AN ESSAY IN UNIVERSAL HISTORY

From an Orthodox Christian Point of View

PART I. THE AGE OF FAITH (TO 1453)

Volume 2: from 1000 to 1453

Vladimir Moss

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If the Emperor forgets the fear of God, he will inevitably fall into sin and be changed into a despot, he will not be able to keep to the customs established by the Fathers, and by the intrigues of the devil he will do that which is unworthy and contrary to the commandments of God, he will become hateful to the people, the senate and the Church, he will become unworthy to be called a Christian, he will be deprived of his post, will be subject to anathema, and, finally, will be killed as the ‘common enemy’ of all Romans, both ‘those who command’ and ‘those who obey’.

Emperor Constantine VII, On the Government of the Empire.

It is wonderful how, from the time when Pope Nicholas I tried to bring about the divorce between the two Churches, the downward course of Rome proceeded with such rapidity that one could not but recognize God’s finger on the wall, “Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin!”

Joseph Overbeck.

The Pope is truly the vicar of Jesus Christ, anointed of the Lord… set between God and man, lower than God but higher than man, who judges all and is judged by no-one.

Pope Innocent III.

The people should be led, not followed, as God has ordained… Those who say, ‘The voice of the people is the voice of God,’ are not to be listened to, for the unruliness of the mob is always close to madness.

Deacon Alcuin of York to Charlemagne.

The Lord commands us not to keep silent when the faith is in danger. Nobody can say: "But who am I to speak" A priest or a ruler? No. A soldier, or a peasant? No, I am a poor man who worries only about his daily bread. It is not my affair to speak, or to worry about this." Alas! Will the stones cry out, while you keep silent and remain unconcerned?

St. Theodore the Studite.

There can be no compromise between truth and falsehood.

St. Mark of Ephesus.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>THE PAPAL DESPOTISM</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>CHARLEMAGNE AND POPE LEO III</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>THE FALL OF THE POPES: (1) FROM NICHOLAS I TO JOHN VIII</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>THE GROWTH OF FEUDALISM</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>THE ENGLISH AND GERMAN MONARCHIES</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>THE FALL OF THE POPES: (2) FROM SERGIUS IV TO LEO IX</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>THE NORMAN CONQUEST OF ENGLAND</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>THE FALL OF THE POPES: (3) FROM NICHOLAS II TO GREGORY VII</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>THE CRUSADES AND THE THEORY OF THE JUST WAR</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>ROMAN LAW, THE PAPACY AND MEDIEVAL KINGSHIP</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>HERETICS AND JEWS</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>THE APOTHEOSIS OF PAPISM</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.</td>
<td>THOMAS AQUINAS ON NATURAL LAW</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63.</td>
<td>UNAM SANCTAM AND DE MONARCHIA</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.</td>
<td>PROTO-PROTESTANTISM: (1) WILLIAM OF OCKHAM AND MARSILIUS OF PADUA</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65.</td>
<td>PROTO-PROTESTANTISM: (2) PEASANTS, LOLLARDS AND TABORITES</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66.</td>
<td>PROTO-PROTESTANTISM: (3) THE CONCIILIAR MOVEMENT</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>THE FALL OF NEW ROME</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.</td>
<td>THE RIGHTS OF THE ORTHODOX AUTOCRAT</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68.</td>
<td>KIEVAN RUS’</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69.</td>
<td>ST. ANDREW OF BOGOLIUBOVO</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70.</td>
<td>THE SLIDE TOWARDS ABSOLUTISM</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71.</td>
<td>THE NICAEAN EMPIRE AND ROYAL ANOINTING</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72.</td>
<td>THE GEORGIAN MONARCHY</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73.</td>
<td>ST. SAVA AND SERBIAN AUTOCEPHALY</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74.</td>
<td>ST. ALEXANDER NEVSKY AND THE MONGOL YOKE</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75.</td>
<td>MOUNT ATHOS AND THE COUNCIL OF LYONS</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76.</td>
<td>THE CRISIS OF BYZANTINE STATEHOOD</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77.</td>
<td>THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SERBIAN EMPIRE</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
78. THE RISE OF MUSCOVY 235
79. ST. MARK OF EPHESUS AND THE COUNCIL OF FLORENCE 242
80. THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE 255

CONCLUSION: AUTOCRACY, DESPOTISM AND DEMOCRACY 261
V. THE PAPAL DESPOTISM
For centuries, and in spite of the intermittent expression of papist ideas, the Roman Papacy had seen itself as part of the Byzantine Empire and a vital link with the four patriarchates of the East. This position was reinforced in a cultural sense during the period of the “Byzantine papacy” of the seventh and early eight centuries, when several of the Popes were Greek or Syrian in origin, and many eastern monks fled to Rome to escape persecution by Monothelite or Iconoclast emperors. Even when the Emperor Leo deprived the papacy of its lands in Southern Italy and the Balkans, the Popes still looked to New Rome as the capital of the Christian oikoumene. They still commemorated the eastern emperors at the Liturgy, and still used the emperors’ coinage. East and West still constituted one Christian world…

However, the relationship began to undergo strain when the Lombards penetrated further south into Italy, and Leo, occupied with his Muslim enemies in the East, could offer the papacy no military support. The Popes in desperation looked for other defenders, and found them in – the Franks…

The first act that “brought the Franks into Italy” was the blessing by Pope Zachariah of a dynastic coup d’état in Francia. The last Merovingian rulers were weak and ineffective: real power was concentrated in the hands of their “mayors” or prime ministers. Pope Zachariah – the last of the Greek popes – had already been heavily engaged in the reorganization of the Frankish Church through his legate in Francia, St. Boniface, the English Apostle of Germany. In 751 the Frankish mayor, Peppin III, Charles Martel’s grandson, sent envoys to him to ask “whether it was just for one to reign and for another to rule”. Zachariah took the hint and blessed the deposition of Childeric III and the anointing of Peppin by St. Boniface in his place.

This was a revolutionary act: removing legitimate dynasties and putting upstarts in their place is not usually considered the business of churchmen... Be that as it may, Zechariah’s, successor, Stephen II, a Roman aristocrat, greatly increased the links with “the most Christian king of the Franks”. Having been deserted by the iconoclast eastern emperor at a moment when Rome was in great peril from the Lombards, he crossed the Alps and in the summer of 754 gave Peppin the title of “patrician”, re-consecrated him and his queen and blessed him and his successors to rule in perpetuity.

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1 Perhaps the earliest was in 608, when the tyrant emperor Phocas, gave Pope Boniface IV the title “Vicar of Christ”, while reserving for himself the title, “Christ’s deputy in the East”.

2 Andrew Louth writes: “From 680 to 751, or more precisely from the accession of Agatho in 678 until Zacharias’ death in 751 – the popes, with two exceptions, Benedict II and Gregory II, were Greek in background and speakers of Greek, which has led some scholars to speak of a ‘Byzantine captivity’ of the papacy. This is quite misleading: most of the ‘Greek’ popes were southern Italian or Sicilian, where Greek was still the vernacular, and virtually all of them, seem to have made their career among the Roman clergy, so, whatever their background, their experience and sympathies would have been thoroughly Roman” (Greek East and Latin West, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007, p. 79).
Perhaps Peppin’s first consecration was deemed to have been illegitimate in that the last Merovingian king, Childeric, was still alive. Or perhaps this second anointing had a deeper significance. Whether Stephen already had this in mind or not, it came to signify the re-establishment of the Western Roman Empire, with its political capital north of the Alps, but its spiritual capital, as always, in Rome. For in exchange, the Franks became the official protectors of Rome instead of the Eastern emperors, whose subjects the Popes now ceased to be. Moreover, from this time the popes stopped dating their documents from the emperor’s regnal year, and began to issue their own coins.

Peppin more than fulfilled his side of the bargain: he defeated the Lombards, restored the Pope to Rome and gave him the former Byzantine exarchate of Ravenna, thereby laying the foundation for the Papal States and the role of the Popes as secular as well as spiritual rulers. As Joseph Overbeck writes: In exchange for receiving anointing from Pope Stephen Pepin had had “to sign a document by which he engaged himself to conquer the Exarchate, which the Longobards had wrested from the hands of the Byzantine Emperor, and to hand it over to the Pope. Pepin accomplished the conquest. When the Emperor sent his Legates to reclaim his lawful property, Pepin referred to the Pope as owner. In private life we should call such transactions cheat and robbery, but as part and parcel of the ‘Patrimonium of S. Petri’ they are hallowed. Or shall we defend main force as a ‘legal title,’ and cover the robberies of the Longobards with a moral cloak? Then we might as well all at once sanction highway robbery... It is a curious, not to say providential, fact that Piedmont, the first country touched by Pepin on his invading tour in Italy, when Pope Stephen asked him to take the sword in St. Peter’s behalf, was the very country that was to destroy the Papal States.”

At about this time the forgery known as The Donation of Constantine was concocted by someone in the papal chancellery. This alleged that Constantine the Great had given his throne to Pope Sylvester and his successors because “it is not right that an earthly emperor should have power in a place where the government of priests and the head of the Christian religion has been established by the heavenly Emperor”. For this reason he moved his capital to the New Rome, Constantinople. “And we ordain and decree that he [the Roman Pope] shall have rule as well over the four principal sees, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Jerusalem, as also over the Churches of God in all the world. And the pontiff who for the time being shall preside over the most holy Roman Church shall be the highest and chief of all priests in the whole world, and according to his decision shall all matters be settled.”

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5 Overbeck, “Rome’s Rapid Downward Course”, http://nftu.net/romes-rapid-downward-dr-j-joseph-overbeck/
Of course, there is an inherent contradiction in this theory. If it was St. Constantine who gave the authority to St. Sylvester, then the ultimate authority in the Christian commonwealth rested, not with the Pope, but with the Emperor. But this consequence was ignored in the face of the urgent necessity of finding some justification for the papacy’s expansionist plans.

The forgery was probably directed against the heretical emperor in Constantinople, being meant to provide a justification for the papacy’s stealing of the exarchate of Ravenna from the emperor in exchange for Leo III’s earlier deprivations. But in the long term its significance was deeper: it represented a quite new theory of the relationship between the secular and the ecclesiastical powers. For contrary to the doctrine of the “symphony” of the two powers which prevailed in the East and the Byzantine West, the theory encapsulated in the Donation essentially asserted that the head of the Roman Church had a higher authority, not only than any other bishop, but also than the head of the Empire; so that the Emperor could only exert his authority as a kind of vassal of the Pope...

In 768, King Pepin’s son, Charles, later known as Charlemagne, ascended the throne. He destroyed the power of the Lombards and vigorously expanded the boundaries of his kingdom from the Elbe to the borders of Byzantine Italy and Hungary. In Western Europe, only the British Isles, Brittany, Scandinavia and some parts of Spain remained beyond his grasp. He promoted education and art, held twice-yearly Synods of his bishops and nobles, suppressed heresy (while introducing the Filioque) and tried to wield the varied peoples and customs of his realm into a multi-national whole.

Charlemagne’s empire was seen by the Franks as a resurrection of the Western Roman Empire. Thus the marble steps leading up to his throne came from temples in Rome. And according to his English adviser, Deacon Alcuin, Charlemagne, like King David, combined the functions of royal leadership and priestly teaching in order to guide his people to salvation. As early as 775 Cathwulf wrote to Charlemagne, comparing him to the Father, the bishop to the Son: “Always remember, my king, with fear and love for God your King, that you are in His place to look after and rule over all His members and to give account on judgement day even for yourself. And a bishop is in second place: he is only in Christ’s place. Ponder, therefore, within yourself how diligently to establish God’s law over the people of God.” Again, in 794 Paulinus of Aquileia called him “king and priest”.

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7 Centuries later, in 1242, a pamphlet attributed to Pope Innocent IV corrected this flaw in the theory of papism by declaring that the Donation was not a gift, but a restitution (Charles Davis, “The Middle Ages”, in Richard Jenkyns (ed.), The Legacy of Rome, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 86.)
10 Canning, op. cit., p. 49.
Charlemagne dominated the Church in his empire. As D.E. Luscombe writes, “Among the principal tasks of a Carolingian monarch were the convening of church councils, the nomination of bishops, the maintenance of clerical discipline and public morality, and the promulgation of sound religious doctrine. Carolingian monarchy was theocratic; it intervened extensively in church affairs.”11 And so, at the very moment that the Seventh Ecumenical Council was decreeing the proper spheres of Church and State in the East, Caesaropapism was threatening to undermine that decree and re-establish itself in the West...

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By the 790s Charlemagne was already not just a king, but de facto emperor. But the resurrection of the Western Empire needed a special sanction that only the Church could give. The opportunity to gain this came with the election of a new Pope, Leo III.

Leo was no supporter of caesaropapism, the “king-priest” idea. Thus when, in 796, Eadbert Praen, an English priest, assumed the crown of the sub-kingdom of Kent for himself, he was immediately rejected by the Archbishop of Canterbury and later anathematised by Leo. Such a priest-king, he wrote, was like Julian the Apostate…12

Nevertheless, he needed the support of Charlemagne; and to that end he was prepared to make compromises... For “even though his election had been unanimous,” writes Tom Holland, “Leo had enemies: for the papal office, which until recently had brought its holder only bills and overdrafts, was now capable of exciting the envious cupidity of the Roman aristocracy. On 25 April, as the heir of St. Peter rode in splendid procession to Mass, he was set upon by a gang of heavies. Bundled off into a monastery, Leo succeeded in escaping before his enemies, as had been their intention, could blind him and cut out his tongue. Lacking any other recourse, he resolved upon the desperate expedient of fleeing to the King of the Franks. The journey was a long and perilous one – for Charlemagne, that summer, was in Saxony, on the very outer reaches of Christendom. Wild rumours preceded the Pope, grisly reports that he had indeed been mutilated. When he finally arrived in the presence of Charlemagne, and it was discovered... that he still had his eyes and tongue, Leo solemnly asserted that they had been restored to him by St. Peter, sure evidence of the apostle’s outrage at the affront to his vicar. And then, embracing ‘the King, the father of Europe’, Leo summoned Charlemagne to his duty: to stir himself in defence of the Pope, ‘chief pastor of the world’, and to march on Rome.

“And to Rome the king duly came. Not in any hurry, however, and certainly not so as to suggest that he was doing his suppliant’s bidding. Indeed, for the fugitive Pope, humiliation had followed upon humiliation. His enemies, arriving in Charlemagne’s presence only days after Leo, had publicly accused him of a series of extravagant sexual abuses. Commissioners, sent by Charlemagne to escort the Pope back to Rome and investigate the charges against him, drew up a report so damning that Alcuin preferred to burn it rather than be sullied by keeping it in his possession. When Charlemagne himself, in the early winter of 800, more than a year after Leo’s arrival in Saxony, finally approached the gates of Rome, the Pope humbly rode out to greet him twelve miles from the city. Even the ancient emperors had only required their servants to ride out six.

“But Leo, a born fighter, was still resolved to salvage something from the wreckage. Blackened though his name had certainly been, he remained the Pope, St. Peter’s heir, the holder of an office that had been instituted of Christ Himself. It was not lightly to be given to any mortal, not even Charlemagne, to sit in judgement on Rome’s bishop. In token of this, when the proceedings against Leo formally opened on 1 December, they did so, not within the ancient limits of the city, but in the Vatican, on the far side of the Tiber, in implicit acknowledgement of the rights of the Pope, and the Pope alone, to rule in Rome. Papal officials, displaying their accustomed talent for uncovering ancient documents just when they were most needed, presented to Charlemagne papers which appeared conclusively to prove that their master could in fact only be judged by God. Charlemagne, accepting this submission, duly pronounced the Pope acquitted. Leo, placing his hand on a copy of the New Testament, then swore a flamboyant oath that he had been innocent all along.

“And now, having triumphed over his enemies in Rome, he prepared to snatch an even more dramatic victory from the jaws of all his travails. Two days after the Pope’s acquittal, Charlemagne attended Christmas Mass in the shrine of St. Peter in the Vatican. He did so humbly, without any insignia of royalty, praying on his knees. As he rose, however, Leo stepped forward into the golden light cast by the altar candles, and placed a crown on his bare head. Simultaneously, the whole cathedral echoed to the ecstatic cries of the congregation, who hailed the Frankish king as ‘Augustus’ – the honorific of the ancient Caesars. Leo, never knowingly less than dramatic, then prostrated himself before Charlemagne’s feet, head down, arms outstretched. By venerable tradition, such obeisance had properly been performed only for one man: the emperor in Constantinople.

“But now, following the events of that momentous Christmas Day, the West once again had an emperor of its own.
“And it was the Pope, and no one else, who had granted him his crown…”

Now Charlemagne’s biographer Einhard claims that he would never have entered the church if he had known what the Pope was intending to do. This is difficult to believe. Everything suggests that the events leading up to the coronation were carefully stage-managed by the two men, each of whom possessed something that only the other could give.

However, there is evidence that in later years Charlemagne drew back from the confrontation with Constantinople that his new title of “Emperor of the Romans” threatened. He dropped the phrase “of the Romans” while retaining the title “Emperor”. Moreover, he dropped his idea of attacking the Byzantine province of Sicily. Instead he proposed marriage to the Byzantine Empress Irene (or perhaps it was her idea). In this way he hoped “to unite the Eastern and Western provinces”, as the Theophanes put it - not under his sole rule, for he must have realised that that was impossible, but perhaps on the model of the dual monarchy of the fifth-century Roman empire. In any case, all these plans collapsed with Irene’s overthrow in 802…

The Byzantines at first treated Charlemagne as yet another impudent usurper; for, as a chronicler of Salerno put it, "The men about the court of Charles the Great called him Emperor because he wore a precious crown upon his head. But in truth, no one should be called Emperor save the man who presides over the Roman - that is, the Constantinopolitan kingdom.” As Russell Chamberlin writes: “The Byzantines derided the coronation of Charlemagne. To them he was simply another barbarian general with ideas above his station. Indeed, he took care never to style himself Imperator Romanorum. His jurists, dredging through the detritus of empire, came up with a title which me with his approval: Romanum gubernans imperium ‘Governing the Roman Empire’. The resounding title of this first of the post-classical Western Emperors was ‘Charles, Most Serene Augustus, crowned by God, great and merciful Emperor, governing the Roman Empire and by the mercy of God, King of the Lombards and the Franks’.”

14 Heather, *op. cit.*, chapter 5.
18 Chamberlin, “The Ideal of Unity”, *History Today*, vol. 53 (11), November, 2003, p. 57. And yet in 812 the legates of Emperor Michael I saluted Charles in Aachen with the title “emperor”. So from 812, as A. Vasiliev says, “there were two Roman emperors, in spite of the fact that in theory there was still only one Roman empire” (*op. cit.*, p. 268). There is an interesting parallel to this in the theory of the One Christian Empire in contemporary China. Thus when the Chinese empire actually split between the Khitans and the Sung in 1004, “to preserve the myth of indivisibility the relationship between the two emperors was henceforth
supported the idea that Charlemagne was greater than both the Pope in Rome and the Emperor in Constantinople: "There have hitherto been three persons of greatest eminence in the world, namely the Pope, who rules the see of St. Peter, the chief of apostles, as his successor...; the second is the Emperor who holds sway over the second Rome...; the third is the throne on which our Lord Jesus Christ has placed you to rule over our Christian people, with greater power, clearer insight and more exalted royalty than the afore-mentioned dignitaries. On you alone the whole safety of the churches of Christ depends."  

Whatever Charlemagne's real intentions in 800, by the mid-ninth century it was clear that for the West the only Orthodox Roman Emperor was the Emperor of the Franks. Thus whereas Alcuin in the previous century still followed the convention of calling Constantinople the second Rome, for a later Latin eulogist the second Rome was Charlemagne's capital, Aachen: “Most worthy Charles, my voice is too small for your works, king, love and jewel of the Franks, head of the world, the summit of Europe, caring father and hero, Augustus! You yourself can command cities: see how the Second Rome, new in its flowering and might extent, rise and grows; with the domes which crown its walls, it touches the stars!”

And yet the ultimate winner from Charlemagne’s coronation was probably not the emperor, but the Pope. Judith Herrin writes that his “acclamation as imperator et augustus only partly answered Alcuin’s proposals for a grander title and did not please the Frankish theologians. They did not consider that the Bishop of Rome had any right to bestow an imperial title and thus assume a crucial role in the ceremony. The Franks did not conceive of Roman ecclesiastical authority as something overarching which covered the whole of Charles’s territories. Within northern Europe, papal authority was hedged by the claims of many archbishops to an equal power...

“Of the three powers involved in the coronation event of 800, the Roman pontiff emerges as the clear winner in the triangular contest over imperial authority. By seizing the initiative and crowning Charles in his own way, Pope Leo claimed the superior authority to anoint an imperial ruler of the West, which established an important precedent... Later Charles would insist on crowning his own son Louis as emperor, without papal intervention. He thus designated his successor and, in due course, Louis inherited his father’s authority. But the notion that a western rule could not be a real emperor without a papal coronation and acclamation in ancient Rome grew out of the ceremonial devised by Leo III in 800.”


21 Herrin, *op. cit.*, pp. 124, 128.
Fr. Andrew Louth confirms that the real winner was the Pope: “The Constitutio Romana sought to establish a bond between the Frankish Empire and the Republic of St. Peter, but it was a very different relationship from that which had formerly held between the pope and the Byzantine emperor. The Frankish emperor undertook to protect the legitimacy of the electoral process, but claimed no right, as the Byzantine emperor had done, to confirm the election itself. What we see here, in inchoate form, is a way of protecting the legitimacy and independence of the pope…”22

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So the foundations were laid for the growth of papal power in the political as well as the ecclesiastical spheres… But if Charlemagne’s empire was meant to be a restoration of the Western Roman Empire, it must be judged to have failed; for it disintegrated after his death and the death of his son Louis the Pious into three separate kingdoms (roughly co-terminous with modern France, Germany and Northern Italy), and continued to disintegrate in the tenth century. One reason for this was that he failed to create the political bureaucracy and tax collection systems that were so important in preserving the Roman Empire.23 Another reason was the fact that the dukes and counts upon whom his administration critically depended expected to be paid in land for the services they rendered, so that the kingdom was stable just so long as it was expanding – that is, until the 810s.24

For the idea of selfless service to the king as the Lord’s anointed had to compete with the idea of the loyalty of a band of warriors to a leader that was conditional on his providing greater success in war and therefore more plunder than anyone else. The state was not yet fully a res publica, a public thing, in the Frankish consciousness; it was rather the private demesne of the king and those of his nobles who had earned a part of the spoils through their service to him. As Heather writes, “the fruits of expansion power… were a crucial element in the rise of the Carolingians. It really is one of the most

22 Louth, op. cit., p. 81.
23 Heather writes: “Fundamentally, the early Middle Ages saw the emergence of a new smaller type of state structure. With no state-run professional army, no large-scale systematic taxation of agriculture, and no developed central bureaucratic structure, the early medieval state swallowed up a much smaller percentage of GDP than had its Roman predecessor. As far as we can tell, this had nothing to do with right-wing ideologies and everything to do with a basic renegotiation of centre-local relations around the brute fact that landowning elites now owed their ruler actual military service, which put their own very physical bodies on the line. Equally important, all the changes conspired together… to make it much more difficult for early medieval rulers to hold together large geographical areas over the longer term. “There was also the further, critical difference in the type of economic assets that the ruler of a smaller early medieval state structure had at his disposal. Although late Roman emperors were landowners in their own right, like their Carolingian successors, they drew the majority of their much larger overall income from tax revenues. And tax revenues were entirely renewable…” (op. cit., p.279)
24 However, see the life of St. William of Toulouse (+812), for an example of a completely non-acquisitive warrior lord (Living Orthodoxy, vol. V, N 2, March-April, 1983, pp. 3-5).
significant statistics of them all that Carolingian armies were in the field for eighty-five out of the ninety years from the accession of Charles Martel to 803/4. The vast majority of these campaigns were aggressive and expansionary, and the renewable wealth they liberated – in all its forms – made it possible for four generations of the dynasty to build their regimes without eroding the fixed assets of the royal fisc... In the small-state world of early medieval Europe, expansionary warfare replaced large-scale taxation as the source of renewable wealth that was necessary to maintaining a powerful central authority in anything but the shortest of terms.”

However, Charlemagne’s real weakness was spiritual rather than institutional. He took his own strength and the weakness of the Eastern Empire (which, since it was ruled at the time by a woman, Irene, was technically vacant according to Frankish law), as sufficient reason to usurp the role of the Basileus. Still more seriously, he usurped the place of the Church in the ecclesiastical sphere. As long as the Eastern Emperors had been iconoclast, while Charlemagne himself remained Orthodox, he could have had some justification for claiming the leadership of the Christian world. But since 787 the Eastern Empire had returned to Orthodoxy, whereas in 794 Charlemagne convened a false council at Frankfurt which, without consulting the Pope, condemned the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council on icon-veneration and introduced the Filioque – the statement that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son – into the Creed.

This rejection of the Acts of the Seventh Council has been ascribed to a mistranslation. But we may suspect that the mis-translation was not entirely fortuitous (was there really nobody at the court who read Greek?), and that Charlemagne was actually looking for an excuse to reject the Eastern Empire as idol-worshipping and heterodox and put himself forward as the one true and Orthodox Christian Emperor. Be that as it may, his adoption of the Filioque made him a heretic rather than his eastern rivals because: (a) it contradicted the words of Christ about the procession of the Spirit from the

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25 Heather, op. cit., pp. 287, 288. Tacitus had written centuries before of the pagan Germans in his Germania: “You cannot keep up a great retinue except by war and violence, for it is to the free-handed chief that they look for the war horse, for the murderous and masterful sphere: banquetings and a certain rude but lavish outfit take the place of salary. The material for this open-handedness comes from war and foray.”

26 Louth writes: “The Frankish court received a Latin version of the decrees of Nicaea II in which a central point was misrepresented: instead of an assertion that icons are not venerated with the worship owed to God, the Latin version seems to have asserted exactly the opposite, that icons are indeed venerated with the worship due to God alone. There is certainly scope for misunderstanding here, especially when dealing with a translated text, for the distinction that the iconodules had painstakingly drawn between a form of veneration expressing honour [proskynesis] and a form of veneration expressing worship [latreia] has no natural lexical equivalent in Latin” (op. cit., pp. 86-87).

When, in 792, Charlemagne sent the Acts of the Seventh Council in this inaccurate translation to the kings and bishops of Britain, it was supposed that the Fathers of the Council had asserted, in the words of Symeon of Durham, “that icons are to be adored, which is altogether condemned by the Church of God”; and the reader Alcuin brought back to the continent the negative opinion of the British Church (Haddan & Stubbs, op. cit., pp. 468-469).
Father alone (John 15.26), (b) it involved a change in the Creed, which was forbidden by the Third Ecumenical Council, and (c) it was objectively false, as destroying the monarchy of the Father and introducing a second principle into the life of the Holy Trinity.27

The Filioque immediately produced conflict between Frankish and Greek monks in Jerusalem. And within the Frankish camp itself there was opposition: Alcuin rejected the innovation in a letter to the monks of Lyons, and Pope Leo III had the Creed without the Filioque inscribed in Greek and Latin on silver shields and placed outside St. Peter’s. But Charlemagne did not back down: in a council in Aachen in 809 he decreed that the innovation was a dogma necessary for salvation.

The iconoclast Emperor Leo the Isaurian had undermined the “symphonic” principle of Church-State relations when he had declared that he was “both king and priest”. But now Charlemagne was showing himself to be no less of a caesaropapist than Leo by his imposition of heretical innovations on the Church. Indeed, the former champion of Orthodoxy and Romanity against the heretical and despotic iconoclast emperors was now well on the way to becoming the chief enemy of Orthodoxy and Romanity through his heresy and despotism, considering, as Fr. John Romanides puts it, "that the East Romans were neither Orthodox nor Roman"!28

Another important innovation of the Carolingian period was the replacement of leavened bread by unleavened in the Eucharist. As Fr. Joseph Jungman writes, “In the West, various ordinances appeared from the ninth century on, all demanding the exclusive use of unleavened bread for the Eucharist. Still, the new custom did not come into exclusive vogue until the middle of the eleventh century. Particularly in Rome it was not universally accepted till after the general infiltration of various usages from the North.”29

29 Jungman, The Mass of the Roman Rite, volume II, pages 33-34. Jungman goes on to say that, “the opinion put forward by J. Mabillon, Dissertatio de pane eucharistica, in his answer to the Jesuit J. Sirmond, Disquisitio de azymo, namely, that in the West it was always the practice to use only unleavened bread, is no longer tenable” [op. cit., page 33].

"Now, the fact that the West changed its practice and began using unleavened bread in the 8th and 9th century -- instead of the traditional leavened bread -- is confirmed by the research of Fr. William O’Shea, who noted that along with various other innovative practices from Northern Europe, the use of unleavened bread began to infiltrate into the Roman liturgy at the end of the first millennium, because as he put it, "Another change introduced into the Roman Rite in France and Germany at the time [i.e., 8th - 9th century] was the use of unleavened bread and of thin white wafers or hosts instead of the loaves of leavened bread used hitherto" [O'Shea, The Worship of the Church, page 128]. Cited by Fr. Ambrose Maonaigh on Facebook, July 6, 2016.
This issue did not figure among the serious theological differences that arose between Pope Nicholas I and St. Photius of Constantinople in the 850s. However, it did become important two centuries later, when the schism became Rome and Constantinople became permanent. At that time the Latin innovation was seen as damaging the symbolism of the human nature of Christ insofar as leaven signifies the grace of the Holy Spirit that makes human nature rise.30

* Charlemagne’s empire began to crumble quite soon after his death in 814. His son Louis the Pious had to suffer rebellions from his sons Lothar, Pippin and Louis, and was even deposed briefly by the latter. On his death in 840 the empire was divided between his three surviving sons, Lothar, Louis the German and Charles. When Lothar claimed the whole empire, Louis the German and Charles met with their armies at Strasbourg in 842 and swore allegiance to each other and a united front against Lohar.

“The oaths and pledges... were given in the vernacular languages of each of the armies, rather than the kings’ own languages or in Latin. Charles speaks to Louis’ army in Old High German, ‘teudisca lingua’, and they pledge in the same. Louis and Charles’ army speak in Proto-French, ‘romana lingua’. By speaking to their brother’s army in their own language, each oath-taker ensured they were understood and neither could escape being held to their word.

“The Oaths are important, not just for the treaty they forged but for the languages they used: in the Carolingian Empire Latin was the standard language of writing. The Oaths of Strasbourg are the very earliest written evidence of a Romance language to survive and are, therefore, the earliest words to be written in the language that would become French. The Old High Geran portions are one of the earliest known texts written in the language. Together they give a glimpse of how multilingual the Carolingian Empire was. Louis and Charles were both multilingual and literate.

“Thanks in part to the alliance made that day in Strasbourg the war was brought to an end in August 843 with the Treaty of Verdun. With this treaty the Empire was subdivided: Lothar took the central region around Aachen, with lands stretching down to Italy; Louis the German took East Francia, which was roughly the territory east of the Rhine; and Charles the Bald took West Francia, the western two thirds of what is now France. This subdivision created geographical regions with their own languages, political organisations and identities, which laid the foundations for the shape of western Europe.”31

As K.N. Leontiev writes: “It was precisely after the fall of the artificial empire of Charles that the signs which constitute, in their integrity, a picture of a special European culture, a new universal civilization, become clearer and clearer. The future bounds of the most recent western States and particular cultures of Italy, France and Germany also begin to become clearer. The Crusades come closer, as does the flourishing age of knighthood and of German feudalism, which laid the foundations of the exceptional self-respect of the person (a self-respect which, passing first by means of envy and imitation into the bourgeoisie, produced the democratic revolution and engendered all these modern phrases about the boundless rights of the person, and then, penetrating to the lower levels of western society, made of every simple day-time worker and cobbler an existence corrupted by a nervous feeling of his own worth). Soon after this we hear the first sounds of Romantic poetry. Then Gothic architecture develops, and soon Dante’s Catholic epic poem will be created, etc. Papal power grows from this time. And so the reign of Charles the Great (9th century) is approximately the watershed after which the West begins more and more to bring its own civilization and its own statehood into prominence. From this century Byzantine civilisation loses from its sphere of influence all the large and well-populated countries of the West. On the other hand, it acquires for its genius the Southern Slavs…, and then… Russia.”

32 Leontiev, “Vizantinizm i Slavianstvo” (”Byzantinism and Slavism”), in Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo (The East, Russia and Slavism), Moscow, 1996, pp. 94-95.
52. THE FALL OF THE POPES: (1) FROM NICHOLAS I TO JOHN VIII

The new relationship between the Roman papacy and the Carolingian empire after 800 caused changes in the political ideology of the Franks, on the one hand, who came to see themselves as the real Roman Empire, more Roman and more Orthodox than the Empire of the East; and on the other hand, in the ecclesiology of the Popes, who came to see themselves as the only Church of this renewed Roman Empire, and as having ultimate jurisdiction over all the Churches in the world.

However, as long as Charlemagne lived the change in political ideology was much more prominent, while the change in the papacy’s perception of itself was still hidden. As he wrote to Pope Leo III, he saw himself not only as protecting the Church from external dangers but also “internally strengthening it in the knowledge of the Christian faith”. And he was true to his word: Charlemagne initiated and funded a huge project of reform and education, whose result, as Peter Heather writes, was “a total transformation of the Church of Western, Latin Christendom… Charlemagne used his religious authority to define a mass Christian piety which was to apply to everyone within his empire.”

However, during the reign of Charlemagne’s son, Louis the Pious, the Frankish bishops quickly reasserted their authority. Thus D.E. Luscombe writes: “At the same time as Carolingian kingship acquired a greater ecclesiastical role, and as the king appeared more and more to be an ecclesiastical person, voices were raised on behalf of the Frankish bishops who asserted that kingship was an office within the church, accountable to the priesthood. The removal from office of the emperor Louis the Pious at Compiègne in 833 provided an opportunity to develop such themes. Whatever the effective reasons and causes underlying Louis’ deposition, bishops were predominant in the assembly at Compiègne. They represented their role as penitential: Louis’ power had been wrested from him by God because of his incapacity and the bishops now had to impose public penance.”

The shift in the balance of power from king to bishops was remarkable. It could be argued that the power of the Carolingian empire never recovered from this blow to their authority. Thus while the Eastern Empire recovered its strength after the Triumph of Orthodoxy in 843, the Frankish Empire began to disintegrate after the bloody battle of Fontenoy in 841, which was fought between Charlemagne’s three grandsons.

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The Frankish bishops were especially concerned to assert their authority against their metropolitans, who had been the lynch-pins of Charlemagne’s educational programme. To this end they wanted to increase the power of the Pope over the metropolitans. And in order to increase the papacy’s authority a forged collection of canons was composed in about 850 in Western Francia called *The Pseudo-Isidorean Decretals*.

“Its author,” writes Alexander Dvorkin, “was a Frankish cleric who has remained unknown, hiding himself under the pseudonym of Isidore Mercator (St. Isidore). To Isidore of Seville (+636) is ascribed a collection of genuine sources of church law. The pseudo-Isidore took a Gallic edition of this as his basis, and succeeding in forging, interpolating, false attributing and reworking a huge quantity of papal decrees, which, together with the resolutions of the councils, became the main source of canon law in all the provinces ‘captured’ by the papacy. Marius Mercator was the name of a Spanish writer of the fifth century from whom the pseudo-Isidore borrowed the prologue for his compilation.

“The pseudo-Isidore compiled 70 decreals in the name of venerated popes who ruled before the Council of Nicaea (325), and also wove his own interpolations into the genuine materials of a much later period. One should remember that the earliest genuine decreal belongs to Pope Siricius (385). The pseudo-Isidore did a huge work, putting genuine later citations into the completely different context of much earlier works. His main task was, it would seem, the defence of the local interests of the Frankish bishops, who wanted, instead of a nearby and effective secular power, and also metropolitan control, to have a much more distant and, consequently, much less effective papal power. The pseudo-Isidore wanted to defend the bishops juridically from archbishops and metropolitans, and also from their own clerics and laity. The only way of achieving this, it seemed to the pseudo-Isidore, was to proclaim the absolute monarchy of the Roman popes.

“Thus the pseudo-Isidore laid a juridical basis for the absolute and universal power and authority of the Roman see. In the decreals the pope is proclaimed to be the supreme lawgiver, without whose approval not a single council could be convened nor a single conciliar resolution become valid. He was the supreme judge without whose permission not one bishop could be defrocked and who decided all the ‘main affairs’ in the Church. Anyone unhappy with the decision of a local council or local metropolitan could appeal to the pope, and on him depended the final decision, to which everyone had to submit without question. In this way bishops were freed from the judgement of laity and even from the power of their own metropolitans. According to the decreals, in countries distant from Rome, the pope appointed vicars of the apostolic throne, or primates, who enjoyed in the locality all the privileges of the pope, and who served in this way as channels of the central power of the Roman first-hierarchs. Thus according to the
pseudo-Isidorean decretales the authority of the pope in the Church became even higher than the authority of the Ecumenical Councils. Far from Francia, the Pope, as the successor of the prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, had the complete fullness of power in the Universal Church and was proclaimed as the head of the whole Christian world.”

In 858 Nicholas I succeeded to the see of Rome. He was a West Roman by birth (his father was the regionarius Theodore), who spent his pontificate in violent conflict with the Frankish Emperor Louis II. According, therefore, to Fr. John Romanides’ theory of the Frankish origin of the heretical papacy, he should have been a “good” pope, in that he opposed the “tyranny” of the Franks. But in fact, he was one of the worst of all the popes, the first truly “papist pope”, trying to impose his tyranny on everyone, kings and bishops, easterners and westerners. He first waged war against the major metropolitan sees of the continental West - Archbishops John of Ravenna, Hincmar of Rheims and others, who, as we have seen, were also the main target of The Pseudo-Isidorean Decretals. This brought the Frankish metropolitanans briefly into an alliance with the Eastern Church against him...

Thus Metropolitan Hincmar of Rheims deposed his suffragan, Bishop Rothad of Soissons. Rothad appealed to Rome. “Nicholas’ initial response,” writes Heather, “was to refer the matter back to a provincial synod, as was standard contemporary practice, and where the outcome, with Hincmar in the chair, was only too predictable. Rothad, however, was a resourceful individual who took to the road, which led, as of course they all do, direct to Rome, carrying with him a copy of Pseudo-Isidore. Nicholas’ attitude then changed suddenly and drastically. On being confronted with the ‘evidence’ of ancient Christian practice, the Pope issued a new ruling on 24 December 862. Following the rules laid down in Pseudo-Isidore, he now required that Rothad’s appeal should be heard in Rome, with himself in the chair.

“A weapon crafted in the north for other purposes entirely had found its way to Rome into the hands of a Pope who was not afraid to use it. The results were explosive. Nicholas was no shy, retiring individual, and had not been afraid to involve himself widely in the affairs of the Western Church in any case, asserting his own authority ruthlessly in 860-1, prior to Rothad’s arrival, over Archbishop John of Ravenna’s attempts to remain independent...”

Peter Llewellyn tells the story: “During the pontificate of Benedict Archbishop John of Ravenna had increased his local power, but Nicholas soon received from the suffragans of Ravenna and from ‘the senators of Ravenna and its uncounted population’ appeals for protection from their archbishop. Letters and legates that were sent to John without effect were

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36 Heather, op. cit., pp. 359-60.
followed by a summons to Rome. At a Synod in Rome early in 861 John was
excommunicated by the pope and at once fled to Pavia to ask help from [the
Emperor] Louis. Louis offered him the company of two imperial missi to
Rome, but Nicholas refused to accept them and John’s enemies in Ravenna
invited the pope there. Louis, anxious to avoid a rupture with the papacy,
withdrew his support from John and his brother duke Gregory. When John
was finally received in Rome with two missi as guarantors of his personal
safety, he was compelled at a synod in December 861 to renounce all
territorial ambitions. He swore to make a visit ad limina every two years, to
allow no episcopal elections in Emilia save those canonically managed, and to
raise only the canonical tribute from his suffragans. He was to restore all
stolen property and above all to exercise no civil jurisdiction in private cases.
The right of appeal to the resident papal missus in Ravenna and to the papal
vestararius was always to remain open.

“It was a moral and legal victory for Nicholas, the papacy and for Rome,
but it threatened Louis’ hold over Italy and the prospects of a successful war
against the Arabs [in the south of Italy]. In 860 his position had become
precarious through the opposition of two great feudatories of central Italy,
Lambert the son of duke Guy of Spoleto and count Ildebert of Camerino.
These fled, Ildebert to the sultan of Bari and Lambert to Adelchis of
Benevento. Their flight gave Louis an opportunity to assert his control over
central Italy and to prepare for his great campaign. Pentapolis was occupied
by his troops and the payment of tribute to the papal authorities was
forbidden; instead public land was distributed to Franks to outweigh the
influence of the papal party. Two years later there came another occasion to
establish his power over Rome. When Louis’ brother Lothair, King of
Lorraine, repudiated his wife and married and crowned his mistress
Waldrade, a synod of bishops at Metz had, under pressure from the king, and
giving voice to national aspirations among the episcopate, condoned the act;
the papal legate, Bishop Radoald of Porto, had succumbed to bribes and also
given his assent. Nicholas promptly [in October 863] excommunicated the
king [and the two archbishops who had presided over the synod in Metz],
and Archbishop John’s partisans in Emilia prevailed on Louis to support his
brother and march on Rome. As the Frankish army approached, Nicholas
organized fasts and processions for divine intervention. One of these was
attacked and broken up in the street by Louis’ supporters in the city; the
crosses and relics, including a part of the True Cross, were thrown to the
ground and the pope himself was barely able to escape by river to the
Leonine City. He remained there for two days until, with the promise of a
safe-conduct, he went to interview Louis. In the Emperor’s camp the
archbishops overwhelmed him with reproaches and accused him, in Louis’
presence, of trying to make himself emperor and of wishing to dominate the
whole world – the expressions of resentment felt by a national episcopate in
conflict with a supranational authority. Nicholas’s excommunication of the
bishops was rejected and they in turn anathematized him.”

Nicholas may have been right in some of his judgements. But that was not the point: the point was the way in which he rode roughshod over the rights of provincial metropolitans, who since Charlemagne had recognized only the emperor’s right to interfere in their jurisdiction. Thus the archbishops of Trèves and Cologne wrote to Nicholas: “Without a council, without canonical inquiry, without accuser, without witnesses, without convicting us by arguments or authorities, without our consent, in the absence of the metropolitans and of our suffragan bishops, you have chosen to condemn us, of your own caprice, with tyrannical fury. But we do not accept your accursed sentence, so repugnant to a father’s or a brother’s love; we despise it as mere insulting language; we expel you yourself from our communion, since you commune with the excommunicate; we are satisfied with the communion of the whole Church and with the society of our brethren whom you despise and of whom you make yourself unworthy by your pride and arrogance. You condemn yourself when you condemn those who do not observe the apostolic precepts which you yourself are the first to violate, annulling as far as in you lies the Divine laws and the sacred canons, and not following in the footsteps of the Popes your predecessors.” 38

If the papacy could cite some precedents for claiming supreme power over the Church in the West, in the East it had no jurisdiction. But in 863 Nicholas defrocked even St. Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople. 39 The Frankish Annals of St. Bertin for 864 responded cuttingly by speaking of “the lord Nicholas, who is called pope and who numbers himself as an apostle among the apostles, and who is making himself emperor of the whole world”. 40 Nothing daunted, in 865 Nicholas declared that the Pope had authority “over all the earth, that is, over every other Church”, “the see of Peter has received the total power of government over all the sheep of Christ”. As he wrote to Emperor Michael III: “The judge shall be judged neither by Augustus, nor by any cleric, nor by the people… The First See shall not be judged by any… Before the coming of Christ it was the case that there existed, in a type, men who were at once kings and priests: sacred history tells us that the holy Melchisedech was one of these. The devil, as one who ever strives, with his tyrannical spirit, to claim for himself what belongs to the worship of God, has imitated this example in his own members, so that pagan emperors might be spoken of as being at the same time the chief pontiffs. But He was found Who was in truth both King and Pontiff. Thereafter the emperor did not lay hands on the rights of the pontificate, nor did the pontiff usurp the name of emperor. For that one and the same ‘Mediator between God and man, the

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39 “We declare him,” he says, “deprived of all sacerdotal honour and of every clerical function by the authority of God Almighty, of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, of all the saints, of the six general councils, and by the judgement which the Holy Spirit has pronounced by us” (in Guettée, p. 298). Note the reference only to six ecumenical councils.

40 Quoted in Louth, Greek East and Latin West, p. 168.
man Christ Jesus’ (I Timothy 2.15), so separated the functions of the two authorities, giving each its own proper activities and distinct honours (desiring that these properties should be exalted by the medicine of humility and not brought down again to the depths by man’s arrogance...”41

This would suggest that Nicholas supported the Orthodox teaching on the separation of the secular and ecclesiastical powers. And indeed, his treatment of the traditional theme of Melchizedek is Orthodox. However, while it was useful for him to preach the Orthodox doctrine in order to limit the power of the emperor, he accepted few, if any, limitations on his own power. He even hinted that the Byzantine emperors might not be legitimate emperors of the Romans, which would imply that the only legitimate emperor was the Frankish one, or, if the Donation of Constantine was to be believed, the Pope himself! Thus he said that it was ridiculous for Michael to call himself Roman emperor, since he did not speak Latin.42

Then he demanded from the Emperor the return of his territories in the Greek-speaking south of Italy: “Give us back the patrimony of Calabria and that of Sicily and all the property of our Church, whereof it held possession, and which it was accustomed to manage by its own attorneys; for it is unreasonable that an ecclesiastical possession, destined for the light and service of the Church of God, should be taken from us by an earthly power.” Finally, he sent missionaries to Bulgaria, which was deep within the traditionally Byzantine sphere. To add injury to insult, these missionaries preached the heresy of the Filioque to the newly converted Bulgarians. For this reason, a Council convened at Constantinople in 867 presided over by St. Photius, and at which the archbishops of Trèves, Cologne and Ravenna were present, excommunicated and anathematized Nicholas.

In 867 St. Photius convened a large Council in Constantinople, to which he invited the archbishops of Ravenna, Trèves and Cologne who appealed to him against Nicholas. Nicholas was defrocked. However, his successor, Hadrian II, rejected the Council and burned its Acts. Then in 869 a palace revolution in Constantinople enabled him to convene a Council there led by his legates that reversed the decisions of the earlier Council. Papists have often counted this anti-Photian council as the Eighth Ecumenical – not least, one suspects, because Hadrian demanded that all its participants recognized him as “Sovereign Pontiff and Universal Pope”. “The Pope,” he said, “judges all the bishops, but we do not read that any have judged him.”43 St. Photius refused to defend himself, saying that the thirty-three bishops convened in this Council could not presume to reverse the decision of the three hundred and eighteen bishops who had proclaimed him legitimate Patriarch.

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41 Nicholas I, in Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., pp. 103, 104-105.
43 Guettée, op. cit., p. 307.
According to Joseph Overbeck, “Hadrian II, succeeded in having the Pseudo-Isidorian principles (these legalised lies) recognized” by the Council, “which was packed for the occasion. There can scarcely be found a more miserable sham than this Council, in which three disguised Saracen merchants were slyly introduced to act as the representatives of the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, as we learn from the evidence of the Patriarchs themselves in the Synod of 879.”

In 872 Hadrian II was succeeded by John VIII. At first, his language was scarcely less authoritarian than that of his predecessors. But in time he did come to recognize St. Photius as lawful, and sent his legates to the Great Council of Constantinople in 879-880, which was attended by about four hundred bishops. This Council annulled, under the legates’ signature, the acts of the anti-Photian council. It also decreed that there was no papal jurisdiction in the East, although the papal primacy was recognised.

The Council also anathematized another heresy of Pope Nicholas, the addition of the word Filioque, meaning “and from the Son”, to the original text of the Nicene Creed, which meant that the Holy Spirit was affirmed as proceeding from the Father and the Son, without the Filioque. So Pope John formally recognised that he had no jurisdiction in the Eastern Church and that the Filioque was a heresy. He had a hard task ahead of him, however. As he wrote to Photius: “I think your wise Holiness knows how difficult it is to change immediately a custom which has been entrenched for so many years. Therefore we believe the best policy is not to force anyone to abandon that addition to the Creed. But rather we must act with wisdom and moderation, urging them little by little to give up that blasphemy. Therefore, those who claim that we share this opinion are not correct. Those, however, who claim that there are those among us who dare to recite the Creed in this way are correct. Your Holiness must not be scandalized because of this nor withdraw from the sound part of the body of our Church. Rather, you should aid us energetically with gentleness and wisdom in attempting to convert those who have departed from the truth...”

St. Photius seems to have accepted this, and remained in communion with Rome for the rest of his life, referring to the Pope as “my John”. But in 903 his successor St. Nicholas the Mystic broke communion with Pope Christopher because the latter introduced the Filioque into the Creed of the Roman Church again. In 904, however, communion was again restored - until 1009.

There is an inner connection between the theory of papal infallibility, the introduction of the Filioque and the removal of the invocation of the Holy Spirit from the Divine Liturgy. Infallibility belongs to God, not man; truth and

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grace are maintained in the Church through the operation, not of any one man or group of men, but through the workings of the Holy Spirit of God. Therefore if the Popes were to “promote” themselves to the heights of infallibility, they had somehow to “demote” the Holy Spirit and take His place in the Divine economy. This was done through the Filioque, which made the Spirit as it were subject to both the Father and the Son, and by the doctrine of the Pope as the “Vicar of Christ” – to the Pope also. With the Holy Spirit lowered to a position below that of the Son, and the Pope raised to the position of the Son’s vicar or regent, the way was paved for proclaiming the Pope as, in the words of a recent book with the imprimatur of the Vatican, “the ultimate guarantor of the will and teaching of the Divine Founder.”

Thus was the Papist heresy crushed – for the time being. Through the Constantinopolitan Councils of 867 and 879-889, the Filioque was recognized as a heresy and Pope Nicholas I as a heretic. Most significantly, as we have seen, the Acts of the 879 Council were signed also by the legates of Pope John VIII. Implicitly, this meant a rejection also of the political claims of the Carolingian empire; for both the Eastern and the Western Churches agreed that it was the Western, Frankish empire that was not Orthodox. And since both Greeks and Romans and Franks agreed that there could be only one Christian Roman Empire, this meant that the Frankish attempt to usurp the Empire had been defeated – for the time being...

In spite of this, the Frankish rulers did not give up their claims. Thus, as Romanides writes, the Frankish position “was clearly spelled out in a letter of Emperor Louis II (855-875) to Emperor Basil I (867-886) in 871. Louis calls himself ‘Emperor Augustus of the Romans’ and demotes Basil to ‘Emperor of New Rome’. Basil had poked fun at Louis, insisting that he was not even emperor in all of Francia, since he ruled only a small part of it, and certainly was not emperor of the Romans, but of the Franks. Louis argued that he was emperor in all of Francia because the other Frankish kings were his kinsmen by blood. He makes the same claim as that found in the Annals of Lorsch: he who holds the city of Old Rome is entitled to the name ‘Emperor of the Romans’. Louis claimed that: ‘We received from heaven this people and city to guide and (we received) the mother of all the churches of God to defend and exalt… We have received the government of the Roman Empire for our Orthodoxy. The Greeks have ceased to be emperors of the Romans for their cacodoxy. Not only have they deserted the city (of Rome) and the capital of the Empire, but they have also abandoned Roman nationality and even the Latin language. They have migrated to another capital city and taken up a completely different nationality and language.’”

46 Mgr. Oliveri, The Representatives, Apostolic Legation of London, 1980. Cf. Pope John-Paul II: “The Pope is...the man on earth who represents the Son of God, who ‘takes the place’ of the Second Person of the omnipotent God of the Trinity.” (Crossing the Threshold of Hope, p. 3)
47 Romanides, op. cit., p. 18.
However, the truth was that the Carolingian empire was in schism from the true Christian Empire, much as the ten tribes of Israel had been in schism from the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Moreover, in its false doctrines, and in the coerciveness of its missionary work, it laid the foundations of the Roman Catholic heresy. Roman Catholicism began when the Popes, instead of resisting the heresies of Charlemagne, adopted those heresies themselves – and then proclaimed themselves to be Emperors as well as Priests…

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48 Cf. Charlemagne’s Capitulary on Saxony dating to about 785: “Anyone who, in contempt of Christianity, refuses to respect the holy fast of Lent and eats meat shall be put to death… Any unbaptized Saxon who tries to conceal the fact from his fellows and refuses to accept baptism shall be put to death…” (in Jean Comby, How to Read Church History, London: SCM Press, 1985, vol. 1, p. 123). This despotic attitude drew a sharp rebuke from Alcuin, who said: “Converts must be drawn to the faith, not forced” (in Siedentop, op. cit., p. 155).
53. THE GROWTH OF FEUDALISM

The serpent of papism lay bruised and wounded, but not completely scotched; a more permanent triumph could be hoped for only if a healthy antidote against its poison could be built up within the West. This depended, above all, on the strength of the other main pillar of Christian society in the West – the sacred monarchy. Here the picture was mixed. On the one hand, by the late ninth century the monarchy in West Francia, modern France, was collapsing into the paralytic condition known as feudalism. But on the other hand, at about the same time a remarkable resurrection of the monarchy was taking place in England in the person of King Alfred the Great, while in East Francia, modern Germany, Carolingian kinship survived and gained in strength under the tenth-century Ottonian dynasty.

The word “feudalism” comes from the Latin feuda, or “fief”, which means a piece of land held in exchange for service to a lord, usually a knight. “The fief,” writes Francis Fukuyama, “was a contractual agreement between lord and vassal by which the latter was given protection and a plot of land in return for serving the lord in a military capacity. The contract was solemnized in a ceremony in which the lord placed the vassal’s hands within his own and sealed the relationship with a kiss. The relationship of dependency entailed clear obligations on both sides and needed to be renewed annually. The vassal could then create subfiefs out of his lands and enter into relationships with his own vassals. The system generated its own complex set of ethical norms concerning honor, loyalty, and courtly love.

“From the standpoint of political development, the critical aspect of European feudalism was not the economic relationship between lord and vassal but the decentralization of power it implied. In the words of the historian Joseph Strayer, ‘Western European feudalism is essentially political – it is a form of government... in which political authority is monopolized by a small group of military leaders, but is rather evenly distributed among members of this group.’... The core of the institution was the grant of the fiefdom, benefice, or appanage, a delineated territory over which the vassal exerted some degree of political control. Despite the theoretical revocability of feudal contracts, European vassals over time turned their fiefdoms into patrimony, that is, property that they could hand down to their descendants. They acquired political rights over these territories to raise armies, tax residents, and administer justice free from interference of the nominal lord. They thus in no way the lord’s agent but rather lords in their own right...”

Feudalism arose in many parts of continental Western Europe in the ninth to the eleventh centuries as a result of the disintegration of the unitary Carolingian empire. In the first phase, until the emergence of independent states in France, Germany and Northern Italy towards the end of the ninth century...
century, feudalism was both a cause and an effect of the weakening of royal power. It ate into the king’s power in two ways: first, the kings’ peasants hardly counted as his subjects any more since their real masters were now their landowners; and secondly, the king’s vassals tended to leave his service for that of the most powerful local feudal lord. The king did not always resist this process, but rather reinforced it, since he saw that the feudal lord was the only guarantee of law and order in the countryside. Thus in the capitulary of Meersen in 847 King Charles the Bald ordered all free men to choose a lord, and likewise forbade them to leave their lord without just reason – which effectively made the bond of vassalage permanent in all normal cases. Again, in a capitulary issued at Thionville, he gave official recognition to the vassal’s oath, which thereby replaced the oath of allegiance as the main glue holding society together. Finally, in the capitulary of Kiersy in 877, Charles sanctioned hereditary succession to counties and other fiefs, which meant that county administration became hereditary and passed out of the king’s control.50

We have seen how, with the sixth-century Christianization of the Germanic tribes – Ostrogoths and Visigoths, Burgundians and Franks, Angles and Saxons, - the Church took over the functions of social security from the tribe. At the same time, Church laws, especially those relating to marriage, broke down the bonds of kinship and blood, and women became legal individuals and independent property-owners. We are therefore entitled to speak of the Church as promoting the growth of a certain kind of individualism, “in the sense that,” as Fukuyama explains, “individuals and not their families or kin groups could make important decisions about marriage, property, and other personal issues. Individualism in the family is the foundation of all other individualisms. Individualism did not wait for the emergence of a state declaring the legal rights of individuals and using the weight of its coercive power to enforce those rights. Rather, states were formed on top of societies in which individuals already enjoyed substantial freedom from social obligations to kindreds. In Europe, social development [set in motion by the Church] preceded political development.”51

The question arises: how did the breakdown of society in the ninth century, and the introduction of feudalism, influence or change this growth of individualism? The experience of other societies in similar periods of breakdown, such as the Middle East or China, would lead us to think that there would be a reversion to tribalism. However, in the West tribalism had been drastically weakened; it never really revived. Instead, people deprived of the protection that the Church had once offered them, and not yet able (except in England) to look to the State to restore the situation, created the vassalistic bonds that have been called feudalism.

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50 Geoffrey Barraclough, The Crucible of Europe, London: Thames & Hudson, 1976, chapter five. The estates and the people living on them were granted to the vassal “so that he for all the days of his life, and his son after him, may hold and possess them in right of benefice and usufruct” (in Larry Siedentop, Inventing the Individual, London: Penguin, 2010, p. 168).

51 Fukuyama, op. cit., p. 231.
Therefore, as Fukuyama, following Bloch, argues, “feudalism arose as an alternative to kinship... Feudalism was the voluntary submission of one individual to another, unrelated, individual, based on the exchange of protection for services: ‘Neither the State nor the family any longer provided adequate protection. The village community was barely strong enough to maintain order within its own boundaries; the urban community scarcely existed. Everywhere, the weak man felt the need to be sheltered by someone more powerful. The powerful man, in his turn, could not maintain his prestige or his fortune or even ensure his own safety except by securing for himself, by persuasion or execution, the support of subordinates bound to his service.’”

But this support was secured through a contract; so the relative individualism of the early Christian period (6th-9th centuries) began to be modified, in the later ninth century, by a contractual, legal element that profoundly changed the nature of western society. And for the worse. For while the individualism of the early period came with a certain degree of freedom from the suffocating restraints of tribalism and paganism, feudal man’s “freedom” came with a feeling of naked insecurity. And so, in order to free himself from this “freedom”, he freely enslaved himself again, through the legal bonds of enfeoffment to his lord...

During the tenth century, a second phase of disintegration began in France. This led, as R. Van Caenegem writes, “to the break-up of that kingdom into a number of regional states, usually referred to as the territorial principalities, ruled by powerful families exercising the political authority which should normally have been in the king’s hands. Most of these principalities were founded by descendants of royal officials, the counts of the pagi, who had thrown off their subjection to the crown and taken power into their own hands. In the case of Normandy, however, an alien [Viking] war-leader had obtained a portion of French territory for himself and his followers and turned it into a separate dukedom. The main reason for this development, which set in about AD 900, was the weakness of the crown: it could not guarantee the safety of its subjects, who found protection (inter alia against the Vikings) in the leadership of a powerful local figure. Finally the kings of France themselves, although they always remained the nominal heads of the whole country and received the royal anointing from the Church, became in fact one regional dynasty among many others, ruling over the area around Paris and Orleans...

“Political decomposition did not stop there: a third and ultimate phase was to follow. The first phase had seen, in the ninth century, the break-up of the Frankish empire; the second, in the tenth, the division of the kingdom of France into territorial principalities. The third, mainly in the eleventh century, brought for several (though not all) of these regional states another, ultimate collapse. This resulted in the establishment of tiny castellannies as the basic

32 Fukuyama, op. cit., p. 236.
political units, each acting autonomously, with a castle as its centre, whence an area of a few miles around was controlled and ruled by the castellan and his small band of knightly vassals. Here the authority of the post-Carolingian counts and dukes underwent the collapse from which they themselves had profited a century before, and they became the helpless witnesses of the rise of independent castellans. Not all principalities suffered this fate – Flanders and, most notably Normandy were exceptions, where the old regional dynasties firmly held the reins of power in their respective ‘fatherlands’ (although even they went through some critical moments). However, the majority of the French principalities fell victim to the final phase of decomposition – which Bournazel has called la poussée châtelaine... At this stage political life had become amazingly small scale. The mass of the population lived in miniature states controlled by knightly castellans who recognised no authority above themselves but were kept in some kind of order by arbitration, by the balance of (vassalitic) allegiances and by the threat of excommunication and hell-fire if they broke their engagements to observe some truce or peace – most notably the Truce or Peace of God...

“In the early eleventh century the breakdown of public order had reached a point where only the peasant population was subjected to discipline, that of the lord and his manor. All others, the members of the free landowning class, all those who boasted of a castle of their own, behaved as they liked and recognised no power above them. They were the ‘masters of peace war’, ‘knights who lived without restraint, without knowing anyone in the world who might have punished them’. Sugar, a staunch supporter of the monarchy, called them ‘tyrants’ and was proud that the king neutralised their ‘audacity’. They were constantly involved in warfare, which corresponded to their knightly way of life...”

The first result of the feudal system was serfdom: the lands which had belonged to the crown, the royal “fisc”, were given to local landowners, both ecclesiastical and lay, while the peasants who had cultivated the land, deprived of protection from the crown, threw themselves on the mercy of the local landowners, bartering their and their children’s labour in return for protection. The second was feudalism proper: the freemen became vassals of lords, swearing to fight the lord’s battles in exchange for protection. A vassal was a knight – that is, he owned arms and a horse and was able to fight. Since this required money, he very likely owned land – either inherited, “allodial” land, or a “benefice” or “fief” granted temporarily, in the vassal’s lifetime only. A vassal might himself have vassals. Thus many of the king’s counts, or local officials, were at the same time both feudal lords and vassals of the king.

As a defensive system to preserve a minimum of order, feudalism undoubtedly had merits. But it was inferior not only to Byzantine-style autocracy, but also to the Carolingian system. Moreover, as the threat of

invasion passed, and feudalism spread from Northern France to the rest of Western Europe in the eleventh century, it revealed a degrading and coarsening effect on general morality.

According to Solonevich, feudalism could be defined as “the splintering of state sovereignty among a mass of small, but in principle sovereign owners of property”. Contrary to Marx, it had nothing to do with ‘productive relations’ and was far from being an advance on previous forms of social organisation. “It is sufficient to remember the huge cultural and unusually high level of Roman ‘production’. Feudal Europe, poor, dirty and illiterate, by no means represented ‘a more progressive form of productive relations’ – in spite of Hegel, it was sheer regression. Feudalism does not originate in productive relations. It originates in the thirst for power beyond all dependence on production and distribution. Feudalism is, so to speak, the democratisation of power [my italics – V.M.] – its transfer to all those who at the given moment in the given place have sufficient physical strength to defend their baronial rights – Faustrecht. Feudalism sometimes presupposes a juridical basis of power, but never a moral one.

“The feudal lord does not rule ‘in the name’ of the nation, the people, the peasants, or whoever else there might be. He rules only and exclusively in his own interests, which have been strengthened by such-and-such battles or parchments. For the feudal lord the monarch is not the bearer of definite moral ideals or even of the practical interests of the people or nation, but only ‘the first among equals’, who has had the luck to be stronger than the rest…

“The thirst for power is, of course, a property common to all humanity, and therefore the tendency to the development of feudalism will be to a greater or lesser degree characteristic of all countries and all peoples of the world…. But if we discard trivialities, then we must say that Rome, for example, had no knowledge at all of feudal relations. There were landowners and there were senators, there were proconsuls and there were emperors, but there were no barons. The sovereign power ‘of the people and senate of Rome’, engraved on the Roman eagles, remained the single indivisible source of all power – even the power of the Roman emperors. The civil wars of Rome bore no relation to the feudal wars of medieval Europe. Nor did Ancient Greece with its purely capitalist relations know feudalism. Yes, Greece was split up into a series of sovereign states, but, though tiny, these were nevertheless states – monarchies and republics, in principle having equal rights in relation to each other and by no means in relations of feudal submission or co-submission.”54

The worst aspect of feudalism was the fact that the Church, too, was bound up in the feudal nexus. It reduced the Church’s independence and made it an increasingly worldly, secular organization. For, as Jean Comby writes, “every holder of an ecclesiastical office had the use of a piece of land or a benefice which provided him with a living. The bishop was a lord and vassal in the same way as the laity. He held jurisdiction over his land and dispensed justice; he maintained an army. This helps us to understand the great desires people had to hold ecclesiastical office. The old rules of election by the clergy and people were forgotten. Not being hereditary titles, like other fiefdoms, bishoprics and abbeys were redistributed on the death of those who held their titles. Lords, the emperor, kings, dukes and so on disposed of them to whoever earned their favour. Since an Episcopal fiefdom involved both a spiritual and a temporal jurisdiction, it was granted by a kind of investiture ceremony: the lord bestowed the cross and ring on his candidate. This was lay investiture. Of course, the bishop was always consecrated by another bishop, generally the metropolitan (archbishop).”

As a result of this situation, writes Papadakis, “by the 900s most churchmen – both high and low – had lost nearly all their independence and sense of corporate identity, as their functions everywhere became identified with those belonging to lay vassals. Quite simply, as rulers came to regard all ecclesiastical organization under their effective control as a facet of the secular system, conventions governing one sphere were adjusted to fit the other. As a result, bishops and abbots were not exempt from the secular obligations and responsibilities attached to feudal tenure. As feudal dependents they, too, had to attend court, give advice and, when required, supply their lay superiors with military service… Characteristically, promotion to an episcopal see or a rich abbey was often the reward of previous dutiful service in the royal household. It is worth adding that ecclesiastical tenants were also preferred for many posts because their lands and their jurisdictions were not governed by inheritance [celibate priests had no (legal) children]. Whereas the heirs of a lay vassal holding of the king by hereditary right could occasionally create legal difficulties or foment rebellion, an heirless but enfeoffed celibate cleric was incapable of doing so. This was probably a decisive reason why so many high ecclesiastics, time and again, became essential associates in royal government everywhere.”

The ceremony of lay investiture was distinct from ecclesiastical ordination, but in practice it determined who should be ordained (and for how much). “The hastily ordained and ‘invested’ clerk was often altogether unworthy (if not also incompetent and untrained) of the priestly calling. Church assemblies and individual churchmen, it is true, routinely complained. All the same,

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56 Aristides Papadakis, The Orthodox East and the Rise of the Papacy, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1994, pp. 18-19. It is also one of the reasons, according to Christopher Tyerman (God’s War, London: Penguin, 2006, p. 6), why the church hierarchy encouraged clerical celibacy: “to protect church land from being inherited by non-clerical clergy children”.

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neither the power of laymen to appoint and invest clergy, nor the encroachment and spoliation of Church property, was ever discontinued. As a matter of fact, lay nominations to vacant sees became so frequent that they were no longer regarded a radical departure from canonical tradition. The abuse was recognized as a perfectly acceptable practice. In 921 the archbishop of Cologne was thus solemnly admonished by the pope himself for attempting to block a royal appointment at Liège. Pope John X’s letter informing the archbishop that no episcopal candidate was to be consecrated in any diocese without royal authorization still survives. As far as pope John was concerned, the right of the feudal power to interfere at the highest level in the internal affairs of the Church was ‘ancient usage’. Ecclesial autonomy, to say nothing of ecclesial political and economic freedom, was apparently of little consequence. Canon law evidently had long given way to the feudal system…”

The development of feudalism, according to Papadakis, was aided by the pressure of the German “so-called Eigenkirchentum, or proprietary church system, an arrangement by which the parish with all its appurtenances became the private property of its founder. In terms of ecclesiastical power, according to one investigator, the main result of this ‘Germanization’ or ‘privatization’ was complete revolution. Its overall effect on Latin ecclesiastical organization at any rate was profound as well as extensive.

“This becomes evident when traditional canon law is compared or contrasted with German land law. Plainly put, unlike the Church, early barbarian Europe did not understand the legal concept of corporate ecclesiastical ownership. The idea of an abiding corporation with legal rights simply did not exist in German customary law. Thus, the conviction that the Church could also simultaneously own land or real property, as a corporate personality or institution, was unknown. Rather, according to Germanic law, everything built on a plot of land, whether it was the local parish church or the monastery, was considered the exclusive ‘property’ of the landlord; the man who had built and endowed it was also its real owner. Control and rights of ownership of the foundation constructed on an estate, quite simply, continued to be in the hands of the proprietor. To be sure, the church could never actually be secularized. On the other hand, it could always be given, sold, traded, or exchanged if necessary. It was even possible to dispose of it as a sort of fief by leasing it to one’s relatives or liegemen. In sum, the treatment of parishes was identical to the holding of ordinary pieces of real property… It is worth adding that the resident priest of the Eigenkirche (usually an ill-trained serf from the lord’s own estate) was in practice appointed and dismissed by the proprietor. His status resembled a small quasi-feudal dependent. Almost invariably, if the incumbent was married or living in concubinage he was able to pass the parish on to his son or heir.

“...The practice of buying and selling rural parishes as a profitable investment was in time also applied to bishoprics and cathedrals. Although such sales were not a general phenomenon, it remains true that in some areas such as the Midi region, bishoprics were habitually sold or bequeathed as Eigenkirche. This was presumably still the practice in 1067 when the bishopric of Carcassone was sold to the count of Barcelona by the viscount of Albi....

“Everywhere the priest had really become essentially an estate servant. His private arrangement with the lord of the parish had in fact replaced the canonical bond uniting him to his bishop. It was this personalized local relationship that ultimately mattered, rather than the bishop's potestas jurisdictionis. Throughout Europe, to put it another way, episcopal control enjoyed by all prelates was succeeded by a division of control among an unlimited number of owners. The diocese no longer actually functioned as a single administrative unit, but as a collection of private independent churches, in which the bishop's pastoral and disciplinary powers were in practice relaxed or ignored altogether. Before long, given the moral and intellectual shortcomings of the priesthood, this diocesan centralization was to generate further serious pastoral and canonical problems. The confusion of authority and rights within the diocese just described was, in the main, also responsible for the ensuing simony and incontinence among the western clergy.

“It was undoubtedly lay control of ecclesiastical structure that made possible the purchase or sale of virtually every clerical grade the general rule by the tenth century. Simony became in fact unavoidable once clerical offices began to be treated like secular appointments. If a secular vassal could be taxed on inheriting his fief, so could every clerical candidate on his elevation to office. Besides, the offices in question were profitable, and to grant them out without any remuneration would have been pointless if not unusual in the agrarian world of the Middle Ages. In the event, the bishop who had received his position by canonical election (without paying for it) had before long become a great rarity...”

However, a reaction to the evil consequences of feudalism was under way. It began in the Church. As Larry Siedentop writes, “In the eyes of its leaders, the threat to the church must have seemed even greater than that posed by the barbarian invasions. For the threat came from within, in what was ostensibly a Christian society. It was a threat of inward perversion, a threat to belief in the sovereignty of God.

“So it is hardly surprising that, in self-defence, churchmen gave ever more emphasis to a 'moral law' derived from the sovereignty of God, a law that applied to 'all souls equally'. Hincmar had led the way in the previous century, invoking the sovereignty of God in order to set moral limits on the imperium of later Carolingian rulers and present the bishops as defenders of the...

58 Papadakis, op. cit., pp. 21-22, 23.
those limits: ‘When it is said that the king is not subject to the laws or the judgement of anyone, if not that of God alone, that is true provided that he is king in the proper sense of the word. He is called king because he reigns and governs; if he governs himself according to the will of God, directs others to the right paths and corrects miscreants by leading them from the wrong to the right path, then he is king, and is not subject to the judgement of anyone, except that of God alone. For laws are instituted not against the just but against the unjust. But if the king is an adulterer, murderer, depraved, a rapist, then he must be judged… by the bishops, who sit on the thrones of God…’ For Hincmar, not only was justice the final criterion of secular law, but the church was its spokesman. The sovereignty of God invested the church with overarching moral authority. And that, in turn, was preserved by and justified the ‘liberty’ of the church. The emerging issue, therefore, was the right of the church to govern itself – choosing and investing its own leaders – and to pronounce freely on moral issues…”

As we have seen, Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims had hinted at future papist attempts to dominate the kings. However, he did not want to undermine their power; for with so many bishops compromised by their (involuntary) involvement in the feudal system, the power with the most realistic prospect of saving society from the morass of feudalism was the Orthodox monarchy. And the one country in Western Europe where the monarchy was still strong enough to ward off feudalism was England.

Before the Viking invasions, which began in 793, England was divided into seven independent kingdoms. Each had its own bishops, but all, from the time of St. Theodore the Greek, archbishop of Canterbury (+691), recognised the authority of the archbishop of Canterbury. In the eighth century the dominant English kingdom was Mercia under its powerful King Offa, whose son Ecgfrith was anointed in 786 in the first royal anointing in Anglo-Saxon history. However, in 829 King Egbert of Wessex, conquered Mercia and soon had a precarious control over Northumbria, too. In the second half of the century the famous King Alfred the Great led the recovery against the Viking invaders, and Alfred’s successors succeeded in uniting most of Britain in a single Orthodox kingdom until the Norman-Papist invasion of 1066-70.

King Alfred came to the throne of Wessex in 871, when English civilization was in the process of being wiped out by the pagan Danes. Almost single-handedly, he defeated the Danes in 878, baptized their king Guthrum (in baptism: Aethelstan) and laid the foundations for their conversion and integration into a truly Anglo-Danish kingdom. Moreover, he undertook the organization and education of the badly shattered Church, beginning by sending all his bishops a copy of his own translation of the Pastoral Care by Pope Gregory the Great - the Roman connection again! Indeed, re-establishing links with both Rome and the Eastern Orthodox Church was a priority with Alfred. He corresponded with the Patriarch of Jerusalem and sent alms to the monks of India.

As Chris Wickham writes, Alfred “seems to have developed a large-scale military levy from the population, and he certainly established a dense network of public fortifications, burhs, throughout southern England, defended by public obligation, which was sufficiently effective to hold off a second large-scale Viking assault in 892-6. Alfred died ‘king of the Anglo-Saxons’, or, in the Chronicle’s words, ‘of the whole English people except that part which was under Danish rule’; he may have been the first king to see himself in ‘English’, not West Saxon or Mercian, terms... But it was the Vikings who made that choice possible for him.”

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The stability of Alfred’s dynasty and kingdom by comparison with the sub-Carolingian kingdoms on the continent was partly owing to the fact that, like the Roman missionaries in the early seventh century, this Romanizing monarch found a tabula rasa and was able to rebuild on relatively uncluttered, but firm foundations. In particular, the tensions between the monarchy and the local aristocracies which so weakened the West Frankish kingdom, hardly existed in England after 878 and surfaced again in a serious way only briefly in the reign of Edward the Martyr (975-978) and again in 1052. The English kings of the tenth century created a powerful landowning aristocracy; but its estates were scattered in different parts of the kingdom, so a powerful all-English king was in its interests.\textsuperscript{62}

There are several indications that the English kingdom modeled itself on Byzantium. Thus early in the tenth century King Athelstan gave himself the Byzantine titles basileus and curagulus. Again, in 955, King Edred called himself “King of the Anglo-Saxons and Emperor of the whole of Britain”. Unlike the Frankish or German kings, the English kings never aspired to the title of “Holy Roman Emperor” (although Henry VIII was a candidate several centuries later). But their power was de facto greater than that of any western ruler until the rise of the Ottonian dynasty in Germany.

In the second half of the tenth century, England reached the peak of her glory as an Orthodox kingdom, founded on a strong monastic revival supported by a powerful king, Edgar, and a holy archbishop, Dunstan. The relationship between them was truly symphonic, with a particularly strong role assigned to the king: “I have in my hand the sword of Constantine; you hold that of Peter,” wrote Edgar to Dunstan in 967. “Let us join our right hands sword to sword, so that the sanctuary of God may be cleansed.”\textsuperscript{63}

Ryan Lavelle writes: “A document from around 973, the Regularis Concordia,... was intended as a rulebook and liturgical guide for English monks and nuns, but it was also a bold statement of the relationship between God, the king and a Christian people. The king and queen were seen as protectors of monks and nuns in the temporal world, while, in return, the souls of the West Saxon royal family were protected with prayers by the same monks and nuns. The positions of the king and queen were therefore inextricably linked with the survival of Christianity in the kingdom. This was part of a process of legitimizing royal power to an extent that was hitherto unparalleled in Anglo-Saxon England. The king had become part of the ecclesiastical order in a coronation ceremony that made him God’s representative on earth. The original meaning of Christ’s name, Christus meant ‘the anointed [king]’, and the inauguration of Edgar used an ordo (an

\textsuperscript{62} Wickham, op. cit., chapter 19.

\textsuperscript{63} Oratio Edgari regis, P.L. 138, 515D-516A.
order of service) that put Edgar on a similar level – directly anointed by God. The monastic reform movement gave this a new impetus...”

Edgar’s first anointing had taken place in 960 or 961. For many years he was not allowed to wear his crown in penance for a sin he had committed. But in 973, the penance came to an end, and at the age of thirty (perhaps not coincidentally, the canonical age for episcopal ordination in the West) he was anointed again, this time as “Emperor of Britain” in the ancient Roman city of Bath. In the same year, again emphasizing the Roman imperial theme, he was rowed on the River Dee by six or eight sub-kings, include five Welsh and Scottish rulers and one ruler of the Western Isles. “This was a move,” writes Lavelle, “that recalled the actions of his great-uncle Athelstan, the successful ruler of Britain, but it was also an English parallel to the tenth-century coronation of the Holy Roman Emperor, Otto of Germany, in which the stem-dukes had undertaken the task of feeding the emperor.”

Edgar’s claims to Romanitas were not without foundation. The economy was strong, the tax and legal systems were sophisticated, the coinage was secure (with an impressive system of monetary renewal whereby all coins issued from the royal mints had to be returned and reissued every five years). England was now a firmly Orthodox, multi-national state composed of three Christian peoples, Anglo-Saxons, Celts and Danes, living in mutual amity. She was at peace at home and respected abroad, spreading her influence in a beneficial way through missions to the Norwegians and Swedes.

Edgar married twice, producing a son from each marriage. When he died in 975 (his relics were discovered to be incorrupt in 1052), the partisans of his second son, Aethelred, argued that he should be made king in preference to his elder half-brother Edward, on the grounds that Edgar had not been anointed when he begat Edward in 959 or 960, and that his first wife, Edward’s mother, had never been anointed, so that the throne should pass to the younger son, who had been born “in the purple” when both his parents were anointed sovereigns. The conflict was settled when the archbishop of Canterbury, St. Dunstan, seized the initiative and anointed St. Edward.

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64 Lavelle, Aethelred II: King of the English 978-1016, Stroud: Tempus, 1002, p. 29.
65 Some see in this event less a submission of the northern kings to Edgar as a kind of peace treaty between them. Be that as it may, it is true to say that the power of the Anglo-Saxon kings never really extended into Scotland, where a native dynasty founded by Kenneth MacAlpin (840-858) “destroyed the last Pictish kings, and imposed Gaelic customs and the Gaelic language throughout the kingdom of Alba” (Ann Williams, “Britain AD 1000”, History Today, vol. 50 (3), March, 2000, p. 34). One of these Scottish Orthodox kings was Macbeth (+1057), made famous by the hero of Shakespeare’s play. He made a pilgrimage to Rome, where he “scattered money like seed among the poor”.
66 Lavelle, op. cit., p. 31.
In this way, through her stewardship of the sacrament of royal anointing, the Church came to play the decisive role in deciding the question of succession.

However, the defeated party did not give up their opposition to God’s chosen one, and in 979 came the murder of the Lord’s anointed. “No worse deed for the English was ever done that this,” said the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. And while it was said that there was “great rejoicing” at the coronation of St. Edward’s half-brother, Aethelred, St. Dunstan sorrowfully prophesied great woes for the nation in the coming reign. The prophecy was exact; for not only were the English successively defeated by Danish pagan invaders and forced to pay ever larger sums in “Danegeld”, but the king himself, betrayed by his leading men, was forced to flee abroad in 1013. The next year he was recalled by the English leaders, both spiritual and lay, who declared that “no lord was dearer to them than their rightful lord, if only he would govern his kingdom more justly than he had done in the past.” Aethelred promised that he “would be their faithful lord, would better each of those things that they disliked, and that each of the things would be forgiven which had been done or said against him. Then was full friendship established in word and in deed and in compact on either side.”

“Embedded here in the prose of The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,” writes David Starkey, “is the text, probably even the actual words, of a formal written agreement between the king and his people. It is the Anglo-Saxon Magna Carta. The circumstances in 1014, moreover, were very similar to those 200 years later. A political crisis and a foreign pretender brought the king, more or less naked, to the negotiating table. The throne would be his, but on conditions. The king agrees, since he has no choice. The terms and his consent to them are made public and the whole enshrined in a written document. The result is the first constitutional settlement in English history and it began a tradition which descends through Magna Carta, the Petition of Right and the Reform Acts, down to the present.” In another place, Starkey says that this agreement demonstrated the political maturity of the English people. But from an Orthodox point of view it would be better to characterize it as the beginning of the end of the English Orthodox Autocracy...

However, in 1016, after Aethelred had died and the Danish King Canute had conquered the land, full autocratic rule was restored. The king reassumed complete control in the political sphere, while the Church retained her supremacy in the spiritual (Canute was baptized). But in 1051-52, and again

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69 Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, E, 979, 1014.
71 Starkey, in the second of his series of programmes entitled “Monarchy” and broadcast on October 25, 2004 on Channel 4 TV.
72 Canute was not the first Christian king of Denmark; the first was probably King Harald Bluetooth in the late tenth century. His conversion, we read in Wikipedia, is a contested bit of
in 1065, the aristocracy raised its head against the king, which presaged the final fall of the English Autocracy in 1066...

The king for the Anglo-Saxons was the “warden of the holy temple”. Crimes against the Church or her servants were seen as crimes against the king, and were duly punished by him. His duty was to look after the Church and enforce her laws with secular penalties. “For a Christian king is Christ’s deputy among Christian people”, as King Aethelred’s laws put it. Both the king and the archbishop were “the Lord’s Anointed” – the archbishop so that he might minister the sacraments of salvation, and the king so that, as Bede wrote in his commentary on Acts, “he might by conquering all our enemies bring us to the immortal Kingdom”. The king was sometimes compared to God the Father and the bishop – to Christ. Thus in his letter to Charlemagne, Cathwulf compared the king to the Father and the bishop to the Son. He was the shepherd and father of his people and would have to answer for them at the Last Judgement. Regicide and usurpation were the greatest of crimes; for, as Abbot Aelfric wrote in a Palm Sunday sermon, “no man may make himself a king, for the people have the option to choose him for king who is agreeable to them; but after that he has been hallowed as king, he has power over the people, and they may not shake his yoke from their necks.” And so, as Archbishop Wulfstan of York wrote in his Institutes of Christian Polity, “through what shall peace and support come to God’s servants and to God’s poor, save through Christ, and through a Christian king?”

And yet the relationship between Church and State in England was “symphonic”, not caesaropapist; for the kings did nothing without consulting their bishops and senior nobles – who were not afraid to disagree with the king, or remind him of his obligations. Thus, as Frank Barlow says, “a true theocratic government was created, yet one, despite the common charge of confusion against the Anglo-Saxon Church, remarkably free of confusion in theory. The duality of the two spheres was emphatically proclaimed. There were God’s rights and the king’s rights, Christ’s laws and the laws of the world. There was an independent ecclesiastical jurisdiction under the control

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74 Chaney, op. cit., epilogue.
75 See, for example, St. Dunstan’s speech to King Aethelred at his coronation (Bishop W. Stubbs, Memorials of St. Dunstan, Rolls series, 1874, pp. 356-357).
of the bishop, but there was also the helping hand of the secular power which the church had invoked and which it could use at its discretion."\textsuperscript{76}

The success of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom can be attributed to a large extent to the respect for \textit{the law}, both God’s law and the king’s law. As van Caenegem writes, “in this period the Anglo-Saxons founded the most solid and best administered kingdom of the western world. Their kings were great law-givers and this tradition was in no way diminished after legislation had lapsed on the Continent. On the contrary, the voluminous and numerous dooms (some of which are unfortunately lost) of Ine, Offa, Alfred the Great, Edward the Elder, Athelstan, Edmund, Edgar, Aethelred the Unready and Canute form a collection of texts unique in Europe, bearing witness to an equally unique tradition of royal, national law-giving in England right through the Anglo-Saxon period (Liebermann 1898-1916).

“The nation-wide administration of justice was equally impressive. There was a network of hundred and shire courts, topped by the witenagemot and receiving decisive impulses from the crown, inter alia by means of the writs, which were often addressed to such local gatherings. There were also franchisal courts belonging to lords... Finally the comparative excellence of royal administration should be mentioned. England enjoyed a high measure of internal peace and order (staving off enemies from overseas was another matter): private warfare and adulterine castles (or which there were a few under the Confessor, built by Norman knights) were practically unheard of, and practices such as tithing and frankpledge guaranteed a measure of public safety that must have astounded people on the other side of the Channel. The efficiency of the royal writing-office has already been mentioned. Equally efficient was the new network of local royal officials, the sheriffs, who had no equals on the Continent. These ‘counts of the shire’ had nothing to do with hereditary regional princes, but were real appointees of the crown. The royal mint was also one of the wonders of Europe because of its monopolistic position, its efficiency and its enormous output. National defence was centrally directed and general military service, in the local and the national \textit{fyrd}, was never abandoned in favour of the feudal formula of the army of professional knights: the disaster of October 1066 should not obscure the fact that English armies had successfully resisted the Danes in the ninth and tenth centuries and that King Harold had, a few weeks before Hastings, destroyed a powerful army led by the king of Norway. The foundation of a solid national monarchy was a notable Anglo-Saxon achievement and its consequences were far reaching. When in the twelfth century the rebirth of the state became a general European phenomenon, the existence of these Anglo-Saxon antecedents gave Norman and Angevin England an advantage which goes a long way towards explaining England’s pioneering role in this European development...”\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{76} Barlow, \textit{The English Church, 1000-1066}, London: Longmans, 1979, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{77} Van Caenegem, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 184-185.
Just as the English Orthodox autocracy arose out of the successful struggle with the Vikings, so the German Orthodox autocracy arose out of the successful struggle with the Magyars. King Alfred the Great’s victory at Ethandune in 878 laid the foundations for the All-English kingdom that eventually encompassed three nations: the Anglo-Saxons, the Danes in the East and the Celts in the West. In the same way, King Otto the Great’s victory over the Magyars at Lech in 955 laid the foundations for the German “Holy Roman” empire, which, while not as extensive as the Carolingian empire at its height, lasted much longer. However, Germany proved more difficult to weld into a single whole than England. It was only after a series of civil wars that Otto won the submission of the duchies of Lotharingia, Swabia, Bavaria and Franconia in addition to his native Saxony. And this even after he had been formally elected by “the whole people” of the Saxons and the Franks, and had been anointed to the kingdom in a double ceremony in Charlemagne’s palace-chapel at Aachen.

After defeating the rebellious princes, Otto decided to remove the native ducal dynasties and distribute their lands to his relatives. But rebellions continued, so he resorted to a bold and fateful experiment: government, not through secular officials, dukes or counts, but through bishops and abbots. Thus Otto put Lotharingia, as Davis writes, “in charge of his young brother Bruno, who was a cleric and Archbishop of Cologne. The combination of an archbishopric and a duchy did not seem in any way incongruous to him, for he did not consider that there was any essential division between ‘Church’ and ‘State’; they were merely different aspects of the same society.”78 As he wrote to Bruno, “you have both priestly religion and royal strength”.79 This failure to see any essential division between Church and State was a consequence of the feudal Weltanschauung.

The system of government through bishops had the advantage that, since they could not marry, they could not found hereditary dynasties that might challenge his power. Moreover, the king founded imperial churches or abbeys with vast swathes of land to which he granted “immunity” from interference from the local dukes and counts. These abbots then became in effect the local judges and tax-collectors. Although this system of government through the clergy was clearly caesaropapist in essence, it was not opposed by the papacy. However, it had the weakness from the king’s point of view that while the bishops and abbots could be appointed by him, they could be dismissed only by the Pope. Moreover, only the Pope could create new bishoprics. In the case of conflict with a bishop, therefore, - and such a conflict took place between Otto and Archbishop Frederick of Mainz, the Primate of Germany - the king would need the help of the Pope in order to impose his will.

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Otto hoped that the Pope could be persuaded to grant more “stavropegial” grants to abbeys, making them directly subject to the Pope and so “immune” from episcopal control. “What he wanted,” writes Davis, “and eventually got, was papal exemptions for abbeys such as Hersfeld, Quedlinburg, and Gernrode, which were to be the perfect examples of the Ottonian System. Their ‘royal immunities’ would exclude the power of counts and dukes, and their papal exemptions that of bishops and archbishops. In them the abbot would preside over all things; and over the abbot would stand the king.”80

Now from the 880s the papacy entered the period of perhaps the greatest degradation in its pre-schism history. Heather ascribes this degeneration to two interrelated causes. First is the fact that the papacy was now, not only a Church, but also a State, the Republic of St. Peter, with vast assets bequeathed to it by Charlemagne and his successors. With this came all the temptations of political power, and a consequent increase of violence as different factions, Italian and German, and different families, especially the Tusculani and the Crescentii families, struggled for control of the see, and through it, its material assets. Secondly, from the 880s the Carolingian empire entered a further period of disintegration, which meant that the papacy lost both a whip to keep its political factions within the bounds of decency, and the broader West European stage upon which the Carolingians had allowed it to play so important a role.81

“The Popes,” writes Overbeck, “had long since forgotten St. Paul’s injunction (2 Timothy 2:4) ‘not to entangle themselves in the affairs of this life.’ Their greediness of power was, naturally enough, not confined to ecclesiastical concerns; they strove also to become powerful political agents. Formosus was succeeded by Stephen VI (for Boniface the Sixth’s pontificate of fifteen days can scarcely be counted), who [in 897], being a fanatic partisan of the opposite political faction, had Formosus un tombed, dressed in pontifical robes, arraigned, condemned, deposed, mutilated, and finally flung into the Tiber! This behaviour seems not exactly to be in accordance with the character of a ‘Vicar of Christ.’ However, the Papists have to settle this question. We prefer examining the Council convened by Stephen for the before-mentioned purpose. In this Council, Stephen declared all ordinations made by Formosus to be invalid, and acted accordingly. This was not a private, but an official act, attended by official consequences, and, what is more serious, it was an official act based on a dogmatic error; in fact, it was an anticipation of the heresy of John Huss. And the [Roman] Church continued for two years in this heresy! Yet the Romans are bound to believe that Stephen was an ‘infallible’ Pope. Pope John IX annulled, in 898, the decrees of Stephen, declared the ordinations made by Formosus to be valid, and reinstated the expelled clergy. The only difficulty is to come here to a decision which of the two ‘Infallibles’ is the genuine article, and even then the base article must be

80 R.H.C. Davis, op. cit., p. 217.
81 Heather, op. cit., pp. 361-373.
believed by the Romans to be infallible. Who is able to get out of this maze of contradictions?

“From 904-963, the πορνοκρατία, or ‘reign of prostitutes,’ disgraced the Papal throne. From Sergius III to John XII eleven monsters of lewdness and profligacy ruled the Church of God, persons utterly indifferent to religion and poisoning Christendom by their bad example. Sergius III had no scruple in sanctioning the sacrilegious marriage of the Byzantine Emperor Leo VI, but the Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus had vindicated the purity of the Church by excommunicating the Emperor, who, with the help of Pope Sergius, deposed the undaunted and faithful Patriarch. If the Roman Church was the true Church, and the Pope the factotum of this Church, where was the Holy Ghost governing the Church during these sixty years? Now let us cast a glance on the Patriarchs of Constantinople during the period of the Roman πορνοκρατία. All of them, six in number, were men of an exemplary sanctity, with the solitary exception of Theophlyact, who was a creature of Pope John XII, and was installed by the Papal Legates. He was the worst Patriarch that ever sat on the Constantinopolitan throne. Do these contrasts not convey any lesson to us? With which of the two parties was God?”

The real ruler of Rome in his period was the Tusculani clan member Marozia, an evil woman who made, unmade, lived with and begat a series of popes. However, in 932 Marozia’s son Alberic imprisoned his mother, took over the government of Rome, reformed its monasteries and gave it a short period of peace and relative respectability. Alberic, writes Llewellyn, “who styled himself as ruler by the grace of the Lord and had such close contacts with the Byzantine world, may have seen himself as custodian of the imperial and Roman concept of Christian rulership that had been inherent in Pepin’s patriciate and Charlemagne’s imperial title – a title that could only validly be realized by denying all initiative to the clergy.”

But in 955 he died and his son Octavian became Pope John XII at the age of sixteen. “Even for a pope of that period,” writes De Rosa, “he was so bad that the citizens were out for his blood. He had invented sins, they said, not known since the beginning of the world, including sleeping with his mother. He ran a harem in the Lateran Palace. He gambled with pilgrims’ offerings. He kept a stud of two thousand horses which he fed on almonds and figs steeped in wine. He rewarded the companions of his nights of love with golden chalices from St. Peter’s. He did nothing for the most profitable tourist trade of the day, namely, pilgrimages. Women in particular were warned not to enter St. John Lateran if they prized their honour; the pope was always on

83 It has been suggested by J.N.D. Kelly that Marozia’s deeds were the origin of the legend of the female Pope Joan (*The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, quoted in Louth, *op. cit.*, p. 207).
84 Llewellyn, *op. cit.*, p. 310.
the prowl. In front of the high altar of the mother church of Christendom, he even toasted the Devil...”

Retribution was coming, however. Berengar of Lombardy advanced on Rome, and the pope in desperation appealed to Berengar’s feudal lord, Otto of Germany. This was Otto’s opportunity to seize that imperial crown, which would give him complete dominance over his rivals. He marched into Italy, drove out Berengar and was crowned Emperor by John on February 2, 962.

However, when Otto demanded that the inhabitants of the Papal states should swear an oath of allegiance to him, Otto, and not to the pope, thereby treating the Papal states as one of his dependencies, the Pope took fright, transferred his support to Berengar and called on both the Hungarians and the Byzantines to help drive Otto out of Italy. But Otto saw this as treachery on the part of the pope; he summoned a synod in Rome, deposed John, and placed Leo VIII in his place. Then he inserted a clause into his agreement with Leo whereby in future no pope was to be consecrated without taking an oath of loyalty to the Emperor. Although Otto was crowned in Rome, he did not call himself “Emperor of the Romans”, but preferred simply “emperor”. This was probably because he did not wish to enter into a competition with the Byzantine emperor. It may also have been because he had little admiration for Old Rome, just as Old Rome had little time for him. Thus he instructed his sword-bearer to stand behind him as he kneeled at the tomb of the Apostle. “For I know,” he said, “only too well what my ancestors have experienced from these faithless Romans.”

In spite of that, Otto and his dynasty were more closely linked to Old Rome than Charlemagne had been. Janet Nelson writes: “Bishop Liutprand of Cremona saw Otto in the line of Constantine and Justinian, appointed by God to establish peace in this world. Returning from an embassy to Constantinople in 968, Liutprand denounced the ritual technology of the ‘Greeks’ [i.e. the machines used to dazzle foreign visitors at the imperial court] as empty form: the substance of true Roman emperorship now lay in the West. Otto, legislating in Italy ‘as a holy emperor’ (ut imperator sanctus) gave colour to Liutprand’s claim. In the Ottonianum, he confirmed the privileges of the Roman Church under his imperial protectorship.”

Otto gained the Byzantines’ recognition of his imperial title, and in 972 married his son, Otto II, to Princess Theophanou, the niece of Emperor John Tzimiskes, in Rome. Theophanou then introduced another Byzantine, John Philagathos, as godfather of her son, Otto III; he later became head of the royal finances and finally - Pope John XVI. This led to a sharp increase in

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Byzantine influence in the western empire, and the temporary eclipse of the new papist theory of Church-State relations. Thus in an ivory bas-relief Christ is shown crowning Otto II and Theophanou – a Byzantine tenth-century motif expressing the traditionally Byzantine concept of Church-State symphony.

In 991 Theophanou died and Otto III became Emperor under the regency of his grandmother. Otto, as Tom Holland writes, “was nothing if not a Roman emperor. He lived on the Palatine Hill, just as Augustus had done a thousand years before him; he revived the titles of ‘consul’ and ‘senator’. He had himself betrothed to a princess from the Second Rome, Constantinople. His death in 2002, before his marriage could serve to join the eastern and western empires, left hanging one of history’s great ‘what-ifs’. Otto III’s ambition of reviving the Roman empire had been the great theme of his reign. Tantalising, then, to ponder what might have happened if he had succeeded in joining it to the eastern Roman empire – the empire that, unlike his own, could trace a direct line of descent from ancient Rome.”

Otto, writes Jean-Paul Allard, “dreamed of reuniting the two empires into one one day, so as to restore universal peace – a new imperial peace comparable to that of Augustus, a Roman Empire which would embrace once more the orbis terrarum before the end of the world that was announced for the year 1000.”

To signify that the Renovatio Imperii Romani had truly begun, he moved his court from Aachen to Rome, introduced Byzantine ceremonial into his court on the Aventine hill, gave a stimulus to the rediscovery of Roman law, and began negotiations with the Byzantine Emperor for the hand of a daughter or niece of the basileus, which union would enable him to unite the two empires in a peaceful, traditional manner.

Although the plan for union with Byzantium was foiled through the death of Otto’s fiancée before her arrival in Rome, Otto sought and followed the advice of holy hermits such as Nilus of Calabria and Romuald of Ravenna, as

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90 “The image,” as Jean-Paul Allard writes, “was more eloquent than any theological treatise. It illustrated a principle that the papacy and the Roman Church have never accepted, but which was taken for granted in Byzantium and is still held in Orthodoxy today: Christ and Christ alone crowns the sovereigns; power comes only from God, without the intercession of an institutional representative of the Church, be he patriarch or pope. The anointing and crowning of the sovereign do not create the legitimacy of his power; but have as their sole aim the manifestation of [this legitimacy] in the eyes of the people.” (“Byzance et le Saint Empire: Theopano, Otton III, Benzon d’Albe”, in Germain Ivanov-Trinadtsaty, *Regards sur l’Orthodoxie* (Points of View on Orthodoxy), Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1997, p. 39.


92 Allard, op.cit., p. 40
a result of which Byzantine influence continued to spread outwards from the court. And when Gerbert of Aurillac became the first Frankish Pope in 999 and took the name Sylvester II, he revived memories, in those brought up on the forged Donation of Constantine, of the symphonic relationship between St. Constantine and Pope Sylvester I.  

However, Sylvester loved the true symphony, not the fake variety: in 1001 he persuaded Otto to issue an act demonstrating that the Donation of Constantine was a forgery. Moreover, this very unpapist Pope did not believe that he was above the judgement of his fellow-bishops. Thus he wrote in 997: “The judgement of God is higher than that of Rome... When Pope Marcellinus offered incense to Jupiter [in 303], did all the other bishops have to do likewise? If the bishop of Rome himself sins against his brother or refuses to heed the repeated warnings of the Church, he, the bishop of Rome himself, must according to the commandments of God be treated as a pagan and a publican; for the greater the dignity, the greater the fall. If he declares us unworthy of his communion because none of us will join him against the Gospel, he will not be able to separate us from the communion of Christ.”

This must count as a formal abjuration of the papist heresy. Unfortunately, Sylvester was not imitated by his successors. But the courage of his right confession deserves appreciation. Indeed, by the year 1000 there was little formal papism in the west: it was the Byzantine ideal of “symphonic” Church-State relations that had triumphed almost everywhere. Even in those parts of the West where normal government had broken down, such as France, the ideal was still alive. Paradoxically, the very breakdown of order appears to have stimulated a kind of nostalgia for the old forms, when emperors and patriarchs ordered the Christian world between them...

Otto and Sylvester imitated the Byzantine concept of a family of kings under one Christian Emperor. Thus they handed out crowns to King Stephen of Hungary and the Polish Duke Boleslav. And in a Gospel book made for Otto four states – Roma, Gallia, Germania and Scclavinia (Poland) – are represented as women doing homage to him. “Otto even opened up friendly relations with Vladimir, prince of the powerful Russian state of Kiev, who

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94 Charles Davis, op. cit., p. 84. In this exposure he was correct, even if he was wrong in his dating of the forgery to the middle of the tenth century (Allard, op. cit., pp. 45-46).
95 Pope Sylvester, Letter 192, in Fr. Andrew Phillips, “The Three Temptations of Christ and the Mystical Sense of English History”, Orthodox England, vol. I, N 2, December, 1997, p. 6. Sylvester wrote this when he was Archbishop of Ravenna, a see that had always shown independence in relation to Rome. Thus in the hour of his death, Sylvester’s predecessor, St. Maurus of Ravenna (+671), “called all his priests, and weeping before them, and seeking their forgiveness, he said to them: ‘I am entering the path of death, I call to witness and warn you, do not place yourselves under the Roman yoke. Choose a pastor for yourselves, and let him be consecrated by his bishops. Seek the pallium from the emperor. For on whatever day you are subjugated to Rome, you will not be whole.’ And with these words he died; and he was buried in the narthex of Blessed Apollinaris, in a wonderful tomb.” (From The Book of the Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna by Andreas Agnellus [+846])
had accepted his Christianity from Byzantium. One can only speculate how different the future history of Eastern Europe might have been had Otto’s policy of pacification been followed by subsequent German rulers…”

The forty-year Ottonian period in the history of the papacy has been viewed in sharply contrasting ways. According to Voltaire in his *Essay on History and Customs*, Pope John XII’s summoning the Germans to Rome was the source of all the subsequent calamities suffered by Rome and Italy. However, an unprejudiced view must accept that the intervention of the Ottonian monarchy in Roman affairs was not wholly unbeneﬁcial. Someone had to put a stop to the scandalous degeneration of the ﬁrst see of Christendom - and if the Ottonians did not succeed in completely cleansing the Augean stables, it was hardly their fault alone. For the corruption in the Eternal City ran deep: in 991, at a Council in Rheims attended by English as well as French bishops, Arnulph, bishop of Orleans, more or less accused Pope John XV of being the Antichrist…

At the same time, the rivalries between the Tusculani and Crescentii made the city virtually ungovernable in this period. The Ottonians at least seem to have had good intentions, and the partnership of the German-Greek Otto III and the Frankish Sylvester II – a collaboration “unique in medieval history”, according to J.B. Morrall99 - looked on the point of restoring a true unity between the Old and the New Romes. Indeed, for a short period it even looked as if Byzantinism might triumph in the West...

“But the Romans,” writes Chamberlin, “rose against [Otto], drove him and his pope out of the city, and reverted to murderous anarchy. He died outside the city in January 1002, not quite twenty-two years of age. Sylvester survived his brilliant protégé by barely sixteen months [he died on May 12, 2003]. His epitaph summed up the sorrow that afﬁicted all thoughtful men at the ending of a splendid vision: ‘The world, on the brink of triumph, in peace now departed, grew contorted in grief and the reeling Church forgot her rest.’ The failure of Otto III and Sylvester marked the effective end of the medieval dream of a single state in which an emperor ruled over the bodies of all Christian men, and a pope over their souls.”

“Otto transposed political and religious universalism. In his legislation he evoked Justinian. Denouncing the Donation of Constantine as the product of papal arrogance, Otto ‘slave of the Apostles’ stole the clothes of papal

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99 Morrall, op. cit.
humidity, Otto died young and his successor Henry II preferred to stay north of the Alps. But Otto’s imperial vision never entirely faded. His successors perpetuated it in their symbols of state. Henry II’s mantle, still to be seen at Bamberg, is embroidered with the stars of heaven in imitation of Byzantine imperial claims to cosmic authority. More importantly, Otto had forged the bond between the *regnum* and the empire so strongly that it would not be broken even by rulers like Henry II with little interest in a Roman power-base. Conrad I, once elected king, was already an emperor-elect and the East Frankish realm only one of the *regna* he would rule. His son Henry III immediately on Conrad’s death took the title, no longer of ‘king of the Franks’ but ‘king of the Romans’. When, later, there was a German kingdom, its ruler was never officially entitled ‘king of the Germans’. German kingship had become inseparable from Roman emperorship...”

The Holy Roman Empire of the Ottonians and their German and Spanish successor dynasties survived, amazingly, until 1806. Voltaire famously said it was “neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire”. But under Otto III it had been, briefly, all three, a not unworthy consort to its greater eastern neighbour...

55. THE FALL OF THE POPES: (2) FROM SERGIUS IV TO LEO IX

With the death of Otto III, the last Western ruler sympathetic to Byzantium, both the empire and the papacy began to lose their last links with the Eastern Church. Their final decline began after the death of Pope Sylvester II in 1003, when “suddenly,” according to Papadakis, “the papacy was turned into a sort of imperial Eigenkirche or vicarage of the German crown. The pope was to be the instrument and even the pawn of the Germans, as opposed to the Romans.”

Not that the ethnically Roman Popes were paragons of virtue - the previous century had shown that they usually were far from that: but at least they were usually formally Orthodox. However, in 1009, as Ranson and Motte write, “the last Roman Orthodox Pope, John XVIII, was chased away and a Germanic Pope usurped the Orthodox patriarchate of Rome: Sergius IV, an adulterer-bishop of Rome who, on ascending the episcopal throne, wrote to the four other patriarchs a letter of communion which confirmed the doctrine of the double procession [of the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son – the Filioque heresy] and immediately provoked a break. The four Orthodox patriarchs then broke communion with the pope. Some years later [in 1014], Benedict VIII, who was close to the emperor of Germany Henry II, had the Filioque inserted into the Creed.”

According to Sir Steven Runciman, the popes’ addition of the Filioque was hateful to the Greeks for purely political reasons, since it represented the triumph of German influence in Rome. However, the purely theological zeal of the Byzantines must not be underestimated.

As for the native Romans, Fr. John Romanides has argued that they remained basically Orthodox (because they were actually Greek!) and only accepted the Filioque unwillingly, it being forced on them by the German emperors and their appointed, reformist popes. The cause of the West’s falling away lay exclusively, according to Romanides, in the Franks... However, contrary to this (essentially racist) theory, the Roman aristocratic families bore their own share of responsibility for the catastrophe, having made the city virtually ungovernable through their rivalries. The fact is that the whole of the West, both Latin and German, formed a single body that fell away from the Church together...

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103 Papadakis, op. cit., p. 28. However, Papadakis dates this transformation to 962 rather than 1002, on the grounds that “during the century following the revival of the empire [in 962], twenty-one popes from a total of twenty-five were virtually hand-picked by the German crown” (p. 29).
Another point to remember is that while the German emperors may have appointed German popes in order to clean up the papacy, the papacy remained thoroughly unreformed until the middle of the century - that is, until the pontificate of Leo IX. Thus Lampryllos writes: “After the death of this pope [Benedict VIII], who was... the nephew of the Emperor Henry, another of his nephews, and brother of the last pope, was elevated by the imperialist party to the pontificate under the name of John XIX in 1024. Simple layman though he was, he ascended through all the degrees of the hierarchy in six days. He held the pontificate for nine years, but finally the national party, impatient with the excesses of his behaviour, expelled him from Rome. However, the Emperor Conrad II came down with an army into Italy and restored him; he died in the same year, and another Teuton, the nephew also of the Emperor Conrad, succeeded him under the name of Benedict IX. Henry III, then his son Henry IV, continued to get involved in successive elections of the popes, tipping the scales in favour of their candidates; almost until 1061 the popes were their creatures: they were those who go down in history under the name of the German Popes.”

The German ascendancy over the papacy came to a head in 1046, when there were no less than three men calling themselves the Pope of Rome. The Emperor Henry III summoned all three to Sutri, north of Rome, and deposed all of them, placing a fellow German, Clement II, in the Lateran. After his death the notorious Benedict IX returned for his third spell as Pope.

“Benedict IX was Pope from 1032 to 1044, again in 1045, and finally from 1047 to 1048, the only man to have served as Pope for three discontinuous periods. Benedict gave up his papacy for the first time in exchange for a large sum of money in 1044. He returned in 1045 to depose his replacement and reigned for one month, after which he left again, possibly to marry, and sold the papacy for a second time, to his Godfather (possibly for over 650 kg /1450 lb of gold). Two years later, Benedict retook Rome and reigned for an additional one year, until 1048. Poppo of Brixen (later to become Pope Damascus II) eventually forced him out of Rome. Benedict’s place and date of death are unknown, but some speculate that he made further attempts to regain the Papal Throne. St. Peter Damian described him as ‘feasting on immorality’ and ‘a demon from hell in the disguise of a priest’ in the Liber Gomorrhianus, a treatise on papal corruption and sex that accused Benedict IX of routine homosexuality and bestiality.”

Emperor Henry replaced Benedict with another German, and then, when he died, with yet another, Leo IX. However, though a distant cousin of the Emperor, Leo was no pawn of the German Reich. Indeed, it was his policies “that would put an end to the Carolingian entente of church and empire essentially creating bitter conflicts between the two”.

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108 Siedentop, op. cit., p. 196.
It was Leo IX who turned German caesaropapism turned into German papocaesarism, a political empire with ecclesiastical pretensions into an ecclesiastical one with political ones... However, before discussing his fateful pontificate, we need to examine a monastic movement that had an enormous influence on the tenth- and eleventh-century Church in the West.

Now we have spoken little in this history about monasticism - in spite of the fact that Basilian monasticism in the East from the fourth century, and Benedictine monasticism in the West from the sixth century, undoubtedly greatly influenced the evolution of their respective societies. But they had little direct impact on government or Church-State relations... That could not, however, be said of the movement of Frankish monasticism that arose in the tenth century and which is known as the Cluniac movement after the Burgundian monastery of Cluny.

Cluny was founded by Duke William the Pious of Aquitaine in 910. Cluny and its dependencies were distinguished first of all by the fact that they were not Eigenkirchen, but “stavropegial” foundations independent of the control of any feudal lord. As such, they assumed the leadership of a powerful reform movement directed against the corruptions introduced into the Church by the feudal system, and had considerable success in this respect.

For example, the founder of the movement, Abbot Odo of Cluny, succeeded in being appointed archimandrite of Rome by Alberic with authority to reform all the monastic houses in the district. 109

The Cluniacs, writes Jean Comby, “restored the main principles of the Benedictine Rule: the free election of the abbot, independence from princes and bishops. Moreover, the abbey affirmed its direct allegiance to the pope. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries it became the head of an Order which multiplied throughout Europe. In fact, unlike the old monasteries, all the new ones that were founded remained under the authority of the abbot of Cluny. In its heyday, the ‘state of Cluny’ comprised 50,000 monks.” 110

The determination of the Cluniacs to remain completely independent of secular control “led gradually,” according to Siedentop, “to the recasting of relationships in government in terms of the requirements of ‘souls’ rather than the traditional claims of lordship (dominium) and paterfamilias.

“The new vision of how ‘the Christian people’ should be served would prove to be far more subversive than Charlemagne’s vision. For it not longer combined ancient and Christian moral impulses. Where Charlemagne and his

109 Llewellyn, op. cit., p. 309.
110 Comby, op. cit., pp. 140-141.
clerical advisers had relied on aristocratic subordination and personal ties to promote unity in the empire and church, tenth-century Frankish reformers engaged in ‘purifying’ monastic life developed attitudes that would, in the next century, lead Pope Gregory VII to put forward what was virtually a constitution for Europe. Monastic reform thus generated a more aggressive, uncompromising ambition in the church, a political ambition...

“[In this development] it would be difficult to exaggerate the influence, direct and indirect, of this Cluniac reform movement. The ”direct influence can be found not only in the way many older monasteries rapidly submitted to the disciplines of Cluny, but also in the frequent election of monks from Cluny to bishoprics, where they began to defend the principle that the church should choose its own leaders. These bishops sought to restore order to their dioceses, attacking the sale of offices, rooting out clerical immorality and trying to recover church property that had been alienated. They met fierce resistance from secular lords.

“The indirect influence of Cluny was perhaps even more important. It restored the prestige of monasticism as representing a truly Christian life, an ordered life of personal dignity, work and self-government. It laid emphasis on learning and prayer as well as physical labour. It offered, tacitly, a challenge to the church to exert itself in a society plagued by the warfare of minor aristocrats and knights, who were profiting from the disappearance of older forms of authority. Such knights went in for banditry and, in the words of one historian, ‘organising protection rackets’. Altogether, the Cluniac reform movement raised the sights of the church, inciting it to defend moral authority in a world apparently given over to mere power.

“As the year 1000 approached, the fragmenting of secular power and castle-building by local lords in West Francia created an impression of anarchy – the ‘dissolution of all things’ – which some interpreted as the approach of the Antichrist. As a result, the Frankish church not only had an opportunity but felt an imperious need to stamp its own image on society. It alone now had a coherent conception of right rule. For the previous belief in an imperium – in an autocratic ‘Roman’ empire set over and regulating temporal lordships – no longer corresponded to social facts. It was up to the church to restore order. But how was it to begin?

“In fact, movements sprang up almost simultaneously in a number of places towards the end of the tenth century. Stimulated by the abbot of Cluny, the clergy encouraged the expression of a new sensibility. In 975 the bishop of Le Puy convened a meeting of the knights and peasants of his diocese, eliciting from them an oath to respect the property both of the church and of paupers or the ‘powerless’. In 989 a church council in Burgundy went even further. It excommunicated ‘those who attacked bishop, priests, deacon or clerk, while at home or travelling; those who robbed a church; those who stole a beast from the poor or the tillers of soil.’ By the end of the century many other public meetings and church councils had extended this ‘Peace of God’,
so that it included ‘pilgrims, women and children, labourers and the
instruments of their work, monasteries and cemeteries.’ These were to be left
‘undisturbed and in perpetual peace’.

“Such councils had first appeared in the south of France. But they soon
spread to its northern regions as well. Indeed, the movement became an
irresistibly popular one. ‘Peasants of every class, from the most prosperous,
through the middling ranks, to the lowest of all’ flocked to the councils. The
power of the movement was such that by 1017 it constrained the nobles and
knights to accept a ‘truce of God’. They ‘swore to desist from all private
warfare from noon on Saturday until prime on Monday.’ ‘This would allow
due reverence to be paid to the Lord’s Day; those who broke this ‘truce of
God’ would be cut off from the sacraments of the church and the society of
the faithful in life; no priest might bury them, no man might pray for their
soul. Those who swore to and observed the truce were assured of absolution
from God.’

“The movement was at the same time religious and secular. Contemporaries greeted it with such wonder and delight, almost as if it were
the Second Coming. They had a sense that they were witnessing something of
fundamental importance, that Christian moral beliefs were finally shaping
society at large. The church was defending the defenceless. ‘The movement...
depended upon and encouraged an outburst of religious fervor such as had
not appeared in the written sources since the sixth century, if then.’”

The question that now arose was: “Could appeals to ‘God’s law’ be
translated into practices more durable than the ‘Peace of God’ and ‘Truce of
God’? If so, the monastic movement of reform would have to act outside the
monasteries. And in order to do that, a fulcrum for action was required. There
was only one fulcrum available: the papacy.

“Only Rome could offer a central agency for general reform. The history of
Western Europe from the mid-eleventh to the thirteenth century is the history
of the papacy being recruited and transformed by the reform movement.
Within a few decades the papacy became so central to the reform movement
that some historians have doubted whether the Cluniac movement was as
important as the ‘Gregorian’ reforms issuing from Rome. Cluny was not,
indeed, the only source of pressure for reform. There were isolated
movements for reform of the church in England, Flanders and Italy. But... it
was from the new German empire that the first effective impetus for reform at
the centre came. German emperors had renewed the Carolingian project of a
‘Christian empire’. A project of moral reform was embedded in their imperial
system. So in the eleventh century German emperors began to prise the
papacy away from the hold of Roman aristocratic families...”

111 Siedentop, op. cit., p. 184.
112 Siedentop, op. cit., p. 195.
Let us briefly review the development of the papist heresy to this point... Until about 600, the development of Papism was inhibited by the fact that the Popes were subjects of the Byzantine Emperors, to whom they nourished feelings of loyalty, whose basic view of Church-State relations they shared, and whose confirmation they still required before they could be consecrated. In the seventh and eighth centuries, however, both the political and ecclesiastical bonds between the Popes and the Emperors became weaker as Byzantine power in Italy weakened and the Byzantine emperors fell into the heresies of Monothelitism and Iconoclasm. The estrangement from Byzantium was accompanied by a rapprochement with the new Carolingian empire in the north. This relationship was reinforced by the Pope’s double anointing of the first Carolingian, Pepin, the crowning of Charlemagne in Rome and the double anointing of his son, Louis the Pious, in 814. At the same time, the disintegration of the empire and the forgeries known as the Donation of Constantine and the Pseudo-Isidorean Decretals enabled the Popes to begin propagating the heresy of the unimpeachable power of the papacy over all bishops, and even over kings.\footnote{Not only the pope, but also the episcopate as a whole became more powerful in relation to the Carolingian kings in the ninth century. Thus in 859 the Council of Savonnières pronounced: “Bishops, according to their ministry and sacred authority, are to be united and by mutual aid and counsel are to rule and correct kings, the magnates of their kingdoms and the people committed to them” (in I.S. Robinson, “Church and Papacy”, The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350 – c. 1450, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 298).} However, after the heresies of papal universal jurisdiction and the Filioque had been anathematized by the Council of Constantinople in 879-80, - which decisions were also signed by the legates of Pope John VIII, - the papacy went into a steep moral decline just as Byzantium reached its apogee. There was some recovery towards the end of the tenth century, during the Ottonian dynasty, but then decline set in again. This decline was indicated, not only by the moral decline of the popes, but also by their domination by the secular authority. As Fukuyama writes: “Of the twenty-five popes who held office before 1059, twenty-one were appointed by emperors and five dismissed by them...”\footnote{Fukuyama, op. cit., pp. 263-264.}

Now the theory of papal infallibility was not expressed in a fully explicit manner until the middle of the eleventh century. Before then we have an accumulation of grandiloquent epithets, which were seen as no more than rhetorical devices by the majority of Christians. That they were not taken literally is evident from the fact that some Popes were condemned as heretics.

Thus the Monothelite Pope Honorius I was anathematised by the Sixth Ecumenical Council\footnote{Session XIII: “The holy council said: After we had reconsidered, according to the promise which we had made to your highness, the doctrinal letters of Sergius, at one time patriarch of this royal God protected city to Cyrus, who was then bishop of Phasius and to Honorius some time Pope of Old Rome, as well as the letter of the latter to the same Sergius, we find that these documents are quite foreign to the apostolic dogmas, to the declarations of the holy}, and this anathematisation was confirmed by later...
Moreover, towards the end of the sixth century Pope Gregory I forcefully rejected the title “universal bishop”. “Anyone who dares to call himself ‘universal bishop’,” he wrote to Patriarch Eulogius of Alexandria, “is a forerunner of the Antichrist” (Epistle 33).

Although the heresies of universal jurisdiction and the Filioque were the earliest and most fundamental of the papist heresies, the final break between East and West was in fact elicited by two innovations in the Divine Liturgy: the replacement of leavened bread (artos) by unleavened bread (zymes), and the removal of the epiclesis, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, during the consecration. Although these liturgical innovations would at first sight appear to be of less than fundamental importance than the Trinitarian and ecclesiological innovations, their symbolical importance was very great.

First, since the leaven represented the soul of Christ, its removal by the Papists signified the replacement of the living Christ by a soulless corpse. And as the Monk Nicetas Stethatos, of the Studite monastery in Constantinople pointed out, the use of unleavened bread signified a return to the Old Testament: “Those who still participate in the feast of unleavened bread are under the shadow of the law and consume the feast of the Jews, not the spiritual and living food of God… How can you enter into communion with Christ, the living God, while eating the dead unleavened dough of the shadow of the law and not the yeast of the new covenant…?”

Secondly, in removing the invocation of the Holy Spirit, Who changes the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, the Popes invalidated their own sacrament. It was as if they were witnessing of themselves: “The Holy Spirit no longer descends upon our offerings, since we have presumed to speak in His name, and the Christ that lies on our altars is no longer the living Christ, since we have presumed to usurp his authority.”

Councils, and to all the accepted Fathers, and that they follow the false teachings of the heretics...And with these [Sergius, Pyrrhus, Cyrus, etc.] we define that there shall be expelled from the holy Church of God and anathematized Honorius who was some time Pope of Old Rome, because of what we found written by Honorius to Sergius, that in all respects Honorius followed Sergius’ view and Honorius confirmed his impious doctrines.” Session XVI: To Theodore of Pharan, the heretic, anathema! To Sergius, the heretic, anathema! To Cyrus, the heretic, anathema! To Honorius, the heretic, anathema!...

For example, Pope Leo II (+683), who wrote to Emperor Constantine VI: “We anathematize also even Honorius, who did not purify this Apostolic Church with the Doctrine of the Apostolic Tradition, but by wicked betrayal sought to subvert the Immaculate [Faith].” (P.L. 96, fol. 408). Again this is an excerpt from the Profession of Faith required upon the Consecration of a new Bishop of Old Rome, used from the late 7th century until sometime in the 11th century: "Also the authors of the new heretical dogmas: Sergius, Pyrrhus, Paul, and Peter of Constantinople, together with Honorius, who paid incentive to their depraved assertions." (P.L. 105, fol. 52, Liber Diurnus).

As even the Roman Catholics admit, the epiclesis was present in all the ancient liturgies. See http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05502a.htm

Early in his pontificate (1049-1054), writes Siedentop, “Pope Leo IX gathered around him a group of reform-minded clergy. Leo worked closely with the German emperor, Henry III, a friend of abbot Hugh of Cluny, to promote reform by appointing men of outstanding ability as cardinals and advisers in the curia. Hildebrand [the future Pope Gregory VII] was only one of the group – including minds as different as the legalistic Cardinal Humbert [of Candida Silva] and the moralizing Peter Damian – who developed in this monastically inspired reformist atmosphere. Each of these cardinals had been a monk, and all shared a discontent with the condition of the church. Their influence ushered in a period when the popes themselves would be drawn from a monastic background. Leo IX’s pontificate thus saw a first crucial, if informal step towards what has been called the ‘papal revolution’, the creation of a clerical elite determined on systematic reform…”119

“From the outset,” writes Papadakis, “the new pope was determined to make the papacy an instrument of spiritual and moral rejuvenation both in Rome itself and throughout Europe. To this end Pope Leo journeyed to central and south Italy, but also to France and Germany, crossing the Alps three times. Nearly four and a half years of his five-year pontificate were in fact spent on trips outside Rome. The numerous regional reforming synods held during these lengthy sojourns often had as their target the traffic in ecclesiastical offices and unchaste clergy. Their object above all was to rid the Church of these abused by restoring canonical discipline. The need to reassert both the validity and binding power of canon law for all clergy was repeatedly emphasized. In addition to the decrees against simony and sexual laxity promulgated by these local synods, however, simoniacal and concubinary clergy were examined and, when required, suspended, deposed and, even excommunicated. The object, in short, was to punish the offenders as well. Even if the synods were not always successful, no one was in doubt that Leo IX and his team of like-minded assistants were serious. The immediate impact of this flurry of activity was often extraordinary…

“Overall, the progress of the new papal program was not all smooth sailing. Widespread protest, often accompanied by violent protest, was to continue for decades. Yet, all in all, by the end of the century the popular defenders of simony, of clerical marriage, and of the evils of the proprietary church had by and large vanished. The champions of reform at any rate proved more unyielding than their often more numerous adversaries. This was particularly evident in the skilful drive of the reformers to make celibacy an absolute prerequisite to ordination. This part of the Gregorian platform was reinforced by the monastic ideal, since many of the reformers were actually monks and had already embraced a continent life. Some, like the ascetic Peter Damian, cardinal-bishop of Ostia, were even eager to treat the problem as heresy and not as a matter of discipline. But the reformers were

119 Siedentop, op. cit., p. 196.
perhaps also uncompromising on this issue because they were convinced that compulsory clerical continence could advance the process of de-laicization – another more general item of their platform. A monasticized priesthood, quite simply, was viewed by reformers everywhere as a crucial corrective to clerical involvement in the world. If successful, the strategy, it was hoped, would provide the clergy with that sense of solidarity and corporate identity needed to distinguish them from the laity. In all essential respects, as one scholar has put it, the reforming initiatives of the popes were ‘an attempt by men trained in the monastic discipline to remodel Church and society according to monastic ideals… to train churchmen to rethink themselves as a distinct ‘order’ with a life-style totally different from that of laymen.’ Behind the campaign for celibacy, in sum, aside from the moral and canonical issues involved, was the desire to set all churchmen apart from and above the laity; the need to create a spiritual elite by the separation of the priest from the ordinary layman was an urgent priority. Doubtless, in the end, the Gregorian priesthood did achieve a certain libertas and even a sense of community, but only at the expense of a sharp opposition between itself and the rest of society.

“By contrast, in the Christian East, as in primitive Christianity, a wholly celibate priesthood never became the norm…”

It sometimes happens that one important historical process going in one direction masks the presence of another going in precisely the opposite direction. The process of ecclesiastical reformation initiated by Pope Leo IX in 1049, which aimed at the liberation of the Church from secular control, was in many respects a laudable and necessary programme. But the increasing distance it placed between clergy and laity was fraught with danger. In particular, it threatened to undermine the traditional place in Christian society of the anointed kings, who occupied an intermediate position between the clergy and the laity. And in the hands of two ambitious northern clerics whom Leo brought with him to Rome, Bishop Humbert of Silva Candida and Archdeacon Hildebrand, it threatened simply to replace the caesaropapist variety of feudalism with a papocaesarist variety – that is, the subjection of the clergy to lay lords with the subjection of the laity, and even the kings, to clerical lords – or rather, to just one clerical lord, the Pope. For, as Fr. Patric Ranson and Lauren Mott write, “in many respects, in its structure the papacy is nothing other than the religious form of feudalism…”

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120 Papadakis, op. cit., pp. 34, 36-37. Peter de Rosa (op. cit., p. 420) agrees with this estimate: “The chief reason for maintaining the discipline [of clerical celibacy] was the one dearest to the heart of Gregory VII: a celibate priest owed total allegiance not to wife and children but to the institution. He was a creature of the institution. The Roman system was absolutist and hierarchical. For such a system to work, it needed operatives completely at the beck and call of superiors. The conservatives at Trent [the papist council of 1545] were quite frank about this. They actually said that without celibacy the pope be nothing more than the Bishop of Rome. In brief, the papal system would collapse without the unqualified allegiance of the clergy. Celibacy, on Trent’s own admission, was not and never was primarily a matter of chastity, but of control…”

Indeed, on the eve of the papal revolution Church and State in the West were so deeply entangled with each other through feudalism that nobody could conceive of a return to the traditional system of the symphony of powers, which allowed for the relative independence of both powers within a single Christian society. The Church wished to be liberated from “lay investiture”; but she did not want to be deprived of the lands, vassals and political power that came with investiture. The only solution, therefore, from the Pope’s point of view, was to bring the whole of Christian society, including its kings and emperors, into vassalage to the papacy…

But before undertaking this assault on the whole structure of Western Christendom, the papacy needed to secure its rear in the East, in the south of Italy. There an upstart, newly Christianized people, the Normans, had carved out a dominion for themselves that was independent both of the Byzantines and of the German Emperor. They had even encroached on some lands given to the papacy by the Emperor. Leo declared a holy war against the Normans, promising “an impunity for their crimes” to all who answered his call (those who died in the battle were declared to be martyrs), and set off with himself at the head of the papal army. But at Civitate he was roundly defeated. Since the German Emperor could not come south to help him, Leo now decided to try and forge an alliance with the Byzantines against the Normans, and sent Cardinal Humbert and two others to Constantinople as his envoys.

This was always going to be a difficult mission, for there were tensions between Rome and Constantinople on ecclesiastical questions, especially that of the use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist. In 1053, Archbishop Leo of Ochrid, had criticized the Latins’ use of unleavened bread in a letter to Bishop John of Trania, and had asked the latter to convey his views to Pope Leo IX. In September the Pope replied122: “In prejudging the case of the highest See, the see on which no judgement may be passed by any man, you have received the anathema from all the Fathers of all the venerable Councils… You, beloved brother of ours, whom we still call in Christ and primate of Constantinople, with extraordinary presumption and unheard-of boldness have dared openly to condemn the apostolic and Latin Church – and for what? For the fact that she celebrates the commemoration of the sufferings of Christ on unleavened bread. That is your imprudent abuse, that is your unkind boasting, when you, supposing that your lips are in heaven, in actual fact with your tongue are crawling on the earth and striving by your human reasonings and thoughts to corrupt and shake the ancient faith. If you do not pull yourself together, you will be on the tail of the dragon [cf. Revelation 12], by which this dragon overthrew and cast to the earth a third of the stars of heaven. Almost 1200 years have passed since the Saviour suffered, and do you really think that

122 Some scholars, such as Anton Michel, believe on stylistic grounds that these letters of Leo IX were in fact written by Cardinal Humbert. However, we shall continue to ascribe them to the man in whose name they were written. See Mahlon Smith III, And Taking Bread: The Development of the Azyme Controversy, Paris: Beauchesne, 1978, p. 81.
only now must the Roman Church learn from you how to celebrate the Eucharist, as if it means nothing that here in Rome there lived, worked for a considerable period, taught and, finally, by his death glorified God he to whom the Lord said: ‘Blessed are thou, Ō Simon, son of Jonah’…”

“Oh,” continues A.P. Lebedev, “the Pope explained in detail why the Roman Church could not tolerate any instructions from other Churches, but remained the leader of all the rest. ‘Think how senseless it would be to admit that the heavenly Father should conceal the rite of the visible sacrifice [of the Eucharist] from the prince of the apostles, Peter, to whom He had completely revealed the most hidden Divinity of His Son. The Lord promised to Peter, not through an angel, nor through a prophet, but with His own lips: ‘You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church’ (Matthew 16.16). But in the opinion of the Pope an important place in the question of the headship of the Roman high priest was occupied by the miracle-working power of Peter’s shadow. This argument of the Pope in his favour was so original that we cite it in full. ‘In Peter,’ said the Pope, ‘what is particularly remarkable is that the shadow of his body gave health to the infirm. Such power was given to none of the saints; even the Holy of holies Himself did not give the gift of healing from His own most holy body; but to His Peter alone He gave this privilege that the shadow from his body should heal the sick. Here is a great sign of the Church of the present and the future, that is, Peter has become the manager of both Churches and indicates their condition beforehand in himself: it is precisely the present Church which by the power of its visible sacraments and those that are still to come as it were by her shadow heals souls on earth, and presents to us an as yet invisible but firm image of truth and piety on earth.’ Or here is one more cunning papal interpretation of one saying with which the Lord addressed Peter, and interpretation whose aim was to prove the overwhelming significance of the Roman high priests among the other bishops of the whole Church. The Pope takes the saying of the Lord: ‘I have prayed for thee, O Peter, that thy faith should not fail, and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren’ (Luke 22.32).

“By this the Lord showed,’ says the Pope, ‘that the faith of the other brethren will be subject to dangers, but the faith of Peter will remain without stumbling. Nobody can deny that just as the whole door is ruled by the hinge, so by Peter and his successors is defined the order and structure of the whole Church. And as the hinge opens and closes the door, while remaining itself unmoved, so Peter and his successors have the right freely to pronounce sentence on every Church, and nobody must disturb or shake their condition; for the highest see is not judged by anybody (summa sedes a nemine judicatur).”

But the most interesting part of Leo’s pretensions was his claim to have royal as well as priestly power. Thus he not only tried, as Gilbert Dagron writes, “to impose obedience [on the Eastern Church] by multiplying the expected scriptural quotations... He also added that the rebels of the East should content themselves with these witnesses ‘to the simultaneously earthly and heavenly power, or rather, to the royal priesthood of the Roman and apostolic see (de terreno et coelesti imperio, imo de regali sacerdotio romanae et apostolicae sedis).’\textsuperscript{125}

“Of much greater importance and interest in the given letter,” continues Lebedev, “are the very new papal ideas about his secular lordship, which are developed by the Pope in his letter to Cerularius and which rely on a false document – the so-called Donatio Constantini. Setting out his superior position among the other hierarchs of the Church, the Pope, in order to humiliate the Church of Constantinople – the aim of the letter – he develops the thought that the Popes are immeasurably superior to the representatives of all the other Churches since they are at one and the same time both first priests and emperors. In the East, it would seem, nothing of the sort had ever been heard; and for that reason it is understandable how such a novelty would affect the Church of Constantinople!

“Since the time of Constantine the Great the Popes had become at the same time emperors, insinuated Leo to Cerularius. The Pope wrote: ‘So that there should remain no doubt about the earthly [secular] power of the Roman high priest, and so that nobody should think that the Roman Church is ascribing to herself an honour that does not belong to her, we shall cite the proofs of from that privileged deed which the Emperor Constantine with his own hands laid upon the holy tomb of the heavenly key-bearer [Peter], and that the truth should be manifest and vanity disappear.’ In this privileged deed Constantine, according to the words of the Pope, declared the following: ‘We have considered it necessary, we together with all our rulers, the Senate, the nobles and the people of Rome, that, just as St. Peter was the vicar of the Son of God on earth, so the high priests, the heirs of the prince of the apostles, should retain the power to rule – and to an even more complete extent than is given to the earthly imperial dignity. That is, we are decreeing that reverent honour should be accorded both to our earthly imperial might, and in exactly the same way to the most holy Roman Church, and, so as more fully to exalt the see above our own earthly throne, we ascribe to her a royal power, dignity and honour. Moreover, we decree that the see of Peter should have the headship over the four sees of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Constantinople and also over all the Church in the inhabited world; the high priest of this Roman see must be considered for all time to be higher and more glorious than all the priest of the whole world, and in relations to questions of Divine service and faith his judgement should rule over all.’ Then Pope Leo describes what precisely Constantine bestowed upon his contemporary, Pope Sylvester, so as to exalt the papal altar. In the opinion of the Pope, it turns out

\textsuperscript{125} Dagron, \textit{Empereur et Prêtre} (Emperor and Priest), Éditions Gallimard, 1996, p. 247.
that Constantine bestowed upon the Pope first of all the palace in Rome. The privileged deed, according to the letter of Pope Leo, said the following about this: ‘We cede to the holy apostles themselves, the most blessed Peter and Paul, and through them to our father Pope Sylvester and all his successors who will be on the see of St. Peter to the end of the ages the Lateran palace, which is superior to all the palaces in the world.’ Then the Emperor Constantine adorns, as the Pope puts it, the person of the Roman high priest with royal regalia. The deed, according to the words of Pope Leo, said this about that: ‘We transfer to the Pope of Rome the diadem, that is the crown, from our own head, the garland that adorns the imperial neck, the purple chlamys, the scarlet tunic and all the other royal vestments. We entrust to him the imperial sceptre and all the other marks of distinction and the shoulder-belt – in a word, all the appurtenances of royal majesty.’ The letter even informs us that the Emperor with his own hands want to place his crown on the Pope’s head, but ‘the Pope did not want to use a crown of gold, and for that reason the Emperor placed on him with his own hands his Phrygian wreath (phrygium), shining white and signifying the Resurrection of Christ.’ In the words of Pope Leo, the Emperor Constantine, having adorned the Pope with royal regalia, in correspondence with this wanted to put the clergy who constituted his suite on a level with the royal courtiers. The deed, in the words of the letter, made the following legal ruling: ‘We raise the most honourable clergy of every rank in the service of the Roman Church to the same height of power and brilliance as our Senate, and decree that they should be adorned as our patricians and consuls are adorned. In a word, just as there are various kinds of servants attached to the imperial dignity – bed-makers, doormen and guards, so must it be with the holy Roman Church. And more than that: for the sake of the greater brilliance of the papal dignity let the clergy travel on horses adorned with the whitest of materials, and let them wear exactly the same shoes as are worn by the senators. And in this way let the heavenly [papal] power be adorned like the earthly [imperial], to the glory of God.’ In his concern for the person of the Pope and those close to him, according to the words of the Pope’s letter, Constantine bestowed on Sylvester and his heirs a broad, de facto royal power over a whole half of the Roman kingdom: the Roman high priest became the Roman emperor. In the words of the Pope, the deed said the following on this score: ‘So that the high priestly power should not decline, but should flourish more than the imperial power itself, we have decreed that besides the Lateran palace, the city of Rome, the provinces of Italy and all the western lands, and all the places and cities in them, should be transferred to our father Sylvester, so that he should have complete use of and dominion over them.’

In the letter Leo sent to the Patriarch with Cardinal Humbert he continued his assault: “We believe and firmly confess the following: the Roman Church is such that if any nation (Church) on earth should in its pride be in disagreement with her in anything, then such a Church ceases to be called and to be considered a Church – it is nothing. It will already be a conventicle

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126 Lebedev, op. cit., pp. 3-5.
of heretics, a collection of schismatics, a synagogue of Satan.”127 This was hardly calculated to mollify the Byzantines, and things were made worse when Humbert called them pimps and disciples of Mohammed! Humbert made it clear where the first loyalties of all Christians should lie when he told the Byzantines: “All men have such reverence for the holder of the apostolic office of Rome that they prefer the holy commandments and the traditions from the mouth of the head of the Church than from the Holy Scriptures and patristic writings. [Thus the Pope] makes almost the whole world run after God with delight and enthusiasm.”128

As a consequence of these events, the Greeks refused to enter into negotiations with the papal legates about an alliance against the Normans... Humbert claimed that the Patriarch had closed the churches of the westerners which served the Eucharist on unleavened bread. However, as Smith writes, “it is doubtful that the patriarch had actually committed himself to suppressing the Latin rite even on a local basis. For Humbert admits that he is only repeating a rumor that he has learned from some unidentified source. And he does not appear to have repeated the charge as the controversy progressed. For the church closings are not mentioned in the second papal letter to [Patriarch Michael] Cerularius or the note to [Emperor] Constantine Monomachus, complaining about the patriarch’s behavior. Nor was this made an issue in the debates with Nicetas [Stethatos] during his mission to Constantinople. Although Humbert does mention that before leaving the imperial city he brought the practice of certain churches – most likely those founded for Latins – into conformity with the standards of Rome, he does not claim that he found these churches actually closed. Therefore, it seems that the cardinal himself did not have certain evidence that Cerularius had actively persecuted Constantinople’s Latins before his arrival. But, in developing his reasons for excommunicating his opponent, he included the earlier report, though without claiming to have personally verified it...”129

The climax came on July 16, 1054, when the papal legates marched into the cathedral of Hagia Sophia and placed a bull of excommunication on the altar, anathematizing the Church of Constantinople and accusing her of every possible heresy in a “fantastically ignorant” document.130 Four days later, the Patriarch convened a Council that excommunicated the legates. “O you who are Orthodox,” he said, “flee the fellowship of those who have accepted the heretical Latins and who regard them as the first Christians in the Catholic and Holy Church of God!” For “the Pope is a heretic.”131

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127 Lebedev, op. cit., p. 7.
130 Alexander Dvorkin, Ocherki po Istoriy Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novgorod, 2006, p. 618. Humbert wrote: “May Michael the neophyte…and all those who follow him… fall under the anathema, Maranatha...” Comby (op. cit., p. 133) supposes that “he did not know that Maranatha means ‘Come, Lord’, and is not a condemnation”. But was he simply quoting I Corinthians 16.22?
Pope Leo IX had actually already died in April, 1054, so the papal anathema was technically invalid as not representing the will of a living Pope. In fact, the Byzantines seem to have regarded it as a forgery. However, although the next Pope, Stephen IX, wanted to send an embassy to Constantinople to repair the damage, he also died before the embassy could set off.

“No further missions were sent. Already, in the space of a few years, the mood in Rome had decisively shifted. What was at stake, many reformers had begun to accept, was nothing less than a fundamental point of principle. Cardinal Humbert had sounded out a trumpet blast on a truly decisive field of battle. The message that it sent to the rest of Christendom could hardly have been more ringing: no one, not even the Patriarch of the New Rome, could be permitted to defy the authority of the Pope…”

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132 See the italicized parts of the Byzantine decision: “When Michael, our most holy ruler and Ecumenical Patriarch was presiding, certain impious and disrespectful men—what else could a pious man call them?—came out of the darkness, because they were begotten of the West [i.e. sun rises in the east, sets in the west]. They came to this pious and divinely protected city from which the springs of Orthodoxy flow as if from on high, disseminating the teachings of piety to the ends of the world. They came like a thunderbolt, or an earthquake, or a hailstorm, or to put it more directly, like wild wolves trying to defile the Orthodox belief by different doctrines...

“We do not wish to tamper with the Sacred and Holy Creed...by wrongful arguments, improper reasoning and extreme boldness. Unlike them, we do not wish to say that the Holy Spirit Proceeds from the Father and the Son -- What a devilish deceit! -- but we say that the Holy Spirit Proceeds from the Father. We also declare that they do not follow the Scripture which says, 'Do not shave your beards.' (Leviticus 19:27).

“They do not want to understand that God created woman, and He decreed that it was improper for men to be alone. We continue to observe inviolate the ancient Canons of the Apostolic perfection and order, and affirm that the marriage of ordained men should not be dissolved. Neither should they be deprived of having sexual relations with their wives, which from time to time is appropriate. So if anyone is found to be worthy of the office of deacon or sub-deacon, he should not be kept form this office. He should be restored to his lawful wife in order that we not dishonor what God has Himself ordained and blessed, especially since the Gospel declares, "Those whom God has joined together, let not man put asunder." (Matthew 19:6) If someone then dares to act against the Apostolic Canons by removing anyone of the clergy who is a presbyter, deacon, or sub-deacon, depriving him of his lawful bond with his wife, let him be excommunicated....

“But they come against us and against the Orthodox Church of God...arriving before the most pious emperor. They intrigued against the faithful and even 'counterfeited' their arrival with the pretext that they came from Rome, and pretended that they were sent by the Pope.... They even produced fraudulent letters which allegedly had been given them by him. This fraud was detected, among other things, also from the seals which were clearly tampered with...The original of the impious document deposited on the Altar of the Great Church by these irreverent and accursed men was not burned, but was placed in the depository to bring the perpetual dishonour to those who have committed such blasphemies against us, and as permanent evidence of this condemnation." (From Readings in Christianity, by Robert Van Vorsts, pp. 129-130)

The other Eastern Churches were informed of the decision, and accepted it. And so 1054 has conventionally been taken as the date of the severing of the branch, the moment when the Western Church finally fell away from the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. However, many have doubted that this was the real cut-off point. Thus a Byzantine council of 1089 acted as if the schism of 1054 had not taken place. Again, Dvorkin writes that “the popular consciousness of that time in no way accepted the schism as final: nobody pronounced a ban on mutual communion, and concelebrations of priests and hierarchs of the two halves of Christianity continued even after 1054. The name of the pope of Rome was commemorated in the diptychs of other Eastern Churches (at any rate, sometimes). In our [Russian] lists of saints there were western saints who died after 1054.”

Nevertheless, the balance of evidence remains in favour of the traditional dating. For after 1054, there is a sharp and noticeable change in the papacy’s policies and attitudes to dissidents in Church and State. The bloody destruction of Orthodox England in 1066-70 was followed by the less violent subjection of Churches throughout Western Europe. Then came the papal blessing of the Norman invasion of Greece in the 1080s and of the first of the crusades – which did so much damage to Eastern Orthodox Christendom - in 1095. Ironically in view of the semi-racist theory that it was the Germans who destroyed the papacy, the last powerful opponent of the new, “Reformed” papacy was the German Emperor Henry IV, who was anathematized and deprived of his crown by Pope Gregory VII – an Italian Jew...

The momentous event of the Great Schism was heralded in the heavens by a huge explosion. “Arab and Chinese astronomers recorded the appearance of the bright Crab Supernova in [July] 1054. At X-ray and gamma-ray energies above 30 KeV, the Crab is generally the strongest persistent source in the sky today.” From now on, the whole of the West would be steadily sucked into the great black hole formed through the apostasy of the Roman papacy - the explosion of the first star in the firmament of the Church on earth.

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134 Papadakis, op. cit., pp. 76-77.
137 Dr. Jerjis Alajaji, personal communication, March 22, 2010.
56. THE NORMAN CONQUEST OF ENGLAND

In 1059 Pope Nicholas II sealed the political break with Constantinople when he entered into alliance at Melfi with the Normans. This alliance was momentous because up to this moment the Popes had always turned for protection to the Christian Roman Emperor, whether of East Rome or of the “Holy Roman Empire” of the West. Indeed, the Pope had insisted on crowning the “Holy Roman Emperor” precisely because he was the papacy’s official guardian. For it was unheard of that the Church of Rome should recognize as her official guardian any other power than the Roman Emperor, from whom, according to the forged Donation of Constantine, she had herself received her quasi-imperial dignity and power. But just as, in the middle of the eighth century, the Papacy had rejected the Byzantines in favour of the Franks, so now it rejected the Germans in favour of the Normans, a nation of Viking origin but French speech and culture that had recently seized a large swathe of German and Byzantine land in Southern Italy. The Pope legitimized this robbery in exchange for the Norman leaders Richard of Capua and Robert Guiscard becoming his feudal vassals and swearing to support the Papacy. In addition, Robert Guiscard specifically promised: “If you or your successors die before me, I will help to enforce the dominant wishes of the Cardinals and of the Roman clergy and laity in order that a pope may be chosen and established to the honour of St. Peter.”

“Thus after 1059 the Norman conquests were made progressively to subserve the restoration of the Latin rite and the extension of papal jurisdiction in southern Italy.” The losers here were both the German Emperor and the Emperor of New Rome. And in 1061 Guiscard’s younger brother Roger conquered Sicily from the Saracens, making sure to give a good share of the loot to the Pope. In exchange, Pope Alexander II granted Roger and his men “absolution for their sins”.

Even before entering into alliance with the Normans in Italy, the Papacy had begun to forge close bonds with the Normans in their homeland in Northern France, whence the papal assault on that other fortress of old-style Orthodox Autocracy, England, would soon be launched. Thus in 1055, the year after Duke William of Normandy seized effective control of his duchy by defeating a coalition led by his lord, King Henry I of France, the old-fashioned (that is, Orthodox) Archbishop Mauger was deposed to make way for the more forward-looking Maurilius. He introduced “a new and extraneous element” – that is, an element more in keeping with the ideals of the heretical, “reformed papacy” – into the Norman Church. Then, in 1059, papal sanction for the marriage between Duke William and Matilda of Flanders,

139 Douglas, op. cit., p. 155.
140 Holland, op. cit., p. 356.
which had been withheld by Leo IX at the Council of Rheims in 1049, was finally obtained. This opened the way for full cooperation between the Normans and the Pope. Finally, William supported the candidacy of Alexander II to the throne as against that of Honorius II, who was supported by the German Empress Agnes.142 The Pope now owed a debt of gratitude to the Normans which they were soon to call in...

By the 1060s there were only two powers in the West that stood in the way of the complete triumph of the crude, militaristic ethos of feudalism: the Orthodox autocracies of England and Germany. By the end of the century both powers had been brought low – England by military conquest and its transformation into a feudal state under William of Normandy, and Germany by cunning dialectic and the fear of excommunication by the Pope. In England, after a period of rule by Danish Christian kings (1017-1042), the Old English dynasty of Alfred the Great was restored in the person of King Ethelred’s son Edward, known to later generations as “the Confessor”. In January, 1066, King Edward died, and his brother-in-law Harold Godwineson was consecrated king in his place. Now two years earlier, Harold had been a prisoner at the court of William in Normandy, and in order to gain his freedom had sworn over a box of holy relics to uphold William’s claim to the English throne. So when he broke his oath and became king himself, William decided to invade – with the Pope’s blessing.

How could the Pope bless the armed invasion of a Christian country led by an anointed king who posed no threat to its neighbours? In order to answer this question, we have to examine the new theory of Church-State relations being developed in Rome. The critical question then was: in a society whose aims are defined by the Christian faith, are the jurisdictions of the clergy and secular ruler strictly parallel, or do the clergy have the power to depose a king who, in their judgement, is not ruling in accordance with these spiritual aims – whose nature, of course, can only be defined by the clergy?

Now up to the middle of the ninth century, no decisive test-case had yet appeared which would define whether the Church could, not simply confirm a royal deposition or change of dynasty, but actually initiate it. Pope Nicholas I was the first pope to take it upon himself to initiate the deposition of emperors and patriarchs as if all power in both Church and State were in his hands.143


143 The nearest parallels to Nicholas’ action are the following: (i) as early as 633 the Fourth Council of Toledo had condemned the Visigothic King Suinthila as unjust and faithless, and declared that he had already deprived himself of the kingship. However, the king had already been removed by a Frankish army, and the nobles had already elected a new king, Sisenand, before the convening of this Council, so it was not the clergy who deposed the king in this case. Moreover, the bishops then proceeded to condemn rebellions against kings with an extraordinarily powerful anathema! The Fathers of the Council, led by St. Isidore of Seville, “begged that there should be no usurpations in Spain, no attempts to stir up rebellion,
However, as we have seen, in 865 Nicholas’ efforts were thwarted by the firm opposition both of the Eastern Church under St. Photius the Great and of Western hierarchs such as Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims. It was not before another two hundred years had passed that the papacy once again felt strong enough to challenge the power of the anointed kings. Its chance came on the death of King Edward the Confessor, when Harold Godwinsson took the throne of England with the consent of the leading men of England but without the consent of the man to whom he had once sworn allegiance, Duke William of Normandy.

Douglas writes: “At some undetermined date within the first eight months of 1066 [Duke William] appealed to the papacy, and a mission was sent under the leadership of Gilbert, archdeacon of Lisieux, to ask for judgement in the duke’s favour from Alexander II. No records of the case as it was heard in Rome have survived, nor is there any evidence that Harold Godwinsson was ever summoned to appear in his own defence. On the other hand, the arguments used by the duke’s representatives may be confidently surmised. Foremost among them must have been an insistence on Harold’s oath, and its violation when the earl seized the throne… Archdeacon Hildebrand… came vigorously to the support of Duke William, and Alexander II was led publicly to proclaim his approval of Duke William’s enterprise.”

no plots against the lives of the monarchs. In future, when a king died, his successor must be appointed by the magnates of the whole kingdom sitting along with the bishops in a common council. Three times the bishops repeated their awful anathema against anyone who should conspire to break his oath of allegiance, or make an attempt on the king’s life, or try to usurp the throne. Three times the anathema was read out to the concourse with profound solemnity, and three times the notaries copied it into the minutes. All the clergy and laymen present shouted out their agreement. Then the bishops called upon Sisenand and his successors for ever to rule moderately and mildly, with justice and piety, over the peoples entrusted to them by God. Any successor of Sisenand’s who ruled harshly or oppressively would be anathema. After this impressive scene the bishops condemned and sentenced Suinthila and his family…” (E.A. Thompson, The Goths in Spain, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, pp. 174, 175).

(ii) Again, in 750, when the last Merovingian king, Childeric, had been deposed, and the first Carolingian, Pippin, enthroned in his place, it was not Pope Zachariah who deposed Childeric: he only confirmed and blessed the change of dynasty, declaring that “it would be better for him to be called king who had the power of one, than him who remained without royal power”, and then “commanded by apostolic authority that Pippin be made king lest order be disturbed”.

(iii) Again, it was the chief men of the Carolingian empire who, in 833, removed their support from Louis the Pious. The bishops only confirmed the decision later by “declaring formally the divine judgement that he had been shown to be unfit to govern, and by then degrading him from his rank as ruler and imposing a penance on him.” (Canning, op. cit., p. 51. See the whole of chapter 2 for Carolingian ideas on kingship)

144 Douglas, William the Conqueror, op. cit., p. 187. Hildebrand was almost certainly reminding William of his support for him at this point when he wrote, on April 24, 1080: “I believe it is known to you, most excellent son, how great was the love I ever bore you, even before I ascended the papal throne, and how active I have shown myself in your affairs; above all how diligently I laboured for your advancement to royal rank. In consequence I suffered dire calumny through certain brethren insinuating that by such partisanship I gave sanction for the perpetration of great slaughter. But God was witness to my conscience that I did so with a
The Pope had his own reasons for supporting William. In 1052 Archbishop Robert of Canterbury, a Norman, had fled from England after the struggle between the English and Norman parties at the court had inclined in favour of the English. During his flight he forgot to take his pallium (omophorion), which with the agreement of the king was then handed over to Bishop Stigand of Winchester, who became archbishop of Canterbury in place of Robert. This elicited the wrath of the Pope, who labelled Stigand an anticanonical usurper. But the English refused to obey the Pope. And so, beginning from 1052 and continuing right up to the Stigand’s deposition by the legates of the Pope at the false council of Winchester in 1070, England remained in schism from, and under the ban of, the Roman Pope – who himself, from 1054, was in schism from, and under the ban of, the Great Church of Constantinople. To make matters worse, in 1058 Archbishop Stigand had had his position regularized by the “antipope” (i.e. enemy of the Hildebrandine reformers) Benedict IX. Here was the perfect excuse for blessing William’s invasion: the “schismatic” English had to be brought to heel and their Church purged of all secular influence. And if this “holy” aim was to be achieved by the most secular of means – armed invasion and the murder of hundreds of thousands of innocent Christians – so be it!

According to Frank McLynn, it was Stigand’s supposed uncanonicity “that most interested [Pope] Alexander. William pitched his appeal to the papacy largely on his putative role as the leader of the religious and ecclesiastical reform movement in Normandy and as a man who could clean the Augean stables of church corruption in England; this weighed heavily with Alexander, who, as his joust with Harald Hardrada in 1061 demonstrated, thought the churches of northern Europe far too remote from papal control. It was the abiding dream of the new ‘reformist’ papacy to be universally accepted as the arbiter of thrones and their succession; William’s homage therefore constituted a valuable precedent. Not surprisingly, Alexander gave the proposed invasion of England his blessing. It has sometimes been queried why Harold did not send his own embassy to counter William’s arguments. Almost certainly, the answer is that he thought it a waste of time on two grounds: the method of electing a king in England had nothing to do with the pope and was not a proper area for his intervention; and, in any case, the pope was now the creature of the Normans in southern Italy and would ultimately do what they ordered him to do. Harold was right: Alexander II blessed all the Norman marauding expeditions of the 1060s.

“But although papal sanction for William’s ‘enterprise of England’ was morally worthless, it was both a great propaganda and diplomatic triumph for the Normans. It was a propaganda victory because it allowed William to pose as the leader of crusaders in a holy war, obfuscating and mystifying the base, materialistic motives of his followers and mercenaries. It also gave the

Normans a great psychological boost, for they could perceive themselves as God’s elect, and it is significant that none of William’s inner circle entertained doubts about the ultimate success of the English venture. Normandy now seemed the spearhead of a confident Christianity, on the offensive for the first time in centuries, whereas earlier [Western] Christendom had been beleaguered by Vikings to the north, Hungarians to the east and Islam to the south. It was no accident that, with Hungary and Scandinavia recently Christianised, the Normans were the vanguard in the first Crusade, properly so called, against the Islamic heathens in the Holy Land.

“Alexander’s fiat was a diplomatic triumph, too, as papal endorsement for the Normans made it difficult for other powers to intervene on Harold’s side. William also pre-empted one of the potential sources of support for the Anglo-Saxons by sending an embassy to the emperor Henry IV; this, too, was notably successful, removing a possible barrier to a Europe-wide call for volunteers in the ‘crusade’.”

As long as King Edward had been alive, Hildebrand’s party had been restrained from attacking England both by the king’s Europe-wide renown as a wonderworker and by the lack of a military force suitable for the task in hand. But now that Edward was dead, William’s suit presented Hildebrand with the opportunity for the “holy war” he had wanted for so long.

William and his army invaded the south of England in September, 1066. Meanwhile, King Harald Hardrada of Norway had invaded the north. On September 20 the English King Harold defeated the Norwegian army, and then marched south to meet the Normans with the minimum of rest and without waiting for reinforcements. The reason for this, David Howarth argues, is that Harold had now, for the first time, heard that he and his followers had been excommunicated by the Pope and that William was fighting with the pope’s blessing and under a papal banner, with a tooth of St. Peter encrusted in gold around his neck.

"This meant that he was not merely defying William, he was defying the Pope. It was doubtful whether the Church, the army and the people would support him in that defiance: at best, they would be bewildered and half-hearted. Therefore, since a battle had to be fought, it must be fought at once, without a day's delay, before the news leaked out. After that, if the battle was won, would be time to debate the Pope's decision, explain that the trial had been a travesty, query it, appeal against it, or simply continue to defy it.”

“At first,” writes François Neveux, “the new king hoped that he could win round his former adversaries. He considered that he had been quite within

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146 He prophesied on his deathbed that England was under God’s curse and would soon be invaded by demons (Anonymous, *Vita Aedwardi Regis* (The Life of Edward the King), edited by Frank Barlow, Nelson’s Medieval Texts, 1962).
his rights to conquer the country, since he had been promised the throne by the previous king, Edward. ‘God’s judgement’ having favoured him, he assumed that the English would all rally to him without any problem. We know of one English reaction from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (version D). The anonymous author, who seems to be resigned to the inevitable, asserts that the English were punished for their sins. At first, William presented himself as the successor of the Anglo-Saxon kings, not only Edward, but Harold also. He drafted a number of documents in Old English, and made an effort to learn the language of his new people. Some this attitude may be glimpsed in the Bayeux Tapestry, which is one of the first testimonies we possess of these events. In it, Harold is referred to as ‘king’, just as he is in a number of charters. He is even singled out and praised for his bravery. The Latin commentary is very neutral, and may be read in both a pro-English and a pro-Norman light. This early line only lasted a few years, until it came up against the harsh reality of Anglo-Saxon rebellions.

“The first rebellion broke out in Exeter, in the south-west of the kingdom, in 1067-8; it was easily quelled. The most serious rebellion took place in the north, in several stages, during 1069-70. It was harshly put down by the king, who systematically ravaged the region. The Fens, around the Isle of Ely, were the scene of a final rebellion, in 1070-1...”

During these rebellions, according to one source, every fifth Englishman was killed, and even if this figure is an exaggeration, Domesday Book (1086) shows that the North a wasteland for a generation after the Conquest. So terrible was the slaughter, and the destruction of holy churches and relics, that the Norman bishops who took part in the campaign were required to do penance when they returned home. But the Pope who had blessed this unholy slaughter did no penance. Rather, he sent his legates to England, who, at the false council of Winchester in 1070, deposed Archbishop Stigand and most of the English bishops, thereby integrating the “rebellious” land into his religious empire. For the Norman Conquest was, in effect, the first crusade of the “reformed” Papacy against Orthodox Christendom. As Professor Douglas writes: “It is beyond doubt that the latter half of the eleventh century witnessed a turning-point in the history of Western Christendom, and beyond doubt Normandy and the Normans played a dominant part in the transformation which then occurred... They assisted the papacy to rise to a new political domination, and they became closely associated with the reforming movement in the Church which the papacy came to direct. They contributed also to a radical modification of the relations between Eastern and Western Europe with results that still survive. The Norman Conquest of England may thus in one sense be regarded as but part of a far-flung endeavour...”

149 Fr. Andrew Phillips, Orthodox Christianity and the Old English Church, English Orthodox Trust, 1996, p. 27.
150 Douglas, William the Conqueror, pp. 6-7.
It follows that if William had lost, then, as John Hudson writes, “the reformers in the papacy, who had backed William in his quest for the English throne, might have lost their momentum. Normandy would have been greatly weakened…”151 In other words, the whole course of European history might have been changed…

All William’s barons and bishops owned their land as his vassals; and when, on August 1, 1086, William summoned all the free tenants of England to an assembly at Salisbury and imposed upon them an oath of loyalty directly to himself, he became in effect the sole landowner of England – that is, the owner of all its land.

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Thus was born the feudal monarchy, a new kind of despotism.

As R.H.C. Davis explains, this feudal monarchy was in fact “a New Leviathan, the medieval equivalent of a socialist state. In a socialist state, the community owns, or should own, the means of production. In a feudal monarchy, the king did own all the land – which in the terms of medieval economy might fairly be equated with the means of production.

“The best and simplest example of a feudal monarchy is to be found in England after the Norman Conquest. When William the Conqueror defeated Harold Godwineson at the battle of Hastings (1066), he claimed to have established his legitimate right to succeed Edward the Confessor as King of England, but, owing to Harold’s resistance, he was also able to claim that he had won the whole country by right of conquest. Henceforward, every inch of land was to be his, and he would dispose of it as he thought fit.”152

As we have seen, William had conquered England with the blessing of Archdeacon Hildebrand. And shortly after his bloody pacification of the country he imposed the new canon law of the reformed papacy upon the English Church. This pleased Hildebrand, now Pope Gregory VII, who was therefore prepared to overlook the fact that William considered that he owed his kingdom to his sword and God alone: "The king of the English, although in certain matters he does not comport himself as devoutly as we might hope, nevertheless in that he has neither destroyed nor sold the Churches of God [!]; that he has taken pains to govern his subjects in peace and justice [!!]; that he has refused his assent to anything detrimental to the apostolic see, even when solicited by certain enemies of the cross of Christ; and that he has compelled priests on oath to put away their wives and laity to forward the tithes they were withholding from us - in all these respects he has shown himself more worthy of approbation and honour than other kings..."

The "other kings" Gregory was referring to included, first of all, the Emperor Henry IV of Germany, who, unlike William, did not support the Pope's "reforms". If William had acted like Henry, then there is no doubt that Pope Gregory would have excommunicated him, too. And if William had refused to co-operate with the papacy, then there is equally no doubt that the Pope would have incited his subjects to wage a "holy war" against him, as he did against Henry.

But William, by dint of brute force within and subtle diplomacy without, managed to achieve complete control over both Church and State, while at the same time paradoxically managing to remain on relatively good terms with the most autocratic Pope in history. For totalitarian rulers only respect rivals of the same spirit. Thus did the papocasarist totalitarianism of Hildebrand beget the caesaropapist totalitarianism of William the Bastard...

The absolute nature of William's control of the Church was vividly expressed by Edmer of Canterbury: "Now, it was the policy of King William to maintain in England the usages and laws which he and his fathers before him were accustomed to have in Normandy. Accordingly he made bishops, abbots and other nobles throughout the whole country of persons of whom (since everyone knew who they were, from what estate they had been raised and to what they had been promoted) it would be considered shameful ingratitude if they did not implicitly obey his laws, subordinating to this every other consideration; or if any one of them presuming upon the power conferred by any temporal dignity dared raise his head against him. Consequently, all things, spiritual and temporal alike, waited upon the nod of the King... He would not, for instance, allow anyone in all his dominion, except on his instructions, to recognize the established Pontiff of the City of Rome or under any circumstance to accept any letter from him, if it had not first been submitted to the King himself. Also he would not let the primate of his kingdom, by which I mean the Archbishop of Canterbury, otherwise Dobernia, if he were presiding over a general council of bishops, lay down any ordinance or prohibition unless these were agreeable to the King's wishes and had been first settled by him. Then again he would not allow any one of his bishops, except on his express instructions, to proceed against or excommunicate one of his barons or officers for incest or adultery or any other cardinal offence, even when notoriously guilty, or to lay upon him any punishment of ecclesiastical discipline."¹⁵³

Again, in a letter to the Pope in reply to the latter's demand for fealty, William wrote: "I have not consented to pay fealty, nor will I now, because I never promised it, nor do I find that any of my predecessors ever paid it to your predecessors."¹⁵⁴ In the same letter he pointedly called Archbishop

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Douglas & Greenway, English Historical Documents, Eyre & Spottiswoode, p. 647.
Lanfranc "my vassal" – that is, not the Pope’s! Here we see the way in which the language of feudalism, of the mutual rights and obligations of lords and vassals, had crept into the language of Church-State relations at the highest level...

The Popes therefore had to wait until William's death before gradually asserting their personal control over the English Church... Nevertheless, the early Plantagenet kings of England inherited a power that was unique in Western Europe, and they took care to retain it, especially through the institution of the courts. As Francis Fukuyama writes, “of all European polities, the English state was by far the most centralized and powerful. This state grew out of the king’s court and its ability to offer justice across the whole realm. Already by the year 1200 it boasted permanent institutions staffed by professional or semiprofessional officials; it issued a rule saying that no case concerning the possession of land could be initiated without a write from the king’s court; and it was able to tax the entire realm.”

57. THE FALL OF THE POPES: (3) FROM NICHOLAS II TO GREGORY VII

One of the aims of the papal reform programme, as we have seen, was the enforcement of celibacy on the priesthood. In 1057 street fights broke out between the supporters of Archbishop Guy of Milan, who allowed married priests, and the so-called “Pataranes”, who rejected it and threatened married priests with death. The papacy sent legates to investigate the matter: Cardinal Peter Damian and Bishop Alexander, the future Pope Alexander II, both advocates of priestly celibacy.\(^{156}\)

Hieromonk Enoch writes: “Four years after the Schism of Old Rome and Constantinople (New Rome), we find the increased activity on the part of the Vatican to consolidate its influence.

“In this year, representatives of Pope Stephen IX were sent to the Church of Milan to instruct its Bishop, clergy, and all dependents that it was to be subject completely to Rome in all matters. Caesar Baronius, the well-known Ultramontanist writers, states the clergy and people rose up in great discord against such a suggestion, with the clergy of Milan saying, ‘that the Ambrosian Church ought not to be subject to the laws of Rome; that the Pope had no power of judging or ordering matters in that See; and that it would be a great indignity if that Church, which under their ancestors had been always free, should now, to their extreme reproach (which God forbid), become subject to another Church.’

“So great was the anger at what was trying to be done that Baronius states: ‘the clamour increased; the people grew into a higher ferment; the bells were rung; the episcopal palace beset; the legate threatened with death.’ (Annals, t. xi., p. 262, A.D. 1059, n. 43).”\(^{157}\)

In 1059 a quasi-royal coronation was introduced into the rite of the inauguration of the new Pope, Nicholas II. Then he decreed that the Popes should be elected by the cardinal-bishops alone, without the participation of the people – or the emperor. “The role of the Roman clergy and people,” writes Canning, “was reduced to one of mere assent to the choice. The historical participation of the emperor was by-passed with the formula

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\(^{156}\) The matter was complicated by the fact that Archbishop Guy had been invested by Emperor Henry III. Another complication was the fact that Milan was a see with very unpapist attitudes. This could be traced back to the fact that its most famous incumbent, St. Ambrose, had declared that Rome had only “a primacy of confession, not of honour” (Liber de incarnationis Dominicae Sacramento (Book on the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Lord), 4, 32). St. Ambrose, like the medieval popes, was very bold in relation to the secular authorities, having excommunicated the Emperor Theodosius I. However, unlike the papal reformers from Gregory VII onwards, he did not attempt to remove the authorities from power, nor exalt the role of the Roman papacy.

\(^{157}\) Hieromonk Enoch, facebook communication, September, 2015.
saving the honour and reverence due to our beloved son Henry [IV] who is for the present regarded as king and who, it is hoped, is going to be emperor with God’s grace, inasmuch as we have now conceded this to him and to his successors who shall personally obtain this right from the apostolic see’." 158

This new method of election, having strengthened the reformers against the Emperor, now encouraged them to return to the struggle against his appointee in Milan. In 1065 Archdeacon Hildebrand, the real power behind the papal throne, gave a knight called Erlembald a papal banner, “the battle-flag of St. Peter”, under which he was to renew the struggle against the married priests in Milan. “Whether as a consequence of this or not, victory marked all his efforts. ‘He subdued the city by the sword and also by gold, and by many and diverse oaths; none of the nobles could withstand him.’ Indeed, by 1071, such was the scale of Erlembald’s success that the wretched Archbishop Guy, holed up in his cathedral, and in increasingly poor health, had resolved on clandestine resignation.” 159

Also in 1071, Byzantine Bari in South Italy fell to the Normans, who soon created another absolutist kingdom “of Sicily and Italy” that served as the launch-pad for several invasions of the Byzantine Empire. In the same year the Byzantines suffered a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Seljuk Turks at Manzikert, as a result of which most of Anatolia was conceded to the Turks. As Orthodoxy reeled under these hammer blows, - the loss of England, of Southern Italy and of Eastern Anatolia – the worst hammer blow of all, the implosion of the Western Patriarchate, was about to take place...

By 1072 there were two archbishops of Milan – Godfrey, chosen by the Emperor, and Atto, chosen by the reformers. But Godfrey was under siege by Patarene thugs, and Atto, after a beating up himself, had sworn not to interfere in the affairs of the bishopric. “A shocking state of affairs, to be sure – and yet barely hinting at the full scale of the crisis yet to come. In the summer of 1072, Pope Alexander II, at a formal synod of the Roman Church, pronounced that Atto was not bound by the oath he had given his assailants – and was therefore the rightful Archbishop of Milan. A few months later, in early 1073, Henry IV leaned on the bishops of Lombardy to stand as Godfrey’s patrons at his consecration. Alexander’s response was to

159 Holland, op. cit., p. 345. A similar campaign against married priests was being waged at this time in Norman-conquered England by Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester: "The sin of incontinence he abhorred, and approved continence in all men, and especially in clerks in holy orders. If he found one wholly given to chastity he took him to himself and loved him as a son. Wedded priests he brought under one edict, commanding them to renounce their fleshly desires or their churches. If they loved chastity, they would remain and be welcome: if they were the servants of bodily pleasures, they must go forth in disgrace. Some there were who chose rather to go without their churches than their women: and of these some wandered about till they starved; others sought and at last found some other provision...” (William of Malmesbury, Vita Wulfstani)
excommunicate not only Godfrey himself, not only the Lombard bishops, but, just for good measure, some of Henry’s own closest advisers. Only once they had all been dismissed, the Pope declared, would he re-establish contact with the king: until that moment, he was to be regarded as ‘outside the communion of the Church’. Almost without anyone quite understanding how it had happened, papacy and empire, those twin pillars of Christendom, were at open loggerheads…”

Late in 1072 Peter Damian died, and with him, reformer though he was, there died in the West that symphonic ideal of Church-State relations that he had described thus: “The heads of the world shall live in union of perfect charity, and shall prevent all discord among their lower members. These institutions, which are two for men, but one for God, shall be enflamed by the divine mysteries; the two persons who represent them shall be so closely united by the grace of mutual charity, that it will be possible to find the king in the Roman pontiff, and the Roman pontiff in the king.”

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160 Holland, op. cit., p. 347.
161 Peter Damian had also opposed the new tendency in Roman canon law to protect local bishops from local opposition. As he wrote, “The statement, ‘It is not permissible for a son of the church to bring charges against his own bishop... before a greater church’ is too incongruous and utterly contrary to ecclesiastical discipline... See what is claimed: ‘I am a bishop, a pastor of the Church, and I must not suffer the annoyance of accusations from the flock committed to me: for the sake of the faith it is right that I should be borne with equanimity, even if I am of evil character.’... Let this cunning subterfuge be abolished, so that... [no one] may enjoy immunity for the sins which he has committed. Let free access be permitted to just grievances and complaints made at the primatial see.” (Epistolae 1.12).

However, we cannot say that Peter Damian was truly Orthodox. As Hieromonk Enoch writes: “I’ve always found it interesting, that Peter Damian’s letter to the Patriarch of Constantinople on the Filioque, which he wrote to support, he says, ‘First of all, therefore, let me explain the source of this ignorance that allows almost all the Greeks and some Latins to maintain that the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son but only from that Father.’

“Peter Damian then goes onward, in point 8 of his letter, to give what should be the clearest reasons not to support the Filioque. He says, ‘Citing these texts, therefore, and the like, not only from the Gospels but from other scriptural evidence as well, they assert that the Holy Spirit in no way proceeds from the Son, but only from the Father. Some such statement which seems to agree with this opinion is often found even in the doctors who use the Latin language. Clearly blessed Jerome, in his explanation of the faith sent to the bishops Alippius and Augustine, says among other things, "We believe also in the Holy Spirit, true God, Who Proceeds from the Father, equal in all things to the Father and to the Son." Augustine also, inveighing against Maximus the heretic, says, "The Son is from the Father, the Holy Spirit is from the Father." Even Pope St. Leo, on the silver plaque erected before the most sacred body of St. Paul the Apostle, says among other formulations of his faith, "And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, Who Proceeds from the Father--with the Father and the Son to be jointly adored and glorified." In the Creed of the Council of Nicea, moreover, it says, "We also believe in the Holy Spirit, Who Proceeds properly from the Father, and who just as the Son is true God"; and a littler further on, "And that the Holy Spirit is also true God we find in Scripture, and that He Proceeds properly from the Father, and that He always exists with the Father and the Son." And again it says, "The Son is from the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds properly and truly from the Father."

“Nevertheless, Damian tries to defend the Filioque by saying that just because it says this, it doesn’t mean it excludes something else. However, many find it interesting that there were enough ‘some Latins that Peter Damian had to mention them.” (http://westernorthodoxchristian.blogspot.co.uk/2013/10/and-some-latins.html)
In April, 1073, Pope Alexander II also died. “The people of Rome, rather than wait for the cardinals to nominate a successor, were soon taking the law into their own hands. They knew precisely whom they wanted as their new pope: ‘Hildebrand for bishop!’ Even as Alexander was being laid to rest in the Lateran, the cry went up across the whole city.”162 So a democratic revolution in the Church brought to power one of the greatest despots in history, Hildebrand – Höllenbrand, or “Hellfire”, as Luther called him, or “my holy Satan”, in the words of one of his associates.163 He was a midget in physical size. But having been elected to the papacy “by the will of St. Peter”, he set about ensuring that no ruler on earth would rival him in “spiritual” grandeur. Having witnessed, in 1046, the Emperor Henry III’s deposition of Pope Gregory VI, with whom he went into exile, he took the name Gregory VII in order to emphasize a unique mission. For, as Peter de Rosa writes, “he had seen an emperor dethrone a pope; he would dethrone an emperor regardless.

“Had he put an emperor in his place, he would have been beyond reproach. He did far more. By introducing a mischievous and heretical doctrine [of Church-State relations], he put himself in place of the emperor… He claimed to be not only Bishop of bishops but King of kings. In a parody of the gospels, the devil took him up to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and Gregory VII exclaimed: These are all mine.

“As that most objective of historians, Henry Charles Lea, wrote in The Inquisition in the Middle Ages: ‘To the realization of this ideal [of papal supremacy], he devoted his life with a fiery zeal and unshaken purpose that shrank from no obstacle, and to it he was ready to sacrifice not only the men who stood in his path but also the immutable principles of truth and justice.’

“… The Bishop of Trier saw the danger. He charged Gregory with destroying the unity of the Church. The Bishop of Verdun said that the pope was mistaken in his unheard-of arrogance. Belief belongs to one’s church, the heart belongs to one’s country. The pope, he said, must not filch the heart’s allegiance. This was precisely what Gregory did. He wanted all; he left emperors and princes nothing. The papacy, as he fashioned it, by undermining patriotism, undermined the authority of secular rulers; they felt threatened by the Altar. At the Reformation, in England and elsewhere, rulers felt obliged to exclude Catholicism from their lands in order to feel secure…

“The changes Gregory brought about were reflected in language. Before him, the pope’s traditional title was Vicar of St. Peter. After him, it was Vicar of Christ. Only ‘Vicar of Christ’ could justify his absolutist pretensions, which his successors inherited in reality not from Peter or from Jesus but from him.”164

162 Holland, op. cit. pp. 348-349.
163 Fukuyama, op. cit. p. 265.
164 De Rosa, op. cit. pp. 65, 66.
Canning writes: “The impact of Gregory VII’s pontificate was enormous: for the church nothing was to be the same again. From his active lifetime can be traced the settling of the church in its long-term direction as a body of power and coercion; the character of the papacy as a jurisdictional and governmental institution... There arises the intrusive thought, out of bounds for the historian: this was the moment of the great wrong direction taken by the papacy, one which was to outlast the Middle Ages and survive into our own day. From the time of Gregory can be dated the deliberate clericalisation of the church based on the notion that the clergy, being morally purer, were superior to the laity and constituted a church which was catholic, chaste and free. There was a deep connection between power and a celibacy which helped distinguish the clergy as a separate and superior caste, distanced in the most profound psychological sense from the family concerns of the laity beneath them. At the time of the reform papacy the church became stamped with characteristics which have remained those of the Roman Catholic church: it became papally centred, legalistic, coercive and clerical. The Roman church was, in Gregory’s words, the ‘mother and mistress’ (mater et magistra) of all churches.”

Gregory’s position was based on a forged collection of canons and a false interpretation of two Gospel passages: Matthew 16.18-19 and John 21.15-17. According to the first passage, in Gregory’s interpretation, he was the successor of Peter, upon whom the Church had been founded, and had plenary power to bind and to loose. And according to the second, the flock of Peter over which he had jurisdiction included all Christians, not excluding emperors. As he wrote: “Perhaps [the supporters of the emperor] imagine that when God commended His Church to Peter three times, saying, ‘Feed My sheep’, He made an exception of kings? Why do they not consider, or rather confess with shame that when God gave Peter, as the ruler, the power of binding and loosing in heaven and on earth, he excepted no-one and withheld nothing from his power?”

For “who could doubt that the priests of Christ are considered the fathers and masters of kings, princes and all the faithful?” This meant that he had power both to excommunicate and depose the emperor. Nor did the emperor’s anointing give him any authority in Gregory’s eyes. For “greater power is conceded to an exorcist, when he is made a spiritual emperor for expelling demons, than could be given to any layman for secular domination”. Indeed, “who would not know that kings and dukes took their origin from those who, ignorant of God, through pride, rapine, perfidy, murders and, finally, almost any kind of crime, at the instigation of the devil, the prince of this world, sought with blind desire and unbearable presumption to dominate their equals, namely other men?”

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165 Canning, op. cit., pp. 96, 97.
166 Gregory VII, in Canning, op. cit., pp. 91-93.
Hildebrand’s attitude to political power was Manichaean in its negative intensity. It was Manichaean insofar as it saw the relationship between the Church and the State as a dualistic struggle between good and evil, light and darkness. Just as the Manichaeans (like all heresies of the Gnostic type) tried to free themselves from the flesh and physical nature as from something defiling in essence, so the Gregorians tried to free themselves from the state as from something evil in essence. For them there could be no really good king: kingship should be in the hands of the only good ones, the priests. Indeed, as de Rosa writes of a later Pope who faithfully followed Hildebrand’s teaching, “this was Manichaeism applied to relations between church and state. The church, spiritual, was good; the state, material, was essentially the work of the devil. This naked political absolutism undermined the authority of kings. Taken seriously, his theories would lead to anarchy”.167

Of course, the idea that the priesthood was in essence higher than the kingship was not in itself heretical, and could find support in the Holy Fathers. However, the Fathers always allowed that kings had supremacy of jurisdiction in their own sphere, for the power of secular rulers comes from God and is worthy of the honour that befits every God-established institution. Indeed, Gregory’s colleague and fellow-reformer Peter Damian had written: “In the king Christ is truly recognized as reigning”.168 What was new, shocking and completely unpatriotic in Gregory’s words was his disrespect for the kingship, his refusal to allow it any dignity or holiness, his denial to Caesar of the things that are Caesar’s - because he considered himself to be Caesar! In Gregory’s view rulers had no right to rule unless he gave it them.

The corollary of this was that the only rightful ruler was the Pope. For “if the holy apostolic see, through the princely power divinely conferred upon it, has jurisdiction over spiritual things, why not also over secular things?” Thus to the Spanish kings Gregory wrote in 1077 that the kingdom of Spain belonged to St. Peter and the Roman Church “in rightful ownership”. “The Spanish Church, according to Hieromonk Enoch, “had its entire ecclesiastical hierarchy (both the episcopate, the archpriests [deans], and canons of cathedrals, and many abbacies] replaced by Cluniac French prelates who were loyal to the ‘Reform’, especially those of Gregory VII in the late 11th century; the move in Spain was supported by the rulers, such as Alfonso VI, it also came along with the suppression of the native Iberian liturgical ritual in a brutal fashion.”169

Again, to the secular rulers of Sardinia Gregory wrote in 1073 that the Roman Church exerted “a special and individual care” over them - which meant, as a later letter of 1080 demonstrated, that they would face armed invasion if they did not submit to the pope’s terms.

167 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 69.
168 Peter Damian, Letter 8, 2, P.L. 144, 436.
169 Hieromonk Enoch, Facebook communication, 26 September, 2016.
Again, in 1075 he threatened King Philip of France with excommunication, having warned the French episcopate that if the king did not amend his ways he would place France under interdict, adding: “Do not doubt that we shall, with God’s help, make every possible effort to snatch the kingdom of France from his possession.” But this would have remained just words, if Gregory had not had the ability to compel submission. He demonstrated this ability when wrote to one of King Philip’ vassals, Duke William of Aquitaine, and invited him to threaten the king. The king backed down...

The Gregorians were amazing in their ability to twist Holy Scripture to their purpose. One of the main passages supporting the inviolability of the king’s power was Romans 13.1-7, which declares that political authorities are from God, that they are ministers of God and do not wield the sword in vain. As I.S. Robinson writes, “Early medieval commentators underlined the apostle’s insistence on the Christian’s duty of submission to the divinely ordained secular power, placing particular emphasis on St. Paul’s warning: ‘those who resist [the political power] incur damnation’. So, for example, Atto of Vercelli wrote c. 940 that it was sacrilegious to resist the regnum, even if the ruler was an enemy of the Christian faith. A mala potestas was imposed by God ‘so that the good may be tested in the virtue of patience’: hence the word of Job 34.30, ‘He makes the hypocrite reign because of the sins of the people’. The eleventh-century reformers concentrated in their interpretation of the Pauline text not on the impossibility of resistance to the king, but rather on the description of kingship as ministerium. From the king’s role of minister they were able to deduce that a mala potestas could after all be resisted. The argument is first found in a letter of Peter Damian of 1065, instructing Henry IV of Germany in his duties. The king ‘bears the sword in vain’ if he does not punish those who resist God; he is not ‘the servant of God to execute his wrath on the evildoer’ if he does not punish the enemies of the Church. A king who shows by his protection of the Church that he reveres God must be obeyed: a king who opposes the divine commandments is no minister Dei and is held in contempt by his subjects.

“This was the attitude to kingship which determined the actions of Gregory VII. He would countenance only ‘a suitable king for the honour of holy church’, ‘a fitting defender and ruler’: ‘unless he is obedient, humbly devoted and useful to holy Church, as a Christian king ought to be... then without a doubt holy Church will not only not favour him, but will oppose him’. Ideally the king should be the vassal (fidelis) of St. Peter and of his vicar, the pope. Gregory VII gave lectures on Christian kingship to the rulers of the ‘new’ kingdoms on the edge of Christendom; he sat in judgement on the conduct of the rulers of the older kingdoms, summoning their vassals to enforce his decisions. If a king did not prove to be ‘useful to holy Church’, he was to be excommunicated and deposed, and replaced by a more suitable candidate. The removal of the last Merovingian and the installation of the

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Arnulfing major of the palace as king of the Franks in 751 provided Gregory VII with his most important exemplum.\footnote{Robinson, “Church and Papacy”, pp. 300-301.}

All this came to a head in his famous dispute with Emperor Henry IV. It began, as we have seen, with a quarrel between Gregory’s predecessor, Alexander II, and the Emperor over who should succeed to the see of Milan. Gregory, following the line of his predecessor (which he had probably inspired), expected Henry to back down as King Philip had done. And he did, temporarily – not because he recognized Gregory’s right, but because from the summer of 1073 he had to face a rebellion in Saxony. “So it was that, rather than rise the slightest papal sanction being granted to his enemies’ slurs, he brought himself to grovel – even going so far as to acknowledge that he might possibly have backed the wrong horse in Milan. ‘Full of pleasantness and obedience’, a delighted Gregory described the royal tone to Erlembald. The likelier alternative, that the king might be stringing him along and playing for time, appeared not to have crossed the papal mind…”\footnote{Holland, op. cit., p. 362.}

And sure enough, having subdued the rebellion in Saxony, Henry prepared to hit back. He was helped by the fact that many German bishops “had developed an active stake in thinking the worst of the new pope. ‘The man is a menace!’ sniffed one archbishop. ‘He presumes to boss us around as though we were his bailiffs!’ Others, recoiling from Gregory’s brusque demands that priests be obliged to abandon their wives, demanded to know whether he planned to staff the Church with angels.

Such a show of sarcasm had absolutely zero effect on Gregory himself. Indeed, by 1075, his prescriptions against married priests, and simony too, were attaining a new level of peremptoriness. In February, four bishops were suspended for disobedience. Then, in July, one of them, a particularly inveterate simonist, was deposed. Finally, as the year drew to its close, Gregory unleashed against the sullen and recalcitrant imperial Church the reformers’ most devastating weapon of all. ‘We have heard,’ he wrote in an open letter to King Henry’s subject, ‘that certain of the bishops who dwell in your parts either condone, or fail to take notice of, the keeping of women by priests.’ Such men, rebels against the authority of St. Peter, he now summoned to the court of popular opinion. ‘We charge you,’ Gregory instructed the peoples of the Reich, ‘in no way to obey these bishops.’”\footnote{Holland, op. cit., p. 365.}

To add insult to injury, in February by a formal synod of the Roman Church the King’s right to confer bishoprics was prohibited. This directly threatened Henry’s power-base, since the bishops of the Reich were also important imperial lieutenants and administrators. Finally, a letter came from the Pope demanding that Henry repent of his offences and do penance for them, or else “not only would he be excommunicated until he had made due
restitution, but he would also be deprived of his entire dignity as king without hope of recovery”.

In January, 1076, Henry convened a Synod of Bishops at Worms. First he defended the legitimacy of his own kingship: “Henry, King not by usurpation, but by the pious ordination of God, to Hildebrand, now not Pope, but false monk”. Henry asserted that he could be “judged by God alone, and am not to be deposed for any crime unless – may it never happen! – I should deviate from the faith.”

Then the bishops, addressing Gregory as “brother Hildebrand”, demonstrated that his despotism had introduced mob rule into the Church, and refused all obedience to him: “Since, as thou didst publicly proclaim, none of us has been to thee a bishop, so henceforth thou shalt be Pope to none of us”. The bishops said that the Pope had “introduced worldliness into the Church”; “the bishops have been deprived of their divine authority”; “the Church of God is in danger of destruction”.

Henry himself declared: “Let another sit upon Peter’s throne, one who will not cloak violence with a pretence of religion, but will teach the pure doctrine of St. Peter. I, Henry, by God’s grace king, with all our bishops say to you: come down, come down.”

Gregory retaliated in a revolutionary way. In a Synod in Rome he declared the emperor deposed. Addressing St. Peter, he said: “I withdraw the whole kingdom of the Germans and of Italy from Henry the King, son of Henry the Emperor. For he has risen up against thy Church with unheard of arrogance. And I absolve all Christians from the bond of the oath which they have made to him or shall make. And I forbid anyone to serve him as King.”

By absolving subjects of their allegiance to their king, Gregory “effectively,” as Robinson writes, “sanctioned rebellion against the royal power…” Such a step was truly unprecedented. For “it is new and unheard-of throughout the centuries,” wrote Wenrich of Trier, “that the popes should wish… to change the Lord’s anointed by popular vote as often as they choose, as though kings were village-bailiffs.”

Anonymous of Hersfeld wrote: “See how Hildebrand and his bishops… resisting God’s ordination, uproot and bring to nothing these two principal powers [regnum and sacerdotium] by which the world is ruled, desiring all other bishops to be like themselves, who are not truly bishops, and desiring to have kings whom they themselves can command with royal licence.”

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174 Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., p. 113.
175 Holland, op. cit., p. 368.
176 Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., p. 114.
178 Wenrich of Trier, Epistola Hilthebrando papae (1081).
179 Anonymous of Hersfeld, Liber de unitate ecclesiae conservanda, II, 15.
In effect, this was power politics in the guise of the execution of the priestly office. Or rather, it was the Church assuming to herself the role of a State – the “empire within the empire” had become the “empire above the empire”. As Fyodor Dostoyevsky put it many centuries later, “The Western Church distorted the image of Christ, changing herself from a Church into a Roman State, and again incarnating the State in the form of the Papacy.”\textsuperscript{180}

Gregory followed this up by publishing the famously megalomaniac \textit{Dictatus Papae}: "The Pope can be judged by no one; the Roman church has never erred and never will err till the end of time; the Roman Church was founded by Christ alone; the Pope alone can depose bishops and restore bishops; he alone can make new laws, set up new bishoppries, and divide old ones; he alone can translate bishops; he alone can call general councils and authorize canon law; he alone can revise his own judgements; he alone can use the imperial insignia; he can depose emperors; he can absolve subjects from their allegiance; all princes should kiss his feet; his legates, even though in inferior orders, have precedence over all bishops; an appeal to the papal court inhibits judgement by all inferior courts; a duly ordained Pope is undoubtedly made a saint by the merits of St. Peter."\textsuperscript{181}

Robinson continues: “The confusion of the spiritual and the secular in Gregory VII’s thinking is most marked in the terminology he used to describe the laymen whom he recruited to further his political aims. His letters are littered with the terms ‘the warfare of Christ’, ‘the service of St. Peter’, ‘the vassals of St. Peter’…, Military terminology is, of course, commonly found in patristic writings.. St. Paul had evoked the image of the soldier of Christ who waged an entirely spiritual war… In the letters of Gregory VII, the traditional metaphor shades into literal actuality… For Gregory, the ‘warfare of Christ’ and the ‘warfare of St. Peter’ came to mean, not the spiritual struggles of the faithful, nor the duties of the secular clergy, nor the ceaseless devotions of the monks; but rather the armed clashes of feudal knights on the battlefields of Christendom…”\textsuperscript{182}

Henry began to lose support, and in the summer the Saxons rebelled again – this time with the support of Duke Rudolf of Swabia. In October a letter from Gregory was read out to a group of rebellious princes in Tribur suggesting that they elect a new king. Desperate, the king with his wife and child was forced to march across the Alps in deepest winter and do penance before Gregory, standing for three days almost naked in the snow outside the castle of Canossa. Gregory restored him to communion, but not to his kingship… On March 13, in Franconia, some of the German nobles elected Rudolf of Swabia as king. However, the next month Henry had returned from

\textsuperscript{180} F.M. Dostoevsky, \textit{The Diary of a Writer} (August, 1880).
\textsuperscript{182} Robinson, “Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ”, pp. 177, 178.
Italy, and civil war erupted in Germany. The rebels considered that they had heaven on their side, that those who died in their cause were martyrs for Christ and that Henry himself was “a limb of the Antichrist”.\(^\text{183}\)

For some years, Gregory hesitated to come down completely against the anti-king. But then, at Pascha, 1080, he definitely deposed Henry, freed his subjects from their allegiance to him and declared that the kingship was conceded to Rudolf. From that time, as an anonymous monk of Hersfeld wrote, the Gregorians said that “it is a matter of the faith and it is the duty of the faithful in the Church to kill and to persecute those who communicate with, or support the excommunicated King Henry and refuse to promote the efforts of [the Gregorian] party.”\(^\text{184}\) However, Henry recovered, convened a Synod of bishops that declared Gregory deposed and then convened another Synod that elected an anti-pope, Wibert of Ravenna. In October, 1080, Rudolf died in battle. Then in 1083 Henry and Wibert marched on Rome; the next year Wibert was consecrated Pope Clement III and in turn crowned Henry as emperor.

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It looked as if Gregory had failed, but his ideas endured - as did the conflict between papacy and empire, which rumbled on for centuries. Both sides in the conflict adopted extreme positions, showing that the balanced Orthodox understanding of the symphony of powers had been lost in the West. Thus Joseph Canning writes: “Consideration of the issues which the Investiture Contest raised concerning the relationship between temporal and spiritual power was not confined to Germany and Italy, but was evident in France from the 1090s and in England from the turn of the century. Indeed, the most radical treatment was contained in a tract produced in the Anglo-Norman lands. The writer, who was originally known to modern scholars as the Anonymous of York, but following the research of George H. Williams, is now commonly called The Norman Anonymous, produced in his work on the Continent, perhaps at Rouen in c. 1100. He expressed the traditional view that royal and sacerdotal powers were combined in Christ; but the author’s independence of mind was revealed in his development of his argument. He held that Christ was king by virtue of his divine nature and priest by that of his human, with the result that kingship was superior to priesthood within both Christ and his vicar, the king. Whereas, however, Christ was divine by nature, the king was God and Christ through grace, that is through unction: the king, therefore, had a dual personality – ‘in one by nature an individual man, in the other by grace a christus, that is a God-man’. The anointed king as the ‘figure and image of Christ and God (figura et imago Christi et Dei) reigned together with Christ. As a result, ‘It is clear that kings have the sacred power of ecclesiastical rule even over the priests of God themselves and dominion over them, so that they too may themselves rule holy church in

\(^\text{183}\) Holland, op. cit., p. 376.  
\(^\text{184}\) Quoted in Robinson, “Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ”, p. 177.
piety and faith.’ The priesthood was subject to the king, as to Christ. The king could in consequence appoint and invest bishops. Behind the Anonymous’s statements lay the view that jurisdiction was superior to sacramental power, a notion common both to Gregorians and their royalist opponents. But he reversed the papalist position by denying governmental powers to the priesthood and reserving them solely to the king. He did not consider, incidentally, that the fact that bishops consecrated kings made them in any sense superior, because there were many examples of lesser powers elevating superior ones to office.

“Of all the issues treated in the publicistic literature of the Investiture Contest the crux was clearly whether the pope in fact had the authority to free subjects from their oaths of allegiance and depose kings. The papacy was here on its most insecure ground and its claims most shocking, indeed no less than a sign of contradiction to the presuppositions of lay society. Fundamental questions concerning obedience to authority and the justifiability of rebellion were at issue. Both sides accepted that kingship was an office in the tradition of the ideas of Gregory I and thus limited by its function; but whereas the Henricians followed that pope in leaving an errant king solely to God’s judgement, the followers of Gregory VII interpreted the notion of royal office as justifying human action to remove a ruler who was perceived to have failed in his duties; they thereby contributed further to the desacralisation of kingship. Their main focus was on the pope’s role in this respect. Manegold of Lautenbach, however, went further by saying that a king (a name not of nature, but of office), who was unjust or tyrannical had broken the pact (pactum) with his people by which he had been constituted, and that as a result of his severing the bond of faith his people were already free from its oath of allegiance...”

In 1122, at Worms, the papacy and the empire worked out a concordat in which “the emperor largely gave up the right of investiture, while the church recognized the emperor’s authority in a range of temporal matters”. This was a compromise, not a solution, and the conflict between the two parties still had a long time to run. The problem was that they could not agree on the ultimate authority in Christian society.

The solution, if they only had known it, lay in the Emperor Justinian’s doctrine of the harmony or “symphony of powers” between Church and State that still existed in the Orthodox East, and which had existed in the

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185 Canning, op. cit., pp. 104-105. “For the people,” wrote Manegold, “do not exalt him above themselves so as to concede to him an unlimited power of tyrannizing over them, but to defend themselves against the tyranny and wickedness of others. However, when he who is chosen to repress evil doers and defend the just begins to cherish evil in himself, to oppress good men, to exercise over his subjects the cruel tyranny that he ought to ward off from them, is it not clear that he deservedly falls from his lordship and from subjection to him since it is evident that he first broke the compact by virtue of which he was appointed” (in Siedentop, op. cit., p. 249).
186 Fukuyama, op. cit., p. 266.
monarchies of the West until the schism, but which the papacy under Gregory VII had destroyed. According to this doctrine, both Church and State owed their origin to God; each was autonomous in its own sphere – the Church in the spiritual sphere, the State in the political; and both were subject ultimately to the Law of God as incarnate in the whole of the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church. However, the papacy did not see God’s Law as above itself, to which it was itself subject, but rather as something that the papacy itself discovered - or rather, invented - in a creative manner over time. As a result, it sought to subject the State to itself in a totalitarian manner, to which the State reacted by assigning to itself – not so much in the medieval period (if we exclude the Norman kings) but certainly in the early modern period - quasi-totalitarian, absolutist powers.

It can easily be seen how the ideas raised by the Gregorian revolution and the Investiture Contest could lead, in Siedentop’s words, to “the emergence of constitutionalism in Europe” and of “the idea of the state endowed with a ‘sovereign’ authority”187. The Russian poet and diplomat F.I. Tiutchev went further. In 1849 he linked the Gregorian revolution with the whole further revolutionary development of Western civilization: “The revolution, which is nothing other than the apotheosis of that same human I having attained its fullest flowering, was not slow to recognise as its own, and to welcome as two of its glorious ancestors – both Gregory VII and Luther. Kinship of blood began to speak in it, and it accepted the one, in spite of his Christian beliefs, and almost deified the other, although he was a pope.

“But if the evident similarity uniting the three members of this row constitutes the basis of the historical life of the West, the starting-point of this link must necessarily be recognized to be precisely that profound distortion to which the Christian principle was subjected by the order imposed on it by Rome. In the course of the centuries the Western Church, under the shadow of Rome, almost completely lost the appearance of the originating principle pointed out by her. She ceased to be, amidst the great society of men, the society of believers, freely united in spirit and truth under the law of Christ; she was turned into a political institution, a political force, a state within the state. It would be true to say that throughout the whole course of the Middle Ages, the Church in the West was nothing other than a Roman colony planted in a conquered land…”188

Indeed, it was at Canossa, as Tom Holland writes, that “the foundations of the modern Western state were laid, foundations largely bled of any religious dimension. A piquant irony: that the very concept of a secular society should ultimately have been due to the papacy. Voltaire and the First Amendment, multiculturalism and gay weddings: all have served as waymarks on the road from Canossa…”189

187 Siedentop, op. cit., p. 197.
189 Holland, op. cit., p. xxii.
Gregory fled from Rome with his Norman allies and died in Salerno in 1085. When he was lying on his death-bed, he said: “I have loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore I die in exile.” But a monk who waited on him replied: “In exile thou canst not be, for God hath given thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession (Psalm 2.8).”

The papist claim to lordship over the whole world, including the heathen, was demonstrated especially during the Crusades, which were the manifestation to the Orthodox Christian and Muslim worlds, of the mystery of iniquity that was taking place within the Western world. The West – especially England, Germany and Italy – had already felt the mailed fist of the Pope. Now it was the turn of the North (the Baltic lands), the South (Spain) and the East (Byzantium, the Levant and the Holy Land).

First, the Pope’s vassals, the Normans, having conquered Sicily and Bari, invaded Greece; Emperor Alexis I only just succeeded in containing them with the help of English warrior-exiles. Then, in 1085, King Alfonso VI of Castile-Leon captured the Muslim city of Toledo for the Pope; within a few years, his champion, the famous El Cid, had entered Valencia. Most importantly, in 1095, at a synod in Clermont, Pope Urban II, a Cluny monk, appealed to all Christians to free Jerusalem from the Saracens, and placed his own legate, a bishop, at the head of the Christian forces.

Urban’s main motivation was to shore up his own position in his struggle with the Holy Roman Empire in the Investiture Contest. As Christopher Tyerman writes, “The background to the First Crusade lay in this conflict, as Urban II sought to use the mobilization of the expedition as a cover the reclaim the pope’s position in Italy and demonstrate his practical leadership of Christendom, independent of secular monarchs. The slogan of the papal reformers was ‘libertas ecclesiae’, ‘church freedom/liberty/rights’. This provided the central appeal of Urban II’s summons of 1095, when called on the faithful to go to ‘liberate’ the churches of the east and Jerusalem. The crusade is impossible to understand outside the context of more general church and papal reform.”

At the same time, the pope saw the crusades as a “Christian” solution to problems thrown up by the new feudal, militaristic pattern of life in the West. He made it clear, writes Barbara Ehrenreich, “that a major purpose of the crusade was to deflect the knights’ predatory impulses away from Europe itself:

‘Oh race of the Franks, we learn that in some of your provinces no one can venture on the road by day or by night without injury or attack by highwaymen, and no one is secure even at home.’

“We know he is not talking about common, or lowborn, criminals because it emerges in the next sentence that the solution to this problem is a re-enactment of the ‘Truce of God’, meaning voluntary restraint on the part of the knights, whose energies are now to be directed outward towards the infidels:

‘Let all hatred depart from among you, all quarrels end, all wars cease. Start upon the road to the Holy Sepulchre to wrest that land from the wicked race and subject it to yourselves.’

“Militarily, the Crusades were largely a disaster for the Christians, but they did serve to cement the fusion of the cross and the sword. The church’s concept of the ‘just war’ had always been something of a grudging concession to reality. Here, though, was a war that was not only ‘just’ but necessary and holy in the eyes of God, Christendom’s first jihad. Those who participated in Europe’s internal wars were often required to do penance for the sin of killing; but participation in a crusade had the opposite effect, cleansing a man from prior sin and guaranteeing his admission to heaven. It was the Crusades, too, that led to the emergence of a new kind of warrior: the warrior-monk, pledged to lifelong chastity as well as to war. In the military monastic orders of the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitalers, any lingering Christian hesitations about violence were dissolved. The way of the knight – or at least of the chaste and chivalrous knight – became every bit as holy as that of the cloistered monk.”

Let us look more closely at the new Roman Catholic concept of the just war that was emerging here. Now it is claimed that this concept goes back to St. Augustine. “From Augustine’s diffuse comments on war,” writes Tyerman, “could be identified four essential characteristics of a just war that were to underpin most subsequent discussions of the subject. A just war requires a just cause; its aim must be defensive or for the recovery of rightful possession; legitimate authority must sanction it; those who fight must be motivated by right intent. Thus war, by nature sinful, could be a vehicle for the promotion of righteousness; war that is violent could, as some later medieval apologists maintained, act as a form of charitable love, to help victims of injustice. From Augustine’s categories developed the basis of Christian just war theory, for example, by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century.”

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192 Tyerman, op. cit., p. 34. Cf. St. Augustine in The City of God: “They who have waged war in obedience to the divine command, or in conformity with His laws, have represented in their persons the public justice or the wisdom of government, and in this capacity have put to
However, between Augustine and Aquinas came the crusades; and the crusades added other elements that are completely lacking in Augustine - the authority of the pope, and the positive holiness of a war proclaimed by the pope. For Augustine, the only authority that could justly proclaim a war was the Roman emperor - and he was more than a little sceptical that all wars proclaimed by the emperor were holy or just. But for the crusader, as Jonathan Riley-Smith writes, “A crusade was a holy war fought against those perceived to be the external or internal foes of Christendom for the recovery of Christian property or in defence of the Church or Christian people. As far as the crusaders were concerned, the Muslims in the East and in Spain had occupied Christian territory, including land sanctified and made his very own by the presence of Christ himself, and they had imposed infidel tyranny on the Christians who lived there. The pagans in the Baltic region threatened new Christian settlements. The [Albigensian] heretics in Languedoc or Bohemia were rebels against their mother the Church and were denying the responsibility for teaching entrusted to her by Christ; they and the Church’s political opponents in Italy disturbed rightful order. These people all menaced Christians and the Church, and their actions provided crusaders with the opportunity of expressing love for their oppressed or threatened brothers in a just cause, which was always related to that of Christendom as a whole. A crusading army was therefore considered to be international even when it was actually composed of men from only one region… The war it fought was believed to be directly authorized by Christ himself, the incarnate God, through his mouthpiece, the pope. Being Christ’s own enterprise it was regarded as positively holy…”

The crusades were a new kind of “just” war with a more exalted, religious pathos. Those who incited them were popes rather than kings (Gregory VII in 1074, Urban II in 1095); plenary remission of sins and penances, even eternal salvation, was touted as the reward – “by a transitory labour you can win an eternal reward”, said Gregory VII. They were holy wars blessed by the Pope and directed against Muslims (in Spain and Palestine), pagans (the Slavic Wends and Balts), and even other Christians (the “schismatics” of Anglo-Saxon England, the Albigensians of Southern France, the Orthodox of Novgorodian Russia).

They were not strictly defensive wars any longer, but wars of reconquest of formerly Christian lands - the word reconquista was used to describe the wars against the Moors in Spain blessed by Pope Alexander II in 1064. To this was added a passionate and sinful element, the desire for revenge, albeit on God’s behalf. Thus the Norman leader Robert Guiscard declared his wish to free Christians from Muslim rule and to “avenge the injury done to God”…

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194 Tyerman, op. cit., p. 54.
The Lord said: “Vengeance is Mine; I will repay”. But for the brave new world of Roman Catholic Christendom born in the second half of the eleventh century, vengeance became once again a human obligation...

It may be argued that the crusades borrowed some of their characteristics from their main opponents, the Muslims. And indeed, they could be compared with the Muslim jihads, with the Pope taking the place of the Caliph. Now Jihad is “the sixth pillar of Islam, the perpetual collective and sometimes individual obligation on all the faithful to struggle (jihad) spiritually against unbelief in themselves (al-jihad al-akbar, the greater jihad) and physically against unbelievers (al-jihad al-asghar, the lesser jihad).”195 In the era of the Crusades, we see the lesser jihad, the physical struggle against unbelievers, becoming increasingly important in the thought and practice of the Catholic West, which in turn stimulated its revival among the Muslims. Traditional peaceful missionary work had no place in this Christian jihad; the aim was not the conversion of the infidel enemy, but his extermination...

The evil consequences were not slow to reveal themselves. First, the Crusades were wars of sadistic cruelty that often revelled in the cruelty. It has been observed that when a Christian people falls away from the true faith, during the first two or three generations after their apostasy they display a cruelty that would not have seemed possible before the apostasy. We can say that of the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and of the Russians after 1917. It now became true of the Western European peoples after the fall of the Roman Church in 1054, being displayed most clearly in the First Crusade of 1098-99. For in the course of recapturing Jerusalem, the crusaders exterminated most of the Muslim and Jewish inhabitants of the Holy City in a terrible and wholly unjustified bloodbath. “In the Temple,” wrote an eye-witness, “[the Crusaders] rode in blood up to their bridles. Indeed it was a just and splendid judgement of God that this place should be filled with the blood of unbelievers.”196 Again, in a later crusade King Richard “the Lionheart” of England “massacred thousands of Muslim prisoners in cold blood outside Acre and, on another occasion, arranged the heads of executed Muslims around his tent...”197

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195 Tyerman, op. cit., p. 269.
196 Raymond of Aguilers, the Count of Toulouse’s chaplain, in Simon Sebag Montefiore, Jerusalem: The Biography, London: Phoenix, 2012, p. 253. Simon Sebag Montefiore writes: “The massacre of Jews and Muslims in Jerusalem was a terrible crime but it was certainly vastly exaggerated: Muslim historians claimed that 70,000 or even 100,000 died in the slaughter but it is likely that there were not more than 30,000 inside the city and the latest research from contemporary Arab source el-Arabi suggests the number may be closer to between 3,000 and 10,000. Crusader brutality demonstrates the evil of intolerance but the Christians were scarcely alone in this: when the crusader cities of Edessa and Acre later fell, the slaughter by Muslim conquerors was much greater” (Titans of History, London: Quercus, 2012, p. 126).

However, it should be pointed that the Arab chroniclers of the time paradoxically make no mention of Crusader cruelty. Perhaps the western chronicles exaggerated the atrocities because they thought that they were praiseworthy!
197 Montefiore, Titans of History, p. 135.
Nor was this cruelty confined to the crusades in the Eastern Mediterranean. Those against the pagan Slavs and Balts of the Baltic Sea coast were similarly savage. Thus Albert, Margrave of Brandenburg is described as having colonized the lands of the Slavic Wends in the mid-twelfth century as follows: “Because God gave plentiful aid and victory to our leader and the other princes, the Slavs have been everywhere crushed and driven out. A people strong and without number have come from the bounds of the ocean and taken possession of the territories of the Slavs. They have built cities and churches and have grown in riches beyond all estimation.”

Again, Bernard of Clairvaux said about the Wendish crusade of 1147: “We expressly forbid that for any reason whatsoever they should make a truce with those peoples, whether for money or for tribute, until such time as, with God’s help, either their religion or their nation be destroyed.” For “the knight of Christ need fear no sin in killing the foe, he is a minister of God for the punishment of the wicked. In the death of a pagan a Christian is glorified, because Christ is glorified... [He] who kills for religion commits no evil but rather does good, for his people and himself. If he dies in battle, he gains heaven; if he kills his opponents, he avenges Christ. Either way, God is pleased.”

Even the Orthodox Russians were considered to be in need of forcible conversion. Thus Bishop Matthew of Crakow wrote to Bernard in 1150, asking him to “exterminate the godless rites and customs of the Ruthenians.”

A vivid witness to the destructiveness and anti-Orthodoxy of these Crusaders in the Baltic is provided by the city of Vineta on the Oder, whose under-sea remains are now being excavated by German archaeologists. Tony Paterson writes: ‘Medieval chroniclers such as Adam of Bremen, a German monk, referred to Vineta as ‘the biggest city in all of Europe’. He wrote: ‘It is filled with the wares of all the peoples of the north. Nothing desirable or rare is missing.’ He remarked that the city’s inhabitants, including Saxons, Slavs and ‘Greeks and Barbarians’ were so wealthy that its church bells were made of silver and mothers wiped their babies’ bottoms with bread rolls....

“A century later, another German chronicler, Helmold von Bosau, referred to Vineta, but this time in the past tense. He said it had been destroyed: ‘A Danish king with a very big fleet of ships is said to have attacked and completely destroyed this most wealthy place. The remains are still there,’ he wrote in 1170... Vineta was most likely inhabited by resident Slavs and

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200 Bernard, *De Laude Novae Militiae Ad Milites Templi*.
Saxons as well as ‘Greeks and Barbarian’ merchants from Byzantium who plied a trade between the Baltic and the Black Sea via the rivers of western Russia. Dr. Goldmann said that the majority of Vineta’s estimated 20,000 to 30,000 population were probably Greek Orthodox Christians...’After the great schism of 1054, the Orthodox believers were regarded as threat by the Catholics in the Holy Roman Empire. Vineta was almost certainly a victim of a campaign to crush the Orthodox faith,’ he said. Its demise is therefore likely to have occurred when the chronicler von Bosau said it did: towards the end of the 12th century when the Crusaders launched a never fully explained campaign in northern Europe...”

Secondly, in the long run the Crusades failed in their aim, the reconquest of the Holy Land from the Muslims. Most of the Crusader kingdoms carved out of Syria and Palestine had been reconquered by the Muslims by the late thirteenth century. So if that, too, was the “just and splendid judgement of God”, it did not speak well for the justice or holiness of the Crusader wars.

And thirdly, while at first claiming to help “liberate” the Eastern Churches, the Crusades ended up by destroying Orthodoxy in large parts of the Balkans and Middle East. Already before the Second Crusade Bernard of Clairvaux had expressed “bloodthirsty anti-Greek fulminations”, in Sir Steven Runciman’s phrase. But the climax of the anti-Greek campaign was undoubtedly the Fourth Crusade of 1204, as a result of which Constantinople was sacked in a frenzy of barbarism, and a Latin emperor and patriarch were placed on the thrones of Hagia Sophia. And so the project that had begun as a mission to liberate the Eastern Churches at the request of the Byzantine emperor ended up by destroying the empire (temporarily) and attempting to subject all the Orthodox Churches to Rome. Even Pope Innocent III disapproved. The Greek Church, he said, “now, and with reason, detests the Latins more than dogs”.

However, this did not prevent the Pope from profiting from the crusaders’ evil. Latin kingdoms with Latin patriarchs were established over Orthodox populations in Jerusalem, Antioch, Cyprus and Constantinople. In general, therefore, the thirteenth century represented a nadir for Orthodoxy and the zenith of Papism. Nevertheless, the Orthodox held out in these conquered lands. In Cyprus, for example, which had been conquered by King Richard of England and then handed over to the Knights Templar, the local population refused to adopt the faith of their Latin metropolitan. They were instructed and inspired by the great hermit St. Neophytus the Enclosed of Cyprus (+1219), who once said of a Latin attempt to reconquer Jerusalem: “It is similar to the wolves coming to chase away the dogs...”

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204 Tyerman, op. cit., p. 538.
The crusades were rightly called “the Roman war” because they were waged by the Pope of Rome. Although the actual fighting was undertaken by emperors and kings, who sometimes displayed megalomaniac tendencies on a par with the Pope’s — as when Emperor Frederick Barbarossa once wrote to Saladin claiming, like the most powerful Roman emperors, to have dominion over the whole of the Middle East and Africa as far as Ethiopia! — it was the Popes who propelled the crusaders eastward; and they frequently excommunicated rulers who were tardy in fulfilling their vows to take up the cross. Thus the crusades completed the transformation of the papacy from a spiritual power into a worldly, political and military one, placing an ineluctantly expansionist and violent seal on western civilization.

The most successful of the crusades was that led by the German Emperor Frederick II in 1228-1229. Paradoxically, he “alone of all the Crusaders was not blessed, but cursed by the Pope’. But he alone succeeded in securing freedom for Jerusalem and the Holy Land for a full fifteen years by a treaty with the Arabian Sultan, without shedding a drop of human blood. And this was the only bloodless Crusade…”

The Crusades demonstrate how quickly and easily apparently good intentions can pave the way to hell. The problem is that violence, even violence that is blessed by lawful authorities, can so easily unleash hatred and cruelty. And this in turn leads to false, heretical justifications of that hatred and cruelty; for “the sinner praiseth himself in the lusts of his soul” (Psalm 19.24).

In the West, consciousness of the evil that lurks even in the justest of wars remained strong in the Orthodox period, as we see in the Truce of God movement. And even after the schism this consciousness lingered for a time, as when the Norman knights who had participated in their barbaric Conquest of England in 1066-70 were put on penance when they returned home. But by the end of the century this Orthodox consciousness was waning in the West, while by the thirteenth it had disappeared completely... In the East, by contrast, war was not glorified, but seen as a necessary evil. The Eastern Orthodox have never preached pacifism; and even those Eastern writers with pacifist tendencies, such as Origen, admitted the concept of the just war.

Nevertheless, there has always been an awareness in the East of the strong temptation to sin inherent in all warfare, an awareness expressed thus in St. Basil’s Canon 13: “Our fathers did not consider killing on the field of battle as murder, pardoning, as it seems to me, defenders of chastity and piety. But it

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208 “Christians wrestle,” Origen wrote, “in prayers to God on behalf of those fighting in a righteous cause, and for the king who reigns rightly, that whatever is opposed to those who act rightly may be destroyed” (*Against Celsius*, 8.73).
might be good that they refrain from Communion only in the Holy Mysteries for three years as people who have unclean hands…”
The Gregorian revolution, if it was to be permanent, required a legal underpinning. The impetus towards this was given by Gregory himself, who, as Siedentop writes, “may have encouraged the Countess Matilda of Tuscany to establish law lectures at Bologna, in order to promote the study of Roman law. Within a few decades this school of law acquired a remarkable reputation. It began to attract students from across Europe. By the end of the century a jurist, Irnerius, was lecturing at Bologna on the body of Roman law, the Corpus Juris Civilis of Justinian [which had been discovered in a library in Northern Italy, together with important works from pre-Christian antiquity, such as Aristotle’s Politics]. Irnerius and other jurists did not merely discover in Roman law a rich, sophisticated collection of rules relating to different conditions of life and society. Their encounter with Roman law stimulated reflections on the nature and requirements of a legal system, a kind of jurisprudence. For them, Roman law conjured up the vision of an autonomous, self-contained legal system.

“Such a vision inevitably prompted comparison with the rules of canons supposedly governing the life of the church. These seemed painfully inadequate when compared to the elaborate, articulated structure of Justinian’s Corpus. There had, it is true, been earlier collections of canons that brought together the decisions of ‘universal’ church councils, papal decrees and the opinions of church Fathers such as Augustine and Gregory the Great. But these collections were centuries-old and incomplete, often incoherent or inconclusive. The new Roman lawyers or ‘civilians’ viewed them with some contempt.

“What was needed to introduce order and unity into the laws of the church? What were the legal and practical prerequisites of a legal system? Justinian’s Corpus Juris Civilis suggested a clear answer: ‘The emperor is not bound by statutes’. Supreme authority had to be invested in a single agency that would itself be above the law. Just as the emperor’s imperium had become the final source of Roman law, the laws of the church required a source that was not itself bound by law and so was able to prevent contradictions or anomalies developing within the system. Such a source for law provided the means of abrogating undesirable customs.”

What was needed, therefore, was a new body of law in which the final source of legislative authority would be the pope, not the emperor. However, the new law would have to be very wide-ranging, with major inroads into what, in Byzantine and Western Orthodox times, had been within the secular ruler’s jurisdiction. For this was the whole essence of the Gregorian revolution: the invasion of Caesar’s domain by God’s (i.e. the Pope’s).

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209 Fukuyama, op. cit., p. 268.
210 Siedentop, op. cit., p. 212.
This meant pillaging Justinian’s Corpus for what was compatible with the Gregorian project while discarding all the rest (together, of course, with the whole spirit of Byzantine jurisprudence). “As Ivo of Chartres insisted at the end of the eleventh century, only those parts of Roman law acceptable to the church should be adopted. Yet before long the areas invaded by canon lawyers included important parts of both private and communal law, for the church took a close interest in matters such as marriage, testament, adultery, divorce, perjury, usury and homicide. Little wonder that at times civil lawyers felt their domain was under threat…”

The result was the publication, in about 1140, of Gratian’s Concordia discordantium canonum, “Concord of Discordant Canons”, later called simply the Decretum, in which much of Justinian’s Corpus was collated, compared and commented on. It quickly became the standard compilation of church law, so much so that, as Bernard of Clairvaux complained, “Every day the papal palace resounds to the laws of Justinian and not those of the Lord.”

Gratian’s Decretum was particularly important in its influence on the justifications that preachers used for the crusades. “A long section, Causa XXIII, was devoted to warfare and violence. Although on the surface Gratian did not deal with crusading – the Causa’s process of argument started with the issue of the suppression of heresy by force – consciousness of it lay behind the armoury of justifications for the Church’s authorization of violence provided to clerical readers, who were led inescapably through a panoply of authorities, to the conclusions that war need not be sinful, could be just, and could be authorized by God, and, on God’s behalf, by the pope…”

“Gratian,” writes K. Pennington, “made a general statement about law at the beginning of the Decretum: ‘The human race is ruled by two things: natural law and custom.’” It is, or should be, the aim of human legislators to make their acts correspond as closely as possible to the higher or “natural” law, or “Law” with a capital “L”. If they succeed in doing this, then they may be said to be following “the rule of law”.

As Fukuyama writes, “Early European states dispensed justice but not necessarily law. Law was rooted elsewhere, either in religion (as in the edicts regulating marriage and the family…) or in the customs of tribes or other local communities. Early European states occasionally legislated – that is, created new laws – but their authority and legitimacy rested more on their ability to impartially enforce laws not necessarily of their own making.

211 Siedentop, op. cit., p. 213.
212 Comby, op. cit., p. 138.
213 Riley-Smith, op. cit., p. 93.
“This distinction between law and legislation is critical to understanding the meaning of the rule of law itself. As with a term like ‘democracy’, it sometimes seems as if there are as many definitions of ‘rule of law’ as there are legal scholars. I use it in the following sense, which corresponds to several important currents in thinking about the phenomenon in the West. The law is a body of abstract rules of justice that bind a community together. In premodern societies, the law was believed to be fixed by an authority higher than any human legislator, either by a divine authority, by immemorial custom, or by nature. Legislation, on the other hand, corresponds to what is now called positive law and is a function of political power, that is, the ability of a king, baron, president, legislature, or warlord to make and enforce new rules based ultimately on some combination of power and authority. The rule of law can be said to exist only where the preexisting body of law is sovereign over legislation, meaning that the individual holding political power feels bound by the law. But if they are to function within the rule of law, they must legislate according to the rules set by the preexisting law and not according to their own volition…

“The rule of law in its deepest sense means that there is a social consensus within a society that its laws are just and that they preexist and should constrain the behavior of whoever happens to be the ruler at a given time. The ruler is not sovereign; the law is sovereign, and the ruler gains legitimacy only insofar as he derives his just powers from the law.”

Let us now turn to how the legal works of Gratian and his followers defined the relationship of the king to the law... “Classical Roman law,” writes Pennington, “was not particularly helpful for understanding the limitations of legislative authority. The passages in Roman law touching upon the emperor’s right to legislate were open to contradictory interpretations. A text from Justinian’s Code, Digna Vox (Cod. 1.14.4) stated that although the emperor is the source of all law, he should conduct his actions according to the law. This was repeated at Cod. 6.23.3. These two texts seem to sustain the idea of a limited, constitutional monarch whose actions must conform to the rules of the legal system. In contrast, other texts in the Digest stressed the illimitability of the emperor’s authority and his absolute power. In Dig. 1.4.1, the Roman jurist Ulpian declared that ‘what pleases the prince has the force of law’, which underlined a similar point he made in another text, ‘the prince is not bound by the law’ (Dig. 1.3.31).”

However, the idea of a limited, constitutional monarchy did not really come into being before Magna Carta (1215). The contrast in antiquity was between the absolutist ruler, who recognized no authority above himself, and the Orthodox ruler, who recognized that he was subject to the Law of God, even if he was the source of all human legislation. But the canonists could manipulate the Orthodox law to suit their master, the anti-Orthodox pope.

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215 Fukuyama, op. cit., pp. 245-246.
For “these texts were not intractable. In the hands of skilled lawyers, they could be used to fashion systems of constitutional or of absolute monarchy. In the beginning the lawyers had difficulty assimilating these texts of Roman law into their thought because they did not always have a clear understanding of the complex issues underlying them. Further, their assumptions about monarchical authority were taken primarily from Germanic law and feudal customs, which emphasised the contractual relationship between the people and the monarch and which laid down the king’s sacred duty to defend the laws and customs of the land. In this system of thought, law must be reasonable and just. A prince could not exercise his office arbitrarily. A monarch could legislate, but his authority was circumscribed by a restrictive web of ideas which demanded that there be a need for new law and that the people consent to new law, either by approving it formally or by accepting it through use…”

In other words, in Orthodox times rulers had not been absolute. There had been “a restrictive web of ideas” that they were required to conform to if their legislation was to be accepted as lawful. This higher law was Orthodox Tradition, which was not to be identified with the decrees of the Pope or any Church hierarchy… The innovation introduced by the Gregorian revolution consisted in the usurpation of this higher law by the Pope, whose “plenitude of power” brooked no contradiction or appeal to a higher court. Moreover, it extended not only over kings and bishops, but also over every Christian soul, cutting through and across all other loyalties of race, class or feudal status.

“In this way,” writes Siedentop, “canon law developed around a new theory of justice, a theory resting on the assumption of moral equality. To find it, we have only to look at the opening words of Gratian’s Decretum: ‘Natural law [jus] is what is contained in the Law and the Gospel by which each is to do to another what he wants done to himself and forbidden to do to another what he does not want done to himself.’ Here the biblical ‘golden rule’ has been imposed on the ancient theory of natural law, so that equality and reciprocity are made the mainsprings of justice. Without, perhaps, fully realizing the novelty of his move, Gratian fused Christian moral intuitions with a concept inherited from Greek philosophy and Roman law. Relations of equality and reciprocity are now understood as antecedent to both positive and customary law. They provide ultimate standards for judging the contents of each. By identifying natural law with biblical revelation and Christian morality, Gratian gave it an egalitarian basis – and a subversive potential – utterly foreign to the ancient world’s understanding of natural law as ‘everything in its place’.”

At first sight, there would seem to be nothing wrong with placing the Gospel commandments at the foundation of justice. However, the rub came in the principle’s application, its “subversive potential” in the hands of the Pope. Or of his subjects...

216 Pennington, op. cit., pp. 426-427.
“This new theory of justice, developing within canon law, would have far-reaching consequences. For it marked a departure from the assumptions about status embedded in Roman law since antiquity. For example, the second-century jurist Gaius had relied on three tests to establish personal status:

Is the person free or unfree?
Is the person a citizen or foreign born?
Is the person a paterfamilias or in the power of an ancestor?

Evidently, Gaius did not assume an underlying equality of moral status. His use of ‘person’ was purely descriptive and physical. It carried no moral implications. The church, following Constantine’s conversion, had accepted much Roman private law, modeling its courts and procedures on that law. But when knowledge and practice of Roman law declined after the fall of the Western empire, the overriding concern of the clergy was to save as much as possible, by helping Germanic rulers to create law codes for their new kingdoms and trying to protect their Romanized subjects. The understanding of Roman legal terms became fragile. For centuries there was neither leisure nor the ability to review basic assumptions about status in Roman law.

“Gratian’s interpretation of the requirements of natural law amounted, however, to just such a review. It amounted to a reversal of assumptions in favour of human equality. For, in effect, it stipulated that all ‘persons’ should be considered as ‘individuals’, in that they share an underlying equality of status as the children of God. Instead of traditional social inequalities being deemed natural – and therefore not needing justification – an underlying moral equality was now deemed natural. This reversal of assumptions meant that paterfamilias and lordship were no longer ‘brute’ facts that stood outside and constrained the claims of justice. They too were now subject to the scrutiny of justice…

“Of course, the canonists did not foresee all the implications of this reversal of moral presumptions. They were not social revolutionaries. But the fact remains that they laid the foundation for a move away from an aristocratic society to a ‘democratic’ society. Such a reversal of assumptions not only foreshadowed a fundamental change in the structure of society. It also freed the human mind, giving a far wider scope and a more critical edge to the role of analysis. It made possible what might be called the ‘take-off’ of the Western mind…

“We can see the impact of this intellectual revolution on thinking about political authority. The canonists were greatly influenced by the notion of imperium in Roman law. Yet their translation of imperium into the papal claim of sovereignty changed its meaning. Individuals rather than established social categories or classes became the focus of legal jurisdiction. Individuals or ‘souls’ provided the underlying unit of subjection in the eyes of the church,
the unit that counted for more than anything else. In effect, canon lawyers purged Roman law of hierarchical assumptions surviving from the social structure of the ancient world.”

Siedentop makes a valid and important point here. Nevertheless, he exaggerates the role that the Gregorian revolution played in the emergence of the concept of the individual. That concept did not emerge as a consequence of the idea of the papal sovereignty over all Christians. The idea that God will judge all men impartially in accordance with His commandments and regardless of their social status was introduced at the beginning, not at the end of the first Christian millennium. Moreover, the Byzantine Autocracy and all her children in the East and the West fully understood that the individual person is the unit of moral evaluation, and that kings and paupers, clergy and laity – all will be judged according to the same criterion. The difference with the epoch that begins with Gregory VII was that the early Church, following St. Paul’s words: “Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called” (I Corinthians 7.20), believed that the race, sex, wealth, calling and social status of each individual were not accidental or “brute” facts about them, but providential – that is, decreed by God for the sake of that individual’s salvation. It followed that social mobility, still less social revolution and the overthrowing of hierarchies and social structures, were not Christian aim; even slavery – notoriously, according to liberal thinkers – remained virtually untouched as an institution, although Christians were encourage to liberate their slaves and in any case treat them well, as brothers in Christ. At most, the “anointed of God”, the Orthodox emperor or king, could make some minor changes around the edges to the social structure. But Orthodox Christian society remained consciously conservative, traditional and hierarchical.

The Gregorian revolution retained the hierarchical aspect of pre-Gregorian, society, while being profoundly radical and anti-traditional. Moreover, the hierarchy was now quite different in kind. Now it was a despotism of a strictness and universality that had never yet been seen in human history since Nimrod. The Pope was the despot and all men, if they wanted to be saved, had to be his subjects. Too late the Christians of the West learned that the complex, aristocratic structure of pre-Gregorian (and especially pre-feudal) Christian society had been designed by God, not in order to enslave them, but in order to keep them free from despotism and heresy...

The other important and valid point made by Siedentop, that the canonists laid the foundations for a move towards a more democratic society, sounds paradoxical in view of the fact that they were working for the papist absolutism. However, it was confirmed in Rome herself, where from the 1140s the Roman commune was looking for support against absolutism. Thus from Justinian’s Digest lawyers extracted the lex regia, according to which “every right and every power of the Roman people” was transferred to the emperor.

This, as Charles Davis writes, “could be interpreted in a popular as well as an imperial sense. There was an ongoing debate among those ‘priests of justice’, the legists, as to whether the Roman people by means of the lex regia had made a permanent or merely a temporal grant of their power and authority to the emperor. Did the grant have to be renewed on the emperor’s death? If so, was the acclamation of the Roman people necessary to create the emperor, as had apparently been the case at the coronation of Charles the Great?

“This question was answered in the affirmative in the middle of the twelfth century by the newly created Roman commune, which rebelled against the pope in 1143 and again in 1144. The commune reconstituted the Senate and asserted its right to create the emperor. As Robert Brenson has said, ‘From 1144 to 1155, far from having concrete limited goals, the Romans relied on Antiquity as a political model, and claimed to exercise in the present the undiminished prerogatives of the ancient Roman Senate and people.’

“Their model seems to have been the pre-Carolingian empire, primarily that of Constantine and Justinian, without any room in it for the pope. They were much influenced by the religious leader Arnold of Brescia (d. 1155), who believed that clerics should be stripped of their property. A partisan of his named Wezel had the temerity to write to [the German Emperor] Frederick [Barbarossa] that the Donation [of Constantine], ‘that lie and heretical fable’, was not believed even by ‘servants and little women’ in Rome, and that the Pope therefore had no right to summon him there for a coronation...

“... When [Frederick] was approaching Rome in order to be crowned by the pope, he was met by emissaries of the commune who, according to Helmold, told him that he ought to ‘honour the City, which is head of the world and mother of the empire’.”

But Frederick had little time for democratism… Nor, of course, did the Popes, who, however much they might wish to overthrow the power of the emperors and kings, did not want to replace it with the vague but potentially very powerful force of the mob. However, already in this twelfth century, John of Salisbury floated the idea that the assassination of a tyrant in certain circumstances – that is, if he acted against the holy faith or disregarded the interests of the Church hierarchy - was allowed: “It is not only permitted, but is equitable and just, to kill tyrants. For he who receives the sword deserves to perish by the sword…”

Political revolution had found its justification...

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218 Charles Davis, op. cit. pp. 87-88, 88-89.  
219 John of Salisbury, Policraticus.
Now the canon lawyers faced two special problems. One we have already encountered frequently: the relationship of the king to the papal monarchy. The other would become increasingly important: the relationship of the Holy Roman Emperor to the other kingdoms of Western Europe.

"According to classical Roman law," writes Pennington, "the emperor’s sovereignty encompassed all lesser kings, princes, and magistrates. As Johannes Teutonicus wrote in his gloss that was incorporated later into the Ordinary Gloss to the Decretals of Gregory VII: ‘The emperor is over all kings... and all nations are under him... He is the lord of the world... and no king may gain an exemption from his authority, because no prescription can run against him in this case.’ By the high Middle Ages, Johannes’ gloss no longer described the reality of Europe’s political system. In his famous decretal, Per venerabilem (1202), Pope Innocent III stated that the king of France recognised no superior in temporal affairs. After this decretal had been included in collections of canon law, lawyers gave juridical precision to Innocent’s assertion. Some said that national kings were not subject to the emperor de facto, but were so de iure, while others insisted that kings were also completely independent of imperial authority. By the mid-thirteenth century jurists commonly defined the kings’ untrammelled sovereignty with the maxim ‘rex in regno suo imperator est’ (a king is emperor in his kingdom). Legally, therefore, kings exercised the same sovereignty as the emperor.”

So de facto, and perhaps also de jure, the authority of the German “Holy Roman Emperor” over the states of Western Europe in the later (Catholic) Middle Ages was as tenuous as the authority of the Eastern Byzantine Emperor had been over the same areas in the earlier (Orthodox) Middle Ages. And so as England under the Normans and Plantagenets, and France under the Capetians, increased in strength, they paid little attention to the claims of the German Emperor. (In any case, England had never been subject to Charlemagne or his successors).

However, England and France could not ignore the competing claims of another kingdom – that of the papacy; and from the twelfth century the relations of both states with Rome were complex and troubled. But it was not only as a power-rival that the papacy influenced the rising nation-states. They were impressed by the scope and efficiency of papal rule, founded on its new system of canon law and a vast net of agents and legates throughout Europe. And so, as Siedentop writes, “despite their continuing struggle against papal pretensions, secular rulers carried two things away from the conflict. The first was papal acceptance that secular jurisdictions had their own origin and validity. The second was a gradual disengagement from a corporate conception of society. This made the relationships one of emulation as well as competition...

\[220\] Pennington, op. cit., pp. 432-433.
“… A distinct pattern emerged. Feudal kingship gave way to a new form of kingship, a form involving centralization of authority and the growth of bureaucracy. Royal councils, traditionally composed of tribal chiefs or feudal magnates, were reformed along the model of the papal curia. The names give to new, separate agencies varied. But the pattern involved separating legislative, administrative and judicial functions, and giving each into the hands of people with some appropriate training. Often these were ‘new’ men rather than leading feudatories. In this way a wider pool of talent became available, men whose modest origins also made them more amenable to discipline…

“These changes can be observed in southern Italy and in Sicily, the principality put together by Norman invaders from the later eleventh century. Two things may help to explain why its rulers created the ‘first modern system of royal law’. The first was the fact of proximity to Rome and constant contact with papal government. But the second and more important was their need for a legitimacy that the papacy could bestow. These Norman ‘intruders’ wished to become kings properly so called (a wish which also led Duke William of Normandy to cultivate relations with the papacy, before invading England in 1066).

“What institutions did the Norman rulers create? They created a system of civil service examinations’ which provided officials to staff new central agencies, a chancery which prepared and issued royal decrees, a treasury (the dogana) which organized and directed an efficient system of taxation, and a high court claiming direct jurisdiction over the most serious cases and providing itinerant judges to deal with lesser cases outside the capital of Palermo. Altogether, the pattern strongly resembled that of the reformed Roman curia.

“But Norman innovations did not stop there. These rulers inherited a peculiarly complex set of ‘legal’ traditions, the result of Sicily and southern Italy having been subject, at various times, to Byzantine, papal and Arab rule…” 221

King Roger II of Sicily was the most striking innovator. He made use of the discovery of Justinian’s Digest in order to strengthen his authority vis-à-vis the pope. He was an absolutist ruler who tried to obtain complete control, not only of political matters, but also of ecclesiastical matters within his kingdom – hence his rejection of papal claims to feudal overlordship of the island, and his promotion of his claim to be the apostolic legate to Sicily. So he was less interested in those parts of Roman law that regulated relations with the Church on a symphonic basis, such as Justinian’s famous Sixth Novella, than in the more absolutist elements, which went back to old, pagan Rome.

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David Abulafia writes: “Roger II was several decades ahead of the German emperors in making use of Roman law codes, and it can be argued that he grasped their principles more quickly and firmly than did the emperors: ‘no one should dispute about the judgement, plans and undertakings of the king. For to dispute about his decisions, deeds, constitutions, plans and whether he whom the king has chosen is worthy is comparable to sacrilege.’ The king stood above the law: this was pure Justinian, cited by Roger, with the substitution of the term rex for princeps. In other words, it was a law which was intended exactly to apply to Roger’s kingdom. The idea of the crime of maiestas, or treason, was developed on Roman lines, and was extended to heretics as well, for by questioning the parameters of religion they questioned implicitly the divine election of the ruler.

“Thus the Sicilian monarchy was not entirely a novelty. The ideas that inspired Roger were late-Roman legal ideas, transmitted through Byzantine Italy, but applied to a new set of conditions: a territorial monarchy whose ruler saw himself as detached from the higher jurisdiction of western or eastern emperor, even of pope. Old legislation was seen to confirm the rights and powers of a new institution, the Sicilian monarchy; what was revolutionary was the transformation of the idea of monarchy from the universalism of the late-Roman codes into the regional autonomy of the Sicilian kingdom…

“Roger II’s attitude to his monarchy has nowhere been so misunderstood as in his dealings with the Byzantine emperors. Much of his reign was taken up with open or threatened conflict with Byzantium; but in 1141 and 1143 he sent embassies to the emperors John and Manuel Comnenus, demanding recognition of his status as basileus. This is just the moment when his minister George of Antioch commissioned the mosaic of the king being crowned by Christ, and when his relations with the pope were once again difficult over the apostolic legateship. What did Roger mean? The term basileus gave rise to problems. Westerners knew that it was the core title of a long list of titles held by the Byzantine emperor… In ancient Greek, basileus was the word for ‘king’. Western rulers who wished to irritate the Byzantines would send letters to Constantinople addressed to the ‘king of the Greeks’; but the Byzantines saw their ruler as ‘emperor of the Romans’, that is, universal emperor, appointed by God, successor to Constantine. Roger’s idea of a territorial monarchy, separated out of the universal Christian community, was not easy for Byzantium to accept; there was a tendency in Byzantium to… treat the kingdoms of the west as petty provinces ‘allowed’ to function under a system of self-government (though southern Italy and Sicily were a different case – they had been ‘stolen’ from Byzantium by the Normans). What Roger wanted from Constantinople was recognition of the new reality; when he asked to be treated as a basileus he was not cheekily asking to be reckoned as the emperor’s equal, or as the western emperor (in lieu of the German ruler), but as a territorial monarch possessing the plenitude of monarchical authority, described in Justinian’s law-codes. Nevertheless, the
Byzantines regarded even this as the height of impudence; the Sicilian ambassador was imprisoned, and relations became even worse than before.

“A sidelight on these events is perhaps cast by a book written at Roger’s court by a Byzantine scholar just at this time: Neilos Doxopatrios’ *History of the Five Patriarchates*. This book rebukes the Normans for seizing the lands of the Roman emperor – an extraordinary statement in a work dedicated to a Norman king – but it also argues that Sicily and southern Italy belong to the patriarchate of Constantinople, and are not under the ecclesiastical authority of the bishop of Rome. Roger may have seized on this idea, already exploited in his dealings with the Church, to approach the Byzantine emperor and to offer to re-enter the Orthodox fold. It would be, at the very least, a deft way to put pressure on the pope when he was making difficulties over the apostolic legateship.”222

Re-entry into the Orthodox fold was indeed the only way for a Western ruler of the time, not only to escape from the coils of the papist absolutism, but also to aspire to the ideal of Christian Statehood. For that ideal was not “faith-free”: it critically depended on the acceptance of the Orthodox faith as the pillar and foundation of the Christian State, the source of the rule of law. Unfortunately, however, Roger was almost the last western ruler who even contemplated returning to the Orthodox faith223, and he himself ruled less like an Orthodox ruler and more like a modern multi-faith and multi-cultural ecumenist. In fact, he embraced ecumenism as a solution to the problems of multi-culturalism, portraying himself in art as both a Latin king, a Greek emperor and a Muslim caliph. Thus Jeremy Johns writes that on Christmas Day 1130, the “had himself crowned King of Sicily and announced that the different communities of his kingdom – Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Muslim and Jewish – now all belonged to a single ‘three-tongued’ Sicilian people. Arabic, Greek and Latin were all employed by the administration of the new kingdom, but the linguistic complexities of Sicily were not triple but legion: a handful of Normans spoke Norse; many Muslims came from North Africa and spoke Berber; the Jews spoke Arabic for day-to-day matters (writing it in Hebrew script), but worshipped and studied in Hebrew; the ‘Latinis’ spoke not with one tongue, but in French, Spanish and a babel of more or less mutually incomprehensible ‘Italian’ dialects. Few were able to communicate in all three official languages, so that, for example, a Latin lord had to issue orders in Romance dialect to a Greek interpreter for translation into Arabic so that they could be understood by his Berber-speaking peasants. In what language was King Roger to convey to his subjects the royal message that they were now a single Sicilian people?


223 Early in the thirteenth century the Hungarian King Andreas II was converted to Orthodoxy by St. Savva of Serbia. And in the fourteenth century the Swedish King Magnus became a monk after being washed up at the Russian monastery of Valaam during a storm.
“His solution was to develop art, architecture and material culture as a new visual language of Sicilian unity. Roger was depicted in the robes of a Latin king, a Byzantine emperor and an Islamic caliph; his coins, documents and inscriptions used all three languages, irrespective of their audience; his palaces and churches combined Byzantine, Islamic and Latin forms and decoration. In all cases, the tri-culturalism of the medium, not the original meaning of the constituents, was the message.

“The image of Roger in royal garb conveyed ‘king’ to all his subjects in an immediate way that the words basileios, malik or rex did not, but the image of the king conveyed a very different meaning to the loyal Greek minister, the fervent Muslim who rejected Christian rule, and the backwoods Latin baron who despised the sophisticated culture of the court.” 224

60. HERETICS AND JEWS

It was not only secular kings that felt compelled to resist the exorbitant claims of the “reformed” papacy: the peasants also began to rebel. At first, the rebellions were relatively inchoate, and were directed against abuses of church authority rather than the authority itself. But in time these developed into clearly heretical movements with a Proto-Protestant character.

Thus in 1116, writes Siedentop, a former monk called Henry arrived in Le Mans. “‘Preceded’ by his disciples, he was at first tolerated by the local bishop. But when the bishop left for Rome, Henry’s real message emerged. With a powerful voice and wearing only a hair shirt, he denounced the corruption of the local clergy. ‘After a short course of Henry’s preaching the populace was beating priests in the streets and rolling them in the mud. When Henry later moved into the countryside of southern France and Italy, his message became more extreme: ‘Baptism, he taught, should be given only as an external sign of belief. Church buildings and all the trappings of official religion were useless; a man could pray anywhere as well as he could in a church. The true church consisted of those who followed the apostolic life, in poverty and simplicity; love of one’s neighbour was the essence of true religion.’”

Again, “in the mid-twelfth century a Breton called Eon… led a movement that challenged the established church in Brittany. Although a layman, he celebrated mass for his followers and, apparently, claimed to be the son of God. ‘In the end he organized his followers in a new church, with archbishops and bishops whom he called by such names as Wisdom, Knowledge, Judgement and by the names of the original apostles.’”

More lasting in its impact, and less openly heretical was the movement founded by Francis of Assisi. (However, St. Ignaty Brianchaninov characterized Francis’ behavior and visions as “madness.”). His emphasis on voluntary poverty and charity struck a powerful chord, and he soon had thousands of followers across Europe.

The most powerful heretical movement of this period was that of the Cathars or Albigensians of southern France. And their appearance elicited a very fierce response from the papacy. In 1209 Pope Innocent III gave an expedition against the heretics the legal status of a crusade. At Muret in 1213 the crusaders from northern France overcame the heretics of southern France, which was followed by a terrible inquisition and bloodletting carried out by “Saint” Dominic, the real founder of the Inquisition.

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227 Brianchaninov, “Christians, you must know Christ!”
Indeed, according to Ehrenreich, “the crusades against the European heretics represented the ultimate fusion of church and military... In return for an offer of indulgences, northern French knights ‘flayed Provence [home of the Cathars], hanging, beheading, and burning with unspeakable joy.’ When the city of Béziers was taken [at the cost of twenty thousand lives] and the papal legate was asked how to distinguish between the Cathars and the regular Catholics, he gave the famous reply: ‘Kill them all; God will know which are His...’”  

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However, before discussing the Albigensians in more detail we need to examine the internal enemies par excellence of Medieval Europe, the Jews, whose influence on the Albigensians was extensive...  

The Jews of the West, the “Ashkenaz”, began to become influential during the reign of Charlemagne, who protected them and gave them the freedom of the empire, much to the dismay of the bishops. With the decline of the Carolingian empire, Jewish merchants made Rouen, the capital of Normandy, their own capital in the West (excluding Spain, which was called “Sepharad”, literally “the East”), and they were also well-established in Mainz and other Rhineland towns. After the Norman conquest of England, the Jews penetrated there as well, and the Norman kings of England came to rely on them financially...  

The Jews were propelled westward by two disasters they suffered in the East: the destruction of the Jewish Khazar kingdom by the Russians in the tenth century, which was followed by their being banned from Russia by Great Prince Vladimir Monomakh in the twelfth century, and their expulsion from Mesopotamia by the Muslims in 1040. Mesopotamia had been their homeland for many generations, the seat of their government-in-exile and the place where the Babylonian Talmud received its finished form.  

But in the West, no less than in the East, the Jews were an “alien, apparently indigestible element in society”; they were “always and everywhere in society and in the state, but never properly of either one or the other”.  

The reasons given for this alienation of the Jews in the course of history have basically been of two diametrically opposing kinds. According to the Christians and those who are called by the Jews “anti-semites”, the Jews were alien because they wanted to be alien, because their law, the Talmud, which has only the most strained and tangential relationship to God’s revelation in

228 Ehrenreich, op. cit., p. 172.  
the Old Testament, ordered them to be alien and hostile to all non-Jews, whom they exploited through their money-lending activities and against whose political authorities they very often rebelled. In other words, Christian anti-semitism was the regrettable but fully understandable consequence of Jewish anti-Gentilism.

According to the Jewish and pro-semitic view, on the other hand, it was the Christians who imposed this alienation upon the Jews, forcing them to live in ghettos, to take up money-lending as a profession, and to rebel out of self-defence.

In fact, as L.A. Tikhomorov writes, “the Jews were well organized in every country, and Jewish organizations in all countries were in constant contact with each other, warning about dangers, preparing refuges in case of persecution and helping each other internationally in respect of trade and industry. This gave Jewry an exceptional power. Wherever a Jew went with a view to practising trade and industry, he found ready support. But the dominance that flowed from this in trade and industry placed a heavy burden on the non-Jewish population. The rulers of the countries – kings, dukes, landowning princes – greatly valued the Jews for their ability to get for them money and think up all kinds of financial operations. Even during times of persecution of the Jews generally, people with property and even town magistrates each wanted ‘to have his own Jew’ for himself, as a consequence of which the persecutions lost their systematic character. But for the population their financial talents were very burdensome, and dissatisfaction and hatred continued to grow against the Jews. This was felt everywhere. In Portugal, for example, where there prevailed the firmest and most exceptional goodwill towards the Jews, the masses of the people hated them. Also, the Jews’ disdain for Christianity could not fail to irritate the Christians. This disdain the Jews did not try to hide in the least. The most broad-minded Jews, such as Judah Halevy [1075-1140] who, of course, had the most superficial understanding of Christianity, and of Islam too, put the one and the other on a level with paganism. Judah Halevy said that although Christianity and Islam ‘in their original form’ were institutions for the purification and ennoblement of the non-Jews (their preparation for Judaism), nevertheless they had turned into paganism: the Christians worshipped the Cross, and the Muslims – the stone of the Kaaba. The Jews expressed their criticisms wherever they could. Undermining Christianity became part of their mission. And meanwhile they occupied the most prominent position in such dark sciences as alchemy, astrology and every kind of theurgy. Their mysticism and kabbalistic theories had a great influence on Christian society. All kinds of magic and witchcraft, to which the superstitious Middle Ages was avidly drawn, were closely linked with Jewish elements. An example of the degree to which Jewish influence could go is presented by the south of France, which was called French Judaea. The Jews exhibited constant close links with all the

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231 Halevy is also considered a great medieval forerunner of twentieth-century Zionism (Cantor, op. cit., p. 143). (V.M.)
enemies of Christianity, with the Arabs, with the heretics of the most disgusting sects, such as Manichaeism. Michelet, in evaluating the Albigensians [the Cathari, or Manichaeans, of Southern France], says: ‘The southern nobility was overflowing with the children of Jews and Saracens [Histoire de France (A History of France), vol. II, p. 159].’ They were more developed people, in Michelet’s opinion, than the northern nobility. However it was here that there developed a terrible opposition to religion, and a collapse of morality. The more eminent women were just as debauched as their husbands and fathers, and the poetry of the troubadors was completely filled with blasphemies against God and the stories of lovers. ‘This French Judaea, as Languedoc was called, was reminiscent of the Judaea in the East not only because of its olive groves and aromas: it had its own Sodom and Gomorrha… The local scholars openly taught the philosophy of Aristotle, while the Arabs and Jews in secret taught the pantheism of Averroes and the subtleties of the Cabala.’ [Michelet, op. cit., pp. 393-404].

“The Jewish historian G. Graetz confirms the essence of this characterization. ‘The Albigensians,’ he says, ‘especially energetically protested against the papacy, and their opposition was partly owing to their relations with the educated Jews and knowledge of Jewish works. Amidst the Albigensians there existed a sect that directly said that the Jewish Law is better than the Christian. Those princes who protected the Albigensians also protected the Jews.’

“We can see what a socially demoralizing influence this was from the same Albigensians. We are accustomed to speak only about the persecutions against the Albigensians. But we must also remember what was being done in those levels of the population which are labelled by the general name of ‘Albigensians’. They were overflowing with people having no social restraint. ‘The heroes of the great highways,’ writes Michelet, ‘together with the peasants… dressed their wives in sacred vestments, beat up the priests and mockingly forced them to sing mass. One of their entertainments consisted in disfiguring representations of the Saviour, cutting out the hands and legs. These trouble-makers were dear to the landowning princes precisely for their godlessness. Unbelievers, like our contemporaries, and as savage as barbarians, they lay as a heavy burden on the country, stealing, blackmailing and killing whoever came to hand, carrying out a terrible war’…

“From the ninth century in France children began to disappear, and rumour began to accuse the Jews of stealing them. First they said it was for selling into slavery, then there appeared rumours that the Jews were killing them. In the twelfth century the Jews were accused of crucifying Christians. It appears that at that time they were not talking about the Jews’ use of Christian blood for ritualistic ends. This accusation appeared only in the thirteenth century. The constant friendship of the Jews with the Saracens elicited suspicion and hatred that was the stronger the more intense became the struggle with Islam.
“So the era of the crusades elicited stormy pogroms of the Jews. Before the crusades themselves, in 1014, in France, killing of Jews for such reasons took place everywhere. The Jews of Orleans sent an ambassador to Sultan Hakim in Jerusalem, advising him to destroy the Church of Sepulchre of the Lord. Hakim (Fatimid) did indeed destroy the Church. But for that Jews were killed throughout France, while their ambassador, on his return from Jerusalem, was burned in Orleans.

“The first crusade began in 1096, and if the correct crusading armies did not touch the Jews, the motley crowds of people drawn to the liberation of the Holy Sepulchre beat up Jews along the way and forced them to be baptized against their will. Against this there sounded the voices of the Roman popes, but they remained powerless in face of the excited masses. Pogroms began to become a common phenomenon. Even in England, where nobody had touched the Jews before, in 1189 the first pogrom broke out, while one hundred years later, in 1290, the kings decided to expel them completely from England. Thus the Jews had no access to England for 350 years until Cromwell, who again allowed them to live in the country. On the continent a terrible pogrom broke out in Fulda, where on the occasion of the killing of some Christian children a crowd burned several tens of Jews, although it remained unclear who had killed the children. In the fourteenth century Europe began to be devastated by the so-called ‘Black Death’ (the plague), and the general voice of the peoples accused the Jews of poisoning the water and supplies set aside for the use of the Christians. The year 1348 was a fatal date for the Jews. In 1453 the Jews suffered universal extinction in Silesia. It goes without saying that the persecuted Jews everywhere sought salvation in new emigrations to such places where they were not killing them at the given moment, although after a certain time the refugees perhaps had to seek a new refuge. During this period there were countless accusations that they had committed ritual killings. Moreover, in a majority of processes – even, perhaps, in all of them – there were Jews who confessed to the crime, and even described the details of how they did it. But the trials of the time took place with the help of tortures, whose horrors we can hardly imagine. In the same period there were many trials of magicians and witches, who were compelled to make confessions by the same tortures. Looking objectively, there is no possibility of reaching an exact conclusion about what these magicians and witches were, and in exactly the same way whether there were cases of ritual killings among the Jews.

“In the interesting collection of I.O. Kuzmin [Materialy k voprosu ob obvineniakh evreev v ritual’nykh ubijstvakh (Materials on the question of the accusations against Jews of ritual murders), St. Petersburg, 1913] there is a long list of trials (mainly Polish) on ritual killings. And it is impossible even to

232 In 1306 they were expelled from France, in 1349 from Saxony, in 1360 from Hungary, in 1370 from Belgium, in 1380 from Bohemia, in 1480 from Austria, in 1444 from the Netherlands; in 1492 from Spain, in 1495 from Lithuania, in 1497 from Portugal, in 1498 from Salzburg, Wurtemburg and Nuremberg, in 1540 from Sardinia and Naples, and in 1551 from Bavaria. (V.M.)
understand what amount of truth there could be in the depositions and confessions extracted by tortures, which make one’s hair stand on end. Dr. Frank [Ritual’nie ubijstva pered sudom istiny i sprawedlivosti (Ritual murders before the court of truth and justice), Kiev, 1912, p. 50] cites the conclusion of the Jesuit Friedrich von Sprey, who said: ‘I swear that amidst the many women sentenced to burning for supposed sorcery, whom I accompanied to the fire, there was not one whose guilt was established. Apply this kind of tortures to judges, to spiritual fathers, to me – and you would recognize all of us to be sorcerers.’ We could say the same about the confessions of ritual murders. But on the other hand the centuries we are talking about did indeed constitute the peak of various kinds of sorcery and ‘black magic’, combined with the most disgusting crimes. Moreover, blood was considered to be one of the most important materials used in magic. It is said that the sacrifice of a child and the drinking of his blood was part of the so-called ‘black mass’ [S. Tukholk, Okkul’tizm i magia (Occultism and Magic), St. Petersburg, 1911, p. 92]. The translator of the Russian edition of the book of the Monk Neophytus [O tajne krovi u evreev (On the Mystery of Blood among the Jews), St. Petersburg, 1914] adduces in the foreword examples of the murder of children with the aim of making incantations among people belonging by blood and birth-certificate to the Christians. Thus in 1440 the Marshal of France Giles de Lavalle was condemned and burned; he tortured and killed many children to find the philosopher’s stone. The remains of the tortured children were found in a cellar. ‘From their blood, brains and bones,’ says the translator, ‘they prepared some kind of magical liquid.’

“Since among the Jews various kinds of sorcery and magic were as well developed as among the Christian peoples, and in this respect the Jews were even rather the teachers of the others since the time of the Babylonian captivity, then one can, of course, imagine that some among them were capable of such evils. But the accusers among the people spread this slander on the whole of Jewry.

“On these grounds, besides tortures and court burnings, a number of pogroms were stirred up against the Jews by crowds in all countries. In exactly the same way terrible persecutions were raised against the Jews during the so-called ‘Black Death’, which ravaged Europe. The people shouted that the Jews were preparing destructive concoctions out of poisonous plants, human blood and urine, etc., and sorcerers were poisoning people with this mixture. Excited crowds destroyed the homes of the Jews, plundered their property, and killed them. It goes without saying that it is easy to imagine there were people who deliberately stirred up the people against the unfortunate Jews in order to profit from their inheritance. This was perhaps the most difficult era in the life of the Jewish people.”

The main heretical books of the Jews were the Talmud and the Kabbala (or Cabala). “The Byzantine emperors,” writes Oleg Platonov, “were unconditional opponents of the Talmud, forbidding it on their territory. In this policy the Russian sovereigns followed the Byzantine emperors. Right until the end of the 17th century the import of the Talmud into Russia was forbidden under pain of death.

“The tradition of the non-allowance of the Talmud onto the territory of Christian states was broken after the falling away of the Western church from Orthodoxy and the strengthening of papism. The mercenary Roman popes and cardinals for the sake of gain often entered into agreements with the Jews and looked through their fingers at the widespread distribution of the Talmud in Europe. Nevertheless, amidst the Roman popes there were found those who tried to fight with this ‘book worthy of being cursed’, from the reading of which ‘every kind of evil flows’.

“Popes Gregory IX in 1230 and Innocent IV in 1244 ordered all Talmudic books to be burned. In England in 1272 during the expulsion of the Jews searches for copies of the Talmud were carried out in their homes and they were handed over to be burned…”

A new Jewish “holy” book now appeared, the Cabala. Nesta Webster writes: “The modern Jewish Cabala presents a dual aspect - theoretical and practical; the former concerned with theosophical speculations, the latter with magical practices. It would be impossible here to give an idea of Cabalistic theosophy with its extraordinary imaginings on the Sephiroths, the attributes and functions of good and bad angels, dissertations on the nature of demons, and minute details on the appearance of God under the name of the Ancient of Ancients, from whose head 400,000 worlds receive the light. ‘The length of this face from the top of the head is three hundred and seventy times ten thousand worlds. It is called the “Long Face”, for such is the name of the Ancient of Ancients.’ The description of the hair and beard alone belonging to this gigantic countenance occupies a large place in the Zoharic treatise, Idra Raba.

“According to the Cabala, every letter in the Scriptures contains a mystery only to be solved by the initiated. By means of this system of interpretation passages of the Old Testament are shown to bear meanings totally unapparent to the ordinary reader. Thus the Zohar explains that Noah was lamed for life by the bite of a lion whilst he was in the ark, the adventures of Jonah inside the whale are related with an extraordinary wealth of imagination, whilst the beautiful story of Elisha and the Shunamite woman is travestied in the most grotesque manner.

“In the practical Cabala this method of ‘decoding’ is reduced to a theurgic or magical system in which the healing of diseases plays an important part and is effected by means of the mystical arrangement of numbers and letters, by the pronunciation of the Ineffable Name, by the use of amulets and talismans, or by compounds supposed to contain certain occult properties.

“All these ideas derived from very ancient cults; even the art of working miracles by the use of the Divine Name, which after the appropriation of the Cabala by the Jews became the particular practice of Jewish miracle-workers, appears to have originated in Chaldea…”

How could this paganism ever have entered the rigorously anti-pagan religion of Judaism? The pro-semite author Paul Johnson writes: “The sages were both fascinated and repelled by this egregious superstition. The anthropomorphism of God’s bodily measurements went against basic Judaic teaching that God is non-created and unknowable. The sages advised Jews to keep their eyes firmly fixed on the law and not to probe dangerous mysteries… But they then proceeded to do just that themselves; and, being elitists, they tended to fall in with the idea of special knowledge conveyed to the elect: ‘The story of creation should not be expounded before two persons, and the chapter on the chariot [Ezekiel 1] before even one person, unless he is a sage, and already has an independent understanding of the matter.’ That was the Talmud; indeed the Talmud and other holy writings contained a good deal of this suspect material…”

L.A. Tikhomirov writes that the mysticism of the Cabala “was based on the idea of the self-sufficiency of nature, on the substitution of nature for the idea of God the Creator, the Personal God Whose essence was beyond the whole of creation created by Him.

“Therefore the Cabala undermined both the Mosaic faith and the Christian.

“In social relations it also undermined that order which was based on the law given by God, for it made man the independent orderer of his own social relations. This side of the Cabala aroused alarm in Jewish society, too, exciting it sometimes to struggle against Cabalism by force. And indeed, in, for example, its newest manifestation, Hassidism, the Kabbalistic idea undermined the authority both of the rabbis and of Jewish society itself and opposed to it the ‘Tsadiks’ – a power that was, so to speak, independent by dint of the mystical link it presupposed with the Divine principle. The Jews therefore found in Cabalism a kinship with Christianity, where, as they supposed, ‘Christ made himself God’. In exactly the same way in the triads of

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the Sephiroth they saw a similarity with the Christian idea of the consubstantial Trinity. But if Cabalism excited the alarm of the Jewish world, they still were able to deal with it there, since the Cabalists in general were also penetrated by Jewish national patriotism, and, in all probability, it was precisely Cabalist influences that served as the basis for that original form of messianism which sees in the Messiah not a special ambassador of God, but the Jewish people itself, and understands the coming kingdom of the Messiah as the universal kingdom of the people of Israel.

“But the Cabala had a more destructive impact on Christian society.

“In the Christian world Cabalism was also supposed to be closer to Christianity than Talmudism, so that the Cabalists were sometimes protected even by the Roman popes. But if there were cases of the conversion of Cabalists to Christianity, in general Cabalism has the same relationship to Christianity as Gnosticism, that is, it can give birth only to heretical teachings. And that is how it worked in history, undermining Christian ideas about God, Christ, the Church and, finally, the whole order of Christian society through its ability to join up with all and sundry. The survivals of Gnosticism and the heresies went hand in hand with Cabalism right from the Middle Ages. It undermined the same things, and first of all the Church; and it gave birth to the same ideals of public life.

“This does not mean that Cabalism whenever it appeared put forward political or social programmes. It had nothing of the kind, as there was nothing of the kind in occultism. Like occultism, Cabalism was always only a well-known religio-philosophical world-view. If it had politico-social consequences, then only because this world-view undermined the Christian-ecclesiastical world-view, and through it also the order founded upon it, and those forms of discipline which it held to.

“That intellectual-social movement, a constituent part of which in its religio-philosophical aspect was Cabalism, together with occultism and Gnosticism undermined the bases of the Christian order confirmed in the middle ages. It was in fact reformist, emancipatory and revolutionary, since it opposed to the social discipline of old Europe the democratic idea. The democratic idea in itself, through its internal logic, was put forward in opposition to the hierarchical idea, when the idea of submission to the will of God was substituted by the idea of human autonomy. It was for that reason that the secret societies and tendencies, in whose world-view the Cabala found its place, played, together with Gnosticism and occultism, a reformist and revolutionary role. Such, especially, was the role of Freemasonry.

“But we must not conclude from this that the Cabalistic idea was in essence ‘emancipatory’ and democratic. Quite the opposite. If Cabalism, like occultism, will at any time begin to introduce into the ordering of society its own ideas, they will give birth to a society that is in an idiosyncratic way aristocratic and very despotic. We see this in part in the social order of
Cabalistic Hasidism, in which the Tsadiks are absolute masters to whom the whole of their community submits unconditionally. And that is understandable.

“According to the idea of Cabalism, people have by no means equal rights, they are not identical. Over humanity in general there is no authority higher than human authority, and human authority goes back even to the heavens. But people are not all identical, authority does not belong to all of them, because they are not equally powerful. Some people are rich in occult abilities, whose power can be developed by exercise to an infinite degree. But other people are weak in this respect or even nothing. And these weak people must naturally be in the hands of the strong, receive directions from them and be under their administration. This power of the mystical aristocracy is incomparably more powerful than the power of hereditary aristocracy, because the latter is not united with great personal power, while the mystical aristocracy has an invincible personal power. It possesses the ability to rule over the whole of nature, over the angelic powers, over the souls of men, not because such a rule was given to it by some human law or ‘constitution’, but because these higher men are incomparably more powerful than others, while the weak cannot oppose them. Moreover, there is no need to oppose them, because the higher nature will be able to construct a life that is much better for the weak than they can build themselves.

“On this basis heredity can arise. Among the Tsadik hassidim there soon arose ‘dynasties’ in which power was passed down by inheritance.

“And so in itself the Cabalistic idea by no means leads to democracy…

“As is well-known, in Freemasonry, too, in spite of the external democratism and elective nature of its institutions, in actual fact the secret power of the ‘higher degrees’ is exceptionally great. It is noteworthy that a man of the ‘higher degrees’, when placed among people of the lower degrees, does not receive any external power. He seems to be equal to all his co-members, but is obliged to direct them in the direction indicated to him from above. He must do this by means of influence. What kind of influence is this? In all probability, as they say, he must possess the ability of a hypnotist and magnetist. It is also thought that reception into the higher degrees of Masonry takes place on the basis of the degree to which these ‘occult’ abilities are revealed and proved in a man.

“Concerning Cabalism, we must further note the possibility of its national role. From ancient times there has existed in Jewry the conviction that the ‘Godchosenness’ of Israel is defined by special ‘prophetic abilities’ of the descendants of Abraham. One can well imagine that the special abilities necessary for Cabalism belong in the highest degree only to the Jews. With this presupposition we can understand why ‘the Jewish Cabala’ stands separate from ‘the European’, and if the time for the influence of the Cabalists were ever to come, it would probably coincide with the world influence of
Jewry. We can also suppose that this is linked to the preponderance of Jewry in the highest centre of Freemasonry, about which the investigators of the latter speak. But so little is known both about the Cabalistic organizations and about the higher organizations of Freemasonry, and all ideas about them have so little basis in fact, that one should not attach any serious significance to hypotheses of this sort…”

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a conflict arose between the rationalists, led by Maimonides, who rejected the paganism of the Cabala, and the “mystics”, led by Nahmanides, who accepted it. The work of Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) is to Judaism what the Spanish Arab philosopher Averroës is to Islam and Thomas Aquinas is to Christianity – the first to attempt to reconcile the faith of his fathers with scientific knowledge, and in particular the science of Aristotle which was becoming known again in Spain and Western Europe. For this rationalist project Maimonides was criticized by many of the rabbis of his time. But in his opposition to the Cabala he showed himself faithful to the monotheistic roots of Judaism.

“Nahmanides,” however, as Johnson writes, “made it possible for kabbalists to pose as the conservatives, tracing the origin of their ideas back to the Bible and Talmud, and upholding the best and most ancient Jewish traditions. It was the rationalists who were the innovators, bringing to the study of the Torah the pagan ideas of the ancient Greeks. In this respect, the campaign against the works of Maimonides could be described as the last squeak of the anti-Hellenists.

“Nahmanides himself never joined the witch-hunt against rationalism – on the contrary, he opposed it – but he made it possible for the kabbalists to escape similar charges of heresy, which in fact would have been much better grounded. For Cabalah not only introduced gnostic concepts which were totally alien to the ethical monotheism of the Bible, it was in a sense a completely different religion: pantheism. Both its cosmogony – its account of how creation was conceived in God’s words – and its theory of divine emanations led to the logical deduction that all things contain a divine element. In the 1280s, a leading Spanish kabbalist, Moses ben Shem Tov of Guadalajar, produced a summa of kabbalistic lore, the Sefer-ha-Zohar, generally known as the Zohar, which became the best-known treatise on the subject. Much of this work is explicitly pantheist: it insists repeatedly that God ‘is everything’ and everything is united in Him, ‘as is known to the mystics’. But if God is everything, and everything is in God, how can God be a single, specific being, non-created and absolutely separate from creation, as orthodox Judaism has always emphatically insisted? There is no answer to this question, except the plain one that Zohar-Cabalah is heresy of the most pernicious kind…”

238 Johnson, op. cit., pp. 198-199.
“Heresy of the most pernicious kind…” And yet, during the Renaissance this heresy was to penetrate the intellectual life of Western Europe, undermining what was left of its Christian faith…

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Perhaps the most famous movement accused of heresy in the Middle Ages were the Knights Templar, a monastic-military sect founded under the protection of the papacy in 1118 in order to protect pilgrims to the Holy Land. In exchange for their military service, in 1139 Pope Innocent II allowed them “to retain all the spoils from the Saracens, with no one else having any right to demand a portion”. After a distinguished beginning to their history during which they displayed great courage in support of the crusaders in the Holy Land, - indeed, they became “the most important defenders of European interests” there. However, they were corrupted by the vast wealth they acquired both through donations and through rapine, and began to betray the Christian cause through deals with the Saracens.

Worst of all, according to their enemies, they accepted dualistic, Manichaean-Albigensian doctrines and began to worship an idol called “Baphomet”, accompanied by the renunciation of Christ and homosexual orgies.

These “facts” were established during trials of their members by King Philip the Fair of France, who wanted their money, and Pope Clement V, who was coerced by Philip. The head of the Order, Jacques de Molay, and one other Templar, refused to admit their guilt even under torture. They were finally burned at the stake in Paris in 1314, and all their property was confiscated…

Many authorities assert that the Templars were completely innocent; certainly, the use of torture in the earlier trial, in 1307, by King Philip, makes the use of that evidence unsafe by modern standards of proof.

240 This “idol” may in fact have been what we now know as the Shroud of Turin. See Ian Wilson, The Shroud: the 2000-Year-Old Mystery Solved, London: Bantam Press, 2010.
241 According to Bertrand Russell (op. cit., p. 503), “the best account of this proceeding is in Henry C. Lea’s History of the Inquisition, where, after full investigation, the conclusion is reached that the charges against the Templars were wholly without foundation”. However, some authorities, and in particular Tikhomirov (op. cit., chapters 50, 51), think the evidence of their guilt is overwhelming, and take seriously the claim that the Templars are the link between ancient paganism and modern Freemasonry.
Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) was probably the most powerful and imperialist pope in history. Applying Jeremiah 1.10, “I have set thee over the nations and kingdoms” to himself, he declared that the Pope was “truly the vicar of Jesus Christ, anointed of the Lord… set between God and man, lower than God but higher than man, who judges all and is judged by no one”. His ambitions had been apparent already at his enthronement: “Take this tiara,” intoned the Archdeacon, “and know that thou art Father of princes and kings, ruler of the world, the vicar on earth of our Saviour Jesus Christ, whose honour and glory shall endure through all eternity.”

Nor did Innocent in private soften the force of these public claims. For “we are the successor of the Prince of the Apostles,” he said, “but we are not his vicar, nor the vicar of any man or Apostle, but the vicar of Jesus Christ Himself before whom every knee shall bow.” But was it before Christ or the Pope that the Scripture said every knee shall bow? It made little difference to the papists. For by now the Pope had taken the place, not just of Peter, but of Christ in the Roman Church.

Innocent invented an original doctrine, the “by reason of sin” (ratione peccati) theory, which enabled him to interfere in secular affairs, and make judgements in disputes between secular rulers, where he judged sin to be involved. Whether or not sin was involved in a given case was up to the Pope to decide; he was the expert on sin, though he was not yet acknowledged to be sinless himself. And since, as is generally acknowledged, sin is everywhere, Innocent intervened vigorously in every part of Christendom.

Certainly, the emperor was subject to him; for, as he put it in 1198, “just as the moon derives its light from the sun and is indeed lower than it in quantity and quality, in position and in power, so too the royal power derives the splendor of its dignity from the pontifical authority…” On this basis Innocent intervened vigorously in the election of the German Emperors, choosing Otto IV because he promised to do whatever he ordered him. So Otto was crowned “king of the Romans, elect by the grace of God and of the Pope” (God’s grace was evidently considered not enough: it had to be supplemented by the Pope’s). But within a year he had excommunicated him...

Innocent was no less high-handed in his relations with the other monarchs of the West. In England in 1172, King Henry II had murdered Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury. The resultant canonization of the archbishop raised the prestige of the Church in its perennial struggle with the State, and the Popes were not slow to press their advantage.

244 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 67.
245 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 68.
Thus when King John disagreed with Innocent over who should be archbishop of Canterbury and plundered the revenues of the English Church, the pope placed the whole kingdom under interdict for six years. He excommunicated John, deposed him from the throne and suggested to King Philip Augustus of France that he invade and conquer England! John appealed to papal mediation to save him from Philip. He received it, but at a price – full restitution of church funds and lands, perpetual infeudation of England and Ireland to the papacy, and the payment of an annual rent of a thousand marks. Only when all the money had been paid was the interdict lifted “and,” as De Rosa puts it acidly: “by kind permission of Pope Innocent III, Christ was able to enter England again”.

This enraged King Philip, however; for he was now ordered to abandon his preparations for war, in that England was now papal soil. Moreover, the abject surrender of John to the Pope, and the oath of fealty he made to him, aroused the fears of the English barons. These fears, combined with John’s despotic rule, led to the baron’s imposing upon the king the famous Magna Carta of 1215, which set out the rights of the “free man” as follows: “No free man is to be arrested, or imprisoned, or disseised, or outlawed, or exiled, or in any way destroyed... save by the lawful judgement of his peers or by the law of the land”. It “promised the protection of church rights, protection from illegal imprisonment, access to swift justice, and, most importantly, limitations on taxation and other feudal payments to the Crown, with certain forms of feudal taxation requiring baronial consent. It focused on the rights of free men — in particular the barons — and not serfs and unfree labour.”

According to David Starkey, Magna Carta “set out to do three things. Firstly, to bridle a king, John, who was dangerous and unpredictable and made his whim the law, and secondly, to make it impossible for any other king to rule in the same way. It was successful in both these things. The third thing was the great change, and something very different: it set out to create a

246 One has to admit that this sentence was justified. “King John lost most of his empire, broke every promise he ever made, dropped his royal seal in the sea, impoverished England, murdered his nephew, seduced the wives of his friends, betrayed his father, brothers and country, foamed at the mouth when angry, starved and tortured his enemies to death, lost virtually every battle he fought, fled any responsibility whenever possible and died of eating too many peaches” (Montefiore, Titans of History, p. 137).
247 In 1152 the English Pope Adrian IV by his bull Laudabiliter had reminded the English King Henry II that Ireland, like all islands, belonged to St. Peter and the Roman Church in accordance with the Donation of Constantine. He therefore blessed Henry to invade Ireland in order to extend the boundaries of the Church, extirpate vice and instill virtue. As John of Salisbury wrote in his Metalogicus of 1156 of Adrian: “At my solicitation he granted Ireland to Henry II, the illustrious King of England, to hold by hereditary right, as his letter to this day testifies. For all Ireland of ancient right, according to the Donation of Constantine, was said to belong to the Roman Church which he founded. Henry duly obliged in 1172 by invading Ireland and beginning the fateful “Irish question”. See Michael Richter, ”The First Century of Anglo-Irish Relations”, History, 59, N 196, June, 1974, pp. 195-210.
248 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 71.
machinery that absolutely bound any king in iron to its measures. The 1215 Magna Carta failed in that respect because it would have created a neo-republican government. It began as a thoroughly extremist programme before being edited and reaching common ground.

“It’s perfectly clear that it was highly controversial from the beginning: hence the denunciation of Magna Carta by the papacy…”

Magna Carta is therefore commonly regarded as the beginning of modern western democracy. But it had the further profound effect of undermining papal power. For although Magna Carta was a limitation of royal, not papal power, it set a dangerous, revolutionary precedent which might be used against the Pope himself. And indeed, it was so used: in 1366 the English parliament abolished the feudal subjection of England to the papacy...

Foreseeing these consequences, Pope Innocent III “from the plenitude of his unlimited power” condemned the charter as “contrary to moral law”, “null and void of all validity forever”, absolved the king from having to observe it and excommunicated “anyone who should continue to maintain such treasonable and iniquitous pretensions”.

But Archbishop Stephen Langton of Canterbury refused to publish this sentence. And the reason he gave was very significant: “Natural law is binding on popes and princes and bishops alike: there is no escape from it. It is beyond the reach of the pope himself.”

We shall return to this concept of natural law, which presented a challenge to the papacy’s claims of the greatest significance…

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Also in 1215 Innocent convened the Fourth Lateran council, which assembled 400 bishops and 800 abbots from every country in Europe and the Mediterranean basin. It represents the high-water mark of the papist despotism. For in it every decree of the Pope was passed without the slightest debate in accordance with Innocent’s word: “Every cleric must obey the Pope, even if he commands what is evil; for no one may judge the Pope…”

Coming shortly after the crusade against the Albigensians, the council legalized their slaughter, declaring it right, even obligatory to kill heretics: “If a temporal Lord neglects to fulfil the demand of the Church that he shall purge his land of this contamination of heresy, he shall be excommunicated by the metropolitan and other bishops of the province. If he fails to make

250 Starkey, “Magna Carta of 1215 was designed to create a revolutionary regime”, History Today, May, 2015, p. 64.
252 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 72.
253 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 73.
amends within a year, it shall be reported to the Supreme Pontiff, who shall pronounce his vassals absolved from fealty to him and offer his land to Catholics. The latter shall exterminate the heretics, possess the land without dispute and preserve it in the true faith... Catholics who assume the cross and devote themselves to the extermination of heretics shall enjoy the same indulgence and privilege as those who go to the Holy Land...”

It was Thomas Aquinas who provided a theological justification for the killing of heretics: “There is a sin, whereby they deserve not only to be separated from the Church by excommunication, but also to be shut off from the world by death. For it is a much more serious matter to corrupt faith, through which comes the soul’s life, than to forge money, through which temporal life is supported. Hence if forgers of money or other malefactors are straightway justly put to death by secular princes, with much more justice can heretics, immediately upon conviction, be not only excommunicated but also put to death.”

Such ferocious words compare badly with those of the Orthodox Bishop Wason of Liège written to the Bishop of Châlons in about 1045: “We have not received power to cut off from this life by the secular sword those whom our Creator and Redeemer wills to live so that they may extricate themselves from the snares of the devil... Those who today are our adversaries in the way of the Lord can, by the grace of God, become our betters in the heavenly country... We who are called bishops did not receive unction from the Lord to give death but to bring life.”

The Church in both East and West always considered heresy to be the most serious of sins, in accordance with Holy Scripture. However, the execution of heretics precisely for heresy had been extremely rare. That was now to change...

The Inquisition was officially founded by Pope Gregory IX in 1233. The Dominicans were entrusted with the task of eradicating heresy, calling in the secular authorities if necessary. Only one verdict was possible: guilty. For according to the Libro Negro of the inquisitors, “if, notwithstanding all the means [of torture] employed, the unfortunate wretch still denies his guilt, he is to be considered as a victim of the devil: and, as such, deserves no compassion...: he is a son of perdition. Let him perish among the damned.”

The Inquisition became especially notorious in Spain, where, as “Llorente, Secretary to the Inquisition in Madrid from 1790 to 1792, estimated in his History of the Inquisition... up to his time thirty thousand had been put to

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254 Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., p. 147.
258 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 164.
death…. During the reign of Philip II, Bloody Mary’s Spanish husband, it is reckoned that the victims of the Inquisition exceeded by many thousands all the Christians who had suffered under the Roman emperors.”

It had not always been like that. Orthodox Spain before its conquest by the Moors in 717 had already replaced “the oath of compurgatores, or the judicial combat” by “the proof by witnesses, and a rational investigation of the matter in question, such as might be expected in a civilised society.” Truly, as de Rosa writes, “the Inquisition was not only evil compared with the twentieth century, it was evil compared with the tenth and eleventh century when torture was outlawed and men and women were guaranteed a fair trial. It was evil compared with the age of Diocletian, for no one was then tortured and killed in the name of Jesus crucified.”

Five centuries later, Cardinal Bellarmine, in his book De Romano Pontifice, was preaching the same doctrine: “The Pope is the supreme judge in deciding questions of faith and morals…. If the Pope were to err by imposing sins and forbidding virtues, the Church would still have to consider sins as good and virtues as vices, or else she would sin against conscience.”

Thus did the Roman Church consciously and completely openly declare that truth is not truth, or goodness goodness – if the Pope so decrees. Later, during the Reformation, the Pope would be replaced by the People as the ultimate arbiter of truth and goodness. Thus both Catholics and Protestants denied the only “pillar and ground of the truth”, which is “the Church of the living God” (I Timothy 3.15).

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But the papacy’s enemies were not finished yet. The popes continued to be defied by that most avant-garde outpost of medieval kingship, the kings of Sicily, known as Stupor Mundi, who continued to break the mould of medieval kingship. Their most famous and powerful representative was Frederick II Hofenstaufen (1194-1250), who was also Holy Roman Emperor and who wanted to extend his territories beyond Germany and Sicily into the Italian lands in between. “He was raised in Sicily, a court that blended Christian and Islamic, Arab and Norman culture. If his upbringing – speaking Arabic, and at home with Jews and Muslims – made him seem exotic, his eccentricity was his own. He travelled with Arab bodyguards, a Scottish magician, Jewish and Arab scholars, fifty falconers, a zoo and a sultanic harem of odalisques. He was said to be an atheistic scientist who joked that Jesus, Muhammed and Moses were frauds and was portrayed as a proto-Dr Frankenstein who sealed a dying man in a barrel to see if he would escape.

259 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 171.
261 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 177.
262 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 52.
“Yet he was actually an effective and ruthless politician with a clear vision of his own role as universal Christian emperor…”

This inevitably brought him into conflict with that other universal Christian emperor, the Pope, who excommunicated him in 1227 for his supposed dilatoriness in going on crusade. In spite of that (perhaps because of it?), he succeeded where previous, papally sponsored crusaders had failed. For he occupied Jerusalem without bloodshed for ten years!

At the heart of this bitter conflict lay the question of who would dominate Christendom: pope or emperor. With each side buoyed up by a messianic belief in his cause, Italy became the battleground of papal bulls, and insults flew across Europe. Frederick was again excommunicated. If he was the Wonder of the World to his admirers, he was henceforth the Beast of the Apocalypse to his enemies. Two different popes, Gregory IX and Innocent IV, fled Rome, the former dying in exile. In 1245 Innocent IV fired the papacy’s ultimate salvo: he announced that the emperor was deposed. For the next five years it was all-out war. In the end it was death, not the papacy, that defeated Frederick. Fighting on against the almost insurmountable twin obstacles of excommunication and deposition, Frederick was regaining ground in both Italy and Germany when he died suddenly in 1250…”

263 Montefiore, Titans of History, p. 144.
By this time, Empire and papacy were about equally matched. But now there entered into the equation a philosophical idea that was to sap at the foundations of both – natural law. As we have seen, the twelfth century saw a revival of the study of certain Byzantine legal texts, especially Justinian’s *Digest*; and one of the ideas that the medieval jurists extracted from the *Digest* posed a serious threat to the papist world-view. This was the idea that everyone – even the pope and the emperor – is subject to the rule of law. Archbishop Stephen of Canterbury used this idea to defend Magna Carta. Thus the *Digest* declared that law was “something all men ought to obey for many reasons, and chiefly because every law is devised and given by God, but resolved on by intelligent men, a means of correcting offences both intentional and unintentional, a general agreement on the part of the community by which all those living therein ought to order their lives. We may add that Chrysiippius [said]: ‘Law is the king of all things, both divine and human; it ought to be the controller, ruler and commander of both the good and the bad’.”

But what kind of law was meant? There was scope for confusion and contradiction here. For it was another principle of Roman-Byzantine law that the prince was above the law, or freed from human laws (*legibus solutus*), insofar as “what pleases the prince has the power of law”. For if he broke his own laws, who was to judge him and who was to prevent him passing other laws to make his previous transgression of the law lawful? The pope was similarly considered to be above the law – that is, canon law. This was a consequence of his “absolute power” (*potestas absoluta*), for if he sinned against canon law, or became a heretic, who was to judge him if not the supreme expert on the subject, the pope himself? And who could judge him if he refused to judge himself? So a monarch might be freed from the laws of the State, and the pope might be freed from the canon law of the Church. But they were both theoretically subject to another kind of law. This higher law was called by medieval theorists *natural law*.

Gratian, as we have seen, distinguished between natural law and customary law. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, the concept of natural law was formulated with greater precision by Thomas Aquinas, the most famous of the medieval Catholic theologians, who practiced that corruption of Christian theology by Greek pagan philosophy, especially Aristotelianism, known as *scholasticism*. However, in his general political theory Aquinas remained more Christian than Aristotelian, and closer to the Orthodox concept of the two powers than to the papist theory of the complete subordination of the State to the Church.

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266 In fact, according to Fukuyama, he “established a hierarchy among divine, natural, positive, and customary law” (*op. cit.*, p. 269).
Thus, as the Jesuit Fr. Frederick Copleston interprets his thought: “The end of the Church, a supernatural end, is higher than that of the State, so that the Church is a society superior to the State, which must subordinate itself to the Church in matters bearing upon the supernatural life; but that does not alter the fact that the State is a ‘perfect society’, autonomous within its own sphere. In terms of later theology, then, St. Thomas must be reckoned as an upholder of the indirect power of the Church over the State... St. Thomas does not say that man has, as it were, two final ends, a temporal end which is catered for by the State and a supernatural, eternal end which is catered for by the State: he says that man has one final end, a supernatural end, and that the business of the monarch, in his direction of earthly affairs, is to facilitate the attainment of that end. The power of the Church over the State is not a potesta directa, since it is the business of the State, not the Church, to care for economic concerns and the preservation of peace; but the State must care for these concerns with an eye on the supernatural end of man. In other words, the State may be a ‘perfect society’ [pace Aristotle], but the elevation of man to the supernatural order means that the State is very much a handmaid of the Church. This point of view is based not so much on medieval practice as on the Christian faith, and it is, needless to say, not the view of Aristotle who knew nothing of man’s eternal and supernatural end.”

So far so good. However, the revolutionary concept of “natural law” goes back to the early Greek philosophers and is not equivalent to any Scriptural or patristic concept of law. Fr. Copleston defines it as “the totality of the universal dictates of right reason concerning that good of nature which is to be pursued and that evil of man’s nature which is to be shunned.” But how do we know what is “right reason” and “the good of nature”?

Another interpreter of Aquinas, J.S. McClelland, explains: “For a maxim of morality or a maxim of good government to be part of natural law, it has to be consistent with scripture, with the writings of the Fathers of the Church, with papal pronouncement, with what the philosophers say, and it must also be consistent with the common practices of mankind, both Christian and non-Christian.” But “papal pronouncement” often contradicts “the writings of the Fathers of the Church”, “what the philosophers say” takes us still further away from the Fathers, and “the common practices of mankind, both Christian and non-Christian” encourages complete license of interpretation.

Aquinas defined the relationship of natural law to man-made laws as follows: “Every law framed by man bears the character of a law exactly to that extent to which it is derived from the law of nature. But if on any point it is in conflict with the law of nature, it at once ceases to be a law; it is a mere

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268 Copleston, op. cit., p. 129.
perversion of the law.”270 If this concept could be made precise, it could provide a basis on which to justify rebellion against the powers that be, whether in Church or State. However, Aquinas was not trying to find reasons for rebellion against either the ecclesiastical or the secular authorities. “Like Aristotle and Augustine,” writes McClelland, “Thomas always makes a presumption in favour of obedience. Good government carries its own rationale with it, and this is definitely strengthened by the Aristotelian ends which Thomas embeds in secular authority. The effects of good government are certainly pleasing to God. Thomas assumes that there will be a substantial natural law content in nearly all positive law (and even in the positive law of Muslim kingdoms ruling over Christian subjects). Obedience to positive law is therefore to an extent obedience to God’s law…

“Thomas ends by claiming that most secular law is binding on Christian conscience, including most of what might appear at first sight to be the doubtful cases. No Christian had ever doubted that unjust law – that is, law which flies in the face of the direct commands of the Scriptures – is invalid; and law that is obviously in keeping with God’s commands is good law by definition. But what about law that is somehow ‘in between’, law which is neither very good nor very bad? Aristotelianism enables him to establish a presumption in favour of obedience in conscience to this ‘in between’ kind of law. The question of obedience to a particular command of the positive law cannot be divorced from consideration of the ends for which positive law is in general established, and one of these ends is the secular peace on which the realisation of all other strictly human ends depends. A rational conscience is therefore obliged to consider the question of obedience to an ‘in between’ law very carefully. Disobedience is only justified if two criteria can be met. First, the law must be bad in itself, though not necessarily very wicked; and second, disobedience must not threaten the earthly peace to the extent that the ends for which earthly peace in general established become more difficult to realise. The second criterion is obviously more difficult to meet than the first. It is not a blanket cover for obedience in conscience to every nasty law, but it comes close. The implication is that law bad enough to satisfy both criteria is only going to appear very infrequently, because no case is easier to make out than the case which argues that disobedience in this case of bad law is unjustified because disobedience might either cause social disturbance or indirectly encourage other kinds of law-breaking.”271

Copleston puts the matter as follows: “The function of the human legislator is primarily to apply the natural law and to support the law by sanctions. For example, murder is forbidden by the natural law, but reason shows the desirability of positive enactments whereby murder is clearly defined and whereby sanctions are added, since the natural law does not of itself clearly define murder in detail or provide immediate sanctions. The legislator’s primary function is, therefore, that of defining or making explicit

271 McClelland, op. cit., pp. 118-119.
the natural law, of applying it to particular cases and of making it effective. It follows that... every human law is a true law only in so far as it is derived from the natural law. ‘But if it disagrees with the natural law in something, it will not be a law, but the perversion of law.’ The ruler is not entitled to promulgate laws which go counter to or are incompatible with the natural law (or, of course, the divine law): he has his legislative power ultimately from God, since all authority comes from God, and he is responsible for his use of that power: he is himself subject to the natural law and is not entitled to transgress it himself or to order his subjects to do anything incompatible with it. Just human laws bind in conscience in virtue of the eternal law from which they are ultimately derived; but unjust laws do not bind in conscience. Now, a law may be unjust because it is contrary to the common good or because it is enacted simply for the selfish and private ends of the legislator, thus imposing an unjustifiable burden on the subjects, or because it imposes burdens on the subjects in an unjustifiably unequal manner, and such laws, being more acts of violence than laws, do not bind in conscience, unless perhaps on occasion their non-observance would produce a greater evil. As for laws which are contrary to the divine law, it is never licit to obey them, since we ought to obey God rather than men.“272

"The ruler possesses his sovereignty only for the good of the whole people, not for his private good, and if he abuses his power, he becomes a tyrant. Assassination of a tyrant was condemned by St. Thomas and he speaks at some length of the evils which may attend rebellions against a tyrant. For example, the tyrant may become more tyrannical, if the rebellion fails, while if it is successful, it may simply result in the substitution of one tyranny for another. But deposition of a tyrant is legitimate, especially if the people have the right of providing for themselves with a king. (Presumably St. Thomas is referring to an elective monarchy.) In such a case the people do no wrong in deposing the tyrant, even if they had subjected themselves to him without any time limit, for he has deserved deposition by not keeping faith with his subjects. Nevertheless, in view of the evils which may attend rebellion, it is far preferable to make provision beforehand to prevent a monarchy turning into a tyranny than to have to put up with or to rebel against tyranny once established. If feasible, no one should be made ruler if he is likely to turn himself into a tyrant; but in any case the power of the monarch should be so tempered that his rule cannot easily be turned into a tyranny. The best constitution will in fact be a ‘mixed’ constitution, in which some place is given to aristocracy and also to democracy, in the sense that the election of certain magistrates should be in the hands of the people.”273

Aquinas also, writes Canning, “accepted government by the people as a valid form for cities. This provision underlay his general theory of legislation: ‘Making law belongs either to the whole multitude or to the public person who has care of the whole multitude’, as also did the power of legal coercion.

272 Copleston, op. cit., pp. 138-139.
273 Copleston, op. cit., pp. 139-140.
Indeed, ‘if it is a free multitude, which could make law for itself, the multitude’s consent, manifested by custom, has more weight in observing something than the authority of the prince, who only has the power to make law, in so far as he bears the person of the multitude.’”

The revolutionary potential of this doctrine is obvious; and, having made every allowance for Aquinas’ essential conservatism, it has to be said that he opened a chink in the wall of social stability that more determined people would make wider. The problem was that the concept of natural law was so vague that it could be used to justify almost any act of disobedience provided it had mass support. Since natural law, in his understanding, was a kind of self-evident truth to which all men had access, it followed that it was the people as a whole – and “people” here could mean Muslims and pagans as well as Christians - who were the ultimate arbiters of justice and truth. True, Aquinas stipulated that natural law should be consistent, in McClelland’s words, “with scripture, with the writings of the Fathers of the Church, with papal pronouncement” as well as “with the common practices of mankind, both Christian and non-Christian”. But it was the latter part of the definition that was seized upon by political theorists and reformers, who knew little or nothing about the Scriptures or the Fathers, but claimed that their own beliefs coincided completely with the common practices and beliefs of mankind.

According to Aquinas, all men know naturally, without the need for grace, what is politically right and just. Here he shows the influence of Aristotle, for whom man was a political animal, and political life - the most natural thing in the world, having no relation to any supernatural or supra-political, religious goals. This was subtly different from the Orthodox view, which is that the truly natural is that which is grace-filled: without grace, nature degenerates into that which is unnatural, contrary to nature. According to the Holy Fathers, therefore, the will and law of God is not apprehended in a “natural” way, if by “natural” we mean the fallen human mind, but by grace. While there is “a light that enlightens every man that comes into the world” (John 1.9), this natural light of grace, this “eye of God in the soul of man”, has been so darkened by the fall that it is folly to entrust the most important decisions of political and social life to the people as a whole. According to Orthodoxy, there is no safety in numbers; the multitude can, and very often are, wrong. Only by personal purification of the mind, and the ascent of the whole person to God, can the will of God be known.

In the eighth century Deacon Alcuin of York had expressed this principle in its political application in a letter to Charlemagne: “The people should be led, not followed, as God has ordained... Those who say, ‘The voice of the people is the voice of God,’ are not to be listened to, for the unruliness of the mob is always close to madness.”

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274 Canning, op. cit., p. 131.
The difference between Alcuin and Aquinas is the difference between Orthodoxy and Catholicism. Orthodoxy presents the apostolic teaching of obedience to secular authorities on the basis of a profound understanding of the fall of man, from which the intellect of man, whether as an individual or en masse, is not immune. Catholicism exempts the intellect from the fall, thereby undermining the basis of obedience to all authorities, both secular and ecclesiastical.

Aquinas represents a point of transition between the eleventh- and twelfth-century doctrine of the absolute papal monarchy and the conciliarist teaching of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. On the one hand, he upheld the doctrine that the pope “occupies the summit of both powers, spiritual and secular”, and that secular rulers, while having a certain autonomy, “should be subject to him who cares for the ultimate end, and be directed by his command”.276 On the other hand, Aquinas’ doctrine of natural law opened the way for the people to judge and depose both popes and kings.

Aquinas does recognize that the king is the Lord’s anointed.277 And yet there is little place in his system for recognition of the sacred character of Christian kingship. The reason for this lack is not far to find: the Popes had destroyed such faith in the course of nearly two centuries of incessant propaganda against kingship and the sacrament of royal anointing, violently undermining every authority except their own. All reasonable men rebelled instinctively against this tyranny, but their lack of a truly Orthodox faith prevented them from understanding its cause and fighting against it effectively. And so, failing to understand the root of the tyranny that oppressed him, western man could turn from the extreme of tyranny to the other, equally barren and destructive extreme of democracy – rule by everyman rather than rule by one.

276 Canning, op. cit., pp. 132, 133.
277 Aquinas, On Kingship, VII.61.
“By the fourteenth century,” write Siedentop, “an increasing number of voices were calling for something like representative government in the church. Calls for reform focused on the role of general councils. Was not a general council of the church the supreme authority in matters concerning the faith and well being of the church? Did not the authority of such a council constrain even the pope’s ordinary jurisdiction, his claim to be the final judge and legislator of the church?

“The struggle between Boniface VIII and Philip the Fair [King of France], which began in 1297, gave these questions a new urgency. The French king – urged on by many cardinals and Franciscans – appealed to a general council, contending that Boniface was a usurper (that is, that the resignation of his predecessor, Celestine V, was ‘forced’ and invalid) and a heretic... The relationship between the papacy and church authorities – as well as papal relations with secular rulers asserting their sovereignty – came under unprecedented critical scrutiny...”

If Pope Innocent III represented the apotheosis of papal power, Boniface VIII represented a second megalomaniac peak albeit one in danger of being scaled by rival mountaineers at any moment. For as Fr. Seraphim Rose writes, he “seated himself on the throne of Constantine, arrayed himself in a sword, crown and sceptre, and shouted aloud: ‘I am Caesar – I am Emperor.’ This was not just an act but an indication of something extremely deep in the whole of modern thought: the search for a universal monarch, who will be Antichrist.”

In his struggle against the king, Boniface VIII made special use of the two swords metaphor, the last great metaphor of papal power, which had originally been developed in the eleventh century in an anti-papal spirit by Gottschalk of Aachen, a chaplain of the Emperor Henry IV. Hildebrand, claimed Gottschalk, “without God’s knowledge has usurped the regnum and sacerdotium for himself. In so doing he has despised God’s pious Arrangement which He wished principally to consist not in one, but in two: that is the regnum and sacerdotium, as the Saviour in His passion had intimated should be understood by the figurative sufficiency of the two swords. When it was said to Him, ‘Lord, behold here are two swords’, he replied, ‘It is enough’ (Luke 22.48), signifying by this sufficient duality that there were to be borne in the Church a spiritual and a carnal sword, by which every harmful thing would be cut off: the sacerdotal sword would be used to encourage obedience to the king on God’s behalf, whereas the royal sword

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278 Siedentop, op. cit., p. 328.
would be employed for expelling the enemies of Christ without, and for enforcing obedience to the sacerdotium within."

However, the papists turned the allegory on its head by claiming that both the secular and the spiritual swords were in the hands of the Pope. They also pointed out that the Apostle Peter had, almost immediately after these words of Christ, used the secular sword to cut off Malchus’ ear (Luke 22.50).

To which the riposte from the monarchist side was that the Lord had then ordered Peter to put up his sword, saying: “All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword” (Matthew 26.5)...

Prince Roman Mstislavich of Galicia gave a similar answer to a papal legate who came to him after the conquest of Constantinople by the crusaders in 1204, “declaring that the Pope would soon subdue all peoples with the sword of Peter and make him king. Roman took his sword and said: ‘Is Peter’s sword that the Pope has like this? If so, then with it he can take cities and give them to others. But this is against the Word of God: for the Lord forbade Peter to have such a sword and fight with it. But I have a sword given to me by God’.”

The papists were able to get round even this objection. “The sword is yours to be drawn,” wrote Bernard of Clairvaux to the Pope, “perhaps at your command, if not by your hand. Otherwise, if it in no way belonged to you, when the apostles said, ‘Behold, there are two swords here’, the Lord would not have replied to them, ‘It is enough’, but ‘It is too much’. Both belong to the Church, that is the spiritual sword and the material, but the one is to be drawn for the Church, and the other also by the Church: the one by the priest’s hand, the other by the soldier’s, but, to be sure, at the priest’s command and the emperor’s order.”

In 1302, in his famous bull, Unam Sanctam, Boniface declared that submission to the Pope was a necessary condition of salvation for every creature. And he returned to the image of the sword: “He who denies that the temporal sword is in the power of Peter wrongly interprets the Lord’s words, ‘Put up thy sword into its scabbard’. Both swords, the spiritual and the material, are in the power of the Church. The spiritual is wielded by the Church; the material for the Church. The one by the hand of the priest; the other by the hand of kings and knights at the will and sufferance of the priest. One sword has to be under the other; the material under the spiritual, as the temporal authority in general is under the spiritual.”

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281 Vladimir Rusak, Istoria Russkoj Tserkvi (History of the Russian Church), 1993, p 140.
283 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 79.
Unam Sanctam was followed by the appointment of Albert of Hapsburg as Emperor with authority over all kings, including Philip the Fair. But an aide of the King of France noted: “The Pope’s sword is merely made of words; my master’s is of steel.” So when French soldiers burst into Boniface’s palace at Anagni, and a sword made of steel pressed onto his neck, the “spiritual” sword had to beg for mercy...

Papadakis concludes: “This earliest confrontation between the newly emerging monarchical nation-state and the late medieval papacy was to result in the collapse of the old Gregorian system of government…”

For now the papacy came under the domination of the French, and in 1309 the Pope and his court moved to the French city of Avignon. The luxuries and corruption of the Avignon papacy earned it the title of “the second Babylon” from its contemporaries. Nor could the monastic orders, which were the traditional mainstay of the medieval papacy but had now lost their ascetic character, restore the authority of the Church...

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The humiliation of the papacy was clearly an opportunity for the empire. Could it revive in order to take over the leadership of the western world? That was the dream of many. But, as Richard Chamberlin writes: “Looking down through the long perspective of the Holy Roman Empire is a melancholy experience of watching the dream fall apart. The Italians fought endless civil wars under the banner of Guelph or Ghibelline, Pope or Empire, but they were little more than pretexts for strife. Yet as the actual power of the emperor waned, the ideal of the universal monarch increased so that the imperial nadir coincided with its most able apologia, Dante’s De Monarchia.”

Dante’s work was written as if in reply to Boniface VIII’s Unam Sanctam and on a wave of hope occasioned by the arrival in Italy of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry VII in 1311. Not that Dante was anti-papist; he believed that the Pope should govern spiritual affairs as the Emperor governed political affairs. But his De Monarchia was Ghibelline, inasmuch as it denied to the Church supreme authority in temporal things; and his great dream of universal peace could only be achieved, he believed, through the universal monarchy.

285 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 79.
286 Papadakis, op. cit., p. 358. We recall that Pope Gregory VII had come into conflict with King Philip of France – and won. Now a later King Philip avenge his ancestor’s defeat.
287 This was most clearly evident, as we have seen, in Pope Clement V’s full cooperation with – or rather, subjection to - King Philip in the affair of the trial and execution of the Templars.
“Dante’s view of Empire,” writes Watt, “hinged on three fundamental theses, each in the treatise the subject of a book. The first argued that the only guarantee of peace and justice for the Christian world lay in the establishment of unity under one single ruler. The second argued that under God’s providence this role had been assigned to the Roman Emperor, even from its origins in pre-Christian times, and given special confirmation of it after the Messiah in sign of its right to rule the world had chosen to live, work and died under its sovereignty. The third thesis postulated that this single universal rulership was given by God directly to each emperor, without mediation by way of the papacy and was exercised independently of any jurisdictional control by the head of the Church…”

In this way Dante comes close to returning to the Byzantine idea of the symphony of powers. For while he argues that the Emperor should rule over temporal matters as the Pope rules over spiritual ones, he rules out the complete separation of Church and State in the modern sense. They must work together as equals in common obedience to the One God.

“Wherefore,” he concludes, “let Caesar honor Peter as a first-born son should honor his father, so that, refulgent with the light of paternal grace, he may illumine with greater radiance the earthly sphere over which he has been set by Him who alone is Ruler of all things spiritual and temporal…”

It was a noble ideal, perhaps the last expression of the Orthodox understanding of politics in the Western world. But the ideal did not survive: Henry VII arrived in Italy in response to Dante’s summons; but by 1313 he was dead, and with him died the dominion of the Empire in Italy. And so “Dante’s call for the risen majesty of empire became its requiem.”

Nevertheless, the decline of the papacy meant that the empire could now once again defy the Pope’s claims to appoint the Emperor. Thus Harold Nicolson writes: “When Pope Clement VI demanded that the Emperor Louis should admit that the Empire was a fief of the Holy See, the Diet of Frankfurt replied by issuing a declaration in 1337 to the effect that the Empire was held

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289 For “the human race is at its best and most perfect when, so far as its capacity allows, it is most like to God. But mankind is most like to God when it enjoys the highest degree of unity... All concord depends upon the unity of wills; mankind is at its best in a state of concord; for as man is at his best in body and soul when he is in a state of concord, the same is true of a house, a city and a kingdom, and of mankind as a whole. Therefore mankind at its best depends upon unity in the wills of its members. But this is impossible unless there is one will which dominates all others and holds them in unity, for the wills of mortals influenced by their adolescent and seductive delights, are in need of a director.” (Dante, De Monarchia). (V.M.)

290 Watt, op. cit., p. 412.


293 Chamberlin, “The Ideal of Unity”, op. cit., p. 63.
from God alone, and that an Emperor, once he had been duly elected by the Princes, needed no confirmation or approval from the Bishop of Rome.”

However, while independent of the Pope, the Emperor was tied by his contracts with the Electors, who included both bishops and princes, and who invariably demanded various concessions in exchange for their support. This guaranteed the Emperor’s (and Germany’s) continued political weakness...

In the fourteenth century not only anti-papist but also democratic ideas based on the concept of natural law were in the air of philosophical discourse. Thus as early as 1315 the French King Louis le Hutin proclaimed an end to feudal servitude: « As according to the law of nature each must be born free, and that by some usages and customs, which of great antiquity have been introduced and hitherto preserved in our kingdom... many of our common people have fallen into servitude and diverse conditions which very much displease us; we, considering that our kingdom is called... the kingdom of the Franks [free men], and wishing that the fact should be truly accordant with the name... upon deliberation of our great council, have ordered and order that generally through our kingdom... such servitudes be brought back to freedom and that to all those who from origin or recently from marriage or from residence in places of servile condition are fallen... into bonds of servitude, freedom be given... »

A further impetus to the democratic movement, as we can now call it, was provided by the second Avignon Pope, John XXII (1316-1334), when he entered into a particularly arcane (from an Orthodox point of view) argument with the Franciscan order about the poverty of Christ and His apostles. This had two important consequences, one political and the other theological. The political consequence was that the Holy Roman Emperor Louis IV took the side of the Franciscans, invaded Italy, deposed John XXII and set up an antipope, Nicholas V.

Still more serious was the theological consequence. This arose from the fact that in declaring as "erroneous and heretical" the view that Christ and His Apostles had no property whatsoever (for that would have put in question the Church’s right to own property), John came into conflict with an earlier papal bull that had supported the Franciscan championship of absolute poverty. The Franciscans countered by claiming that “what the Roman Pontiffs have once defined in faith and morals through the key of knowledge is immutable because the Roman Church is unerring... what is once defined through the key of knowledge by the supreme pontiffs, the vicars of God, to be the truth of faith cannot be called into doubt by any successor, nor can the contrary to what is defined be affirmed without the one doing this being adjudged a heretic... what is once defined in faith and morals is true for all eternity and unchangeable by anyone.”

In fact, many popes had reversed the decisions of their predecessors. And the early Church had even known heretical popes, such as Liberius, Vigilius and Honorius. So this new Franciscan doctrine on the infallibility and
irreversibility of papal judgements was itself heretical – as John XXII himself was soon to declare: “In Quia Quorundum, given on November 10, 1324, Pope John XXII confronted the errors of the dissident Franciscans and their false assertions regarding the irreformability of prior papal pronouncements even if they dealt with matters of faith or morals. John chastised and condemned those who would dare to teach such heresy. John obviously recognized, among other things, the potential handcuffing of successor popes, and consistently insisted that he was not and could not be bound by any previous pope’s declarations, no matter if they were disciplinary or supposedly binding in the realm of faith or morals. These assertions of papal irreformability John XXII rejected outright. So while Pope John in his dispute with the Franciscans was pressed by them to recognize the infallibility of a previous occupant of that See pronouncing on faith or morals, he resisted it as false and condemned those who dared to hold such opinions…”

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One of the Franciscans, who had gone to Rome and been imprisoned by the Pope, was William of Ockham. Together with his friend, Marsilius of Padua, he fled to the emperor’s protection in Munich, from where he declared that Pope was a heretic and the papal throne vacant. And he proceeded to work out a democratic method for the electing of a General Council that could judge him.

Ockham is important in the history of philosophy for his nominalism and for his distinction between metaphysical, logical and empirical reasoning. In political theory he is important for his insistence on the natural right to freedom of conscience. He developed the theory of natural law further than Aquinas in an individualist and anti-papist direction.

For Ockham, writes Siedentop, “freedom became a birthright, a right founded on the nature of human agency. For two hundred years canon lawyers had been converting the ancient doctrine of natural law into a theory of natural rights. They had come close to asserting a general right to freedom. But it was left to Ockham and his followers to take that final step. That is why the ‘poverty’ debate, which involved the Franciscan order in repeated conflicts with the papacy, became so important. It was the Franciscan emphasis on a natural right to freedom, justifying their claim to renounce property of any kind, that finally led to Ockham’s excommunication.

“Freedom was central to Ockham’s understanding of rational agency. He defined it as the power ‘by which I can indifferently and contingently produce an effect in such a way that I can cause or not cause that effect, without any difference in that power having been made.’ Knowledge of

297 Kirwan, op. cit., pp. 18-19.

298 That is why, “of all the schoolmen, Occam was the one Luther preferred” (Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy, London: Allen & Unwin, 1946, p. 493).
freedom comes not from a priori reasoning but from experience of ourselves as agents. That knowledge, in turn, underpins our sense of moral responsibility. ‘No act is blameworthy unless it is in our power. For no one blames a man born blind, for he is blind by sense [caecus sensu]. But if he is blind by his own act, then he is blameworthy.’ The human will does not will anything necessarily - not the pursuit of happiness or even the enjoyment of God for those with faith! For Ockham, the radical character of freedom makes it both possible and important to distinguish between acting out of conviction and mere conformity of behavior...

“In order to protect the sphere of conscience, Ockham argues that allowance must be made for well-intentioned conduct, even if it conflicts with a dictate of ‘right reason’ or justice... By insisting that intentions formed in a ‘conscientious’ way deserve respect, Ockham implies that in the absence of freedom, the notion of moral conduct itself becomes incoherent. ‘Enforced’ morality becomes a contradiction in terms.

“That does not mean that there are no enforceable moral limits to choice. Ockham makes it clear that some actions remain ‘blameworthy’, providing grounds for social intervention and punishment. Thus, acting in good faith involves accepting constraints imposed by equality and reciprocity. But if society is to encourage acting in good faith, without making the mistake of assuming that morality can be enforced, a system of individual rights – allowing considerable freedom of judgement and conduct – becomes indispensable. For only a system of rights can protect the role of conscience and foster self-respect.”

One kind of natural rights “are those which free and equal individuals carry into any association, but which they can modify by express or tacit agreement. Thus, the right to choose rulers in church and state can be lodged in some intermediate body, such as the college of cardinals or the electors of the German empire. But ‘the people’ can always claim back their residual rights if that body fails to act appropriately...”

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We can see that William of Ockham’s theory of natural law and natural rights, and his emphasis on human autonomy and freedom of conscience, was leading towards a democratic understanding both of Church and State. His friend, Marsilius of Padua, went still further.

Marsilius had also worked for Emperor Louis IV and had witnessed the terribly damaging effects of that emperor’s struggle with Pope John XXII. This impressed upon him the need for a single unambiguous authority or legislator. That legislator, according to Marsilius, had to be “the totality of

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300 Siedentop, op. cit., pp. 315-316.
those who believe in and call on the name of Christ”, not the pope; unlike Dante, Marsilius did not believe that the pope was divinely appointed as head of the Church.

“Christ said, ‘Tell it to the Church’, and not, ‘To the apostle or the bishop or the priest or to one of their colleagues’. By this he meant the Church as the multitude of the faithful, judged to be constituted to this end under his authority… Judicially to declare someone guilty, to cite, enquire, judge, acquit or condemn… is the role of the whole of the faithful forming the community where a judgement must be given, or for the General Council.

“It appertains to the authority of the sole human legislator – who has no superior – either to him or to those on whom this power has been conferred by him, to convocate the General Council, to designate the persons who must form part of it.

“If with the aim of temporal utility it is for the legislator to designate people who are to be promoted to diverse offices in the city… it seems all the more right that the same human legislator, namely the totality of the faithful, should decide on both the promotion of the priestly office and the institution of priests in their functions.”

Joseph Canning writes: “Marsilius confronted papal power head-on: in the Defensor Pacis [1324] he focused on what he considered to be the true cause of the most real problem of his time – the disruption of the peace of Italy and Europe. He sought both to demonstrate that the papacy’s claim to plenitude of power was the source of strife, and to destroy the theoretical basis of that claim….

“Marsilius’ technique was to argue from first principles; in the process he drew considerably on Aristotle, but interpreted him in his own way. In order to demonstrate what powers the clergy could not possess, Marsilius began by examining the origin, purpose and structure of the civil community. In so doing he produced a model of general application on a naturalistic basis. The purpose of the community was the sufficient life; for this end, tranquillity was necessary, which was found when the parts of the community worked in harmony like the members of the body of an animal, a biological image reflecting Marsilius’ medical training. The structure of government rested on the ultimate authority of the whole corporation of citizens (universitas civium) which was identified with the human legislator (legislator humanus), which in turn elected the executive or ruling part (pars principans) and could depose it. The ruling part in turn established the other parts and offices of the community. This theoretical structure was very flexible and capable of being applied to a wide range of possible political communities. The pars principans could be one, few or more in number. Marsilius also habitually referred, unspecifically, to the corporation of citizens or its ‘weightier part’

301 Marsilius of Padua, Defensor Pacis, 1324; in Comby, op. cit., p. 174.
(valentior pars), thereby raising the possibility that the legislator could be very restricted in number. Furthermore, the legislator could always delegate its law-creating powers to one or more persons. The essence of Marsilius’ approach was to concentrate on the efficient cause – the will of the citizen body.”\textsuperscript{302}

Indeed, according to Jeannine Quillet, it was only with the work of Marsilius “that the idea of representation came to occupy a prominent place in political thought... Not that Marsilius was entirely innovatory in this respect, as thinkers and theologians had found the theoretical foundations of popular sovereignty in Aristotle’s Politics from the time his political ideas began to spread, while the Roman Lex Regia stated that the prince held his authority by delegation of concession of the people, the ultimate source of sovereignty. Yet although Marsilius is not strictly an innovator in this area, he is the first to coin the phrase legislator humanus...

“... The very definition of the principle of representation is bound up with the notion of the human legislator. ‘The legislator, or the primary and efficient cause of the law, is the people or the whole body of the citizens, or the weightier part thereof, through its election of will expressed by words in the general assembly of the citizens, commanding or determining that something be done or omitted with regard to human civil acts, under a temporal pain or punishment.’”\textsuperscript{303}

An important part of Marsilius’ argument was his concept of law, which he identified with the command of the legislator, not with Divine or natural law. While he was confident that human law was generally conducive to justice and the common good, he nevertheless disjoined the two concepts in such a way as to raise the possibility, in McClelland’s words, “that law can exist without justice... The ruler or legislator is no longer to be seen as someone well enough qualified to understand the nature of justice. The legislator (we would say sovereign) is now defined as that man or group of men who possess the authority to make laws and the power to make them effective.

“This was anathema to the whole system of papal politics. The papacy’s case for universal hegemony, that kings were the pope’s vice-regents, rested on the claim that popes had privileged access to knowledge of divine law. The pope was always the first to know the latest news from God and had the unique duty of passing it on to the faithful. News direct from God was always... news about justice, which the rulers of the earth were then supposed to put into law under papal tutelage. Now that law was defined as legislation and punishment, special knowledge of the divine will no longer constitute a valid claim for papal interference in the law-making and law-enforcing of secular states. These were, in the most precise sense possible,
none of the pope’s business. Peace, the end of the law, was still, of course, a
good and godly end, but it was now possible to see senses in which papal
pretensions to interfere in the mechanisms of peace-keeping were actually
pernicious. For Marsilius, the efficient cause of peace was law as the
command of the law-giver, with the stress on the word ‘command’. It is the
merest commonplace that for orders to be effective they have to be
unambiguous: order, counter-order, disorder is the oldest military maxim.
Anything which interferes with the clarity of commands is to be avoided at all
cost. Nothing could be worse than two commanders giving different and
contradictory orders. This would reduce an army to a shambles in no time at
all. This is how Marsilius sees papal claims to hegemony. If the papal claims
were to be upheld, there would always be two commanders in every state.
People would always be uncertain which commander to obey and the result
might well be chaos, the opposite of that earthly peace which it is the state’s
job to provide.”

It was an important consequence of Marsilius’ approach that “the human
legislator had jurisdiction, including powers of appointment, over bishops,
priests and clergy, and indeed, control over all the externals of religion
relating to the good of the community.”

His system may therefore be called caesaropapist with a democratic bias,
insofar as the will of the people is the ultimate sovereign. He therefore looks
forward both to the powerful princes of the Protestant Reformation and to the
democratic revolutions that followed. Of course, he was aiming, not to
undermine, but to strengthen the authority of the princely ruler: “In Marsilius
the concept of popular sovereignty is meant only to strengthen secular rulers
at the expense of the temporal jurisdiction of the princes of the Church.”
Nevertheless, the democratic and revolutionary potential of his ideas is self-
evident...

304 McClelland, op. cit., pp. 141-142.
305 Canning, op. cit., p. 156.
306 McClelland, op. cit., p. 145.
These ideas did not remain without practical fruit. There were several proto-democratic revolutions in Europe in this period.

The first was in that eternally rebellious city, Rome. « Under Clement VI (1342-52), » writes Bertrand Russell, « Rome, for a time, sought to free itself from the absentee Pope under the leadership of a remarkable man, Cola di Rienzi. Rome suffered not only for the rule of the popes, but also from the local aristocracy, which continued the turbulence that had degraded the papacy in the tenth century. Indeed it was partly to escape from the lawless Roman nobles that the popes had fled to Avignon. At first Rienzi, who was the son of a tavern-keeper, rebelled only against the nobles, and in this he had the support of the Pope. He roused so much popular enthusiasm that the nobles fled (1347). Petrarch, who admired him and wrote an ode to him, urged him to continue his great and noble work. He took the title of tribune, and proclaimed the sovereignty of the Roman people over the Empire. He seems to have conceived this sovereignty democratically, for he called representatives from the Italian cities to a sort of parliament. Success, however, gave him delusions of grandeur. At this time, as at many others, there were rival claimants to the Empire. Rienzi summoned both of them, and the Electors, to come before him to have the issue decided. This naturally turned both imperial candidates against him, and also the Pope, who considered that it was for him to pronounce judgement in such matters. Rienzi was captured by the Pope (1352), and kept in prison until Clement VI died. Then he was released, and returned to Rome, where he acquired power again for a few months. On this second occasion, however, his popularity was brief, and in the end he was murdered by the mob.»

Meanwhile, the Hundred Years war and the Black Death were devastating Western Europe. It was a time of black pessimism and apocalyptic speculation and a great opportunity for repentance. However, the papacy had undermined the very idea of repentance by its abuses, the spiritual opportunity was lost, and the West moved still further away from its Orthodox and monarchical foundations...

The second democratic revolution was the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 in England. Charles George writes: “Although the pretext for revolt was a tax grievance against the government of Richard II’s minority, and was linked therefore to the heavy and unpopular burden of the Hundred Years’ War, the motives of the insurgents went deeper. Their anger, like that of the German peasants one hundred and fifty years later, was directed against primary mechanisms within the social system: the customary manorial services to the lord, the restrictive aristocratic forest laws, the wealth of the Church. These

demands for the freer sharing of the land and game of England, for greater security and opportunity for the farmer in the village through fixed rents, and the animus expressed against institutional Christianity represented more than a temporary disaffection resulting from the fortuitous bad luck with nature and disease and the stupid wars of the century. The English historian, G.M. Trevelyan, puts the case strongly, perhaps, but interestingly:

"Nothing is more remarkable than the change in the temper and mental activity of the lower orders during the fourteenth century. Professor Davis has summed up the reign of Henry III with the words: “Of all the contrasts which strike us in medieval life, none is so acute as that between the intellectual ferment in the upper class and the oriental passivity of their inferiors.” But in the reign of Edward III the peasants could no longer be accused of “oriental passivity”, and the “intellectual ferment” in their ranks reminds us of a modern labor movement. Village unions strike for higher wages, villains demand freedom in return for 4d. an acre rent, and men ask each other in every field that deep-probing question—

When Adam delved and Eve span
Who was then the gentleman?"\(^{308}\)

These words were spoken by John Ball, “the crazy priest”, as Froissart calls him, in his address to the rebels at Blackheath in June, 1381. The continuation of his speech is worth quoting for its socialist connotations: “From the beginning all men by nature were created alike, and our bondage or servitude came in by the unjust oppression of naughty men. For if God would have had any bondmen from the beginning, he would have appointed who should be bond, and who free. And therefore I exhort you to consider that now the time is come, appointed to us by God, in which ye may (if ye will) cast off the yoke of bondage, and recover liberty. I counsel you therefore well to bethink yourselves, and to take good hearts unto you, that after the manner of a good husband that tilleth his ground, and riddeth out thereof such evil weeds as choke and destroy the good corn, you may destroy first the great lords of the realm, and after, the judges and lawyers, and questmongers, and all other who have undertaken to be against the commons. For so shall you procure peace and surety to yourselves in time to come; and by dispatching out of the way the great men, there shall be an equality in liberty, and no difference in degrees of nobility; but a like dignity and equal authority in all things..."\(^{309}\)

At his first meeting with the rebels the young king agreed to abolish serfdom and set a flat-rent rate of four pence an acre. The rebels appeared to have won; nor did the king succeed in saving the Archbishop of Canterbury Sudbury, who was executed on Tower Hill. However, he agreed to a second face-to-face meeting with the peasants at Smithfield on June 15.

\(^{308}\) George, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

“Before he left," writes Simon Schama, he went to the great shrine that Henry III had built at Westminster and prayed to the king whom the Plantagenets had made their guardian saint, Edward the Confessor. When he reached Smithfield, he saw that the rebel leaders were on the west side of the field, the royal party on the east. Wat Tyler rode over to Richard, dismounted, briefly and unconvincingly bent his knees, but then rose, shook the king’s hand and called him ‘brother’. ‘Why will you not go home?’ Richard asked. Tyler is said to have responded with a curse and a demand for a new Magna Carta, this time for the common people, formally ending serfdom, pardoning all outlaws, liquidating the property of the Church and declaring the equality of all men below the king. As revolutionary as all this sounds (and undoubtedly was), all the demands, other than the pardon for outlaws, would, in fact, return as elements of English royal policy in the centuries to come. But that was for the future. When Richard replied in the affirmative (with the crucial loophole, ‘saving only the regality of his crown’), it was hard to know who was more flabbergasted – the rebels or the royals.

“Perhaps taken aback by the unexpected concession, for a moment no one did anything. A silence fell over the field, broken by Wat Tyler, calling for a flagon of ale, emptying it, then climbing back on his mount, a big man on a little horse. And it was at that moment that history changed.

“Someone on the royal side was evidently unable to take the humiliation a moment longer. It was a royal esquire, a young man of the king’s own age, who shouted that Tyler was a thief. Tyler turned his horse, drew his dagger and rounded on the boy. The spell was broken. A mêlée broke out, and [the Mayor of London] Walworth, who must have been beside himself with mortification, attempted to arrest Tyler. There was fighting, Tyler striking the mayor with his dagger, Walworth cutting Tyler through the shoulder and neck. He rode his horse a little way back, blood pouring from him, then fell to the ground where the king’s men were on him, finishing him off. 

“It was the moment of truth. Once they had discovered Tyler’s fate, the rebel side might have attacked then and there. But before they could, Richard himself pre-empted the action with a show of astonishing courage and resourcefulness, riding straight to them shouting, famously, ‘You shall have no captain but me.’ The words were carefully chosen and deliberately ambiguous. To the rebels it seemed that Richard was now their leader just as they had always hoped. But the phrase could just as easily have been meant as the first, decisive reassertion of royal authority. In any event, it bought time for Walworth to speed back to London and mobilize an army that, just the day before, had been much too scared to show itself. At Smithfield the process of breaking the now leaderless army began cautiously and gently, with promises of pardons and mercy. Once back in London and Westminster, though, the king and council acted with implacable resolution. On 18 June,
just three days after Smithfield, orders were sent to the disturbed counties, commanding the sheriffs to do whatever it took to restore the peace..."\footnote{Schama, \textit{A History of Britain}, vol. 1, pp. 217-218.}

The mystique of the anointed king had saved the day. This was the mystique expressed so memorably by Richard II in Shakespeare’s play of the same name (III, ii, 54-57):

\begin{quote}
Not all the water in the wide rough sea  
Can wash the balm from an anointed king;  
The breath of worldly men cannot depose  
The deputy elected by the Lord.
\end{quote}

But it had been a close call, protests continued, and Richard showed himself in the rest of his reign as a true tyrant...

The problem for late medieval kings was that in opposing (with justification) the overweening power of the heretical papacy, they had deprived themselves of ecclesiastical sanction, which made the people less inhibited from rebelling against them. Secularist defences of royal as opposed to papal power, like that of Marsilius, only made the problem worse in the long run. For even if mixed with theological arguments, they could only convince the listeners that papal authority was less than the kings’, not that the kings’ power was holy in itself. The problem derived from the loss of the concept of the symphony of powers in western society. Unlike in the East, where Church and State were both considered holy and supported each other, in the West since the eleventh century there was always a \textit{competition} between the two powers that ultimately discredited both.

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The problem is illustrated by the career of the English priest John Wycliffe (ca. 1320-84). Motivated by his love for the poor and disgust at the behaviour of rich churchmen, Wycliffe became a champion of royal power. In his \textit{Tractatus de Officio Regis}, he argued that God favoured kingship, since three kings had visited the manger at Bethlehem. The king was the vicar of God. He should study theology and suppress heresy and have full jurisdiction over the clergy. If the Pope tried to diminish his authority, he should be denounced as the Antichrist...

For “however unjust, the king was vicar of God and above all human laws. If necessary he was obliged to reform the church, correcting the worldly pursuit of the clergy for honours and offices, punish their simony and remove them from temporal dominion. The clergy were to live in an apostolic manner surviving on tithes and alms offered by the faithful.”\footnote{Janet Coleman, “Property and poverty”, \textit{Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350 – c. 1450}, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 647.}
“Wycliff,” writes Nicolson, “advanced the difficult idea that the king was superior to the Church since he reflected the godhead of Christ, where the priest reflected his manhood only. He argued that the king was above the law (solutus legibus) and that it was the moral duty of the citizen to obey the authority of the crown in every circumstance... Richard II was deeply imbued with Wycliff’s teaching and asserted that ‘the laws were in his mouth or in his breast and he alone could change the statutes of the realm’.”

Wycliffe translated the Vulgate into English and founded an order of “poor priests”, the Lollards, that preached to the poor. He called the Pope the Antichrist, and said that all popes that had accepted the Donation of Constantine were apostates. Most controversially, he asserted that the doctrine of transubstantiation was a deceit and a blasphemous folly. This led John of Gaunt, who held power during the minority of Richard II, and befriended him as long as possible, to order him to be silent. Moreover, Wycliffe also had socialist tendencies - Pope Gregory XI condemned eighteen of his theses in his Oxford lectures, saying that they were derived from Marsilius.

“The Peasants’ Revolt,” writes Russell, “made matters more difficult for Wycliffe. There is no evidence that he actively encouraged it, but, unlike Luther in similar circumstances, he refrained from condemning it. John Ball, the Socialist unfrocked priest who was one of the leaders, admired Wycliffe, which was embarrassing. But as he had been excommunicated in 1366, when Wycliffe was still orthodox, he must have arrived independently at his opinions. Wycliffe’s communistic opinions, though no doubt the ‘poor priests’ disseminated them, were, by him, only stated in Latin, so that at first hand they were inaccessible to peasants.

“It is surprising that Wycliffe did not suffer more than he did for his opinions and his democratic activities. The University of Oxford defended him against the bishops as long as possible. When the House of Lords condemned his itinerant preachers, the House of Commons refused to concur. No doubt trouble would have accumulated if he had lived longer, but when he died in 1384 he had not yet been formally excommunicated...”

In 1399 Richard II was deposed and then starved to death by his cousin, Bolingbroke, which shows that in spite of his popular opposition to the Pope and defence of Wycliffe, Richard’s royal power had been weakened during

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312 Nicolson, op. cit., pp. 192-193. Another influence on Richard was, according to Nigel Saul, “the ideas of the Roman – in other words, the civil – lawyers. In general terms, civilian thought emphasised the scope of the King’s will. To the civilian, a King’s power should be unlimited because his rule was just. At a number of points, correspondences are to be observed between Richard’s governance and a popular civilian-influenced tract, Giles of Rome’s De Regimine Principum (c. 1277-9)” (“Richard II: Author of his own Downfall?”, History Today, vol. 49 (9), September, 1999, pp. 40-41). (V.M.)
his reign. The epitaph he chose for his tomb at Westminster Abbey sounds impressive:

*He threw down all who violated the royal prerogative; he destroyed heretics and scattered their friends.*

But the truth is that by his fickleness and injustice he tarnished the royal name…

Nevertheless, “when Parliament recognized Bolingbroke as Henry IV they were careful to maintain the fiction of Divine Right by asserting that he had succeeded ‘through the right God had given him by conquest’.” Right of conquest is a much weaker argument than “right by royal anointing”. But the Divine right of kings had to be maintained somehow…

* In Bohemia another revolution broke out under the leadership of the Czech cleric Jan Hus, a follower of Wycliffe (Richard II’s queen was a Bohemian and had supported Wycliffe at Oxford). “Like his English inspiration,” writes Bridget Heal writes, he “attacked indulgences and condemned the vices and failings of the clergy… Hus advocated communion in both kind – that the communion wine, Christ’s blood, should be given to the laity as well as the clergy – and emphasized the importance of preaching the Gospel. From the perspective of Czech history, locating the start of the Reformation in Wittenburg in 1517 is a provocative act, for it was not Luther but Hus who achieved the first lasting religious reform of the early modern era.”

Hus was excommunicated and burned at the Council of Constance in 1415, the same Council that ordered Wycliffe’s bones to be dug up and burnt. However, the Czech Hussite rebellion continued, and was put down only with the greatest difficulty and after much bloodshed. On two occasions (in 1418 and 1452) the Hussites applied to join Constantinople. However, as Bishop Milan Gavrilko Kucera writes, “not only Constantinople never accepted them, but the Patriarchate was so horrified of the depth of heresy in their letter describing the Hussite Articles of Faith, that they decided to pretend they never got the letter. The letter, however, just like the letter by Philip Melanchton, are part of the Patriarchal Archives.”

The more radical Hussites were called Taborites. They claimed that for true Christians their ruler could only be God: "All must be brothers to each other and no one must be subject to another." And so taxation and royal power had to be eliminated, along with every mark of inequality.

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316 Kucera, Facebook communication, December 29, 2016.
T.L. Frazier writes: “The Taborites set about constructing a theocratic society in their territory in southern Bohemia. In theory, there was to be no human authority, for all were brothers and sisters. Of course, the theory was ‘modified’ somewhat to allow for the necessity of government. The older brothers obviously needed to look after their younger siblings. It was also supposed to be a classless society, and a primitive version of communism was attempted. Private property, rents, taxes, and dues were abolished. Peasants from all over Bohemia and Moravia sold all their worldly possessions to contribute to the common purse. In the first part of 1420, chests were set up by the Taborite clergy in which the people were expected to deposit all their money. But here, too, reality didn’t always conform to theory. The leadership concentrated so much on common ownership that they took no thought of motivating people to produce anything.

“Rather than construct a functioning economy for their newly established Kingdom of God, the Taborites turned to simple banditry whenever the communal chests were empty. As the people of God, they reasoned, they had a right to all of God’s wealth found on the earth. Conversely, those who were not of the people of God, that is, all who were not Taborites, had no claim to the resources of the earth. Thus raids on the property of non-Taborites were rationalized and became common.

“According to Taborite plans, after all of Bohemia was subjected to Taborite control, the purification of the rest of the world would follow through conquest and domination. This belief was deeply engrained in the Taborite movement. Norman Cohn writes: ‘As late as 1434 we find a speaker at a Taborite assembly declaring that, however unfavorable the circumstances might be at present, the moment would soon come when the Elect must arise and exterminate their enemies – the lords in the first place, and then any of their own people who were of doubtful loyalty or usefulness.’”

Taborism is a form of the ancient heresy of chiliasm or millenarianism, - the idea that the Kingdom of heaven will be achieved here on earth, by the efforts of men and in the conditions of the fall. In the opinion of some, this is the heart of the revolutionary movement and modern secularism in general. Certainly, there is a red thread of utopian, millenarian thought connecting the rebellions of 1381 in England, of 1415-1437 in Bohemia, of the 1520s in Germany, of the Levellers in England in the 1640s, of the Jacobites in France in the 1790s, of many nineteenth-century revolutions, and of the Russian revolution in the twentieth-century, not to speak of our own, twenty-first century rebellion against all the foundations of Christian society.

“The conciliar movement of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries,” writes Antony Black, “was an attempt to modify and limit papal control over the Church by means of general councils. It was sparked off by the disputed papal election of 1378, when, following the return of the papacy from Avignon to Rome, French cardinals rejected the election of the Italian Urban VI, on canonical grounds, and elected Clement VII as anti-pope. The movement was also a response to growing centralisation of church administration and justice, to perceived abused of power by the (in fact rather weak) papacy in exile at Avignon (1305-77) and to the widespread desire for church reform. There was, further, a latent contradiction in church tradition between the doctrinal authority of councils and the jurisdictional primacy of Rome. The movement was led mostly by Frenchmen and Germans; it evoked little response in Italy. Conciliarism was a moderate programme in comparison with the aspirations of men like Marsilius, Wyclif or Hus, who wanted national or state churches, and who saw whole aspects of Catholic tradition, especially papal authority, as fundamentally opposed to scripture or to reason. But it also reflected a shift in religious sentiment from universality to nationality, and a sense that religious matters could legitimately be debated, at least by all educated clergy. In the event, the pope-council conflict affected considerably the structure of medieval Christendom. What emerged as the practical alternative to papal centralisation was devolution of power to secular rulers and nation-states. During the schisms of 1378-1417 and 1437-49, ecclesiastical policy and the allegiance of clergy and peoples were to a great extent determined by princes, foreshadowing cuius regio, eius religio. In 1418, and again in 1447-50, matters were settled by concordats between the papacy and the various secular powers. The ‘Christian republic’ had become a very loose confederation.

“In arguing that the council is above the pope, conciliarists relied principally on scripture, the early fathers and canon law; they drew extensively upon church history, especially the ecumenical councils. Like Wyclif and the Hussites, they appealed to the practice of the apostles and the primitive church, and sometimes from canon law to scripture. Scripture and history showed that the position of Peter and of his successors was that of primus inter pares, that doctrinal disputes were settled by councils, that popes had erred and that the Church ought to be governed by fraternal consultation...”319

At first sight the conciliarist movement appears to have had much in common with Orthodox ideas on the importance of Councils. It must be remembered, however, as Fr. John Meyendorff pointed out, that conciliarism

took place within the context of certain western presuppositions that are foreign to Orthodoxy. One such presupposition was that all forms of power should be defined primarily “in legal terms, whether one spoke of the power of kings, the ‘apostolic’ power of the pope, or the collective power of councils.”

This involved a new attitude towards authority in both Church and State...

As regards the State, write Thompson and Johnson, the conciliarists “approached the whole question of the purpose, organization and functioning of civil society without giving to God, heaven and immortality a predominant place. The purpose of the state was to obtain peace, prosperity, and security, immediate and earthly ends, and not to prepare mortals for their heavenly home... The will of the people [exercised in a representative assembly of the wealthier citizens] should determine what is law, to which the prince himself should be obedient. The prince is the servant and not the maker of the laws, and must act always in the interest of all. A state so organized is quite self-sufficient in itself, with absolutely no need of or use for the Church.”

As regards the Church, the Conciliarists considered it to be “composed of the community of the faithful (universitas fidelium), of all believing Christians. Final authority in this Church rests not with pope and clergy but with the representatives of all believers gathered together in a general council. The laity as well as the clergy should be represented in this council. Ockham recommends that even women should be included. The council has authority to deal with any questions concerning the spiritual affairs of the Church. As the prince is the instrument of the legislator, so the pope is the mere instrument of the will of a general council. Councils should be summoned by the secular prince and not by the pope. The ultimate authority in the Church should be the Scriptures, not as interpreted by the pope or clergy, but as interpreted by a group of reasonable and learned men. The Petrine theory is a falsehood, and the present papacy an accident of history.”

Pure Protestantism! And the origin of their doctrine was, according to Thomson and Johnson, “what they regarded as the principles of natural law which guaranteed the equality of men. If there arose differences in power and influence within the hierarchy of the Church they must have originally arisen with the consent of the Church. Papal power therefore rested on the consent of the Church; it had no inherent rights of its own. As a delegated power, it must, when abused as it was obviously being abused, be subject to the control and limitation of the Church, from which it got its power. This Church was, as had been argued by Marsiglio [Marsilius] and Ockham, the whole body of the faithful, or, as some argued, the body of the clergy. The institution best

322 Thomson & Johnson, op. cit., p. 967.
qualified to represent its interests was the council. If the pope were not subject to the supervision and control of a council it was possible for the Church to become the slave and the tool of the pope in the pursuit of goals that had no relation to the needs of the Church at large. The pope must therefore be the minister of the Church, i.e., of a council, and not an autocrat. As one historian has put it, he must be the Vicar of the Church, not of Christ..." 323

Even some cardinals sympathized with these ideas. Thus Cardinal Pierre d’Ailly wanted to see the cardinals as a kind of elected parliament above the Pope. However, papist doctrine decreed that a general council could be convened only by the Pope. The problem was: there were now two Popes, Clement and Urban...

Nevertheless, the cardinals convened a council at Pisa in 1409 which deposed both existing popes and elected another, Alexander V. But since this council had no ecumenical or papal authority, it did not solve the problem. France, Scotland and Castile continued to recognize Urban, while England, Flanders, most of the Italian states and Emperor Wenceslaus recognized Clement.

In May, 1410 Alexander died; and at the council of Constance, John XXII, one of the most scandalous Popes in history, was elected. “On 29 May 1415,” writes John Julius Norwich, “he was arraigned before another General Council, which had been in session since the previous November at Constance. As Gibbon summed up: ‘The most scandalous charges were suppressed: the Vicar of Christ on earth was only accused of piracy, murder, rape, sodomy and incest.’ Predictably, he was found guilty on all counts – the council, benefiting from the lesson learnt at Pisa, requiring him to ratify the sentence himself” 324

By Sacrosancta (1415) and Frequens (1417) it was declared that in matters of the faith the supreme authority was a general council, which should be convened at intervals of not more than ten years. The Sacrosancta decreed: “The sacred synod of Constance... declares that it is lawfully assembled in the Holy Spirit, that it has its power immediately from Christ, and that all men, of every rank and position, including the pope himself, are bound to obey it in those matters that pertain to the faith, the extirpation of the said schism, and to the reformation of the Church in head and members. It declares also that anyone, of any rank, condition or office – even the papal – who was contumaciously refuse to obey the mandates, statutes, decrees or institutions made by this holy synod or by any other lawfully assembled council on the matters aforesaid or on things pertaining to them, shall, unless he recovers his senses, be subjected to fitting penance and punished as is appropriate.” 325

325 Bettenson and Mauder, op. cit., p. 149; Papadakis, op. cit., p. 375.
Nicholas of Cusa summed it up in his *De concordantia catholica* (1433): “The council is superior to the pope... since the representation of the Church in the general council is surer and more infallible than the pope alone.”

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Another western presupposition of the conciliar movement was that the papacy was a political, quasi-imperial power as much as an ecclesiastical one.

“In this context,” writes Meyendorff, “ecclesiological and canonical thought in the West began systematically to define papal jurisdictional and administrative power, as clearly distinct from his sacramental functions as bishop of Rome...”

“The idea that the pope’s ‘power of jurisdiction’ was independent of his ‘power of ordination’ (possessed by any bishop) was greatly enhanced in the fourteenth century when the actual residence of the pope was not Rome – of which he was bishop – but Avignon. Canonists began to debate the question: who possesses the ‘power of jurisdiction’ during a vacancy of the papal throne, and some answered: the college of cardinals. Understandably, the cardinals liked the idea of exercising such powers, as extensively as they could, and this led to long vacancies... Furthermore, it was admitted that a pope, from the moment of his election, was already fully empowered jurisdictionally, even if he was not yet a bishop. He would rule the church even if his Episcopal consecration was postponed for months. From these approaches, John of Paris could conclude that ‘the power of jurisdiction could be conferred solely by human election and consent’. It is understandable therefore that those who in the West were opposed to papal power, appalled by its abuses and confident in the ‘will of the people’, would end up with a ‘conciliar theory’, affirming that the pope in his jurisdictional, administrative and magisterial powers, is responsible before a general council, since those powers are granted to him by election. It is this theory which was endorsed at Constance and Basel, following the ‘Great Schism’, setting up a system of church government, also rather secular (or relatively speaking ‘democratic’), and rejecting papal monarchy...”

However, while conciliarism might limit the power of the pope as a constitution limits the power of an absolute monarch, it neither diagnosed nor healed the root ecclesiological heresy of papism – the idea that the Roman pope is in some way the reincarnation of the Apostle Peter on earth, possessing all his authority – and more. (The Hildebrandine development of papism, whereby the pope was the Vicar of Christ and possessed all power in both Church and State went even further than this. But by the late middle ages, after all the humiliations of the papacy, nobody believed this any more.)

The papists paid no heed to the Byzantine argument against the papacy, which consisted, as Meyendorff says, “in denying that the apostle Peter belongs only to Rome, not only because he had been in Jerusalem and Antioch (Acts 1-10, 15, etc.) before coming to the imperial capital, but because Peter is the model of every bishop within his community. This early Christian idea was formulated most clearly by Cyprian in the third century: every bishop, presiding over his diocese, occupies the ‘chair of Peter’. It recurs in most unexpected contexts, including hagiography. According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, Christ ‘through Peter gave to the bishops the keys of heavenly honors’, and even Pseudo-Dionysius refers to the image of Peter, when he describes his ecclesiastical ‘hierarch’. Actually, this view of the ministry of Peter, perpetuated in all bishops, inherited from Cyprian, was prevailing in the West as well, as shown by the numerous texts patiently collected by Y. Congar. The idea that there was a ‘Petrine’ power independent of and separable from the sacramental perpetuation of the episcopate is totally foreign to this early Christian ecclesiology.

“Whenever the Byzantines discussed directly the succession of Peter in the Church, they emphasized the universal ministry of all the apostles, including Peter; the distinctive, and always local and sacramental ministry of the bishops, inseparable from each bishop’s community; the fact that Rome cannot claim the succession of Peter for itself alone, and that such a succession, in Rome as elsewhere, is conditioned by the confession of Peter’s faith; and finally, that every bishop orthodox in faith, possesses ‘the power of the keys’ conferred by Christ to Peter.”

In spite of these deficiencies in the conciliarist movement, the idea that the problems of Christian society could be resolved by a general council similar in principle to the Seven Ecumenical Councils, rather than by papal fiat, was an important breakthrough that could have led to a fundamental rethinking of the bases of western society. With both ecclesiastical and political authority weak and divided, and with the people as a whole sobered by the terrible calamity of the Black Death (which killed perhaps a third of Western Christendom), it was time for the West to reject the absolute monarchy of the Pope and turn back to its former leader and the creator of its own pre-schism civilization – Byzantium. This had been the insight of John Wyclif in 1383: “The pride of the Pope is the reason why the Greeks are divided from the so-called faithful... It is we westerners, too fanatical by far, who have been divided from the faithful Greek and the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Moreover, it was at this time that the Byzantine Emperor Manuel visited France and England, and made a considerable impression (but without receiving any help). Thus at precisely the time that the West was, for the first

327 Meyendorff, op. cit., p. 103.
time in centuries, looking to the East for spiritual support, the East was looking to the West for military support. But the East saw help as coming from the papist West rather than the proto-Protestant conciliar movement. And so Manuel’s successors sought ecclesiastical unity with the Pope rather than with his conciliarist opponents. And the invitation offered to the Greeks to attend the Council of Basle (1431-1438) was rejected...

Nevertheless, the bishops at Basle were in earnest. “From now on,” they said, “all ecclesiastical appointments shall be made according to the canons of the Church; all simony shall cease. From now on, all priests whether of the highest or lowest rank, shall put away their concubines, and whoever within two months of this decree neglects its demands shall be deprived of his office, though he be the Bishop of Rome. From now on, the ecclesiastical administration of each country shall cease to depend on papal caprice... The abuse of ban and anathema by the popes shall cease... From now on, the Roman Curia, that is, the popes shall neither demand nor receive any fees for ecclesiastical offices. From now on, a pope should think not of this world’s treasures but only of those of the world to come.”

Pope Eugene IV rejected the Council’s demand that he attend it. He called the Basle delegates “a beggarly mob, mere vulgar fellows from the lowest dregs of the clergy, apostates, blaspheming rebels, men guilty of sacrilege, gaolbirds, men who without exception deserve only to be hunted back to the devil whence they came.” Instead, he convened another council at Ferrara (they later moved to Florence), which was joined by the Greeks and the more pro-papal delegates from Basle. It was at this “robber council” that the Greeks signed the infamous unia with the Pope in 1439.

The Pope quickly took advantage of his victory over the Greeks to conclude separate unias with the Armenians, the Copts, the Ethiopians, the Monophysite Syrians, the Chaldean Nestorians and the Cypriot Maronites, making inroads into the East that the papacy has retained to the present day. This greatly increased the prestige of Rome, which in turn contributed significantly to “the ultimate defeat of the anti-council of Basle and of the anti-Pope Felix IV, who eventually abdicated. All subsequent ‘unions’ were clearly formulated as an unconditional surrender to the Church of Rome. The shrewd Latins, choosing the Greeks first as their negotiation partners, broke them down. Rome used this fact as an argument in their severe negotiations with the other churches, from whom they extracted complete submission.”

Tragically, the Greeks’ signing of the unia and endorsement of papism not only betrayed Orthodoxy and condemned the Byzantine Empire to destruction: it also dealt a severe blow to the conciliarist movement in the

329 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 100.
330 De Rosa, op. cit., p. 100.
West. For “conciliar sovereignty and superiority, established officially as law at Constance twenty-five years previously, was given its coup de grâce at Florence by the ‘infallible document’ of Laetentur caeli. ‘By its very existence it [Florence] counterbalanced and finally outweighed the council of Basel, and in so doing checked the development of the conciliar movement that threatened to change the very constitution of the [papal] Church.’”  

With the conciliarist movement in disarray, the Czech Hussite rebellion against the papacy crushed, and the Greeks (officially, at any rate) on his side, Pope Pius II launched a counter-attack on the very concept of conciliarity in his bull Execrabilis of 1460: “There has sprung up in our time an execrable abuse, unheard of in earlier ages, namely that some men, imbued with the spirit of rebellion, presume to appeal to a future council from the Roman Pontiff, the vicar of Jesus Christ... We condemn appeals of this kind as erroneous and detestable...”

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Thus the situation in the West at the end of the Middle Ages was superficially similar to what it had been four centuries before, with the popes in their quest for absolute power once again carrying the battle to those who sought to limit it. However, the constant civil war between the ecclesiastical and the secular principles, and the constant arguments of canonists and revolutionary thinkers such as William of Ockham, Marsilius of Padua and the Conciliarists, had taken their toll; a return to the papism and feudalism of the High Middle Ages was now out of the question; a decisive change of landmarks was about to take place. If there was no question of a movement back to the Orthodox origins of the European concept of statehood – that is, to the Orthodox symphony of powers, - then the only alternative was to move “forwards”, to the full unravelling of the revolutionary principle of the autonomous “I” first proclaimed by that most revolutionary of popes, Gregory VII...

Indeed, according to Larry Siedentop, it was precisely the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and not any later period, that was the period of the birth of “liberalism”, that quintessentially western ideology that has now conquered the world. “The roots of liberalism were firmly established in the arguments of philosophers and canon lawyers by the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries: belief in a fundamental equality of status as the proper basis for a legal system; belief that enforcing moral conduct is a contradiction in terms; a defence of individual liberty, through the assertion of fundamental or ‘natural’ rights; and, finally, the conclusion that only a representative form of government is appropriate for a society resting on the assumption of moral equality.

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332 Papadakis, op. cit. p. 404.
333 Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., p. 460.
“These roots of liberalism were, however, dispersed in the fifteenth century. They had not yet been combined to create a coherent programme or theory for reform of the sovereign state, into what we have come to call ‘secularism’. That development awaited developments in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries – the Renaissance and the Reformation – when the fragmentation of Christianity led to religious wars, civil and international. In an attempt to restore a broken unity, Catholic and Protestant churches resorted to force. It was an appeal to force which led sensitive minds gradually to put together the credo of secularism, drawing on the insights of the so-called ‘medieval’ thinkers.

“Increasingly, the adjective ‘barbarous’ – which in earlier centuries had been applied by churchmen to the beliefs and practices of the tribes overrunning the Western Roman empire – would be reapplied to the attitudes and actions of the churches...”

However, Siedentop regards liberalism, if not secularism, as a product of Christianity rather than its opponent. “On its basic assumptions, liberal thought is the offspring of Christianity. It emerged as the moral intuitions generated by Christianity were turned against an authoritarian model of the church.”

This is true if by “Christianity” we mean “Western” or “Roman Catholic Christianity”. But that immediately raises the question: how and why, if Christianity is the parent of liberalism, did liberalism lead to secularism and the rebellion against Christianity, so that the grandchild devoured the parent? That question we shall attempt to answer in the following volumes of this series...

In the meantime, it should be pointed out that if “Christianity” means “Eastern” or “Orthodox Christianity”, the “progression” to liberalism and secularism is by no means a necessary development; for Orthodox Christianity, rightly understood and practiced, contains within itself antibodies, as it were, against the spread of the liberal-secular disease. The Orthodox East did not have to develop in that direction because it did not have the West’s heretical and authoritarian model of the church, but retained the truly Christian understanding of Church-State relations and of the correct relationship of individual rights to social duties. It developed in a westernizing direction only after that truly Christian understanding began to be undermined by western cultural injections after the Fall of Constantinople, and especially after the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the French revolution...

So let us now return to the history of the Roman Autocracy, the main bastion of Orthodox Christianity, in the final phase of its existence.

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334 Siedentop, op. cit., p. 332.
335 Siedentop, op. cit., p. 332.
VI. THE FALL OF NEW ROME
67. THE RIGHTS OF THE ORTHODOX AUTOCRAT

In view of the triumph of Orthodox monarchism in most of Europe by the year 1000, it is fitting, as we continue that story into the second Christian millennium, to summarize the theory of the Orthodox autocracy in its most important aspect, that of Church-State relations.

Whatever rights the emperor has in the Church are given to him by the Church, for the sake of the Church, and in view of the fact that he is himself specially anointed to the kingdom by the Church. This is a vitally important point which is often overlooked by those who look on Church and State as necessarily warring principles. Just as the soul and the body are not by nature warring principles, even if the fall has often set them against each other, so it is with the Church and State. And yet we must agree with Sir Steven Runciman that “the chief practical problem that faces any organized Church lies in its relation to the State”...

The rights of the Emperor in the Church were limited by the fact that he could not perform sacraments, nor did he ordain or defrock bishops and priests. “To be sure, the Emperor wore vestments similar to those of the bishop and even had a special place in the worship of the Church, such as censing the sanctuary at the Liturgy for the Nativity of Christ, offering the sermon during Vespers at the commencement of the Great Lent, and receiving Holy Communion directly from the altar as did the clergy. Nevertheless, the Emperor was not a priest and many Greek Fathers disapproved of even these privileges. Emperor Marcian (451-457) may have been hailed as a priest-king at the Council of Chalcedon (451), but this did not bestow sacerdotal status on him or any Byzantine imperator.”

One of the rights given to the Emperor by the Church was that of convening Councils and enforcing their decisions. This right did not empower the emperor or his officials to interfere in the proceedings on a par with the bishops, but it did enable him to make quiet suggestions which were often vitally important. Thus at the First Council it was the Emperor Constantine who quietly suggested the word “consubstantial” to describe the relationship between the Son of God and God the Father. Again, although the Emperor Marcian said that he had decided to be present at the Fourth Ecumenical Council “not as a manifestation of strength, but so as to give firmness to the acts of the Council, taking Constantine of blessed memory as my model,” his firm but tactful intervention was decisive in the triumph of Orthodoxy.

338 Archbishop Averky (Taushev) of Syracuse, Sem’ Vselenskikh Soborov (The Seven Ecumenical Councils), Moscow, 1996, p. 11.
The Emperor also had the right to invest the Patriarch. “According to the official formula,” writes Runciman, “the Patriarch was elected by the decree of the Holy Synod and the promotion of the Emperor. His investiture took place in the Imperial Palace in the presence of the high dignitaries of Church and State. Until 1204 the scene was the Palace of Magnaura, where the Emperor in person announced the election with the formula: ‘The Divine grace, and Our Majesty which derives from it, raised the most pious [name] to be Patriarch of Constantinople.’ After 1261 the investiture was held in the triclinium of the Palace of Blachernae; and about the same time the formula was changed. The Emperor now said: ‘The Holy Trinity, through the power that It has given Us, raises you to be Bishop of Constantinople, New Rome, and Oecumenical Patriarch.’ By the beginning of the fifteenth century the formula and the setting had changed once more. The investiture now took place in a church in the presence of the Emperor; but it was a high lay official who pronounced the words: ‘Our great and holy Sovereign and the Sacred Synod call Your Holiness to the supreme throne of Patriarch of Constantinople.’ The theologian Symeon of Thessalonica, writing in about 1425, regretted the change of words as there was no mention of God, though he liked the recognition given to the Holy Synod. When the election had thus been proclaimed the Emperor gave to the Patriarch the cross, the purple soutane and the pectoral reliquary which symbolized his office. After this investiture the new Patriarch rode in procession through the streets of Constantinople to the church of Saint Sophia, where he was consecrated by the Metropolitan of Heraclea, in memory of the days when Byzantium had been a suffragan see under Heraclea.”

The Emperor chose the Patriarch from three candidates put forward to him by the Holy Synod. As Simeon of Thessalonica witnessed, this right was not seized by the emperor by force, “but was entrusted to him from ancient times by the Holy Fathers, that is, by the Church itself”. Moreover, “if none of the three candidates was suitable, the basileus could suggest his own candidate, and the Hierarchical Synod again freely decided about his suitability, having the possibility of not agreeing. The king’s right did not in principle violate the Hierarchs’ freedom of choice and was based on the fact that the Patriarch occupied not only a position in the Church, but was also a participant in political life... Simeon of Thessalonica said: ‘He, as the anointed king, has been from ancient times offered the choice of one of the three by the Holy Fathers, for they [the three] have already been chosen by the Council, and all three have been recognized as worthy of the Patriarchy. The king assists the Council in its actions as the anointed of the Lord, having become the defender and servant of the Church, since during the anointing he gave a promise of such assistance. De jure there can be no question of arbitrariness on the part of the king in the choosing of the Patriarch, or of encroachment on the rights and freedom of choice [of the Hierarchs].’”

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340 Runciman, op. cit., p. 27.
Another imperial right was that of handing the Patriarch his staff. This should not be interpreted as if the emperor bestowed the grace of the Patriarchy. Nor was it the same as the ceremony of “lay investiture” in the West. The emperor did this, according to Simeon of Thessalonica, “because he wishes to honour the Church, implying also at the same time that he personally accepts the individual now consecrated as his own pastor whom God has chosen for him.”

“Simeon of Thessalonica explains that in this act the king only witnesses to the fact of his agreement with the installation of the new Patriarch, and after the bestowal of the staff he witnesses to his spiritual submission... by the bowing of his head, his asking for a blessing from the Patriarch and his kissing of his hand. By the grace and action of the Hierarchy, the Patriarch does not differ from the Metropolitans and Bishops. But in the dignity of his see, and in his care for all who are under his authority, he is the father and head of all, consecrating Metropolitans and Bishops, and judging them in conjunction with the Council, while he himself is judged by a Great Council, says Simeon of Thessalonica. The king was present at both the consecration and the enthronement of the Patriarch in the altar...; but the consecration and enthronement were acts of a purely ecclesiastical character, and the king’s participation in them was no longer as active as in the first stages of the process, when he convened the Hierarchical Council, chose one of the three elected by the Council and witnessed to his recognition of him in the act of προφητείας [which gave the Patriarch his rights in Byzantine civil law]. In the act of consecration [assuming that the candidate to the Patriarchy was not already a bishop] Hierarchical grace was invoked upon the man to be consecrated by the Metropolitan of Heraclea, while in the act of enthronement he was strengthened by abundant grace to greater service for the benefit, now, of the whole Church, and not of one Diocese [only].”

These rights of the emperor in the Church were paralleled by certain rights of the Church in the State, especially the Patriarch’s right of intercession (Russian: pechalovanie). “The Patriarch was called to intercede for the persecuted and those oppressed by the authorities, for the condemned and those in exile, with the aim of easing their lot, and for the poor and those in need with the aim of giving them material or moral support. This right of intercessory complaint, which belonged by dint of the 75th canon of the Council of Carthage to all Diocesan Bishops, was particularly linked with the Patriarch of Constantinople by dint of his high position in the Byzantine State with the king.”

Also, State officials “were obliged to help the Bishop in supporting Church discipline and punishing transgressors. Sometimes the emperors obliged provincial officials to tell them about Church disturbances which depended

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343 Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, pp. 120-121.
344 Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 121.
on the carelessness of the Bishop, but the emperors gave the Bishops the right to keep an eye on officials, while the Bishops, in carrying out this obligation imposed on them by the civil law, did not thereby become State officials... In the Byzantine laws themselves the Church was distinguished from the State as a special social organism, having a special task distinct from that of the State; these laws recognized the Church as the teacher of the faith and the establisher of Church canons, while the State could only raise them to the status of State laws; Church administration and Church courts were recognized as being bound up with the priestly rank.”

“In reviewing Byzantine ideas on royal power, we must recognize the fact that, in spite of the influence of pagan traditions, in spite of Saracen Muslim influences leading to a confusion of powers, in spite of the bad practices of arianizing and iconoclast emperors, it remained a dogma of Byzantine law to recognize the Church of Christ as a special society, parallel to the State, standing separate and above the latter by its aims and means, by dint of which the supreme head of the State was by no means the head of the other, ecclesiastical union, and, if he entered into it in the position of a special sacred rank, it was far from being the higher, but was only equal to the deacon’s, being subject thereby to the canons which established the Church as a Divine institution having its own legislation, administration and court...”

The State is rooted in the family, so that the head of the State, the Emperor or King, is like the Father of all his citizens. However, if the Emperor is the father of his people, the Patriarch is the father of the Emperor, and was so called in Byzantium and in all her daughter-autocracies: Serbia, Bulgaria, Georgia and Russia. Thus Emperor Theodosius the Great, embraced St. Meletius, president of the Second Ecumenical Council, as his father. In Serbia, this spiritual relationship was even paralleled by physical paternity: St. Symeon, the first Nemanja king, was the physical father of the first archbishop, St. Savva, but at the same time his spiritual son. Again, in Russia the first Romanov Tsar, Mikhail Fyodorovich, was the spiritual and natural son of Patriarch Philaret. This emphasized that Christian politics, as represented by the Emperor or Tsar, should ideally be conformed to – even “begotten by” - the other-worldly spirit and aims of Christian spirituality, as represented by the Patriarch.

345 Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 137.
346 Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 139.
68. KIEVAN RUS'

After the Baptism of Rus’ in 988, the Russian princes continued to look up to the Byzantine Emperor as to their father in spite of the fact that their own kingdom was completely independent of, and even more powerful than, the Empire. Nor did this change with the enthronement of the first metropolitan of Russian blood, Hilarion, in the eleventh century. Thus G. Podskalsky writes: “Although Hilarion compared Vladimir with Constantine the Great and recognised his sovereignty over Kievan Rus’, he ascribed the title of ‘Emperor’ neither to him nor to his successor. The collector (or editor) of the Izbornik of 1076 everywhere exchanged the term βασιλεύς (‘emperor’) for ‘prince’ or ‘kahan’, so as thereby to adapt the Byzantine texts to Russian conditions, while the term βασιλεύς, ‘tsar’, was kept only when it referred to God. The idea of the ‘transfer of the empire’ (translatio imperii), which captivated the Bulgarian tsar Simeon or Charles the Great in relation to the Frankish empire, was foreign to pre-Mongol Rus’. The Byzantine supremacy in the hierarchy of States was also strengthened by the emperors’ practice of adopting the role of sponsor at the baptism of newly converted kings or princes.”

Thus the Emperor became the sponsor at the baptisms of Tsar Boris-Michael of Bulgaria and Princess Olga of Kiev. Such sponsorship, according to Richard Fletcher, “indicated secular lordship as well. The experience of baptism could thus become a token of submission. Exported to the west we can see the idea at work in the baptismal sponsorship of Widukind by Charlemagne in 785, or of Harald Klak by Louis the Pious in 826, or of the Viking leader Guthrum by Alfred of Wessex in 878.”

The inferiority of the other Orthodox rulers to the Byzantine Emperor was indicated in various ways: by differences in titles (the Russian princes were called αυγοντες), and by the fact that only the emperors were anointed at their enthronement. Fr. Timothy Alferov writes: “The Russian Great Princes and the Serbian, Georgian and Bulgarian rulers were defenders of the Church only in their territories. They were also raised to the princedom with the blessing of the Church, but by a different rite (о ezhe blagosloviti knyazya), which included the crowning of the prince, but contained no anointing.” If the Frankish and Bulgarian rulers had been accorded the title of basileus, this was only under compulsion and was withdrawn as soon as politically expedient. And even much later, in 1561, when the pre-eminence of Russia in the Orthodox world could not be denied, the Ecumenical Patriarch Joasaph II accorded the Ivan the Terrible the title Basileus only because he was thought to descend from a Byzantine princess – Anna, the wife of St. Vladimir. So

347 Podskalsky, Khristianstvo i Bogoslovskaia literatura v Kievskoj Rusi (988-1237) (Christianity and Theological Literature in Kievan Rus’ (988-1037), St. Petersburg, 1996, p. 68.
349 Alferov and Alferov, O Tserkvi, pravoslavnom Tsarstve i poslednem vremeni (On the Church, the Orthodox Kingdom and the Last Time), Moscow: “Russkaia Idea”, p. 18.
tenacious was the idea among the Greeks that there could be no Third Rome after the Second.  

From the beginning Church and State were exceptionally close in Kievan Rus’. This was the result, in part, of the fact that in Russia it was the Great Princes who introduced the Church into Russia, whereas in Byzantium St. Constantine came to power when the Church was already three hundred years old and well-established. St. Vladimir threatened those who threatened this order as follows: “If anyone breaks my rule, whether he be my son or a servant, or anyone of my race or one of the boyars, and interferes in the ecclesiastical affairs of the metropolitan, which I gave into the hands of the metropolitan, and of the Church, and of the bishops in all the cities in accordance with the canons, he will be judged and punished. If anyone tries to seize the judgement of the Church, he will be deprived of the name of Christian, and may all such be cursed by the Holy Fathers.”

Yaroslav the Wise, strengthened this tendency in “The Church Statute of Kiev”. “In this document, we observe the symphony already developing between the Russian princes and the Church: ‘I, Grand Prince Yaroslav, son of Vladimir, in accordance with the wish of my father, have conferred with Metropolitan Illarion and have prepared [this] Church Statute because I believe that there are matters that belong neither to [the exclusive] jurisdiction of the prince nor to that of the boyars. I have granted this jurisdiction, as embodied in the present rules of the Church Church Statute, to the metropolitan and the bishops.’ An examination of these rules reveals that their nature is primarily concerning morality as determined by Church law, for example, ‘If the godfather should have illicit relations with the mother [of his godchild], the bishop shall receive one grivna of gold and at his discretion he shall also impose [an appropriate] penance.’ Sometimes the line between Church and State is blurred, as in the following statute: ‘If a husband should force his wife into prostitution, this is a religious crime. The prince [however] shall administer justice [in this case in accordance with the ancient customs

350 However, not everyone shared this viewpoint. According to Podalsky, a Greek Metropolitan of Kiev in the early twelfth century, Nicephorus I, “without hesitation called both the emperor and the prince equally likenesses of the Divine archetype. This meant that he rejected the Byzantine idea of the single and undivided imperial power, which was inherent only in the Basileus of the Romans and which in this capacity reflected the Divine order of the world. The conception of the emperor as ‘the image of God’ (imago Dei, εικόνα Θεού) became well-known in Kiev thanks to the Mirror of Princes composed in 527 by Deacon Agapetus for Justinian. Extracts from it, in which the discussion was about the duty of subjects to submit to the visible deputy (prince) of the invisible ruler of the world (God), were included in the Izbornik of 1076 (Podskalsky, op. cit., pp. 67-68). “Yet it was a quite exceptional case,” writes G. Fedotov, “when the author of the panegyric of Prince Andrew of Vladimir dared to apply to him the famous definition of Chrysostom-Agapit, so popular in later Moscow: ‘Caesar by his earthly nature is similar to any man, but by the power of his dignity he is similar to God alone” (The Russian Religious Mind, Harvard University Press, 1966, vol. I, p. 398).

351 Alferov, “Teokratia ili Ierokratia”.

352 St. Vladimir, quoted in Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), Russkaia Ideologia (The Russian Ideology), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 83-84.
and traditions’. Occasionally the decision is shared: ‘The bishop shall receive 100 grivnas as the fine from whoever sets a dwelling, or a barn, or anything else afire. The prince shall the jurisdiction ‘in this matter in accordance with ancient custom and traditions.]’ As we see from the above statutes, the State both acknowledged and deferred to the Church from the beginning of Russian history. This relationship between the Prince and (in this case) the Metropolitan was one of mutual respect and cooperation. The State had its older traditions but incorporated a Christian worldview into its legal system and invited the Church to take part in the judicial side of Russian life when it deemed it appropriate.”

As an example of the closeness of Church and State in Kievan Rus’, we may cite an incident from Novgorod in 1078, as described by Bishop Dionysius (Alferov): “A certain sorcerer by demonic power wrought many signs and wonders, collected a huge crowd of people whom he had deceived and went with them to destroy the church of Hagia Wisdom. The Bishop of Novgorod with a cross in his hands stood in front of the church and called the Christians to help him. But only very few hastened to his side. Only the Prince of Novgorod, Gleb Svyatoslavich, did not fear. He went alone to meet the armed mob and in the sight of all struck with his sword the servant of satan who had proudly prophesied to the people that he would be enthroned that day. After this the crowd dispersed. It is evident that in such a situation no ordinary good fellow could take the place in the defence of the Church of the Christian Autocrat, who had received from her a blessing on his service and who was protected by the power of God through her prayers”.354

The relationship between Church and State in Kievan Rus’ is described by Podskalsky as follows: ‘The relations between the sovereign and his subjects were based on principles drawn from Old- and New-Testament texts. This, for example, how the chronicler views princely virtue: ‘If there are righteous princes on the earth, then many sins are forgiven to the earth, but if they are evil and cunning, then God brings more evil on the earth, insofar as its head is of the earth’. The Novgorod Bishop Luke the Jew looks at the matter differently: ‘Fear God, honour the prince, you are slaves first of God, and also of the lord (that is, the prince – G.P.). The logical consequence of both utterances is, in principle, the right to resist the authorities, although its existence and the practical possibilities of applying it were just not formulated sufficiently clearly in Rus’. On the contrary, the Church willingly resorted to helping the State in its struggle with the remnants of paganism and the reappearance of heresies, and also in the missionary absorption of new territories. In the first place this was a work of the monks, whose ranks at the beginning were filled up with many from the land-owning nobility and the social elite of society. But the metropolitans, who were all practically without exception Greeks, tried, on their part, to direct the efforts of the Russian

354 Alferov and Alferov, op. cit., p. 21.
princes to ward off the attacks of the nomads on the East Roman empire, without, however, overstepping the bounds of loyalty to the princely power....”

“The princes in their turn gradually gave the Church juridical privileges, steady income and possessions in land... Crimes in the sphere of family relations, which were subject to punishment from the point of view of Christian morality, entered into the administration of the Church already in the 11th century. The jurisdiction of the prince’s power was limited by the immunity of the clergy and the members of their families, and also of the monks and the ‘church people’, that is, people under the special protection of the Church (the poor, the sick, strangers, etc.). However, sometimes representatives of the clergy were still brought before the prince’s court...

“Just as the princes took part in the administration of Church affairs, so the episcopate strove to influence the princes’ politics. Such cooperation between Church and State reached its zenith during the rule of Vladimir Monomakh [1113-1125]. But, according to the words of Hilarion, already Vladimir I had taken part in councils, discussing with the Church leadership ways and means of strengthening faith amidst the newly converted. In the future such cooperation gradually broadened in proportion as the place of the Greek hierarchs was taken by bishops of Russian extraction, while the princes thereby received the possibility of exerting greater influence on the choice of candidates and their consecration. The chronicler tells us of a whole series of bishops who recommended themselves by carrying out complicated diplomatic missions. The triumphant conclusion of treaties by the princes was accompanied by oaths and kissing of the cross. The monks of the Kiev Caves monastery more than once took up a critical position in relation to the prince. Thus, for example, in 1073 Abbot Theodosius refused to join the princely civil war on the side of Svyatoslav, who had then seized the princely throne, and did not even fear sharply to point out to the prince the lawlessness of his actions, and of his exiling his brother Izyaslav. Only the lofty authority of the monastery leader and the pleas of the brethren saved him from persecution, and after the laying of the foundations of a new monastery church complete reconciliation was achieved. If the monks thereby kept an inner distance in relation to politics, the episcopate was forced sometimes to enter into it, although it did not take an immediate part in the counsels of the princes...

“In general, in the course of the civil wars of the 11th-12th centuries, the Church acquired a new moral authority in the eyes both of the princes and the people, while the State, for its part, received from the Church a confirmation of its divine purpose for the sake of the common good. From the Slavonic translation of the Nomocanon in 14 chapters Kievan Rus’ drew the ideal formula for the relations between the secular and ecclesiastical authorities going back to Justinian’s Sixth Novella.... The emperor was bound to concern himself with the teaching of the faith, with respect for the clergy

and with the observation of the canons. It was precisely this postulate that was laid by Metropolitan Hilarion at the base of his reasonings on agreement between the Church and the State...

“And so, in all the manifestations of theological and church-political thought, in art, in Divine services and in literary works of various genres, already in the 11th century one and the same national tendency was revealed, a leaning towards a State Church... The strength of the Church consisted in the fact that it worthily presented itself in a non-standard situation which it was impossible to master without the aid of earlier conceptual models and models of behaviour transferred to the new situation; while the strength of the State consisted in an understanding of the far-reaching commonality of its interests with the interests of the Church, by virtue of which it was necessary to give the Church necessary aid in the fulfilment of her mission. In spite of, or even thanks to the fact that not one of these two powers was able to boast of complete independence from the other, the sphere of their external activity and internal freedom was as great as it would ever be later.”

Kievan Rus’ represented a rare balance of freedom and obedience in State life. Obedience was owed to the power that be; but if they obtained their power in an unlawful manner, the Church felt at liberty to withdraw her support. Thus St. Theodosius of the Kiev Caves (+1074) for a time stopped commemorating Prince Sviatoslav of Kiev because he had usurped the throne of his brother Iziaslav.

Fedotov writes: “Kievan chroniclers are very outspoken about the vices and flaws of their princes; they obviously felt no restraint imposed by princely dignity upon the freedom of their judgement. All they can afford to do, in order to alleviate the guilt of a prince, is to attribute his deficiency to the influence of bad counselors. Bad counselors, mostly ‘young ones’ (compare Isaiah 3.1-4), are the root of all political evils. The youth of the prince himself is often considered as a great misfortune and a sign of God’s wrath against the country.

“Good and bad princes alike are sent by God as a reward or punishment to the people. ‘If a country is right before God, He ordains in it a just Caesar or prince, loving law and justice, and he installs governors and judges administering justice.’ But ‘woe to the city where the prince is young, and likes to drink wine at the sound of the gusli with young counselors... Such are given by God for our sins’ (Lavr. 1015).

“If a bad prince is sent by God and his tyranny has a penitential significance this seems to exclude revolt against the tyrant as a legitimate political action. This conclusion would be quite correct in the spirit of the Byzantine and even early Christian ethics; it was indeed the doctrine of

357 Nestor, A life of St. Theodosius.
Anastasius Sinaitas in the seventh century and it was repeated by some Russian moralists as well. And yet the import of this doctrine of obedience was greatly exaggerated by the modern historians who often viewed the early Russian ways of life from the viewpoint of Muscovy. The Kievan chronicler may consider a revolt of the citizens against their prince as the act of God’s will, punishing the prince in his turn (Lavr. 1068)…. The chastising providence of God, in the political sphere, is double-faced; occasionally, it can use to its own ends even a popular revolution.

“There was, however, one thing before which ancient Russia, unlike Byzantium, stopped with horror: the murder of a prince. Regicide in Byzantium was so common that it seems a part of the political system, a necessary corrective to autocracy. In Russia,… a revolt, although it was sometimes justified if it ended in the overthrow of a prince, was never pardoned if it resulted in his murder…”

And yet the very first saints canonized in Kiev Rus’ were Princes Boris and Gleb, the sons of St. Vladimir, who were killed by their evil brother Sviatopolk. And it was the fratricide of the Kievan princes that was to destroy the State… Nevertheless, it remains true that a far greater proportion of rulers died peacefully in their beds in Russia than in Byzantium.

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The unity of Kievan Rus’ under St. Vladimir and his immediate successors was an extraordinary achievement in view of the country’s lack of natural frontiers, constant invasions of barbarians and multinational character. However, as G. Podskalsky writes, on the death of Yaroslav the Wise in 1054, according to his will, “the rule of the Kievan princes was replaced by a federation of independent princedoms linked between themselves only by the hierarchy of princely thrones and the constant redistribution of princedoms within the princely clan (according to the principle of seniority) that flowed from that. These new traits of State construction were fraught with constant political tension, and forced the Church to step forward in a new for her role of preserver and defender of State unity”.

And so from the beginning of the twelfth century the State began to weaken from both within and without as a result of the internecine warfare of the princes who, though belonging to the same family, fought each other for princedoms. For the Russian custom was that the Great Prince of Kiev would divide up his realm into principalities and give each of his sons one part. This opened the gates to fratricidal strife. It was not until the fourteenth century that Muscovite Russia, under the influence of St. Sergius of Radonezh, introduced the law of primogeniture...

359 Podskalsky, op. cit., p. 62.
360 According to Ivan Solonevich, (Narodnaia Monarkhia (Popular Monarchy), Minsk, 1998, p. 153) this custom was introduced from feudal Hungary, Poland and, in part, Germany.
However, Ivan Solonevich considers the civil wars of the Kievan princes to be insufficient to explain why none of them succeeded in creating a lasting and powerful empire. “For the question inevitably arises: why did Kiev and those with her not cope with situation, and why did Moscow and those with her cope? Neither does the idea that the Moscow princes were talented, or the Kievian ones untalented, contribute to our understanding: was Yaroslav, who, though called ‘the Wise’, divided the Kievian land between his sons, stupider than, for example, Daniel Alexandrovich, who ascended the throne at the age of ten, or Michael Fyodorovich, who ascended the throne at the age of sixteen? Under these princes the Muscovite land was not divided. Would it not be more correct to seek for the reasons for success and failure in some deeper or much broader phenomena than princely childbirths, and more constant causes than the talent or lack of it of some tens of princes who shone on the Kievian or Muscovite thrones?

“The most obvious reason for the failure of the pre-Muscovite rulers was the ‘civil wars’ in the Novgorodian or Kievian veches [assemblies or parliaments], independently of whether they were decided by the armed combat of princes on the field of battle or by the battle of parties. If we take the main lines of development of Novgorod and Kiev, Galich and Vilna, on the one hand, and Moscow, on the other, then it will become sufficiently obvious: both Novgorod and Kiev, and Galich and Vilna created a purely aristocratic order for themselves. And in Novgorod, and partly also in Kiev, the princes, that is, the representatives of the monarchical principle in the country, were simply hirelings, whom the veche sometimes invited and sometime expelled as seemed fit to them. In Galich the princely power was completely eaten up by the boyars. In the Lithuanian-Russian State the aristocracy was just waiting for the moment to establish their freedoms before the face of the representative of one-man rule. They succeeded in this – at the price of the existence of the State. ‘In Kiev in the 11th century the administration of the city and district was concentrated in the hands of the military elders’ (Klyuchevsky). ‘The veches in Kiev and Novgorod, which appeared according to the chronicler already at the beginning of the 11th century, from the time of the struggle between Yaroslav and Svyatopolk in 1015, began, from the end of the century, to make louder and louder noises, making themselves felt everywhere and interfering in the relations between the princes. The princes had to take account of this force, enter into deals with it, conclude political agreements with the cities. ‘The prince, sitting in Kiev, had to strengthen the senior throne under him by compacts with the Kievian veche. The princes were not fully empowered sovereigns of the land, but only their military-political rulers.’

“Not so long ago Russian social thought looked on Kiev Rus’, and in particular Novgorod, as, very unfortunately, unsuccessful attempts to establish a democratic order in Rus’. The coarse hand of eastern despotism crushed these attempts: ‘the veche is not to exist, the bell is not to exist, and Novgorod is to exist under the complete control of the Muscovite princes’... Now opinions of this democracy have changed somewhat. Neither in Kiev
nor in Novgorod was there any democracy. There was a feudal-mercantile aristocracy (in Vilna it was a feudal-landowning aristocracy). And it was this, and by no means ‘the people’, that tried by all means to limit and bind the princely power. And not, of course, in the name of ‘the people’, but in its own class interests. One can say: both in Galich, and in Novgorod, and in Vilna, and in Kiev the aristocracy – whether land-owning or mercantile – swallowed up the supreme power. But one can also put it another way: neither in Galich, nor in Novgorod, nor in Vilna, nor in Kiev did the popular masses succeed in creating their own power. And for that reason the lower classes attached themselves to that power which the Muscovite lower classes had succeeded in creating: ‘we want to be under the Muscovite Tsar, the Orthodox Tsar’.

Archpriest Lev Lebedev is in essential agreement with this verdict: “What a misfortune is democracy, whether it be of the veche or of the boyars! And what madness! Never was the people (or even the best part of it) the source of power and law, nor can it be. In democracy everyone wants to ‘drag’ things in their direction, as a result of which they ‘break up’ the Russian Land, as the chronicler puts it... The fall of great Kiev was accomplished to a significant degree under the influence of the veche. Often it either summoned princes that it liked, driving out the lawful ones, or, on the contrary, invited the latter and drove out the others, thereby ‘helping’ the princes ‘to break up’ Great Kievan Rus’, which had been gathered together by the great labours of St. Vladimir, Yaroslav the Wise and Vladimir Monomakh.”

361 Solonevich, op. cit., pp. 265-267. As G.G. Litavrin writes: “(The Great Prince) was not the only one amidst others, like the Byzantine Emperor, - he was only the first among equals” (quoted in Fomin S. and Fomina T. Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1993, vol. 1, p. 177).

The American professor Richard Pipes agrees that the prince was not the supreme authority: “If in Novgorod the prince resembled an elected chief executive, the Great Prince of Lithuanian Rus’ was not unlike a constitutional king.” (Russia under the Old Regime, London: Penguin Books, second edition, 1995, p. 38).

However, G. P. Fedotov believed that in Novgorod, at any rate, there was real ‘people’s power’: “Was Novgorod a republic? Yes, at least for three and a half centuries of its history, from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. The fact that a prince held authority in Novgorod should not deceive us...

“Supreme authority in the Novgorod republic belonged, of course, to the veche, or the assembly of all free citizens. The veche elected the entire administration, not excluding the archbishop, and had the power to check on it and judge it. This was a direct, not a representative, democracy like the republics of the ancient world. Only those who participated in the public meetings could exercise their political rights. An immense territory was administered by the inhabitants of this single city. This was the weak spot in the republican systems of both Athens and Rome; the agora and the forum could not rule empires...

“The archbishop stood above parties and expressed the unity of the republic. To make him really independent, his name was drawn by lot from those of the candidates elected by the veche. The three lots on the altar in the Cathedral of St. Sophia symbolized the divine will for the fate of the city-state. In the political symbolism of Great Novgorod its sovereign, the bearer of authority, was St. Sophia herself...” (op. cit, volume II, pp. 188-190, 191).

362 Lebedev, Velikorossia (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 13.
The first major attempt by a Russian ruler to halt the decline of Kievan Rus’ by imposing a more disciplined, centralized and truly autocratic power began in 1155, when Prince Andrew, son of Great Prince George Dolgoruky, left the southern principality of Vyshgorod to settle in Rostov-Suzdal, a small principality situated in the dense forests of the Volga-Oka triangle. Here, far from the fratricidal politics of southern Russia, as N.M. Karamzin writes, “the people had not yet exhibited a mutinous spirit, they did not judge and change their sovereigns, but fervently obeyed them and fought bravely for them”. It was therefore the perfect base for Andrew, who, “having not only a good heart, but also an excellent mind, clearly saw the reasons for the woes of the State and wanted to save at least his own land from them: that is, he removed the unfortunate system of appanages and ruled on his own, giving cities neither to his brothers nor to his sons”.

“Here in the north,” writes M.V. Zyzykin, “the princes felt themselves to be the owners of the territory, which they could dispose of according to their discretion. And recognizing themselves to be creators and builders of that which was being formed more than was the case in the south, they could no longer be reconciled with the character of the temporary ownership of thrones that had brought them to unending transfers of their princedoms, and which gave the impression of some kind of queue, albeit a disordered queue. Now the prince does not leave his appanage, even if he obtains a great princedom. ‘This is mine, for it has been brought into being by me’ – that was the consciousness of the prince in the north. If earlier, in the south, there had still been some idea of a collective ownership by the Riurik family, now a more complete isolation of the princely lines took place… Together with the concept of property, that appeared in the north as a result of the personal activity and personal political creativity of the princes in the building up of society, there came to an end not only the transfer of princes from throne to throne, but also a change took place in the order of inheritance as the concept of private civil right was introduced into it. Earlier, in order that a prince should obtain the transfer of a throne in favour of the candidate he desired, he had to come to an agreement with the desired heir, with those relatives whom he was bypassing, with his boyars, and finally, with the veche of the city, and, last of all, his desire was often not fulfilled after his death, even if the promise to fulfil it was accompanied by kissing the cross. But now the prince, as the

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363 N.M. Karamzin, Predania Vekov (The Traditions of the Ages), Moscow, 1989, p. 207. Lebedev sees in this trait the influence of the Finnish element of the population. For the Finns, according to Tacitus, “did not fear people, and were not frightened of enemies, but attained that which is difficult to attain – they wanted nothing″! So when the Russians emigrated to these areas from the south and absorbed the Finnish population, they “also wanted nothing in their earthly life”. Only, since they were Orthodox Christians, these Russians “wanted life in the Heavenly Kingdom, which is why sedentary Rus’ strove to construct her earthly Fatherland in the image of the Heavenly, eternal Fatherland!” (op. cit., pp. 12, 15).

364 Karamzin, op. cit., p. 214.
owner, could divide his princedom and leave it in his will, according to his discretion, to his sons, his wife, his daughters and distant relatives – sometimes as their property, and sometimes for lifetime use. His private right as a property-owner became the basis for his rights as a ruler…”

This new political order introduced above all by Prince Andrew received support from the heavenly realm, as Archpriest Lev explains: “In Vyshgorod at that time, in 1154-55, there was a holy icon of the Mother of God which had been brought not long before from Constantinople. This was a special holy thing! It was one of the icons created by the Evangelist Luke, which he painted having before his eyes the Most Holy Theotokos herself. He painted this icon on part of a plank from a table that had belonged to the Holy Family in Nazareth. Kiev, however, did not value this holy thing in a fitting manner. But meanwhile it worked miracles. It was often found in Vyshgorod, having departed from its place [in Kiev]. In 1155 it again moved, as it were showing that it did not want to remain there [in Kiev]. This time Prince Andrew was a witness of the event. He fell to his knees in prayer before the icon. And the Most Pure Mother of God told him what he should do. That night, secretly, without asking his father, Andrew of Bogoliubovo took the icon of our Lady and some priests of Vyshgorod and their families, and went away to the North... Again on the instructions of the All-Pure One he did not take it to Rostov, but left it in Vladimir. From that time this great icon began to be called the Vladimir icon. In accordance with God’s providence (for otherwise it is impossible to explain it), the father was not angry with his son. Prince Andrew remained in Vladimir, and built next to it the village of Bogoliubovo in which he constructed his palace. In 1157 Yury Dolgoruky [his father] died. His son did not go to live in Kiev. Moreover, he began to petition in Constantinople for the founding of a metropolitan see in Vladimir, that is, a see having the same ecclesiastical significance as that of Kiev. [However,] he was blessed to have only a bishopric. But then Bishop Theophanes of Vladimir was murdered in a bestial manner in Kiev at the command of the new Metropolitan, Constantine II, who had been despatched there from Constantinople. In reply to this evil act, and also because of the other injustices of the Kievans, Prince Andrew sent an army there, taking the Polovtsians as his allies. In 1169 Kiev was terribly burned down and looted. The churches were also looted.

“The Great Prince, who already bore the title ‘of Kiev’, moved the centre of Rus’ to Vladimir, to the North. Here, in Vladimir-Suzdalian Rus’, he erected about 30 churches, among them the noted Dormition cathedral in Vladimir, and the first church in honour of the new feast of the Protecting Veil of the Theotokos – the wonderful ‘Pokrov on the Nerl’. The ‘Golden Gates’ of Vladimir are also his creation. Thus, not accidentally, but consciously, a new capital of Rus’ was being constructed in the image of the former. Prince Andrew himself put his hand to the writing of a service to the feast of the

365 Zyzykin, Tsarskaia Vlast’ (Royal Power), Sophia, 1924; http://www.russia-talk.org/cd-history/zyzykin.htm, pp. 11-12.
Protecting Veil, which did not exist in the Greek Church, so that it became the first purely Russian national feast. It is also thought that he participated in the composition of the service to the All-Merciful Saviour and the All-Holy Theotokos on August 1/14 in commemoration of the victory of the Volga Bulgars, when the Vladimir icon and the icon of the Saviour gave out heavenly rays that were visible to all. The Byzantine Emperor Manuel had the same vision in the same year and day during his battle with the Saracens, as Andrew and Manuel learned from letters they wrote to each other. Prince Andrew also composed a prayer that was attached to the ‘Instruction’ of Vladimir Monomakh. Andrew loved God and people, and they loved him, not in vain giving him the nickname ‘God-loving’ [Bogoliubskij]. To the end of his days he had a special veneration for the passion-bearer Prince Boris, and always had his cap and sword by him.

“But, as in the life of a people, so in the earthly life of a man, not everything is unambiguous. Here they live partly according to Christ, but partly still according to the old Adam. Andrew, for all his love for God, could become spiteful’, as was already said, against Kiev. He also ‘became spiteful’ in 1170 against wilful Novgorod. And he sent a powerful army there. But none other than the Mother of God Herself now began to become the Opponent of Prince Andrew, through her icon of the Sign defending the Novgorodians and bringing about a stinging defeat for the Suzdalian armies. However, Bogoliubsky nevertheless later brought Novgorod into obedience by ‘peaceful’ means – by cutting off the movement of bread to it from the Volga region and Ryazan.

“Having moved to the North, Prince Andrew himself hardly waged war at all. Here he was the builder of a state. And not everything was in order in the land. He was an opponent of paganism in everything, including such manifestations of it as the veneration of the military war-band and the ancient veche, which was especially strong in Rostov. He did not want to obey the old war-band nobles of his father. A plot was hatched among them. Prince Andrew wanted to be and become autonomous, an Autocrat, relying on the new Vladimir, and in general on the new people who were settling the new Rus’. For old Rostov was a stronghold of resistance not only to Prince Andrew personally. Here, as far back as the Baptism of Rus’, there had been strong opposition to the Christian faith, and there had been a rebellion of the sorcerers. Then they had expelled the bishops, not allowing them to preach, so that the holy Hierarch Leontius had had to begin teaching the people outside the city with teaching the children. Then, in the 12th century, through the efforts of many saints, Orthodoxy shone out there also. But something from paganism, and above all self-will and pride, still remained. And these are always the sources of every kind of disturbance. Therefore, while wanting to crush them, Prince Andrew of Bogolyubovo did not at all want to become a tyrant and disregard the rule of the Russian princes of ruling ‘together with

366 In spite of the fact that it commemorated the miraculous deliverance of Constantinople by the Mother of God from the then still pagan Russians in 862! (V.M.)
the land’, having its voice as an advisor. That is how he ruled – but as an *Autocrat*, and not as a *plaything* in the hands of the powerful boyars, or of the people’s *veche*!...

“In 1174, in Bogolyubovo, Prince Andrew was killed in a terrible way by plotters. Before this one of them had stolen the sword of Prince Boris from his bedroom. Thus did the *first Autocrat* of Great Russia end his life in a martyric fashion, and the commemoration of his death is celebrated on the very day, July 4/17, when the *last Autocrat* of Great Russia, his Majesty Nicholas Alexandrovich, was killed together with the whole of his Holy Family!...”

Andrew’s achievement, according to Georgievsky, was to change “the principles on which ancient Kievan Rus’ had lived before him, proclaiming the idea of the autocracy as the basis of the political life of the Russian people. Orthodoxy and autocracy, these corner-stones of the great building of the Russian State, were first indicated to the Russian people by Andrew Bogolyubsky as the foundation of the attainment of State might and popular prosperity. Bogolyubsky’s successors, the Great Princes of Moscow who founded the great Muscovite State which then grew into a mighty empire, only developed and realized Bogolyubsky’s ideas in their own political activity”.

An important aspect of the Suzdalian princes’ policy was the continuance of close relations with Byzantium. Colin Wells writes: “Relations between Byzantium and the fractious Russian principalities suffered as a new group of Turkic nomads, the Cumans, moved into the steppes during the twelfth century. The southern principalities of Kiev and Galicia both temporarily broke with Byzantium, allying themselves with Hungary, at that time Byzantium’s deadly foe. During these and other tribulations, Byzantine historians noted the steadfast loyalty of the principality of Vladimir. Later, a similarly close relationship would prevail between Byzantium and Vladimir’s successor, Moscow...”

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367 Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18. There was another link between Andrew and the Tsar-Martyr: in both murders Jews took part. Thus A.I. Solzhenitsyn writes: “There was at least one Jew among the confidants of Andrew Bogoliubsky in Vladimir. ‘Among those close to Andrew was a certain Ephraim Moizich, whose patronymic, Moizich or Moiseevich, points to his Jewish origin’, and he, in the words of the chronicler, was among the plotters by whom Andrew was killed. But there is also a record that under Andrew Bogoliubsky ‘there came from the Volga provinces many Bulgars and Jews and accepted baptism’, and after the murder of Andrew his son George fled to Dagestan to the Jewish prince” (*Dvesti let vmesete* [Two Hundred Years Together], Moscow, 2001, p. 17).


Andrew’s achievements were consolidated by his brother, Vsevolod III, who was, as John Fennell writes, “one of the shrewdest and more farsighted of all the descendants of Vladimir I, [and] was widely acknowledged among his fellow-rulers. ‘All lands trembled at his name and his fame spread throughout the whole country,’ wrote his chronicler, who... probably represented the views of most of his contemporaries. All Suzdalia owed him allegiance of some kind or other; the great city-state of Novgorod with its vast subject lands to the west, north and north-east had, for the first eight years of the thirteenth century, only his sons as its rulers; Kiev’s eastern neighbour, Southern Pereyaslavl’, was firmly under his control; and the princes of Murom and Ryazan’ to the south were little more than his vassals.”

Then, in 1211, writes G.G. Litavrin, Vsevolod “obtained from a congress of the boyars, cities, villages, merchants, nobles, abbots, priests and ‘all the people’ a recognition of his son Yury’s hereditary rights to the Vladimir-Suzdal throne, which at that time held the seniority in Rus’. L.V. Cherepnin considers this date critical in the history of Old Russian Statehood: there began the change from the system of princedoms headed by a given Prince at a given moment, to a centralised, hereditary Monarchy. The bearer of the seniority, the Great Prince of Rus’, became the true Autocrat of the whole of the Russian land”.

Vsevolod’s rule, according to Kliuchevsky, “was in many respects the continuation of the external and internal activity of Andrew of Bogolyubovo. Like his elder brother, Vsevolod forced people to recognise him as Great Prince of the whole of the Russian land, and like him again, he did not go to Kiev to sit on the throne of his father and grandfather. He rules the south of Russia from the banks of the distant Klyazma. Vsevolod’s political pressure was felt in the most distant south-western borders of the Russian land. The Galician Prince Vladimir, the son of Yaroslav Osmomys, who won back his father’s throne with Polish help, hastened to strengthen his position on it, under the protection of his distant uncle, Vsevolod of Suzdal. He sent him the message: ‘Father and Lord, keep Galicia under me, and I, who belong to you and God, will always remain in your will together with the whole of Galicia.’

However, on the death of Vsevolod in 1212 disturbances again broke out between the princes of Russia. Novgorod separated from Vladimir, and the brothers and nephews of the Great Prince held sway in different cities of the land of Vladimir-Suzdal. As a result, “because of our sins”, as the chronicler put it, “God sent upon us the pagans”, that is, the Tatars...

However, as Nicholas Riasanovsky points out, “the Mongol invasion and other wars and disasters of the time also contributed to the growth of princely
authority, for they shattered the established economic and social order and left it to the prince to rebuild and reorganize devastated territory.”

So the survival of autocracy was assured...

373 Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 93.
70. THE SLIDE TOWARDS ABSOLUTISM

We have seen that political power, even Christian political power, was evaluated ambiguously by the Holy Fathers. On the one hand, it was a force for law and order, a protection of the defenceless, a focus of unity in the Church, a support of missionary work beyond the boundaries of the Church. On the other hand, it could be the object of naked ambition, the instrument of the oppression of Christians and even of open revolt against God.

We have already met the two basic forms of the abuse of state power in Christian statehood: caesaropapism, the besetting sin of the East, and papocaesarism, the besetting sin of the West. In modern times we find in the philosopher Nicholas Berdiaev an opponent of all Christian state power, seeing it as just so many variations on the caesaropapist or papocaesarist theme. As he writes: “Papocaesarism and caesaropapism were two forms of ‘the Christian state’, two false attempts on the part of the authorities of this world to claim themselves to be Christian, whereas it has never been said or foretold that the religion of Christ would lord it over the world, would persecute and rape (and not itself be persecuted and raped). ‘The Christian state’, which gives the impression that the world has accepted Christianity and that Christian power lords it over the world, in all its forms was a historical deal between Christianity and paganism, or rather, it was a state of non-Christians. The state is of pagan origin and is necessary only for the pagan world; the state cannot be a form of Christian society, and for that reason Catholic papism and Byzantine caesaropapism are remains of paganism, signs of the fact that humanity has not yet accepted Christ into itself. For humanity that has accepted Christ, for God-manhood, human power is not necessary, since it is absolutely obedient to the power of God, since for it Christ is the High Priest and King. A genuine theocracy is the revelation of God-manhood on earth, the revelation of the Holy Spirit in conciliar humanity. In Christian history, in ‘historical Christianity’ the time of this revelation has not yet arrived, and humanity has been deceived, living in its collective history in a pagan manner. As an exception, ascetic religious consciousness has turned away from the earth, from the flesh, from history, from the cosmos, and for that reason on earth, in the history of this world the pagan state, the pagan family, and the pagan way of life have pretended to be Christian, while papism and the whole of medieval religious politics has been called theocratic.”

The Church has never accepted this view. As we have seen, she has accepted Christian statehood since Constantine as a gift from God. And however frequently Christian statehood has fallen away from the ideal, this does not mean that the gift itself should be rejected.

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374 For a history of the terms “papocaesarism” and “caesaropapism”, see Gilbert Dagron, “Vostochnij tszaropapizm (istoria i kritika odnoj kontsepsii)” ("Eastern Caesaropapism (a history and critique of one conception)", http://portal-credo.ru/site/?act=lib&id=177.
375 Berdiaev, Filosofia Svobody (The Philosophy of Freedom).
Nevertheless, it is true that more ascetic writers have tended to give more ambiguous assessments of Christian statehood. For example, St. Symeon the New Theologian (+1022), while never saying a word against the institution of the Orthodox autocracy as such, was fierce in his criticism of its abuse at the hands of Emperor Basil II. As Archbishop Basil (Krivoshein) writes: “Following the thought of the Apostle Paul (I Corinthians 1.27-28) that ‘God has abandoned the wise and powerful and rich of the world, and has chosen in His inexpressible goodness the weak and foolish and poor of the world’, Symeon the New Theologian draws the following contrast between the Divine and the earthly kingdom: ‘People are disgusted by them (i.e. the weak, the foolish, the poor), the earthly king cannot bear the sight of them, their ruling men turn away from them, the rich despise them and, when they meet them, pass by them as if they did not exist, and nobody considers it desirable to mix with them, while God, Who is served by an innumerable number of angels, Who upholds all things by the word of His power, Whose majesty is unbearble for all, did not refuse to become father and friend and brother of these outcasts, but wanted to become incarnate, so as to become like us in everything except sin and make us participants in His glory and kingdom.’ In this excerpt from the second Catechetical Sermon, what is interesting is not only the vivid description both of the ‘rich’ with their disgust and disdain towards the ‘weak and poor’, and of the ‘king’ who cannot even ‘bear the sight of them’, but also the contrast between the ‘earthly king’ and the heavenly King, God, Who, in contrast to the earthly did not refuse to become poor and a man like us, our brother. As we can see from this, St. Symeon the New Theologian was foreign to the thought that the ‘earthly king’ was an image of God on earth, and that the earthly kingdom is a reflection of the Heavenly Kingdom. On the contrary, the earthly kingdom with all its customs seems to him to be the opposite of the Kingdom of God”. 376

Unfortunately, from the twelfth century, the behaviour of the Byzantine emperors tended to confirm St. Symeon’s negative assessment of the earthly kingdom...

However, before that we are presented with the much rarer image of a papocaesarist patriarch in the person of Michael Cerularius. This is somewhat ironical because it was in the patriarchate of Michael Cerularius that the papocaesarist patriarchs of the West fell away from the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, being condemned precisely by him and his Synod. But if we are to believe Psellos, the patriarch “tried to rule over the Empress” Theodora, overthrew her successor, Michael VI (1056-1057), forcibly tonsuring him, and set up Isaac Comnenus (1057-1059) in his place.

376 Krivoshein, “Prepodobnij Simeon Novij Bogoslov i ego otnosheni k sotsial’nopoliticheskoj dejstvitsel’nosti svoego vremeni” (“St. Symeon the New Theologian and his relationship to the social-political reality of his time”, in Bogoslovske Trudy (Theological Works), Nizhni Novgorod, 1996, pp. 242-243.
Then, “losing all shame,” according to Psellos, “he joined royalty and priesthood in himself; in his hand he held the cross, while from his mouth imperial laws came.” But gradually Isaac asserted his power, arrested Cerularius and tried him for high treason in 1059. So the East’s one brush with papoaesarism came to a swift end...

It is a striking coincidence that in the same year, 1059, in which Pope Nicholas II obtained an imperial-style coronation from his cardinals, Patriarch Michael Cerularius should attempt the same. But Nicholas succeeded, whereas Michael failed, defeated by the power of the Orthodox Emperor. That was the difference between East and West.

As Bishop Dionysius (Alferov) of Novgorod writes: “Fortunately, these [papoaesarist] tendencies did not develop in the East into real papism. The eastern ‘candidates for the papacy’ (for example, the Egyptian or Constantinopolitan patriarchs) always had a power counter-weight in the person of the emperors. In this sense the emperors played the role of the restrainers not only of the external forces of evil nestling in the underground, but also the forces of intra-ecclesiastical apostasy in the person of archpastors wanting to be ‘ecclesiastical monarchs’.”

The difference between East and West consisted in the fact that while deviations from the “symphonic” norm of Church-State relations were common in both, this norm was never forgotten in the East, whereas it was officially and triumphantly rejected in the West.

The norm was described by I.I. Sokolov as follows: “In the question of the mutual relations of Church and State Byzantium not only limited the principle of the all-powerful and all-devouring State (quod principi placuit, legis habet vigorem), but also pushed into the foreground the idea of the Church and proclaimed the superiority of Church canon over civil law, ecclesiastical power over secular power, ecclesiastical teaching over the principles of social-political life. According to the Byzantine view, the State could carry out its function only to the extent that it was penetrated with the teaching of the Church.” And again he wrote, referring to the Epanagoge: “The very nature of royal power is corrupted when the king weakens in carrying out good works. In relation to the Church the king is the keeper of piety and right belief, the exact fullfiller and protector of the church dogmas and canons; he must be distinguished more than anyone else by zeal for God. But generally speaking the whole power of the king finds its limit in the religious and moral law established by the Supreme Lawgiver and Judge, Christ.”

379 Sokolov, op. cit., p. 17.
These principles were in general respected by the early Comnenan emperors. Thus Emperor John Comnenus wrote to Pope Honorius (1124-1130): “In the course of my reign I have recognized two things as being completely distinct from each other. The one is the spiritual power, which was bestowed by the Great and Supreme High Priest and Prince of the world, Christ, upon His apostles and disciples as an unalterable good through which, according to Divine right, they received the power to bind and to loose all people. The other thing is the secular power, a power directed towards temporal things, according to the Divine word: Give to Caesar that which belongs to him; a power shut up in the sphere belonging to it. These are the two dominant powers in the world; although they are distinct and separate, they act for their mutual benefit in a harmonious union, helping and complementing each other. They can be compared with the two sisters Martha and Mary, of whom the Gospel speaks. From the consensual manifestation of these two powers there flows the common good, while from their hostile relations there flows great harm.”

But the norm was more and more often defied as the later Comneni Emperors took it upon themselves not only to convene Church Councils, but even to take the leading part in them and punish dissidents. Thus John Comnenus’ successor, Manuel I, had the following powers, according to Archbishop Demetrius Chomatianos: “He presided over synodal decisions and gave them executive force; he formulated the rules of the ecclesiastical hierarchy; he legislated on the ‘life and the statute’ of the clergy, including the clergy of the bema, and on the ecclesiastical jurisdictions, the elections to vacant sees and the transfer of bishops; he could promote a bishopric to the rank of a metropolia ‘to honour a man or a city’. The frontier thus traced annexed to the imperial domain several contested and contestable zones, but in the name of a right – that which gave the emperor his statute and his title of common epistemonarch of the Churches.”

The meaning of the term “epistemonarch” here is obscure; it may also have been obscure to most Byzantines. But that was all the better from Satan’s point of view; for, as Aristotle said, “the occurrence of an important transition in customs often passes unnoticed”. However, the Byzantines could hardly fail to notice the use to which the emperors now put it – to justify their ever-increasing interference in ecclesiastical affairs.

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381 This tendency is already evident in Alexis I, who also ordered one of the very rare executions for heresy in Orthodox history, that of the Paulician Monk Basil, which took place after Alexis’ death, in 1119 (Lebedev, op. cit., p. 105).


383 It seems to have referred to the monastic duty of gathering together the brothers in church for services. See I.I. Sokolov, “Tserkovnaia politika imperatora Isaaka II Angela” (The Church Politics of Emperor Isaac II Angelus), in *Svet. Grigorij Palama*, St. Petersburg, 2004, pp. 166-167.

Thus the first of the Angeli dynasty, Isaac, in a novella issued in 1187, justified his hearing complaints of bishops together with the patriarch on the grounds that he had received “the rank of epistemonarch of the Church from him who anointed him and made him emperor.”

Using this invented power, the Emperors tended to choose patriarchs who would be obedient to them. As George Acropolites wrote: “The Emperors in general want the patriarchs to be humble people, not greatly endowed in mind, who would easily give in to their desires as to law-giving decrees. And this happens all the more frequently with uneducated people; being ignorant in word, they are not capable of bold speaking and bow before the Emperor’s orders.” Similarly, Nicephorus Gregoras wrote that the emperors chose simple people for the post of patriarch “so that they may unhesitatingly obey their commands, like slaves, and so that they should not offer any resistance.”

And yet they did not always get their way. The extent, but also the limits, of the Emperor’s power were strikingly illustrated by a debate that took place towards the end of the reign of Manuel I. The Emperor convened a Council in order to strike out the following words found in the rite for the reception of Muslims to Orthodoxy: “Anathema to the God of Mohammed, about whom Mohammed says that… He does not beget and is not begotten, and nobody is like Him.” However, the hierarchy did not want to strike out this phrase. Then the Emperor “issued a second decree, in which he again insisted on his opinion and then appointed another Council in Scutari, where the Emperor had withdrawn because of illness to make use of the pure country air. Thither the Emperor summoned the Patriarch and Bishops, but Manuel because of his illness could not enter into personal conversation with the Fathers: the matter was conducted through the Emperor’s beloved secretary. The latter in the person of the Emperor presented two papers to the Council. These were, first, a document in which Manuel set out his point of view on the question being debated, and secondly, his letter to the Patriarch. The Emperor demanded that the Bishops should sign the indicated document. And in the letter he in every way reproached the Patriarch and Bishops for their stubbornness and defiance, even threatening to convene a Council in which he wanted to entrust the presidency to none other than the Pope of Rome (it can be understood that the Pope in this letter served for Manuel only as a kind of scarecrow). In the same letter to the Patriarch the Emperor wrote: ‘I would be ungrateful to God if I did not apply all my efforts so that He, the true God, should not be subjected to anathema.’ But the Patriarch and Bishops even now did not want to share the Emperor’s opinion. On this occasion the noted Eustathius, Metropolitan of Thessalonica, spoke out with special zeal against the Emperor’s demands. He was a man of wide learning, distinguished by the

386 Acropolites, Chronicle, ch. 53; in Lebedev, op. cit., p. 99.
387 Gregoras, History of Byzantium, VIII, 2; in Lebedev, op. cit., p. 100.
gift of eloquence. He heatedly declared: ‘I would consider myself completely mad and would be unworthy of these hierarchical vestments if I recognized as true some Mohammedan God, who was his guide and instructor in all his disgusting deeds.’ The unusual boldness with which Eustathius began to oppose the Emperor horrified everyone. The hearers almost froze at these words of Eustathius. The Emperor’s secretary immediately set off to inform Manuel about his. The Emperor was indescribably amazed and considered himself deeply offended by Eustathius’ words. He said: ‘Either I shall justify myself and prove that I do not believe in a God that is the teacher of all impiety, and then I shall subject him who vomits blasphemy against the Anointed of God to merited punishment, or I shall be convicted of glorifying another God, and not the true one, and then I will be grateful that I have been led away from a false opinion.’ Patriarch Theodosius set off for the quarters of the Emperor, and for a long time tried to persuade him to forgive the act of Eustathius, and finally, to reduce the Emperor’s anger, promised that he, the Patriarch, and the Bishops would agree to accept the removal of the formula about the God of Mohammed from the trebniks. And apparently, the Council did in fact cease to oppose the will of the Emperor. Manuel was delighted, forgave Eustathius and sent the Bishops off to Constantinople in peace. But the Emperor somewhat deceived himself in his hopes. The next day, early in the morning, an envoy of the Emperor came to the Patriarch demanding impatiently that the Bishops should assemble and sign a decree of the Emperor. The Bishops quickly assembled at the Patriarch’s, but refused to sign the decree. Although, the day before, the Bishops, probably out of fear for Eustathius, had agreed completely to accept the opinion of Manuel, now, when the danger had passed, they again began to oppose the Emperor. They began to criticize the decree, found inaccuracies in it, began to demand changes and removals. Learning about this, the Emperor became very angry against the Bishops and showered them with indecent swear-words, calling them ‘pure fools’. History does not record what happened after this. At any rate the end of the quarrel was quite unexpected: the historian Gregoras records the ending in only a few words. The Bishops, he says, somehow agreed to reject the formula which had enticed the Emperor, and replaced it with a new one, in which, instead of the anathema on the God of Mohammed there was proclaimed an anathema on Mohammed himself and on his teaching and on his followers.”

Now the Church herself began to find ways of justifying the emperor’s new power. Canonists were found – Patriarch Theodore Balsamon of Antioch (12th century) and Archbishop Demetrius (Chomatianos) of Ochrid (early 13th century) – who ascribed to the emperor all of the privileges of the episcopate except the conducting of church services and sacraments, but including the traditionally exclusively episcopal domain of teaching the faith. According to Balsamon, “the Orthodox Emperors can enter the holy altar when they want to, and make the sign of the cross with the trikiri, like hierarchs. They present catechetical teachings to the people, which is allowed only for local bishops.”

“Since the reigning Emperor is the Lord’s Anointed by reason of his anointing to the kingdom, but our Christ and God is, besides, a bishop, similarly the Emperor is adorned with hierarchical gifts.”

According to Balsamon, as Dagron summarizes his thought: “If the emperor acts in many circumstances as a bishop, this is because his power is dual. His dual competence, spiritual and temporal, can only be understood by the quasi-sacerdotal character of royalty, founded on anointing…

“The Church is subject to the authority of the emperor and that of the patriarchs. That is established. But what is the authority of the emperor based on? On his role as epistemonarch – that is, on the disciplinary function which he is recognized to have. Balsamon does not reject this explanation and uses it on occasion, for example, with regard to the right of appeal to the emperor in ecclesiastical matters, to show that the decisions of the patriarchal tribunal are without appeal in view of the loftiness of the see, but that the emperor in his capacity as epistemonarch of the Church will have to judge the patriarch if he is personally accused of sacrilegious theft (ιεροσυλη) or heterodoxy…

“‘Insofar as the Emperor, through his anointing to the kingdom, is the Anointed of the Lord, while the Christ [= the Anointed One] and our God is, besides other things, also a Bishop, there is a basis for the Emperor being adorned with hierarchical gifts’. The reasoning is simple, albeit under a complicated form: the Anointed One par excellence, Christ, is qualified as bishop by us, so the emperors, who also receive anointing, must be equally considered to be bishops.”

Chomatianos is hardly less clear than Balsamon in his caesaropapist views: “The Emperor, who is and is called the general supreme ruler of the Church, stands above the decrees of the Councils; he gives to these decrees their proper force. He is the standard in relations to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the lawgiver for the life and conduct of the priests, to his jurisdiction belong the quarrels of bishops and clergy and the right of filling vacant sees. He can make bishops metropolitans, and Episcopal sees – metropolitan sees. In a word, with the single exception of carrying out Divine services, the Emperor is endowed with all the remaining Episcopal privileges, on the basis of which his ecclesiastical resolutions receive their canonical authority. Just as the ancient Roman Emperors signed themselves: Pontifex Maximus, such should the present Emperors be considered to be, as the Lord’s Anointed, for the sake of the imperial anointing. Just as the Saviour, being the Anointed One, is also honoured as First Priest, so the Emperor, as the Anointed one, is adorned with the charismata of the first priesthood.”

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389 Balsamon, Interpretation of the 69th Canon of the Council in Trullo, in Lebedev, op. cit., p. 97.
390 Dagron, op. cit., p. 267; Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., p. 120.
Again, he writes that the transfer of bishops “is often accomplished at the command of the emperor, if the common good requires it. For the emperor, who is and is called the supreme watchman over church order, stands higher than the conciliar resolutions and communicates to them strength and validity. He is the leader of the Church hierarchy and the law-giver in relation to the life and behaviour of priests; he has the right to decide quarrels between metropolitans, bishops and clergy and fills vacant Episcopal sees. He can raise Episcopal sees and bishops to the dignity of metropolias and metropolitans… His decrees have the force of canons.”

Ostrogorsky characterizes the ideas of Balsamon and Chomatianos as “merely echoes of old and antiquated ideas”. But these old ideas, dressed up in new, pseudo-canonical forms, were still dangerous… Thus Dagron writes: “Insensibly we have passed from one logic to another. The rights of intervention recognized by the Church for the emperor are no longer considered as exceptional privileges, but as a manifestation of the quasi-episcopal nature of imperial power. Taken together, they give the temporal power a particular status, and force one to the conclusion that if the emperor is not strictly speaking a cleric ‘after the order of Aaron’, he is not in any case a simple layman. By contrast with a purely juridical conception, Balsamon sketches, not without prudence, a charismatical conception of imperial power. He suggests that [the emperor’s right of] ‘promoting’ the patriarch is not only the [right of] choosing from a list of three names which is in principle submitted by the assembly of metropolitans, or of imposing his choice on the same assembly in the case of disagreement, as is envisaged in a chapter of the Book of Ceremonies: it is above all [the right of] ‘creating’ him – before the religious consecration in which the metropolitans proceed to Hagia Sophia on the following Sunday, either by invoking the Holy Spirit, as Balsamon says, or by using the somewhat more neutral formula preserved by the ceremonial of the 10th century: ‘Grace Divine and the Royalty that we have received from it promote the very pious person before us to the rank of patriarch of Constantinople.’ The ‘designation’ of the patriarch would be a political prerogative, just as the carving out of dioceses and the promotion of Episcopal sees, to which the emperor has the sovereign right to proceed for a better harmony between the spiritual and the temporal powers; but his ‘promotion by invocation of the Spirit’ is a religious, if not a liturgical act, which only a charisma can justify…”

Balsamon even went so far as to reverse the traditional Patriarch-soul, Emperor-body metaphor in favour of the emperor: “Emperors and Patriarchs must be respected as teachers of the Church for the sake of their dignity, which they received through anointing with chrism. Hence derives the power of the right-believing Emperors to instruct the Christian peoples and, like

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394 Dagron, op. cit., p. 271.
priests, offer incense to God. Their glory consists in the fact that, like the sun, they enlighten the world from one end to the other with the flash of their Orthodoxy. The strength and activity of the Emperor touches the soul and body of man while the strength and power of the Patriarch touches only the soul.” Again, he wrote: “The emperor is subject neither to the laws nor to the Church canons”. And yet St. Nicholas the Mystic had written: “If the emperor is the enemy and foe of the laws, who will fear them?” And so the Balsamonite teaching on the role of the Emperor could only lead to the undermining of the Empire and its eventual fall...

The late twelfth century was bloody even by Byzantine standards... During the Macedonian dynasty, the idea of lawful succession from father to son had taken root, so the anarchy at the end of the twelfth century was a sharp regression from earlier practice – a regression made worse by the fact that there now existed a “canonical” argument for the absolutism of the emperors. Moreover, ambition on the one side was matched by servility on the other: the attitude of many in Byzantium to the emperors was nothing short of idolatrous. Thus in 1216 Nicetas Choniates wrote: “For most of the Roman Emperors it was quite intolerable merely to give orders, to walk around in gold clothes, to use the public purse as their own, to distribute it however and to whomever they wanted, and to treat free people as if they were slaves. They considered it an extreme insult to themselves if they were not recognised to be wise men, like gods to look at, heroes in strength, wise in God like Solomon, God-inspired leaders, the most faithful rule of rules – in a word, infallible judges of both Divine and human matters. Therefore instead of rebuking, as was fitting, the irrational and bold, who were introducing teachings new and unknown to the Church, or even presenting the matter to those who by their calling should know and preach about God, they, not wishing to occupy the second place, themselves became at one and the same time both proclaimers of the dogmas and their judges and establishers, and they often punished those who did not agree with them…”

The ghastly story began in 1182, when a popular philanderer and adventurer, Andronicus Comnenus, marched on the capital against the young Emperor Alexis Comnenus II. “As he progressed,” write Lord Norwich, “the people flocked from their houses to cheer him on his way; soon the road was lined with his supporters. Even before he crossed the straits, rebellion had broken out in Constantinople, and with it exploded all the pent-up xenophobia that the events of the previous two years [Manuel’s pro-western proclivities] had done so much to increase. What followed was the massacre of virtually every Latin in the city: women and children, the old and infirm, even the sick from the hospitals, as the whole quarter in which they lived was burnt to the ground.”

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395 Balsamon, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., vol. I, p. 120.
396 Nicetas Choniates, The Reign of Manuel, VI, 31; quoted in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., p. 120; Lebedev, op. cit., p. 95.
Vengeance was swift in coming, both from within and outside the empire. First, Andronicus, having ascended the throne, proceeded to conduct a reign of terror against his subjects that can be compared only to Ivan the Terrible's. And then the empire began to collapse. Already in 1181 the Hungarians had seized Dalmatia, much of Croatia and Sirmium. In 1183 they joined forces with the Serbs under Stephen Nemanja and sacked Belgrade, Nish and Sardica. A great-nephew of Manuel's, Isaac Comnenus, seized power in Cyprus and declared its independence. In 1185 a huge Sicilian army sacked Thessalonica with fearful brutality and were finally repelled only by the next emperor, Isaac II Angelus. Later, the Bulgarians and Wallachians under Peter and Asen rebelled.

Andronicus was overthrown by Isaac II Angelus, and the ever-fickle people took a gory revenge on their former idol, torturing him before finally killing him. For, as Nicetas Choniates relates, "they did not think that this was a man who had not long ago been the Emperor adorned with a royal diadem, and that they had all glorified him as a saviour, and greeted him with best wishes and bows, and they had given a terrible oath to be faithful and devoted to him". Thus in the person of Andronicus was fulfilled the prophecy of Emperor Constantine VII in 1057: "If the Emperor forgets the fear of God, he will inevitably fall into sin and be changed into a despot, he will not be able to keep to the customs established by the Fathers, and by the intrigues of the devil he will do that which is unworthy and contrary to the commandments of God, he will become hateful to the people, the senate and the Church, he will become unworthy to be called a Christian, he will be deprived of his post, will be subject to anathema, and, finally, will be killed as the 'common enemy' of all Romans, both 'those who command' and 'those who obey'..."

Isaac in his own way was no better than Andronicus. He deposed several patriarchs; for, as he claimed, "the Emperors are allowed to do everything, because on earth there is no difference in power between God and the Emperor: the Emperors are allowed to do everything, and they can use God's things on a par with their own, since they received the royal dignity itself from God, and there is no difference between God and them." Isaac ascribed to himself the power to correct what was done in the Church contrary to the Church canons. Moreover, the encomiasts blasphemously addressed him as "God-like" and "equal to God"!

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When the Emperors exalted their dignity to the level of Divinity, and the people trampled on them in spite of the Lord’s command: “Touch not Mine anointed”, Divine vengeance could not fail to appear. Isaac was deposed and blinded by his brother, Alexis III Angelus, who was no better than he. Finally, in 1204 Isaac’s son, Alexis IV regained the throne for himself and his father. He did this by accompanying the Doge of Venice Dandolo (who was thirsting for revenge against the Greeks for earlier mistreatment) and the soldiers of the Fourth Crusade to Constantinople and promising them money, soldiers and the subjection of the Church of Constantinople to Rome. But the Angeli betrayed the Venetians, who then seized the City, subjected it to the worst sacking in its history and installed a western king on the imperial throne and a western bishop on the patriarchal throne…

As Bishop Dionysius writes: “No more than 15,000 Latin crusaders stormed the well fortified city with its population of one million and its five-times larger garrison! After this the same band of wandering knights took possession of the whole of Balkan Greece and founded their Latin empire on its ruins. Nobody thought of resisting, of saving the capital, of defending the Orthodox monarchy. The local Byzantine administration itself offered its services to the new masters. In the lower classes apathy reigned towards all that had happened, and even evil joy at the wealthy city’s sacking. Using the suitable opportunity, local separatists sprang into life: not only Serbia, Bosnia and Bulgaria separated and declared their independence, but also the purely Greek provinces of Epirus, Trebizond and some of the islands…”

71. THE NICAEN EMPIRE AND ROYAL ANOINTING

After the fall of Constantinople to the crusaders in 1204, asks Bishop Dionyius (Alferov), “what remained for the few Byzantine patriots and zealots of Orthodoxy to do? Correctly evaluating the situation, they understood that the process of the fall was already irreversible, that neither the empire nor the capital could be saved by them. Having elected Theodore Lascaris as emperor on the day before the fall of Constantinople, they left the capital with him and founded a centre of resistance in the hilly and wooded district of Bithynia. It is noteworthy that the centre became the city of Nicaea, the place in which the First and Seventh (the last) Ecumenical Councils had been conducted. Here, to Nicaea, there flowed the church hierarchs who had not submitted to the Roman pope and his puppet – the new patriarch of Constantinople. These zealot bishops elected their own Orthodox Nicaean patriarch. The Nicaean patriarch received St. Savva of Serbia and gave autocephaly to the Serbian Church; and it was he who appointed our Metropolitan Cyril, the fellow-struggler of the right-believing Prince Alexander Nevsky. In this way the Nicaean Greeks had communion with the Orthodox in other countries.

“The material and military forces of the Nicaean Empire were tiny by comparison with its mighty enemies: the Latin West and the Muslim East. And in spite of that the Nicaean Kingdom survived for more than half a century. The Providence of God clearly preserved it, destroying its dangerous enemies in turn: the Turks constricted the Latins, and these same Turks were themselves defeated by the Mongols.

“The Nicaean Empire relit in the Greeks the flame of zeal for Orthodoxy and its national-state vestment. It opposed faith, and life according to the faith, to the society that had been corrupted by base materialist instincts. The first three Nicaean emperors Theodore I Lascaris, John Vatatzes and Theodore II were people of burning faith, firm and energetic rulers and courageous warriors.

“Interesting is the reply of the second Nicaean Emperor John Vatatzes to Pope Innocent III. Rejecting the pope’s offer of a unia, and replying to his mockery (what kind of emperor are you, he said, if you sit in the woods and not in the capital), John replied: ‘The emperor is he who rules not walls and towers, not stones and logs, but the people of the faithful.’ And this people was those who for the sake of the preservation of Orthodoxy abandoned the capital and gathered with him ‘in the woods’.”

So Romanity survived in Nicaea; the Lascarid Emperors preserved and nurtured the strength of the Roman power in exile. And their position was reinforced by an important sacramental development that strengthened the

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404 Alferov, “Uroki Nikejskogo Tsarstva” (“The Lessons of the Nicaean Empire”), op. cit.
autocracy while at the same time restoring the Patriarch to a position of something like equality with the Emperor – the visible anointing of the emperor with holy oil, at the hands of a patriarch. This was first introduced at the coronation of Emperor Theodore I Lascaris.

It had taken several centuries for the imperial coronation to acquire this strictly ecclesiastical character. Alexander Dvorkin writes: “The ceremony of coronation introduced by Diocletian was accomplished by the first official of the Empire. The first Christian emperors continued this practice. For example, Theodosius II was crowned by the prefect of the city of Constantinople. However, at the coronation of his successor, Marcian, the patriarch was already present. [And his successor, Leo, was probably crowned by the patriarch.] On the one hand, this signified that the patriarch had become the second most important official person in the Empire after the emperor himself. But on the other hand, his participation turned the coronation into a religious ceremony. In the course of it the emperor was subjected to a kind of ordination, he received the gifts of the Holy Spirit. From that time the imperial palace became known as the holy palace. The palace ceremonies acquired a liturgical character in which the emperor played a double role: as representative of God on earth and representative of the people before God, the symbol of God Himself and of the Divine incarnation. Nevertheless, during the whole of the first half of Byzantine history the crowning only sanctioned de facto the already proclaimed emperor. The ancient Roman tradition of the army and senate proclaiming the emperor continued to remain the main criterion of their [his?] entering into his post. However, in the eleventh century there appeared the opinion among the canonists (such as Patriarch Arsenius the Studite) that the lawfulness of the emperors was founded, not on the proclamation, but upon the patriarchal crowning.

“A special character was given to the position of the emperor by specific petitions in the litanies and prayers read in the churches on feastdays. In the prayer on Christmas Eve Christ was asked to ‘raise the peoples of the whole inhabited world to give tribute to Your Majesty as the magi brought gifts to Christ’. In the songs of Pentecost it was said that the Holy Spirit descended in the form of fiery tongues on the head of the emperor. Constantine Porphyrogenitus wrote that it was precisely through the palace ceremonies that ‘imperial power is directed in the needful rhythm and order, and the Empire can in this way represent the harmony and movement of the Universe that comes from the Creator’. The Byzantines believed fervently precisely in such an understanding of the role of the emperor. However, this did not prevent them from taking part in the overthrow of an emperor whom they considered unworthy or dishonourable. His holiness did not guarantee him from suffering a violent death. The Byzantines venerated the symbol, which by no means necessarily coincided with every concrete personality. That emperor whose personality in the eyes of the people and the Church did not correspond to his lofty calling was considered a tyrant and usurper, and his violent overthrow was only a matter of time and was seen as a God-pleasing act…
“The emperor was crowned by the patriarch, and in later Byzantium the opinion prevailed that it was precisely this act of crowning that led him into the imperial dignity. The patriarch received his confession of faith and could refuse to crown him if he did not agree to change his faith or correct his morals. As a last resort the patriarch could excommunicate the emperor...”

G.A. Ostrogorsky describes the fully-fledged rite as follows: “Before the coronation, the Emperor, on entering the church of Hagia Sophia, first of all handed over to the Patriarch the text of the Symbol of Faith written in his own hand and signed, and accompanied... by promises to follow unfailingly the Apostolic traditions, the decrees of all the Ecumenical and Local Councils, and the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, and always to remain a faithful son and servant of the Church, etc.... Then before the accomplishment of the actual rite of coronation, in the Augusteon (a courtyard leading to Hagia Sophia) there took place the ceremony of raising on the shield... The shield was held in front by the Patriarch and the first functionary of the Empire, while on the sides and behind there went the nobles who were next in rank... The anointing and crowning of the Emperor were included in the course of the Divine service. At a particular moment in the Liturgy, when the Patriarch came out of the altar and onto the ambon, accompanied by the highest ranks of the Church, and ‘a great silence and quiet’ settled in the church, the Patriarch invited the Emperor to come onto the ambon. The Patriarch read the prayers composed for the rite of anointing – one quietly, the others aloud, - after which he anointed the Emperor with chrism in the form of the cross and proclaimed: ‘Holy!’ Those around him on the ambon repeated this cry three times, and then the people repeated it three times. After this the altar brought a crown out of the altar, the Patriarch placed it on the head of him who was to be crowned and proclaimed: ‘Worthy!’ This proclamation was again repeated three times, first by the hierarchs on the ambon and then by the people.”

The late appearance of the fully-fledged rite, including anointing, requires some explanation... According to Dagron, Theodore Lascaris’ anointing by the patriarch in Nicaea in 1208 was modelled on the westerners’ anointing of Baldwin I in Constantinople in 1204. It both bolstered imperial power and strengthened the position of the Church in relation to imperial power.

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407 Dagron, Empeureur et Prêtre (Emperor and Priest), Paris: Gallimard, 1996, p. 282. Dvorkin agrees with him (op. cit., p. 698). So, in a more guarded way, does Vera Zemskova, who writes that “the rite of anointing arose in Byzantium under the influence of the West, where the sacrament already existed and had its source in the understanding of the sacredness of power that was characteristic for the Barbarians. True, it is impossible to say precisely what kind of influence this was. Even in the history of the intensive contacts between the Emperor Manuel Comnenus (1143-1180) and the western sovereigns there is no mention of this subject.
“Far from the historical capital, in the modest surroundings of Nicaea, it would have appeared necessary to materialise the ‘mystery of royalty’. The Church, being from now on the only force capable of checking the secessionist tendencies, was able to seize the opportunity to place her mark more deeply on the imperial coronation. Using the request of clergy from Constantinople who wanted the convocation of a council to nominate a patriarch, Theodore Lascaris, who was not yet officially emperor, fixed a date that would allow the new titular incumbent to proceed to the ‘habitual’ date, that is, during Holy Week [Holy Thursday, to be more precise], for the making of holy chrism (το θειον του μυρου χρυσω). On his side, [Patriarch] Michael Autoreianos, who had just been elected on March 20, 1208, multiplied initiatives aimed at strengthening imperial authority, exhorting the army in a circular letter in which we are astonished to find echoes of the idea of the holy war, remitting the sins of the soldiers and of the emperor, and taking an oath of dynastic fidelity from the bishops assembled in Nicaea.”

Royal anointing exalted the authority of the emperor by closely associating him with the Church. For the rite had similarities to the rite of ordination of clergy and was administered by the Patriarch. As the Byzantine writer Zosimas wrote: “Such was the link between the Imperial dignity and the First-Hierarchical dignity that the former not only could not even exist without the latter. Subjects were much bolder in deciding on conspiracies against one whom they did not see as having been consecrated by native religion.”

Perhaps also the Byzantines introduced anointing at this point in reaction to its downgrading by Pope Gregory VII and his successors, in order to

The rite appeared after the conquest of Constantinople with the emperors of the Nicaean empire...” (personal communication, August 11, 2000)

There is in fact little agreement about the date at which this sacrament was introduced in Byzantium. According to Fomin and Fomina, (op. cit., vol. I, p. 96), it was introduced in the ninth century, when Basil I was anointed with the chrismation oil or with olive oil (P.G. 102.765); according to M.V. Zyzykin (Patriarkh Nikon (Patriarch Nicon), Warsaw, 1931, part 1, p. 133) – in the 10th century, when Nicephorus was anointed by Patriarch Polyeuctus; according to Canning (op. cit., p. 15) – in the 12th century; according to Dagron (op. cit., p. 282) and G. Podskalsky (Christianstvo i Bogoslovskaia literatura v Kievskoj Rusi (988-1237) (Christianity and Theological Literature in Kievan Rus’ (988-1037), St. Petersburg, 1996, p. 70) – in the 13th century. Nicetas Khoniates mentions that Alexis III was “anointed” at his coronation in 1195; but according to Vera Zemskova (personal communication) it is likely that this meant “raising to the rank of emperor” rather than anointing with chrism in the literal, bodily sense. In this distinction between visible and invisible anointing lies the crux of the matter, for even bishops, who (in the East) received no visible anointing, were often described as having been anointed. And when St. Photius said of the Emperor Michael III that God “has created him and anointed him since the cradle as the emperor of His People”, he was clearly speaking about an invisible anointing. See also O.G. Ulyanov, “O vremeni vozniknovenia inauguratsionnogo miropomazania v Vizantii, na Zapade i v drevnej Rusi”, in Rus’ i Vizantia, Moscow, 2008, pp. 133-140.


bolster the prestige of the anointed kings in the face of the anti-monarchism of the Popes, who constituted the greatest political power in the world at that time and the greatest threat to the survival of the Byzantine Church and Empire. Against the claims of the Popes to possess all the charismas, including the charisma of political government, the Byzantines put forward the anointing of their Emperors. It was as if they said: a truly anointed and right-believing Emperor outweighs an uncanonically ordained and false-believing Patriarch…

The lateness of the introduction of imperial anointing in Byzantium is paralleled by a similar slowness, as we have seen, in the development of the rite of crowning in marriage. Both marriage and coronation are “natural” sacraments that existed in some form before the coming of Christianity; so that they needed not so much replacing as supplementing, purifying and raising to a new, consciously Christian level. This being so, the Church wisely did not hasten to create completely new rites for them, but only eliminated the more grossly pagan elements, added a blessing and then communed the newly-weds or the newly-crowned in the Body and Blood of Christ.

Since kingmaking, like marriage, was a “natural” sacrament that predated the New Testament Church, the ecclesiastical rite was not felt to be constitutive of legitimate kingship in Byzantium – at any rate, until the introduction of the last element of the rite, anointing, probably 1208. After all, the pagan emperors had been recognized by Christ and the apostles although they came to power independently of the Church. The Roman Empire was believed to have been created by God alone, independently of the Church. As the Emperor Justinian’s famous Sixth Novella puts it: "Both proceed from one source", God, which is why the Empire did not need to be re-instituted by the Church.

Of course, the fact that the Empire, like the Church, was of Divine origin did not mean that the two institutions were of equal dignity. Whereas the Church was “the fullness of Him Who filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:23), and as such eternal, the Empire, as all believing Byzantines knew and accepted, was destined to be destroyed by the Antichrist. The Church was like the soul which survives the death of the body, being by nature superior to it.

Having said that, the fact that the Empire, like the body, was created by God was of great importance as against those who asserted, like Pope Gregory VII, that its origin lay in the fallen passions of man and the devil. It was against this political Manichaeism that the institution of imperial anointing in Byzantium stood as a powerful witness. Or, to use a different metaphor: the quasi-Chalcedonian “dogma” of the union without confusion of the two institutions in Byzantium, the one institution anointing and the other being anointed, served to mark if off from the political Monophysitism of the Popes, for whom the Divinity of the Church “swallowed up”, as it were, the “mere humanity” of the Empire.
Another reason for the introduction of imperial anointing may have been a perceived need to protect the monarchy against potential usurpers and bolster the legitimacy of the lawful Emperors against those innumerable coups which, as we have seen, so disfigured the image of Byzantine life in the decades before 1204. As we have seen, the earlier introduction of anointing in Spain, Francia and England had had just such a beneficial effect. And certainly, the need for some higher criterion of legitimacy had never been more sorely needed than in the period of the Nicaean empire, when Roman power appeared to be divided among a number of mini-states.

In previous centuries, the *de facto* criterion of legitimacy had been: the true emperor is he who sits on the throne in Constantinople, whatever the means he used to obtain the throne. This may have seemed close to the law of the jungle, but it at any rate had the advantage of clarity. The problem after 1204, however, was that he who sat on the throne in Constantinople was a Latin heretic who had obtained his throne, not just by killing a few personal enemies, but by mass slaughter of the ordinary people and the defiling of all that was most holy to the Byzantines, including the very sanctuary of Hagia Sophia. The patriarch had not recognised him and had died in exile. There was no question for the majority of Byzantines: this was not the true emperor.

So the true emperor had to be found in one of the Greek kingdoms that survived the fall of the City: Nicaea, Trebizond and Epirus. But which? For a time it looked as if the Épirote ruler Theodore Angelus, whose dominion extended from the Adriatic to the Aegean and who was related to the great families of the Comneni and Ducae, had a greater claim to the throne than the Nicene John Vatatzes, who was the son-in-law of the first Nicaean emperor, Theodore Lascaris. However, Theodore Angelus’s weakness was that the Patriarch lived in Nicaea, and the metropolitan of Thessalonica refused to crown him, considering that a violation of the rights of the Patriarch.

So he turned instead to Archbishop Demetrios (Chomatianos) of Ochrid, who crowned and anointed him in Thessalonica in 1225 or 1227. As Vasiliev writes, Theodore “put on the purple robe and began to wear the red shoes’, distinctive marks of the Byzantine basileus. One of the letters of Demetrios shows that his coronation and anointment of Theodore of Epirus was performed ‘with the general consent of the members of the senate, who were in the west (that is, on the territory of Thessalonica and Epirus), of the clergy, and of all the large army.’ Another document testifies that the coronation and anointment were performed with the consent of all the bishops who lived ‘in that western part’. Finally, Theodore himself signed his edicts (chrysobulls) with the full title of the Byzantine Emperor: ‘Theodore in Christ God Basileus and Autocrat of the Romans.”

From the letters of Metropolitan John Apocaucus of Naupactus, as V.G. Vasilievsky writes, “we learn for the first time what an active part was taken

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by the Greek clergy and especially by the Greek bishops. The proclamation of Theodore Angelus as the Emperor of the Romans was taken very seriously: Thessalonica, which had passed over into his hands, was contrasted with Nicaea; Constantinople was openly indicated to him as the nearest goal of his ambition and as an assured gain; in speech, thought, and writing, it was the common opinion that he was destined to enter St. Sophia and occupy there the place of the Orthodox Roman emperors where the Latin newcomers were sitting illegally. The realization of such dreams did not lie beyond the limits of possibility; it would be even easier to take Constantinople from Thessalonica than from Nicaea.”

However, Theodore Angelus’ position had one weakness that proved fatal to his hopes: he was not anointed by the Patriarch of Constantinople. Previous Byzantine emperors, including Constantine himself, had received the throne through the acclamation of the army and/or the people, which was considered sufficient for legitimacy. But now, in the thirteenth century, acclamation alone was not enough: imperial anointing by the first-hierarch of the Church was considered necessary.

But here it was the Lascarids of Nicaea had the advantage over both the Angeli of Thessalonica and the Comneni of Trebizond. For the first Lascarid, Theodore I, had been anointed earlier (in 1208) and by a hierarch whom everybody recognised as having a greater authority – Patriarch Michael IV Autoreianus. As Michael’s successor, Germanus II, wrote to Archbishop Demetrius: “Tell me, most sacred man, which fathers bestowed on you the lot of crowning to the kingdom? By which of the archbishops of Bulgaria was any emperor of the Romans ever crowned? When did the archpastor of Ochrid stretch out his right hand in the capacity of patriarch and consecrate a royal head? Indicate to us a father of the Church, and it is enough. Suffer reproach, for you are wise, and love even while being beaten. Do not get angry. For truly the royal anointing introduced by you is not for us the oil of joy, but an unsuitable oil from a wild olive. Whence did you buy this precious chrism (which, as is well known, is boiled in the patriarchate), since your previous stores have been devoured by time?”

In reply, Archbishop Demetrius pointed to the necessity of having an emperor in the West in order effectively to drive out the Latins. Theodore Angelus had carried out his task with great distinction, and was himself of royal blood. Besides, “the Greek West has followed the example of the East: after all, in despite of ancient Constantinopolitan practice, an emperor has been proclaimed and a patriarch chosen in the Bithynian diocese as need has dictated. And when has it ever been heard that one and the same hierarch should rule in Nicaea and call himself patriarch of Constantinople? And this did not take place at the decree of the whole senate and all the hierarchs, since

after the capture of the capital both the senate and the hierarchs fled both to the East and the West. And I think that the greater part are in the West...

“For some unknown reason you have ascribed to yourself alone the consecration of chrism. But it is one of the sacraments performed by all the hierarchs (according to Dionysius the Areopagite). If you allow every priest to baptise, then why is anointing to the kingdom, which is secondary by comparison with baptism, condemned by you? But according to the needs of the time it is performed directly by the hierarch next in rank after the patriarch, according to the unfailing customs and teaching of piety. However, he who is called to the kingdom is usually anointed, not with chrism, but with oil sanctified by prayer... We had no need of prepared chrism, but we have the sepulchre of the Great Martyr Demetrius, from which chrism pours out in streams...”

Nevertheless, in the end it was the anointing from the true first-hierarch of the Church that gave the victory to the Lascarids. We have seen that this sacrament was critical in strengthening the Western Orthodox kingdoms at a time when invasions threatened from without and chaos from within. Now it came to serve the same purpose in Eastern Orthodoxy. As Papadakis writes, “the continuity and prestige conferred on the Lascarid house by this solemn blessing and by the subsequent presence of a patriarch at Nicaea were decisive. For, by then, coronation by a reigning patriarch was thought to be necessary for imperial legitimacy.”

Soon the opponents of the anointed emperors in the West began to fail. The power of the Angeli was crushed by the Bulgarian Tsar John Asen. Then, in 1242, the Nicaean Emperor John III Vatatzes forced Theodore Angelus’ son John to renounce the imperial title in favour of “despot”; and four years later the Emperor John conquered Thessalonica. Thus it was the earlier and more authoritative anointing of the Nicaean Emperors that enabled them to win the dynastic struggle. And under their rule the Nicaean Empire prospered.

Another reason for its prosperity was that the Lascarid emperors of Nicaea were much more modest in their pretensions than their predecessors. As R.J. Macrides writes: “Their style of rule was partly a response to limited resources, partly to exclusion from Constantinople, the natural setting, and also a reaction to the ‘sins’ which had caused God to withdraw his support from the Byzantines. John III Vatatzes and his son Theodore II ruled as if New Constantines had never existed. To rephrase Choniates’ words of criticism for the twelfth-century emperors: John III and Theodore II did not wear gold, did not treat common property as their own nor free men as slaves, nor did they hear themselves celebrated as being wiser than Solomon, heroic in strength,

413 Archbishop Demetrius, in Uspensky, op. cit., p. 413.
414 Papadakis, op. cit., p. 212.
God-like in looks. Contrary to the behaviour of most emperors, John did not even have his son proclaimed emperor in his lifetime, not because he did not love his son, nor because he wanted to leave the throne to anyone else, but because the opinion and choice of his subjects was not evident. John was an emperor who reproved his son for wearing the symbols of imperial power, for wearing gold while hunting, because he said the imperial insignia represent the blood of the emperor’s subjects and should be worn only for the purpose of impressing foreign ambassadors with the people’s wealth. John’s care to separate public wealth from his own became legendary. He set aside land to produce enough for the imperial table and had a crown made for the empress from the sale of eggs produced by his hens. He called it the ‘egg crown’ (οατόν). John was an emperor who submitted to the criticism of the church. When his mistress was forbidden entrance to the church by the monk Blemmydes, tutor to his son, she went to him in a fury and charged him to come to her defence. But he only replied remorsefully that he could not punish a just man. It was precisely the qualities which made him an exceptional emperor which also contributed to his recognition as a saint by the local population in Magnesia..."416

In relation to the patriarchate, too, the Lascarid emperors were less “caesaropapist” than their predecessors. We see this in the election of Patriarch Arsenius under Theodore II: “After the triumphant burial of Emperor John [Vatatzes] in Sosandri, Theodore II was raised onto the shield by the nobility and clergy, in accordance with ancient custom. Setting off for Nicaea, he occupied himself with the election of a patriarch in the place of the reposed Manuel; then the new patriarch had to crown the new emperor. Up to 40 hierarchs assembled, and asked for the learned Blemmydes as patriarch. He, however, was displeasing to the court because of his independence. Emperor John Vatatzes had already once rejected his candidacy, declaring openly that Blemmydes would not listen to the emperor, who might have different views from those of the Church. The new Emperor Theodore did not decide on speaking openly against Blemmydes, and even tried to persuade him, promising various honours. But Blemmydes refused outright, knowing the explosiveness and insistence of the young emperor. The efforts at persuasion ended in a tiff, and Blemmydes left Nicaea for his monastery.417 That is how Blemmydes himself recounted the matter, but according to an anonymous author there was a strong party against Blemmydes among the

416 Macrides, op. cit., pp. 280-281. The emperor’s body was found to be incorrupt and fragrant seven years after his death. See The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, vol. 11 (November), Athens, 1979, pp. 154-156; translated in Orthodox Life, vol. 32, N 6, November-December, 1982, p. 44).
417 Theodore offered his old tutor “more power and glory than any Patriarch had ever possessed before. But he [Nicephorus] was suspicious because the young Emperor had already published a treatise maintaining that matters of faith and doctrine could only be decided by a General Council summoned by the Emperor and attended also by members of the laity. So he said that he would accept the Patriarchate only if he could put first the glory of God. ‘Never mind about the glory of God’, the Emperor replied crossly. Blemmydes, so he says, was so deeply shocked that he refused the post...” (Runciman, The Great Church in Captivity, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 66). (V.M.)
hierarchs. Then the emperor suggested electing the patriarch by lot. On proclaiming the name of a candidate, they opened the Gospel at random and read the first words of the page. To one there fell the words: ‘They will not succeed’, to another: ‘They drowned’, to the abbot of Sosandri there even came: ‘ass and chicken’. Finally Arsenius Avtorianus succeeded: at his name there fell the words ‘he and his disciples’, and he was elected. Monk Arsenius, from a family of officials... was a new man, with a strong character, sincerely devoted to the royal house... At Christmas, 1254, Patriarch Arsenius triumphantly crowned Theodore II as emperor of the Romans....”

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72. THE GEORGIAN MONARCHY

Georgia, the lot of the Most Holy Mother of God, had played only a minor role in Orthodox history since her baptism by St. Nina in the fourth century. However, in 1008 a political and ecclesiastical unification took place between the kingdom of Abkhazia (much larger then than now, with its capital at Kutaisi) and Kartli (with its capital in Uplistsikhe) under the authority of King Bagrat III, who was now called “the king of kings of All Georgia”.

Since the western kingdom contained two metropolias under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Byzantine Emperor Basil II sent an army into Georgia in 1014, but it was soundly beaten. In 1021-1022, however, the Byzantine army, strengthened by the presence of Varangians (probably Russians from Kievan Rus’) overcame the Georgians. But the Byzantines wisely did not crush the Georgian state system, which gradually strengthened under Byzantine tutelage.

Moreover, in the course of the next two centuries Byzantine influence in general became stronger, and Byzantine liturgical practice became the norm throughout the autocephalous Church of Georgia...

It is from the moment of the union of 1008, writes Aristides Papadakis, “that we may speak of Georgia...

“The new unity… brought Church and State closer together. The ecclesiastical hierarchy were doubtless advocates of national unity and in this sense were of the greatest benefit to Georgia’s Bagratid rulers. The catholicus on the other hand retained control of ecclesiastical affairs and administration, and was even formally recognised as the spiritual king of the nation. However, the Georgian primate along with all major bishops and abbots were temporal princes of the realm as well, and actually sat on the council of state or Darbazi together with the feudal princes of Georgia...

“Arguably, the two most important members of the new Caucasian monarchy were David II (1089-1125) and Queen Tamar (1184-1212). Both of these Bagratid sovereigns were in the end canonized as saints by the Georgian Orthodox Church. By extending Georgia’s power far beyond its historic frontiers, these rulers were in the final analysis responsible for creating a genuine Georgian hegemony not only over Georgians but over Muslims and Armenians as well. David II was surnamed by contemporaries the Restorer or Rebuilder (aghbashenebeli) for good reason…His reign constitutes a genuine ‘epic period’ in the history of medieval Georgia. David’s victories against the Muslims were especially important since they paved the way for the Transcaucasian

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419 V.M. Lurye, “Tysiacha let Gruzinskogo Imperializma” (One Thousand Years of Georgian Imperialism), Russkij Zhurnal (Russian Journal), August, 2008; Alexander Dvorkin, Ocherki po Istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Istorii (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni- Novgorod, 2006, pp. 824-825.
multinational empire of his successors. In 1122 he was able to gain control of Tiflis (it had been for centuries an Islamic town) and to reestablish it as Georgia’s capital. But his great triumph was without doubt his decisively humiliating defeat of the Seljuks a year earlier at the battle of Didgori (12 August). Georgians to this day celebrate the victory annually as a holiday in August.

“In addition to a strengthened monarchy and a magnified Georgia, David II also bequeathed to his descendants a reformed Church. The attention he was willing to devote to the welfare of the Church as a whole, was doubtlessly genuine. He was also evidently concerned with Christian unity and repeatedly labored to convince the separated Armenian community to return to the unity of the Orthodox Church by accepting Chalcedonian Christology and by renouncing schism. His vigorous efforts to establish ecclesiastical discipline, eliminate abused, and reorganize the Church, culminated in 1103 at the synod of Ruisi-Urbinisi. This meeting – one of the most famous in Georgian history – was presided over by the king who had also convened it…

“It was during [Queen Tamar’s] rule that the great golden age of Georgian history and culture reached its summit. There is no denying the multinational nature of her kingdom by the dawn of the thirteenth century. By then Georgia was one of the most powerful states in the Near East. As a result of Queen Tamar’s numerous campaigns, which took her armies to the shores of the Black Sea, Paphlagonia and further east into Iranian territory, the Georgian state extended far beyond its original borders. By 1212 the entire Caucasus, the southern coast of the Black Sea, most of Armenia and Iranian Azerbaijan, had in fact been annexed to the Georgian state….

“[The queen was in general friendly towards] Saladin, who was actually responsible in the end for the return to the Georgians in the Holy City of properties that had once belonged to them. In contrast, Tamar’s relations with the Latins in the crusader states… were rarely courteous or fraternal. The Orthodox Georgians never actually directly involved themselves with the crusades. This may have been at the root of the friendship Muslims felt for them.”

However, Tamar defeated the Turks when they tried to conquer Georgia. “During two terrible battles she herself saw the finger of God directing her to the fight, and, with her soldiers, witnessed the miraculous conversion of one of the Mohammedan generals who was made prisoner.”

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420 “On his own testimony, while meeting an attack from the Turks, both he and his enemies saw S. George protecting him; and on another occasion, he was saved from instant death by a special act of faith, when a thunderbolt falling upon him was prevented from hurting him by the golden image of the Archangel Michael which he wore on his breast” (P. Ioseliani, A Short History of the Georgian Church, Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1983, p. 115). (V.M.)
422 Ioseliani, op. cit., p. 122.
The Georgians in this, their golden age, saw themselves as sons of the Byzantines. This was undoubtedly good for them. The contrast between Georgia and Bulgaria is instructive: the Georgian kings saw themselves as sons of the Byzantines, and prospered, whereas the Bulgarian tsars saw themselves as rivals, and were brought low...

Let us examine this relationship to Byzantium a little more closely.

Antony Eastmond writes: “The two hundred years before Tamar’s reign saw a very marked change in the depiction of power in Georgia in an attempt to establish an effective form of royal presentation. The Georgian monarchy came increasingly to model itself on imperial rule in Byzantium. The Bagrat’ioni kings began to see themselves as inheritors of Byzantine royal traditions, and displayed themselves as the descendants of Constantine the Great, rather than their own Georgian ancestors, such as Vakhtang Gorgasalan (the great Georgian king who ruled c. 446-510). Between the ninth and twelfth centuries it is possible to trace the way the Bagrat’ionis began to adopt more and more of the trappings of Byzantine political ideas. In the ninth century, Ashot’I the Great (786-826), the first Bagrat’ioni ruler, showed his dependence on Byzantine ideas by accepting the title of Kouropalates; although the only surviving image of the king shows him in a very abstract, indistinguishable form of dress. By the tenth century the Georgians had adopted a more positive Byzantine identity. At the church of Oshk’i (built 963-73), the two founder brothers, Davit and Bagrat’ are shown in a donor relief on the exterior wearing very ornate, ‘orientalized’, Byzantine costume. All earlier royal images in Georgia, as well as the contemporary image of the rival King Leo III of Abkhazia (a neighbouring Georgian Christian kingdom) in the church of K’umurdo (built 964), had shown the rulers in less distinct, or clearly local forms of dress. The choice of dress at Oshk’I showed the outward adherence of the Bagrat’ionis to the Byzantine political system....

“This gradual process of Byzantinization continued throughout the eleventh century, becoming increasingly dominant. It was encouraged by closer links between the Georgian and Byzantine royal families. Bagrat’ IV (1027-72) married Helena, the niece of Romanos III Agyros in 1032; and his daughter, Maria ‘of Alania’ married two successive Byzantine emperors (Michael VII Doukas and Nikephoros III Botaneiates).

“By the beginning of the twelfth century, there had been a transformation in the whole presentation of the Georgian royal family. In addition to Byzantine court dress, all aspects of the royal environment became ‘Byzantinized’. In the royal churches standard Byzantine forms were adopted...

“At Gelati, built between 1106 and 1130 by Davit IV and his son Demet’re (1125-54), this Byzantinization reaches its peak... The point of strongest Byzantine influence at Gelati comes in the fresco scenes in the narthex. These
show the earliest surviving monumental images of the seven ecumenical councils... Davit IV himself convened and presided at two sets of church councils in his reign, and clearly saw himself as a successor to the early Byzantine emperors and their domination of the church: Davit IV’s biographer even calls him a second Constantine…”  

The most striking example of Georgia’s filial relationship to Byzantium can be seen after the capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204, when “a Georgian army immediately took Trebizond and handed it over to a relative of the queen [Tamara], Alexis Comnenus. He became the first emperor of Trebizond. The empire of the Great Comneni, which at first existed under the vassalage of Georgia, continued to exist for almost three hundred years, outlasting Constantinople, and was destroyed by the Turks only in 1461.”

As we ponder why little Georgia should have fared so prosperously and heroically at a time when the Byzantine Empire was being defeated by her enemies, we should remember two factors.

One was the internal unity of the State under its strong and pious rulers. A second was its strictness in relation to heresy. Thus the Georgians were much firmer in relation to the heretical Armenians than the Byzantines were in relation to the heretical Latins during the same period. This refusal to make concessions on the faith for the sake of political gains reaped both spiritual and material fruits for the Georgians.

Thus the Synod of Ruisi-Urbnisis decreed that “an Orthodox Christian was not authorized to contract a marriage either with a heretic or an infidel... Armenians and other monophysite dissidents upon returning to the unity of the Orthodox faith were legally compelled to be rebaptized.”

In Tamara’s reign there was an official debate between the Georgians and Armenians at which a great miracle took place: a dog fled in fear from the Orthodox Mysteries of the Georgians, but immediately devoured the sacrifice of the Armenians. As a result, the Armenian nobleman John Mkhargradzeli accepted Orthodoxy and was baptized by Patriarch John.

The unity of the kingdom was not achieved without a struggle - even a struggle, at one point, against a form of parliamentary democracy! Thus “in the first year of Tamara’s reign, an officer of the royal court, Kurltu-Arslan, whose dream was to become the Minister of Defense, insisted that a parliament be established in Iani, where, according to his plan, all internal and external problems of the country were to be discussed, and only after that was a notice to

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425 Papadakis, op. cit., p. 142.
426 The Life of St. Tamara.
be sent to the king for approval. The Isani Parliament was planned to appropriate the legislative power and leave the monarch a symbolic right to approve decisions already made and give orders to carry out the will of the members of this parliament. Thus, the very foundations of the royal institution blessed by God Himself were shaken and the country found itself face to face with the danger of civil war.

“Tamara ordered that Kurlu-Arslan be arrested, but his followers, bearing arms, demanded the release of their leader. In order to avoid imminent bloodshed, Tamara came to a most wise and noble solution, sending to the camp of the rebels as negotiators two of the most respectable and revered ladies: Huashak Tsokali, the mother of the Prince Rati, and Kravai Jakeli. The intermediation of the two noble mothers had such an effect on the conspirators that they ‘obeyed the orders of their mistress and knelt in repentance before her envoys and swore to serve the queen loyally.’ The country felt the strong arm of the king, Tamara appointed her loyal servants to key government posts…”

Queen Tamara is called a second Constantine, a David and a Solomon in the chronicles. She deserves both titles as having been great in both peace and war, and as having defended Orthodox autocracy against the threat of constitutionalism. She preserved the Orthodox and Byzantine ideal of the symphony of powers as purely, perhaps, as it has ever been seen in Christian history…

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428 Eastwood, op. cit., p. 289.
Among the achievements of the Nicaean Empire was the granting of autocephaly to the Serbian Church in the person of her first archbishop, St. Savva. This was a unique event in that full autocephaly, - as opposed to, for example, the semi-autocephaly of the Bulgarian Church centred at Ohrid, - had never been granted before to any Church by the Byzantines. As Alexander Dvorkin writes, St. Savva "received practically complete independence from Constantinople and jurisdiction ‘over all the Serbian and coastal lands’ (an unambiguous reference to Zeta [Montenegro], which had left to join the Latins). Thus the status of the Serbian Church was in essence equivalent to that of a patriarchate or to the autocephalous Churches of today. The one link with Constantinople that was demanded of it was the commemoration of the Ecumenical Patriarch in the Eucharistic prayer (‘Among the first, O Lord, remember...’). The autocephalous status of the Serbian Church became in many ways a new formula...

“The establishment of the Serbian demonstrated a subtle, but very important evolution in the meaning of the concept of autocephaly. Before that, with the single exception of Georgia, all the autocephalous Churches had been in the Empire and had acquired juridical status by a one-man decision of the emperor or by a decree of an Ecumenical Council. The new autocephalies (that is, Serbia and Bulgaria) were created by means of bilateral agreements between two civil governments. This reflected the new tendency to view ecclesiastical autocephaly as the mark of a national state, which undoubtedly created a precedent for ecclesiastical relations in recent history, when increasingly passionate nationalist politics – both in the Balkans and in other places – turned the struggle for national autocephalies into the phenomenon which we know today as ecclesiastical phyletism...”

And yet the Serbian autocephaly was neither motivated by phyletism, nor were its consequences in the medieval period anything other than good. For the Serbs proceeded to create one of the most perfect examples of Church-State symphony in Orthodox history. Both in the fact that the first king, St. Stefan, and the first archbishop of the Nemanja dynasty, St. Savva, were father and son, and that the son became the spiritual father of his physical father, we see a profound symbol of the true relationship between Church and State, in which the physical pre-eminence of the State is controlled and purified by the spiritual pre-eminence of the Church.

Moreover, St. Savva enshrined the ideal in his Zakonopravilo or Kormchija, “a code,” as Dmitrije Bogdanovich writes, “written in 1220 and consisting of a selection of Byzantine legal texts, to be enforced in the Serbian Church and State life. Under the title of ‘The Law of the Holy Fathers’, they were enforced throughout the Middle Ages; to a certain extent, they were valid even later, during the reign of the Ottoman empire. It is a known fact that the reason

429 Dvorkin, op. cit., pp. 688, 690.
behind the drafting of this code was the planned establishment of an independent, autocephalous Serbian Church. On his way back from Nicaea, where in 1219 he succeeded in having the autocephaly recognized, thus securing the preconditions for the organization of a new Church, Serbia’s first archbishop St. Sava, aided by a group of collaborators and working on Mount Athos and in Salonika, put together a selection of Byzantine Church laws, relying on the existing nomocanon but taking a highly characteristic course. Instead of following the existing nomocanonic codes, where certain commentators opposed the original symphony of the political and ecclesiastical elements, subordinating the latter to the former, Sava selected texts which, as opposed to the ideas and relations then obtaining in Byzantium (‘Caesaropapism’, the supremacy of the State over the Church), constituted a return to the old, authentic relation, i.e. the original Orthodox, early Byzantine political philosophy.

“‘St. Sava’, as S. Troitsky puts it, ‘rejected all the sources containing “traces of the Hellenic evil” in the form of the theory of Caesaropapism’, since that theory went against the dogmatic and canonical doctrine of the episcopate as the seat of Church authority, as well as the political situation in Serbia, where imperial authority had not yet been established at the time. He also rejected the theory of “Eastern Papism”, which, according to Troitsky, imposes the supremacy of the Church of Constantinople over all the other local Churches of the Orthodox oecumene – and which was, moreover, at variance with the dogmatic doctrine of the Council as the supreme organ of Church authority, with the canonical doctrine proclaiming the equality of the heads of the autocephalous Churches, and with the position of the Serbian Church itself, which met the fundamental canonical condition of autocephaly (that of independently electing its own bishops), so that any interference of the Patriarch of Constantinople in its affairs would have been anticanonical. Sava therefore left out of the Nomocanon any work from the Byzantine canonical sources in which either the centripetal ideology of Caesaropapism or the Eastern Papism theory was recognized; he resolutely ‘stood on the ground of the diarchic theory of symphony’, even to the extent of amending it somewhat…”

“Serbian history,” writes Bishop Nikolai, “never knew of any struggle between Church and state. There were no such struggles, but bloody wars have filled the history of Western nations. How does one explain the difference between the two cases? The one is explained by theodulia [the service of God]; the other by theocracy.

“Let us take two tame oxen as an example, how they are both harnessed to the same yoke, pull the same cart, and serve the same master. This is

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430 Bogdanović, “The Political Philosophy of Medieval Serbia”, in 1389-1989, Boj na Kosovu (The Battle of Kosovo), Belgrade, 1989, p. 16. St. Savva’s Zakonopravilo has only recently been published in full by Professor Miodrag M. Petrović – not in Serbia, where the official hierarchy discouraged its publication, but in Greece.
theodulia. Then let us take two oxen who are so enraged with each other that one moment the ox on the left pulls himself out from the yoke and goes the other one, goading him on to pull the cart alone, while the next moment the ox on the right does the same to his companion on the left. This is theocracy: the war of the Church against the state and the war of the state against the Church; the war of the pope against kings and the war of kings against the pope. Neither ox wished to be yoked and serve the Master; each of them wanted to play the role of the Master and drive his companion under the yoke. Thus the Master's cart has remained stationary and his field uncultivated and has eventually become completely overgrown with weeds. This is what happened in the West.”

“In those days the problem of relations between the Church and the State did not disquiet people as it does in our days, at least not in the Orthodox countries. It had been regulated as it were by itself, through long tradition. Whenever Caesaropapism or Papocaesarism tried to prevail by force, it had been overcome in a short time. For there existed no tradition in the Church of the East of an augustus [emperor] being at the same time Pontifex Maximus, or vice-versa. There were unfortunate clashes between civil and ecclesiastical authorities on personal grounds, but those clashes were temporary and passing. Or, if such clashes and disagreements arose on matters of religious doctrines and principles, threatening the unity of the Christian people, the Councils had to judge and decide. Whoever was found guilty could not escape condemnation by the Councils, be he Emperor or Patriarch or anybody else.

“Savva’s conception of the mutual relations between Church and State was founded upon a deeper conception of the aim of man’s life on earth. He clearly realized that all rightful terrestrial aims should be considered only as means towards a celestial end. He was tireless in pointing out the true aim of man’s existence in this short life span on earth. That aim is the Kingdom of Heaven according to Christ’s revelation. Consequently, both the Church and the State authorities are duty-bound to help people towards that supreme end. If they want to compete with one another, let them compete in serving people in the fear of God and not by quarrelling about honors and rights or by grabbing prerogatives from one another. The King and the Archbishop are called to be servants of God by serving the people towards the final and eternal aim…”

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Apart from Georgia, the one Orthodox nation that remained loyal to Byzantium until its fall in 1204 was Kievan Rus’. And both nations paid with their blood for their faithfulness. Thus in Russia, as in Georgia, a rejection of pleas for union with the heretical West was followed by devastation at the hands of the pagan or Muslim East. On October 7, 1207, Pope Innocent called on the Russians to renounce Orthodoxy, since “the land of the Greeks and their Church has almost completely returned to the recognition of the Apostolic see”. The Russians, led by their metropolitan, a Nicaean Greek, rejected the papal demands.

Then, however, the Mongols invaded… In 1215, China, the greatest despotism that the world had ever seen up to that time, lost “the mandate of heaven” and fell to the Mongols under Chinghis Khan. In 1223 he defeated a Russian-Cuman army at the battle of Kalka. In the following years until his death in 1227 Chinghis extended his conquests from Persia to Korea; and his successor Tamerlane even conquered India...

After the death of St. Tamara the Mongols invaded Georgia and gradually brought the country into vassalage. During one invasion, in 1227, the Sultan “ordered that the icons of the Theotokos and our Savior be carried out of Sioni Cathedral and placed at the center of the bridge across the Mtkvari River. The invaders goaded the people to the bridge, ordering them to cross it and spit on the holy icons. Those who betrayed the Orthodox Faith and mocked the icons were spared their lives, while the Orthodox confessors were beheaded… One hundred thousand Georgians sacrificed their lives to venerate the holy icons…”

When the Mongols advance began again, they sacked Ryazan, Moscow and Vladimir in 1237-38 and then completely destroyed Kiev in 1240, thereby establishing suzerainty over all the North Russian principalities except Novgorod. The Poles, the Teutonic Knights and the Hungarians were defeated but not occupied, sending shock waves throughout the West – and several missions to convert the Mongols to Christianity before they could convert the rest of the world to dust. Then the horde smashed the Turkish Seljuk Sultanate (in 1243) and the Arab Abbasid Caliphate (in 1258). The cruelty of the Mongol invasion of Russia was illustrated by the destruction of Ryazan, where “the prince with his mother, wife and sons, the boyars and inhabitants, without regard to age or sex, were slaughtered with the savage cruelty of Mongol revenge… Priests were roasted alive, and nuns and maidens were ravished in the churches before their relatives. No eye remained open to weep for the dead…”

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The only Russian principality not destroyed by the Mongols was Novgorod. This was because the Novgorodians’ ruler, Great-Prince Alexander Nevsky of Vladimir, decided to pay tribute to the Mongols in the East in order to concentrate all his forces in a successful war against what he considered to be their more dangerous enemies in the West - the papist Swedes and the quasi-monastic orders of the Teutonic Knights and the “Knights of God”. These orders played a critical part in the crusades in both the Mediterranean and the Baltic, and were answerable only to the Pope. Their wealth – and violence – was legendary. As the Knights said in 1309: “The sword is our pope”. But in 1240 St. Alexander defeated a Swedish army on the Neva. And on April 5, 1242, he crushed the “Knights of God” on the ice of Lake Chudov in present-day Estonia.

Having failed with the stick, the Pope now tried the carrot. In 1248 he sent “the two cleverest” of his cardinals to Alexander, in order that he might “forsake the false way of corruption which leads to the damnation of eternal death... and recognize the Roman church as mother and obey its pope.” But Alexander refused, saying that Holy Tradition, the constant teaching of the Church from the beginning, had been passed down to the Orthodox alone.

Then, in accordance with his principle: “Not in might, but in truth, is God”, he made the historic decision to submit to the Mongols, who might subdue the Russians politically but would not harm their Orthodox faith, rather than to the Pope, who would destroy both their statehood and their faith.

However, there was strong opposition to his policy. Thus one of his brothers, Andrew, having adopted the opposite course of standing up to the Tatars, was routed and had to flee to Catholic Sweden. And the other brother, Yaroslav, placed himself at the head of the anti-Alexander party in Novgorod, which led to an armed confrontation between the two sides in 1255. The tax imposed by the Tatars was very burdensome; and even in Vladimir-Suzdal there were uprisings. The Tatars responded harshly, forcing the Russians to fight in their armies... Alexander’s last major act was to journey to the Khan to plead for mercy... He died on his return home, exhausted by his efforts, having taken the schema as Monk Alexis. “My children,” said Metropolitan Cyril, know that the sun of the land of Suzdal has now set! For nevermore shall such a prince be found in the land...”

The Church had strongly supported Alexander not simply because it believed that it was necessary to give to Caesar (the Tatars) what was Caesar’s: there were also substantial benefits for the Church itself. For under the Tatars, as Fennell writes, “its lands and possessions were secure and the clergy was immune from taxation and conscription. Religious toleration had

437 Metropolitan Cyril, in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 170.
been Mongol policy ever since the time of Chinghis Khan, and the khans of the Golden Horde, whether pagan or Moslem, always showed consideration and even generosity to the churches in the lands under their sway.”

Indeed, as Fr. Sergei Hackel writes, Mengu-Temir’s iarlyk of 1308 declared that “no one is ‘to seize, tear or destroy that which belongs to their law: icons or books or anything else by means of which they pray to God. And if anyone blasphemes against their faith or curses it, that man shall not be pardoned and shall be cruelly put to death.’ But of primary importance to Mengu-Temir, as it would have been to Chengis-Khan himself, was the requirement that the clergy should use their freedom to offer intercessions for their distant masters: ‘that they may pray to God for us and for our people with an upright heart [...] and that they may bless us.’ Not that the masters were content with formal prayer. With a fine sense of discrimination, the iarlyk envisaged the possibility of prayer with inward reservations (nepravym serdtem). This would be sinful, and the responsibility of the priest involved: ‘that sin shall be upon him’.

“None of these arrangements were affected by the conversion to Islam of the khan Uzbed (1313), nor by the Islamic faith of his successors. In 1347 the senior wife of Khan Janibeg, Taidula, could still write of the Christian metropolitan as ‘our intercessor’.

“Two very different foreign rulers might now be commemorated in the Russian Church. One of these had from the first required, and had normally if not invariably received, commemoration. That was the ruler of the oikoumene, the senior partner in that symphonic structure which bound the Byzantine emperor and patriarch into an immutable and, ideally, symbiotic relationship with one another and, together with them, the empire and the Church. At least an honorary membership of the one followed from integration with the other. Both had been received by Rus’ as part and parcel of conversion and acculturation. The metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus’ was there to link his flock to each in due proportion.

“By contrast, prayers for the khan could hardly fit the established pattern, however much the Russians might attempt to modify the non-Byzantine nature of his title by calling by the name they also used for the Byzantine emperor himself, tsar. For this was soon to be the designation of the distant emperor in Karakorum, as also of the khan at Sarai. In either case, the Russians were no doubt mindful of the Pauline exhortation to the effect that ‘supplications, prayers, intercessions’ be made for all men, including ‘kings and for all who are in authority’, and this regardless of their faith…”

438 Fennell, op. cit., p. 121.
Another important feature of Church life under the Mongols, as Papadakis writes, was that “the metropolitan of Kiev, a prelate appointed from Nicaea and later from Constantinople, was considered by the khans as a privileged representative of a friendly power, which throughout the thirteenth and the fourteenth century promoted commercial exchanges between the Far East and Western Europe. Before the conquest, the Greek metropolitan stood above local political struggles between the Russian princes. Respected as he was by the Tatars, he acquired additional and exclusive powers, since he headed the only administrative structure extending over the whole ‘land of the Rus’’, divided as it was now between territories controlled by the Tatars, the Lithuanians and the Poles.”

Indeed, Metropolitan Cyril II (1242-1281) went freely through all the Russian lands, from Galicia, where his former patron, Prince Daniel Romanovich, ruled to Vladimir, where St. Alexander ruled, being accepted as the leader of the Church by all. Therefore as the old Kievan State continued to disintegrate it was becoming clearer that only through the Church could Russia be united. Russia could not prosper without strong political authority; but only the Church could decide who and where that authority should be. For the time being, that authority remained the Mongols, who, in spite of their false religion, protected the Church and so were accepted as a legitimate political authority...

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Papadakis, op. cit., p. 332; Fennell, op. cit., p. 113.
The papacy tried to subdue the Orthodox East to itself not only by force, through the crusades, but also by negotiation, through the offer of ecclesiastical union – but in any case under the Pope. For their part, ever since communion with the Roman Church had been broken in the eleventh century, the Byzantine Emperors had sought to restore it, not so much for spiritual reasons (although there were Emperors with spiritual motives) as for political reasons, so that they could call on the West to provide military support against the Turks. Thus Alexius I Comnenus and Manuel I Comnenus both put pressure on the patriarchs of their time to restore union.

However, these early negotiations came to an abrupt end after the fearful sack of Constantinople in 1204. Even the Pope, Innocent III, recognized that relations could never be the same again: “How is the Church of the Greeks, when afflicted with such trials and persecutions, to be brought back into the unity of the Church and devotion to the Apostolic See? It has seen in the Latins nothing but an example of perdition and the works of darkness, so that it now abhors them as worse than dogs. For they who are supposed to serve Christ rather than their own interests, who should have used their swords only against the pagans, are dripping with the blood of Christians. They have spared neither religion, nor age, nor sex, and have committed adultery and fornication in public, exposing matrons and even nuns to the filthy brutality of their troops. For them it was not enough to exhaust the riches of the Empire and to despoil both great men and small; they had to lay their hands on the treasures of the Church, and what was worse its possessions, seizing silver retables from the altars, breaking them into pieces to divide among themselves, violating the sanctuaries and carrying off crosses and relics.”

Several Greek bishops, writes Spiros Vryonis, “fled the Latin lands. Others remained in their sees, sometimes ignoring Latin ecclesiastical demands and often maintaining contact with the Greek clergy in non-Latin territory. The Catholics decided that the Greek clergy were to keep the churches in those regions inhabited exclusively by Greeks, but in mixed areas the bishops were to be Latins. The hierarchy of the Church in the conquered areas thus passed into the hands of the Catholics, whereas the village priests remained Greek. With some exceptions the Latin bishoprics were filled with adventurers little inspired by the religious life, who treated their Greek parishioners as schismatics. Very often the Greek clergy who conformed to the demands of the papacy and hence were supported by Innocent were removed by fanatic Latin bishops who wished to take over all the bishoprics.”

The Pope was right that the Greeks would now hate the Latins. But he was wrong in thinking that they would not seek the union of the Churches. The simple people rejected it; but as the empire grew weaker, and then went into

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exile after 1204, the Greek elites’ attachment to it grew, and for the sake of the empire they began to bargain with the faith...

Thus the Nicaean Emperor Theodore I unsuccessfully attempted to convene a Council of Patriarchs and to decide, with them, on the opening of negotiations with the Pope.

Then, as Fr. Ambroise Frontier relates, “John Vatatzes, the new emperor, took as his second wife, Constance, the daughter of Frederick II, the Emperor of the West. Upon becoming Orthodox she took the name Anna. A great friendship linked Frederick II and John Vatatzes. Even though Frederick II was a Roman Catholic he was in conflict with the Pope and he showed much regard for the Orthodox Church: ‘... how can this so-called pontiff every day excommunicate before the whole world the name of your majesty and all the Roman subjects (at this time the Greeks were called Romans) and without shame call the most orthodox Romans, heretics, thanks to whom the Christian Faith was spread to the far ends of the world.’...

“In 1250 Frederick II died and his son Manfred, an enemy of the Nicaean Empire, became King of Sicily. The relations between John Vatatzes and [Pope] Innocent IV took a dangerous turn. Innocent IV tried to turn the Venetians and the Franks of the East against the Nicaean Empire. This forced John Vatatzes to concede the following privileges to the Pope: 1) Recognition of the Pope’s supremacy, 2) Commemoration of the Pope’s name, 3) Recognition of the right to appeal to the Pope. These concessions were sufficient for the time being to change the Pope’s politics so that he supported the policies of the Nicaean Empire.

“Other reasons also forced the Pope to uphold the Emperor. Whole territories were breaking away from the Latin state of Constantinople and were repudiating their forced submission to the Pope. Innocent IV thought that it would be good, before the fall of the weakening Latin state of Constantinople, to come to an agreement with the Greeks and thus place the union on a more solid foundation. He thus imposed two more conditions: 1) The Latin Patriarch installed by the Crusaders in Constantinople in place of the legitimate Orthodox Patriarch would be kept in the capital, 2) The doctrine of the Filioque, that is of the Holy Spirit’s procession from the Father and the Son, a heretical doctrine, cause of the schism between the two Churches and a stumbling block to all attempts at union, would be introduced into the Orthodox Creed. Theodore II Lascaris, the successor of John Vatatzes, a child of his first marriage, however, had other plans. He refused the papal proposals and sent Innocent’s legates away. He even wrote a treatise in which he defended the Orthodox dogmas and refuted the doctrine of the Filioque.”443

In 1261 the Greeks defeated the Latins and Emperor Michael Palaeologus entered Constantinople... “The splendour surrounding the ‘New Constantine’,” writes F.I. Uspensky, “was a reflection of the great national triumph. Not only the courtiers and service people rejoiced, but also the patriots, the venerators of the ancient glory; and they could hardly imagine what the restoration would cost the real interests of the people. They had reasons for their joy. From its many years of struggle with the foreign aggressors, the Greek nation emerged not overcome, but united. Under the leadership of the Orthodox Church the population from Thessalonica to Magnesia and Attalia was conscious of itself as one body; the consciousness of nationality grew in strength – the Hellenic idea – not a literary idea, but a popular one; and the Church herself, having borne the struggle upon her shoulders, became still more dear, native and Greek. Some of the educated people could still talk about the union from the point of view of an abstract dogma; the politicians... could reluctantly wish for peace with the curia, but the simple people was lost for ‘the Latin faith’ forever.”

However, there were ominous signs. The City itself was still devastated as a result of the Latin conquest, and greatly reduced in population and wealth. Independent Greek statelets in Epirus and Trebizond still existed, and the Serbs and Bulgarians were also independent now. At the same time, Michael himself was a sybarite. He imitated the luxuriousness of the caesaropapist Angeli rather than the modesty of the more Orthodox Lascari. As Uspensky writes, “Palaeologus openly set out on the old path of the Comneni and Angeli. Not only was the capital returned, but the old order, the demands and expenses of the antiquated world order that had lived out its time, was also re-established...”

Worse still, overtures to the Pope continued. As regent, Michael had flattered the hierarchs, saying that he would accept power only from their hands, and promised that he would consider the Church to be his mother – in contrast to Emperor Theodore, who had supposedly despised the Church and kept it in subjection to imperial power. However, on ascending the throne, he changed course in a caesaropapist direction... His aim was to compel the Church and Byzantine society to adopt a more pro-Western attitude leading ultimately to a union with Rome. For he feared an alliance between Pope Urban, the former Latin Emperor of Constantinople Baldwin and King Manfred of Sicily, whose designs on Constantinople were well-proven. To that end he proposed divorcing his wife Theodora and marrying Manfred’s half-sister Anna, the widow of John Vatatzes – but abandoned the project under pressure from his wife, Anna herself and Patriarch Arsenius.

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446 Uspensky, *op. cit.*, p. 486.
In fact, Michael was, as Sir Steven Runciman writes, “a usurper who had made himself in turn Grand Duke and regent for the child Emperor John IV, then co-Emperor and finally senior Emperor. The Patriarch Arsenius had grudgingly condoned each step, only when Michael swore to respect the boy-Emperor’s rights. He was so suspicious of Michael’s intentions that in 1260 he abdicated; but, when his successor died a few months later, Michael persuaded him to return, again promising not to harm John IV. But his triumphant recapture of the capital convinced Michael that he was divinely protected. He pushed the boy further and further into the background, and in 1262 he deposed and blinded him. Arsenius, who had been looking on with growing horror, thereupon excommunicated Michael.”

The news about the blinding spread, and in Bithynia a rebellion broke out under a blind pretender with the name John Lascaris. The rebellion was suppressed with difficulty. Meanwhile, Michael tried through the clerics to get his excommunication removed. “But Arsenius replied: ‘I let a dove into my bosom, but it turned out to be a snake and fatally bit me.’ Once, on listening to a rejection, Palaeologus said: ‘What then, are you commanding me to renounce the empire?’ – and wanted to give him his sword. Arsenius stretched out his hand, and Palaeologus began to accuse the old man of making an attempt on the emperor’s life. In vain did the emperor embrace the knees of the patriarch: Arsenius pushed him away and went off to his cell. Then the emperor began to complain: ‘The patriarch is ordering me to abandon State affairs, not to collect taxes, and not to execute justice. That is how this spiritual doctor heals me! It is time to seek mercy from the pope’. The emperor began to seek an occasion to overthrow Arsenius, but the patriarch’s life was irreproachable. The emperor gathered several hierarchs in Thessalonica and summoned Arsenius to a trial, but he did not come. The obsequious hierarchs tried to demonstrate that the disjunction of the ‘soul of the State’ from the Church was a disease that threatened order… Palaeologus decided to get rid of Arsenius whatever the cost. Having gathered the hierarchs, he laid out to them all the steps he had taken to be reconciled with the patriarch. ‘It seems that because of my deed he wants me to abandon the throne. But to whom am I to give the kingdom? What will be the consequences for the empire? What if another person turns out to be incapable of such a great service? Who can guarantee that I will live peacefully, and what will become of my family? What people ever saw the like, and has it ever happened amongst us that a hierarch should do such things without being punished? Doesn’t he understand that for one who has tasted of the blessedness of royal power it is impossible to part with it except together with his life? Repentance is decreed by the Church, and does it not exist for emperors? If I don’t find it from you, I will turn to other Churches and receive healing from them. You decide.’”

449 Uspensky, op. cit., pp. 510, 511.
Finally Arsenius was deposed for failing to appear at his trial, and the more malleable Germanus was made patriarch in his place. But Arsenius and his followers refused to be reconciled with this. In justification of his deposition of Patriarch Arsenius, the emperor invoked his right as epistemonarch – a vague title used by the emperors since the twelfth century to justify their interference in the Church. Then, writes Gilbert Dagron, in a prostagma of 1270, he “invoked yet again his title of epistemonarch of the Church to force Patriarch Joseph I to give Deacon Theodore Skoutariotes, on whom he had conferred the imperial title of dikaiophylax, a rank corresponding in the hierarchy to the archontes of the Church. In order to settle this trivial affair, the emperor, completely impregnated with the spirit of the Comneni and the teachings of Balsamon, did not hesitate to affirm that the [Church’s] choices of patriarch had to be aligned with those of the emperor and that the ecclesiastical offices were nothing other than transfers of the imperial offices, as was demonstrated in the Donation of Constantine.”

Meanwhile, the Emperor was continuing to manoeuvre for an ecclesiastical union with the Roman Church. However, his real purpose was not spiritual but political – the reunification of the Greek lands under his authority. And for that he needed the help of the Pope against his western enemies, especially Charles of Anjou, the new king of Sicily – which help could be bought only at the price of a unia. Charles was ready to invade in 1270, but a terrible storm destroyed his fleet. Michael had been saved again...

Both the people and the Church were against the unia. They were not prepared to place the nation above the faith, and began to turn against the Emperor. Even “the emperor’s spiritual father Joseph went over to the opposition, counting on ascending the patriarchal throne. He began to advise the emperor that Germanus was not able to absolve him from the curse placed on him by Arsenius, and the emperor sent Joseph to Germanus to persuade him to leave voluntarily. When Germanus was convinced that this advice came from the emperor, he departed for the Mangana monastery…

“Joseph achieved his aim and occupied the patriarchal throne for seven years (1267-74)... The removal of the curses from the emperor – his first task – was carried out with exceptional triumphalism. In the presence of the Synod and the court the emperor crawled on his knees, confessing his sin, the blinding of Lascaris. The patriarch and hierarchs one by one read out an act of absolution of the emperor from the excommunication laid upon him...”

“But the Emperor’s humiliation,” continues Runciman, “did not satisfy Arsenius’s adherents. The ascetic element in the Church, based mainly the monasteries, always suspicious of the court and the upper hierarchy, believing them to be sinfully luxurious and over-interested in secular learning, saw in Arsenius a saintly martyr who had dared to oppose the

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450 Dagron, op. cit., p. 262
451 Uspensky, op. cit., p. 513.
Emperor on a basic moral issue; and their party was joined by many even in the hierarchy who maintained the old Studite tradition that opposed Imperial control of the Church. The Arsenites, as they began to be called, would not accept Joseph’s compromise. They continued to regard the Emperor as excommunicate, his hierarchy as illegitimate and his officials as the servants of a usurper. They were never very numerous; but their monkish connections gave them influence over the people. The hierarchy tired to rid the monasteries of such dissidents, but only drove them underground. Dismissed monks, poorly clad, and often called the saccophori, the wearers of sackcloth, would go about the people preaching resistance…”

The Arsenites remained in schism from the official Church for several more decades. They insisted, writes Aristides Papadakis, that “all elections to the see of Constantinople after the patriarch’s deposition (1265) were uncanonical and invalid. No less irregular in their opinion was the status of those elevated to the episcopal dignity by Arsenius’ ‘illegitimate’ successors.” In 1310 most of them were reconciled to the official Church. Some, however, such as St. Theoliptus, metropolitan of Philadelphia, considered that the Church had been reconciled too easily with the Arsenites and broke communion with the official Church for a period.

Restored to communion, and with the anti-uniate Arsenites excommunicated, the Emperor now had greater freedom in planning the unia. However, the reaction of the Church against the unia was growing stronger. Patriarch Joseph was now determined to limit the Emperor’s use of the ‘epistemonarchy’ “to the most modest temporal dimensions. Job Iasites, in the name of Patriarch Joseph, restated the issue a little after 1273: ‘It is true that he who wears the crown has received in person the responsibility and the title of epistemonarch of the holy Churches. However, that does not consist in electing, or deposing, or excommunicating, or carrying out any other action or function of the bishop, but, in accordance with the meaning of the term ‘epistemonarch’, it consists [for the emperor] in wisely keeping the leaders of the Churches in order and rank, and in giving the force of law to the canonical decrees which they issue. If these decrees are truly canonical, it is not in his power, as epistemonarch, to oppose them…”

The unia was signed at Lyons in 1274 by a delegation led by the ex-Patriarch Germanus. The emperor conceded all the dogmatic points (the Filioque, azymes, papal supremacy) without argument and promised to help the pope in his next crusade. In exchange Pope Gregory X promised to stop his enemies, especially Charles of Anjou, from invading the Greek lands.

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452 Runciman, op. cit., p. 69.
455 Dagron, op. cit., p. 263.
Michael continued to persecute the anti-uniates, imprisoning and mutilating their leaders. However, the Church as a whole offered strong resistance. “Two parties were formed,” writes Fr. Ambroise Frontier: “the Politicals or Opportunists, who strangely resemble the Ecumenists of today, and the Zealots, who were especially strong in Thessaloniki. The center of Orthodoxy, however, was Mount Athos. The persecutions of Michael VIII and of Beccus, his Patriarch, equalled those of the first centuries of Christianity. The intruder Patriarch went himself to the Holy Mountain to impose the decree of Lyons but he failed miserably. Only a few poor weak-minded monks followed him. In the Menaión of September 22, we read the following rubric: ‘Memory of the Holy Martyrs of the Monastery of Zographou, who chastized the Emperor Michael Palaeologus, the latinizer and his Patriarch Beccus, and died, through burning in the tower of their monastery.’ Yes, 26 monks died, burned in the tower of their monastery, others were drowned in the sea in front of Vatopedi and Iviron. At Karyes, the capital of Mount Athos, both laity and monks were beheaded. These Martyrs assured the victory of Orthodoxy by their sacrifice and with their blood washed away the shame of the treason of Lyons.

“To please the new Pope, Nicholas III, the servile Emperor ordered Isaac of Ephesus to accompany the papal legates through the prisons of Constantinople to show him the imprisoned Orthodox. Some had been tortured, others had their hands and feet cut off, others their eyes punctured and others their tongues ripped out. It is a fact: Christ is not discussed, He is confessed…”

“An anti-uniate council was in Thessaly, which anathematized the pope, the emperor and his uniate patriarch, John Beccus. The Fathers of Holy Mount Athos joined in the condemnation, writing to the emperor: “It is written in the explanation of the Divine Liturgy that the liturgizer commemorates the name of his hierarch, showing his exceeding obedience to him, and that he is in communion with him both in faith and as a steward of the Divine Mysteries… [But] he who receives a heretic is subject to the curses laid on him, and he who gives communion to an excommunicate is himself excommunicate.”

456 “The Zealots preached asceticism and contemplation and disliked the Imperial court and the intellectuals, lay and clerical, who frequented it. Their opponents, known as the Politicals, believed in co-operation with the State and the use, if need be, of Economy” (Runciman, op. cit., p. 70). (V.M.)

457 Outside Athos, the resistance to the unia was led by the holy King Milutin of Serbia, whose body remains incorrupt and wonderworking to this day (Velimirovic, op. cit., pp. 130-131). In Constantinople, the unia was denounced by the great ascetic, St. Meletius of Mount Gelesion. The emperor ordered his tongue to be cut out, but by a miracle the saint continued to speak clearly and distinctly (Living Orthodoxy, vol. XII, N 4, July-August, 1990, p. 15). (V.M.)

In 1280 (Pope Gregory had died by this time) Charles again invaded from the West. In the next year he was defeated by the Emperor Michael, but was planning to invade again in 1282 – this time by sea. And his chances looked good, especially since a new Pope, Martin IV, was now on his side and had excommunicated the Emperor. But then the Sicilians, supported by an Aragonese army, rose up against Charles. The threat of invasion from the West was now finally removed – which only left the formidable threat of the Seljuk Turks in the East to deal with...

In spite of this improvement in his military fortunes, and his excommunication by the Pope, Michael remained faithful to the unia until the end. And so the conqueror of Constantinople, the “new Constantine”, died on December 11, 1282, hated by his people. Rarely has such a glorious beginning to a reign ended in such ignominy...

“His wife, Empress Theodora and his son and successor Andronicus II Palaeologus refused to give him burial and Church honors. Andronicus II officially denounced the union and restored Orthodoxy. He sent edicts to all parts of the Empire proclaiming an amnesty for all those who had been exiled or imprisoned because of their zeal for the Church.

“Ten years after the council of Lyons, in 1285, an Orthodox Council was held in the Church of Blachernae in Constantinople. Gregory of Cyprus was the Orthodox Patriarch and Andronicus II the Emperor. The false union of Lyons was rejected and the heresy of the Filioque was condemned. Later on, Gennadius Scholarius, Patriarch of Constantinople, after the fall of the Empire in the XVth century, declared this Council to be Ecumenical. To those who considered it local because of the absence of the heretics and schismatics, Gennadius answered that: ‘… the absence of heretics does not diminish in any way the character of Ecumenicity.’

459 Andronicus dared not bury his body openly, but put him into the ground at night without a funeral or prayers. The empress issued the following declaration: “My Majesty hates and regards as loathsome this action (the union) that has recently come about in the Church and has caused such discord… As the holy Church of God has determined not to sanction any official commemoration of my departed spouse, our lord and king, on account of his aforementioned actions and intrigues, my Majesty also, bowing in all things to the fear of God and submitting to the holy Church, approves and accepts her decree, and will never presume to commemorate the soul of my lord and spouse in any way.” (Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, The Prologue from Ochrid, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1986, part 4, p. 59) (V.M.)

460 Frontier, op. cit., pp. 11-12.
76. THE CRISIS OF BYZANTINE STATEHOOD

The Nicaean Empire was a period of spiritual recovery, and of a return to the symphonic tradition of the Orthodox Autocracy. However, after the reconquest of the City in 1261, Byzantium declined inexorably. The loss of its control over trade to the Genoans and Venetians, who took it in turns to inflict defeats on the Greeks, was a serious blow. They were also vulnerable to the Turks…

In 1055 the Seljuk Turks had captured Baghdad before crushing the Byzantines at Manzikert in 1071, pushing them out of Eastern Anatolia for good. Fortunately, the Seljuk kingdom was destroyed by the Mongols in the course of the thirteenth century. But the Seljuk Turks were replaced by the Ottomans, who began their inexorable advance from the East in the fourteenth century.

Then, in the middle of the fourteenth century came the Black Death, which, according to one source, killed most of the inhabitants of Constantinople, further undermined the strength of the State. Still more serious were the divisions between and within the Greek states (for there were several of them), and the state of near-permanent civil war between the members of the ruling Palaeologan dynasty. The humiliation of Orthodoxy was such that towards the end of the century, all the Orthodox rulers, Greek, Slav and Romanian, were vassals of the Turkish sultan and even had to fight in his armies against other Orthodox Christians…

The underlying spiritual cause of these disasters was not far to find: in spite of the chastening experiences of the previous century, Byzantine rulers still continued to dangle the bait of union with Rome before western princes in exchange for military help that very rarely came. Only once, at the battle of Nicopolis in 1396, did a large-scale “crusade” led by the King of Hungary set off to rescue the Greeks from the Turks. It ended in disaster…

The lesson was obvious, but seemed never to be learned: no material gain, but only continued disasters, not to speak of spiritual shipwreck, came from attempting to sell the birthright of the Orthodox Faith…

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Paradoxically, however, this deeply dispiriting period from the point of view of state life also witnessed something of a spiritual renaissance in the cultural and religious spheres as a result of the hesychastic movement, which was spread by wandering monks such as St. Gregory of Sinai throughout the Orthodox commonwealth, and which brought forth rich fruits of sanctity for centuries to come. Moreover, in defending hesychasm against its humanist

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461 Thus the Emperors Manuel II and John VII were forced by the Sultan to take part in the siege of the last Byzantine city in Asia Minor, Philadelphia (Norwich, op. cit., pp. 345-47).
and latinizing detractors, the Orthodox Church was able to define the
difference between Orthodoxy and Catholicism more broadly and deeply
than ever before.

In this struggle, whose epicenter was the decade between 1341 and 1351,
two outstanding personalities shine out in the surrounding darkness as
defenders of the truth: St. Gregory Palamas, leader of the hesychast monks on
Mount Athos and later Archbishop of Thessalonica, who formulated the
theological defence of hesychasm, and his friend John Catacuzenus, who in
turn became the Great Domestic, the Emperor John VI and then plain Monk
Joasaph, and who, while never rejecting the idea of the union as such, always
cleverly insisted that it could only be done through an Ecumenical Council –
an idea that the Popes rejected because they knew it would end in failure for
the uniate cause.

The debate began in the 1330s with a rather original attempt to engineer
the unia. The Calabrian Greek monk Barlaam argued that the truths of the
Faith – he was thinking especially of the Filioque controversy - cannot be
proved, so we might as well take both positions, the Greek and the Latin, as
private opinions! Such relativism was refuted by St. Gregory, and found no
support in the West either: Pope Benedict was no more inclined than the
Byzantine Church to accept such agnosticism.

But Barlaam’s pride had been hurt, and he now set about attacking the
Athonite hesychast monks with regard to their practice of the Jesus prayer. In
particular, he attacked the claim that by combining the prayer with certain
physical exercises that involved directing the eye of the mind on the physical
heart, the monks could reach a state of deification and behold the Uncreated
Light that emanated from Christ’s Body during the Transfiguration. Barlaam
mockingly called the hesychasts omphalopsychoi, that is, those who locate the
soul in the navel, and identified them with the fourth-century sect of the
Messalians, which taught that through asceticism and prayer and without the
aid of the sacraments one could see God with one’s physical eyes.

The Athonite hesychasts refuted Barlaam’s charges in a Tomos entitled
“The Declaration of the Holy Mountain in Defence of Those who Devoutly
Practise a Life of Stillness”. Composed by St. Gregory and signed by the
leading hesychasts, including Bishop James of Hierissos and the Holy
Mountain, it argued that: 1. The deifying grace of God, in and through which
we are united with God and saved, is God Himself, uncreated and eternal; 2.
This deification is not a capacity inherent in human nature, as the Messalians
taught, but a gift of God by grace; 3. The mind (nous) which sees God in the
Divine Light is located in the heart, for the body takes part in deification as
well as the soul; 4. The Light that shone around the disciples on Mount Tabor
was not an apparition or a symbol, but the Uncreated Divine Light, God
Himself, Which they were able to see through the opening of their spiritual
eyes, a transmutation of their spiritual senses; 5. Both the Essence of God and
His Energies are Uncreated, but constitute one God, insofar as the Energies
are not a second God, but the One God going out of Himself, as it were, in order to unite Himself with created nature; 6. This vision of God and participation in His Uncreated Energies is the mystery of the age to come manifest already in this age. "For if in the age to come the body is to share with the soul in ineffable blessings, then it is evident that in this world as well it will also share according to its capacity in the grace mystically and ineffably bestowed by God upon the purified intellect [nous], and it will experience the divine in conformity with its nature. For once the soul’s possible aspect is transformed and sanctified – but not reduced to a deathlike condition – through it the dispositions and activities of the body are also sanctified, since body and soul share a conjoint existence." 462

This teaching was vindicated at a Council in Constantinople presided over by Emperor Andronicus III in 1341, and again at Councils in 1347 and 1351, when Barlaam and his helpers Acindynus and Nicephorus Gregoras were excommunicated. (Barlaam renounced Orthodoxy and became a Catholic bishop). Apart from their dogmatic significance, these Palamite Councils presented a precious image of Orthodox bishops convened by a right-believing emperor to define essential truths of the faith and thereby preserve the heritage of Orthodoxy for future generations and other nations...

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But amidst this spiritual triumph the state continued to decline, and now divisions appeared not only within the members of the ruling dynasty but between different layers of society. Thus when St. Gregory Palamas was appointed archbishop of Thessalonica he was not at first allowed to enter his see, because in Adrianople and Thessalonica, where sharp divisions in wealth were exacerbated by the feudal system that had been introduced by the Latin crusaders, a social revolution of the poor (called “zealots”) against the rich was in progress. 463 This revolution betrayed, according to Diehl, “a vague

463 “It is perhaps the fault for which Byzantium was punished,” writes Rebecca West. “The two classes, the ‘powerful’ and the ‘poor’, fought hard from the ninth century. The small landowners and the free peasants were so constantly harassed by invasion and civil war that they bartered their liberty in return for the protection of the great nobles, who took advantage of the position to absorb the small landowners’ estates and to make serfs of the free peasants. At first the monarchy fought these great nobles, and even appeared to have vanquished them. Feudalism, the exploitation of a country by its large landowners, could not exist in a declared theocracy, which implied the conception of divinely impartial justice for all individuals and every class. But when the Latins invaded the Byzantine Empire they brought with them the feudal system which was established in their own countries, and it could not be driven out with them, because the Byzantine nobles, like all the rich, would rather choke than not have their mouths full, and applauded the idea of any extension of their wealth and their power, however dangerous.” (Black Lamb and Grey Falcon, Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006, pp. 872-873)
tendency towards a communistic movement”⁴⁶⁴, and in its final wave forced
the abdication of Emperor John VI in 1354.

St. Gregory defended the principle of autocracy against the revolutionaries:
“The worst... are those who do not demonstrate a due loyalty to the kings
established by God... and do not humble themselves under... the hand of
God and do not submit to the Church of Christ.” However, he also chastised
the rich whose greed and selfishness had laid the seeds for the revolution. He
exhorted them: “Do not use force against those subject to you; show them... a
fatherly attitude, remembering that you and they are of one race and co-
servants. And do not go against submission to the Church and her
teachings... You who are in subjection, consider it your duty in relation to the
authorities to carry out only that which does not serve as an obstacle to your
promised hope of the Heavenly Kingdom.”⁴⁶⁵

Amidst all this turmoil there was no agreement about who was the true
emperor. First there was a bitter civil war between Andronicus II and his
grandson Andronicus III. Then in 1341, after the death of Andronicus III, war
broke out between John V Palaeologus and the army’s choice, John VI
Cantacuzenus (a firm believer in the dynastic principle and lifetime supporter
of the Palaeologi!). Then came the forced abdication of John VI, who became a
monk. Then civil war again broke out between John V and his son
Andronicus IV. Early in the fifteenth century, Manuel II exiled his nephew;
and in the very last years of the Empire John VIII had to contend with a
rebellion from his brother Demetrius...

Of course, coups and counter-coups were no rarity in Byzantine history - in
74 out of 109 cases, the throne was seized by a coup.⁴⁶⁶ The period of the
Nicaean Empire had seen a marked increase in stability and in the quality of
imperial rule. But in the fourteenth century, when the external situation of the
State was increasingly desperate, the old bad habits reasserted themselves.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁴ Diehl, in A.A. Vasiliev, A History of the Byzantine Empire, University of Wisconsin Press,
1955, p. 684.
⁴⁶⁵ St. Gregory Palamas, Homilies; quoted in D.I. Makarov, Antropologia i Kosmologia Sv.
Grigoria Palamy (The Anthropology and Cosmology of St. Gregory Palamas), St. Petersburg,
2003, pp. 403, 400. See also Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos, Saint Gregory Palamas as a
⁴⁶⁷ We can see that the Byzantines had not lost the consciousness that “rebellion is as the sin
of divination” (I Kings (I Samuel) 15.23) in the fact that, as Nikolsky writes, “an anathema
against those daring to undertake rebellion was pronounced in the 11th to 14th centuries...
Thus, according to the Byzantine historian Kinnamas, Andronicus Manuel fell under
anathema in the 12th century. ‘This traitor, enemy of the fatherland, made frequent assaults on
the Roman lands from Persia, enslaved many people and handed over much military booty
to the Persians, for which he was subjected to anathema by the Church.’... But the
anathematization against the rebels and traitors was in all probability not introduced by the
We have seen that the Byzantines never had an agreed system of imperial legitimacy and succession. However, L.A. Tikhomirov points to another, still deeper weakness of the Byzantine system: the fact that imperial power was based on two mutually incompatible principles, the Christian and the Old Roman (Republican). According to the Christian principle, supreme power in the State rested in the Emperor, not in the People. But, while supreme, his power was not absolute in that it was limited by the Orthodox Faith and Church; for the Emperor, while supreme on earth, was still the servant of the Emperor of Emperors in heaven. According to the Old Roman principle, however, which still retained an important place alongside the Christian principle in the legislation of Justinian, supreme power rested, not in the Emperor, but in the Senate and the People. But since the Senate and the People had, according to the legal fiction, conceded all their empire and power to the Emperor, he concentrated all executive power in his own person, and his will had the full force of law: Quod Principi placuit legis habet vigorem, et in eum solum omne suum imperiu et potestatem concessit.

“This idea was purely absolutist, making the power of the Emperor unlimited, but not supreme, not independent of the people’s will. The formula also contradicted the Christian idea of ‘the King, the servant of God’, whose law could in no way be simply what was ‘pleasing’ to him. But the conjunction of popular delegation and Divine election gave Byzantine imperial power the opportunity to be very broadly arbitrary. In the case of a transgression of the people’s rights, it was possible to refer to the unlimited delegation of the people. However, it is impossible not to see that this same conjunction, which gave the Emperor’s power the opportunity to be arbitrary, at the same time did not give it solidity. This power could be taken away from an unworthy bearer of it also on a dual basis: for transgression of the will of God, or on the basis of the will of the People, which did not want to continue the ‘concession’ it had given before any longer.

“The idea of the delegation of the people’s will and power to one person in itself presupposes centralisation, and then bureaucratisation. Truly, as the point of concentration of all the people’s powers, the Emperor is an executive power. In accordance with the concept of delegation, he himself administers everything. He must do all the work of the current administration. For that reason everything is centralised around him, and in him. But since it is in fact impossible in fact for one person, even the greatest genius, to carry out all the acts of State, they are entrusted to servants, officials. In this way bureaucratisation develops.

“The king, ‘the servant of God’, is obliged only to see that the affairs of the country are directed in the spirit of God’s will. The people’s self-administration does not contradict his idea on condition that over this administration the control of ‘the servant of God’ is preserved, directing everything on the true path of righteousness, in case there are any deviations from it. But for the Emperor to whom ‘the people concedes all power and might’, any manifestation of popular self-administration, whatever it may be,
is already a usurpation on the part of the people, a kind of taking back by the people of what it had ‘conceded’ to the Emperor.”

In 1369 Emperor John V, knowing that he could never bring his whole people into the unia, went to Italy. As Lord Norwich writes, “he formally signed a document declaring his submission to the Holy Roman Church and its father the Pope, sealing it with his imperial golden seal; and the following Sunday, in the presence of the entire Curia, he did obeisance to the Supreme Pontiff on the steps of St. Peter’s, kneeling before him and kissing him on the feet, hands and finally on the lips.”

But there was no rebellion, and no public humiliation of the body of the apostate after his death, as in the time of Michael VIII. In almost any previous period of Byzantine history, such an apostasy would have elicited disturbances among the Orthodox people. But not now... The reason was that, as Runciman writes, “he was careful not to involve the Church in his conversion. His tact was rewarded. Towards the end of his reign, probably in 1380 or soon afterwards, in circumstances that are unknown to us, he was able to make a concordat with the Patriarchate which clarified and restored much of the Imperial control over the Church. It contained nine points. The Emperor was to nominate metropolitans from three candidates whose names were submitted to him. He alone could transfer and promote bishops. He had to sanction appointments to high Church offices. He alone could redistribute sees. Neither he nor his senior officials nor members of the Senate, which was his advisory council, could be excommunicated except with his permission, ‘because the Emperor is defender of the Church and the canons’. Bishops were to come to Constantinople and to leave it whenever he ordered. Every bishop must take an oath of allegiance to him on appointment. Every bishop must put his signature to acts passed by a Synod or Council. Every bishop must implement such acts and refuse support to any cleric or candidate for ecclesiastical office who opposed Imperial policy.”

St. Simeon, Metropolitan of Thessalonica, commented with some bitterness on the situation: “Now... the Bishop is not counted worthy of any kind of honour for the sake of Christ, but rather his lot is dishonour; he is counted immeasurably inferior to the emperor, who receives a blessing from the Hierarch. At the present time the Bishop falls down at the feet of the emperor and kisses his right hand. With the sanctified lips with which he recently touched the Sacred Sacrifice, he servilely kisses a secular hand, whose function is to hold the sword. And, O shame!, the Bishop stands while the emperor sits. For the Bishop, as the delegate of the Church, all this reflects in an indecent and shameful manner on Christ Himself. These absurd customs were introduced, however, not by the emperors themselves, but by flatterers, who in an undiscrimining manner suggested to them that they should use the Divine for evil, that they should ascribe to themselves power and install and

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468 Tikhomirov, op. cit., p.163.
469 Norwich, op. cit., p. 333.
remove the Bishop. Alas, what madness! If the deposition of a Bishop is necessary, this should be done through the Holy Spirit, by Whom the Bishop has been consecrated, and not through the secular power. Hence come all our woes and misfortunes; hence we have become an object of mockery for all peoples. If we give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s, then the blessing of God will rest on everything: the Church will receive peace, and the State will become more prosperous.” 470

“As an Emperor,” continues Runciman, “John V was incompetent and almost impotent. The Turks were overrunning all his territory and exacting tribute from him. He himself in a reign of fifty years was three times driven into exile, by his father-in-law, by his son and by his grandson. Yet, as the concordat shows, he still retained prestige enough to reaffirm his theoretical control over a Church, many of whose dioceses lay far outside of his political control. It was soon after his death that the Patriarch Antony IV wrote the letter in which he talked of the great position of the Emperor. It was addressed to the Grand Prince of Muscovy, Vassily I, who had somewhat scornfully pointed out the actual weakness of the Emperor, hinting that some more powerful Orthodox ruler ought to lead the Oecumene. ‘The Emperor,’ Antony wrote, ‘is still the Holy Emperor, the heir of the Emperors of old and the consecrated head of the Oecumene. He, and he alone, is the King whom Saint Peter bade the faithful to honour.’

“The Patriarch’s loyalty was greater than his realism. But the Emperor still had some power. About twenty years later, in 1414 or 1415, Manuel II, who was generally liked by his ecclesiastics, when in Thessalonica appointed a Macedonian bishop to the see of Moldavia and sent him to Constantinople for consecration by the Patriarch, Euthymius II. Euthymius refused to perform the service, on the out-of-date ground that a bishop could not be transferred. The case undoubtedly had deeper implications, of which we can only guess. It must be remembered the Emperor was actually nominating a bishop for a Christian country over which he had no control; and the Patriarch must have feared that his own good relations with the sovereign Prince of Moldavia might be endangered. He insisted that the transference be approved by the Holy Synod. But the Emperor referred him to the concordat. He had to yield…” 471

The concordat was a truly shameful document. And yet the old Zealot tradition was not dead. There were still many in Byzantium who rejected the subordination of the Church to the State and would have preferred the dominion of the infidel Turks to that of the heretical Latins. For in religious matters the Turks were more tolerant than the Latins. Moreover, submission to the Turks would at least have the advantage of making the administration of the Church easier – in the present situation, the bishops under Turkish rule

were separated from their head in Constantinople and were distrusted because that head lived in a different state…

V.M. Lourié writes: “It was precisely in the 14th century, when immemorial Greek territories passed over to the Turks, and some others – to the Latins, that there was formed in Byzantine society those two positions whose struggle would clearly appear in the following, 15th century. It was precisely in the 14th century that the holy Fathers established a preference for the Turks over the Latins, while with the humanists it was the reverse. Neither in the 15th, nor in the 14th century was there any talk of union with the Turks – their invasion was thought to be only an evil. But already in the 14th century it became clear that the Empire would not be preserved, that they would have to choose the lesser of two evils. In the capacity of such a lesser evil, although a very great one, the holy Fathers were forced to make an irrevocable decision in favour of the Turks, under whose yoke it was possible to preserve the Church organisation and avoid the politics of forced conversions to Latinism. The danger of conversions to Islam was significantly smaller: first, because the inner administration of the Ottoman empire was based on ‘millets’, in accordance with which the civil administration of the Orthodox population was realized through the structure of the Orthodox Church and the patriarch, and this created for the Turks an interest in preserving the Church, and secondly, because the cases of conversion to Islam, however destructive they were for those who had been converted, did not threaten the purity of the confession of the Christians who remained faithful, while Latin power always strove to exert influence on the inner life and teaching of the faith of the Orthodox Church. The Church history of the 16th to 19th centuries showed that, in spite of all the oppressions caused to the Christians in the Ottoman empire, it protected the Christian peoples living within its frontiers from the influence of European religious ideas and Weltanschauungen, whereby it unwittingly helped the preservation of the purity of Orthodoxy…”472

Of course, the victory of the Turks would be a terrible disaster.473 But the victory of the Latins would be an even greater disaster, since it would signify the end of Greek Orthodoxy. Nor, said the Zealots, would buying the support of the Latins help matters. For, as the Studite Monk and head of the Imperial Academy, Joseph Vryennios said early in the fifteenth century: “Let no one be deceived by delusive hopes that the Italian allied troops will sooner or later come to us. But if they do pretend to rise to defend us, they will take arms in order to destroy our city, race and name…”474

473 St. Gregory Palamas was for a time a captive of the Turks and said of them: “This impious people [the Turks] boasts of its victory over the Romans, attributing it to their love of God. For they do not know that this world below dwells in sin, and that evil men possess the greater part of it… That is why, down to the time of Constantine, … the idolaters have almost always held power over the world.” (John Meyendorff, A Study of Gregory Palamas, London: Faith Press, 1964, p. 104)
“The 14th century,” writes Dvorkin, “buried the epoch of multinational super-empires. The future lay with centralized national states. However, it is interesting to note how long the peoples did not want to part with the myth of the Empire, to become the centre of which became the dream of practically every European state both in the East and in the West, from Bulgaria to Castilia. In the course of the 13th-14th centuries the canonists of many countries independently of each other developed the principle of the translatio imperii (translation of the empire). This process touched Russia a little later – in the 15th century, in the form of the theory of the Third Rome, which Moscow became…”

Of all the newly powerful nation-states of the 14th century formed out of the ruins of the ever-decreasing Byzantine Empire, the most powerful was Serbia.

Aristides Papadakis writes: “Greatly expanded under powerful leaders like King Stephen Urosh Milutin (1282-1321) and particularly Stephen Dushan (1331-55), the Serbian kingdom annexed traditionally Byzantine territories in Macedonia and northern Greece. In fact, Stephen Dushan dominated the entire Balkan peninsula. It was inevitable that, like Symeon of Bulgaria in the tenth century, he would dream of taking Constantinople itself and assume the ‘Roman’ imperial title. In the expectation of achieving this goal, he called himself – provisionally - ‘emperor and autocrat of Serbia and Romania’ (1345) and raised the archbishop of Pech to the rank of ‘patriarch of the Serbs and the Greeks’. The important city of Skopje, captured by Milutin, had, more than the other, smaller cities of the Serbian realm, the appearance of an imperial capital. There, on April 16, 1346, Dushan was crowned emperor by his newly-established patriarch Ioannikije.”

Shortly after this, Dushan published his “Archangelic Charter”, whose introduction set out his political theology in impressive style. The foundation of all power is the Lord God, Who dwells in eternal light. The earthly ruler is a lord only for a time; he does not dwell in eternal light; and his splendour is only a reflection of the splendour of the Lord God. The incarnation of God the Word, His humiliation and descent, is imitated by the earthly ruler in his constant self-correction and the thought of death: “I am reminded of the terrible hour of death, for all the prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and saints, and emperors died in the end; none of them remained, all were buried, and the earth received them all like a mother”. At the same time, the ruler, if he protects Orthodoxy and is guided by love for God, earns the titles “holy lord”, “patriot”, “enlightener of Serbia” and “peace libator”. In accordance with this dual character of the ruler’s power, his subjects are obliged, on the one hand, to obey him, in accordance with St. Paul’s word, and on the other

475 Dvorkin, op. cit., p. 716.
476 Papadakis, op. cit., pp. 258-259.
to criticise him if he departs from the true path. For while power as such is from God, those in power may act in accordance with God’s will or against it.\textsuperscript{477}

Dushan’s code, writes Rebecca West, “brought up to date the laws made by the earlier kings of the Nemanyan dynasty and was a nicely balanced fusion of Northern jurisprudence and the Byzantine system laid down by Justinian. It coped in an agreeable and ingenious spirit with the needs of a social structure not at all to be despised even in comparison with the West.

“There, at this time, the land was divided among great feudal lords who ruled over innumerable serfs; but here in Serbia there were very few serfs, so few that they formed the smallest class in the community, and there was a large class of small free landowners. There was a National Diet which met to discuss such important matters as the succession to the throne or the outbreak of civil war, and this consisted of the sovereigns, their administrators, the great and small nobility, and the higher clergy; it was some smaller form of this, designed to act in emergencies that met to discuss whether John Cantacuzenus should receive Serbian aid. All local government was in the hands of the whole free community, and so was all justice, save for the special cases that were reserved for royal jurisdiction, such as high treason, murder, and highway robbery. This means that the people as a whole could deal with matters that they all understood, while the matters that were outside common knowledge were settled for them by their sovereign and selected members of their own kind; for there were no closed classes, and both the clergy and the nobility were constantly recruited from the peasantry.”\textsuperscript{478}

In this period, the way in which the Serbian kings were portraying themselves was almost indistinguishable from the symbolism of the Byzantine Emperors. Thus Desanka Miloshevich describes a portrait of Tsar Milutin in Grachanitsa in which “the king had all the prerogatives of power of the Byzantine Emperor, except for the title. The crown, the garments, the loros and the sceptre were all identical to the Byzantine Emperor’s. Before Milutin, something like this would have been absolutely unthinkable, for only the Byzantine Emperor was Christ’s regent on earth…”\textsuperscript{479}

Dushan went further: directly challenging the authority of the Byzantine Emperor, he refused to call his kingdom, following Byzantine custom, “of the Romans”, but rather “of the Serbs and the Greeks”. The ethnicity of this title was in direct contradiction to the universalism of Christian Romanity. And yet he had come to the throne by rebelling against and then strangling his own father, St. Stephen Dechansky; so his claim even to the Serbian throne, not to speak of the Byzantine, was weak.

\textsuperscript{477} Bogdanovich, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 16-17.
In spite of this, so feeble and divided was the Empire at this time that many Greeks supported his claims, and the protos of Mount Athos was present at his coronation in Skopje. But St. Gregory Palamas, remained loyal to Byzantium – even though Dushan had ransomed him from captivity to the Turks. St. Gregory confirmed the traditional Byzantine theory that just as there is only one true God, so there can be only one Orthodox empire. As he wrote: “Will you transform into two emperors that one emperor whom God has established for us on the earth? Will you demonstrate that his empire is composed of two empires?”

“The Serbian patriarchate was immediately recognized and supported by the patriarch of Trnovo and the archbishop of Ochrid (the latter was now controlled by Serbian power), as well as the monasteries of Mount Athos. It included within its realm a number of Greek dioceses, located on territories conquered by Dušan. In the circumstances, it is understandable that the establishment of such a patriarchate was challenged in Constantinople: on December 1349, ecumenical patriarch Callistus anathematized the Serbian Church.”

To anathematize a whole Local Church neither for heresy nor for schism, but for appropriating to itself territories that did not belong to it may have been a defensible step, but it was also a drastic one. It showed how anxious the patriarch was, in the absence of a strong emperor, to retain the centralising power of the patriarchate as the “glue” holding the Byzantine commonwealth together.

However, there is no question: the leading power in the Balkan peninsula at this time was not Byzantium, but Serbia. Dushan’s land was prosperous, and attracted Venetians and Ragusans as traders, and Saxons as miners. As West writes: “Against the military difficulties that constantly beset Stephen Dushan there could be counted the security of this possession: a country rich in contented people, in silver and gold, in grain and cattle, in oil and wine, and in the two traditions, one Byzantine and mellow, one Slav and nascent, which inclined its heart towards civilization... Stephen Dushan ordered that all foreign envoys travelling through the land should be given all the meat and drink they desired at the imperial expense. As he pressed southward into Byzantine territory he restored to it elements necessary to civilized life which it had almost forgotten. He was not in need of money, so he did not need to rob his new subjects after the fashion of participants in the Civil War; he taxed them less, repaired gaps in their strongholds, and lent them Serbian soldiers as police. He also practised the principle of toleration, which was very dear to the Byzantine population; it must be remembered that the Orthodox crowd of Constantinople rushed without hesitation to defend the Saracen merchants’

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481 Papadakis, op.cit., p. 259.
mosque when it was attacked by the fanatic Latin knights. There could be no complete application of this principle, and Stephen Dushan certainly appointed Serbian governors to rule over his new territories, as well as Serbian ecclesiastics when the local priests were irreconcilable; but he left the indigenous social and political systems as he found them, and there was no economic discrimination against the conquered.

“It was as if there were falling down the map from the Serbian Empire an ooze of honey, runnels of wine. They must drip across Byzantium, they must spread all over the country to the sea, to the Bosphorus. To all men’s minds it became possible that some day Stephen Dushan might come to Constantinople and that he might be Emperor not only of the Byzantines but of Byzantium, seated at its centre in the palace that had known Constantine the Great and Justinian... His own age, and those who lived within recollection of its glory, believed him capable of that journey, and more....”

But it was not to be. Why? Because Dushan’s quarrel with Byzantium divided the Orthodox world at just the moment it needed to unite against their common enemy, the Turks. Indeed, it was the rivalry between the two Orthodox states that let the Turks into the Balkans, leading to the destruction of both... For, as Andrew Wheatcroft writes, “in 1350 the Byzantine Emperor, John Cantacuzenus, recruited [Sultan] Orhan’s Ottoman warriors in his campaign against the King of Serbia, Stephen Dushan. Three years later Orhan’s son, Suleiman, crossed the Hellespont to take possession of the fortresses promised as the price of their support. Within a few years, from their base at Gallipoli, the Ottomans had advanced to cut the road from Constantinople to the fortress town of Adrianople, the capital of Thrace.”

Still more importantly, the prosperity of the Serbian Empire under Dushan could not outweigh the injustice of his seizure of the throne, and, above all, the curse of the Church on the ecclesiastical and political disunity that he introduced into the Orthodox world. And so Dushan, for all his glory, was one of the few kings of the glorious Nemanja dynasty who is not inscribed among the saints. Like King Solomon’s in the Old Testament, his reign marks the culmination of his people’s glory in the political sphere, on the one hand, and on the other, the beginning of its decline in the spiritual sphere.

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In 1354 Patriarch Ioannikije died, and in 1355 - Tsar Dushan. “It was as if,” writes Fr. Daniel Rogich, “the passing of two great religious and secular leaders created a huge vacuum over the empire which was filled by a black cloud of lack of faith and political disaster. The upcoming events and internal and external strife would bring Serbia to the brink of political and religious disaster.

482 West, op. cit., pp. 893-894.
“The new leadership fell into the hands of Dushan’s son, King Urosh IV and Empress Helen. Urosh was only seventeen years old at the time... Being truly humble in spirit and less worldly than his departed father, Urosh was unable to control such a vast territory. In fact many began to call him Urosh ‘the Weak’. As a result, the next twenty years saw the breakup of the entire region of the southern territory of the Serbian empire, as well as a vying for power in the northern half.”

In 1371 the Serbs were disastrously defeated by Sultan Murad I on the Maritsa, and in the same year Tsar Urosh died. However, at this point the Serbian Prince Lazar of Krushevac gradually began to reunite the Serbs with the slogan, Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava, that is, “Only Unity Saves the Serbs”.

Still more important, he finally managed to heal the ecclesiastical break with Constantinople. “In the spring of 1375, Holy Lazar called a National Church Assembly, inviting all civil leaders and bishops to his palace in Krushevac. The widowed Empress Helen, Dushan’s wife, was given a special place of honor, and Patriarch Sava IV served as the ecclesiastical head of the meeting. It was decided at the gathering to bless the virtuous monk Isaiah of Hilandar, with monks Theophanes, Silvester, Niphon, and Nicodemus as companions, to travel to Constantinople to visit His Holiness, Patriarch Philotheos (1364-1376). Due to the letters of the Patriarch and Holy Tsar Lazar, Patriarch Philotheos granted, as Archbishop Danilo II wrote in his Lives of the Kings and Archbishops of Serbia, ‘that the Serbs would no longer simply have an archbishop, but an autocephalous Patriarch over whom no one would exercise authority.’ The Patriarch also forgave Tsar Dushan, Patriarch Ioannikios, Patriarch Sava IV, King Urosh IV, and all the Serbian Orthodox Christians. He also sent two hieromonks, Matthew and Moses, to Prizren to celebrate Divine Liturgy with His Holiness Patriarch Sava IV, and to pronounce over the grave of Tsar Dushan in Pristina the revocation of the anathema. This took place on Thomas Sunday, April 29, 1375. Shortly thereafter Patriarch Sava IV fell asleep in the Lord, and Tsar Lazar summoned the Synod of Bishops, which elevated the venerable elder Ephraim as the new Patriarch of Serbia”.

In spite of this inspiring miracle of political and ecclesiastical peacemaking, the Turks continued to make inroads into Serbia, culminating in the famous battle of Kosovo Polje (Blackbird Field) in 1389, at which the Sultan was killed, but also 77,000 Serbs, including Tsar Lazar. According to tradition, on the eve of the battle King Lazar had a vision in which he was offered a choice between an earthly victory and an earthly kingdom, or an earthly defeat that would win him the Heavenly Kingdom. He chose the latter and lost the battle – but his incorrupt relics continue to work miracles to this day.

485 Rogich, Great Martyr Tsar Lazar of Serbia, pp. 11-12.
For as Patriarch Danilo wrote in his late-fourteenth century *Narrative about Prince Lazar*: “We have lived for a long time in the world, in the end we seek to accept the martyr’s struggle and live for ever in heaven. We call ourselves Christian soldiers, martyrs for godliness to be recorded in the book of life... Suffering begets glory and labours lead to peace.”

According to the great Serbian Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, it was this conscious seeking of martyrdom, rather than self-preservation, that distinguished Kosovo from all other battles between Orthodox armies and the enemies of Orthodoxy. “As the dead are dressed in new and expensive clothes, so was the Serbian army dressed in its best robes. The shiny and glowing procession hurried from all the borders of the empire into the focus of honour and fame, to the field of Kosovo. Shaded by cross-shaped banners and the icons of the family saints (slava), singing and cheering, singing and playing musical instruments, with song and joy, the army rushed towards its place of execution. Not a single Christian martyr is known to have prayed to God to save him from his approaching death, while thousands and thousands are known to have prayed not to be spared from a martyr’s death. Neither did Lazar’s army hold prayers for salvation from death. On the contrary – it confessed its sins and took Communion – for death. One whole armed people as one Christian martyr, obedient to the thoughtful will of the Almighty, accepted the bitterness of death and that not as bitterness but as a vital force. And hasn’t Kosovo right up to the present day, indeed, served as a vital force to dozens of generations? In the history of the Christian peoples there is not a case of one whole army, one whole armed people being imbued by the wish to die, to meet death for the sake of its religion. Not to meet a suicidal but a heroic death. Kosovo is unique in the twenty-century-old history of the Christian world.”

However, as he stood dying, supported in the arms of a Turkish soldier, the holy king began to have doubts. “He prayed to God to reply to the question that was tormenting him: ‘I am a sinner, and I am dying, but why are my people and my warriors condemned to this torment, to these sufferings?’ And at this moment the king remembered that he had once made a choice between the earthly kingdom and the Heavenly Kingdom. And at that time he had chosen the Heavenly Kingdom. Perhaps his choice had been incorrect, and he had stirred up his people, forcing it to suffer. This thought tormented the dying king. Perhaps it was this decision of his that had become the main reason for the defeat of Serbia and the destruction of his people, the destruction of his closest friends...

“At that moment, when the pain in the soul of the king was so deep that he could no longer feel his physical sufferings, he was suddenly overshadowed by a bright light, and before him there stood an angel and someone else in

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shining raiment. (This was the Prophet Amos – King Lazarus’ holy ‘slava’, that is, his heavenly protector – Nun I).

“The angel addressed him with the following words: ‘Do not grieve, King Lazarus. I am sent from God. I have been sent to you to answer all the questions which are tearing your soul apart. Do not suffer thinking that you made an incorrect choice. Your choice was correct’…

“He said: ‘Why has your country fallen? Because it has grown old.’

“Seeing the perplexity of the king, the angel explained that old age is not a physical condition, but a spiritual one (more precisely, not old age, but spiritual paralysis). The poison of sin had poisoned the Serbian nobility and made it old, and this poison was beginning also to penetrate the people and poison its soul. Only a powerful storm could sweep away this evil, the corrupting spirit of the poison, and save the people from the destruction that threatened it. And so in order to save the country spiritually (from sin), it would have to be overthrown. ‘Do not grieve, king,’ continued the Angel, ‘your choice was correct and in agreement with the will of God. It is clear that Christ Himself and His angels, while confirming the sufferings of life, have given them a special higher meaning and thereby forced man to find in them a higher righteousness: to find in these sufferings the path to a better life.’

King Lazarus had to understand this inner and higher meaning of sufferings. These sufferings had to be perceived by him as a voluntary exploit taken on by him and his people, an exploit of love for the highest principles of life.

“The world cannot accept this love, for it loves only itself with a love of the flesh and sensuality.

“‘No, king, no,’ said the angel, ‘you made no mistake in your choice, and therefore you will receive a double crown, both a heavenly and an earthly. You have made the right choice, but you are sinning in doubting it.’

“‘But how can my choice of the Heavenly Kingdom,’ asked the king, ‘bring good to my people?’

“Your choice of the Heavenly Kingdom will undoubtedly give unwaning benefit to your people. It will purify their mind, heart and will. It will transfigure their souls into radiant mirrors in which eternal life will be reflected. The Heavenly Kingdom will enter into them and will make them worthy of It. Their minds will be purified from impurity, and their hearts will become worthy of grace. ‘In Thy light shall we see light’...

“Since neither the example of the saints of your people, not the sermons of the priests have produced any benefit or positive result, Providence allowed this terrible death, this killing of your noble generals, and your death. Then will come a time of deep repentance, silence and sufferings. And so, step by step, the hearts of people will have to be drawn away from this world and
return to Heaven. Their hearts must be freed from the smoke of hell and be filled with the true Light...

“One more question tormented King Lazarus: ‘Will not slavery destroy that feeling of inner freedom which is innate in my people? And will not all their talents and abilities dry up under the heavy yoke of slavery?’

The angel replied: ‘Your words, O king, witness to the fact that you are still in the chains of the flesh. But in the Heavens human affairs are evaluated only in accordance with the motives that rule man. All the rest: cities, palaces, mechanisms – are emptiness without any value. Huge cities are all just the dust of the roads, smoke that vanishes. A small, pitiful bee can laugh on looking at your huge towers and empires. And how is one to explain to a bird sitting in a cage this inner, deep meaning of the freedom of a free bird? Those who have chosen the earthly kingdom cannot understand those who have chosen the Heavenly Kingdom. Their evil will is united with the demonic will and so they cannot look on the Heavenly Kingdom. The entrance into it is closed to them. And they have no freedom, they are the slaves of their flesh and the demons.

‘Understand, O king, that this sad day may be the day of the turning of your people, not to evil, but to good. Until now their earthly will has dragged them down into the abyss of eternal death. Beginning from now, your people must carry out the will of another, and this can teach them to carry out the will of God, separating them from self-opinion and self-will.

‘They will have to submit to the will of a cruel tyrant, and so will be able to understand and hate their own tyranny, the tyranny of their flesh over their soul. Through the years and centuries, labours and sorrows will teach them to hate these evil powers, their own will and the will of their slave-owners.

‘And so the people will strive upwards, to heaven, as a tree in a thick wood, and will seek the bright light of their Creator, for, not possessing anything earthly, they will easily acquire the Heavenly Light; for they will hate both their own will and the will of their slave-owners. And then the Divine will will become for them sweeter than milk and honey.

‘... And so, O king, say to God: ‘Thy will be done.’ It is possible to understand the meaning of the cross and sufferings only if one voluntarily accepts to take up the cross sent by God. Taking up the cross is a witness to one’s love for God through one’s voluntary sufferings. The cross is the witness of holy love.’

“The angel also explained the meaning of freedom. What does freedom mean? It is a symbol. The word ‘freedom’ has many meanings. When the external form of freedom changes to the tyranny of one man over another, and is not punished by the laws of the country, then the Lord takes away the
freedom of this nation and casts it into the ‘school’ of slavery, so that the people may esteem and understand true freedom. But this true, golden freedom is closely linked with the honourable cross. Only through the cross is golden freedom revealed to people. Golden freedom is true, unfailing freedom. And only that mortal man who acquires such freedom becomes truly free, and not the slave of the flesh and passions. Then it truly becomes free from illusions, fleshly passions and glory, free from people and demons, free from himself, from his passions. Free at all times and in all places, wherever he may be, whether in freedom or in slavery. This gem is preserved precisely in the depths of the human soul. True freedom is that freedom which cannot be taken away from man by prison or any foreign power. Without this freedom man is a pitiful slave, be he a king or the meanest servant. This freedom is not from obedience to God, but this freedom is in God - the true, eternal, joyful and golden freedom.

“… And the angel added: ‘It is better to acquire the Kingdom of Heaven by sufferings that the kingdom of the earth by evil. And there is no evil on earth, or in hell, that could conquer the eternal wisdom of the Heavens.’

“After these words of the angel, Lazarus was no longer spiritually the old man, but was renewed in spirit. His soul was enlightened by the spirit of the Heavens. And although the battle still raged around him, in his soul Lazarus felt a new, eternal life and eternal joy. He sighed deeply and said: ‘Amen’.”

Northern Serbia retained some independence from the Turks for a few more decades. But the Bulgars were overwhelmed. Under Tsar Ivan Alexander (1331-71) they recovered somewhat; but the “Autocrat of all Bulgarians and Greeks” had the same ambition as had Tsar Dushan of replacing Roman universalism with the ethnic principle. St. Theodosius, of Trnovo (+1363) prophesied that the Turks would conquer the Bulgarian land because of its sins. And so it turned out: in 1393, Trnovo was conquered, the Bulgarian state was dissolved and the patriarch, St. Euthymius, was deposed.

Byzantium survived for over sixty years after Kosovo Polye and the fall of Bulgaria. In this there is a moral: that the persistent attempts of the Slavic states to achieve equal status, ecclesiastically as well as politically, with Byzantium were not pleasing to God insofar as the spiritual leadership of the Orthodox world was still entrusted by God to Byzantium. But it was a different story with a third Slavic state to the north – Russia.

A new phase in Russian history had begun in 1299, when Metropolitan Maximus of Kiev, whose title now included the phrase “of all Russia”, moved the seat of the Russian metropolitanate from the devastated ruins of Kiev in the South to Vladimir-Suzdal in the North. In this way the Church followed where the State, in the person of St. Andrew of Bogolyubovo, had led in the previous century. This indicated that the political leadership of Russia had to come from the north, from the area that we shall now call “Great Russia”, as opposed to “Little Russia” in the south, centred on Kiev, or “White Russia” in the west, which was increasingly coming under the dominion of the pagan rulers of Lithuania.

On the death of Maximus, Grand-Prince Yury of Galicia petitioned Patriarch Athanasius I to consecrate a “metropolitan of Galicia”. This move was potentially very dangerous for the unity of the Russian lands. For once the Russian territories under Lithuanian rule had their own metropolitan, they might be tempted to break with Great Russia ecclesiastically as well as politically. And this in turn would certainly expose Little Russia to the danger of absorption into Roman Catholicism, which threatened from Poland and the Baltic German lands… It appears that the patriarchate recognised its mistake, because when Maximus died and Grand Prince Yury put forward a Galician abbot, Peter, for the metropolitanate of Galicia, the patriarchate appointed him “metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia” instead, rejecting the candidate put forward by the great prince of Vladimir, Michael of Tver.

Beginning with St. Peter, the metropolitans firmly maintained their rights to rule over the whole of the Russian flock, having for this the support of the Tatars in the same way that the ecumenical patriarch would later have the support of the Turks. St. Peter moved the seat of Church government again, from Vladimir to Moscow – that is, to the town whose princes, more than any

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Footnote:
490 That this was a real threat already in the fourteenth century, and even in some parts of Great Russia, is illustrated by an incident that took place in Novgorod, which was traditionally, because of its foreign merchant colony, less anti-Catholic than other parts of Great Russia. “On one occasion at the end of the fourteenth century, the city, in bargaining with the patriarch of Constantinople for privileges for its archbishop, threatened to go to Rome as a final argument. This threat was not serious and did not fail to elicit a severe rebuke from the patriarch, but, up to the time of the loss of their independence, the Novgorodians saw no objection against a political alliance with the Catholic kings of Lithuanian Poland” (G. Fedotov, The Russian Religious Mind, Harvard University Press, 1966, vol. I, p. 336).
others, followed the “Alexandrian” pro-Tatar and anti-Catholic policy, and which was neither too far east to be under the shadow of the Tatars nor too far west to be under the shadow of the Lithuanians. And the Tatar Khan in a gramota of 1315 gave to the prince of Moscow the same privileges in the State that he had already given to the metropolitan in the Church.

St. Peter advised Great Prince Ivan I Danilovich to build a stone church dedicated to the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God, which became the first church of Russia. “If, my son, you obey me, and build the church of the Most Pure Mother of God, and give me rest in your city, God will bless you and make you higher than all the other princes, and will extend this city more than all other cities. And your race will possess this place to the ages.”

In 1326 St. Peter moved his see to Moscow, and died in December of the same year. As he had prophesied, a process of political and economic centralisation around Moscow now began. The first step in this process consisted in the replacing of Tver by Moscow as the most favoured principality in the eyes of the Mongols.

Now the Mongols liked to appoint one of the Russian princes as their chief tax-collector for the Russian dominions. In exchange for providing the Horde with regular income, this prince was given the Great Princely title, was protected from Mongol raids and had the opportunity of making considerable gains for himself from the other tribute-paying princes. At the time of St. Peter’s death, the prince of Tver had the “yarlik” of tax-collector and Great Prince. Almost immediately, however, in 1327, the citizens of Tver rose up against the khan and killed a high-level deputation from the Mongol capital of Sarai sent to oversee the collection of tribute. After some hesitation, the prince of Tver sided with the rebels – which gave Prince Ivan of Moscow his chance. He set off for Sarai and returned at the head of a Mongol-Russian force which devastated Tver. In reward for this service, the khan bestowed the title of Grand Prince on Ivan together with the responsibility of farming all the taxes due to the khan from the whole of Russia.

In 1345 Great-Prince Olgerd ascended the throne of Lithuania. He was a pagan; but, as Papadakis writes, he “would extend his domains over Russian territories from the Baltic to the Black seas, including the prestigious city of Kiev. His avowed goal was to free Russia from the Mongol rule and assume the legacy of the ancient Kievan princes. To reach that goal he was ready to embrace Orthodox Christianity, which was already the religion of his two successive wives (who were Russian princesses), of all his numerous children, and of the vast majority of his subjects. However, it was not Olgerd byt “the

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Church [that] was actually holding the trump card: the real center of the country had to be the metropolitan’s residence, since that prelate controlled the only administrative structure covering Moscow, Novgorod, Kiev, Vilna (the Lithuanian capital) and distant Galicia. He was, in addition, a representative of Byzantium and a religious official respected by the Tatar khans.”

It was at about this time, in 1347, that Olgerd’s supposed conversion to Orthodoxy was not genuine: three young Orthodox, Anthony, John and Eustathius, were martyred by him in Vilna for refusing to accept paganism. It then suddenly became clear to all those with eyes to see that the interests of Orthodoxy lay with Moscow rather than Lithuania. And at the same time the issue of the metropolitanate again became of political importance.

In 1353, Metropolitan Theognostus of Kiev, a Greek, had “personally arranged his succession in the person of a Russian, Alexis, whom he had consecrated as bishop of Vladimir… In 1352 the Lithuanian grand-prince strongly demanded from the patriarchate that the seat of the metropolitanate be returned to Kiev, and even sent his candidate, Theodoret, to Constantinople for consecration. Facing a rebuke, he took the unusual step of having Theodoret ordained by the Bulgarian patriarch of Trnovo. Understandably, Theodoret was labelled a schismatic in Constantinople and in Moscow…”

The Ecumenical Patriarch, St. Philotheus, wanted to preserve the unity of the Russian metropolitanate and resist the divisive plans of Olgerd. So in 1354 he consecrated Bishop Alexis as metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia. Alexis was a holy man who in 1357 had healed the influential widow of khan Uzbek, Taidul, and consequently had great authority with the Golden Horde. Almost immediately, however, a political and ecclesiastical coup took place in the capital. John VI Cantacuzenos was forced to abdicate, and “with Genoese assistance,” as Colin Wells writes, “John V Paleologos resumed the throne as sole emperor. Cantacuzenos’ patriarch, Philotheos, was deposed, and the new government installed his rival, Callistos.

“The new Genoese-controlled government in Constantinople now swung towards Olgerd, the powerful grand prince of Lithuania, as a counter to Moscow. Callistos offered Olgerd his own ‘metropolitan of the Lithuanians’, for which position the Lithuanian ruler nominated a Russian from Tver named Roman [he had by this time dropped Theodoret]. The patriarchal archives record Byzantine impressions of Olgerd’s motive: ‘to find a means, with Roman’s help, of ruling Great Russia’, as the northeastern provinces were now called. Since he already ruled ‘Little Russia’, including Kiev, it was clear that Olgerd was making a bid to take over all of Russia.

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493 Papadakis, op. cit., p. 337.
494 Papadakis, op. cit., p. 338.
“In keeping with Olgerd’s ambitions, Roman soon began styling himself metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia, moving his residency to Kiev and ignoring Callistos’ injunctions that he respect the claims of Alexis, the rightful metropolitan, whom Philotheos had installed before Cantacuzenos’ resignation, and who resided in Moscow. But Roman died in 1362, and Callistos – perhaps under Cantacuzenos’ renewed influence behind the scenes – reunified the Russian metropolitanate under Alexis.

“Olgerd wasn’t about to give up so easily. Over the next decade and a half until his death in 1377, the energetic Lithuanian grand prince challenged Moscow for control of Russia. That struggle was a major watershed in Eastern European history. It reached its peak in his unsuccessful siege of Moscow in 1368, which was repelled by Moscow’s grand prince Dimitri II, not yet the victor of the Don. Olgerd’s campaign continued even after that defeat. It turned Alexis and the metropolitanate into political footballs...”

Thus in 1369 Great Prince Dimitri, having consolidated his position within Great Russia, sent an army against Lithuanian-controlled Smolensk and Briansk.

“At the same time Metropolitan Alexis excommunicated from the Church those princes who had entered into union with the Lithuanian pagans against the Christian prince of Moscow.”

By this time, Philotheos had resumed control of the patriarchate on the death of Callistos in 1363 – and resumed also his support of St. Alexis. Olgerd hit back by complaining to Philotheos that Alexis never visited his flock in Lithuania, and asked him to grant a second metropolitan for all the lands which he and his allies controlled. He was supported by a threat coming from King Casimir of Poland, as Papadakis writes, “forcibly to convert the Galicians to Roman Catholicism. Faced with an emergency situation, Philotheus reestablished a separate [but temporary] metropolitanate in Galicia (1371), and called on Alexis to exercise more even-handedness towards Olgerd and his Orthodox subjects. [In particular, he was to visit them more often.] In 1375, he also consecrated a man of his immediate entourage, the learned Bulgarian monk Cyprian, as metropolitan in Lithuania. He made sure, however, that this consecration would not lead to a lasting division of the metropolitanate: Cyprian received the right to succeed Alexis. Upon his arrival in Kiev in 1376, he restored order and the prestige of the metropolitanate in territories controlled by Lithuania.”

At the same time, Great Prince Dimitri was bringing Tver, which previously had been in the Lithuanian sphere of influence, in vassalage to himself, and Prince Sviatoslav of Smolensk broke with Olgerd and entered into union with Dimitri. With the change in political orientation in these lands, Metropolitan Alexis was able to appoint new bishops for Smolensk and

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495 Wells, op. cit., pp. 257-258.
496 Boris Floria, “Tochka raspada” (“The Point of Dissolution”), Rodina (Homeland), N 11, 2003, p. 29
497 Papadakis, op. cit., p. 339
Briansk. As Lithuania began to be threatened by the Catholic Teutonic knights from the Baltic, Prince Dimitri took the title “Great Prince of all Russia” when signing a treaty with Novgorod; and it looked as if the reunification of the Russian lands under Moscow was about to begin....

At about this time the Metropolitan of Lithuania Cyprian urged a union between Orthodox Muscovy and Lithuania against the Tatars. However, this policy was not favoured by the Muscovite Great-Prince. And so when Cyprian hastened to Moscow on the death of St. Alexis in 1378 he was imprisoned and then expelled from Moscow, which led to a prolonged struggle to fill the vacant metropolitan’s throne...

Encouraged by another coup in Constantinople, Dimitri sent his candidate for the metropolitanate, Mityai, to the City. But Cyprian had got there before him – and another coup changed the situation again in Cyprian’s favour. Besides, as Mityai came within sight of the City he dropped dead...

But in 1380 the pendulum swung again. The new patriarch, Neilos, could not resist the pressure of Dimitri, and decided on a compromise. A man called Pimen was consecrated metropolitan of Kiev and Great Russia, while Cyprian was given Lithuania and Little Russia.

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It was at this time that one of the greatest saints of this or any other age, Sergius of Radonezh, assumed the spiritual leadership of the Russian Church. In 1380, a Tatar usurper, Mamai, invaded Muscovy. He was claiming unpaid tribute, and was supported by Genoa, Ryazan – and Lithuania under Olgerd’s son Jagiello. St. Sergius blessed the Great-Prince to fight only when all other measures had failed498: “You, my lord prince, must care and strongly stand for your subjects, and lay down your life for them, and shed your blood in the image of Christ Himself, Who shed His blood for us. But first, O lord, go to them with righteousness and obedience, as you are bound to submit to the khan of the Horde in accordance with your position. You know, Basil the Great tried to assuage the impious Julian with gifts, and the Lord looked on Basil’s humility and overthrew the impious Julian. And the Scripture teaches us that such enemies want glory and honour from us, we give it to them; and if they want silver and gold, we give it to them; but for the name of Christ, the Orthodox faith, we must lay down our lives and shed our blood. And you, lord, give them honour, and gold, and sliver, and God will not allow them to overcome us: seeing your humility, He will exalt you and thrust down their unending pride.”

498 The following account, though accepted before the revolution, has been rejected more recently by scholars who argue that St. Sergius could not have blessed the Great-Prince, who had been excommunicated by St. Cyprian, Metropolitan of Moscow. See Oleg Morozov, “Novie Russkie Sviatie”, Portal-Credo.Ru, February 5, 2016. However, in lieu of a definitive consensus among the historians, I have chosen to keep the following account in this work, especially in view of its important didactic content.
“I have already done that,” replied the Great Prince: “but my enemy is exalted still more.”

“If so,” said the God-pleaser, “then final destruction awaits him, while you, Great Prince, can expect help, mercy and glory from the Lord. Let us hope on the Lord and the Most Pure Mother of God, that They will not abandon you”. And he added: “You will conquer your enemies.”

Fortified by the blessing of the saint, Great-Prince Demetrius defeated the enemy at the great battle of Kulikovo Polje, at which over 100,000 Russian warriors gave their lives for the Orthodox faith and their Russian homeland. Some have seen in this, the first victory of the Russians over the Tatars, a sign that the Russians had changed the policy of submission to the Tartars that they had inherited from St. Alexander Nevsky, and that St. Sergius actively blessed a policy of rebellion against those whom previous princes and metropolitans had seen as their lawful sovereigns. However, as we have seen, the saint advised submission in the first place, and war only if the Tatar could not be bought off. Moreover, it needs to be borne in mind that Mamai was himself a rebel against the Horde, so that in resisting him the Russians were in no way rebelling against their lawful sovereigns. In any case, two years later the lawful khan came and sacked Moscow; so there was not, and could not be, any radical change in policy. It was not until a century later, in 1480, that the Muscovites refused to pay any further tribute to the khans. The real significance of Kulikovo Polje lies in the fact that a union of princes had defeated an external foe under the leadership of the Orthodox Church, thereby holding out the promise that the spiritual unity of the Russian lands, which had never been lost, could be complemented by that political unity which had been lost two hundred years before.

To seal this spiritual unity, Metropolitan Cyprian returned in triumph to Moscow in the spring of 1381. “A chronicler relates that he was greeted with great rejoicing among the people. He resumed his active promotion of ecclesiastical unity, conspicuously ministering to the Orthodox in Lithuanian-controlled ‘Little Russia’ (which included Kiev).

“But he also made it clear that this unity now cohered around Moscow, exalting it as the divinely favored center of Orthodoxy in Russia. His Life of Peter, written at this time, pointedly celebrates his illustrious predecessor, the metropolitan who had first taken up residence in Moscow. Dimitri and his dynasty benefited immensely from such influential propaganda. The Life of Peter glorifies them as the legitimate heirs of Kievan rule, specially anointed to hold sway over the lands of the Orthodox Russians…”

Archimandrite Nikon, Zhittie i Pobedy Prepodobnago i Bogonosnago Otsa Nashego Sergia, Igumena Radonezhskago (The Life and Victories of our Holy and God-bearing Father Sergius, Abbot of Radonezh), Sergiev Posad, 1898, p. 149

Wells, op. cit., p. 270.
As it turned out, in spite of the pan-Russian vision of such leaders as Metropolitan Cyprian and St. Sergius, political union with Lithuania was not achieved: although, in 1383, the Lithuanian Great Prince Jagiello signed a treaty with Moscow and agreed to convert to Orthodoxy, he quickly changed his mind and instead, in 1386, converted to Catholicism, which led to the union of Lithuania with Catholic Poland and the increasing identification of Russian Orthodoxy and Russian Orthodox statehood with Muscovite Great Russia alone. Nevertheless, although only Great Russia remained faithful to the ecumenical vision of Orthodoxy, that vision, drawing strength from the Palamite renewal of monasticism taking place in Constantinople and the Balkan lands, helped produce that flowering of monasticism, iconography and missionary activity that makes the Age of St. Sergius such a glorious one in the annals of Russian history. The northern forests were covered with new monasteries founded by the disciples of St. Sergius (over 100 of whom were canonized). And icon-painters such as Andrei Rublev glorified the newly-built churches with their wonderful works.

Moreover, it was at this time that, under the influence of St. Sergius, Great-Prince Dimitri ordered his children to observe a new order of inheritance, whereby his eldest son was to inherit the Great Princedom, not allowing any quarrels or claims from the other children. Once again, St. Sergius was entrusted with guarding this most important decree, which served to strengthen the institution of one-man, autocratic rule in Russia. For, as St. John Maximovich writes, “under Dimitri Ivanovich the significance of the Great Prince grew mightily. The most powerful appanages of the Great Prince – Tver and Ryazan – were forced to conclude agreements with him in which they recognised themselves to be his younger brothers... Basil Dimitrievich continued the work of his father. He joined some appanages to Moscow, and with the remaining appanage princes he concluded agreements to the effect that they had to submit to him and not seek the Great Princedom.”

Although Dimitri again quarreled with St. Cyprian and replaced him with Pimen, on the deaths of both Dimitri and Pimen in 1388, Cyprian reentered Moscow again in 1390 as the unchallenged metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia...

The Russians’ defeat of the Mongols at Kulikovo Polje in 1380 and the Serbs’ defeat by the Ottomans at Kosovo Polje in 1389, represent the opposite poles of Orthodox fortunes in the Middle Ages. The first marked the beginning of the rise of the last of the Orthodox autocracies, while the second marked the beginning of the end of Orthodox autocracy in its original Mediterranean homeland.

The Fall of Bulgaria in 1393 exposed Constantinople to the Turks, and the West summoned a large army under King Sigismund of Hungary to rescue the first city of Christendom. The two armies met at Nicopolis in 1396. The Turks won…

Now the Serbian Despot Stephen Lazarevich was a Turkish vassal, and had to fight on the Turkish side. However, it may be that, like St. Alexander Nevsky 150 years before, he consciously chose to support the Turks rather than the Catholics, seeing in the latter a greater danger to the Serbian Faith and Nation. In partial support of this hypothesis, Barbara Tuchman writes that, “as a vassal of the Sultan,” Stephen “might have chosen passive neutrality like the Bulgarians on whose soil the struggle was being fought, but he hated the Hungarians more than the Turks, and chose active fidelity to his Moslem overlord. His intervention was decisive. Sigismund’s forces were overwhelmed.”

The way to Constantinople was now open for the Turks. But once again God saved the Orthodox when all human support had failed: at the battle of Ancyra in 1402 the Turkish Sultan Bayezit (with Stephen Lazarevich again fighting on his side) was defeated by the Mongol Tamerlane, one of the greatest and most ruthless conquerors in history. “Later the same year,” writes Simon Sebag Montefiore, “he annihilated the Christian city of Smyrna, floating the severed heads of his victims out to sea on candlelit dishes. By 1404, even the Byzantine emperor John I was paying him tribute in return for a guarantee of safety.”

However, the political and military position of the Empire continued to decline. The City itself was ravaged and largely depopulated; its inhabitants dragged out a miserable existence, ill-fed, ill-clothed and demoralized. In a desperate last throw of the dice, the Byzantines decided to unite with the Roman Church in exchange for the promise of military help against the Turks…

Outside the City, the only considerable Byzantine possession was the Despotate of Morea, now known as the Peloponnese. Andronicus Palaeologus had given Thessalonica into the hands of the Venetians, who then, in 1430, lost it to the Turks. There, in the capital of Mystra, a last flourishing of Byzantine civilization took place… And yet it was a strange flourishing when Mystra’s most famous citizen, the philosopher George Gemistus Plethon, was a student of Aristotle, Zoroaster and the Jewish Cabala, and who was discovered, after his death, to have been a believer in the pagan Greek gods!


Colin Wells writes: “In so flagrantly abandoning Orthodox Byzantium for ancient Greece, Pletho represents an extreme version of the classicizing tendency that had helped drive the humanists [students of the “Outer Wisdom”, pagan classical literature and art] further and further from the Byzantine mainstream. Most Byzantines had already paid their money and taken their choice, and their choice was not Pletho’s. Their most urgent priority was to save their immortal souls, not to preserve what was an essentially Greek state. Imbued with Hesychasm’s somber, otherworldly tones, the mainstream of Byzantine civilization had already turned towards a better life in the next world while resigning itself to Turkish captivity in this one. For his self-reliant stand against the Turks, Pletho has been called the first Greek nationalist – so ardent was he, in fact, that he argued against church union not for religious reasons but for patriotic ones, preferring to find strength from within [the Byzantine state].”

Negotiations with Rome dragged on, “held up partly”, as Runciman writes, “by the Pope’s difficulties with the leaders of the Conciliar movement [in the West] and partly by the uneasy situation in the East. At one moment it seemed that a Council might take place at Constantinople; but the Turkish siege of the city in 1422 made it clear that it was no place for an international congress. Manuel II retired from active politics in 1423 and died two years later. His son, John VIII, was convinced that the salvation of the Empire depended upon union and tried to press for a Council; but he was unwilling at first to allow it to take place in Italy; while the Papacy still had problems to settle in the West. Delays continued. It was not until the beginning of 1438 that plans were completed and the Emperor arrived with his delegation at a Council recently opened in Ferrara and transferred to Florence [at the urging of Cosimo de Medici] in January 1439.”

The Greek delegation consisted of 700 ecclesiastical and lay notables, including twenty metropolitans. The leader of the bishops was Patriarch Joseph II of Constantinople. He had previously told the Emperor: “The Church must go in front of the power of the Emperor, or next to it, but in no way behind it.” And yet he meekly followed the same Emperor to Florence and submitted to his instructions. Moreover, he was prepared to make critical concessions on the issue of the Filioque, agreeing with the Latins that the prepositions “proceeding through” and “proceeding from” meant the same.

But he did not become a Roman Catholic... One day, as Hefele writes, “The Patriarch was found dead in his room. On the table lay (supposedly) his testament, Extrema Sententia, consisting in all of some lines in which he declared that he accepted everything that the Church of Rome confesses. And

then: "In like manner I acknowledge the Holy Father of Fathers, the Supreme Pontiff and Vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Pope of Old Rome. Likewise, I acknowledge purgatory. In affirmation of this, I affix my signature."

"There is no doubt whatever that Patriarch Joseph did not write this document. The German scholar Frommman, who made a detailed investigation of the "Testament" of Patriarch Joseph, says: "This document is so Latinized and corresponds so little to the opinion expressed by the Patriarch several days before, that its spuriousness is evident." 508

The need for western military help was not the only factor that propelled the Byzantines to Florence. Another was the idea, dear to the humanists whose influence was increasing in Byzantium, that Greek culture was so precious that it had to be preserved at all costs. But “Greek culture” for the humanists meant the pagan culture of Classical Greece, not the Orthodox civilization of the Holy Fathers; and by the fifteenth century, by contrast with the eleventh or even the thirteenth century, the Latins had become almost as enthusiastic fans of pagan Greek culture as the Greeks themselves. So it was much more likely that the Latins would preserve that culture than the Turks. Thus better for the humanists the pope’s tiara than the sultan’s turban...

However, it was not only humanists or Greek nationalists that looked with hope towards the council in Florence. Paradoxically, even some of those who remained true Romans – that is, who valued the universalist heritage of Christian Rome more than any specifically Hellenistic elements, and for whom the true glory of the empire was its Orthodoxy – were attracted by the prospect. In the minds of some, this was because the idea of imperial unity between East and West was inextricably linked with that of ecclesiastical unity.

Thus Fr. John Meyendorff writes that an essential element of the Byzantine world-view “was an immovable vision of the empire’s traditional borders. At no time – not even in the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries – did the Byzantines abandon the idea that the empire included both East and West, that ideally its territories comprised Spain as well as Syria, and that the ‘Old Rome’ somehow remained its historical source and symbolic center in spite of the transfer of the capital to Constantinople. There were theological polemics against the ‘Latins’; there was popular hatred against the ‘Franks’, especially after the Crusades; there was resentment against the commercial colonization of Byzantine lands by the Venetians and the Genoese, but the ideal vision of the universal empire remained, expressed particularly in the exclusive ‘Roman’ legitimacy of the Byzantine emperor. As late as 1393, patriarch Anthony of Constantinople, in his often-quoted letter to the grand-prince Basil I of Moscow urging him not to oppose the liturgical commemoration of the emperor in Russian churches, expresses the utterly unrealistic but firm conviction that the emperor is ‘emperor and autokrator of the Romans, that is, of all Christians’; that ‘in every place and by every patriarch, metropolitan and

bishop the name of the emperor is commemorated wherever there are Christians...’ and that ‘even the Latins, who have no communion whatsoever with our Church, give to him the same subordination, as they did in past times, when they were united with us.’ Characteristically, the patriarch maintains the existence of an imperial unity in spite of the schism dividing the churches.”

Another anachronistic idea from the sixth-century past that played a part here in the fifteenth century was that of the pentarchy – that is, the idea that the Church was composed of five patriarchal sees, like the five senses, of which Old Rome was one. Several completely Orthodox Byzantines even in the fourteenth century, such as Emperor John VI Cantacuzene and Patriarch Philotheus Kokkinos, had been in favour of an ecumenical council with Rome. Of course, the Latins were power-loving heretics. But this was not new. Even during the “Acacian schism” of the early sixth century Pope Hormisdas had presented overweening demands relating to the supremacy of the papacy, which Patriarch John the Cappadocian had accepted, adding only the significant phrase: “I proclaim that the see of the Apostle Peter and the see of this imperial city are one”. Could not the two sees be reunited again, this time under the leadership of the new Justinian, Emperor John VIII? And in this context Justinian’s idea of the pentarchy also became relevant again, for, as Meyendorff points out, it was “an important factor in the Byzantine understanding of an ‘ecumenical’ council, which required the presence of the five patriarchs, or their representatives, even as the Eastern sees of Alexandria and Antioch had, in fact, ceased to be influential. In any case, in the Middle Ages, these two interconnected elements – the theoretical legitimacy of the Byzantine emperor over the West and a lingering respect for the pentarchy, of which the Roman bishop was the leading member – made it into a requirement that a properly ecumenical council include the bishop of Rome (in spite of the schism), and the four Eastern patriarchs (although three of them were now heading churches which were barely in existence at all).”

Thus many factors – obedience to the emperor, fear for the fate of Hellenism, hopes of a reunion of Christendom - combined to undermine the resistance of most Greeks to the unia, which involved surrender to almost all the pope’s demands, including the Filioque and papal supremacy.

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During the council, the Latins wore down the Greeks with their scholastic reasoning. “The Papal theologian John Protonotarios, the Spaniard, otherwise known as Juan de Torquemada, uncle to the terrible Inquisitor Tomás de Torquemada, during one of the synodal assemblies, abused the logic of Aristotle to such an extent, that one Orthodox Bishop from Iberia was

510 Meyendorff, op. cit., p. 90.
overheard by Silvester Syropoulos, an eyewitness of this historic Synod, muttering: ‘Aristotle, Aristotle, why all this Aristotle when they should be quoting St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Basil, Gregory the Theologian, Chrysostom, but not Aristotle.’ Syropoulos says that he writes this to show how the Latins were condemned for their scholastic mentality, which was foreign to the authentic ecclesiastical spirit, not only by the Orthodox who attended the Synod, but also by those "who spoke other languages" who were present at the discussions.”

Throughout, the heretical Pope stubbornly insisted that the Orthodox were outside the Church: ““The most Holy Roman Church firmly believes, professes and preaches that none of those existing outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics, can have a share in life eternal; but that they will go into the eternal fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels, unless before death they are joined with Her; and that so important is the unity of this ecclesiastical body that only those remaining within this unity can profit by the sacraments of the Church unto salvation, and they alone can receive an eternal recompense for their fasts, their almsgivings, their other works of Christian piety and the duties of a Christian soldier. No one, let his almsgiving be as great as it may, no one, even if he pour out his blood for the Name of Christ, can be saved, unless he remain within the bosom and the unity of the Catholic Church.”

“In the end, weary of it all, longing to get home and, it was said, deliberately kept short of food and comforts, the whole Greek delegation, under orders from the Emperor and in obedience to the concordat of their Church with John V, signed the decree of union [on July 6, 1439], with the exception of Mark Evgenicus [Metropolitan of Ephesus], and, it seems, of Plethon…; and, after retiring for a while to his see of Ephesus, in Turkish territory, he submitted to pressure and abdicated.”

Michael Ducas records that on February 1, 1440, “the people of Constantinople kissed the hierarchs immediately as they disembarked from the triremes and they asked the hierarchs how things went. ‘What happened at the Synod? Were we successful?’ The hierarchs answered, ‘We sold our faith, we exchanged Godliness for godlessness, betraying the pure sacrifice, we became upholders of unleavened bread.’ They said all this and more obscene and sordid words. When they were asked why they had signed, they said ‘Because we feared the Latins.’ And when they were asked if the Latins had tortured them or whipped them or put them in prison they responded,

512 Runciman, op. cit., p. 109. Bishop Isaiah of Stavropol, the Bishop of Tver and Bishop Gregory of Georgia secretly left the city to avoid signing. George Scholarius, the future patriarch, together with John Evgenicos, St. Mark’s brother and the Despot Demetrius [of the Morea] also left earlier without signing. And the signature of Methodius of Lacedaemon is nowhere to be found… (The Lives of the Pillars of Orthodoxy, Buena Vista, CO: Holy Apostles Convent, 1990, p. 466)
‘No’. The people then asked them: ‘So what happened? Let the right hand that signed,’ they said, ‘be cut off and the tongue that professed [heresy] be pulled out from its root.’…

“The people spat in their faces, and history recorded them as betrayers and the people praised St. Mark of Ephesus as the pillar of Orthodoxy…” 513

In fulfillment of his side of the bargain, the Pope called on western leaders to mount a crusade against the Turks. The resultant “Crusade of Varna” set out from Hungary with twenty-five thousand men. It was crushed by the Turks at Varna in November, 1444…

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St. Mark now undertook the leadership of the anti-uniate Church with the motto: “There can be no compromise in matters of the Orthodox Faith.” 514
And again: “Let no one lord it over our faith, neither emperor, nor false council, not anyone else, but only the One God, Who Himself handed it down to us through His disciples.”

In July, 1440 St. Mark wrote: “To All Orthodox Christians on the Mainland and in the Islands.

“From Mark, Bishop of the Metropolis of Ephesus—Rejoice in Christ!

“To those who have ensnared us in an evil captivity—desiring to lead us away into the Babylon of Latin rites and dogmas—could not, of course, completely accomplish this, seeing immediately that there was little chance of it. In fact, that it was simply impossible. But having stopped somewhere in the middle—both they and those who followed after them—they neither remained any longer what they were, nor became anything else. For having quit Jerusalem, a firm and unwavering faith—and yet being in no condition and not wishing to become and to be called Babylonians—they thus called themselves, as if by right, ‘Greco-Latins,’ and among the people are called ‘Latinizers.’

“And so these split people, like the mythical centaurs, confess together with the Latins that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, and has the Son as Cause of His existence, and yet together with us confess that He proceeds from the Father. And they say together with them that the addition to the Creed (of the Filioque) was done canonically and with blessing, and yet together with us do not permit it to be uttered. (Besides, who would turn away from what was canonical and blessed?). And they say together with

514 “In the eyes of Mark even the complete political extinction of the Byzantine State was not as important as the preservation of the integrity of Orthodoxy” (Constantine Tsiapanlis, Mark Eugenicus and the Council of Florence, New York: Kentron Vyzantinon Erevnon, 1986, p. 60).
them that unleavened bread is the Body of Christ, and yet together with us do not dare to accept it. Is this not sufficient to reveal their spirit, and how that it was not in a quest for the Truth—which, having in their hands, they betrayed—that they came together with the Latins, but rather from a desire to enrich themselves and to conclude not a true, but false, union?

“But one should examine in what manner they have united with them; for everything that is united to something different is naturally united by means of some middle point between them. And thus they imagined to unite with them by means of some judgment concerning the Holy Spirit, together with expressing the opinion that He has existence also from the Son. But everything else between them is divergent, and there is among them neither any middle point nor anything in common. Just as before, two divergent Creeds are uttered. Likewise, there are celebrated two Liturgies, divergent and discordant one with the other—one with leavened bread, the other with unleavened bread. Divergent also are baptisms—one performed with triple immersion, the other with “pouring” over the head from above; one with anointing chrism, the other completely without. And all rites are in everything divergent and discordant one with the other, along with the fasts, church usages, and other, similar things…

“The pious canons speak thus: ‘He is a heretic and subject to the canons against heretics who even slightly departs from the Orthodox Faith.’ If, then, the Latins do not at all depart from the correct Faith, we have evidently cut them off unjustly. But if they have thoroughly departed [from the Faith]—and that in connection with the theology of the Holy Spirit, blasphemy against Whom is the greatest of all perils—then it is clear that they are heretics, and we have cut them off as heretics.

“Why do we anoint with chrism those of them who come to us? Is it not clear that it is because they are heretics? For the seventh canon of the Second Ecumenical Council states:

“‘As for those heretics who betake themselves to Orthodoxy, and to the lot of those being saved, we accept them in accordance with the subjoined sequence and custom: Arians, and Macedonians, and Sabbatians, and Novatians, those calling themselves Cathari (“Puritans”) and Aristeri (“Best”), and the Quartodecimans, otherwise known as Tetradites, and Apollinarians we accept when they offer libelli (recantations in writing), and anathematize every heresy that does not hold the same beliefs as the Catholic and Apostolic Church of God, and are sealed first with holy chrism on their forehead and their eyes, and nose, and mouth, and ears, and in sealing them we say: “The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit.”’

“Do you see with whom we number those who come from the Latins? If all those are heretics, then it is clear that these are the same…
If the Latin dogma is true that the Holy Spirit proceeds also from the Son, then ours is false that states that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father—and this is precisely the reason for which we separated from them. And if ours is true, then without a doubt, theirs is false. What kind of middle ground can there be between two such judgments? There can be none, unless it were some kind of judgment suitable to both the one and the other, like a boot that fits both feet. And will this unite us?..

And we affirm, in agreement with the Fathers, that the will and energy of the uncreated and divine nature are uncreated; while they, together with the Latins and Thomas, say that will is identical with nature, but that the divine energy is created, whether it be called divinity, or the divine and immaterial light, or the Holy Spirit, or something else of this nature—and in some fashion, these poor creatures worship the created ‘divinity’ and the created ‘divine light’ and the created ‘Holy Spirit.’

And we say that neither do the Saints receive the kingdom and the unutterable blessings already prepared for them, nor are sinners already sent to hell, but both await their fate which will be received in the future age after the resurrection and judgement; while they, together with the Latins, desire immediately after death to receive according to their merits. And for those in an intermediate condition, who have died in repentance, they give a purgatorial fire (which is not identical with that of hell) so that, as they say, having purified their souls by it after death, they also together with the righteous will enjoy the kingdom; this is contained in their Conciliar Decree.

And we, obeying the Apostles who have prohibited it, shun Jewish unleavened bread; while they, in the same Act of Union, proclaim that what is used in the services of the Latins is the Body of Christ.

And we say that the addition to the Creed arose un-canonically and anti-canonically and contrary to the Fathers; while they affirm that it is canonical and blessed—to such an extent are they unaware how to conform to the Truth and to themselves!

And for us, the Pope is as one of the Patriarchs, and that alone—if he be Orthodox; while they, with great gravity, proclaim him ‘Vicar of Christ, Father and Teacher of all Christians’ May they be more fortunate than their Father, who are also like him. For he does not greatly prosper, having an anti-pope who is the cause of sufficient unpleasantness; and they are not happy to imitate him.

And so, brethren, flee from them and from communion with them, for they are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works (II Corinthians 11:13–15). And in another place, the same
Apostle says of them: ‘For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly’; and by good words and fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the simple. Nevertheless, the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal (Romans 16:18; II Timothy 2:19). And in another place: ‘Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the circumcision’ (Philippians 3:2). And then, in another place: ‘But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you—let him be accursed’ (Galatians 1:8). See what has been prophetically foretold, that ‘though an angel from heaven,’ so that no one could cite in justification of himself an especially high position. And the beloved Disciple speaks thus: ‘If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting; for he that giveth him greeting is partaker in his evil deeds’ (II John 10–11).

‘Therefore, in so far as this is what has been commanded you by the Holy Apostles, stand aright, hold firmly to the traditions which you have received, both written and by word of mouth, that you be not deprived of your firmness if you are led away by the delusions of the lawless.

“May God, Who is all-powerful, make them also to know their delusion; and having delivered us from them as from evil tares, may He gather us into His granaries like pure and useful wheat, in Jesus Christ our Lord, to Whom belongs all glory, honor, and worship, with His Father Who is without beginning, and His All-holy and Good and Life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen.”

St. Mark’s confession had a good effect. In April 1443 when the three Patriarchs Joachim of Jerusalem, Philotheos of Alexandria, and Dorotheos of Antioch met in Jerusalem and condemned the Council of Florence as "vile" and Patriarch Metrophanes of Constantinople as a heretic.

On the day of his death in 1444, St. Mark said: “Concerning the [uniate] Patriarch I shall say this, lest it should perhaps occur to him to show me a certain respect at the burial of this my humble body, or to send to my grave any of his hierarchs or clergy or in general any of those in communion with him in order to take part in prayer or to join the priests invited to it from amongst us, thinking that at some time, or perhaps secretly, I had allowed communion with him. And lest my silence give occasion to those who do not know my views well and fully to suspect some kind of conciliation, I hereby state and testify before the many worthy men here present that I do not desire, in any manner and absolutely, and do not accept communion with him or with those who are with him, not in this life nor after my death, just as (I accept) neither the Union nor Latin dogmas, which he and his adherents have accepted, and for the enforcement of which he has occupied this presiding place, with the aim of overturning the true dogmas of the Church. I am absolutely convinced that the farther I stand from him and those like him, the nearer I am to God and all the saints; and to the degree that I separate myself from them am I in union with the Truth and with the Holy Fathers, the
Theologians of the Church; and I am likewise convinced that those who count
themselves with them stand far away from the Truth and from the blessed
Teachers of the Church. And for this reason I say: just as in the course of my
whole life I was separated from them, so at the time of my departure, yea and
after my death, I turn away from intercourse and communion with them and
vow and command that none (of them) shall approach either my burial or my
grave, and likewise anyone else from our side, with the aim of attempting to
join and concelebrate in our Divine services; for this would be to mix what
cannot be mixed. But it befits them to be absolutely separated from until such
time as God shall grant correction and peace to His Church."\textsuperscript{515}

St. Mark, as Runciman writes, “was treated as a martyr by almost the
whole body of the Greek Church. The Emperor soon found that it was easier
to sign the union than to implement it. He remained personally loyal to it,
but, influenced by his aged mother, he refrained from trying to force it on his
people. He found it hard to persuade anyone to take the empty Patriarchal
chair. Metrophanes II, whom he appointed in May 1440, died soon
afterwards. His successor, Gregory Mammas, who was a sincere advocate of
union, found it prudent to retire to Italy in 1451. Bessarion [of Trebizond],
liked and admired though he was personally, had already moved to Italy,
shocked at the hostility that his actions had aroused at Constantinople and
believing that he could best served the Greek cause by remaining among the
Italians. Isidore of Kiev’s adherence to the union was angrily repudiated by
the Russian Prince, Church and people, who deprived him of his see. He too
went to Italy. The Eastern Patriarchs announced that they were not bound by
anything that their representatives had signed and rejected the union. George
Scholarius, though he had accepted the union and was devoted to the works
of Thomas Aquinas, was soon convinced by Mark Eugenicus that he had been
wrong. He retired into a monastery; and on Mark’s death in 1444 he emerged
as leader of the anti-unionist party. The lesser clergy and the monks followed
him almost to a man.

“The Emperor John VIII died weary and disillusioned in 1448. His brother
and heir Constantine XI considered himself bound by the union; but he did
not try to press it on his people till the very end of the final Turkish siege. In
the autumn of 1452 Isidore of Kiev, now a Roman cardinal, arrived at
Constantinople with the union decree, which was solemnly read out in the
Cathedral of Saint Sophia on 12 December. Isidore, who was anxious that
everything should go smoothly, reported that it was well received. But his
Italian assistant, Leonard of Chios, Archbishop of Mitylene, wrote angrily that
few people were present and many officials boycotted the ceremony.
Certainly, though during the last few months of the Empire’s existence Saint
Sophia was served by Latin and by a handful of unionist clergy, its altars
were almost deserted. The vast majority of the clergy and the congregations
of the city would have nothing to do with them…

\textsuperscript{515} St. Mark, P.G. 160, cols. 536c and 537a.
“At this supreme moment of the Empire’s agony, the [uniate] Church of Constantinople could provide little help for the people. Its provincial administration had been disorganized by the Turkish advance. In Constantinople itself the official policy of union had produced chaos. There was no Patriarch. The last occupant of the post, Gregory Mammas, had fled to Italy. As bishoprics fell vacant the Emperor could find no one to fill them who would support his work for union. The clergy and the congregations of the city held aloof from the ceremonies in the Great Church of Saint Sophia, going instead for guidance to the monastery of the Scholarius, where the monk Gennadius, the former George Scholarius, fulminated against the union. Was it right for the Byzantines to seek to save their bodies at the cost of losing their souls? And indeed, would they save their bodies? To Gennadius and his friends it was all too clear that the help provided by the West would be pathetically inadequate. Holy Writ maintained that sooner or later Antichrist would come as a precursor of Armageddon and the end of the world. To many Greeks it seemed that the time had come. Was this the moment to desert the purity of the Faith?”

Gennadius went into seclusion, but left a notice on the door of his cell: "O unhappy Romans, why have you forsaken the truth? Why do you not trust in God, instead of in the Italians? In losing your faith you will lose your city."

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Of vital importance was how the rising star in the Orthodox firmament, Russia, would react to the council...

In 1434, on the death of Metropolitan Photius, Bishop Jonah of Ryazan was elected metropolitan of Kiev and sent to Constantinople for consecration. “But here,” writes Protopriest Peter Smirnov, “obstacles were encountered. The Greeks were going through their last years. The Turks had moved up to Constantinople from all sides. The only hope of salvation was seen to be help from the West, but that could be bought only by means of humiliation before the Roman pope. Negotiations concerning the union of the Churches were undertaken. On the Latin side, people were being prepared in the East who would be able to agree to union, and they were given influential places and posts. One of these people was a certain Isidore, a very talented and educated person, but one who from a moral point of view was not especially firm, and was capable of changing his convictions. It was he whom they hastened to appoint as metropolitan for Moscow before the arrival of Jonah in Constantinople. St. Jonah was promised the metropolitanate after Isidore.

“Soon after Isidore had arrived in Moscow, he declared that the Eighth Ecumenical Council was being prepared in Italy for the union of the

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Churches, and that it was necessary for him to be there. Then he began to prepare for the journey. Great Prince Basil Vasilievich tried in every way to dissuade Isidore from taking part in the council. Finally he said to him: “If you unfailingly desire to go to the eighth council, bring us thence our ancient Orthodoxy, which we received from our ancestor Vladimir, and do not bring us anything new and foreign, which we will not accept.” Isidore swore to stand for Orthodoxy, but at the council of Florence he was especially zealous in promoting an outcome that was favourable for the pope. At the end of the council and after the reception of the union, Isidore… returned to Moscow, and in his first service began to commemorate the pope instead of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The great prince publicly called him a Latin seducer and heretic and ordered that he be placed under guard until a conciliar resolution of the matter. The Russian bishops gathered in Moscow [in 1441] and condemned Isidore. Together with his disciple Gregory he fled to Tver, then Lithuania, and finally to Rome, where he remained for good with the pope.

“After Isidore’s flight from Russia, St. Jonah remained for seven more years a simple bishop… Finally, in 1448… Basil Vasilievich summoned all the bishops of the Russian land to a council. The Fathers of the Council, on the basis of the Church canons, previous examples and the decision of the Constantinopolitan Patriarch that St. Jonah should be metropolitan after Isidore, appointed him to the see of the first-hierarch. At a triumphant service in the Dormition cathedral the omophorion which had placed on earlier metropolitans was placed on him, and the great metropolitan’s staff, the symbol of first-hierarchical power, was put into his hands.”

The Russian Church was now technically in schism from the Great Church of Constantinople, which had fallen into the Latin heresy…

“However,” writes N. Boyeikov, “even after he had learned about the treachery of the Orthodox emperor and the events which had shaken Byzantium, Basil did not consider that he had the right to break the canonical dependence which the Russian Church had inherited since the time of the Baptism of Rus', and after Jonah's election he wrote the following: ‘After the death of Metropolitan Photius, having taken counsel with our mother, the Great Princess, and with our brothers, the Russian princes, both the Great Princes and the local ones, together with the lord of the Lithuanian land, the hierarchs and all the clergy, the boyars and all the Russian land, we elected Bishop Jonah of Ryazan and sent him to you in Constantinople for consecration together with our envoy. But before his arrival there the emperor and patriarch consecrated Isidore as metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus', while to Jonah they said: “Go to your see - the Ryazan episcopate. If Isidore dies or something else happens to him, then be ready to be blessed for the metropolitan see of all Rus’. Since a disagreement in the Church of God has taken place in our blessed kingdoms, travellers to Constantinople have

518 Smirnov, Istoria Khristianskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi (A History of the Orthodox Christian Church), Moscow: Krutitskoe podvorye, 2000, pp. 159-160.
suffered all kinds of difficulties on the road, there is great disorder in our countries, the godless Hagarenes have invaded, there have been civil wars, and we ourselves have suffered terrible things, not from foreigners, but from our own brothers. In view of this great need, we have assembled our Russian hierarchs, and, in accordance with the canons, we have consecrated the above-mentioned Jonah to the Russian metropolitanate of Kiev and all Rus'. We have acted in this way because of great need, and not out of pride or boldness. We shall remain to the end of the age devoted to the Orthodoxy we have received; our Church will always seek the blessing of the Church of Tsargrad and obey her in everything according to the ancient piety. And our father Jonah also begs for blessing and union in that which does not concern the present new disagreements, and we beseech your holy kingdom to be kindly disposed to our father Metropolitan Jonah. We wanted to write about all these church matters to the most holy Orthodox patriarch, too; and to ask his blessing and prayers. But we do not know whether there is a patriarch in your royal city or not. But if God grants that you will have a patriarch according to the ancient piety, then we shall inform him of all our circumstances and ask for his blessing.'

"On reading this gramota of the Great Prince Basil, one is amazed at his tact and the restraint of his style. Knowing that the emperor himself had betrayed the faith, that Patriarch Gregory had fled to Rome, as also Isidore who had been sent to Moscow, Basil II, instead of giving a well-merited rebuke to his teachers and instructors, himself apologised for the fact that circumstances had compelled the Russian bishops to consecrate a metropolitan for themselves, and comes near to begging him to receive Jonah with honour. It is remarkable that the Great Prince at every point emphasizes that this consecration took place 'in accordance with the canons', while doubting whether there was a lawful patriarch in Byzantium itself or not. The whole of this gramota is full of true Christian humility and brotherly compassion for the emperor who had fallen on hard times."

The Russian Church was now de facto autocephalous – and would become so de jure towards the end of the sixteenth century. And soon, after the fall of New Rome in 1453, the Russian State, too, would be independent, not only in the sense of being de facto self-governing (she had been that for centuries), but also in the sense of owing no filial, de jure allegiance to any other State. Indeed, the Russian Grand Prince Basil II was already being called “Tsar” and “Autocrat” by his own people, and “brother” by Emperor John VIII… Russia, whose Church constituted only one of the two hundred or so metropolias of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, was becoming the leader of the Orthodox world…

520 And yet at the same time that it acquired full independence, the Russian Church lost its unity: a separate metropolis for the Lithuanian State was established in Kiev in 1458 (N.Riaisonovsky, A History of Russia, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 121).
80. THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE

In December, 1452 a uniate liturgy in which the Pope was commemorated was celebrated by Metropolitan Isidore in Hagia Sophia. The emperor communed... In the months that followed, the uniate churches were only sparsely attended as the anti-unionists boycotted them. However, on the very eve of the Fall, May 28, 1453, almost the whole of the able-bodied population crowded into Hagia Sophia for a final Great Vespers. They sought comfort in numbers where they had lost comfort in the true faith...

“The Patriarchal Chair,” writes John Julius Norwich, “was still vacant [the uniate Patriarch Gregory had fled the unwelcoming city]; but Orthodox bishops and priests, monks and nuns – many of whom had sworn never to cross the threshold of the building until it had been formally cleansed of the last traces of Roman pollution – were present in their hundreds. Present too was Isidore, formerly Metropolitan of Kiev, long execrated as a renegade and traitor to his former faith, but now heard with a new respect as he dispensed the Holy Sacrament and intoned once again the old liturgies.

“The service was still in progress when the Emperor arrived with his commanders. He first asked forgiveness of his sins from every bishop present, Catholic and Orthodox alike; then he took communion with the rest...”

Now, with both emperor and patriarch fallen into heresy, and the holiest shrine in Orthodoxy defiled by the communion of heresy, the protection of the Mother of God deserted the Empire, which had ceased to be the instrument of God’s purpose in the world, and allowed it to be conquered by the Turkish Sultan Mehmet II...

As Andrew Wheatcroft writes, on the morning of May 29, 1453, “after fifty-three days of desperate resistance, the Ottoman janissaries broke through the walls into the city. By custom they were entitled to three days of looting in any city they had taken by storm. At first they killed everyone they found alive. From the Church of St. Mary of the Mongols high above the Golden Horn, a torrent of blood rained down the hill towards the harbour. The soldiers broke into the churches, ripping out the precious objects, raping or killing anyone who caught their fancy. In the afternoon the sultan made his formal entry, and went directly to the Church of the Holy Wisdom, Haghia Sophia. There he ordered an end to the pillage and destruction and directed that the great church should become the chief mosque of the city. Ducas, in his Historia Turco-Byzantina, records the day:

“‘He [Mehmed] summoned one of his vile priests who ascended the pulpit to call out his foul prayer. The son of iniquity, the forerunner of Antichrist, ascending the holy altar, offered the prayer. Alas, the calamity! Alack, the

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horrendous deed! Woe is me! What has befallen us? Oh! Oh! What have we witnessed? An infidel Turk, standing on the holy altar in whose foundation the relics of Apostles and Martyrs have been deposited! Shudder, O sun! Where is the Lamb of God, and where is the Son and Logos of the Father Who is sacrificed thereon, and eaten, and never consumed?

“Truly we have been reckoned as frauds! Our worship has been reckoned as nothing by the nations. Because of our sins the temple [Hagia Sophia] which was rebuilt in the name of the Wisdom of the Logos of God, and is called the Temple of the Holy Trinity, and Great Church and New Sion, today has become an altar of barbarians, and has been named and has become the House of Muhammad. Just is Thy judgement, O Lord.”

Everyone lost when Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453. The Orthodox of the Balkans came under infidel rulers; the Orthodox of Russia began to weaken spiritually as Byzantine traditions became more remote; the Western Catholics lost their best chance of being restored to Orthodox Catholicism; and the Western Conciliarists, who were meeting in Basle at the very moment of the council of Florence, and to whom John VIII had sent three ambassadors, lost their chance of being united to the Conciliar Church par excellence.

Many Greeks fled to the West, taking their learning and culture with them and giving an important impulse to the Renaissance. But it was pagan poets such as Plato and Homer and the pagan court philosopher of Mystra, George Gemisthus Plethon, not saints such as John Chrysostom or Gregory Palamas, whom the Westerners were eager to read. The true heroes of Byzantium did find admirers and imitators; but but in the north, in the mountains of Romania, and, especially, in the forests of Russia, not in the Mediterranean homeland of Roman Christian civilisation. Here Romanitas, the ideal of Christian Statehood, remained intact. For it was the Russians who were that “third God-chosen people” of the prophecy. It was they who were able to re-express the Christian ideal of the symphony of powers for the modern age, the age of Rationalism and Revolution, when the foundations, not only of the Church, but also of the State, would be shaken to their foundations…

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Many causes have been proposed for the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. Secular historians have naturally looked for material causes: the loss of Anatolia to the Ottoman Turks, with the consequent loss of manpower and economic resources; the handover of trade into the hands of the Genoese; the debasing of the currency; the feudal system introduced by the Latins; social inequalities between the rich and the poor; and the Black Death… Orthodox historians have gone deeper, proposing the divisions in the Byzantine commonwealth of States between Slavs and Greeks, and Greeks and Greeks, or, most plausibly, the betrayal of the Faith at Florence in 1439…

And yet there is something not quite convincing in these explanations. While undoubtedly valid up to a point, they fail, individually and collectively, to explain why the Fall took place precisely at this time. After all, the Byzantines had suffered similar disasters on previous occasions. Anatolia had been lost to the Persians in the seventh and to the Arabs in the eighth centuries, and again to the Seljuks in the eleventh century – but they had recovered. Before 1204 trade had been in the hands of the Venetians – but they had recovered. Social rest had been rife at the end of the Comnenan period, and again in mid-fourteenth century Thessalonica – but they had recovered. The Black Death afflicted them, as it afflicted many European states – but they had recovered. As for trouble with the Slavs, especially the Bulgarians, this was not new. And as for falls into heresy, these had been frequent and sometimes prolonged, as in the time of the iconoclasts - but both the Church and the Empire had recovered. There was no reason to believe that this fall into heresy was any deeper than previous falls – the unia of Florence 1439 was rejected almost immediately by the people, and was officially rejected by the hierarchy after the Fall in 1454 and again in 1484.

A clue to our conundrum is provided by an 8th or 9th century Greek prophecy found in St. Sabbas’ monastery in Jerusalem, which says: “The sceptre of the Orthodox kingdom will fall from the weakening hands of the Byzantine emperors, since they will not have proved able to achieve the symphony of Church and State. Therefore the Lord in His Providence will send a third God-chosen people to take the place of the chosen, but spiritually decrepit people of the Greeks.” If we take this prophecy as God-inspired, as I believe we can, then we have the beginnings of an answer: Constantinople fell because something fundamental in the relationship between Church and State went wrong in the Palaeologan period – something that was irreparable in the context of late Byzantium, and which was so serious, according to God’s righteous judgement, as to require the final Fall of the Empire itself...

But had not the Church-State relationship almost always been in crisis in Byzantine history? How many emperors had not come to power through murdering their predecessors, prompting the remark of J.B. Bury that the government of Byzantium was “an autocracy tempered by the legal right of revolution”. How many had not broken the laws of marriage in a flagrant manner! How many had not tried to impose heresy on the Empire, thereby stretching the Church-State relationship to breaking point! What was so sinister about the apparently peaceful relations between Church and State in the Palaeologan period that called for so terrible and final a judgement?

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523 Archbishop Seraphim, “Sud’by Rossii” (“The Destinies of Russia”), Pravoslavnij Vestnik (Orthodox Messenger), N 87, January-February, 1996, pp. 6-7; translated in Fr. Andrew Phillips, Orthodox Christianity and the Old English Church, English Orthodox Trust, 1996.
According to the theory of Church-State “symphony”, the Emperor was in complete command of the political sphere, and could be deposed only in the case of his apostasy from the true faith. However, until the first Fall of the City in 1204, the Byzantines were constantly “shaking the yoke of the emperors from their necks” – and not for reasons of the faith. They were killed or mutilated simply because, in the opinion of some army commander, they were bad rulers. And the Church and the people usually acquiesced in the deed…

The Russian diplomat K.N. Leontiev tried to defend the Byzantines against the charge of serial regicide: “They drove out the Caesars, changed them, killed them. But nobody touched the holiness of Caesarism itself. They changed the people, but nobody changed its basic organization.” But was he correct? Was Caesarism truly seen as holy? Is not the truth rather that the Byzantine attitude to the imperial power veered, for much of its history, from one unchristian extreme to the other, from the extreme of idolatry (the emperor as demi-god) to the extreme of sacrilege and murder (the emperor as a mere mortal, who could be removed by force if “the mandate of heaven” deserted him)? In neither case was the Lord’s command: “Touch not Mine anointed ones” (Psalm 104.15) seen as applying to emperors, and emperors continued to be slaughtered right until the first Fall of the City in 1204.

But then, under the impact of that terrible tragedy, attitudes began to change. Emperor Theodore I Lascaris received the physical sacrament of anointing to the kingdom for the first time in Byzantine history. And the effects were felt immediately: the Lascarid dynasty was the most pious and effective in Byzantine history, even if – and perhaps partly because - their rule was exercised in the more modest conditions of Nicaean exile and not in the pomp and splendour of Constantinople. Moreover, no Lascarid emperor was was killed by his own people…

However, with the advent of the last Byzantine dynasty, that of the Palaeologi, this apparent improvement in morals was compromised by what amounted to a deviation from the faith, a heresy concerning the kingdom. For the emperor was now not only the Anointed one – both physically and spiritually, but also considered to be untouchable and irremovable, even in the event of his falling away from the Orthodox faith. The Easterners now had their equivalent of the Western Pope…

This development began in 1369, only a few years after the great spiritual triumph of the Palamite Councils, when the Emperor John V Palaeologus travelled to Italy and converted to Roman Catholicism. No rebellion against him followed because of his apostasy, as there had been in the time of Michael VIII. And the reason was that the emperor was now untouchable…

The concordat concluded by John V with the Orthodox Church was a shameful document, which subordinated the Church to the State in a truly caesaropapist manner. The Emperor now had a control over the Church that the iconoclast emperors could only have dreamed of. Moreover, nobody had twisted the Church’s arm: the hierarchs had surrendered their power voluntarily and without compulsion...

From now on, even if the emperor betrayed the Faith he could not be removed or even excommunicated, according to the concordat. Or, if some still thought he should be removed, nobody called on the people to do it. Thus John V submitted to Rome – and kept his throne. John VIII signed the unia in 1439 – and kept his throne. Constantine XI remained faithful to the unia – and kept his throne - until an unbeliever killed him and captured it...

The unia with Rome was not caused by real sympathy for the papacy: only a small minority were real Latinophiles. It was caused by the fact that the bishops (except Mark of Ephesus) chose to follow their emperor rather than Christ. But the last emperor, Constantine XI, was not even crowned after his return to Constantinople in 1449, but in Mystra, because of the opposition of the zealots of Orthodoxy.526

And yet in spite of the fact that their emperor was neither anointed nor Orthodox, the people still followed him... And so the emperors, although they were no longer seen as gods, as in pagan times, nor have pretensions to be priests, as in the times of the iconoclasts, were nevertheless for all practical purposes god-kings and king-priests. For they were untouchable, being placed by their subjects above the laws both of God and of man. And this untouchable idol was placed as the lynch-pin upon which the whole Byzantine system of government, both political and ecclesiastical, rested. For as Patriarch Anthony IV said to Great Prince Basil of Moscow, “it is impossible for Christians to have a Church, but not have an Emperor”.

526 Pope Nicholas V wrote to him: “From this man [the imperial legate, Andronicus Vryennios] and from your own letters, we have learned that you desire union and accept the synodal decree” (P.G. 160, 1201B). See “The Long-Awaited King”, Orthodox Christian Witness, May 7/20, 1979. And Bishop Leonard of Chios wrote: “Through the diligence and honesty of the said Cardinal, Isidore of Kiev, and with the assent (if it was not insincere) of the emperor and the senate, the holy union was sanctioned and solemnly decreed on December 12th, the feast of Saint Spirydon, the bishop” (quoted in Judith Herrin, “The Fall of Constantinople”, History Today, vol. 53, N 6, June, 2003, p. 15). St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite believed that Constantine was not a uniate and therefore inscribed him in some calendars. His name is also found on some Russian calendars. But there appears to be no doubt that he was a uniate, having received communion from Cardinal Isidore a few hours before his death, and therefore cannot be counted as an Orthodox saint. Lebedev writes: “Whatever might be said in his defence, nevertheless the last Orthodox Byzantine Emperor was a traitor to Orthodoxy. His betrayal is the more shameful the less it was sincere. Here are the words by which the Emperor and those who thought like him tried to pacify the crowd which did not want the unia; they said: ‘Be patient a little, wait until God has delivered the capital for the great dragon [the Turks], who wants to devour it. Then you will see whether our reconciliation with the azymites [the Latins] was sincere.’” (op. cit., p. 392).
And yet this was not true, as the patriarchs knew better than anybody else. For whereas, in the last years of Byzantium, the emperor’s ever-decreasing rule extended over the City, the Morea, and little else, the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch was truly universal in the Orthodox world, extending beyond throughout the Orthodox commonwealth of nations.\textsuperscript{327}

So why did the powerful patriarchs fawn on, and bow down to the almost powerless emperors? The paradox is explained by the fact that the Ecumenical Patriarchate was no longer truly ecumenical but increasingly Greek in its orientation – and Greek hopes centred narrowly and exclusively on the Empire, and specifically on Constantinople. In 1204 the patriarchs had been prepared to fight on even after the fall of the City - and had constructed a viable and prosperous realm outside it. But not now… In a previous age, they might have blessed and supported a translatio imperii to some foreign land that was still devoted to the ideals of the Christian Empire – Romania, perhaps, or Moscow. But not now…

The fatal weakness of the Byzantines had been their placing the security of the Empire above that of the Church, the earthly kingdom above the Heavenly Kingdom. They reversed the choice that the holy Prince Lazar of Serbia had made on the field of Kosovo. Like Judah in the time of Jeremiah, they tried to play off one despotic power against another – the Pope against the Sultan - and lost to both. Unable to present a truly Catholic – in the sense of universal, non-nationalistic - vision of Christian society to the world, the Byzantines fell into a false union with the West with its heretical, but more explicitly universal vision. And so, in becoming Latins, they ceased to be Romans, whose whole glory, even when their dominion was no longer universal, lay in their \textit{universal vision}. For, as Solomon said, “where there is no vision, the people perish…” (Proverbs 29.18)

Great-Prince Basil had been right: “We have a Church,” he said to Patriarch Anthony, “but we do not have an emperor”. For how can the emperor of Christian Rome be a heretic? But the Byzantines could not and would not believe this, even when it was obvious that their heretical emperor was leading them to political and spiritual disaster. Unlike their great ancestors, who had often defied heretical emperors for the sake of the Faith, they tried to preserve their earthly kingdom at the price of the Kingdom of Heaven, forgetting that the whole glory of the Christian Empire lay in its readiness to live and die for its Heavenly King; “for here we have no lasting city, but seek the City which is to come” (Hebrews 13.14). The universal, eschatological and supernatural vision of Christian Rome had been narrowed to a terribly debilitating concentration on one small speck of dust in space and time. And so, in order that this extreme narrowness of vision should not contract to complete blindness, the Lord in His great mercy removed even that speck from their sight…

\textsuperscript{327} For a map of the patriarchate’s dominions, see https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=zFF_0-ggg3xLkANSIEUOgS-o
CONCLUSION: AUTOCRACY, DESPOTISM AND DEMOCRACY

Ideally, the people of God should be ruled only by God, or by a man directly appointed by God, that is, the Orthodox Autocrat. A true autocrat is a man who is appointed by God and who strives to rule in obedience to the Church and the commandments of God. Under these conditions God blesses one-man rule unfettered by oligarchical or democratic institutions.

Contrary to the generally held view, autocracy is not a form of absolutism or despotism. Indeed, as D.A. Khomiakov writes, “the tsar is ‘the denial of absolutism’ precisely because it is bound by the confines of the people’s understanding and world-view, which serve as that framework within which the power can and must consider itself to be free.” The true Autocrat is unfettered by oligarchical or democratic institutions, but is bound to fulfill the Law of God, and is an obedient son of God’s Kingdom on earth, the Church.

The questions arise: What if there is no autocrat appointed by God? How are we to relate to despotic or democratic regimes? Is it permissible to obey a ruler who does not worship the God of Israel?

In the Old Testament the loss of autocracy, and its replacement by foreign despotic rule, was a sign of the wrath of God. The classic example was the Babylonian captivity. However, God’s ultimate purpose in subjecting His people to foreign rule was always positive – to draw the people back to Him through repentance. The sign of the remission of God’s wrath and the manifestation of His mercy and forgiveness is His return of true, autocratic rule, as when the Jews returned from Babylon to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel.

It is possible for the people of God to serve a foreign despot with a good conscience – as Joseph served Pharaoh, and Daniel - Darius. Indeed, it may be sinful to rebel against such rule, as was the case with King Zedekiah’s rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar. In the first century there was a Jewish sect called the Essenes who did not use money that had the image of Caesar and did not recognize any ruler except God Himself. Christ rejected this position in His famous words about giving to Caesar what is Caesar’s (money, military service) and to God what is God’s. And the Church affirmed that “all authority is of God” (Romans 13.1).

528 As such, he first of all rules himself, his spirit being the autocratic ruler of the rest of his nature. As Bishop Theophan the Recluse writes: “when determination and a readiness to live according to God is formed in the spirit, the grace of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments enters into the spirit, and from this time man’s inner life begins before God; his psychosomatic needs not only cease to rule him, on the contrary, he himself begins to rule them, following the indications of the Spirit. In this way our spirit, with the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, again becomes autocratic, both within and without.” (Tolkovanie Poslanij sv. Apostola Pavla (An Interpretation of the Epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul), St. Petersburg, 2002, pp. 446-447.

529 Khomiakov, Prawoslavie, samoderzhavie, narodnost’ (Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality), Minsk, 1997, p. 103.

530 Josephus Flavius, Jewish Antiquities, 18, 23; St. Hippolytus of Rome, Philosophoumen, 18-28.
However, the word “authority” here does not apply to rulers who compel the people of God to worship false gods. If they do this, then resistance – at any rate of the passive kind - becomes obligatory, as when the Three Holy Children refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar’s golden idol. And in certain circumstances even armed rebellion may be blessed by God, as when the Maccabees rebelled against Antiochus Epiphanes. Even if the ruler was originally a true autocrat, if he later turns against the God of Israel, becoming a despot, he must be resisted, as when the Prophet Elijah rebelled against Ahab and Jezabel, and when the Prophet Elisha anointed Jehu as king in their stead. Similarly, in Christian times the Christian people rebelled against Julian the Apostate, the Spanish prince St. Hermenegild against his Arian father, and the English Orthodox rebelled against the Catholic King William I.

The Christian people can survive under other systems of government than autocracy, but not prosper. Thus Bishop Dionysius writes: “The Church can live for some time even in conditions of persecution, just as a dying man can remain among the living for a certain period of time. But just as the latter desires deliverance from his illness, so the Church has always wished for such a situation in which there will be flocks, not individuals, of those being saved – and this can be attained only if she is fenced around by the power of ‘him who restraineth’”531 – that is, the Autocracy.

The autocrat is distinguished from the absolutist despot in two ways. First, having been appointed by God and being in obedience to Him, he will never ascribe divine honours to himself; whereas the despot either commands that he be worshipped as a god, or acts as if he were God by rejecting any criticism of his actions based on the law of God. Secondly, the autocrat will always respect the priesthood and will yield it authority in the sphere of Divine worship and the spiritual life, whereas the despot will attempt to subject the priesthood to himself, sometimes even by making himself high priest.

Although the relationship between the autocracy and the priesthood is not clearly defined in the Old Testament, the embryo of the Christian symphony of powers is already to be seen in the relationships between Moses and Aaron, David and Abiathar, and Zerubbabel and Joshua. And encroachment by the autocrat on the priestly prerogatives is already severely punished, as when King Saul was removed from the kingship for taking it upon himself to offer sacrifices. It was the Hasmonean combination of the roles of king and high-priest that finally ushered in the end of the Israelite autocracy.

The autocrat can sin in either of two directions: by becoming a despot on the Near Eastern pagan model, or by becoming a democrat on the Classical Greek model. For, on the one hand, truly autocratic power is not arbitrary,

531 Hieromonk Dionysius, Priest Timothy Alferov, O Tserkvi, Prawoslavnom Tzarstve i Poslednem Vremeni (On the Church, the Orthodox Kingdom and the Last Time), Moscow, 1998, pp. 61-62.
but subject to a higher power, that of God – as Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow puts it, the king “freely limits his unlimited autocracy by the will of the Heavenly King”. And on the other hand, it neither derives from the people nor can it be abolished by the people.

In the period of the Byzantine Autocracy, the main temptation was despotism. This took two forms: “caesaropapism” in the East and “papocaeasarian” in the West. “Caesaropapism” signifies the intrusion of State power into the realm of the Church, and “papocaeasarian” – the intrusion of the Church power into the realm of the State, by the transformation of the Church’s first-hierarch into a secular despot.

Orthodoxy stands for the Chalcedonian unity-in-diversity of Church and State, priesthood and kingship. The two powers are unconfused but undivided under the One King of kings and Chief High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. The eventual fall of Byzantium was preceded by the gradual decay of this symphonic, Chalcedonian principle of Church-State relations, making its conquest by anti-Chalcedonian, absolutist principles easier.

The decay of the symphonic principle began already with the Arian emperors in the mid-fourth century, revived with the Monothelite and Iconoclast emperors in the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, and became firmly entrenched with the Angeli emperors before the first Fall of Constantinople in 1204. If anything, the “Orthodox” absolutism of the Angeli, supported by canonists such as Balsamon, proved to be a more dangerous temptation than the heretical absolutism of the Arians and Iconoclasts. In any case, with its revival in a still stronger form under the later Palaeologi in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Byzantium was doomed.

The final Fall of Constantinople in 1453 was caused by three absolutisms: the internal absolutism of the last Palaeologi emperors, and the external absolutisms of the Latins and the Turks. Both Papism and Islam, in imitation of the absolutist pagan empires, tended to conflate Church and State, religion and politics, kingship and priesthood, into a single institution or activity, in contrast to the duality of the two spheres which is the norm in Orthodoxy. Both could therefore be called ecclesiological analogues of the Monophysite-Monothelite group of heresies in Christology; and, perhaps not coincidentally, the beginnings of the papist and Islamist heresies coincide with the beginnings of the Monophysite and Monothelite heresies.

In the West, the last Orthodox autocracies of England and Germany fell to the “papocaeasarian” version of the absolutist heresy, Papism. But in the West, by contrast with the East, the ideal of the Orthodox autocracy did not survive in the hearts of the people. Here not only the flesh, Christian Statehood, died: the spirit, the Christian Faith and Church, was also radically corrupted. So in the West, in contrast to the East, there could be no transfer of the ideal to another soil, no renovatio imperii, no Third Rome to succeed the First and Second Romes...
Not that there were no attempts to pretend that the old ideal was still alive and well. The “Holy Roman Empire” of the Hohenstaufens (and later, of the Habsburgs) claimed to be the continuation and revival of the Roman and Constantinian Empires. But where was the “symphony of powers” between the Roman Church and Empire when one of the powers, the Church, was itself a State that sometimes waged war – physical war – against the Empire?

Indeed, the continual wars between the Roman papacy and the “Holy Roman Empire” in the later Middle Ages cannot be compared to the conflicts between Church and State in Byzantium because they were not in fact wars between Church and State, but between State and State. For ever since Pope Leo IX rode on horseback into battle against the Normans in 1053, the very difference between Church and the State, between the other-worldly spirit of Christian society and its this-worldly flesh, had been obscured in the Western mind...

It is time to define more precisely the religio-political heresy of absolutism, which destroyed the flesh of New Rome in the East, and both the flesh and the spirit of Old Rome in the West.

L.A. Tikhomirov writes: “Absolutism... signifies a power that is not created by anything, that depends on nothing except itself and that is qualified by nothing except itself. As a tendency, absolutism can in fact appear under any principle of power, but only through a misunderstanding or abuse. But according to its spirit, its nature, absolutism is characteristic only of democracy, for the will of the people, qualified by nothing but itself, creates an absolute power, so that if the people merges with the State, the power of the latter becomes absolute.”

“Absolutism is characteristic of democracy”?! This is the height of paradox to the modern Western (and Classical Greek) mind, for which absolutism and democracy are polar opposites, and for which the ideal of Statehood (even Christian Statehood) must consist in the complete extermination of absolutism and the fullest possible installation of democracy. And yet the paradox is true, as we shall demonstrate.

The absolutist despot, be he emperor or king, pope or patriarch, believes that all power on earth, in all matters, is given to him alone – even if, as in pagan Rome, this power was supposedly transferred to him from the people. In pagan times, such a belief would be expressed in the idea that the ruler was also a god. In Christian times, such open self-deification was no longer expedient, so the phrase “vicar of God” or “deputy of God” was used instead. In theory, such a title is compatible with a certain self-limitation, insofar as the vicar or deputy of God is obliged to submit his will to the will of God; and

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332 Tikhomirov, Monarkhicheskaiia Gosudarstvennost’ (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 92.
some rulers have succeeded in doing just that, becoming saints and “equals-to-the-apostles” in the process. But if the ruler dispenses with an independent priesthood, and is seen as the highest interpreter of the will of God, the path is open to arbitrariness and tyranny on a vast scale, which is precisely what we see in absolutist rulers throughout history, whether pagan or Christian, religious, secular or atheist.

However, the arbitrariness and tyranny of the single unchecked will inevitably elicits, sooner or later, the appearance of other wills determined to check or completely subdue it. This, in its turn, is inevitably accompanied by the process of the debunking or desacralising of kingship: since the authority of the ruler is hedged around with an aura of divinity, the first task of the reformers or revolutionaries is to strip away this aura, to reveal the ruler to be an ordinary man. Then they will strive either to place one of themselves in the place of the former ruler, endowing him with the same aura of divinity as he had, or will put forward a general theory of the ordinariness – or kingliness - of all men. But this is a sign of God’s wrath. For “because of the transgression of a land, many are its princes” (Proverbs 28.2).

Medieval western history developed precisely in this direction: first in the struggle between the popes and the “Holy Roman Emperors” for absolute power, and then in the emergence of the doctrines of natural law, conciliarism and democratism. The second, democratic path would appear to be radically different from the first, absolutist one insofar as it abolishes the idea of sacred persons altogether. But in fact it simply endows all men with the same absolutism and sacredness as was formerly attributed to pope or emperor. Thus the old personal gods of pope or emperor make way for the new collective god of the people in accordance with the often-cited but completely erroneous saying: vox populi – vox Dei. And yet, as Deacon Alcuin of York said to the Emperor Charlemagne: “The people should be led, not followed, as God has ordained… Those who say, ‘The voice of the people is the voice of God,’ are not to be listened to, for the unruliness of the mob is always close to madness.”

And so absolutism is characteristic of democracy insofar as the demos is an absolute power, free from any restraint in heaven or on earth. In a democracy the will of the people is the final arbiter. Before it neither the will of the (constitutional) monarch, nor the decrees of the Church, nor the age-old traditions of men, nor the eternal and unchanging law of God, can prevail. This arbiter is in the highest degree arbitrary: what is right in the eyes of the people on one day will be wrong in the next. But consistency is not required of the infallible people, just as it is not required of infallible popes. For democracy is based on the Heraclitan principle that everything changes, even the demos itself. As such, it does not have to justify itself on the basis of any unchanging criteria of truth or falsehood, right or wrong: its will is truth and justice, and if its will changes, then truth and justice must change with it...

533 Alcuin of York, Letter to Charlemagne, M.G.H., 4, letter 132.
The famed tolerance or freedom of religion in democratic states is only apparent. Or rather, it can be real only for a time, until the State works out its own ruling ideology and applies it consistently. For, as Tikhomirov writes, “if a state, as law and power, removes itself from being linked with a determinate confession, that is, from the influence of a religious confession on its own religious politics, it becomes the common judge of all confessions and subjects religion to itself. All relations between the various confessions and the rights of them all must, evidently, be decided by the state that is set outside them, which is governed exclusively by its own ideas on justice and the good of the state and society. In this situation it evidently has the complete right and opportunity to carry out repressions whenever, in its opinion, the interests of a confession contradict civil and political interests.”

In many ways the collective absolutism of democracy is a more absolute and destructive absolutism than the personal absolutisms of popes and emperors. Although many absolutist rulers appeared in both East and West in the medieval period, fundamental changes in society were slow to appear. Whatever absolutist rulers may have thought or said about their own unfettered power, in practice they conformed to tradition in most spheres, for they knew that the masses of the people believed in a higher truth in defence of which many of them were prepared to die. Hence the failure of most absolutist rulers to establish a firm tradition of absolutism: Julian the Apostate was replaced by Jovian the Pious, Pope Nicolas I by Pope John VIII, Michael Palaeologus by Andronicus II. Even the more enduring absolutism of the post-schism popes was bitterly contested for centuries, and became weaker over time.

But the triumph of democracy in the modern period has been accompanied by the most radical and ever-accelerating change: the demos that overthrew the monarchy in the English revolution, even the demos that obtained universal suffrage in the early twentieth century, would not recognise, and most certainly would not approve of, what the demos has created in twenty-first-century England...

Democracy considers itself to be at the opposite pole from absolutism, and justifies itself on the grounds that its system of checks and balances, which provides frequent opportunities to remove the ruler at the ballot-box, precludes the possibility of absolutism. However, as the old traditions grow weaker, the leaders that the democracy votes for become more radical and anti-traditional. And if democracy has always had the tendency to elect vainglorious and dishonest demagogues, in modern times these demagogues have often also turned out to be absolutist tyrants. For, as Plato noted, there is a persistent tendency for democracy to pave the way for absolutism.

534 Tikhomirov, Religiozno-philosophskie osnovy istorii (The Religio-Philosophical Foundations of History), Moscow, 1997, p. 269.
Thus the democracy of the English Long Parliament paved the way for Cromwell; the democracy of the French Estates General - for Robespierre and Napoleon; the democracy of the Russian Provisional Government - for Lenin and Stalin; the democracy of the German Weimar Government - for Hitler; the democracy of Chiang Kai Shek - for Mao; and the democracy of Yeltsin – for Putin.

We see, then, that the whole of world history can be seen as a struggle between God-pleasing autocracy, on the one hand, and God-hating despotism and democracy, on the other, whose main feature is the gradual weakening of autocracy, and strengthening of despotism, in and through the triumph of democracy, leading finally to the enthronement of the Antichrist...