

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 13

### THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA

“And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” (Rev. 2: 18-29)

It requires but little spiritual discernment, we think, and a very moderate acquaintance with ecclesiastical history, to see the popery of the middle ages foreshadowed in this epistle. We saw in Ephesus the decline of first love, in Smyrna persecution from the Roman power, in Pergamos Balaam seducing the church and uniting her to the world; but things are even worse in **Thyatira**. Here we have the sad but natural consequences of this unhallowed union. How could it be otherwise, when all who merely submitted to the outward rite of baptism were regarded as born of God? The door was thus thrown open for the spoiler and the corrupter to enter the sacred enclosure of the church of God. All testimony was now gone as to her heavenly character and her place of separation from the world. She had falsified the word of the Lord which says of His disciples, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” True, in appearance, Christianity had gained a victory. The cross was now arrayed in gold and precious stones; but this was the glory of the world, not of a crucified Christ. It was the world really that gained the victory, and the humiliation of the church was completed.

The Lord only could estimate the fearful consequences of such a state of things. His eye saw the corruption, the idolatries, and the persecutions of the so-called dark ages, of which the church in Thyatira was a remarkable foreshadowing. We will now glance briefly at the contents of the epistle.

1. The *titles* of the Lord are first to be noticed. They are full of the most suited instruction for the faithful few, when the general body of Christians are identified with this world. He introduces Himself as the Son of God, who has eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass. When Peter confessed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, He immediately added, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And now, in anticipation of all that was coming, He recalls the thoughts of His people to that immutable foundation on which the church is built. He also assumes the attributes of divine judgment. *Fire* is the symbol of *penetrating* judgment eyes like unto a flame of fire, of *all-searching* judgment; and feet like *burnished brass*, of *impending* judgment.

Here then we have, in the character which the blessed Lord takes, the assurance of the perfect security of the faithful remnant, and the assertion of the unfailing judgment of the false prophetess, and her numerous brood of corrupt children — children of her seduction and corruption. **Jezebel** was not only a prophetess but a mother: she not only seduced God's people by her false doctrines, slaying many of them also; but a large class of the worst of men derived their existence from her corruption. This is painfully manifest all through the dark ages — the Jezebel-state of the church. She established herself *within* the church as in her own house, and published to all the world that she was infallible and to be implicitly obeyed in all matters of faith. To acquiesce in this blasphemous assumption was unfaithfulness to Christ; to oppose it was suffering and death.

2. As the **pretensions of Rome** waxed louder and louder and the darkness grew thicker and thicker, many of the saints of God became more and more devoted to Christ and His claims. *What is due to Christ* must ever be the watchword of the Christian, not what is due to those in high stations. There seems to have been a spiritual energy displayed at this time which rises above all that had been seen since the days of the apostles. This is grace — the marvellous grace of God to His real saints in a most trying time. It is the *silver line* of His own love which is so precious in His sight. We may not always be able to trace it in ecclesiastical history, but there it is, and there it shines to the eye and the heart of God in the midst of abounding iniquity. This is to be noted, and always to be remembered, as most encouraging to the Christian when placed in circumstances of trial. Hear what the Lord Himself says

*"I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first."* Here we have love, faith, and hope, in lively exercise, the three great foundation principles of sound

practical Christianity; and the last works to be more than the first. We have not met with such a faithful testimony, or such a measure of devotedness, since the early days of the church in Thessalonica. It may be, however, that the surrounding wickedness made their faithfulness all the more precious to the heart of the Lord, and led Him to praise them more. But no heart that beats true to Himself in an evil day is unknown, unnoticed, or unrewarded.

3. But though the Lord loves to praise what He can in His people, and notice the good things before He speaks of the evil things, He is also quick-sighted in detecting their failures. They were in danger of tampering with the false doctrine and with the false religious system of Jezebel; so He says,

“I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.” (Ver. 20) Notwithstanding the faithfulness of many earnest souls in Thyatira (or, in the mediaeval church), there was the public allowance of the spirit of evil: “Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel.” This was the dark shade on the *silver line*: sometimes the latter seems completely obscured. But the Lord did not fail, as of old, to raise up suited witnesses for Himself. Just as there were saints in Caesar’s household, an Obadiah in the house of Ahab, and a faithful remnant in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal, so the Lord was never left without a faithful witness all through the middle ages. Nevertheless there was an allowance of evil in the general state of things, which grieved the heart of the Lord and brought down His judgments.

“The woman,” it may be well to observe, is used as a symbol of the *general state*; “the man,” it is said, is a symbol of *responsible activity*. Balaam and Jezebel are symbolic names — a prophet and prophetess. The former acted as a seducer among the saints: the latter established herself within the professing church, and pretended to have absolute authority there. This was going much farther than even the wickedness of Balaam. But we all know what Jezebel was when she sat as queen in Israel. Her name has come down to us as swathed in cruelties and blood. She hated and persecuted the witnesses of God; she encouraged and patronised the idolatrous priests and prophets of Baal; she added violence to corruption: all was ruin and confusion. And this is the name which the Lord has chosen to symbolise the general state of the professing church during the middle ages. In Thyatira He, whose eyes were as a flame of fire, could see the germ of that which was to bear such evil fruit in after days, and so warns His people to hold fast that which they have already, even Himself. “I will put upon you none other burden; but that which ye have already, hold fast till I come.” As the Jezebel-state continues to the end and can never get right, the Lord now directs the faith of the remnant to His own return — “Till I come.” The bright hope of His coming is thus presented as a comfort to the heart in the midst of the general ruin; and His saints are relieved by the Lord Himself from vain attempts to set either the church or the world right. Most merciful deliverance! But poor human nature cannot

understand this, and so tries, and tries again, to mend matters both in church and state.

4. We have evidently three classes of persons spoken of in this epistle. (1) The children of Jezebel — those who owe their christian name and place to her corrupt system. Unsparring judgment will overtake all such. Space had been given for repentance, but they repented not; therefore the full judgment of God falls upon them. “I will kill her children with death.” (2) Those who are not her children, but make no stand against her; they are easy-going. This alas! is a large class in our own day. It characterises the public state of Christendom. Without conscience before God, they are content to float smoothly down the stream, in fellowship with some religious system, most agreeable to their own minds. As to whether it is agreeable to God’s mind, they have never inquired. Still they are His children. The judgment of such is “great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.” (3) The faithful remnant, the “*overcomers*.” They are here addressed as “the rest” or remnant; they will have power over the nations in association with Christ when He comes to reign. In the meantime they have this sweet and precious promise: “And I will give him the morning star.” This is conscious association with Himself even now. The mediaeval church was especially guilty of two things: she arrogantly and wickedly sought to possess supreme power over the nations; and she persecuted the faithful remnant of the saints, such as the Waldenses and others. But the saints, once so persecuted, shall yet possess the kingdom, and reign with Christ a thousand years; and the whole system of Jezebel shall be utterly and for ever rejected: “Strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.”

5. There is only one other thing to notice in this sketch of the public state of Christendom since the commencement of the papal system. The exhortation to “hear” is placed *after* the special promise. This marks out the remnant as distinct and separate from the general body. In the first three churches the warning word — “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” — comes before the promise; but in the four concluding churches we have the promise before the call to hear. The obvious meaning of this change is deeply solemn. In the first three the call to hear is addressed to the whole assembly, but in the last four only to the remnant. It would seem that none are expected to hear but the overcomers. The general professing body seem both blind and deaf through the power of Satan and the pollutions of Jezebel; fearful condition! We must also bear in mind, that the four states as represented by the last four churches run on to the end or to the coming of the Lord. May He keep us from all that savours of Jezebel, that we may duly appreciate our oneness with Himself, and His promised blessings to the “*overcomers*.”

Having now briefly examined the divinely drawn picture of the Jezebel-state of the church during the dark ages, we turn to the ample but dreary records of its history.

## THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE PAPAL PERIOD

It is generally admitted that this period begins with the pontificate of **Gregory the Great**, 590, and ends with the Reformation in the early part of the sixteenth century. But before entering on the general history, we will endeavour to answer a question which has been asked, and which, we doubt not, is on the minds of many: When, and by what means, did the power fall into the hands of the Roman pontiffs, which led to their supremacy and despotism during the middle ages? The question is an interesting one, but to answer it fully would lead us beyond our limits. We can only point out a few facts in the chain of events which laid the foundation of the great power and sovereignty of the See of Rome.

From the time of the famous edict of Milan in 313 the history of the church changes in its character. She then passed from a condition of distress and persecution to the summit of worldly prosperity and honour: other questions besides those of Christianity were henceforth involved in her history. Having entered into an alliance with the State, her future path was necessarily formed by her new relations. She could no longer act simply in the name of the Lord Jesus, and according to His holy word. But complete amalgamation there could never be. The one was from heaven, and the other of this world. They are, in nature, opposed to each other. Either the church aspired to be the mistress of the State, or the State encroached on the province of the church and disregarded her inherent rights. This was exactly what took place. Soon after the death of Constantine the struggle between these two great powers, the church and the State, for the government of the world, commenced; and, in order to ensure success in this warfare, the Roman pontiffs had recourse to ways and means which we will not characterise here, as they will come before us in due course.

Before Constantine transferred the seat of empire to **Byzantium** and built Constantinople, Rome was the acknowledged metropolis, and her bishop the primate. But when Constantinople became the imperial city, her bishop was raised to the rank of patriarch, and soon began to lay claim to the dignity of the Roman pontiffs. This was the commencement of the **Greek church** as a separate communion, and of the long contest between the East and the West. There were now four patriarchs, according to the plan of the Emperor, Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria. The rank of the bishop was governed by the superiority of the city in which he presided; and as Constantinople was now the capital of the world, her bishops would yield to none in honour and magnificence. The others were jealous, Rome complained, the strife began, the breach widened; but Rome never rested until she had gained the ascendancy over her feeble and less ambitious rival.

## THE ADVANTAGES OF ROME

The court of Constantinople, although it may have encouraged the hopes and ambition of the bishops, affected to govern the church with despotic power, and to decide on religious controversies of the gravest kind. But in the West it was not so. The Roman pontiffs from this period showed the independent and aggressive spirit of popery which rose to such heights in after ages. The bishops of the East were thus placed at a disadvantage in consequence of their dependence on the court and of their quarrels with the emperors. Besides, the presence and grandeur of the Eastern sovereign kept the dignity of the bishop in a very secondary place. In Rome there were none left to dispute the rank or style of the pontiff.

The withdrawal of the emperors from Rome, as the royal residence, was thus favourable to the development of the ecclesiastical power there; for, though deserted by her rulers, she was still venerated as the real capital of the world. Hence Rome possessed many advantages as the seat of the supreme bishop. But that which chiefly pushed on and consolidated the power of the Roman See was the growing belief, all over Christendom, that St. Peter was its founder. The Roman bishops denied that their precedence originated in the imperial greatness of the city, but in their lineal descent from St. Peter. This dogma was generally received about the commencement of the fifth century.

By such arguments the church of Rome established her right to govern the universal church. She maintained that Peter was primate amongst the apostles, and that his primacy is inherited by the bishops of Rome. But it may be well to notice here, the twofold aspect of Romanism — ecclesiastical and political. In both characters she claimed supremacy. Ecclesiastically she maintained, 1, that the bishop of Rome is the infallible judge in all questions of doctrine; 2, that he has the inherent right to supreme government in assembling general councils, and presiding over them; 3, that the right of making ecclesiastical appointments belongs to him; 4, that separation from the communion of the church of Rome involves the guilt of schism. **Politically** she claimed, she aspired to, and gained preeminence and power over all European society as well as all European governments. We shall see abundant proof of these particulars in the course of her well-defined history, which we will now go on with.

It was not till after the first council of Nice that the supremacy of the Romish bishops was generally allowed. The early bishops of Rome are scarcely known in ecclesiastical history. The accession of Innocent I, in the year 402, gave force and definition to this new tenet of the Latin church. Till this time there had been no legal recognition of the supremacy of Rome, though she was considered the principal church in the West, and had been frequently appealed to by the other great bishops for a spiritual judgment in matters of dispute. When the Greek church fell into Arianism, the Latin adhered firmly to the Nicene creed, which raised her much in the opinion of all the West. “Upon the

mind of Innocent,” says Milman, “appears first to have dawned the vast conception of Rome’s universal ecclesiastical supremacy; dim as yet and shadowy, but full and comprehensive in its outline.”

## LEO THE FIRST, SURNAMED THE GREAT

We may proceed without interruption from the name of Innocent to that of **Leo**, who ascended the chair of **St. Peter** in the year 440, and occupied it for one-and-twenty years. He was remarkable for his political skill, theological learning, and great ecclesiastical energy. He maintained with the haughtiness of the Roman, and with the zeal of the churchman, that all the pretensions and all the practices of his church were matters of unbroken apostolic succession. But withal he seems to have been sound in the faith as to salvation, and zealously opposed to all heretics. The Eastern churches had lost the respect of Christendom, from their long and disgraceful controversies. Power, not subtleties, was the ambition of Rome. Leo condemned the whole race of heretics from Arius to Eutyches; but more especially the Manichaeian heresy.

By his great exertions and extraordinary genius he raised the claims of the Roman bishop, as the representative of St. Peter, to a height before unknown. “The apostle,” he says, “was called *Petra*, the rock, by which denomination he is constituted the foundation... In his chair dwelleth the ever living, the superabounding, authority. Let the brethren therefore acknowledge that he is the primate of all bishops, and that Christ, who denieth His gifts to none, yet giveth unto none except through him.”<sup>74</sup>

Making due allowance for the character of the times and for official and inherited opinions, we believe Leo was sincere in his convictions, and probably a Christian. At heart he cared for God’s people, and more than once, by his prayers and political sagacity, saved Rome from the barbarians. When Attila, the most terrible of the foreign conquerors, with his countless hosts, was hovering over Italy, ready to fall upon the defenceless capital, Leo went forth to the “Destroyer” in the name of the Lord, and as the spiritual head of Rome, and so earnestly did he pray for his people, that the wild passions of the **Hun** were soothed, and, to the astonishment of all, he agreed to terms by which the city was saved from havoc and slaughter. But Leo’s main object through life, and that which he fully accomplished, was to lay the groundwork of the great spiritual monarchy of Rome. During his pontificate he had the greatest name in the empire, if not in all Christendom. He died in the year 461.

## THE EMPEROR JUSTINIAN

The name of **Justinian** is so famous in history, and so connected with legislation both civil and ecclesiastical, that it would be unfair to our readers

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<sup>74</sup> Greenwood’s *Cathedra Petri*, vol. 1, p. 348.

to pass it without a notice though not immediately of the Latin church. He belonged to the East, and rather hindered the rise of the West.

In the year 527 Justinian ascended the throne of Constantinople, and occupied it for nearly forty years. The political and military affairs of the empire he committed to his ministers and generals, and devoted his own time to those things which he thought more important. He spent much of his time in theological studies, and in the regulation of the religious affairs of his subjects, such as prescribing what the priests and the people should believe and practise. He was fond of mixing in controversy and of acting as a lawgiver in religious matters. His own faith — or rather, slavish superstition — was distinguished by the most rigid orthodoxy, and a large portion of his long reign was spent in the extinction of heresy. But this led to many instances of persecution, both public and private.

In the mean time Justinian saw a new field opening for his energies in another direction, and immediately turned his attention to it. After the death of **Theodoric the Great** in 526 the affairs of Italy fell into a very confused condition, and the new conquerors were far from being firmly seated on their thrones. Rousing the national hostility of the Romans against the barbarians, the imperial army was united and determined, and led by the able generals **Belisarius** and **Narses**, the conquests of Italy and Africa were achieved in a very short space of time. At the sight of the well-known eagles the soldiers of the barbarians refused to fight, and the nations threw off the supremacy of the Ostrogoths. The imperial generals now prosecuted an exterminating war. It is reckoned that during the reign of Justinian Africa lost five millions of inhabitants. Arianism was extinguished in that region; and in Italy the numbers who perished by war, by famine, or in other ways, is supposed to have exceeded the whole of its present population. The sufferings of these countries, during the revolutions of this period, were greater than they had ever endured in either earlier or later times. So that both the secular events of Justinian's reign and his own legislative labours had an important, but most unfortunate bearing on the history of Christianity.

After erecting the church of St. Sophia, and twenty-five other churches in Constantinople, and publishing a new edition of his code, he died A.D. 565.<sup>75</sup>

We now pass on to the third great founder of the papal edifice.

## **GREGORY THE FIRST, SURNAMED THE GREAT**

**A.D. 590**

We have now come to the close of the sixth century of Christianity. At this period the early history of the church ends, and the mediaeval begins. The pontificate of Gregory may be regarded as the line that separates the two

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<sup>75</sup> Milman, vol. 1, p. 350; J.C. Robertson, vol. 1, p. 473; Milner, vol. 2, p. 336.

periods. A great change takes place. The Eastern churches decline and receive but little notice; while the churches of the West especially that of Rome, largely engage the attention of the historian. And as Gregory may be considered the *representative man* of this transitional period, we will endeavour to place him fairly before the reader.

**Gregory** was born at Rome about the year 540, his family being of senatorial rank, and himself the great-grandson of a pope named Felix, so that in his descent he blended both civil and ecclesiastical dignity. By the death of his father he became possessed of great wealth, which he at once devoted to religious uses. He founded and endowed seven monasteries; six in Sicily, and the other, which was dedicated to St. Andrew, in his family mansion at Rome. His costly robes jewels, and furniture, he reduced to money, and lavished it on the poor. About the age of thirty-five he gave up his civil appointments, took up his abode in the Roman monastery and entered on a strictly ascetic life. Although it was his own convent, he began with the lowest monastic duties. His whole time was spent in prayer, reading, writing, and the most self-denying exercises. The fame of his abstinence and charity spread far and wide. In course of time he became abbot of his monastery; and, on the death of the pope Pelagius, he was chosen by the senate, the clergy, and the people, to fill the vacant chair. He refused, and endeavoured by various means to escape the honours and difficulties of the papacy; but he was forcibly ordained, by the love of the people, as the supreme bishop.

Drawn from the quiet of a cloister and from his peaceful meditations there, Gregory now saw himself involved in the management of the most various and perplexing affairs of both Church and State. But he was evidently fitted for the great and arduous work which lay before him. We will notice first

### **THE FERVENT CHARITY OF GREGORY**

The character of Gregory was distinguished by the fervour of his almsgiving. Though raised to the papal throne, he lived in a simple and monastic style. His palace was surrounded by the suffering poor, as his monastery had been, and relief was distributed with a liberal hand. Nor was he content to exercise his almsgiving alone, he powerfully exhorted his episcopal brethren to abound in the same. "Let not the bishop think," he said, "that reading and preaching alone suffice, or studiously to maintain himself in retirement, while the hand that enriches is closed. But let his hand be bountiful; let him make advances to those who are in necessity; let him consider the wants of others as his own; for without these qualities the name of bishop is a vain and empty title."

The wealth of the Roman See enabled him to exercise extensive charities. As administrator of the papal funds, Gregory has the reputation of being just, humane, and most laborious. But his biographers are so voluminous in their accounts of his good works that it is bewildering to attempt a brief sketch. However, as we can esteem him as a believer in Christ, notwithstanding the

false position he was in, and his consequent blindness as to the true character of the church, we delight to dwell a little on his memory, and also to trace the *silver line* of God's grace in spite of the unhallowed mixture of secular and sacred things.

On the first Monday of every month he distributed large quantities of provisions to all classes. The sick and infirm were superintended by persons appointed to inspect every street. Before sitting down to his own meal, a portion was separated and sent to the hungry at his door. The names, ages, and dwellings of those receiving papal relief filled a large volume. So severe was the charity of Gregory, that one day, on hearing of the death of a poor man from starvation he condemned himself to a hard penance for the guilt of neglect as steward of the divine bounty. But his active benevolence was not confined to the city of Rome; it was almost world-wide. He entered into all questions affecting the welfare of all classes, and prescribed minute regulations for all, lest the poor should be exposed to the oppression of the rich, or the weak to the strong. But this will more fully appear as we notice

### **THE ECCLESIASTICAL AND TEMPORAL POSITION OF GREGORY**

The pastoral care of the church was evidently the main object and delight of Gregory's heart. This he believed to be his work, and fain would he have devoted himself entirely to it; for according to the superstitious credulity of the times, he had the deepest conviction that the care and government of the whole church belonged to him as the successor of St. Peter; and also, that he was bound to uphold the special dignity of the See of Rome. But he was compelled, from the disturbed state of Italy, and for the safety of his people — his dear flock — to undertake many troublesome kinds of business, altogether foreign to his spiritual calling. The Lombard<sup>76</sup> invaders were at that moment the terror of the Italians. The Goths had been to a great degree civilised and Romanised; but these new invaders were remorseless and pitiless barbarians; though, strange to say, they were the avowed champions of Arianism. And the imperial power instead of protecting its Italian subjects, acted only as a hindrance to their exerting themselves for their own defence. War, famine, and pestilence, had so wasted and depopulated the country, that all hearts failed, and all turned to the bishop as the only man for the emergency of the times; so firmly was the opinion of his integrity and ability established among men.

Thus we see that *temporal power*, in the first instance, was forced upon the Pope. It does not appear that he sought the position — a position so eagerly

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<sup>76</sup> The Lombards were a German tribe from Brandenburg. According to the popular belief, they had been invited into Italy by Justinian to serve against the Goths. Their chief, Alboin, established a kingdom which lasted from 568 to 774. The last king, Desiderius, was dethroned by Charlemagne. As we shall meet them again in connection with our history, we give this notice of their origin. — Haydn's *Dictionary of Dates*.

grasped by many of his successors; but rather that he entered with reluctance upon duties so little in accordance with the great object of his life. He unwillingly threw off the quiet contemplative life of the monk, and entered into the affairs of state as a duty to God and to his country. The direction of the political interests of Rome devolved for the most part upon Gregory. He was guardian of the city, and the protector of the population in Italy against the Lombards. All history bears witness to his great ability, his incessant activity, and the multiplicity of his occupations as the virtual sovereign of Rome.

But however unconscious Gregory may have been of what the effects would be of his great reputation, it nevertheless contributed much to the ecclesiastical and secular domination of Rome. The pre-eminence in his case, however sorrowful for a Christian, was disinterested and beneficially exerted; but not so with his successors. The infallibility of the Pope, spiritual tyranny, persecution for a difference of opinion, idolatry, the doctrine of the merit of works, purgatory and masses for the relief of the dead, which became the discriminating marks of the papacy, had not, as yet, a settled establishment at Rome; but, we may say, they were all in sight.

We must not, however, pursue this subject farther at present; we turn to one more interesting, and more congenial to our minds.

### **THE MISSIONARY ZEAL OF GREGORY**

Notwithstanding the depression of the church, and of all classes of society, through the inroads of the barbarians, the blessed Lord was watching over the spread of the gospel in other countries. And surely it was of His great mercy, that the hosts of invaders which poured down on the provinces of the empire were soon converted to Christianity. They may have had very little understanding of their new religion, but it greatly softened their ferocity, and mitigated the sufferings of the vanquished. **Gregory** was most zealous in his endeavours to extend the knowledge of the gospel, and to bring over the barbarous nations to the Catholic faith. But his favourite scheme, and that which had been long on his heart, was the evangelisation of the Anglo-Saxons.

The beautiful story of the incident which first directed Gregory's mind to the conversion of **Britain**, is too pleasing, not to find a place in our "Short Papers." In the early days of his monastic life, at least before his elevation to the papacy, his attention was arrested one day by seeing some beautiful fair-haired boys exposed for sale in the market-place. The following conversation is said to have taken place. He inquired from what country they came. "From the island of Britain," was the reply. "Are the inhabitants of that island Christians or Pagans?" "They are still Pagans." "Alas!" said he, "that the prince of darkness should possess forms of such loveliness! That such beauty of countenance should want that better beauty of the soul." He then asked by what name they were called. "Angles," was the reply. Playing on the words,

he said, “Truly they are *Angels!* From what province?” “From that of Deira” — Northumberland. “Surely they must be rescued *de ira*” — from the wrath of God, and called to the mercy of Christ. “What is the name of their king?” “Ella,” was the answer. “Yea,” said Gregory, “Alleluia must be sung in the dominions of that king.”

“To be the first missionary to this beautiful people,” says Milman, “and to win the remote and barbarous island, like a christian Caesar, to the realm of Christ, became the holy ambition of Gregory. He extorted the unwilling consent of the Pope; he had actually set forth and travelled three days’ journey, when he was overtaken by messengers sent to recall him. All Rome had risen in pious mutiny and compelled the Pope to revoke his permission.”<sup>77</sup> But although he was thus prevented from executing this mission in person, he never lost sight of his noble object. From this time he was not allowed to return to his monastery. He was forced to embark in public affairs, first as a deacon, then as supreme pontiff. But all this was *compulsory* dignity to Gregory. His heart was set on the salvation of the fair-haired youths of England and he would a thousand times rather have undertaken a journey to our island, with all its hardships and unknown dangers, than be crowned with the honours of the papacy. But such was the character of his mind, that he pursued with unwearied attention and devotion any scheme of piety which he had once planned. Hence it was that, after he was raised to the papal chair, he was enabled to furnish and send forth a band of forty missionaries to the shores of Britain. But before speaking of the character and results of this mission, it will be interesting to glance briefly at the history of the church in the British Isles from the beginning.

### **THE FIRST PLANTING OF THE CROSS IN BRITAIN**

Far back in the early days of apostolic simplicity, the cross of Christ, we believe, was planted in our island. There is fair historical evidence for believing that “Claudia,” mentioned by Paul in his Second Epistle to Timothy, was the daughter of a British king, who married a distinguished Roman named “Pudens.” This circumstance will not seem unlikely if we bear in mind that, during the whole period of the Roman dominion in this country, there must have been many opportunities for the spread of Christianity, and that these would be readily embraced by those who loved the Lord Jesus and the souls of men. Besides, it was the custom at that time for the British kings and nobles to send their sons to Rome for education; and this practice, it is said, prevailed to such an extent, that a mansion was established expressly for them, and a tax of one penny was levied on every house in England for its support.<sup>78</sup>

Another witness for the early planting of Christianity in this country is the testimony of the Fathers. Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian, who wrote

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<sup>77</sup> *Latin Christianity*, vol. 1, p. 434.

<sup>78</sup> For details, see *Life of Paul* by Conybeare and Howson, and *English Monasticism* by Travers Hill.

in the second century, affirm, that in every country known to the Romans there were professors of Christianity — from those who rode in chariots, or were houseless, there was no race of men amongst whom there were not prayers offered in the name of a crucified Jesus. We have also the testimony of later Fathers. The historic chain seems to be carried down by the mention of British bishops as having attended several of the general councils in the fourth century; and their orthodoxy throughout the Arian controversy has been attested by the weighty evidence of Athanasius and Hilary. It is also worthy of note that Constantine — who had spent some time with his father in Britain — when writing to the churches of the Empire about a dispute concerning Easter, quoted the British church as an example of orthodoxy. The Pelagian heresy, it is said, was introduced into Britain by one Agricola in the year 429, and found much acceptance; but in a conference at St. Albans the heretical teachers were defeated by the orthodox clergy.<sup>79</sup>

### **THE ANCIENT BRITISH CHURCH**

Although the **British church** had acquired such credit for orthodoxy, we have very little reliable information as to its rise and progress, or as to the means by which this was effected. There are many traditions, but they are scarcely worth repeating, and are unsuitable for a brief history. There is ample evidence, however, that in the early part of the fourth century, and at least two hundred years before the arrival of the Italian monks, the British church had a complete organisation, with its bishops and metropolitans.

According to the testimony of both ancient and modern historians, the doctrines and the ritual of the old church were of the simplest character compared with the Greek or Roman, though a long way from the simplicity of the New Testament. They taught the oneness of the Godhead; the Trinity, the divine and human nature of Christ, redemption through His death, and the eternity of future rewards and punishments. They regarded the Lord's supper as a symbol, not a miracle; they took the bread and wine as our Lord commanded these should be taken — in remembrance of Him and they did not refuse the wine to the laity. Their hierarchy consisted of bishops and priests, with other ministers, and that a particular service was employed at their ordination. Marriage was usual among the clergy. There were also monasteries with monks living in them, sworn to poverty, chastity, and obedience to their abbot. That churches were built in honour of martyrs, each church had many altars; and the service, which was performed in the Latin tongue, was chanted by the priests. Disputes were finally settled by provincial synods, held twice a year, beyond which, on matters of discipline, there was no appeal. So that we see the doctrines of the old church were characterised

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<sup>79</sup> J.C. Robertson, vol. 1, p. 450.

by a true apostolic simplicity, and as an institution it was free and unfettered.<sup>80</sup>

It is matter of unfeigned thankfulness that the early church of our own country has left so fair a name behind her compared with the superstitions and corruptions of the East and the West. But, alas! her existence as a separate establishment was not of long duration. She scarcely survived the middle of the seventh century. Her calamities were brought on by three successive steps, and these outside of her own jurisdiction — the withdrawal of the Roman troops from Britain; the Saxon Conquest; and the Augustinian Mission. We will now briefly glance at each step, and its effects.

We have seen something of the decline and approaching fall of the Roman Empire. In consequence of the heavy calamities which befell the city and provinces of Rome, the troops were gradually withdrawn from this island for the protection of the seat of dominion. And the Romans, finding that they could no longer spare the forces necessary for a military establishment in Britain, took their final departure from our island towards the middle of the fifth century, and about four hundred and seventy-five years after **Julius Caesar** first landed on its shores. The government then fell into the hands of a number of petty princes, who, of course, quarrelled. Civil wars, national weakness, and demoralization soon followed, with their usual judgments.

The withdrawal of the Roman troops necessarily exposed the country to the inroads of invaders, especially the **Picts and Scots**. The British chiefs, unable to resist these audacious robbers and spoilers, appealed in their distress to Rome. “The barbarians,” they said, “break through our walls, like wolves into a sheep-fold, retire with their booty and return every succeeding year.” But however much the Romans might pity their old friends, they were now unable to help them. Disappointed of aid from Rome, and despairing of their ability to defend themselves against the desolating tribes of the North, the Britons turned to the Saxons for help.<sup>81</sup>

### **THE ARRIVAL OF THE SAXONS IN ENGLAND**

About the middle of the fifth century the Saxon ships reached the British coast, and under their leaders, Hengist and Horsa, a few hundred fierce and desperate warriors disembarked. These famous leaders immediately took the field at the head of their followers, and completely defeated the Picts and Scots. But the remedy proved worse than the disease. One great evil was averted, but another and a greater followed. The **Saxons**, finding the country they had been hired to defend possessed a more genial climate than their own, and eager to exchange the bleak shores of the North for the rich fields of

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<sup>80</sup> See *English Monasticism* by Travers Hill, p. 141, the works of Gildas; *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* by Bede *The Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain* by Jeremy Collier, vol. 1.

<sup>81</sup> *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 5, p. 301.

Britain, invited fresh bodies of their countrymen to join them; and thus, from being the defenders, they became the conquerors and masters of the ill-fated Britons. The Angles and other tribes poured in on the country; and although the British did not yield without a severe struggle, the Saxon power prevailed, and reduced the natives to entire submission, or drove them to seek shelter in the mountains of Wales, Cornwall, and Cumberland. Many emigrated, and some settled in Armorica, now Brittany, in the north-west of France.

But the Saxons and Angles were not only wild warriors, they were savage merciless pagans. They exterminated Christianity wherever they conquered. According to the “**venerable Bede,**” the bishops and their people were indiscriminately slaughtered with fire and sword, and there was no one to bury the victims of such cruelty. Public and private buildings were alike destroyed, priests were everywhere murdered at the altar; some who had fled to the mountains were seized, and slain by heaps, others, worn out with hunger, surrendered themselves, embracing perpetual slavery for the sake of life; some made for regions beyond the sea, and some led a life of poverty among mountains, forests, and lofty rocks.

Britain, after this event, relapsed into a state of obscure barbarism, was withdrawn from the view of the civilised world, and was sunk down to the depths of misery and cruelty; and yet these are the very people whom the Lord had laid on the heart of Gregory to win over to Himself by the gospel of peace. How could a few poor monks, without fleet or army, we may well exclaim, venture on such a shore, far less hope to gain the hearts and subdue the lives of such savages to the faith and practice of the gospel of peace? It is the same gospel that triumphed over Judaism, Orientalism, and Heathenism, and by the same divine power, was soon to triumph over the fierce barbarism of the Anglo-Saxons. How weak and foolish is the infidelity that questions its divine origin, power, and destiny! We will now watch the progress of the mission.

### **THE MISSION OF AUGUSTINE TO ENGLAND**

In the year 596, and about 150 years after the arrival of the Saxons in Britain, Gregory's famous mission left Italy for our island. A company of forty missionary monks, under the direction of Augustine, were sent to preach the gospel to the benighted Anglo-Saxons. But hearing of the savage character and habits of the people, and being ignorant of their language, they became seriously discouraged, and were afraid to proceed. Augustine was sent back by the others to entreat Gregory to discharge them from the service. But he was not the man to abandon a mission of that kind. He had not done it in haste, it was the result of much prayer and deliberation. He therefore exhorted and encouraged them to go forward, trusting in the living God, and in the hope of seeing the fruit of their labours in eternity. He gave them letters of introduction to bishops and princes, and secured for them all the assistance in

his power. Thus animated they pursued their journey, and, travelling by way of France, they arrived in Britain.

The forty-one missionaries, having landed on the Isle of Thanet, announced to Ethelbert, king of Kent, their arrival from Rome, and their errand with glad tidings of great joy to himself and all his people. Circumstances greatly favoured this remarkable mission. Bertha, the queen (daughter of Clotaire the First, king of the Franks), was a Christian. Her father stipulated in her marriage settlement that she was to be allowed the free profession of Christianity, in which she had been educated. A bishop attended her court, several of her household were Christians, and divine service was conducted after the Romish form. The Lord in this instance made use of a woman, as He often did, for the propagation the gospel among the heathen. These favourably contrast with the Jezebel class of women, and preserve *the silver line* of God's grace in these dark ages. Bertha was of the house of Clovis and Clotilda.

**Ethelbert**, influenced by his queen, received the missionaries kindly. Augustine and his retinue were allowed to proceed to Canterbury, the residence of the king. He consented to an interview, but in the open air for fear of magic. The monks approached the royal party in the most imposing manner. One of their number, bearing a large silver cross with the figure of the Saviour, led the procession the others followed, chanting their Latin hymns. On reaching the oak appointed for the place of conference, permission was given to preach the gospel to the prince and his attendants. The king was then informed that they had come with good tidings, even eternal life to those that received them, and the enjoyment of the blessedness of heaven for ever. The king was favourably impressed, and gave them a mansion in the royal city of Canterbury, and liberty to preach the gospel to his court and his people. They then marched to the city, singing in concert the litany; "We pray thee, O Lord, in all Thy mercy, that Thine anger and Thy fury may be removed from this city, and from Thy holy house, because we have sinned. Alleluia."

By these preparatory steps the missionaries' way was now plain and easy. The approval of the monarch inspired his subjects with confidence, and opened their hearts to the teachers. Converts, such as they were, multiplied rapidly. On the Christmas-day of the year 597 no fewer, it is said, than ten thousand heathen were gathered into the fold of the Catholic church by baptism. Ethelbert also submitted to baptism, and Christianity, in the Romish form, became the established religion of his kingdom. This was Rome's first footing in England. She now determined on subduing the British church to the papacy, and establishing her authority in Great Britain, as she had done in France. She set to work in this way.

## ROMISH HIERARCHY FORMED IN ENGLAND

Gregory, on hearing of the great success of Augustine, sent him more **missionaries**, who carried with them a number of books, including the Gospels, with church plate, vestments, relics, and the pallium which was to invest Augustine as Archbishop of Canterbury. He also directed him to consecrate twelve bishops in his province; and, if he should see it advantageous to the propagation of the faith, to establish another metropolitan at York, who should then have authority to nominate twelve other bishops for the northern districts of the island. Such were the rudiments of the English church, and such the excessive eagerness of Gregory for ecclesiastical supremacy, that he settled a plan of government for places before they had been visited by the evangelist.

“In the ecclesiastical view of the case,” says Greenwood, “the Anglo-Saxon church was the genuine daughter of Rome. But, beyond the limits of that establishment, no right of parentage can be assigned to her within the British islands. A numerous christian population still existed in the northern and western districts, whose traditions gave no countenance to the Roman claim of maternity. The ritual and discipline of the British, Welsh and Irish churches differed in many points from those of Rome and the Latins generally. They celebrated the Easter festival in conformity with the practice of the Oriental churches; and in the form of their tonsure, as well as in that of the baptismal rite, they followed the same model: differences which of themselves seem sufficient to preclude all probability of a purely Latin pedigree.”<sup>82</sup>

Augustine, now at the head of a hierarchy composed of twelve bishops, immediately made the bold attempt to bring the ancient British church under the Roman jurisdiction. Through the influence of Ethelbert he obtained a conference with some of the British bishops at a place which from that time was called Augustine’s oak, on the Severn. There the Roman and the British clergy met for the first time; and Augustine’s first and imperious demand was, “Acknowledge the authority of the bishop of Rome.” “We desire to love all men,” they meekly replied, “and whatever we do for you, we will do for him also whom you call the Pope.” Surprised and indignant at their refusal, Augustine exhorted them to adopt the **Roman** usages as to the celebration of Easter, the tonsure, and the administration of baptism, that a uniformity of discipline and worship might be established in the island. This they positively refused to do. Having received Christianity at first not from Rome but from the East, and never having acknowledged the Roman church as their mother, they looked upon themselves as independent of the See of Rome. A second and a third council were held, but with no better results. Augustine was plainly told that the British church would acknowledge no man as supreme in the Lord’s vineyard. The archbishop demanded, argued, censured, wrought miracles; but all to no purpose — the Britons were firm. At last he was

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<sup>82</sup> *Cathedra Petri*, book 3, p. 215.

plainly told that they could not submit either to the haughtiness of the Romans, or to the tyranny of the Saxons. Aroused to wrathful indignation at their quiet firmness, the angry priest exclaimed, "If you will not receive brethren who bring you peace, you shall receive enemies who bring you war. If you will not unite with us in showing the Saxons the way of life, you shall receive from them the stroke of death." The haughty archbishop withdrew, and is supposed to have died soon after (A.D. 605), but his ill-omened prophecy was accomplished soon after his decease.

**Edelfrid**, one of the Anglo-Saxon kings, still a pagan, collected a numerous army, and advanced towards Bangor, the centre of **British Christianity**. The monks fled in great alarm. About twelve hundred and fifty of them met in a retired spot, where they agreed to continue together in prayer and fasting. Edelfrid drew nearer, and happening to see a number of unarmed men, inquired who they were. On being told that they were the monks of Bangor, who had come to pray for the success of their countrymen, "Then," he cried, "although they have no weapons, they are fighting against us;" and he ordered his soldiers to fall upon the praying monks. About twelve hundred, it is said, were slain, and only fifty escaped by flight. Thus did the dominion of Rome commence in England, which continued for nearly a thousand years.

Whether Augustine had really anything to do with the murder of the monks, it seems hard and is difficult to say. Those who take a strong Protestant view of the case plainly affirm that his last days were occupied in making arrangements for the accomplishment of his own threatening. Others, who take an opposite view, deny that there is any evidence that he influenced the pagans to the dreadful tragedy. But, be that as it may, a dark suspicion must ever rest on the policy of Rome. Augustine's own revengeful words, and her whole history, confirm the suspicion. Such was the nature of the intolerant Jezebel — when argument failed, she appealed to the sword. Henceforth Romanism was characterised by arrogance and blood. The ancient church of Britain, which was limited to the mountainous districts of Wales, gradually diminished and died away.<sup>83</sup>

## **REFLECTIONS ON THE MISSION OF AUGUSTINE AND THE CHARACTER OF GREGORY**

**Augustine** is spoken of by some historians as a devout Christian, and his missionary enterprise as one of the greatest in the annals of the church. But, without wishing to detract in the least degree from the greatness of the man or his mission, we must not forget that scripture is the only true standard of character and works. There we learn that the fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." And certainly the great churchman did not manifest towards his brethren, the

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<sup>83</sup> Gardner, vol. 1, p. 391.

British Christians, the grace of love, peace, or conciliation; on the contrary, he was proud, imperious, haughty, and vain-glorious.

These serious defects in his character were not unknown to Gregory, as he says, in a letter addressed to himself: "I know that God has performed, through you, great miracles among that people, but let us remember that when the disciples said with joy to their divine Master, "'Lord, even the devils are subject to us through Thy name,' He answered them, 'Rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.'" While God thus employs your agency without, remember, my dear brother, to judge yourself secretly within, and to know well what you are. If you have offended God in word or deed, preserve those offences in your thoughts to repress the vainglory of your heart, and consider that the gift of miracles is not granted to you for yourself, but for those whose salvation you are labouring to procure." In another letter he cautioned him against "vanity and personal pomp;" and reminded him "that the pallium of his dignity was only to be worn in the service of the church, and not to be brought into competition with royal purple on state occasions."

He was most unsuited for a mission which required patience, and a tender consideration of others. The British church had existed for centuries, her bishops had taken part in great ecclesiastical councils and signed their decrees. The names of London, York, and Lincoln are found in the records of the Council of Arles (A.D. 314), so that we cannot but respect in the Britons their desire to adhere to the liturgy transmitted from their ancestors, and to resist the foreign assumption of the spiritual supremacy of Rome. Augustine utterly failed to profit by the lessons of humility which he received from his great master, and has less claim upon our esteem and admiration.

The great prelate, like his great missionary, did not long survive the spiritual conquest of England. Worn out at length by his great labours and infirmities, he died in the year 604, assuring his friends that the expectation of death was his only consolation, and requesting them to pray for his deliverance from bodily sufferings.

The conduct of Gregory, during the thirteen years and six months that he was bishop of Rome, displays a zeal and a sincerity which have scarcely been equalled in the history of the Roman church. He was laborious and self-denying in what he believed to be the service of God, and in his duty to the church and to all mankind. The collection of his letters, nearly eight hundred and fifty in number, bears ample testimony to his ability and activity in all the affairs of men, and in every sphere of life. "From treating with patriarchs kings, or emperors on the highest concerns of Church and State, he passes to direct the management of a farm, or the relief of some distressed petitioner in some distant dependence of his See. He appears as a pope, as a sovereign as a bishop, as a landlord. He takes measures for the defence of his country, the

conversion of the heathen, the repression and reconciliation of schismatics,” etc.<sup>84</sup>

But notwithstanding the varied excellencies of Gregory, he was deeply infected with the principles and **spirit of the age** in which he lived. The spirit of Jezebel was evidently at work, though yet in its youth. We look in vain for anything like christian simplicity in the church of God at this time. The piety of Gregory himself we cannot doubt; but, as an ecclesiastic, what was he? Poisoned to the heart's core by the gross delusion of the universal claims of the chair of St. Peter, he could brook no rival, as we see in his determined and bitter opposition to the pretensions of **John**, bishop of Constantinople; and, what was darker still, we see the same spirit in his triumphing over the murder of the Emperor **Maurice** and his family by the cruel and treacherous Phocas merely because he suspected Maurice of what he called heresy. It appears that Maurice countenanced what Gregory thought the *usurpation* of John in assuming the title of *universal bishop*. But even to sanction such a claim was no small crime in the mind of a Roman pontiff. And so it was with Gregory. When the intelligence of the bloody tragedy reached him, he rejoiced; it appeared to him in the light of a providential dispensation for the deliverance of the church from her enemies. The very well-springs of charity seem to have been dried up in the hearts of all who ever sat on a papal throne, towards all ecclesiastical rivals. Justice candour, humanity, and every right feeling of Christianity must yield to the dominant claims of the false church. Even Gregory bowed before, and was fearfully corrupted by, “*that woman Jezebel*.”

### THE SUPERSTITION AND IDOLATRY OF GREGORY

Ambition, mingled with humility; and superstition, mingled with faith, characterised the great pontiff. This strange mixture and confusion was no doubt the result of his false position. It is difficult to understand how a man of such sound sense could be so debased by superstition as to believe in the working of miracles by means of relics, and to have recourse to such things for the confirmation of the truth of scripture. But the sad truth is, that he was blinded by the one great absorbing object, the interests of the church of Rome, in place of being devoted to the interests of Christ. Paul could say, “One thing I do;” another said, “One thing I know.” First, we must *know* that we are pardoned and accepted; then, to do the things that please Christ is the high and heavenly calling of the Christian. “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death... But this *one thing I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 3) Such was, and ever ought to have been, the spirit and breathings of Christianity. But what do we find at the close of the sixth

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<sup>84</sup> J.C. Robertson, vol. 2, p. 4.

century? What was the *one thing* Gregory had in view? Clearly not the claims of a heavenly Christ, and conformity to Him in His resurrection, sufferings, and death. We may safely affirm, that the one great object of his public life was to establish beyond dispute *the universal bishopric of Rome*. And to this end, in place of leading souls to delight in the *ways* of Christ, as well as in Himself, which Paul ever did, he sought to advance the claims of the Romish See by *idolatry* and *corruption*. Neither was the spirit of *persecution* altogether absent.

Monasticism, under the patronage of Gregory, especially according to the stricter rules of *Benedict*, was greatly revived and widely extended. The doctrine of purgatory, respect for relics, the worship of images, the idolatry of saints and martyrs, the merit of pilgrimages to holy places, were either taught or sanctioned by Gregory, as connected with his ecclesiastical system; all which we must own to be the unmistakable features of the activity of Balaam and the corruption of Jezebel.

But we are now in the *seventh century*. The dark ages are at hand, and dark indeed they are. The papacy begins to assume a definite form. And as we have reached in our history the close of one age of Christianity and the commencement of another, we may profitably pause for a moment and take a general survey of the progress of the gospel in different countries.

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 14

### THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY OVER EUROPE

The ecclesiastical system which the Italian monks introduced into England rapidly spread, and ultimately triumphed. In about a hundred years after the arrival of Augustine, it was professed and believed throughout Anglo-Saxon Britain. The English church, thus founded on the Roman model, could not fail to hold a position especially dependent on Rome. This union at an early period was promoted and strengthened by English monks, nuns, bishops, nobles, and princes, making frequent pilgrimages to the grave of St. Peter at Rome. In no country were the Roman missionaries more successful than among our Anglo-Saxon ancestors though they were considered the fiercest of the Teutonic race. The British clergy, though still adhering to their old ways; and disposed to resist foreign assumption, were compelled to seclude themselves in the extremities of the land. Romanism now prevailed all over England.

**Scotland and Ireland** appear to have been blessed with Christianity about the same time as Britain. By means of soldiers, sailors, missionaries, and persecuted Christians from the south, the gospel was preached and many believed. But, as the early religious history of these countries is so overlaid with legends, we will only refer to names and events that are well authenticated.

### THE FIRST PREACHERS OF CHRISTIANITY IN IRELAND

**Patrick**, the apostle of Ireland, is supposed to have been born about the year 372 on the banks of the Clyde. *Kilpatrick* is said to have taken its name from him. His parents were earnest Christians; his father was a deacon, and his grandfather was a presbyter. His mother, who sought to instil into his heart the doctrines of Christianity, was sister to the celebrated Martin, archbishop of Tours. But the young Succath for such was his original name — was not seriously inclined. Some time after, his parents left Scotland and settled in Brittany. At the age of sixteen, when Succath and his two sisters were playing on the sea-shore, some Irish pirates, commanded by O'Neal, carried them all three off to their boats and sold them as captives in Ireland. For six years he was employed in keeping cattle.

During the period of his slavery he endured many and great hardships. But his sin had found him out. He became serious and thoughtful. When about the age of fifteen he had committed some great sin which now pressed heavily on his conscience both night and day. He prayed often, and wept much; indeed such was the inward fervour of his soul, that he became insensible to the cold,

the rain, and other inconveniences to which he was exposed. He now thought of home, of his mother's tender words and earnest prayers; and God graciously used the remembrance of the gospel to the blessing of his soul. He was born again. "I was sixteen years old," he says, "and knew not the true God; but in that strange land the Lord opened my unbelieving eyes, and, although late, I called my sins to mind, and was converted with my whole heart to the Lord my God, who regarded my low estate, had pity on my youth and ignorance, and consoled me as a father consoles his children. The love of God increased more and more in me, with faith and the fear of His name. The Spirit urged me to such a degree that I poured forth as many as a hundred prayers in one day. And during the night, in the forests and on the mountains when I kept my flock, the rain and snow and frost and sufferings which I endured excited me to seek after God. At that time I felt not the indifference which now I feel; the Spirit fermented my heart."<sup>85</sup>

If these words can be relied upon as flowing from the lips of Succath, they present a much purer testimony to the truth of the gospel than we ever find in the church of Rome. They present an exercised soul in close quarters with God Himself. The forms and priesthood of Romanism destroy this beautiful, personal, direct communion with God and with His Christ through the grace and power of the Holy Ghost. But such, no doubt, was the Christianity of these British Isles before it was corrupted by the papal emissaries.

In the course of time Succath gained his liberty, and after travelling much and preaching he returned to his family. But he soon felt an irresistible desire to return to Ireland and preach the gospel to the pagans, among whom he had found the Saviour. In vain did his parents and friends seek to detain him. He broke through all hindrances, and with a heart full of christian zeal departed for Ireland. He was now over forty years of age, and, according to some writers, had been ordained a presbyter, and was now consecrated bishop of the Irish. After this he is known as Saint Patrick. He devoted the remainder of his life to the Irish, and laboured among them with great effect, though amidst many difficulties and dangers. The conversion of Ireland is ascribed to his means. The year of his death is uncertain.

### **THE MISSIONARY ZEAL OF IRELAND**

The blessed fruits of St. Patrick's labours were abundantly manifested in after years. Ireland at this time is described as a kind of elysium of peace and piety; and its fame for pure scriptural teaching rose so high, that it received the honourable appellation of "**the Isle of Saints.**" The labours of the Irish clergy, however, were not confined to their own country. Naturally fond of travelling or wandering, and being energised by a love for souls, numbers left their native country, as missionary bands, under the leadership of a loved and devoted abbot. The monasteries, it is generally said, were so filled with pious

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<sup>85</sup> D'Aubigné, vol. 5, p. 25.

monks at this time, that there was not sufficient room in their own country for the employment of their zeal, so that they felt it was their duty to exercise their activity in other lands. Thus we see a broad *silver line* of God's grace in that rude people, more distinctly marked than in any other part of Christendom. The Lord's name be praised. But let us take an example to see its working.

### THE MISSION OF COLUMBA

**Columba**, a pious man, of royal descent, and full of good works, became deeply impressed with the importance of carrying the gospel to other lands. He thought of Scotland, and determined to visit the country of the famous **Succath**. Having communicated his intention to some of his fellow Christians, who thoroughly entered into his scheme, the mission was agreed upon. About the year 565 Columba, accompanied by twelve companions, sailed from the shores of Ireland in an open boat of wicker-work, covered with skins, and, after experiencing much tossing in their rude little vessel, the noble missionary band reached the Western Isles — a cluster of islands off the west coast of Scotland, called the Hebrides. They landed near the barren rock of Mull, to the south of the basaltic caverns of Staffa, and fixed their abode on a small island, afterwards known as Iona, or Icolmkill. There he founded his monastery, afterwards so famous in the history of the church. Tradition has preserved a point on the coast at which they landed by an artificial mound, faintly resembling an inverted boat, fashioned after the pattern of the currach, in which the pious monks navigated the sea.<sup>86</sup>

A goodly number of Christians, it is thought, had already found a refuge on that barren rock. At that time it must have been almost completely isolated from the abodes of men. The waters of the Hebrides are so tempestuous that navigation in open boats must have been extremely dangerous. The name Iona signifies “the Island of Waves.” Besides its cross tides, its currents, and its headlands, the heavy swell of the Atlantic rolls in upon its shores. Of the *monks* of Iona we shall speak by-and-by; but we have not yet done with Ireland.

**Columbanus**, another monk of great sanctity, appears to have left his cell about sixty years after Columba. He was born in Leinster, and trained in the great monastery of Bangor on the coast of Ulster. A society of three thousand monks, under the government of its founder, Comgal, were fostered in this convent. And the church in Ireland was still free; it had not yet been enslaved by the church of Rome. They were simple and earnest in their Christianity compared with the lifeless forms and the priestly element of the papacy. Neither did the religious houses of that period resemble the popish convents

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<sup>86</sup> For interesting details, see “*The Church History of Scotland from the commencement of the Christian era to the present time*” by the Rev. John Cunningham, minister of Crieff. A. and C. Black Edinburgh. 1859.

of later times. Still they had travelled far away from the simplicity of apostolic Christianity.

The word of God was not their only guide. Christianity had not existed in the world six hundred years without contracting many corruptions. It had passed through many events of very great importance in the history of the church. Gnosticism, Monasticism, Arianism, and Pelagianism, were giant evils in those early days; but Monasticism was the popular institution at the close of the sixth century.

### **THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A MONK SUPERIOR**

A proficient in the mystic piety of that day was believed to work miracles, utter prophecies, and enjoy divine visions. He was surrounded with such a fearful sanctity, that none dared to touch the man of God. He emerged from his miserable cell as from another world, himself and his garments covered with dust and ashes; he boldly rebuked the vices of kings, confronted the most cruel of tyrants, threatened the overthrow of dynasties, and assumed the lofty tone of superiority over all secular dignities.

Such was **Columbanus**. With a colony of monks he sailed from Ireland about the year 590. He had intended to preach the gospel beyond the Frankish dominions; but he landed in Gaul. The fame of his piety reached the ears of Guntram, king of Burgundy, who invited him to settle in that country. Declining the king's offer, the abbot requested permission to retire into some unapproachable wilderness. He established himself in the Vosges. For a time the missionaries had to endure great hardships. They had often for days no other food than wild herbs, the bark of trees, and probably fish from the stream. But by degrees they made a favourable impression on the people of the neighbourhood. All classes looked on them with reverence. Provisions were sent to them, especially by those who were desirous of profiting by the prayers of these holy men. The supply was described as miraculous. The piety and wonder-working powers of the abbot soon gathered numbers around him. Monasteries arose in different places, and votaries flocked in to fill them.

Columbanus presided as abbot over all these institutions. His rule was probably that of the Irish Bangor. Although his delight was ever to wander in the wild woods, or to dwell for days in his lonely cave, he still exercised strict superintendence over all the monasteries which he had formed. Work, diet, reading, time for prayer, and the adjustment of punishment, were all ruled by himself. He at length fell into disputes with his neighbours as to the time of keeping Easter. He wrote on the subject to Pope Gregory and to Boniface, and placed the church of Jerusalem above that of Rome, as being the place of the Lord's resurrection. He laboured also in Metz, Switzerland, and Italy; after founding many monasteries, he died in Rome A.D. 610.

The most celebrated follower of the great abbot was his countryman St. **Gall**, who had accompanied him in all his fortunes, but being ill when his master

passed through Italy, he could not follow him, and was left in Helvetia. He afterwards preached to the people in their own language, founded the famous monastery which bears his name, and is honoured as the apostle of Switzerland. He died about the year 627. From the time of St. Patrick until the middle of the twelfth century the church in Ireland continued to assert its independence of Rome, and to maintain its position as an active living branch of the church, not owning any earthly head.<sup>87</sup> We will now turn to Scotland.

## THE FIRST PREACHERS OF CHRISTIANITY IN SCOTLAND

About a hundred and fifty years before the famous Columba landed on the isle of Iona, **St. Ninian**, “a most holy man of the British nation,” as Bede calls him, preached the gospel in the southern districts of Scotland. This missionary like almost all the saints of early times, is declared to have been of royal blood. He received his education at Rome studied under the famous Martin of Tours, and, returning to Scotland, fixed his principal residence in Galloway.

If his biographers can be trusted, we are to believe that he went everywhere preaching the word, and that the naked savages listened, wondered, and were converted. “He hastened about the work to which he had been sent by the Spirit, under the command of Christ, and being received in his country, there was a great concourse and running together of the people, much joy in all, wonderful devotion the praise of Christ everywhere resounded; some took him for a prophet. Presently the strenuous husbandman entered the field of his Lord, began to root up those things which were badly planted, to disperse those badly collected, and destroy those badly built.” Thousands, it is said, were baptised and joined the army of the faithful.

He began to build a church of stone on the shores of the Solway, but, before it was finished, he received intelligence of the death of his friend and patron St. Martin, and piously dedicated the church to his honour. This is said to have been the **first stone building** erected in Scotland, and, from its white and glittering appearance compared with the log and mud cabins hitherto used, it attracted great attention. It was called in Saxon, *whithern*, or *whithorn*, from its appearance and so it is till the present day.<sup>88</sup>

We know nothing of the immediate successors of St Ninian: down to the mission of Columba the history of Christianity in Scotland is little known. Doubtless the Lord would keep alive the fire which He had kindled, and preserve and spread the truth of the gospel which had been received by so many. Among the **Picts**, south of the **Grampians**, **Ninian** appears to have laboured chiefly and successfully, but with the celebrated Columba begins the most interesting period in the ancient ecclesiastical annals of Scotland.

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<sup>87</sup> Gardner's *Faiths of the World*, vol. 1, p. 150.

<sup>88</sup> Cunningham, vol. 1, p. 52.

We have already seen Columba and his colony of monks settling down in Iona. There he built his monastery, such as it was. And so famous did the college of Iona become, that it was considered for many years, nay, for centuries, the light of the Western world. Men, eminent for learning and piety, were sent forth to found bishoprics and universities in every quarter of Europe. For thirty-four years Columba lived and laboured on that solitary rock. Occasionally he visited the mainland, doing the work of an evangelist among the barbarous **Scots and Picts**, planting churches, and exercising an immense influence over all classes; but his great object was training men for the work of the gospel at home and abroad. A close and friendly connection would, no doubt, be maintained between the North of Ireland and the West of Scotland; indeed, at that time they were considered as identical and were known by the general appellation of Scots.

### **THE IONA MISSIONARIES**

About the close of the sixth, or the beginning of the seventh century, missionaries began to issue from the cloisters of Iona, carrying the light of Christianity not merely to the different parts of Scotland, but to England and the continent. Augustine and his Italian monks landed in **Kent** a little before the famous Aidan from Iona and his monks entered Northumberland. Thus was Saxon England invaded by christian missionaries at its two extremities.

**Oswald**, then king of Northumbria, was a Christian. He had been converted, baptised, and received into the communion of the Scottish Church when a youth and an exile in that country. On recovering the throne of his ancestors he naturally desired that his people should be brought to the knowledge of the Saviour. At his request the elders of Iona sent him a missionary band, headed by the pious and faithful Aidan. The king assigned them the island of **Lindisfarne** for their residence. Here Aidan established the system of Iona; and the community lived according to monastic rule. Numbers gathered to the new monastery both from Scotland and Ireland. The king himself zealously assisted in spreading the gospel: sometimes in preaching, and sometimes acting as an interpreter, having learnt Celtic during his exile. Bede, though strongly Roman in his affections, bears hearty testimony to the virtues of these Northern clergy — “Their zeal, their gentleness, their humility and simplicity, their earnest study of scripture, their freedom from all selfishness and avarice, their honest boldness in dealing with the great, their tenderness and charity towards the poor, their strict and self-denying life.”<sup>89</sup>

The work of conversion appears to have prospered in the hands of both Augustine and Aidan. The Italian monks extended their teaching and influence over the south and south-west of the kingdom, while the Scottish monks spread the truth of a clearer and simpler gospel over the northern, eastern, and midland provinces. At one time the sees of York, Durham, Lichfield and

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<sup>89</sup> J.C. Robertson, vol. 2, p. 62.

London, were filled by Scotchmen. Thus Rome and Iona met on English ground, a collision was inevitable; who would be master? Augustine, who had been consecrated primate of England by the pope, required the Celtic monks to conform to the Roman discipline: this they stedfastly refused to do, and defended with great firmness their own discipline and the rules of Iona. Serious disputes now arose. Rome could submit to no rival she was determined to hold England in her grasp.

After the death of the pious and generous Oswald, the throne was filled by his brother **Oswy**, who also had been converted to Christianity and baptised in Scotland during his captivity. But his princess adhered to the customs of Rome, and the family followed the mother. A strong influence was thus brought to bear against the Scottish monks; and wearied with the continual taunts and the unscrupulous conduct of the pontiff's agents, both sacred and secular, the unyielding presbyters determined to leave England and return to Iona. By far the largest and most important part of the country had been converted to Christianity by means of their labours; but the triumph of Rome at the Whitby conference in 664, through the subtlety of the priest Wilfred, so discouraged them that they quietly withdrew from the field after occupation of about thirty years. "However holy thy Columba may have been," said the crafty Wilfred, "wilt thou prefer him to the prince of the apostles, to whom Christ said, *Thou art Peter, and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven?*" **King Oswy** was present, and professed obedience to St. Peter, Lest, he said, when I appear at the gate of heaven, there should be no one to open it to me. The people soon followed their prince, and in a short time all England became subservient to Rome. But neither arguments, intimidation, nor derision, had any effect on the presbyters of the North. They refused to acknowledge that they owed any allegiance to the bishop of Rome. Scotland was still free. How to enslave her was now the great question with the Romanists. The priests, as usual, set to work with the princes. It was accomplished in this way: —

### **THE CLERICAL TONSURE**

Amongst the many subjects of dispute between the **Celtic** and **Italian** missionaries, the true day for the celebration of Easter, and the true form of the clerical tonsure, excited the fiercest controversies, stirred up the strongest passions, and ultimately led to the fall of the Church in Scotland, and the triumph of the priests of Rome. But, having already spoken of the Easter question in connection with the council of Nice, we will only now notice the dispute about the tonsure.

It must appear strange to our youthful protestant readers, who may never have seen a catholic priest with his hat off, that the shaving of his crown was of more weight in his ordination than either his learning or his piety. And the mere form in which it was shaven was considered of such importance that it was made a test of orthodoxy. The Scottish monks followed the churches of

the East both in the observance of Easter and in the form of the tonsure. They shaved the fore part of the head from ear to ear in the form of a crescent. The Easterns claimed John and Polycarp as their example and authority. The Italians professed to be greatly shocked by such barbarity, and called it the tonsure of **Simon Magus**. The Roman clergy used the circular form. This was done by making bald a small round spot on the very crown of the head, and enlarging the spot as the ecclesiastic advanced in holy orders. The tonsure was made requisite as a preparation for orders about the fifth or sixth century.

Augustine and his successors in the see of Canterbury, following the writings of the most ancient and venerable Fathers, affirmed that the tonsure was first introduced by the prince of the apostles, in honour of the crown of thorns which was pressed upon the head of the Redeemer; and that the instrument devised by the impiety of the Jews for the ignominy and torture of Christ may be worn by His apostles as their ornament and glory. For more than a century the controversy raged with great fierceness. So far did matters proceed, that a man was or was not a heretic according as he made bare the crown or the fore part of his head. Rome was filled with anger; human means appeared insufficient to conquer a miserable band of presbyters in a remote corner of the island. They refused to bend before her. What was to be done? As always, finding herself unable to accomplish her object by the priest, she had recourse to court favourites, nobles, and princes. Naitam, king of the Picts, was made to believe, that by submitting to the pope he would be equal to Clovis and Clotaire. Flattered by such greatness of future glory, he recommended all the clergy of his kingdom to receive the **tonsure of St. Peter**. Then without delay he sent agents and letters into every province, and caused all the monasteries and monks to receive the circular tonsure according to the Roman fashion. Some refused. The elders of the rock held out for a time; but the orders of the king, the example of the clergy, and the weakness of some amongst themselves led the way to the downfall of Iona and all Scotland. About the beginning of the eighth century the razor was introduced, they received the Latin tonsure, they became serfs of Rome, and continued so until the period of the Reformation.<sup>90</sup>

### WHO WERE THE CULDEES?

The **Culdees**, as their name imports, were a kind of religious recluses, who lived in retired places. The christian community of Iona was called *Culdees*. And this is probably the reason why that isolated spot was fixed upon by Columba as the seat of his monastery. Though utterly free from the corruptions of the great monasteries on the continent, the life and institutions of Columba were strictly monastic. And from fragments gathered up it appears pretty certain, that “they gloried in their miracles, paid respect to relics, performed penances, fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays, had something

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<sup>90</sup> D’Aubigné, vol. 5, p. 77. Cunningham, vol. 1, p. 90.

very like to auricular confession, absolution, and masses for the dead; but it is certain they never submitted to the decrees of the papacy in regard to celibacy.” Many of the Culdees were married men. St. Patrick was the son of a deacon and the grandson of a priest.<sup>91</sup>

But though these good and holy men were so far infected by the superstition of the times; the remoteness of their situation, the simplicity of their manners, and the poverty of their country must have greatly preserved them from Roman influences, and from the prevalent vices of more opulent monasteries. We would rather think of it as a seminary, in which men were trained for the work of the ministry. In after years the monks were frequently disturbed, and sometimes slaughtered by pirates. In the twelfth century Iona passed into the possession of Roman monks. “Its pure and primitive faith,” says Cunningham, “had departed; its renown for piety and learning was gone; but the memory of these survived, and it was now regarded with greater superstitious reverence than ever. Long before this it had been made the burial-place of royalty, numerous pilgrimages were made to it, and now kings and chiefs began to enrich it with donations of tithes and lands. The walls which are now crumbling were then reared; and the voyager beholds these venerable ecclesiastical remains rising from a bare moor in the midst of a wide ocean, with feelings akin to those with which he regards the temples of Thebes standing half buried amid the sands of the desert.”

We will now take our leave for a while of the British Isles. The first planting of the cross in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the ultimate triumph of Rome in these countries are events of the deepest interest in themselves; but as happening in our own country they are entitled to our special attention. From this time little outward change takes place in the history of the church, though there may have been many internal struggles from the numerous abuses and the audacious demands of Rome.

### **THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY IN GERMANY AND PARTS ADJACENT**

It is more than probable that the cross had been planted, at an early period, in the heart of the German forests, as well as in those cities and districts which were in subjection to the Roman Empire. The names of several bishops from Germany are found in the lists of the councils of Rome and Arles held under the authority of Constantine in the years 313, 314. But it was not till the close of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century, that it was widely spread and firmly rooted. The Britons, Scots, and Irish were honoured of God as the principal instruments in this great and blessed work. The ardent Columbanus, whose mission we have already noticed, was the leader of the earliest band who went to the help of the heathen on the continent of Europe. He first crossed over into France, then passed the Rhine, and laboured for the

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<sup>91</sup> Cunningham, vol. 1, p. 94.

conversion of the Swabians, Bavarians, Franks, and other nations of Germany. **St. Kilian**, a Scotchman, and a most devoted evangelist, followed him. He is regarded as the apostle of Franconia, and honoured as a martyr for his christian faithfulness about the year 692. *Willibrord*, an English missionary with eleven of his countrymen, crossed over to Holland to labour among the **Frieslanders**; but like other Anglo-Saxons of the period, he was warmly devoted to the Roman See. He was ordained bishop of Witteburg by the pope; his associates spread the gospel through Westphalia and the neighbouring countries.

But the man who brought the nations of Germany like a flock of sheep under the shepherd of Rome, was the famous **Winfred**. He was born at Crediton in Devonshire, of a noble and wealthy family, about the year 680. He entered a monastery in Exeter at the age of seven, and was afterwards removed to Nursling in Hampshire. Here he became famous for his ability as a preacher, and as an expositor of scripture. He felt called of God in early life to go abroad as a missionary to the heathen. He sailed to Frisia in the year 716. His labours were long and abundant. Three times he visited Rome and received great honours from the pope. Under the title of **St. Boniface**, and as the apostle of Germany, he died as a martyr at the age of sixty-five. But though he was a most successful missionary, a man of great strength of character, of great learning, and of saintly life, he was the sworn vassal of the pope, and sought rather the advancement of the church of Rome than the extension of the gospel of Christ.<sup>92</sup>

### **THE GREAT PAPAL SCHEME OF AGGRANDISEMENT**

The diffusion of Christianity in this century far exceeded its former bounds both in the Eastern and Western countries. We have seen something of its triumphs in the West. In the East the Nestorians are said to have laboured with incredible industry and perseverance to propagate the truth of the gospel in Persia, Syria, India, and among the barbarous and savage nations inhabiting the deserts and the remotest shores of **Asia**. In particular, the vast empire of China was illumined by their zeal and industry with the light of Christianity. During several succeeding centuries, the patriarch of the Nestorians sent out a bishop to preside over the churches then in China. These interesting people reject image worship, auricular confession, the doctrine of purgatory, and many other corrupt doctrines of the Roman and Greek churches.

The Eastern or Greek church appears to have been hindered by internal dissensions from caring much for the spread of Christianity among the heathen. In the West all was activity, but alas! not for the spread of the gospel, or the conversion of souls.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> For particulars see Hardwicke's *Middle Ages*; J.C. Robertson, vol. 2, p. 95.

<sup>93</sup> Mosheim, vol. 2, p. 29.

## THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD OF THE PAPACY

We now return to Rome. Her importance and influence as a centre, claim our closest attention for a little. The spiritual dominions of the pope were now extended far and wide. From all parts of the empire bishops, princes, and people looked to Rome as the parent of their faith, and the highest authority in Christendom. But, though thus exalted to the highest spiritual sovereignty, the supreme pontiff, in his relation to the eastern empire, was still a subject. This was unbearable to the pride and ambition of Rome. The mighty struggle for political life and power now commenced. It lasted during the whole course of the seventh and eighth centuries. This was the period of transition from a state of subordination to the civil power to that of political self-existence. How this could be accomplished was now the great problem which the Vatican had to solve. But the spiritual dominion could not be maintained without secular power.

The **Lombards** — the nearest and most dreaded neighbours of the popes — and the Greek empire were the two great obstacles in the way of the pope's temporal sovereignty. The downfall of the western empire, and the absence of any truly national government, left the Roman people to look to the bishop as their natural chief. He was thus invested with a special political influence, distinct from his ecclesiastical character. The invasions of the Lombards, as we have already seen, and the feebleness of the Greeks, contributed to the increase of political power in the hands of the pontiffs. But this was only accidental, or the necessity of unforeseen emergencies. The Roman states were still governed by an officer of the eastern empire and the pope himself, if he offended the Emperor, was liable to be seized and thrown into prison, as was actually the case with Pope St. Martin in the year 653, who died in exile the following year.

## THE ONE GRAND OBJECT OF THE PAPACY

Every day it became more and more manifest, that there could be no solid peace for Rome, no sure foundation for the spiritual supremacy already achieved, but in the total overthrow both of the Greek and Lombard powers in Italy, and the appropriation of their spoils by the holy See. This was now the one grand object of the successors of St. Peter, and the battle they had to fight. But like the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite it must be possessed by fair means or foul. Jezebel plots, and the death of Naboth is accomplished. The history of the Lombard kings, and of the great Iconoclastic controversy, during the seventh and eighth centuries, throws much light on the means used to gain this end; but of these we can only say a word as we pass along, and must refer our readers to the general histories.<sup>94</sup>

“There is abundant historical ground to believe,” says Greenwood, “that this object had by this time shaped itself very distinctly in the mind of the papacy:

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<sup>94</sup> See especially Greenwood's *Cathedra Petri*.

the territory of its religious enemy, the Emperor, must be definitively annexed to the patrimony of St. Peter, together with as much more extensive a territorial estate as opportunity might bring within its grasp. But there remained the arduous and apparently hopeless task of wresting these prospective acquisitions from the hands of the Lombard enemy. And, in fact, the whole course of the papal policy was thenceforward directed to the accomplishment of this single object.”

## PEPIN AND CHARLEMAGNE

A.D. 741-814

The eyes of the popes had for some time been turned to France as the quarter from which deliverance was to come. The Frankish nation had been catholic from the beginning of their Christianity; but a closer connection with Rome had been lately formed by means of **St. Boniface**, the English monk. Filled as he was with the reverence of his nation for St. Peter and his successors, he exerted all his influence among the bishops of France and Germany, to extend the authority of the Roman See. This prepared the way for the solution of the great problem now in hand.

**Pepin**, who was high steward or mayor of the palace to Childeric III, King of the Franks, had long exercised all the powers of the State together with all the attributes of sovereignty excepting the title; he thought that the time was now come to put an end to the pageant royalty of his master, and assume the kingly name and honours. He possessed in full measure all the qualities which the nobility and people were accustomed to respect at that period in princes. He was a gallant warrior and an experienced statesman. By a brilliant series of successes he had greatly extended the dominion of the Franks. The poor king being destitute of such abilities sank in popular favour, and was surnamed the Stupid. Pepin, however, had the wisdom to proceed cautiously at this stage of his plans. Boniface, who played an important part in this matter, was secretly dispatched to Rome to **prepare the** pope for Pepin’s message, and with instructions how to answer it. In the meantime he assembled the states of the realm to deliberate on the subject. The nobles gave it as their opinion, that first of all the pontiff should be consulted, whether it would be lawful to do what the mayor desired. Accordingly two confidential ecclesiastics were sent to Rome to propose the following question to Pope Zachary “*Whether the divine law did not permit a valiant and warlike people to dethrone an imbecile and indolent monarch, who was incapable of discharging any of the functions of royalty, and to substitute in his place one more worthy of rule, and one who had already rendered most important service to the state?*” The laconic answer of the pope already in possession of all the secrets — was prompt and favourable. “*He who lawfully possesses the royal power may also lawfully assume the royal title.*”

The pope no doubt replied as his questioners desired. Pepin now felt secure of his prize. Fortified by the approval of the highest ecclesiastical authority, and assured of the acquiescence of the people, he boldly assumed the royal title. He was crowned by Boniface, in the presence of the assembled nobles and prelates of the realm, at Soissons, A.D. 752. But the religious character of the coronation marked the growing power of the clergy. The Jewish ceremony of anointing was introduced by Boniface to sanctify the usurper; and the bishops stood around the throne as of equal rank with the armed nobles. According to the usage of the Franks, Pepin was elevated on the shield, amid the acclamations of the people, and proclaimed king of the Franks. Childeric, the last of the Merovingian kings, was stripped of royalty without opposition, shorn of his long hair, tonsured, and shut up in a monastery.

### **ZACHARY'S SANCTION OF PEPIN'S PLOT**

The part which Boniface and his patron the pope had in this revolution, and the morality of the proceedings, have been the subjects of much controversy. Papal writers have been at some pains to exonerate the unscrupulous priests, and protestant writers to criminate them. But if we compare their conduct with the principles of the New Testament, there can be no controversy. Every right principle and feeling, both human and divine, was readily sacrificed to secure the alliance of Pepin against the Greeks and Lombards. The violation of the sacred rights of kings, the great law of hereditary succession, the rebellious ambition of a servant, the degradation of a lawful sovereign, absolving subjects from their allegiance, are here sanctioned by the papacy as right in the sight of God, provided they are the means of raising the pope to temporal sovereignty. Such was the daring wickedness and awful blasphemy of the Roman See in the middle of the eighth century. Let the student of church history note this occurrence as characteristic of the papacy, and as a precedent for its future pretensions. It is generally related as the first instance of the pope's interference with the rights of princes and the allegiance of subjects. But the successors of Zachary made ample use of the precedent in after years. They asserted that the kings of France, from this time, held their crown only by the authority of the pope, and that the papal sanction was their only legal title. Little did either Pepin or Zachary foresee the immense effects of this one negotiation on the history of the church and the world. It was the first great step towards the future kingdom of the bishop of Rome — the important link in the chain of events.

### **THE TEMPORAL SOVEREIGNTY OF THE PAPACY ESTABLISHED**

By a mutual exchange of good offices, in less than three years Pepin crossed the Alps at the head of a numerous army, overthrew the Lombards, and recovered the Italian territory which they had wrested from the Eastern empire. Justice would indeed have demanded that it should be returned to the Emperor to whom it belonged; or he might have retained it for himself. But

he did neither. Mindful of his obligation to the holy See, he replied, that he had not gone to battle for the sake of any man, but for the sake of St. Peter alone, and to obtain the forgiveness of his sins. He then transferred the sovereignty over the provinces in question to the bishop of Rome. This was the foundation of the whole temporal dominion of the popes.

**Astolph**, king of the Lombards, having sworn to Pepin that he would restore to St. Peter the towns which he had seized, the French troops were withdrawn. But the magnificent “*donation*,” so far as the pope was concerned, was only on paper. He had not been put into actual possession of the ceded territories, neither had he the means of putting himself in possession of the royal gift. No sooner, therefore, had the Frankish king recrossed the Alps than Astolph refused to fulfil his engagements. He collected his scattered divisions, and resumed his attacks upon the scattered territories of the church. He wasted the country up to the very walls of Rome, and laid siege to the city. The pope, incensed as much at the evasive conduct of Pepin as at the perfidy of the Lombards, sent messages to his Frankish protectors in all haste by sea, for every way by land was closed by the enemy. His first letter reminded King Pepin, that he hazarded eternal condemnation if he did not complete the *donation* which he had vowed to St. Peter. A second letter followed, more pathetic, more persuasive. Still the Franks were tardy. And finally the pope wrote a third, as from St. Peter himself. The daring and assumption of this letter is so awful, that we give it entire as a specimen of the means used by the pope to terrify the barbarians into the **protection of the Holy See and the** advancement of her dominions. He considered all means justifiable for such high purposes. Thus it reads:

“I, Peter the apostle, protest, admonish, and conjure you, the most Christian kings, Pepin, Charles and Carloman, with all the hierarchy, bishops, abbots, priests and all monks; all judges, dukes, counts, and the whole people of the Franks. The mother of God likewise adjures you, and admonishes and commands you, she as well as the thrones and dominions and all the host of heaven, to save the beloved city of Rome from the detested Lombards. If ye hearken, I, Peter the apostle, promise you my protection in this life and in the next, will prepare for you the most glorious mansions in heaven, and will bestow on you the everlasting joys of paradise. Make common cause with my people of Rome, and I will grant whatever ye may pray for. I conjure you not to yield up this city to be lacerated and tormented by the Lombards, lest your own souls be lacerated and tormented in hell with the devil and his pestilential angels. Of all nations under heaven the Franks are highest in the esteem of St. Peter; to me you owe all your victories. Obey, and obey speedily; and, by my suffrage, our Lord Jesus Christ will give you in this life length of days,

security, victory, in the life to come, will multiply His blessings upon you, among His saints and angels.”<sup>95</sup>

## **THE FORESHADOWING OF THE MAN OF SIN**

Nothing could give us a more expressive idea of the fearful apostasy of the church of Rome than this letter. The one title to eternal life is obedience to the pope; the highest duty of man is the protection and enlargement of the holy See. But where is Christ? where are His claims? where is Christianity? In place of seeking to convert the barbarians and win their souls for Christ, the Lord’s most holy name, and the name of the apostle are prostituted to the basest of purposes. The soldier that fights hardest for the Roman See, though destitute of every moral and religious qualification, is assured of great temporal advantages in this present life, and in the life to come the highest seat in heaven. Surely we have here the mystery of iniquity, and the foreshadowing of that man of sin, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God — even of him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders. (2 Thess. 2: 3-12)

Pepin soon had his Franks in marching order. The threatenings and promises of St. Peter’s letter had the desired effect. They again invaded Italy. Astolph yielded at once to the demands of Pepin. The contested territory was abandoned. Ambassadors from the East were present at the conclusion of the treaty, and demanded the restitution of Ravenna and its territory to their master, the Emperor; but Pepin declared that his sole object in the war was to show his veneration for St. Peter; and he bestowed by the right of conquest the whole upon his successors. The representatives of the pope now passed through the land, receiving the homage of the authorities and the keys of the cities. But the territory he accepted from a foreign potentate in the form of a *donation* belonged to his acknowledged master, the Eastern Emperor. He had hired for a large sum, which he took care to make payable in heaven, a powerful stranger to rob his lawful sovereign for his own advantage, and without shame or hesitation he accepted the plunder. The French king may be dethroned and humbled by his servant, and the Greek Emperor may be robbed and defied by his priest, if the church be thereby aggrandised. Such has ever been the policy of Rome.

But the munificent donation of Pepin — who died in the year 768 — awaited the confirmation of his son, **Charlemagne**. In the year 774, when the Lombards once more threatened the Roman territories, the aid of France was implored. Charlemagne proceeded to their help. He arrived in Rome on

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<sup>95</sup> For an able description of this important period, see Milman’s *Latin Christianity*, vol. 2, p. 243.

Easter-eve. The Romans, we are told, received the king with unbounded demonstrations of joy. Thirty thousand citizens went forth to meet him; the whole body of the clergy with crosses and banners; the children of the schools, who bore branches of palm and olive, and hailed him with hymns of welcome. He dismounted, and proceeded on foot towards St. Peter's church where the pope and all the clergy were in waiting. The king devoutly kissed each step of the stairs, and, on reaching the landing kissed the Pope, and entered the building holding his right hand. He spent the eve of Easter in devout exercises and prayers. But when the king's heart was warm and tender, pope Hadrian opened the subject of a *new deed of donation* to the holy See. Charlemagne now greatly enlarged the donation which Pepin had made to the church, confirmed it by an oath, and solemnly laid the deed of gift on the apostle's tomb. After the conclusion of the Easter solemnities, he took his leave of the pontiff, and rejoined his army. His arms were victorious everywhere; nor did he pause till he had entirely and finally subverted the empire of the Lombards, and proclaimed himself *King of Italy*.

### THE TERRITORIAL DONATION OF CHARLEMAGNE

The actual extent of his donation is very difficult to ascertain. But it seems to be the general opinion of the historians, that it included not only the exarchate of Ravenna, but the dukedoms of Spoleto and Benevento, Venetia, Istria, and other territories in the north of Italy — in short, almost the whole peninsula with the island of Corsica. Every Naboth was robbed of his vineyard, and his blood shed, for the gratification of Jezebel's ambition, and for the establishment of her throne of iniquity. But mark the consummation and seal of all wickedness in the way that the pope sought to reconcile his character as **vicar** of Christ, with his new position. As all men are subject to Christ, he reasoned, so likewise are they subject to His vicar and representative on earth in all that appertains to His kingdom. But that kingdom extends over all, therefore nothing belonging to this world or its affairs can be above or beyond the jurisdiction of St. Peter's chair. Our kingdom is not of this world; it is, like that of Christ, in all, above all, over all. According to this theory, no amount of temporal dominion was to be regarded as inconsistent with the Saviour's declaration respecting the nature of His kingdom. On this impious assumption thenceforward, the popes ever acted. Hence their interference with priest and people, king and subject, land and sea, all over the world.

Charlemagne visited Rome again in 781, and a third time in 787, and on each occasion the church was enriched by gifts, bestowed, as he professed in the language of the age, "for the good of his soul." Overwhelmed with gratitude, and fully conscious of his own need of a permanent defender, the pope crowned Charlemagne on the Christmas-eve of the year 800 with the crown of the Western empire, and proclaimed him Caesar Augustus. A Frankish prince, a Teuton, was thus declared the successor of the Caesars, and wielded all the power of the Emperor of the West. "The empire of Charlemagne," says Milman, "was almost commensurate with Latin Christendom; England

was the only large territory which acknowledged the ecclesiastical supremacy of Rome, not in subjection to the new Western empire.”<sup>96</sup> This event forms the great epoch in the annals of Roman Christendom.

We must now leave the West for a time, and turn our attention to another great religious revolution which suddenly and unexpectedly sprang up in the East — Mahometanism.

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<sup>96</sup> See Milman, vol. 2. Greenwood, vol. 2.

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 15

### MAHOMET, THE FALSE PROPHET OF ARABIA

It has been with much interest, that we have traced the steady progress and subduing power of Christianity throughout the whole of Europe, during the seventh and eighth centuries, though in its Latin or Roman dress. The name of Jesus was spread abroad, and God could use the sweet savour of that name for blessing, in spite of the rigid formularies of Rome which everywhere surrounded it. But all these conquests of the gospel, through the management of the pope and the influence of his missionaries, became the conquests of the Roman See. How far her spiritual dominion might have extended, and how great her power might have become had she met with no formidable opposition, it would be impossible to imagine. But God permitted an enemy to arise, who not only arrested the progress of Romanism on all sides but more than once made the pontiff himself tremble for his safety even in the chair of St. Peter. This was **Mahomet**, the impostor of Arabia.

The beginning of the seventh century — the time when this remarkable man appeared — was peculiarly favourable for the accomplishment of his great object. Almost the whole world was mad after idols. The prevailing religion of his own country was grossly idolatrous. There were 360 idols in the temple of Mecca, which was the precise number of days in the Arab year. Paganism with its numberless false gods, still covered a large portion of the earth; and even Christianity alas! had become extensively idolatrous both in the Greek and Roman churches. It was at this moment that Mahomet appeared before the world as a stern and austere monotheist. He felt himself called to restore the fundamental doctrine of the divine Unity to its due prominence in the religious belief of mankind. But the very ideas of incarnation, of redemption, of a Redeemer, of relationship and communion with God — the pervading influences of a holy love — have no place in the prophet's system. The yawning gulf that separates between God and the sinner is left impassable by the religion of Mahomet. But, before speaking of his system, we will briefly glance at his family and youth.

### THE FAMILY AND YOUTH OF MAHOMET

According to Arabian tradition, he was of the noble family of the Koreish. That tribe, the Koreishite, at the time of Mahomet's birth (which is generally placed about the year 569) was a kind of hierarchy exercising religious supremacy, and the acknowledged guardians of the Caaba, the sacred stone of **Mecca**, with its temple. His father died soon after his birth, and his mother when he was very young; so that he was left an orphan and destitute. Other

male members of his family having died, the governorship of Mecca, and the keys of the Caaba, passed into the hands of another branch of the family. Little is known of the first twenty-five years of his life, save that he engaged in mercantile pursuits, and was so successful and honourable in his dealings that he received the title of the *Amin*, or faithful. At the age of twenty-eight he married a widow of his kindred, possessed of great wealth.—Twelve years after his marriage — in his fortieth year — the prophet began to listen to the intimations of his future mission. The misfortunes of his family and how to recover its ancient dignity and power may have been at first in his mind. According to a custom which was common among his countrymen, he withdrew every year to a cave in a mountain, and spent some time in religious solitude. It was in one of these caves, according to his own account, that he received his first communication from heaven, or rather, as we believe, from the dark abyss. He was, however, gradually wrought up to a belief that he was especially called of God to be an instrument for the destruction of idolatry and for the propagation of the true faith. His oracles, which he professed to receive direct from heaven by the angel Gabriel, are preserved in **the Koran**, and regarded by the faithful as the word of God.

### THE RELIGION OF ISLAM

The new religion thus announced was Islam — a word which means *submission* or *resignation* to the will of God. His doctrine was summed up in his own aphorism, “There is no God but the true God, and Mahomet is his prophet.” The six main articles in the theoretical faith of Islam were: 1, belief in God, 2, in His angels, 3, in His scriptures; 4, in His prophets; 5 in the resurrection and day of judgment; 6, in predestination. The practical part of the prophet’s creed was equally unobjectionable, according to the prevalent thoughts of religious observance at the time. It embraces four great precepts: 1, prayers and purification; 2, alms; 3, fasting; 4, the pilgrimage to Mecca, which was held to be so essential that any one who died without performing it might as well have died a Jew or a Christian.

The only really new and startling article in the religion of Islam was the divine mission of Mahomet as the apostle and prophet of God. But in these fair appearances the craft of Satan is most manifest. Such simple and elementary religious principles would do violence to none, but deceive many. History clearly proves that his opinions changed with his success, and that his violence and intolerance increased with his power, until it became a religion of the sword, of rapine, and of sensuality. “He is a gentle preacher,” says Milman, “until he has unsheathed his sword.” The sword once unsheathed is the remorseless argument. At one time we find the broad principle of Eastern toleration explicitly avowed: diversity of religion is ascribed to the direct ordinance, and all share in the equal favour, of God. But the Koran gradually recants all these gentler sentences, and assumes the language of insulting superiority or undisguised aversion. But, although the Koran has many points of resemblance both to Judaism and Christianity, it is thought that Mahomet

was not acquainted with either the Old or the New Testament — that he rather drew his materials from **Talmudical legends**, from **spurious Gospels**, and other heretical writings, mixed with the old traditions of Arabia.

The first converts which Mahomet gained over to his new religion were among his friends and near relations, but the work of conversion proceeded very slowly. At the end of three years his followers only numbered fourteen. Not content with his progress, he resolved to make a public declaration of his religion. He first called upon his own family to recognise him as a prophet of God, and, having been accepted as the prophet of his family, he then aspired to be the prophet of his tribe. But his demands were refused by the Koreishites, his pretensions disbelieved, and himself and his followers persecuted.

### **MAHOMET'S TRIUMPHANT ENTRY INTO MEDINA**

Hitherto he had endeavoured to spread his opinions by persuasion only, but the people were obstinate and superstitious, and threatened the prophet with martyrdom. He was obliged to flee from his native city **Mecca**, the central spot of the commerce and of the religion of Arabia, and the hoped for centre of his new spiritual empire. He fled to **Medina** where he was received as a prince. Some of its most distinguished citizens had embraced his cause; a party had been already formed in his favour. His flight, A.D. 622, is regarded as the great era in the prophet's life, and as the foundation of the Mahometan chronology. Now that he was possessed of a force, he was charged by a fresh revelation to use it for the propagation of the faith. The character of his heavenly revelations was now changed, they became fierce and sanguinary. His mouth was filled, like the prophets of Ahab, with a lying spirit.

In a few years, after some fighting between the rival cities and the followers of the rival religions, the strength of the prophet so increased, that in 630 he gained possession of Mecca. He cleansed the Caaba of its 360 idols, and erected it into the great sanctuary of Islam. From that time Mecca became the centre of his system; the whole population swore allegiance; all the tribes of Arabia were now under his dominion and in the profession of his religion.

### **MECCA THE CAPITAL OF ISLAM**

Mahomet was now lord of Mecca. The unity of God was proclaimed and his own prophetic mission from the highest pinnacle of the **Mosque**. The idols were broken to pieces. The old system of idolatry sank before the fear of his arms and the outward simplicity of his new creed. The next important step in the policy of the prophet was to secure the absolute religious unity of all Arabia. By this means the old hereditary feuds of the tribes and races disappeared, and all were turned into one united religious army against the infidels. War was now declared against all forms of unbelief, which was especially a declaration of war against Christendom, and an expressed determination to propagate Mahometanism by the power of his sword.

Mahomet is now an independent sovereign. Arabia, delivered from idols, embraces the religion of Islam. But, though the prophet is now a temporal prince and a successful warrior, he neglects not the duties of a priest. He constantly led the devotions of his followers, offered up the public prayers, and preached at the weekly festivals on the Fridays. He blasphemously assumed to be prophet, priest, and king. The mixture, the delusion, is the inspiration of hell; it is like the masterpiece of Satan, issuing from the realm of darkness. The fanaticism of his followers was urged on by the inducements of plunder, and the gratification of every evil passion. The appropriation of all female captives was recognised as one of the laws of war, and the reward held out to valour. The maxims inculcated on all the faithful were such as, "One drop of blood shed in the cause of God, or one night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months' employment in fasting and prayer. Whosoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven; at the day of judgment his wounds shall be resplendent as vermilion and odoriferous as musk: and the loss of his limbs shall be supplied by the wings of angels and cherubim." The war cry of the intrepid Khaled was, "Fight on, fight on and fear not! Paradise, paradise, is under the shadow of your swords! Hell with its fires is behind him who flies from battle, paradise is open to him who falls in battle." Thus animated, the Moslem armies were fired with enthusiasm; and, thirsting for the spoils of victory here and a sensual paradise hereafter, they rushed fearlessly into battle.

The foundation of the Arabian empire was now laid. Mahomet summoned, not only the petty potentates of the neighbouring kingdoms, but the two great powers of the more civilised world, the king of Persia and the Emperor of the East, to submit to his religious supremacy. Heraclius is said to have received the communication with respect, but Chosroes, the Persian, contemptuously tore the letter to pieces: the prophet, on hearing of the act, exclaimed, "It is thus that God will tear the kingdom, and reject the supplications of Chosroes." And so it happened; the kingdom of Persia was reduced in a short time by the Mahometan arms to a few scattered communities. But though the circle of Islam was widening, the centre was passing away. Having followed his eldest son to the grave with tears and sighs, the prophet made his farewell pilgrimage to Mecca, and died in the year 632, and in the sixty-fourth year of his age. It would appear that he was untouched by remorse on his death-bed; but the blood he had shed, and the multitudes he had beguiled, would follow him to the judgment-seat.

The evil mission of the false prophet was fulfilled. He had organised the most terrible confederacy the world ever saw. In the short space of ten years he planted in the East a religion which has taken root so firmly, that amid all the revolutions and changes of twelve centuries it still exercises a powerful controlling influence over the minds and consciences of more than a *hundred millions* of human beings.

## THE SUCCESSORS OF MAHOMET

After the death of the prophet, war was declared against mankind by his successors, the **Caliphs**. The chief of these were, Abou Beker, the wise; Omar, the faithful; Ali, the brave; Khaled, the sword of God. These were the oldest companions and relatives of the prophet. In a few months after his death these generals were followed by the swarms of the desert, and overran the plains of Asia. The history of these wars, though deeply affecting the progress of Christianity, lies not within the sphere of our "Short Papers." But as many nations and multitudes of the Lord's people were the victims of this fearful scourge, it fairly claims a brief consideration. Many believe that the **Saracen locusts** were a partial fulfilment of Revelation 9: 1-12.

The persecuting heathen, such as Chosroes the infidel and defiant king of Persia, and the merely nominal professors of Christianity, were alike chastised of God by the successors of Mahomet; but the proud bishops and priests were the especial objects of their vengeance. "Destroy not fruit-tree nor fertile field in your path," said the Caliphs; "be just, and spare the feelings of the vanquished. Respect all religious persons who live in hermitages or convents, and spare their edifices. But should you meet with a class of unbelievers of a different kind, who go about with shaven crowns and belong to the synagogue of Satan, be sure you cleave their skulls, unless they embrace the true faith or render tribute." And so the mighty horde moved on with an enthusiasm which nothing could check. "Syria fell; Persia and Egypt fell; and many other countries yielded to their power." Many great cities, such as Jerusalem, Bozrah, Antioch, Damascus, Alexandria, Cyrene, and Carthage, fell into their hands. They also invaded India, assailed Europe, overran Spain, and advanced even to the banks of the Loire; but there they were defeated and driven back by Charles Martel in the year 732. We would only further notice their treatment of the vanquished in the case of Jerusalem.

In the year 637 Jerusalem fell into the hands of the **Caliph Omar**, who built a mosque on the site of the temple. The whole people of that guilty city were degraded into a marked and abject caste by the haughty conqueror. Everywhere they were to honour the Mussulmans, and give place before them. Christianity was subjected to the ignominy of toleration; the cross was no longer to be exhibited on the outside of the churches, the bells were to be silent; the Christians were to bewail their dead in secrecy; the sight of the devout Mussulman was not to be offended by the symbols of Christianity in any way; and his person was to be considered sacred, so that it was a crime in a Christian to strike a Mussulman.

Such was the condition to which the christian inhabitants of Jerusalem fell at once, and in which they remained undisturbed by any serious aggression of the Christians till the time of the crusades. Nearly the same terms, we may believe, were enforced on all the Christians in Syria. Thus did God in His holy providence deal with many nations both in the East and in the West that

were thickly peopled with Jews and Christians, and doom millions to a long night of servitude under Mahometanism which continues to this day.<sup>97</sup>

## REFLECTIONS ON MAHOMETANISM AND ROMANISM

Having brought down our history, both civil and ecclesiastical, to the close of the eighth century, we may pause for a moment and reflect on what we have seen, where we are, and what we have to expect. We have watched the growth of **the Roman See** in the West, and how she gained the summit of her ambition. We have also seen the rise of a great antagonistic power in the East, inferior only in the extent of its religious and social influence to Christianity itself. The first sprang up gradually in the very centre of enlightened Christendom, the latter arose suddenly in an obscure district of a savage desert. But what, it may be asked, is the moral lesson to be drawn from the character and results of these two great powers? Both have been permitted by God, and, if we rightly judge, have been permitted by Him as a divine judgment on Christendom for its apostasy, and on the heathen for their idolatry. On the one hand, the war-cry was raised against all who refused faith or tribute to the creed and to the armies of the Caliphs; on the other hand, a more merciless war-cry was raised against all who refused to believe in the Virgin and the saints, their visions and miracles, their relics and images, according to the intolerant demands of idolatrous Rome. The Eastern churches had been weakened and wasted from the days of Origen by a Platonic philosophy, in the form of a metaphysical theology, which caused continual dissension. In the West controversy had been greatly avoided: *power* was the object there. Rome had aspired, for centuries, to the dominion of Christendom — of the world. Both were judicially dealt with by God in the fiery deluge from Arabia; but **Mahometanism** remains as the mighty scourge of God in the East, and Romanism in the West.

## MONOTHELITES, ICONOCLASM

While the Arabs under Abou Beker and Omar were overrunning the Greek countries, and wresting province after province from the empire, the Emperor contented himself by sending out armies to repel them, and remained in his capital for the discussion of theological questions. From the conclusion of his successful wars with Persia, religion had become almost the exclusive object of his solicitude. Two great controversies were at that moment agitating the whole of the christian world. The first of these, the so-called **Monothelite** controversy, may be described generally as a revival, under a somewhat different form, of the old Monophysite, or Eutychian, heresy. Under the general name of *Monophysites* are comprehended the four main branches of separatists from the Eastern church, namely, the Syrian Jacobites, the Copts, the Abyssinians, and the Armenians. The originator of

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<sup>97</sup> See Milman's *Latin Christianity*, vol. 2, p. 4-52; James White's *Eighteen Christian Centuries*, p. 143.

this numerous and powerful christian community was Eutyches, abbot of a convent of monks at Constantinople in the fifth century. The Monophysites denied the distinction of the two natures in Christ; the Monothelites, on the other hand, denied the distinction of the will, divine and human, in the blessed Lord. A well-meant but unsuccessful attempt was made by the Emperor Heraclius to reconcile the Monophysites to the Greek church. But as the sound of controversy is seldom heard among the Eastern sectaries after this period, and as a detailed account of their disputes would possess no interest to our readers, we leave them on the pages of ecclesiastical history.<sup>98</sup>

**Iconoclasm**, or the **Image-breaking** storm, claims a fuller consideration. It went to the heart of Christendom as no other controversy had ever done before; and it forms an important epoch in the history of the Roman See. Jezebel now appears in her true colours, and, from this time onward, her evil character is indelibly stamped on the papacy. The popes who then filled the chair of St. Peter openly defended and justified image-worship. This was surely the beginning of the popedom — the maturity of the God-dishonouring system. The foundations of popery were laid bare, and it was thus seen that persecution and idolatry were the two pillars on which her arrogant dominion rested.

### **THE FIRST VISIBLE OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN VENERATION**

For more than three hundred years after the first publication of the gospel there is good reason to believe, that neither images nor any other visible objects of religious reverence were admitted into the public service of the churches, or adopted into the exercises of private devotion. Probably such a thing had never been thought of by Christians before the days of Constantine; and we can only regard it as an early fruit of the union of Church and State. Up till this period the great protest of Christians was against the idolatry of the heathen: for this they suffered unto death. And it is not a little remarkable, that the Empress Helena, Constantine's mother, was the first to excite the christian mind to this degrading superstition. She is said, in her zeal for religious places, to have discovered and disinterred the wood of the "**true cross.**" This was enough for the enemy's purpose. The predilection of human nature for objects of veneration was kindled; the flame spread rapidly; and the usual consequence — idolatry — followed.

Similar memorials of the Saviour, the Virgin Mary, the inspired Apostles, and the Fathers, were found. The most sacred relics that had been concealed for centuries were now discovered by visions. So great, so successful, was the delusion of the enemy, that the whole church fell into the snare. From the age of Constantine till the epoch of the Arab invasion, a veneration for images, pictures and relics gradually increased. The reverence for *relics* was more

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<sup>98</sup> For full details of the different sects, see Marsden's *Dictionary of Christian Churches and Sects*, and Gardner's *Faiths of the World*.

characteristic of the Western, and that for *images* of the Eastern churches; but from the time of Gregory the Great the feeling of the West became more favourable to images. In consequence of the almost total decay of literature, both among the clergy and the laity, the use of images was found to give immense power to the priesthood. Pictures, statues, and visible representations of sacred objects became the readiest mode of conveying instruction, encouraging devotion, and strengthening religious sentiments in the minds of the people. The more intellectual or enlightened of the clergy might endeavour to maintain the distinction between respect for images as a *means* and not as *objects* of worship. But the indiscriminating devotion of the vulgar utterly disregards these subtleties. The apologist may draw fine distinctions between images as objects of reverence and as objects of adoration, but there can be no doubt that with ignorant and superstitious minds the use, the reverence, the worship of images, whether in pictures or statues, invariably degenerates into idolatry.

Before the close of the sixth century idolatry was firmly established in the Eastern church, and during the seventh century it made a gradual and very general progress in the West where it had previously gained some footing. It became usual to fall down before images, to pray to them, to kiss them, to adorn them with gems and precious metals, to lay the hand on them in swearing, and even to employ them as sponsors at baptism.

## LEO ATTEMPTS THE ABOLITION OF IMAGE-WORSHIP

### ABOUT A.D. 726

The **Emperor Leo III**, surnamed Isauricus, a prince of great abilities, had the boldness to undertake, in the face of so many difficulties, to purify the church of its detestable idols. As the writings of the unsuccessful party were carefully suppressed or destroyed, history is silent as to the Emperor's motives: but we are disposed to believe that the new creed and the success of Mahomet greatly influenced Leo. Besides, there was a very general feeling among Christians in the East, that it was the increasing idolatry of the church that had brought down upon them the chastisement of God by the Mahometan invasion. The Christians were constantly hearing from both Jews and Mahometans the odious name of idolaters. The great controversy evidently arose out of these circumstances.

Leo ascended the throne of the East in the year 717; and, after securing the empire against foreign enemies, he began to concern himself with the affairs of religion. He vainly thought that he could change and improve the religion of his subjects by his own imperial command. About the year 726 he issued an edict against the *superstitious use* of images — not their destruction. We cannot suppose that the Isaurian was actuated by the fear of the true God in this, but rather that his motives were purely selfish. Being head of the empire and still ostensibly head of the church, he no doubt thought that by his edicts

he could accomplish the total and simultaneous abolition of idolatry throughout the empire, and establish an ecclesiastical autocracy. But Leo had greatly overrated his temporal power in spiritual matters. The time was past for imperial edicts to change the religion of the empire. He had yet to learn, to his deep mortification, the disdainful, insolent, haughty pride and power of the pontiffs, and the religious attachment of the people to their images.

The first edict merely interdicted the *worship* of images, and commanded them to be removed to such a height that they could not be touched or kissed. But the moment that the impious hand of the Emperor touched the idols, the excitement was immense and universal. The proscription affected all classes: learned and unlearned, priest and peasant, monk and soldier, clergyman and layman, men, women, and even children, were involved in this new agitation. The effect of the edict immediately occasioned a civil war both in the East and in the West. The monkish influence was especially strong. They set up a pretender to the throne, armed the multitude, and appeared in an ill-equipped fleet before Constantinople. But the Greek fire discomfited the disorderly assailants; the leaders were taken and put to death. Leo, provoked by the resistance which his edict had met with, issued a second and more stringent decree. He now commanded the *destruction* of all images, and the whitewashing of walls on which such things had been painted.

### THE SECOND EDICT PUBLISHED

Sweeping as the second edict was, the imperial officers, it is said, went even beyond their orders. The most sacred statues and pictures were everywhere ruthlessly broken, torn to pieces, or publicly committed to the flames under the eyes of the enraged worshippers. “Heedless of danger and death,” says Greenwood, “men, women, and even children rushed to the defence of objects as dear to them as life itself. They attacked and slew the imperial officers engaged in the work of destruction; the latter, supported by the regular troops, retaliated with equal ferocity; and the streets of the metropolis exhibited such a scene of outrage and slaughter as can only proceed from envenomed religious passions. The leaders of the tumult were for the most part put to death on the spot; the prisons were filled to repletion; and multitudes, after suffering various corporal punishments, were transported to places of penal banishment.”<sup>99</sup>

The populace was now excited to fury; even the presence of the Emperor did not overawe them. An imperial officer had orders to destroy a statue of the Saviour, which stood over the Brazen Gate of the imperial palace, and was known by the name of the **Surety**. This image was renowned for its miracles, and was held in great veneration by the people. Crowds of women gathered about the place and eagerly entreated the soldier to spare their favourite. But he mounted the ladder, and with his axe struck the face which they had so

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<sup>99</sup> Greenwood's *Cathedra Petri*, vol. 3, p. 474.

often gazed upon, and which, they thought, benignly looked down upon them. Heaven interfered not, as they expected; but the women seized the ladder, threw down the impious officer, and tore him to pieces. The Emperor sent an armed guard to suppress the tumult; the mob joined the women, and a frightful massacre took place. “The Surety” was taken down, and its place was filled with an inscription in which the Emperor gave vent to his enmity against images.<sup>100</sup>

The execution of the imperial orders was everywhere resisted, both in the capital and the provinces; the popular enthusiasm was so great that it could only be quelled by the strongest efforts of the civil and military power. Passions were kindled on both sides which had their natural issue in the most daring rebellion and the most violent persecution.

### **THE POPE REJECTS THE EDICTS OF LEO**

The intelligence of the first assault of Leo against the images of Constantinople filled the Italians with grief and indignation; but when the orders arrived to put the fatal decrees in force within the Italian dependencies of the empire, all rose to arms from the greatest to the least. The pope refused to obey orders and defied the Emperor; and all the people swore to live and die in the defence of the pope and the holy images. But the political complication of matters at that moment made it impossible for the Emperor to enforce his edicts in the papal dominions. Gregory addressed the Emperor in the most haughty strain; the tone of his reply to the imperial manifesto breathes a spirit of the most seditious defiance. The monks, who saw their craft in danger — the superstition to which they owed their riches and influence, preached against the Emperor as an abandoned apostate. He was painted by these slaves of idolatry as one who combined in himself every heresy that had ever polluted the Christian faith and endangered the souls of men. But as exhibiting the true spirit of popery, both in the defence of their darling superstition, idolatry, and in their defiance of temporal power, we will transcribe parts of the original epistles of the second and third Gregory, leaving the reader to examine the portrait.

**Pope Gregory II** says to the Emperor, “During ten pure and fortunate years, we have tasted the annual comforts of your royal letters, subscribed in purple ink with your own hand, the sacred pledges of your attachment to the orthodox creed of your fathers. How deplorable is the change! how tremendous the scandal! You now accuse the catholics of idolatry; and, by the accusation, you betray your own impiety and ignorance. To this ignorance we are compelled to adapt the grossness of our style and arguments: the first elements of holy letters are sufficient for your confusion; and, were you to enter a grammar school, and avow yourself the enemy of our worship, the simple and pious children would cast their tablets at your head.”

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<sup>100</sup> J. C. Robertson, vol. 2, p. 83; Milman, vol. 2, p. 156.

After this disloyal and offensive salutation, the pope attempts in the usual way the defence of image-worship. He endeavours to prove to Leo the vast difference between christian images and the idols of antiquity. The latter were the fanciful representation of demons, the former are the genuine likeness of Christ, His mother, and His saints. He then appeals in justification of their worship to the decorations of the Jewish temple; the mercy-seat, the cherubim, and the various ornaments made by Bezaleel to the glory of God. Only the idols of the Gentiles, he affirms, were forbidden by the Jewish law. He denies that the catholics worship wood and stone: these are memorials only, intended to awaken pious feelings.

In speaking of his own edification from beholding the pictures and images in the churches, we have a passage of great historical interest as showing the usual subjects of these paintings. “The miraculous portrait of Christ sent to Abgarus, king of Edessa; the paintings of the Lord’s miracles; the virgin mother, with the infant Jesus on her breast, surrounded by choirs of angels; the last supper; the raising of Lazarus, the miracles of giving sight to the blind; the curing the paralytic and the leper; the feeding of the multitudes in the desert; the transfiguration; the crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the sacrifice of Isaac.”<sup>101</sup>

Gregory enters at length into the common arguments in behalf of images, and reproaches the Emperor with his breach of the most solemn engagements, and then breaks out in a contemptuous tone, such as, “You demand a council: revoke your edicts, cease to destroy images; a council will not be needed. You assault us, O tyrant, with a carnal and military band: unarmed and naked, we can only implore the Christ, the prince of the heavenly host, that He will send unto you a devil for the destruction of your body and the salvation of your soul. You declare, with foolish arrogance, I will dispatch my orders to Rome, I will break in pieces the image of St. Peter; and Gregory, like his predecessor Martin, shall be transported in chains, and in exile, to the foot of the imperial throne. Would to God that I might be permitted to tread in the footsteps of the holy Martin; but may the fate of **Constans** serve as a warning to the persecutors of the church. But it is our duty to live for the edification and support of the faithful people; nor are we reduced to risk our safety on the event of a combat. Incapable as you are of defending your Roman subjects, the maritime situation of the city may perhaps expose it to your depredations; but we have only to retire to the first fortress of the Lombards, and then you may as well pursue the winds. Are you ignorant that the popes are the bond of union, the mediators of peace between the East and the West? The eyes of the nations are fixed on our humility; and they revere, as a God upon earth, the apostle St. Peter, whose image you threaten to destroy.”

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<sup>101</sup> Milman’s *Latin Christianity*, vol. 2, p. 160.

The conclusion of the pope's letter evidently refers to his new allies beyond the Alps. The Franks had dutifully listened to the papal recommendation of Boniface, the apostle of Germany. Secret negotiations were already begun to secure their assistance. The history and results of these we have, in a previous paper, examined. Hence the pope assured his royal correspondent, that "the remote and interior kingdoms of the West present their homage to Christ and His vicegerent: and we now prepare to visit one of their most powerful monarchs, who desires to receive from our hands the sacrament of baptism. The barbarians have submitted to the yoke of the gospel, while you alone are deaf to the voice of the Shepherd. These pious barbarians are kindled into rage, they thirst to avenge the persecutions of the East. Abandon your rash and fatal enterprise; reflect, tremble, and repent. If you persist, we are innocent of the blood that will be spilt in the contest; may it fall on your head."<sup>102</sup>

### **A LYING SPIRIT IN THE MOUTH OF POKERY**

After carefully reading these ancient epistles, it is impossible to believe that Gregory could have been so ignorant as to state so many things to Leo in favour of image-worship that were positively false: we are more inclined to believe that he knew them to be untrue, but counted on the ignorance of the Emperor. "You say," continued Gregory, "that we are forbidden to venerate things made by men's hands. But you are an unlettered person, and ought therefore to have inquired of your learned prelates the true meaning of the commandment. If you had not been obstinately and wilfully ignorant, you would have learned from them that your acts are in direct contradiction to the unanimous testimony of all the fathers and doctors of the church, and in particular repugnant to the authority of the six general councils." So glaringly false are these statements, that we can only wonder how any one could have had the effrontery to write them as true, especially the highest ecclesiastic in Christendom. But it proves that there has been from the beginning a lying spirit in the mouth of popery, as there was in the prophets of Baal. (1 Kings 22:23) Even Greenwood says, "In none of the general councils does a word about images or image-worship occur. The statement as to the unanimous testimony of the fathers is equally at fault. Excepting in the works of Gregory the Great, I have not met with any mention of the practice of image-worship in the fathers of the first six centuries of the christian era."<sup>103</sup>

But the lying spirit goes on to say, that the visible appearance of Christ in the flesh made such an impression on the minds of the disciples, that "no sooner had they cast their eyes upon Him than they hastened to make portraits of Him, and carried them about with them, exhibiting them to the whole world, that at the sight of them men might be converted from the worship of Satan to the service of Christ, — but so only that they should worship them, not with

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<sup>102</sup> See Greenwood's *Cathedra Petri*, vol. 3.

<sup>103</sup> Greenwood, vol. 3, p. 476.

an absolute adoration, but only with a relative veneration.” In like manner the pope assured Leo, that “pictures and images had been taken of **James**, the Lord’s brother, of **Stephen**, and all other saints of note. And so having done, he dispersed them over every part of the earth, to the manifest increase of the gospel cause.”

By a strange perversion or confusion of scriptural facts, the pope compares the Emperor with “the impious Uzziah who,” he tells him, “sacrilegiously removed the brazen serpent, which Moses had set up, and broke it in pieces.” Here we may give the pope the benefit of ignorance. He was less likely to know his Bible than the six general councils. He seems to have had some confused recollection of the story of Uzza, whom the Lord smote, because he put forth his hand to stay the ark when the oxen stumbled, and of the act of Hezekiah, who broke in pieces the brazen serpent expressly to prevent the people from paying divine homage to it. (1 Chron. 13:9, 2 Kings 18:4) “Uzziah,” he says, though it was really Hezekiah — “Uzziah truly was your brother, as self-willed, and, like you, daring to offer violence to the priests of God.” It might now be asked, what would the children of our schools say to the pope who mistook the good king Hezekiah for a wicked king, and his destroying the brazen serpent for an act of impiety? As well might we expect them to throw their tablets at Gregory’s, as at Leo’s head. But enough has been said on this point to show the reader what has been the spirit and character of popery from its very foundation. It has ever been a barefaced, lying, idolatrous system, though countless numbers of God’s saints have been in it during its darkest periods. The saving Name of Jesus has ever been maintained amidst its grossest absurdities and idolatries, and whosoever believes in that Name shall surely be saved. The finger of faith that touches but His garment’s hem, though pressed through a throne of idolaters, opens the everlasting springs of all healing virtue, and the very fountain of disease is immediately dried up. And whatever the press or throne may be He will look round to see the one that touched Him by faith, and speak peace to the troubled soul. (Mark 5: 25-34)

### **CLOSE OF ICONOCLASM**

Gregory did not long survive his epistles. In the following year he was succeeded by a third pope of the same name. **Gregory III** was also zealous in the cause of images, he laboured to increase the popular veneration for them. In Rome he set the example of image-worship on the most splendid scale. A solemn council was convoked, consisting of all the bishops of the Lombard and Byzantine territories in Northern Italy to the number of ninety-three. The assembly was held in the actual presence of the sacred relics of the apostle Peter, and was attended by the whole body of the city clergy, the consuls, and a vast concourse of people; and a decree was framed, unanimously adopted and signed by all present, to the effect that, “If *any person* should hereafter, in contempt of the ancient and faithful customs of all Christians, and of the apostolic church in particular, stand forth as a

destroyer, defamer, or blasphemer of the sacred images of our God and Lord Jesus Christ, and of His mother, the immaculate ever-Virgin Mary, of the blessed apostles, and all other saints, he be excluded from the body and blood of the Lord, and from the communion of the universal church.”<sup>104</sup>

Leo, indignant at the pope’s audacity, arrested his messengers, and resolved to fit out a numerous fleet and army to reduce Italy into better subjection. But this Greek Armada encountered a terrible storm in the Adriatic, the fleet was disabled, and Leo was compelled to postpone his designs for enforcing the execution of his edicts against images in the Italian dependencies of the empire. He indemnified himself, however, by confiscating the papal revenues in Sicily, Calabria, and other parts of his dominions, and transferring Greece and Illyricum from the Roman patriarchate to that of Constantinople. But here, with both, the scene closes, but not the contest. Gregory and Leo both died in 741. The Emperor was succeeded by his son Constantine, whose reign extended to the unusual length of thirty-four years. Gregory was succeeded by **Zachary** a man of great ability, and deeply imbued with the spirit of popery. To the end of his reign, Constantine was unrelenting in his enmity against the worshippers of images. He is blamed for great cruelty towards the monks, but he was no doubt provoked to the last degree by their violent and fanatical behaviour.

**Irene**, wife to the son and heir of Constantine, an ambitious, intriguing, haughty princess, seized the government on the death of her feeble husband, in the name of her son, who was only ten years old. She dissembled for a time her designs for the restoration of images. Policy and idolatry took counsel together in her heart. She was jealous, crafty and cruel. Her history is the record of inward hatred and treachery with an outward appearance of courtesy. But we have only to do with the religious part of her reign.

## **THE SECOND COUNCIL OF NICAEA**

Decrees were issued for a council to be held at Nicaea — a city, hallowed by the sittings of the first great council of Christendom — to decide the question of **image-worship**. The number of ecclesiastics present was about 350. Her chosen men took the lead; everything was, no doubt, pre-arranged. Among the preliminary acts of the council, it was debated to what class of heretics the Iconoclasts were to be ascribed. **Tarasius**, president of the assembly, asserted that it was worse than the worst heresy, being an absolute denial of Christ. The whole proceedings of the council were characterized by the same condemnatory tone towards the adversaries of image-worship. After assenting to the decrees of the first six councils, and to the anathemas against the heretics denounced therein, they passed — acting, as they declared, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit — the following canon:

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<sup>104</sup> *Cathedra Petri*, vol. 3, p. 480.

“With the venerable and life-giving cross shall be set up the venerable and holy images, whether in colours, in mosaic work, or any other material, within the consecrated churches of God, on the sacred vessels and vestments, on the walls and on tablets, in houses and in highways. The images, that is to say, of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, of the immaculate mother of God; of the honoured angels; of all saints and holy men — these images shall be treated as holy memorials, worshipped, kissed, only without that peculiar adoration which is reserved for the Invisible, Incomprehensible, God. All who shall violate this, as is asserted, immemorial tradition of the church, and endeavour, forcibly or by craft to remove any image, if ecclesiastics, are to be deposed and excommunicated; if monks or laymen, to be excommunicated.”

The council was not content with this formal and solemn subscription. With one voice they broke out into a long acclamation. “We all believe, we all assert, we all subscribe. This is the faith of the apostles, this is the faith of the church, this is the faith of the orthodox, this is the faith of all the world. We who adore the Trinity worship images. Whoever do not the like, anathema upon them! Anathema on all who call images idols! Anathema on all who communicate with those who do not worship images... Everlasting glory to the orthodox Romans, to John of Damascus! To Gregory of Rome, everlasting glory! Everlasting glory to all the preachers of truth!”

### **HELENA AND IRENE**

Thus ended the most critical question that had ever been raised since Christianity became the religion of the Roman world. By the seventh general council idolatry was formally and vehemently established as the worship of **the great papal system**, and anathemas were denounced against all who should dare to depart from it. Hence the merciless persecution of so-called separatists. But it is worthy of note, as according with our view of Jezebel’s character, that a woman was the first mover in the worship of images, and a woman was the restorer of images when they had been cast down. Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great, was a blameless and devout woman, but she was used of the enemy to introduce exciting relics and sacred memorials which changed Christianity from a purely spiritual worship to that paganising form of religion which grew up with such rapidity in the succeeding centuries. The crafty Irene was again used of Satan to restore and re-establish the worship of images. From that day to this both the Greek and Latin churches have adhered to that form of worship, and maintained the sanctity of their images and pictures.

The *political* results of the Iconoclastic controversy were equally great and important. Rome now burst the bonds of her connection with the East, separating herself for ever from the Byzantine empire; and Greek Christianity from this time becomes a separate religion, and the empire a separate state. The West, receiving a great accession of power through this revolution,

ultimately created its own empire, formed alliances with the Frankish kings, and placed the crown of the Western empire on the head of Charlemagne, as we have already seen.

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 16

### THE SILVER LINE OF SOVEREIGN GRACE

**The papal monarchy** is now established. The court of France and the papacy are united. Rome is now dis severed from the East, and become the centre of influence over all the West. But having traced the dark lines of the apostasy of Latin Christianity from the beginning of the fourth to the beginning of the ninth century, we will now turn for a little and endeavour to trace the *silver line* of God's sovereign grace in those who separated from her communion during the same period. If Satan was active in corrupting the outward church, God was active in gathering out His own from the corrupt mass, and strengthening them as His own special witnesses. From the days of Augustine, the noble witness for His grace against Pelagianism in Western Christendom, down to the Reformation, a line of faithful witnesses may be traced who testified against the idolatry and tyranny of Rome, and preached salvation through faith in Christ Jesus without works of merit.<sup>105</sup> Besides multitudes who were nourished in private, both in convents and families, on the simple truth of the gospel, we would briefly notice some of the most prominent who form an important link in the great chain of witnesses, especially as connected with the history of the church in Europe.

### THE NESTORIANS AND THE PAULICIANS

The rise of the Nestorians in the fifth century and their great missionary zeal have been already mentioned. At their head stood a bishop, known by the title of *Patriarch of Babylon*. His residence was originally at Seleucia. From Persia, it is said, they carried the gospel to the North, the East, and the South. In the sixth century they preached the gospel with great success to the Huns, the Indians, the Medes, and the Elamites: on the coast of Malabar, and the isles of the ocean, great numbers were converted. Following the course of trade, the missionaries made their way from India to China, and penetrated across the deserts to its northern frontier. In 1625 a stone was discovered by the Jesuits near Singapore, which bears a long inscription, partly Syriac and partly Chinese, recording the names of missionaries who had laboured in China, and the history of Christianity in that country from the year 636-781. But the propagation of Christianity, it is thought, awakened the jealousy of the State, and, after witnessing the success of the gospel, and experiencing persecution, they probably were exterminated, or fled, about the close of the eighth century. The Nestorians were patronised by some of the Persian kings, and under the reign of the caliphs they were protected and prospered greatly.

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<sup>105</sup> See E.B. Elliott's *Hora Apocalyptica*, vol. 2, p. 219.

They assumed the designation of Chaldean Christians, or Assyrians, and still exist under that name.<sup>106</sup>

The doctrines, character, and history of the **Paulicians** have been subjects of great controversy; but they have not been allowed to speak for themselves to posterity. Their writings were carefully destroyed by the catholics, and they are known to us only through the reports of bitter enemies who brand them as heretics, and as the ancestors of the protestant reformers. On the other hand, some protestant writers accept the pedigree, and assert that they were the maintainers of a purely scriptural Christianity, which may have appeared to the papacy as heretical. This latter circumstance, from what we have already shown, will be easily believed. The most grievous corruptions, both in the doctrine and the worship of the catholic church, had been not only admitted, but enforced, long before the rise of the Paulicians. Neither the spirit nor the simplicity of the gospel remained; hence, scriptural Christianity must have appeared to the image-worshippers as a heresy.

Passing over many individual names from the time of St. Augustine, who were worthy witnesses of the truth, we will come at once and inquire into

## **THE ORIGIN OF THE PAULICIANS**

**A.D. 653**

**The Gnostics**, who had been so numerous and powerful during the early days of Christianity, were now an obscure remnant, chiefly confined to the villages along the borders of the Euphrates. They had been driven by the all-powerful catholics from the capitals of the East and the West, and the remains of their different sects passed under the general and odious name of the **Manicheans**.

In this region, at the village of Mananalis, near Samosata, lived about the year 653 one Constantine, who is described by the Roman writers as descended from a Manichean family. Soon after the Saracens' conquest of Syria, an **Armenian** deacon, who was returning from captivity among the Saracens, became the guest of Constantine. In acknowledgement of his hospitality the deacon made him a present of a manuscript, containing the four Gospels and the fourteen Epistles of St. Paul. This was indeed a rare gift, as the scriptures were already concealed from the laity. The study of these sacred books produced a complete revolution in his religious principles, and in the whole subsequent course of his life. Some say he had been trained in Gnosticism, others, that he was a member of the Greek established church; but, however this may have been, those books now became his only study and the rule of his faith and practice.

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<sup>106</sup> See *Faiths of the World*, vol. 2, p. 527; J.C. Robertson, vol. 2, p. 163.

Constantine now thought of forming a new sect, or rather, of restoring apostolic Christianity. He renounced and cast away his Manichean books, say his enemies; he abjured Manicheism, and made it a law to his followers not to read any other books whatsoever, but the Gospels and the epistles of the New Testament. This may have given their enemies a pretext for charging them with rejecting the Old Testament and the two Epistles of St. Peter. But it is more than probable that they did not possess these portions of the word of God. It is to be feared however, from their peculiar attachment and devotion to the writings and character of St. Paul, that other scriptures were neglected.

It is generally agreed that the word *Paulician* is formed from the name of the great apostle of the Gentiles. His fellow-labourers, **Silvanus, Timothy, Titus, Tychicus**, were represented by Constantine and his disciples; and their congregations, as they sprang up in different places, were called after the names of the apostolic churches. It is difficult to see, in this “innocent allegory,” as it has been termed, how the catholics could have been so grievously offended with the Paulicians, or could have found a pretext for hunting them down with fire and sword. Yet so they did, as we shall presently see. Their unpardonable sin was their separation from the State church; their testimony against superstition and apostasy; their reviving the memory of a pure primitive Christianity.

### **SILVANUS AT CIBOSSA**

Constantine, who styled himself *Silvanus*, addressed his first appeals to the inhabitants of a place called Cibossa in Armenia, whom he styled *Macedonians*. “I am Silvanus,” he said “you are Macedonians.” There he fixed his residence and laboured with untiring energy for nearly thirty years; he made many converts, both from the Catholic Church, and the Zoroastrian religion. At length, the sect having become sufficiently considerable to attract attention, the matter was reported to the Emperor, and an edict was issued A.D. 684 against Constantine and the Paulician congregations. The execution of the decree was entrusted to an officer of the imperial court, named Simeon. He had orders to put the teacher to death, and to distribute his followers among the clergy and in monasteries, with a view to their being reclaimed. The government, no doubt, ordered as directed by the church; as in the case of Ahab, “whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.” (1 Kings 21:25) But the Lord is above all, and He can make the wrath of man to praise Him.

Simeon placed Constantine — the chief object of the priests' revenge — before a large number of his companions, and commanded them to stone him. They refused, and, instead of obeying, all dropped the stones with which they were armed, excepting one young man; and Constantine was killed by a stone from the hand of that heartless youth — his own adopted son Justus. This ungrateful apostate has been extolled by the enemies of the Paulicians, as another David who with a stone slew another Goliath — the giant of heresy. But from the stoning of Constantine, as from the stoning of Stephen, a new

leader was raised up in the person of his imperial murderer. Impressions were made on Simeon's mind by what he had seen and heard that he could not shake off. He entered into conversation with some of the sectaries, and the result was that he became their convert. He returned to the imperial court, but after spending three years at Constantinople in great uneasiness of mind, he fled, leaving all his property behind him, and took up his abode at Cibossa, where, under the name of *Titus*, he became the successor of Constantine Sylvanus.

About five years after the martyrdom of Constantine the same renegade Justus betrayed the Paulicians. He knew, like the traitor of old, the habits and movements of the community, and also where he would be rewarded for his treachery. He went to the bishop of Colonia, and reported the revival and spread of the so-called heresy. The bishop communicated his information to the Emperor Justinian II, and, in consequence, Simeon, and a large number of his followers were burnt to death in one large funeral pile. The cruel Justinian vainly thought to extinguish the name and memory of the Paulicians in a single conflagration, but the blood of the martyrs seemed only to multiply their numbers and strength. A succession of teachers and congregations arose from their ashes. The new sect spread over all the adjacent regions, Asia Minor, Pontus, the borders of Armenia and to the westward of the Euphrates. They bore, during many successive reigns, with christian patience, the intolerant wrath of the rulers through the instigation of the priests. But the prize for cruelty, as one observes, must doubtless be awarded to the sanguinary devotion of Theodora, who restored the images to the Oriental church.

## **ANOTHER JEZEBEL IN POWER**

**A.D. 842**

After the death of the Emperor Theophilus, **Theodora** his widow governed as regent during the minority of her son. Her concealed attachment to idolatry was well known to the priesthood, and no sooner was Theophilus dead than she applied herself to the complete accomplishment of her great object. When the way was clear, a solemn festival was appointed for the restoration of images. "The whole clergy of Constantinople, and all who could flock in from the neighbourhood, met in and before the palace of the archbishop, and marched in procession with crosses, torches, and incense, to the church of St. Sophia. There they were met by the Empress and her infant son Michael. They made the circuit of the church, with their burning torches, paying homage to every statue and picture, which had been carefully restored, never again to be effaced till the days of later, more terrible Iconoclasts, the Ottoman Turks."<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> *Latin Christianity*, vol. 2, p. 202.

After so triumphant a re-establishment of images, the victorious party no doubt thought the right time was come to propose and endeavour to secure another triumph; they now urged the Empress to undertake the entire suppression of the Paulicians. They had preached against images, relics, and the rotten wood of the cross. They were not fit to live. The catholics gained their object! An edict was issued under the regency of Theodora, which decreed that the Paulicians should be exterminated by fire and sword, or brought back to the Greek church. But they refused all attempts which were made to gain them, and the fiery demon of persecution was let loose among them. Her inquisitors explored the cities and mountains of the lesser Asia, and executed their commission in the most cruel manner. The numbers of the sect, and the severity of the persecution, may be judged by the multitudes who were slain by the sword, beheaded, drowned, or consumed in the flames. It is affirmed by both civil and ecclesiastical historians, that, in a short reign, *one hundred thousand* Paulicians were put to death. Was there ever a more genuine daughter of Jezebel? She had not even an Ahab to stir up to do this cruel work, but with her own hand, as it were — alas! a woman’s hand — by her own decree, she slaughtered *one hundred thousand* of God’s saints,<sup>108</sup> re-established the worship of idols, and nourished with royal favour the idolatrous priests of Rome.

The history of Iconoclasm has been remarkable for female influence. Helena was the first to suggest and encourage veneration for relics; Irene was the restorer of image-worship when threatened with destruction; and now Theodora not only re-establishes the idolatry which her husband had endeavoured to suppress, but persecutes the true worshippers. Surely that woman Jezebel — symbol of the dominant church in the dark ages — has her antitype in these three women, especially the last two. The likeness is too striking to be questioned. But the whole system of Catholicism breathes the fearful spirit, and is characterised by the dark features of Jezebel’s character. The word of the Lord cannot be broken. “There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom *Jezebel his wife stirred up.*” This is the type. The antitype is, “I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest *that woman Jezebel*, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.” (1 Kings 21:25; Rev. 2:20, 21)

### **ROME’S ADMIRATION OF THEODORA’S CONDUCT**

**Nicolas I**, who became pope of Rome in 858, highly commends, by letter, the conduct of the superstitious and cruel Theodora. He especially admires and approves her implicit obedience to the Roman see. “She resolved,” he says, “to bring the Paulicians to the true faith, or cut them all off root and branch.

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<sup>108</sup> We do not mean to affirm that all who were slain by Theodora as Paulicians were true Christians. We cannot judge the heart; but they professed to be and willingly died as martyrs.

Pursuant to that resolution, she sent noblemen and magistrates into the different provinces of the empire; and by them some of those unhappy wretches were crucified, some put to the sword, and some thrown into the sea and drowned.” Nicolas at the same time observes, that the heretics, experiencing in her all the resolution and vigour of a man, could scarcely believe her to be a woman. Indeed the blinding power of an idolatrous superstition had changed in Theodora (as it did in our queen, “the bloody Mary”) the tender and compassionate heart of a woman into that of a merciless and blood-thirsty tyrant. From the pope’s own words, it is perfectly evident that the Roman See had chiefly to do with the slaughter of the Paulicians. After telling her that the heretics dreaded, and at the same time admired, her resolution and steadiness in maintaining the purity of the catholic faith, he adds, “*and why so, but because you followed the directions of the Apostolic See?*”<sup>109</sup>

It is difficult to believe that the professed vicar of Christ, and the shepherd of His sheep, could ever have put on record such sayings. But so he was permitted, and thus they have come down to us as the true witness of the established antichristian tyranny of Rome in the ninth century.

### **THE PAULICIANS REBEL AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT**

Like certain of the Albigenses, Hussites of Bohemia, and Calvinists of France, the Paulicians of Armenia and the adjacent provinces determined on more decided resistance to their persecutors. This was their sad failure, and the sad fruit of listening to the suggestions of Satan. For nearly two hundred years they had suffered as Christians, adorning the gospel by a life of faith and patience. So far as we have the means of judging, they seem to have maintained the truth through a long course of suffering, in the noble though passive spirit of conformity to Christ. But faith and patience failed at length, and they openly rebelled against the government. It happened in this way:

**Carbeas**, an officer of high rank in the imperial service, on hearing that his father had been impaled by the catholic inquisitors, renounced his allegiance to the empire, and with five thousand companions, sought a refuge among the Saracens. The Caliph gladly welcomed the deserters, and gave them leave to settle within his territory. Carbeas built and fortified the city of Tephric, which became the headquarters of the Paulicians. They naturally flocked to this new home, and sought an asylum from the imperial laws. They soon became a powerful community. Under the command of Carbeas, war was waged with the empire, and maintained with various success for more than thirty years; but as details would be more depressing than interesting, we forbear.

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<sup>109</sup> Milner, vol. 2, p. 498.

## THE PAULICIANS IN EUROPE

About the middle of the eighth century Constantine, surnamed **Copronymus**, either as a favour or as a punishment transplanted a great number of Paulicians into Thrace an outpost of the empire, and there they acted as a religious mission. By this emigration their doctrines were introduced and diffused in Europe. They seem to have laboured with great success amongst the **Bulgarians**. It was in order to guard the infant church of Bulgaria, that Peter of Sicily about the year 870, addressed to the archbishop of the Bulgarians a tract warning him against the infection of the Paulicians. This document is the chief source of information as to the sect. In the tenth century the Emperor John Zimisces conducted another great migration to the valleys of Mount Haemus. Their history after this period is European. They were favoured with a free toleration in the land of their exile, which greatly softened their condition and strengthened their community. From these Bulgarian settlements their way was opened into Western Europe. Many native Bulgarians associated with them, hence the name of Bulgarians, in a course or corrupted form, is one of the appellations of hatred, which clung to the Paulicians in all quarters

As to the subsequent religious history of these interesting people historians are greatly divided. Nothing is known of them but from the writings of their enemies; therefore, in common justice, we are bound to suspend our belief of their statements. One thing however is certain: they protested against the saint and image-worship of the catholics, and the legitimacy of the priesthood by which idolatry was upheld. They also protested against many things in the doctrines, the discipline, and the assumed authority of the church of Rome. The catholic writers usually speak of them as *Manicheans* the most odious of all heretics. But there are some protestant writers, who have examined with great care all that can throw light on their history, and have come to the conclusion, that they were guiltless of the heresies imputed to them, and maintain that they were the true and faithful witnesses of Christ and His truth during a very dark period of the middle ages.<sup>110</sup>

We now turn to our general history.

## THE RELIGIOUS WARS OF CHARLEMAGNE

### FROM ABOUT 771-814

Ecclesiastical history, so-called, from the time of Pepin, is so interwoven with the history of the Frankish kings, and the disgraceful intrigues of the popes, that we must further, though briefly, trace the course of events which have an important bearing on the character of popery and the history of the church.

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<sup>110</sup> For a careful inquiry and details, see *Hora Apoc.*, vol. 2, 249-344 5th edition.

The rising power of Charlemagne, the younger son of Pepin, was watched by the occupants of St. Peter's chair with the greatest possible interest, and skilfully used by them for the accomplishment of their ambitious designs. Pope Hadrian I and Leo III, both able men, filled the papal throne during the long reign of Charles; and succeeded in greatly aggrandising, through what he called his religious wars, the Roman See.

A quarrel between Desiderius, king of the Lombards, and Pope Hadrian led to a war with France, which ended in the complete overthrow of the Lombard kingdom in Italy. This was the result of the grand scheme of the papacy, and brought about by the unprincipled and treacherous policy of the pontiff. Charles was son-in-law to Desiderius; but after one year's wedlock he divorced Hermingard the Lombard's daughter, and immediately married Hildegard, a lady of a noble Swabian house. The insulted father, on receiving back his repudiated daughter, naturally sought for redress from the pope, the head of the church, of which Charles was so dutiful a son. But although the church, when it suited its own purposes, had asserted in the strongest terms the sanctity of the marriage bond, its open violation in this instance was passed quietly over; the pope refused to interfere.

Rome was reckoning on good service from the great Charles, and could not afford to risk his displeasure. Not a word was said against the conduct of the dissolute monarch. Desiderius at length resented the bitter insult of Charles and the wicked connivance of Hadrian; he appeared at the head of his troops in papal Italy; he besieged, stormed, and spread devastation everywhere, and threatened the pope in his capital.

### **HADRIAN SENDS FOR CHARLEMAGNE**

The pope now sent messages in the utmost haste to entreat immediate help from Charles; at the same time diligently superintending in person the military preparations for the defence of the city and the security of its treasures. And, according to an old strategy of Rome, **Hadrian** sent three bishops to overawe the king and to threaten him with excommunication if he dared to violate the property of the church. The pope thus gained time; and Charles, with his usual rapidity, assembled his forces, crossed the Alps and laid siege to Pavia. During the siege, which continued several months, Charles paid a visit to the pope in great state, and was received with every honour. He was hailed by nobles, senators and citizens, as patrician of Rome and the dutiful son of the church, who had so speedily obeyed the summons of his spiritual father, and had come to deliver them from the hated and dreaded Lombards. When the holy season was over, Charles and his officers returned to the army.

Pavia at length fell. Desiderius, successor of the great and wise Luitprand, was dethroned, and took refuge in a monastery — the usual asylum of dethroned kings; his valiant son Adelchis, fled to Constantinople; and thus

expired the kingdom of the Lombards, the deadly enemies of the Italians, and the great hindrance to the papal aggression. The way was now clear for the conqueror to give the pope a kingdom, not on paper merely, like his father Pepin, but in cities provinces, and revenues. And so he did, and thereby ratified the munificent gift of his father. As lord by conquest, Charlemagne presented to the successors of St. Peter, by an absolute and perpetual grant, the kingdom of Lombardy; some say, the whole of Italy. At the same time Charles claimed the royal title, and exercised a kind of sovereignty over all Italy and even over Rome itself. But the pope, being now secure in the possession of the territory, could well afford to allow all royal honours to his great benefactor.

## **THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE ROMAN PONTIFFS**

**A.D. 775**

The pope was now a temporal prince. The long looked-for and sighed-for day was come; the fond dream of centuries was realised. The successors of St. Peter are proclaimed **sovereign pontiffs** and the lords of the city and territories of Rome. The last link of the shadowy vassalage and subserviency to the Greek empire is broken for ever; and Rome has again become the acknowledged capital of the West.

The great Pope Hadrian at once assumes the power privileges, and language of a temporal sovereign to whom fealty is due. Murmurs from Ravenna and the East were speedily silenced; and Rome reigned supreme. The pope's language even to Charlemagne is that of an equal: "As your men," he said, "are not allowed to come to Rome without your permission and special letter, so my men must not be allowed to appear at the court of France without the same credentials from me." He claimed the same allegiance from the Italians which the subjects of Charlemagne owed to him. "The administration of justice was in the pope's name; not only the ecclesiastical dues, and the rents of estates forming part of the patrimony of St. Peter, the civil revenue likewise came into his treasury... Hadrian, with the power, assumed the magnificence of a great potentate... Rome, with the increase of the papal revenues, began to resume more of her ancient splendour."

## **THE GREAT EPOCH IN THE ANNALS OF POPYRY**

As the empire of Charlemagne is in a peculiar manner connected with the history of the church, and forms the great epoch in the annals of the Roman See, it demands a fuller consideration. Roman catholicism was just about as much indebted to that great prince, as Mahometanism was to the great Arab prophet and his successors. "The Saxon wars of Charlemagne," says Milman, "which added almost the whole of Germany to his dominions, were avowedly religious wars. If Boniface was the Christian, Charlemagne was the Mahometan, apostle of the gospel. The declared object of his invasions was the extinction of heathenism, subjection to the christian faith, or extermination.

Baptism was the sign of subjugation and fealty, the Saxons accepted or threw it off according as they were in a state of submission or revolt. These wars were inevitable; they were but the continuance of the great strife waged for centuries from the barbarous North and East against the civilised South and West; only that the Roman and Christian population, now invigorated by the large infusion of Teutonic blood, instead of awaiting aggression, had become the aggressor. The tide of conquest was rolling back; the subjects of the Western kingdoms, of the Western empire, instead of waiting to see their homes overrun by hordes of fierce invaders, now boldly marched into the heart of their enemies' country, penetrated their forests, crossed their morasses, and planted their feudal courts of justice, their churches, and their monasteries, in the most remote and savage regions, up to the Elbe and the shores of the Baltic."

The Saxons were divided into three leading tribes, the Ostphalians, the Westphalians, and the Angarians. Each clan, according to old Teutonic usage, consisted of nobles, freemen, and slaves; but at times the whole nation met in a great armed convention. The Saxons scorned and detested the Romanised Franks, and the Franks held the Saxons to be barbarians and heathens. For three-and-thirty years the powerful Charles was engaged in subduing these wild Saxon hordes. "The tract of country inhabited by these tribes," says Greenwood, "comprehended the whole of the modern circle of Westphalia, and the greater portion of that of lower Saxony, extended from the Lippe to the Weser and the Elbe; bordering to the northward upon the kindred Jutes, Angles, and Danes; and to the eastward of Slavonic origin, who had gradually advanced upon the more ancient Teutonic races of Eastern Germany." But we must limit ourselves chiefly to the religious aspect of these wars; still, it is interesting at this moment to study these ancient records, as we have just witnessed the conclusion of the great war of 1870-71 between the descendants of the Franks and Germans of antiquity.

### **THE SWORD OF CHARLEMAGNE OR BAPTISM**

The professed object of Charlemagne was to establish Christianity in the remote parts of Germany, but it must ever be regretted that he used such violent means to accomplish his end. Thousands were forced into the waters of baptism to escape a cruel death. The sword or baptism were the conqueror's terms. A law was enacted which denounced the penalty of death against the refusal of baptism. He could offer no terms of peace, enter into no treaty, of which baptism should not be the principal condition. Conversion or extermination was the watchword of the Franks. And though the old religion might sit loosely enough on the conscience of the Saxon, he could see nothing better in the new; for to his mind baptism was identified with slavery and Christianity with subjugation to a foreign yoke. To submit to baptism was to renounce, not only his old religion but his personal freedom.

With such anti-Christian, such inhuman, feelings the war was carried on, as we have said, for thirty-three years. At the head of his superior armies he oppressed the savage tribes, who were incapable of confederating for their common safety; nor did he ever, it is said, encounter an equal antagonist in numbers, in discipline, or in arms. But after a struggle of incalculable bloodshed, and of almost unexampled obstinacy and duration, the numbers, the discipline, and the valour of the Franks prevailed at length over the undisciplined and desultory efforts of the Saxons. “The remnant of thirty campaigns of undistinguished slaughter,” says Greenwood, “and wholesale expatriation, accepted baptism, and became permanently incorporated with the empire of the Franks and Christianity. Abbeys, monasteries, and religious houses of all descriptions sprang up in every part of the conquered territory, and the new churches were supplied with ministers from the school of Boniface — a school which admitted no distinction between the law of Christ and the law of Rome.”

Baptism was the only security and pledge of peace which the Franks would accept for the submission of the Saxons. And thus it was — how sad and humbling to relate! — when the conquest was complete, and the carnage over, the priests entered the field. Their office was to baptise the vanquished. Thousands of the barbarians were thus forced, at the point of the sword, into what the priests called **the regenerating waters of baptism**. But to the Saxons their baptism meant neither more nor less than the renunciation of their religion and their liberty. The consequence was, that no sooner were the armies of Charles withdrawn, than the indefatigable Saxons rose again, and burst through the encroaching limits of the empire, ravaging as they went. In their burning rage and bitter revenge they hewed down crosses, burnt churches, destroyed monasteries, slaughtered their inmates, respected neither age nor sex, until the whole country seemed wrapped in flames and deluged with blood. Such revolts, it is said, were often provoked by the insolent language, and still more by the offensive demeanour of the missionary monks, and the severe avarice with which they exacted their tithes. But such outbursts, on the part of the Saxons, were followed by a fresh invasion and a merciless slaughter by the Franks, until tribe after tribe yielded to the conquering arms of Charlemagne. On one occasion after a severe revolt Charles massacred 4,500 brave warriors in cold blood who had surrendered. This cruel and cowardly abuse of power leaves a dark, an indelible stain on his history, which no apology can ever remove. Even the sceptic historian alludes to it in a most truthful and touching way. “In a day of equal retribution,” he says, “the sons of his brother Carloman, the Merovingian prince of Aquitaine, and the four thousand five hundred Saxons who were beheaded on the same spot, would have something to allege against the justice and humanity of Charlemagne. His treatment of the vanquished Saxons was an abuse of the right of conquest.”

## THE EVIL INFLUENCE OF THE POPE'S MISSIONARIES

Sad as it is to reflect on the fearful slaughter of the Saxons, and the forced baptism of the helpless remnant, our sadness is infinitely increased when we find that the professed messengers of mercy were the great movers in these long and exterminating wars. In place of being the merciful missionaries of the gospel of peace, they were in reality the cruel emissaries of the papacy — of the power of darkness: Charlemagne was, no doubt, to a great extent deceived and urged on by the priests.

Under the avowed object of cementing the union between Church and State, for the temporal and spiritual benefit of mankind, and for the enduring strength of the imperial government, the artful priests saw the way opening for their own temporal greatness and the more **absolute sovereignty of Rome**. And so it happened, as all history affirms. They very soon gained a position of worldly greatness over the conquered people and their lands. An entire change takes place just at this time in the outward condition of the clergy, and indeed in society generally. Ancient history disappears, we are told, at the death of Pepin, and mediaeval life begins. A new state of society is inaugurated by his son — the last of barbaric kings and the first of feudal monarchs. But it is with ecclesiastical history we have to do, and here, again, we prefer giving a few extracts from the Dean — so often referred to — who will not be accused of unnecessary severity, but whose testimony is of the very highest integrity.

“The subjugation of the land appeared complete before Charlemagne founded successively his great religious colonies, the eight bishoprics of Minden, Seligenstadt, Verden, Bremen, Munster, Hildesheim, Osnaburg, and Paderborn. These, with many richly endowed monasteries like Hersfuld, became the separate centres from which Christianity and civilization spread in expanding circles. But though these were military as well as religious settlements, the ecclesiastics were the only foreigners. The more faithful and trustworthy Saxon chieftains, who gave the security of seemingly sincere conversion to Christianity, were raised into counts: thus the profession of Christianity was the sole test of fealty...

“Charlemagne, in christian history, commands a more important station even than for his subjugation of Germany to the gospel, on account of his complete organization, if not foundation, of the high feudal hierarchy in a great part of Europe. Throughout the Western empire was, it may be said, constitutionally established this double aristocracy, ecclesiastical and civil. Everywhere the higher clergy and the nobles, kind so downwards through the different gradations of society, even of the same rank, and liable to many of the same duties, of equal, in some cases of co-ordinate, authority. Each district had its bishop and its count; the dioceses and the counties were mostly of the same extent...

“Charlemagne himself was no less prodigal than weaker kings of immunities and grants of property to churches and monasteries. With his queen Hildegard, he endows the church of St. Martin, in Tours, with lands in Italy. His grants to St. Denys, to Lorch, to Fulda, to Prum, more particularly to Hersfuld, and many Italian abbeys, appear among the acts of his reign.

“Nor were these estates always obtained from the king or the nobles. The stewards of the poor were sometimes the spoilers of the poor. Even under Charlemagne there are complaints against the usurpation of property by bishops and abbots, as against counts and laymen. They compelled the poor free man to sell his property, or forced him to serve in the army, and that on permanent duty, and so to leave his land either without owner, with all the chances that he might not return, or to commit it to the custody of those who remained at home in quiet, and seized every opportunity of entering into possession. *No Naboth’s vineyard escaped their watchful avarice.*

“In their fiefs the bishop or abbot exercised all the rights of a feudal chieftain... Thus the hierarchy, now a feudal institution, parallel to and co-ordinate with the temporal feudal aristocracy, aspired to enjoy, and actually before long did enjoy the dignity, the wealth, the power, of suzerain lords. Bishops and abbots had the independence and privileges of inalienable fiefs; and at the same time began either sullenly to contest, or haughtily to refuse, those payments or acknowledgements of vassalage, which sometimes weighed heavily on other lands. During the reign of Charlemagne this theory of spiritual immunity slumbered, or rather had not quickened into life. It was boldly announced so rapid was its growth — in the strife with his son, **Louis the Pious**. It was then asserted by the hierarchy, that all property given to the church, to the poor, to the saints, to God Himself — such were the specious phrases — was given absolutely, irrevocably, with no reserve. The king might have power over the knights' fees; over those of the church he had none whatever. Such claims were impious, sacrilegious, and implied forfeiture of eternal life. The clergy and their estates belonged to another realm, to another commonwealth; they were entirely, absolutely, independent of the civil power.”<sup>111</sup>

## THE FEUDAL HIERARCHICAL SYSTEM

For centuries the papal cry to each succeeding monarch had been, “Give, give; endow, endow; and the blessed Peter shall surely send you victory over your enemies, prosperity in this world, and a place near himself in heaven.” This cry was in a great measure answered about the beginning of the ninth century. The above extracts will give the reader some idea of the spoils which came to the clergy from the victories of Charles in Germany. It was chiefly out of these thirty-three years of internecine war, that the great feudal hierarchical system arose. Innumerable thousands were slain to make room for the bishops

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<sup>111</sup> *Latin Christianity*, vol. 2, p. 286.

and abbots — an ecclesiastical aristocracy. Up rose the princely palaces of these great ecclesiastics all over the conquered land: but their foundations were laid in cruelty, injustice, and blood.

Though more than a thousand years have passed away since the great patron of the church died, the palaces still live and are thickly planted all over Europe. But the heart sickens at the thought of the origin of these avowed palaces of peace; especially if we bear in mind the true character of the gospel, and that the ministers of Christ should ever seek to manifest the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus. The souls, not the property, of men should be their object. “We seek not *yours*, but *you*” should be their motto; going forth taking nothing of the Gentiles. But the example of Christ had been long forgotten. The church sank to the level and spirit of the world when she was united by Constantine to the State. This was her great fall, from which her painful inconsistency flows. The love of the world, of absolute power, of universal dominion, then took possession of her whole being. Misled by Satan, on whose throne (Rev. 2) she sits, the shameless iniquity of her course can only be accounted for on the ground of his blinding power. All means, in her sight, were justifiable which had for their object the advancement of the Roman See.

### REFLECTIONS ON THE LORD’S CARE FOR HIS OWN

The Lord had, no doubt, His many hidden ones, even in the darkest times, as in Thyatira: “But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.” One thing, and only one, was to occupy the faithful after the apostasy had set in — the ascended Saviour, the Man in the glory. And to all such the sweet promise is, “And I will give him the Morning Star.” But the outward or mere professing church, as allied to the State, was corrupt to the very core, and sunk, and blinded, and hardened, in the most unflinching wickedness; for the concentration of every form of evil was to be found in the **chair of St. Peter**. Even as to the religious wars Charlemagne himself stands before as guiltless, compared with Hadrian.

We must remember that Charles was a barbaric king, though the greatest perhaps in European history with the exception of **Alexander** and **Caesar**, so that we can understand his object in seeking to unite and consolidate a great empire, but he was ignorant and superstitious as to divine things, though the religious element was strong in his mind. On this the pope acted, and led him to believe that a strong and wealthy church would make a strong and wealthy State; and that if he would please heaven and gain eternal life the harmonious union of Church and State must be the basis of all his governmental schemes. He personally loved Hadrian, readily obeyed his call, yielded to his counsels, and wept when he heard of his death; which took place on the 26th of December in the year 795, after the unusually long pontificate of twenty-three

years and upwards. He might sometimes see the pope's real object under the greatest artifice, but strong in his own self-reliant power, he could allow such things to pass without those feelings of distrust and jealousy, which would have been engendered in a feebler mind. Not given to change, he made a good friend.

## THE PAPAL FORGERY

But the kindness of Charlemagne only excited the cupidity and envy of the rapacious priests. Not content with their estates and tithes, they aspired to a position far above the lay-lords, and even above the monarch himself. Stimulated by past success, they now attempted by a **daring forgery** to accomplish the object of their secular ambition. A title to almost imperial power is now for the first time, after the lapse of 450 years, brought to light. By this original deed of gift it was discovered, that all which Pepin or Charlemagne had conferred on the church of Rome was only an instalment of the royal grant to the chair of St. Peter by the "pious emperor Constantine."

As our main object throughout this period of the church's history is to present the real character of the papal system, the means by which it reached its wonderful influence and power, and the secularising effects of the Church and State alliance, we copy the pope's own letter from Greenwood. The reader will, no doubt, be surprised to find that any man with the smallest pretension to respectability — far less the head of the church — could ever have fabricated such a document, and that merely to gain more territory and power. But we must remember that Thyatira was characterised by "the depths of Satan," and so has the papacy ever since she drew her first breath, and so must she be until she draws her last. Revelation 17, 18 describe both her character and her end.

"Considering," says pope Hadrian, "that in the days of the blessed pontiff **Sylvester**, that most pious Emperor did, *by his donation*, exalt and enlarge the holy catholic and apostolic church of Rome, giving unto her *supreme power over all the region of the West*, so now we beseech you, that in this our own happy day, the same holy church may sprout forth and exult, and be ever more and more lifted up, so that all people who shall hear thereof may exclaim, 'God save the king, and hear us in the day in which we call upon thee!' For behold, in those days arose Constantine, the christian Emperor, by whom God vouchsafed to give all things to His most holy church, the church of the blessed Peter, prince of the apostles. All this, and many territories besides, which divers Emperors, patricians, and other God-fearing persons, had given to the blessed Peter and the holy Roman and apostolical church of God, for the benefit of their souls and the forgiveness of their sins, lying in the parts of Tuscany, Spoletum, Beneventum, Corsica, Savona — territories which were taken and kept by the impious nations of the Lombards, cause all this to be restored to us in these your days, according to the tenor of your several deeds of gift deposited in our archives of the Lateran. To that end we

have directed our envoys to exhibit those deeds to you for your satisfaction, and in virtue of them we now call upon you to command the undiminished restitution of this patrimony of St. Peter into our hands; that by your conformity therewith the holy church of God may be put into full possession and enjoyment of its entire right; so that the prince of the apostles himself may intercede before the throne of the Almighty for long life to yourself and prosperity in all your undertakings.”

### **THE IGNORANCE AND CREDULITY OF THE TIMES**

So deep was the ignorance and credulity of those times, that the most absurd fables were received with great reverence by all classes. The cunning priests knew how to clothe their religious frauds with the most specious piety, and to blind both king and people. According to the legend Constantine was healed of the leprosy by Pope Sylvester; and so penetrated with gratitude was the Emperor, that he resigned to the pope the free and perpetual sovereignty of Rome, Italy, and the provinces of the West; and resolved on founding a new capital for himself in the East.

The object of Hadrian in forging such a deed, and in writing such a letter, was no doubt to influence Charlemagne to imitate the alleged liberality of his great predecessor. If he merely put the popes in possession of the said donation of Constantine, he was only acting as his executor; if he aspired to be a spontaneous benefactor of the church, he must exceed the limits of the original deed of gift. But the depths of this forgery we have not yet fathomed. It went to prove that the Greek Emperors, all these centuries, had been guilty of usurpation, and robbing the patrimony of St. Peter; that the popes were justified in appropriating their territory, and in rebelling against their authority; that the gifts of Pepin and Charlemagne were nothing more than the restitution of a small portion of the just and lawful dominions originally granted to the chair of St. Peter; and that he, Charlemagne, must consider himself as debtor to God and His church, so long as a single item of the debt thus entailed upon him remained unpaid.

Such were some of the convenient effects of the document for the purposes of Hadrian at the time; but though it may have been productive of great advantages to the papacy both then and afterwards, the forgery has long since been exposed. With the revival of letters and liberty the fictitious deed was condemned, together with the **False Decretals** — the most audacious and elaborate of all pious frauds. Speaking of the Decretals, Milman observes, “They are now given up by all; not a voice is raised in their favour; the utmost that is done, by those who cannot suppress all regret at their exposure, is to palliate the guilt of the forger, to call in question or to weaken the influence which they had in their own day, and throughout the later history of Christianity.”<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Milman, vol. 2, p. 375; Greenwood, book 6, chap. 3, p. 82.

## THE FOUNDATIONS AND EDIFICE OF POPERY

Such, alas! alas! were the foundations of the great papal edifice. We have been at some pains to see them laid; we are not mistaken. Were we to characterize the separate foundation-stones, we might speak of them as the most extravagant pretensions, the most insulting arrogance, the most barefaced forgeries, the most openly avowed and even death defying love of idolatries, the most unscrupulous appropriation of stolen territory, the most unrelenting spirit of persecution, and, what may be said to be the topmost (as well as the foundation) stone, the most inordinate love of temporal sovereignty. But if we look inside the house, what do we find there? It is full of blasphemies, the worst kind of corruptions, and the concentration of all attractions for the flesh. (Rev. 18:12, 13) The very essentials of Christianity were either corrupted or rejected — such as sacrifice, ministry, and priesthood. The mass was substituted for the finished work of Christ; the dogmatic teaching of the church for the ministry of the Spirit of God, and the great ecclesiastical system of priesthood, or rather, priestcraft — for the common priesthood of all believers, yea, for that of Christ Himself.

The Lord's supper had been gradually changed from the simple remembrance of His love, and showing forth His death, to the idea of a sacrifice. Many superstitions were practised with the consecrated bread, or rather wafers. The sacrifice was supposed to avail for the dead as well as for the living; hence the practice of giving it to the dead, and burying it with them. The soul-destroying doctrine of **purgatory**, which had been sanctioned by Gregory the Great, was now spreading far and wide. It appears to have specially taken root in the English church before the ninth century. But the deception is manifest, for there is no purgatory but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son; as saith the apostle John, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Thank God, there is no limit to the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus His Son; all who have faith in that blood are *whiter than snow* — perfectly fitted for the presence of God. But the doctrine of purgatory struck at the very root of this foundation-truth, and became a powerful instrument in the hands of the priests for extorting money from the dying, and for securing large legacies to the church; but almost everything was now made subservient to these base objects. The truth of God, the work of Christ, the character of the church, the souls and bodies of men, were all readily sacrificed for the aggrandisement of the See of Rome, and for the aggrandisement of the clergy in subordination to the papal system.

The ungodly lives of those entrusted with the government of the church and the care of souls are also matters of bitter complaint with all honest historians, both then and now. But here it may be well to introduce one of good report — Mosheim — as a witness and confirmation of what we have said as to this period.

## MOSHEIM'S SUMMARY

“In the East sinister designs, rancour, contentions, and strife were everywhere predominant. At Constantinople, or New Rome, those were elevated to the patriarchal chair who were in favour at court; and upon losing that favour, a decree of the Emperor hurled them from their elevated station. In the West the bishops hung around the courts of princes, and indulged themselves in every species of voluptuousness: while the inferior clergy and the monks were sensual, and by the grossest vices corrupted the people whom they were set to reform. The ignorance of the clergy in many places was so great, that few of them could read or write. Hence, whenever a letter was to be penned, or anything of importance was to be committed to writing, recourse was generally had to some one individual, whom common fame invested with a certain dexterity in such matters...

“The bishops and the heads of monasteries held much real estate or landed property by feudal tenure; wherefore, when a war broke out, they were summoned personally to the camp, attended by the number of soldiers which they were bound to furnish to their sovereign. Kings and princes, moreover that they might be able to reward their servants and soldiers for their services, often seized upon consecrated property, and gave it to their dependants; in consequence, the priests and monks, before supported by it, sought relief for their necessities in committing any sort of crimes, and in contriving impostures.

“Few of those who were raised, about this time, to the highest stations in the church can be commended for their wisdom, learning, virtue, and other endowments proper for a bishop. The greater part of them, by their numerous vices, and all of them, by their arrogance and lust of power, entailed disgrace upon their memories.

“All agree that in those dark days the state of Christianity was everywhere most deplorable; not only from amazing ignorance, the parent of superstition and moral debasement, but also from other causes... The sacred order, both in the East and in the West, were composed principally of men who were illiterate, stupid, ignorant of everything pertaining to religion... What the Greek pontiffs were, the single example of *Theophylact* shows; who, as credible historians testify, made traffic of everything sacred, and cared for nothing but his hounds and his horses. But though the Greek patriarchs were very unworthy men, yet they possessed more dignity and virtue than the Roman pontiffs. That the history of the Roman bishops in this century is a history, not of men, but of monsters, a history of the most atrocious villanies and crimes, is acknowledged by all the best writers, those not excepted even who plead for pontifical authority

“The essence of religion was thought, both by Greeks and Latins, to consist in the worship of images, in honouring departed saints, in searching for and

preserving relics and in enriching priests and monks. Scarcely an individual ventured to approach God until interest had been duly sought with images and saints. In getting relics together, and seeking after them, all the world was busy to insanity.”<sup>113</sup>

Nothing more, we think, need be said at present as to the nature — root and branch — of the papal system. In the mouth of at least three competent witnesses, all that we have said of Rome, from the beginning of the Thyatirian period, has been confirmed. And the half has not been told, especially on the subject of immorality. We could not transfer to our pages the open profligacy of the priests and monks. It is thought by some that the papacy fell to the deepest point of degradation in the ninth and tenth centuries. For many years the papal tiara was disposed of by the infamous **Theodora** and her two daughters, **Marozia** and **Theodora**. Such was their power and evil influence, by means of their licentious lives, that they placed in the chair of St. Peter whom they would — men wicked like themselves. Our pages would be defiled by an account of their open unblushing immoralities. Such has been the papal succession. Surely Jezebel was truly represented by these women, and in the influence they obtained over the popes and the city of Rome. But, alas! alas! Jezebel, with all her associations, corruptions, tyrannies, idolatries, and uses of the civil sword, has been too faithfully represented by popery from its very foundation.

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<sup>113</sup> Mosheim’s *History*, vol. 3, p. 184 & 272.

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 17

### THE PROPAGATION OF CHRISTIANITY

#### NINTH CENTURY

It is truly a great relief to the mind, both of writer and reader, to turn away from the dark and polluted regions of Rome, and trace for a little the *silver line* of God's saving grace in the spread of the gospel and in the devotedness of many of His servants. At the same time we must not expect much of Christ, or of what is called a clear gospel, in the testimony of the missionaries at this period. The state of Europe generally in the ninth century, compared with the nineteenth, must be considered, if our hearts would rise to God in gratitude for that day of small things.

The preference given to human writings above the scriptures was now the habit, at least wherever the influence of Rome prevailed. The Paulicians, probably, and others who were standing apart from the communion of Rome, maintained the authority of the word of God; but the Roman missionaries were instructed and bound to abide by the decisions of the fathers. The canons of councils, and the writings of the great doctors, were constantly appealed to, so that the sacred volume was completely overlooked. Long before this period the word of God had been treated as obscure, perplexed, and unfit for general reading. And so it has been considered by the Catholics from that day until now. Still, God was and is above all, and overrules all for His own glory, the spread of Christianity, and the salvation of sinners. "All that the Father giveth me," says Christ, "shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out:" on no consideration of country, period, education, or condition, will I cast out or reject. (John 6:37)

#### THE REVIVAL OF EDUCATION

Although the sanguinary ambition and the dissolute life of Charlemagne forbid our thinking that he was possessed of any true christian principle, yet it is only fair to acknowledge that he was used of God for the advancement of education at home, and for the spread of Christianity abroad. Schools were erected, universities were founded, learned men were sought for in Italy, England, and Ireland, with the view of raising his subjects to a higher level of moral, religious, and intellectual attainments. Towards the close of his long reign he was surrounded in his royal residence at Aix-la-Chapelle by literary men from all countries. The scholars, grammarians, and philosophers of the time were welcomed in the great Hall of Audience. But chief amongst these

was our countryman, the Anglo-Saxon monk, **Alcuin**, a native of Northumbria, and tutor to the imperial family.

Alcuin was the most important, both for his learning and for the extent of his labours as a teacher among the Franks. But what is of still more importance, he seems to have had some correct thoughts of Christianity. He often remonstrated with the Emperor against the enforcement of tithes from the newly-converted Saxons, and against the compulsory and indiscriminate administration of baptism. "Instruction," he said, "should first be given on the great heads of christian doctrine and practice, and then the sacrament should follow. Baptism may be forced on men, but faith cannot. Baptism received without faith or understanding by a person capable of reason is but an unprofitable washing of the body."<sup>114</sup>

How refreshing to the spirit, and how truly thankful we are to find such plain, honest, dealing with the great Emperor. It shows us that the Lord had His witnesses at all times and in all places. Let us hope that he may have been used of the Lord for the spread of the truth and the blessing of souls in those higher circles.

The end of the great Charles was drawing nigh. Though he had surrounded himself with literature, music, and everything that could please and gratify his every taste and passion; and though, it is said, his antechambers were filled with the fallen monarchs of conquered territories, waiting to supplicate his favour, or seek restoration to their lawful dominions; he must yield to the stroke which none can turn aside. He died on the 28th of January 814, at the advanced age of seventy-two, and after a long reign of forty-three years. He appointed his son, **Louis**, as his successor.

### **LOUIS THE PIOUS**

There can be little doubt that Louis, surnamed the Pious, was a sincere and humble Christian. But there never was a man in such a false position as the meek and gentle Louis when the empire fell into his hands. He lived till the year 840. But his life is one of the most touching, tragical and pitiful, in the annals of kings. There was something like universal rebellion when the principles of his government were known. He was too gentle and scrupulous for his soldiers; much too pious for his clergy. Bishops were prevented from wearing sword and arms, or glittering spurs on their heels. The monks and nuns found in him a second St. Benedict. The license of his father's court speedily disappeared from the sacred precincts of his palace; but he was far too easy in the discipline of his sons. Such true piety, as may easily be imagined, was only turned into ridicule, and could not long be borne with. He was deserted by his soldiers, whose wealth arose from plundered enemies; his sons, **Pepin**, **Louis**, and **Lothaire**, were more than once in arms against him. The clergy, who ought to have surrounded the fallen monarch with their

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<sup>114</sup> Robertson, vol. 2, p. 131.

sympathy in the day of adversity, only took occasion to show their power by degrading him to the depths of a cloister; and, to give a fair appearance to their injustice, he was forced by the priests to confess sins of which he was entirely innocent. Siding with his rebellious son, Lothaire, a man of cruelty, yet fearing to sanction his taking the life of his father, they — the son and the priests together — determined to incapacitate the king by civil and ecclesiastical degradation for the exercise of his royal authority. He was compelled to do public penance for alleged crimes; his royal armour and his imperial apparel he was forced to lay on the altar of St. Sebastian, and to put on a dark mourning robe.<sup>115</sup>

But the pride of his nobles was insulted by this display of ecclesiastical presumption, and the nation wept at the fate of their good and gentle Emperor. A reaction was inevitable. Indignant at his treatment, the people demanded his restoration. He was taken from the monastery, re-robed and restored, but only to experience a deeper humiliation. He was at length rescued by the hand of divine mercy from the unnatural conduct of his sons, and from the pitiless persecution of the clergy, who cared only for the display and the establishment of their own power. With a crucifix pressed to his bosom, his eyes lifted up to heaven, and breathing forgiveness to his son Louis, who was then in arms against him, he departed this life, to be with Christ, which is far better. (Phil. 1:23)

## **THE CONVERSION OF THE NORTHERN NATIONS**

The spread of the gospel towards the northern extremities of Europe, during the ninth and tenth centuries has been so fully detailed in the general histories, that we shall do little more than name the principal places, and the chief actors, in connection with the good work. But we rejoice to trace the footsteps of those self-denying missionaries, in the very heart of Satan's kingdom, where for centuries he had reigned undisturbed. We have already seen that the sword of Charlemagne had opened the way to the **Frieslanders**, **Saxons**, **Huns**, and other tribes.

In the early part of the reign of his son Louis, the gospel was introduced among the **Danes** and **Swedes**. Disputes, as to the throne of Denmark, between Harold and Godfrid, led Harold to seek protection from Louis. The pious Emperor thought this might be a convenient opportunity for the introduction of Christianity among the Danes. He therefore promised Harold assistance on condition that he would embrace Christianity himself and admit preachers of the gospel into his country. The king accepted the terms, and was baptized at Mentz, A.D. 826, together with his queen and a numerous train of attendants. Louis was sponsor for Harold, the empress for his queen, Lothaire for his son; and sponsors of suitable rank were found for the members of his train. Thus Christianized, as was thought in those days, he returned home,

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<sup>115</sup> For details, see Milman's *Latin Christianity*, vol. 2.

taking two teachers of Christianity with him. And lest Harold might not regain his kingdom, Louis assigned to him an estate in Friesland.

**Ansgarius** and **Auberg**, the two French monks that accompanied them, laboured with great zeal and success; but Aubert, a monk of noble birth, died in two years, amidst the toils of the missionary.

The indefatigable Ansgarius, on the death of his fellowlabourer, went over to Sweden. He was equally happy and successful in his work there. In 831 Louis rewarded his great labours by making him archbishop of Hamburg, and of all the north. He had often great opposition to encounter, but he usually disarmed his persecutors by the goodness of his intentions and the uprightness of his conduct. He lived till the year 865, and laboured chiefly among the Danes, the Cimbrians, and the Swedes.

### **THE SCLAVONIANS RECEIVE THE GOSPEL**

Some efforts were made about this time for the conversion of the Russians, Hungarians, etc., but the work of the gospel seems to have made little progress in these quarters until the conquest of Bohemia by Otho, in the year 950, or rather until the marriage of Vladimir, prince of the Russians, with Anna, sister of Basil, the Greek Emperor. He embraced the faith of his queen, lived to an extreme old age, and was followed in his faith by his subjects. The conversion of the Duke of Poland is also ascribed to the influence of a Christian queen. In those days the belief of the prince became the rule of his people, both in faith and practice, and the faith of the queen generally speaking, became the rule of the king. Hence the influence of the wife for good or for evil. This we may have noticed, especially from the days of Clotilda and Clovis. "There is a strange uniformity," says Milman, "in the instruments used in the conversion of barbarous subjects. A female of rank and influence, a zealous monk, some fearful national calamity no sooner do these three agencies coincide, than the heathen land opens itself to Christianity."

**Bulgaria.** The introduction of Christianity among the Bulgarians has been referred to in our notice of the Paulicians. They were a barbarous and savage people. Next to the Huns, the Bulgarians were the most hateful and most terrible to the invaded Europeans. The sister of Bogoris, their king, having been taken captive by the Greeks in her childhood, had been educated at Constantinople in the christian faith. After her redemption and return home, she was greatly affected by the idolatrous habits of her brother and his people. She seems to have been an earnest Christian, but all her appeals in favour of Christianity were little heeded, till a famine and a plague ravaged Bulgaria. The king was at length persuaded to pray to the God of the Christians. The Lord, in great mercy, stayed the plague. Bogoris acknowledged the goodness and power of the Christians' God, and agreed that missionaries should be allowed to preach the gospel to his people.

**Methodius** and **Cyril**, two Greek monks, distinguished for their zeal and learning, instructed the Bulgarians in the truths and blessings of the gospel of Christ. The king was baptized, and his people gradually followed his example. One hundred and six questions it is said, were sent by the king to the pope, Nicholas I embracing every point of ecclesiastical discipline, of ceremonial observance, and of manners. The answers are said to have been wise and discreet, and fitted to mitigate the ferocity of a savage nation.

From Bulgaria the zealous missionaries visited many of the Slavonian tribes, and penetrated into regions of unmingled barbarism. Their dialects were as yet unwritten. But these devoted men mastered the language of the country, and preached the gospel to the people in their native tongue. This was quite a new thing in those days, but heavenly Christianity brings in her train many precious gifts. The ordinary practice of the time was to preach and teach in the ecclesiastical languages — Greek and Latin; indeed complaints were made to the pope of the novelty of worshipping in a barbarous tongue, but the scruples of the pontiff were overcome with the reasons assigned by the missionaries, nevertheless the controversy was renewed in after ages, as some foolishly thought that it was a desecration of the church services to be celebrated in a barbarous tongue. Cyril is said to have invented an alphabet, taught the rude people the use of letters, translated the liturgy and certain books of the Bible into the dialect of the Moravians. Who can tell what the effect of Cyril's work may have been down to the present day? The king of Moravia was baptized, and, as usual in those times, his subjects followed his example. The province of Dalmatia, and many others, hitherto in gross darkness, received the gospel during the ninth and tenth centuries!

### **THE FLOWING STREAM OF LIFE**

How good of the Lord, the great Head of the church, to send forth into many and distant lands the living waters of the sanctuary, when Rome, the centre of Christendom, was stagnant and corrupt. At that very time, **Baronius**, the famous annalist of the Roman church, and whose partiality to the See of Rome is notorious, cries out, "How deformed, how frightful, was the face of the church of Rome! The holy See was fallen under the tyranny of two loose and disorderly women, who placed and displaced bishops as their humour led them, and (what I tremble to think and speak of) they placed their gallants on St. Peter's chair," etc. Referring to the same period, Arnold, bishop of Orleans, exclaims, "O miserable Rome! thou that didst formerly hold out so many great and glorious luminaries to our ancestors, into what prodigious darkness art thou now fallen, which will render thee infamous to all succeeding ages."<sup>116</sup>

While such was the state of Rome, the capital of the corruptress, Jezebel, the vital stream of eternal life from the exalted Saviour, was flowing freely in the

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<sup>116</sup> As given by du Pin, vol. 2, p. 156.

extremities of the empire. Many nations and tribes and tongues had received the gospel with the many blessings it brought to them. Doubtless it was encumbered with many superstitions; but the word of God so far, and the name of Jesus, had been introduced among them; and the Spirit of God can work wonders with that most blessed name, and that most precious word. The Saviour was preached; the love of God and the work of Christ seem to have been taught with a divine unction which carried conviction to the rude barbarians. It was God's own work, and the accomplishment of His own purposes. In such a case would not Paul have said, "I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice?" (Phil. 1:18)

## **ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, AND IRELAND**

Before closing our brief notice of the doings of the Lord at this time, we will notice a few names which indicate the state of things in our own country.

Of the glory of Alfred's reign it is needless to say much. With some historians he comes up to the conception of a perfect sovereign. At any rate, we may say, he was a true christian king, and was made a blessing both to the church and the world. His successful war with the Danes; his rescuing England from a return to barbarism; his encouragement of learning and learned men; his own abundant labours; his christian faith and devotedness, are well known to all who are acquainted with English history. He succeeded his father in 871 at the age of twenty-two, and reigned thirty years. Thus the ninth century, which opened with the great days of Charlemagne, closed with the far more glorious days of Alfred, probably the most honoured name in mediaeval history.

**Clement**, a pious ecclesiastic of the Scotch church, appeared in the centre of Europe about the middle of the eighth century, as a preacher of evangelical doctrines. History speaks of him as a bold and fearless defender of the authority of the word of God, in opposition to Boniface, the champion of tradition and the decisions of councils. It may throw light on the condition of Christendom, and the history of the church, to view these two missionaries as the representatives of two systems; namely, the great human organization of Rome, and the remaining scriptural Christianity of Scotland.

Alarmed at the boldness of Clement, Boniface, then archbishop of the German churches, undertook to oppose him. He confronted the Scotchman with the laws of the Roman church, the decisions of various councils, and the writings of the most illustrious fathers of the Latin church. Clement replied that no laws of the church, no decisions of councils, or writings of the fathers, that were contrary to the Holy Scriptures, had any authority over Christians. Boniface then appealed to the invincible unity of the Catholic church with its pope, bishops, priests, etc., but his opponent maintained that there only, *where the Holy Spirit dwells*, can be found the spouse of Jesus Christ.

Boniface was confounded. Fair means had failed; foul must be used. Clement was condemned as a heretic by a council met at Soissons in March, 744. He was afterwards ordered to be sent to Rome under a sure guard. The further history of Clement is unknown, but it is easy to conjecture what must have been his fate.

It is said by some that Clement held strange notions as to our Lord's descent into hades, on the subject of marriage, and predestination, but little reliance is to be placed on the statements of his enemies. Boniface appeared in court as his adversary, accuser, and judge. Rather let us hope that he was a true representative of the ancient faith of his country. But we must not suppose that Clement was the only one who appears in contest with the Roman missionaries at this period of our history. From time to time we find such witnesses for the truth openly testifying against the pretensions of Rome. Certain Scotchmen, who called themselves bishops, were condemned in a council at Chalons, in the year 813. But clerical forms having taken the place of the word of God, enlightened and faithful men were condemned as heretics.

**John Scot Erigena**, a native of Ireland, who resided chiefly in France, and at the court of Charles the Bald, is said by Hallam to have been, in a literary and philosophical sense, the most remarkable man in the dark ages. But he was more of a philosopher than a theologian, though he wrote largely on religious subjects, and appears to have belonged to some order of the clergy. He had studied the early fathers and the Platonic philosophy, and was too much inclined to favour human reason, even in the reception of divine truth. But, according to d'Aubigné, there appears to have been real piety in his heart. "O Lord Jesus," he exclaimed, "I ask no other happiness of Thee, but to understand, unmixed with deceitful theories, the word that Thou hast inspired by Thy Holy Spirit! Show Thyself to those who seek for Thee alone." He is supposed to have died about the year 852.

The Irish divines in the eighth century held so high a character for learning, that the literary men invited by Charlemagne to his court were chiefly from Ireland. Until the time of Henry II, king of England, the church of Ireland continued to assert its independence of Rome, and to maintain its position as an active, living, branch of the church of Christ, and owning no earthly head. But from this period the original Irish church, with its high reputation, completely disappears.

## **THE NORTHMEN**

Were it not that we believe these powerful enemies of Christianity — the Northmen, or pirates from the regions of the North — were instruments in God's hands for the punishment of the apostate church of Rome, it would not be in our way to have introduced them. But as they appear to be nothing short

of the judgment of God against the overgrown worldliness of every order of the Catholic priesthood, we may give them a brief notice.

Originally they came from the shores of the Baltic, in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Probably they were a mixture of Goths, Danes, Norwegians, Swedes, and Frisians. But though composed of so many different tribes, they were all agreed as to their main object — plunder and slaughter. Their petty kings and chieftains were practised pirates, and the most daring that ever infested the seas or the shores of Western Christendom. They pushed their light boats up the rivers as far as they could go, burning, slaying, and plundering wherever they went.

“From the shores of the Baltic,” says Milman, “from the Scandinavian islands, from the gulfs and lakes, their fleets sailed on, wherever the tide or the tempest might drive them. They seemed to defy, in their ill-formed barks, the wildest weather; to be able to land on the most inaccessible shores, to find their way up the narrowest creeks and shallowest rivers; nothing was secure, not even in the heart of the country, from the sudden appearance of these relentless savages.” They have been called “the Arabs of the sea,” but, unlike the Mahometans, they did not wage a religious war. They were ferocious heathens, and their gods, like themselves, were warriors and pirates. Plunder, not the propagation of a faith, was their object. The castle or the monastery the noble lord, the bishop, or the monk, were alike in their eyes, provided a rich booty could be obtained. The religious estates, especially in France, suffered the most. The wealth and the defenceless position of the monasteries, pointed these out as the chief objects of their attack.

A day of retribution had come. God’s hand was sore upon those who called themselves His people. His wrath seemed to burn. The church had now to pay dearly for her worldly greatness and glory. It had been her ambition for centuries and Charlemagne had raised the clergy to great wealth and worldly honour. But, scarcely had they been seated in their palaces, when the tide of barbaric invasion began to desolate the empire, and lay waste the religious edifices. The richer the abbey, the more tempting the prey, and the more remorseless the sword of the barbarian. Ignorant of the different orders of clergy, they massacred indiscriminately. Fire and sword were their weapons throughout their whole career. “France was covered with bishops and monks, flying from their ruined cloisters, their burning monasteries, their desolate churches, bearing with them the precious relics of their saints, and so deepening the universal panic, and preaching despair wherever they went.”

To purchase repose from the warlike Normans, who forced their way up the Seine, and for two years besieged the city of Paris, Charles the Simple, of France, ceded the duchy of Normandy to their leader Rollo in 905. Thus the pirate of the Baltic assumed the Christian religion, became first Duke of Normandy, and one of the twelve peers of France. William, conqueror of England in 1066, was the seventh Duke of Normandy.

**England**, like France, was greatly harassed and desolated by the Northmen. The first descent, which was severely felt, was about the year 830. From that time these invasions were incessant. And here, as in France, they found the richest booty in the defenceless monastery. The sanctuaries were wasted with fire and sword. At length, after the victory gained by Alfred over Guthrum in 878, a large territory was ceded to the Danes in the East of England, on condition of their embracing Christianity, and living under equal laws with the native inhabitants. But the peace thus obtained was only for a time.<sup>117</sup>

### **THE SUPPOSED END OF THE WORLD**

No period in church history, or perhaps in any history, or in any country, presents a darker picture than christian Europe at the close of the tenth century. The degradation of the papacy, the corrupt state of the church within, and the number and power of her enemies without, threatened her complete overthrow. Besides the unbelieving Mahometans in the East, and the pagan Northmen in the West, a new enemy the *Hungarians* — burst unexpectedly upon Christendom. In the strong language of history, they seemed as hordes of savages, or wild beasts, let loose upon mankind. Their source was unknown, but their numbers appeared inexhaustible. Indiscriminate massacre seemed their only war law: civilization and Christianity withered before their desolating march, and all mankind were panic-stricken.

In addition to these appalling calamities, famines prevailed and brought plague and pestilence in their train. The most alarming signs were supposed to be seen in the sun and the moon. The prediction of our Lord seemed to be accomplished: “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” But, though these words fitly describe the state of things then, the prophecy was far from being fulfilled; as our Lord immediately adds, “And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” (Luke 21: 25-27)

But if ever man might be forgiven the dream of believing that the end of the world was come, it was then. The clergy preached it, and people believed it, and it rapidly spread over all Europe. It was boldly promulgated that the world would come to an end when a thousand years from the Saviour’s birth were expired. From about the year 960 the panic increased, but the year 999 was looked upon as the last which any one would ever see. This general delusion, through the power of Satan, was founded on a total misunderstanding and false interpretation of the prophecy concerning the millennial reign of the saints with Christ for a thousand years. “Blessed and

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<sup>117</sup> Robertson, vol. 2, p. 360.

holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and *shall reign with him a thousand years.*” (Rev. 20: 1-7)

### **THE YEAR OF TERROR**

The ordinary cares and employments of this life were given up. The land was left untilled; for why plough, why sow, when no one would be left to reap? Houses were allowed to fall into decay; for why build, why repair, why trouble about property, when a few months will put an end to all terrestrial things? History was neglected; for why chronicle events, when no posterity was expected to read the records? The rich, the noble, the princes, and bishops, abandoned their friends and families, and hastened to the shores of Palestine, in the persuasion that Mount Zion would be the throne of Christ when He descended to judge the world. Large sums of money were given to churches and monasteries, as if to secure a more favourable sentence from the supreme Judge. Kings and emperors begged at monastery doors, to be admitted as brethren of the holy order; crowds of the common people slept in the porches of the holy buildings, or at least under their shadow.

But in the meantime the multitudes must be fed. The last day of the thousand years had not yet arrived. But food there was none, corn and cattle were exhausted, and no provision had been made for the future. The most frightful extremities were endured, far too revolting to be repeated here. But the day of doom drew nearer and nearer. The last evening of the thousand years arrived: a sleepless night for all Europe! Imagination must fill up the doleful picture. But in place of some extraordinary convulsion, which all were tremblingly waiting for, the night passed away as other nights had done, and in the morning the sun shed forth his beams as peacefully as ever. The amazed but now relieved multitudes began to return to their homes, repair their buildings, plough, sow, and resume their former occupations.

Thus closed the first thousand years of the church’s history; the darkest day in the reign of Jezebel, and in the annals of Christendom.

# SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

## CHAPTER 18

### THE CHURCH-BUILDING SPIRIT REVIVED

The beginning of the eleventh century was marked by great activity in repairing and building churches; and, but for the many uses to which these sacred edifices were applied by the poor people, they might not be worthy of our notice. We may reasonably suppose that during the past thirty or forty years there had been little disposition to engage in such works. But when the awful night was past, and when the first day of the year 1001 shone upon the world, the hopes of all nations revived. Men's minds had reached, with the close of the tenth century, the lowest point, but from that date a manifest rise was apparent: and their first attention was given to the holy buildings, by whose virtues, as they believed, judgment had been turned away, and the favour of heaven restored.

This superstitious feeling was no doubt what led to those great architectural efforts and results which characterize this period. Many of them are now standing, to attest the greatness of the plan and the solidity of the work. "The foundations were broad and deep, the walls of immense thickness, roofs steep and high, to keep off the rain and snow... Tall pillars supported the elevated vault, instead of the flat roof of former days... The great square tower, which typified resistance to worldly aggression, was exchanged for the tall and graceful spire, which pointed encouragingly to heaven."<sup>118</sup>

But we must not suppose that the uses and purposes of those enormous buildings were merely as places of public worship. The **village church** in mediaeval times was equal to a number of separate buildings in our own day. It was large enough to enable the greater part of the population to wander in its aisles. The cottages of the poor were then miserable hovels, without windows, into which they retired to sleep. But the vast, beautiful building consecrated by religion was the poor man's mansion, where he spent his leisure time, and where he felt as if it all belonged to himself. It was like the town-hall, the market-place, the newsroom, the school-room, and the meeting-place of friends, all in one. We, who live in the comfortable houses of the nineteenth century, can have no just idea of the uses and convenience of such buildings. But all tended, like everything else in those times, to increase the power of the clergy, and the servility of the people. Not only was the sanctuary hallowed, but the priests became glorified, in the eyes of the people, and far outshone even the dignity of kings.

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<sup>118</sup> James White's *Eighteen Christian Centuries*.

## THE REVIVAL OF LITERATURE

The beginning of the eleventh century was not only famous for the putting forth of great architectural skill, but also for the renewed energies of the human mind in the various departments of learning. The long, dull, unquestioning belief of ages was now to be disturbed by a free and wholesome inquiry.

The intellectual energy of Europe, it is said, was in a condition of gradual decay from the fifth to the middle of the eighth century, and though the condition of the British isles, and the labours of the **venerable Bede**, may seem to furnish some exception to the general rule, it was then that ignorance reached its widest and darkest boundaries. Bede, we may observe in passing, is spoken of as the man who most eminently deserves to be called England's teacher. He was born in the year 673, in the village of Jarrow in Northumberland; he was a monk and a priest, but a most devout, laborious, and godly man: the instruction of youth had been one of the great objects of his life, which he continued till his latest hours: he died in the midst of his beloved scholars, May 26th, 735.<sup>119</sup>

## THE REVIVAL OF LETTERS BY THE ARABS

We now meet with a somewhat curious and unexpected phenomenon in the history of literature during these dark ages, and though it may not properly fall within the line of our church history, it is too interesting and important to overlook. The professed teachers of Christendom were at this time, as is well known, sunk in the very depths of ignorance; but we find the Saracens had risen to be the students and the teachers of the national literature of Greece. This was the remarkable state of things at the beginning of the eleventh century.

We have already seen that in the seventh century the companions and successors of Mahomet desolated the face of the earth with their arms, and darkened it by their ignorance, and the acts of barbarism ascribed to them — such as the burning of the Alexandrian library, attest their contempt for learning, and their aversion for the monuments which they destroyed. In the eighth century they seem to have settled down in the countries which they subdued, and, with the advantages of a finer climate and a richer soil, they began to study the sciences and useful knowledge. “In the ninth [century],” says Dean Waddington, “under the auspices of a wise and munificent Caliph, they applied the same ardour to the pursuit of literature which had heretofore been confined to the exercise of arms. Ample schools were founded in the principal cities of Asia, Bagdad, and Cufa, and Bassora; numerous libraries were formed with care and diligence, and men of learning and science were solicitously invited to the splendid court of Almamunis. Greece which had civilized the Roman republic, and was destined in a much later age, to

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<sup>119</sup> Neander, vol. 5, p. 197.

enlighten the extremities of the West, was now called upon to turn the stream of her lore into the barren bosom of Asia; for Greece was still the only land possessing an original literature. Her noblest productions were now translated into the ruling language of the East, and the Arabians took pleasure in pursuing the speculations, or submitting to the rules, of her philosophy.

“The impulse thus given to the genius and industry of Asia was communicated with inconceivable rapidity along the shores of Egypt and Africa to the schools of Seville and Cordova; and the shock was not felt least sensibly by those who last received it. Henceforward the genius of learning accompanied even the arms of the Saracens. They conquered Sicily, from Sicily they invaded the southern provinces of Italy and, as if to complete the eccentric revolution of Grecian literature, the wisdom of Pythagoras was restored to the land of its origin by the descendants of an Arabian warrior.”<sup>120</sup>

### **THE LEARNING OF THE ARABS IMPORTED INTO CHRISTENDOM**

Pope **Sylvester II**, who filled the chair of St. Peter when the first morning of the eleventh century dawned upon Europe, formed the link between the wisdom and learning of the Arabians, and the ignorance and credulity of the Romans. He had studied at the Mahometan schools in the royal city of Cordova, where he had acquired much useful knowledge as to this life, which he began to teach and practise in Rome. But such was the dark superstition of the people generally, that they attributed his great acquirements to the arts of magic, and maintained that such powers could only be possessed through a compact with the evil one. For ages after Pope Sylvester was remembered with horror, lest the throne of St. Peter should have been filled by a necromancer. But as time passed on, and the darkness of the tenth century was more and more left behind, there arose a race of men who were distinguished, not merely for great philosophic attainments, but for the study of the holy scriptures, and for their devotedness to the progress of Christianity. To have learned to read, and to have attended to the meaning of words, at such a time, especially in connection with the sacred writings, were blessings to mankind. The superiority of the eleventh over the tenth century must be chiefly ascribed to the improvements and advancement in learning, as a means in the Lord's hands.

But we must say another word about Sylvester. It would be unfair to leave so great and so good a man under the dark shade of the people's prejudices. He is spoken of by enlightened and impartial history as the most eminent prelate of his age. His own name was **Gerbert**. “In learning peerless, in piety unimpeachable, was Gerbert of Ravenna,” says Milman. He was the tutor, guide, and friend of Robert, the son and successor of Hugh Capet, who, by a great but silent revolution, was raised to the throne of the imbecile race of

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<sup>120</sup> Waddington's *History*, vol. 2, p. 44.

Charlemagne, in the year 987. The royal pupil seems to have profited by the instructions of Gerbera. He came to the throne of France about the year 996, and reigned till the year 1031. He was a great friend to learning, died lamented, and was surnamed the Sage. In 998 Gerbera was appointed pope by Otho III, Emperor of Germany, when he took the name of Sylvester II. He died May 12th, 1003.

### **TRACES OF THE SILVER LINE OF GOD'S GRACE**

**Stephen**, a most pious prince of Hungary, was baptized by Adelbert, bishop of Prague, and began to reign in the year 997. He was a most zealous supporter of the gospel, schools, and missionary work. He often accompanied the preachers, and sometimes preached himself. His pious queen, **Gisla**, daughter of Henry III, greatly assisted him. He also introduced many social reforms, was kind to the poor, and endeavoured to suppress all impiety throughout his dominions. He lived to see, under the blessing of God, all Hungary become externally christian. He died in the year 1038. A change of government brought about persecution, and the pious labourers were interrupted in their good work.

**Othingar**, a bishop of Denmark, and **Unwan**, bishop of Hamburg, were earnest, devoted, servants of Christ, and used by Him for the spread of the truth. **John**, a Scotchman, the bishop of Mecklenburg, baptized great numbers of the Sclavonians, but the Prussians resisted all attempts to introduce the gospel among them. **Boleslaus**, king of Poland, endeavoured by force to evangelize them, but in vain. Then eighteen missionaries, under one Boniface, went to labour among the Prussians, by means of the peaceful gospel, but they were all massacred by that barbarous people. They seem to have been the last of the European nations who submitted to the yoke of Christ. Christianity had no footing in Prussia till the thirteenth century.

The reign of **Olave**, who became king of Sweden towards the end of the tenth century, and died about 1024, was famous for the propagation of the gospel in that country. The zeal of the English clergy embraced the opportunity, and many of them went over to preach the gospel in Sweden; among them was **Sigfred**, archdeacon of York, who laboured many years among the Swedes. But the zeal of Olave led him to use violent measures in the spread of Christianity, and excited a general hatred against him among the adherents of the old religion. After many struggles, and much bloodshed, the christian religion was firmly established about the end of the eleventh century. The number of churches in Sweden was increased to about eleven hundred.

The progress of the gospel in Norway had been slow from the time of Ausgar's mission; but when **Olave**, son of Harold, became king in 1015, he determined to carry on the good work with great zeal. Many missionaries were invited from England, at their head was a bishop named **Grimkil**, who drew up a code of ecclesiastical laws for Norway. But the king pursued the

system — too common in those days, but always the Roman system — of enforcing Christianity by such means as confiscation and severe bodily punishments, even unto death. He often had to encounter armed resistance. At length a conference was agreed upon. The king and his missionary, Grimkil, met the heathen priest at Dalen, in 1025. Olave, it is said, spent a great part of the night in prayer. The god Thor, who was represented as superior to the Christians' God, because he could be seen, was brought into the place of conference. When they met in the morning, the king pointed to the rising sun as a visible witness to his God who created it; and while the heathen were gazing on its brightness, a gigantic soldier raised his club, and broke the idol to pieces. A swarm of loathsome creatures, thus rudely disturbed, rushed forth, and, running in all directions, the men of Dalen were convinced of the vanity of the old superstition, and consented to be baptized. Olave was afterwards slain in a civil war, but it was rumoured that his blood had healed a wound in the hand of the warrior who killed him; and many other miracles were said to have been wrought by him. He was canonized, and St. Olave was chosen as the patron of Norway.

The triumphs of the gospel were especially conspicuous in **Denmark** towards the end of this century. "Look," says Adam of Bremen, who wrote in the year 1080; "Look at that **very ferocious nation of the Danes**; for a long time they have been accustomed to celebrate the praises of God. Look at that piratical people; they are now content with the fruits of their own country. Look at that horrid region, formerly altogether inaccessible on account of idolatry; they now eagerly admit the preachers of the word." History represents the Danes and the English as enjoying a kind of millennial scene at this time, through the effects of missionary labours. In mutual confidence and charity they were enjoying together the blessings of Christianity. This must have been indeed wonderful and surprising to those who had known with what savage barbarity the Danes had formerly desolated the dwellings of the English. These were the peaceful triumphs of the gospel of Christ. The preaching of the cross, attended with the energy of the Holy Spirit, is sure to effect such blessed and salutary changes in the rudest people. The gospel not only emancipates the immortal soul from the slavery and doom of sin, but it greatly ameliorates the condition of man in this life, and diffuses through the world the precepts of peace, order, and good government. These are the native effects of the gospel, but they are often marred and hindered by the natural enmity of the heart, especially by those who have the sword on their side.

**Lanfranc and Anselm** are names famous in church history at this time, though not so much for grace as for learning and controversy: both were archbishops of Canterbury. They had both been monks, and celebrated teachers in that humble rank. Upwards of four thousand scholars attended the prelections of Lanfranc when a monk at Caen. Anselm was of equal reputation in Normandy. Lanfranc, however has the unenviable reputation of confirming, by his great influence and learning, the dogma of

transubstantiation. In the darkness of the tenth century it had made its first authoritative appearance in the church. It was attacked by **Berengar** of Tours, who used all the powers of his mind, and all the resources within his reach, to demonstrate its unsoundness. But Lanfranc defended it, and having the majority of the clergy on his side, Berengar was confuted, stripped of all his preferments, and condemned to a rigorous seclusion for the remainder of his life. *Berengarism* became a term of reproach, and was considered a heresy. Thus the mysterious dogma of the **Real Presence** was established about the middle of the eleventh century. Lanfranc died in 1089. William Rufus appointed Anselm to be his successor. He has the reputation of being a great divine, a sincere Christian, and most blameless in his life. He died in 1109, being the sixteenth year of his archbishopric, and the seventy-sixth of his age. Both Lanfranc and Anselm, we need scarcely say, were zealous supporters of the power of Rome.

**Margaret**, Queen of Scotland, was evidently a divine channel of God's grace in those days, notwithstanding the legality of Popery. She was the daughter of Ethelred, and sister to Edgar Atheling, the last of the Saxon line of princes. The rapacity and profaneness of the Norman princes, especially of William Rufus, led Edgar and Margaret to seek a safe retreat in Scotland. **King Malcolm Canmore** married the English princess. The most wonderful things are related of her piety, liberality, and humility. Her character was fitted to throw a lustre over a purer age. She had by Malcolm six sons and two daughters. Three of her sons reigned successively, and her daughter, Matilda, was wife to Henry I of England, and was considered a pious Christian.

As the life and character of Margaret will give a better view or embodiment of Romish Christianity in one of its brightest examples, than we could describe, we will quote a few passages from real life. "The royal lady, who has been honoured with canonization, though very superstitious, and somewhat ostentatious in her acts of beneficence, nevertheless possessed many eminent virtues, and must be ranked among the best of our queens. She exercised unbounded influence over her brave but illiterate husband, who, though unable to read her books of devotion, was accustomed fervently to kiss them. Every morning she prepared food for nine orphans, and on her bended knees she fed them. With her own hands she ministered at table to crowds of indigent persons, who assembled to share her bounty; and nightly, before retiring to rest, she gave a still more striking proof of her humility by washing the feet of six of them. She was frequently in church, prostrate before the altar, and there, with sighs and tears and protracted prayers, she offered herself a sacrifice to the Lord. When the season of Lent came round, besides reciting particular offices, she went over the whole Psalter twice or thrice within twenty-four hours. Before repairing to public Mass, she prepared herself for the solemnity by hearing five or six private masses, and when the whole service was over, she fed twenty-four on-hangers and thus illustrated her faith by her works. It was not till these were satisfied that she

retired to her own scanty meal But with all this parade of humility, there was an equal display of pride. Her dress was gorgeous, her retinue large and her coarse fare must needs be served on dishes of gold and silver, a thing unheard of in Scotland till her time.

“Fortunate in having obtained a good education, St. Margaret was particularly fond of showing her learning and knowledge of the scriptures. She often discoursed with the clergy of Scotland on questions of theology, and through her influence Lent was henceforward observed according to the Catholic institution. She did good service to religion and virtue in many ways; but the life of this good queen was shortened by the severity of her fasts. They gradually under undermined her constitution... She was lying, wasted and dying, with the crucifix before her, when her son, Edgar arrived from the battle of Alnwick. ‘How fares it with the King and my Edward?’ said the dying mother. The young man stood silent. ‘I know it all,’ she cried, ‘I know it all By this holy cross, by your filial affection, I adjure you, tell me the truth.’ ‘Your husband and your son are both slain,’ said the youth. Lifting her hands and her eyes to heaven, she devoutly said, ‘Praise and blessing be to thee, Almighty God that thou hast been pleased to make me endure so bitter anguish in the hour of my departure, thereby, as I trust, to purify me in some measure from the corruptions of my sins and Thou, Lord Jesus Christ, who, through the will of the Father, has enlivened the world by Thy death, oh, deliver me!’ While the words were yet upon her lips she softly expired.”<sup>121</sup>

### **REFLECTIONS ON THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT OF ROME**

We have seen, in tracing the good work of the gospel in different countries, the activity, energy and aggressive character of the church of Rome. And although there was a fearful amount of human tradition, and many foolish absurdities, mixed up with “the gospel of God,” still the name of Jesus Christ was proclaimed, and salvation through Him though not alas through Him alone. Nevertheless God in grace could use that blessed name, and give the eye of faith to see its preciousness, amongst the rubbish of Roman superstition. The full, clear, gospel of Christ was completely lost. It was no longer Christ *only*, but Christ and a thousand other things. They were eloquent in preaching good works, but, at the same time, they obscured the faith from which all good works should spring. “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;” “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else;” “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;” “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” (John 1:29; Isa. 45:22; Matt. 11:28; John 6:37) These, and such like texts, give the idea of a gospel that brings souls to Christ Himself, by faith alone; not to Christ, and rites and ceremonies innumerable, before the soul can be saved. To be converted to Christ Himself is the best of all

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<sup>121</sup> Cunningham’s *Church History of Scotland*, vol. 1, p. 97, Milner vol. 2, p. 566; Robertson, vol. 2, p. 441.

conversions. To rest on the unfailing efficacy of the blood of Christ is sure salvation to the soul, and perfect peace with God.

There were, no doubt, many good and earnest men in the missionary field, whose spiritual state may have been much better than their ecclesiastical one, and whom God may have used to gather precious souls to Himself. But there can be no doubt that the spirit of Rome's missionaries was more of proselytizing to the church of Rome than to the faith and obedience of Christ. Baptism, and implicit, unquestioning, subjection to the authority of the pope, was the demand made on all converts, ruler or subject. Faith in Christ was not looked for. The ambition of the Roman See was to embrace the whole world, and, as far as Europe was concerned, all public profession of Christianity which professed independence of the Roman domination was to be immediately suppressed, and utterly destroyed.

Just about this time, a monk of humble origin, but of the most extraordinary character, appeared on the scene. In him were accomplished all the fond dreams of dominion over the human mind. Till now the mission of the Papacy had never been fulfilled. But as there never had been such a Pope before, and never has been such a Pope since, we must briefly sketch his unparalleled career.