

THE AGE OF PAPISM
(787 to 1453)

Volume II
of
AN ESSAY IN UNIVERSAL HISTORY
From an Orthodox Christian Point of View

Vladimir Moss

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Orthodoxy is what Christ taught, the Apostles preached, and the Fathers kept.
St. Athanasius the Great.

Equality is known to produce strife. Therefore God allowed the human race to be a monarchy, not a democracy. But the family is constructed in a similar way to an army, with the husband holding the rank of monarch, the wife as general and the children also given stations of command.
St. John Chrysostom, Homily 34 on I Corinthians, 7.

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?
St. Theodore the Studite.

This is another shaft being driven today through the heart of Death, not as the Saviour is engulfed by the tomb of mortality for the common resurrection of our kind, but as the image of the Mother [of God] rises from the very depth of oblivion, and raises along with herself the likenesses of the saints. Christ came to us in the flesh, and was borne in the arms of His Mother. This is seen and confirmed and proclaimed in pictures, the teaching made manifest by means of personal eyewitnesses, and impelling the spectators to unhesitatingly assent... The Virgin is holding the Creator in her arms as an infant. Who is not there who would not marvel, more from the sight of it than from the report, at the magnitude of the mystery, and would not rise up to laud the ineffable condescension that surpasses all words?
St. Photius the Great (867).

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.

Even if abuses of power by this or that emperor were accepted by some weak-willed patriarch, sooner or later they were nevertheless rejected by the people of God and the church authorities.
Alexander Dvorkin, Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church
(2006).

O great God, Creator of heaven and earth! Look down upon this new people, and grant them, Lord, to know Thee, the true God, as the Christian countries have known Thee; and confirm them in the true and uncorrupted faith; and aid me, Lord, against the hostile enemy, so that, trusting in Thee and in Thy power, I may defeat his intrigues.
St. Vladimir the Great, at the Baptism of Russia (August 1, 988).

The judgement of God is higher than that of Rome...
Pope Sylvester II (997).

Into what an unspeakable labyrinth of wrong and incorrigible sin of revolution the papacy has thrown even the wiser and more godly Bishops of the Roman Church.
Epistle of the Eastern Patriarchs to Pope Pius IX (1848).

The Church which is in Jerusalem is the Mother of all the Churches. For she was the first to receive from Christ the Grace and knowledge of the Faith and the Sevenfold Gifts of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, from Heaven... But the Church of Rome was given precedence over her, not by Christ or His Apostles, but by men... For as the Holy Fathers themselves bear witness, the Church of Rome was accorded this by virtue of secular power and the dignity of the city... Nevertheless, this was the work of men, and not of God.
York Tract (11th century).

The human race is ruled by two things: natural law and custom.
Gratian, Decretum (12th century).

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 perversion of the law.
Thomas Aquinas.

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...
Dante, De Monarchia.

Even if the Pope were Satan incarnate, we ought not to raise up our heads against him, but calmly lie down to rest on his bosom.
Catherine of Siena.

My good friends, things cannot go well in England, nor ever will, until everything shall be held in common; when there shall neither be vassal nor lord, and all distinctions levelled; when the lords shall be no more masters than ourselves... Are we not all descended from the same parents, Adam and Eve? And when can they show, or what reasons give, why they should be more the masters than ourselves?
John Ball (c. 1366).

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 Greeks and the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ...
John Wycliffe (1383).

Ideally, it [the Empire] should embrace all the peoples of the earth, who, ideally, should all be members of the one true Christian Church, its own Orthodox Church.
Sir Steven Runciman, The Byzantine Theocracy (1977).

Never, O man, is that which relates to the Church corrected through compromises: there is no middle way between the Truth and the lie... and although one can say that there is a mean between light and darkness which is called the morning and evening twilight, nevertheless between the Truth and the lie, however hard you try, you will never find a mean.

St. Mark of Ephesus, letter to St. Gennadius Scholarius.

Keep an eye on your bishops as far as their Orthodoxy is concerned, lest they go so far as to teach doctrines against the true faith or celebrate with heretics and schismatics.
St. Gennadius Scholarius.

"A Constantine began, and a Constantine shall lose the Byzantine kingdom of the East. Son of man, start counting the number from the first Constantine until the twelfth time of the same name, and you will find out the number (year) in which it will be fulfilled. God has decided, and the fixed Divine Resolution, determined to be genuine, shall be irremovable. It will come to pass during the fourth hundred of years after the millennium (1000 AD), within the fifty-second to the fifty-third, in which year the vast kingdom shall fall into the hands of the Saracens. And the houses will be spoiled, the holy churches profaned, and the believers persecuted until the eighth century (1800s) decisively. Because God wants that the people should understand His justice and feel the weight of His omnipotent hand, and repent and rush back to His embrace, and then afterwards they will become spiritually able and well acceptable. And in the manner the Jewish people were subjected under Nebuchadnezzar, so also will this people be subject to the impious Hagarenes until the determined time, and they will remain captives under the yoke until the approximate completion of a fourth hundred of years."
Hieromonk Agathangelos (1279).

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INTRODUCTION

This is the second volume in my series, *A Universal History from an Orthodox Christian Point of View*, and traces the history of Orthodox Christian Romanity during the Middle Ages, together with its western imitations and distortions: the Roman Catholic papacy and the “Holy Roman Empire” of the Carolingians and Hohenstaufens.

Antiquity is sometimes taken to end, and the Middle Ages to begin, with the coming of Islam and the subjection of most of the non-Greek speaking Orient to the Islamic yoke. This was indeed a major landmark, and Islamic civilization is, of course, with us still. But a still more important landmark is the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787, and the rejection of it by the major part of Western Christendom, marking the beginning of that ever-changing but extremely powerful and destructive phenomenon that we call “western civilization” and which is now the dominant civilization of the whole of humanity.

With the ending of the iconoclast controversy, writes Sir Steven Runciman, “Byzantine theology can be said to have taken on its lasting characteristics. The Liturgy and the practices of the Church were established in forms that have scarcely been altered since that day. There were no fundamental theological disputes [except over the *Filioque*] for some centuries. The Church shared in the prosperity of the Empire and worked together with the State on great missionary enterprises. Among the most splendid achievements of the period were the conversion of the Balkan Slavs to Orthodox Christianity in the ninth century and the conversion of the Russians at the end of the tenth...”¹

The conversion of the Slavs was indeed a great achievement of Byzantine civilization and piety, guaranteeing the survival of that civilization for many more centuries. By the middle of the eleventh century, the conversion was complete. However, at this point a series of catastrophes began the downward slide of the Byzantine Church. First, in 1054 the long-standing rivalry between the Byzantine Church and East Roman Empire, on the one hand, and the Roman papacy and West Roman or Carolingian Empire, on the other, hardened into a full ecclesiastical schism, and the whole of the Western patriarchate fell into the heresy of Roman Catholicism. Soon after, the assaults of Islam, which had begun under the Arabs and continued, more successfully, under the leadership of the Seljuk Turks, culminated at the battle of Manzikert in 1071. Then, from within Byzantium, the State began to exert an increasing dominance over the Church – a temptation that had been overcome in earlier centuries, but which became entrenched in the late Paleologan period. When these temptations came together, towards the middle of the fifteenth century, Constantinople, the New Rome, fell and the Age of Faith – that is, the Age when the most important factor in human society was the struggle for the Orthodox Faith – came to an end, at least in its original Mediterranean, Greco-Roman-Semitic homeland. Of course, the struggle

¹ Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 11.

for the Faith would continue, but under the leadership of other states and nations in other lands...

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us! Amen.

I. NEW ROME, ISLAM AND THE SLAVS

1. THE TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY

The last iconoclast emperor, Theophilus, died in February, 842. His widow, St. Theodora, wanted to restore the icons, but she used her imperial authority to impose a bargain on the Church: if her reposed husband could be restored to the diptychs as an Orthodox emperor, she would give *carte blanche* to the new patriarch, St. Methodius, to restore the true faith in the manner he considered appropriate. The confessors of Orthodoxy were understandably reluctant to enter into such a bargain, since there was no reliable evidence that Theophilus had repented before his death.

However, God inspired Methodius to resolve the dilemma in the following way. As Nun Cassia tells the story, "On March 4, 843 Methodius was consecrated to the see of Constantinople and immediately proclaimed that the whole Church should pray for the Emperor Theophilus, which continued for the whole of the first week of the Great Fast and ended with the miraculous blotting out of the name of Theophilus from the list of heretics that the patriarch had sealed before the beginning of the prayer and placed on the altar of Hagia Sophia. The reposed emperor was recognized as forgiven by the Church and as Orthodox, and on Sunday, March 11, 843 the icons were brought in a triumphal procession into the main church of the Empire, and icon-veneration has remained forever as an unshakeable dogma of the Orthodox Church..."²

Methodius proceeded to carry out a complete purge of the iconoclast clergy. He "deposed any bishops who had embraced iconoclasm under Leo V, as well as the clergy they had ordained."³ That had been the aim laid down, but not attained by his teacher and predecessor in the see of Constantinople, St. Nicephorus. However, it was attained by St. Methodius⁴, who imposed different penances on different groups of clergy depending on their guilt.⁵

In this way the dissonance of the powers, political and ecclesiastical, that had prevailed, with some intermissions, for such a long time was transformed into a symphony that remained stable, if not completely unshaken, until the twelfth century.

*

² Senina, Nun Cassia (editor), *Zhitia Vizantijskikh Sviatykh Epokhi Ikonoborchestva* (Lives of the Byzantine Saints of the Iconoclast Period), vol. I, St. Petersburg: Kvadrivium, 2015, pp. 129-130. For other accounts of how Theophilus was posthumously absolved, see George Peter Bithos, *Saint Methodios of Constantinople*, Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2009, pp. 53-54.

³ Fr. Andrew Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2007, p. 133.

⁴ D.E. Afinogenov, *Povest' o Proshchenii Imperatora Fofila in Torzhestvo Pravoslavia* (The Tale of the Forgiveness of the Emperor Theophilus and the Triumph of Orthodoxy). Moscow: Indrik, 2004, p. 61.

⁵ Bithos, *Saint Methodios of Constantinople*, pp. 107-114

With the final fall of iconoclasm, there also fell the absolutist theory of Church-State relations preached by the iconoclast emperors. Although the iconoclast emperors had done much to defend the empire against the Arabs, and the new dynasty of Macedonian emperors was one of the strongest in Byzantine history, the patriarchs of the period were in no mood to concede more power than was necessary to it, however Orthodox it might be. One reason for this was the particularly prominent – and damaging – role that the emperors had taken in the recent persecutions, in which several of the leading hierarchs themselves had suffered (St. Methodius himself had been in prison). The early Roman emperors had persecuted the Church at times – but they had been pagans in a pagan society, and were therefore simply expressing the prejudices of the society in which they lived. Later emperors in the post-Constantinian era, such as Constantius and Valens, had also persecuted the Church – which was worse, since they were supposed to be Christians, but again, they had not been the initiators of the persecution, but had responded to the pleas of heretical churchmen. However, the iconoclast emperors enjoyed the dubious distinction of having been at the head of their heretical movement; they were heresiarchs themselves, not simply the political agents of heresiarchs. “The ancient heresies came from a quarrel over the dogmas and developed progressively, whereas this one [iconoclasm] comes from the imperial power itself.”⁶ The patriarchs therefore laboured to raise the profile of the patriarchate in society, as a defence against any return to antichristianity on the part of the emperors.⁷

This new intransigence of the patriarchs in relation to the emperors had been foreshadowed even before the last phase of iconoclast persecution, when, on 24 December, 804, as Gilbert Dagron writes, “Leo V brought Patriarch Nicephorus and several bishops and monks together to involve them in coming to an agreement with those who were ‘scandalised’ by the icons and in making an ‘economy’”. The confrontation gave way to a series of grating ‘little phrases’ ... which sketched a new theory of imperial power. The clergy refused to engage in any discussion with this perfectly legitimate emperor who had not yet taken any measures against the icons and who wanted a council of bishops to tackle the problem. Emilian of Cyzicus said to him: ‘If there is an ecclesiastical problem, as you say, Emperor, let it be resolved in the Church, as is the custom... and not in the Palace,’ to which Leo remarked that he also was a child of the Church and that he could serve as an arbiter between the two camps. Michael of Synada then said to him that ‘his arbitration’ was in fact a ‘tyranny’; others reproached him for taking sides. Without batting an eyelid, Euthymius of Sardis invoked eight centuries of Christian icons and angered the emperor by reusing a quotation from St. Paul that had already been used by John of Damascus: ‘Even if an angel from heaven should preach to us a gospel different from the one that you have received, let him be anathema!’ (Galatians 1.8). The ‘ardent teacher of the Church

⁶ Theosterictus, *Life of St. Nicetas of Medicon*; in Dagron, *Empereur et Prêtre* (Emperor and Priest), Paris: Gallimard, 1996, p. 197

⁷ It is perhaps significant that several of the patriarchs of the period – notably Tarasius, Nicephorus and Photius – had worked as laymen in the imperial administration before becoming patriarchs. The same was true of St. Ambrose of Milan. Evidently close experience of imperial administration from within is a good qualification for a patriarch who has to stand up against imperial power!

and abbot of Studion' Theodore was the last to speak: 'Emperor, do not destroy the stability of the Church. The apostle spoke of those whom God has established in the Church, first as apostles, secondly as prophets, and thirdly as pastors and teachers (I Corinthians 12.28)..., but he did not speak of emperors. You, O Emperor, have been entrusted with the stability of the State and the army. Occupy yourself with that and leave the Church, as the apostle says, to pastors and teachers. If you did not accept this and departed from our faith..., if an angel came from heaven to preach to us another gospel, we would not listen to him; so even less to you!' Then Leo, furious, broke off the dialogue to set the persecution in motion."⁸

What is remarkable in this scene is the refusal of the hierarchs to allow the emperor any kind of arbitrating role – even though he had not yet declared himself to be an iconoclast.

The bishops' refusal was probably conditioned by the fact that they knew the emperor's secret motives and beliefs. So they knew that any council convened by him would have been a "robber council", like that of 754. Moreover, the Seventh Ecumenical Council had already defined the position of the Church, so a further council was superfluous.

However, the bishops' fears were probably particularly focused on the word "arbitration" and the false theory of Church-State relations that that implied. The Church had allowed, even urged, emperors to convene councils in the past; but had never asked them to *arbitrate* in them. Rather it was they, the bishops sitting in council, who were the arbiters, and the emperor who was obliged, as an obedient son of the Church, to submit to their judgement. The bishops were determined to have no truck with this last relic of the absolutist theory of Church-State relations.

It was St. Theodore the Studite who particularly pressed this point. As he wrote to the Emperor Leo V: "If you want to be her (the Church's) son, then nobody is hindering you; only follow in everything your spiritual father (the Patriarch)."⁹ And it was the triumph of Studite rigorism – on this issue, if not on others – that determined the attitude of the patriarchs to the emperors after the final Triumph of Orthodoxy over iconoclasm in 843. For St. Methodius, while having severe reservations about some of the writing of St. Theodore, and sanctioning some Studites who contested his rule, followed him in trying to exalt the authority of the patriarchate in relation to the empire.

His successors, Saints Ignatius and Photius, went still further in the same direction... And this not out of ambition or lust for power, but for no other reason than the defence of uncompromising Orthodoxy, complete faithfulness to the Apostolic Faith and Tradition. Such faithfulness is the first obligation of every

⁸ Gilbert Dagron, *Empereur et Prêtre* (Emperor and Priest), Paris: Gallimard, 1996, pp. 198-199.

⁹ St. Theodore, quoted in Fomin S. and Fomina T, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishesviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, vol. I, p. 94.

Orthodox Christian, and first of all of the bishops, the successors of the holy apostles. So how can a patriarch defend Orthodoxy, the supreme value for the people that believes in Christ, if he allows the secular authority to have any authority over him?

For, as St. Photius himself said, "In questions of the Faith even the smallest deviation is already a sin that leads to death; and even a small despising of Tradition leads to the complete forgetting of the dogmas of the Faith. "

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While exalting the status of the patriarch in relation to that of the emperor, St. Photius by no means refused to give due honour to the emperor.¹⁰ Moreover, in his advice to the newly baptized Bulgarian Tsar St. Boris-Michael Photius gave the tsar authority even in matters of the faith: "The king must correct his people in the faith and direct it in the knowledge of the true God."¹¹

For the emperor was, according to Alexander Dvorkin, "the supreme judge and lawgiver, the defender of the Church and preserver of the right faith. He took decisions on the declaration of war and the conclusion of peace; his juridical decision was final and not subject to appeal; his laws were considered to be God-inspired, while his power was limited only by the laws of morality and religion. On the other hand, however, once he had issued a law, the emperor himself fell under its force and he was bound to observe it."¹²

However, in the law code entitled the *Epanagoge*, in whose composition Photius probably played a leading part, the authority of the Patriarch is exalted over the Emperor. Its bias is already evident in the foreword, where, as Fr. Alexis Nikolin writes, "it says that 'the law is from God', Who is the true Basileus... [And] in the *Digests* we do not find the following thesis of Roman law: 'That which is pleasing to the emperor has the force of law'. Thus the emperor is not seen as 'the living law'."¹³ He can be called that only in the secular sphere: "The Emperor must act as the law when there is none written, except that his actions must not violate canon law. The Patriarch alone must interpret the canons of the

¹⁰ Thus in a letter to the bishops in exile he writes: "While before us the divine Paul exhorts us to pray for sovereigns, so does Peter too, the chief of the apostles, saying, 'Be submissive to every human institution for the Lord's sake whether it be to the emperor as supreme,' and again, 'Honor the emperor,' But still, even before them, our common Master and Teacher and Creator Himself from His incalculably great treasure, by paying tribute to Caesar, taught us by deed and custom to observe the privileges which had been assigned to emperors. For this reason, indeed, in our mystical and awesome services we offer up prayers on behalf of our sovereigns. It is, accordingly, both right and pleasing to God, as well as most appropriate for us, to maintain these privileges and to join also our Christ-loving emperors in preserving them." (D.S. White, *Patriarch Photios of Constantinople*, Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1981, p. 155)

¹¹ St. Photius, in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., vol. I, p. 95.

¹² Dvorkin, *Ocherki po Istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novogorod, 2006, pp. 586-587.

¹³ Nikolin, *Tserkov' i Gosudarstvo* (Church and State), Moscow, 1997, pp. 41, 42. It will be recalled that Justinian used the same phrase...

ancient (Patriarchs) and the decrees of the Holy Fathers and the resolutions of the Holy Synods" (*Titulus* III, 5).

In fact, as Dagron writes, "The emperor is defined as a 'legitimate authority' ..., contrary to the Hellenistic and Roman tradition which declares him to be 'above the laws', being himself 'the living law' and only submitting to the laws of his own free will... In the first article [of *Titulus* III] the patriarch is defined as the living and animate image of Christ by deeds and words typifying the truth... Everything that the patriarch gains, he steals from the emperor. In place of the emperor traditionally called – as in the letter of Theodore the Studite – 'imitator of Christ' there is substituted a patriarch called the image of Christ, and in place of the emperor as the living law – a patriarch as the living truth... The idea of the emperor-priest, which was condemned in the person of Leo III, is succeeded by the prudent but clear evocation of a patriarch-emperor, or at least of a supreme priest to whom revert all the attributes of sovereignty. If he is the living image of Christ, the patriarch participates like him in the two powers. He is a New Moses and a New Melchizedek."¹⁴

Just as the Emperor Leo had used the figure of Melchizedek, both king and priest, to justify his exaltation of the role of the emperor, so Patriarch Photius used the figure of Moses, both king (as it were) and priest, to exalt the role of the patriarch. Only whereas Melchizedek had been seen by Leo as primarily a king who was also a priest, Moses was seen by St. Photius as primarily a priest who also had the effective power of a king: "Among the citizens, [Moses] chose the most refined and those who would be the most capable to lead the whole people, and he appointed them as priests... He entrusted them with guarding the laws and traditions; that was why the Jews never had a king and why the leadership of the people was always entrusted to the one among the priests who was reputed to be the most intelligent and the most virtuous. It is he whom they call the Great Priest, and they believe that he is for them the messenger of the Divine commandments."¹⁵

The *Epanagoge* proceeds to contrast the rights and duties of the Emperor and the Patriarch. "The task of the Emperor is to protect and preserve the existing popular forces by good administration, and to re-establish the damaged forces by careful supervision and just ways and actions" (*Titulus* II, 2). "The task of the Patriarch is, first, to keep those people whom he has received from God in piety and purity of life, and then he must as far as possible convert all heretics to Orthodoxy and the unity of the Church (heretics, in the laws and canons of the Church, are those who are not in communion with the Catholic Church). Also, he must lead the unbelievers to adopt the faith, striking them with the lustre and glory and wonder of his service" (*Titulus* III, 2)... "The aim of the Patriarch is the salvation of the souls entrusted to him; the Patriarch must live in Christ and be crucified for the world" (*Titulus* III, 3). "The Emperor must be most distinguished in Orthodoxy and piety and glorified in divine zeal, knowledgeable in the

¹⁴ Dagron, op. cit., pp. 237-238.

¹⁵ Dagron, op. cit., p. 234.

dogmas of the Holy Trinity and in the definitions of salvation through the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Titulus* II, 5). "It particularly belongs to the Patriarch to teach and to relate equally and without limitations of both high and low, and be gentle in administering justice, skilled in exposing the unbelievers, and not to be ashamed to speak before the face of the Emperor about justice and the defence of the dogmas" (*Titulus* III, 4). "The Emperor is bound to defend and strengthen, first of all, all that which is written in the Divine Scriptures, and then also all the dogmas established by the Holy Councils, and also selected Roman laws" (*Titulus* II, 4).

Although a more exalted place is accorded to the patriarch in the *Epanagoge*, it is striking that the emperor is still given an important role in defending the faith. However, the word "emperor" is carefully defined to exclude what St. Basil or St. Ambrose would have called a "tyrant": "The aim of the Emperor is to do good, which is why he is called a benefactor. And when he ceases to do good, then, it seems, he corrupts the meaning of the concept of Emperor by comparison with the ancient teachings." (*Titulus* II, 3)

In the last analysis, Photius' conception of the kingship seems "to the right of centre" of the patristic consensus, if Justinian's *Novella* 6 is seen as the centre. This is probably to be explained by the need felt by the Patriarch to counter the absolutism of Leo III's *Eclogue* and the tyrannical acts of the contemporary emperors (Photius himself was exiled more than once). Moreover, St. Photius probably felt able to express such a bold attitude in relation to the emperor because of the exceptional power he wielded in post-iconoclast Byzantium.

This power was seen as extending even over the other patriarchates of the East. Thus Dmitri Shabanov writes: "As the editor of the *Nomocanon in 14 Tituli*... St. Photius often writes that on the territories of the East the Patriarch of Constantinople has all the canonical rights that the Roman Pope has on the territories of the West. For example, in *Titulus* I, 5 and in *Titulus* VIII, 5 of the *Nomocanon in 14 Tituli* St. Photius writes directly that Constantinople has the prerogatives of the old Rome and is 'the head of all the Churches' of the *oikoumene*, that is, of the Roman Empire...

"According to the thought of St. Photius, the transfer of the prerogatives of the Roman bishop to the bishop of Constantinople gives the latter the right to speak out in the capacity of highest court of appeal for the whole of the East.

"St. Photius' conception of the equal status of the sees of the Old and New Rome was accepted at the Great Council of Constantinople of 879-880 (many canonical monuments and some of the Holy Fathers called this Council the Eighth Ecumenical Council). The Council of 879-880 was convened to rescind the decisions of the preceding Council of 869 at which particular emphasis was placed on the rights of the eastern Patriarchs. In spite of the rescinded decisions of the Council of 869, the Great Council of Constantinople of 879-880 in general made no mention of any rights of the eastern Patriarchs, but decreed in its first canon that the Roman and Constantinopolitan sees had equal judicial rights,

thereby removing the right of appeal to Rome against the decisions of the Constantinople court, which in this way was recognized as the highest court of appeal for the whole of the East."¹⁶

The process of reducing the pentarchy of patriarchates to a diarchy (Rome and Constantinople) had begun in the time of Justinian in the sixth century. It gathered pace when the three Eastern patriarchates fell under Muslim rule in the seventh century and were virtually reduced to the status of metropolitan districts of the Constantinopolitan patriarchate.¹⁷ In the time of St. Photius, moreover, the diarchy was sometimes seen rather as a Constantinopolitan monarchy, insofar as the decline and corruption of Rome in the early tenth century during the "pornocracy of Marozia" greatly reduced her prestige and influence. Moreover, in missionary work beyond the bounds of the empire (the Armenians and Syrians in the East, the Moravians in the West, the Khazars, Bulgars and Russians in the North), where the emperors had previously taken the initiative, the patriarch was now the prime mover.¹⁸

Thus the patriarchate was becoming ever more truly "ecumenical"... At the same time, St. Photius did not deny the traditional doctrine of Church-State symphony. Thus the *Epanagoge* concludes: "The State consists of parts and members like an individual person. The most important and necessary parts are the Emperor and the Patriarch. Therefore unanimity in everything and agreement between the Empire and the Priesthood (constitutes) the spiritual and bodily peace and prosperity of the citizens" (*Titulus* III, 8). And so the iconoclast thesis and the post-iconoclast antithesis came to rest, in the *Epanagoge*, in a synthesis emphasizing the traditional symphony of powers, even if the superiority was given to the patriarch (the soul) over the emperor (the body).

It must also be remembered that the "consensus of the Fathers" with regard to the emperor-patriarch relationship did not occupy an exact middle point, as it were, on the spectrum between "caesaropapism" and "papocaesarism", but rather a broad band in the middle. In times when the emperor was apostate, heretical or simply power-hungry and passionate, the Fathers tended slightly right of centre, emphasizing the independence of the Church, the lay, unpriestly character of the emperor, and the superiority of spiritual to temporal ends as the soul is superior to the body (SS. Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, Maximus the Confessor, Photius the Great). But in times when the emperor was a faithful son of the Church, the Fathers were glad to accord him a quasi-priestly role – provided that he did not undertake strictly sacramental functions (the Fathers of the First, Fourth and Fifth Ecumenical Councils, St. Isidore of Pelusium). It was only the extremes that were excluded:

¹⁶ Shabanov, "Kanonicheskaya Spravka o Prave Vselenskogo Patriarchego Prestola Konstantinopolia – Novogo Rima prinimat' apelliatsii na sudebnie dela iz drugikh Pomestnykh Tservej" (A Canonical Note on the Right of the Ecumenical Patriarchal Throne of Constantinople – New Rome to accept appeals in judicial cases from other Local Churches), <http://portal-credo.ru/site/print.php?act=news&id=64720>, July 24, 2008.

¹⁷ Dagron, op. cit., pp. 240, 241; Shabanov, op. cit.

¹⁸ Dagron, op. cit., p. 239.

the royal absolutism of the iconoclast emperors and the priestly, hierocratic absolutism of the heretical popes, both of which tended to deny any independent sphere of action, in the former case, to the Church, and in the latter, to the State...

2. MIGHT AND RIGHT IN MIDDLE BYZANTIUM

As a result of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, Byzantium, strengthened and purified spiritually, was able to enter into one of its most glorious periods also from a political point of view...

M. Angold writes that "from the mid-ninth century Byzantium took the offensive," against the Muslims. "After the battle of the Bishop's Meadow (863) the Arabs were never a real threat to Anatolia. Along the eastern frontier petty emirates emerged, not all of them in Muslim hands. Tephrike, for example, was held by the heretical Paulicians. Its capture in 878 brought the Byzantines within striking distance of the upper Euphrates. Care was taken to consolidate advances by creating new border *themes*, such as Mesopotamia and Lykandos (c. 900). Melitene, key to the middle Euphrates, fell in 934, and Theodosiupolis (Erzerum) in 949, allowing the Byzantines to exercise more influence in Armenian lands, where a policy of piecemeal annexation was pursued. In 968 the Armenian principality of Taron was annexed and turned into a *theme*. These advances were complemented by the conquest of Tarsus and of Cilicia (965). Antioch fell in 969 and the city of Aleppo was put under tribute. The eastern frontier thus advanced from the Taurus mountains and the Pontic Alps to northern Syria and the lands of the middle and upper Euphrates.

"In the Mediterranean the Byzantines were still on the defensive in the early tenth century, but the Arab corsairs of Crete were driven out in 960/61 and Cyprus was taken in 965. Further successes in the eastern Mediterranean were checked by the arrival of the Fatimids in Egypt (969). They quickly extended into Palestine and Syria.

"Conditions had also changed rapidly to the north of the Black Sea. Ever since the seventh century Byzantium had relied on alliance with the Khazars. From the early ninth century, however, a new people appeared in the shape of the Russians, who controlled the rivers leading from the Baltic Sea and the Caspian. Byzantium reacted by creating a *theme* in the Crimea centred on Cherson (833)..."¹⁹

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It was a fundamental principle both of Justinian's and of Photius' legislation that Church canons should always take precedence over imperial laws. (Parallel texts of ecclesiastical law and the relevant secular laws were laid out in *nomocanons*.) As this principle became more generally accepted, more areas of what had been considered secular life came under the influence of the process of "enchurchment". This process was expressed in several new requirements: that the emperors themselves should be anointed in a special Church rite (though this did not come about until the thirteenth century); that marriages should take place

¹⁹ Angold, in Angus Mackay and David Ditchburn (eds.), *Atlas of Medieval Europe*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, pp. 21-23.

in church, and in accordance with the church canons; and that lands and monies donated by individuals to the Church should never be secularized, but should ever remain under the control of the Church. Thus one of the *novellas* of Emperor Alexis Comnenus said that it was wrong to forbid a slave a Church marriage in a Christian State, for in the Church a slave is equal to a lord. Again, in the thirteenth century there were cases of trials of murderers, not according to the civil codex, but in accordance with the Church canons: the criminal besought forgiveness on his knees and was given a fifteen-year penance of standing among the penitents at the Divine Liturgy. However, as was to be expected, there was resistance to this process, if not as an ideal, at any rate in practice; and this was particularly so in the case of marriage law – more specifically, of marriage law as applied to emperors...

The first major conflict came towards the end of the eighth century, when St. Tarasius, Patriarch of Constantinople, refused to give his blessing to the marriage of the son of the Empress Irene, Constantine VI, who had cast off his lawful wife and entered into an adulterous relationship with his mistress. The Emperors then turned to the priest Joseph, who performed the marriage, upon which St. Tarasius at first did nothing, "through adaptation to circumstances", but then excommunicated Joseph. Fearful, however, that too great a strictness in this affair would lead the Emperors to incline towards iconoclasm, the patriarch accepted Joseph into communion before the end of his penance. He was also accepted by the next Patriarch, St. Nicephorus, who was under pressure from the next Emperor, Nicephorus. In protest against these applications of "economy", St. Theodore the Studite broke communion with both patriarchs, and returned into communion with St. Nicephorus only when he had again excommunicated Joseph. St. Theodore allowed no compromise in relation to the Holy Canons. He who was not guided by them was not fully Orthodox. St. Paul anathematized anyone who transgressed the law of Christ, even if he were an angel from heaven. *A fortiori* the emperors were not exempt from the Canons. There was no special "Gospel of the kings": only God is not subject to the law.²⁰

St. Photius faithfully followed St. Theodore's teaching: when Basil I came to power after murdering his predecessor, he accepted him as emperor, but refused to give him communion. But he was deposed for this, and was deposed again by Basil's son, Leo the Wise, who shifted the balance of Church-State relations back towards caesaropapism, saying: "from now on the emperor's care extends to everything, and his foresight (pronoia, a word which can equally well mean the 'providence' of God) controls and governs everything."²¹ He claimed, according to Dorothy Wood, "to be head of Church and State in the sense that, if the Church as led by the Patriarch was irreconcilably opposed to the Emperor, the Emperor

²⁰ Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1931, part I, pp. 89-93. However, as D.A. Afinogenov writes, the issue was not really one of Church-State relations, but whether the hierarchs were allowed to apply "oikonomia" (condescension) in the application of the canons to non-dogmatic matters (*Konstantinopol'skij Patriarkhat i Ikonoborcheskij Krizis v Vizantii (784-847)* (The Constantinople Patriarchate and the Iconoclast Crisis in Byzantium), Moscow, 1997, p. 54).

²¹ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 36

could resolve the conflict".²² And so when St. Photius' successor (and nephew), Patriarch Nicholas the Mystic, opposed his fourth marriage to Zoe, the Emperor simply removed him from office, forced a priest to perform the marriage and then himself placed the crown on his "wife's" head.

"In order to legitimize the marriage," writes Fr. Andrew Louth, "Leo sought a dispensation from the pope. The attitude to marriage in the West was different from that in Byzantium, partly because the Church had not yet succeeded in imposing its will on lay society – the Church was still flexing its muscles over the question – but mainly because the West approached marriage from a different perspective. So long as there was no living spouse, in the eyes of the Latin Church one was in a position to marry. Leo was in such a position, and Pope Sergius III readily recognized Leo's marriage to Zoe Karbonopsina."²³

However, the patriarch did not give in. Commenting that the Emperor was to Zoe "both bridegroom and bishop"²⁴, he defrocked the priest that had "married" him and stopped the Emperor from entering Hagia Sophia. Then, when the papal legates recognized the marriage, St. Nicholas resigned from his see, declaring that he had received the patriarchate not from the king but from God, and that he was leaving because the Emperor was making the government of the Church impossible.

The Emperor retaliated by exiling Nicholas and putting Euthymius on the patriarchal throne, who permitted the fourth marriage, saying: "It is right, your Majesty, to obey your orders and receive your decisions as emanating from the will and providence of God"²⁵! However, after the death of Leo in 912, Euthymius was imprisoned and St. Nicholas was restored to his see. Finally, in the *Tome of Union* (920), fourth marriages were condemned as "unquestionably illicit and void", and third marriages permitted only by special dispensation.

St. Nicholas excommunicated Pope Anastasius III for his support for Leo and wrote to him: "What was I to do in such circumstances? Shut up and go to sleep? Or think and act as befits a friend who cares at one and the same time both for the honour of the emperor and for the ecclesiastical decrees? And so we began the struggle with God's help; we tried to convince the rulers not to be attracted by that which is proper only for those who do not know how to control themselves, but to endure what had happened with magnanimity, with good hope on Christ our God; while we touched, not only his knee, but also his leg, begging and beseeching him as king in the most reverential way not to permit his authority to do everything, but to remember that there sits One Whose authority is mightier than his - He Who shed His Most Pure Blood for the Church."

²² Wood, *Leo VI's Concept of Divine Monarchy*, London: Monarchist Press Association, 1964, p. 15.

²³ Louth, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

²⁴ P.G. 91.197.

²⁵ *Life of Euthymius*, quoted in Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

And to the Emperor he wrote: "My child and emperor, it befitted you as a worshipper of God and one who has been glorified by God more than others with wisdom and other virtue, to be satisfied with three marriages: perhaps even a third marriage was unworthy of your royal majesty... but the sacred canons do not completely reject a third marriage, but are condescending, although they dislike it. However, what justification can there be for a fourth marriage? The king, they say, is the unwritten law, but not in order to act in a lawless manner and do anything that comes into his head, but in order that by his unwritten deeds he may be that which is the written law; for if the king is the enemy and foe of the laws, who will fear them?"²⁶ The saint went on to say that "an emperor who gave orders to slander, to murder through treachery, to celebrate unlawful marriages, and to seize other people's property, was not an emperor, but a brigand, a slanderer, and adulterer and a thief."²⁷

The emperors' attempts to impose their will on the Church continued. Thus "Emperor Romanus, who reigned over Byzantium at the beginning of the tenth century had a son, Theophylact, who was sixteen years old when Patriarch Stephen died. The emperor wanted his son to be elevated as patriarch for he had promised him this spiritual calling from his youth. Since his son was a minor, the emperor was ashamed to do this. The patriarchal throne was assumed by Tryphun a simple but chaste and pious old man. Tryphun remained on the throne for three years. When the son of the emperor reached his twentieth year, the emperor thought to remove Tryphun at any price and to install his son as patriarch. The saint of God, Tryphun, did not want to relinquish his throne voluntarily, for no other reason, because he considered it to be a great scandal that such a young man be elevated to such a responsible and burdensome position as that of being patriarch. Through the intrigue of a nefarious bishop, the signature of the innocent Tryphun was extracted on a blank sheet of paper. Later on, in the imperial court, above that signature, the alleged resignation of the patriarch was written which the emperor decreed. As a result of this, there arose a great confusion in the Church, for the laity and the clergy stood by Tryphun, the godly man. The emperor then forcibly removed the aged patriarch and sent him to a monastery and, his son, Theophylact, was elevated as patriarch. St. Tryphun lived as an ascetic in this monastery for two years and five months and presented himself before the Lord in the year 933 A.D."²⁸

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Another area in which imperial might came up against ecclesiastical right was that of imperial legitimacy and succession. We have seen that in the early Byzantine period very strict criteria of legitimacy were applied by such bold hierarchs as St. Ambrose of Milan. However, these strict criteria were by no

²⁶ Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 90.

²⁷ St. Nicholas, Epistle 32, *P.G.* 111: 209-213; Fr. George Poullas, "Indestructible Towers", *Orthodox Tradition*, vol. 26, 2009, N 2, p. 15.

²⁸ *Life of St. Tryphun, Patriarch of Constantinople.*

means consistently adhered to in later centuries²⁹; and even late into the Christian period, Roman emperors were so often overthrown by force that J.B. Bury, following Mommsen, called the government of Byzantium "an autocracy tempered by the legal right of revolution"³⁰.

Dagron has pointed out that one could become emperor in Byzantium in various ways: by dynastic succession from father to son, by being "purple-born (*porphyrogennetos*)"³¹, by marrying a former empress, by being made co-emperor by a living emperor, as well as by usurpation, that is, the overthrow of a living emperor by force.³² Although a usurper would naturally be considered the very opposite of a legitimate ruler, he could nevertheless be seen as expressing God's transfer of power from an unworthy man to one more worthy, as when He "repented" of His choice of Saul and chose David instead.³³ Or the legitimate emperor could simply hand over power to the usurper in order to avoid bloodshed, as when Emperor Michael Rangabe sent his crown, purple robe and shoes to Leo V, saying: "I abdicate in your favour. Enter Constantinople without fear and reign gloriously."³⁴

A comparison can be made between the Byzantine idea of legitimacy and the Chinese "mandate of heaven". In the Chinese system, as J.M. Roberts writes: "Confucian principles taught that, although rebellion was wrong if a true king reigned, a government which provoked rebellion and could not control it ought to be replaced, for it was *ipso facto* illegitimate."³⁵ Similarly, in the Byzantine system, as Lemerle writes, "usurpation... has... almost a political function. It is not so much an illegal act as the first act in a process of legitimation... There is a parallelism, rather than an opposition, between the basileus and the usurper.

²⁹ For example, in 602 Phocas brutally murdered the Emperor Maurice, and was recognized as the new emperor (Pope Gregory I even heaped praises on him!). Phocas proceeded to "establish bloody terror in the empire (602-610). One contemporary cites the story of a certain man who cried out to God: 'Why did You send Your people such a blood-thirsty wolf?' And the Lord replied to him: 'I tried to find someone worse than Phocas, so as to punish the people for its self-will, but was unable. But don't you question the judgements of God'" (Dvorkin, op. cit., p. 439).

³⁰ Bury, *The Constitution of the Later Roman Empire*, Cambridge University Press, 1910, p. 9. Dvorkin echoes this judgement (op. cit., p. 587).

³¹ That is, born in the *porphyra*, a special room lined with porphyry which Constantine V had constructed in the imperial palace as birth-place for his son. Being born in this room then came to confer on the new-born, writes Dagron, "a sacred character: the divine unction from the womb of his mother... {St.} Theophano, in order to explain to Leo VI that he was born in the purple without experience of unhappiness or poverty, said to him: 'You have been anointed from the womb'" (op. cit., p. 61). Several emperors, including Constantine VII, Zoe and Theodora, claimed the throne primarily on the basis of their being "born in the purple".

³² Dagron, op. cit., chapter 1.

³³ "In the middle of the 9th century, the Khazars dispatched an envoy to [St.] Constantine/Cyril, who had landed in their country to evangelise it; and this 'astute and malicious' man asked him: 'Why do you persist in the bad habit of always taking as emperors different people coming from different families? We do it according to the family?' To which the missionary replied by quoting the example of David, who succeeded to Saul when he was not of his family by the choice of God." (Dagron, op. cit., pp. 33-34).

³⁴ *The Life of our Holy Monastic Father Nicholas the Confessor, Abbot of the Studium*, in St. Demetrius of Rostov, *The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints*, February 4.

³⁵ Roberts, *History of the World*, Oxford: Helicon, 1992, p. 360.

Hence the existence of two different notions of legitimacy, the one 'dynastic' and the other which we might call (in the Roman sense) 'republican', which are not really in conflict but reinforce each other: the second, when the usurper fails, reinforces thereby the first, and when he succeeds, recreates it, whether the usurper attaches himself to the dynasty or founds a dynasty himself."³⁶

What if a usurper came to power by the murder of his predecessor? Even here the Church usually crowned him. Thus in 865 St. Irene Chrysovalantou revealed that the Emperor Michael III was going to be murdered. However, she said, "do not by any means oppose the new Emperor [Basil I], who shall come to the throne, though murder be at the root of it. The holy God has preferred and chosen him, so the enemy himself will not benefit."³⁷ St. Photius also accepted the new emperor – but refused him communion in church.

Paradoxically, writes Judith Herrin, "despite his obscure origins, Basil I's family maintained control over Byzantium for nearly two centuries, from 867 to 1056. In the tenth century, Constantine VII commissioned a biography of Basil (his grandfather), which invented a noble Armenian origin for the family and traced the portents which led to Basil 'saving' the empire from a drunken and dissolute ruler, Michael III, rather than gaining power in treacherous circumstances. By blackening the character of Basil's patron and colleague, Constantine made sure that his grandfather was given a highly original and invented role, as more legitimate and worthy of the imperial title than Michael. By such means the Macedonian dynasty, as it became known, contributed to a deeper sense of order, *taxis*, and strengthened the imperial office through a proper and controlled line of succession from father to son."³⁸

Sometimes the usurper was crowned, provided certain conditions were fulfilled. Thus when Nicephorus Phocas was murdered on December 11, 969 (he had been warned about this three months before the event by his spiritual father, St. Michael Maleinus, and so spent his last days in prayer and fasting) by his wife Theophano and his successor, John Tzimiskes, Patriarch Polyeuctus "declared that he would not allow the Emperor to enter the church as long as he had not expelled the Augusta from the palace and had not named the murderer of the Emperor, whoever he might be. Moreover, he demanded the return to the Synod of a document published by Nicephorus in violation of justice. The point was that Nicephorus, either intending to remove certain violations of the sacred rites that had been allowed, in his opinion, by certain hierarchs, or wishing to submit to himself even that in the religious sphere which it was not fitting for him to rule over, had forced the hierarchs to compose a decree according to which nothing in Church affairs was to be undertaken without his will. Polyeuctus suggested that

³⁶ Lemerle, in Rosemary Morris, "Succession and usurpation: politics and rhetoric in the late tenth century", in Paul Magdalino, *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantine History, 4th to 13th Centuries*, Aldershot, 1994, pp. 200-201.

³⁷ *The Lives of the Spiritual Mothers*, Buena Vista, CO; Holy Apostles' Convent, 1991, p. 325.

³⁸ Herrin, *Byzantium*, London: Allen Lane, 2007, pp. 146-147. According to Louth, by the time of the Macedonian dynasty in the tenth century, the idea of legitimate succession from father to son had taken hold (*Greek East and Latin West*, p. 213).

the Emperor carry out all (this); in the contrary case he would not allow him to enter the holy church. (John) accepted the conditions; he removed the Augusta from the palace and exiled her to an island called Protos, returned Nicephorus' decree to the Synod and pointed to Leo Valans, saying that he and nobody else had killed the Emperor with his own hand. Only then did Polyeuctus allow him into the holy church and crown him, after which he returned to the Royal palace and was hailed by the army and people."³⁹

This extraordinary episode tells us much about the real relationship between Church and State in Byzantium. On the one hand, there is no question that although Tzimiskes won the throne through brute force and murder, there was no real attempt to remove him or refusal to recognize him. This indicates that the pagan principle of Old Rome: "might is right", still prevailed in tenth-century Byzantium. Or rather: if might prevails, then this is by the Providence of God, and should therefore be accepted. Such a concept is similar to the Chinese idea of "the mandate of heaven". On the other hand, Tzimiskes' *de facto* victory was not felt to be enough in a Christian society: he needed the Church's forgiveness and sacramental blessing. And this the Church felt powerful enough to withhold until several conditions had been met: (1) the removal of Empress Theophano, the widow both of Nicephorus and the previous emperor Romanus and the mother of Romanus' purple-born sons Basil and Constantine, whom Tzimiskes had wanted to marry in order to strengthen his position; (2) the annulment of a caesaropapist decree of the previous emperor; and (3) the new emperor had made at least a formal attempt to find the murderer (everyone must have known that the emperor himself was the murderer, but if he did not accuse himself there was no higher judicial power that could convict him). By obtaining the fulfilment of these three conditions the Church, it could be said, made the best out of a bad job, extracting some good from an essentially evil deed.

While the Byzantines accepted Tzimiskes as *basileus*, they condemned the deed by which he attained the throne. The manoeuvre, writes Morris, was "nicely put by Leo the Deacon, who clearly understood these matters. Tzimiskes, he wrote, 'took up the reins of the Empire' at the fourth hour of the day of 11 December 963. In other words he assumed the governance of the empire. But it was not until after his coronation that his position as *autokrator* was finally legitimised by receiving the blessing of the church."⁴⁰

But if this resolved the question of Tzimiskes' legitimacy, it did not wipe out his sin. The best the Byzantines could come up with here was the theory – propounded by the thirteenth-century canonist Balsamon – that the emperor's anointing washed out all his previous sins!⁴¹

As Morris writes: "In the *Apocalypse of Anastasia*, dateable to the beginning of the twelfth century at the latest, we have an angel indicating to the narrator an

³⁹ Leo the Deacon, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 99.

⁴⁰ Morris, in Magdalino, op. cit., p. 205.

⁴¹ Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., p. 99.

empty throne in Hell and explaining that it belonged to John Tzimiskes 'who was not worthy of it, because he murdered Nikephoros Phokas'. Then the wounded Nikephoros is seen reproaching John, saying, "John, Tzimiskes, Lord John, why did you inflict an unjust death on me..." And John replied nothing but "Woe! What have I done?" The invention of the tradition that Tzimiskes' anointing had washed away the sin of the murder is, of course, another clear indication that he was believed to have been directly implicated."⁴²

"The aim," according to Dagron, "is to convert brute force (to thiriodes, thirion alogon, as Agapetus and Basil write) into a legitimate power, and the historical sources often allude to this conversion. If Theophanes characterizes Leo V, in 814, as 'very legitimate emperor of the Romans', this is to signify that this general, who had been called to the Empire by war and popular favour, was able to carry out the mutation which from now on made him a legitimate sovereign by not being too precipitate in the stages of transition, by letting the patriarch act, by ceasing to be an army commander, by conforming himself, not to constitutional rules which did not exist, nor even to more or less uncertain procedures, but to a process that allowed him to leave one role, that of a popularly elected general, for another, that of an emperor elected by God. If, on the contrary, Michael Attaliates and his contemporaries were doubtful that Isaac I Comnenus had succeeded, in 1057, in his passage from 'tyranny' to 'legitimate power', in spite of his probity and his courage, this was because he had not been able to divest himself of his martial fury, which had given him power but not sacredness..."

"So it is not power that is legitimate, it is he who appropriates it who can become legitimate by choosing to respect the law..."⁴³

⁴² Morris, op. cit., p. 211. "Together with the Holy Synod... [Patriarch Polyeuctus] recognized that, just as chrismation at Holy Baptism forgives sins committed up to that time, whatever they may be, so, it goes without saying, anointing to the kingdom forgives the sin of murder committed earlier by Tsimiskes... On the basis of the 19th canon of the Nicaean Council, the 9th and 11th of Neocaesarea and the 27th of St. Basil the Great, the ordination of hierarchs and the anointing of emperors removes all sins committed before ordination and anointing, whatever they may be. But the ordination of priests and other sacred people forgives small sins, such as impulses to sin, lying and other suchlike, which are do not subject them to deposition. But they do not forgive adultery" (M.V. Zyzkin, *Tsarskaia Vlast'* (Royal Power), Sophia, 1934, <http://www.russia-talk.lrg/cd-history/zyzkin.htm>, p. 29).

⁴³ Dagron, op. cit., pp. 38, 39.

3. ISLAMIC STATEHOOD

By contrast with its huge success in proselytizing converts all over the world, and its considerable cultural achievements, Islam never achieved a stable and distinctive religio-political order comparable with that of Orthodox Christian *Romanitas*. In fact, Islam appears to possess no political doctrine. In attempting to analyse why this is so, we will come closer to the heart of what this false, but very important religion, really is...

The dominant image of Islamic power is one of despotism – and a cruel, intolerant despotism at that. And that is true of later Islamic history. But in the beginning Islamic rule was closer to anarchism than despotism, an insufficiency of power rather than an excess of it.

Bernard Lewis writes that “the power wielded by the early caliphs was very far from the despotism of their predecessors and successors. It was limited by the political ethics of Islam and by the anti-authoritarian habits and traditions of ancient Arabia. A verse attributed to the pre-Islamic Arabic poet ‘Abid ibn al-Abras speaks of his tribe as ‘*laqah*’, a word which, according to the ancient commentators and lexicographers, denotes a tribe that has never submitted to a king. ‘Abid’s proud description of his people makes his meaning clear:

*They refused to be servants of kings, and were never ruled by any.
But when they were called on for help in war, they responded gladly.*

“The ancient Arabs, like the ancient Israelites depicted in the books of Judges and Samuel, mistrusted kings and the institution of kingship. They were, indeed, familiar with the institution of monarchy in the surrounding countries, and some were even led to adopt it. There were kings in the states of southern Arabia; there were kings in the border principalities of the north; but all these were in different degrees marginal to Arabia. The sedentary kingdoms of the south used a different language, and were part of a different culture. The border principalities of the north, though authentically Arab, were deeply influenced by Persian and Byzantine imperial practice, and represent a somewhat alien element in the Arab world...

“The early Muslims were well aware of the nature of imperial monarchy as practised in their own day in Byzantium and in Persia, and believed that the state founded by the Prophet and governed after him by his successors the caliphs represented something new and different...”⁴⁴

Mohammed did not consider himself a king, still less a Persian-style “king of kings”, but a mere prophet – albeit the last and greatest of them.

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⁴⁴ Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East*, London: Phoenix, 1995, pp. 140-141.

The first few decades after his death in 632 did not clarify the nature of the Islamic political system. The Arab Muslim hordes destroyed all opposition to their rule, but did not construct any enduring ecclesiastical or political structure in the lands they conquered. The “Caliphs” - a word that means “deputy” or “successor” in post-Koranic Arabic - were religio-political leaders who claimed to be both deputies of God and successors of the Prophet. But the institution had no clear basis in Mohammed’s practice or teaching; it was never clearly agreed how the caliph should be chosen or what was the nature of his power. Hence the chronic weakness and instability of Islam in most of its history. For it had neither a Church nor a State. It had only *a book* - a book whose origins were obscure, to say the least, and its interpretation disputed, providing no clear answer to many important questions, both religious and political.

Things began to change in the “reign” of Abd al-Malik (646-705), the fifth Caliph, who, while ruling from Damascus, built the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and established Mecca as the holiest shrine of the faith.

“Deploying his favourite medium of coinage,” writes Tom Holland, “he made sure to broadcast to the world precisely how he saw his role: as the *Khalifat Allah*, or ‘Deputy of God’. Just as Mohammed had been chosen to reveal the divine word, Abd al-Malik had been appointed to interpret it and broadcast it to humanity - and who was to say which one had been allotted the greater responsibility? Certainly, the title of ‘Caliph’ - introduced in the public gaze for the first time by Abd al-Malik’s agents in the imperial mints - implied a dominance over realms that were not less supernatural than earthly. It was upon the command of Al-Malik that roads were built and dams constructed, then it was also through his person that people might ‘pray for rain’. Formidably though his warriors stood guard upon the frontiers of the empire, yet they were not so formidable as the Caliph himself, who stood guard upon the highway that led to heaven. A ‘beater of skulls’, he was also the ultimate ‘*imam* of guidance’.

“These vaunting claims were not mere idle propaganda. The breathtaking scope of Abd al-Malik’s ambition was matched only the sheer drive and creative brilliance with which he sought to fulfil it. By the time of his death in 705, a ramshackle patchwork of conquests that only two decades previously had been on the verge of utter disintegrations had been reconstituted as a state no less brutally efficient than had been its toppled predecessors. Even more awesome, it had been consecrated to a vision of the due owed by humanity to the divine that brooked very little contradiction. ‘Religion in God’s eyes, is submission.’ So Muhammed had declared. Featured on the Dome of the Rock, however, the meaning of the verse had been subtly altered. ‘Submission’ demanded by God had come almost to serve as a proper noun. The faith proclaimed by Abd al-Malik, lord of an empire that stretched from the rising to the setting of the sun, had been given a name. The slogan stamped on the Dome of the Rock had become fit for the entire world.

“Religion, in God’s eyes,’ so it declared, ‘is *Islam*.’”⁴⁵

However, the Ummayyad Caliphs in Damascus, and then the Abbasid Caliphs in Baghdad, gradually fell under the influence of Byzantine statehood. Thus in 661 one of the early caliphs, Muawiya, became, as Simon Sebag Montefiore writes, “the Caliph of the vast empire that included Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, Persia and Arabia... He ruled through Christian bureaucrats and tolerated Christians and Jews alike, seeing himself as something between Arab sheikh, Islamic caliph and Roman emperor. He was tolerant and pragmatic, following an early, looser version of Islam, happy to worship at Christian and Jewish sites, and share their shrine.” However, despite his ‘tolerance’, he continued to conquer Christian lands such as Rhodes and Cyprus, and almost took Constantinople. Later he expanded the empire into eastern Persia, central Asia, the Sahara and today’s Libya and Algeria.

Living as he did in Syria, whose culture was Byzantine, Muawiya was influenced by Byzantine ideas and practices. “Byzantine influence on the emerging Islamic civilization,” writes Colin Wells, “a tidal pull that now reached its high-water mark, went far beyond the caliph’s assumption of royal ways. It covered virtually all areas of life...” Thus he was criticised “for putting on royal airs. In defense he explained ‘that Damascus was full of Greeks, and that none would believe in his power if he did not behave and look like an emperor.’” And his public designation, before his death in 680, of his son Yazid as his successor constituted a break with Islamic tradition and the adoption of the Byzantine principle of dynastic succession.⁴⁶

“Yazid failed to grasp the succession, facing rebellions in Arabia and Iraq. Muhammed’s grandson Hussein rebelled to avenge his father Ali’s death but was brutally murdered at Karbala in Iraq, his martyrdom creating the Shia, ‘the party’, a division that still splits Islam today. However, after Yazid’s early death, Muawiya’s old kinsman Marwan started to reconquer the empire, dying in 685 and leaving this troubled inheritance to his son Abd al-Malik, the second of the titanic Ummayyad Caliphs. Abd al-Malik was less human and flexible but more ruthless and visionary than Muawiya. He first mercilessly crushed the rebellions, retaking Iraq and Arabia; in Jerusalem he built the Dome of the Rock...

Abd al-Malik, writes Montefiore, “saw himself as God’s shadow on earth: if Muawiya was Caesar of the Arabs, he was a mixture of St. Paul and Constantine the Great – he believed in the marriage of empire, state and god. As such it was Abd al-Malik who collated the book of Islam – the Koran – into its final form (the inscriptions in Jerusalem’s Dome of the Rock are the first examples of the final Koran text), who defined Islamic rituals and who unified Islam into a single religion recognizable today with the emphasis on Koran and Muhammed, expressed in the double *shahada*: ‘There is no God but God and Muhammed is the apostle of God’. Abd al-Malik and his son Caliph Walid expanded their empire

⁴⁵ Holland, *In the Shadow of the Sword*, London: Abacus, 2013, pp. 429-430.

⁴⁶ Wells, *Sailing from Byzantium*, New York: Bantam Deli, 2006, pp. 129-132.

to the borders of India and the coasts of Spain. Yet their dynasty remained part Islamic theocrats, part Roman emperors, often living in a distinctly unIslamic decadence. This led to the family's downfall in the revolution of 750, when they were replaced by the Abbasid caliphs who ruled from Iraq and blackened the reputation of the Umayyads. To the Shia, they remained heretics and sinners because the Shia believed the real Caliphs were the twelve descendants from [Muhammed's cousin] Ali and [his wife] Fatima: indeed the Shia of Iran still await the return of the Twelfth..."⁴⁷

It was Abu Muslim, a manumitted Persian slave, who raised the standard of revolt, defeated the Umayyads and created the Abbasid dynasty. A few years later, Al-Mansur (754-775), having moved the capital of the empire to Baghdad, came under the influence of Persia with its strong despotic tradition. "The cause proclaimed by Abu Muslim was that of a single family, appointed by God to the rule of the world, and if the mark of their claim to this awesome status was the *possessio*, not of a *farr* [the supernatural aura of a Persian king] but rather of a bloodline traceable back to the uncle of the Prophet, then that, in an Islamic empire, promised qualification enough. Abu Muslim, like so many other rebels trained in subterfuge and insurrection, was an agent of the Abbasids, and by raising the East in their cause, he had succeeded in fusing the past with the future, the Iranian with the Arab, the Sasan with the Islamic."⁴⁸

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Through this fusion, Muslim "democratism" passed into a despotism closely akin to the pagan monarchies that Islam had destroyed; for despotism in politics invariably leads to the persecution of all non-state religions. Thus the Umayyad caliphs of the ninth century, particularly Mamun (813-833), believed their authority to be unlimited. The Umayyads persecuted Orthodoxy in Georgia, and in 839 the Abbasid Caliph Mutasim, Mamun's brother and successor, "at the head of a powerful Saracen army, won an outstanding victory against the Byzantines and laid siege to the town of Amorium in Upper Phrygia. After thirteen days, he overcame it through an act of betrayal and put all the inhabitants to the sword, whether they were bearing arms or not, as well as numerous peasants of the region who had sought refuge in the town. He spared only the town's forty-two highest officials, all illustrious and valiant men of noble birth, and shut them up in a dark and noisome prison. Tears were their only drink, and for food they had to try to survive on the few bits of mouldy bread that their gaolers deigned to toss to them from time to time, and on what one of their number was authorised to beg for in the street. Their bodies and clothes devoured by vermin, unable to see each other in the permanent darkness and reduced to the most extreme weakness, they did not however lose their courage and nobility of soul, and resisted all attempts of those sent from the Caliph to make them abjure [the faith]. He, counting as nothing the conquest of a town in comparison with that of human souls, promised them their lives if they simply pretended to

⁴⁷ Montefiore, *Titans of History*, London: Quercus, 2012, pp. 98, 99-100.

⁴⁸ Holland, *op. cit.*, pp. 468-469.

be converted by presenting themselves with him at public prayer. The martyrs replied to his emissaries: 'Would you agree to do the same if you were in our place?' 'Certainly,' the Muslims replied, 'for nothing is more important than liberty.' The Christians then replied: 'We do not take counsel in religious matters from those who are not stable in their own!'

"Some days later, others were sent and presented themselves, pretending to have brought alms. Feigning tears of compassion, they tried to win them to the religion of Mohammed, which promises all sorts of fleshly pleasures in this life and in the next. Raising their eyes towards heaven and thus arming themselves with words inspired by Scripture, the valiant combatants for the Faith then replied that such promises were indeed the proof of the falsity of that religion, which subjects our reasonable soul, created in the image of God, to the tyranny of the flesh. They replied in the same manner with the same assurance to the fakirs – the 'religious' of Islam who give themselves to ascetic practices and ecstatic prayers – reminding them that no prophet had ever announced the coming of Mohammed, whereas the whole of the Old Testament bore witness to the coming of Jesus Christ.

"The holy martyrs remained in that state for seven whole years, keeping the Faith without fault, nourishing it each day by the recitation of the Psalms of David and the divine Offices of the Church at the prescribed hours, giving thanks to God for having judged them worthy to endure such trials for Him..." On March 6, 839, they were all executed on the banks of the Euphrates after "pronouncing an anathema on Mohammed and on all those who confessed him as a prophet".⁴⁹

"The increasingly authoritarian character of government", writes Lewis, "and the disappointment of successful revolutionaries is vividly expressed in a passage quoted by several classical authors. A certain Sūdayf, a supporter of the Abbasids, is cited as complaining of the changes resulting from the fall of the Umayyads and the accession of the Abbasids to the caliphate: 'By God, our booty, which was shared, has become a perquisite of the rich. Our leadership, which was consultative, has become arbitrary. Our succession, which was by the choice of the community, is now by inheritance.'"⁵⁰

The climax of Islamic despotism came with the Fatimid ruler Al-Hakim, who even declared that himself to be divine. In *Wikipedia* we read that from 1007 to 1012 his attitude with regard to Jews and Christians became hostile. "On 18 October 1009, al-Hakim ordered the destruction of the [Holy Sepulchre](#) and its associated buildings, apparently outraged by what he regarded as the fraud practiced by the monks in the miraculous Descent of the [Holy Fire](#), celebrated annually at the church during the Easter Vigil. The chronicler Yahia noted that 'only those things that were too difficult to demolish were spared.' Processions

⁴⁹ Hieromonk Makarios of Simonos Petra, *The Synaxarion. The Lives of the Saints of the Orthodox Church*, Holy Convent of the Annunciation of our Lady Ormylia, 2003, vol. 4, pp. 59-61. Cf. Daniel J. Sahas, "What an Infidel Saw that a Faithful Did Not: Gregory Dekapolites (d. 842) and Islam", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 31 (1986), 47-67.

⁵⁰ Lewis, op. cit., pp. 143-144.

were prohibited, and a few years later all of the convents and churches in Palestine were said to have been destroyed or confiscated.¹ It was only in 1042 that the [Byzantine Emperor Constantine IX](#) undertook to reconstruct the Holy Sepulchre with the permission of Al-Hakim's successor."

That Muslim statehood should eventually become despotic and cruel was not only the result of Persian influence, but a natural consequence of the lack of a clear separation of Church and State, and of divine and secular law, in Islamic thought. This gave an absolute, unchecked power to the Caliphate, whatever the grumblings of Muslim clerics. In this respect, of course, the Caliphs were very different from the more Orthodox of the Byzantine autocrats, who, while supreme in the political realm, were not supreme in religion, holding to the principle of the symphony of powers.

"The office of Caliph," writes Sir Roger Scruton, "began as an attempt to recapture a vanished personal authority. Hence Caliphs repeatedly failed to give proof of their legitimacy, and the first three of them began a lengthy tradition by dying at the hands of assassins. Those who rule in the Prophet's name seldom satisfy their subjects that they are entitled to do so, since the authority that is looked for in an Islamic ruler is – to use Weber's idiom – a charismatic, rather than a legal-national form. Islamic revivals almost always begin from a sense of the corruption and godlessness of the ruling power, and a desire to rediscover the holy leader who will restore the pure way of life that had been laid down by the Prophet. There seems to be no room in Islamic thinking for the idea – so vital in the history of Western constitutional government [and not absent, of course, from Byzantine autocratic government] – of an office that works for the benefit of the community, regardless of the virtues and vices of the one who fills it... There seems to be no similar idea in Islamic political thinking, since institutions, offices and collective entities play no part in securing political legitimacy, and all authority stems from God, via the words, deeds, and example of his Messenger..."⁵¹

Christianity arose in the context of the Roman Empire, in which Christians was obliged to recognize and obey the state in all its laws that did not directly contradict the commandment of God. For although their ultimate loyalty was to God, the Christians were also citizens of a state established by God. So they did not rebel against the State, but gradually worked on its crude *mores* and pagan faith until it became Christian under St. Constantine. Thereafter Church and State could work in harmony with each other in a "symphony of powers".

The Church was universal, and had members in many different countries. The State, on the other hand, was territorial, being based on the feeling of a common destiny of all or most of the people on that territory, reinforced by commonalities of language, culture and religion. But the Church did not contest the power of the State on its own territory, so long as it did not violate the Church's authority in the spiritual realm

⁵¹ Scruton, *The West and the Rest: Globalization and the Terrorist Threat*, London: Continuum, 2002.

Islam, however, did not encourage the growth of stable territorial nation-states or empires. There were tribes, and there was the universal religion, and very little of what we may call “political infrastructure” in between. There was *shariah*, the law of Allah, derived solely from the Koran, but very little in the way of state law, and certainly nothing comparable to the legal structures created by Constantine, Theodosius and Justinian.

The only important exception to this was the caliphate. But the caliphate, as we have seen, had no foundation in the Koran. Nor does Mohammed speak about the succession of power. It was therefore always open for a discontent to question the legitimacy of the caliphate. And therein lay a recipe for constant unrest, even revolution. As François Guizot, the French Prime Minister in the 1840s, pointed out, it was the crucial lack in Islam of a separation of spiritual and temporal power, that distinguished the Islamic world from the Christian: “This separation is the source of liberty of conscience; it is founded upon no other principle but that which is the foundation of the most perfect and extended freedom of conscience. The separation of temporal and spiritual power is based upon the idea that physical force has neither right nor influence over souls, over conviction, over truth. It flows from the distinction established between the world of thought and the world of action, between the world of internal and that of external facts. Thus this principle of liberty of conscience for which Europe has struggled so much, and suffered so much, this principle which prevailed so late, and often, in its progress, against the inclination of the clergy, was enunciated, under the name of the separation of temporal and spiritual power, in the very cradle of European civilisation; and it was the Christian Church which, from the necessity imposed by its situation of defending itself against barbarism, introduced and maintained it... It is in the combination of the spiritual and temporal powers, in the confusion of moral and material authority, that the tyranny which seems inherent in this [Muslim] civilisation originated.”⁵²

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The early schism in Islam between the Sunnis and the Shias had important implications for political thought. For one of the major differences between the Sunnis and the Shias related to whether the caliphate should be elective or hereditary.

“The Shia maintained that the caliphate should be hereditary in the line of the Prophet, and therefore that all the caliphs, except only for the brief rule of Ali and of his son Hasan, were usurpers. The more generally accepted view of the Sunni Muslims was that the caliphate was elective, and any member of the Prophet’s tribe, Quraysh, was eligible.”⁵³

⁵² Guizot, *The History of Civilization in Europe*, London: Penguin, 1997, pp. 42, 55.

⁵³ Lewis, pp. 94-95.

The Shiites also believed in a certain separation, even antagonism between the imamate and the State. "The myth of the Hidden Imam, writes Karen Armstrong, "symbolized the impossibility of implementing a truly religious policy in this world, since the caliphs had destroyed Ali's line and driven the *ilm* [the knowledge of what is right] from the earth. Henceforth the Shii *ulama* [learned men, guardians of the legal and religious traditions of Islam] became the representatives of the Hidden Imam, and used their own mystical and rational insights to apprehend his will. Twelver Shiis (who believe in the twelve *imams*) would take no further part in political life, since in the absence of the Hidden Imam, the true leader of the *ummah* [the Muslim community], no government could be legitimate."⁵⁴

Therefore the potential always exists in Shiite Islam for a revolution in a hierocratic, "papocaesarist" direction. This is precisely what happened in Iran in 1979, when the Ayatollah Khomeini expelled the shah and took over the state...

The Sunnis, by contrast, conflate politics and religion in a "caesaropapist" manner. Thus for them, according to T.P. Miloslavskaya and G.V. Miloslavsky, the sultanate and the imamate were indivisible.⁵⁵ Again, Colin McEvedy writes that "the successors of Mohammed, the Caliphs, combined, as he had, the powers of Emperor and Pope".⁵⁶ Again, Ninian Smart writes that Islam "demands institutions which cover the whole life of the community. There is nothing in Islam... corresponding to the Church. There is no place for a special institution within society devoted to the ends of the faith. For it is the whole of society which is devoted to the ends of the faith."⁵⁷

Again, Bernard Lewis writes: "It is sometimes said that the caliph was head of State and Church, pope and emperor in one. This description in Western and Christian terms is misleading. Certainly there was no distinction between *imperium* and *sacerdotium*, as in the Christian empire, and no separate ecclesiastical institution, no Church, with its own head and hierarchy. The caliphate was always defined as a religious office, and the caliph's supreme purpose was to safeguard the heritage of the Prophet and to enforce the Holy Law. But the caliph had no pontifical or even priestly function... His task was neither to expound nor to interpret the faith, but to uphold and protect it - to create conditions in which his subjects could follow the good Muslim life in this world and prepare themselves for the world to come. And to do this, he had to maintain the God-given Holy Law within the frontiers of the Islamic state, and to defend and, where possible, extend those frontiers, until in the fullness of time the whole world was opened to the light of Islam..."⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Armstrong, *Islam*, New York: Modern Library, 2002, pp. 67, 68-69.

⁵⁵ Miloslavskaya and Miloslavsky, "Kontseptsia 'Islamskogo Edinstva' i Integratsionnye Protsessy v 'Musul'manskoy Mire'" ("The Conception of 'Islamic Unity' and Integrational Processes in 'the Muslim World'"), in *Islam i Problemy Natsionalizma* (Islam and the Problems of Nationalism), Moscow: Nauka, 1986, p. 12.

⁵⁶ McEvedy, *The Penguin Atlas of Medieval History*, London: Penguin, 1961, p. 36.

⁵⁷ Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, London: Fontana, 1971, p. 538.

⁵⁸ Lewis, op. cit., pp. 138-139.

This indivisibility of the roles of political and religious leader in Islam gave a certain unhealthily aggressive utopianism to the people's image of national and international life; they yearned for an order in which, "as ideally conceived, there were to be no priests, no church, no kings and no nobles, no privileged orders or castes or estates of any kind, save only for the self-evident superiority of those who accept the true faith to those who wilfully reject it – and of course such obvious natural and social realities as the superiority of man to woman and of master to slave."⁵⁹

"This is the ideal," says Mansfield. "Since the earliest times, Arab and Muslim rulers have assumed secular powers to some degree – and none more so than those of today – but the ideal continues to have a powerful influence on the hearts and minds of all Muslims. It accounts for the potent force of utopianism among Arabs – the belief that if they were to return to the ways of the Prophet and his companions the triumph of Islam in this world would be assured. In the West this is usually described as fundamentalism, but in a real sense all Muslim believers are fundamentalist, because they know that the Holy Koran was God's final message to mankind. The triumph of the West in the last two or three centuries is seen by Muslims as an aberration of history..."⁶⁰

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The huge conquests of Islam brought vast numbers of slaves into the markets of the East. Although the Church never formally condemned slavery, an institution that was endemic in Roman society, it was clearly frowned upon, especially if the slave-owner and the slave were both Christians. St. Paul, while forbidding slaves to run away from their masters, said that "in Christ there is neither slave nor free", and St. Gregory of Nyssa condemned it unequivocally.⁶¹

But for Christians to be enslaved to a Muslim was a direct threat to their faith. Muslims saw slaves as a gift from God. And so "the slave markets of the Caliphate were so glutted with female flesh that wealthy Arabs might debate the various merits of the merchandise as though evaluating the pedigree of bloodstock. Abd al-Malik himself was a noted connoisseur..."⁶²

This practice has continued to the present day in Muslim societies, and has become particularly topical today in view of the Muslim terrorist group ISIS's practice of slavery and kidnapping and raping of captive women. Its acceptance in the Koran was made clear in an interview conducted by Kevin Allen with a former Muslim, "George", who became an Orthodox Christian:

⁵⁹ Lewis, op. cit., p. 72.

⁶⁰ Mansfield, op. cit., p. 13.

⁶¹ Holland, op. cit., p. 438.

⁶² Holland, op. cit., p. 523, footnote 49.

““But wasn’t it Muslim slave traders who actually went into Africa and then enslaved Africans for sale to the Europeans and so on?”

““Yes, what is known as the Arab slave trade begun in the seventh century, with the rise of the Islamic Empire and lasted well into the twentieth century in some places such as Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and the Sudan, where there are still reports of slave trading to this present day. The Arab Muslim slave trade reached a vast area including the Sub-Saharan east and west Africa, which was the major supplier, then there was central Asia, the Mediterranean region, Eastern Europe including the lands of the Slavic peoples.

““There are even reports of the slave trade extending as far north as the British Isles and Iceland. America at the time of its infancy fell victim to the Muslim traders to what was known as “Barbary States,” which were independent Islamic states that run along the coast of north Africa.

““One thing I’d like to note is that in Islamic law it is not permissible to enslave free-born Muslims. Therefore only those born into slavery and non-Muslim captives are allowed to be taken as slaves. This could account for the fact that the vast majority of the people enslaved were those who inhabited the regions that bordered the territory of the Islamic empires and in particular the Christians were targeted.’

““But we see radical Islamic groups now like ISIS regularly kidnapping and enslaving and selling women and others. Is this practice of enslavement approved of in the Quran and the Hadith?”

““Yes it is. It’s not a very popular notion but I mean it definitely has been sanctioned by the Quran and Hadith. Groups such as ISIS look at the atrocities that they are committing as a holy war and as such any non-Muslim women captured become their property, even if these women are married. In the Quran such captives are frequently referred to as “ma malakat aymanukum” or “what your right hand possesses.” One such reference can be found in the Quran in Surah or chapter 4 verse 24, and it says, “And also forbidden are all married women except those whom your right hand possess. This is the law’s ordinance to you.”

““What I just quoted is a part of a longer section that speaks about the women who are lawful for a man to have sexual relations with. In connection to these verses the Hadith, the tradition from the life of Mohammed that gives the reason or circumstances in which this verse was revealed, it says,

“““The apostle of Allah sent a military expedition to Awtas on the occasion of the battle of Hunain. They met their enemy and fought with them. They defeated them and took them captives. Some of the companions of the apostle of Allah were reluctant to have intercourse with the female captives in the presence of their husbands who were unbelievers. So Allah, the Exalted, sent down the

Quranic verse, 'And also are forbidden, all married women except those whom your right hands possess. This is the law's ordinance to you.'"

""And then there is another example that can be found in the Quran, Surah 33 verse 50, where it is actually speaking through Mohammed himself personally. It says, "O Prophet, indeed we have made lawful to you your wives to whom you have given their due compensation and those whom your right hand possesses from what Allah has given to you of the captives ...""⁶³

⁶³ Fr. John, "Islam Through the Heart and Mind of a Convert to Orthodox Christianity, Part 1", *Journey to Orthodoxy*, March 11, 2016, <http://journeytoorthodoxy.com/2016/03/islam-heart-mind-convert-orthodox-christianity-part-1/>

4. THE MISSION TO THE SLAVS

From the beginning of the ninth century we see the first attempts by national kingdoms within the Orthodox Christian world to challenge New Rome's pre-eminence and take the place of the Roman emperor. The first such kingdom was that of Charlemagne, who was acclaimed "Emperor of the Romans" by the Pope in 800. But, as we shall see, from the Byzantine point of view, Charlemagne might be an "emperor" (*basileus*), but in no way could he be called the "emperor of the Romans", whose seat could only be the New Rome of Constantinople.

A challenge similar to that of Charlemagne – but much more threatening to the real power of the Roman emperors, at least in the short term – was provided by the Bulgarian khans (later: tsars)...

The Slavs had first moved across the Danube and into the Balkans in large numbers during the reign of Justinian. "By the 580s," writes Richard Fletcher, "their raids were reaching as far south as the Peloponnese. By about 600 it was plain that imperial authority had lapsed throughout this inland area and had retreated to coastal strongholds such as Thessalonica, Monemvasia and Dyrrachium (Durazzo, Dures). Even these were not wholly secure: Thessalonica was besieged by the Slavs in 612 and for the next two centuries remained a frontier town, with Slav settlements just outside the walls and Slavonic spoken in its streets and markets. It was the empire's tragedy that the military imperatives during most of the seventh century called from the east and the south: the Persian wars of the Emperor Heraclius followed by the hard fought surrenders to Islam in Syria, Egypt and north Africa. No resources could be spared for the Balkans and Greece, which were in effect abandoned to the depredations and settlements of the Slavs."⁶⁴

Nevertheless, in Greece, and particularly the Peloponnese, the Slavs had quickly become Christian and Hellenized thanks to the re-settling of many Greeks of Asia Minor in Greece. Further north, however, they remained hostile to Byzantium. In 626 they helped the Avars in their unsuccessful siege of Constantinople, and in 681 the Byzantines were forced to cede a large area of land south of the Danube to the Bulgars, a Slavic people with a Turkic leadership. In 811 they ceded still more territory after a Byzantine army was crushed by Khan Krum with the death of Emperor Nicephorus I.

God's counter-offensive against this pagan attack was led by two brother-saints from Thessalonica, Cyril and Methodius. Living in a region populated by many Slavs, they had learned their language and customs. Cyril in particular was a brilliant linguist and philosopher, having succeeded St. Photius the Great in the chair of philosophy in Constantinople at the extraordinarily young age of twenty-four.

⁶⁴ Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 337.

In 860 the brothers were sent by the emperor and St. Photius on an important diplomatic and missionary mission to the Khazars north of the Black Sea. The Khazars were a Turkic race whose leaders had been converted to Judaism. The Byzantines were seeking an alliance with them against the new pagan threat of the Russians, who attacked Constantinople in 860.

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Who were the Russians? “The north-eastern European forest zone,” writes Catherine Merridale, was “the dark continent of the ninth and tenth centuries. Like Africa in later times, it seemed to be a dangerous, exotic place, where fortunes waited for adventurers. Human slaves were one source of profit, for while Muslims and Christians were forbidden to enslave each other, the pagan Slavs were fair game. The appetite for fur, meanwhile, seemed to be inexhaustible, and it was purchased by everyone from the Arabs and Turks of Asia to the Franks and Anglo-Saxons of Europe’s Atlantic fringe. The northern birchwoods and the taiga beyond them produced the best. If the goods could be brought to market – in Constantinople, maybe, or Bolghar, the great city of the Volga route towards the east – serious money, silver, was on hand to pay for them.

“The profits on offer, and the many opportunities to set up custom posts and levy taxes on the precious freight, meant that the trade routes were worth fortunes, but the local Slavs were neither organized nor swift enough to take control of them. Instead, the prize fell to some bands of Vikings from Scandinavia, soon known to Greeks and Arabs as *Rhos*.⁶⁵ This used to be another controversial issue (Russian nationalists resented the suggestion that their founding princes might have come from somewhere else), but the archaeological evidence around the Baltic is conclusive. By protecting some convoys, raiding others, and seizing any promising tribute, the rough freebooters became formidable regional players. From their first permanent settlement on Lake Ilmen, on navigable waters near modern Novgorod⁶⁶, they had extended their network along the Dnieper and the Upper Volga by the middle of the ninth century. Like their relatives, the Vikings who raided Alfred the Great’s Wessex in the same decades, they were ambitious, warlike and incorrigibly mobile. In 860, they even managed to attack Constantinople, the heir of Rome, by closing on the great walled city from the sea. Before long, they had wrested the Dnieper capital of Kiev from... the Khazars and mounted a succession of campaigns against Slav settlements as far east as the middle Volga. In a world where hundreds of miles separated the main ports and markets, and a good average speed for overland travel was no more than thirty miles a day, it was no easy matter to complete a long journey with a fleet of loaded craft. The evolution of the region’s intercontinental trade was an epic of endurance, skill and simple human greed...”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ The word “Russian” is probably Scandinavian in origin. The Finns call the Swedes “Rossi”, and the Estonians call them “Rootsi”, to this day. (V.M.)

⁶⁶ The first evidence of Viking settlement in Russia dates to 753 in Staraya Ladoga. (V.M.)

⁶⁷ Merridale, *Red Fortress*, New York: Picador, 2013, pp. 15-16.

In 862, the Slavs of Novgorod took an unprecedented step: they invited the Vikings, the *Rhos* under Rurik, to rule over them: "Our land is great and abundant, but there is no order in it – come and rule over us." As N.M. Karamzin writes: "The citizens'... need for good order and quiet made them forget their national pride, and the Slavs, 'convinced,' as tradition relates, 'by the advice of the Novgorod elder Gostomysl,' demanded rulers from the Varangians [Vikings]." ⁶⁸

Rurik, writes Benson Bobrick, "has been identified as Roric the Dane or Roric of Jutland, known in western annals as *fel Christianitatis* or 'the gall of Christendom'. Before departing for Russia, he raided settlements along the banks of the river Elbe, ravaged part of northern France, and with an armada of boats had sacked the coast of England. The military confraternity of Norsemen to which he belonged was called the Varangians {from 'vaeringr' – 'associate under oath'}, mercenary merchant-warriors who also by way of the Western Dvina, Dnieper, and Volga Rivers, explored routes all the way to the Black and Caspian seas. Some entered the service of the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople, where they served as shock troops or imperial guards. Rurik remained on Slav territory and... established himself at Novgorod.

"Like the Normans in England, the Varangians soon merged with the native population. No one really know, for example, whether the word 'Russe' is Slavic or Norse..." ⁶⁹

As New Hieromartyr Andronicus, Archbishop of Perm, wrote: "At a time when, in the other peoples of Europe, the power of the princes and kings was subduing the peoples to themselves, appearing as external conquerors of the disobedient, but weak, - we, on the other hand, ourselves created our own power and ourselves placed the princes, the prototypes of our tsars, over ourselves. That is how it was when Rurik and his brothers were recognised by Ilmen lake. We placed them to rule over ourselves at a time when we had only just begun to be conscious of ourselves as a people, and when our statehood was just beginning to come into being." ⁷⁰

The Rus, continues Merridale, bought wooden hulls from Slav craftsmen and used local networks "to procure the furs, wax, honey, hides and slaves with which to load them. Over time the Rus and native Slavs began to merge and even intermarry, sharing a landscape and its local gods and inventing new stories, in a

⁶⁸ Karamzin, *Predania Vekov* (The Traditions of the Ages), Moscow: Pravda, 1989, p. 65. As I. Solonevich notes, this appeal was similar to that of the British Christians to the Saxons Hengist and Horsa. However, the results were very different. Whereas in Britain the invitation led to a long series of wars between the Britons and Saxons and the eventual conquest of most of England by the pagans, in Russia it led, without bloodshed, to the foundation of a strong and stable State, in which the Germanic element was quickly swallowed up by the Slavs." (*Narodnaia Monarkhia* (Popular Monarchy), Minsk: Luchi Sophii, 1998, p. 214)

⁶⁹ Bobrick, *Ivan the Terrible*, Edinburgh: Canongate, 1987, pp. 23-24.

⁷⁰ St. Andronicus, *O Tserkvi, Rossii* (On the Church and Russia), Fryazino, 1997, p. 132.

comon language, to make sense of their world. They were not yet a single people, but the foundations of a culture had certainly been laid.

“It was always crucial for the warlike Rus to persuade their various neighbours to trade with them. Unfortunately, the wealthiest of them, the citizens of Constantinople, were horrified by stories of the Vikings to the north. The very harshness of their world, to say nothing of that recent sea-attack, made this particular group of pagans seem especially uncouth. Although Constantinople’s imperial government hired Vikings of its own to serve as mercenaries (they were the most resourceful sailors, after all, and staunch fighters to boot), undomesticated ones, whatever they called themselves, were not permitted to enter the imperial capital at all. Instead, they had to trade through the Black Sea ports of Cherson and Tmutorokhan, which meant sharing their profits with a swarm of middle-men. They finally secured a trade treaty with Constantinople in 911, but its terms made clear that Rus merchants were permitted to enter the city only if they kept to their designated gate. They were also forbidden to arrive in groups of more than fifty at a time...”⁷¹

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Let us now return to the mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius...

On the way to Khazar capital of Atil, writes Hieromonk Makarios, St. Cyril (he was then a layman known as Constantine the Philosopher) learned Hebrew “and was miraculously given a knowledge of the Samaritan dialect. At the Khazar court, they held long theological discussions with the Jews, and Constantine confronted the doctors of the law, showing them the superiority of the Gospel and thus obtaining the conversion of many dignitaries and also the freeing of Christian captives. After having signed a treaty of alliance with the Khan, the two brothers set off homeward, converting on the way the pagan peoples of [the Crimea]. They also took St. Clement’s relics, which they had discovered in a miraculous way in Chersonesus (Sevastopol), back with them...

“Immediately after he had given his report to the Emperor, Constantine withdrew into *hesychia* [the practice of the prayer of the heart] near the Church of the Holy Apostles. Methodius, having refused the episcopal consecration that was offered him, had nevertheless to accept the post of abbot of the Monastery of Polychronion, where seventy monks were living at that time.”⁷²

However, the holy brothers had not in fact succeeded in converting the Khazar leadership to Christianity. The Khazars’ choice had been for Judaism. In view of the importance of this choice, and of “the Thirteenth Tribe”, for the future of Russia (for many of the Bolshevik leaders were Khazarian Jews), it is worth retelling the story...

⁷¹ Merridale, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

⁷² Hieromonk Makarios of Simonos Petras Monastery, *The Synaxarion*, volume 5: May, June, Ormylia, 2005, p. 118.

Now the Jews of the East had been persecuted by some of the Byzantine emperors. Thus Cyril Mango writes that “Leo III ordered once again the baptism of Jews and those who complied were given the title of ‘new citizens’, but they did so in bad faith, while others, it seems, fled to the Arabs. The failure of this measure was acknowledged by the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787, which decreed that insincere converts should not be accepted; it was preferable to let them live according to their customs while remaining subject to the old disabilities.”⁷³

However, this decree of the Ecumenical Council – which corresponded to the practice of the early Roman emperors – was not always observed. A fresh attempt to convert the Jews by force was made by Basil I: Jews were summoned to disputations and if they were unable to demonstrate the truth of their religion, they were to be baptized.⁷⁴ Remission of taxes and the grant of dignities were offered as rewards [for conversion]; even so, after the emperor’s death, most of the converts ‘returned like dogs to their own vomit’. The last recorded case of forced conversion was under Romanus I, but it only resulted in driving many Jews to the land of Khazaria north of the Black Sea. From then on such Jews as remained were left to live in relative peace; there was even a reverse migration of them from Egypt into the Empire in the late tenth and eleventh centuries...”⁷⁵

Khazaria was an attractive refuge for fugitive Jews because of trading links and because its rulers had adopted Judaism. Peter Frankopan tells the story: “Envoys from Khazaria arrived in Constantinople around 860 and asked for preachers to be sent to explain the fundamentals of Christianity. ‘From time immemorial,’ they said, ‘we have known only one god [that is, Tengri], who rules everything... Now the Jews are urging us to accept their religions and customs, while on the other hand the Arabs draw us to their faith, promising us peace and many gifts.’

“A delegation was therefore despatched with the aim of converting the Khazars. It was led by Constantine [the future St. Cyril, apostle of the Slavs.]... When they arrived at the Khazar capital, the envoys took part in a highly charged

⁷³ Thus the eighth canon of the Council states: “Inasmuch as some person who have been misled by their inferences from the religion of the Jews have seen fit to sneer at Christ our God while pretending to be Christians, secretly and clandestinely keep the Sabbath and do other Jewish acts, we decree that these persons shall not be admitted to communion, nor to prayer, nor to church, but shall be Jews openly in accordance with their religion; and that neither shall their children be baptized, nor shall they buy or acquire a slave. But if any one of them should be converted as a matter of sincere faith, and confess with all his heart, triumphantly repudiating their customs and affairs, with a view to censure and correction of others, we decree that he shall be accepted and his children shall be baptized, and that the latter shall be persuaded to hold themselves aloof from Jewish peculiarities...” (V.M.)

⁷⁴ This measure elicited opposition even from the Christians: “In reply to Basil’s initiative came a pamphlet from the best theologian and canonist of the day, Gregory Asbestas, who did not content himself with defending the dogmas and the canons, but preached rebellion and threatened the imperial power with anathema.” (Dagron, op. cit., p. 207.) (V.M.)

⁷⁵ Mango, *Byzantium. The Empire of New Rome*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986, p. 93.

series of debates against rivals who had been invited to present Islam and Judaism. Constantine's erudition carried all before him... In fact, despite Constantine's brilliance – he was told by the *khagan* that his comments about scripture were as 'sweet as honey' – the embassy did not have the desired effect for the Khazar leader decided that Judaism was the right religion for his people..."⁷⁶

In a letter to a Jew from Spain, a later *khagan* explained that the decision to convert to Judaism "was the result of the great wisdom of one of his predecessors, who had brought delegations representing different faiths to present the case for each. Having pondered how best to establish the facts, the ruler had asked the Christians whether Islam or Judaism was the better faith; when they replied that the former was certainly worse than the latter, he asked the Muslims whether Christianity or Judaism was preferable. When they lambasted Christianity and also replied that Judaism was the less bad of the two, the Khazar ruler announced that he had reached a conclusion: both had admitted that 'the religion of the Israelites is better', he declared, so 'trusting in the mercies of God and the power of the Almighty, I choose the religion of Israel, that is, the religion of Abraham.' With that, he sent the delegates home, circumcised himself and then ordered his servants, his attendants and all his people to do the same..."⁷⁷

One can't help wondering whether such illogical reasoning was not influenced by certain more material considerations... Nevertheless, the die was cast, and Khazar power grew until the reign of the Russian Great Prince Sviatoslav of Kiev. "Sviatoslav destroyed the Khazar city of [Sarkel](#) around 965, possibly sacking (but not occupying) the Khazar city of [Kerch](#) on the [Crimea](#) as well. At Sarkel he established a Rus' settlement called Belaya Vyezha ('the white tower' or 'the white fortress', the East Slavic translation for 'Sarkel'). He subsequently destroyed the Khazar capital of [Atil](#). A visitor to Atil wrote soon after Sviatoslav's campaign: 'The Rus' attacked, and no grape or raisin remained, not a leaf on a branch.'...

"Although [Ibn Haukal](#) reports the sack of [Samandar](#) by Sviatoslav, the Rus' leader did not bother to occupy the Khazar heartlands north of the Caucasus Mountains permanently. On his way back to Kyiv, Sviatoslav chose to strike against the Ossetians and force them into subservience. Therefore, Khazar successor statelets continued their precarious existence in the region. The destruction of Khazar imperial power paved the way for Kievan Rus' to dominate north-south trade routes through the steppe and across the Black Sea, routes that formerly had been a major source of revenue for the Khazars. Moreover, Sviatoslav's campaigns led to increased Slavic settlement in the region of the [Saltovo-Mayaki](#) culture, greatly changing the demographics and culture of the transitional area between the forest and the steppe."⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Frankopan, *The Silk Road*, London: Bloomsbury, 2015, p. 110.

⁷⁷ Frankopan, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

⁷⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sviatoslav>.

In 863, Prince Rostislav of Moravia, who was interested in his land becoming Christian, sent for a bishop and a teacher capable of instructing them “in our own language”; for the Frankish missionaries who had come to them celebrated the liturgy in Latin, a language they did not understand. St. Cyril, who by this time knew Bulgarian, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Khazarian Turkic, Syriac and Samaritan, was entrusted with the mission to Moravia with his brother, St. Methodius. In preparation for the trip, and with the blessing of St. Photius, he had created a Glagolitic alphabet for the Slavs and translated a selection from the Gospels for use in a Slavic liturgy. Decades later, Glagolitic was replaced by Cyrillic, a simpler alphabet derived from Greek in which the Old Slavonic Bible and liturgy common to all the Slavic Orthodox nations was written.

In 863 the brothers set out for Moravia, but encountered difficulties from the German bishops who were pressing in from the West and strongly opposed a Slavic-language mission to the Slavs.

“Now,” as Richard Fletcher writes, “the Germans had no objection to vernaculars as such... There was at this very time a lively development of Old High German [at Reichenau and at Fulda] for the purposes of Christian instruction. The error, in German eyes, of which Cyril and Methodius were guilty, was to translate *the liturgy of the sacraments* into the vernacular. Preaching, praying and professing the faith might be done in a convert’s own native tongue; but baptism and the eucharist must be administered in Latin – and correct Latin too...

“The German clergy claimed that there were only three permissible liturgical languages, namely Hebrew, Greek and Latin”⁷⁹ on the grounds that the apostles and fathers did not know Slavonic, and only the use of Greek, Latin and Hebrew were justified in that Pilate’s inscription over the Cross of Christ was in these three languages. Cyril replied to the “Pilatiens”, as he called them, “with the democratic argument that all nations are equal (‘Does not the rain from God come equally upon all, does not the sun shine for all nations?’); with the historical argument that a great many other nations were already celebrating in their own language (Armenians, Georgians, Persians, Syrians, Egyptians, Goths); and with the theological argument that one should understand what one is praying (‘praying with the mind’).”⁸⁰

“Cyril had other objections, too, to the methods of the German clergy. These are alluded to in one puzzling sentence in his *Life*. Its meaning is not clear in detail but its general drift is to the effect that Cyril accused the German missionaries of being too ready to compromise with the pre-Christian beliefs and customs – among them, we might care to note, ‘illegitimate unions’ or consanguineous marriages. It is clear therefore that the differences at stake were not just about ecclesiastical power politics but involved hard and important questions

⁷⁹ Fletcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 354-355.

⁸⁰ Will Van Den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999. p. 35.

concerning missionary tactics. After some forty months, that is to say in the autumn of 866, Cyril and Methodius left Moravia and entered Pannonia [western Hungary]. They took with them their body of trainee clergy so that they might be ordained to the priesthood by a bishop, presumably within the east Roman empire. It is possible that the timing of their departure was not unconnected with the appointment of Bishop Hermanrich to the see of Passau. This man was later to show himself fanatically anti-Greek; it was his bishopric that had lost the most by the brothers' work in Moravia. Cyril and Methodius were made welcome in Pannonia by Prince Kocel and remained there for about a year, teaching in Old Church Slavonic and training a native clergy, just as they had done in Moravia. We know, from the *Conversio*, how this initiative was regarded in Salzburg.

"It was at this point that a new player took a hand. At some point in 867, Pope Nicholas I summoned Cyril and Methodius to Rome. Quite why he did so we do not know. The most natural explanation among the various possibilities is that the pope – one who had a particularly exalted conception of his office and its authority – was apprehensive of an unseemly dispute between rancorous German clergy and innovative Greek missionaries, particularly at a juncture when relations between Rome and Constantinople were fragile. The brothers travelled to Venice, where they debated the trilingual question with a distinguished body of clergy, some of whom at least must have been attached to patriarchate of Aquileia. That church... may have had some interest in the evangelization of the Slavs. After this encounter the party travelled on to Rome, arriving there in the autumn of 867. Pope Nicholas had just died [under the anathema of the Church of Constantinople]; his successor, Hadrian II, received them...

"After the death of Cyril in Rome in February 869 Pope Hadrian II prevailed upon his brother to accepted the proposed Moravian bishopric. Accordingly Methodius was consecrated a bishop – with the titular rank of archbishop of Sirmium – with responsibilities for the Christian Slavs of both Moravia and Pannonia."⁸¹

Pope Hadrian approved of the concept of a Slavic-language mission, placing the Slavonic books on the altars of the main Roman churches. And he wrote to the Slavic Princes Rostislav, Sviatopolk, and Kocel: "'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men' (Luke 2:14). We have heard of your spirituality and eagerly desire and pray for your salvation; and how the Lord moved your hearts to seek Him, and showed you that it is fitting to serve God not only through faith, but also through good works. For faith without works is dead, and they fall away who profess to know God, but deny Him in works. You have asked for a teacher not only from this Holy See, but also from the pious Emperor Michael. And he sent you the blessed Philosopher Constantine together with his brother before we managed to. But when they learned that your lands belonged to the Apostolic See, they did nought against the Canon, but came to us bearing the relics of Saint Clement. Deriving threefold joy therefrom, we considered the matter and decided to send to your lands our son Methodius, an Orthodox man

⁸¹ Fletcher, op. cit., pp. 355-356, 359.

accomplished in mind, whom we consecrated with his disciples in order to teach, as you requested, and to explain fully in your language the Scriptures, the Holy Mass, that is, the Liturgy, as well as Baptism according to the entire Church Office, just as Constantine the Philosopher had begun through the Grace of God and the prayers of Saint Clement. Likewise, if there be someone else who is able to explain properly and faithfully, may this be holy and blessed by God, by us, and by the entire Catholic and Apostolic Church, so that God's commandment be easily learned. But keep this one custom: during Mass read the Apostolos and Gospel, first in Latin, then in Slavic, that the word of the Scripture might be fulfilled: 'Praise the Lord, all ye nations' (Psalm 116:1) and elsewhere, 'all the difference tongues shall proclaim the greatness of God as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance.' But if one of the teachers called to you, or one of those who tickle the ears and who turn from the Truth to lies dares, and begins in another manner to corrupt you, reviling the writings of your tongue, may he be cut off not only from communion, but also from the Church until he corrects himself. For they are not sheep but wolves whom you shall know by their fruits and avoid. And you, O beloved children, obey God's teaching and reject not the Church's instruction, that you might be true worshipers of God, our Heavenly Father, and all the Saints. Amen."

However, while the Pope approved, and confirmed Methodius's right to celebrate the Liturgy in Slavonic, the German bishops, especially Hermanrich of Passau did not. Methodius was imprisoned in a Swabian monastery for two-and-a-half years, until he was released in about May 873 at the insistence of Pope John VIII. He returned to Moravia... However, Pannonia was incorporated into the German kingdom and the archbishopric of Salzburg gained jurisdiction over the whole region.

After Methodius' death his disciples Clement, Gorazd, Nahum, Sava and Angelarius, known as the Five Companions, fled to King Boris-Michael of Bulgaria, and from there to Ochrid, where SS. Clement and Nahum and their followers translated books into Slavonic script for the benefit of the Slavs.

Meanwhile, the German bishops of Passau and Salzburg persuaded Pope Stephen V to ban Slavonic as a liturgical language, reversing the decision of John VIII...

5. THE FIRST BULGARIAN EMPIRE

Meanwhile, in 862 the Bulgarian Tsar Boris had accepted Christianity from German bishops. Seeing this as a threat to the Great Church's jurisdiction in Eastern Europe, the Byzantines promptly invaded the country, "and an imperial fleet cruised up the Danube. Boris capitulated, renounced his German alliance "and agreed to accept Christianity from Constantinople. After instruction he was baptized by a Greek bishop sent from the capital, probably towards the end of 865. Following Byzantine custom, he became the Emperor Michael's godson and took his name... He also received from the Patriarch Photius, a long letter setting

out the main points of Christian doctrine and sketching a portrait of the ideal Christian ruler for the convert khan to model himself upon... Photius compared Boris with Constantine... The patriarch's letter was cast in elaborate circumlocutions but between its stately lines could be read the message that conversion entailed subordination to the emperor in Constantinople.

"The first domestic result of the acceptance of Christianity by Boris from Constantinople was a rebellion against him by the pagan boyars of Bulgaria. The little that we know about it indicates that the revolt was an extremely serious one which nearly cost Boris his throne and his life. He suppressed it with great savagery. It is probably correct to interpret this rising not as a 'pagan reaction' *tout court* but rather as the expression of revulsion against the idea of accepting Christianity, with all sorts of menacing strings attached, from Bulgaria's traditional enemy. Boris cannot have been unaware that in neighbouring Moravia the missionaries were employing the vernacular and training a prospective priesthood for what might turn out to be a largely self-governing Moravian church. It was evident from Photius's letter that there was no prospect of these things coming to pass in Bulgaria. For Boris the future looked unappealing: he had subordinated himself to the emperor in Constantinople, which his own magnates would not stand for. So as soon as he had put the rebellion down, in 866, Boris changed tactics. He decided to play the 'western card' as he had done in 862, and once more appealed to King Louis the German. But in 866 there was this difference, that he also approached the pope.

"The Germans eagerly grasped this opportunity of expanding their influence, now threatened by Cyril and Methodius in Moravia, into Bulgaria. A German mission under Bishop Hermanrich of Passau was despatched to the khan's court: it was a significant choice of leader. Pope Nicholas I also responded positively. In November 866 a papal mission was sent under an Italian bishop, Formosus of Porto (later himself to become pope between 891 and 896). He took with him a long letter from Pope Nicholas responding to queries put to him by Boris, and from one of the pope's answers it can be inferred that Boris had requested a patriarch for the nascent Bulgarian church, in other words a leader who might render it independent of Constantinople. Pope Nicholas stalled. He could take no action until his legates had reported on their mission. If the number of believers multiplied in Bulgaria, then bishoprics might be founded there. In the fullness of time it might be that one of the bishops could be chosen, not as patriarch, but as archbishop."⁸²

In other respects, however, - for example, in relation to permissible food and clothing - the pope showed greater flexibility than the Byzantines.⁸³ This Boris encouraged Boris to expel the Greek clergy and allow Roman missionaries to consolidate themselves in the country. But they brought with them the new Frankish-papist heresy of the *Filioque* - of which Pope Nicholas was the foremost proponent...

⁸² Fletcher, op. cit., pp. 356-357.

⁸³ Dvorkin, op. cit., p. 574.

The Byzantines were helped at this point by division in the Roman ranks. "Rome was apprehensive of Bavarian churchmen's propensity for empire-building. One of the first acts of the Roman delegation upon arriving in Bulgaria in the spring of 867 was to snub the Germans by sending Bishop Hermenrich back to Passau. Formosus of Porto established himself in place of the Germans at the court of Boris and his Latin missionaries set to work among his subjects. Boris and Formosus evidently got on well together. This seems to have raised other suspicions at Rome. Later in 867 Boris asked Pope Nicholas whether he might allow Formosus to become archbishop of Bulgaria. The pope blocked this on a technicality, the prohibition in canon law on the transfer of a bishop from one see to another. (And it *was* a technicality: no objections were raised when Formosus was transferred from the see of Porto to that of Rome in 891.) Nicholas's successor Hadrian II was equally unresponsive. When Boris suggested an alternative candidate for the proposed Bulgarian archbishopric this too was turned down. This last exchange seems to have taken place in the later summer of 869. By this time it must have appeared to Boris that he was not going to get what he wanted from Rome. His every effort for the last three years had been in vain."

In the winter of 869-70 a council of Greek and Latin bishops met in Constantinople. Delegates from Tsar Boris appeared just before the end of the council. "They requested an authoritative and binding ruling on the issue, to which church, Rome or Constantinople should Bulgaria look for leadership? The council was re-convened for an extraordinary session on 4 March 870. The question was debated acrimoniously. But the outcome could never have been in doubt. Attendance from the Greek east vastly outnumbered the clerical representatives of the Latin west. The decision was in Constantinople's favour. In the immediate wake of this ruling Boris courteously but firmly expelled the Latin clergy from Bulgaria and accepted an archbishop, bishops and numerous other clergy from Constantinople. These included many monks, 'called upon from the mountains and from the caves of the earth and sent there by the emperor'. The Byzantine establishment was going to take no chances this time, and its missionaries were going to tread more warily. As for Boris, he had skilfully saved face. The decision had been made by a council of the whole church, not imposed on him by emperor and patriarch. Presumably the boyars found this reassuring. As an earnest of his good intentions he sent his son Symeon to be brought up in Constantinople. No one was so tactless as to refer to the boy as a hostage..."⁸⁴

"The 870s," writes Fr. Andrew Louth, "saw the conversion of Bulgaria continue apace. At this stage, Christianization seems to have entailed Hellenization, building on the Greek culture already widespread in Bulgaria both at official (administrative) levels and more generally. Meanwhile, Boris presumably heard of Methodius' mission in Moravia with its use of Slavonic in the liturgy and for preaching. When, after the death of Methodius in 885, his disciples were expelled from Moravia, they were greeted with enthusiasm by Boris, and they set about introducing Slavonic scriptures and liturgical texts in

⁸⁴ Fletcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 357-359.

Bulgaria. Of the traditional 'Seven Teachers' of the Slavs, the founders of Slav Christianity – Cyril, Methodius, Gorazd, Clement, Naum, Laurence (or Sava) and Angelar – the last four now pursued their mission in Bulgaria (Cyril and Methodius were dead, the fate of Gorazd is unclear; he may have continued a Slav mission somewhere in Central Europe). The most influential of these were Clement, who had now left Moravia for Bulgaria, and Naum, who had been sold into slavery, redeemed in Venice and had arrived in Bulgaria via Constantinople. Clement was sent to Macedonia, probably his homeland, and in 893 was consecrated a bishop, the first Slav bishop of Bulgaria. He died in 916 at Ohrid, at his monastery of St. Panteleimon, where he had retired, and which had earlier been the centre of his missionary and teaching activity. He seems to have continued to use the Glagolitic alphabet devised by his mentor Cyril. Naum had earlier remained at the capital Pliska, but with Clement's consecration as bishop took over his teaching activity centred on Ochrid, founding monasteries and himself becoming a monk in 900 and dying in 910. His relics were translated to a monastery dedicated to him at the south end of Lake Ochrid."⁸⁵

After some turmoil, the Bulgarian Church was firmly re-established within the Eastern Church and Empire with its see in Ochrid. One of the many benefits of this was that it brought about the unification of the land's two constituent peoples, the Bulgar ruling class and the Slavic peasants, who had been at loggerheads up to that time. A vast programme for the training of native clergy was initiated. The conversion of the Slavs to Orthodoxy began in earnest...

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However, the virus of nationalism had been sown in Bulgaria almost simultaneously with the Christian faith. St. Boris came out of his monastery in 899 to crush a pagan reaction, depose his elder son Vladimir, who was opposed to Greek influence, and place his youngest son Symeon on the throne.

Symeon "had been educated in Constantinople, and was thoroughly Hellenized; he had become a monk, perhaps with the intention of becoming a future archbishop or even patriarch of Bulgaria. Boris returned to his monastery, and Symeon as tsar continued his father's work. The capital of Bulgaria now became Preslav, in place of Pliska with its pagan associations. At Preslav, under Symeon, the promulgation of Slavonic Christianity became a priority, to undermine any further resistance to Hellenization."⁸⁶

Under Symeon, however, Bulgaria was almost continuously at war with the Empire: he came within thirteen miles of Thessalonica and twice reached the gates of Constantinople. Forced to make concessions, in 913 St. Nicholas the Mystic, patriarch of Constantinople, crowned him "Emperor and Autocrat of the Bulgarians". But this was not enough for Symeon: he wanted to take the place of the Byzantine emperor. But on this point St. Nicholas stood firm: he refused him

⁸⁵ Louth, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-188.

⁸⁶ Louth, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

the title of "Emperor of the Romans" and vigorously defended the authority of the East Roman Emperor. "The power of the Emperor," he said, "which extends over the whole earth, is the only power established by the Lord of the world upon the earth." Again, he wrote to Tsar Symeon in 913: "God has submitted the other sceptres of the world to the heritage of the Lord and Master, that is, the Universal Emperor in Constantinople, and does not allow his will to be despised. He who tries by force to acquire for himself the Imperial dignity is no longer a Christian."⁸⁷

The patriarch called the king "a tyrant and rebel who deserved the severest penalty. The existence of an independent Bulgaria violated the principle of a single Orthodox empire as an icon of the Kingdom of God, and therefore the Bulgarians, as soon as they achieved a schism in the empire, deserved punishment... They had to 'unite the divided under one yoke'"⁸⁸ – and that yoke could only be the Byzantine yoke.

Symeon's son and successor Peter (927-969) was a more peaceful man; he married the grand-daughter of the Emperor Romanus and had no desire to wage war against his in-laws or take the first place. He was advised and supported by the greatest of the Bulgarian saints, St. John of Rila, who advised him: "If you desire the Heavenly Kingdom, be merciful as is you Heavenly Father. Do not give yourself to injustice and be not greedy; be meek, quiet, accessible to all. Do not listen to praise from your nobles. May your royal purple shine with all the virtues. Let the remembrance of death never leave your soul. Humble yourself at the feet of Mother Church; bow your head before her greatest saints, that so the King of kings, seeing your devotion, may give you such blessings as have never entered the heart of man."⁸⁹.

The Byzantines conceded Peter the title "basileus"; and in 932 the title "patriarch" was granted to the first-hierarchy of the now autocephalous Bulgarian Church, Damian. So there were now *three* officially recognized Christian emperors of the one Christian empire, with capitals at Constantinople, Aachen and Preslav!

But after the death of Peter, in about 971, the Bulgarian kingdom was conquered by the Byzantines, as a consequence of which the local Bulgarian dioceses were again subjected to the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate.

However, there was a resurgence of Bulgarian power in Macedonia under Tsar Samuel, who established his capital and patriarchate in Ohrid. He also came into conflict with the fledgling neighbouring kingdom of the Serbs, whose king, John Vladimir, "was a wise ruler, merciful, meek, chaste and courageous. He was fervent in prayer and a devoted builder and benefactor of churches. But he had

⁸⁷ St. Nicholas the Mystic, in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit. vol. I, p. 107.

⁸⁸ Svetlana Lurye, "Translatio Imperii", *Epokha*, N 10, pp. 19-20.

⁸⁹ St. John, in St. Nikolai Velimirovich, *Prologue from Ochrid*, volume I, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1986, p. 113.

major battles to fight, both inside and outside his realm; internally with heretics and Bogomils, and externally with invaders, with King Samuel and the [Byzantine] Emperor Basil. Samuel captured by guile [as part of his invasion of the Serbian principalities of Zamumlje and Zeta] and threw him into prison. When he was in prison, an angel of God appeared to him and foretold that he would be released from prison, but that he would die a martyr's death. Getting to know Vladimir better, Samuel became attached to him and gave him his daughter Kosara [who had fallen in love with him], in marriage."⁹⁰

"When Samuel died he was succeeded by his son Rodomir. But a cousin [or twin brother], Vladislav, assassinated the new Monarch and seized the throne for himself. Then, wishing to add the Serbian territories to his Empire, he sought to lure St. John Vladimir to his court. The Saint, guileless as always, agreed to pay an official visit. Seeing the Saint enter into his presence, Vladislav instantly attacked the Serbian Prince, but failed at first to harm him. The Saint then handed Vladislav his own sword, saying: 'Take it and kill me, for I am ready to die like Abel and Isaac!' Vladislav, by then in a blind fury, took the sword and beheaded the Saint."

The relics of St. John Vladimir are incorrupt... "It is said that, during a campaign against Serbia, Vladislav saw the figure of a soldier bearing the likeness of John Vladimir appear before him. Terrified, he tried to flee from the place, but an angel struck him down and it was thus that he died (1018)."

*

Meanwhile, in 1014 the Bulgarians were decisively defeated by Emperor Basil "the Bulgar-slayer", leading to the end of the Bulgarian empire and its re-absorption into the Roman Empire. The Ochrid diocese's autocephaly was still recognized, but it was demoted from a patriarchate to an archbishopric. And so Bulgarian nationalism was dealt a decisive blow in both Church and State...

Now it has been claimed that the task assigned to Bulgaria and King Boris by God "could be realized only by an independent, autonomous church, since, if the nation were to be dependent on another people in church matters, it could easily lose its political independence along with its religious independence and disappear from the face of the earth."⁹¹

Perhaps; and yet the idea that each nation-state has to have its own independent church was a new one in the history of Christianity. As we have seen, as a result of the barbarian conquests, independent national Churches had sprung up in various regions. But the idea of a single Christian commonwealth of nations looking up to its father in God, the Christian Roman Emperor, was never completely lost; and there was still the feeling that *de jure* all Christian

⁹⁰ Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, *Prologue from Ochrid*, May 22, vol. I, pp, 208-209.

⁹¹ Protopresbyter James Thornton, *Pious Kings and Right-Believing Queens*, Belmont, Mass.: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2013, pp. 246-247.

nations owed him some kind of allegiance. We see this as far afield as Scotland in the far north-west, where St. Columba anointed a king directly in the Roman autocratic tradition, and the Arabian kingdom of Himyar in the far south-east, where the anointing was carried out by an Italian bishop owing allegiance to the Byzantine emperor in Constantinople.

It was the Bulgarian tsars who made the first serious breach in this internationalist ideal of a brotherhood of nations under the Emperor of New Rome; for they called their kingdom “the kingdom of the Bulgarians and the Greeks” – in other words, a national kingdom composed of two ethnic nations, with the Bulgarians as the dominant ethnic element. Coups by individuals were commonplace in Byzantine history: the attempt to place one *nation* above all others was new...

On the other hand, it could be argued that the Bulgarians’ ecclesiastical nationalism, as expressed in their insistence on having an autocephalous Church, was a natural reaction to the Greeks’ no less dangerous and prideful insistence that their empire “extends over the whole earth, and is the only power established by the Lord of the world upon the earth”. The idea of the Roman universal empire was an essentially pagan one that refused to die out when the empire became Christian. It was unsustainable, not only for the obvious reason that the Byzantine Empire never ruled the whole world and towards its end ruled only a tiny area much smaller than, for example, that of the Russian Great Prince, but also because the legitimacy of other Orthodox Christian kingdoms, such as those of England or Spain or Moravia or Georgia, neither derived from, nor depended on, Byzantium in any real way. The idea of the New Rome as the *primus inter pares* and model of Orthodox statehood was acceptable to all the Orthodox Christian States: the idea that the legitimacy of their States, and the independence of their Churches, depended completely on their submission to, or recognition by, New Rome, was not...⁹²

As for ecclesiastical autocephaly, with the single exception of Serbian autocephaly (and that only at the beginning), the Byzantines always resisted bestowing it on other Orthodox nations unless they were forced to; they ignored the obvious benefits that an independent Church would bring in promoting the Faith in a newly Christianized kingdom. They tended to offer autocephaly only when they had no alternative, as a bargaining chip in negotiations with a powerful rival or needed ally – and withdrew the favour immediately they themselves felt stronger and no longer in need of allies.

In this way Byzantine imperial nationalism elicited anti-imperial nationalisms among the Balkan Orthodox. It was quenched temporarily after the Fall of the City in 1453, but came to life again in the early nineteenth century in the form of “the great idea” of Free Greek quasi-imperial nationalism. Greek and Balkan nationalisms have continued to cause innumerable inter-Orthodox quarrels

⁹² Andrew Shishkov, “Church Autocephaly as Sovereignty: a Schmittian Approach”, *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, 6:3, 2014, p. 386.

down the centuries, to the tragic detriment of the universalist idea of Holy Orthodoxy....

6. ST. VLADIMIR AND THE BAPTISM OF RUS'

In *Wikipedia* we read: "The *Primary Chronicle* relates that [the Rus leaders] Askold and Dir were sanctioned by Rurik to go to Constantinople (Norse *Miklagård*, Slavic *Tsargrad*). When travelling on the Dnieper, they saw a settlement on a mountain and asked to whom it belonged. They were told that it was Kyiv and had been built by three brothers named Kyi, Shchek and Khoryv, who were the ancestors of the inhabitants, who were now paying tribute to the Khazars. Askold and Dir settled in the town and gathered a large number of fellow Varangians and began to rule the town and the land of the eastern Polans."⁹³

In 860 or 866 (the sources differ), Askold and Dir, having taken control of Kiev, writes Archbishop Averky, "undertook a raid on Constantinople. Along with a multitude of warriors on 200 boats, they approached Constantinople itself, striking fear in the hearts of its residents." St. Photius called this nation "Rhos" – "an obscure nation, a nation of no account, a nation ranked among slaves... a nation dwelling somewhere far from our country, barbarous, nomadic, armed with arrogance, unwatched, unchallenged, leaderless". Having appeared in the waters surrounding Constantinople on June 18, the Russians ravaged the suburbs.

"Emperor Michael III and Patriarch Photius, along with a multitude of worshipers, cried out in prayer to God to save their capital from the wild barbarians. Upon the conclusion of all-night vigil in Blachernae Church, they took out the veil of the Theotokos which was kept there and went in a procession of the cross to the shores of the Bosphorus, immersing the garment into the water. The sea began to roil with large waves, which destroyed and sank many Russian boats. Many died, while the rest fled, profoundly impressed by the Divine wrath that smote them. This caused the massive conversion of Russians to Christ. 'The people of Rus,' wrote Patriarch Photios, 'set aside the dishonorable superstitions of heathenism and took up the pure and chaste Christian faith, and, receiving a bishop and teacher, conduct themselves as obedient children and friends.' Further, he writes that they accepted a bishop and the Christian rites.⁹⁴ Indeed, a Greek bishop [Michael] soon arrived in Kiev and began to preach Christ, as Emperor Constantine wrote: 'When the bishop arrived in the capital of the Rus, the king of the Rus gathered his council (*veche*).'

"There were a great many people here: the Prince himself presided with the boyars and elders, who were from ancient times more than anyone bound to paganism. They began to discuss their faith and Christianity, and, inviting the archpastor, asked what he wishes to teach them. The bishop opened the Gospel

⁹³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Askold>

⁹⁴ "The formerly terrible people, the so-called *Rhos*... are even now abandoning their heathen faith and are converting to Christianity, receiving bishops and pastors from us, as well as all Christian customs... The zeal of faith has burned them to such a degree that they have received a Bishop and shepherd and have accepted the Christian religion with great eagerness and care." (P.G. 102, 736-737). (V.M.)

and began to tell them about the Savior and His miracles, and about miracles performed by God in the Old Testament. The people of Rus, listening to the preacher, said 'If we do not see something akin to that which happened to the youths in the ovens, we do not wish to believe.' The servant of God was not perturbed, he boldly responded: 'We are nothing before God, but tell me, what do you want?' They asked that the Gospel be thrown into the fire, and vowed to convert to the Christian God if it remained undamaged. Then the bishop declared: 'Lord, glorify Your name before these people!' and place the Book in the fire. Soon, the fire burned the wood, but the Gospel itself remained whole, even the ribbons binding it. Seeing this, the coarse men, confounded by this miracle, began to accept baptism (Constantine Porphyrogenetos, *De administr. imp.* c. 29).

"This was in the year 867. Apparently, this was when the princes were christened, too. In any case, a church was later built in honor of St Nicholas upon the tomb of one of them, Askold, which gives reason to believe he was baptized with that name.⁹⁵

"During Igor's reign, as evidenced by text from the pact between the Rus' and the Greeks, the Rus' were officially divided into those 'who accepted baptism' and 'the un-baptized,' and in fact the baptized recognized this pact with an oath given in the Cathedral of St Elias in Kiev. The fact that a cathedral already existed in Kiev suggests that other churches already existed there, too. Consequently, there was a significant number of Christians there already.

"The first herald of the general baptism of the people of Rus' was Grand Duchess Olga. The chronicler praises her with enthusiasm and warmth, venerating her wisdom. In his depiction, she was for the Russian land 'the morning star preceding the Sun, the early dawn preceding the day; she shone like the full moon in the night, shining among the heathens like a pearl.' Bestowed with a bright, incisive mind and seeing the sinless life of Christians, she submitted to the Gospel truths and, according to tradition, herself travelled to Constantinople in 957, where she was baptized by Patriarch Polyeuctos, while Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenetos himself was her godfather. The Patriarch blessed Olga with a cross which she then brought back with her to Kiev, and foretold that her descendants would achieve glory. Olga gave him in return a gift of a gold platter with the depiction of the Savior in precious stones. Indubitably, many members of her entourage were also baptized. Returning to Kiev, she earnestly began spreading the Christian faith, which the *Stepennaya Kniga* [Book of Degrees of Royal Genealogy] attests to: 'Many, wondering at her [Olga's] words, having yet heard them before, received the word of God with love from her mouth, and were baptized.' For this, and for her lofty Christian

⁹⁵ According to tradition, Princes Askold and Dir were later martyred. See Protopriest Lev Lebedev, "Pervoe Kreschenie Rusi i Muchenicheskij Podvig Pervogo Russkogo Gosudaria-Khristianina Oskol'da-Nikolaia Kievskogo" ("The First Baptism of Rus' and the Martyric Feat of the First Russian Christian Ruler, Askold-Nicholas of Kiev"), http://catacomb.org.ua/rubr12/R13_22.htm. (V.M.)

sensibility, the Church glorified Grand Duchess Olga and commemorates her on July 11 (o.s.).

“And so, gradually, firm foundations were laid down for the conversion of the entire Russian people to Christ, which finally occurred in the year 988 under the grandson of St Olga, Prince Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles. So the Sun as described by the chronicler, was preceded by the early dawn, Olga, and was St Vladimir himself.

“Constantine the Great was for the Roman Empire what Prince Vladimir was to be for Rus, for the latter performed the great work of converting the entire Russian people to Christ. His life is exceptionally instructive for us. He clearly attests to the regenerative power of Christian teaching; how – when it is taken to heart and brought to life – it can utterly transform the human soul. The pre-baptism Vladimir and post-baptism Vladimir were two completely different people. At first brooding, cruel, suspicious, coarse, a lustful barbarian, after his baptism he becomes a tender, welcoming prince, full of love and mercy, a true father of his subjects. Vladimir the Beautiful Sun is the name given to him which characterizes the second part of his life.

“The first years of his reign, Vladimir was occupied with bloody wars and lived like the most sinful pagan. Defeating his brothers in battle, whom he had fought to gain power, he became the sole ruler of the Kievan Duchy. But his conscience gave him no respite, and he attempted to find peace by erecting new idols on the banks of the Dnieper and Volkhov Rivers, adorning them with gold and silver, and making abundant sacrifices before them. He even made human sacrifices, which apparently became the turning point in Vladimir’s soul and forced him to consider changing his faith.

“After his defeat of the Yatvags, it was decided that the gods must be thanked through human sacrifice. The lot fell to a handsome young man, a Christian named Ioann. His father, Feodor, did not wish to give up his son to be sacrificed to idols. The angered mob broke into their home with weapons, demanding that the father surrender his son. The father, standing on an elevated balcony of his house with his son, calmly responded: ‘If your gods are truly gods, let them send one of their own to take my son, why do you ask for him?’ The aggravated pagans then destroyed the pillars under the balcony, and father and son died. The holiday of these first Russian martyrs, Ioann and Feodor, is celebrated on July 12.

“This event inflicted great spiritual pain on Vladimir and instilled doubt in the truth of pagan beliefs. His soul languished, seeking succour and peace, and he remembered great Olga, ‘the wisest of all,’ and her God, the God of the Greek Christians. According to the chronicler, representatives of neighbouring faiths visited Vladimir proposing that he adopt their religion. The first to come were the Volga Bulgars, who confessed Mohammedanism, and began to praise their faith. Vladimir did not like their practice of circumcision and ban on drinking wine. Latin missionaries from the Roman pope came and spoke about the grandeur of the unseen God, and the nothingness of the idols, but the glorious prince, having had enough of the power-hungry politics of the pope, did not give them much

time to speak, but sent them away with the words: 'Go back where you came from: our fathers did not take their faith from the pope.' Then the Khazar Jews came, who said that they believe in the one true God. Vladimir, hearing their words, suddenly asked 'Where is your homeland?' 'In Jerusalem,' they replied, 'but God, for the sins of our fathers, deprived us of a fatherland and scattered us throughout the world.' 'How can you teach others,' retorted Vladimir, 'having been rejected by God yourselves; if God loved you and your law, you would not be scattered throughout the foreign lands; do you wish the same for us?' So the clever words of Vladimir revealed his innate wisdom and clear, incisive intellect, qualities which justified his selection by Divine Providence as being the executor of the great work of converting the entire Russian people to Christ.

"Finally, after everyone else, Vladimir was visited by a scholarly Greek monk, a philosopher, as they called him. In a long speech, he showed the error of all other faiths and explained to him the Biblical history of Divine Providence's plan for mankind, beginning from the creation of the world and ending with the Dread Judgment, showing the prince an icon of the Day of Judgment. Vladimir, beholding the icon, sighed deeply and said: 'It is good for those on the right, and there is sorrow for those on the left.' 'If you desire to be with the righteous, be baptized,' said the preacher. 'I will wait for now,' replied the wise prince.

"Since Vladimir was considering the conversion to a new faith not only by himself but by his people, it was naturally important that the selection of a new religion would involve the best representatives of the people. So, dismissing the Greek emissary and rewarding him with abundant gifts, in 987, he gathered his council of boyars and shared with them the proposals of his recent visitors. 'Every one of them praises his own faith,' said the boyars, 'you have many wise men: send them to study whose faith is best.' Then Vladimir, heeding his advisor's words, sent 'ten men, good and wise,' so that they examined the novel faiths in their own lands. They went to the lands of the Volga Bulgars, then to the Germans who confessed the Latin faith, and finally arrived in Constantinople, where they came to the magnificent Hagia Sophia Cathedral, where the patriarch himself was officiating at divine services. The grandeur of the temple, the service of the many clergymen, headed by the patriarch, the orderly, profoundly prayerful singing, virtually lifting worshipers up from the earth, the splendor and simplicity of the divine service brought the envoys into a holy ecstasy and shook them to their very core.

'Returning home, they gave negative reviews of the Muslim and German services and recounted their experience of the Greek divine services with fervent elation. 'When we came to the Greeks,' said the envoys, 'we were led to the place where they serve their God, and we did not know whether we were in heaven or still on earth: we cannot forget that beauty, for every man, having tasted the sweet, then disdains the bitter and we no longer wish to remain in our old pagan faith.' Then the boyars and elders reminded the prince: 'If the Greek law were not good, then your grandmother Olga, wisest of all, would not have adopted it.' 'Then we will accept christening, but where?' asked Vladimir. 'Wherever you wish,' replied the boyars, presenting the prince the decision to manifest that

which the people themselves, in the persons of their finest representatives, had decided – to adopt the holy faith of Christ from the Greeks.

“The warlike prince, though he decided to convert to Christianity, could not without Divine intervention, humble his soul to the degree sufficient to appeal to the Greeks with the meek request to be baptized and to be taught, together with his people, about the new faith. At the same time, his innate wisdom and refined political instinct told him that asking this of the Greeks would not be without danger. Examples from history of the time indeed showed that peoples who adopted the Christian faith from another nation often found themselves not only in spiritual dependence upon them, but losing political and even sovereign independence. Vladimir, of course, did not want this for his people. And so, fearing that following spiritual submission would be the political submission of the Russian people to the Greeks, he decided to win the new faith with the power of arms. This explains everything that followed after Vladimir and his boyars decided to accept holy baptism, and what at first blush appears strange to many, and even antithetical to the Christian spirit.

“Vladimir decided to show the Greeks that, while accepting their faith, he did not intend to subject his state to them and wished to speak with them as an equal. So he set out for war, besieging the Greek city of Chersonesus (Korsun in Slavic), in the Tauride [Crimea], then gave the vow to be baptized if he took the city. Having taken it, in order to further humble the Greeks, he demanded the co-Emperors Basil and Constantine their sister Anna’s hand in marriage. They responded that they would agree to give them their sister, but only on the condition that he be baptized, since their sister could not marry a pagan. ‘I have long studied and come to love the Greek law,’ replied Vladimir.

“Before Princess Anna’s arrival with the priests who were to perform the baptism then marriage, Vladimir underwent a miraculous experience which possesses profound spiritual meaning. By God’s will, he was stricken with a serious ocular sickness and was completely blinded. Blindness is an ailment in which a person is particularly sensitive to his vulnerability, his weakness, and is naturally humbled. For this reason, the Lord, wishing to make this proud prince a true servant to Him, sent him this temporary tribulation, so that before he receive the great Christian Mystery of baptism, he would be taught the great Christian virtue of humility, just as he had done to that proud persecutor of Christianity, Saul, designating him as His vessel for the conversion of pagans. Vladimir, just as Saul did in this condition, recognized his spiritual poverty, his weakness and nothingness, and with a feeling of profound humility prepared to receive the holy Sacrament. And a great miracle occurred over him that symbolized the opening of his spiritual eyes and rebirth. The moment the bishop of Korsun, during baptism, placed his hand on Vladimir (renamed Basil) as he emerged from the baptismal font, he instantly began to see and cried out joyously: ‘Now for the first time I see the true God!’ Many of his fellow warriors, stunned

by this miracle, were also baptized, after which the wedding to Princess Anna took place.⁹⁶

“But Vladimir sought a better faith not only for himself but for his entire nation. Having himself experienced at the moment of his baptism all the power and grandeur of the Christian faith, he doubtless burned with greater fervour to hasten to illuminate with the light of faith in Christ and the greatness of the Christian faith his own people. And then, returning to Kiev, he first baptized his twelve sons, then decisively began destroying idols and spreading the Christian message to his people. The priests who came with Vladimir walked the streets of Kiev and taught the people about the truths of the new faith, which was already familiar to many Kievans.

“Vladimir then designated a specific day when all the residents of Kiev were to gather at the river to be baptized. Kievans joyfully rushed to fulfil the wish of their beloved prince, reasoning: ‘If this new faith were not better, the prince and boyars would not have adopted it.’ Countless crowds of people, old and young, mothers and children, appeared on the banks of the river. Soon the prince himself appeared along with the host of clergymen. Upon a predetermined signal, the mass of people entered the water: some up to their necks, some up to their chest, adults holding children in their arms, while the priests, standing on shore, read prayers, performing the great Mystery over them.

“During these holy moments, as the pious chronicler [Nestor] wrote, the heavens and the earth truly rejoiced to see this enormous number of saved souls. Those being baptized rejoiced, those baptizing rejoiced, but more than anyone, the central figure in this celebration rejoiced, Holy Prince Vladimir. Raising his eyes to the sky, he spoke to God with love: ‘Oh God, Who hath created heaven and earth, look down, I beseech Thee, on this Thy new people, and grant them, o Lord, to know Thee as the true God, even as the other Christians nations have known Thee. Confirm in them the true and inalterable faith, and aid me, o Lord, against the hostile adversary, so that, hoping in Thee and in Thy might, I may overcome his malice.’”⁹⁷

Vladimir now devoted his whole life to the evangelization of his people. A.V. Kartashev writes: “To use the whole strength of state power, and all the resources of the state treasury, so that baptized people should feel, as the book of the *Acts of the Apostles* says, that they had ‘one heart and one soul’, and that they had ‘everything in common’... He wanted to preserve and broaden the common feast and common joy of brother-loving Christian life.”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg says that it was “as a result of her [Anna’s] persistence that he [Vladimir] adopted the faith of holy Christianity” (V.M.)

⁹⁷ Archbishop Averky (Taushev), “The Baptism of Rus’ and the Legacy to the Russian People of Holy Prince Vladimir”, in *A Time for Everything, in The Spiritual Inheritance of the Russian Diaspora*, Moscow Sretensky Monastery, 2006. .

⁹⁸ Kartashev, *Ocherki po istorii Russkoj Tserkvi* (Sketches on the History of the Russian Church), Paris: YMCA Press, 1959, volume 1, p. 125

Of course, the consolidation of the victory of the true faith, and the transformation of Russia into Holy Russia, required many more centuries of spiritual and political struggle as the autocracy established itself over its internal and external rivals. But "the real state life of Rus'," writes St. John Maximovich, "begins with Vladimir the Saint. The princes who were before him were not so much ruler-lords as conquerors, for whom the establishment of good order in their country was less important than subduing the rich country to themselves and forcing it to pay some tribute. Even Svyatoslav preferred to live in Bulgaria, which he had conquered, and not in his own capital. It was Christianity, which was brought into Russian first by Olga, who had great influence on her eldest grandsons Yaropolk and Oleg, and then finally by St. Vladimir the Beautiful Sun, who baptised Rus', that laid the firm foundations of Statehood.

"Christianity bound together by a common culture the princely race, which was, they say, of Norman [Viking] extraction, and the numerous Slavic and other races which constituted the population of ancient Rus'. It taught the princes to look on themselves as defenders of the weak and oppressed and servants of the righteousness of God. It taught the people to see in them not simply leaders and war-commanders, but as people to whom power had been given by God Himself."⁹⁹

St. Vladimir united the Russian nation with the Church. Under him, "the divided Slavic tribes which composed Vladimir's nation began to feel united. This new consciousness of their unity was strengthened by the fact that for several centuries the whole of Rus' constituted, in ecclesiastical terms, one metropolitan district, despite the later division of Rus' into independent principalities. The Church greatly influenced the unification of Rus' into one state. As Orthodoxy spread among the Slavic and non-Slavic tribes which were living in eastern Europe, they were able to become one with the Russian nation. The Church acted as a peacemaker in times of civil strife, and inculcated an awareness that the Russian nation is one, and should therefore constitute one integral unit in all things."¹⁰⁰

Archbishop Nathaniel of Vienna writes: "The ideal of Holy Rus', like the formula itself, was not born immediately. Two stages are important in its genesis: the baptism of Rus' and her regeneration after the Tatar conquest. Like any other historical people, the Russian nation is a child of her Church. Greece and Rome, on accepting Christianity, brought to the Church their rich pagan inheritance. The German peoples were already formed tribal units at the moment of their reception of Christianity, and they preserved quite a lot of their pagan past,

⁹⁹ St. John Maximovich, *Proiskhozhdenie zakona o prestolonasledii v Rossii* (The Origins of the Law of Succession in Russia), Podolsk, 1994, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ St. John Maximovich, "950-year anniversary of the Baptism of Rus'", in *Man of God: Saint John of Shanghai and San Francisco*, Richfield Springs, N.Y., 1994, p. 222.

especially in the sphere of national and juridical ideas, in their Christianity. But we – the Russian Slavs – had absolutely nothing before our acceptance of Christianity: neither state ideas, nor national consciousness, nor an original culture. The Eastern Slav pagans did not even have their own gods – the whole ancient Russian pantheon consisted of foreign divinities: Perun was a Lithuanian divinity, Khors – a Scythian-Sarmatian one, Moksha and Veles were Finnish gods. None of them even had a Slavic name. The Russian people gave their untouched soul to Christianity. And the Church gave everything to the Slavs, so that already one generation after the reception of Christianity, under Prince Yaroslav, we were no poorer in a cultural sense, but rather richer than the majority of our neighbours...”¹⁰¹

In fact, “for the Russians,” as Wil van den Bercken writes, “Christianity meant the beginning of civilization: they were given an alphabet, they learnt how to read and write, the art of painting, and architecture. These tasks are directly connected with founding churches and appointing priests. Thus the most direct consequence of the Christianization is the art of reading and writing, i.e. literature. The text [Nestor’s Chronicle] talks of ‘the study of books’, not of holy books, although that may well be meant. Jaroslav the Wise, Vladimir’s successor, was already a bibliophile, ‘often reading day and night’: he had a lot of books translated from the Greek and established a library in the Sophia cathedral in Kiev. In the Chronicle this statement is followed by a eulogy on ‘the great advantage of knowledge from books... which are rivers with which the world quenches its thirst, and sources of wisdom’...

“And the Russians learned quickly. Russian historians report with pride that when Jaroslav’s daughter Anna married the French King Henry in 1051, Anna was able to put her name under the marriage certificate in Cyrillic and in Latin letters, while the French king could only put a little cross...”¹⁰²

In about 1050, in his famous *Sermon on the Law and Grace*, Metropolitan Hilarion of Kiev applied the epithet of “the new Constantine” to St. Vladimir, and the new Helen to his grandmother, St. Olga. But he was not a “new Constantine” in the conventional sense attached to all founders of new Christian dynasties in the early Middle Ages. His kingdom evolved from being a *part* of the New Rome into being its *successor* or *heir*.

Indeed, Russia was not only an *offshoot* or *child* of Christian Rome, like Bulgaria or Georgia. Through her racial and dynastic links with Western Europe (especially the Anglo-Scandinavian north-west¹⁰³), Russia united and became the

¹⁰¹ Archbishop Nathanael (Lvov), “O Petre Velikom” (“On Peter the Great”), *Epokha* (Epoch), N 10, 2000, pp. 37-38.

¹⁰² Van Den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999, p. 33.

¹⁰³ Great Prince Yaroslav was married to Princess Inguigerd of Sweden. “Four of his daughters later became queens: Anastasia, of Hungary; Elizabeth, of Norway; Marie, of Poland; and Anne of France. One of his sons, Vladimir II, was married to Guilda [Gytha], the daughter of King Harold II of England; another, Vsevolod I, to Anne, daughter of Constantine Monomach, Emperor of Byzantium. Praxede Adelaide, the daughter of Vsevolod, became the wife of Henry IV,

heir of what was left of the *Old*, Orthodox Rome of the West, regenerating the ideal of the Symphony of Powers just as it was being destroyed in the West by the heretical Papacy. And by her filial faithfulness to Byzantium, as well as through the marriage of St. Vladimir to the purple-born princess Anna in the tenth century, and the marriage of Great-Prince Ivan III to Sophia Palaeologus in the fifteenth century, she became the heir of the *Second* or *New* Rome of Constantinople. In fact, Vladimir's realm was *the Third Rome* in embryonic form, and he minted coins depicting himself in imperial attire.¹⁰⁴

But Russia the Third Rome was not to become a reality for nearly another five hundred years; for while the idea of the *translatio imperii* from Old Rome to New Rome in the fourth century had been accepted by the Byzantines, they did not accept the idea of a second *translatio* – and especially not beyond the confines of the Greco-Roman world to a “barbarian” nation like the Russians. As St. Photius the Great declared: “Just as the dominion of Israel lasted until the coming of Christ, so we believe that the Empire will not be taken from us Greeks until the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...”¹⁰⁵ It took the profound shock of the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and the fact that the Second Coming of Christ did not take place then, to make them think again and recognize that the Russian Tsar had become, as Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople said in 1589, the sovereign of *all* Orthodox Christians.

Emperor of Germany, and Vladimir III, his son,... was allied to Christine, the daughter of the Swedish King Inge IV” (Arsène de Goulévich, *Czarism and Revolution*, Hawthorne, Ca.: Omni Publications, 1962, p. 162).

¹⁰⁴ Vladimir Volkoff, *Vladimir the Russian Viking*, Bath: Honeyglen, 1984, p. 256.

¹⁰⁵ St. Photius, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 123.

7. CHURCH AND STATE IN KIEVAN RUS'

"Over the next generations," writes Janet Martin, "Vladimir and his successors continued to extend their domain and to create an apparatus to govern it. The political structure they devised for Kievan Rus was based on the concept that its lands were the possession of the dynasty. Thus, as his father had done, Vladimir assigned a portion of his realm to each of his principal sons. Thereafter, the Riurikid princes continued to share the lands of Kievan Rus and the responsibilities for administering and defending them.

"Princely administration gradually replaced tribal allegiance and authority. As early as the reign of Olga, officials representing the Kievan ruler began to replace tribal rulers. Vladimir extended this practice by assigning particular lands to his sons, to whom he also delegated responsibility for tax-collection, for protection of communication and trade routes, and for local defence and territorial expansion. Each prince also had his own military force, which was supported by tax revenues, commercial fees, and booty seized in battle. After Vladimir's son Grand Prince Iaroslav (d. 1052) issued a law code known as the *Ruskaia Pravda*, the Rus princes also became enforcers of Riurikid law. The administration of justice, which upheld both Riurikid authority and social order, yielded revenues in the form of court fees and fines. The *Ruskaia Pravda*, as amended by Iaroslav's sons and latter provisions that continued to be added to it until the thirteenth century, remained in force long after the Kievan era; it was not formally replaced until the law code (*Sudebnik*) of 1497 was adopted.

"Over the two centuries following Vladimir's death (1015), Kievan Rus became an amalgam of principalities, whose number increased as the dynasty itself grew. The main principalities in the centre of the realm were Kiev, Chernigov and Pereiaslavl. Galicia and Volhynia (south-west of Kiev) gained the status of principalities in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries respectively. During the twelfth century Smolensk (north of Kiev on the upper Dnieper) and Rostov-Suzdal (on the north-east) similarly emerged as powerful principalities. The north-western portion of the realm was dominated by Novgorod..."¹⁰⁶

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 more powerful than the Empire. The other Orthodox rulers to the Byzantine Emperor, as was indicated by differences in titles and 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 principedom with the blessing of the Church, but by a different rite (*o ezhe blagosloviti knyazya*), which included the crowning of the prince, but contained no anointing."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Martin, "From Kiev to Muscovy", in Gregory L. Freeze, *Russia. A History*, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰⁷ Alferov and Alferov, *O Tserkvi, pravoslavnom Tsarstve i poslednem vremeni* (On the Church, the Orthodox Kingdom and the Last Time), Moscow: "Ruskaia Idea", p. 18.

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 tenacious was the idea among the Greeks that there could be no Third Rome after the Second...¹⁰⁸

G. Podskalsky writes: “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.”¹⁰⁹

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.¹¹⁰ Thus St. Vladimir had ordered his subjects to be baptised, and “those who did not do this out of love, did so out of fear’, as Nestor writes.

He 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

¹⁰⁸ 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*, *εικων θεου*) 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).

¹⁰⁹ Podskalsky, *Khristianstvo i Bogoslovskaja literatura v Kievskoj Rusi (988-1237)* (Christianity and Theological Literature in Kievan Rus’ (988-1037), St. Petersburg, 1996, p. 68.

¹¹⁰ Alferov, “Teokratia ili Ierokratia”.

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.”¹¹¹

Yaroslav the Wise, Vladimir’s son¹¹², 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 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 glimpse [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 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 have 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.”¹¹³

The leaders of Church and State cooperated closely in the evangelization of the vast land of Russia, and in protecting the faith. Thus in his “Testament”, perhaps the greatest saint of the period, Theodosius of the Kiev Caves (+1074) wrote to Great Prince Iziaslav as follows: “I have something to say to you, God-loving Prince! I, Theodosius, the wretched slave of the All-Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, was born and raised in the pure and Orthodox faith and in good Orthodox teaching by my father and mother.

“Beware, my child, of those who are crooked in faith, and beware all their conversations, for our land is full of them.

¹¹¹ St. Vladimir, quoted in Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), *Russkaia Ideologia* (The Russian Ideology), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 83-84.

¹¹² Vladimir had four sons (at least). Two of them, Boris and Gleb, were killed by their brother Sviatopolk, “the accursed”, and became the first canonised Russian saints. Yaroslav was the fourth. He reigned from 1019 to 1054.

¹¹³ Archimandrite Luke, “Nationalism, Russia, and the Restoration of the Patriarchate”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 51, N 6, November-December, 2001, pp. 26-27.

“If a man will save his soul, this is possible only by living in the Orthodox faith. For there is no other faith better than our pure, holy, Orthodox faith. Living in this faith, not only will you be delivered from sins and eternal torments, but you will also become a partaker of eternal life, and you will rejoice endlessly with the saints. But those who live in another faith will not see eternal life.

“Also, my child, it is not good to praise a foreign faith. He who praises a foreign faith is doing the same as if he were blaspheming against his own faith. But if someone will praise both his own faith and a foreign faith, then he is two-faithed, and is close to heresy.

“And so, my child, beware of them and always stand for your own faith. Do not be friendly with them, but flee from them and struggle in your own faith through good works. Give alms not only to those of your own faith, but also to those of other faiths. If you see someone naked or hungry, or who has fallen into misfortune, – whether he is a Jew, or a Turk, or a Latin, – be merciful to everyone, deliver him from his misfortune, as far as you are able, – and you will not be deprived of a reward from God. For God Himself in this age pours out His mercies not only on Christians, but also on the unbelievers. God cares for pagans and unbelievers in this age, but in the future age they will be strangers to the eternal good things. But we who live in the Orthodox faith will both receive all good things here and will be saved in the future age by our Lord Jesus Christ.

“My child! If it will be necessary for you even to die for this holy faith, go with boldness to death. In this way did the saints die for the faith, and they now live in Christ.

“My child, if you see those of other faiths quarrelling with the Orthodox and trying to seduce them away from the Orthodox Church, help the Orthodox. In this way you will deliver the sheep from the mouth of the lion. But if you are silent and leave him helpless, that is the same as if you took away a soul that had been redeemed by Christ and handed him over to Satan. If someone says to you: ‘Both your and our faith are from God’, you, my child, must reply to him as follows: ‘O crooked in faith! Or do you think that God, too, is two-faithed? Have you not heard what the Scripture says: “There is one God, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4.5)? How many years have you kept the right, Apostolic faith, and now through Satan’s insinuation you have been corrupted into evil belief. Have you not heard the teaching of the Apostle Paul: ‘Even if an angel should come from heaven and preach to you a Gospel that we have not preached to you, let him be anathema’ (Galatians 1.8)? But you have rejected the apostolic teaching and the decrees of the Holy Fathers and accepted a wrong and corrupted faith, filled with all destruction. Therefore you are rejected by us. You are dead, and the sacrifice you offer [i.e., the Eucharist] is dead. But we offer a living sacrifice to the living God, a pure and undefiled sacrifice, so as to obtain eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. To Him be glory. Amen.”

Again, 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 Sviatoslavich, 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."¹¹⁴

Podskalsky writes: "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 élite of society. But the metropolitans, who were all practically without exception Greeks, tried, on their part, to direct the efforts of the Russian 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...."¹¹⁵

"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-

¹¹⁴ Alferov and Alferov, op. cit., p. 21.

¹¹⁵ Podskalsky, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

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 Sviatoslav, 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 Iziaslav. 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.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Podskalsky, op. cit., pp. 63, 64-65, 66-67, 71.

Kievan Rus' represented a rare balance of freedom and obedience in State life. Obedience was owed to the powers 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 for a time stopped commemorating Prince Sviatoslav of Kiev because he had usurped the throne of his brother Iziaslav.¹¹⁷

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 counsellors. Bad counsellors, 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 counsellors... 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 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..."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Nestor, *A Life of St. Theodosius*.

¹¹⁸ Fedotov, *op. cit.*, pp. 398-400.

8. THE YEAR 1000: APEX OF MONARCHISM

As the year 1000 approached, when many Western Christians were expecting the reign of the Antichrist, the End of the World and the Second Coming of Christ, the question of the survival of legitimate monarchical authority became ever more pressing. For with the removal of that authority, according to the prophecy of St. Paul (II Thessalonians 2.7), would come the Antichrist – and the monarchy, at any rate in the Frankish lands to the west of the Rhine, was in a very parlous state as the “true” Carolingian line died out and virtual anarchy ruled. Signs of millennial fever were certainly increasing. Thus in 991, at a Council in Rheims attended by English as well as French bishops, Arnulph, bishop of Orleans, said that if Pope John XV had no love and was puffed up with knowledge, he was the Antichrist...¹¹⁹

And yet paradoxically, if we exclude the chaos in West Francia, by the year 1000 the monarchical principle had never looked in better health. A survey of the world in the year 1000¹²⁰ gives rise to the thought: just as the year 2000 has witnessed the apex of democratism in political thought, so the year 1000 witnessed the apex of its opposite, monarchism. The monarchical regimes that dominated the ancient world were of two main kinds: *autocracy*, based on the *symphony* between Church and State and exemplified first of all in Byzantium, and *despotism*, based on the *fusion* between Church and State.

By the year 1000 the Byzantine autocratic model of statehood – that is, of “symphonic” relations between an autonomous Church and State – had triumphed well beyond the boundaries of the Eastern Orthodox Empire. Thus it was the rule also in the most powerful states outside Byzantium: East Francia (modern Germany), England and Kievan Rus’. Even in those parts of the West where normal government had broken down in many places, such as West Francia (modern France), the ideal was still alive. Thus in the mid-tenth century Abbot Adso of Montier-en-Der wrote to Queen Gerbera, the Saxon wife of the Frankish King Louis IV: “Even though we see the Roman Empire for the most part in ruins, nonetheless, as long as the Kings of the Franks who now possess the Roman Empire by right shall last, the dignity of the Roman Empire will not completely perish because it will endure in its kings. Some of our learned men say that one of the Kings of the Franks will possess anew the Roman Empire. He will be in the last time and will be the greatest and the last of all kings. After he has successfully governed his empire, he will finally come to Jerusalem and will lay aside his sceptre and crown on the Mount of Olives. This will be the end and the consummation of the Roman and Christian Empire...”¹²¹

119 See John Eadie, “The Man of Sin”, in *Greek Text Commentaries: On Thessalonians*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1877, 1979, p. 341.

120 John Man, *Atlas of the Year 1000*, London: Penguin Books, 1999.

121 Adso, *Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist*.

In 992 Abbot Adso, now in his eighties, set sail for Jerusalem, no doubt in order to witness the apocalyptic events that he believed were about to take place there. He died on the way... ¹²²

In the tenth century Bohemia became Christian under Prince Wenceslas, Denmark under King Harold Bluetooth and Poland under King Mieszko. In or around 1000, Hungary became Christian under St. Stephen the Great¹²³, together with Norway under Olaf Trygvasson, and Sweden under Olaf Skötkonung... In the central European states, the adoption of Christianity was linked (which is not to say determined) to a desire to establish a state that would be independent of the local superpower of Germany. Thus "there are clear parallels between Hungary and Poland," writes M. Angold. "Both turned to the papacy as a means of countering German domination. Boleslav of Poland would follow St Stephen's example and in 1025 obtained the royal crown denied him by the Germans from the papacy."¹²⁴

Autocracy now ruled from the England of Aethelred the Unready (whose missionaries were very active in Scandinavia) to the Georgia of Bagrat III; the only exceptional were the Baltic lands (Lithuania did not become Christian until the fourteenth century), Finland, Iceland and the Islamic half of the Iberian peninsula.

Writing about the "outer" regions of Europe, Chris Wickham writes: "Kings and princes were in every region more ambitious around 1000 than they had been around 750: they often ruled wider areas, or at least were aiming at wider hegemonies, and sometimes had more elaborate structures to underpin that rule as well; they were often more relevant to local societies, too, thus ruling more deeply as well as more widely... Overall,... the trend to wider and deeper political power seems to have been based on two sorts of developments. The first was the development of aristocratic power, and therefore of the possibility of hierarchies of political dependence extending from kings and princes down into the localities. The second was the development of techniques of rule and of control, usually (except in Spain and Ireland) borrowed from neighbouring powers, more specialized royal officials, a more complex and more top-down judicial system, the ability to demand military service from the population, the ability to exploit manpower to build fortifications of different types, and, in newly Christianized areas, the development of tighter official hierarchies of the church...

¹²² Tom Holland, *Millenium*, London, 1999 p. 129.

¹²³ Stephen's father Geza was baptized in 995 and died in 997. "The rest of Europe," writes Louth, "was amazed at the transformation of Hungary into a Christian country. As the chronicler Ralph Glaber put it: 'The people of the Hungarians, who previously were accustomed cruelly to prey upon their neighbours, now freely give of their own for the sake of Christ. They who formerly pillaged the Christians... now welcome them like brothers and sisters.'" (op. cit., p. 252). Stephen was presented with a crown of gold set with precious stones; it remains one of Hungary's national treasures.

¹²⁴ Angold, in Angus Mackay and David Ditchburn (eds.), *Atlas of Medieval Europe*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 28.

In Rus', the development was somewhat different. The Russians were too far away from the Germans to fear being swamped by them. In any case, they already had an autocracy with strong connections, both commercial and religious, to Constantinople. The deepening and broadening of autocracy in Rus' went together with a voluntary subjection (de jure, if not de facto) to the Eastern Emperor.

"Political aggregation was perhaps greatest in Rus', and also, in a smaller compass, Bulgaria, Denmark and Asturias-Leon; it was beginning, however, to crystallize in Croatia, Bohemia, Poland and maybe Norway by the end of our period as well, in a less stable and more contested way, and also (the obscurest of all) in Scotland. In Wales and Ireland, however, and also Sweden, royal ambition did not yet have an adequate infrastructural development behind it, and the expansion of kingdoms promoted instability more than solid bases for government (this was partly true of Bohemia and Poland as well); and in some places, on the Baltic coast or in Iceland (as also sometimes in Norway) such expansion was successfully resisted for some time..."¹²⁵

In all the Orthodox lands we find strong kings allied to independent Churches. Despotism in the strict sense is nowhere to be found – not even in Rome... Iceland's Althing preserved a form of pre-liberal democratism.¹²⁶ France had a true, albeit weak, monarchy under Henry I Capet, who was married to a daughter of Yaroslav of Kiev.

The whole of this vast area was not only monarchical in governance, but also Orthodox Christian in faith (although backslidings did take place, for example in Denmark). And so the year 1000 represented the peak of the influence both of Orthodox autocracy and of Orthodox Christianity in world history so far. As Wil van den Bercken writes: "In the eleventh century, when with the exception of the Finns and the Baltic peoples all the European peoples had adopted Christianity as their national religion, Christian Europe had formally become a historical reality."¹²⁷ Moreover, in all those nations the Christianity was Orthodox. It would not be until 1054 that Western Christianity fell into the heresy of Roman Catholicism and under the ecclesiastical rule of the papacy. But even then more or less traditional monarchies survived in most countries...

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Despotism, meanwhile, ruled throughout Asia and Northern Africa, including the Islamic lands from Morocco to northern India, and the Hindu-Buddhist-Confucian lands from southern India to China and Japan.

¹²⁵ Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000*, London: Penguin, 2009, pp. 505-506.

¹²⁶ "Things", or parliaments, were a characteristic of many Viking lands. Cf. the Tynwald, or Thingwald of the Isle of Man, which has lasted from the eleventh century to the present day, and the "Veche" of Novgorod.

¹²⁷ Van den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, p. 115.

The fusion of politics and religion is clearly evident in Japan. As J.M. Roberts writes: "The keys to the continuity and toughness of Japanese society have been the family and the traditional religion. The clan was an enlarged family, and the nation the most enlarged family of all. In patriarchal style, the emperor presided over the national family as did a clan leader over his clan or, even, the small farmer over his family. The focus of family and clan life was participation in the traditional rites, the religion known as Shinto, whose essence was the worship at the proper times of certain local or personal deities."¹²⁸

In 645, according to the Taika Reform Edict, the emperor, who was from the ruling Yamato elite and claimed to be descended through the first emperor Jinmu from the sun goddess, acquired absolute power and claimed ownership of all land in the kingdom. As W.M. Spellman writes, "he also reaffirmed his status as Shinto high priest, thereby combining supreme religious authority with new-found political primacy on the classic pagan god-king model. In reality, however, the Taika Reform Edict did little to alter the status of powerful and semi-autonomous aristocrats in the countryside, of whom the most important were the Fujiwara..."¹²⁹

Even the Jews had a quasi-monarchy in the form of their Exilarch in Baghdad-Babylon. But in 1040 this power came to an end. The only independent Jewish State since the fall of Jerusalem, Khazaria, fell in 966-967 to Sviatoslav of Kiev. However, it survived in a weakened form until the Mongols finally swept it away, eliciting a mass migration of Khazars to Eastern Europe that created the Yiddish-speaking communities that were to have such a destructive impact on Tsarist Russia.¹³⁰

This fairly sharp contrast between Orthodox and Autocratic Europe, on the one hand, and pagan and despotic Asia and North Africa, on the other, confirms the thesis that there is a more than coincidental correlation between Orthodoxy and Autocracy, on the one hand, and paganism and despotism, on the other. Orthodoxy flourishes under authoritarian political rule, but does not allow that rule to subsume the authority of the Church, which sanctifies and supports the king while remaining independent of him. Pagan rulers, on the other hand, almost always ascribe quasi-divine honours to themselves. Thus the Japanese emperors traced their ancestry back to the sun goddess, the Khmer rulers of Cambodia in this period were "the embodiment of Shiva, spirit of the ancestors and the earth and the fount of fertility"¹³¹, and the Fatimid Islamic ruler Al-Hakim - who destroyed the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in 1009 - believed that he was a god incarnate.¹³²

The sharp contrast between Orthodox and Autocratic Europe, on the one hand, and pagan and despotic Asia and North Africa, on the other, began to break down

¹²⁸ Roberts, *History of the World*, Oxford: Helicon, 1992, p. 371.

¹²⁹ W.M. Spellman, *Monarchies, 1000-2000*, Trowbridge: Reaktion, 2001, pp. 57, 58.

¹³⁰ Schlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, London: Verso, 2009, pp. 210-229.

¹³¹ Man, op. cit., p. 102.

¹³² Man, op. cit., p. 75. Which is what the Druse of Lebanon still believe him to be.

only with the appearance of the heretical papacy, whose rule was despotic and semi-pagan.

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Characteristic of all these European and Asian monarchies – Christian, Islamic and pagan – was an intense religiosity. Here is further evidence of the links we find throughout history between monarchy and religion, on the one hand, and democracy and secularism, on the other. The modern idea that religion should be separated from the State would have been incomprehensible to almost any man in the year 1000. The religiosity of these monarchies was not incompatible with striking artistic, technical and economic achievements. Thus the great cities of Constantinople, Cordoba, Baghdad and Bukhara were at their peak at this time, as was the Sung empire in China.

The most important corollary of the religious monarchism of Europe and Asia in the year 1000 was the belief it embodied that, as John Man writes of Sung China, “state and society, administration and education, could be united, and take civilization forward to a new level”.¹³³ The major tendency of modern democratic civilization has been the opposite: the belief that state and society must be disjoined.

Of course, one cannot deny that the conjoining of state and society can have evil consequences; and some of the states of this period, such as Al-Mansur’s in Spain or Al-Hakim’s in Egypt and Palestine, were aggressively antichristian. (In 1009 Al-Hakim destroyed the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, creating the nominal cause of the First Crusade.) But it is no less unreasonable to suppose that state and society *cannot* in any circumstances be conjoined for the good. Certainly, the Christian monarchies of the period compare favourably, from a Christian point of view, with the disjointed, secularized democracies of today. The unity enjoyed by these monarchical societies gave each citizen a purpose in life higher than his own narrowly personal interests. This purpose, in such a religious age, could only be religious. That is why changes of regime which did not involve changes of religion – as when the Muslim Turks took control of Bukhara from the Muslim Samanids in 999 – caused less upheaval than might have been expected. Correspondingly, the most savage wars of the time – as between the Muslims and Hindus in northern India, or between the Muslims and Christians in the Iberian peninsula – were invariably religious.

The scourge of modern states, ethnic rivalry, was less of a problem in an age that took multi-ethnic empires like the Roman and Muslim for granted. “National identities,” writes Wickham, “were not widely prominent in 1000, even if one rejects the association between nationalism and modernity made in much contemporary scholarship. We must recognize that some such identities did exist. One can make a good case for England in this respect (the dismal years of the Danish conquest in the early eleventh century produced a number of texts

¹³³ Man, op. cit., p. 91.

invoking a version of it). Italians, too, had a sense of common identity, although it hardly reached south of Rome (of course, that is pretty much still true today), and did not lead to a desire for political unity. Geographical separation, such as that provided by the English Channel and the Alps, helped both of these, as it also did the Irish, who were capable of recognizing a version of an Irish community, however fragmented Ireland really was. In the parallel case of Byzantium, what gave its inhabitants identity was simply the coherence of the political system, which was much greater than any other in Europe at that time; Byzantine 'national identity' has not been much considered by historians, for that empire was the ancestor of no modern national state [not the Greek? (V.M.)], but it is arguable that it was the most developed in Europe at the end of our period. By contrast, France, Germany and Spain (either Christian or Muslim) did not have any such imagery. The Danes may have had it, but in Scandinavia as a whole there is good evidence for it only in Iceland. The Slav lands were still too inchoate to have any version of identity not specifically tied to the fate of ruling dynasties."

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Much more problematic was the idea of *religious* pluralism, because it threatened society's unity of purpose. Hence the anti-Jewish pogroms in the Rhineland in 1002 and in Limoges in 1010 – it was not the different *nationality* of the Jews that exacerbated the Christians so much as the clear contradictions in faith and life between the Jews and the Christians.

Since religion was so important to these peoples, when they did change religion, they tended to convert *en masse*. The most important and striking example of this is the conversion of the vast territory of Russia from paganism to Orthodoxy under St. Vladimir. Some western historians, puzzled by the speed of the process in Russia and noting one or two violent incidents, have come to the conclusion that it was all the result of coercion. But they fail to take into account, not only the grace of God, but also the cohesiveness of tribal societies, and therefore the unanimity or near-unanimity of their decision-making, and the genuine respect and awe in which the views of the tribal leader or king were held, which naturally led to their decisions being accepted as God-inspired. Thus the Kievans reasoned, as the Chronicler records: "If it had not been good, then our prince and boyars would not have accepted it".

Even democratic Iceland converted from paganism to Christianity at this time with scarcely any opposition once the opinion of one wise man, the Lawgiver Thorgeir, became known. For, as Holland writes, "All the Icelanders assembled on the *Thingvellir*, Christian as well as pagan, duly agreed to accept his judgement on what the faith of Iceland should be; and Thorgeir accepted the fateful charge. 'He lay down and spread his cloak over himself, and lay all that day and the next night, nor did he speak a word.' Then abruptly, on the following morning, he sat up and ordered the Icelanders to accompany him to the great Law Rock – and from there he delivered them his verdict. Men were still be permitted to eat horseflesh; to expose unwanted children; to offer sacrifices, provided that it was

¹³⁴ Wickham, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

done in private. In every other respect, however, they were to submit themselves to the laws of the new religion. Whether in cold water or warm, all were to be baptized. The inhabitants of Iceland were to become a Christian people."¹³⁵

And so these societies combined two characteristics which, from the modern point of view, cannot be combined: the "collectivist" belief that men can and should freely choose its supreme end *together*, and the "individualist" belief that the supreme end can be revealed to one particular man. For if wisdom comes from God, "it is much more natural to suppose," as Vladimir Trostnikov says, "that divine enlightenment will descend upon the chosen soul of an Anointed One of God, as opposed to a million souls at once".¹³⁶

Holy Scripture does *not* say *vox populi - vox Dei*, but: "The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever He will" (Proverbs 21.1).

¹³⁵ Holland, op. cit., p. 212. Cf. Man, op. cit., p. 40; Gwyn Jones, *The Vikings*, London: The Folio Society, 1997, pp. 266-270.

¹³⁶ Trostnikov, "The Role and Place of the Baptism of Rus' in the European Spiritual Process of the Second Millenium of Christian History", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 39, N 3, May-June, 1989, p. 34.

II. THE DECLINE AND FALL OF WESTERN ORTHODOXY

9. CHARLEMAGNE, THE FATHER OF MODERN EUROPE

For centuries, and in spite of the intermittent expression of papist ideas, the Roman papacy had seen itself as part of the Byzantine Empire. This position was reinforced in a cultural sense during the period of the “Byzantine papacy” of the seventh and early eighth centuries, when most 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 empire’s position in Italy weakened when, in 727, “Ravenna rebelled against the Byzantine prohibition of icons and killed the exarch. Emperor Leo III was not able to respond. And so from this time, confirmation of the election of a new pope was no longer sought from the emperor or his exarch in Ravenna...

The empire still held extensive lands in the south of Italy; but the relationship between the empire and the Roman papacy began to undergo strain when the Lombards penetrated further south into central Italy, creating duchies in Spoleto and Benevento. The Emperor Leo, occupied with his Muslim enemies in the East, could offer the papacy no military support. In desperation, therefore, the pope 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 popes¹³⁷ – 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 750 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 replied, according to the *Royal Frankish Annals*, “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 was to be made king, lest order be disturbed.”

¹³⁷ Fr. 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).

“Whereupon,” writes Joseph Canning, “Pippin was elected king of the Franks at Soissons, and in 751 the Frankish bishops participated in the king-making through anointing the new monarch, an innovation in Frankish terms. ‘Pippin the most high by the election of all the Franks to the throne of the kingdom, with the consecration by the bishops and the subjection of the lay magnates, together with his queen Bertrada, as the ancient order requires, was raised to the kingdom.’”¹³⁸

The deposition of the last Merovingian Childeric III (who was tonsured, together with his sons), and the establishment of a new king and dynasty in his place, was certainly unusual. It might even be called revolutionary insofar as “regime change”, the removing of legitimate dynasties by churchmen and their replacement by upstarts, was not considered the business of churchmen – at least in Orthodox Christendom...

Be that as it may, Zechariah’s successor, Stephen II, a Roman aristocrat, greatly strengthened the links with “the most Christian king of the Franks”. He was worried by the activities of the Lombard King Aistulf (749-756), “who,” as Janet Nelson writes, “now encroached on what had been the Byzantine exarchate, where local elites and their local officials (*duces*) were carving out estates for themselves. Meanwhile Aistulf demanded a tribute from the Roman duchy itself, putting further pressure on papal coffers. It did not take long for Stephen to become involved in negotiations with the Franks for the protection of Rome and its territory... Pippin’s response was all the pope could have wished for. The king sent to Rome two very powerful men whom he specially trusted, Chrodegang of Metz and a leading Frankish aristocrat, Duke Autchar, ‘to bring the pope back’ with them to Francia.”¹³⁹

Stephen crossed the Alps, and on the feast of Epiphany, 752, having received Peppin’s promise that he “would restore the exarchate of Ravenna and the rights of the *Res Publica* [the Roman State] by every means possible”, anointed the king and his two sons “by Christ’s grace kings of the Franks”.¹⁴⁰ 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. Whatever Stephen had this in mind, the anointing 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. In exchange for the backing of the papacy, the Franks became its official protectors instead of the Eastern emperors, whose subjects the Popes now ceased to be.¹⁴¹ Moreover, from this time the popes stopped dating their documents from the emperor’s regnal year, and began to issue their own coins.¹⁴²

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¹³⁸ Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought 300-1450*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 48.

¹³⁹ Nelson, *King and Emperor. A New Life of Charlemagne*, London: Allen Lane, 2019, pp. 72, 73.

¹⁴⁰ *Vita Stephani*, in Nelson, op. cit., p. 74.

¹⁴¹ Norman Davies, *Europe*, London: Pimlico, 1996, pp. 288-290.

¹⁴² Judith Herrin, *Women in Purple*, London: Phoenix Press, 2002, p. 47.

Peppin more than fulfilled his side of the bargain: he defeated the Lombards, restored the pope to Rome. Moreover, he gave to the pope, as Gilmour writes, "territories that had belonged to the exarchate of Ravenna. Known as the Donation of Pepin, the promise was confirmed and magnified (though largely unfulfilled) twenty years later by his son Charlemagne. Yet, as the Frankish kings had no rights in Italy at this time, it could be argued that their donations of former Byzantine land were invalid. An older and higher authority was needed, and thus the *Donation of Constantine* came into being..."¹⁴³

The Donation of Constantine was a forgery concocted by someone in the papal chancellery. It alleged that Constantine the Great, in gratitude for his recovery from leprosy, 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."¹⁴⁴

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. 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 *restitutio*.¹⁴⁵

The forgery was probably directed against the heretical emperor in Constantinople, providing a justification for the papacy's stealing the exarchate of Ravenna from the emperor in exchange for Leo III's earlier depredations. 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 powers of Church and State that prevailed in the East, 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...

The *Donation* was proved to be a forgery by Pope Sylvester II in 999. But since Sylvester was a truly Orthodox pope (one of the last), his finding was ignored until the Renaissance. "By that time," continues Gilmour, "the document had

¹⁴³ Gilmour, *The Progress of Italy*, p. 55.

¹⁴⁴ Henry Bettenson and Christopher Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church*, London: SPCK, 1999, p. 52.

¹⁴⁵ Charles Davis, "The Middle Ages", in Richard Jenkyns (ed.), *The Legacy of Rome*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 86.

served its purpose of justifying the dominion of the papal states, a thick band of territory stretching from the Adriatic to the Tyrrhenian that kept the Italian peninsula divided until the second half of the nineteenth century. The popes expanded their territories from Rome and its environs – the so-called ‘Patrimony of St. Peter’ – to include the duchies of Perugia, Spoleto and Benevento, the March of Ancona and finally the Romagna and parts of Emilia. In the process Christ’s differentiation between the realms of God and Caesar was forgotten...”¹⁴⁶

The pope was now not only a religious leader, but also a secular ruler...

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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 most of Spain remained beyond his grasp. He promoted education and art, held twice-yearly Synods of his bishops and nobles, and suppressed heresy - but introduced the heretical *Filioque*. He tried to weld the varied peoples and customs of his realm into a multi-national whole: a new unity of Western Christendom was being forged, with enormous consequences for the future of the world...

The early part of Charlemagne’s reign is notorious for his slaughter of hundreds of leaders of the Saxon pagans; he conducted mass-baptisms of the conquered Saxons, “dragging the battalions of forest-worshippers into heavenly kingdoms”¹⁴⁷, and imposed the death penalty on them if they refused to convert to Christianity. Thus one of the capitularies of Saxony (775-790) reads: “If any one of the race of the Saxons hereafter concealed among them shall have wished to hide himself unbaptized, and shall have scorned to come to baptism and shall have wished to remain a pagan, let him be punished by death.” Another Capitulary of 785 declared: “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...”¹⁴⁸

Some have excused the king on the grounds that Saxon paganism was truly barbaric and anti-Christian. Others have pointed out that a few decades later the Byzantine Emperor murdered thousands of Paulician (Manichaean) heretics. Deacon Alcuin of York, Charlemagne’s English counsellor, had an economic explanation: “Tithes, so it is said, destroyed the faith of the Saxons”, causing them to rebel again and again. Maybe economic oppression had something to do with it. But Alcuin also wrote: “Faith comes from the will, not from compulsion...”

¹⁴⁶ Gilmour, op. cit., p. 55.

¹⁴⁷ Paulinus of Aquileia, in Nelson, op. cit., p. 167.

¹⁴⁸ Jean Comby, *How to Read Church History*, London: SCM Press, 1985, vol. 1, p. 123.

Alcuin, the brightest light of the School of York, had met Charlemagne in 781 “while returning from a visit to Rome, and been recruited to his court. Pagans, he urged the king, should be persuaded, not forced to convert. ‘Let peoples newly brought to Christ be nourished in a mild manner, as infants are given milk – for instruct them brutally, and the risk then, their minds being weak, is that they will vomit everything up.’ Charlemagne, far from objecting to this advice, appears to have taken it in good spirit. In 796, the policy of forcible baptism was eased; a year later, the laws that governed the conquered Saxons in a milder form. The king, who enjoyed nothing more than discussing theology with Alcuin while soaking with him in a hot bath, had full confidence in his advice. He knew that the Northumbrian’s commitment to the creation of a properly Christian people was absolute. Alcuin’s conviction that there was no improvement so radical that it might not be achieved by education was precisely why Charlemagne had employed him. ‘For without knowledge no one can do good.’ Alcuin, schooled in the sternest traditions of Northumbrian scholarship, wished everyone in his patron’s empire to share in the fruits of Christian learning. Monasteries, in his opinion, had a greater role to play in the pacification of Saxony than fortresses. It was not only Saxons, though, who caused Alcuin anxiety. Christians in lands from which paganism had been scoured many centuries before still laboured in darkness. How, when they were illiterate, and their priests semi-literate, could they possibly profit from the great inheritance of writings from the ancient past: the Old and New Testaments, the canons of Nicaea and other councils, the teachings of the fathers of the Church? How, without these timeless texts, could they be brought to a proper knowledge of God’s purposes and desires? How could they even know what Christianity was? It was not enough to take the light of Christ into the forests of Saxony. It had to be taken into the manors, and farms, and smallholdings of Francia. An entire society needed reform.

“Charlemagne did not duck the challenge. He knew that greatness brought with it great responsibilities. A king who permitted his people to stray, who indulged their mistakes, who failed to guide them, would be sure to answer for it before the throne of God. Charlemagne, declaring in 768 his ambition to see his subjects ‘apply themselves to a good life’, cited as his model a king from the Old Testament, Josiah, who had discovered in the Temple a copy of the law given to Moses. ‘For we read how the saintly Josiah, by visitation, correction and admonition, strove the recall the kingdom which God had given him to the worship of the true God. But Charlemagne could not, as Josiah had done, cite a written covenant. His subjects were not, as Josiah’s had been, governed by the law given to Moses. Different peoples across his empire had different legal systems - nor, provided only that these codes did not subvert Frankish supremacy, did Charlemagne object. The one law that he wished his subjects to obey, the one law that existed to guide all the Christian people, could not be contained in a single book. Only on their hearts could it be written. Yet this imposed on Charlemagne a ferocious obligation: for how could God’s law possibly be written on the hearts of the Christian people if they were not properly Christian? Without education, they were doomed; without education, they could not be brought to Christ. *Correctio*, Charlemagne termed his mission: the schooling of his subjects in the authentic knowledge of God.

“‘May those who copy the pronouncements of the holy law and the hallowed sayings of the fathers sit here’. Such was the prayer that Alcuin, following his appointment as abbot of Tours in 797, ordered to be inscribed over the room where monks would toil daily at their great task of writing. Under his leadership, the monastery became a powerhouse of penmanship. Its particular focus was the production of single-volume collections of scripture. Edited by Alcuin himself, these were written to be as user-friendly as possible. No longer did words run into one another. Capital letters were deployed to signal the start of new sentences. For the first time, a single stroke like a lightning flash was introduced to indicate doubt: the question mark. Each compendium of scripture, so one monk declared, was a library beyond compare... The sheer number of editions produced at Tours was prodigious. Large-format, easy to read, and distributed widely across Charlemagne’s empire, they gave to the various people across the Latin West something new: a shared sense of God’s word as a source of revelation that might be framed within one single set of covers.

“Yet Alcuin and his colleagues were not content that scripture and the great inheritance of Christian learning be made available merely to the literate. Familiar as they were with the shrunken settlements that huddled within even the most imposing Roman city walls, they knew that there could be no true *correction* without reaching deep into the countryside. The entire span of the Latin West, from its ancient heartlands to its newest, rawest marches, needed to function as a great honeycomb of dioceses. Even the meanest peasant scratching a living beside the darkest wood had to be provided with ready access to Christian instruction. This was why, every time Saxon rebels burned down a church, the Frankish authorities would hurry to rebuild it. It was why as well, under the stern and tutelary gaze of Charlemagne, the project of *correction* had as a particular focus the education of the priesthood. This was a topic on which Boniface, only a generation previously, had expressed robust views. Frankish priests, he had charged, ‘spend their lives in debauchery, adultery, and every kind of filth.’ Some were barely distinguishable from serfs: ordained at the behest of their lords, they were more practised in holding the leashes of hunting dogs or the reins of a lady’s horse than in teaching the word of God. That, as ever more instructions flowed from Charlemagne’s court, was now starting to change. Everyone in the empire, as the king ordained, was to know the Creed. So too were they to learn the words which Christ himself, asked by his disciples how they should pray, had taught: the Lord’s Prayer. Small books written specifically to serve the needs of rural priests began to appear in ever-increasing numbers. Battered, scruffy and well-thumbed, these guides were the index of an innovative experiment in mass education. Charlemagne’s death in 814 did nothing to slow it. Four decades on, the archbishop of Rheims could urge the priests under charge to know all forty of Gregory the Great’s homilies, and expect to be obeyed. One was jailed for having forgotten ‘everything that he had learned’. Ignorance had literally become a crime...”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Holland, *Dominion*, London: Abacus, 2019, pp. 193-196.

The 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.”¹⁵⁰

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Charlemagne’s empire was seen by many as a resurrection of the Western Roman Empire. Thus the marble steps leading up to his throne came from temples in Rome.¹⁵¹ According to Alcuin, Charlemagne, like King David, combined the functions of royal leadership and priestly teaching in order to guide his people to salvation.¹⁵² And as early as 775 the Englishman Cathwulf wrote to Charlemagne comparing him to the Father, and 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.”¹⁵³

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...”¹⁵⁴

If only Charlemagne had always “promulgated sound religious doctrine’. But, as we shall see, that was not always so. 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 by re-establishing itself in the West...

But Carolingian caesaropapism had its good points. Thus it created the beginnings of what we would now call the welfare state: “In March 779,” writes Nelson, “a special assembly was convened to deal with a serious famine... The Bishops’ Capitulary, recently re-dated to 778, along with the Herstal Capitulary, established relief measures ‘for the starving poor’. These measures were to be activated by St. John’s Day 24 June, usually the beginning of the harvest season. The bishops set up arrangements for fasting and alms-giving to be provided by clergy, abbots and abbesses, and laity of different ranks and at different social levels, reaching down to that of local priests and local people. Counts, for instance, were divided into three categories: stronger, middling and lesser. The

¹⁵⁰ Peter Heather, *The Restoration of Rome*, London: Pan Books, 2013, pp. 336, 345.

¹⁵¹ Jack Watkins, “Charlemagne: Part 1 of 2”, *Catholic Life*, December, 2008, p. 43.

¹⁵² Canning, op. cit., p. 50.

¹⁵³ Canning, op. cit., p. 49.

¹⁵⁴ Luscombe, “Introduction: the Formation of Political Thought in the West”, *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, c. 350 - c. 1450, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 166.

middling were 'moderately well-off office-holders'. That meant that they were responsible for alms to the value of 120 pennies (half a silver pound). Fasting and alms-giving went hand in hand: those who fasted contributed the food they didn't eat for the relief of the starving. Scripture said, 'As water extinguishes fire, so alms-giving extinguishes sin' (*Ecclus.* 3.30). Such a major relief operation was apparently not beyond the means of this regime, or at any rate beyond aspirations driven by Charles..."¹⁵⁵

By the 790s Charlemagne was already not just a king, but a *de facto* emperor, and in 794 the Lombard Archbishop Paulinus of Aquileia called him "king and priest" ... But the resurrection of the Western Empire needed a special *de jure* sanction that only the Church could give. The opportunity to gain this came with the election of a new Eastern emperor, Irene, who, being a woman, was not considered a real ruler according to Frankish law, and of a new Pope, Leo III.

Leo was no supporter of 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 anathematized by Leo. Such a priest-king, he wrote, was like Julian the Apostate..."¹⁵⁶

Nevertheless, Leo needed the support of Charlemagne; and to that end he was prepared to flatter him in his caesaropapist ambitions... For "even though his election had been unanimous," writes 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.

¹⁵⁵ Nelson, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-178.

¹⁵⁶ A.W. Haddan & W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1869, 1964, vol. III, p. 524. Charlemagne's ideas of the relationship of Church and State were also traditional. Thus "in his response to Leo's announcement of his election as pope in 795, he affirmed that, while it was the duty of the earthly ruler to defend the Church and promote the faith, it was the duty of the pope and his clergy, like Moses, to lift up hands in prayer for the realm and for victory over its enemies." Cf. Louth, *op. cit.* p. 71.

“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...”¹⁵⁷

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. But can

¹⁵⁷ Holland, *Millenium*, London: Abacus Books, 2009, pp. 30-32.

we believe this? Does it not appear 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?¹⁵⁸

However, John Julius Norwich disagrees: "Charles had never shown the faintest interest in claiming imperial status, and for the rest of his life continued to style himself *Rex Francorum et Longobardorum* – King of the Franks and Lombards. Nor, above all, did he wish to owe any obligation to the Pope; there is every reason to believe that he was in fact extremely angry when he found such an obligation thrust upon him. Leo, on the other hand, was creating an all-important precedent. By crowning Charles as he did, he was emphasizing that both the empire and Charles at its head were his creation. The world could make no mistake: it was to the Pope, and to the Pope only, that the emperor owed his title."¹⁵⁹

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."¹⁶⁰

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 met with his approval: *Romanum gubernans imperium* 'Governing the Roman Empire'. Thus the resounding title of this first of the post-fall-of-Rome 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'."¹⁶¹

Alcuin even 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

¹⁵⁸ Peter Heather, *The Restoration of Rome*, London: Pan Books, 2013, chapter 5.

¹⁵⁹ Norwich, *France. A History from Gaul to De Gaulle*, London: John Murray, 2018, p. 13.

¹⁶⁰ Quoted in Richard Chamberlin, *Charlemagne, Emperor of the Western World*, London: Grafton books, 1986, p. 52.

¹⁶¹ 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" (*A History of the Byzantine Emperor*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1955, 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 expressed in the language of a fictional blood relationship" ("China in the year 1000", *History for All*, vol. 2, issue 6, December / January, 2000, p. 37).

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."¹⁶²

Moreover, whereas previously Alcuin had followed the convention of calling Constantinople the second Rome, now 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 mighty extent, rises and grows; with the domes which crown its walls, it touches the stars!"¹⁶³

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 ruler 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."¹⁶⁴

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..."¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Alcuin, in Stephen Allott, *Alcuin of York*, York: Sessions Book Trust, 1974, p. 111.

¹⁶³ Alcuin, in Wil van den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999, p. 148.

¹⁶⁴ Herrin, *op. cit.*, pp. 124, 128.

¹⁶⁵ Louth, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

In later years Charlemagne drew back from the confrontation with Constantinople that his assumption of the title of "Emperor of the Romans" had threatened. He dropped the phrase "of the Romans" while retaining the title "Emperor". And he dropped his idea of attacking the Byzantine province of Sicily.¹⁶⁶ Then, after the death of the Empress Irene in 802, he sought to be reconciled with the Byzantines. And with some success: as he later wrote to the Byzantine Emperor Michael (811-13), Christ had deigned to establish peace between the eastern and western empires.

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However, what was done could not be undone: through the coronation of the year 800, the foundations were laid both for the growth of papal power in the West and for a disastrous attempt by Charlemagne to change the teaching of the Church. As long as the Eastern Emperors had been iconoclast, while Charlemagne remained Orthodox, he could have had some – albeit insufficient – justification for claiming the leadership of the Christian world. But after the Seventh Council restored the veneration of icons in 787, the Eastern Empire had returned to Orthodoxy – and the Western quasi-emperor fell into heresy...

The process seems to have begun with a personal snub: no Frankish bishop had been invited to the Seventh Ecumenical Council. As a result, writes Nelson, "Charles broke off the betrothal [between his daughter Rotrud and the Empress Irene's son Constantine] in 787, at Capua. (There is no evidence that he brought Rotrud to Italy with him in 786/7, as he had in 781.) Charles's motives, probably mixed, included revenge for Eirene's ecumenical snub. No Frank was at Nicaea to hear the decrees read out in Greek. A Latin translation was made on [Pope] Hadrian's orders, but it was seriously flawed because the translator was not bilingual, and worked from glossaries. The consequence was that Charles commissioned a searing critique of the official conciliar text, which in his mind confirmed his own standing as a qualified religious arbiter."¹⁶⁷

Charlemagne's rejection of the Acts of the Seventh Council has been ascribed to a mistranslation of the Greek *proskynesis* by the Latin *adoratio*. As 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

¹⁶⁶ Instead, according to the Byzantine chronicler Theophanes, he proposed marriage to the Byzantine Empress Irene "to unite the Eastern provinces". Nelson (op. cit., p. 370) considers this "beyond the bounds of credibility", while Herrin (op. cit., pp. 117-118) considers it more likely that Irene made the proposal.

¹⁶⁷ Nelson, op. cit., p. 226.

[*proskynesis*] and a form of veneration expressing worship [*latreia*] has no natural lexical equivalent [in Latin].”¹⁶⁸

The British, too, were misled by the mistranslation. 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 [i.e. worshipped], which is altogether condemned by the Church of God”; and Alcuin, though personally unconvinced, brought back to the continent the negative opinion of the British Church.¹⁶⁹

However, we may suspect (without having any firm evidence to assert this confidently) that Charlemagne, having been offended by the snub to the Franks, 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, it was not the Eastern, but the Western emperor, who now fell into heresy. For In 794 he convened a large council at Frankfurt which, without consulting the Pope, condemned both the iconoclast council of 754 and the Seventh Ecumenical Council as *ineptissimae Synodi*, “most stupid Councils”¹⁷⁰, and introduced the *Filioque*, which supposed that the Holy Spirit proceeded both from the Father *and from the Son*, into the Creed.

The *Filioque* was heretical because: (a) it contradicted the explicit words of Christ about the procession of the Spirit from the 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.¹⁷¹

With regard to iconoclasm, Charlemagne found himself at odds with Pope Hadrian, who accepted the Acts of the Seventh Council. However, the pope, out of gratitude for Charlemagne’s political services to the papacy, did not emphasize his theological differences with him. Similarly, he did not emphasize his agreement with the Orthodox emperor in Constantinople because he was trying to reverse Leo III’s earlier confiscation of the Roman Church’s patrimonies in southern Italy and transfer of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of southern Italy, Sicily and Illyria from Rome to Constantinople.

Charlemagne’s iconoclasm was not without consequences in the West. Thus in the early ninth century, Bishop Claudius of Turin preached iconoclasm (he was

¹⁶⁸ Louth, op. cit., pp. 86-87.

¹⁶⁹ Haddan & Stubbs, op. cit., pp. 468-469.

¹⁷⁰ Constantine Scouteris, “‘Never as gods’: icons and their veneration”, *Sobornost*, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 15.

¹⁷¹ St. Photius the Great, *The Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*, Boston: Studion Publishers, 1983; “The *Filioque*: Truth or Trivia?”, *Orthodox Christian Witness*, March 21 / April 3, 1983.

opposed by the Irishman St. Dungalus of Pavia).¹⁷² And although the heresy did not prevail a sharp decline in iconography is evident in the West from this time.¹⁷³

In 808, the introduction of the *Filioque* into the Frankish Creed 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. It is one of the great ironies of history that the fall of the Roman papacy, so notorious in later ages for its inquisitorial zeal against heresy, should have begun with a lack of zeal to expel a heretic, Charlemagne, from the Church even after he had been exhorted more than once because of his heresy (*Titus* 3.10). Long past were the days when a bishop like St. Ambrose of Milan could dare to excommunicate an emperor from the Church...

The acts of the Aachen council were taken to Rome for discussion with the pope. "The Frankish experts," writes Nelson, "were determined to keep the *Filioque*; Pope Leo was content that it remain in practice in Francia, but did not want to change the Creed of the Romans and Greeks (and there were many Greeks in Rome). The Franks were chided for not having got authorization for the *Filioque*, but nothing was done to prevent their continuing the tradition they knew... By now, pope and emperor understood each other..."¹⁷⁴

It was an evil understanding, as between Herod and Pilate... 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. For he believed, as

¹⁷² See also Bishop Enoch, "Abbot Walafrid Strabo (+840) and Veneration of Icons", <https://traditionalwesternorthodoxchristian.blogspot.com/2021/11/abbot-walafrid-strabo-840-on-veneration.html>.

¹⁷³ However, recognizably Byzantine-style iconography still remained in the West. See, for example the silks given to St. Cuthbert's community by the English King Athelstan, and the frescoes of the tenth-century Spanish church of St. Peter del Bural: https://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=https%3A%2F%2Fupload.wikimedia.org%2Fwikipedia%2Fcommons%2Fthumb%2F7%2F75%2FAbsis_de_Sant_Pere_del_Bural%252C_11th_c._fresco.jpg. Rome especially, the home of many iconodule monks from the East, remained strictly Orthodox in its iconography. Moreover, iconography in churches remained compulsory. Thus in the second canon of the Council of Chelsea (81) we read: "We command that every bishop, that he have depicted on the wall of the oratory, or on a tablet, or also on the altars, to what saints both are dedicated."

¹⁷⁴ Nelson, op. cit., p. 453.

Fr. John Romanides puts it, "that the East Romans were neither Orthodox nor Roman"¹⁷⁵!

Another important Carolingian innovation 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."¹⁷⁶

This issue had not been among the theological differences that arose between Rome and Constantinople in the 850s. However, it *did* become important two centuries later, when the schism hardened, as we shall see. The Latin innovation was seen as damaging the symbolism of Christ's human nature insofar as leaven signifies the grace of the Holy Spirit that makes human nature rise.

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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 continued to disintegrate in the tenth century...

The main cause of this was undoubtedly God's wrath elicited by his heretical innovations and his challenge to the authority of the Eastern Empire. But there were other causes...

One was that he failed to create the bureaucracy and tax collection systems that were so important in preserving the Roman Empire.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ J. Romanides, *Franks, Romans, Feudalism and Doctrine*, Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1981, p. 31.

¹⁷⁶ 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 eucharistia*, 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]. "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 the Roman liturgy at the end of the first millennium: '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]." (Fr. Ambrose Maonaigh, *Facebook*, July 6, 2016). Cf. V. Moss, "The Bread of the Eucharist", https://www.academia.edu/13506091/THE_BREAD_OF_THE_EUCHARIST.

¹⁷⁷ 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

Another related to 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. 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. True statehood begins only when the state is seen, not as an instrument of power or profit for one or more individuals, or even all the citizens of the state, but as something having a right to exist for its own sake, being established by God.

As Heather writes, "the fruits of expansionary power... were a crucial element in the rise of the Carolingians. It really is one of the most 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."¹⁷⁸

In evaluating the Carolingian dynasty, one encounters similar difficulties to those experienced with regard to another powerful and innovative ruler, Peter the Great: on the one hand, respect for the material strengthening of Western Christian civilization, which enabled it both to resist the external assaults of Vikings and Saracens and to increase its internal cultural unity, and on the other, regret at its spiritual weakening, leading to the weakening also of the Roman Papacy and the Eastern Empire.

Charlemagne was a powerful personality, a talented administrator and a benefactor of the Church before he fell into heresy. His holding together of such

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)

¹⁷⁸ 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."

a vast and varied dominion was a major achievement, and did in some sense constitute a resurrection of the Western Roman Empire. Like the Romans, as E.H. Gombrich writes, "he never lost sight of his goal: to bring all these various German tribes and duchies together under his rule, and forge them into a single people."¹⁷⁹

Indeed, so widely accepted was the ideal of "One Faith, One Church, One Empire" that when Charlemagne came to create his western rival to the true Roman Empire, he also spoke of "the Christian people of the Romans" without ethnic differentiation, and tried to introduce a single Roman law for all the constituent nations of his empire. As Agobard, Archbishop of Lyons, put it: "There is now neither Gentile nor Jew, Scythian nor Aquitanian, nor Lombard, nor Burgundian, nor Alaman, nor bond, nor free. All are one in Christ... Can it be accepted that, opposed to this unity that is the work of God, there should be an obstacle in the diversity of laws [used] in one and the same country, in one and the same city, and in one and the same house? It constantly happens that of five men walking or sitting side by side, no two have the same territorial law, although at root - on the eternal plan - they belong to Christ."¹⁸⁰

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However, Charlemagne's empire began to crumble quite soon after his death in 814. First, his son Louis the Pious suffered rebellions from his sons Lothar, Pippin and Louis, and in 833 was even briefly deposed by them. The bishops confirmed this 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."¹⁸¹

On Louis' death in 840 the empire was divided between his three surviving sons, Lothar, Louis the German and Charles. When Lothar claimed the whole empire, the other two brothers met with their armies at Strasbourg in 842 and swore allegiance to each other and a united front against Lothar. "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 German portions are

¹⁷⁹ Gombrich, *A Little History of the World*, London: Yale University Press, 2008, p. 123.

¹⁸⁰ Agobard, in R.H.C. Davis, *A History of Medieval Europe*, Harlow: Longman, 1988, p. 147.

¹⁸¹ Canning, op. cit., p. 51.

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.”¹⁸²

The Treaty of Verdun, writes T.S. Brown, “was not envisaged as replacing the empire by nascent nation-states, but in practice centrifugal pressures were increased by rivalries between the rulers and the pressures of aristocratic supporters to regain offices and lands lost in the division. Lothar’s kingdom lacked viability and was divided in 855 among his three sons, none of whom had male heirs. As a result the kingdom of Lothar II (855–69) in the low countries was carved up between his uncles, Louis and Charles. In west Francia Charles fought manfully against Viking invaders and aristocratic separatism and succeeded in becoming emperor after the death of his nephew, Louis II, in 875. However, after his death (877) his descendants proved incompetent and short-lived. Louis the German proved the strongest king, but on his death (876) his kingdom was divided, and his sons died in rapid succession, apart from the youngest, Charles the Fat, who ruled a reunited empire fortuitously and ignominiously from 884 until his deposition in 887.”¹⁸³

On top of these divisions, the Vikings, who first appeared in 793, began to make serious and highly destructive inroads into North-Western Europe...

“Although Charlemagne’s empire perished,” writes Norwich, “his idea did not. Henceforth, the western Europeans were almost able to forget about Constantinople. Before 800, there was only one empire in the Christian world – the empire of Augustus, Trajan and Hadrian, which was not a jot less Roman for having had its capital transferred to the Bosphorus. But the Bosphorus was nearly 1500 miles from Paris; the West now had an emperor of its own, on its very doorstep. And that emperor had been crowned by the Pope... After Charlemagne, Europe would never be the same again...”¹⁸⁴

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The durability of Charlemagne’s idea of Western unity was demonstrated in 1978, when President Giscard d’Estaing of France and Chancellor Helmut

¹⁸² “Oaths of Strasbourg Sworn”, *History Today*, February, 2017, p. 8. Cf. Jenkins, op. cit., p. 56.

¹⁸³ Brown, op. cit., p. 21.

¹⁸⁴ Norwich, op. cit., p. 14.

Schmidt decided to relaunch the European Project by agreeing to work towards the creation of a common currency for the West European region, they met beside the tomb of Charlemagne in his old capital of Aachen.

This was appropriate; for, 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."¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Leontiev, "Vizantinizm i Slavianstvo" ("Byzantinism and Slavism"), in *Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo* (The East, Russia and Slavism), Moscow, 1996, pp. 94-95.

10. THE FALL OF THE POPES: (1) FROM NICHOLAS I TO JOHN VIII

The new relationship between the Roman papacy and the Carolingian empire created by Charlemagne's coronation in Rome in 800 caused changes, on the one hand, in the political ideology of the Franks, 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, more controversially, as having ultimate jurisdiction over *all* the Churches in the world.

As long as Charlemagne lived the change in *political* ideology was much more prominent, while the change in *ecclesiology* was still hidden. However, during the reign of Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious, the Frankish bishops quickly reasserted their authority. And they reasserted it *over* the king in a way that had never been seen before, a way that would soon seem attractive to the Pope in Rome...

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."¹⁸⁶

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.

The Frankish bishops were especially concerned to assert their authority against their metropolitans, who had been the lynchpins 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

¹⁸⁶ Luscombe, "Introduction: the Formation of Political Thought in the West", *Cambridge History of Medieval Thought*, c. 350 – c. 1450, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 167.

(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 decretals 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 decretal 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 decretals 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 decretals, 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 decretals 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."¹⁸⁷

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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

¹⁸⁷ Dvorkin, *Ochreki po Istorii Vselenskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (Sketches on the History of the Universal Orthodox Church), Nizhni-Novgorod, 2006, pp. 599-600. Cf. Heather, op. cit., p. 356

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 metropolitans briefly into an alliance with the Eastern Church against him...

The quarrel with Hincmar began when he 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..."¹⁸⁸

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 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

¹⁸⁸ Heather, op. cit., pp. 359-60.

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.”¹⁸⁹

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 canonical 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

¹⁸⁹ Llewellyn, *Rome in the Dark Ages*, London: Constable, 1996, pp. 273-275.

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.”¹⁹⁰

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If the papacy could cite some, albeit contested, precedents for claiming supreme power over the Church in the West, in the East it had *no* jurisdiction. But Nicholas defrocked even St. Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople. This was one of the great power struggles of Christian history...

The canonical aspect of the quarrel began in 858 when Photius's predecessor, Ignatius, refused to tonsure the Empress Theodora at the will of her son, Michael, and his uncle, Bardas, and was deposed by them. Ignatius's deposition was uncanonical, so Photius' election in his place was correspondingly uncanonical; but the Great Church had accepted it by condescension (*oikonomia*). The papal legates sent to Constantinople to investigate were persuaded to confirm the election. However, this did not please Pope Nicholas, who in a council in Rome in 863 deposed Photius and reappointed Ignatius as patriarch. "We declare him [Photius]," he said, "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.*"¹⁹¹

Meanwhile, the Frankish *Annals of St. Bertin* for 864 cuttingly spoke 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"¹⁹². Undaunted, 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 Melchisedeck 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

¹⁹⁰ Abbé Guettée, *The Papacy*, New York: Minos, 1867, p. 305, note.

¹⁹¹ Guettée, p. 298. Note the reference only to *six* ecumenical councils.

¹⁹² Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, p. 168.

and man, the 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..."¹⁹³

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. "The First See shall not be judged by any" – this is the authentic voice of the pseudo-infallible medieval papacy. 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.¹⁹⁴

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. St. Photius called the Nicolaitan Trinitarian theology that of a "dual divinity", and the Council anathematized both the heresy and its champion, Nicholas.

However, Nicholas' successor, Hadrian II, rejected the 867 Council and burned its Acts. In 869 a palace coup 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."¹⁹⁵ 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. However, as Joseph

¹⁹³ Nicholas I, in Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., pp. 103, 104-105.

¹⁹⁴ Charles Davis, "The Middle Ages", in Richard Jenkins (ed.), *The Legacy of Rome*, Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 81.

¹⁹⁵ Guettée, op. cit., p. 307.

Overbeck writes, "Hadrian II, succeeded in having the Pseudo-Isidorean principles (these legalized 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."¹⁹⁶

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 came to recognize St. Photius as lawful, supported the Byzantine missionaries in Moravia, 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 of 869-70 and anathematized the *Filioque*. It also decreed that there was no papal jurisdiction in the East. Pope John VIII, accepted this, declaring to the Council: "We wish that it is declared before the Synod, that the Synod which took place against the aforementioned Patriarch Photius at the time of Hadrian, the Most holy Pope in Rome, and [the Synod] in Constantinople [869/70], should be ostracized from this present moment and be regarded as annulled and groundless, and should not be co-enumerated with any other holy Synods."

The minutes of the Council at this point add: "The Holy Synod responded: We have denounced this by our actions and we eject it from the archives and anathematize the so-called [Eighth] Synod, being united to Photius our Most Holy Patriarch. We also anathematize those who fail to eject what was written or said against him by the aforementioned by yourselves, the so-called [Eighth] Synod." And Pope John wrote personally to St. Photius: "As for the Synod [i.e., the 869 Synod that condemned St. Photius] that was summoned against your Reverence we have annulled here and have completely banished, and have ejected [it from our archives], because of the other causes and because our blessed predecessor Pope Hadrian did not subscribe to it..."¹⁹⁷

The Council of 879-80 was of great significance in that it may have been the last time that the Roman papacy showed complete unity of faith with the Eastern Orthodox. David Ford writes: "There is considerable discussion today within the worldwide Orthodox Church about the status of the so-called 'Photian Council,' held in Constantinople in 879-880. This is an exceedingly important council in the history of the Orthodox Church, and therefore deserves to be much more widely known among the Orthodox faithful. And this Council is of special relevance for our Orthodox Church vis-à-vis the Roman Catholic Church, in that 1), it officially prohibited any addition to the Nicene Creed, thus rejecting the *Filioque* clause, which was in use by many churches in Western Europe at that time (though not in Rome until 1014); and 2), it implicitly rejected the principle of Papal

¹⁹⁶ Overbeck, "Rome's Rapid Downward Course", <http://nftu.net/romes-rapid-downward-dr-j-joseph-overbeck>.

¹⁹⁷ Fr. George Dragas, "The 8th Ecumenical Council: Constantinople IV (879/88) and the Condemnation of the *Filioque* Addition and Doctrine", http://geocities.com/heartland/5654/orthodox/dragas_eighth.html.

Supremacy, or jurisdictional authority, over the Eastern Churches, in that this Council rendered null and void the pro-papal Ignatian Council held in Constantinople ten years earlier. But in one of the greatest ironies of Christian history, the Photian Council *was recognized as legitimate by the papacy for nearly 200 years until the period of the Gregorian Reform*, when the canon lawyers of Pope Gregory VII (r. 1073-1085) rejected the Photian Council and resurrected the Ignatian Council to take its place.”¹⁹⁸

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Although Pope John VIII had anathematized the *Filioque*, he knew he would have a hard task ahead of him extirpating it from the West. 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...”¹⁹⁹

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 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

¹⁹⁸ Ford, “St. Photius the Great, The Photian Council, and Relations with the Roman Church”, *Preacher’s Institute*, November 12, 2017.

¹⁹⁹ Pope John VIII, *P.G.* 102, 813; translated by Richard Haugh, *Photius and the Carolingians*, Nordland, 1975, pp. 129-130, 137. Cf. V. Moss, “Western Saints and the *Filioque*”, *Living Orthodoxy*, volume IV, N 1, January-February, 1982.

the Vatican, "the ultimate guarantor of the will and teaching of the Divine Founder".²⁰⁰

Thus was the Papist heresy crushed – for the time being. Implicitly, the rejection of the papist heresies by both pope and patriarch 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.'"²⁰¹

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...

²⁰⁰ 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)

²⁰¹ Romanides, op. cit., p. 18.

11. THE GROWTH OF FEUDALISM

By the end of the ninth century, 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...

Feudalism represents a regression in the political and economic development of Orthodox Western Europe. "It is still inadequately appreciated," writes Richard Fletcher, "that Christian Europe in the early Middle Ages was both wealthy and well managed. The view that the early medieval economy was in some sense 'primitive' or 'under-developed', long ago abandoned by medievalists, is still widespread. It deserves the strongest possible emphasis that such a judgement is without foundation. Medieval Christendom was densely settled – the population was almost certainly much higher than the usual estimates that have been made – and efficiently exploited. Furthermore, it commanded, partly by inheritance from a Roman or pre-Roman past, partly by means of fertile improvisation, orderly structures and techniques of power (family, community, hierarchies, kingship, literacy, law, taxation and so forth) which were demonstrably effective, and which were above all flexible and adaptable to novel circumstances..."²⁰²

But all this changed with the coming of the Vikings, who forced the Christians to adopt the cruder system of feudalism. "The word 'Viking'," writes Sir Geoffrey Hosking, "originally meant 'pirate'. These Vikings came from kingdoms whose population was growing fast and whose agricultural land was severely restricted both by climate and by mountainous terrain. During the eighth to tenth centuries they spread all over northern Europe, and parts of southern Europe too, in search of land, trade, booty, slaves, or just military glory. They differed from previous and some later invaders in that they were not nomads but settled peoples, with already a relatively high level of material culture."²⁰³

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

²⁰² Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 519.

²⁰³ Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, London: Penguin, 2012, p. 30.

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...”²⁰⁴

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. This was in itself caused by the invasion of the Vikings from Scandinavia, who first attacked Northumbria in 793 and then went further south. “Their intention,” writes Rebecca Fraser, “was not just to raid, but to drive out the native population and settle. It was on Holy Saturday 845, the day before Easter, that the full extent of Viking ambitions were understood. On that Easter eve even the most notorious Viking of the ninth century, the fearsome chief Ragnar Lodbrok, sailed up the Seine and sacked Paris. The citizenry fled and the churches were abandoned. Ragnar Lodbrok had successfully struck at the heart of the kingdom which had dominated Europe so recently under Charlemagne. Before the appalled eyes of the Frankish king Charles the Bald, Ragna Lodbrok hung 111 citizens from trees and let another hundred go only when he was paid 7,000 pounds of silver. Then, his red beard glinting in the pale spring sun, he made a sarcastic bow to the terrified king and took himself off to the open seas once more. But there was no doubt among the watching crowds where power lay. It was certainly not with the king.

“From now on Danish Viking armies took up more or less permanent quarters on the Rhine, the Scheldt, the Somme, the Seine, the Loire and the Garonne. By 859 the Vikings were fighting in Morocco and carrying off prisoners to their Irish bases...”²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order*, London: Profile, 2012, p. 106.

²⁰⁵ Fraser, *A People’s History of Britain*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1003, pp. 55-56.

As royal power crumbled, feudalism took its place, being both a cause and an effect of the weakening of royal power. It ate into the king's power in two ways: first, the king's 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 lord.

The king often encouraged this process, since he saw that the feudal lord was the only guarantee of law and order in the countryside. Thus in the capitulary of Meerssen 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.²⁰⁶

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 kindred. In Europe, *social development* [set in motion by the Church] *preceded political development*."²⁰⁷

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.

206 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).

207 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.’”²⁰⁸

The relative individualism of the early Christian period (6th-9th centuries), which came with a certain degree of *freedom* from the suffocating restraints of tribalism and paganism, began to be modified, in the later ninth century, by a *contractual, legal* element that profoundly changed the nature of western society for the worse. For the insecurity engendered by the Viking invasions compelled men to seek to abandon their former freedom in exchange for the security of feudal vassalage. So, in order to free himself from the fearfulness of his “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 castellanies as the basic 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

²⁰⁸ Fukuyama, op. cit., p. 236.

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...”²⁰⁹

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.

Feudalism can be defined, writes Ivan Solonevich, 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 organization. “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.

²⁰⁹ Van Caenegem, “Government, Law and Society”, *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, c. 350 – c. 1450, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 175-177, 179-180.

Feudalism is, so to speak, *the democratisation of power* – 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.”²¹⁰

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“In many respects,” write Fr. Patric Ranson and Laurent Motte, “in its structure the papacy is nothing other than the religious form of feudalism.”²¹¹ For the papal church found itself bound up in the feudal nexus. The pope became a feudal lord, while the lower clergy often lost their independence to secular lords, making the whole 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

²¹⁰ Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia* (Popular Monarchy), Minsk: Luchi Sophii, 1998, pp. 270-272.

²¹¹ Ranson and Motte, introduction to Cyriaque Lampryllos, *La Mystification Fatale* (The Fatal Mystification), Lausanne: L’Age de l’Homme, 1987, p. 14.

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)."²¹²

As a result, writes Aristides 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."²¹³

Lay investiture, though distinct from ordination, 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, 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..."²¹⁴

²¹² Comby, *How to Read Church History*, London: SCM Press, 1989, p. 131.

²¹³ 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".

²¹⁴ Papadakis, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

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...”²¹⁵

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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 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...”²¹⁶

The critical question was: granted that “if the king is an adulterer, murderer, depraved, a rapist, then he must be judged... by the bishops,” does this entitle the

²¹⁵ Papadakis, op. cit., pp. 21-22, 23.

²¹⁶ Siedentop, op. cit., pp. 180-181.

bishops to depose an evil-living king? The new western tradition, beginning with Pope Nicholas I, gave an affirmative answer to this question. But what did the kings themselves think of this?

In the state, a partial recovery from the evil consequences of feudalism did not begin until 987, when the last of the Carolingian kings of France, Louis V, *le Fainéant* ("the do-nothing"), died. "Since he left no legitimate offspring, the lords of France met to elect his successor. There were two candidates for the crown. The first was the Carolingian Duke Charles of Lower Lorraine; the second was Hugh Capet, a great-grandson of Robert the Strong [Duke of Anjou and Blois]. According to the principle of heredity, Charles was obviously the legitimate king; but at an early stage of the proceedings the Archbishop of Rouen made his preference clear: 'The throne,' he thundered, 'is not acquired by hereditary right; he who is elected to it should be distinguished not merely by the nobility of his birth but by the wisdom of his mind.' His words were heeded, and Hugh Capet was awarded the crown of France."²¹⁷

This shows the great stabilizing role the Church still played in the fractured world of West European politics. All the more reason why the Church should be reformed and liberated from the feudal nexus. And that this reform should be conducted along Orthodox lines...

The Capetians securely ruled only the area around Paris, and had many rivals in the rest of France. But the dynasty gradually gained in strength, ruling "directly until the death of Charles the Fair in 1328. In fact the House of Valois which followed it and the House of Bourbon which followed Valois were both cadet branches of the Capetian line; that line could thus be said to have lasted for over eight and a half centuries, until the abdication in 1848 of France's last king..."²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Norwich, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

²¹⁸ Norwich, op. cit., p. 18.

12. THE ANGLO-SAXON AUTOCRACY

As we have seen, Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims had hinted at future Papist attempts to dominate the kings. However, he did not want the Church to undermine the power of the kings too much; 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. The one country in Western Europe where the monarchy was still strong enough to ward off feudalism was *England*.

A strong monarchy was necessary especially in order to repel the Viking invasions from Scandinavia, who first sack the famous monastery of Lindisfarne in 793, and went on to cause murder and devastation around the shores of Northern Britain and Ireland, creating the Viking kingdom of Dublin in 795, before turning south and east to England in the ninth century... Before the invasions, 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 Egfrith 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. In 869 the "Great Army" had conquered Northumbria and East Anglia, before turning south of the Thames into Wessex. Almost single-handedly, Alfred defeated the Danes at Ethandune in 878, baptized their king Guthrum (in baptism: Athelstan) and laid the foundations for their integration into a truly Anglo-Danish kingdom.²¹⁹

Moreover, he undertook the organization and education of the devastated Church, 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*

²¹⁹ Julian D. Richards and Dawn Hadley, "The Great Viking Terror", *BBC History Magazine*, September, 2016, p. 39.

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."²²⁰

The stability of Alfred's dynasty and kingdom by comparison with the West European kingdoms was partly owing to the fact that, like the Roman missionaries in the early seventh century, he 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.²²¹

There are several indications that the English kingdom modelled itself on Byzantium. Thus early in the tenth century King Athelstan, the first truly all-English king²²², who had marched to the north of Scotland and had crushed a coalition of Celts and Vikings at Brunanburgh in 937, gave himself the Byzantine titles *basileus* and *curagulus*. Again, in 955, his brother and successor King Edred called himself "emperor of the Anglo-Saxons and Northumbrians, governor of the pagans, defender of the Britons". Unlike the Frankish or German kings, the English kings never aspired to the title of "Holy Roman Emperor". But their power was *de facto* greater than that of any western ruler until the rise of the Ottonian dynasty in Germany.

"The English were prospering" writes Robert Tombs, "through agriculture and trade in conditions of peace and prosperity unknown for centuries. In contrast with post-Carolingian Europe, England had no prolonged or general internal conflict in 200 years. Its kings ruled with an iron hand, punishing disobedient shires and nobles with hangings, ravaging, confiscation and exile. Enforcing law and custom was a job for the people themselves. Law, as was typical of lightly governed societies, aimed at compensation for injury ('If anyone strike another with his fist on the nose, iii shillings') and restraint of blood feuds, by regulating the 'wergild' ('man money') paid by a killer to a dead man's kin or master. Wergild differed according to status: one king issued a proclamation to 'all his people, whether men of a twelve-hundred wergild or of a two hundred' – meaning nobles and peasants respectively. One of the concessions Alfred had extracted from Guthrum was that the price for killing an Englishman in the Danelaw should be the same as that for killing a Dane. Men were divided into groups of men – tithings – to protect and police each other, and they bonded through eating and drinking. Ten tithings formed armed posses to ride after

²²⁰ Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000*, London: Penguin, 2009, p. 457.

²²¹ Wickham, *op. cit.*, chapter 19.

²²² Tom Holland, "The Astonishing Aethelstan", *BBC History Magazine*, July, 2016.

rustlers and escaped thralls (slaves) living as bandits, and if necessary attack their protectors. Thrall ringleaders were summarily hanged, and their followers were flogged, scalped and deprived of their little fingers – which marked them without destroying their ability to work. In the century before 1066 there was an increase in punishment (usually by death or savage mutilation) for crimes that were increasingly seen not merely as matters concerning individuals and families, but as offences against king and community by breaking ‘the king’s peace’. There were what now seem oddities: taking the king’s wheat led to arrest, but braining one’s mother with a candlestick brought only a religious penance. Athelstan commanded that free women harbouring thieves should be thrown from a cliff or drowned, and delinquent slaves stoned to death by other slaves (‘And if any one of them fails three times to hit him, he shall himself be scourged three times’). Such harshness was not the whole story. Slaves could be freed as a religious act, as in the following case in the late tenth century of people who had voluntarily entered bondage in time of famine, and which suggests that human feelings could exist even in savage times: ‘Geatfleda has given freedom for the love of God and the for the sake of her soul [to] Ecceard the smith, Aelstan and his wife and all their children born and unborn, and to Arkil, Cole, Ecfeth [and] Aldhun’s daughter and all the people whose head she took for their food in those evil days.’

“The Angelcynn were becoming what we might recognize as an embryonic nation.²²³ Their boundaries were now broadly established. They had a distinct and fairly homogeneous system of customary law – even the ‘Danelaw’ was little different – with the king’s law over all. There was an English Church with English saints, which prayed for ‘the king of the English and his army’, and which was beginning the long process of creating the hundreds of small parishes that would for a millennium provide the framework of English society. An opulent coinage was struck, millions of silverpennies bearing the king’s head and title. An administrative system was gradually established over most of the country, based on the ‘scir’ (shire) generally centred on a river port, governed for the king by an ealdorman and his deputy, the ‘scirgerefa’ (sheriff), tax collector, judge and policeman. The shires would substantially retain their territories and names (such as Devenscire and Nordfulc) for over 1,000 years, with no major change until 1974. There was a regular system of participation in government. The warrior nobility, ‘thegns’, and free peasants, ‘ceorls’ (‘churls’), met in shire courts and local monthly courts in every hundred (a subdivision of the shire). Tens of thousands of men took part in levying taxes enforcing the law, bearing royal commands, and when necessary taking up arms. At the age of twelve, every freeman took an oath of loyalty to the king and obedience to the law – a practice that continued for many centuries. To represent the whole kingdom, a gathering of thegns and prelates, the ‘witan’ (‘the councillors’), was summoned by the king at various places, sometimes traditional open-air sites, to take part in ceremonies, give advice, settle disputes, try cases of treason, or endorse royal acts. It was crucial at times of danger and of disputed succession. From the 970s it was called the ‘Angelcynnnes witan’, the council of the English people, and King Aethelred’s 1008 law was issued ‘on the decree of the English witan’. Though there were

²²³ However, the concept of an English nation goes back to the Venerable Bede. (V.M.)

representative bodies in other parts of Europe, there were few if any national representative bodies like this. The ability of English rulers to raise taxation and manpower was unequalled in Europe, and it required this unique degree of involvement and consent by local communities, including even relatively humble subjects..."²²⁴

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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."²²⁵

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 order of service) that put Edgar on a similar level – directly anointed by God. The monastic reform movement gave this a new impetus..."²²⁶

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 (which shoed both his humility and the power of the archbishop). 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.²²⁷

²²⁴ Tombs, *The English and their History*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015, pp. 35-36. Peter Rex says this the Witan "was not a formal institution with a constitution and defined powers, like a modern parliament, but consultations between the king... and his natural advisors" (*The Last English King. The Life of Harold II*, Stroud: The History Press, 2008, p. 33).

²²⁵ *Oratio Edgari Regis*, P.L. 138, 515D-516A.

²²⁶ Lavelle, *Aethelred II: King of the English 978-1016*, Stroud: Tempus, 1002, p. 29.

²²⁷ 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

"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."²²⁸

Edgar's claims to *Romanitas* were not without foundation. The economy was strong, the tax and legal systems were sophisticated, and 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, the Anglo-Saxons, Celts and Danes²²⁹, living in mutual amity. She was at peace at home and respected abroad, spreading her influence in a beneficial way through ecclesiastical 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.²³⁰

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 than 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.

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".

²²⁸ Lavelle, op. cit., p. 31.

²²⁹ Already in the middle of the tenth century one archbishop of Canterbury, St. Oda "the Good", and one archbishop of York, Oskytel, were Danish by race. See V. Moss, *The Saints of Anglo-Saxon England*, Seattle: St. Nectarios Press, 1993, volume II, pp. 38-41.

²³⁰ "Passio et Miracula Sancti Edwardi Regis et Martyris", in Christine Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, University of Leeds, 1971.

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.”²³¹

“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.”²³²

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...²³³

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 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”.²³⁴ 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

²³¹ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, E, 979, 1014.

²³² Starkey, *The Monarchy of England*, London: Chatto & Windus, 2004, p. 83.

²³³ Starkey, in the second of his series of programmes entitled “Monarchy” and broadcast on October 25, 2004 on Channel 4 TV.

²³⁴ Quoted in Chaney, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England*, Manchester University Press, 1970, p. 14.

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?"²³⁵

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.²³⁶ 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 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."²³⁷

The success of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom can be attributed to a large extent to the respect for *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

²³⁵ Chaney, op. cit., epilogue.

²³⁶ 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).

²³⁷ Barlow, *The English Church, 1000-1066*, London: Longmans, 1979, p. 141.

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 *fyrð*, 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..."²³⁸

²³⁸ Van Caenegem, op. cit., pp. 184-185.

13. THE GERMAN AUTOCRACY

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, “a new migration,” as Simon Jenkins writes, “from the Ural mountains. The Magyars were first reported in the Crimean peninsula in 860. They came, like the Huns, as mounted warriors, eager for plunder and land. They reached Orléans in France and as far south as Rome. In 910 they defeated a German army, and in 924 devastated Provence. As the Vikings were unstoppable at sea, so the Magyars seemed unstoppable on land. After they had marauded across central Europe for some years, they were confronted by another of the dominant personalities of medieval Europe, Otto the Great of Saxony (936-73), ruler by inheritance of both Germany and Lotharingia. In 955 he assembled an alliance of German duchies to face the Magyars at the battle of Lechfeld in Bavaria. Otto’s mail-clad cavalry overwhelmed a much larger force of Magyars, and the latter retreated to settle, to this day, in Hungary.”²³⁹

King Alfred the Great’s victory at Ethandune in 878 had 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 Lechfeld in 955 laid the foundations for “Holy Roman empire of the German nation”. Remarkably, he was not a descendant of Charlemagne, but a Saxon, from the race that had warred stubbornly against the Franks and been crushed by him – truly a case of the “the last shall be first”. His empire, 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.” As he wrote to Bruno, “you have both priestly religion and royal strength”.²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Jenkins, *A Short History of Europe*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2018, p. 59.

²⁴⁰ R.H.C. Davis, *A History of Medieval Europe*, Harlow: Longman, 1988, pp. 212-213.

"Unlike the great Frankish empire," writes R. Samson, "the extension of centralized political power in the new German empire was largely achieved through the Church. By 951 Otto successfully declared eighty-five 'royal' monasteries and all the bishoprics exempt from all secular authority. They were 'immune' from ducal administration. Their lands could not be sub-enfeoffed without royal authority."²⁴¹

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.

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 in the way that the famous abbey of Cluny in West Francia was.

"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."²⁴²

From the 880s the papacy entered a period of degradation unparalleled in its pre-schism history. Thus in 897, one pope, Stephen VI, exhumed his predecessor, Formosus from the grave before excommunicating him, declaring all his ordinations invalid and cutting off his fingers.²⁴³

Heather ascribes this situation to two interrelated causes. First, 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

²⁴¹ Samson, in Angus Mackay and David Ditchburn (eds.), *Atlas of Medieval Europe*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 37.

²⁴² R.H.C. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

²⁴³ Alberto Reche Ontillera, "Vengeance at the Vatican: The Cadaver Synod", *National Geographic History*, January/February, 2016, pp. 14-17.

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.²⁴⁴

The period 904 to 963 is known as “the pornocracy of Marozia” after the Tusculani clan member Marozia, an evil woman who made, unmade, lived with and begat a series of popes.²⁴⁵ 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.”²⁴⁶ 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 the prowl. In front of the high altar of the mother church of Christendom, he even toasted the Devil...”²⁴⁷

Retribution was coming, however. Berengar of Lombardy advanced on Rome, and the pope in desperation appealed to Berengar’s feudal lord, Otto of Germany, who had some claim to the throne through his wife Adelaide, “the daughter, widow and jilter of three previous kings of Italy”.²⁴⁸ 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 in exchange for his recognizing the papacy’s claim to the papal states of Central Italy.

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, began negotiations

²⁴⁴ Heather, *op. cit.*, pp. 361-373.

²⁴⁵ Llewellyn, *The Dark Ages in Rome*, p. 310.

²⁴⁶ 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).

²⁴⁷ Peter de Rosa, *Vicars of Christ*, London: Bantam Press, 1988, p. 51.

²⁴⁸ Gilmour, *The Pursuit of Italy*, p. 56.

with Berengar's son Adalbert and called on both the Hungarians and the Byzantines to help drive Otto out of Italy. But Otto intercepted John's letters, and saw this as treachery on the part of the pope.

Simon Montefiore continues the story: "After John received Adalbert in Rome with great ceremony, bishops and nobles sympathetic to the German king rebelled. On 2 November 963, John was forced to flee Rome as Otto re-entered the city.

"Whilst John hid in the mountains of Campania, Otto convened a panel of fifty bishops in St. Peter's Basilica, who compiled a list of political and personal charges against him. These ranged from sacrilege (swearing oaths and toasting the devil with wine) to adultery, perjury and even murder (he was accused of blinding his confessor, Benedict, leading to his death, and of castrating and murdering his cardinal subdeacon). The excesses of his private life had also led him into flagrant abuses of his office, including simony – bestowing bishoprics and other ecclesiastical titles in return for payments – in order to pay his extensive gambling debts.

"On 4 December 963, the synod found him guilty and deposed him, replacing him with Pope Leo VIII. However, the new appointment was made without following proper canonical procedure and few regarded Leo as a legitimate replacement. As Otto and Adalbert clashed on the battlefield again, a new revolt broke out in Rome, restoring John to the papacy, while Leo fled. Those who betrayed John now suffered horrible vengeance. Cardinal Deacon John had his right hand cut off by the merciless pope while Bishop Otgar of Speyer was scourged; another official lost his nose and ears, many more were excommunicated. On 26 February 964, John repealed Otto's decrees in a special synod and re-established his own authority as pope.

"John's position was still precarious and when Otto finally defeated Berengarius on the battlefield and started back for Rome, it seemed highly likely that he would be deposed again. However, on 16 May 964, lustful to the last, John collapsed and died eight days after being caught in the act of adultery. Some say he was beaten up by the jealous husband; others that he was murdered, others again that the devil had claimed him as his own...."²⁴⁹

As Bishop Liutprand of Cremona relates, the Romans then made a deacon to be Pope Benedict V. But the emperor and the other bishops, who recognized Leo VIII, accused Benedict of various things, which Benedict admitted. He was allowed to return to his rank of deacon and exiled to a monastery outside Rome, while all his other ordinations (to priest and bishop) were declared invalid.

During the Council of Verzy in 991, Archbishop Arnulf of Orleans (+1003) drew conclusions from the behaviour of John XII and his successors that were by no means compatible with the later doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope:

²⁴⁹ Montefiore, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-115.

"Looking at the actual state of the papacy, what do we behold?... Are there, indeed, any bold enough to maintain that the priests of the Lord over all the world are to take their law from monsters of guilt like these - men branded with ignominy, illiterate men, and ignorant alike of things human and divine? If, holy fathers, we be bound to weigh in the balance the lives, the morals, and attainments of the meanest candidate for the sacerdotal office, how much more ought we to look to the fitness of him who aspires to be the lord and master of all priests! Yet how would it fare with us, if it should happen that the man the most deficient in all these virtues, one so subject as not to be worthy of the lowest place among the priesthood, should be chosen to fill the highest place of all? What would you say of such an one, when you behold him sitting upon the Throne glittering in purple and gold? Must he not be the Antichrist, 'sitting in the Temple of God, and showing himself as God'? Verily such an one lacketh both wisdom and charity; he standeth in the temple as an image, as an idol, from which as from dead marble you would seek counsel.

"But the Church of God is not subject to a wicked pope; nor even absolutely, and on all occasions, to a good one. Let us rather in our difficulties resort to our brethren of Belgium and Germany than to that city, where all things are venal, where judgment and justice are bartered for gold. Let us imitate the great Church of Africa, which, in reply to the pretensions of the Roman Pontiff, deemed it inconceivable that the Lord should have invested any one person with his own plenary prerogative of judicature, and yet have denied it to the great congregation of his priests assembled in Council in different parts of the world. If it be true, as we are informed by common report, that there is in Rome scarcely a man acquainted with letters, - without which, as it is written, one may scarcely be a doorkeeper in the House of God, - with what face may he who had himself learnt nothing set himself up for a teacher of others? In the simple priest ignorance is bad enough; but in the high priest of Rome, - in him to whom it is given to pass in review the faith, the lives, the morals, the discipline, of the whole body of the priesthood, yea, of the universal Church, ignorance is in nowise to be tolerated.... Why should he not be subject in judgment to those who, though lowest in place, are his superiors in virtue and in wisdom? Yea, not even he, the prince of the Apostles, declined the rebuke of Paul, though his inferior in place, and, saith the great Pope [St]. Gregory I [the Dialogist], 'if a bishop be in fault, I know not any one such who is not subject to the holy see; but if faultless, let every one understand that he is the equal of the Roman Pontiff himself, and as well qualified as he to give judgment in any matter.'²⁵⁰

Although Otto was crowned in Rome, he did not call himself "Emperor of the Romans", but *rex romanorum et semper augustus*, "king of the Romans and ever 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.²⁵¹ Thus he instructed his sword-bearer to stand behind him as he kneeled at the tomb of the

²⁵⁰ Archbishop Arnulf, in Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 4, pp. 290-292.

²⁵¹ Charles Davis, "The Middle Ages", op. cit., pp. 82-83.

Apostle. "For I know," he said, "only too well what my ancestors have experienced from these faithless Romans."²⁵²

In spite of that, Otto and his dynasty were more closely linked to Old Rome than Charlemagne had been. As 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."²⁵³

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 became head of the royal finances and then - Pope John XVI, which led to a sharp increase in Byzantine influence in the western empire.²⁵⁴ Also eclipsed - temporarily - was 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.²⁵⁵

In 991 Theophanou died and Otto III became Emperor under the regency of his grandmother. Otto, as 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 1002, 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

²⁵² Richard Chamberlin, "The Ideal of Unity", *History Today*, vol. 53 (11), November, 2003, p. 62.

²⁵³ Nelson, "Kingship and Empire", *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, c. 350 - c. 1450, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 245.

²⁵⁴ Holland, *Millennium*, London: Abacus Books, 2009, pp. 75-76. Byzantine influence had already been increasing under Alberic, whose "insistence on the forms of Byzantine administration and court hierarchy... checked the growth of any real feudal devolution of government such as the rest of Europe [outside Rome] was experiencing" (Llewellyn, op. cit., p. 307).

²⁵⁵ "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).

empire that, unlike his own, could trace a direct line of descent from ancient Rome."²⁵⁶

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."²⁵⁷ And 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*. This union would enable him to unite the two empires in a peaceful, traditional manner...

The plan for union with Byzantium was foiled through the death of Otto's fiancée before her arrival in Rome. However, Otto sought and followed the advice of holy hermits such as Nilus of Rossano in Calabria and Romuald of Ravenna, as a result of which Byzantine influence continued to spread outwards from the court.

This did not mean that conflicts between Church and State ceased altogether. When Archbishop John Philagathos expelled the Pope and made himself Pope John XVI in his place, St. Nilus of Rossano (+1004) denounced his action as lawless. However, when the Emperor Otto III arrived with Pope Gregory V in 998, and blinded and mutilated Philagathos, St. Nilus interceded for Philagathos and secured his life, rebuking the Emperor for his behavior, since Philagathos was his godfather: "For the sake of the Lord, forgive me, the most sinful of men, and a half-dead old man, because I am unworthy of such honour. Rather it is I who should prostrate myself at your honourable feet and revere your great dignities. Indeed, I have come to your glorious presence, not seeking glory, or gifts, or great rewards, but for the sake of the one who offered you great services, and was harshly treated by you. He sponsored you at Baptism, but now you have gouged out his eyes. I beseech your piety to give him to me, so that he may sit with me, and we both may weep for our sins." The Emperor then repented, and granted St. Nilus the request. But the pope, contrary to St. Nilus' command, "not satisfied by the punishments he had already inflicted upon the aforementioned Philagathos, brought him out, tore off his priestly vestments, and paraded him all around Rome. When the holy old man heard this, he was sorely grieved and no longer made any plea to the emperor for the archbishop. When the Emperor was informed about what had happened, he sent one of his archbishops to entreat the old man. St. Nilus replied: "Go and tell the Emperor and the Pope, 'These are the words of a crazy old man: you gave me this blind man, neither out of fear of men, nor because of my great power, but only for the sake of God's love. Now all the injuries you have inflicted were not upon him, but upon me, and, even more, you have insulted God Himself. Therefore you should know that, just as you did not

²⁵⁶ Holland, "Rome Undead", *New Statesman*, May 16-22, 2014, p. 24.

²⁵⁷ Allard, op. cit., p. 40

show compassion or mercy on the one delivered into your hands by God, so neither will your Father, Who is in Heaven, forgive your sins.'"²⁵⁸

St. Nilus then returned to his own monastery and "kept propitiating God, by devoting himself to ceaseless prayer and meditation. A few days later, the pope [Gregory V] met a violent death, just like a tyrant." However, the Emperor Otto III fulfilled his penance and "walked on foot from Rome to the Sanctuary of the incorporeal Archangel Michael at Gargano. His return was by way of the abode of the blessed father." When the Emperor Otto III arrived and saw the monks' cells around the chapel he exclaimed: "Behold the tents of Israel in the desert; behold the citizens of the kingdom of Heaven. These men stay here not as residents, but as those passing by." The *Life* of the saint then goes on: "The blessed father ordered incense to be burned and went out to meet the Emperor with the entire brotherhood, and bowed before him with complete humility and reverence. The, Emperor, however, placed his hand under the old man's arms to support him, and together they entered into the chapel." The *Life* then describes the conversations between the Emperor and St. Nilus. When, after all this, the Emperor Otto asked St. Nilus what he could give to him, St. Nilus "extended his hand toward the Emperor's chest and said, 'I ask for nothing else from Your Majesty except for the salvation of your soul. Even if you happen to be an Emperor, nevertheless as a human being you have to die and stand for judgment and given an accounting for all your deeds, both wicked and good.' At these words the Emperor shed tears from his eyes." The Emperor then bent his head, was blessed by St. Nilus and returned to Rome.

It was under Otto III that his tutor and friend Gerbert of Aurillac became the first Frankish Pope in 999. He took the name Sylvester II and revived memories, in those brought up on the forged *Donation of Constantine*, of the symphonic relationship between St. Constantine and Pope Sylvester I.²⁵⁹ 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.²⁶⁰ Still more significantly, this very unpopapist 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."²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ *Life of St. Nilus of Rossano*, chapters 90-91. Quoted by Hieromonk Enoch on Facebook.

²⁵⁹ R. Lacy & D. Danzinger, *The Year 1000*, London: Little, Brown and Company, 1999, p. 190.

²⁶⁰ 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).

²⁶¹ 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

This must count as a formal abjuration of the papist heresy... Unfortunately, however, 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. 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 Sclavinia (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 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..."²⁶²

The Ottonian period in the history of the papacy has been viewed in sharply contrasting ways. Voltaire said that Pope John XII's summoning of the Germans to Rome was the source of all the subsequent woes.²⁶³ However, an unprejudiced view must accept that the intervention of the Ottonian monarchy in Roman affairs was not wholly unbeneficial. The rivalries between the Tuscullani and Crescentii made the city virtually ungovernable in this period. *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, as we have seen, at a Council in Vézelay attended by English as well as French bishops, Arnulph, archbishop of Orleans, more or less accused Pope John XV of being the Antichrist... As he said of the papacy's attempts to intervene in the internal affairs of the Western Churches: "The Church of Rome is for ever to be honoured in memory of St. Peter; and the decrees of the Popes are to be duly respected, saving always the Canons of Nicea and of other Councils, which must remain eternally in force. For we must take good heed that neither the silence nor the new constitutions of the Pope are allowed to prejudice the ancient Canons of the Church. If his silence is to prevail, it follows that all laws - all the decrees of antiquity - must be suspended so long as he remains mute. But if we are to be bound by his new constitutions, where is the use of enacting laws at all, since they may be rescinded at once by the will of a single individual? Do we, then, wish to

relation to Rome (and remained so until the death of Henry IV's anti-Pope Clement III (Guibert) in Ravenna in 1100). Thus at 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])

²⁶² J.B. Morrall, "Otto III: an Imperial Ideal", *History Today*, 14 January, 2011.

²⁶³ Voltaire, *Essay on History and Customs*, chapter 36. See Cyriaque Lampryllos, *La Mystification Fatale* (The Fatal Mystification), Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 1987, pp. 59-60.

detract from the just prerogatives of Rome? By no means. But, alas! how pitiable is the condition of Rome at present! The throne of the Leos and the Gregories, of Gelasius and of Innocent, is occupied by monsters of licentiousness, cruelty, and impiety. Let us pray for the conversion of our superiors; but, meanwhile, let us look for advice and direction to some other quarter than Rome, where all is corrupt, and justice is bartered for gold."

And, concerning statements of St. Gelasius, and others, which supposedly make it out to be that the Church of Rome cannot be judged, the Archbishop said: "If this be so, we have at least a right to demand that the Roman Pontiff shall be one capable of pronouncing an indisputable judgment; whereas it is reported that, at present, Rome is given up to the most barbarous ignorance. But, even supposing that the present Pope were a Damasus, what have we done to contravene his decree? We never attempted to decide this cause until no hope remained of our obtaining a decision from Rome. And as to holding a Council without his permission, the Council of Nicaea, so specially revered by Rome herself, ordains that Councils shall be held in each province twice every year, without any mention of the authority of Rome. In short, to avoid further disputing, if the judgment of Rome be just, we will accept it willing; but, if unjust, let us obey the Apostle, and refuse to listen even to an angel from heaven, if he should command anything contrary to the Gospel. If Rome is silent, as in the present case, let us consult the laws of the Church. What other course is open to us, since Rome appears to be abandoned by all aid, divine and human, nay, even to have abandoned herself?"²⁶⁴

The Ottonians at least seem to have had good intentions in relation to the Church of Rome, and the partnership of the German-Greek Otto III and his friend the Frankish Sylvester II - a collaboration "unique in medieval history", according to J.B. Morrall - 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."²⁶⁵

"Sylvester survived his brilliant protégé by barely sixteen months (he died on May 12, 1003). His epitaph summed up the sorrow that afflicted 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."²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ W.H. Jervis, *The Gallican Church: A History of the Church of France*, pp. 40-42.

²⁶⁵ He died of smallpox. See Richard Cavendish, "The Death of Emperor Otto III", *History Today*, 13 December, 2001. (V.M.)

²⁶⁶ Chamberlin, "The Ideal of Unity", op. cit., p. 62.

“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 humility. 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...”²⁶⁷

The Ottonian dynasty lived under the guidance and protection of Adelaide, who married Otto I in 951, gave birth to Otto II, her only son, and was regent of the kingdom during the minority of her grandson, Otto III. She famously called herself “Adelaide, servant of the servants of God, sinner by nature, Empress by Divine Grace”. She reposed in a convent she had founded in 999.²⁶⁸

The continuation of the Holy Roman Empire of the Ottonians under their papist German and Spanish successor dynasties survived, amazingly, until 1806. Voltaire famously and truly said of the papist empire that 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...

²⁶⁷ Nelson, op. cit., pp. 245-246.

²⁶⁸ Protopresbyter James Thornton, *Pious kings and Right-Believing Queens*, Belmont, Mass.: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2013, pp. 15-16.

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

With the death of Otto III, the last Western continental ruler sympathetic to Byzantium, both the “Holy Roman Empire” and the Roman 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.”²⁶⁹

Nor was it only German Popes that contributed to the decline. The ethnically Roman Popes, too, were hardly paragons of virtue, as they had clearly demonstrated in the previous century. 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.”²⁷⁰

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.²⁷¹ 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 the reformist popes they appointed. 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...

²⁶⁹ 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).

²⁷⁰ Patric Ranson and Laurent Motte, introduction to Cyriaque Lampryllos, *La Mystification Fatale*, Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1987, p. 14.

²⁷¹ Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, Oxford, 1955, p. 161.

Another important point 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.”²⁷²

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 lawful Pope (a relative term, since his behaviour was completely lawless) was Benedict IX, a member of the Tusculani family, who had become pope at the age of twelve or fourteen. “In 1044,” writes Matthew Kneale, “when he had reigned for a dozen years, the Roman populace ended centuries of political docility and rose against him in armed revolt. Their rebellion was a transforming event that brought a new generation of aristocratic families to the fore. It also brought an almighty mess, even by Rome’s messy standards. The rebels backed a new pope, Sylvester III, but Benedict maintained his claim. After a year he finally resigned the papacy and gave it – or rather sold it – to another candidate, Gregory VI, only to change his mind and claim it back. Rome ended up with three popes.

“The chaos was sorted out by King Henry III who - like his son thirty-six years later – wanted to secure his position by being crowned Holy Roman Emperor. Imperial coronation was a tradition that already stretched back two and a half centuries to Charlemagne, but it required a plausible pope. Finding no such thing, Henry III created his own. In 1046 he journeyed to Sutri, just north of Rome, summoned a church council, had all three papal claimants dismissed and installed his candidate, who was German and strongly supportive of the reform movement.”²⁷³

After his death the notorious Benedict IX returned for his third spell as Pope...

And so “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

²⁷² Lampryllos, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66.

²⁷³ Kneale, *Rome. A History in Seven Sackings*, London: Simon Schuster, 2017, pp. 117-118.

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."²⁷⁴

When was deposed for the last time (by death), Emperor Henry replaced him with another German, and then, when he died in 1049, 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".²⁷⁵ It was Leo IX who turned German caesaropapism 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. This was the movement of Frankish monasticism known as the Cluniac movement after the Burgundian monastery of Cluny, which 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 were independent enough to assume 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. 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."²⁷⁶

The powerful influence of Cluny, writes Siedentop, "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.

²⁷⁴ http://www.oddee.com/item_96537.aspx.

²⁷⁵ Siedentop, op. cit., p. 196.

²⁷⁶ 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. (Llewellyn, op. cit., p. 309)

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 with 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.'"²⁷⁷

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..."²⁷⁸

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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

²⁷⁷ Siedentop, op. cit., p. 184.

²⁷⁸ Siedentop, op. cit., p. 195.

crowning of Charlemagne in Rome in 800 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.²⁷⁹ Consequently, in spite of the fact that 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, under Sylvester II, 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..."²⁸⁰

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 anathematized by the Sixth Ecumenical Council²⁸¹, and this anathematization was confirmed by later Popes.²⁸² Moreover,

²⁷⁹ 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).

²⁸⁰ Fukuyama, op. cit., pp. 263-264.

²⁸¹ 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 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!..."

²⁸² 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 we have seen, 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*).

Fr. Andrew Louth points out that it is at the time of the reform movement championed above all by Leo IX that the very notion of the papacy emerges, as a kind of fourth degree of the priesthood. “To speak of the ‘papacy’ before the eleventh century is an anachronism, for the term – *papatus* in Latin – was coined only then, apparently used for the first time by Clement II in 1047. Formed on the analogy of *episcopatus*, it suggests that the papacy, *papatus*, is a further order of ministry in the Church, transcending the episcopate. There seem to be two notions entailed here. The first makes explicit something that had a long history, namely that the Church of Rome exercised a primacy, *primatus*, over the other Churches, a primacy that was not shared by any other church. This was defined more precisely. It meant that the Church of Rome was the mother of the Churches, *mater ecclesiarum*, their head, *caput*, and hinge, *cardo* (all claims made by Nicholas I in the ninth century)... The other notion entailed focuses these claims, not so much, as traditionally, on the see of Rome, as on the pope in person. The title *universalis episcopus*, once rejected by Gregory the Great, is resurrected: the pope is not just a bishop with universal jurisdiction, but is personally the ruler of the whole Church. ‘Universal jurisdiction’ might simply mean that Rome was a final court of appeal in the Church, as Nicholas had claimed. The notion of *universalis episcopus* went further: the pope has become a pope for all Christians, with immediate, not just appellate, jurisdiction. He is more than a bishop; he is the pope...”²⁸³

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 (*azymes*), and the removal of the *epiclesis*, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, during the consecration.²⁸⁴ Although these liturgical innovations would at first sight appear to be of less than fundamental importance than the Trinitarian and ecclesiological innovations, their importance was in fact 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

²⁸³ Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, pp. 298-299.

²⁸⁴ As even the Roman Catholics admit, the *epiclesis* was present in all the ancient liturgies. See <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05502a.htm>.

unleavened dough of the shadow of the law and not the yeast of the new covenant...?"²⁸⁵

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."

"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..."²⁸⁶

"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 abuses 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

²⁸⁵ Stethatos, in Jean Comby, *How to Read Church History*, London: SCM Press, 1985, vol. 1, p. 132).

²⁸⁶ Siedentop, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

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 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.”²⁸⁷

Peter de Rosa 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*...”²⁸⁸

The married priests naturally resented this encroachment on their lawful marriage bed. Thus one priest of the late eleventh or early twelfth century wrote: “We married clergy were born to be made fun of, to be ridiculed, to be criticised by everyone . . . you draw up harsh laws, bitter statutes, and make things generally impossible for us. You deny it is right to touch a woman’s bed and to consummate the marriage rite in the bridal chamber. But it is the natural right of a man to enjoy his wife . . .”²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, pp. 34, 36-37.

²⁸⁸ De Rosa, *op. cit.*, p. 420.

²⁸⁹ Jennifer Thibodeaux, “The defence of clerical marriage: Religious identity and masculinity in the writings of Anglo-Norman clerics”, in P.H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis, *Religious Men and Masculine Identity in the Middle Ages*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012.

15. THE SCHISM OF 1054

The final break between the Eastern and Western Churches, which was to have such profound and long-lasting consequences for the whole of European civilization, was closely linked with the emergence of a new European nation – the Normans.

“In 876,” writes Fr. Andrew Louth, “a band of Vikings began to settle at the mouth of the Seine under the leadership of Rollo the Ganger, better known as Rollo, who had been exiled by the Norwegian king. In 911, after some decades of plundering the inhabitants there, Rollo led his band of warriors on an abortive attack on Chartres. This led to a settlement with the French king, Charles the Simple, who, in return for the Vikings’ homage and promise to defend the region against other Vikings, granted him the lands of the mouth of the Seine and the title of Count of Rouen. Already the Normans, as they were to be called, had established themselves in the region, marrying local girls. They were gradually becoming assimilated to the society of the local inhabitants, adopting their language and religion; a year after the raid on Chartres, Rollo embraced Christianity. Rollo and his descendants were given further grants of land and the region eventually became the duchy of Normandy, ruled by Rollo’s lineal descendants, powerful and not always loyal vassals of the French king. The Normans prospered, and became hungry for land. This hunger was fed at a political level by the conquest of England in 1066 under William the Conqueror, Duke of Normandy. But before – and after – this the younger sons of the Norman nobility, and their illegitimate offspring, sought land, possessions and adventure elsewhere. In the twelfth century, the Crusades would satisfy this need, but in the early part of the eleventh century, it was to southern Italy that they made their way. Sicily and much of southern Italy had long been under Muslim rule; part of the Byzantine emperor Basil II’s reconquest had restored southern Italy (Apulia – present-day Puglia, Basilicata, Campania and Calabria) to the Byzantine Empire. In the 1030s the Byzantines had made an attempt to reconquer Sicily, but only recovered the eastern coast. Traditionally, this part of the world – Sicily and ‘Magna Graecia’, ‘Great Greece’ – was Greek-speaking; it was Greek-speaking Byzantine Christianity that had survived Muslim rule and Byzantine Christianity that was restored. However, it had originally come under the jurisdiction of the pope, who had considerable landholdings there, but in the eighth century, as a result of the pope’s resistance to the imperial will over iconoclasm, the jurisdiction of this area had been transferred to the patriarchate of Constantinople (along with the area of the Balkans known as Illyricum). As we have seen, the pope’s loss of jurisdiction over these areas (and of revenue, too) had long been a bone of contention between Pope and Emperor. The coming of the Normans disturbed an already fragile situation. They established themselves throughout southern Italy, building castles from which they plundered and then sought to rule the region; later in the century they succeeded where the Byzantines had failed in driving the Arabs out of Sicily.

“The initial response of both Pope and Emperor to the Norman presence in Italy was one of alarm. Michael Kerularios, patriarch of Constantinople from 1043

to 1058, sent a friendly letter to Pope Leo IX proposing an alliance against the 'Franks'. Nothing came of that initiative..."²⁹⁰

But Leo now 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 and taken hostage. The Normans, remarkably, asked forgiveness of the captive Pope for having seized territory from him. But, less remarkably, they did not want to give back this territory and wanted the Pope to bless their rapacity.

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Meanwhile, "as they settled in southern Italy, the Normans encountered Greek Christians following Greek customs, different from the Latin ways. Tolerance was not a virtue much respected by the Normans (nor by many others in the Middle Ages); the Greek ways were suppressed and Latin customs introduced. The cult of Greek saints, for instance, were suppressed (just as the Normans in England suppressed the cult of many of the Anglo-Saxon saints), and devotion to more mainstream Latin saints encouraged, though a few local saints were saved by the efficacy of their miracles. One custom, however, sharply marked off Greek from Latin, and that was the kind of bread used in the Eucharistic liturgy – leavened or unleavened – and there were other liturgical differences. There began, in southern Italy of the eleventh century, a different kind of encounter between Greek East and Latin West, which was to become more common over the next century or so. This was an encounter that affected ordinary people, for it concerned what they did when they worshipped. Hitherto, Latin and Greek practices had been geographically separate. Scholars – and merchants, used to local differences – had known about various differences between Eastern and Western Christians, but that was in the realm of theory. Now the differences were on the doorstep, ordinary people became aware of different customs and had to live with them, or not.

"Although the pope had no love for the Normans, he could hardly object to their imposition of Latin practices. Christians in the Byzantine Empire, especially in the geographically closer, formerly independent Bulgaria, felt very differently. The suppression of Greek services, and the replacement of ordinary leavened bread in the Eucharist by the unleavened bread favoured by the Latins, was an affront. The archbishop of Ochrid, the senior Bulgarian bishop, Leo, wrote to John, archbishop of Apulia, arguing that unleavened bread (*azyma* in Greek) was not properly bread and that, therefore, the use of unleavened bread was a Jewish practice, inappropriate for the sacrament of the New Covenant. Leo's letter, at his request, was translated into Latin, Leo doubtless expecting the Italian episcopate to endorse his arguments. Earlier on Leo himself had been one of the clergy of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, and was, indeed, the first Greek-speaking incumbent of the see of Ohrid. It has often been suspected that Leo's letter was

²⁹⁰ Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, pp. 305-306.

written at the behest of Patriarch Michael Kerularios – a charge explicitly made by Cardinal Humbert – but there is no direct evidence that such was the case. News of the suppression of Greek services in Apulia had, however, reached Constantinople, and the patriarch had retaliated by closing some, at least, of the Latin churches there, which served the needs of Western merchants from Venice and elsewhere.”²⁹¹

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...”²⁹²

In September, 1053 the Pope wrote to the Patriarch, sending his letter to Constantinople with Cardinal Humbert, who, having once been archbishop of Sicily, was well acquainted with Greek liturgical practices.²⁹³ The letter already exhibits Papism in its full-blown form: “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 only now must the Roman Church learn from you how to celebrate the Eucharist, as if it means nothing that here in Rome

²⁹¹ Louth, *Greek East and Latin West*, pp. 306-307.

²⁹² Mahlon Smith III, *And Taking Bread: The Development of the Azyme Controversy*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1978, pp. 130-131.

²⁹³ 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 Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

there lived, worked for a considerable period, taught and, finally, by his death glorified God he to whom the Lord said: 'Blessed are thou, O Simon, son of Jonah' ..."²⁹⁴

"Then," 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 unshaken. 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*).'"²⁹⁵

Leo not only tried, as Gilbert Dagron writes, "to impose obedience [on the Eastern Church] by multiplying the expected scriptural quotations... He also

²⁹⁴ Henry Bettenson and Christopher Maunder, *Documents of the Christian Church*, London: SPCK, 1999, p. 106.

²⁹⁵ Lebedev, "Vek odinnadtsatij – Okonchatelnoe razdelenie Tserkvej (1053-1054gg.)" ("The 11th Century – the Final Division of the Churches"), <http://portal-credo.ru/site/index.php?act=lib&id=378>, pp. 23.

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*).'²⁹⁶

Lebedev writes that "the very new papal ideas about his secular lordship... are developed by the Pope in his letter to Cerularius and... 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 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,

²⁹⁶ Dagron, *Empereur et Prêtre* (Emperor and Priest), Paris : Éditions Gallimard, 1996, p. 247.

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.

"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 of heretics, a collection of schismatics, a synagogue of Satan."²⁹⁷

Things were made worse when Humbert called the Greeks 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."²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ Lebedev, op. cit., pp. 3-5, 7.

²⁹⁸ Humbert, in Heather, op. cit., p. 384.

As a consequence of these events, the Greeks unsurprisingly refused to enter into negotiations with the papal legates about an alliance against the Normans...

The climax came on July 16, 1054, when the papal legates marched into the cathedral of Hagia Sophia and placed what has been called "a fantastically ignorant"²⁹⁹ bull of excommunication on the altar, anathematizing Patriarch Kerularios, Leo of Ohrid and their associates. "Then they strode out of the church, ceremoniously shaking its dust off their feet. A deacon ran out after them and begged them to take back the bull. They refused, and he dropped it in the street..."³⁰⁰ Thus did the West renounce its spiritual mother, the Orthodox Church of the East, and reject its Heavenly Father, initiating a schism that has lasted to the present-day and caused innumerable woes and suffering not only to themselves but to the whole world

Four days later, the Patriarch convened a Council that excommunicated the legates. The Byzantine decision read: "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. 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 hail-storm, 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 from 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

²⁹⁹ Alexander Dvorkin, *Ocherki po Istorii 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?

³⁰⁰ Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, 1955, p. 48.

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 irreligious 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."³⁰¹

"O you who are Orthodox," said the patriarch, "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."³⁰²

"The bull," writes Louth, "tried to drive a wedge between the emperor and the people of Constantinople on the one hand and the patriarch and his associates on the other. The emperor and the people were praised, while Keroularios was accused of daily disseminating heresy, and a list of such heresies followed: the absurdity of the Greek claim to be the one true Church, alone dispensing baptism and offering the Eucharistic sacrifice, and the use of the title 'oecumenical patriarch' by the patriarch of Constantinople, treating Latins as heretics ('azymites') and practicing rebaptism; allowing clerical marriage ('Nicolaism'), deleting the *Filioque* from the creed, not allowing the baptism of infants before the eighth day (and consequently consigning those who died beforehand to perdition); forbidding Communion to menstruating women; and expelling from the Eucharist clean-shaven Latins...

"Michael Kerularios was careful in his response to the bull. He did not excommunicate the pope. He knew that Pope Leo IX was dead, but was not enough of a canonist to make anything of this by claiming that the legates had exceeded their powers. He concentrated on Humbert's meetings with [the Latinizing Byzantine commander] Argyros at Benevento on the way to Constantinople, claiming that their plotting together had poisoned the whole legation. Like Humbert, he listed the errors of the Latins: the *Filioque*, insistence on priestly celibacy, use of unleavened bread in the Eucharist, failure to offer proper reverence to relics and icons; failure to avoid eating blood in accordance with the decree of the Apostolic synod of Act 15; encouragement of clean-shaven clergy; allowing clergy to take part in war; inclusion of *Tu solus sanctus* ('You alone are holy') in the Great Doxology; use of episcopal rings; laxity in the Lenten fast; and a coolness in referring to the blessed Virgin as simply *Sancta Maria*,

³⁰¹ Robert van Vorsts, *Readings in Christianity*, pp. 129-130.

³⁰² *The Lives of the Pillars of Orthodoxy*, Buena Vista, CO: Holy Apostles Convent, 1990, p. 155.

rather than the synodically authorized *Theotokos* or *Deipara* – ‘Mother of God’. On this basis, Michael appealed for support to the other Eastern patriarchs – of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem – especially to Peter III of Antioch. In his response to Michael Kerularios, however, Peter deplored his inflammatory tone, and argued that all his allegations were either matters of no importance or misunderstandings. Different customs were no ground for refusal of Communion; Rome had a place of honour within the Pentarchy of the patriarchs, which Peter upheld. Nor was Peter indifference to the Roman claim that the Petrine foundation of Antioch placed Antioch above Constantinople! For the most part, the Latin errors were not a matter of contumacy, but were to be put down to thie rustic ignorance: they were barbarians and the poverty of language meant that they could not be expected to match the level of conceptual accuracy found among other educated Greeks (a form of condescension that was often to characterize the more conciliatory Greek opponents of the Latins).”³⁰³

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Although 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, many in more recent times 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.³⁰⁴ 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.”³⁰⁵

Nevertheless, the balance of evidence remains in favour of the traditional dating.³⁰⁶ Formally speaking there had been no communion between Rome and Constantinople since 1009, when Rome reintroduced the *Filioque* into the Creed. In 1054, this break was consolidated, and there was 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 completely transformed the character of English Christianity and statehood; it was followed by the less violent subjection of Churches throughout Western Europe. The “Gregorian Reform” confirmed several of the heretical innovations that Michael Cerularius had condemned: compulsory celibacy for the clergy, the universal jurisdiction and

³⁰³ Louth, op. cit., pp. 309, 310-311. Cf. Archpriest Vladimir Dolgikh, “A History of the Papal Pride that led to the Great Schism”, *Orthodox Christianity*, January 28, 2020.

³⁰⁴ Papadakis, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

³⁰⁵ Dvorkin, op. cit., p. 619.

³⁰⁶ Cf. O. Barmin, “Sovremenniaia istoriografia o datirovke tserkovnoj skhizmy mezhdru Zapadom i Vostokom khristianskoj ekumeny” (“Contemporary Historiography on the Dating of the Church Schism between the West and the East of the Christian Oikumene”), in D.E. Afinogenov, A.V. Muraviev, *Traditsii i Nasledie Khristianskogo Vostoka* (The Traditions and Heritage of the Christian East), Moscow: “Indrik”, 1996, pp. 117-126.

infallibility of the papacy; the subjection of all kings to papal rule. In the 1080s came the papal blessing of the Norman invasion of Greece and in 1095 the first of the crusades – which did so much damage to Eastern Orthodox Christendom. In 1098 the Pope presided over the pseudo-council of Bari, at which the Greeks of southern Italy were persuaded to accept the *Filioque*...

Moreover, there seemed to be no attempt to heal the breach. “No further missions were sent [from Rome to Constantinople]. 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...”³⁰⁷

Ironically in view of Romanides’ 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...

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.”³⁰⁸ 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.

³⁰⁷ Tom Holland, *Millenium*, London: Abacus Books, 2009, p. 280.

³⁰⁸ Dr. Jerjis Alajaji, personal communication, March 22, 2010.

16. PRIESTLY CELIBACY

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 “Patarenes”, who threatened them 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.³⁰⁹

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).”³¹⁰

The traditional Orthodox teaching on the marriage of the clergy was defended by Bishop Ulrich of Imola (near Ravenna) in a letter to Pope Nicholas in 1059: “As I had made no sense of the measure, O Father and Lord, in your decrees on the continence of clerics, which had recently come to me, fear and sadness troubled me in a single feeling. Fear, since it is written: ‘the opinion of those who command, both right and wrong, must be respected’ (St. Gregory the Great, Homily in Evang., II 26,6). In fact, I was worried for those who find it difficult to stick to the Scriptures, because they, who barely obey a just prescription, once they have transgressed the unjust – an oppressive, indeed intolerable disposition of their pastor – would no longer feel bound to the commandments. I was sad

³⁰⁹ 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 un-papist attitudes. This could be traced back to its most famous incumbent, St. Ambrose, who 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.

³¹⁰ Hieromonk Enoch, *Facebook*, September, 2015.

and in pain as I thought how much the members needed their head, invalidated by such a large body.

“What is more serious, what is more worthy of the compassion of the whole Church than you– bishop of the highest See, which is called to herd everyone– having lost the sense of discretion? And not just from this you have deviated, when you wanted to force the clerics to abandon the marriage with a certain violence, while you should have only exhorted them. Is it not, in the judgment of all the masters of the Faith, violence that compels us to obey arbitrary decisions, taken against the rule of the Gospel and the teaching of the Holy Spirit? Since there are plenty of examples of the Old and New Testaments in favor of moderation, you know, after all, and I beg your paternity of not bothering to have anyone mentioned in these pages.

“The Lord has certainly instituted the marriage of priests in Jewish law; and that he later forbade it is not written anywhere; indeed, he says the same thing in the Gospel: ‘There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of Heaven: not all are capable of this: whoever is capable of these things is capable of it.’ (Matthew 19.11-12). For this, the Apostle (Paul) says: ‘I do not give the Lord a command of the Lord, but a council’ (I Corinthians 7.25). He was aware, in accordance with the aforementioned word of the Lord, that not everyone would live up to that ideal and foretold that many of his zealots, eager to please not to God but to men with a false image of continence, would have committed more serious things: they would have violated the wives of the others and would not have escaped from the intercourse with the males or the beasts. To prevent the contagion of this disease from becoming a devastating pestilence of the whole Church, (St. Paul) said: ‘to avoid debauchery every man has a wife.’ (I Corinthians 7.2) that this concerns exclusively the laity is a lie of the hypocrites present in every degree of the priesthood who instead do not hesitate to abuse the wives of others and fully, we say crying, degrade in the aforementioned wickedness.

‘They certainly did not rightly interpret the Scripture, whose breast, pressed too hard, drank blood instead of milk. In fact, that apostolic saying, ‘everyone has a wife’, does not allow exception, except for those who make a vow of continence and those who decide in the Lord to remain in virginity. (...)’

“In order that you know with certainty that it should not be absolutely forced who did not make this vow, listen to what the Apostle says to Timothy: ‘the Bishop must be irreprehensible, the husband of only one wife’ (I Timothy). And, so that someone did not refer this sentence only to the Church, he added: ‘But if someone does not know how to govern his own family, how will he take care of the Church of God?’ (I Timothy 3.2).

“Besides, I know that the decrees of Pope Sylvester have taught you enough that the wife must be blessed by the Church. Finally, the author of the canon law, agreeing with the decrees of the Holy Scriptures, rightly says: ‘The cleric is chaste or bound with certainty to a single marriage’ (Apostolic canon VI).

‘It is clear from all these texts that the bishop and the deacon are condemnable if they share among many women. If instead they cast out only the legitimate ones with the pretext of religion, without any difference in rank, they are thus condemned by canon law (canon V): ‘No one, bishop or priest, in any case drive his own wife under the pretext of faith, if he then goes away, he is excommunicated, and if he perseveres, he is deposed.’”³¹¹

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 ‘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’.”³¹²

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...”³¹³

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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

³¹¹ Fr. Marco Gorgi, “Bishop Ulrich of Imola in Defense of Married Clergy” *NFTU News*, January 28, 2020.

³¹² Canning, *A History of Western Political Thought, 300-1450*, London and New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 86-87. “The decree of 1059 was thus, in the words of an eminent medievalist, a ‘declaration of independence’” (Siedentop, op. cit., p. 202).

³¹³ 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*)

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 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’.”

17. THE NORMAN CONQUEST OF ENGLAND

Meanwhile, the papacy came to terms with its former enemy, the Normans. "After the death of Leo IX in 1054, his two successors both sought help from the German Emperor in their struggle against the Norman, but Nicholas II reversed this policy and sought an alliance between the see of Rome and the Normans. This was cemented at a synod held in Melfi [in August, 1059], the capital of Norman Apulia, at which he invested Richard of Aversa with the principality of Capua and Richard Guiscard with the duchies of Apulia and Calabria and the lordship of Sicily. In return, the Normans pledged fealty to the apostolic see and promised the pope military assistance. The synod also legislated against clerical marriage. At a stroke the pope regained control over southern Italy, the papal patrimonies were restored and the region returned to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Rome – at least in theory, and soon in practice, too. The Normans now fought for the pope against the Byzantines and the Arabs..."³¹⁴

The Norman-papist alliance was momentous in its significance 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*³¹⁵, 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. It was as if the Pope were saying: "I no longer need a Holy Roman Emperor to protect me: *I am the Holy Roman Emperor.*"

The alliance was remarkably successful from the point of view of both allies. Armed with the papal blessing, the Normans under Guiscard conquered

³¹⁴ Louth, op. cit., p. 549. 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." (in David C. Douglas, *The Norman Achievement, 1050-1100*, London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969, p. 132)

³¹⁵ In 1441, writes Yuval Noah Harari, "Lorenzo Valla – a Catholic priest and a pioneer linguist – published a scientific study proving that Constantine's Donation was a forgery. Valla analysed the style and grammar of the document, and the various words and terms it contained. He demonstrated that the document included words that were unknown in fourth-century Latin, and that it was probably forged about 400 years after Constantine's death. Moreover, the date appearing on the document is '30 March, in the year Constantine was consul for the fourth time, and Gallicanus was consul for the first time'. In the Roman Empire, two consuls were elected each year, and it was customary to date documents by their consulate years. Unfortunately, Constantine's fourth consulate was in 315, whereas Gallicanus was elected consul for the first time only in 317. If this all-important document was indeed composed in Constantine's days, it would never have contained such a blatant error. It is as if Thomas Jefferson and his colleagues had dated the American Declaration of Independence 34 July 1776." (*Homo Deus*, London: Vintage, 2017, p. 224)

southern Italy, seizing the last major Byzantine outpost in the region, Bari, in 1071. The losers here were both the German Emperor and the Emperor of New Rome.

Meanwhile, in 1061 Guiscard's younger brother Roger invaded Saracen Sicily, 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".³¹⁶ In 1072, Roger conquered Palermo and most of Sicily from the Arabs, completing the conquest in 1091.

The Pope, meanwhile, extended his jurisdiction over the whole area... "Thus after 1059," writes Professor Douglas, "the Norman conquests were made progressively to subserve the restoration of the Latin [as against the Byzantine] rite and the extension of papal jurisdiction in southern Italy."³¹⁷

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 Laurent Mott write, "in many respects, in its structure the papacy is nothing other than the religious form of feudalism..."³¹⁸

Indeed, on the eve of the papal revolution of 1054, when the Roman papacy fell away from the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, 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...

The first important attempt to put this policy into practice was the Norman conquest of England in 1066, which became the means for the Papist conquest of England...

³¹⁶ Holland, op. cit., p. 356.

³¹⁷ Douglas, op. cit., p. 155.

³¹⁸ Ranson and Motte, in Lampryllos, op. cit., p. 14.

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, where they were *de jure* subjects of the King of France but *de facto* formed an independent duchy. In 1054 Duke William (known as “the Bastard” before he became “the Conqueror”) of Normandy seized effective control of the duchy by defeating a coalition led by his lord, King Henry I of France. In the next year, Archbishop Mauger was deposed to make way for the more forward-looking Maurilius. He introduced “a new and extraneous element”³¹⁹ – 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, 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.³²⁰ The Pope now owed a debt of gratitude to the Normans which they were soon to call in...

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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 Duke 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 invaded – 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 Christian society, are the jurisdictions of the clergy and the king parallel, or do the clergy have the power to depose a king who, in their judgement, is not ruling in accordance with the faith – which faith, of course, can only be defined by the clergy?

³¹⁹ Douglas, *William the Conqueror*, London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964, p. 121

³²⁰ Jean-Paul Allard, “Byzance et le Saint Empire: Theopano, Otton III, Benzon d’Albe” (“Byzantium and the Holy Empire: Theophano, Otto II and Benzon of Alba”), in Germain Ivanov-Trinadtsaty, *Regards sur l’Orthodoxie* (Points of View on Orthodoxy), Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1997, p. 55.

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 Stephen II had blessed the deposition of the last Merovingian ruler, Childeric III, but had not initiated 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. 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 opportunity came on the death of King Edward the Confessor in 1066, when Harold Godwinsson ascended the throne with the consent of the Witan but without the consent of the man to whom he had supposedly once sworn allegiance, Duke William of Normandy.

William 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."³²¹

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 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

³²¹ Douglas, *William the Conqueror*, 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 right mind, trusting in God's grace and, not in vain, in the virtues you possessed" (in Harriet Harvey Wood, *The Battle of Hastings*, London: Atlantic Books, 2008, p. 139).

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.”³²²

This potential gain from an alliance with William was the pope’s main motive for blessing of the invasion. Harold’s perjury and Stigand’s uncanonicity were useful excuses, but no more. After all, papal legates had sat with Stigand at a council in 1062, before the invasion, and again at Winchester, after the invasion, in 1070; and he had consecrated Remigius as Bishop of Dorchester in 1067.

³²² F. McLynn, 1066: *The Year of the Three Battles*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1998, pp. 182-183.

Alexander was able to overlook these minor misdemeanours in what he saw as the interests of the Church. More important was the chance of gaining control over the Churches both of Normandy and England if William won, and of a fruitful long-term partnership with the Normans in the East. Alexander finally showed his support for William by giving him, as William of Poitiers writes, “a banner as a pledge of the support of St. Peter”.

As Peter Rex explains, “there was a policy of bestowing such banners on those whose activities the papacy wished to endorse. Benedict IX, as early as 1043, had sent to Emperor Henry III, as an endorsement of his campaign against the Hungarians, a *Vexillum ex beati Petri parte*. During the expedition of Pope Leo IX against the Normans in the Papal States in 1053, to defend the Church’s territories against their savagery, he had fought under the banner of St. Peter. This was part of a trend towards increasing the use of force, a kind of papal militarism according to some, which included the sending of papal legates and the bestowal of papal approval for military action in support of the papacy. Robert Guiscard was given a banner by Nicholas II in 1059, and others had gone to the Patarine leader Erkembald of Milan and to Roger of Sicily in 1063. Even the leaders of the Barbastro campaign in Spain had received one in 1064, so the gift of a banner to Duke William was by no means a singular event. The trend eventually culminated in the launching of the First Crusade. It was associated with a warlike rhetoric which referred to supporters of the papacy as ‘Militia of St. Peter’; the faithful were regarded as soldiers in the service of St. Peter. The arrival of the Reform Party at Rome had been the turning point; they stood for the idea of holy war and sought to put it into practice.

“The bestowal of a banner on William remained a little ambiguous, and he rejected the idea that he had become a papal vassal. The Normans used the gift to promote the idea that the Conquest of England had been a sort of holy war, visiting God’s verdict on Harold...”³²³

“It is quite impossible to understand the events of 1066,” writes Simon Schama, “without comprehending the immense significance of the religious and Roman dimension. Between them, William and Lanfranc [abbot of Bec, future archbishop of Canterbury] had managed to convert a personal and dynastic feud into a holy war, and once this was known, many of the nobles who had fought shy of the original proposal flocked to William’s sanctified banner. There were not just Normans, but also Bretons and Flemings. The matter of England had now become the cause of Christian Europe, and nothing good could come of this for its new king...”³²⁴

The Norman Conquest was indeed a kind of holy war, the first Crusade of the Reform Papacy against the Orthodox Church. However, it was not yet a pan-European crusade; it is unlikely that William obtained the support of other major European powers for his invasion of England, as William of Poitiers claims. “It is

³²³ Rex, *The Last English King. The Life of Harold II*, Stroud: The History Press, 2008, p. 211.

³²⁴ Schama, *A History of Britain 1*, London: BBC Publications, 2003, p. 84

highly unlikely, for example," writes Ian Walker, "that Swein of Denmark gave his backing to William's enterprise. He would be more likely to welcome Harold's accession since the latter might favour aiding his Danish cousin against his Norwegian enemies, as had his father Earl Godwine. It should be noted here that Swein had just emerged from a long and bloody war with Norway and was fearful of further trouble. In this context, William of Poitiers contradicts himself when he later speaks of the Danes sending troops to assist Harold against the Normans. This contradiction somewhat undermines our confidence in the further claim made by Poitiers that the Emperor Henry IV provided his own endorsement for William's claim. This seems unlikely. Henry IV or his regents, since he was still in his minority. Had many other concerns and the contemporary Annals of Corvey compiled in that royal monastery in Saxony were to describe William in 1066 as removing the 'legitimate' King of England (Harold) and seizing his kingdom. What these diplomatic 'successes' described by Poitiers seem to represent is nothing more than the fact that neither Swein nor Henry IV were in a position to interfere directly in William's plans."³²⁵

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As long as King Edward had been alive, Hildebrand's party had been restrained both by the king's renown as a wonderworker and by the lack of a military force suitable for the task in hand. But now that Edward was dead³²⁶, William's suit presented Hildebrand with the opportunity for the "holy war" he had wanted for so long. In September, 1066 he invaded the south of England.

Meanwhile, King Harald Hardrada of Norway invaded the north. On September 20 the English King Harold defeated the Norwegian army under Harald Hardrada in the last great victory of Orthodoxy over Viking paganism. Then he marched south to meet the Normans with the minimum of rest and without waiting for reinforcements. The victory was the greater in that it was achieved against the greatest warrior of his age. "This Harold," wrote Theodoricus the Monk, "has performed many bold deeds in his youth, overthrowing many heathen cities and carrying off great riches in Russia and Ethiopia... from there he travelled to Jerusalem and was everywhere greatly renowned and victorious. After he had travelled through Sicily and taken much wealth by force from there, he came to Constantinople. And there he was arraigned before the emperor; but he inflicted an amply shameful disgrace upon that same emperor, and, making an unexpected escape, he slipped away".

The reason for this haste, David Howarth argues, is that Harold had now, for the first time, heard 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

³²⁵ Walker, *Harold. The Last Anglo-Saxon King*, Sutton Publishing, 2006, p. 167.

³²⁶ He prophesied on his deathbed that England was under God's curse and would soon (one year and one day after his death) be afflicted by fire and sword and be invaded by demons (Anonymous, *Vita Aedwardi Regis* (The Life of Edward the King), edited by Frank Barlow, Nelson's Medieval Texts, 1962). The prophecy was precisely accurate.

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 had to be 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."³²⁷

On October 14, in a long, hard-fought battle in which both sides suffered heavy losses, the English defensive line was finally broken when King Harold was killed³²⁸, after which he was savagely mutilated by the Normans. When Harold's mother, Countess Gytha, pleaded for the body of her royal son from William, even offering him its weight in pure gold, the Bastard refused. It was thought that the monks had buried the body in the monastery Harold founded at Waltham. But the body was not found in spite of intensive searches... The mystery of its whereabouts was solved only in 1954, when a mutilated corpse answering to the description of the martyred king was discovered under an unmarked slab in his family's church of the Holy Trinity in Bosham.³²⁹

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"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 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 of 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

³²⁷ David Howarth, *1066: The Year of the Conquest*, Milton Keynes: Robin Clark, 1977, p. 164.

³²⁸ "This alternating victory, first of one side and then of the other, continued as long as Harold lived to check the retreat; but when he fell, his brain pierced by an arrow, the flight of the English ceased not until night" (William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*)

³²⁹ John Pollock, *Haroldus Rex*, Bosham: Penny Royal Publications, 1996. Cf. arc Morris, "Where is King Harold Buried?" *BBC History Magazine*, June, 2020, p. 40.

systematically ravaged the region.³³⁰ The Fens, around the Isle of Ely, were the scene of a final rebellion, in 1070-1..."³³¹

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..."³³²

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..."³³³ 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 Salisbury and imposed upon them an oath of quasi-feudal loyalty directly to himself, he became in effect the sole landowner of England – that is, the owner of all its land. Thus was born *the feudal monarchy*, a new kind of despotism.

³³⁰ There was widespread starvation, even cannibalism, and it is estimated that 150,000 died, mainly in Yorkshire. See Mark Morris, "'The Conqueror Massacred Almost the Whole Population, from the very Young to the Old and Grey'", *BBC History Magazine*, November, 2019, p. 27. (V.M.)

³³¹ Neveux, *The Normans*, Philadelphia: Running Press, 2008, p. 139.

³³² Douglas, *William the Conqueror*, pp. 6-7.

³³³ Hudson, "The Norman Conquest", *BBC History Magazine*, vol. 4, N 1, January, 2003, p. 23.

18. DOMESDAY BOOK AND THE DESTRUCTION OF ORTHODOX ENGLAND

As we have seen, William had conquered England with the blessing of Archdeacon Hildebrand. But he firmly refused to pay fealty to Hildebrand when he became Pope Gregory VII.³³⁴ The pope was prepared to overlook this, because William agreed to impose the new canon law of the reformed papacy upon the English Church: "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 clever 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 papocaesarist totalitarianism of Hildebrand beget the caesaropapist totalitarianism of William the Bastard...

William's control of the Church was described 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

³³⁴ "Your legate," William wrote to Gregory, "has admonished me to profess allegiance to you and your successors, and to think better regarding the money which my predecessors were wont to send to the church of Rome. I have consented to the one but not to the other. I have not consented to pay fealty, nor will I do so; because I never promised it, nor do I find that my predecessors did it to your predecessors." (in Douglas & Greenway, *English Historical Documents*, Eyre & Spottiswoode, p. 647)

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."³³⁵

In the same letter in which he refused to pay fealty to the Pope, he pointedly called Archbishop 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 writ from the king's court; and it was able to tax the entire realm."³³⁶

However, the power of the English kingdom was not necessarily a sign that it was prospering spiritually. For "as Scripture points out," writes C.S. Lewis, "it is bastards who are spoiled, the legitimate sons, who are able to carry on the family tradition, are punished (Hebrews 12.8)."³³⁷ As an Orthodox nation, England had been constantly stretched on the rack of suffering by successive waves of pagan invaders, of which the Norman invasion had been the last and the worst. But later, as a fallen and heretical nation, while suffering that which all men suffer through living in a fallen world, the English did not suffer what the great Messianic Christian nations – the Jews of the Old Testament, the Greeks of the Byzantine Empire and under the Turkish yoke, the Russians to the present day – have suffered in bearing the cross of the true confession of faith. There were no more catastrophic defeats, no more successful invasions from abroad to rouse the people from their spiritual sleep. For "why should ye be stricken any more?

³³⁵ Edmer, *Istoria Novorum in Anglia* (A History of the New Things in England); translated by Geoffrey Bosanquet, London: Cresset Press.

³³⁶ Fukuyama, *The Origins of Political Order*, London: Profile, 2012, p. 272.

³³⁷ Lewis, *The Joyful Christian*, New York: Touchstone, 1996, p. 38.

Ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint..." (Isaiah 1.5). Freed from the cross of confessing the Orthodox faith, the English were free to begin their ascent to global empire...

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The scene towards the end of William's reign in 1087 is one of almost unrelieved gloom. As Edmer writes: "How many of the human race have fallen on evil days! The sons of kings and dukes and the proud ones of the land are fettered with manacles and irons, and in prison and in gaol. How many have lost their limbs by the sword or disease, have been deprived of their eyes, so that when released from prison the common light of the world is a prison for them! They are the living dead for whom the sun - mankind's greatest pleasure - now has set. Blessed are those who are consoled by eternal hope; and afflicted are the unbelieving, for, deprived of all their goods and also cut off from heaven, their punishment has now begun..."³³⁸

For some time, the more sensitive of the English felt that they were indeed "cut off from heaven", having lost their inheritance in the Orthodox Church and kingdom. Thus an anonymous English poet wrote in the early twelfth century: "The teachers are lost, and many of the people, too."³³⁹ Later, less religious generations of English have also felt that much was lost as a result of "1066 and all that". Deep in the collective unconscious of the nation, 1066 is felt to have been more than a political defeat or "regime change".

Even secular writers have sensed a massive loss. Thus Harriet Harvey Wood writes, "one fact is undisputed: it wiped out overnight a civilisation that, for its wealth, its political arrangements, its arts, its literature and its longevity, was unique in Dark Age Europe, and deserves celebration. In the general instability, lawlessness and savagery of the times, Anglo-Saxon England stood out as a beacon."³⁴⁰

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As was mentioned above, the English *Orthodox Autocracy* was replaced by a *feudal monarchy*. R.H.C. Davies explains that the feudal monarchy was "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

³³⁸ *Liber Confortarius*; translated in Barlow, *The English Church 1000-1066*, p. 29.

³³⁹ At about the same time the famous scholar Abelard of Paris noted: "The Fathers were guided by the Holy Spirit, but we are not" (quoted by Fr. Andrew Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the English Tradition*, p. 19).

³⁴⁰ Wood, *The Battle of Hastings*, London; Atlantic Books, 2008, p. 2.

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. As is well known, he distributed most of it to his Norman followers, but he did not give it to them in absolute right...

"Apparently as the result of one day's fighting (14 October, 1066), England received a new royal dynasty, a new aristocracy, a virtually new Church, a new art, a new architecture and a new language."³⁴¹

The Conqueror's ownership of the land was established in *Domesday Book* (1086), a still-existent document in which the whole population and property of England was recorded for tax purposes. As Neveux writes, "Like Christ on the Day of Judgement examining the actions of all men, the King of England would know all the inhabitants and all the properties in his kingdom... No other document of this kind has been preserved in Western Europe, nor was any ever made..."³⁴²

"Domesday was a good word for it," writes Melvyn Bragg. "Twenty years after the Battle of Hastings, William sent out his officers to take stock of his kingdom. The monks of Peterborough were still recording the events of history in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and they noted, disapprovingly, that not one piece of land escaped the survey, 'not even an ox or a cow or a pig'. William claimed all.

"There are two volumes of the Domesday Book (one called Little Domesday, the return from East Anglia) and they show how complete the Norman takeover of English land was and how widespread their influence and their language. Half the country was in the hands of just one hundred and ninety men. Half of that was held by just eleven men."³⁴³

"By the time Domesday Book was compiled in 1086," writes Marc Morris, "the elite had been almost completely wiped out: of the 500 or so top individuals listed in the survey as tenants of the king, only 13 had English names, and of 7,000 or so subtenants, no more than 10 percent were natives. The aristocracy of Anglo-

³⁴¹ R.H.C. Davies, *The Normans and their Myth*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1976, p. 103.

³⁴² "This book is called by the English 'Domesday', that is, by metaphor, the day of judgement. For just as the sentence of that strict and terrible Last Judgement cannot be evaded by any art of subterfuge, so, when a dispute arises in this realm concerning facts which are there written down, and an appeal is made to the book itself, the evidence it gives cannot be set at naught or evaded with impunity" (Richard FitzNigel, in M.J. Cohen and John Major, *History in Quotations*, London: Cassell, 2004, p. 218).

³⁴³ Bragg, *The Adventure of English*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2003, pp. 38-39. For comparison's sake, we may note that about one-third of modern Russia's wealth is in the hands of 110 billionaires.

Saxon England had been almost completely swept away – killed in battle, driven into exile or forced to exist in suppressed circumstances.”³⁴⁴

“We have the testimony of Domesday Book that by 1086 only 8 per cent of English land remained in the hands of those who had owned it in 1066. William of Malmesbury in the following century confirmed that England had become ‘the residence of foreigners and the property of strangers; at the present time there is no Englishmen who is either earl, bishop, or abbot³⁴⁵; strangers all, they prey upon the riches and vitals of England...”³⁴⁶

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Robert Tombs describes the new, in essence totalitarian, system as follows: “Social, economic and political control of the land and its people – what in the eighteenth century would retrospectively be termed the ‘feudal system’ – was given a more centralized and rigorous form after the Conquest swept away many existing rights and eliminated the English thegns. The Conqueror at once granted land – ‘fiefs’, or ‘fees’ – to his barons in return for their services, military and political, symbolized by the ceremony of homage, a public oath of allegiance. They in turn granted it to their own followers, for similar allegiance and services: England’s 50,000 square miles could supply about 7,500 knights’ fees of on average six or seven square miles. At the lowest level, ‘natives’, ‘Anglici’, ‘rustics’, ‘serfs’, ‘villeins’ (the words overlapped) were allotted land and protection in return for rent, labour and other services. Many thousands of previously free English landholders became legally subject to the new lords. Recalled an early historian, ‘it was even disgraceful to be called English.’ Over 70 percent of tenants were villeins, holding 15-40 acres or ‘cottagers’, with five acres or less; and many of the former employed paid labourers or slaves.

“All land and all men were now legally part of this hierarchy, which was buttressed by an ideology of lordship, duty and loyalty, of which the cult of chivalry and the Arthurian romances would later be the most idealized example. In theory, it gave rights as well as duties to all (even, to a limited extent, to villeins). ‘Glanvill’ (the 1180s treatise on law traditionally attributed to Henry II’s Chief Justice, Ranulf Glanvill) stated that ‘the bond of trust in lordship should be mutual’. However unequal the relationship, it did give some protection to dependants, and established a principle of reciprocity. The most unpopular landlords were not barons but monks: the monasteries were efficient and impersonal exploiters with long memories and clear consciences. The military foundation on which feudalism was supposedly based – service in arms was the prime duty owed – was never fully applied, and money was always a substitute. Towns and their inhabitants were always partly outside it.

³⁴⁴ Morris, “What the Normans did for Us”, *BBC History Magazine*, November, 2016, p. 34.

³⁴⁵ There was one exception to this rule: Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester, who had been the confessor of King Harold, was an Englishman. (V.M.)

³⁴⁶ Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

"The English version of this 'feudal system' was unlike that elsewhere in Europe. The post-Conquest Crown recognized no powers or rights independent of the king. Nor did barons possess large continuous territories, but only scattered holdings. England escaped the trend that tormented the Continent: central authority did not fragment, but was strengthened. Great barons could never create autonomous and warring principalities. They had no jurisdiction over their vassals higher than that of the king's judges. A French historian comments that 'the great success of medieval England was to combine an early centralization of justice with recognition of local liberties, buttressed by popular juries.'

"What about the majority of the population? Pre-Conquest society was later idealized as embodying 'Anglo-Saxon liberties', but it was nevertheless... subject to heavy taxation and compulsory labour, and about 12 percent of the people were slaves – a status that the Normans gradually abolished in England, then in Wales and later in Ireland. It was also exposed to invasion and internal conflict. Even so the Conquest was disastrous for English peasants as a whole, through the direct effects of war, greater impositions, and the subjection of many thousands of freemen to serfdom. The luckier ones managed to remain as free tenants (14 percent of those listed in Domesday Book), or held subordinate positions as estate managers, foresters, huntsmen and minor royal officers. The Conquest may have increased a common sense of Englishness among the subject population: the old divide between Dane and Saxon seems to have disappeared. Many must have realized that their personal fate was linked with that of the country. When testifying about local affairs, jurors in the twelfth century sometimes spoke of 'the Conquest of England' or referred to the time 'before the Normans conquered England'. In some places, the customary rights of Anglo-Saxon days were successfully claimed, and long after 1066 peasants appealed to privileges granted by the Confessor, Canute or even Offa.

"There were two groups of Englishmen, and some women, who retained power, wealth or status. The first group were townspeople. Although the Conquest led to an influx of urban immigrants, the English remained a strong presence, including among the most prominent groups – moneyers, goldsmiths, moneylenders (among them there were also Jewish communities), merchants and royal officers. They were the only significant English group whose wealth and influence could approach that of the French landed magnates, with whom some of them mixed even at the level of the royal court. There were occupational hazards, however: in the 1120s many moneyers were castrated and had their right hands cut off by Henry I for debasing the currency. The second group were churchmen. As we have noted, the highest ranks of the clergy – commanding immense economic and political as well as spiritual power – were closed to Englishmen. But the lower levels – parish clergy, cathedral canons, archdeacons, monks, nuns, hermits and anchoresses – remained strongly and sometimes predominantly English in background and culture. Their oral teaching (mostly in English) and writings (in English, Latin and French) maintained English religious and cultural traditions. Some, notably William of Malmesbury (c. 1090 – c. 1142), librarian of Malmesbury Abbey, and Henry of Huntingdon (c. 1088- c.

1157), hereditary clergyman-squire of Little Stokely and archdeacon of Huntingdon, both of mixed French and English parentage, were responsible... for writing a new English history which helped to define the post-Conquest nation...

"The Normans built the grandest, the most experimental, the most expensive buildings in a variety of styles, surpassing the greatest on the Continent. The new Winchester Cathedral (begun in 1079) was the longest in western Europe; London's White Tower (c. 1080) was the biggest keep in western Europe; Westminster Great Hall (1097) was the largest secular covered space; Norwich castle (c. 1100) was the most ambitious secular building in northern Europe; Christ Church priory, Canterbury, possessed the greatest glass windows in all Europe. Probably more cut stone than in the Pyramids was used in this, the most concentrated construction effort in England between the Romans and the Victorians, amounting to the greatest per capita investment ever seen in England until the Industrial Revolution. Quite a lot, built in haste, fell down... But what remained was stupendous, matched then only by Rome itself, Constantinople and Kiev..."³⁴⁷

And yet these vast stone structures, so different from the much humbler and cosier structures of the Anglo-Saxons, symbolized as nothing else the complete subjection of the native population to brutish foreigners. This subjection was lamented by Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester and the last Anglo-Saxon bishop surviving in his post after the Conquest, as he viewed the destruction and replacement of his old cathedral: "We poor wretches destroy the works of our forefathers only to get praise to ourselves. The happy age of holy men knew not how to build stately churches: under any roof they offered themselves as living temples to God. But we neglect the care of souls, and labour to heap up stones..."³⁴⁸

There was no more impressive pile of stones than the new Norman cathedral of Durham (c. 1093-1140), built as if to crush England's greatest saint who was buried there. For, as we have seen, St. Cuthbert had forced even the great William the Conqueror to flee when he invaded the north in 1069. This cathedral was truly the English equivalent of the pyramids; it could only have been built through a horrendous use of slave labour and the impoverishment of England's northernmost province.

Tombs continues: "Buildings and lands came to embody new family identities. Wealthy Anglo-Saxons had spread bequests widely among relatives to maintain the cohesion of an extended clan, very conscious of far-flung degrees of kinship. Norman wealth went into stones and mortar: according to William of Malmesbury, the Saxons had lived richly in 'mean and despicable' houses, while the Normans lived frugally 'in noble and splendid mansions'. The practice grew of transmitting land where possible to a single male heir by primogeniture - a

³⁴⁷ Tombs, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-53.

³⁴⁸ Wulfstan, in Cohen and Major, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

social revolution. The family became smaller and more vertical, and attached to a particular place. Names and titles reflected this change. Unlike in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian societies, which used Christian names and patronymics (e.g. Harold Godwineson) or identifying names based on characteristics or occupation (Thorkell the Tall, Eadric the Steersman), the Norman elite adopted permanent family names derived from land, castle or ancestor (Hubert de Vaux, Roger de Chateauneuf, Richard Fitzgerald). For the rest, individual nicknames (from place, job, physique – John Wood, Robert Smith, Thomas Becket) in time became permanent family surnames.

“There was no greater cultural conquest than in language. Working shortly before 1066, a thousand writers and copyists of English have been identified. This may sound few, but it is several times the number writing Italian texts in Renaissance Italy. The Normans eradicated written English as the language of government and undermined it as the language of literature, and spoken English ceased to be the language of elite society. This change was confirmed by England’s attachment to the Angevin empire in 1154. It was long believed that English largely disappeared except as a peasant dialect. Walter Scott, in *Ivanhoe* (1819), made the famous point that English became the language of the farmyard (swine, ox, calf) and French that of the table (pork, beef, veal). But this does not mean that English was crude, and French sophisticated. As we have seen, Old English and Irish were the most developed of Europe’s vernaculars. English had a standardized writing from the late tenth century, whereas French had no written literature at all until – ironically – it was pioneered in post-Conquest England..., perhaps in imitation of Anglo-Saxon literature. Replacing English required two languages: Latin, for legal, administrative, ecclesiastical, commercial and intellectual contexts; French for verbal communication among the new elites. The sophistication of English government drove a high level of lay literacy. ‘Unless a man knows French he is little thought of,’ wrote the chronicler Robert of Gloucester in about 1290; ‘but low-born men keep to English and to their own speech still’.

“Spoken English thus survived. Moreover, it soon predominated in everyday speech: the Normans needed it to communicate with the great majority of the population. Often within a generation, smaller landlords not only became bilingual in French and English – except among the highest nobility and at court – probably became their first language. Knowledge of French remained an essential social attribute, but noble children had to be sent to France to learn it properly. Bilingualism became a mark of ‘English’ identity among the descendants of the Normans. Trilingualism (with Latin) was the norm for the educated. In practice, there was a hybridization, or ‘creolization’, with the languages being mixed together, creating huge changes in vocabulary and grammar. French and Latin words were imported into English, though more slowly than Scott’s example might suggest. For example, in the popular verse history of Britain, Layamon’s *Brut* (c. 1200), a rare example of non-religious literature in English, there were only 250 French loan-words in 30,000 lines.

"So written English too survived. It retained certain grass-roots legal functions. In important monastic outposts, notably Worcester, Hereford, Winchester, Canterbury, Peterborough and Exeter, which we can properly call patriotic, it was propagated as the way of teaching the people. The monks of Peterborough Abbey were the last who continued to write the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, until 1154; but they stopped using formal English in 1121, when it was replaced by a local dialect – a sign of how quickly the old formal language was forgotten. By the end of the century, very few could still read it. In 1230, a monk at Worcester was trying to learn it – the West Midlands seem to have maintained a tradition – but by 1300 Old English had become an 'ydioma incognita'. Yet English, in older and newer forms, continued to be written in religious centres such as Worcester and Hereford. Even after the Conquest, the production and use of vernacular texts was rarely paralleled anywhere in medieval Europe. These were not luxury products, but were for everyday use in prayer, preaching and ritual, and hence for the mass of the people English remained the intimate language of belief and salvation. This is one of the things that prevented it, changing though it inevitably was, from becoming a dying peasant dialect. The French-speaking elite often mocked it as uncouth, and so using and writing it was somewhat subversive. One Worcester scribe left a list of the notable churchmen who 'taught our people in English'; and he added, 'not dim, their light: it fair glowed'.

"English continued in place-names, though little in personal names. There is perhaps nothing that distances us more instinctively from the pre-Conquest English than names: Ealdgyth, Aelfgifu, Colswein, Eadric, Waltheof (even if a few were revived during the Romantic period – Karl Marx called one of his sons Edgar). Our names since the 1100s have been overwhelmingly Norman, a personal form of cultural conquest through snobbery: William (which became the most common), John, Richard, Robert, Margaret, Mary, Emma. In a significant conciliatory gesture, the sons of Henry III were christened Edward and Edmund, signaling a link with the pre-Conquest monarchy; and the former became King Edward I in 1272."³⁴⁹ However, the very fact that this King Edward was called "the first" when in fact there were at least three King Edwards before him shows how the Normans sought to blot out the pre-Conquest history of England...

Tombs concludes: "The Conquest thus began to transform much of English culture. But it is likely that Latin, the common language of [Western] Christendom, would in any case have been increasingly used in legal, devotional and intellectual matters, as was happening across Europe: even before 1066, despite the prominence of the vernacular, there was more writing in Latin than in English. Choices of names would also probably have changed, as elsewhere in Europe, as the Church encouraged more uniform devotions. French would have come into greater use among the educated and the fashionable, especially in

³⁴⁹ Tombs, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-56. The last poem in Old English, dating to no later than 1109, is about Durham and its saints, but significantly makes no mention of the massive Norman cathedral being built there at that time (Gerald Bonner, "The Saints of Durham", *Sobornost*, vol. 8, no. 1, p. 34).

courtly and chivalric literature. This was not only because of the Conquest; the peak of borrowing from French came three centuries after 1066, a consequence of the cultural magnetism of Paris and the other great French cities, which affected all of western Europe.

“There was a dazzling literary revival in England in the century following the Conquest – but in Latin and French. It was probably the English tradition of vernacular writing that encouraged the development of writing in French. Some of the earliest works of French literature came from England or had English connections. The famous *Chanson de Roland*, an epic poem of Charlemagne’s battles against the Saracens, was first written down in England in the early twelfth century.³⁵⁰ The first historical work in French was Geoffrey Gaimar’s history of the English, the *Estoire des Engleis* (c. 1136-37), an accessible work in fashionable French verse based on the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. English authors – or authors in England, often of mixed Anglo-Norman families – attained a European influence greater than ever before, and rarely equaled since.

“Their most important works were histories or historical romances in Latin – the first major works of English history since Bede 400 years before. William of Malmesbury’s *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (c. 1126) was a continuous history of England from the arrival of the Saxons to Henry I, and Henry of Huntingdon’s *Historia Anglorum* went from the mythical arrival of the Trojan hero Brutus to 1154, just before the author’s death. The most extraordinary of these works went beyond English history, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136), ‘one of the supreme achievements of the historical imagination’, which transformed English visions of the past. As noted earlier, Geoffrey and his emulators plunged into legend and fantasy to create a prestigious new common Anglo-British epic. It became one of the most popular historical works in the European Middle Ages, far more widely read even than Bede, and is the only historical work known to have been in the possession of great nobles. It also produced popular spin-offs. The Jerseyman Wace, a monk in Caen, produced in 1155 a popular French version of the sage, called the *Roman de Brut* (Brutus), which, among other things, added the story of Arthur’s Round Table. Significantly, he often translated *Britannia* as *Engleterre*. Layman (‘Lawman’) prepared his English translation of *Brut* in the early 1200s – an oddity, as even patriotic writings (such as the *Roman de Waldef* – about Earl Waltheof) were usually in French. Walter Map, a Herefordshire priest at Henry II’s court, wrote a French version of the Grail and Lancelot stories (c. 1180). A later prose version of *Brut* was very widely read in Latin, French and above all English – more copies survive than of any other medieval manuscript, and it was repeatedly printed by Caxton after 1480.

“Thus for more than two centuries English after 1066 almost ceased to be the language of secular literary culture, as the elite no longer commissioned major

³⁵⁰ It was written between 1040 and 1115. There is a single extant manuscript of the *Song of Roland* in Old French held at the Bodleian Library at Oxford. This copy dates between 1129 and 1165 and was written in Anglo-Norman. (V.M.)

works in English. A rare exception, such as Layamon's *Brut*, was perhaps an early sign of a new appetite for literature in English. But especially in the religious sphere English writing – sermons, psalms, saints' lives, poetry, songs – continued as one element of a bilingual or trilingual culture. One of the most famous pieces of early music – 'Sumer is icumen in / Lhude sing cuccu' – is a song written down in Reading Abbey in about 1250, using the same tune as a hymn. English did not therefore decline into a merely spoken range of peasant dialects, as was traditionally thought..."³⁵¹

"By 1200 at the latest the descendants of the victors of Hastings (with the exception of a small number of cosmopolitan aristocrats with land in several countries) had become English, by speaking English, describing themselves generally as English, adopting what were thought of as English manners (including drinking), and expressing pride in their English lineage, gilded with the glories of Brutus and King Arthur."³⁵²

Much, then, that was English survived after 1066, especially in the cultural and political spheres. But we must be clear about what was lost: "the one thing necessary", the Orthodox Faith as expressed in the Orthodox Church and defended by the Orthodox Autocracy. Autocracy was replaced by Despotism, albeit one tempered by the embryonic Democratism of Magna Carta and the belief that the king was not above the law – England's law, the Common Law. Orthodoxy was replaced by Roman Catholicism. In later centuries, occasional appeals were made to what was thought to be the faith of the Anglo-Saxon Church. But there was little consciousness of the fact that the Norman Conquest marked an ecclesiastical, as well as a political, revolution. For England was now part of the great pseudo-Christian empire of the papacy, which, theoretically at least, had the power to depose her kings, close her churches (which it did in King John's reign) and enrol her soldiers in crusades against the Muslims and Orthodox Christians around the world. Little was said or done about returning to union with the Orthodox of the East – except for those thousands of nobles and their families who actually emigrated to Constantinople in 1075. Even the visit, in the early fifteenth century, of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel to England to enlist English help in the defence of Constantinople against the Turks failed to arouse interest in the ancestral faith and Church.

For, as Edward Freeman wrote in the nineteenth century, "so far from being the beginning of our national history, the Norman Conquest was the temporary *overthrow* of our national being..."³⁵³

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³⁵¹ Tombs, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

³⁵² Christopher Hill, "The Norman Yoke", in *Puritanism and the Revolution*, London: Penguin Books, 1958, 1990, pp. 58-125.

³⁵³ Freeman, E.A., *A History of the Norman Conquest of England*, Oxford, 1870-1879, p. 1.

What influence did the Norman-Papist Conquest of England have on the destiny of the neighbouring Orthodox Churches of Scotland, Wales and Ireland?

Soon the Norman-Papist malaise spread to other parts of the British Isles. Scotland welcomed many of the English exiles fleeing from William, but it proved to be a temporary and illusory refuge. For King Malcolm's wife Margaret, though a very pious woman and an English princess of the Old Wessex dynasty, became a spiritual daughter of Lanfranc, and hence the chief instrument of the normanization and papalization of the Scottish Church, although Scotland remained independent. Her foundation at the Abbey in Dunfermline in Fife, purely Norman in style, is witness to this. However, according to Lucy Menzies, "it was not till the time of David I, son of Malcolm and Margaret, that the authority of the Church of Rome was fully accepted in Scotland and the Celtic Church, as such, disappeared from the mainland, the Culdees being driven out."³⁵⁴

Wales did not fare much better. William went on a "pilgrimage" to St. David's in 1081, and came to an agreement with the local King Rhys. However, in 1093 Rhys was killed, and the Normans gradually took over. It seems likely that the last independent Orthodox bishop in Britain was Rhyddmarch of St. Davids, son of Sulien the Wise, who reposed in 1096. The *Annals of St. Davids* say of him that he was "one without an equal or second, excepting his father, for learning, wisdom, and piety. And after Rhyddmarch instruction for scholars ceased at Menevia..."³⁵⁵

The Irish, too, suffered a Papist "reformation" and a Norman invasion. In 1152 the English Pope Adrian IV by his bull *Laudabiliter* 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*. As John of Salisbury wrote of Adrian in 1156 in his *Metalogicus*: "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." King Henry II therefore invaded Ireland with the blessing of the papacy in 1172 in order to extend the boundaries of the Church, extirpate vice and instil virtue.

But Ireland was one European land on which the Roman *imperium* had never infringed... Rarely has a forgery had such long-term and evil consequences...³⁵⁶

³⁵⁴ Menzies, *Saint Columba of Iona*, Felinfac: J.M.F. Books, 1920, p. 214.

³⁵⁵ A.W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1871, 1964, volume I, p. 298.

³⁵⁶ See Michael Richter, "The First Century of Anglo-Irish Relations", *History*, 59, N 196, June, 1974, pp. 195-210.

19. THE ANGLO-SAXON DIASPORA

Ripples from the Norman Conquest spread through Continental Europe. One ruler tried to reverse the Conquest - Saint Canute (also "Knud," or "Knut") ruled Denmark, who reigned as King Canute IV from 1080 to 1086 and is that country's patron Saint, known to Danes as "Knud den Hellige" ("Canute the Holy"). "He was born in about 1043, the son of King Svend II of Denmark and grandnephew of King Canute the Great, who simultaneously ruled England, Denmark, and Norway in the early years of the eleventh century. Believing William the Conqueror to be a usurper of the English throne, Saint Canute twice sought to invade that country to liberate the Anglo-Saxon people from Norman oppression. He was thwarted in that endeavor by an act of treachery on the part of his brother, Olaf. An intensely pious man and ascetical in his personal life, during his short reign Saint Canute approved laws to protect the weak, orphans, and widows. 'The happiness of his people and the interests of the Church were the objects he had most at heart.'

"In 1086, a peasant rebellion erupted in the Kingdom. The Saint, at that time staying in Odense, on the island of Funen, took refuge in St. Alban's Church. There, before the Altar, he, his brother, and seventeen of his men were slaughtered by the mob. It is said that he died while on his knees, praying before the Altar and that almost from the moment of his burial, miracles took place at his grave."³⁵⁷

Fr. Andrew Phillips writes: "Alsin, Abbot of St. Augustine's at Canterbury, took refuge in Norway. Sweden, where English missionaries had long been at work was another destination and perhaps Finland too. It was, however, Denmark which proved to be the most popular destination. It was from here that King Swein had thought to mount invasions in 1070 and 1075. These were supported in England, especially in the North and the East where Danish sympathies were strong...

"Many churchmen also fled abroad, their places taken by the feudal warrior-bishops and clergy of the Normans, such as Odo of Bayeux, who fought at Hastings. Scandinavia seems to have been their main destination.

"Other exiles went to the Continent, to Flanders, France and Italy. King Harold's daughter, Gytha, moved further still. She was to marry the Grand-Prince of Kiev, Vladimir, and lived in Kiev, then a great centre of Christian civilization. Here, having been made welcome, she gave birth to several children, of whom the eldest son was named Harold like his grandfather, but also received the Slavic name, Mstislav."³⁵⁸

³⁵⁷ Protopresbyter James Thornton, <http://orthodoxinfo.com/general/pious-kings-and-right-believing-queens-fr-james-thornton.pdf>.

³⁵⁸ Harold Mstislav became Great Prince of Kiev in succession to his father and ruled from 1126 to 1132. He was given the title "the Great" for the excellence of his rule, and is counted among the saints of the Russian Church. See N.M. Karamzin, *Predania Vekov*, Moscow: Pravda, 1989, pp. 177-179.

"Possibly the greatest emigration, however, was elsewhere; the Old English were attracted above all by the almost mystical name of Constantinople, fixed they believed, as Constantine had believed before them, at the middle of the Earth, joining East and West (which Kipling wrongly said would never meet). It is certain that from the Conquest on, and especially during the 1070's but right on into the middle of the twelfth century, huge numbers of English emigrated to the New Rome. Moreover, this emigration was an emigration of the elite of the country. The great scholar Sir Frank Stenton has discovered that several noble families simply disappeared after the Conquest and they were not all killed at Hastings - they emigrated. It was particularly the young who left to seek a better future elsewhere. In historical terms this emigration is comparable only to the emigration of the Russian elite and nobility in 1917 when confronted by the Bolshevik terror. So great was this emigration, especially it seems from the West Country, the Fens and East Anglia, and so long did it continue, that we must assume that it occurred with the approval of William I and his successors. It seems almost certain that it was their method of ridding themselves of the rebellious Old English ruling class and their supporters among the people. Exile, organised by the State, was after all a bloodless elimination of those who opposed William and the new order. It is no coincidence that the exodus continued right into the twelfth century. Why did they choose Constantinople? First, because probably already in the Confessor's reign (let us not forget that he was also half-Norman) discontented elements seem already to have left for Constantinople where the Emperor needed men to fight in his armies, especially against the Turks, who posed a threat in the East. Secondly, many Danes and other Scandinavians (such as Harold Hardrada) had formed the elite 'Varangian Guard' there and found fame and fortune; news of this had certainly reached England. Thirdly, what was the future for a young English noble in Norman England? We know that in 1070 a certain Ioannis Rafailis, an Imperial agent or 'prospatharios' came to England recruiting for the Imperial Army. Young Englishmen and Anglo-Danes, especially those of noble birth, would certainly have been attracted. All the more so, since though the Emperor faced the Turks in the East, in the West, especially in Southern Italy, Sicily and Dalmatia, he faced the hated Normans; what better way for an Englishman of avenging himself? Fourthly, there were those who did not like the new order in the Church or in the State under the Normans. Spiritually they could find refuge in Constantinople and the freedom to continue to live in the ritual and the spirit of the Old English Church in the imperial Capital. Perhaps unconsciously their instincts and feelings drew them to that City which symbolised the unity of Christendom through the Old English period and which had had so many connections with the Apostles of the English, Gregory and Augustine..."³⁵⁹

³⁵⁹ Phillips, *Orthodox Christianity and the Old English Church*, pp. 29-30. A.A. Vasiliev (*History of the Byzantine Empire*, Madison, Milwaukee and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952, vol. II, p. 484) writes: "In the eighties of the eleventh century, at the beginning of the rule of Alexius Comnenus, as the English historian Freeman emphasized in his very well-known work on the conquest of England by the Normans, some convincing indications of the Anglo-Saxon emigration into the Greek Empire were already evident. A western chronicler of the first half of the twelfth century [Ordericus Vitalis] wrote: 'After having lost their liberty the Anglians were deeply

The contribution of the English exiles was immediately felt. Thus Stephen Lowe writes: "Nikephoros Bryennios, writing in the first half of the twelfth century, describes a palace coup in 1071. Emperor Romanos Diogenes owed his position to being stepfather to the legitimate Emperor Michael VII Doukas. After Romanos was defeated and captured by Seljuk Turks at the disastrous battle of Manzikert, Michael seized the throne on his own account. Varangian guards were used as bullyboys to over-awe the opposition, and Bryennios implies that these palace guards were Englishmen 'loyal from of old to the Emperor of the Romans'." ³⁶⁰

In 1075, continues Phillips, "a fleet of 350 ships (according to another source 235) left England for exile in 'Micklegarth', the Great City, Constantinople. The commander of this fleet was one Siward (or Sigurd), called Earl of Gloucester. It is not impossible that he is identical with Siward Barn who had taken part in the Fenland uprising of 1071 with Hereward. With him sailed two other earls and eight high-ranking nobles. If, at a conservative estimate, we accept the figure of 235 ships and place forty people in each ship, this would indicate an exodus of nearly 10,000 people, and this was only one group - albeit by far the largest - which left these shores after 1066... When they arrived in Constantinople they found the city under siege and, we are told, thereupon relieved the inhabitants, scattering the Turks before them. This 'relief', and it occurred, earned the gratitude of the Emperor and the English were granted lodging and places in the Imperial Army. The English were particularly valued since they were mostly young, many were of noble birth and they all loathed the Normans. The elite showed such loyalty that they entered the Imperial Household and formed the Emperor's bodyguard. Their exemplary loyalty to the Emperor of the Romans echoed the loyalty of the Old English to the Pre-Conquest Papacy, to St. Gregory the Great, Pope of the Romans.

"We read of English troops fighting at Dyrrachium (Durazzo) in 1081, where they suffered heavy losses against the Normans. Again in the 1080's the Emperor granted the English land on the Gulf of Nicomedia, near Nicaea to build a fortified town known as Civotus. ³⁶¹ We are told that from the great fleet of 1075 some 4,300 English settled in the City itself, which at that time was the most populous, advanced and cosmopolitan city in the world. Further we read that the English sent priests to Hungary, which was then in close contact with Constantinople, for them to be consecrated bishops, since the English preferred the Latin rite to the Greek rite of 'St. Paul'. According to the sources, far more

afflicted... Some of them shining with the blossom of beautiful youth went to distant countries and boldly offered themselves for the military service of the Constantinopolitan Emperor Alexius.' This was the beginning of the 'Varangian-English bodyguard' which, in the history of Byzantium of the twelfth century, played an important part, such as the 'Varangian- Russian Druzhina' (Company) had played in the tenth and eleventh centuries."

³⁶⁰ Lowe, "Ancestral Trust: The English in the Eastern Roman Empire", *Medieval History Magazine*, No 13, September, 2004, p. 11

³⁶¹ Called "Chevetogne" in the West. According to Ordericus Vitalis, the English were given lands in Ionia, where a town was built for them (Thierry, op. cit., p. 230). (V.M.)

English than the 4,300 who settled in the city went further still. With the blessing of Emperor Alexis, these went on to recolonise territories lost by the Empire. It is said that they sailed on from the city to the North and the East for six days. Then they arrived at 'the beginning of the Scythian country'. Here they found a land called 'Domapia', which they renamed New England. Here they founded towns and having driven out the invaders, they reclaimed them for the Empire. Moreover, they renamed the towns 'London', 'York' and called others after the towns where they had come from...

"After painstaking research it has been discovered that medieval maps... list no fewer than six towns with names suggesting English settlements. These settlements on maps of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries are located along the northern coast of the Black Sea. One of the names appears as 'Susaco', possibly from 'Saxon'. Another town, situated some 110 miles to the east of the straits of Kerch near the Sea of Azov appears variously as 'Londia', 'Londin' and 'Londina'. On the twelfth century Syrian map the Sea of Azov itself is called the 'Varang' Sea, the Sea of the Varangians, a name used for the English in Constantinople at this period. It is known that in the thirteenth century a Christian people called the 'Saxi' and speaking a language very similar to Old English inhabited this area, and that troops of the 'Saxi' served in the Georgian army in the twelfth century. There seem to be too many coincidences for us to think that the Sea of Azov was not then the first 'New England'."³⁶²

Concerning this expedition of 1075, Lowe writes: "They sailed to Gibraltar, captured Minorca and Majorca, and then went on to Sicily. They sailed to Miklagard (Constantinople) ruled at that time by Kirjalax (Alexios I), and arrived in the nick of time to save the City from a seaborne invasion by heathens. In gratitude the Emperor gave them permission to re-take a land to the north across the sea, taken from him by the heathens. If they could win it back, it would be theirs. Some stayed in the Emperor's service, most went to this land, and re-took it. They called it England, and gave English names such as London and York to cities they captured and to new ones they built... The land in question is possibly the Crimea, which the Empire had lost not long before."³⁶³

Phillips continues: "As for those thousands of Old English who settled in the Great City itself, they may have lived in a quarter known as 'Vlanga' [from 'Varangian'], near the Sea of Marmara..."³⁶⁴

³⁶² Phillips, op. cit., pp. 30-32.

³⁶³ Lowe, op. cit., p. 14. Other researches indicate that the English conquered land further on the southern shore of the Sea of Azov, and held it for centuries against Tatar onslaughts. Caitlin Green, "The Medieval 'New England'", <http://www.caitlingreen.org/2015/05/medieval-new-england-black-sea.html>. See also See also A. A. Vasiliev, "The Opening Stages of the Anglo Saxon Immigration to Byzantium in the Eleventh Century," *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 9 (1937).

³⁶⁴ Phillips, op. cit., p. 30.

In the thirteenth-century *Edwardsaga* we read that Earl Sigurd of Gloucester and his men reached Constantinople “and set the realm of the Greek King free from strife. King Alexius the Tall [Comnenus, 1081-1118)] offered them to abide there and guard his body as was the wont of the Varangians... but it seemed to earl Sigurd that it was too small a career to grow old there... They begged the king for some towns of their own... [The Emperor assigned some lands in the north, if they could re-conquer them.] Sigurd and his men came to this land and had many battles there and they took possession and gave it a name and called it England and they gave names to the towns that were there and called them London and York.”³⁶⁵

Lowe continues: “Joscelyn’s *Miracula Sancti Augustini Episcopi Cantuariensis* tells of an Englishman of high rank from Canterbury who ‘obtained such favour with the emperor and empress... that he received a dukedom over wise soldiers and a large part of the auxiliaries’. He married a rich woman of high family, and had a church built in Constantinople dedicated to Saints Nicholas and Augustine of Canterbury. This church was popular with the English in Byzantium and became the chapel of the Varangians.”³⁶⁶

“Another report tells of a monk of Canterbury named Joseph, who visited Constantinople in about 1090, on his return from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He found there a number of his own countrymen, and recognised friends of his own among them. They were now in the Imperial household, and were friends of the officer in charge of guarding holy relics. The *Historia Monasterii de Abingdon* records

³⁶⁵ *Edwardsaga*, in M.J. Cohen and John Major, *History in Quotations*, London: Cassel, 2004, p. 108.

³⁶⁶ V.G. Vasilevsky (*Works*, St. Petersburg, volume 1, p. 275) has described the history of another church dedicated to the Mother of God: “The saga links a miracle of St. Olaf, who appeared in support of his brother [Harald Hardrada], with the story about the building of a church in honour of this Norwegian king in Constantinople. Immediately after they returned to Micklegarth, the Varangians carried out the vow they had made to build a large church, but the Emperor put obstacles in the way of its consecration and Harald had to devote considerable labour to overcome this stubbornness, etc. It goes without saying that neither in the Byzantine nor in any other sources do we find a trace of evidence that there ever existed in Tsargrad a church dedicated to the Norwegian Olaf, as the saga affirms. Other Scandinavian sources - the saga of Olaf in its shortest edition and the homily on the day of the holy martyr-king both belong to the second half of the 12th century - do not say that the church built in honour of Olaf was called by his name. They represent the event in a somewhat different light. The Byzantine emperor himself, being threatened by pagan enemies, turned in prayer to St. Olaf for protection and gave a vow to build a church in Constantinople ‘in the name of the saint and in honour of the Holy Virgin’. But when it came to carrying out his vow it turned out that the Greek emperor did not consider himself or his Church bound to accept the definition of the Norwegian assembly which in 1031 recognised King Olaf, who had been slain in battle, as a saint. The church was built in honour and in the name of the Holy Virgin... The Varangians only helped in its construction and adornment. In this form the story seems much more probably, if not with regard to the reason, at any rate with regard to the consequence, that is, the construction of a Varangian church of St. Mary. It is here that we learn of the ‘Varangian Theotokos’.”

Phillips writes: “We also know of a convent dedicated to the Mother of God, called Panagia Varangiotissa. This was recorded until at least 1361 and from its name it may well have been founded by an Englishwoman. One of the English exiles, probably a certain Coleman, ‘vir sanctus’, a holy man educated at St. Augustine’s in Canterbury, founded a basilica in the City and had it dedicated to St. Nicholas and St. Augustine of Canterbury.” Its ruins survive to this day (V.M.)

that in the reign of Henry I, an Englishman named Ulfric (from Lincoln in the Danelaw) arrived on a mission from Emperor Alexios – the purpose is not stated, but it may have been a further attempt to hire mercenaries.

“The Byzantine chronicler Kinnamos, writing about 1180-3 of the actions of Emperor John II at the battle of Beroe of 1122, describes ‘the axe-bearers who stood around him (they are a Brittanic people who of old served the Roman Emperors)...’ *Inglinoi* [English] were present at the disastrous battle of Myriokephalon in 1185 (?). However, by this late stage these Englishmen, whom Emperor Manuel describes as ‘some of the leading men of the nobility of England’ were more likely to have been Anglo-Normans than Saxon exiles.

“In 1204 the Frankish army of the Fourth Crusade, diverted from its original aim to attack Muslim Egypt, instead besieged and captured Christian Constantinople. Niketas Choniates was a Roman chronicler of the fighting that led to the City’s fall. He writes that an attempted landing near the Palace of Vlachernai was repulsed by Pisan mercenaries and ‘the axe-bearing barbarians’.

“The Frankish eyewitness and chronicler Robert de Clari describing the battle tells of the ‘English, Danish and Greeks’ defending the towers ‘with axes and swords’. The Frankish Crusader de Villehardouin reports the walls being manned by English and Danes – and that the fighting was very violent with axes and swords. One of the negotiators sent to the Emperor, de Villehardouin describes walking past Englishmen and Danes, fully armed with their axes, posted at the gate of the city and all the way along to the Palace.³⁶⁷

“There are few mentions of the Varangian Guard after the City’s fall, and it is thought they dwindled to a shadow of their former glory. However, traces of the English Varangians still remained. Emperor Michael VIII (1261-1282) who recaptured Constantinople after the Frankish ‘Empire’ collapsed, refers to the active and repeated use of his ‘*Englinovarangoi*’ in defending his reduced Byzantine realm.

“The fourteenth-century *De Officiis* of Pseudo-Codinus, states that English was used in the acclamation to the Emperor at the Imperial banquet at Christmas – after the Genoese, Pisans and Venetians, came the *Inglinisti*, clashing their weapons with a loud noise...”³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ John Godfrey writes of the battle for the city in 1204: "The Franks put up two ladders against a seawall barbican near Blachernae, and two knights and two sergeants, followed by fifteen men-at-arms, managed to get on top of the wall. They found themselves opposed by 'the English and Danes, and the fight which followed was hard and ferocious', says Villehardouin; and the courage of the Anglo-Danes put heart into the hesitant troops inside the barbican, who now threw themselves into the fray" (1204: *The Unholy Crusade*, Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 107). Phillips (op. cit.) notes that, according to de Clari, these English soldiers had their own priests in Constantinople. (V.M.)

³⁶⁸ Lowe, op. cit., p. 15.

Perhaps the most lasting image of the English Orthodox in exile is Anna Comnena's description of their last stand against the Normans at the Battle of Durazzo (present-day Albania) in 1081. This was truly the last stand of the English Orthodox, fighting, as was appropriate, in the ranks of the Byzantine Emperor against the Roman Catholic invaders: "The axe-bearing barbarians from the Isle of Thule", as Anna called them, thrust back an attack on their part of the line, and then pursued the Normans into the sea up to their necks. But they had advanced too far, and a Norman cavalry attack threw them back again. "It seems that in their tired condition they were less strong than the Kelts [Normans]. At any rate the barbarian force was massacred there, except for survivors who fled for safety to the sanctuary of the Archangel Michael; all who could went inside the building: the rest climbed to the roof and stood there, thinking that would save their lives. The Latins merely set fire to them and burned the lot, together with the sanctuary..."³⁶⁹

Thus did the chant of the English Orthodox warriors, "Holy Cross! Holy Cross!" fall silent on earth. And thus did the Lord accept their sacrifice as a whole-burnt offering to Himself in heaven. "May Michael the standard-bearer lead them into the holy Light, which Thou didst promise of old to Abraham and his seed."³⁷⁰

³⁶⁹ *Alexiad*, II, 11, 9; IV, 6; translated by E.R.A. Sewter, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969, pp. 100, 96, 147-8.

³⁷⁰ *Old Roman Liturgy for the Dead*.

III. THE PAPAL DESPOTISM

20. HOLLENBRAND: POPE GREGORY VII

Pope Alexander II died in April 1073. "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."³⁷¹ So a democratic revolution in the Church brought to power one of the greatest despots in history, Hildebrand – *Höllénbrand*, or "Hellfire", as Luther called him, or "my holy Satan", in the words of one of his associates.³⁷² 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."³⁷³

³⁷¹ Holland, op. cit., pp. 348-349.

³⁷² Fukuyama, op. cit., p. 265.

³⁷³ 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."³⁷⁴

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?"

The emperor had no special authority in Gregory's eyes. The sacrament of royal anointing meant nothing for him; St. Paul called even the pagan emperor "the minister of God", but for Gregory the Christian emperor is the most ordinary of laymen. 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?"³⁷⁵

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³⁷⁴ Canning, op. cit., pp. 96, 97.

³⁷⁵ Gregory VII, in Canning, op. cit., pp. 91-93.

Hildebrand's attitude to political power was Manichaeism in its negative intensity. It was Manichaeism 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 men, 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."³⁷⁶

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."³⁷⁷ What was new, shocking and completely unpatristic 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, Gregory, 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?"³⁷⁸

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."³⁷⁹

³⁷⁶ De Rosa, op. cit., p. 69.

³⁷⁷ Peter Damian, *Letter 8*, 2, P.L. 144, 436.

³⁷⁸ He was also *the only* apostolic see. Thus when, in 1049, the Bishop of Compostela in Spain declared that he, too, like the Bishop of Rome, was the Bishop of an Apostolic See, he was excommunicated by the newly-reformed Papacy for telling the truth (Fr. Andrew Philipps, "Orthodox Portugal, Orthodox England, <http://orthodoxengland.org.uk/oeportug.htm>).

³⁷⁹ Hieromonk Enoch, Facebook communication, 26 September, 2016.

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.

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.”³⁸⁰

But these 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’s vassals, Duke William of Aquitaine, and invited him to threaten the king. The king backed down...

The Gregorians had an amazing ability to twist 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, being from God, 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

³⁸⁰ I.S. Robinson, “Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ”, *History*, vol. 58, N 193, June, 1973, pp. 174-175.

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 Arnulfing major of the palace as king of the Franks in 751 provided Gregory VII with his most important *exemplum*."³⁸¹

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..."³⁸²

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.'"

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

³⁸¹ Robinson, "Church and Papacy", pp. 300-301.

³⁸² Holland, op. cit., p. 362.

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.”³⁸³

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”.³⁸⁴ 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.”³⁸⁵

Gregory retaliated in a truly 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.”³⁸⁶

By absolving subjects of their allegiance to their king, Gregory “effectively,” as Robinson writes, “sanctioned rebellion against the royal power...”³⁸⁷

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.”³⁸⁸

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

³⁸³ Holland, op. cit., p. 368.

³⁸⁴ Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., p. 114.

³⁸⁵ Holland, op. cit., p. 368

³⁸⁶ Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., p. 114.

³⁸⁷ Robinson, “Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ”, p. 175.

³⁸⁸ Wenrich of Trier, *Epistola Hilthebrando papae* (1081).

bishops to be like themselves, who are not truly bishops, and desiring to have kings whom they themselves can command with royal licence.”³⁸⁹

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.”³⁹⁰

The papists were contradicting an earlier papal decree dating to 963 that confirmed the practice of imperial investiture, which demonstrated their departure from the Orthodox tradition of Church-State relations. As Bishop Enoch writes: “Hildebrandian authors began to deny the authenticity of the decree of Pope Leo VIII [+965] in the 11th century, since it militated against their revolution against Symphonia. Before this, the Imperial [or Royal] Power in the Church was considered just as vital as the Sacerdotal Power in maintaining harmony among the Christian peoples, especially in regulating the elections of bishops, archbishops, and popes. When the Decree speaks of the right of the Orthodox Civil Power to 'ordain' it does not mean the act of laying on of hands and reading the consecratory prayers for the descent of the Holy Ghost to make a man a bishop, etc. It means the right of the Patriciate to participate in elections, to certify mandates, and even to veto, in some cases, certain candidates if the candidate should be found to be harmful to the Christian Commonwealth. After this, the Bishops of a local Province must consent, and agree to perform the Consecration.

“It should be noted that this procedure, that is, for the King, Emperor, or Patrician, to take part in the actual election and investiture of a Bishop, Archbishop, or Pope, was explicitly condemned as heretical and 'simoniac' by the 11th century Hildebrandians during their so-called 'Reform', which sought to upset the ancient idea of Symphony. It is fitting that this ancient right and privilege of the Christian people should be confirmed by Pope Leo VIII, who was elected at the 963 Synod of Rome, which same Synod deposed the reprobate John XII, or Octavian, from the Bishopric of Rome. This has given rise to attempts to paint Pope Leo VIII as a 'temporary anti-pope', but, without any reasonable cause.”³⁹¹

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These developments reached an appropriately megalomaniac climax in 1075, when Gregory published his famous *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;

³⁸⁹ Anonymous of Hersfeld, *Liber de unitate ecclesiae conservanda*, II, 15.

³⁹⁰ Dostoevsky, *The Diary of a Writer* (August, 1880).

³⁹¹ Bishop Enoch, “963 AD Decree of Pope Leo VIII [+965] Confirming Investiture”, <https://traditionalwesternorthodoxy.blogspot.com/2020/05/963-ad-decree-of-pope-leo-viii-965.html?fbclid=IwAR29Q5iPsryF8IpNETzy2SOEomELAcFq1P48BetMdXtI7zBYD1Uky4Liys>.

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 bishoprics, 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."³⁹²

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..."³⁹³

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 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".³⁹⁴

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For some years, Gregory hesitated to come down completely against Henry. 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.

³⁹² R.W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, London: Penguin, 1970, p. 102.

³⁹³ Robinson, "Gregory VII and the Soldiers of Christ", pp. 177, 178.

³⁹⁴ Holland, op. cit., p. 376.

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."

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 and besieged it; the next year Wibert was consecrated Pope Clement III and in turn crowned Henry as emperor. Henry and his pope was forced to flee northwards when the Norman Robert Guiscard, an ally of Gregory, returned from Greece to Italy and occupied Rome, liberating Gregory from the Castel San Angelo. But ordinary Romans had had their fill of the tyrannical Gregory, who was forced to flee to Guiscard's domain of Salerno, where he died in 1085.

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 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 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.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁵ "By Divine Authority and by Institution of the Holy Fathers, Kings are Ordained in the Church of God and are Consecrated at the Altar with Sacred Unction and Benediction, that they may have the power of ruling the people of the Lord, the Christian people, which is the Holy Church of God --- a chosen race, an holy race, a purchased people (cf. 1 Peter 2:9). What else indeed is the Church but the Congregation of faithful Christians living together in the House of Christ in Charity and in the One Faith? Therefore Kings receive in their Consecration the power to rule this Church, that they may rule it and strengthen it in judgment and justice and administer it in accordance with the Discipline of the Christian Law; for they reign in the Church, which is the Kingdom of God, and reign together with Christ, in order that they may rule, protect, and defend it. To reign is to rule the subjects well and to serve God with fear. The Episcopal Order too is Instituted and Consecrated with Sacred Unction and Benediction, that it also may rule the Holy Church according to the form of Doctrine given to it by God. Accordingly the Blessed Pope Gelasius speaks thus, 'Two there are by which this world is chiefly ruled, the Priestly Authority and the Royal Power.' By 'this world' he means the Holy Church, which is a sojourner in this world. In this world, then, the Priestly Authority and the royal Power hold the Principate of Sacred Government. Some seek to divide the Principate in this fashion, saying that the Priesthood has the Principate of ruling souls, the king that of ruling bodies, as if souls could be ruled without bodies and bodies without souls, which cannot be done by any means. For if bodies are well ruled it is necessary that souls are well ruled too and vice versa, since both are ruled for this purpose, that at the Resurrection they may both be saved together.

"Christ, God and Man, is the True and Highest King and Priest. But He is King from the Eternity of His Divinity, not made, nor created, not below or separate from the Father, but Equal to and One with the Father. He is Priest from His Assumption of Humanity, made and created according to the Order of Melchisedech and so less than the Father. As King He created all things and Rules and Preserves all things, Governing both Men and Angels. As Priest He only Redeemed men that they might reign with Him. This is the sole reason why He was made Priest, to Offer Himself as a Sacrifice so that men might be made sharers of His Kingdom and of His Royal Power. For everywhere in the Scriptures He promised the Kingdom of Heaven to the Faithful but nowhere the Priesthood. It is clear, therefore, that in Christ the Royal Power is greater and higher than the Priestly in proportion as His Divinity is greater and higher than His Humanity. Hence some hold that among men likewise the Royal Power is greater and higher than the Priestly and the King greater and higher than the Priest, as being an imitation and emulation of the better and higher Nature or Power of Christ. And so it is not contrary to the Justice of God, they say, if the Sacerdotal Dignity is Instituted by the Royal or subjected to it, for so it was done in Christ; He was made a Priest by His Royal Power and was subjected to the Father in His Priestly Power while He was Equal to Him in His Royal Power...

"But now let us see what the King confers on a man who is to be created Bishop by the prerogative of the Pastoral Staff. I think that he does not confer the Order or Right of Priesthood, but what pertains to his own right and to the rule of worldly things, namely the lordship and guardianship of things of the Church, and the power of ruling the people of God, which is the Temple of the Living God, and the Holy Church, the Bride of Christ Our Lord. That a Bishop has lordship over earthly things, that is, possession of estates, by the law of Kings is stated by Augustine at the end of his sixth treatise on John where he says, 'Each man possesses all he does possess by human law for, by Divine Law, "the Lord's is the Earth and the fullness thereof" By Human law and therefore by the Law of Emperors. . . .'

"No one should take precedence by right over [the king], who is blessed with so many and such great blessings, who is Consecrated and made like unto God with so many and such great Sacraments, for no one is Consecrated and made like God with more or greater Sacraments than he is, nor indeed with equivalent ones, and so no one is co-equal with him. Therefore he is not to be called a layman, for he is the Anointed of the Lord, a god through Grace, the supreme ruler, supreme shepherd, master, defender, and instructor of Holy Church, lord over his brothers, worthy to be adored by all men, chief and highest prelate. It is not to be said that he is inferior to the Bishop because the Bishop consecrates him, for it often happens that lesser men consecrate a greater, inferiors their superior, as when the Cardinals consecrate a Pope or suffragan Bishops a

“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...”³⁹⁶

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 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 felt free to distort, add to and subtract from 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

Metropolitan. This can be so because they are not the authors of the Consecration but ministers. God makes the Sacrament efficacious; they administer it.” (*Tractatus Eboracensis* (c. 1080-1100), M.G.H., *Libelli de Lite*, III, pp. 663,667, 679, translated on pages 76-78 of Brian Tierney’s *The Crises of Church and State 1050-1300*) (V.M.)

³⁹⁶ Canning, op. cit., pp. 104-105.

constitutionalism in Europe” and of “the idea of the state endowed with a ‘sovereign’ authority”. 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 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...”³⁹⁷

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...”³⁹⁸

This is a perceptive and important comment. Canossa, as the centre of that momentous chain of events that began with the schism of 1054 and culminated in the First Crusade of 1098-99, represent the birth of a new Europe, a new civilization that would become the *global* civilization in the twentieth century. This civilization, while religious externally (“Reform Papism” in the eleventh century, “human rights” in the twentieth) was profoundly secular internally. Interventionist and expansionist, it would impose its own ideas and culture, and ultimately its political control, over the whole world. Led by the Normans in the beginning (the first king of Jerusalem, Bohemond, was a Norman, a kind of pan-European pop star), other nations would take over the lead in later centuries; but the basic lineaments of the new civilization were already clear.

The Eastern Churches, while slow to recognize the schism of 1054 as an accomplished fact, still less as the foundation-stone of a new civilization, now recognized that pride and ambition were at the root of Rome’s tragic fall and alienation from the life of the True Church. Thus in the twelfth century Nicetas, Archbishop of Nicomedia wrote: “My dearest brother, we do not deny to the

³⁹⁷ Tiutchev, *Politicheskie Stat'i* (Political Essays) (1849).

³⁹⁸ Holland, *Millenium*, London: Abacus Books, 2009, p. xxii.

Roman Church the primacy amongst the five sister Patriarchates; and we recognize her right to the most honourable seat at an Ecumenical Council. But she has separated herself from us by her own deeds, when through pride she assumed a monarchy which does not belong to her office... How shall we accept decrees from her that have been issued without consulting us and even without our knowledge? If the Roman Pontiff, seated on the lofty throne of his glory, wishes to thunder at us and, so to speak, hurl his mandates at us from on high, and if he wishes to judge us and even to rule us and our Churches, not by taking counsel with us but at his own arbitrary pleasure, what kind of brotherhood, or even what kind of parenthood can this be? We should be the slaves, not the sons, of such a Church, and the Roman See would not be the pious mother of sons but a hard and imperious mistress of slaves..."

And yet it is a tragic fact that the Ecumenical Patriarchate did little, if anything, to support the opponents of the Grigorian revolution in the West. As Bishop Enoch writes: "The Emperor in Constantinople, and the ruling establishment there, in the 1080s and 1090s actively choose to seek an alliance with the Hildebrandians in the person of Otho de Lagery [i.e. Urban II]; this became evident when Metropolitan Basil of Calabria, who was a Greek Metropolitan in Southern Italy, consecrated by the Patriarch of Constantinople, and who had several antagonistic encounters with Urban, was told to carry letters of negotiation to Urban.

"The previous negotiations which Basil of Calabria had carried on with Wibert of Ravenna [the counter-claimant to the See of Rome, named Clement III], were ordered to cease. All negotiations were to be carried on with 'Urban II', by order of the Emperor and Patriarch Nicholas, with Urban II, whom Basil of Calabria [Metropolitan of Reggio], had called a pseudo-pope and godless heretic. The previous exchange of letters between Wibert / Clement was ended. Why would the ruling establishment in Constantinople do this? Because they believed that Otho [Urban II] could deliver large numbers of Western soldiers and fighters in a campaign to re-take Asia Minor and parts of the Mid-East from the Muslims. For this reason, the only other figure in the West, Wibert of Ravenna / Clement III, who, for all his problems, represented ecclesiological ideas opposed to the totalitarian Hildebrandian model, was simply shafted; there would be no support from the East, and any contacts between the Southern Italian Orthodox Greek hierarchy and Wibert/Clement were to be terminated, and all efforts directed toward currying the favor of the arch-heretic pseudo-pope 'Urban II'.

"In the end, the political strategy of the Roman government in Constantinople worked, they got a massive force of Crusaders, unwieldy as they were, to attack the Muslims in Asia Minor, Syria, and Jerusalem. All it cost the ruling elite in Constantinople, both regal and priestly, was putting the final nails in the coffin of whatever was left in the West that had the best chance of reversing the Great Schism; and also inevitably contributing to the Roman state having a powerful Crusader force that would cause massive destruction to their own society [i.e. 1204 Sack of Constantinople], only 100 years later.

"In other words, there were "compelling" worldly reasons [which also turned out to be wrong] that motivated Constantinople's shift in policy; Urban could promise hundreds of thousands of fighters and crusaders; Wibert couldn't, he could only promise opposition to Hildebrandianism. The Empire's history thereafter seems to be plagued with 350 years of not just attacks from Islam, but, attacks from the monster they helped create and bring there, the Crusaders, combined with Constantinople trying its best to suppress and destroy the Orthodox Serbs, Bulgarians, and others, all the while having increasing efforts by the ruling elite to subvert and betray Orthodoxy to Union with Hildebrandianism, in order to achieve some revival of worldly power."³⁹⁹

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Gregory VII fled from Rome with his Norman allies and died in Salerno in 1085. 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) This Scripture refers to Christ, not a simple man. But then such distortion and blasphemy was becoming commonplace now... For, as Archimandrite Justin Popovich put it: "Human history has had three main falls: that of Adam, that of Judas, and that of the Pope... The fall of the Pope consists in seeking to replace the God-man with man."⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁹ Bishop Enoch, *Facebook*, February 13, 2021.

⁴⁰⁰ Popovich, *The Orthodox Church and Ecumenism*, Thessalonica, 1974, pp. 180-181.

21. CHRISTIAN JIHAD: THE FIRST CRUSADE

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 and military bodyguards, the Normans, having conquered Bari in 1071 and Palermo in 1072, invaded Greece from the West. Emperor Alexis I's Varangian Guard, probably containing many Anglo-Saxon veterans of Hastings, were again defeated, and Alexis only just succeeded in containing the invaders. Finally, the formidable Norman leader Robert Guiscard, died as Duke of Apulia in 1085, with the inscription on his tomb: "Here lies Guiscard, terror of the world."

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.

The idea of a Crusade to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims appears to have originated with Pope Gregory VII in 1074.⁴⁰¹ However, the idea came close to realization only in 1095, when, 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. He was responding to a plea for help against the Muslims by the Emperor Alexis, but he may also have been trying 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 to 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."⁴⁰²

Urban offered remission of sins to all those who died on crusade: "All who die by the way, whether by land or by sea, or in battle against the pagans, shall have immediate remission of sins. O what a disgrace if such a despised and base race,

⁴⁰¹[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclopaedia_Britannica/Gregory_\(Popes\)/Gregory_VII](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclopaedia_Britannica/Gregory_(Popes)/Gregory_VII)

⁴⁰² Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades*, London: Penguin, 2006, p. 7.

which worships demons, should conquer a people which has the faith of omnipotent God and is made glorious with the name of Christ!"

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 Hospitallers, 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."⁴⁰³

As Simon Jenkins writes, "four crusader armies set off across Europe. First to leave was a chaotic 'People's Crusade' under a charismatic French evangelist, Peter the Hermit. He led an estimated 15,000 variously adventurous and starving peasants, with little idea of where they were going or what to do. On the way Peter's crusaders and other hangers-on killed thousands of Jews in the Rhineland, possibly a quarter of those in the region. They went on to inflict similar pogroms in Hungary, largely in a quest for food. Disoriented survivors eventually arrived in Constantinople, where they again raided the countryside for supplies. A dismayed Alexis pushed them south, where in October the remnants were massacred in an ambush by the Turks. They were heard of no more.

⁴⁰³ Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites*, London: Virago Press, 1998, pp. 171-172.

"The other armies, from France, Flanders, Germany and Italy travelled more comfortably by sea, some 35,000 assembling outside Constantinople in 1097. Their motives have been much discussed, a mix of adventurism, hope of gain and genuine piety. As the crusaders marched south they were debilitated by heat, disease and disagreement. They captured Nicaea and Antioch, and entered Jerusalem in 1099. Here they perpetrated another mass killing, this time of the city's Muslim population, and held the Jews for ransom. By then, barely 12,000 crusaders remained. Jerusalem was garrisoned and four Christian settlements were formed, including a 'kingdom' of Jerusalem."⁴⁰⁴

The First Crusade had many important effects. First, it demonstrated to the Byzantines, who previously had not paid much attention to the Schism of 1054, but rather had hoped to use the western schismatics to defend their own territories, that the westerners were now truly of a different spirit from theirs, and that, far from defending them from the Muslims, they were an enemy scarcely less dangerous than the Muslims, for they did not return former Byzantine possessions such as Antioch and Jerusalem to the empire, as had been agreed, but rather made them centres of heresy.

Secondly, the crusade revealed that in the West there had arisen a new "theology of war". For "unlike both the Muslims and the Latins, Byzantium did not indulge a particular penchant for holy war; in fact Byzantine authors use the phrase only when referring to battles for the possession of Delphi in classical times. 'We must always preserve peace,' their chronicles say. The West on the other hand did not indulge such squeamishness."⁴⁰⁵

For the Byzantines the just war had to be a defensive war, a war to defend or regain territory lost to the infidel, not for territory's sake, but for the sake of the souls of the Orthodox who lived on that territory. 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. "Christians wrestle," Origen wrote, "in prayers to God on behalf of those fighting in a righteous cause, and for the king who reigns righteously, that whatever is opposed to those who act righteously may be destroyed".⁴⁰⁶ Again, St. Athanasius the Great wrote: "Although one is not supposed to kill, the killing of the enemy in time of war is both a lawful and praiseworthy thing. This is why we consider individuals who have distinguished themselves in war as being worthy of great honours, and indeed public monuments are set up to celebrate their achievements. It is evident, therefore, that at one particular time, and under one set of circumstances, an act is not permissible, but when time and circumstances are right, it is both allowed and condoned."⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁴ Jenkins, *A Short History of Europe*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2018, p. 70.

⁴⁰⁵ Bettany Hughes, *Istanbul: A Tale of Three Cities*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2017, p. 366.

⁴⁰⁶ Origen, *Against Celsus*, 8.73.

⁴⁰⁷ St. Athanasius, *Apostolic letter to Monk Amon of Nitria*.

Nevertheless, there was always an awareness of the strong temptation to sin inherent in all warfare. As St. Basil the Great put it: "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 might be good that they refrain from Communion only in the Holy Mysteries for three years as people who have unclean hands..."⁴⁰⁸

In the ninth century, St. Cyril Equal-to-the-Apostles had made a similar point to some Muslims, who asked him: «Your God is Christ. He commanded you to pray for enemies, to do good to those who hate and persecute you and to offer the other cheek to those who hit you, but what do you actually do? If anyone offends you, you sharpen your sword and go into battle and kill. Why do you not obey your Christ?» Having heard this, St. Cyril asked his fellow-polemists: «If there are two commandments written in one law, who will be its best respected – the one who obeys only one commandment or the one who obeys both?» When the Hagarenes said that the best respecter of law is the one who obeys both commandments, the holy preacher continued: «Christ is our God Who ordered us to pray for our offenders and to do good to them. He also said that no one of us can show greater love in life than he who gives his life for his friends (John 15:3). That is why we generously endure offences caused us as private people. But in company we defend one another and give our lives in battle for our neighbours, so that you, having taken our fellows prisoners, could not imprison their souls together with their bodies by forcing them into renouncing their faith and into godless deeds. Our Christ-loving soldiers protect our Holy Church with arms in their hands. They safeguard the sovereign in whose sacred person they respect the image of the rule of the Heavenly King. They safeguard their land because with its fall the home authority will inevitably fall too and the evangelical faith will be shaken. These are precious pledges for which soldiers should fight to the last. And if they give their lives in battlefield, the Church will include them in the community of the holy martyrs and call them intercessors before God.»

St. Philaret of New York (+1985) writes: "War is a negative phenomenon. Yet, it will exist, sometimes as the sole defence of truth and human rights, or against seizure, brutal invasion and violence. Only such wars of defence are recognized in Christian teaching. In fact, we hear of the following event in the *life* of St. Athanasios of the Holy Mountain.

"Prince Tornikian of Georgia, an eminent commander of the Byzantine armies, was received into monasticism at St Athanasios' monastery. During the time of the Persian invasion, Empress Zoe recalled Tornikian to command the armies. Tornikian flatly refused on the grounds that he was a monk. But St. Athanasios said to him, "We are all children of our homeland and we are obligated to defend it. Our obligation is to guard the homeland from enemies by prayers. Nevertheless, if God deems it expedient to use both our hands and our heart for the common weal, we must submit completely ... If you do not obey the ruler, you will have to answer for the blood of your compatriots whom you did not wish to

⁴⁰⁸ St. Basil, *Canon* 13.

save." Tornikian submitted, defeated the enemy and rescued the homeland from danger...

"One can, of course, sin and sin greatly while participating in war. This happens when one participates in war with a feeling of personal hatred, vengeance, or vainglory and with proud personal aims. On the contrary, the less the soldier thinks about himself, and the more he is ready to lay down his life for others, the closer he approaches to the martyr's crown."⁴⁰⁹

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This is the Orthodox position. But among the Roman Catholics a different concept of the just war was emerging. The Catholics claimed that this concept went back to St. Augustine and St. Gregory the Great. Thus Gregory, following Augustine, had argued that war could be waged "for the sake of enlarging the *res publica* within which we see God worshipped... so that the name of Christ will travel among the subject people through the preaching of the faith."⁴¹⁰

As for Augustine, from his "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."⁴¹¹

However, between Augustine and Aquinas came the crusades; and the crusades added other elements that are completely lacking in Augustine – the secular 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

⁴⁰⁹ St. Philaret, https://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/law_of_god.htm#n24

⁴¹⁰ St. Gregory the Great, *Registrum*, 1.73.

⁴¹¹ 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 deawicked men; such persons have by no means violated the commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill.'"

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..."⁴¹²

The crusades were a new kind of "just" war with a more exalted, religious pathos. Those who incited them were popes rather than kings; 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 the Balts), and even other Christians (the "schismatics" of Anglo-Saxon England, the Albigensians of Southern France, the Orthodox of Novgorodian Russia). Thus they were not defensive wars, but wars of *reconquest* of formerly Christian lands - the word *reconquista* was first 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."⁴¹³... His brother Robert was blessed to conquer Muslim-held Sicily, completing his "holy war" in his conquest of Palermo in 1072. His grandson Tancred was a leader of the crusaders who conquered Jerusalem in 1099, himself becoming "Prince of Galilee".

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 or right... In this attitude, paradoxically, the Catholics were not so different from their main opponents, the Muslims. Indeed, the crusades 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*)."⁴¹⁴ During the Crusades, we see a Christian version of the lesser *jihad*, the physical struggle against unbelievers, becoming increasingly important in the thought and practice of the Catholic

⁴¹² Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History*, London: Athlone Press, 1987, pp. xxviii-xxix.

⁴¹³ Tyerman, op. cit., p. 54.

⁴¹⁴ Tyerman, op. cit., p. 269.

West. Traditional peaceful missionary work had no place in this Christian *jihad*. The aim was not the conversion of the infidel enemy, but his extermination...

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Certainly, the Crusaders of 1098-99 were sadistically cruel. 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. We can say this of the Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and of the Russians who accepted Sovietism 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."⁴¹⁵ And another wrote: "On the top of Solomon's Temple, to which they had climbed in fleeing, many were shot to death with arrows and cast down headlong from the roof. Within this Temple about 10,000 were beheaded. If you had been there, your feet would have been stained up to the ankles with the blood of the slain. What more shall I tell? They did not spare the women and children."⁴¹⁶

Montefiore comments: "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."⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁵ Raymond of Aguilers, the Count of Toulouse's chaplain, in Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Jerusalem: The Biography*, London: Phoenix, 2012, p. 253. However, it should be pointed out that the Arab chroniclers of the time paradoxically make no mention of Crusader cruelty. Perhaps the western chroniclers exaggerated the atrocities because they thought that they were praiseworthy!

⁴¹⁶ Fulcher of Chartres, in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 226.

⁴¹⁷ Montefiore, *Titans of History*, London: Quercus, 2012, p. 126.

22. OUTREMER: EUROPE MOVES OUT

As a result of the First Crusade, European colonies were created in the Middle East that recall nothing more, in their imperialist zeal and the quarrels between the European imperialists, than the “scramble for Africa” of the nineteenth century.

These colonies, writes Peter Frankopan, “were founded in ‘Outremer’ – literally ‘overseas’ – ruled over by new Christian masters. It was a graphic expansion of European power: Jerusalem, Tripoli, Tyre and Antioch were all under the control of Europeans and governed by customary laws imported from the feudal west which offered everything from the property rights of the new arrivals, to tax gathering, to the powers of the King of Jerusalem. The Middle East was being recast to function like western Europe.”⁴¹⁸

These overseas colonies were created in direct violation of an oath made to the Byzantine emperor. “All the leaders of the expedition had met Emperor Alexios I personally as they passed through the imperial capital in 1096-7 and swore an oath, over relics of the Holy Cross, that they would hand over all the towns and territories that they conquered which had previously belonged to Byzantium. As the expedition dragged on, [the Norman leader] Bohemond became obsessed with how to wriggle out of these commitments and to seize the prizes for himself – chief of which was the great city of Antioch.

“He took his chance when the city was captured following a debilitating siege. In one of the most dramatic stand-offs of the age, he was confronted in the Basilica of St. Peter in Antioch and challenged to defend his refusal to hand the city over to the Byzantine Emperor as promised. As Raymond of Toulouse, the most powerful of all the Crusader leaders, solemnly reminded him: ‘We swore upon the Cross of the Lord, the crown of thorns and many holy relics that we would not hold without the consent of the emperor any city or castle in his dominion.’ Bohemond simply stated that the oaths were null and void because Alexios had not kept his side of the bargain, and with that he simply refused to carry on with the expedition.

“It was a mark of the brilliance of the propaganda campaign mounted in the early twelfth century which placed Bohemond squarely in the centre of the triumph of the Crusade that there was no mention of the fact that its supposed hero was nowhere near the Holy City when it fell. After a delay of nearly a year trying to resolve the impasse over Antioch, the Crusader army eventually set off without him. As the knights processed around Jerusalem in order to give thanks to God before starting the siege, some in bare feet to show their humility, Bohemond was hundreds of miles away, lording it over his new prize, which he had secured through sheer obstinacy and ruthlessness.”⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁸ Frankopan, *The Silk Roads*, London: Bloomsbury, 2015, p. 137.

⁴¹⁹ Frankopan, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-139.

The West gained a great deal from the Crusades, not so much politically (they ultimately lost control of the Levant and the Holy Land and did not hold Constantinople for long) as *economically*. And this became a characteristic tactic of western civilization in future ages: *conquest primarily for the sake of commerce and trade*. The great need of the Crusader armies in the East was for transport and provisioning, and this created a great opportunity for western maritime powers to supply those needs. It was the Italian city-states that had navies that took rapid advantage of this opportunity: Venice, Genoa, Pisa and Amalfi were the competitors for the franchise of the Eastern Mediterranean; but Amalfi soon fell out of the race, and in the end it was Venice that won the race. This fierce competitiveness among the western (shall we call them capitalists?) was to become another defining characteristic of western civilization.

Tragically, Constantinople was the first victim of this new, expansionist Europe. We have seen how the Emperor Alexis was brutally deceived by the Crusaders. Now the Empire fell under the economic domination of the West.

In 1092, writes Frankopan, "Venice had been granted extensive trading concessions across the Byzantine Empire as part of a grand strategy by the Emperor Alexios to stimulate the economy. This saw the Venetians awarded landing pontoon in the harbour of Constantinople, and being exempted from taxes on both imports and exports. The primary motivation of the Venetians seven years later, therefore, was to keep Pisa out of this market place, and in doing so to protect the highly attractive terms that they had negotiated with the Emperor. As part of the settlement with Venice, the Pisans were forced to agree that they would never again enter Byzantium 'for the sake of trade, nor fight against Christians in any manner whatsoever, unless on account of devotion to the Holy Sepulchre.' That, at least, was how the Venetians reported what happened.

"Enforcing such treaties was easier said than done, and in fact, by the early twelfth century, the Byzantine Emperor had granted Pisa its own privileges that were not dissimilar to those previously granted to Venice, if not quite as generous. Although they too were granted a quay and anchorage in the imperial capital, Pisan merchants were offered only discounted customs duties, rather than full exemption from them. This was a case of trying to water down a monopoly that threatened to give the Venetians an excessive advantage over their competitors.

"The scramble between the city-states of Italy for trading dominance in the eastern Mediterranean was frantic and ruthless. But it was not long before Venice emerged as the clear victor. This owed much to the city's geographical position in the Adriatic, which meant a shorter sailing time to Venice than the trip to either Pisa or Genoa; it also helped that anchorages on this route were better, making it a safer journey too, at least once the treacherous Peloponnese had been negotiated. That Venice's economy was stronger and more developed was also important, as was the fact that the city had no local competitors to bog it down –

unlike Pisa and Genoa, whose intense rivalry removed both from the Levant at crucial moments as they competed over control of their coastlines and above all that of Corsica.

“This played to Venice’s advantage when a large army of western knights was comprehensively routed in what became known as the battle of the Field of Blood in 1110, a defeat that dealt a shattering blow to Antioch’s viability as an independent Crusader state. With Pisa and Genoa caught up in their own squabbles, desperate appeals were sent from Antioch to the Doge in Venice, begging for help in the name of Jesus Christ. A powerful force was put together because, as one generous contemporary commentator put it, the Venetians wanted ‘with the help of God to extend Jerusalem and the area adjacent, all for the advantage and glory of Christendom’. Significantly, however, the pleas for assistance from King Baldwin II were accompanied by the promise of new and additional privileges in return.

“The Venetians used this opening to teach the Byzantines a lesson. The new Emperor, John II, who succeeded his father Alexios in 1118, had concluded that the domestic economy had recovered sufficiently to justify refusing to renew the concessions given to the Venetians more than two decades earlier. As a result, as the Venetian fleet made its way east towards Antioch, it laid siege to Corfu and threatened further action if the Emperor did not renew the award. A stand-off followed until the Emperor backed down and reconfirmed the privileges granted by his father.

“This success was more than matched by the gains made when the Doge’s ships finally reached the Holy Land. Gauging the situation shrewdly, the Venetians made a loan to the western leaders in Jerusalem to enable them to fund their own forces to launch an attack on the ports that were held by the Muslims. A hefty premium was extracted in return. Venice would receive a church, a street and a square of good size in every royal and baronial city in the kingdom of Jerusalem. An annual fee would be paid to the Venetians, secured on the substantial future tax revenues of Tyre, the leading trade emporium in the region. When that city fell following a siege in 1124, Venice’s status in the region was transformed by the granting of extensive concessions that would apply throughout the kingdom of Jerusalem. From having a mere foothold, the Italians had engineered a position of such strength that some realized it threatened to compromise the authority of the crown and immediately attempted to water down some of the terms.

“This was ostensibly a time of faith and intense religious conviction, a period marked by self-sacrifice in the name of Christianity. But religion had to jostle alongside realpolitik and financial concerns – and the church hierarchy knew it. When the Byzantine Emperor John II tried to assert his claim over Antioch, the Pope issued a declaration to all the faithful, telling them that anyone who helped the Byzantines would face eternal damnation. This had everything to do with keeping Rome’s allies happy, and little to do with theology or doctrine.

“But the best example of the blending of the spiritual and the material came after the loss of Edessa to the Muslims in 1144 – another major reversal for the Crusaders. Calls went out across Europe for reinforcements to take part in an expedition that would become the Second Crusade. The cheerleading was led by Bernard of Clairvaux, a charismatic and energetic figure, who was realistic enough to understand that the remission of sins and the possibility of salvation through martyrdom might not persuade everyone to head east. ‘To those of you who are merchants, men quick to seek a bargain,’ he wrote in a letter that was circulated widely, ‘let me point out the advantages of this great opportunity. Do not miss them!’

“By the middle of the twelfth century, the Italian city-states were lucratively exploiting the enviable positions they had so brilliantly built in the east. With preferential access to Constantinople as well as to the main cities on the coast of both the Byzantine Empire and Palestine, Venice’s stepping stones now extended right the way across the eastern Mediterranean, not only in the Levant, but before long to Egypt too. Some looked on jealously, like Caffaro, the most famous Genoese historian of the Middle Ages. Genoa ‘was asleep and suffering from indifference’ he wrote mournfully of the 1140s; it was ‘like a ship sailing across the sea without a navigator’...”⁴²⁰

As in the later age of imperialism, where the traders and businessmen led, the politicians followed, partly to protect the gains of the former, partly to get some of the gains and glory for themselves. The first to come, during the disastrous Second Crusade, was probably the most sincerely religious of the Crusaders, King Louis VII of France, the builder of Notre Dame de Paris and founder of the Sorbonne, the University of Paris.

Some years later, a Muslim *jihad* under the Kurdish Sultan Saladin destroyed a large Crusader army at Hattin and reconquered Jerusalem in 1187, but was relatively merciful to the Christian inhabitants.

In response, King Richard “the Lionheart” of England together with the French king Philip Augustus and the German Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa undertook the Third Crusade, in which, after sacking the Greek city of Messina in Sicily and seizing the Orthodox land of Cyprus⁴²¹ and imposing a Latin hierarchy on the inhabitants, Richard “massacred thousands of Muslim prisoners in cold blood outside Acre and arranged the heads of executed Muslims around his tent...”⁴²² However, he was forced to turn back before the walls of Jerusalem...

⁴²⁰ Frankopan, op. cit., pp. 142-145

⁴²¹ He “avenged himself on [Emperor] Isaac Comnenus, ruler of Cyprus for insulting his bride to be: Berengaria Princess of Navarre. English troops stormed the town of Limassol, and in 1190 upon their arrival at Acre, sold it to the Templars.” (“Knights Templar: Richard the Lionheart”, *Crusader History*, June 6, 2019, <https://crusaderhistory.wordpress.com/2019/06/06/knights-templar-richard-the-lionheart/> (V.M.)

⁴²² Frankopan, op. cit., pp. 142-145

Meanwhile, Barbarossa's crusade ended ingloriously by drowning in a river in Asia Minor. This was fitting reward for his megalomaniac pretensions. He once wrote to Saladin claiming to have dominion over the whole of the Middle East and Africa as far as Ethiopia!⁴²³

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The cruelty and avarice of the Europeans were not confined to the Eastern Mediterranean. In fact, they spread out in all directions, foreshadowing the future global dominance of western apostate civilization. Thus the Genoese, squeezed out of the Eastern Mediterranean by the Venetians, headed south to Morocco and North Africa.

This was relatively peaceful and non-commercial. Not so the crusades against the pagan Slavs and Balts of the Baltic Sea coast. Albert, Margrave of Brandenburg 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."⁴²⁴

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."⁴²⁵

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."⁴²⁶

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".⁴²⁷

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 were excavated by German archaeologists.

⁴²³ R.H.C. Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

⁴²⁴ Richard Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 484.

⁴²⁵ Bernard, in Fletcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 487-488.

⁴²⁶ Bernard, *De Laude Novae Militiae Ad Milites Templi*.

⁴²⁷ Wil van den Bercken, *Holy Russia and Christian Europe*, London: SCM Press, 1999, p. 125.

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 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..."⁴²⁸

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In the long run, in spite of the enormous effort put into them over the course of centuries, the crusades failed in their ostensible aim, the reconquest of the Holy Land from the Muslims. Most of the crusader colonies 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. While at first claiming to help "liberate" the Eastern Churches, the crusades ended up by *destroying Orthodoxy* in large parts of the Greek-speaking East. Already before the Second Crusade Bernard of Clairvaux had expressed "bloodthirsty anti-Greek fulminations", in Sir Steven Runciman's phrase.⁴²⁹

The climax was undoubtedly the fourth crusade of 1204, than which, as Runciman writes, with pardonable exaggeration, "there never was a greater crime against humanity". The crusade was diverted to Constantinople by the crafty doge of Venice, Dandolo, as a result of which the city 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.

⁴²⁸ Paterson, "Sonar ship homes in on Atlantis of North", *Sunday Telegraph* (London), September 26, 1999, p. 39.

⁴²⁹ Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, Oxford, 1955, p. 100.

Even Pope Innocent III disapproved. The Greek Church, he said, “now, and with reason, detests the Latins more than dogs”.⁴³⁰

However, this did not prevent the Pope from profiting from the evil. Latin kingdoms with Latin patriarchs were imposed in Jerusalem, Antioch, Cyprus and, after the fourth crusade of 1204, Constantinople.⁴³¹

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...*”⁴³²

The crusades were with reason called “the Roman wars” because they were waged by the Pope of Rome. Although the actual fighting was undertaken by emperors and kings, 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 ineluctably expansionist and violent seal on western civilization.

The most successful of the crusades was the fifth, 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...”⁴³³

The crusades demonstrate how ostensibly good intentions can pave the way to hell. For 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” (Psalms 19.24). In the West, consciousness of the evil that lurks in even the justest of wars remained strong in the Orthodox period, as we see in the

⁴³⁰ Tyerman, op. cit., p. 538.

⁴³¹ The independence of the Cypriot Church was re-established after the Ottoman conquest in 1571. So it was the Muslims who came to the rescue, as it were, of the Orthodox, rescuing them from their greatest foes, the Roman Catholics!

⁴³² Fr. Panagiotes Carras, “Saint Neophytos of Cyprus and the Crusades”, <http://orthodoxyinfo.org/Saints/StNeophytos.htm>.

⁴³³ Bishop Nikolai Velimirovič, “The Life of St. Sava”, *Sabrana Dela* (Collected Works), vol. 12, Khimelstir, 1984, p. 589.

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...

23. THE MIRACLE OF THE HOLY FIRE

The seizure of Jerusalem by the Crusaders did not prevent the recurrence of the best-known miracle in the Orthodox Christian world, and one of immense significance to the present day: the descent of the Holy Fire on the Holy Sepulchre on Holy Saturday. Concerning this miracle, we have many witnesses down the ages.⁴³⁴

The following is the witness of the Russian Abbot Daniel, who visited the Holy Sepulchre between 1105 and 1107: “The following is a description of the Holy Light, which descends upon the Holy Sepulchre, as the Lord vouchsafed to show it to me, his wicked and unworthy servant. For in very truth I have seen with my own sinful eyes how that Holy Light descends upon the redeeming Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many pilgrims relate incorrectly the details about the descent of that Holy Light. Some say that the Holy Ghost descends upon the Holy Sepulchre in the form of a dove, others that it is lightning from heaven which kindles the lamps above the Sepulchre of the Lord. This is all untrue, for neither dove nor lightning is to be seen at that moment; but the Divine grace comes down unseen from heaven, and lights the lamps of the Sepulchre of our Lord. I will only describe it in perfect truth as I have seen it.

“On Holy Friday, after Vespers, they clean the Holy Sepulchre and wash all the lamps that are there; they fill the lamps with pure oil without water and after having put in the wicks, leave them unlighted they affix the seals to the Tomb at the second hour of the night. At the same time they extinguish all the lamps and wax candles in every church in Jerusalem. Upon that same Friday, at the first hour of the day, I, the unworthy, entered the presence of Prince Baldwin, and bowed myself to the ground before him. Seeing me, as I bowed, he bade me, in a friendly manner, come to him, and said, ‘What dost thou want, Russian abbot?’ for he knew me and liked me, being a man of great kindness and humility and not given to pride. I said to him, ‘My prince and my lord! for the love of God, and out of regard for the Russian princes, allow me to place my lamp on the Holy Sepulchre in the name of the whole Russian country.’ Then with peculiar kindness and attention he gave me permission to place my lamp on the Sepulchre of the Lord, and sent one of his chief retainers with me to the custodian of the Resurrection, and to the keeper of the keys of the Holy Sepulchre. The custodian and the keeper of the keys directed me to bring my lamp filled with oil. I thanked them, and hastened, with much joy, to purchase a very large glass lamp; having filled it with pure oil, I carried it to the Holy Sepulchre towards evening, and was conducted to the afore-mentioned keeper, who was alone in the chapel of the Tomb. Opening the sacred portal for me, he ordered me to take off my shoes; and then, having admitted me barefooted to the Holy Sepulchre, with the lamp that I bore, he directed me to place it on the Tomb of the Lord. I placed it, with my sinful hands, on the spot occupied by the sacred feet of our Lord Jesus Christ; the lamp of the Greeks being where the head lay, and that of St. Sabbas and all the monasteries

⁴³⁴ Haris Skarlakidis records seventy historical accounts between the fourth and the sixteenth centuries, as well as several more recent ones, in his book *Holy Fire*, Athens: Elea Publishing, 2015.

in the position of the breast; for it is the custom of the Greeks and of the Monastery of St. Sabbas to place their lamps there each year. By God's grace these three lamps kindled on that occasion, but not one of those belonging to the Franks, which hung above, received the light. After having placed my lamp on the Holy Sepulchre, and after having adored and kissed, with penitence and pious tears, the sacred place upon which the body of our Lord Jesus Christ lay, I left the Holy Tomb filled with joy, and retired to my cell.

“On the morrow, Holy Saturday, at the sixth hour of the day, everyone assembles in front of the Church of the Holy Resurrection; foreigners and natives people from all countries, from Babylon, from Egypt, and from every part of the world, come together on that day in countless numbers; the crowd fills the open space round the church and round the place of the Crucifixion. The crush is terrible, and the turmoil so great that many persons are suffocated in the dense crowd of people who stand, unlighted tapers in hand, waiting for the opening of the church doors. The priests alone are inside the church, and priests and crowd alike wait for the arrival of the Prince and his suite; then, the doors being opened, the people rush in, pushing and jostling each other, and fill the church and the galleries, for the church alone could not contain such a multitude. A large portion of the crowd has to remain outside round Golgotha and the place of the skull, and as far as the spot where the crosses were set up; every place is filled with an innumerable multitude. All the people, within and without the church, cry ceaselessly, ‘Kyrie Eleison’ (Lord, have mercy upon us); and this cry is so loud that the whole building resounds and vibrates with it. The faithful shed torrents of tears; even he who has a heart of stone cannot refrain from weeping; each one, searching the innermost depths of his soul, thinks of his sins, and says secretly to himself, ‘Will my sins prevent the descent of the Holy Light?’ The faithful remain thus weeping with heavy heart; Prince Baldwin himself looks contrite and greatly humbled; torrents of tears stream from his eyes; and his suite stand pensively around him near the high altar, opposite the Tomb.

“Saturday, about the seventh hour, Prince Baldwin, with his suite, left his house, and, proceeding on foot towards the Sepulchre of our Lord, sent to the hospice of St. Sabbas for the abbot and monks of St. Sabbas; the abbot, followed by the monks, thereupon set out for the Holy Sepulchre, and I, unworthy, went with them. When we reached the Prince we all saluted him; he returned our salute and directed the abbot and me, the lowly one, to walk by his side, whilst the other abbots and the monks went in front, and the suite followed behind. We thus reached the western door of the Church of the Resurrection, but such a dense crowd obstructed the entrance that we could not get in. Prince Baldwin thereupon ordered his soldiers to disperse the crowd and open a way for us; this they did by clearing a lane to the Tomb, and we were able in this manner to pass through the crowd. We reached the eastern door of the Holy Sepulchre of the Lord, and the Prince, who came after us, took his post to the right, near the railing of the high altar, in front of the eastern door of the Tomb; at that spot there is a raised place for the Prince. The Prince ordered the Abbot of St. Sabbas to take up a position beyond the Tomb, with his monks and the orthodox priests; as for me, the lowly one, he directed me to place myself higher up, above the doors of the

Holy Sepulchre, in front of the high altar, so that I could see through the doors of the Tomb; these doors, three in number, were sealed up with the royal seal. The Latin priests stood by the high altar.

“At the eighth hour the Orthodox priests, who were over the Holy Sepulchre, with the clergy, monks, and hermits, commenced chanting the Vespers; and the Latins, by the high altar, began to mumble after their manner. Whilst all were thus singing I kept my place and attentively watched the doors of the Tomb. When they commenced reading the paroemia for Holy Saturday during the reading of the first lesson, the bishop, followed by the deacon, left the high altar, and going to the doors of the Tomb, looked through the grille, but, seeing no light, returned. When they commenced reading the sixth lesson of the paroemia, the same bishop returned to the door of the Holy Sepulchre, but saw no change. All the people, weeping, then cried out ‘Kyrie Eleison’ which means, “Lord, have mercy upon us!” At the end of the ninth hour, when they commenced chanting the Canticle of the passage (of the Red Sea), ‘Cantabo Domino,’ a small cloud, coming suddenly from the east, rested above the open dome of the church; fine rain fell on the Holy Sepulchre, and wet us and all those who were above the Tomb. It was at this moment that the Holy Light suddenly illuminated the Holy Sepulchre, shining with an awe-aspiring and splendid brightness. The bishop, who was followed by four deacons, then opened the doors of the Tomb, and entered with the taper of Prince Baldwin so as to light it first at the Holy Light; he afterwards returned it to the Prince, who resumed his place, holding, with great joy, the taper in his hands. We lighted our tapers from that of the Prince, and so passed on the flame to everyone in the church.

“This Holy Light is like no ordinary flame, for it burns in a marvellous way with indescribable brightness, and a ruddy colour like that of cinnabar. All the people remain standing with lighted tapers, and repeat in a loud voice with intense joy and eagerness: ‘Lord, have mercy upon us!’ Man can experience no joy like that which every Christian feels at the moment when he sees the Holy Light of God. He who has not taken part in the glory of that day will not believe the record of all that I have seen. It is only wise, believing men who will place complete trust in the truth of this narrative, and who will hear with delight all the details concerning the holy places. He who is faithful in little will also be faithful in much; but to the wicked and incredulous the truth seems always a lie. God and the Holy Sepulchre of our Lord bear witness to my stories and to my humble person; so do my companions from Russia...”⁴³⁵

The Miracle of the Descent of the Holy Fire has continued in the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem every Holy Saturday to the present day....

But in one year it descended outside the Holy Sepulchre. The story was recounted by a monk Parthenios, who visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 1846: "At the Great Gates themselves, on the left side, stands a column made

⁴³⁵ Abbot Daniel, in C.W. Wilson, *The Pilgrimage of the Russian Abbot Daniel in the Holy Land* 1106- 1107: A. D., London, 1888.

out of marble with a fissure from which the grace, that is, the Holy Fire, came forth. This column is honored by Orthodox as well as non-Orthodox, and even the Armenians. I would like to write a little about this incident, how the Orthodox Eastern Christians unanimously speak of it and the Turks themselves confirm it. In the wall there is an inscribed marble slab, and they say that this very incident is written on it; but we could not read it because it is written in Syrian letters, in the Arab tongue; and I only heard about it, but did not read it. But the incident happened [in 1579] something like this: At one time when the Greeks were completely oppressed by the Turkish yoke, some rich Armenians took it into their heads to force the Greeks out of the Holy Sepulchre and out of the Church of the Resurrection. They gathered a large sum of money and bribed the Ottoman Porte and all the Jerusalem authorities, assuring the unbelievers that the Holy Fire comes forth not simply for the sake of the Greeks, but for all Christians, and "if we Armenians are there, we also will receive it!" And the Turks, who are greedy for money, accepted the bribe and therefore did as the Armenians wished, and they affirmed that only the Armenians would be allowed to receive the Holy Fire. The Armenians rejoiced greatly and wrote to all their lands and to their faithful, that more of them should go on a pilgrimage. And a great multitude of them did come. Holy Saturday approached: the Armenians all gathered in the church, and the Turkish army drove the poor Greeks out. Oh, what unspeakable grief and sorrow filled the Greeks! There was only one comfort for them -- the Grave of the Saviour, and they were being kept away from it, and the Holy Gates were locked to them! The Armenians were inside the church and the Orthodox were on the streets. The Armenians were rejoicing and the Greeks were weeping. The Armenians were celebrating and the Greeks were bitterly lamenting! The Orthodox stood opposite the Holy Gates on the court and around them stood the Turkish army, watching so that there would not be a fight. The Patriarch himself with all the rest stood there with candles, hoping that they would at least receive the Fire from the Armenians through the window. But the Lord wished to dispose things in a different way, and to manifest His true Faith with a fiery finger and comfort His true servants, the humble Greeks. The time had already come when the Holy Fire issues forth, but nothing happened. The Armenians were frightened and began to weep, and ask God that He send them the Fire; but the Lord did not hear them. Already a half hour had passed and more, and still no Holy Fire. The day was clear and beautiful; the Patriarch sat to the right side. All of a sudden there was a clap of thunder, and on the left side the middle marble column cracked and out of the fissure a flame of fire came forth. The Patriarch arose and lit his candles and all the Orthodox Christians lit theirs from his. Then all rejoiced, and the Orthodox Arabs from Jordan began to skip and cry out, "Thou art our one God, Jesus Christ; one is our True Faith, that of the Orthodox Christians!" And they began to run about all of Jerusalem and raise a din, and to shout all over the city. And to this day they still do this in memory of the incident and they jump and shout, running around the Holy Sepulchre, and they praise the one true God, Jesus Christ, and bless the Orthodox Faith. Beholding this wonder, the Turkish army, which was standing around on guard, was greatly amazed and terrified. From amongst them one named Omir [other places written as Tounom the Emir], who was standing at the St. Abraham's Monastery on guard, immediately believed in Christ and shouted, "One is the

true God, Jesus Christ; one is the true faith, that of the Orthodox Christians!" And he jumped down to the Christians from a height of more than 35 feet. His feet landed on the solid marble as if though on soft wax. And to this day one can see his footprints imprinted as though in wax, although the non-Orthodox tried to erase them. I saw them with my own eyes and felt them with my own hands. And the column with the fissure still bears the scorch marks. As for Omir the soldier, having jumped down, he took his weapon and thrust it into the stone as though into soft wax, and began to glorify Christ unceasingly. For this, the Turks beheaded him and burned his body; the Greeks gathered up his bones, put them into a case and took them to the Convent of the Great Panagia, where they gush forth fragrance until this day."⁴³⁶

⁴³⁶ Text provided by Protopresbyter James Thornton of California.

24. THE NEW UNDERSTANDING OF LAW

The Gregorian revolution, if it was to be permanent, required a legal underpinning. For “the order defined by the Roman Church was one that consciously set itself against primordial customs..., or ephemeral codes drawn up on the whims of kings, or mildewed charters. Only one law could maintain for the entirety to Christendom the ties of justice and charity that bound together a properly Christian society: ‘the eternal law, that creates and rules the universe’. This was not an order that could be administered by priests alone...”⁴³⁷

The impetus to acquiring this law was given by Pope Gregory VII 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 or 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.”⁴³⁸

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

⁴³⁷ Holland, *Dominion*, London: Abacus, 2019, p. 220.

⁴³⁸ Siedentop, *Inventing the Individual*, London: Penguin, 2014, p. 212.

law would have to be very wide-ranging, with major inroads into what, in both East and West to that time, 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).

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, testaments, adultery, divorce, perjury, usury and homicide. Little wonder that at times civil lawyers felt their domain was under threat..."⁴³⁹

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."⁴⁴⁰ The *Decretum* was bound to be revolutionary because it assumed to itself an authority higher – because more God-given – than any existing code of laws with a new supreme law-giver, the Pope. The question was: would the other lawgivers accept it?

The other question was: how were the discordances in the canons to be made concordant? "Gratian and his colleagues," writes Holland, "had two recourses. There was the guidance provided by scripture, and by the Church fathers – men such as Irenaeus, and Origen, and Augustine. Yet even these authorities did not provide Gratian with what Muslim lawyers had long taken for granted: a comprehensive body of written rulings supposedly deriving from God himself. No Christians had ever had such a resource. God, as they believed, wrote his rulings on the human heart. Paul's authority on this score was definitive. The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. Here, for Gratian, was the foundation-stone of justice. So important to him was the command that he opened the *Decretum* by citing it. Echoing the Stoics as much as Paul had done, he opted to define it as natural law – and the key to fashioning a properly Christian legal system. All souls were equal in the eyes of God. Only if it were founded on this assumption could justice truly be done. Anything obstructing it had to go. 'Enactments, whether ecclesiastical or secular, if they were proved to be contrary to natural law, must be totally excluded.'

"Much flowed from this formulation that earlier ages would have struggled to comprehend. Age-old presumptions were being decisively overturned: that custom was the ultimate authority; that the great were owed a different justice

⁴³⁹ Siedentop, op. cit., p. 213.

⁴⁴⁰ Comby, op. cit., p. 138.

from the humble; that inequality was something natural, to be taken for granted. Clerks trained in Bologna were agents of revolution as well as of order. Legally constituted, university-trained, they constituted a new breed of professional. Gratian, by providing them with both a criterion and a sanction for weeding out objectionable customs, had transfigured the very understanding of law. No longer did it exist to uphold the differences in status that Roman jurists and Frankish kings alike had always taken for granted. Instead, its purpose was to provide justice to every individual, regardless of rank, or wealth, or lineage – for every individual was equally a child of God.

“Gratian, by inscribing this conviction into the *Decretum*, had served to set the study of law upon a new and radical course. The task of a canon lawyer, like that of a gardener, was never done. The weeds were always sprouting, always menacing the flowers. Unlike the great corpus of Roman law, which scholars in Bologna regarded as complete and therefore immutable, canon law was oriented to the future as well as to the past. Commentaries on the *Decretum* worked on the assumption that it could always be improved. To cite an ancient authority might also require reflection on how best to provide it with legal sanction in the here and now. How, for instance, were the Christian people to square the rampant inequality with the insistence of numerous Church Fathers that ‘the use of all things should be common to all’? The problem was one that, for decades, demanded the attention of the most distinguished scholars in Bologna. In 1200, half a century after the completion of the *Decretum*, a solution had finally been arrived at – and it was one fertile with implications for the future. A starving pauper who stole from a rich man did so, according to a growing number of legal scholars, *iure naturali* – ‘in accordance with natural law’. As such, they argued, he could not be reckoned guilty of a crime. Instead, he was merely taking what was properly owed him. It was the wealthy miser, not the starving thief, who was the object of divine disapproval. Any bishop confronted by such a case, so canon lawyers concluded, had a duty to ensure that the wealthy pay their due of alms. Charity, no longer voluntary, was being rendered a legal obligation.

“That the rich had a duty to give to the poor was, of course, a principle as old as Christianity itself. What no one had thought to argue before, though, was a matching principle: that the poor had an entitlement to the necessities of life. It was – in a formulation increasingly deployed by canon lawyers – a human ‘right.’

“Law, in the Latin West, had become an essential tool of its ongoing revolution...”⁴⁴¹

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Larry Siedentop makes essentially the same point: “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

⁴⁴¹ Holland, *Dominion*, pp. 221-223.

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...

"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, modelling 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..."⁴⁴²

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 pre-schism 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 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 aims; even slavery – notoriously, according to liberal thinkers – remained virtually untouched as an institution, although Christians were encouraged 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, but dispensed with its conservatism and traditionalism. For the hierarchy was now quite different in kind. Now it was a despotism with the Pope as the despot, and all men, including kings, had to be his subjects if they wanted to be saved.

⁴⁴² Siedentop, op. cit., pp. 216-217, 218, 219.

Too late did the Christians of the West learn 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 the city of Rome herself, where from the 1140s the Roman commune was looking for support *against* papist absolutism and for the authority of the Holy Roman Emperor.

In fact, lawyers were able to extract from Justinian's *Digest* a *lex regia*, according to which "every right and every power of the Roman people" was transferred to the emperor, thereby undermining papal absolutism...

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'." ⁴⁴³

⁴⁴³ Charles Davis, op. cit. pp. 87-88, 88-89.

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...”⁴⁴⁴

Political revolution had found its “canonical” justification...

So had foreign offensive wars. 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...”⁴⁴⁵

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An alternative understanding of law was to be found in England... Thanks to the exceptional power (by medieval standards) of her Norman-Angevin kings, England was able to evolve a specifically English institution known as the Common Law that is still prevalent today in the world’s Anglophone countries. Thus King Henry II (1154-1189) ruled not only England, but also Normandy, Anjou and Aquitaine.

In addition to his extensive possessions in France, “within the British Isles,” as Simon Schama writes, Henry “turned out to be a true imperialist, pushing English power, for the first time since the Conquest, across its old borders, across the Irish Sea to Leinster and reducing the king of Scotland into a humiliated vassal.

“Henry would prove to be a zealous dispenser of justice. During his reign there was a decisive and irreversible shift away from baronial courts to royal courts. Any freeman might appeal from the lord’s local jurisdiction or simply demand that their case be heard before the king’s justice. A ‘jury’ of twelve, begun informally and selectively in Aethelred II’s reign, now became the norm for trying many such cases, so that justice ceased to be an extension of the unequal social order and was, instead, an obligation of the king’s state. That was the principle, at any rate. In reality, of course, the criterion of ‘freeman’ necessary to have access to this ‘common law’ excluded the vast number of those peasants – villeins and cottars – who were legally tied to the lord of their manor and subject to the law

⁴⁴⁴ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*.

⁴⁴⁵ Riley-Smith, op. cit., p. 93.

of his court. Nonetheless, it was still an immeasurable advance on the feudal monopoly of justice common elsewhere in baronial Europe..."⁴⁴⁶

"Under the Anglo-Saxons," writes Robert Tombs, "law had been fairly uniform in its main lines, and decentralized in its enforcement, through sheriffs, shire courts and collective self-policing through tithings, oath-taking and sworn local juries who identified criminals. After 1066 the Normans introduced complications – different laws for French and English, now forest law, Church courts using canon law, courts under the jurisdiction of local lords, and trial by combat. The Anglo-Saxon system continued too, including the sheriffs and county courts, the tithings, and the use of ordeals (by ducking in water or by carrying a hot iron) by which God signalled who was in the right. As before the Conquest, if locals could not cope, the king's men might intervene in a brief flurry of savagery: in Leicestershire, in 1124, 'they hanged... more thieves than had ever been hanged before... in all forty-four men in that little time; and six men were blinded and castrated.' Usually, however, locals literally did it themselves: in one recorded case from the 1170s a Bedfordshire man got his next-door neighbour convicted (wrongfully) of stealing from his house, and did the blinding and castrating in person.

"Henry II's drive for law and order saw the introduction in the 1160s of travelling royal judges, who were increasingly professional lawyers, on 'eyres' (journeys) to hear some case involving the Crown, and in the 1170s permanent royal courts began to sit at Westminster, developing standardized 'writs' (court orders in the king's name) to initiate a range of procedures before royal judges. Writs were the basis of the system, and could be purchased for a modest sum by any plaintiff to summon an adversary before a royal court. Thus originated in practice as well as in theory the universal primacy of royal justice: the Common Law. It was gradually extended to cover every place and every free layman within the kingdom, irrespective of ethnicity. The unfree (serfs or villeins) did not have equal access to royal courts, particularly as concerned land tenure; but royal courts decided in disputed cases whether a man was free or serf. In serious criminal matters, moreover, royal justice extended even to the unfree, because Henry extended 'the King's Peace' to cover 'all times, the whole realm, all men'. This contrasted with much of Europe, where what is commonly called the 'feudal revolution' fragmented jurisdiction. A long-term divergence also began between English and Continental legal principles. In Europe, law would either remain local, a patchwork of differing customs, or become transnational by borrowing Roman law enshrined in the Code of Justinian (AD 530). The English Common Law was the first national system of law in Europe. It was a hybrid of Anglo-Saxon and Norman customs and Roman theories, using French terms and concepts – debt, contract, heir, trespass, court, judge, jury – and (until 1731) keeping records in Latin. It was primarily concerned with land rights, based on the careful recording of precedents set by the decisions of judges who, to a large extent, laid down the law as they went along. This practice was formalized in the first great book of law in use for at least three centuries: 'Bracton', traditionally

⁴⁴⁶ Schama, *A History of Britain 1*, London: BBC Publications, 2014, p. 114.

attributed to one of Henry III's judges, Henry of Bratton (d. 1268), and based on the compilation of precedents. Thus the Common Law evolved over time, rather than deriving from a single code, as Roman law did.

"Henry's policy of asserting the legal rights of the Crown did not make him popular. Eyres were sudden, frightening descents that not only tried legal cases, but generally asserted royal power, including by aggressive imposition of higher taxes and feudal exactions. Mere suspicion brought ordeal by water or hot iron. Royal justice also led to a clash with the Church, when in the Constitutions of Clarendon (1164) Henry legislated for political control over the Church, including royal jurisdiction over those clergy (and bogus clergy) who committed crimes. This caused an angry breach with his close friend and trusted chancellor, Thomas Becket, whom he had made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162, and who had unexpectedly become an intransigent defender of ecclesiastical privilege. Their trial of strength culminated in Becket's murder on 29 December 1170 in Canterbury Cathedral.

"... The murder caused international outrage, from which the French court naturally tried to profit, urging the Pope to draw 'the sword of St. Peter'. But moderation prevailed: Henry was allowed to perform seemingly heartfelt acts of repentance in 1174, including being flogged by the monks of Canterbury. The capture the very next day of the king of Scots, who had invaded England, proved divine approval: William I 'the Lion' was taken 'shackled under the belly of a horse' to make formal submission to Henry. The dispute between king and clergy ended in a compromise that Becket's unbending sanctity had prevented: the clergy (and those claiming to be such) won certain legal immunities until the Reformation and vestiges remained even until 1827."⁴⁴⁷

The murder of Becket raised the question: what was the relationship of the king to the Church and to the law...

"Classical Roman law," writes K. 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

⁴⁴⁷ Tombs, op. cit., pp. 67-69.

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 Law of God to suit their master, the anti-Orthodox pope. For, as Pennington writes, "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..."⁴⁴⁸

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.

⁴⁴⁸ Pennington, "1. Law, legislative authority, and theories of government, 1150-1300", *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350 – c. 1450*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 426-427.

25. THE KINGDOM OF SICILY

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 jure*, 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.”⁴⁴⁹

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. Therefore 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 tended to imitate it. And so, as Siedentop writes, “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 given 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

⁴⁴⁹ Pennington, op. cit., pp. 432-433.

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..."⁴⁵⁰

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.

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

⁴⁵⁰ Siedentop, op. cit., pp. 259, 260-261.

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.”⁴⁵¹

And so, “whether out of genuine feeling, or as a tactical device against Rome, [Roger] flirted with Greek Orthodoxy.”⁴⁵² Unfortunately, however, he remained

⁴⁵¹ Abulafia, *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor*, London: Pimlico, 2002, pp. 33, 34-35.

⁴⁵² Richard Cavendish “The Death of Roger II of Sicily”, *History Today*, February, 2003, p. 49.

in the Latin church and was almost the last western ruler who even contemplated returning to the Orthodox faith.⁴⁵³ But his real religion was neither Orthodoxy nor Catholicism, but syncretistic ecumenism...

“One of Norman Sicily’s most enduring contributions to Christendom was as a channel by which Arab (and, through the Arabs, classical Greek) scientific, geographic, astronomic and medical knowledge was conveyed to the West. Roger II actively fostered this interest in learning. The Arab scholar al-Edrisi dedicated his major geographical treatise to Roger, his patron and friend. It offers a wealth of topographical information, much of it strikingly accurate. [In it he wrote: “The earth is round like a sphere.”]”⁴⁵⁴

Being ruler of an island composed of three cultures: Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim, Roger’s solution to the problem of uniting his people was to embrace ecumenism, 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, Roger “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 ‘Latins’ 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?

“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 *basileus*, *malik* or *rex* did not, but the image of the king conveyed a very different meaning to the loyal Greek minister, the fervent

⁴⁵³ 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.

⁴⁵⁴ Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 223.

Muslim who rejected Christian rule, and the backwoods Latin baron who despised the sophisticated culture of the court."⁴⁵⁵

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Rome continued to be defied by the kings of Sicily, who continued to break the mould of medieval kingship. Their most famous and powerful representative after Roger was Frederick II Hohenstaufen (1194-1250), who, besides being king of Sicily, was Holy Roman Emperor, and wanted to extend his territories beyond Germany and Sicily into the Italian lands in between.

"He was raised in Sicily," writes Montefiore, "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 sultan's 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.

"Yet he was actually an effective and ruthless politician with a clear vision of his own role as universal Christian emperor..."⁴⁵⁶

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 between emperor and pope lay the question of who would dominate Christendom: pope or emperor. With each side buoyed up by a messianic belief in its 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..."⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁵ Johns, "The Language of Islamic Art", *Oxford Today*. Vol. 17, N 3, Trinity, 2005, p. 13. Cf. John Julius Norwich, *Sicily*, London: John Murray, 2015, chapter 4.

⁴⁵⁶ Montefiore, *Titans of History*, p. 144.

⁴⁵⁷ Montefiore, *Titans of History*, pp. 145-146. For more on this extraordinary man, see John Julius Norwich, *Sicily*, London: John Murray, 2015, chapter 6.

26. TALMUDISM AND CABALISM

The Middle Ages saw a resurgence of Jewish influence in Western Europe and the Islamic Middle East, but not in Orthodox Eastern Europe. Perhaps the most influential Jew in the Islamic Middle East (he worked as a physician and philosopher in Morocco and Egypt) was Moses Maimonides (1135-1204). As Michael Hoffman writes, Maimonides, “the supreme arbiter of rabbinic law in the Ashkenazic world,” “devoted twelve years to extracting every decision and law from the Talmud of Babylon and arranging them into fourteen systematic volumes. The work was completed in 1180 as the *Mishneh Torah*.

“In the *Mishneh Torah*, Moses Maimonides taught in ‘Avodat Kochavim’ chapter 10, ‘Show no mercy to a non-Jew.’

“He gave the following example: ‘If we see a non-Jew being swept away or drowning in the river, we should not help him. If we see that his life is in danger, we should not save him.’

“Maimonides also taught that Christians should, under the proper circumstances, be killed. The ‘proper circumstances’ are predicated on Rabbi Maimonides’ situation ethics: when Talmudists are powerfully dominant over *goyim* then worshippers of Jesus can be executed.

“This is the foundation of Rabbi Maimonides’ ruling on when Jewish doctors may refuse to treat non-Jewish patients: when Jews are sufficiently supreme in a nation that the refusal to treat will not result in repercussions and reprisals from *goyim*, who would be too cowed to retaliate in a nation where Jewish supremacy was nearly total. It is instructive to observe that Maimonides in *Mishneh Torah*, Sefer Ha-Mada, Aoda Zara 10: 1-2, ruled that *goyim* not currently at war with Israel should neither be actively killed, nor saved from death: ‘It is prohibited both to save them from dying and to kill them.’...

“[He] created a justification for white slave-holders and slave-traders (both Judaic and Christian) to enslave black people for life and treat them as chattels (animals). Maimonides performed this service for the slave trade in his seminal text, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, which is celebrated throughout the western world (his image hangs in a place of honor in the halls of Congress and numerous buildings in the United States are named for him). In *The Guide of the Perplexed*, this ‘illustrious’ rabbi taught that black people are ‘irrational animals’ who are situated halfway between the ape and the human...”⁴⁵⁸

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

⁴⁵⁸ Hoffman, “What does Rabbinic Judaism Say about What Makes Jews and Gentiles Different?” *Revisionist History*, 111, October-November, 2020, pp. 4, 6.

capital in the West (excluding Spain, which was called “Sepharad”, literally “the East” because it was the domain of the Sephardic Jews), 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...⁴⁵⁹

Possibly the most celebrated financier and usurer of his time was Aaron of Lincoln (d. c. 1186), “who made no secret either of his prosperity or his pride in the material success he had worked to achieve. A financial giant and real-estate magnate, he had apparently boasted about his extensive financial support of the large monastery of St. Albans, north of London. When he died he was possibly the wealthiest person in England, and his investments and holdings were so vast that it was necessary to create a special branch of the Exchequer, the *Scaccarium Aaronis*, to sort out his estate. The task took almost five years...”⁴⁶⁰

The Jews were propelled westward by two disasters they suffered in the East: the destruction of the Jewish Khazar kingdom by the Russians under Great Prince Sviatoslav 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”.⁴⁶¹

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 the Old Testament, *ordered* them to be alien and hostile to all non-Jews. The Talmud’s dietary laws and taboos made it very difficult for them to integrate into Gentile society, 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 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.

A more theological explanation of the alienation was given by Bernard of Clairvaux (who wrote against the pogroms): “The Jews are for us the living words

⁴⁵⁹ Norman Cantor, *The Sacred Chain*, London: Fontana, 1995, chapter six.

⁴⁶⁰ M.J. Cohen and John Major, *History in Quotations*, London: Cassell, 2004, p. 178.

⁴⁶¹ David Vital, *A People Apart: The Jews in Europe, 1789-1939*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 32.

of Scripture, for they remind us of what our Lord suffered. They are dispersed all over the world so that by expiating their crime they may be everywhere the living witness of our redemption... Under Christian princes they endure a hard captivity, but 'they only wait for the time of their deliverance'. Finally, we are told by the Apostle that when the time is ripe all Israel shall be saved..."⁴⁶²

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.⁴⁶³ 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 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

⁴⁶² Bernard of Clairvaux, in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 179.

⁴⁶³ Halevy is also considered a great medieval forerunner of twentieth-century Zionism (Cantor, op. cit., p. 143). (V.M.)

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 troubadours 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.⁴⁶⁴ 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 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 spravedlivosti* (*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’,

⁴⁶⁴ 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, Wurtemberg and Nuremberg, in 1540 from Sardinia and Naples, and in 1551 from Bavaria. (V.M.)

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 Laval 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."⁴⁶⁵

Most civilized people of European education have rejected the so-called "blood libel" as evidence of the most extreme anti-semitism. But a study of the Talmud shows that there is plenty of evidence for the most murderous anti-Gentilism in the Jews' most sacred book...

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Talmudic Judaism is not a dogmatic religion. The accent is on works, not faith. As Tikhomirov points out, "Christianity says: you must believe in such-and-such a truth and on the basis of that you must do such-and-such. New Judaism says: you can believe as you like, but you have to do such-and-such. But this is a point of view that annihilates man as a moral personality..."⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁵ Tikhomirov, *Religioznie-Filosofskie Osnovy Istorii (The Religious-Philosophical Foundations of History)*, Moscow, 1997, pp. 348-353.

⁴⁶⁶ Tikhomirov, *op. cit.*, pp. 379, 380.

As Paul Johnson writes, "They never adopted, for example, the idea of Original Sin. Of all the ancient peoples, the Jews were perhaps the least interested in death..."

"It is significant, indeed, that whereas the Christians started to produce credal formulations very early in the history of the Church, the earliest Jewish creed, listing ten articles of faith, was formulated by Saadiah Gaon (882-942)... If we discount their fierce opposition to the main tenets of Christianity, Judaism is not so much about doctrine – that is taken for granted – as behaviour; the code matters more than the creed."⁴⁶⁷

This adogmatism is taken as an advantage by some. But it meant that the religion was vulnerable to infiltration by rationalism, on the one hand, and magic, on the other...

Jewish rationalism is rooted in the Talmud and magic – in the 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..."⁴⁶⁸

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As for the Cabala, Nesta Webster writes that it "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

⁴⁶⁷ Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, London: Phoenix, 1995, pp. 161, 162.

⁴⁶⁸ Platonov, *Ternovij Venets Rossii* (Russia's Crown of Thorns), Moscow, 1998, p. 137.

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..."⁴⁶⁹

How could this paganism ever have entered the rigorously anti-pagan religion of Judaism? The pro-semitic 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..."⁴⁷⁰

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.

⁴⁶⁹ Webster, *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements*, The Christian Book Club of America, 1924, pp. 12-13. Further evidence for paganism in modern Judaism is the adoption of the Babylonian Fast of Tammuz as one of the two main fasts of the synagogue year, though condemned by the Prophet Ezekiel (Elizabeth Dilling, *The Jewish Religion: Its Influence Today*, The Noontide Press, 1963).

⁴⁷⁰ Johnson, op. cit., p. 196.

“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 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...”⁴⁷¹

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a conflict arose in Jewry between the rationalists, led by Maimonides, who rejected the paganism of the Cabala, and the “mystics”, led by Nahmanides, who accepted it. Maimonides 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 Guadalajara, 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

⁴⁷¹ Tikhomirov, op. cit., pp. 241-243.

question, except the plain one that *Zohar-Cabalah* is heresy of the most pernicious kind..."⁴⁷²

"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...

Let us look more closely at the wider rationalist project, undertaken by both Jews and Muslims, in which Maimonides was involved. This, "the great philosophical debate of the time", as Andrew Marr calls it, "pitted radical political thinkers against the religiously orthodox. It was spearheaded by the Persian Avicenna, who tried to reconcile faith with the rationalist Greek philosophy of Aristotle. Writing from the 1020s onward, he distinguished between a remote, eternal Creator on the one hand and a complex day-to-day world of cause and effect, which he felt could be investigated and understood on its own terms. He suggested that God had simply set up the world, then had largely left it to follow its course, under rules that mankind could discover."

This philosophy looks forward to the Deist philosophy of eighteenth-century England, and "was an invitation to the curious and determined, but it depended on a passive and remote version of God which was not that of Muslim thinkers: their God [like the Christian God] was deeply and busily engaged in the world. The most famous of these orthodox thinkers, al-Ghazali, writing in the latter part of the eleventh century, lashed Avicenna in a book splendidly entitled *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*. But he in turn was attacked by Averroës, who also distinguished between the world of eternity outside time, which was where God existed, and the seek-by-week, colourful, smelly world of cause and effect, explained by Aristotle.⁴⁷³ Like Avicenna, he was creating a space for human reason and imagination – a bubble in which enlightenment could thrive inside a universe made by God... It was an invitation to think again, a battle-cry against passively leaving everything to God's will. Averroës felt this as a personal challenge. It was a hot argument. One of his key works, hitting back at al-Ghazali, has an even better title: *The Incoherence of Incoherence*.

"Averroës, though commissioned to think radically by an Andalusian Caliph, pushed things so far that he was banished from Cordoba in 1195 and his writings were burned. But translated into Latin, and discovered later by Christians as they seized Muslim strongholds, they would hugely influence the West. The historian Jonathan Lyons says that he gave Europe 'a thoroughly rationalist approach to philosophy that changed forever the landscape of Western thought. This put

⁴⁷² Johnson, op. cit., pp. 198-199.

⁴⁷³ Averroës was a strong proponent of Aristotelianism; he attempted to restore what he considered the original teachings of Aristotle and opposed the Neoplatonist tendencies of earlier Muslim thinkers, such as Al-Farabi and Avicenna. He also defended the pursuit of philosophy against criticism by Ashari theologians such as Al-Ghazali. Averroës argued that philosophy was permissible in Islam and even compulsory among certain elites. He also argued scriptural text should be interpreted allegorically if it appeared to contradict conclusions reached by reason and philosophy." (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Averroes>)

Averroës almost five centuries ahead of Descartes... the West's traditional candidate for founder of modern philosophy.' Alongside him were ranked Avicenna but also Moses Maimonides, the Jewish Andalusian who took a similarly radical and challenging view of the bubble space in which man could reason and argue. These are men who deserve to be as well-known as Voltaire, Hume and Montesquieu.

"The flow of Arab and Andalusian philosophy into the Christian world had been unleashed by the capture of Toledo from al-Andalus in 1085, revealing a hoard of books and manuscripts from Cordoba and Baghdad. Scholars such as Duns Scotus brought Averroës and therefore Aristotle to a Christian audience. In Paris and Naples, the great Christian thinker Thomas Aquinas absorbed his style of argument and, while disagreeing about aspects of Aristotle, found the Andalusian a vital inspiration, one transmitted to Dante in Florence. These early Christian Aristotleans encountered just the same kind of resistance from popes and bishops as had Averroës and Maimonides from caliphs and imams. Islamic arguments about the nature of God and the scope for human reason to unlock nature were mirrored very closely, in early European universities, in debates between teachers and students at Paris, Bologna and Rome..."⁴⁷⁴

The relationship between the scientific causal nexus, the human mind and the will of God is customarily thought to be a very modern problem. Here we see, however, that it was already being discussed by medieval minds. Interestingly, the impetus came from Islamic thinkers, who conveyed it to heretical thinkers in the Christian West: the Christian East took no part in the debate, being content with the writings of the Holy Fathers of the first Christian millennium...

27. INNOCENT III AND MAGNA CARTA

In 1170, the English King Henry II ordered the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket. The resultant canonization of the archbishop as a martyr raised the prestige of the Church in its perennial struggle with the State, and the papacy was not slow to press its advantage. But there was to be a significant backlash...

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".⁴⁷⁵ Naturally, Innocent considered that the emperor was among those subject to him; for, "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 emperor and chose 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

⁴⁷⁴ Marr, *A History of the World*, London: Pan, 2012, pp. 200-201.

⁴⁷⁵ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Sovereignty: God, State, and Self*, New York: Bantam Books, 2008, p. 48.

enough: it had to be supplemented by the Pope's). But within a year he had excommunicated him...

Innocent's ambitions had been apparent already at his own 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."⁴⁷⁶ 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."⁴⁷⁷

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.

Innocent's next target was England, where the extraordinarily despotic behaviour of King John was causing scandals. According to Montefiore, 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."⁴⁷⁸

John's behaviour seemed to provide the papacy with a perfect excuse for what we would now call "regime change". However, the pope's intervention did not go quite according to his plan...

In 1207 Innocent consecrated Stephen Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury against the will of King John. John retaliated by plundering the revenues of the English Church. Innocent then placed the whole kingdom under interdict for six years. "No subject of the king could receive the sacrament of marriage or be buried in consecrated ground. John responded by seizing Church property, which led to his excommunication and eventual capitulation, in 1213, when he surrendered England itself to be a fiefdom of the pope."⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ De Rosa, op. cit., p. 67.

⁴⁷⁷ De Rosa, op. cit., p. 68.

⁴⁷⁸ Montefiore, *Titans of History*, p. 137.

⁴⁷⁹ Schama, op. cit., p. 141.

Meanwhile, the pope had suggested to King Philip Augustus of France that he invade and conquer England! (We may recall that Pope Alexander II had done something similar when he blessed William of Normandy to invade England in 1066...) However, John's capitulation to the pope "transformed John overnight from the most cursed to the most blessed of Christian rulers. Armed with the papal blessing, he made a final run at the aggressive Philip Augustus, but failed to be present in person at the battle of Bouvines in 1214, where his armies went down to disastrous defeat, sealing the doom of the Angevin empire."⁴⁸⁰ John now lost all his dominions in France. Moreover, in order to receive the pope's blessing he had been forced to provide full restitution of church funds and lands, the 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".⁴⁸¹

This enraged King Philip, however; for he was now ordered to abandon his preparations to invade England, in that England was now *papal* soil. Moreover, the abject surrender of John to the Pope, and the oath of fealty he had made to him, aroused the fears of the English barons. These fears, combined with John's despotic rule, led to the barons' imposing upon the king the famous *Magna Carta* of 1215.

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Magna Carta, writes Tombs, "has been called the first written national constitution in European history, though charters between rulers and ruled were not uncommon at the time in France, Catalonia, Germany, Normandy and indeed England. In important ways *Magna Carta* *was* unique, however. Its restraints on the Crown (though later claimed to be the 'gode olde law' of the Anglo-Saxons) were unprecedented and profound.

"They took the form of a contract between the monarch and the 'community of the realm' – 'everyone in our kingdom' – and it ascribed permanent rights and powers to that community, even its humblest members. It made clear that the king was under the law, and it planned a system (a council of twenty-five barons) to force him to obey it, with the whole community being bound by oath to help them. Consent by 'the common council of our realm' was required for taxation. *Magna Carta* was not, of course, egalitarian, - as Schama says, 'many of its prohibitions amounted to tax relief for the landed and armoured classes'⁴⁸², but it was inclusive, granted to 'all free men', and also giving to every man and woman without distinction the right to justice, protection from arbitrary demands for

⁴⁸⁰ Schama, op. cit., p. 141.

⁴⁸¹ De Rosa, op. cit., p. 71.

⁴⁸² Schama, op. cit., p. 141. (V.M.)

money, goods or labour, and protecting against forced marriage. It was permanent, applying 'in all things and places for ever'.⁴⁸³

Magna Carta set out the rights of the "free man": "No free man is to be arrested, or imprisoned, or disseised [deprived of his freehold], 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."⁴⁸⁴

"So if *Magna Carta* was not the birth certificate of freedom, it was the death certificate of despotism [until the reign of Henry VIII]. It spelled out for the first time, and unequivocally, something which the Angevins themselves, as the highest justices of the realm, could not conceivably quarrel: that the law was not simply the will or the whim of the king but was an independent power in its own right, and that kings could be brought to book for violating it – that they should, for example, show the cause why a person's body might be confined (*habeas corpus*) and not just declared to be detained at the inscrutable pleasure of the prince. All this, in turn, presupposed something hitherto unimaginable: that there was some sort of English 'state' of which the king was a part (albeit the supreme part) but not the whole..."⁴⁸⁵

If the barons had succeeded in binding the king to all its measures, writes David Starkey, *Magna Carta* "would have created a neo-republican government. It began as a thoroughly extremist programme before being edited and reaching common ground... [It] was designed to create a revolutionary regime."⁴⁸⁶

But it had the further profound effect of undermining *papal* power also.

Now Innocent III was in the process of consolidating his power at a Fourth Lateran Council. G. Dickson writes: "In his letter convoking the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, *Vineam Domini Sabaoth* (19 April 1213), Pope Innocent III sought the widest possible attendance of Church dignitaries, including, for the first time, representatives from the cathedral chapters. Abbots of the monastic orders and lay envoys of the secular powers were also urged to attend. Thus the primacy of Rome as the centre of *papal* Christendom was to be symbolized by an ecclesiastical parliament on an unprecedented scale.

"Besides the crucial issues of Church reform, the struggle against heresy, and the forthcoming crusade, the conciliar agenda also included such matters of ecclesiastical politics as the outcome of the German imperial election, the disputed primacy of the Spanish Church and the suspension of the Archbishop

⁴⁸³ Tombs, op. cit., p. 74.

⁴⁸⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna_Carta

⁴⁸⁵ Schama, op. cit., p. 142.

⁴⁸⁶ Starkey, "Magna Carta of 1215", *History Today*, May, 2015, p. 64.

of Canterbury. A further vexed question involved the rights of the Count of Toulouse in the territories won by the Albigensian Crusade..."⁴⁸⁷

The problem with *Magna Carta* from the papal point of view was that, although it constituted 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...⁴⁸⁸ Foreseeing this, Pope Innocent "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".

So the Pope, a spiritual despot, was defending the rights of John, a secular despot who was no friend of the Church, against the growing power of a latent democratism represented in *Magna Carta*...

However, at this point something unexpected happened. Archbishop Stephen Langton of Canterbury – who, we may remember, was the pope's, not the king's appointee – refused to publish Innocent's sentence against the charter. 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."⁴⁸⁹ We shall return to this concept of natural law, which presented a challenge to the papacy's claims of the greatest significance...

So *Magna Carta* undermined one-man rule both in the Church and the State; it set kings against their subjects, and kings against popes, and bishops against popes; it was, in short, a recipe for civil war.

⁴⁸⁷ Dickson, in Angus Mackay and David Ditchburn (eds.), *Atlas of Medieval Europe*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 119.

⁴⁸⁸ J.A. Watt, "Spiritual and Temporal Powers", *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, c. 350 – c. 1450, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 393.

⁴⁸⁹ De Rosa, op. cit., p. 72.

28. ENGLISH AND EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARISM

The idea of political freedom first arose in the context of the development of checks on royal power called *parliaments*...

W.M. Spellman writes: "Ideally, the medieval monarch was expected to 'live on his own' or manage the affairs of the kingdom on the basis of revenues derived from his estates and from his traditional feudal prerogatives. In such a context, monarchs who attempted to wrest monies from their leading subjects without their consent, or for purposes at odds with the priorities of the landed elite, found themselves locked in stalemate and in some cases facing direct resistance. Developing out of the feudal compact where the vassal's performance of specific services was exchanged for royal protection and the use of land, kings could not arbitrarily usurp the property rights of their leading subjects without serious consequences. Most often in the feudal setting the king called together his leading vassals in order to solicit their advice and support. These unpretentious meetings, alternatively called *colloquia*, *concilia*, *conventus*, *curiae* or *tractatus*, featured both fluid membership and varied agendas. And as financial, military, economic and administrative problems became more complex, larger and more structured assemblies were called by the monarch.

"Formal representative assemblies emerged in most European countries – Spain, Sicily, Hungary, England, France, the Scandinavian countries, various German principalities – during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries for a number of related reasons, but the key involved the need for monarchs to access sources of wealth not under their direct control as feudal lords. Increasingly after 1000 the cost of pursuing wider military objectives grew substantially across Europe. This was particularly true in the case of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century wars between England and France, where monarchs on both sides were pressed repeatedly to find additional sources of income.

"The word *parlamentum* was first coined in the thirteenth century, and by that time it was being applied to meetings of the unelected feudal council. Both the economic and social structures of European kingdoms were quite unique in comparison to the other major world civilizations, where nothing like Western parliaments ever emerged. Comparatively speaking, only in Europe were power and wealth distributed in a fairly diffuse fashion. The basic structure of medieval parliaments, including as they did representatives of clergy, nobles and commoners from towns and cities, was reflective of this important distribution of income and land. It was in this context that the English king's royal council, for example, normally composed of important churchmen and aristocrats, expanded during the course of the thirteenth century to include new urban elites for the purpose of gaining consent to special taxation."⁴⁹⁰

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⁴⁹⁰ Spellman, *Monarchies*, London: Reaktion Books, 2001, pp. 179-180.

Let us look more closely at this development in England, which, after 1066, was subjugated, not only politically and militarily, but also culturally and spiritually, to the harsh yoke of the Norman-papist conquerors. Only in the late thirteenth century do we see the beginning of a recovery of a specifically English consciousness. Through the mysterious workings of Divine Providence, France suffered retribution in this period for her conquest of the English land: the Norman and Plantagenet kings of England came to control vast tracts of land from Hadrian's Wall to the Pyrenees, including French Anjou and Aquitaine.

However, the power of the French-speaking Norman and Plantagenet kings of England came to be limited, as we have seen, by *Magna Carta*, whose consequences were both good and bad: a resurgence of English national consciousness, on the one hand, and civil war, on the other.

At the Battle of Lincoln in 1217, an Anglo-French rebellion led by Prince Louis of France against the infant King Henry III was defeated by a much smaller force under William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, which was followed, in August of the same year, by a great naval victory over the French at Sandwich.

This, as Sean McGlynn writes, "ended the 18-month French occupation of England and ensured that the English royal succession continued. There would be no Louis I of England."⁴⁹¹ French influence now declined while English national self-consciousness increased; and "by 1271," writes Thomas Asbridge, "the first history of England written in Old English, rather than Latin or French, had been penned. The days of the hybrid, cross-channel society were done..."⁴⁹²

However, continues Tombs, "the Englishness of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century elite was... very different from Englishness before 1066, whose culture there was no effort to rehabilitate or revive. Sir Lancelot replaced Beowulf as a literary hero. Relations with the outside world were transformed. England before 1066 had been on the defensive, and relations with island neighbours (despite their regular raids or invasions) had been generally cautious. The Norman Conquest made a crucial change. Before 1066 the kingdom served principally to defend the country... After 1066, England served to support largely absentee kings in their pursuit of external power. The Normans extended their conquest to the Celtic lands and entangled England in endless conflicts on the Continent. This was the real 'Norman Yoke'.

"Its burden created the embryo of a national polity: the *communitas regni* appealed to the Magna Carta and then again in the barons' revolt of 1258. This 'community of the realm' – ultimately everyone – united in asserting rights against their rulers, especially when those rulers treated England's interests as

⁴⁹¹ McGlynn, "The Battle that Saved England", *History Today*, November, 2017, p. 35.

⁴⁹² Asbridge, "The Battle that Gave Birth to Medieval England", *BBC History Magazine*, May, 2017, p. 26. Indeed, as Richard FitzNigel said in about 1178, "Nowadays, when English and Normans live close together and marry and give in marriage to each other, the nations are so mixed that it can scarcely be decided (I mean in the case of the freemen) who is of English birth and who of Norman." (in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 238)

secondary. As the barons protested to the Pope in 1258, 'a prince owes all his duty to God, very much to his country [*patria*], much to his family and neighbours, and nothing whatsoever to aliens.' Loyalty to the country could conflict with loyalty to the king, and a sense of foreign oppression became a feature of English identity.

"What was unique about England lies in the realm of politics: the early development, in response to Viking invasions, of a powerful kingdom occupying a defined territory, with a system of government in which a large part of the population participated, whether they liked it or not – through courts and juries, through tithings, through labour, taxation and military service, through the use of royal coins, and, for the powerful, through royal councils and parliaments. Some historians have suggested that this made England the prototype of the nation-state. Similar institutions to those in England had existed at times in other parts of Europe, particularly under the empire of Charlemagne, but they were swept away. In England they survived. Being a powerful and yet vulnerable kingdom, able to raise taxes and impose law and order, and yet, subject to disputed royal succession and foreign invasion, its kings needed the support of their people, and the people high and low needed to control the actions of their kings. Anglo-Saxon institutions, some of very ancient origin, were preserved and developed by the post-Conquest monarchy, which extended royal justice and created a Common Law. The country of Bede's *gens Anglorum* was never divided up into autonomous and warring feudal territories. Instead, the 'community of the realm' imposed the rule of law on its powerful and rapacious post-Conquest monarchs to a degree unique in Europe."⁴⁹³

In 1232 Henry III ascended the throne of England. "He had great visions," writes Tombs, "and wanted a government of his own men. He aimed to restore the personal power of the Crown and play a great role in Europe..."

"In 1258 seven leading barons secretly took an oath to bring the king under control. Their leader was Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, originally one of Henry's French entourage and his former governor of Aquitaine. He was the son of another Simon de Montfort, leader of the terrible Albigensian Crusade, which fifty years earlier had taken fire and sword to the Cathar heresy of southern France. Like his father, Simon II was a frightening figure: a great but impecunious and greedy *seigneur*, a man simultaneously racked by unbending religious fervor and rapacious personal ambition. Henry is supposed to have said to him, 'I fear thunder and lightning terribly, but by God's head I fear you more than all the thunder and lightning in the world.' The conspirators confronted the king at Oxford on 9 June to reform the state of the realm. From our viewpoint, both sides represent different mixtures of tradition and modernity. Henry stood for an ancient idea of absolute monarchy going back to the Romans – the barons consequently banned the teaching of Roman law. But his methods were 'modern' – using a professional bureaucracy. The barons demanded to exercise their traditional duty of advising the king; but in doing so they adopted radical ideas

⁴⁹³ Tombs, op. cit., pp. 81-83.

of communal rights. Their motives of course were complex and diverse – from resisting tax increases to restoring the peace of Christendom – but all agreed that the king must be restrained by his subjects. Magna Carta had said this, but Henry ignored it. Now the terms were to be tightened.

“Those who came to the Oxford parliament in June 1258 were asked to take an oath in the name of ‘le commun de Engleterre’. Communal oath-taking was an ancient practice. It had been done in 1205, when all males over twelve were ordered to take an oath to defend the kingdom against a possible French invasion, and in 1215, when an oath was taken to uphold Magna Carta. So *le commun* implied everyone, for all had a right and duty to take part in public affairs, at least in an emergency. This had sweeping consequences: the Provisions of Oxford, which Henry swore to accept, provided for elected committees to supervise the royal government, and for regular public ‘parlementz’. Moreover, Henry, as ‘king on Engleneloande’, promised this in English to his ‘loandes folk’, the people of the land – the first document issued in the king’s name in English since the Conquest.

“But in 1261 Henry, supported by the Pope and Louis IX of France, renounced the agreement. Armed conflict began in 1263, and at the battle of Lewes on 14 May 1264 Henry was taken prisoner. The *Song of Lewes* (a long Latin poem) asserted that ‘the community of the realm [*communitas regni*] should advise and let it be known what everyone [*universitas*] feels, for their own laws are most familiar to them... the customs of the realm passed down from father to son.’ The king’s son Edward escaped and raised an army. Montefort found support in London, among the clergy, lesser knights and landowners, and even among peasants. But clashes of interest and political complexities wore down rebel support. The two sides finally fought it out at Evesham on 4 August 1265, and the rebel army was crushed...”⁴⁹⁴

However, before his defeat, Simon brought not only bishops and barons, but also important burghers, into the king’s council. In 1265 he, convened the first English parliament at Westminster. And he introduced the idea – later abrogated – that if the king broke his contract with the leading men of the kingdom, they had the right take up arms against him.

“Our understanding of the importance of the drama of the 1260s turns upon the interpretation of words. Later generations saw it as a landmark in the history of Parliament, a high point in the history of English freedom. Was ‘le commun de Engleterre’ the beginning of ‘the Commons’, a summoning or representatives of the people to take part in government? Many French and Italian towns had *communes*, which were civic governments. But this one concerned the whole of England. The nearest English expression was ‘loandes folk’. However translated or interpreted, the sense was that everyone had some right and duty... Perhaps we could take this as another birth of England, as a formally recognized, if embryonic, political community. Or perhaps a rebirth. The Conquest distorted

⁴⁹⁴ Tombs, *op. cit.*, pp. 76, 78.

what has been called a constitutional tradition begun with the 'Angelecynnes witan': after 1066, when councils or parliaments met, they did so as the vassals of a foreign lord, not the representatives of a free nation. But after 1200, these councils took tentative steps towards identifying themselves as representatives of the whole community, in opposing the European priorities of their rules and the heavy taxes required to finance them. After a gap of 200 years, a common English political identity began to re-emerge..."⁴⁹⁵

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"Theories of 'representation' and 'consultation'," writes R. Oram, "appear in European writings from about 1000 together with the belief that consultation in government was natural and desirable. Early consultative assemblies were essentially enlarged royal councils, where matters touching the kingdom in general could be discussed. These were ill-defined bodies where membership was non-elective and 'representative' only in so far as the magnates who attended them were deemed to act on behalf of the wider populace. There was no suggestion that 'representation' derived from election, nor that it stemmed from any association with particular areas or social groups. In the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries the shifting burden of government, particularly of taxation, produced significant change in the range of consultation. Growing royal requirement for revenue to meet the costs of increasingly sophisticated government stimulated demands for wider consultation before the granting of taxation. Behind such developments lay recognition of the wealth and rising economic power of classes such as the townsmen and the royal desire to tap that wealth as a source of revenue.

"First evidence for a widening of representation in royal councils to include non-aristocratic or clerical members comes from Spain. There the process arose from Alfonso IX of Leon's search for broad popular support to strengthen his hold on his throne. To an extraordinary meeting of his curia at León in 1188 he summoned town representatives as well as the bishops and magnates, initiating the type of wide-based assemblies referred to as '*cortes*'. This innovation recognized the power which the wealth of the towns commanded and which the king sought to harness to his own needs, fiscal and political.

"In subsequent *cortes*, as at Benavente in 1202 or León in 1208, townsmen were summoned specifically to assent to a tax. Similar developments in Sicily under Frederick II were also tied to the levying of taxes, such as that granted in 1231 by a wide-based council, and the need to secure broad-based support to facilitate collection. Summonses to townsmen were again issued in 1232 and the practice had become so deep-rooted that in 1267 Pope Clement IV instructed Charles of Anjou to consult his subjects before raising a tax. The military and financial demands of the struggle with Frederick II on the papal lands led there to increased consultation over the issue of taxation, with negotiations in assemblies coming to be dominated by the townsmen. Within the empire proper, royal

⁴⁹⁵ Tombs, op. cit. p. 79.

power was considerably more circumscribed after the upheavals of the reign of Frederick II, but in the later thirteenth century under Rudolf I, regnal assemblies composed of men from all areas and social ranks were used as a means of re-establishing royal power through collective endorsement of legislation on a national level.

“Moves towards increased representation in England arose largely from conflict between crown and baronage in the early thirteenth century. At the root of the conflict were basic economic issues, taxation and lack of consultation, and in 1215 clauses of Magna Carta were devoted to resolving such matters. In England, however, although the principle of no taxation without the ‘common counsel’ of the realm was established, the scope of consultation was restricted at first to the nobility, and only from the late 1260s were the boroughs represented in parliament on a regular basis. Increased representation in France arose from a different response to the same issue of taxation. There the king was for long able to levy taxes with the assent of his usual restricted circle of advisers, without any attempt to widen membership or make it more representative. Instead, there were moves towards negotiations between separate social groups and royal officials. In the thirteenth century towns negotiating payment of taxation sent representatives to regional meetings, while the nobility and the Church treated separately.

“Despite the widening of the range of representation in royal assemblies throughout the thirteenth century there appears to have been no corresponding development of a theory of estates. Although society was seen as being composed of ‘orders’ there was no assumption that the orders needed separate representation. Moves towards divisions such as the three ‘estates’ of France, or the two ‘houses’ of parliament in England, although stemming from earlier circumstances, were largely developments of the fourteenth century...”⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁶ Oram, in Angus Mackay and David Ditchburn (eds.), *Atlas of Medieval Europe*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, pp. 127-128.

29. THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR

If a common English political identity began to re-emerge as a result of the struggle for the freedom of the common people, something similar may be said to have happened in France during the One Hundred Years war between England and France that began in the following century. As the French historian Jules Michelet writes, "The struggle against England did France a very great service by confirming and clarifying her sense of nationhood."⁴⁹⁷ A special role in this, of course, was played by Joan of Arc, the young woman called by God (as she thought) to bring Frenchmen to stop fighting each other and obey their lawful monarch in order to cast out the foreign invader. The long-term and paradoxical result was that, by the end of the Middle Ages, England and France emerged as the strongest and most coherent nation-states of Europe...

M. Jones writes: "The long-term causes of 'the Hundred Years War' (a description for the conflicts traditionally covering the years 1337–1453) lay in the claims of the king of France, following the treaty of Paris (1259), to sovereignty over the duchy of Guyenne (or Aquitaine), then held by his liege vassal, the king of England. Difficulties in implementing this complex treaty and subsidiary agreements (Amiens, 1279; Paris, 1303), allied to a more precise definition of sovereign rights, provoked conflict. In 1294 Philip IV declared Guyenne forfeit and invaded the duchy. Although peace was soon restored and diplomats tried to resolve the long-standing problems, these efforts failed as both sides became entrenched in their positions. In 1324 Guyenne was again confiscated and, although peace was agreed in 1327, the French handed back a diminished duchy (holding on to the Agenais) and demanded reparations. Nor was tension subsequently eased by the Process of Agen (1332). By now other causes intensified ill-feeling. The French alliance with Scotland, first formed in 1295, was renewed and resulted in French intervention in support of David Bruce and a series of English invasions of Scotland between 1332 and 1337. There was rivalry for allies in the Netherlands, where economic factors were important because of the staple Anglo-Flemish wool trade. At sea piracy and naval activities connected with French crusading plans further exacerbated bad relations.

"The extinction of the Capetian dynasty in the direct line (1328) was a turning point because it allowed Edward III to claim the Crown of France. At the time Philip of Valois, the nearest adult male claimant, was preferred as king. Edward, under the tutelage of Isabella and Mortimer, performed homage for his French lands. But after further efforts to resolve arguments over Guyenne, Edward undermined the basis on which Anglo-French relations had been predicated by claiming the Crown of France. This he did tentatively and momentarily in 1337, then more permanently from January 1340. This may have been pure expediency, but it has been pointed out that Edward's strategy up to 1360 suggests that he increasingly believed in his claim, even that the Crown was almost within his grasp following spectacular victories (Crécy, 1346; Poitiers, 1356). In any event,

⁴⁹⁷ Michelet, quoted in R.T. Howard, "Revolt in Madagascar, 70 Years On", *History Today*, April, 2017, p. 5.

once adopted, the title 'king of France' was incorporated into the royal style until George III renounced it in 1801, apart from 1360–9 when an attempt was made to implement the treaty of Brétigny (1360) which ended the first major phase of the war.

"If completed, this treaty would have given the English an enlarged and sovereign Guyenne, including Poitou, Saintonge, Périgord, Quercy and the Rouergue, vindicating Edward's resort to force. For, after a false start that brought little advantage by campaigning in the Low Countries and indeed led to bankruptcy, with the opening of the Breton succession war (1341–64) and campaigns in Normandy and Guyenne, the fame of English arms and chivalry spread throughout Europe. In 1359 Edward even prepared for his coronation at Reims but the failure of this campaign led to renewed negotiations with John II, captured at Poitiers, and to the partition of France in the treaty of Brétigny.

"Failure to implement this treaty led to a renewal of war in 1369. Charles V quickly won most of the lands his father lost, leaving English Guyenne reduced to a rump around Bordeaux and Bayonne. However, the effort to drive the English out completely proved to be beyond the means of a war-torn country. With bases at Calais, Cherbourg and Brest, and the alliance, uncertain though it often was, of French princes like the count of Flanders, duke of Brittany or king of Navarre, who held extensive lands in northern France, the English continued to maintain a presence. Moreover from the start both sides had involved their neighbours and war flared up elsewhere, notably after 1365 in the Iberian peninsula.

"The war developed a momentum of its own. Many participated for profit or excitement. From the 1340s both kings found it hard to control troops who recognized their distant authority. Parts of northern, central and southwestern France especially, although no area was entirely spared, suffered from a lawless soldiery. For a period in the 1350s and 1360s bands of English, Breton, Gascon, Navarrese, German and other mercenaries or *routiers* pursued private gain and formed the Great Companies which even tyrannized the pope at Avignon and defeated the duke of Bourbon at Brignais (1362). Civil wars in Flanders and Brittany or conflicts between powerful nobles added to the violence. Independent captains set up garrisons in districts

between zones of English or French allegiance and cruelly exploited the population. Uprisings like the Jacquerie (1358) or the Tuchinat from the 1360s were fuelled by the distress caused by the *routiers*. The same phenomenon affected widespread regions from the 1420s when the freebooters earned the name of 'flayers' (*écorcheurs*). It was in this form that many people experienced the reality of war; others were victims of the great *chevauchées* launched by the English; others suffered in the long sieges of which those of Calais (1346–7), Rennes (1356–7), St-Sauveur (1374–5), Rouen (1418–19) and Orléans (1428–9) are the best-known.

“The pattern of short campaigns or longer sieges interspersed with truces and negotiations, established from the first years of the war, most obviously shaped events from 1369 to 1415. If Richard II did not pursue with conviction the conflict he inherited but looked for peace (a twenty-eight-year truce came into force in 1398) and Henry IV was largely prevented from re-opening the war by revolts and illness, Henry V had few qualms about the justice of his cause. After his request that the terms of Brétigny be fulfilled was rejected, he launched the *chevauchée* that culminated in victory at Agincourt (1415). Thereafter, taking advantage of French divisions, he determined on a systematic conquest beginning with Normandy (1417–19). In 1419 the murder of John the Fearless, duke of Burgundy, drove his successor, Philip the Good, into an English alliance, delivered Paris to Henry and enabled him to attempt a novel solution to the war.

“If it can be argued that up to 1419 Henry worked within the Brétigny tradition of trying to obtain extensive territories in full sovereignty (for which the claim to the French Crown might be seen as a cloak), in 1420 he adopted a new approach. In the treaty of Troyes he came to terms with Queen Isabella and the Burgundians to disinherit the dauphin—the future Charles VII— and marry Catherine, daughter of Charles VI, thus settling the Crown on them and their issue and forming the double monarchy of England and France. The premature death of Henry, two months before that of Charles VI (1422), leaving the infant Henry VI, ruined the chances of this audacious plan, though Henry VI was later crowned king at Paris (1431). For the revival of the fortunes of Charles VII, ‘the king of Bourges’, slowly wore down English resistance. Too much significance should not be attached to the exploits of Joan of Arc, like the relief of Orléans (May 1429), but the renewed confidence of the French monarchy, seen in the coronation which followed, was buoyed up by the defection of the Burgundians from their English allegiance in the treaty of Arras (1435). In 1436 Paris was recaptured by Constable Richemont, whilst from 1439 financial reforms also prepared the way for the restoration of royal authority. In England support for the war was at a low ebb. In 1444 a new truce was agreed at Tours. Henry VI undertook to marry Charles VII’s niece, and to return Maine. By 1449 Charles was ready to launch his reformed army. A brilliant campaign saw the reconquest of Normandy (1449–50). In 1451 Guyenne capitulated and although it reverted to the English in 1452, resources dispatched for its defence proved inadequate. In 1453 the veteran commander John Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury, who with a handful of other outstanding captains had propped up the occupation of Normandy since 1422, was defeated and killed at Castillon in the last major battle of the war. Bordeaux yielded in October; no peace was sealed but the war was over. Beginning as a quarrel between lord and vassal, it had long since become a conflict between ‘autonomous and self-contained kingdoms...and Frenchmen and Englishmen began to hate one another as Englishmen and Frenchmen’ (Le Patourel).”⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁸ Jones, in Angus Mackay and David Ditchburn (eds.), *Atlas of Medieval Europe*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, pp. 159–162.

30. SCHOLASTICISM

Shortly after its fall from the True Church in the eleventh century, the medieval papacy began producing false dogmas, such as the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, which under the guise of glorifying the Virgin violated Church tradition and which was rejected by the papist teachers Anselm of Canterbury (*Cur Deus Homo*, chapter 16) and Bernard of Clairvaux.⁴⁹⁹

With false dogmas came false saints with their false, characteristically Roman Catholic spirituality. Perhaps the most famous example is Francis of Assisi, of whom Fr. Seraphim Rose writes: "His spiritual self-awareness is sufficiently clearly revealed from the following facts. One day, St. Francis prayed very long (the subject of his prayer is extraordinarily telling) 'about two mercies.' 'The first is that I ... could ... experience all the sufferings that You, Sweetest Jesus, experienced in Your torturous passion. The second mercy ... is that ... I might feel ... that boundless love with which You, the Son of God, burned.' As we see, St. Francis was not troubled by a feeling of his own sinfulness, as all saints are; clearly seen here is his open pretension to equality with Christ in His sufferings and His love! During this prayer, St. Francis 'felt himself completely become Jesus,' and something happened to him that had never before happened in the history of the

⁴⁹⁹ Bernard wrote: "I am frightened now, seeing that certain of you have desired to change the condition of important matters, introducing a new festival unknown to the Church, unapproved by reason, unjustified by ancient tradition. Are we really more learned and more pious than our fathers? You will say, 'One must glorify the Mother of God as much as possible.' This is true; but the glorification given to the Queen of Heaven demands discernment. This Royal Virgin does not have need of false glorifications, possessing as She does true crowns of glory and signs of dignity.

"Glorify the purity of Her flesh and the sanctity of Her life. Marvel at the abundance of the gifts of this Virgin; venerate Her Divine Son; exalt Her Who conceived without knowing concupiscence and gave birth without knowing pain. But what does one yet need to add to these dignities? People say that one must revere the conception which preceded the glorious birth-giving; for if the conception had not preceded, the birth-giving also would not have been glorious. But what would one say if anyone for the same reason should demand the same kind of veneration of the father and mother of Holy Mary? One might equally demand the same for Her grandparents and great-grandparents, to infinity.

"Moreover, how can there not be sin in the place where there was concupiscence? All the more, let one not say that the Holy Virgin was conceived of the Holy Spirit and not of man. I say decisively that the Holy Spirit descended upon Her, but not that He came with Her...I say that the Virgin Mary could not be sanctified before Her conception, inasmuch as She did not exist. if, all the more, She could not be sanctified in the moment of Her conception by reason of the sin which is inseparable from conception, then it remains to believe that She was sanctified after She was conceived in the womb of Her mother.

"This sanctification, if it annihilates sin, makes holy Her birth, but not Her conception. No one is given the right to be conceived in sanctity; only the Lord Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and He alone is holy from His very conception. Excluding Him, it is to all the descendants of Adam that must be referred that which one of them says of himself, both out of a feeling of humility and in acknowledgement of the truth: Behold I was conceived in iniquities (Ps. 50:7). How can one demand that this conception be holy, when it was not the work of the Holy Spirit, not to mention that it came from concupiscence? The Holy Virgin, of course, rejects that glory which, evidently, glorifies sin. She cannot in any way justify a novelty invented in spite of the teaching of the Church, a novelty which is the mother of imprudence, the sister of unbelief, and the daughter of lightmindedness." (*Epistle* 174).

Church: painful, bleeding wounds (stigmata) appeared on him—the marks of 'Jesus' sufferings'.

"Here we must note that the nature of these stigmata is well known in psychiatry. Unceasing concentration of the attention on Christ's sufferings on the cross extremely arouse a person's nerves and psyche, and if practiced long enough, can evoke this phenomenon. There is nothing supernatural or miraculous here. In this 'compassion' for Christ, there is not the true love about which the Lord spoke plainly: 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me' (John 14:21). To the contrary, the substitution of dreamy experiences of 'compassion' for the struggle with one's own sinful passions is one of the most serious mistakes in spiritual life, which has lead, and still leads, ascetics to self-conceit and pride - obvious prelest [spiritual deception], often connected with outright psychological disturbance (see the 'sermon' of St. Francis to the birds, the wolf, the turtle-doves, the snakes, the flowers, etc.; his reverence before the fire, the stones, the worms). It is no wonder therefore that St. Francis claimed to redeem the sins of other people through his imitation of Christ.

"Also telling is the life's goal that St. Francis set for himself: 'I labored and want to labor ... because this brings honor.' Isn't this why he said openly at the end of his life, 'I am not aware of any sin on my part that I have not redeemed through confession and repentance'? All this testifies to his ignorance of his own sins, his unworthiness before God — that is, to total spiritual catastrophe.

"By contrast, we cite the moment before death from the life of St. Sisoës the Great (fifth century). 'Surrounded at the moment of his death by the brothers, at that minute when he was as if conversing with unseen beings, the brothers' asked him, "Father, tell us, with whom are you conversing?" Sisoës answered, "They are angels who have come to take me, but I am praying them to leave me for a short time, in order to repent." At this the brothers, knowing that Sisoës was perfect in the virtues, protested, "You have no need to repent, father." Sisoës replied, "Truly, I do not know if I have even begun to repent." This deep knowledge of one's own imperfection is the main distinguishing characteristic of all true saints..."

There also developed a false style or spirit of theology known as *scholasticism*. In 787, Charlemagne decreed the establishment of "schools in every abbey in his empire. These schools, from which the name *scholasticism* is derived, became centers of medieval learning. "During this period, knowledge of Ancient Greek had vanished in the West except in Ireland, where its teaching and use was widely dispersed in the monastic schools. Irish scholars had a considerable presence in the Frankish court, where they were renowned for their learning. Among them was Johannes Scotus Eriugena (815-877), one of the founders of scholasticism. Eriugena was the most significant Irish intellectual of the early monastic period and an outstanding philosopher in terms of originality. He had considerable familiarity with the Greek language and translated many works into Latin, affording access to the Cappadocian Fathers and the Greek theological tradition."

Until the end of the Orthodox period, the schools remained Orthodox in their basic teaching. However, from the late eleventh century, “scholasticism” in the proper sense arose – that is, a new method of approaching intellectual research associated especially with the names of Anselm, Aquinas and others, which consisted mainly in *linguistic and logical analysis*. Moreover, it came to signify more than a new method, but also a heretical mixture of Christian and pagan thought.

The influx of paganism began after the conquest of Toledo by crusaders in 1085, when a large number of texts on philosophy, science and mathematics by Greek pagan authors in the original language were discovered. Through the efforts of a Venetian cleric called Iacopo, and of other translators, most of the works of Aristotle became available in Latin translations by 1200.

“University teachers committed to the proposition that God’s creation was governed by rules, and that reason might enable mortals to comprehend them, fell on the writings of antiquity’s most renowned philosopher with a mixture of avidity and relief. That an authority such as Aristotle had been given voice again promised to set their own investigations into the functioning of the universe on a more rigorous footing than ever before. Paris in particular had fast become a hotbed of Aristotelean study. The sense of excitement generated by its schools had attracted students from across Christendom. Among them had been two future popes: Innocent III and Gregory IX.

“Yet the resurrection of a sage who had lived well before Christ, nor had any familiarity with scripture, presented challenges as well as opportunities. If numerous aspects of his teaching – the fixity of species, or the unchanging motion of sun, and moon, and stars as they revolved around the earth – could readily be integrated into the fabric of Christian teaching, then others were more problematic... Aristotle’s insistence that there had been no creation, that the universe had always existed and always would, was a particularly glaring contradiction of Christian scripture. How, then, when crusaders were struggling to cleanse southern France from heretics, could students in the kingdom’s capital possibly be permitted to study such a noxious doctrine? Anxieties in Paris were heightened by the discovery in 1210 of various heretics whose reading of Aristotle had led them to believe that there was no life after death. The reaction of the city’s bishop was swift. Ten of the heretics were burned at the stake. Various commentaries on Aristotle were burned as well. Aristotle’s own books on natural philosophy were formally proscribed. ‘They were not to be read at Paris either publicly or privately’.

“But the ban failed to hold. In 1231 Gregory IX issued a decree that guaranteed the university effective independence from the interference of bishops, and by 1253 all Aristotle’s texts were back on the curriculum. The people best qualified to learn from them, it turned out, were not heretics, but inquisitors...”⁵⁰⁰

⁵⁰⁰ Holland, *Dominion*, p. 249.

The scholastic movement did not so much proclaim new dogmas as a new *method* of reaching truth, that is, the deduction of true propositions by logical analysis and deduction from axioms. This emphasis on logical deduction had a devastating effect on, among other things, the development of science. For, as Stephen Meyer writes, “the Greek philosophers thought that nature reflected an underlying order, [but] that this order issued from an intrinsic self-existent logical principle called the *logos*, rather than from a mind or divine being with a will. For this reason, many Greek thinkers assumed they could deduce how nature ought to behave from first principles based upon only superficial observations of natural phenomena or without actually observing nature at all. In astronomy, for example, Aristotle (fourth century BCE) and Ptolemy (second century CE) both assumed that planets must move in circular orbits. Why? Because according to Greek cosmology, the planets moved in the ‘quintessential’ realm of the crystalline spheres, a heavenly realm in which only perfection was possible. Since, they deduced, the most perfect form of motion was circular, the planets must move in circular orbits. What could be more logical? As historian of science Reijer Hooykaas explained, when medieval Aristotelians said ‘things happened according to nature, this meant that they followed a pattern that seemed rational to the human mind, one which had been discovered by Aristotle...

“For science to advance, natural philosophers, or scientists, as we refer to them today, needed to develop a more empirical, evidence-based approach. This began to occur well before the scientific revolution because of a shift in thinking about the source of the order in the physical world. In 1277, Etienne Tempier, the bishop of Paris, writing with the support of Pope John XXI, condemned ‘necessarian’ theology’ and 219 separate theses influenced by Greek philosophy about what God could or couldn’t do...

“This transposition in thinking led to a different approach to the study of nature in the centuries following Tempier’s decree. Just as there are many ways to paint a picture or design a clock or organize the books in a library, there are many ways to design and organize a universe. Because it had been chosen by a rational mind, the order of nature could have been otherwise. Thus, the natural philosophers could not merely deduce the order of nature from logical first principles; they needed to observe nature carefully and systematically. As Robert Boyle, one of the most important figures of the scientific revolution and the founder of modern chemistry explained, the job of the natural philosopher was not ask what God must have done, but what God actually did. Boyle argued that God’s freedom required an empirical and observational approach, not just a deductive one. Scientists needed to look and find out...”⁵⁰¹

And, it should be added, Christian thinkers needed to reject the pagan temptations coming from Greek philosophy, which believed that human reason and logic could discover all mysteries, and rediscover their awe before the Mystery of God, unattainable by human reason alone...

⁵⁰¹ Meyer, *The Return of the God Hypothesis*, New York: HarperOne, 2021, pp. 22-23, 24.

Insofar as the scholastic method now dominated all intellectual discourse, a gulf, not only in substance (dogma), but also in style and spirit, opened up between Roman Catholic and Orthodox theology, which continued to rely exclusively on Holy Scripture and the writings of the Holy Fathers. Some of the Fathers used Aristotle on matters of logic and philosophical terminology, as did St. John of Damascus in his *Fount of Wisdom* (8th c.). But they never treated him as an authority in dogmatic questions, let alone adhered to any of his false teachings.

To illustrate the difference let us take Anselm's "ontological" argument for the existence of God: "So true is it that there exists something than which a greater is inconceivable, that its non-existence is inconceivable: and this thing art Thou, O Lord our God." The argument rests on the supposed logical impossibility of conceiving supreme existence as non-existent... Even if we were to accept that this argument is pious in intent and logically valid, it sounds strange to an Orthodox ear. The so-called "cosmological" argument, used in Romans chapter 1 and in other places is the nearest the Orthodox have to such a proof. And yet Orthodoxy does not need such "proofs", and in general does not employ the method of quasi-syllogistic deduction from axioms...

31. THE INQUISITION

The Inquisition was founded in 1229 in Toulouse under the direction of the Dominican monks. It was the product of a series of events beginning with the establishment of an informal episcopal inquisition at Languedoc in 1184 into the heresy of the Cathars, or Albigensians, whose murder of a papal legate in 1209 led to the notorious Albigensian crusade (1209-1229), in which the heretics were exterminated en masse and without trial, eliciting the need for a more formal tribunal. The violent attitude towards heresy of the Inquisition revealed yet another, and still more serious, departure of medieval Catholicism from the order of Orthodox Christianity...

The teaching of the Cathars or Albigensians of southern France consisted (although this is disputed) in a form of dualism similar to that of the Paulicians of the Byzantine Empire and the Bogomils of Bulgaria. In 1209 Pope Innocent III gave an expedition against these 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 bloodletting carried out by "Saint" Dominic, the real founder of the Inquisition.

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...'"⁵⁰²

As we have seen, 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..."⁵⁰³

The council legalized the slaughter of the Albigensians: "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 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

⁵⁰² Ehrenreich, *Blood Rites*, p. 172.

⁵⁰³ De Rosa, op. cit., p. 73.

heretics shall enjoy the same indulgence and privilege as those who go to the Holy Land..."⁵⁰⁴

Later, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), the famous scholastic philosopher, provided the following 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."⁵⁰⁵

We may compare these ferocious words with those of the Orthodox Bishop Wason of Liège written 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."⁵⁰⁶

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, as crusades launched by armed knights was seen as less appropriate for the extirpation of heresy than learned inquisitors armed with instruments of torture... Thus G. Dickson writes: "While the Albigensian crusade was still in progress in 1212, Innocent III threatened the Milanese with a crusading army if they failed to repress the heretics in their city. Yet the crusade was a blunt instrument. The Inquisition was potentially more selective. Traditionally, it was the bishop's job to detect heretics within his diocese. Now specialists were needed. The Franciscan and especially the Dominican friars brought theological expertise and religious zeal to their task. The career of the Dominican Inquisitor, Robert le Bougre, active between c. 1232 and 1239, culminated in that year with the mass *auto da fé* of Cathars at Mont-Aimé in Champagne. The secular priest Conrad of Marburg was similarly relentless in his pursuit of Waldensians, Cathars and (alleged) Luciferians in the mid-Rhineland from c. 1227 until his assassination in 1233. The pope who had commissioned them both, Gregory IX (1227-41), established the Inquisition in Languedoc in 1233. Inquisitors were then based at Toulouse, Montpellier and Albi; at Narbonne there was already a Dominican Inquisitor, an appointee of the archbishop. Fixed inquisitorial tribunals in Italy also date from Gregory IX's pontificate; they become more plentiful thereafter. Particularly effective was the Inquisition of the dead. For a deceased testator to be found guilty

⁵⁰⁴ Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., p. 147.

⁵⁰⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, ii. Q. xi; in Bettenson & Maunder, op. cit., pp. 147-148.

⁵⁰⁶ Bishop Wason, in Comby, op. cit., p. 167.

of heresy meant that his heirs forfeited their estate. Property proved a powerful stimulus for orthodoxy."⁵⁰⁷

The Lateran council absolved the inquisitors of all qualms of conscience with regard to their methods by declaring in its third canon that a man accused of heresy was guilty unless proved innocent: "Those who are merely under suspicion of heresy shall be smitten with the sword of anathema and shunned by everyone until they make suitable amends, unless they prove their own innocence by clearing themselves properly (the nature of the suspicion and also their personal character being taken into account). If they have persisted in their excommunication for one year, they shall be condemned as heretics" – and, as often as not, burned at the stake.

The Inquisition was given the blessing of Pope Gregory IX in 1233. The Dominicans were entrusted with the task of eradicating heresy, calling in the secular authorities if necessary.⁵⁰⁸ 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."

It should be remembered that the use of torture was not unique to the Inquisition: it was used by, for example, the English against Joan of Arc, and continued to be used all over Europe until the nineteenth century. What was unique about the Inquisition was its determination to call white black and black white, thereby undermining the very concept of truth. Thus 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."⁵⁰⁹ Thus did the Roman Church consciously and openly declare that truth is not truth, or goodness goodness – if the Pope so decrees. *This is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth.*

The Inquisition became especially notorious in later centuries 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 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."⁵¹⁰

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

⁵⁰⁷ Dickson, in Angus Mackay and David Ditchburn (eds.), *Atlas of Medieval Europe*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 124.

⁵⁰⁸ Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, *The Inquisition*, London: Penguin, 1999, pp. 20-21.

⁵⁰⁹ De Rosa, op. cit., p. 52.

⁵¹⁰ De Rosa, op. cit., p. 171.

combat" by "the proof by witnesses, and a rational investigation of the matter in question, such as might be expected in a civilised society."⁵¹¹

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 [because Europe was still Orthodox]. It was evil compared with the age of Diocletian, for no one was then tortured and killed *in the name of Jesus crucified*."⁵¹²

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During the two centuries and more from the Gregorian revolution in the late eleventh century to the megalomania of Boniface VIII in the late thirteenth century, the despotism of the popes had combined with the militancy of the crusaders, the pseudo-spirituality of such "saints" as Francis of Assisi and Catherine of Siena, and the scholastic mentality of the lawyers, theologians and inquisitors, to create a distinctively new civilization – the apostate West. The spiritual distance between Orthodox East and Roman Catholic West was so great as to make any real union between them impossible. With a return to the restraining and sanctifying power of Byzantine Orthodoxy now out of sight and out of mind, the West was ready to embark on its ascent to the global dominance (via a large number of internal revolutions) that we see today.

⁵¹¹ François Guizot, *The History of Civilization in Europe*, London: Penguin Books, 1997, p. 60.

⁵¹² De Rosa, op. cit., p. 177.

IV. THE WANING OF PAPISM

32. NATURAL LAW

By the middle of the thirteenth century, Empire and papacy were about equally matched. The first canon of the Lateran Council of 1215 had declared: "There is one Catholic Church of the faithful, and outside of it there is absolutely no salvation." This statement was not really challenged until the Reformation. But the confidence of the papacy began to wane, while the empire recovered, together with more secular concepts of authority.

In particular, there appeared a new interpretation of an ancient philosophical idea that was capable of sapping the foundations of both Church and Empire – the concept of 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* was that *everyone* – even the pope and the emperor – is equally subject to the rule of law – that is, natural law. Archbishop Stephen of Canterbury, as we have seen, used the idea of natural law to defend *Magna Carta* against the pope himself.

But what *is* natural law? From the Orthodox West we have the following testimony, by St. Isidore of Seville: "Natural law is what is common to all peoples, and what is observed everywhere by the instinct of nature rather than by any ordinance, as the marriage of man and woman, the begetting and rearing of children, the common possession of all things, the one freedom of all, and the acquisition of those things that are taken in the air, or on land, or on sea. Likewise the restoring of property entrusted or lent, and the repelling of violence by force. For this, or anything like this, is not considered unjust but natural and fair."⁵¹³

Isidore's definition may well be derived from Justinian: "Natural law, which is uniformly observed by all peoples, was established by a kind of divine providence and remains always constant and unchanging".⁵¹⁴ In Justinian's *Corpus* of Roman-Byzantine law, natural law (*ius naturale*) was distinguished from civil law (*ius civile*) and the law common to all peoples (*ius gentium*). the prince was above the law, that is, freed from all merely 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? But he was not above natural law...

In the post-Orthodox, Roman Catholic West, we see a subtle but important development of this principle. Thus at the beginning of his *Decretum* (c. 1140) Gratian said: "The human race is ruled by two things: natural law and custom." (This was similar to the distinction between *physis* (nature) and *nomos* (customary law) in ancient Greek philosophy.)

⁵¹³ St. Isidore, *Etymologies*, 5, 4, 1-2.

⁵¹⁴ *Institutes* 1.2, 11.

Now when the pope, as a consequence of the Gregorian revolution, was placed above all secular rulers, he, like the prince in Roman-Byzantine law, could be considered to be above the law in the sense of secular law, or custom. Moreover, for similar reasons he was considered to be above ecclesiastical law, that is, canon law. 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, who possessed “absolute power” (*potestas absoluta*) in the ecclesiastical sphere?

So a monarch might be freed from the laws of the State, and the pope might be freed both from the laws of the State and from the canon law of the Church. But they were both theoretically subject to another kind of law. This higher law was *natural law*. It was, or should be, the aim of human legislators to make their acts correspond as closely as possible to this higher or “natural” law, or “Law” with a capital “L”. If they succeeded in doing this, then they might be said to be following “the rule of Law” with a capital “L”.

Francis 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.

“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 pre-existing 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 pre-existing 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 pre-exist 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.”⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁵ Fukuyama, op. cit., pp. 245-246.

Towards the end of the thirteenth century, the concept of natural law was formulated with greater precision by Thomas Aquinas.

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. 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 *potestas 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."⁵¹⁶

So far so good... However, the 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."⁵¹⁷ But how do we know what is "right reason" and "the good of nature"?

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."⁵¹⁸

However, this is unsatisfactory, being internally contradictory. For "papal pronouncement" often contradicts "the writings of the Fathers of the Church";

⁵¹⁶ Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, vol. 2, part II, pp. 135-136.

⁵¹⁷ Copleston, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁵¹⁸ McClelland, *A History of Western Political Thought*, Routledge: London and New York, 1996, p. 123.

“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... In fact, a lawyer or cleric interpreting natural law is required to go beyond Christian revelation...

“Every law framed by man,” says Aquinas, “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 perversion of the law.”⁵¹⁹ 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, on the basis of adherence to natural law. Such a justification was not Aquinas’ intention; but the fact remains...

“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

⁵¹⁹ Aquinas, in Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, London: Allen Unwin, 1946, p. 648.

is unjustified because disobedience might either cause social disturbance or indirectly encourage other kinds of law-breaking."⁵²⁰

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 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."⁵²¹

"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

⁵²⁰ McClelland, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-119.

⁵²¹ Copleston, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-139.

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."⁵²²

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. 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.'"⁵²³

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 is 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

⁵²² Copleston, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-140.

⁵²³ Canning, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

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."⁵²⁴

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". 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. And yet there is little place in his system for 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 despotism that oppressed him, western man turned from the extreme of despotism to the other, equally barren and destructive extreme of *democracy* – rule by everyman rather than rule by one.

But neither in the absolute rule of everyman, nor in that of one man, is to be found the true fount of all real authority, the Lord God.

⁵²⁴ Alcuin of York, *Letter to Charlemagne*, M.G.H., 4, letter 132.

33. UNAM SANCTAM AND DE MONARCHIA

"By the fourteenth century," writes 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 [the French King] Philip the Fair⁵²⁵, 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..."⁵²⁶

If Pope Innocent III represented the apotheosis of papal power, Boniface VIII represented a second megalomaniac peak. 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."⁵²⁷

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 would be employed for expelling the enemies of Christ without, and for enforcing obedience to the *sacerdotium* within."⁵²⁸

⁵²⁵ The quarrel consisted in the pope's ruling that rulers had no jurisdiction over clergy or their property. (V.M.)

⁵²⁶ Siedentop, op. cit., p. 328.

⁵²⁷ Rose, in Monk Damascene Christensen, *Not of this World: The Life and Teaching of Fr. Seraphim Rose*, Forestville, Ca.: Fr. Seraphim Rose Foundation, 1993, p. 592.

⁵²⁸ Gottschalk, in Canning, op. cit., p. 99.

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.'"⁵²⁹

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."⁵³⁰

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."

Unam Sanctam was followed by the appointment of Albert of Habsburg as Emperor with authority over all kings, including Philip the Fair.⁵³¹ But an aide of the King of France noted: "The Pope's sword is merely made of words; my master's is of steel."⁵³² 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...

⁵²⁹ Vladimir Rusak, *Istoria Russkoj Tserkvi* (History of the Russian Church), 1993, p 140.

⁵³⁰ Bernard, in Canning, op. cit., p. 109.

⁵³¹ Richard Cavendish, "Boniface VIII's Bull *Unam Sanctam*", *History Today*, vol. 52 (11), November, 2002, p. 63.

⁵³² De Rosa, op. cit., p. 79.

The new dominance of the secular arm was revealed especially in the affair of perhaps the most famous movement accused of heresy in the Middle Ages - 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". They started well, displaying great courage in support of the crusaders in the Holy Land. Indeed, they became "the most important defenders of European interests" there.⁵³³

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.⁵³⁴

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.⁵³⁵ 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.

And so for the first time in its medieval, post-schism history, the papacy had to submit to a nation-state, coming under the domination of the French. Consequently, in 1309 the papal 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 a Church that had lost the grace of God...

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⁵³³ Jose Luis Corral Lafuente, "Swords in the Holy Land", *National Geographic History*, June/July, 2015, p. 72.

⁵³⁴ 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.

⁵³⁵ 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.

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*."⁵³⁶

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. 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."⁵³⁷

"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 at 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..."⁵³⁸

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. And so, he concludes, "let Caesar honor Peter as a first-born son should honor his father, so that, refulgent with the

⁵³⁶ Chamberlin, "The Ideal of Unity", *History Today*, vol. 53 (11), November, 2003, p. 63.

⁵³⁷ Dante, *De Monarchia*.

⁵³⁸ Watt, op. cit., p. 412.

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..."⁵³⁹

It was a noble – and Orthodox - ideal, perhaps the last expression of the Orthodox ideal of politics in the Western world.⁵⁴⁰ 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.⁵⁴¹

And so "Dante's call for the risen majesty of empire became its requiem."⁵⁴²

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 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; for the Holy Roman Empire was that strange creature – an elected monarchy. And the Electors included both bishops and princes, who invariably demanded various concessions in exchange for their support. This guaranteed the Emperor's (and Germany's) continued political weakness...

⁵³⁹ Dante, *De Monarchia*, book III, XVI, 9.

⁵⁴⁰ The ideal was also expressed in Dante's most famous work, *The Divine Comedy*, in which "Dante set forth the heavenly empire (with God as emperor) as a model for the earthly, and stressed the emperor's role in establishing justice and the ideal society in the form of the Roman empire. The obstacles lying in the way of the emperor were the church, and in particular the papacy with its temporal jurisdiction and wealth, the French monarchy, and Florence, the archetype of the corrupt and wealthy city. In the emperor's absence, Italy lay in a pitiable condition, a horse without a rider; only with a strong empire could there be peace and concord. Dante was highly inventive and lavish in the condemnation which he heaped on the papacy: he lamented the way in which the papacy combined both temporal and spiritual power, the sword with the pastoral crook." (Canning, op. cit., p. 153)

⁵⁴¹ Aurelia Henry, *The De Monarchia of Dante Alighieri*, introduction, edited with translation and notes by Aurelia Henry, Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904. <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2196>.

⁵⁴² Harold Nicolson, *Monarchy*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962, pp. 179-180.

34. WILLIAM OF OCKHAM AND MARSILIUS OF PADUA

In the fourteenth century, ideas about representation and proto-democratism were reinforced and made more potent by the concept of natural law. 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... »⁵⁴³

A further impetus to the democratic movement was provided by the second Avignon Pope, John XXII (1316-1334), when he entered into an argument with the Franciscan order about the poverty of Christ and His apostles.⁵⁴⁴ 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 anti-pope, Nicholas V. Still more serious was the theological consequence. For in declaring as "erroneous and heretical" the view that Christ and His Apostles had no property whatsoever, John put in question the Church's right to own property, bringing him 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 in the first millenium, such as Liberius, Vigilius and Honorius. So this new Franciscan doctrine on the infallibility and irreversibility of papal judgements was itself heretical.

John XXII was quick to point that out. In *Quia Quorundum* (1324) he insisted that he was not bound by any previous pope's pronouncements on faith or morals, and condemned assertions of papal irreformability.

⁵⁴³ Louis, in Siedentop, op. cit., p. 312.

⁵⁴⁴ For details of the controversy, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_John_XXII.

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. But the two friends differed on the status of General Councils. Marsilius believed they were infallible, but William of Ockham did not...

Ockham is important for his nominalism⁵⁴⁵, for his belief that the universe is the result of the *free* choice of the Creator and so could have been created otherwise, and for his insistence on the natural right to freedom of conscience.⁵⁴⁶ He developed the theory of natural law further than Aquinas in an individualist and anti-papist direction. His emphasis on human autonomy and freedom of conscience tended towards a democratic understanding both of Church and State.

His friend, Marsilius of Padua, went still further. He had witnessed the terribly damaging effects of the emperor's struggle with Pope John XXII. This impressed upon him the need for a single authority or legislator, which had to be, not the pope, but "the totality of those who believe in and call on the name of Christ". A truly revolutionary concept, that paved the way for Protestantism in the ecclesiastical domain and democratism in the secular domain...

Marsilius did not believe that the pope was appointed by God as head of the Church. In his *Defensor Pacis* he wrote: "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 convoke the General Council, to designate the persons who must form part of it.

⁵⁴⁵ Daniel Lattier writes: "Ockham denied the real existence of universal natures. In Ockham's view, the universe is inhabited by a number of individual things that have no necessary connection with each other. We can call human beings "human" based on their sharing a certain resemblance with each other, but we can't infer anything about them based on their common name. We can know that one thing can cause another thing to happen only based on repeated experience, not on some abstract knowledge of a thing's nature (thus laying the groundwork for modern science). Anything theological—such as the existence of God or his attributes—can be known by faith alone (thus, apparently, laying the groundwork for the Reformation)" ("William of Ockham: The Man Who Started the Decline of the West", *Intellectual Takeout*, January 10, 2018, [http://www.intellectualtakeout.org/article/william-ockham-man-who-started-decline-west?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=9899070&utm_content=newsletter\(9899070\)&utm_term=newsletter](http://www.intellectualtakeout.org/article/william-ockham-man-who-started-decline-west?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=9899070&utm_content=newsletter(9899070)&utm_term=newsletter))

⁵⁴⁶ That is why, "of all the schoolmen, Occam was the one Luther preferred" (Russell, op. cit., p. 493).

"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."⁵⁴⁷

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' (*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."⁵⁴⁸

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: from the time Aristotle's *Politics* was rediscovered in the West, thinkers and theologians had found in it the theoretical foundations of popular sovereignty; while the Roman *Lex Regia* stated that the prince held his authority by delegation or 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*...

⁵⁴⁷ Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor Pacis*, 1324; in Comby, op. cit., p. 174.

⁵⁴⁸ Canning, op. cit., pp. 154, 155.

“... 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.’”⁵⁴⁹

Marsilius’ identified *law* 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.”⁵⁵⁰

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

⁵⁴⁹ Quillet, “Community, counsel and representation” in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350 – c. 1450*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 558-559.

⁵⁵⁰ McClelland, op. cit., pp. 141-142.

to the good of the community.”⁵⁵¹ His system may therefore be called caesaropapist with a democratic bias, insofar as the will of the people is the ultimate sovereign. He 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.”⁵⁵²

Nevertheless, the democratic and revolutionary potential of his ideas is self-evident...

⁵⁵¹ Canning, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

⁵⁵² McClelland, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

35. THE PEASANTS' REVOLT

These ideas did not remain without practical results even in the medieval period, when there were several proto-democratic revolutions, especially in that land of political innovation *par excellence* - England. Thus in 1327 the English King Edward II was deposed by parliament, before being murdered. And there was deadlock between king and parliament in the reign of his son, Edward III.

Again, « Rome, for a time, sought to free itself from the absentee Pope [Clement VI (1342-52)] 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.»⁵⁵³

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Meanwhile, the Hundred Years war and the Black Death were devastating Western Europe (and beyond into the Orthodox East). It is calculated that about 60 percent of Europe's population of about 80 million died.⁵⁵⁴ About 80% of those contracting the disease in England died; the poor were particularly vulnerable. The population of England was reduced from about 6 million in 1300 to about 2.5 million in 1350. It used to be thought that this was Bubonic Plague, spread by rats, but modern research suggests that the cause was a haemorrhagic virus similar to the modern Ebola...⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵³ Russell, op. cit., pp. 504-505.

⁵⁵⁴ Ole J. Benedictow, "The Black Death, the Greatest Catastrophe Ever", *History Today*, March, 2005, p. 49. For even higher estimates, see Sophie Gallacher, "The Black Death was always blamed on rats, but we were wrong", *Huffpost*, January 16, 2018, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/black-death-has-always-been-blamed-on-rats-this-was-a-mistake_uk_5a5dd5b9e4b04f3c55a59756?ncid=webmail.

⁵⁵⁵ See the BBC film, "The Mystery of the Black Death".

This was a time for apocalyptic pessimism - and an opportunity for repentance. However, the papacy had undermined the very idea of repentance by its abuses. So the spiritual opportunity was lost, and the West moved still further towards revolution.

It began with the Jacquerie in France. "This brief and violent uprising against the nobility broke out on 28 May 1358. Centred on the Beauvaisis, disturbances affected areas from Picardy to Orléans, especially after Etienne Marcel, leader of the Parisian merchants in dispute with the government, joined the rebels and encouraged towns to attack seigneurial castles. Normally described as a peasants' revolt, most known rebels were rural artisans, such as coopers and stone-cutters, together with some minor clergy, petty royal officials and a few more well-to-do men. Led by Guillaume Cale and Jean Vaillant, rebel bands sustained an orgiastic destruction of noble property for a fortnight. By 8 June, however, urban interests, with Marcel the key figure, predominated.

"Possible long-term causes included a painful re-adjustment following the Black Death, the difficulties of an unpopular government, led by the dauphin, in the war with the English, and criticism of a nobility failing in its role as protectors of the peasantry..."⁵⁵⁶

*

In England, the people's misery was increased by invasions of the south coast by the French and Castilians, a Welsh uprising and a Scottish invasion. On the other hand, writes Tombs, "the pressure that had forced up rents and prices and depressed wages had gone. Surviving tenants threatened to leave unless rents were reduced and feudal obligations dropped. The new laws, though vigorously applied by local landowners as Justices of the Peace, were defied or evaded. There was an immediate leap in real wages as food prices fell. Employers had to supplement fixed wages with bonuses, free food, lodgings and allotments of land. Food traditionally given to harvest workers improved - even the poor refused 'bread that had beans therein, but asked for the best white, made of clean wheat, nor none halfpenny ale, in no wise would drink, but of the best and brownest.' Those who were denied better terms simply went elsewhere..."⁵⁵⁷

According to Niall Ferguson, however, "a surprising consequence of the Black Death in England was that it strengthened rather than weakened the English state. In the face of chronic shortages of both food and labor, the Crown instituted wage and price controls in 1351. To compensate for lost rents from the royal lands, it raised the per capita tax burden to triple what it had been in the early 1340s. At the same time, the 1351 Statute of Labourers compelled every able-bodied man to work and imposed novel forms of punishment (such as pillories and stocks) for 'vagrancy' in an effort not so much to maintain order as to reduce labor mobility.

⁵⁵⁶ M. Jones, in Angus Mackay and David Ditchburn (eds.), *Atlas of Medieval Europe*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 226.

⁵⁵⁷ Tombs, op. cit., pp. 119-120. There were also external

Taken together, this proved to be overreach and culminated in the 1381 Peasants' Revolt, which saw not only peasants but also villeins, burghers, and merchants take up arms."⁵⁵⁸

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."⁵⁵⁹

The leader of the rebellion was Wat Tyler of Maidstone in Kent. In June, 1380, after the feast of the Holy Trinity, he and his followers "came to Canterbury before the hour of noon, and 4,000 of them entered into the minster church of St. Thomas and, kneeling down, they cried with one voice to elect a monk to be archbishop of Canterbury, 'for he who is now archbishop is a traitor, and will be beheaded for his iniquity'. And so he was five days afterwards!"⁵⁶⁰

On June 10 Tyler and his men seized Canterbury and killed Archbishop Simon Sudbury... So the first social revolution in western history began with an attack on the Church. And not inappropriately; for the primary cause of all the woes of the West was its falling away from the Church, and the Church's falling away from God three hundred years before.

The spiritual leader of the Peasants' Revolt was John Ball, "the crazy priest", as Froissart calls him, who may well lay claim to being the first socialist in European history, taught: "My good friends, things cannot go well in England, nor ever will, until everything shall be held in common; when there shall neither be vassal nor lord, and all distinctions levelled; when the lords shall be no more masters than ourselves... Are we not all descended from the same parents, Adam and Eve? And when can they show, or what reasons give, why they should be more the masters than ourselves?" He was excommunicated by the Church in 1366 and imprisoned by the archbishop of Canterbury, becoming the first in a long line of priests, to Gapon and Pope Francis I, who confuse the essence of Christianity with social and material equality.

⁵⁵⁸ Ferguson, *Doom. The Politics of Catastrophe*, London: Allen Lane, 2021, p. 134.

⁵⁵⁹ George, *500 Years of Revolution: European Radicals from Hus to Lenin*, Chicago, 1998, pp. 13-14. a

⁵⁶⁰ *Anomalie Chronicle*, in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 279.

Ball, “so that he might infect the more with his doctrines, at Blackheath [near London] where 20,000 of the commons were gathered together, began a sermon in this manner:

*When Adam delved and Eve span
Who was then the gentleman?*

And continuing the sermon thus begun, he strove... to prove that from the beginning all men were created equal by nature, and that servitude had been introduced by the unjust oppression of wicked men, against God’s will; because, if it had pleased Him to create serfs, surely in the beginning of the world He would have decreed who was to be a serf and who a lord.”⁵⁶¹

“And therefore,” he continued, “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...”⁵⁶²

At his first meeting with the rebels the fourteen-year-old King Richard II agreed to abolish serfdom, “whose breakdown the Black Death accelerated, making those still constrained by it all the more aggrieved”⁵⁶³, and set a flat-rent rate of four pence an acre. “And at this time the king caused the commons to arrange themselves in two lines, and caused a proclamation to be made before them that he would confirm and grant them their freedom and all their wishes generally, and that they should go through the realm of England and catch all traitors and bring them to him in safety and that he would deal with them as the law required...”⁵⁶⁴

The peasants’ approach to the king was dictated by a sure instinct; for only a king who is above all class and privilege can help those who are at the bottom of the pile... A similar instinct would draw the Russian workers to seek a meeting with the Tsar on Bloody Sunday 1905. But now, as then, the “lowers” would be deceived – by the king in 1381, and by the workers’ own leader (also a priest) in 1905.

⁵⁶¹ Thomas Walsingham (after 1392), in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 279.

⁵⁶² Brian Macarthur, *The Penguin Book of Historic Speeches*, London: Penguin, 1995, p. 37.

⁵⁶³ Tombs, op. cit., p. 122.

⁵⁶⁴ *Anomalie Chronicle*, in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 279.

The king agreed to a second face-to-face meeting with the peasants at Smithfield on June 15. "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..."⁵⁶⁵

The mystique of the anointed king had saved the day. As Shakespeare's Richard II put it in his play of the same name (III, ii, 54-57):

*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.*

In any case, the real target of the rebels had been the landowners, not the king. "Their watchword was: 'Wyth kynge Richarde and with the trew communes'."⁵⁶⁶

In Thessalonica a similar proto-socialist rebellion took place in the middle of the fourteenth century. Probably the Black Death, which had afflicted Eastern as well as Western Europe, was the stimulus. Rebellion was in the air everywhere...

⁵⁶⁵ Schama, *A History of Britain 1*, pp. 217-218.

⁵⁶⁶ Tombs, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

36. THE MONARCHISM OF JOHN WYCLIFFE

The Peasants' Revolt, writes Tombs, "had been more than just another rural disturbance. It had been a mass demand for rights and freedom, and had shown a striking degree of political sophistication on the part of the 'trew communes'. It was the first time that popular political and social ideas had been recorded in writing – England had an unusually high level of literacy thanks to its developed commercial activity. Political messages were transmitted in English through rhymes, sermons, handbills, posters, prophecies – and ministers of the Crown were killed by angry mobs because of them..."⁵⁶⁷

Indeed, the literacy of the English was to be an increasingly important factor in the country's life. For it was precisely in this, the second half of the fourteenth century, that there appeared Wycliffe's translation of the Vulgate and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, constituting the real beginnings of English literature as the world knows it. But the English we are talking about here is known as "Middle English" to distinguish it from the (to modern ears) largely incomprehensible Old English of the Anglo-Saxon and Norman periods. "This 'Middle English'," writes Tombs, "was very different from 'Old English'. The influx of a ruling class of non-native speakers after 1066 had led to simplification of the language, which lost much of its grammatical complexity – three genders, four cases, two conjugations. The alphabet too became simpler, and more Latin-based. There was no common spelling, and there were differences of dialect and accent, though grammar was largely uniform. Alone of the Germanic tongues, it had received a massive influx of words from Latin and French, which doubled its vocabulary. Between 1250 and 1450, of 17,000 new words identified, 22 percent were derived from French, and most others from Latin. English often acquired several words for the same concept. They were sometimes used in tandem to make meaning sure, or just for rhetorical purposes, as in 'aiding and abetting', 'fit and proper', 'peace and quiet'. In due course they could acquire nuances of meaning, as with 'kingly', 'royal' and 'regal', or 'loving', 'amorous' and 'charitable', from English, French and Latin respectively. Linguistic flexibility was greatly enhanced by bolting together grammatical elements from each language. Prefixes and suffixes made word creation easy: for example, the Old English 'ful' added to French nouns (beautiful, graceful); or French suffixes with Old English verbs (knowable, findable). It has been argued that this made it really a new language. But the basics remained, and remain, Anglo-Saxon: in modern written English, the hundred most frequently used words are all derived from Old English."⁵⁶⁸

Although the peasants seemed to have lost the battle, their ideas continued to spread. But to the rescue of the monarchy came the charismatic theologian and Master of Balliol College, Oxford, 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 *Tractatus de Officio Regis*, he argued that God favoured kingship, since three kings had visited the manger at Bethlehem.

⁵⁶⁷ Tombs, op. cit., p. 123.

⁵⁶⁸ Tombs, op. cit., p. 130.

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."⁵⁶⁹

"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'."⁵⁷⁰

Wycliffe founded an order of "poor priests", the Lollards (literally "mumblers" or "babblers"), who 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 - that is, the teaching that the bread and wine change in substance or essence into the substance of Christ's human body and blood while retaining the appearance and taste ("accidents") of bread and wine - was a deceit and a blasphemous folly. This led John of Gaunt, who held power during the minority of Richard II, to order him to be silent. 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 Bertrand 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.

⁵⁶⁹ Janet Coleman, "Property and poverty", *Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, c. 350 - c. 1450, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 647.

⁵⁷⁰ Nicolson, *Monarchy*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962, 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.)

"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..."⁵⁷¹

Richard II, meanwhile, entered into conflict with parliament, who, as Tombs writes, "were forced to swear that all acts to restrain royal power were illegal - a renunciation of Magna Carta... He insisted on the sacred nature of kingship - courtiers had to prostrate themselves, and he may have planned a re-coronation using the newly 'discovered' holy chrism given by the Virgin Mary to Thomas Becket. He even dreamed of becoming Holy Roman Emperor."

In 1399, however, he was deposed by his cousin, Henry Bolingbroke. This "changed the basis of kingship, for Henry, though Richard's cousin, was not his heir. He therefore claimed the throne by God's grace (proved by having succeeded), by necessity, and, in Chaucer's words, 'by free election'..."⁵⁷²

The epitaph Richard chose for his tomb at Westminster 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. He betrayed his promises to the peasants, and turned out to be a real tyrant. The foundations of the monarchy continued to be undermined - "the world is changed and overthrown," lamented the poet Gower. 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'..."⁵⁷³ "Right of conquest" is a much weaker argument than "right by royal anointing". But the Divine right of kings had to be maintained somehow...

The problem for the late medieval kings was that defences of royal as opposed to papal power, like those of Marsilius and Wycliff, 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. For 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 *competition* - that curse so characteristic of the West - between the two powers that ultimately discredited both. *All* authority in the brave new world of the West had been desacralized...

⁵⁷¹ Russell, op. cit., pp. 508-509.

⁵⁷² Tombs, op. cit., p. 137.

⁵⁷³ Nicolson, op. cit., p. 195.

37. JOHN WYCLIFFE AND THE PEOPLE'S BIBLE

But let us look more closely at Wycliffe's most influential idea, anticipating the Protestant Reformation by more than a century: his undermining of the authority of the Church by exalting that of the Bible, of which he became the first major translator into English since Bede.

"His main argument," writes Melvyn Bragg, "was to distinguish the eternal, ideal Church of God from the material one in Rome. In short, he maintained that if something is not in the Bible there is no truth in it whatever the Pope says – and, incidentally, the Bible says nothing at all about a Pope. When men speak of the Church, he said, they usually mean priests, monks, canons and friars. But it should not be so. 'Were there a hundred popes,' he wrote, 'and all the friars turned to cardinals, their opinions on faith should not be accepted except in so far as they are founded on scripture itself.

"This was inflammatory and cut away the roots of all established authority, especially as he and his followers like John Ball coupled this with a demand that the Church give away all its worldly wealth to the poor. The Church saw no option but to crush him. For Wycliffe went even further. He and his followers attacked transubstantiation, the belief that, administered by the clergy, the wine and bread turn miraculously into the blood and body of Christ; he attacked clerical celibacy, which he thought of as an institutional control system over the army of the clergy; he attacked enforced confession, the method, Wycliffe argued, by which the clergy could trap dissidents and check errors in thought; and indulgences, the purchase of which were said to bring relief from purgatory but also brought wealth to the Church; pilgrimages, as a form of idolatry; and mystery plays, because they were not the word of God. Wycliffe took no prisoners.

"His prime and revolutionary argument, one which, if accepted in any shpe or form would have toppled the Church entirely, was that the Bible was the sole authority for religious faith and practice and that everyone had the right to read and interpret scripture for himself. This would have changed the world and those who ruled the world knew it. He was to become their prime enemy. It is ironic that his main arguments had to be written in Latin – the international language of scholarship and theology – though there are English sermons by him and his followers."⁵⁷⁴

It is ironic, too, that his main argument on the private interpretation of Scripture is refuted by Scripture itself. For St. Peter says: "No prophecy is of any private interpretation" (II Peter 1.20). And St. Paul says that it is the Church that it the ultimate authority, "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3.15). This is in no way to diminish the authority and truth of Holy Scripture. The point is: Holy Scripture is written by and for the Church, which precedes it in time and

⁵⁷⁴ Bragg, op. cit., pp. 83-84.

is the witness to its truth, rather than the other way round. But of course, the *true* Church is meant here, not Roman Catholicism...

In spite of the riskiness of his challenge to the Church, Wycliffe gained support from other scholars. "What sustained them," opines Bragg, "was the state of the Church as they saw it every day. It was intolerable to these Christian scholars. It was often lazy and corrupt. Bible reading even among the clergy appears to have been surprisingly rare, for often they did not have the Latin. When, for example, the Bishop of Gloucester surveyed three hundred and eleven deacons, archdeacons and priests in his diocese, he discovered that a hundred and sixty-eight were unable to repeat the Ten Commandments, thirty-one did not know where to find these Commandments in the Bible and forty could not repeat the Lord's Prayer. To men of true conscience, integrity and faith, men like Wycliffe and his followers, this state of decay and lack of care in what mattered most, this debilitated belief and betrayal of vocation, had to be got rid of and defeated. The chief weapon, the natural weapon for a scholar, was a book, the Bible, in English.

"A full Bible in English was unauthorized by the Church and potentially heretical, even seditious, with all the savage penalties including death which such crimes against the one true Church exacted. Any translation was very high risk and had to be done in secrecy.

"Wycliffe inspired two Biblical translations and rightly they bear his name. Both versions are made from the [fourth-century] Latin Vulgate version and follow it so closely that it can be incomprehensible. Wycliffe prepared the first translation but the burden of it was undertaken by Nicholas Hereford of Queens College, Oxford. He would have needed the help of many friends as well as recourse to a great number of books. It was not only the translation itself, a mammoth task, which faced them: the Bible had to be disseminated too. Rooms in quiet Oxford colleges were turned into revolutionary cells, scriptoria, production lines were established turning out these holy manuscripts and from the number that remain we can tell that a great many were made. One hundred and seventy survive, a huge number for a six-hundred-year-old manuscript, which tells us that there must have been effective groups of people secretly translating it, copying it, passing it on. Later, hundreds would be martyred, dying the most horrible deaths, for their part in creating and distributing to the people the first English Bible.

"It is difficult to appreciate the extent and the audacity of this enterprise. Wycliffe was leading them into the cannon's mouth. All of them knew it and yet behind the obedient honey-coloured Latinate walls of Oxford colleges, the medieval equivalent of the subversive samizdat press which bypassed Stalin's controls in Russia was organized, and effectively...

"By the standards of the day it was a bestseller and at first the Church merely condemned Wycliffe. They complained that he had made the scriptures 'more open to the teachings of laymen and women. Thus the jewel of the clerics is turned

to the sport of the laity and the pearl of the Gospel is scattered abroad and trodden underfoot by swine... ‘

“The Bible, through English, now called out directly to the people. This could not be tolerated. On 17 May 1382, in Blackfriars in London,... a synod of the Church met to examine Wycliffe’s works. There were eight bishops, various masters of theology, doctors of common and civil law and fifteen friars.

“It was a show trial.

“Their conclusions were preordained and on the second day of their meeting they drafted a statement condemning Wycliffe’s pronouncements as outright heresies. Wycliffe’s followers were also condemned. The synod ordered the arrest and prosecution of itinerant preachers throughout the land. Many of those caught were tortured and killed.

“Perhaps most significantly of all as far as the English language is concerned, the synod led, later, to a parliamentary ban on all English-language Bibles and they had the power to make this effective.

“Wycliffe’s great effort was routed. He had taken on the power of the Church and he had been defeated. His Bibles were outlawed. The doors of the Church, from the greatest cathedrals to the lowliest parish churches, were still the monopoly of Latin.

“On 30 May, every diocese in the land was instructed to publish the verdict. Wycliffe became ill. He was paralysed by a stroke. Two years later he died on the last day of 1384...”⁵⁷⁵

Now some of Wycliffe’s ideas – particularly his denial of Transubstantiation (contrary to the clear witness of Holy Scripture) – were indeed heretical. Nevertheless, it is difficult not to admire, not only the scholarship, but also the courage and zeal of this mighty contender for the people’s right to read the Word of God. Moreover, in 1383, just before his death, he displayed an insight into the truth of Eastern Orthodoxy over Roman Catholicism that appears to have been lost completely in the West since the twelfth century. “The pride of the Pope,” he said, “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 Greeks and the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ...”⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁵ Bragg, op. cit., pp. 85-86, 87, 89.

⁵⁷⁶ Wyclif, *De Christo et Suo Adversario Antichristo* (On Christ and His Adversary, the Antichrist), 8; in R. Buddensig (ed.), *John Wiclif’s Polemical Works in Latin*, London: The Wiclif Society, 1883, volume II, p. 672. In 1412 the Archbishop of Canterbury ordered all Wycliffe’s works to be burned, and sent a list of 267 heresies “worthy of the fire” to the Pope. Then, in 1415, at the Council of Constance, he was condemned as a heretic, and in 1428 it was ordered that his bones be exhumed and removed from consecrated ground. His remains were burned and his ashes scattered into the River Swith.

38. THE TABORITE REBELLION

One of Wycliffe's followers was the Czech cleric Jan Hus (Richard II's queen was Bohemian). He now started another revolution. "Denouncing both Prague's church hierarchy and the German-speaking elites who had long been profiting from imperial favour, he helped to bring an already febrile mood to boiling point."⁵⁷⁷ "Inspired by Wycliffe, Hus had openly derided the claim of the papacy to a primacy sanctioned by God."⁵⁷⁸ "Like his English inspiration," writes Bridget Healy, he "attacked indulgences and condemned the vices and failings of the clergy... Hus advocated communion in both kinds – 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."⁵⁷⁹

The Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund, seeking peace and unity in his Bohemian lands, invited Hus to meet papal legates at the Council of Constance in 1415 on a promise of safe conduct. The promise was broken: Hus was excommunicated and burned at the Council, which also ordered Wycliffe's bones to be dug up and burnt.

However, the Czech Hussite rebellion continued. In May 1420, under their one-eyed general Žažka, they defeated "a great army of crusaders summoned from across Christendom" led by Sigismund outside Prague.⁵⁸⁰ By 1424 the whole of Bohemia was in their hands, and they sat down to wait for the Coming of Christ and the millenium.

The more radical Hussites were called Taborites after Tabor. Their radicalism consisted in a kind of Christian communism. They recognized no ruler, secular or ecclesiastical, except 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.

T.L. Frazier writes: "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

⁵⁷⁷ Holland, "Christ's Communists", *BBC History Magazine*, October, 2019, p. 49.

⁵⁷⁸ Holland, *Dominion*, p. 280.

⁵⁷⁹ Healy, "Martin Luther and the German Reformation", *History Today*, March, 2017, 30-31.

⁵⁸⁰ Holland, *Dominion*, p. 282.

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.'"⁵⁸¹

Thus in one Taborite manuscript we read: "Everyone must gird himself with a sword, and let not brother spare brother, or father – son, or son – father, or neighbour – neighbour. Kill all of them, one after the other, so that the German heretics should run away in droves and we should exterminate and greed and lust for profit of the clergy in this world. In this way we shall fulfil the seventh commandment of God in accordance with the words of the Apostle Paul: 'greed is idolatry.' And we must overthrow the idols and kill the idolaters, so as to wash our hands in their filthy blood. That is what Moses taught us by example in his books, for what is written there is written for our instruction."⁵⁸²

"Readying Prague for their Lord's arrival, they had systematically targeted symbols of privilege. Monasteries were levelled; the bushy moustaches much favoured by the Bohemian elite forcibly shaved off wherever they were spotted; the skull of a recently deceased king dug up and crowned with straw..."⁵⁸³

As Christ failed to appear, the Taborites' radicalism began to fade; they were defeated by a force of more moderate Hussites in 1434 and finally suppressed, after the fall of their capital, Tabor, in 1452.⁵⁸⁴

On two occasions, in 1418 and 1452, the Hussites applied to join the Patriarchate of Constantinople. However, Constantinople rejected the Hussite Articles of Faith.

⁵⁸¹ Frazier, *A Second Look at the Second Coming*, Ben Lomond: Conciliar Press, 1999, pp. 61-62.

⁵⁸² Igor Shafarevich, *Sotsializm kak iavlenie mirogoj istorii* (Socialism as a phenomenon of world history), Paris: YMCA Press, 1977, pp. 352-353. "It was not only emperors and popes whom they aspired to eliminate. All those who had rejected the summons to Tabor, to redeem themselves from the fallen world, were sinners. 'Each of the faithful ought to wash his hands in the blood of Christ's enemies'" (Holland, *Dominion*, p. 282).

⁵⁸³ Holland, *Dominion*, p. 283.

⁵⁸⁴ Holland, "Christ's Communists", p. 50. The Czechs would rebel again against the empire in 1618, starting the Thirty Years' War, the most bloody war in European history to that date...

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 in Western Europe since the schism, and of modern secularism in general. Certainly, there is a red thread of utopian, millenarian thought connecting the rebellions of 1381 in England, of 1415-1434 in Bohemia, of the Anabaptists in 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.

39. THE CONCILIAR MOVEMENT

"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..."⁵⁸⁵

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

⁵⁸⁵ Black, "The Conciliar Movement", *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought*, c. 350 – c. 1450, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 573-574.

legal terms, whether one spoke of the power of kings, the ‘apostolic’ power of the pope, or the collective power of councils.”⁵⁸⁶

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

As regards the State, write J.W. Thompson and E.N. 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.”⁵⁸⁷

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.”⁵⁸⁸

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 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

⁵⁸⁶ Meyendorff, “Was there an Encounter between East and West at Florence?” in *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996, p. 99.

⁵⁸⁷ Thompson and Johnson, *An Introduction to Medieval Europe, 300-1500*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938, p. 966.

⁵⁸⁸ Thomson & Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 967.

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..."⁵⁸⁹

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 that 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."⁵⁹⁰

In *Haec sancta* (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. *Haec sancta* 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."⁵⁹¹

Nicholas of Cusa summed it up: "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."⁵⁹²

⁵⁸⁹ Thomson & Johnson, op. cit., pp. 976-977.

⁵⁹⁰ Norwich, *Byzantium: The Decline and Fall*, London: Penguin Books, 1996, p. 380.

⁵⁹¹ Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., p. 149; Papadakis, op. cit., p. 375.

⁵⁹² Nicholas of Cusa, *De Concordanti Catholica* (1433).

It was at this time that the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II visited France and England, and made a considerable impression (but without receiving the military help he needed). This contact between East and West looked briefly promising, and the conciliarists meeting in Basle (1431-1438) invited the Greeks to attend. But the Greeks refused, seeing the help they needed as coming from the Pope rather than the proto-Protestant conciliar movement.

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."⁵⁹³

Pope Eugene IV rejected the Basle 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."⁵⁹⁴ He condemned *Haec Sancta* and on July 6, 1439 he "promulgated the decree *Laetentur Coeli et exultet terra...* principally because it condemned conciliarism definitively, by confirming the doctrine of the Pope's supreme authority over the Church. On September 4th 1439, Eugene IV defined solemnly: 'We likewise define that the holy Apostolic See, and the Roman Pontiff, hold the primacy throughout the entire world; and that the Roman Pontiff himself is the successor of blessed Peter, the chief of the Apostles, and the true vicar of Christ, and that he is the head of the entire Church, and the father and teacher of all Christians; and that full power was given to him in blessed Peter by our Lord Jesus Christ, to feed, rule, and govern the universal Church, as is attested also in the acts of ecumenical councils and the holy canons.'"⁵⁹⁵

Instead of meeting with the conciliarists, Eugene convened another council at Ferrara (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, about which more anon.

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⁵⁹³ De Rosa, op. cit., p. 100.

⁵⁹⁴ De Rosa, op. cit., p. 100.

⁵⁹⁵ Roberto de Mattei, "Haec Sancta (1415): A Conciliar Document Condemned by the Church", July 20, 2016, <http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.co.uk/2016/07/haec-sancta-1415-conciliar-document.html?m=1>.

One of the (correct) presuppositions 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...”⁵⁹⁶

However, while the conciliarists might limit the power of the pope as a constitution limits the power of an absolute monarch, they paid no heed to the Orthodox 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.

⁵⁹⁶ Meyendorff, op. cit., pp. 100-101.

“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.”⁵⁹⁷

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. 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 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.’”⁵⁹⁸

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With the conciliarist movement in disarray, the Czech Hussite rebellion against the papacy crushed, and the Greeks (officially, at any rate) on his side for the time being, Pope Pius II launched a fierce 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...”⁵⁹⁹

Thus the situation in the West now 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,

⁵⁹⁷ Meyendorff, op. cit., p. 103.

⁵⁹⁸ Papadakis, op. cit., p. 404.

⁵⁹⁹ Bettenson and Maunder, op. cit., p. 460.

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 and authority in general – 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.

“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...”⁶⁰⁰

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.”⁶⁰¹

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...

⁶⁰⁰ Siedentop, op. cit., p. 332.

⁶⁰¹ Siedentop, op. cit., p. 332.

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 Byzantine Autocracy, the main bastion of Orthodox Christianity, in the final phase of its existence.

V. THE DECLINE AND FALL OF NEW ROME

40. THE SLIDE FROM AUTOCRACY TO DESPOTISM

The Emperor Constantine VII “Porphyrogennitus” (“born-in-the-purple”) was for much of his reign in submission to his father-in-law, Emperor Romanos Lekapenos, who usurped the throne in 919. This subordinate status had this advantage, however: it gave Constantine the leisure and means to play an important role in the intellectual and cultural life of the empire. Thus between 948 and 952 he compiled *De Administrando Imperio* (DAI), “On the Administration of the Empire”, whose purpose was to instruct his son, Romanos II, on what he should know if and when he ascended the throne.

Thus, as Louis Minakakis writes, “the DAI embodies the imperial ideology, espousing the role of an emperor that was characterized in Byzantine thinking prevalent in the empire’s middle period (843-1204). In it, the Byzantine emperor is the ultimate caretaker, ‘bound to take thought for the safety of all, and to steer and to guide the laden ship of the world’. This reference to the ‘ship of the world’ is the Byzantine state. It was the emperor’s mission to rule over the *oikoumene*, or ‘civilised world’, as God had entrusted the empire to the Romans under Constantinople. The Byzantines were the new Chosen People and the Empire was eulogized in the DAI with biblical imagery: ‘Come hither and behold a land flowing with milk and honey’.

“Yet it is the idea of order (*taxis*) that characterized the Byzantine spirit, calling essentially for a harmonious hierarchy of society and its institutions, framing Byzantine society as a reflection of heaven. In another of Constantine VII’s works, *Book of Ceremonies*, this divine order is described as a beautiful physical form: ‘For just as when a body is not harmoniously fashioned but has its limbs set in a contorted and ill coordinated way, one would describe this as disorder, so too when the imperial administration is not led and governed by order so that the reins of power will be managed with order and beauty.’ States that did not conform to this strict *taxis* were looked on as ‘barbaric’, demonstrating a ‘disorderly’ state of affairs that the Byzantines abhorred.

“Constantine’s intellectual work helped to revitalize the empire’s foreign relations in the 10th century and beyond. As the new Chosen People and legitimate heirs of Constantine the Great’s Roman Empire, the Byzantines sought to project power in former Roman territories with renewed energy and assertiveness. Following Constantine’s return to the throne and his death in 959, the three emperors who followed him were able military leaders, who fielded armies and went on to incorporate large swathes of territory into the Empire.

“By 1025, Byzantium had reached its zenith, in influence, power and territory. These achievements might not have been undertaken – let alone attained – without the impetus of Constantine’s ideological program of the mid-tenth century...”⁶⁰²

⁶⁰² Minakakis, “A Blueprint for Byzantine Power”, *History Today*, November, 2007, pp. 13-14.

Let us summarize the central hinge, as it were, of Byzantine political ideology - the relationship between the Church and the State as led by the Emperor...

The essential condition of successful imperial rule was that the Emperor should be a faithful son of the Church, obeying her dogmas and traditions of Orthodoxy and protecting her from all her enemies. How the Orthodoxy of the Emperors was perceived and guaranteed is illustrated by an incident in the early ninth century, when the Emperor Leo V, a secret iconoclast, began to reign. The patriarch, St. Nicephorus "sent him a book on the Confession of the Orthodox Faith for him to sign (this being according to the custom obtaining for all Byzantine Emperors, who were regarded as sworn to uphold and defend the true Faith). The Emperor did not sign it, but set it aside until his coronation. When the Patriarch crowned him, he still refused to sign the book, and revealed himself to be an iconoclast heretic..."⁶⁰³

"If the Emperor forgets the fear of God," wrote Constantine VII in the eleventh century, "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'..."⁶⁰⁴

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"⁶⁰⁵...

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)

⁶⁰³ St. Nikolai Velimirovich, *Prologue from Ochrid*, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1986, vol. I, p. 259, June 2.

⁶⁰⁴ Emperor Constantine VII, *On the Government of the Empire*.

⁶⁰⁵ Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 55.

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*.”⁶⁰⁶

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 that 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.⁶⁰⁷ 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,”⁶⁰⁸ his firm but tactful intervention was decisive in the triumph of Orthodoxy.

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.”⁶⁰⁹

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

⁶⁰⁶ *The Lives of the Pillars of Orthodoxy*, Buena Vista, Co.: Holy Apostles’ Convent, p. 125.

⁶⁰⁷ Archbishop Averky (Taushev) of Syracuse, *Sem’ Vselenskikh Soborov* (The Seven Ecumenical Councils), Moscow, 1996, p. 11.

⁶⁰⁸ Averky, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

⁶⁰⁹ Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

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].'"⁶¹⁰

The Emperor also had the right to hand 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."⁶¹¹

"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 consecration 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]."⁶¹²

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:

⁶¹⁰ Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1931, part I, pp. 116, 117.

⁶¹¹ Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, pp. 322-323.

⁶¹² Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, pp. 120-121.

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."⁶¹³

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 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."⁶¹⁴

"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..."⁶¹⁵

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

⁶¹³ Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 121.

⁶¹⁴ Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 137.

⁶¹⁵ Zyzykin, op. cit., part I, p. 137.

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.

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From the middle of the eleventh century, however, the Byzantine Empire embarked on a long 400-year decline, with two troughs – the seizure of the City by the crusaders in 1204, and the final fall of the City to the Turks in 1453. The main internal cause of this catastrophe was the violation of the imperial ideology in the direction of despotism... There were also external causes.

By 1055, writes Brian T. Carey, the Seljuk Turks “had taken the Abbasid capital at Baghdad, forcing the Muslim caliph to bestow upon the Seljuk sultan, Turghril-Bey, the title of ‘king of the East and the West’. Converting to Sunni Islam, the Seljuks now controlled Transoxiana and all of Persia, but continued to press westward where their presence alarmed both the Byzantine Empire, with interests in Armenia, and the powerful Muslim Fatimid dynasty (909-1171) centered in Egypt. The Fatimids, who practiced the rival Shia form of Islam, possess land in the Levant stretching from the Nile Delta to Syria. To complicate things for the invading Turks, the Fatimids and Byzantines maintained an uneasy truce, allowing the Eastern Romans to deal with threats in Italy and the Balkans while the Egyptians became rich controlling the lucrative trade coming into the eastern Mediterranean. This balance of power would change with the arrival of the Turks.

“By the late 1060s the Seljuks were migrating in Anatolia proper. As they moved into Byzantine territory, they forced their sultan, Alp Arslan (Turkish for ‘lion’) to intervene in the region. This provoked a Byzantine military response. In early 1071, Alp Arslan (r. 1063-1072) set out to consolidate his frontier, attacking several Byzantine towns and capturing the fortresses of Manzikert and Argis along the way. The sultan was very familiar with Byzantine tactics, having suffered defeat at the hand of the Eastern Romans three times, and was well aware of their capabilities...

“The new Byzantine emperor, Romanos IV Diogenes (r. 1068-1071), inherited a difficult strategic position. In the west, the Normans threatened Byzantine possessions in Italy, while in the east Turkish raiding into Byzantine Armenia and eastern Anatolia forced the emperor to organize punitive expeditions against the marauders. Both in 1067 and 1068, Romanos campaigned against the Turks, surprising them at Sebasteia (modern Sivas) and clearing them out of the western provinces of Cappadocia, before being forced to retreat after a defeat near Khilat, close to Lake Van. In 1070, Romanos was forced to deal with Norman incursions in the west [which led to the fall of Bari in 1071], leaving his nephew, Manuel Komnenos, in charge of his forces in the east. But Manuel was taken prisoner by Alp Arslan’s own brother-in-law, Arisiaghi, who began to hatch a plot with his captive concerning overthrowing the sultan. Manuel convinced Arisiaghi to go to Constantinople, where the duplicitous Turk agreed to an alliance. When Alp

Arslan asked for the traitor's extradition and was refused, the sultan prepared for war."⁶¹⁶

When the sultan saw that Romanos' army was larger than his own, he offered peace. But Romanos rejected the offer, and in the ensuing battle was heavily defeated, partly because the commander of the second line, Andronikos Doukas, betrayed him, abandoning him to his fate, and partly because Romanos did not employ the light infantry (archers) that military experience had shown were absolutely necessary in fighting the Turks. "Romanos, surrounded by his Varangian Guard, was finally overpowered and captured. The remaining Byzantine units fled the battlefield, followed by a close and bloody pursuit that continued throughout the night. By dawn, the Turks had destroyed the flower of the Byzantine professional army."⁶¹⁷

Byzantium never fully recovered from the battle of Manizert. It led to the loss of most of Anatolia and therefore Constantinople's main source of manpower. Moreover, as Bettany Hughes writes, "there were many in those sweeping, multiform territories, the Caucasus, the Middle East, Asia Minor, who were sick of Constantinople's taxes, who therefore found it easy to slide towards Islam... As the Turks advanced with their take-no-prisoners philosophy, resistance was, in many cases, futile. Within twenty years Turkish forces would reach the Mediterranean and within 150 years Anatolia would be called Turchia in Western sources. After Manzikert Constantinople once again found herself accommodating stricken refugees. There were now new 'barbarians' at the gates - Seljuks who established the 'Sultanat of Rum' in Konya."⁶¹⁸

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 East to West in the fourteenth century...

And there were other destroyers, this time from the West... The Emperor Alexis Comnenus unwisely invited the Pope to help him reconquer the Middle East from the Muslims. The result was the First Crusade, a 30,000-strong horde of knights and peasants who, while aiming ostensibly to restore the Byzantine Empire, only weakened it by establishing fiercely anti-Orthodox Crusader kingdoms in Antioch and Jerusalem. And that was only the beginning of Western depredations. In 1185 a Norman Sicilian army conquered and devastated Thessalonica. Then, in 1204, a crusading army was diverted by to Constantinople, which was conquered and sacked.

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⁶¹⁶ Carey, "Debacle at Manzikert, 1071: Prelude to the Crusades", *Medieval History*, January, 2004, pp. 20, 21.

⁶¹⁷ Carey, op. cit., p. 23.

⁶¹⁸ Hughes, *Istanbul: A Tale of Three Cities*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2017, p. 344.

These disasters were to no small degree the result of a gradual corruption of the Orthodox understanding of the nature of true Christian power as a “symphony” between Church and State. This corruption consisted in the destruction of the symphony of powers and a slide towards absolutism - that is, to the state’s domination of the Church.

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 Christianity: caesaropapism, the besetting sin of the East, and papocaesarism, the besetting sin of the West. In modern times the philosopher Nicholas Berdiaev was an opponent of *all* Christian state power, seeing in it just so many variations on the caesaropapist or papocaesarist theme. As he wrote: “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 Godmanhood 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.”⁶¹⁹

The Church has never accepted this view, but has accepted Christian statehood since Constantine as a gift from God. And however frequently Christian

⁶¹⁹ Berdiaev, *Filosofia Svobody* (The Philosophy of Freedom). For a history of the terms “papocaesarism” and “caesaropapism”, see Gilbert Dagron, “Vostochnij tsezaropapizm (istoria i kritika odnoj kontseptsii)” (“Eastern Caesaropapism (a history and critique of one conception)”, <http://portal-credo.ru/site/?act=lib&id=177>.

statehood may have fallen away from the ideal, this does not mean that the gift itself should be rejected.

Nevertheless, it is true that the more ascetic writers have tended to give more negative 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 kingdoms: '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 unbearable 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."⁶²⁰

Unfortunately, from the twelfth century, the caesaropapist 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. Then, "losing all shame," according

⁶²⁰ Krivoshein, "Prepodobnij Simeon Novij Bogoslov i ego otnoshenie k sotsial'no-politicheskoj dejstvitsel'nosti svoego vremeni" ("St. Symeon the New Theologian and his relationship to the social-political reality of his time", in *Bogoslovskie Trudy* (Theological Works), Nizhni Novgorod, 1996, pp. 242-243.

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 reasserted his power, arrested Cerularius and tried him for high treason in 1059. So the East’s one brush with papocaesarism 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 [papocaesarist] 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’.”⁶²¹

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.”⁶²²

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 fulfiller 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.”⁶²³

⁶²¹ Alferov, “Teokratia ili Ierokratia” (Theocracy or Hierocracy), www.evanorthodox.ru; *Vernost’*, 130, 2009, <http://metanthonymemorial.org/VernostNo130.html>.

⁶²² Sokolov, *Lektsii po istorii Greko-Vostochnoj Tserkvi* (Lectures on the History of the Greek- Eastern Church), St. Petersburg, 1914, p. 14.

⁶²³ 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."⁶²⁴

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.⁶²⁵ 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."⁶²⁶

The meaning of "*epistemonarch*" here is obscure.⁶²⁷ However, the emperors now used the term to justify their ever-increasing interference in ecclesiastical affairs. 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."⁶²⁸

⁶²⁴ Emperor John Comnenus, in A.P. Lebedev, *Istoricheskie Ocherki Sostoiania Vizantijsko- Vostochnoj Tserkvi* (Historical Sketches of the Condition of the Byzantine Eastern Church), St. Petersburg, 2003, p. 101.

⁶²⁵ 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).

⁶²⁶ Dagron, *Empereur et Prêtre* (Emperor and Priest), Paris : Éditions Gallimard, 1996, pp. 259-260.

⁶²⁷ 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 *Svt. Grigorij Palama*, St. Petersburg, 2004, pp. 166-167.

⁶²⁸ Dagron, op. cit., p. 261. See Sokolov, op. cit.

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."⁶²⁹

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."⁶³⁰

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 over Islam that took place towards the end of the reign of Manuel I.

Hieromonk Enoch writes: "There were 22 Anathemas and renunciations a convert from Islam had to make. The final one was the following: 'And before all, I anathematize the God of Muhammad, about whom he [Muhammad] says, "He is God alone, God made of solid, hammer-beaten metal; He begets not and is not begotten, nor is there like unto Him any one.'" In 1180 the Emperor assembled a Synod. At the Synod he wanted this anathema removed and reworded, to just anathematize Muhammad, but not 'the God of Muhammad.' The Council refused to do this. There was a great conflict over this for about 6 months; after this, the Emperor died, the issue was dropped, and the old anathemas that the Bishops had originally refused to change, remained."

Before the Emperor's death, however, he had managed to gain some concessions from the bishops. Thus after the Council of 1180, 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 [St. Theodosius] and [most of the] Bishops even now did not want to share the Emperor's opinion. On this occasion

⁶²⁹ Acropolites, *Chronicle*, ch. 53; in Lebedev, op. cit., p. 99.

⁶³⁰ Gregoras, *History of Byzantium*, VIII, 2; in Lebedev, op. cit., p. 100.

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 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."⁶³¹

Orthodoxy had been preserved; but the emperor's attempt to impose his views on the Church was disturbing...

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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

⁶³¹ Lebedev, op. cit., pp. 122-124.

conducting of church services and sacraments, but including the traditionally exclusively episcopal domain of teaching the faith.

Thus 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."⁶³²

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 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"⁶³³, directly contradicting the teaching of St. Theodore the Studite and St. Nicholas the Mystic, who wrote: "If the emperor is the enemy and foe of the laws, who will fear them?"

Dagron summarizes Balsamon's thought as follows: "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 (*ierosyli*) or heterodoxy..."

"Insofar as the Emperor, through his anointing to the kingdom, is the Anointed of the Lord, while the Christ 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*

⁶³² Balsamon, *Interpretation of the 69th Canon of the Council in Trullo*, in Lebedev, op. cit., p. 97.

⁶³³ Balsamon, quoted in Fomin S. and Fomina T. *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1993, vol. I, p. 120.

excellence, Christ, is qualified as bishop by us, so the emperors, who also receive anointing, must be equally considered to be bishops.”⁶³⁴

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 firstpriesthood.”⁶³⁵

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.”⁶³⁶

Ostrogorsky characterizes the ideas of Balsamon and Chomatianos as “merely echoes of old and antiquated ideas”.⁶³⁷ 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 charismatic 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

⁶³⁴ Dagron, op. cit., p. 267; Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., p. 120.

⁶³⁵ Chomatianos, in Ralley and Potlis, *Mega Syntagma ton theion kai ieron kanonon* (Great Collection of the Divine and Sacred Canons), Athens, 1855, vol. V, p. 429.

⁶³⁶ Chomatianos, in *Tvorenia svv. Otsov i uchitelej tserkvi* (The Works of the Holy Fathers and Teachers of the Church), St. Petersburg, 1907, pp. 360-361.

⁶³⁷ Ostrogorsky, “Otnoshenie Tserkvi i gosudarstva v Vizantii” (“The Relationship of the Church and the State in Byzantium”), quoted in Fomin S. and Fomina T. *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1993,, vol. 1, pp. 104.

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..."⁶³⁸

Now that there existed a "canonical" argument for the absolutism of the emperors, they became correspondingly more absolutist, while the attitude of the people to the emperors became nothing short of idolatrous. Thus Nicetas Choniates wrote in about 1180: "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..."⁶³⁹

⁶³⁸ Dagron, op. cit., p. 271.

⁶³⁹ Nicetas Choniates, *The Reign of Manuel*, VI, 31; quoted in Fomin S. and Fomina T. *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1993, p. 120; Lebedev, op. cit., p. 95.

41. ST. ANDREW OF BOGOLIUBOVO AND THE RESTORATION OF AUTOCRACY

If the danger in Byzantium was a slide to despotism, the opposite tendency can be seen in Kievan Rus: a tendency towards disintegration and even democracy, which came to be held in check and to some degree reversed by one of the lesser-known heroes of Russian history, St. Andrew of Bogoliubovo...

The unity of Kievan Rus' under St. Vladimir and his immediate successors was an extraordinary achievement in view of the country's vastness, 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."⁶⁴⁰

The very first saints canonized in Kievan Rus' were Princes Boris and Gleb, the sons of St. Vladimir, who were killed by their evil brother Sviatopolk. And after the death of Great Prince Theodore-Mystislav, son of Vladimir Monomakh and grandson of King Harold II of England, in 1132, 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. "'The grass bends in sorrow,' wrote the poet of *The Lay of the Host of Igor*, the greatest of early Russian epics, 'and the tree is bowed down in earth by woe... Victory over the infidels is gone, for now brother said to brother: "This is mine also," and the princes began to say of little things, "Lo! This is a great matter," and to forge discord against themselves. And on all sides the infidels were victorious.'"⁶⁴¹ Matters were not helped by the fact 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. Sergei of Radonezh, introduced the law of primogeniture...

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 Kievan ones untalented, contribute to our understanding: was Yaroslav, who, though called 'the Wise', divided the Kievan land between his sons, stupider than, for example,

⁶⁴⁰ Podskalsky, *Khristianstvo i Bogoslovskaya literatura v Kievskoy Rusi (988-1237)* (Christianity and Theological Literature in Kievan Rus' (988-1037), St. Petersburg, 1996, p. 62.

⁶⁴¹ Benson Bobrick, *Ivan the Terrible*, Edinburgh: Canongate, 1987, p. 25.

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 Kievan or Muscovite thrones?

“The most obvious reason for the failure of the pre-Muscovite rulers was the ‘civil wars’ in the Novgorodian or Kievan *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 Kievan *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'."⁶⁴²

Nevertheless, according to G. P. Fedotov, 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..."⁶⁴³

One must agree with Archpriest Lev Lebedev in rejoicing that in the longer term Muscovite autocracy rather than Novgorodian democracy triumphed in the Russian land: "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."⁶⁴⁴

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⁶⁴² Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia*, Minsk, 1998, 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 and Fomina, op. cit., 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).

⁶⁴³ Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, Harvard University Press, 1966, vol. I., volume II, pp. 188-190, 191.

⁶⁴⁴ Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, p. 13.

The holy Prince Andrew of Bogoliubovo (1110-1174), a grandson of Vladimir Monomakh, was the son of Yurii Dolgoruky and a Polovtsian princess (in holy Baptism Maria). From his grandfather, Vladimir Monomakh, the grandson inherited great spiritual concentration, love for the Word of God and the habit of turning to the Scripture in all the circumstances of life. A brave warrior taking part in his military father's many campaigns, Andrew more than once came close to death in battle. But each time Divine Providence invisibly saved the princely man of prayer. Thus for example, on February 8, 1150, in a battle near Lutsk, Saint Andrew was saved from the spear of an enemy German by praying to St. Theodore the General, whose memory was celebrated that day.

"The chronicles also stress Saint Andrew's peace-making activity, a rare trait among the princes and military commanders of those harsh times. The combination of military valor with love for peace and mercy, of great humility with indomitable zeal for the Church were present in Prince Andrew in the highest degree. A responsible master of the land, and a constant co-worker to the city construction and church building activity of Yurii Dolgoruky, he built with his father: Moscow (1147), Iuriev-Polsk (1152), Dmitrov (1154), and he also adorned the cities of Rostov, Suzdal', and Vladimir with churches. In 1162 Saint Andrew could say with satisfaction, "I have built up white Rus with cities and settlements, and have rendered it with much populace."

When Prince Yuri Dolgoruky became Great Prince of Kiev in 1154, he gave his son Vyshgorod, near Kiev, as his possession. But in June 1155 St. Andrew left Vyshgorod and settled in Rostov-Suzdal, a small principality situated in the dense forests of the Volga-Oka triangle. The move north and the establishment of a new political order there 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 Yuri Dolgoruky 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 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 over 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 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!..."⁶⁴⁵

It would perhaps be more accurate to speak of the *restoration* of autocracy in Russia rather than its establishment insofar as St. Vladimir and Yaroslav the Wise were undoubtedly true autocrats, in spite of their recognizing the precedence in honour of the Byzantine autocracy.

It was precisely for the sake of restoring autocracy that St. Andrew had found it necessary to move the centre of gravity of the Russian realm to the northern forests? For here, according to N.M. Karamzin, far from the fratricidal politics of southern Russia, "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".⁶⁴⁶ It was therefore the perfect base for Andrew, who, "having not only

⁶⁴⁵ 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 vmeste* (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2001, p. 17).

⁶⁴⁶ 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).

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".⁶⁴⁷

"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 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..."⁶⁴⁸

Also important was the fact that the northern princes of Vladimir, unlike their southern counterparts in Kiev, never failed to maintain 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..."⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁷ Karamzin, op. cit., p. 214.

⁶⁴⁸ Zyzykin, *Tsarskaia Vlast'* (Royal Power), Sophia, 1924; <http://www.russia-talk.org/cd-history/zyzykin.htm>, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁴⁹ Wells, *Sailing from Byzantium*, New York: Bantam Deli, 2006, p. 247.

Andrew's achievement, according to V. 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 of Bogolyubovo as the foundation of the attainment of State might and popular prosperity. Bogolyubovo's successors, the Great Princes of Moscow who founded the great Muscovite State which then grew into a mighty empire, only developed and realized Bogolyubovo's ideas in their own political activity."⁶⁵⁰

It is therefore appropriate that St. Andrew, the real founder of the Russian autocracy, should have been killed on the same day, July 4/17, as the crown of the Russian autocracy and its last holy representative, Tsar Nicholas II....

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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, recognized 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."⁶⁵¹

Meanwhile, the situation in the rest of Rus' was deteriorating. In 1203 the Olgovichi of Chernigov sacked Kiev. The Kievan chronicler described the destruction as the worst since the baptism of Russia... In 1211, writes G.G. Litavrin, Vsevolod of Suzdal "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: it was then that 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."⁶⁵²

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

⁶⁵⁰ Georgievsky, *Svyatoj Blagovernij Velikij Knyaz' Andrej Bogolyubskij* (Holy Right-Believing Great Prince Andrew of Bogoliubovo), St. Petersburg, 1900, Moscow: "Preobrazhenie", 1999, p. 4.

⁶⁵¹ Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia 1200-1304*, Harlow: Longmans, 1983, p. 1.

⁶⁵² Litavrin, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., pp. 177-178.

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 ruled 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.'⁶⁵³

⁶⁵³ Kliuchevsky, quoted in Solonevich, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

42. 1204: THE FIRST FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Italian traders began to settle in the City. But Latins and Greeks did not get on. "Between us and the Latins," wrote Nicetas, "there has arisen a great gulf. Temperamentally we are utterly different and an immeasurable separation exists. They are obstinate and unbending and it pleases them to mock our polished manners. But we despise their arrogant, proud boasting, as the mucus that keeps their noses in the air."⁶⁵⁴

"By the 1160s," writes Peter Frankopan, "competition between the Italian city-states was so acute that there were running battles between Venetians, Genoese and Pisans in the streets of Constantinople. Despite attempts by the Byzantine Emperor to intervene, outbreaks of violence were to become regular occurrences. This was probably the result of increasing commercial competition and the consequences of falling prices: trading positions had to be protected, by force if necessary.

"The self-interest of the city-states antagonized the capital's inhabitants, both because of the damage done to property in the city and because the flexing of western muscles was increasingly evident elsewhere. In 1171, the Byzantine Emperor responded to growing disillusion by imprisoning thousands of Venetians and ignoring pleas for redress, let alone apologizing for his unilateral, unannounced actions. When Doge Vitale Michael was unable to resolve matters after sailing to Constantinople in person, the situation in Venice had become febrile. With crowds gathered hoping to hear positive news, disappointment turned to anger which then gave way to violence. Attempting to flee his own people, the Doge made for the convent of San Zaccaria; before he could get there, a mob caught up with him and lynched him."⁶⁵⁵

The ghastly story of the Fall of the City 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," writes 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."⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁴ Nicetas Choniates, *Chronicle*, in Cohen and Major, p. 109.

⁶⁵⁵ Frankopan, *The Silk Roads*, London: Bloomsbury, 2015, p. 149.

⁶⁵⁶ John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: The Decline and Fall*, London: Penguin, 1996, p. 143. See also http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massacre_of_the_Latins.

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 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".⁶⁵⁷

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."⁶⁵⁸

Isaac ascribed to himself the power to correct what was done in the Church contrary to the Church canons.⁶⁵⁹ Moreover, the encomiasts blasphemously addressed him as "God-like" and "equal to God!"⁶⁶⁰

Isaac also began negotiations with his "brother", the Sultan of Egypt, Saladin, inviting him "to share intelligence with him, warning that rumours about the empire's intentions put out by his enemies were without foundation, and asking Saladin to consider sending military support against the westerners."⁶⁶¹

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 with the help of the soldiers of the Fourth Crusade and the Venetian Doge Dandolo.

⁶⁵⁷ Nicetas Choniates, *The Reign of Isaac*, III, 7; quoted in Lebedev, op. cit., p. 95. See also Norwich, op. cit., chapter 9.

⁶⁵⁸ Nicetas Choniates, quoted in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., p. 109.

⁶⁵⁹ Isaac, *Novella de electionibus pontificum* (Law on the Election of Bishops), P.G. 135: 440; in Lebedev, op. cit., p. 95.

⁶⁶⁰ R.J. Macrides, "From the Komnenoi to the Palaiologoi: imperial models in decline and exile", in Paul Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: the Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994, p. 278.

⁶⁶¹ Frankopan, op. cit., p. 150.

The story is as follows. "With the turbulence following Saladin's successes matched by a period of instability in Byzantium, Venice was desperate to get exposure to Alexandria and the ports at the mouth of the Nile, places where it had been traditionally under-exposed; perhaps as little as 10 per cent of Venetian trade was with Egypt before 1200. The city had previously lost out to Pisa and Genoa, which both had decisive advantages over their Italian rival in volumes of trade and in the connections they had established with commerce coming through the Red Sea – rather than overland to Constantinople and to Jerusalem. The prizes on offer go a long way to accounting for the risks that Venice took in agreeing to build a huge fleet, which involved suspending all other work for the best part of two years.

"It soon became clear, however, that the numbers of those keen to take part were far lower than anticipated – leaving Venice dangerously out of pocket. Events now overtook the Crusaders, with policy being improvised on the go. In 1202, the fleet arrived at Zara on the Dalmatian coast, a city that had been at the centre of a long-running struggle between Venice and Hungary. As it became clear that an attack was imminent, the confused citizens hoisted banners marked with crosses over the walls, assuming that there had been a chronic misunderstanding, and refusing to believe that a Christian force would attack a Christian city without provocation – and against the express orders of Pope Innocent III. The city was not spared; Venice was extracting its pound of flesh from the knights.

"As the Crusaders considered how to justify such actions and argued about what to do next, a golden opportunity presented itself when [Alexis Angelos] offered to reward the army generously if they helped him take power in Constantinople. The forces that had originally set out for Egypt under the impression that they were heading for Jerusalem found themselves by the walls of the Byzantine capital, weighing up their options. As negotiations with factions inside the city dragged out, discussion among the Crusaders turned to how to take the city, and above all how to divide it and the rest of the empire between them.

"Venice had already learnt to guard its interest in the Adriatic and the Mediterranean jealously; it had strengthened this position by taking direct control of Zara. Here was the chance to seize control of the biggest prize of all, and in doing so secure direct control to the east."⁶⁶²

Besides, the Byzantines were heretics, "the enemies of God", and the Angeli had betrayed them... So in March, 2004, the Crusaders began the siege of the City. They conquered it, 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...⁶⁶³

⁶⁶² Frankopan, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-154.

⁶⁶³ The Venetian doge later adopted the title "Lord of a quarter and a half of a quarter of the whole empire of Romania" (Cohen and Major, p. 109).

As Spiros Vryonis writes: "Latin soldiers subjected the greatest city in Europe to an indescribable robbery. For three days they killed, raped, stole and destroyed on a scale that even the old Vandals or Goths didn't aspire to.

"Constantinople had become a museum of ancient and Byzantine art, a store of wealth that the Latins did not believe possible. ... Although the Venetians had an appreciation for the art they discovered (in the end they were also semi-Byzantine) and saved as much as they could, the French and others destroyed everything, stopping just to drink, rape nuns and kill Orthodox clergy.

"The Crusaders manifested their hatred for the Greeks in the most spectacular way: destroying the greatest church of Christianity.

"They destroyed the iconostasis, icons and holy books from Agia Sophia and put a prostitute who played dirty songs on the patriarchal chair.

"The estrangement between the East and the West that had begun centuries [before], culminated in the terrible massacre that accompanied the destruction of Constantinople...

"The Greeks were convinced that even the Turks, if they had conquered the city, they would have been more gentle. The conquest of Constantinople accelerated the fall of Byzantium into the hands of the Turks.

"Ultimately, the fourth crusade had the direct effect of the victory of Islam, i.e. the exact opposite of its initial intention."⁶⁶⁴

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..."⁶⁶⁵

The blind old doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo, came to the City to witness its capture. Having extracted revenge on his old enemy, he died in 1205, and was buried in Hagia Sophia, the only person ever to be buried there. As Frankopan writes, "It was a highly symbolic statement that spoke volumes about the rise of

⁶⁶⁴ Vryonis, *Byzantium and Europe*.

⁶⁶⁵ Alferov, "Uroki Nikejskogo Tsarstva" ("Lessons of the Nicaean Empire"), http://catacomb.org.ua/rubr10/R10_05.htm

Europe. For centuries, men had looked east to make their fortunes and realise their ambitions – whether spiritual or material. The sack and capture of the biggest and most important city in Christendom showed that the Europeans would stop at nothing to take what they wanted – and needed – to get closer to the centre of where the world's wealth and power lay."⁶⁶⁶

The Fourth Crusade and the Sacking of Constantinople in 1204 was a mortal blow to the Empire of New Rome from which it never fully recovered. For, as R. Browning writes, "If there was a single blow, it was struck in 1204 and not 1453... It was the power vacuum created by the Latin invasion which enabled the Orthodox states of the Balkans to strike out on a course of their own, freed from the field of force of Byzantium, and in the end condemned them to fall one by one to the Ottoman conqueror."⁶⁶⁷

Still more important, 1204 signified the end of any realistic hopes of restoring the religious unity of Europe, of healing the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches. This would not prevent further attempts at union. But it would never happen both because the West in its pride refused to repent of its doctrinal heresies, and even added to them, and because the terrible barbarism of the sacking created a moral and civilizational breach that could not be overcome...

From now on, the breach between the Orthodox East and the Catholic (and later Protestant) West would be a permanent fixture of geopolitics, enabling the apostate civilization of the West to continue developing and evolving unhindered and ever further from the grace and truth that is in Jesus Christ, to the terrible detriment, in the end, of the whole world...

⁶⁶⁶ Frankopan, op. cit., p. 155.

⁶⁶⁷ Browning, *The Byzantine Empire*, New York, 1980, p. 209.

43. THE NICAEAN EMPIRE AND ROYAL ANOINTING

After the fall of Constantinople to the crusaders in 1204, asks Bishop Dionysius (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'."⁶⁶⁸

So Romanity survived through the Lascarid Emperors at Nicaea. And their position was reinforced by an important sacramental development that strengthened the 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. For this was first introduced at the coronation of Emperor Theodore I Lascaris.

⁶⁶⁸ Alferov, "Uroki Nikejskogo Tsarstva" ("The Lessons of the Nicaean Empire").

It had taken several centuries for the imperial coronation to acquire this strictly ecclesiastical character in the East.

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 Porphyrogennitus 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..."⁶⁶⁹

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."⁶⁷⁰

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 1204.⁶⁷¹ It both bolstered imperial power and strengthened the position of the Church in relation to imperial power.

⁶⁶⁹ Dvorkin, op. cit., pp. 695-696, 697-698. The patriarch first received the emperor's confession of faith in 491 (Joseph Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought 300-1450*, London & New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 14).

⁶⁷⁰ Ostrogorsky, "Evoliutsia vizantijskogo obriada koronovania" ("The Evolution of the Byzantine Rite of Coronation"), quoted by Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 117.

⁶⁷¹ Dagron, *Empereur 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. The rite appeared after the conquest of Constantinople with the emperors of the Nicaean empire..." (personal communication, August 11, 2000)

“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 χρισμα). 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.”⁶⁷²

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 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

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 Nikon), 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 (*Khristianstvo i Bogoslovskaja 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.

⁶⁷² Zosimas, in Fomin and Fomina, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 118.

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 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 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 it 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 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 Epirote 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 To Archbishop Demetrius (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 Demetrius 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.'⁶⁷³

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 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

⁶⁷³ Vasiliev, *A History of the Byzantine Empire*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1955, p. 521.

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.”⁶⁷⁴

However, Theodore Angelus’ position had one weakness that proved fatal to his hopes: he was not anointed by the Patriarch. 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-hierarchy 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 hierarchy 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?”⁶⁷⁵

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 hierarchy 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 hierarchy next in rank after the patriarch, according to the unfailing customs and teaching of piety. However, he who is called to the

⁶⁷⁴ Vasilievsky, in Vasiliev, op. cit., pp. 521-522.

⁶⁷⁵ Patriarch Germanus, in F.I. Uspensky, *Istoria Vizantiiskoj Imperii* (A History of the Byzantine Empire), Moscow: “Mysl”, 1997, p. 412.

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..."⁶⁷⁶

Nevertheless, in the end it was the anointing they received from the true first-hierarchy of the Church that gave the victory to the Lascarids. This sacrament had been 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 Aristides 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."⁶⁷⁷

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.⁶⁷⁸ 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 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, 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' (*oaton*). John was an emperor who submitted to the criticism of the church.

⁶⁷⁶ Archbishop Demetrius, in Uspensky, op. cit., p. 413.

⁶⁷⁷ Papadakis, *The Orthodox East and the Rise of the Papacy*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994, p. 212.

⁶⁷⁸ John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: The Decline and Fall*, London: Penguin books, 1996, pp. 188, 189.

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..."⁶⁷⁹

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."⁶⁸⁰ That is how Blemmydes himself recounted the matter, but according to an anonymous author there was a strong party against Blemmydes among the 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...."⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁹ 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; *Orthodox Life*, vol. 32, N 6, November-December, 1982, p. 44).

⁶⁸⁰ 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.)

⁶⁸¹ Uspensky, op. cit., pp. 463-464.

44. THE GEORGIAN AUTOCRACY

The true children of New Rome were also autocracies, albeit with a national rather than a universal character... 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. For centuries, most of Georgia (except Abkhazia in the north-west, which had an independent kingdom and semi-independent Church) suffered under Arab rule and its own tendency to fragmentation.

However, “the new millennium,” writes Donald Rayfield, “began auspiciously for Georgia under an energetic, young, indisputably legitimate ruler [Bagrit III]: towns were rebuilt, agriculture and culture prospered; a new political consensus favoured a single monarchy... Political and economic stability, new centres for prayer, scholarship and profitable church landholdings induced Georgian scholars and monks to return from refuge at Mt Athos, Mt Sinai, Antioch or Jerusalem, and compose hymns and hagiographies on Georgian soil.”⁶⁸²

Bagrat was king of Kartli (East Georgia), with its capital in Uplistsikhe. He also controlled Abkhazia, whose capital at that time was Kutaisi, by inheritance from his mother. In 1010 he proceeded to conquer the eastern provinces of Kakhetia and Hereti, and having eliminated his cousins Sumbat and Gurgeti of Klarjeti, was now called “the king of kings of All Georgia”.

Since the western kingdom contained two metropolises 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 (in earlier centuries, Greek had been the predominant ecclesiastical language in the West, and Georgian in the East)...⁶⁸³

In 1071 the Seljuk Turks crushed the Byzantines at Manzikert, and proceeded to conquer and devastate Georgia.

However, a powerful revival was on the way...

“Arguably,” writes Papadakis, “the two most important members of the new Caucasian monarchy were David IV (1089-1125) and Queen Tamar (1184-1212).

⁶⁸² Donald Rayfield, *Edges of Empire: A History of Georgia*, London: Reaktion, 2012, p. 73.

⁶⁸³ 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.

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 (*aghmashenebeli*) 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 multinational empire of his successors. In 1122 he was able to gain control of Tiflis [it had been for centuries an Islamic Arab emirate] 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).⁶⁸⁴ 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 abuse, 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

⁶⁸⁴ "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). He is noted for his tolerance towards non-Christians, Muslims and Jews. See Protopresbyter James Thornton, *Pious Kings and Right-Believing Queens*, Belmont: Institute of Byzantine Studies, 2013, pp. 116-118. (V.M.)

Georgians never actually directly involved themselves with the crusades. This may have been at the root of the friendship Muslims felt for them.”⁶⁸⁵

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.”⁶⁸⁶

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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, seeing themselves as sons of the Byzantines, 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

⁶⁸⁵ Papadakis, *The Orthodox East and the Rise of the Papacy*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1994, pp. 139, 140, 141, 143-144.

⁶⁸⁶ Ioseliani, op. cit., p. 122.

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..."⁶⁸⁷

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."⁶⁸⁸

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-Urbinisi 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."⁶⁸⁹

In Tamar'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

⁶⁸⁷ Eastwood, "Royal renewal in Georgia: the case of Queen Tamar", in Paul Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: the Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th Centuries*, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994, pp. 284, 285, 286.

⁶⁸⁸ Dvorkin, op. cit., p. 828.

⁶⁸⁹ Papadakis, op. cit., p. 142.

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.⁶⁹⁰

At the beginning of her reign, Tamar convened a Church council and addressed the clergy with wisdom and humility: "Judge according to righteousness, affirming good and condemning evil," she advised. "Begin with me — if I sin I should be censured, for the royal crown is sent down from above as a sign of divine service. Allow neither the wealth of the nobles nor the poverty of the masses to hinder your work. You by word and I by deed, you by preaching and I by the law, you by upbringing and I by education will care for those souls whom God has entrusted to us, and together we will abide by the law of God, in order to escape eternal condemnation.... You as priests and I as ruler, you as stewards of good and I as the watchman of that good."

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 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..."⁶⁹¹

Queen Tamara is called a second Constantine, a David and a Solomon in the chronicles.⁶⁹² 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

⁶⁹⁰ *The Life of St. Tamara.*

⁶⁹¹ "Holy Righteous Queen Tamara of Georgia", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 53, No 2, March-April, 2003, p. 9.

⁶⁹² Eastwood, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

symphony of powers as purely, perhaps, as it has ever been seen in Christian history...

However, things began to go downhill after her death. Thus Saint Basil Ratishvili, one of the most prominent figures of the 13th-century Church, was the uncle of Catholicos Ekvtime III. He labored with the other Georgian fathers at the Iveron Monastery on Mt. Athos. Endowed with the gift of prophecy, Saint Basil beheld a vision in which the Most Holy Theotokos called upon him to censure King Demetre's impious rule. (This is actually Saint Demetre the Devoted, who in his youth lived profligately but later laid down his life for his nation.) Having arrived in Georgia and been brought before the king, the God-fearing father denounced the sovereign's unblessed marriage. He promised the king that if he abandoned his present way of life, he would find great happiness and success. Saint Basil also condemned the ungodly ways of Georgia's apostate feudal lords. But the king and his court disregarded the virtuous elder's admonitions, and in response Saint Basil prophesied: "A vicious enemy will kill you, and your kingdom will remain without refuge. Your children will be scattered, your kingdom conquered, and all your wealth seized. Know that, according to the will of the Most Holy Theotokos, everything I have told you will come to pass unless you repent and turn from this way of life. Now I will depart from you in peace." Saint Basil returned to Mt. Athos and peacefully reposed at the Iveron Monastery. His vision was fulfilled.⁶⁹³

Georgia was afflicted by civil wars, the Black Death and, above all, the Mongols, who invaded repeatedly (the worst invasion was that of Tamerlane). Then came centuries in which the country was torn between the Turks in the West and the Persians in the East. Relief would come only when the Georgians finally oriented themselves with the Russians in the north...

⁶⁹³ *Life of St. Basil*, translated by Holy Cross Monastery.

45. ST. SAVA AND SERBIAN AUTOCEPHALY

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 Church 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*..."⁶⁹⁴

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 behind the drafting of this code was the planned establishment of an independent,

⁶⁹⁴ Dvorkin, op. cit., pp. 688, 690.

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..."⁶⁹⁵

"Serbian history," writes Bishop Nikolai Velimirović, "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 *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 gores the other one, goading him on to pull the cart alone, while the next moment the ox on the right does the same

⁶⁹⁵ Bogdanovich, "The Political Philosophy of Medieval Serbia", in 1389-1989, *Boj na Kosovu* (The Battle of Kosovo), Belgrade, 1989, p. 16. St. Sava's *Zakonopravilo* has only recently been published in full by Professor Miodrag M. Petrovich – not in Serbia, where the official hierarchy discouraged its publication, but in Greece.

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."⁶⁹⁶

"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..."

St. Savva, according to St. Nikolai, by founding the autocephalous Church of Serbia, at the same time created a national Church as opposed to the international church of papism: "What does a national church represent? It stands for one independent church organization with its central authority from the people and by the people, with a national priesthood, a native national language, and national customs that express the people's faith. In contrast to such a people's church, you have the non-people's or international church with its headquarters outside the people, a priesthood comprised from everywhere, a foreign language, and a standardized and uniform expression of faith. Which is more natural and more beneficial? Without a doubt the national church. Its validation is found in the Gospels. The Saviour Himself commanded the Apostles: 'Go and make disciples of the nations' (Matthew 28.19). With these words He acknowledged

⁶⁹⁶ Velimirović, *A Treasury of Serbian Orthodox Spirituality*, Grays lake, Ill.: Free Serbian Diocese, 1988, pp. 23-24.

the nations as national entities of His universal Church. When He sent the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, the Apostles began to speak in different languages, not only in Hebrew, or Latin, or Greek, but in the languages of all nations: of the Parthians, Medes, Egyptians, Romans, Arabians, and all the others. When the Apostles appointed a head of the church of a people, they tried to find someone from within the midst of that people...

“A country’s national church requires a national dynasty. When the spiritual leaders are from the midst of the people, then the governing leaders must be from the people too. The parallel here is both logical and inevitable. Following the organization of the people’s church, St. Sava began to organize the people’s state. His most significant act in the organization of the state was the establishment of a national dynasty. He crowned Steven king, not because he was his brother but because he was an Orthodox Serb and had a legal claim to the seat of government. Had anyone other than Steven had a legal claim to the seat of government, and had been an Orthodox Serb as well, Sava would have crowned him king and would have consolidated his dynasty in the people’s state. Sava’s personal relationship with the dynasty was not important to him, instead the relationship of the dynasty with the people was important to him. This relationship with the people had to be complete: through their blood kinship, their language, their homeland, their faith, their spirit, their values, and traditions. And has remained so the present.. Unlike any other people, the national dynasty became natural to the Serbian people...

“For St. Sava the national state is the homeland, the land of our forefathers where one and the same people live. The national state does not stretch as far as the sword can reach. Instead, the sword may extend only as far as the border of the national state, that is, of the homeland. If a country is allowed to extend as far as the sword can reach, then the country ceases to be national; it ceases to be the homeland, and it becomes an empire. In this instance the country gains in territory but loses on moral grounds; it makes a material gain, but suffers a loss in its spiritual and moral power because the mixture of blood, language and disposition generate fear, unrest, selfishness, greed, and a general feeling of insecurity ...”⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹⁷ Velimirović, “Saint Sava’s Nationalism”, 1935, in *The New Chrysostom*. Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 2011, pp. 124, 125, 126.

46. THE MONGOL YOKE AND ST. ALEXANDER NEVSKY

On October 7, 1207, Pope Innocent III 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. However, on the death of Great Prince Vsevolod of Vladimir-Suzdal in 1212 disturbances again broke out between the princes of Russia, especially in the southern and western regions. As a result, “because of our sins”, as the chronicler put it, “God sent upon us the pagans”, that is, the Mongols under Genghis Khan...

“Before 1200,” writes Montefiore, “the Mongols had been a scattered people. But Genghis – claiming a mandate from heaven – was swiftly to transform them into a powerful and unified nation. ‘My strength,’ he declared, ‘was fortified by Heaven and Earth. Foreordained by Mighty Heaven, I was brought here by Mother Earth.’ His soldiers were mainly nomadic warriors, including deadly archers who travelled on small but sturdy Mongolian-bred ponies capable of covering great distances. Genghis turned them into a disciplined and brilliantly coordinated war machine that swept all before them.”⁶⁹⁸

The Mongol empire was probably the greatest land empire in history, extending at its greatest extent from Korea to Hungary. In 1211, Genghis captured and destroyed Yanjing [Beijing], the capital of China. In 1223 he crossed the Caucasus and defeated a Russian-Cuman army at the battle of Kalka River. Then he disappeared again.

“In fact, it was a mission of reconnaissance.

“The battle on the Kalka was followed, somewhere in the heart of Asia, by a period of detailed preparation and training. For the horsemen, such drill and planning had become routine. By the early 1220s, they had already humiliated Khwarezm and sacked Merv, Bukhara and Samarkand; they had crossed the Gobi desert and defeated the hosts of the Jin; and they had ridden westward from the Oxus to the edge of the Crimean steppe. The territory they controlled was four times larger than the Roman empire at its greatest extent, and most of it had been subdued in one lifetime. For such a host, the Dnieper region would have seemed like easy mat, but their plans received a setback in 1227”⁶⁹⁹, when Genghis died. He had claimed secular dominion of the whole world at the same time that the Popes were claiming spiritual sovereignty over it. “With Heaven’s aid,” he said on his deathbed to his son Ogedei in 1227, “I have conquered for you a huge empire. But my life was too short to achieve the conquest of the world. That is left for you...”⁷⁰⁰

⁶⁹⁸ Montefiore, *Titans of History*, pp. 140-141.

⁶⁹⁹ Catherine Merridale, *Red Fortress*, New York: Picador, 2013, p. 23.

⁷⁰⁰ As John Man writes, Genghis and his successors believed “that Heaven had given them the world. The Mongols’ task was to dominate, and all everyone else had to do was submit. It’s there in *The Secret History*: ‘Together Heaven and Earth have agreed. Temujin [Genghis’s original name] shall be the lord of the land... The whole earth is prepared for you...’ It’s there in many statements

Genghis' successors extended the empire to the Danube and Syria and created the Mughal dynasty in India. His grandson, Kublai Khan, completed the conquest of Korea in 1260 and China (overthrowing the Sung dynasty) in 1268-79. In 1274 and 1281 he made two abortive attempts to conquer Japan...

Meanwhile, the Persians 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..."⁷⁰¹

While being a fierce despot and conqueror, Genghis had been remarkably tolerant, even ecumenist, in religious matters. "Being the adherent of no religion and the follower of no creed he eschewed bigotry, and the preference of one faith to another, and the placing of some above others; rather he honoured and respected the learned and pious of every sect, recognizing such conduct as the way to the Court of God. And as he viewed the Muslim with the eye of respect, so also did he hold the Christians and idolaters in high esteem."⁷⁰²

However, this must have been cold comfort for the victims of his successors. For in 1237 the Mongols under his grandson, Batu, devastated Riazan. "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..."⁷⁰³

In February, 1238 the Mongols defeated and killed Great Prince George of Vladimir-Suzdal. "Almost in passing, they sacked and burned Moscow, killing its governor and plundering its meager treasure. The wooden settlement and its fortress burned like a torch..."⁷⁰⁴

from the first Europeans to make contact with the Mongols. John of Plano Carpini reported in 1247 that the Mongols intended to conquer the whole world, that only then would there be peace, that Genghis was seen as 'the sweet and venerable Son of Heaven' – *filius Dei dulcis et venerabilis* – and as the only lord on Earth as God is in Heaven. William of Rubrouck made the same point: *Super terram non sit nisi unus dominus Chinghiskhan* – 'Over the Earth there is to be only one lord, Genghis Khan.' Note the sense of present and future. Genghis remained in some sense alive, in spirit, still does, actually, as anyone can see if they visit his so-called mausoleum in Inner Mongolia, or witness the adoration released by the 800th anniversary of his coronation in 2006" (*Kublai Khan*, London: Bantam Press, 2006, p. 144-145).

⁷⁰¹ Archpriest Zakaria Machidatze, *The Lives of the Georgian Saints*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Press, pp. 403, 404.

⁷⁰² Ala-ad-Din Juvainin (c. 1260), in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 251.

⁷⁰³ Anonymous Chronicler, in M.J. Cohen and John Major, *History in Quotations*, London: Cassel, 2004, p. 169.

⁷⁰⁴ Merridale, op. cit., p. 24.

Then, in December, 1240 an army of 140,000 completely destroyed Kiev. "Pereyaslavl and Chernigov fell that same winter, and in 1241 Batu moves west to Galich and onwards into Hungary. His army seemed invincible, and might have reached the Rhine or further if the death, in Karakorum, of the Great Khan, Ugudey, the third son of Chinghis [Genghis], had not summoned the commander back to settle the succession. The territories of west-central Europe were spared; but the scattered and internally divided lands of the Rus princes [except Novgorod] would spend the next two centuries in subjugation to Mongol rule..."⁷⁰⁵ "A papal legate who crossed southern Russia in 1245 wrote: 'We found lying in the field countless skulls and bones. Kiev, which had been extremely large and prosperous, has been reduced to nothing...'"⁷⁰⁶

The Poles, the Teutonic Knights and the Hungarians had been defeated but not occupied, sending shock waves throughout the West. Several missions were sent to convert the Mongols to Christianity. Then the horde smashed the Turkish Seljuk Sultanate (in 1243) and the Arab Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad (in 1258) amidst scenes of horrendous slaughter⁷⁰⁷, before being defeated by the Mamluks of Egypt at Ain Jalut near Nazareth in 1260.

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"For the princes of Rus," writes Sir Geoffrey Hosking, "Mongol overlordship was by no means intolerable. The Mongols put limits to their mutual feuding, as the Varangians had done earlier for the East Slav tribes, and provided them with powerful backing for their authority in case of social rebellion. The position of prince vis-à-vis veche [primitive parliament] was powerfully enhanced.

"For the people, however, Mongol domination was much harder. In 1262 violent risings against taxation and recruitment took place in a number of the northeastern cities, the resistance being led by the veche. Townspeople objected particularly to the practice of taking away for slavery or conscription householders who could not or would not pay their dues. These and other urban revolts of the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were probably motivated not only by plunder of homes and trade and by ethnic or religious humiliation, but also by the fact that the Mongol overlords deprived the veches of what had hitherto been their main functions, election of princes, decisions on war and peace, the allocation of taxation, and recruitment to the militia. Every one of these functions was now handled by the Mongols themselves or by the princes acting as their agents. The Mongols and the princes, in short, often now had a common interest; at the very least, princes were reluctant to intervene to protect restive townsfolk. Many rebellions coincided with the taking of the census, which

⁷⁰⁵ Merridale, op. cit., p. 24.

⁷⁰⁶ Bobrick, op. cit., p. 26.

⁷⁰⁷ "The 14th-century Persian historian Wassaf Abdullah, born decades after the event, asserted that 900,000 people had been killed and that [the Mongol commander] Hulegu had been forced to move his camp in order to avoid the stench of the rotting corpses" (Nicolas Kinloch, "Hulegu the Mongol", *History Today*, June, 2017, p. 55).

symbolized the hated subjection and prepared administratively for conscription and the levying of tribute.”⁷⁰⁸

Only one Russian city had not been destroyed by the Mongols and retained its princely ruler with undiminished authority - Novgorod. Great-Prince Alexander Nevsky - “taller than any man on earth, with a voice like a clarion call, in visage like Joseph the Beautiful, in strength next to Samson, endowed with the wisdom of Solomon and the courage of the Roman King Vespasian” - had decided to pay tribute to the religiously tolerant Mongols in the East in order to concentrate all his forces against what he considered to be their more dangerous - because religiously intolerant - 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.⁷⁰⁹ 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, Alexander’s policy, writes Hosking, “had numerous and powerful opponents in Novgorod itself, especially among the artisans and merchants who were strong in the veche. They were anxious to reach a peace agreement with the Teutonic Knights so as to continue trading in the Baltic. At one stage his younger brother, Andrei, succeeded in gaining the support both of the veche and of the khan, and he ruled for five years. But Aleksandr’s diplomacy paid off in the end. He managed to regain the confidence of the khan and deposed his brother with the help of Kipchak troops...”⁷¹⁰

Since Andrei had fled to Catholic Sweden, Alexander’s other brother, Yaroslav, placed himself at the head of the anti-Alexander party in Novgorod, leading to war 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...

⁷⁰⁸ Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, London: Penguin, 2012, p. 55.

⁷⁰⁹ Ya.K. Begunov, A.P. Kirpichnikov, *Knyaz’ Aleksandr Nevsky i ego epokha* (Prince Alexander Nevsky and his Age), St. Petersburg, 1995, p. 200.

⁷¹⁰ Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, p. 65.

“An even more serious crisis arose in 1257, when the Mongols tried to supervise the census and tribute-gathering directly. When their officials arrived and ‘began to ask for tithe and *tamga* [customs dues],’ the citizens of Novgorod sent them packing. The Mongols returned the following year with troops, who paraded through the streets escorting Aleksandr. Opposition to the census then collapsed, Aleksandr claimed and then received from them the title of grand prince of Vladimir, senior among the princes of Rus, which he held till his death in 1263. This was the only time a Novgorod prince held a title which adequately reflected the city’s economic importance.”⁷¹¹

After making the long journey to the Khan to plead for mercy, Alexander died, exhausted, on the way back, 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..”

In his anti-Catholic policy St. Alexander had been almost alone among the Russian princes. In 1253, Prince Daniel Romanovich of Galich, agreed to be crowned by the papal legate Opizio of Mezzano.

As Alexander V. Maiorov writes: “This was the first and only case of this kind in Russian history. Apparently, the Pope's decision was partly due to extraordinary circumstances connected with the Mongolian threat and the need to unite the Christian rulers of Europe in order to face it.

“In the international legal aspect, the coronation of Daniel allowed him to consolidate his rights to Galicia and Volhyn against the claims of the Hungarian king. Under conditions of constant Mongolian danger, the Hungarian king had to accept the new royal status of the Galician-Volhynian prince, thereby recognizing him as equal in rank. In the charter of the King Béla IV of April 13, 1264, addressed to Master Laurentius, when describing the merits of the latter in the battle under Yaroslav (August 17, 1245), Daniel Romanovich was titled as King of Rus’ (*Daniel Ruthenorum rex*), while his rival in the struggle for Halych, Prince Rostislav Mikhailovich, was titled as Prince of Galicia (*Ratislao, duce Galliciae*). In the Hungarian hierarchy, Rostislav as *dux Galliciae* occupied a lower and probably subordinate position in relation to the *Galliciae et Lodomeriaeque rex*, which the Hungarian king was considered to be. In recognizing the title *Ruthenorum rex* for Daniel, the Hungarian king, in continuing to be titled as King of Galicia and Lodomeria, did not renounce his claims to Halych-Volhynia.

“In our view, the title King of Rus’ recognized in Western Europe with respect to Daniel Romanovich was in line with his own not only royal, but also imperial (tsarist) ambitions, inherited from his parents. These ambitions can be observed in numerous occurrences of the imperial title and its corresponding status epithets (*tsar’*, *tsarskii*) used in the written records of Galician-Volhynian Rus’ with respect to the local princes, starting with Roman Mstislavich, Daniel’s father.

⁷¹¹ Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, p. 65.

“However, the royal dignity of Daniel was very limited. There is no reason to think that any rank benefits of the Galician-Volhynian prince were recognized by other rulers of Rus’, first of all by Vladimir-Suzdal princes. The sovereignty of power, which the royal title implied in the international legal field, was significantly reduced because of Daniel’s political dependence on the rulers of the Golden Horde.”⁷¹²

The Russians submitted to the Mongols in that westernmost part of their empire known as the Golden Horde. But in 1246 one of their princes, Michael of Chernigov, while agreeing to submit politically to the Tatars⁷¹³ “because God has entrusted the rule to you”, refused to venerate the Tatar idols and a picture of Genghis Khan, and was martyred with his boyar Theodore.

In general, however the Tatars were tolerant in religious matters, which is why the Church strongly supported Alexander’s policy, not simply because it believed that it was necessary to give to Caesar (the Tatars) what was Caesar’s, but also because there were 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 been Mongol policy ever since the time of Genghis 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.”⁷¹⁴

Genghis had introduced the principle of broad tolerance, known as *Yasa*, which “was respected by the Mongols like the Koran of their people. Ministers of all religions were not only freed by it from all taxes and tribute, but also had their own representatives at the court of the Khan in Sarai, by whom the former were supported. There, the Nestorian priests had precedence; on feastdays they went to the Khan arrayed in their vestments, and after praying blessed his cup with wine. The Russian Orthodox had a diocese in Sarai. The Mongols’ conversion to Islam had little effect on their attitudes toward Christianity.

“How expansive was the protection provided by the Tatar Khans to the Russian Orthodox Church is eloquently indicated by the decrees issued to the Russian hierarchs by them. In the decree which was... issued by Tamerlane Khan to Metropolitan Cyril in 1267, or which more probably dates from 1269, we read, among other things, the following: ‘Any of all our officers who blasphemes or reviled the Faith of the Russians will in nowise be excused and will die an evil

⁷¹² Maiorov, “Galician-Volhynian Prince Daniel Romanovich, Rex Coronatus of Rus’, in G. Bilavshchi and D. Aparaschivei (eds.), *Studia Mediaevali Europaea et Orientalis*, Bucharest, 1918, pp. 319-342.

⁷¹³ “As various nomadic groups became part of Genghis Khan's army in the early 13th century, a fusion of Mongol and Turkic elements took place, and the invaders of Rus' and the Pannonian Basin became known to Europeans as Tatars or Tartars (see Tatar yoke). After the breakup of the Mongol Empire, the Tatars became especially identified with the western part of the empire, known as the Golden Horde.” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tatars>)

⁷¹⁴ Fennell, op. cit., p. 121.

death...Let that which is in their law they use to pray to God – icons, books or anything else – not be taken away, or torn apart, or ruined.’.. It is also well known that in the Khans’ capital city of Sarai there was established the see of a Russian bishop, who while the Mongols remained pagans was not hindered from preaching the Christian Faith, even in their very midst.”⁷¹⁵

Thus, as Papadakis writes, “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.”⁷¹⁶

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 had ruled, being accepted as the leader of the Church by all.

The way the Mongols protected the Church is illustrated, as Fr. Sergei Hackel writes, by Mengü-Temir’s *iarlyk* of 1308, which 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 Mengü-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 serdtsem*). 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 Uzbek (1313), nor by the Islamic faith of his successors. In 1347 the senior

⁷¹⁵ “The Encyclical Letter of the Council of Russian Bishops Abroad to the Russian Orthodox Flock, dated 23 March 1933”, *Living Orthodoxy*, September-October, 2001, p. 14. The Russian Church’s missionary work was aided by one of the Russian princes, St. Theodore of Smolensk and Yaroslavl (+1299). “In the 1270s, St Theodore went on state business to the Golden Horde of the Tatars. The saint was so liked by Khan Mengü-Temir that he even wished for the Prince to marry his daughter. The saint accepted, and the Khan’s daughter was baptized with the name Anna. They were married and had two sons, David and Constantine. St Theodore gained a tremendous influence at the Horde which he used to the glory of the Russian Church. The Horde began to adopt Russian customs and piety; it was the beginning of a great missionary movement of the Russian Church towards the East.” (St. Elisabeth Convent, Minsk).

⁷¹⁶ Papadakis, op. cit., p. 332; Fennell, op. cit., p. 113.

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 him 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..."⁷¹⁷

The doctrine of humble submission to the conquerors was also preached by Bishop Serapion of Vladimir (+1275).

From the time of St. Alexander Nevsky 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 – and keep it strong by calling on her children to obey it. 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... Moreover, in the long run, 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."⁷¹⁸

⁷¹⁷ Hackel, "Under Pressure from the Pagans? – The Mongols and the Russian Church", in J. Breck, J. Meyendorff and E. Silk (eds.), *The Legacy of St. Vladimir*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990, pp. 49-50.

⁷¹⁸ Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 93.

47. MOUNT ATHOS, THE UNIA AND MICHAEL PALAEOLOGUS

As the Roman Catholic heresy gained in strength, a reminder of what true, Orthodox Catholicism is was provided by the multinational monastic community of Mount Athos in Northern Greece. "According to one tradition," writes Sotiris Kadas, "the Virgin Mary, accompanied by St. John the Evangelist, was on her way to visit Lazaros [the "four-days-dead" Bishop of Kition] in Cyprus, when a sudden storm arose and her ship was carried by a violent wind to Athos. They are said to have come ashore close to the present monastery of Iveron. There the Virgin rested for a while, and, overwhelmed by the beauty of the place she asked her Son to give her the Mountain, despite the fact that the inhabitants were pagans. In response, a voice was heard saying: 'let this place be your inheritance and your garden, a paradise and a haven of salvation for those seeking to be saved.' Thus the Holy Mountain was consecrated as the inheritance and garden of the Mother of God."⁷¹⁹

There had been hermits and small communities there for centuries; but the first large coenobitic community, the Great Lavra, was founded by St. Athanasius in 963. Following his lead, many new monasteries were founded, not only Greek, but also Georgian (in 979), Bulgarian (980), Russian (in 1169), Serbian (1197) and even Latin. The ruins of the Amalfitan Latin monastery, founded in the eleventh century, can still be seen to this day.⁷²⁰

The papacy tried to subdue the Orthodox East to itself not only by force, 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

⁷¹⁹ Kadas, *Mount Athos*, Athens, 1997, p. 10.

⁷²⁰ Dom Leo Bonsali, "The Benedictine Monastery of St. Mary on Mount Athos", *Eastern Churches Review*, 2:3 (1969), pp. 262-7.

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."⁷²¹

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."⁷²²

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. For the sake of preserving the empire the Greek leaders 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.'...

"...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

⁷²¹ Innocent III, in R.H.C. Davis, *A History of Medieval Europe*, Harlow: Longmans, 1988, p. 333.

⁷²² Vryonis, *Byzantium and Europe*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1967, p. 161.

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*."⁷²³

Finally, 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 unia 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."⁷²⁴

The Nicaean Empire had been a period of spiritual recovery, and of return to the symphonic tradition of the Orthodox Autocracy. However, after the reconquest of the City in 1261, Byzantium began a long decline. Already, immediately after the reconquest, there were ominous signs. The City itself was still devastated as a result of the Latin conquest, and greatly reduced in population and wealth; its trade was now controlled by the Genoans and Venetians. Independent Greek statelets in Epirus and Trebizond still existed, and the Serbs and Bulgarians were also independent now. At the same time, Michael 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..."⁷²⁵

⁷²³ Frontier, "The Council of Lyons and the False Union of 1274", *The True Vine*, vol. 2, N 4, Winter, 1975, pp. 5-6.

⁷²⁴ Uspensky, *Istoria Vizantiiskoj Imperii* (A History of the Byzantine Empire), Moscow: "Mysl", 1997, p. 496.

⁷²⁵ Uspensky, op. cit., p. 494.

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.⁷²⁶ 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 *unia* 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.⁷²⁷

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

⁷²⁶ Uspensky, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

⁷²⁷ Norwich, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

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.'"⁷²⁸

Finally Arsenius was deposed for failing to appear at his trial, and was replaced by the more malleable Germanus. In justification of his deposition of Arsenius, the emperor, in a *prostagma* of 1270, "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*."⁷²⁹

Meanwhile, the Emperor was continuing to manoeuvre for an ecclesiastical union with Rome. His real purpose was the reunification of the Greek lands under his authority, for which 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 or the emperor above the faith. Even "the emperor's spiritual father Joseph went over to the opposition... 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

⁷²⁸ Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 67.

⁷²⁹ Dagron, *op. cit.*, p. 262

Lascaris. The patriarch and hierarchs one by one read out an act of absolution of the emperor from the excommunication laid upon him..."⁷³⁰

"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 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 tried to rid the monasteries of such dissidents, but only drove them underground. Dismissed monks, poorly clad, and often called the *saccophoroi*, the wearers of sackcloth, would go about the people preaching resistance..."⁷³¹

Restored to communion, and with the anti-uniates 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..."⁷³²

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.

Michael continued to persecute the anti-uniates, imprisoning and mutilating their leaders. However, the Church as a whole offered strong resistance.

⁷³⁰ Uspensky, op. cit., p. 513.

⁷³¹ Runciman, op. cit., p. 69. 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." (*The Orthodox East and the Rise of the Papacy*, p. 219.) (V.M.)

⁷³² Dagron, op. cit., p. 263.

“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.⁷³³ 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 *Menaion* 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...⁷³⁴

“An anti-uniatic council was in Thessaly, which anathematized the pope, the emperor and his uniatic 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.”⁷³⁵

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

⁷³³ “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.)

⁷³⁴ 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 (Velimirovič, 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.)

⁷³⁵ Monk Kallistos Vlastos, *Dokimion istorikon peri tou skhismatos tis dutikis ekklesias apo tis Orthodoxou Anatolikis* (Historical Treatise on the schism of the western church from the Orthodox East), Mount Athos, 1991, p. 109.

Emperor. But then the Sicilians, supported by an Aragonese army, rose up against Charles in the so-called "Sicilian Vespers".

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, not least because he needed the help of the West against the Orthodox Serbs and Bulgarians who resisted him. Thus he was in union with those Catholic soldiers that killed the zealot monks of Zographou on Mount Athos. "The pope dispatched an army to help the emperor. The Latin army entered the Holy Mountain and committed such barbarism as the Turks had never committed in five hundred years. Having hanged the Protaton, and having killed many monks in Vatopedi, Iveron and other monasteries, the Latins attacked Zographou. The blessed Abbot Thomas warned the brethren that whoever wished to be spared from the Latins should flee from the monastery, and that whoever desired a martyr's death should remain. And so, twenty-six men remained: the abbot, twenty-one monks, and four laymen who served as laborers for the monastery. They all closed themselves in the monastery's tower. When the Latins arrived, they set fire to the tower and these twenty-six heroes of Christ found a martyr's death in the fire. While the tower was burning, they chanted the Psalms and the Akathist to the Most-holy Mother of God. They gave their holy souls to God on October 10, 1283. In December of the same year, the dishonorable Emperor Michael died in poverty, when the Serbian King Milutin rose up against him in defense of Orthodoxy."⁷³⁶

"His wife, Empress Theodora and his son and successor Andronicus II Palaeologus refused to give him burial and Church honors.⁷³⁷ 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

⁷³⁶ Bishop Nikolai Velimirović, *Prologue from Ohrid*, October 10.

⁷³⁷ 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 Velimirović, *The Prologue from Ochrid*, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 1986, part 4, p. 59) (V.M.)

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.'" ⁷³⁸

And so the conqueror of Constantinople, the "new Constantine", died, hated by his own people. Rarely has such a glorious beginning to a reign ended in such ignominy...

The humiliation of Michael coincided with the exaltation of the memory of his first ecclesiastical opponent, Patriarch Arsenius. By 1310 most of the Arsenites had been reconciled with the official Church. Encomia were written to Arsenius, and he was even venerated as a saint. But as Ruth Macrides writes, "it is not only in encomia that Arsenios was a symbol for the Church which had emerged stronger from the crisis of the thirteenth century. Almost every aspect of Arsenios' recognition as a saint demonstrated the triumph of the Church over the Palaiologi: his reinstatement in Hagia Sophia, the office celebrating him as a champion of the truth, his perfectly preserved body a source of healing. Even in the late fourteenth century,... anyone could see with his own eyes that Arsenios had been blessed and his opponent damned. Philotheus, the metropolitan of Selumbria... commented that the body of the emperor Michael lay in Selymbria in the monastery of Christ Saviour, 'all bloated' because of his heterodoxy and because of the excommunication which 'the most holy patriarch Arsenios pronounced against him'. Michael never received proper burial rites, his corpse was left near the place of his death, 'a plaything and laughing-stock even to his own children; Agallianos, writing in the fifteenth century, invites anyone who has doubts about the sanctity of Arsenios and the damnation of Michael to 'judge for himself [...] and tell me with conscience which is the excommunicate and which the saint. But this is obvious even to a blind person.'

"If Agallianos and others before him attributed Michael's eternal damnation to the power of Arsenios' excommunication, they also acknowledge the part played by Michael's declaration of Union with the Church of Rome. The latter came to be the dominant issue of his reign and the reason for which his name is missing from the commemorative list of emperors in the Synodikon for the Sunday of Orthodoxy. Those who suffered persecution for opposing union were restored and honoured after his death in the reign of Andronicus II..." ⁷³⁹

However, the Catholic persecutions of the Orthodox did not end with the death of Michael. "His son and successor, Andronicus II, unlike his father, was opposed to the Latin rites and the Union, and helped the monks [of Mount Athos] restore their properties. Unwittingly, however, Andronicus was to deal a near-fatal blow to Athos. The Catalan mercenaries, whom he had hired to protect colonies in Asia Minor, became uncontrollable and were dismissed. They

⁷³⁸ Frontier, op. cit., pp. 11-12. The Synod's « Exposition of the Tomos of Faith against Beccus » is found here: <https://sangiulio.org/holy-canons/blachernae/>.

⁷³⁹ Macrides, "Saints and Sainthood in the Early Palaiologan Period" in "The Byzantine Saint", *Sobornost*, 1981, pp. 78-79.

encamped in Kassandra, the westernmost of the three promontories of Chalkidiki, and from there, for two years, they plundered the Mountain, massacred monks, burned down monasteries and then departed, taking with them priceless treasures. Thus the number of monasteries was reduced to 25, of which 19 still survive..."⁷⁴⁰

⁷⁴⁰ Kadas, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

48. THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SERBIAN EMPIRE

"The 14th century," in the opinion of 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..."⁷⁴¹

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. As 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."⁷⁴²

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 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.⁷⁴³

⁷⁴¹ Dvorkin, op. cit., p. 716.

⁷⁴² Papadakis, op. cit., pp. 258-259.

⁷⁴³ Bogdanović, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

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."⁷⁴⁴

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 Milošević 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..."⁷⁴⁵

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.

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,

⁷⁴⁴ West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006, pp. 892-893.

⁷⁴⁵ Milošević, in Tim Judah, *The Serbs*, London: Yale University Press, 1997, p. 22.

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?"⁷⁴⁶

"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."⁷⁴⁷

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 Balkans 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' 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

⁷⁴⁶ St. Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, III, 2, 27, in *Défense des saints hésychastes (Defence of the Holy Hesychasts)*, edited by John Meyendorff, Louvain: Sacrelegium Sacrum Lovaninense, 1973, pp. 692, 693 (in French and Greek).

⁷⁴⁷ Papadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

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..."⁷⁴⁸

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."⁷⁴⁹

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.

According to Bishop Nikolai Velimirović, "The Serbs had their national state from St. Sava until Czar Dušan. Dušan strayed from the ideals of St. Sava, he created an empire, and by this he prepared the downfall of his country, that is, of the national state. As in other instances, here too, the empire destroyed our homeland, our national state. For being subjugated or subjugating another nation result in the same catastrophe..."⁷⁵⁰

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.

"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

⁷⁴⁸ West, op. cit., pp. 893-894.

⁷⁴⁹ Wheatcroft, *Infidels*, London: Penguin Books, 2004, p. 203.

⁷⁵⁰ Bishop Nikolai Velimirović, "Saint Sava's Nationalism" (1935), in *The New Chrysostom*. Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2011, p. 126.

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."⁷⁵¹

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."⁷⁵²

In spite of this inspiring miracle of political and ecclesiastical peacemaking, the Turks continued to make inroads, defeating the Serbs at the battle of the River Maritsa in 1371. Then, at the famous battle of Kosovo Polje (Blackbird Field) in 1389, 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.⁷⁵³

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

⁷⁵¹ Rogich, *Great Martyr Tsar Lazar of Serbia*, Platina: St. Herman Brotherhood, 2001, pp. 8-9.

⁷⁵² Rogich, *Great Martyr Tsar Lazar of Serbia*, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁵³ Tim Judah, *The Serbs*, Yale University Press, 1997, p. 39.

Christian soldiers, martyrs for godliness to be recorded in the book of life... Suffering begets glory and labours lead to peace."⁷⁵⁴

According to Bishop Nikolai Velimirović, just as St. Sava taught the Serbs how to live, so St. Lazar taught them how to die. 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."⁷⁵⁵

However, as he stood, supported in the arms of a Turkish soldier, the dying 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 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

754 Danilo, in Wheatcroft, op. cit., p. 241.

755 Danilo, in Wheatcroft, op. cit., p. 241.

753 Velimirović, "Kosovo", in 1389-1989, *Boj na Kosovu*, pp. 52-53.

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 than 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’.”⁷⁵⁶

As James E. Held writes, after Kosovo “Serbia did not totally lose its independence until 1459, and Orthodox refugees fleeing as well, Latin Crusaders and Venetian raiders, found refuge under the rule of Stefan, Prince Lazar’s son. Although an Ottoman vassal, his sister Olivera joined the Sultan’s harem, his reign was a time of cultural growth and economic prosperity. For a time, Serbia held a privileged position in the Ottoman Empire, even as the Turks systematically dismembered the disjointed Balkan kingdoms until twice reaching the gates of Vienna.”⁷⁵⁷

Meanwhile, under Tsar Ivan Alexander (1331-71) the Bulgarians 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.

⁷⁵⁶ Velimirović, in Nun Ioanna, “Taina kosovskoj bitvy – dukhovnoe zaveshchanie tsaria Lazaria” (“The Mystery of the Battle of Kosovo – the Spiritual Will of Tsar Lazarus”), *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), N 7 (583), July, 1998, pp. 15, 16, 19, 21, 22-23.

⁷⁵⁷ Held, “Legend of the Fall, 1389: the Battle of Kosovo”, *Medieval History*, January, 2004, p. 37.

49. ST. GREGORY PALAMAS AND THE HESYCHAST CONTROVERSY

In the middle of the fourteenth century the Black Death struck Constantinople, killing, according to one source, most of the inhabitants and further undermining the strength of the State. Meanwhile, the divisions between and within the state continued, and there was a 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...⁷⁵⁸

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, come from attempting to sell the birthright of the Orthodox Faith for political gain...

*

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. This was the result, we may suppose, 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 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 epicentre 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.

⁷⁵⁸ 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).

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, they were attempts to know the unknowable; 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 it.

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 passible 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."⁷⁵⁹

⁷⁵⁹ *The Philokalia*, vol. IV, translated and edited by G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware, London: Faber and Faber, 1995, p. 423.

This teaching was vindicated at a Council in Constantinople presided over by Emperor Andronicus III in 1341. There were further Councils in 1347 and 1351, when Barlaam and his helpers Acindynus and Nicephorus Gregoras were excommunicated. Barlaam renounced Orthodoxy and became a Catholic bishop.⁷⁶⁰

Something of the spirituality of the hesychast monks may be gleaned from the spiritual testament of St. Teodosi of Trnovo, a disciple of St. Gregory of Sinai, that he gave to his disciples on his deathbed: "First of all, hold fast to the holy faith of the Church of the Apostles and Councils, and to its inviolable precepts. Shun the Bogomil and Messalian heresies as something totally unfitting, and after them the heresies of Barlaam, Akyndinos, Gregory and Athanasius. Believe those things which we have received from the beginning, and do not remove or add anything, for this leads to blasphemy. This is what caused Akyndinos to blaspheme, when he described Christ's glory, which once shone forth in a truly glorious and miraculous manner, as something created. Hold fast to both these things. In addition he who is a true Christian, by deed and repute as well as in name, also roots out of himself love of self-will. Do not burden your life with possessions, and practice self-denial in order to lull your passions. Subdue anger and all forms of bodily disturbances, and so drive out spiritual darkness. These things, in short, dry up all the moisture and sweetness of the flesh. He whose spiritual eye is clear can see into himself, as did the pious David; and he overcomes the realms of the evil one, that is the cunning inward thoughts of our hearts. Keep constantly before you, as an activity of the mind, the vision of God; for this is a powerful weapon that will not yield or break before any opposing force. Above all, hold fast to love, the supreme virtue, with all your strength, for this is the fulfilment of all blessings. Make all strangers welcome; do not make false accusations; and avoid anger, rage, remembrance of wrongs and hatred, for these things darken the soul and estrange it from God."⁷⁶¹

Apart from their great 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...

⁷⁶⁰ According to Fr. Alexander Prapertov, he "stood at the sources of the Renaissance. One of his pupils was Petrarch himself. And another of his pupils was Leontius Pilatus, the first professor of the Greek language in Western Europe, who translated a multitude of the works of the ancient philosophers and writers (in particular, Homer's *Iliad*) and was a vivid figure in the Early Renaissance. Giovanni Boccaccio learned Greek from him." (*Facebook*, March 13, 2017)

⁷⁶¹ St. Teodosi, in Muriel Heppell, "The Spiritual Testament of St. Teosodi of Turnovo", *Sobornost'*, vol. 4, no. 2, p. 202.

50. ST. SERGIUS OF RADONEZH AND THE RISE OF MUSCOVY

Byzantium survived for over sixty years after the defeat of the Serbs at Kosovo Polye in 1379 and the fall of Bulgaria in 1393. 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.

The principality of Moscow was founded in 1276 by a younger son of St. Alexander Nevsky, Daniel; and in 1299 a new phase in Russian history began 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 was now called “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, Great 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...⁷⁶² It appears that the patriarchate recognised its mistake, because when Maximus died and Great Prince Yury put forward a Galician abbot, Peter, for the metropolitanate of Galicia, the patriarchate appointed him “metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia”.

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

⁷⁶² 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).

to Moscow – that is, to the town whose princes, more than any 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.⁷⁶³

St. Peter advised 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.”⁷⁶⁴

In 1326 St. Peter moved his see to Moscow, and died in December of the same year. He was canonized astonishingly quickly, only a year later... At the time of St. Peter’s death, the prince of Tver had the “yarlik” of tax-collector and the title of 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 Great Prince Ivan of Moscow his chance. He set off for Sarai and returned at the head of a Mongol-Russian force which devastated Tver; Prince Alexander of Tver was excommunicated by the new metropolitan, Theognost. In reward for this service, in 1328 the khan bestowed the title of Grand Prince on Prince Ivan of Moscow together with the responsibility of farming all the taxes due to the khan from the whole of Russia. Hence his nickname of “Kalita”, “money bag”. In exchange for providing the Horde with regular income, the great prince was protected from Mongol raids and had the opportunity of making considerable gains for himself from the other tribute-paying princes. As St. Peter had prophesied, Moscow was on the way to becoming the economic and political centre 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 but the 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.”⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶³ A.E. Presniakov, “Na puti k yedinoderzhaviu” (“On the Path to One-Man Rule”), *Rodina* (Homeland), N 11, 2003, pp. 15-16.

⁷⁶⁴ St. John Maximovich, *Proiskhozhdenie zakona o prestolonasledii v Rossii* (The Origin of the Law of Succession in Russia), Podolsk, 1994, p. 9.

⁷⁶⁵ Papadakis, op. cit., p. 337.

It was at about this time, in 1347, that Olgerd's supposed conversion to Orthodoxy was shown to be 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..."⁷⁶⁶

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.

However, Olgerd put forward his own candidate, a Russian from Tver named Roman, as metropolitan of Lithuania, with the aim of having Roman take over the whole of Russia. And indeed, Roman, having been consecrated by Patriarch Callistos of Constantinople (who had replaced the deposed Philotheus), began styling himself Metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia and moved his residence to Kiev. So it was only after the death of Roman in 1362 that Alexis was able to reunite the Russian metropolitanate under his sole rule.

However, continues Boris Floria, "Olgerd wasn't about to give up so easily. Over the next decade and a half until his death in 1377, the energetic Lithuanian great 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 Great 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."

⁷⁶⁶ Papadakis, op. cit., p. 338.

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 that 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 and Athonite 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.”⁷⁶⁷

At the same time, Great Prince Dimitri brought Tver from the Lithuanian sphere of influence into 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 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, Dimtri 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 certain Pimen was consecrated metropolitan of Kiev and Great Russia, while Cyprian was given Lithuania and Little Russia.

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Under Dimitri, writes Hosking, “Moscow consolidated its authority over the principalities of Rostov, Suzdal, and Nizhni Novgorod and extended its territory

⁷⁶⁷ Papadakis, op. cit., p. 339.

far toward the northeast, into Starodub (east of Suzdal), Kostroma, Galich, Uglich, and Beloozero, whether by some kind of financial transaction or by invasion has never been clear. These acquisitions greatly increased Moscow's access to the wealth of the forests and lakes of the north while curtailing the territory which had been the key to Novgorod's affluence.

"This expansion coincided with a period when the Golden Horde, having been a stable overlord for more than a century, began to fall apart. Until the late fourteenth century, it remained indisputably the leading power in Eurasia. It dominated the great trading route down the Volga, from the Baltic to the Middle East, Persia, and India; it protected the caravan trade across the steppes from Central Asia and China to the Black Sea and the ports of the Mediterranean. The incomes it derived from these lucrative sources, together with the tributes from its subordinate lands, ensured that it was not only a powerful but also a wealthy state. On the other hand, this wealth generated an increasingly sophisticated urban civilization which was difficult to reconcile with continuing nomadic rule. The far-flung, highly diverse territories of the Horde, each developing in its own way, were becoming more difficult to administer adequately from horseback.

"Eventually the accumulating pressures brought about an explosion. The assassination of Khan Berdi-bek in 1359 inaugurated a series of coups, in which short-lived rulers succeeded one another on the throne of Sarai, while one of the more enterprising generals, Mamai, set up his own independent horde on the steppes east of the Volga and proceeded to claim the lands of Rus as part of his *ulus*. Faced with two demanding, unstable, and mutually jealous claimants for acknowledgement and tribute, the princes of Rus fell prey to confusion and apprehension. Yet they also had the opportunity to exploit the divisions among their masters, if only they could unite to take advantage of them."

Further east, meanwhile, the Mongol warlord Timur (Tamerlane) was establishing a great Central Asian empire with its capital at Samarkand. "One of his generals, Tokhtamysh, broke away to move westward with his own army, seize power at Sarai, and reunite most of the fragments of the Golden Horde. Only Mamai eluded his grasp."⁷⁶⁸

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It was at this time that one of the greatest saints of this or any other age, Sergius of Radonezh, a hermit of the northern forests who founded the great Lavra at Sergiev Posad (Zagorsk), the most famous of all Russian monasteries that became the spiritual centre of the Moscow Patriarchate, assumed the spiritual leadership of the Russian Church.

In 1380, Mamai, invaded Muscovy. He was claiming unpaid tribute, and was supported by Lithuania under Olgerd's son Jagiello.

⁷⁶⁸ Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, London: Penguin, 2012, pp. 78-79.

St. Sergius did not immediately bless the Great Prince to fight Mamai, but only when all other measures had failed⁷⁶⁹: “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 silver, and God will not allow them to overcome us: seeing your humility, He will exalt you and thrust down their unending pride.”

“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.”⁷⁷⁰

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, as 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 sovereign.

In any case, two years later the lawful khan Tokhtamysh came and sacked Moscow; so there was not, and could not be, any radical change in policy yet – tribute continued to be paid. 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

⁷⁶⁹ 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.

⁷⁷⁰ Archimandrite Nikon, *Zhitie 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

Orthodox Church, thereby holding out the promise that the spiritual unity of the Russian lands, which had never been lost, could be complemented by the 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..."⁷⁷¹

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.⁷⁷²

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

⁷⁷¹ Colin Wells, *Sailing from Byzantium*, New York: Bantam Deli, 2006, p. 270.

⁷⁷² Archimandrite Nikon, op. cit., p. 169.

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."⁷⁷³

Although Dimitri again quarrelled with St. Cyprian and replaced him with Pimen, on the deaths of both Dimitri and Pimen in 1388, Cyprian re-entered 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 latter marked the beginning of the end of Orthodox autocracy in its original Mediterranean homeland, while the former marked the beginning of the rise of the last of the Orthodox autocracies.

After the death of St. Sergius on September 25, 1392, for six years the monastery was guided by St. Sava of Storozhevsk (December 3). In the year 1400 Saint Sava founded his own monastery near Zvenigorod, and the brethren entreated St. Nikon, St. Sergius' closest disciple, to take over its direction. He consented, but allotted himself a certain time each day for silence, so as to stand alone before God.

In 1395, the fearsome Tamerlane was at the gates of Moscow, but was forced to retreat after the Vladimir icon of the Mother of God was brought from Vladimir to Moscow.

When reports began to spread about an invasion of the Russian land by Khan Edigei in 1408, St. Nikon zealously prayed to God to spare the monastery. In a dream the Moscow hierarchs Peter (December 21) and Alexis (February 12) together with St. Sergius appeared to him and said that he should not grieve over the destruction of the monastery, since it would not become desolate, but would flourish all the more.

The monks left the monastery, taking with them relics, books, and consecrated vessels. When they returned, they saw that their beloved place had been reduced to ashes. But St. Nikon did not despair, and the brethren began to restore the monastery. First of all a wooden church was built in honor of the Most Holy Trinity. It was consecrated on September 25, 1411, the anniversary of the repose of St. Sergius.

The monastery was restored, and St. Nikon began construction of a stone church over the grave of his spiritual Father, St. Sergius. The work crew digging the foundations uncovered the incorrupt relics of St. Sergius on July 5, 1422. Amidst universal rejoicing they placed the relics in a new reliquary and at the new site a wooden church was built (now the church in honor of the Descent of the Holy Spirit is at this place). St. Nikon later built a new stone church in the

⁷⁷³ St. John Maximovich, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

Name of the Most Holy Trinity. In honor and memory of his spiritual Father, he transferred the holy relics into this newly built church.

St. Nikon brought in the finest iconographers, SS. Andrew Rublev (July 4) and Daniel Cherny (June 13) for the adornment of the temple. St. Andrew painted the famous icon of the Most Holy Trinity (the Hospitality of Abraham). St. Nikon was occupied with the construction of the Trinity church until the end of his life on November 27, 1426. .

From about 1430 both of Moscow's main enemies, Lithuania and the Golden Horde, began to disintegrate. From the Golden Horde there separated the khanate of Kazan on the mid-Volga, the Crimean khanate, and the khanate of Astrakhan.

Moscow did not capitalize on this because she suffered her own divisions and civil war. But by the middle of the century, Vasily II had defeated his enemies among his relatives, and increased his power over Novgorod. And so, "built upon territorial, economic, military and ideological foundations that displaced both the traditional heritage of Kievan Rus and Tatar authority, the new state of Muscovy was poised to exploit the disintegration of the Golden Horde and the reduction of Lithuanian expansion and to become a mighty Eastern European power." ⁷⁷⁴

However, it was not until nearly a century later, in 1480, that the Muscovites finally felt strong enough to refuse any further tribute to the khans...

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Fifty monasteries, writes Sergius Bolshakoff, "were founded from St. Sergius' monastery, which was dedicated to the Most Holy Trinity. These fifty monasteries founded forty others in their turn. One hundred canonized monks came from St. Sergius' foundations. From 1300, in the course of 150 years 180 new monasteries were founded...

"Although fifteenth-century Russia was rich in monasteries, they were mostly small. Communities of two to six monks were numerous, while those with 100 to 300 monks were rare...

"The Russian monasteries in the North were centers of colonization. Many peasants from poor or overpopulated districts moved into vast new estates of the distant monasteries where they expected a better living. Gradually villagers began to ring monasteries and then towns. The townships of Ustyug, Varnavin, Kalyazhin, Kirilov, Zagorsk, Pecheri and others came into existence in this way. Many people settled on the monastic estates for security's sake. They were sure that they would not be abandoned to die of sickness and hunger in hard times. Russian monasteries were renowned for charitable aid. Kirilov monastery used to feed 600 people daily during famines while Paphnutiev fed up to 1,000.

⁷⁷⁴ Martin, op. cit., p. 30.

Moreover, the monasteries used to have hospital, homes for the aged and guest houses. They were, in short, the welfare centers of the age. They were, of course, cultural centers as well. They possessed libraries, where manuscripts were copied and circulated. People went to monasteries to be educated. Schools were rare and were maintained mostly by monasteries. Those who wanted to learn reading and writing, arts and crafts went to the monasteries as well. The Russian monasteries were not only schools, universities and welfare centers, but also strongholds, offering refuge in times of trouble. They were also often missionary centers from which Christianity was spread among the heathen.

“However great the merits of the Russian monasteries in the field of culture and welfare, the monks never forgot that their main purpose was to cultivate the religious life. As soon as people began to invade monasteries and settle around them, the best of the monks, who cared only for union with God in prayer and contemplation, moved out to distant and inaccessible spots, to the impenetrable northern forests, to islands in remote lakes or in the Arctic Ocean, to marshes, mountains and tundras. The saintliest Russian monks were always afraid that close contact with secular society would make them worldly and prevent them living in union with God.”⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷⁵ Bolshakov, *The Russian Mystics*, Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980, pp. 15, 16-17.

51. THE CRISIS OF NEW ROMAN STATEHOOD

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.⁷⁷⁶ This revolutionaries “advocated a democratic city-state”, according to Runciman⁷⁷⁷; according to Diehl, they betrayed “a vague tendency towards a communistic movement”.⁷⁷⁸ In any case, they forced the abdication of Emperor John VI, the champion of the hesychasts, 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, exhorting 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.”⁷⁷⁹

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

⁷⁷⁶ “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 harried 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)

⁷⁷⁷ Runciman, op. cit., p. 70.

⁷⁷⁸ Diehl, in A.A. Vasiliev, *A History of the Byzantine Empire*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1955, p. 684.

⁷⁷⁹ 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 Hagiorite*, Levadia: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 1997, pp. 247-257.

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.⁷⁸⁰ 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.

At the same time, the Byzantines had not lost the consciousness that "rebellion is as the sin of divination" (I Samuel 15.23). For, 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 Greeks into the *Order of Orthodoxy*".⁷⁸¹

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. The Old Roman principle was paramount in the view of Anthony Kaldellis, who writes: "Byzantium must first be understood as a republic in the Roman tradition... The Roman people remained the true sovereign of the political sphere, and they both authorized and de-authorized the holding of power by their rulers... The *politeia* was the Byzantine Greek translation and continuation of the ancient *res publica*."⁷⁸²

⁷⁸⁰ Ivan Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia*, Minsk, 1998, p. 77.

⁷⁸¹ Nikolsky, in Fomin & Fomina, op. cit., vol. I, p. 122.

⁷⁸² Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome*, Harvard University Press, 2015, p.ix.

However, 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 in accordance with the principle: *Quod Principi placuit legis habet vigorem, et in eum solum omne suum imperium et potestatem concessit* ("What is pleasing to the Prince has the force of law").

"This idea" writes Tikhomirov, "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."⁷⁸³

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

⁷⁸³ Tikhomirov, op. cit., p.163.

of St. Peter's, kneeling before him and kissing him on the feet, hands and finally on the lips."⁷⁸⁴

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 [or cunning?] 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."⁷⁸⁵

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 undiscerning manner suggested to them that they should use the Divine for evil, that they should ascribe to themselves power and install and 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."⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁸⁴ Norwich, op. cit., p. 333.

⁷⁸⁵ Runciman, op. cit.

⁷⁸⁶ St. Symeon, in M.V. Zyzykin, *Patriarkh Nikon*, Warsaw: Synodal Press, 1931, part I, pp. 122- 123.

“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...”⁷⁸⁷

The concordat was a truly shameful document. And yet there were still many in Byzantium who rejected the subordination of the Church to the State and 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

⁷⁸⁷ Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp. 71-72.

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..."⁷⁸⁸

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."⁷⁸⁹ But Palamas saw the "intermingling" of the Christians and the Turks as an opportunity for the Turks to find the true faith and be converted. As he wrote to his flock: "It seems to me that, because God has ordained things in such a way that Christians and Turks are intermingled, and that I am a prisoner of the Turks, that God's Providence and the works of our Lord Jesus Christ...are being made manifest to them (the Turks) as well..., such as to be without excuse before His future and most dread Tribunal."

Of course, the victory of the Turks would be a terrible disaster. However, 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..."⁷⁹⁰

Runciman argues: "Had the Orthodox states of Eastern Europe ever been able to bring themselves together in a real alliance, they might have been able to hold out against the West and the Turks alike. But civil war and the latent dislike of

⁷⁸⁸ Lourié, commentary on J. Meyendorff, *Zhizn' i Trudy Sviatitelia Grigoria Palamy* (The Life and Works of the Holy Hierarch Gregory Palamas), St. Petersburg, 1997, pp. 396-397.

⁷⁸⁹ John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, London: Faith Press, 1964, p. 104.

⁷⁹⁰ Vryennios, in Vasiliev, op. cit., vol. II, p. 672.

the Balkan Slavs for the Greeks prevented any such alliance. If the Turks were to be driven back it could only be with western help..."⁷⁹¹

But this faced the Emperors with a further complication. Thirty-six metropolitans now lived under Turkish rule; they could face persecution from the Turks if they were suspected of disloyalty to the Sultan at the instigation of the Emperor. The Emperor did his best to prevent such suspicions; but they could be reawakened if he united with Rome; for this could look like a coalition against the Ottomans. Moreover, those metropolitans, together with the Patriarchs of the East and independent nations such as the Russians, might object strongly to the unia on purely theological grounds, thereby threatening a schism in the Orthodox Church throughout the world and further loss of support for the Emperor. The unia might look like a quick-fix political solution to the Empire's problems, but it created several new ones of its own...

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The agonizing dilemmas faced by the Byzantines at this time can be seen in the life of St. Symeon, archbishop of Thessalonica in the early fifteenth century. As David Balfour writes, "Thessalonica, the second capital of the Empire, had surrendered to Turkish sovereignty from 1387 to 1403 and there was a large party, supported by a majority of the populace, which felt that the resultant regime had been tolerable and that to resist the Sultan again was suicidal because hopeless. Another party had already begun, it seems, to make private overtures to the Venetians to take over the city (a plan which was actually carried out next year). Symeon agreed with neither party⁷⁹² and had done his best to persuade the young governor, the Despot Andronikos, to maintain a purely Byzantine policy independent of both. With the Despot's approval, he slipped away unobserved, leaving behind an *Apologia* explaining to the Thessalonians that he was proceeding to the capital to solicit such imperial aid from Manuel II as might enable them 'to stay with their Orthodox masters'. His quest was probably hopeless, and anyway he could hardly have chosen a more inappropriate moment, for within five days, first Constantinople and then Thessalonica were blockaded by Murad with a view to their siege. Symeon got no further than Mount Athos; he was persuaded to return to his see; he hints at dangers and afflictions suffered on the Holy Mountain; he must have returned by sea. From then on, as he often complains, he was virtually a prisoner on his own throne...

⁷⁹¹ Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

⁷⁹² St. Symeon taught concerning the pope, "not only do we have no communion, but we also call him a heretic." "Therefore the innovators are blaspheming and are far away from the Spirit, by blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, hence everything of theirs is graceless, inasmuch as they have violated and have demoted the Grace of the Spirit... which is why the Holy Spirit is not among them, and there is nothing spiritual in them, as everything of theirs is new and altered and contrary to Divine tradition." - *Dialogue 23*, PG 155, 120-121. Epistle regarding blessedness 5, in D. Balfour, *Simeon Archbishop of Thessaloniki (1416/17-1429)*, "Theological Works," Thessaloniki 1981, page 226. (V.M.)

“There followed over a year of mounting anguish, during which Symeon felt even more ill, until in mid-September 1423 Thessalonica was handed over to Venice by Andronikos, reluctantly but with his father Manuel’s approval. The new sources show that to the very last the saintly Archbishop resisted the hand-over; but he accepted the *fait accompli* and it is recorded that he enjoined obedience to the Venetian authorities as now established by God. He could hardly have done otherwise, seeing that the Palaeologi, father and son, had approved the take-over. But he never ceased to regret what had occurred, or to say so openly. It was a bitter pill for the rigorous anti-Latin to swallow: circumstances that obligated him to become the loyal supporter of a heretical regime which held him prisoner, yet described him and rewarded him as *fidelissimus noster*...

“The circumstances that led up to the hand-over had been tragic... As the siege initiated in June 1423 progressed and privations and dangers began to multiply, the pro-Turkish party, the party of surrender, became vociferous and took to violence. It had nearly succeeded in betraying the city to a ferocious Turkish leader called Musa who besieged it in 1411. It saw no hope now in resistance to Murad. The majority of the people, as we learn from both Anagnostes and Symeon, wanted to capitulate to the Turks, and the Archbishop was singled out as a principal target of popular indignation, because his utter opposition was well known. Much rioting went on. One has to grasp the fact – which modern Greek patriotism tends to ignore – that apostasy to Islam was becoming a mass phenomenon; some of the tumultuous rabble must have been intending it, for the rioters, Symeon reports, threatened to drag him down and his churches with him. It was this danger that induced a group of notables to force the Despot Andronikos to call in the Venetians, since it had become evident that Byzantium could do nothing effective. But when that sole solution of the city’s predicament was proposed, Symeon rejected it too. He thus became unpopular with nearly everyone, and when during negotiations with Venice he stood up for his Church’s rights under the future Latin regime he met, he says, with ‘contemptuous treatment and disdainful insults’... So the saintly Archbishop was not only very ill, he was not even enjoying the personal respect and public honour due to him. He did succeed with difficulty in inserting into the agreement with Venice a clause guaranteeing his Church’s independence from the Latin Church. But his stand for Orthodoxy and Empire, against both Islam and the Franks, was a venerable martyrdom; he suffered agonies of frustration and humiliation, and nearly died of his distress.

“However, under the Venetian regime from 1423 onwards he does seem gradually to have recovered some degree of respect. The party of surrender now had to keep quiet; some of its leaders had soon been arrested and exiled. The Venetians, sensing how unreliable the population was, appreciated Symeon’s outstanding resolution to resist the Turks. He became the most important citizen in their eyes. The people were soon disillusioned with their new masters and learned to appreciate better Symeon’s stand against the hand-over. But the beleaguement continued. Murad dropped the siege at Constantinople after a few months and later signed a peace with the Emperor which, onerous though it was, relieved Thrace of the ravages of war for the next twenty-nine years. But Murad

refused to recognize the Venetians' right to take over Thessalonica, and continued the blockade of the city, punctuating his blockade with marauding skirmishes and at least one mass onslaught, the progress and final defeat of which Symeon most graphically and fully describes. In the end, Murad in person descended on Thessalonica with overwhelming force and seized it on 29 March 1430, and all its surviving inhabitants were held for slavery or ransom. Symeon himself escaped that fate by dying suddenly a little more than six months before the fatal date..."⁷⁹³

Simeon was "so well beloved in his diocese that when he died... not only did the Italians mourn him along with the Greeks, but the Jews, a race that seldom had cause to love Byzantine hierarchs, joined sincerely in the mourning. The ease with which the Turks captured Thessalonica the following year was attributed by many to the feeling of despair in the city which followed the great Metropolitan's death."⁷⁹⁴

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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 triumphed...

The battle witnessed the humiliating sight of an Orthodox prince, the Serbian Despot Stephen Lazarevich, fighting on the Turkish side as a vassal of the Ottoman sultan. It may be that, like St. Alexander Nevsky 150 years before, Stephen 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."⁷⁹⁵

Even the Emperor became a vassal of the Sultan. Thus he used his authority "to enforce his own free citizens of Philadelphia to submit themselves to the Sultan. Politically he was becoming impotent; and his dwindling prestige could only be maintained by the loyal support of the Church..."⁷⁹⁶

This was a new low: the Orthodox emperor fighting in the ranks of the infidels in order to submit his own people to their rule!...

⁷⁹³ Balfour, "St. Symeon of Thessalonica: a polemical hesychast", *Sobornost'*, 1982, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 1-15.

⁷⁹⁴ Runciman, op. cit., p. 155.

⁷⁹⁵ Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous Fourteenth Century*, New York: Knopf, 1978, p. 560.

⁷⁹⁶ Runciman, op. cit., p. 67.

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."⁷⁹⁷

However, the 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 Despot Andronicus Palaeologus, as we have seen, had given Thessalonica into the hands of the Venetians, who then, in 1430, lost it to the Turks. The only considerable possession left in the hands of the Byzantines was the Despotate of Morea, now known as the Peloponnese. There, in the capital of Mystra, whose evocative ruins can still be seen, a last flourishing of Byzantine civilization took place...

And yet it was a strange, syncretistic 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! In the eleventh century the Church had officially condemned the Platonist teachings of John Italus. But Plethon was protected by the fact that he no longer lived in the City itself...⁷⁹⁸

B.N. Tatakis writes that Plethon dared "to resuscitate in the 15th century this dead past and to establish on it a new and, in his opinion, universal religion. 'I heard him say,' George Trapezountios writes for Plethon, 'when we were in Florence, that after a few years all human beings in the whole of the earth will accept with a common consent and with the same spirit one and only religion... and, when I asked him whether this religion was going to be the religion of Jesus Christ or that of Mohammed, neither the one nor the other, he said to me, were the case, but a third one which would not be very different from paganism.' It does not matter whether this witness is exact or not (Trapezountios is not a trustworthy witness), since the most important work of Plethon, the *Laws*, fully expresses the absolute confidence of Plethon on philosophy which 'reveals to the spirit, when it is freed from dogma, the naked truth, and obliges the human being to accept it by common consent and with the same spirit.'"⁷⁹⁹

Colin Wells writes: "In so flagrantly abandoning Orthodox Byzantium for ancient Greece, Pletho represents an extreme version of the classicizing tendency

⁷⁹⁷ Montefiore, *Titans of History*, London: Quercus, 2012, p. 157.

⁷⁹⁸ Runciman, op. cit., pp. 121-125.

⁷⁹⁹ Tatakis, *Christian Philosophy in the Patristic and Byzantine Tradition*, Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2007, pp. 275-276.

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... 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.”⁸⁰⁰

⁸⁰⁰ Wells, *Sailing from Byzantium*, New York: Bantam Deli, 2006, pp. 91-92.

52. THE COUNCIL OF FLORENCE

Negotiations with Rome dragged on, "held up partly", as Runciman writes, "by the Pope's difficulties with the leaders of the Conciliar movement 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 in January 1439."⁸⁰¹

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."⁸⁰² And yet he meekly followed the same Emperor to Florence and submitted to his instructions in accordance with the caesaropapism that had now entrenched itself in Constantinople. 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 Frommann, 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."⁸⁰³

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

⁸⁰¹ Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp. 103-104.

⁸⁰² A.P. Lebedev, *Istoricheskie Ocherki Sostoiania Vizantijsko-Vostochnoj Tserkvi* (Historical Sketches of the Condition of the Byzantine Eastern Church), St. Petersburg, 2003, p. 102.

⁸⁰³ Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles*, vol. VII, pt. II, pp. 1015sq.

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 many (but not all) the humanists the pope's tiara than the sultan's turban... As a sign of the increasing influence of the humanists, "suddenly in the middle of the fourteenth century Byzantine intellectuals began to speak of themselves as Hellenes", which until then no Orthodox Christian would have done.⁸⁰⁴

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*."⁸⁰⁵

Another anachronistic idea was that of the *pentarchy* – that is, that the Church was composed of five patriarchal sees, like the five senses, of which Old Rome was one. Several Orthodox Byzantines even in the fourteenth century, such as

⁸⁰⁴ Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁸⁰⁵ Meyendorff, "Was there an Encounter between East and West at Florence?" in *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996, p. 89.

Emperor John VI Cantacuzene and Patriarch Philotheus Kokkinos, had been in favour of an ecumenical council, which by definition had to involve all five patriarchates, including Rome.

Of course, they knew that 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).”⁸⁰⁶

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. “Yet the discussion of differences in doctrine and in practice was somewhat pointless when one side was determined to secure the total submission of the other. If the average Byzantine had no confidence in the value of a Union council, it was because he saw that its intention was to force his religious life under the control of a foreign potentate whose claims he thought to be uncanonical and whose doctrines faulty, and whose followers in the past had shown themselves to be hostile and intolerant. The most for which he could hope from such a council was to be graciously permitted to retain certain of his ritual usages...”⁸⁰⁷

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 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

⁸⁰⁶ Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

⁸⁰⁷ Runciman, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

Orthodox who attended the Synod, but also by those "who spoke other languages" who were present at the discussions."⁸⁰⁸

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 comforts⁸⁰⁹, the whole Greek delegation, under orders from the Emperor and in obedience to the concordat of their Church with Rome under 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."⁸¹⁰

The Greeks had surrendered to almost all the pope's demands, including the *Filioque* and papal supremacy.

⁸⁰⁸ John Sanidopoulos, "The Danger of 'Mutant' Theology", <http://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2015/03/the-danger-of-mutant-theology.html?m=1>.

⁸⁰⁹ "The Russians Simeon of Suzdal and Isidor, and the Greek Sylvester Syropoulos, testify that after refusing to sign the Act of Union, Greeks, Russians and Georgians were badly bullied by the papal servants" (Donald Rayfield, *Edge of Empire: A History of Georgia*, London: Reaktion, 2012, p. 156). (V.M.)

⁸¹⁰ Runciman, op. cit., p. 109. Bishop Isaiah of Stavropol, the Bishop of Tver and Bishop Grigol 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)

53. ST. MARK OF EPHESUS AND THE ANTI-UNIATES

The papacy quickly took advantage of its victory over the Greeks at Florence 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 it 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.”⁸¹¹

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, ‘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...”⁸¹²

“In early 1443,” write Petrus Antiochenus, “Arsenios, the Metropolitan of Caesarea of Cappadocia, which was in Constantinople's jurisdiction but in territory long under Muslim control, visited Jerusalem ostensibly to venerate the holy places. It seems, however, that his real motivation was the trouble he was having with his suffragan bishops who had been appointed by the unionist Patriarch of Constantinople, Metrophanes II. Once in the holy city, Arsenios appealed to Patriarch Joachim of Jerusalem against his patriarch and bishops, so Joachim called a council to address the issue, which was attended by Patriarchs Philotheos of Alexandria and Dorotheos II of Antioch. This council ruled in Arsenios' favor, not only provisionally excommunicating and suspending all unionist clergy from holy orders until an ecumenical council could be held, but authorizing Arsenios to act under their authority to preach Orthodoxy and impose penalties on such clergy anywhere without territorial restriction.

“The text below is translated from the *History of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem* by the Archbishop of Athens Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, pp. 439-442:

⁸¹¹ *The Lives of the Pillars of Orthodoxy*, Buena Vista, CO: Holy Apostles Convent, 1990, pp. 476- 477.

⁸¹² Ducas, in volume 6, p. 299 of the *History* of Paparrigopoulos.

“At that time (1439), the Robber's Council of Florence was convened. Fortunately, however, the designated representative of the Church of Jerusalem was Mark Eugenikos (d. 1443), who did not sign its decision. Already in 1443, in order to officially condemn it, [Patriarch] Joachim called a Council in Jerusalem, which was attended by Patriarchs Philotheos of Alexandria (r. 1435-1459) and Dorotheos of Antioch (r. 1435-1452), as well as Metropolitan Arsenios of Caesarea [in Cappadocia]. It is noteworthy that the decision of this Council of Jerusalem has as its most accurate text the following:

“Since the most reverend metropolitan of the most holy Metropolis of Caesarea of Cappadocia, the first-throned and exarch of all the East, has come here both to venerate the all-venerable and divine Sepulcher of our Lord Christ and examine the holy places in Jerusalem, where the incredible mysteries of Christ's dispensation were accomplished, and to partake with us of the great mystery of Christian orthodoxy and piety and explain all the scandals in Constantinople on account of the mob that gathered-- that is, the unclean Council in Florence in Italy, which held the opinions of the Latins with Pope Eugene, things that are not proper: indeed, the addition in the Symbol of Faith, that the Holy Spirit also proceeds from the Son; permitting azymes in our sacrifice and, on account of these things, to commemorate the pope, and also deciding and prescribing still other illicit things contrary to the canons. [He explained] how Metrophanes of Cyzicus thievingly usurped the throne of Constantinople, joining with the heretics, the aforementioned pope and the Latin-minded Emperor of the Romans, John Palaiologos. Driving away, persecuting, oppressing and penalizing those who are faithful and Orthodox, he encourages and honors the faithless and disreputable as ones like-minded to his heresy, overwhelmingly urges them to enmity for Orthodoxy and piety. In the same way, he sent impure metropolitans and unclean bishops everywhere to the divine and holy sees of the Great and Holy Church of Constantinople as ones submitted to his jurisdiction.

“The aforementioned most reverend Metropolitan Arsenios explained how Patriarch Metrophanes not only sent along men with an illicit, Latin-minded ordination to the other Churches, but this unordained man also ordained four metropolitans and bishops for the eparchy of all the East, for Amaseia, Neocaesarea, Tyanna and Mokissos, who thought and did everything like the Latins, which they not only have their own corruption and destruction within themselves, but after so much audacity, they deceive and corrupt all the Christians there, the flock of Christ, and produce many scandals in the Orthodox Church.

“Therefore, this pious, most faithful, zealot and champion of all Orthodoxy, the aforementioned most reverend metropolitan of Caesarea of Cappadocia, unable to bear seeing innovation in the Church of Christ and the defilement of our most Orthodox and healing faith by the heterodox, found it fitting to receive conciliar opinion from us, the three Orthodox hierarchs in Syria-- that is, Philotheos of Alexandria, Joachim of Jerusalem and Dorotheos of Antioch-- in

order to ward off all those who do not think in an Orthodox manner throughout his eparchy, as he himself is most senior [among them] and Orthodox.

“Wherefore, together we synodally declare in the name of the consubstantial, life-creating, undivided and Holy Trinity that metropolitans and bishops everywhere who were not ordained on account of virtue and piety, as well as hegumens and father confessors and likewise priests, deacons and every ecclesiastical rank in general, but rather being impure and unworthy, having practiced heresy, persecuted Orthodoxy and only spent their time unworthily, in the manner of vainglory and heresy, although they were meant so be savers of souls, so that the entire Orthodox flock of Christ our true God may perish with them, in no wise acquiring for themselves the fear of God or the fruit of righteousness and piety, but rather are shameless despisers of all piety. We declare them from today to be idle and unconsecrated of any priestly activity and ecclesiastical state until [their] piety is generally and ecumenically investigated. Therefore, let them be idle and unconsecrated. Thievishly and lawlessly rebellious and contrary, let them also be cast out, separated and estranged from the holy, super-substantial and consubstantial Trinity as ones who are disobedient and contradictory and likewise also those who honor, defend, and agree with them in these matters. We likewise reinstate the herald of piety and Orthodoxy, the aforementioned most reverend metropolitan and most honorable exarch of all the East to proclaim piety everywhere, not being ashamed of the truth before the person of an emperor or patriarch who does not believe or act in an Orthodox manner, nor before the wealthy and powerful or any human, but rather outspokenly holding fast to the faith and Orthodoxy, not fearing or doubting, according to the commandment, that he from now on may have license to question the piety, penalize and correct those who do not think in an Orthodox manner in every place he is able to travel, receiving permission for these things from us through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit that is given to us. He should also incorruptibly and uprightly guard the piety on account of which our written opinion was freely given to him synodally and recorded by our own hands in the month of April, 6951 [i.e., 1443], year six of the indiction.”⁸¹³

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Further west, St. Mark of Ephesus now undertook the leadership of the true, anti-unionist Church with the motto: “Never, O Man, is that which concerns the Church put right through compromises: there is no mean between truth and falsehood. But just as what is outside the light will be necessarily in darkness, so also he who steps away a little from the truth is left subject to falsehood.”⁸¹⁴ And again: “Let no one lord it over our faith, neither emperor, nor false council, nor anyone else, but only the One God, Who Himself handed it down to us through His disciples.”

⁸¹³ Petrus Antiochenus, “The Council of Jerusalem of 1443”, *orthodoxsynaxis.org*, November 26, 2019.

⁸¹⁴ “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 Tsipanolis, *Mark Eugenikos and the Council of Florence*, New York: Kentron Vyzantinon Erevnon, 1986, p. 60).

St. Mark insisted that the Roman Catholics, with whom the Orthodox were seeking union at the Council of Florence, were not just schismatics, but heretics: “‘Never,’ we are told, ‘did we consider Latins to be heretics, but only schismatics.’ But did not the Latins themselves call us heretics, and only because they, in relation to our confession, cannot reproach us, except that we did not surrender to their dependence, which, in their opinion, we had to submit ourselves. But it must be examined whether it would not be more correct to turn this reproach from us to them, in relation to their confession. The reason for the disintegration came from them, for they openly made that addition to the Symbol, which they had previously spoken secretly. Therefore, we were the first to separate from them and even cut off and threw away the alienated part from the Church body. Why, someone will ask, is it because they believed more correctly, or made the correct addition? What sane person would think that? On the contrary, we separated them from ourselves, because they planned the unacceptable and lawless, and introduced an addition [to the Symbol of Faith] that was not based on anything. We left them as heretics and separated from them. And why is that? The pious decrees read: ‘Those who deviate from Orthodoxy in a small way are called heretics and are subject to the laws against heretics.’” If the Latins had not deviated from Orthodoxy in any way, then we would have had no reason to separate from them; if they completely departed from it, namely in the confession of the Holy Spirit, through the most dangerous and blasphemous innovation, then they became heretics and we separated them from ourselves as heretics.”⁸¹⁵

In July, 1440 St. Mark wrote “To All Orthodox Christians on the Mainland and in the Islands”: “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 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

⁸¹⁵ St. Mark, “Epistle Against the Greco-Latins and the Decrees of the Synod of Florence”.

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, hut 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 the three Patriarchs Joachim of Jerusalem, Philotheos of Alexandria, and Dorotheos of Antioch met in Jerusalem and condemned the Council of Florence as "vile". “By the decision of this Council,” writes Sergei Shumilo, “the ‘Council of Florence’ held in Italy by the Constantinople and Latin hierarchs was declared ‘odious, foul’ (*μιαρὰ*), and the hierarchs and other clergy who received the ordination from the [Uniate] Patriarch of Constantinople who had ceased from Orthodoxy were declared ‘idle and unholy... from henceforth their piety is investigated in a general and ecumenical way [and found lacking].’ Also, Metropolitan Arsenius [of Caesarea of Cappadocia and Exarch of all the East Arsenius from the Church of Constantinople], as a ‘preacher of piety and Orthodoxy,’ was authorized by the Jerusalem Pan-Orthodox Council to notify the entire ecclesiastical completeness of Orthodoxy of this decision, ordering him to ‘henceforth preach piety everywhere, not fearing the Emperor, nor the Patriarch, or anyone else who doesn’t glorify that right.’”⁸¹⁶

On the day of his death in 1444, St. Mark said: “Concerning the 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

⁸¹⁶ Shumilo, “Shine Forth, O Kiev, the New Jerusalem – the Mother of Churches Watches over You”, *Orthodox Christianity*, February 27, 2020.

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 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."⁸¹⁷

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 serve 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 Eugenikos 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.

"Meanwhile, the Pope, trying to fulfil his side of the bargain he had made with the Greeks at Florence, 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...

"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

⁸¹⁷ St. Mark, *P.G.* 160, cols. 536c and 537a.

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...

"At this supreme moment of the Empire's agony, the [unionist] 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?"⁸¹⁸

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."⁸¹⁹

⁸¹⁸ Runciman, op. cit., pp. 109-110, 159-160.

⁸¹⁹ Gennadius Scholarius, in Sir Edmund Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. J. B. Bury, VII, 176.

54. RUSSIA AND THE COUNCIL OF FLORENCE

We have seen that the rising star in the Orthodox firmament, Russia, firmly rejected the council of Florence. Let us in a little more detail at how this took place...

In 1434, on the death of Metropolitan Photius, Bishop Jonah of Ryazan was elected metropolitan of Kiev by Russian bishops and sent to Constantinople for consecration. However, in 1436 Patriarch Joseph consecrated a Greek called Isidore instead; Jonah was promised the metropolitanate after Isidore.

“Soon after Isidore had arrived in Moscow,” writes Protopriest Peter Smirnov, “he declared that the Eighth Ecumenical Council was being prepared in Italy for the union of the 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 unia, Isidore... returned to Moscow⁸²⁰, 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.”⁸²¹

They also petitioned Patriarch Metrophan of Constantinople “to send a replacement of his own choice. The Orthodox Church in Russia was neither Roman nor Jewish, they wrote. Instead, it was the disciple of the blessed Constantine, the faithful child of Kiev’s St. Vladimir, and after generations of such piety, its servants should not be forced into Latin heresies...”⁸²²

“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-hierarchy. At a triumphant service in the Dormition cathedral the omophorion which had been placed on earlier metropolitans was placed on him, and the great

⁸²⁰ He entered the city in a solemn procession and “carrying before him a Latin cross”. (V.M.)

⁸²¹ Smirnov, *Istoria Khristianskoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (A History of the Orthodox Christian Church), Moscow: Krutitskoe podvorye, 2000, p. 159.

⁸²² Merridale, *Red Fortress*, p. 43.

metropolitan's staff, the symbol of first-hierarchical power, was put into his hands."⁸²³

As Andrei Shishkov writes, "This decision was the first sovereign act of the Russian Church. It created a situation of emergency (exception) in which the existing canonical order was changed as the Russian Metropolitanate removed itself from the control of the Patriarchate of Constantinople."⁸²⁴

The Russian Church was now technically in schism from Constantinople, which had fallen into the Latin heresy... It meant that henceforth Moscow was exceptionally strict with regard to relations with the Latin church. Thus when Ivan III, Basil's successor, "agreed to betroth his daughter, Elena, to the Catholic prince Alexander of Lithuania in 1494, he made it a condition that she had to retain her Orthodox faith." The marriage was arranged, but then a Muscovite priest called Thomas "nearly wrecked the wedding ceremony in Vilno by intoning his own prayers above the Catholic service, and at one point, when the bride and groom had just shared a ritual cup of wine, he grabbed the vessel from their hands and smashed it on the church flagstones..."⁸²⁵

"However," writes Nicholas 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 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

⁸²³ Smirnov, op. cit., p. 160.

⁸²⁴ Shishkov, "Church Autocephaly as Sovereignty: a Schismatic Approach", *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 60:3, 2016, p. 377.

⁸²⁵ Merridale, op. cit., p. 44.

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 the *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."⁸²⁶

The Russian Church was now *de facto* autocephalous. And soon, after the fall of the City 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 Great Prince Basil was already being called "brother" rather than "son" 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...

Today, when Russia is again threatened by union with the ungodly Latins, it is worth recalling an incident from the life of St. Sergius of Radonezh: "After the ungodly Council of Florence a multitude of pious hierarchs and priests did not wish to submit to the errors of the Latins and were put to death by the Romans by means of various tortures. Now there was a certain priest from the land of Great Russia who went to the council with Isidore, the Metropolitan of Kiev, who later fell from Orthodoxy. The presbyter's name was Symeon, and he endured many afflictions and torments for piety's sake at the hands of the apostate Metropolitan Isidore. When he was released from his bonds, he took counsel with Thomas, the envoy from Tver, and fled from the Latin city of Florence to his own land. Because of the hardships of the journey, he was troubled and cast into great sorrow. Once, when he laid down to sleep, he fell into a dream and beheld a venerable elder standing above him. The elder took him by the right hand and

⁸²⁶ Boyeikov, *Tserkov', Rus' i Rim (The Church, Rus' and Rome)*, Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1983. See Fr. John Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

said: 'Did you receive the blessing of Mark, the Bishop of Ephesus, who follows in the footsteps of the apostles?'

"Symeon replied, 'Sir, I have indeed seen the wondrous and resolute Mark and received his blessing.'

"The elder said, 'God's blessing is upon that man, for the vain assembly of the Latins has utterly failed to prevail over him either by offers of wealth or flattery or threats of torture. As you have heard the blessed Mark's teaching and instruction, proclaim to all the Orthodox wherever you go that, possessing the traditions of the holy apostles and the ordinances of the holy fathers of the Seven Councils and knowing the truth, they should be not deceived by the Latins. Moreover, do not be troubled by the journey's difficulties, for I will remain with you and shall keep you from harm.'

"After the venerable elder had said this and much else, the presbyter asked him, 'Sir, tell me who are you, for it seems to me that it was God that sent you to lead us who are in despair out of this strange land.'

"I am Sergius, to whom you once prayed and to whose monastery you vowed to come,' replied the elder.

"After seeing this vision the presbyter took heart and arose, and arose, and he told his companion Thomas that which he had seen and heard. Rejoicing, they continued alone their way, and soon, by God's providence and through the prayers of their intercessor, the godly Sergius, they reached the land of Russia unharmed. They told the people of the vision and the help they had received from the saint, proclaiming that which the presbyter had heard, and they related all that had occurred at the Council of Florence..."⁸²⁷

⁸²⁷ St. Demetrius of Rostov, *The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints*, vol. 1: September, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 2000, pp. 415-416.

55. THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE

In December, 1452 a liturgy in which the Pope was commemorated was celebrated 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, large numbers 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..."⁸²⁸

This moment marked the real spiritual death of Byzantium. And 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 an instrument of God's purpose, and allowed it to be conquered by the infidel Sultan Mehmet II...

Sir Steven Runciman describes the final assault as follows: 'The afternoon of Monday, 28 May, had been clear and bright. As the sun began to sink towards the western horizon it shone straight into the faces of the defenders on the walls, almost blinding them. It was then that the Turkish camp had sprung into activity. Men came forward in thousands to complete the filling of the foss, while others brought up cannons and war-machines. The sky clouded over soon after sunset, and there was a heavy shower of rain; but the work went on uninterrupted, and the Christians could do nothing to hinder it. At about half-past one in the morning the Sultan judged that everything was ready and gave the order for the assault.

"The sudden noise was horrifying. All along the line of the walls the Turks rushed in to the attack, screaming their battle-cries, while drums and trumpets and fifes urged them on. The Christian troops had been waiting silently; but when the watchmen on the towers gave the alarm the churches near the walls began to ring their bells, and church after church throughout the city took up the warning sound till every belfry was clanging. Three miles away, in the Church of the Holy Wisdom the worshippers knew that the battle had begun. Every man of fighting age returned to his post; and women, nuns amongst them, hurried to the walls to

⁸²⁸ Norwich, *Byzantium: The Decline and Fall*, London: Penguin, 1996, p. 452.

help bring up stones and beams to strengthen the defenses and pails of water to refresh the defenders. Old folk and children came out of their houses and crowded into the churches, trusting that the saints and angels would protect them. Some went to their parish church, others to the tall Church of Saint Theodosia, by the Golden Horn. It was her feast-day on the Tuesday; and the building was decked with roses gathered from the gardens and the hedgerows. Surely she would not abandon her worshippers. Others went back to the great cathedral, remembering an old prophecy that said that though the infidel might penetrate through the city right into the holy building, there the Angel of the Lord would appear and drive them back with his bright sword to perdition. All through the dark hours before dawn the congregations waited and prayed.

“There was no time for prayer at the walls. The Sultan had made his plans with care. Despite his arrogant words to his army experience had taught him to respect the enemy. On this occasion he would wear them down before risking his best troops in the battle. It was his irregulars, the Bashi-bazouks, whom he first sent forward. There were many thousands of them, adventurers from every country and race, many of them Turks but many more from Christian countries, Slavs, Hungarians, Germans, Italians and even Greeks, all of them ready enough to fight against their fellow-Christians in view of the pay that the Sultan gave them and the booty that he promised. Most of them provided their own arms, which were an odd assortment of scimitars and slings, bows and a few arquebuses; but a large number of scaling-ladders had been distributed amongst them. They were unreliable troops, excellent at their first onrush but easily discouraged if they were not at once successful. Knowing this weakness Mehmet placed behind them a line of military police, armed with thongs and maces, whose orders were to urge them on and to strike and chastise any who showed signs of wavering. Behind the military police were the Sultan’s own Janissaries. If any frightened irregular made his way through the police they were to cut him down with their scimitars.

“The Bashi-bazouks’ attack was launched all along the line, but it was only pressed hard in the Lycus valley. Elsewhere the walls were still too strong; and they were attacked chiefly with the purpose of distracting the defenders from going to reinforce their comrades in the vital section. There the fighting was fierce. The Bashi-bazouks were up against soldiers far better armed and far better trained than themselves; and they were further handicapped by their numbers. They were continually in each other’s way. Stones hurled against them could kill or disable many at a time. Though a few attempted to retreat, most of them kept on, fixing their ladders to the walls and the stockade and clambering up, only to be cut down before they reached the top. Giustiniani and his Greeks and Italians were supplied with all the muskets and culverins that could be found in the city. The Emperor came himself to encourage them. After nearly two hours of fighting Mehmet ordered the Bashi-bazouks to retire. They had been checked and repulsed, but they had served their purpose in wearying the enemy.

“Some of the Christians hoped that this might be just an isolated night-attack, intended to test their strength; and all of them hoped for a moment of rest. It was not granted to them. They scarcely had time to reform their lines and replace

beams and barrels of earth on the stockade before a second attack was launched. Regiments of Anatolian Turks from Ishak's army, easily recognized by their special uniforms and breastplates, came pouring down the hill from outside the Civil Gate of Saint Romanus into the valley and wheeled round to face the stockade. Once more the bells of the churches near the walls rang out to give the alarm. But the sound was drowned by the booming of Urban's great cannon and its fellows as they began afresh to pound the walls. Within a few minutes the Anatolians had rushed in to the assault. Unlike the irregulars they were well armed and well disciplined, and all of them devout Moslems eager for the glory of being the first to enter the Christian city. With the wild music of their trumpeters and pipers to encourage them they hurled themselves at the stockade, climbing over each other's shoulders in their efforts to fix their ladders on to the barrier and hack their way over the top. In the faint light of flares, with clouds continually veiling the moon it was hard to see what was happening. The Anatolians, like the irregulars before them, were at a disadvantage on that narrow front because of their numbers. Their discipline and their tenacity only made their losses the heavier as the defenders flung stones down on them and pushed back their ladders or fought with them hand to hand. About an hour before dawn, when this second attack was beginning to falter, a ball from Urban's cannon landed fully upon the stockade, bringing it down for many yards of its length. There was a cloud of dust as the rubble and earth were flung into the air; and the black smoke of the gunpowder blinded the defense. A band of three hundred Anatolians rushed forward through the gap that had been made, shouting that the city was theirs. But, with the Emperor at their head, the Christians closed around them, slaughtering the greater part and forcing the others back to the foss. The check discomfited the Anatolians. The attack was called off, and they retired to their lines. With cries of triumph the defense once more set about repairing the stockade.

"The Turks had been no more successful on other sectors. Along the southern stretch of the land-walls Ishak was able to keep up enough pressure to prevent the defense from moving men to the Lycus valley, but, with his own best troops gone to fight there, he could not make a serious attack. Along the Marmora Hamza Bey had difficulty in bringing his ships close in shore. The few landing parties that he was able to send were easily repulsed by the monks to whom the defense had been entrusted or by Prince Orhan and his followers. There were feints along the whole line of the Golden Horn but no real attempt at an assault. Around the Blachernae quarter the fighting was fiercer. On the low ground by the harbour the troops that Zaganos had brought across the bridge kept up the constant attack, as did Karadja Pasha's men higher up the slope. But Minotto and his Venetians were able to hold their section of the walls against Zaganos, and the Bocchiardi brothers against Karadja.

"The Sultan was said to be indignant at the failure of his Anatolians. But it is probable that he intended them, like the irregulars before them, to wear out the enemy rather than themselves to enter the city. He had promised a great prize to the first soldier who should successfully break through the stockade; and he wished the privilege to go to some member of his own favourite regiment, his

Janissaries. The time had now come for them to enter the battle. He was anxious; for if they failed him it would scarcely be possible to continue the siege. He gave his orders quickly. Before the Christians had time to refresh themselves and do more than a few rough repairs to the stockade, a rain of missiles, arrows, javelins, stones and bullets fell upon them; and behind the rain, the Janissaries advanced at the double, not rushing in wildly as the Bashi-bazouks and the Anatolians had done, but keeping their ranks in perfect order, unbroken by the missiles of the enemy. The martial music that urged them on was so loud that the sound could be heard between the roar of the guns from right across the Bosphorus. Mehmet himself led them as far as the foss and stood there shouting encouragement as they passed him. Wave after wave of these fresh, magnificent and stoutly armoured men rushed up to the stockade, to tear at the barrels of earth that surmounted it, to hack at the beams that supported it, and to place their ladders against it where it could not be brought down, each wave making way without panic for its successor. The Christians were exhausted. They had fought with only a few minutes' respite for more than four hours; but they fought with desperation, knowing that if they gave way it would be the end. Behind them in the city the church bells were clanging again, and a great murmur of prayer rose to heaven.

"The fighting along the stockade was hand-to-hand now. For an hour or so the Janissaries could make no headway. The Christians began to think that the onslaught was weakening a little. But fate was against them. At the corner of the Blachernae wall, just before it joined the double Theodosian wall, there was, half-hidden by a tower, a small sally-port known as the Kerkopoporta. It had been closed up many years earlier; but the old men remembered it. Just before the siege began it had been reopened, to allow sorties into the enemy's flank. During the fighting the Bocchiardis and their men had made effective use of it against Karadja Pasha's troops. But now someone returning from a sortie forgot to bar the little gate after him. Some Turks noticed the opening and rushed through it into the courtyard behind it and began to climb up a stairway leading to the top of the wall. The Christians who were just outside the gate saw what was happening and crowded back to retake control of it and to prevent other Turks from following. In the confusion some fifty Turks were left inside the wall, where they could have been surrounded and eliminated if at that moment a worse disaster had not occurred.

"It was just before sunrise that a shot fired at close range from a culverin struck Giustiniani and pierced his breastplate. Bleeding copiously and obviously in great pain, he begged his men to take him off the battle-field. One of them went to the Emperor who was fighting near by to ask for the key of a little gate that led through the inner wall. Constantine hurried to his side to plead with him not to desert his post. But Giustiniani's nerve was broken; he insisted on flight. The gate was opened, and his bodyguard carried him into the city, through the streets down to the harbour where they placed him on a Genoese ship. His troops noticed his going. Some of them may have thought that he had retreated to defend the inner wall; but most of them concluded that the battle was lost. Someone shouted out in terror that the Turks had crossed the wall. Before the little gate could be shut again the Genoese streamed headlong through it. The Emperor and his Greeks were left on the field alone.

"From across the foss the Sultan noticed the panic. Crying: 'The city is ours', he ordered the Janissaries to charge again and beckoned on a company led by a giant called Hasan. Hasan hacked his way over the top of the broken stockade and was deemed to have won the promised prize. Some thirty Janissaries followed him. The Greeks fought back. Hasan himself was forced to his knees by a blow from a stone and slain; and seventeen of his comrades perished with him. But the remainder held their positions on the stockade; and many more Janissaries crowded to join them. The Greeks resisted tenaciously. But the weight of numbers forced them back to the inner wall. In front of it was another ditch which had been deepened in places to provide earth for reinforcing the stockade. Many of the Greeks were forced back into these holes and could not easily clamber out, with the great inner wall rising behind them. The Turks who were now on top of the stockade fired down on them and massacred them. Soon many of the Janissaries reached the inner wall and climbed up it unopposed. Suddenly someone looked up and saw Turkish flags flying from the tower above the Kerkopoporta. The cry went up: 'The city is taken.'

"While he was pleading with Giustiniani the Emperor had been told of the Turks' entry through the Kerkopoporta. He rode there at once, but he came too late. Panic had spread to some of the Genoese there. In the confusion it was impossible to close the gate. The Turks came pouring through; and the Bocchiardis' men were too few now to push them back. Constantine turned his horse and galloped back to the Lycus valley and the breaches in the stockade. With him was the gallant Spaniard who claimed to be his cousin, Don Francisco of Toledo, and his own cousin Theophilus Paleologus and a faithful comrade-at-arms, John Dalmata. Together they tried to rally the Greeks, in vain; the slaughter had been too great. They dismounted and for a few minutes the four of them held the approach to the gate through which Giustiniani had been carried. But the defense was broken now. The gate was jammed with Christian soldiers trying to make their escape, as more and more Janissaries fell on them. Theophilus shouted that he would rather die than live and disappeared into the oncoming hordes. Constantine himself knew now that the Empire was lost, and he had no wish to survive it. He flung off his imperial insignia and, with Don Francisco and John Dalmata still at his side, he followed Theophilus. He was never seen again..."⁸²⁹

And so, writes Andrew Wheatcroft, 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:

⁸²⁹ Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge University Press, 1968.

“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 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.”⁸³⁰

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The Fall of Constantinople brought the Age of Faith to an end. It was the greatest disaster in Christian history since the Fall of Old Rome in 476; and its like would not be seen until the fall of the Third Rome in 1917. The Orthodox of the Balkans came under infidel rulers; the Orthodox of Russia began to weaken spiritually as the Byzantine traditions in which they had been nurtured became more remote to them; 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 in the north, in the mountains of Romania, and, especially, in the forests of Russia, not in the Mediterranean homeland of Roman Christian civilization. Here *Romanitas* remained intact...

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

⁸³⁰ Wheatcroft, *Infidels*, London: Penguin Books, 2004, p. 207.

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 union 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 1484.⁸³¹

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."⁸³²

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...

⁸³¹ Some sources claim that there was a truly Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople, Athanasius II, from 1450 to 1453. However, a Wikipedia article on the Patriarchs of Constantinople states: "Athanasius II (1??? – 29 May 1453) is reckoned as the last Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople before the Fall of Constantinople. Athanasius purportedly served as patriarch from 1450 to 1453, but the only document indicating his existence is "Acts of the council in Hagia Sophia" – widely considered a forgery due to the presence of anachronisms in the text. Contemporary scholars dispute his existence, then, suggesting that the unionist patriarch Gregory III of Constantinople, residing in Rome from 1451 on, remained the city's nominal patriarch through the Ottoman capture of the city."

⁸³² Archbishop Seraphim, "Sud'by Rossii" ("The Destinies of Russia"), *Pravoslavniy 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. See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wG9wwq60XM8>.

The “third God-chosen people” of the prophecy was the Russians. 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...

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”.⁸³³ 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?

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, following the bad old traditions of pagan Rome, 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*.”⁸³⁴ 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” (Psalms 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

⁸³³ Bury, *The Constitution of the Later Roman Empire*, Cambridge University Press, 1910, p. 9.

⁸³⁴ Leontiev, “Vyzantinizm i Slavianstvo” (“Byzantinism and Slavism”), in *Vostok, Rossia i Slavianstvo* (The East, Russia and Slavism), Moscow, 1996, p. 97.

modest conditions of Nicaean exile. Moreover, no Lascarid emperor 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. For 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 unbelieving Turk 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.⁸³⁵ And yet in spite of the fact that their emperor was neither anointed

⁸³⁵ 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

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. 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, falsely, to Great Prince Basil of Moscow, "it is impossible for Christians to have a Church, but not have an Emperor".

The patriarchs knew better than anybody else that this was not true. For whereas, in the last years of Byzantium, the emperor's ever-decreasing rule extended only over the City, the Morea, and little else, the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch was truly universal in the Orthodox world, extending throughout the Orthodox commonwealth of nations.⁸³⁶

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, Hellene rather than Roman, 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 supported the Nicaean emperors in building a viable and prosperous realm outside it. In the past they might have thought of 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 was their placing the Empire above 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 *universal vision*. For, as Solomon said, "where there is no vision, the people perish..." (Proverbs 29.18)

Great Prince Basil had been right when he said to the Patriarch "We have a Church, 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

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).

⁸³⁶ For a map of the patriarchate's dominions, see https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=zFF_0-ggg3xI.kANSIEUOgS-o

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...

CONCLUSION: AUTOCRACY, DESPOTISM AND DEMOCRACY

Professor I.M. Andreyev wrote in 1976: "Of the three forms of state power: monarchy, democracy and despotism, strictly speaking, only the first, monarchy, is based on a religious-ethical principle, the second, democracy, is based on an a-religious ethical principle, and the third, despotism, is based on an anti-religious, satanic principle!"

Ideally, the people of God should be ruled only by God, or by a man directly appointed by God, that is, *the Orthodox Monarch, or 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.⁸³⁷ Under these conditions God blesses one-man rule unfettered by oligarchical or democratic institutions. Contrary to the generally held view, Orthodox Autocracy is not a form of absolutism or despotism. Indeed, as D.A. Khomiakov writes, "the tsar is 'the denial of absolutism' precisely because he 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."⁸³⁸ The truly Orthodox Autocrat is unfettered by oligarchical or democratic institutions, but is bound to fulfil 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

⁸³⁷ 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.

⁸³⁸ Khomiakov, *Pravoslavie, samoderzhavie, narodnost'* (Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality), Minsk, 1997, p. 103.

Essenes who did not use money that had the image of Caesar and did not recognize any ruler except God Himself.⁸³⁹ 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).

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'"⁸⁴⁰ – 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.

⁸³⁹ Josephus Flavius, *Jewish Antiquities*, 18, 23; St. Hippolytus of Rome, *Philosophoumen*, 18-28.

⁸⁴⁰ Hieromonk Dionysius, Priest Timothy Alferov, *O Tserkvi, Pravoslavnom Tsarstvie i Poslednem Vremeni* (On the Church, the Orthodox Kingdom and the Last Time), Moscow, 1998, pp. 61-62.

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, 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 “papocaesarism” in the West. “Caesaropapism” signifies the intrusion of State power into the realm of the Church, and “papocaesarism” – the intrusion of the Church power into the realm of the State, by the transformation of the Church’s first-hierarchy 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 the anti-Chalcedonian, absolutist principles of Roman Catholicism and Islam 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 “papocaesarist” 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 there could be no true "symphony of powers" between the Roman Church and Empire when one of the powers, the Church, was itself a State that sometimes waged physical war against its own Empire!

Indeed, the continual wars between the "Holy 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."⁸⁴¹

"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

⁸⁴¹ Tikhomirov, *Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost'* (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, p. 92.

phrase “vicar of God” or “deputy of God” was often 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 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.”⁸⁴²

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, neither 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

⁸⁴² Alcuin of York, *Letter to Charlemagne*, M.G.H., 4, letter 132.

falsehood, right or wrong: its will *is* truth and justice, and if its will changes, then truth and justice must change with it...

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."⁸⁴³

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, the heretic Pope Nicolas I by the Orthodox Pope John VIII, the uniate Michael Palaeologus by the right-believing Andronicus II, the impious Isidore of Kiev by the righteous Jonah of Moscow. 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

⁸⁴³ Tikhomirov, *Religiozno-filosofskie osnovy istorii* (The Religio-Philosophical Foundations of History), Moscow, 1997, p. 269.

turned out to be absolutist tyrants. For, as Plato noted, there is a persistent tendency for democracy to pave the way for absolutism.

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.

So 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 illusion of democracy, leading finally to the enthronement of the Antichrist...