

Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

***The True Story of the Roman Catholic Church***

*Joseph McCabe*

**In Six Double Volumes**

**Volume 3**

**How the Pope's Power Was  
Made and Enforced**

**Volume 4**

**How Rome Made and Ruled  
the Dark Ages**

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## CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter I. The Beginnings of Papal Supremacy.....	5
(1) The Ruin of Europe. (2) The Greek Church Secedes in Disgust. (3) The Last Rebels in Europe.	
Chapter II. Europe Sinks As the Pope Rises.....	14
(1) The Collapse of Civilization. (2) The Early Monks.	
Chapter III. What Rome Did for Europe.....	22
(1) The Glorification of Ignorance. (2) The Duping of the Ignorant Masses. (3) Europe Flooded With Spurious Relics.	
Chapter IV. Trickery of the Greater Popes.....	30
(1) The Ambition of Leo the Great. (2) The Duplicity of Gregory the Great.	
Chapter V. The Roman Church of the Sixth Century.....	37
(1) Rome Under the Goths. (2) The Degradation of the Roman See. (3) Europe Sinks Back Into Barbarism.	
Chapter VI. Rome and Europe Become Brutal.....	46
(1) Rome Sinks to Savagery. (2) The State of Europe. (3) The Monks and Nuns.	
Chapter VII. The Forged Deeds of the Temporal Power.....	56
(1) The Early Development. (2) The Blessed Peter Writes a Letter. (3) The Masterpiece of Forgery.	

# HOW THE POPE'S POWER WAS MADE AND ENFORCED

## CHAPTER I

### THE BEGINNINGS OF PAPAL SUPREMACY

**F**ROM the year 600 B. C., when the Greeks had begun to apply their genius to the development of civilization, to the year 400 A. D., when the Goths and Vandals broke upon the Roman Empire, is a very great millennium in human history. During that stretch of time the race had made more progress in art and culture, in humane ideals and political freedom, than during the previous three thousand years. Next let us observe that about the year 400 A. D. the Roman Church established itself as the sole religion of Europe, and in the course of the next half century it destroyed the last traces of all other religions and its Pope became the spiritual ruler of the western world. Those are two outstanding and familiar facts of history. And it is an equally outstanding and familiar fact of history that from the latter date, 400 A. D., the civilization of Europe steadily sank until, by the tenth century, this world which bowed in subjection to the Bishop of Rome was in a condition which historians describe as barbaric.

This is the next phase of the history of the Church of Rome that we have to study, and our chief interest in it is, obviously, to ascertain whether the Church of Rome was in any degree, and in what degree, responsible for this collapse of civilization. The Romanist indignantly says no, but his Church offers us, as usual, two different versions of this stretch of history: one to be presented to the uneducated mass of the faithful, the other for Catholics who have had a college education. The first, which is still found in popular Catholic literature and which the average priest is quite ignorant enough to include honestly in his sermons, is that there was no collapse of civilization. The Goths and Vandals who broke upon the Roman Empire at this time may have shattered its material frame and dissipated its wealth, but this loss was compensated by the conversion of the Roman world to ways of sobriety and virtue. It is becoming increasingly difficult to protect this ancient fairy tale, even in the mind of the uneducated, when the Church has, in order to retain its small cultivated minority, to tolerate such fairly candid historians as the late Mgr. Duchesne, the distinguished French scholar who preferred to remain in the Church and endeavor to modernize its culture. I have in the previous two books quoted many candid admissions from Duchesne's *History of the Early Church*, and it will be useful here to make a final reference to the significance of his work.

His third volume brings him to the triumph of the Church of Rome and the fall of the Empire, and he is compelled to face the tradition of his Church that there was a great moral improvement. In effect, while tempering his admission with much vague and diplomatic language, he grants that there was not. He finds that the Roman nobles who clung to the old religion and resisted the pressure of the Emperors and the law were, as I said, "persons of substance whose virtues, both public and private, crowned with honor the end of the old religion" (p. 131).— He finds a corresponding group of good men in the ranks of the Christians. To these he gives ten pages, while ten lines suffice for the virtuous pagans. But, apart from a few devout bishop-monks, and apart from the group of zealous women at Rome which I described, he can name less than a dozen of these eminent Christians, and only two of these are Romans. He searches the world from Constantinople to Spain, from 350 to 450, for this "select band," the "real Christians," the men who "refrained even from entering the ranks of the clergy, whom they considered still too much occupied with the things of the world" (p. 5). His vague assurance that there were "many others" does not impress us. The mass of the people he finds unchanged. Their temples were closed but "the places of amusement, even of the most objectionable character, retained their clientèle." In short, he asks candidly whether the world had not conquered the Church instead of the Church conquering the world. And before he died, a few years ago, Duchesne carried his story a century further in a new volume, "*L'Eglise au VIe siècle*" (1925), the finest historical work produced in the Catholic Church for a long time. It is not translated into English. It is too ironical. Wherever it touches the Roman Church—it deals mainly with the other churches—it is written almost in the mood of Anatole France. Duchesne very nearly tells the truth about the Church of Rome in his four volumes and the notes to his translation of the Pontifical Chronicle, and his disdainful smile at the popular Catholic version becomes more and more frequent as he approaches the Middle Ages.

We shall see the facts about this supposed moral conversion of the Roman world. They are so notorious that in the select literature which educated Catholics read the story runs differently from in popular literature. It was the design of Providence, we are told, that the strength of the Church should be tried by two terrible ordeals before it came to rule over Christendom. The first was the series of persecutions by the Roman Emperors, the second the flood of barbarism that poured over Europe just at the moment of its conversion. How can one expect to find a moral and spiritual uplift when, in the new Europe, the robust passions of millions of barbarians from the forests of Germany are added to the obstinate vices of the Romans? What could we find but ages of violence when law and schools were swept away in the flood? What the Church did, we are told, was marvelous. It applied itself to the necessarily long and laborious task of civilizing the barbarians. It created a school system. It abolished slavery. It erected thousands of monastic refuges for the virtuous and the studious. Time and

again its constructive work was checked or destroyed by fresh hordes of barbarians from the north, but in such time as any reasonable person could expect the fruit appeared: the glorious art, the intense intellectual life, the democratic guilds and cities, the wonderful saints of the Middle Ages.

In this and the next book I am going to show that this version of history from 400 to 1500 A. D. is as false as the claim that the Roman Church had been fragrant with saints and martyrs in its first three centuries or that it had won the spontaneous submission of the Roman world in the fourth century. Let one undisputed historical fact be clearly understood from the outset. Roman civilization did not perish at the first onset of the Goths and Vandals, but there was little left of it by 500 A. D.; yet the art and intellectual life and comparative idealism of the Middle Ages did not appear until the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Between the years 500 and 1000 at least lies a period of barbarism, yet the Roman Church had during that time an extraordinary power over Europe. I am going to show, by historical facts, that it is quite false that it takes five centuries to civilize even barbarians: that it is false that fresh invasions of barbarians explain the appallingly long reign of squalor and violence: that the Church of Rome was, during most of the time, itself too corrupt to civilize Europe: that it obstructed all attempts to restore education and learning, did not emancipate either slaves or serfs, and was the least important of the forces that at last shaped a new civilization in Europe. I shall still write my history entirely from the contemporary documents of each age, and though I can no longer refer the reader to English translations of these, for from 500 to 1100 there are few documents that are fit to translate, I shall still quote the authorities and have the support of distinguished modern historians. But I have to add that recent American works on the history of Europe at this period are very misleading. They are in very few cases based upon the original authorities and where they depart from the older historians they, on the plea of avoiding sectarian feeling, are making improper concessions to Catholic Untruth. We shall see this at the close of the present book.

## §1. THE RUIN OF EUROPE

In Vol. 19 of my "Key to Culture" I have described the invasion and destruction of the Roman Empire by the northern barbarians, but some readers of this work may not have the volume and I will give a short summary. We have good reason to believe that about and after the beginning of the Christian Era the climate of central and western Asia changed, and vast regions were stricken with drought. The Chinese had already built their famous Great Wall against the barbaric nomads of central Asia, and when, in the fourth century, these found themselves too populous for Asia to support them, they moved westward. These fierce Huns, as we call them, probably more than two hundred thousand in number, fell, from Russia, upon the Goths who lived in the valley of the Danube and forced them across the river; and the misconduct of the officers of

the Greek Emperor stung them into rebellion. They soon learned the weakness of Rome, and whole armed nations of Teutonic and Asiatic barbarians moved over Europe and trod out its institutions. Half a million Goths marched into Italy and in the year 410 sacked the city of Rome. Quarter of a million Huns rode across Europe to France, and in a single battle between these and the Goths and Romans 162,000 men are said to have been slain. The eastern Goths, another immense horde, settled in Italy. The Vandals crossed the Rhine from Germany, marched over France, over Spain, and along the north of Africa as far as Carthage. The western Goths pursued them and settled in Spain. And other immense hordes of Teutonic barbarians, aroused in the German forests by the din of war and the news of loot, joined in the work of devastation. It was then that the Anglo-Saxons took over Britain.

In all certainly more than a million barbarians moved across the face of the Roman Empire, many traveling in entire nations for one or two thousand miles, looting and killing wherever they went. Civilized institutions remained for a time only in the few large areas which escaped them. Rome had long employed the Teutons as soldiers, even as commanders of the armies, and these took over the Empire and in 476 forced the last Roman Emperor to abdicate. Law, municipal institutions and schools had nearly all disappeared by the year 500. Rome was twice in the fifth century taken and thoroughly looted. The wealthy Romans were impoverished, and the armies of slaves on the great estates were disbanded, to become in time the serfs of the new barbaric land-owners. These hordes would naturally travel along the roads which the Romans had built across the Empire, and they wrecked the towns and cities which were threaded on the roads. Culture survived here and there in a country mansion or a retired small town for a time, but by the sixth century it seemed to die of discouragement in that world of violence. That is, broadly, what we mean by the destruction of the Roman Empire in the fifth century. Whether it ought really to take six centuries to restore civilization we shall consider at a later stage.

## §2. THE GREEK CHURCH SECEDES IN DISGUST

We saw that the vast size of the Empire had long before compelled the Emperors to divide it into eastern and western, or Greek and Latin, halves, with separate rulers. As the invaders came from the east and drove the barbarians westward before them, and as south-eastern Europe is well protected by the mountains of the Balkans and Greece, the eastern or Greek Empire was less seriously threatened, and it successfully defended itself against invasion. It is obvious that here you have the first means of testing the assertion of Catholic writers, which is so lightly borrowed by some other historians, that the barbaric invasion fully explains the collapse of civilization in Europe. For many centuries the Greek Empire continued to be free from invaders. Did it sustain the high level of Greco-Roman culture? Not in the least. I have written the story of its court-life in my "Empresses of Constantinople" and of the

Russian court-life, when the Greek Church spread to Russia, in my "Romance of the Romanoffs," and this picture of Greek Christian life at its highest level is repulsive in the extreme. As the Greek Church corresponds almost completely, apart from the authority of the Pope, to the Roman Church, we have at once a grave suspicion that the ritual and priestly form which Christianity had assumed both in east and west has a great deal to do with the collapse of civilization.

First, however, let us see how the Greek and Roman Churches divided, and the Pope was thus freed from his strongest rival. We have already seen that the Greek Churches had to the end of the fourth century rejected every single pretension of the Popes to exert authority over them. Compliments they could quite easily, and often sincerely, pay to the Roman Church for its wealth, its metropolitan importance, and its supposed foundation by two of the greatest of the apostles. There were, in fact, such passionate, even sanguinary, quarrels during all this time in the east that at times a prelate was anxious to secure the support of Rome against his rivals, and on such occasions the compliments to the Roman Church were very florid. But the Catholic who allows his writers to persuade him that these florid phrases imply a recognition of the supreme authority of the Pope should look rather to the historical facts. On not one single occasion did any eastern Church admit that the Pope had authority over it.

During the pontificate of Pope Leo I (St. Leo, or Leo the Great), whose personal character we will consider later, since he is one of the only two Popes of conspicuous ability in a thousand years, another heresy appeared in the east. For twenty years the east had been torn, and occasionally stained with blood, over the heresy of Nestorius—which, by the way, Duchesne now discovers to have been no heresy at all—and then, in 448, the abbot of one of the largest monasteries in the neighborhood of Constantinople was found to be teaching heresy. The archbishop condemned him and he appealed to Leo. It was the kind of opportunity a Pope loved. Leo wrote, in lordly vein, to tell the Archbishop of Constantinople that he was surprised that he, the Pope, had not been consulted on the matter. His reverend brother drily replied that he had merely condemned a heretic, but before the matter could go further the Emperor summoned a Council at Ephesus, presided over by the Archbishop of Alexandria. This was the council, known in history as "The Robbers' Meeting," at which the monks of the heretical abbot and the soldiers of his eunuch godson burst into the chamber with staves and swords, kicked and bruised the Archbishop of Constantinople—one version is that it was the Archbishop of Alexandria who trampled on him—and compelled the bishops to acquit the heretic. The Pope's Legates were contemptuously refused a hearing.

In view of this terrible quarrel between the Sees of Constantinople and Alexandria Pope Leo now moved heaven and earth to get a Council at Rome under his own presidency. His letters show him making desperate appeals to every member of the imperial

family to use their influence. But the Greeks refused, and a great council was summoned at Chalcedon in 451. The Pope's letters (especially 82 and 83) show that he made spirited efforts to prevent this, and at least he secured that his Legates should preside over the solemn gathering of six hundred bishops. This was natural, as the two great eastern churches were the litigants whose case was to be judged. The heretic was duly condemned. But the Pope had instructed his Legates to demand also a sitting in which they should discuss "the definition of the Fathers and the dignity of the Pope": in other words, the question of Papal supremacy. This additional sitting was held, but the Papal Legates were not present. They seemed to have forgotten their instructions. In reality, they knew what was going to happen. I give the canon or decision of this session in the words of Bishop Hefele, the Catholic historian:

As in all things we follow the ordinances of the holy fathers and know the recently read canon of the hundred and fifty bishops [of the Council of Constantinople in 381], so do we decree the same in regard to the privileges of the most holy Church of Constantinople. Rightly have the fathers conceded to the See of Old Rome its privileges on account of its character as the Imperial City, and moved by the same considerations, the one hundred and fifty bishops have awarded the like privileges to the most Holy See of New Rome (Hefele's "History of the Councils," iii, 411).

This was just what Leo had instructed his Legates to prevent, and they angrily protested. The Greeks, who seem already to have noticed with some disdain the failing culture of Rome, blandly (and truly) replied that they had merely reaffirmed the decision of the Council of Constantinople. The Legates pretended to know nothing about this important Council, when a Greek bishop explained that he had himself read that canon of the council to the Pope at Rome: which the Pope afterwards untruthfully denied.

What finally confirmed the Greeks in their polite but contemptuous attitude toward Rome was that the Legates now produced a copy, which the Pope had given them, of the sixth canon on the same subject of the great Council of Nicaea. When this was translated for them, the Greek bishops were amazed and indignant to find that Rome had falsified the canon in its own interest! The Latin version made it begin: "The Roman Church always held the Primacy," and there are no such words in the Greek canon. As even Duchesne here weakly pleads that these words were merely an innocent "gloss" on the sixth canon of Nicaea, I give that canon, again in Bishop Hefele's translation:

The old custom in use in Egypt, in Libya and in Pentapolis should continue to exist: that is, that the bishop of Alexandria should have jurisdiction over all these [provinces], for there is a similar relation for the bishop of Rome.

In other words, each metropolitan Church had authority over its own provinces, and, as Constantinople was only then coming into existence and was therefore not mentioned at Nicaea, the later council recognized its authority. Even Cardinal Baronius, the famous old Catholic historian, writes on the margin of his Annals, at the year 325: "From the Nicene Council the Roman Church received nothing." From first to last that was the position of the eastern churches: Rome had no authority outside of its own province. Yet the "great" Pope Leo made this Council of Nicaea give the Papacy everything, and the letters which he addresses to the imperial family and others after the return of his Legates only deepened the disdain of the Greeks. He accused them of ambition! With their usual suave irony they wrote to thank him for presiding, through his Legates, "as the head over the members," but regretted that one of their canons did not seem to meet the approval of his Legates.

Later in the fifth century another Pope, Felix II, made a fresh effort to assert his authority over the universal Church. In 483 another eastern malcontent had come to Rome to complain, and the Pope sent two bishops to Constantinople to see the Emperor and the Archbishop. But the Archbishop imprisoned the Pope's Legates, stole their papers, and then corrupted their loyalty. They were excommunicated on their return to Rome, and, when the Archbishop contemptuously ignored the Papal protest, the Pope decided to excommunicate him also. Felix II seems to have been singularly stupid. He sent a secret agent to stir up the monks at Constantinople and induce them to post up a placard, which he provided, informing Constantinople that he had deposed its Archbishop. Some of these monks actually pinned the notice on the Archbishop's garments, and they paid the penalty by death or imprisonment; and the secret agent was, like his predecessors, corrupted and sent home to be excommunicated.

I have called the Pope's action stupid, but he was really guided by one of his counselors, Gelasius, who succeeded him; and, as Pope Gelasius is noted by some American writers as one of the great and strong Popes, I may add a word about him. In one of his own letters he says that men describe him as "a bitter, sharp-tongued, hard and difficult man." This was, in fact, his character, and, to the disgust of many of his clergy, he refused to hold or permit any communication with the east. His successor, Anastasius II, at once sent a conciliatory mission to the east. It was seething with a new heresy, and his Legates seem to have assured the Emperor that the Pope could be induced to subscribe to it—for which Dante has given Anastasius a very warm corner in his Hell—but the Pope died during the negotiations.

Christendom was divided into Greek and Latin Churches, and there was no further attempt to impose Papal authority in the east until the time of Gregory I, whose painful maneuvers we shall see later. In 518 a Roman embassy was warmly received, on equal terms, in the east, but there was merely an agreement about doctrine. Ten years later Pope John I went in person to Constanti-

nople, but Catholic writers do not say much about this particular "triumph." The fact is that John went to oblige a heretic, King Theodoric, the Goth, and the purpose of his mission was to induce the Greek Catholics to cease persecuting the heretics! "Strange," says Duchesne; but we shall see stranger things.

### §3. THE LAST REBELS IN EUROPE

This is the first part of the making of the primacy of the Pope. The Greek Church, with the Russian and Balkan Churches, decisively reject his claims and leave him to get what sovereignty he can in the west. It is painful for the Catholic writer to reflect that one-half of Christendom had the text about Peter in its Gospels yet never admitted the Papal interpretation of it, and efforts are therefore made to represent that at first the Greeks admitted it and then became rebels and schismatics. The answer is that in Duchesne's four large volumes, which minutely survey the life of the Church until 600 A. D., there is not a single instance in which the Popes claim authority in the east and it is not sharply and contemptuously rejected.

The facts which I gave in the first section of this chapter easily explain how the Pope became supreme in the western half of Christendom. The Councils themselves, as we saw, gave each metropolitan seat such an authority. But the sphere of influence of the Pope was at first very limited and not clearly defined. The patriarchs of the eastern churches consecrated their own bishops, or at least their metropolitan bishops, whereas until the ravaging of the western Empire the Pope had no such power. The Bishop of Milan, we saw, was quite independent of him as long as the court remained at Milan, and the African bishops scornfully rejected his pretension to dictate to them. In short, until the fifth century the Pope's authority was confined to the greater part of Italy, and he could not interfere elsewhere except by invitation.

And just as the Papal ideal is merely a reflection in the ecclesiastical mind of the imperial splendor of Rome itself, so the supremacy which the Popes actually won in the west in the course of the fifth century is an unmistakable effect of the historical circumstances. One by one the provincial cities were ruined and their bishoprics passed to inferior men or to monks. The Vandals thundered across Africa. They were Christians, but Arians, and they summoned the five hundred bishops of the African Church to abandon the heresy of the Trinity. In these trembling hours, it is true, the Africans adopted a humbler tone in their communications with Rome. Might the Popes not help to bring Greek forces to drive out the barbarians, as they eventually did? But the great Church was in ruins, its bishops slain or working like slaves in the mines, long before the Greeks came. The area of revolt against the Papal claim was reduced by another province.

The last act of rebellion in the west came from Gaul, and from a bishop of the highest character, St. Hilary, bishop of Arles. Southern Gaul was, we shall see presently, very demoralized, and Pope

Leo in one of his letters gives us a dark account of the morals of the clergy and the monks. Hilary found reason to depose one of the bishops of his province, and the man fled to Rome: which, we have found, was always ready to give a more than patient hearing to sinners and heretics when they discovered that it had supreme authority. Hilary followed his bishop to Rome, and, when he found that the Pope, just to assert his authority, declared in favor of the lax bishop, he seems to have used language which was not saintly. We are not well informed about the matter, but Leo himself says in one of his letters (No. 10) that Hilary used "language which no layman even should dare to use and no priest to hear." It seems that Hilary "would not allow that he was subject to the Blessed Peter, claiming for himself the right to ordain in all the Churches of Gaul and transferring to himself the dignity due to metropolitan priests, even diminishing the reverence due to the Blessed Peter by the arrogance of his language."

This was in the year 445. The Pope withdrew some of the privileges of the Archbishop of Arles, but how far this had any practical effect we cannot say. Hilary was uneasy at his breach with Rome, and through friends he sought a reconciliation, but the Pope's language makes it clear that he would not grant Leo's contention, that he had supreme authority over all the Churches. It was, however, the last serious attempt to check the ambition of Rome. In 449 the Pope obtained from the Emperor a rescript making it a civil offense to question his authority. Leo quotes the words in one of his letters (No. 11):

We lay down this forever, that neither the bishops of Gaul nor those of any other province shall attempt anything contrary to ancient usage without the authority of the venerable man, the Pope of the Eternal City.

It is true that the imperial authority was itself growing feebler and would soon be extinct, but one more documentary basis was provided for the Papal claim. Soon the remaining cities of Gaul and their clergy sank lower. The Goths strangled Spain, and the Vandals Africa. The age of profound ignorance had begun, and soon there would be bishops who could not even write their own names. So the Pope became supreme in the western Church, after four centuries of resistance. But we must look a little more closely into the state of that world, especially in the days of Leo the Great, to see how easily supremacy could be won and how little it meant for the regeneration of Europe.

## CHAPTER II.

## EUROPE SINKS AS THE POPE RISES

**W**E HAVE now made quite clear the first point that interests us in connection with the early history of the Roman Church: the way in which the Popes obtained their spiritual supremacy. On this point there is no serious controversy: I mean, the historical facts are so clear and certain that, not only has no non-Catholic historian any doubt about the matter, but even in such a Catholic writer as Duchesne, who has some sense of the responsibility of scholarship, they are given substantially as I have given them. It is only by a complete falsification of the evidence that such writers as those of the Catholic Encyclopaedia attempt to prove the Papal claim. Strictly speaking there was no "early Church." There was until the fifth century a federation of Churches. There is such a federation, faithfully preserving the original type, in Greek or oriental Christendom today. The Papal idea of a spiritual monarchy was sternly opposed by the whole of the Churches. But the demoralization of the Roman world reduced it to the state of a province with one large city, Rome, and the Popes took every advantage of the situation. When Europe recovered, centuries later, there ought again to have been a federation of Churches in harmony with the unbroken teaching of the early Fathers and Councils, but Rome had by this time a mass of forged documents to sustain its claim, and any critical inquiry into them was deemed heretical.

My task in this respect is easy, but one cannot quote the same unanimous consent of non-Catholic historians on the second point that interests us: whether this supremacy which the Popes won in virtue of the historical conditions was advantageous to Europe. Popular Catholic literature is, of course, so crude that its claims are easily set aside. There is a small work entitled "The Calvert Handbook of Catholic Facts" which is used very extensively all over America for proselytizing purposes. It deals mainly with modern questions, and in later volumes I will give examples of its mendacity, but there is on page 17 a reference to early history, which sufficiently illustrates the recklessness of the book. It says:

No student worthy of the name who peruses the story of the world can but be impressed with the fact that it was organized Christianity, the Catholic Church, that laid the foundation for all present-day civilization, including the American, in its struggle against paganism beginning in the days when Catholics fled the wild beasts and the faggots of persecuting Roman Emperors. . . .

If educated Catholics silently tolerate the use of this sort of mixture of bluff and crass ignorance in their Church they cannot complain

if we speak disdainfully of its culture. They may, however, retort that there are now non-Catholic historians who would not sanction the position of those of us who claim that Rome actually hindered and retarded the construction of a new civilization in Europe. They find, on the contrary, that the centering of authority in Rome and the provision of monasteries and nunneries as refuges for the peaceful and virtuous were great advantages in so lawless an age and contributed greatly to the restoration of civilization. This theory is now not uncommonly taught in the public schools and colleges as part of the modern historical conception of the Middle Ages, yet this view, instead of being based upon a new and more critical examination of early and medieval literature, is a timid, superficial, and unscientific surrender to Catholic pressure. It follows the Catholic custom of selecting a few favorable documents out of a mass of dishonoring documents, of emphasizing a few good men and ignoring the general depravity. It is entirely false, as I will now show by examining the original authorities for each successive age.

### §1. THE COLLAPSE OF CIVILIZATION

In order to prove the essential falseness of all these general assertions about Rome and civilization we must, as far as possible, take each age in succession and examine it thoroughly. Here I confine myself to the fifth century, the period of transition from Roman civilization to barbarism, and the chief point we have to make clear is whether we do in fact discover any social or moral improvement of Europe before the violent movements of the barbarians have had their full effect. The Roman Church itself, in the narrower sense, I leave to the next chapter; but I may say that during the greater part of the century little light is thrown on its character, and that when, at the beginning of the sixth century, a series of scandalous and sanguinary feuds do throw some light on it, we shall find it as lax and vicious as in the days of "St." Damasus.

As the imperial court took up residence in Rome once more in the year 403, though the worthless Emperor fled to the end of Italy when the Goths approached, its character is of some interest; for it now lived under the eyes of the Popes. Of the Emperor Honorius himself it will be enough to say, in the words of a famous historian, that one can write the history of those momentous twenty-eight years of his reign, including the fall of Rome, almost without mentioning him. He had not the grit of a eunuch, and he left his Empire to the conflict of rival ambitions and Teutonic generals while he played like a boy. The rumor of a later age said that when he was told that the barbarians had taken Rome he understood them to mean a favorite hen which he had named Rome, and he wept, finding consolation only when they explained that they meant merely the city of Rome. The Pope made no protest when, in 408, he, against the law of the Church, married his deceased wife's sister, a sexually immature child on whom an operation had to be performed.

Almost the whole imperial house was vicious, and their quarrels

and intrigues and assassinations fill the chronicle in the years of the Empire's most terrible distress. Hardly a single eminent Roman Christian appears in the defense of the Empire. A Vandal general, married to a niece of the great Emperor Theodosius, controls the Empire. Both lost their lives in the palace intrigues. Even in the eastern court, where the vow of virginity of the sisters of the new boy Emperor, Theodosius II, was written in gold and diamonds on the wall of the church, the bloody intrigue was incessant. In the west the Emperor had a violent quarrel with his sister, whose husband was murdered—rumor again said because the Emperor was enamored of his sister—and few years passed without a tragedy. To rival the virtue of the eastern court the Princess Honoria was dedicated to a life of chastity. She promptly had a child by her steward and later made love to the king of the Huns. In short, the dynasty ended in 455, when Valentinian III, its last profligate representative, was stabbed by an officer whose wife he had raped. The assassin seized the Empire and married—some say, having first raped—Valentinian's widow, and she is said to have brought over the Vandals from Africa to slay her husband and sack Rome for the second time. The second Catholic dynasty of Emperors, though living for the most part under the eye of the Popes, had been no better than the first. And had proved the most incompetent and selfish rulers with which a threatened and struggling Empire was ever cursed.

We have already seen that there was no change in the character of the Roman people, and about the middle of the century we find a remarkable picture of morals in every province of the Empire. Most historians make a short reference to this document: a treatise on "The Providence of God" by a priest of the city of Marseilles. Note carefully how optimistic histories of this period are compiled. The few virtuous men and women who are known in the century are described at length and the reader is given a light assurance that there are "many others," but this most valuable and comprehensive of all the documents of the time is dismissed with a few words to the effect that a rhetorical priest of southern Gaul gives a bad character to his people. This work of Salvianus is, on the contrary, a lengthy and deliberate description of the new Christian world in every province of the Roman Empire. It fills about fifty pages of the old quarto edition of the Fathers, and half of it deals with contemporary morals.

Like St. Augustine, Salvianus sets out to reconcile belief in God with the appalling disasters of the time. He takes the line that the Christians have forfeited all right to God's protection by their vices, and this compels him to prove that in every province they are, as a body, thoroughly corrupt. He is evidently a (for the time) well educated man, and there is no evidence that he is a somber or pessimistic man. He begins this section of his work:

It is a grave and painful thing that I am going to say. The very Church of Christ which ought in all things to appease God does nothing but provoke the anger of God.

Apart from a **very few** who avoid evil, what is nearly the whole body of Christians but a **sink** of vice? How many will you find in the Church who are not drunkards, gluttons, adulterers, fornicators, rapers, gamblers, robbers, or murderers? I ask it of the conscience of every Christian: of the vices and crimes I have named how many men are not guilty of some, if not all? You will more easily find the man who has committed the whole of them than the man who has committed none. You will more easily find men guilty of all crimes than men innocent of all: more easily men guilty of the graver crimes than of the lighter: that is to say, more easily men who have committed both the **graver** and the lighter than men who are guilty only of the lighter. For to this turpitude of morals **nearly the entire population** of the Church has sunk, so that in the whole of Christendom it is deemed a sort of sanctity to be not very vicious (iii, 9).

You will notice that this is quite consistent with what a serious historian like Duchesne says in defense of his Church. Salvianus admits the minority and Duchesne describes it. And note further that this minority, the "zealots" as they came to be called, does not mean men and women of austerity of life. It means people of ordinarily correct moral life. Salvianus does not belabor the Christians because they tell lies or are dishonest, or because they occasionally fall from virtue. He refuses to consider "the smaller vices." He is talking chiefly, he says, of murder and adultery, and of every class, not simply of the poor and the slaves:

Who is not stained either by human blood or by impurity? One of these things suffices to merit eternal torment, but there is **hardly a single** rich man who has not committed both.

He contends at great length that the new Christians are just as vicious at least as the barbarians and the earlier pagans, and that, since they have the Gospel to guide them, they are far worse than both. Repeatedly and emphatically this one comprehensive description of the morals of the fifth century assures us that there has not been the least improvement since pagan days; yet you will hardly find a Catholic writer, except Duchesne, who does not tell his readers that there was a vast improvement, and too many non-Catholic historians repeat the statement.

Salvianus is not, as some represent, speaking only of Gaul, in which he lives. He devotes a section to each province of the western Empire and finds the same corruption everywhere. He begins with a summary:

Are the populations of the cities who were unchaste in the days of their prosperity now chaste in their adversity? Has drunkenness, which had grown with peace and abundance, decreased during the hostile invasion? Italy has been devastated so many times: have the vices of the

Italians ceased? Rome has been conquered: have the Romans ceased to blaspheme and brawl? The barbarians have flooded Gaul: are not the crimes of the Gauls the same as ever?

He goes on to Spain, Sardinia, Sicily, and Africa. It is in Africa that he finds the worst corruption; and this, as far as sexual conduct is concerned, is loudly stated by the Vandals themselves who, in spite of their brutality, cultivated chastity. Salvianus asks:

Who does not know that, to speak first of impurity, the whole of [northern] Africa has always seethed with the obscene ardor of lust, not being like a peaceful land and the seat of men, but like an Etna of impure flames? Who does not know that the whole of the Africans are unchaste except, perhaps, those who have been converted to God, that is to say, been changed in their lives? But **this is so rare and novel** that it is like saying that Caius is not Caius. It is so rare that to say that an African is not unchaste is like saying that an African is not an African (vii, 16).

He gives a scorching picture of Carthage, the capital. It "burns with every kind of iniquity"; it is "all drunk with sin"; it is "full of crowds but still fuller of turpitude." There is "not a street that is not a brothel." You would say that the people were insane. Salvianus will not, he says, speak about the clergy—a significant silence—because he will protect his own order, but he swears that there is not one chaste person amongst the laity.

Some readers may be disposed to think that the moral law enforced by the Church was then more stringent than ours and so the language of Salvianus may give us a wrong impression. On the contrary, the Church was then more lenient. It is writers who describe crowds of penitents still at the doors of the churches in the fifth century who mislead. We have a long poem, of poor quality, written about this time by Paulinus of Pella. This autobiographical poem ("Eucharisticos") was written in Gaul about the same time as the work of Salvianus. The writer was one of the few to retain some wealth and comfort in a sheltered region, and he passed as a man of exceptionally good and pious life. Yet, in boasting that he was "chaste" in his early manhood, he explains that he means that he "was content with the use of his domestic slaves" and avoided rape and adultery! St. Augustine himself refused to condemn a man who took a concubine if his wife was childless. He wrote this in 401, in his work "On Conjugal Happiness," and in the preceding year an important Spanish Church synod, at Toledo, had laid it down in its seventeenth canon that "the man who has no wife but a concubine instead must be admitted to communion . . . he must be content with the society of one woman, either wife or concubine, as he pleases." I am aware that Bishop Hefele, the consecrated trickster, gives an improper translation of this canon in his "History of the Councils" (ii, 421), but I have translated it literally from the original in Mansi.

Moreover, there is ample evidence to confirm Salvianus. Pope Leo himself gives a very dark account of the Gallic clergy in Letter No. 167, and an incident in the life of St. Augustine gives us a painful impression of Christian character under the immediate care of that famous preacher: about one of the pious and very wealthy Roman families which had fled to Africa before the Goths went to visit Augustine at Hippo. Their piety was such that the younger Melania, taking to heart Jerome's warning against the bath, used to bribe the servants who attended her to the bath-room to conceal from her husband the fact that she never used the bath. Her husband Pinianus was, however, very pious and generous, and his fortune was strewn along his route in donations to the clergy and monks and to converts. It appears that more than one town had tried to make a priest of Pinianus, even against his will, so as to retain his purse, and he had exacted of St. Augustine a promise not to ordain him priest against his will. More than one wealthy or pious man was thus consecrated or ordained. But the people of Hippo made a "horrible turmoil," Augustine says, and threatened to burn down the church if he did not force Pinianus and his money to remain with them. Augustine gave way and extorted from Pinianus a promise that he would not leave Hippo, while some of the relatives of the noble openly said that Augustine was in collusion with his people. The elder Melania, grandmother of the wife of Pinianus, is one of the saints who figure in all the descriptions of Roman virtue under Jerome, but Augustine accuses her of "lying," in saying that he was as bad as his people; and I may add that Jerome also came to quarrel with her and discovered, as he says, "the blackness of her soul." We quite forgive her indignation at Hippo. The people were sordid. And the sermons of St. John Chrysostom show an equally low level of character in the east.

## §2. THE EARLY MONKS

As regards the fifth century, therefore, the statement that there was any general improvement of morals is a flat contradiction of the only evidence we have concerning the general character; and I will show later that there was a further deterioration in the sixth and succeeding centuries. The second point we have to examine in connection with the fifth century is whether in that time of appalling violence the Church did, as is said, provide monasteries and nunneries for the cultivation of virtue or letters. The monastic idea was, as we saw in the last book, already quite familiar in the west. As early as the year 370 the Emperor had had to declare invalid all legacies to monks, and Jerome gave us a scathing picture of their hypocrisy at Rome. Thirty years later we found St. Augustine writing a book ("On the Work of the Monks") in which he speaks bitterly of the swarms of monks who travel about Africa, selling spurious relics and making hypocritical professions of virtue. We find the Spanish council of Saragossa in 381 complaining of clerics who become monks "for the sake of the luxury and vanity," and few years pass without some bishop or synod complaining of

the morality of monks or consecrated virgins. Lea gives all these complaints in his "History of Sacerdotal Celibacy."

On the other hand there were from the second half of the fourth century unquestionably many monasteries and nunneries of strict life in the west. I shall try throughout to enable my readers to reach a just conclusion on this question of monks and nuns, about which one finds such glaringly contradictory literature. And the only just and proper view is one that seeks as carefully as possible to ascertain the relative proportions of virtue and hypocrisy in the monastic world. This has never yet been attempted, and it is assuredly difficult, but if we put together the authentic instances of monastic purity collected by Catholic writers and the instances of vice collected by Protestants we shall have the material for a verdict.

For the fifth century this verdict must be that, while a number of small monasteries of strict life were founded by men like Augustine and Pinianus, while bishops like Pope Leo and St. Hilary undoubtedly tried to reform the monks, there was a steady and rapid general degeneration from the primitive fervor. The idea had at first led to some remarkable spectacles, at least in provinces far away from Rome; for the Popes had little or nothing to do with these early foundations. St. Ambrose had founded a few monasteries near Milan, and there were others in the islands off the Italian coast, but Rome was very poor in such institutions, and Africa was relatively poor. In Gaul very large monasteries had at once arisen. Two thousand monks followed to the grave the body of St. Martin, who had introduced the idea. Yet within twenty years we find even there symptoms of degeneration, as the successor of Martin, "St." Brice, was so seriously accused of adultery with a nun that his people drove him from the region. It does not seem possible that if these monasteries of Gaul had preserved their fervor in the days of Salvianus—and no contemporary witness asserts it—he should have been silent about them. Meantime the idea had passed to Britain and again, in the primitive fervor, we find very large communities of strict monks and nuns. How long this fervor lasted we have no evidence, but in the next book I shall quote decisive evidence of wholesale corruption in Britain by the eighth century.

We thus find, as we should expect, quite a large number of monasteries of strict life whenever the idea is first introduced into a region, but we must understand that until the latter part of the fifth century there was no such thing as what we call a monastic "order." St. Augustine, it is true, drew up a rule of life for the celibate communities in his own small diocese, and no doubt this was voluntarily followed in other places where some pious bishops or wealthy Christian opened a home. But the Augustinian Order was not founded until centuries later, and the Rule and Order of St. Benedict began in 529. Until then there were, as Cassianus, who founded a strict monastery, says, "as many types and rules as there were monasteries." At the great monastery at Tours in its strict days no work was done except writing—and "little time was given

to that," says the contemporary Salpicius Severus—while in Africa, Salvianus tells us, the appearance of a genuine monk of the Egyptian type was greeted with "a shower of curses, blasphemies, and derision."

In the fourth and fifth centuries, in other words, most of the monks and nuns were simply men and women who professed to have devoted themselves to lives of chastity and had no communal homes, abbots, or rules. It is these, living in the world (often in pairs) or wandering incessantly from one small endowed home to another, visiting rich women everywhere to beg, who receive the invectives of Jerome and Augustine and Cassian: it is against these that a score of councils direct their heavy censures. Benedict in the year 529 found them in Italy just as Augustine had found them in Africa in 400, or Jerome in Rome, or St. Isidore, still later, in Spain. They covered the face of Europe for several centuries. The complaisant historian tells his readers how in the early part of the sixth century St. Benedict gathered disciples, founded a monastery at Monte Cassino, and wrote a rule of life; and he then devotes a chapter to the daily life of the monks as it is described or prescribed in the rule. He does not think fit to say that Benedict had to retire to the wild solitude of the mountains because the existing Italian monks had twice tried to murder him for his strict views and had placed nude girls in the garden of his convent. He does not reproduce the assurance of Benedict himself, in the introduction to his Rule, that Italy is overrun by vagabond monks of "the most wicked description," were gluttons and sensualists "whose only law is the satisfaction of their desires." And if you look up these words of Benedict in the Latin version of his Rule in the Migne collection of the Fathers, you will find that the Benedictine editors of the work quote half a dozen other saints, from the fourth to the eighth century, using just the same language. "The only thing they have in common," says St. Isidore, "is their impure and vagabond life."

I repeat that it is not history, not reputable education, to quote the pious work of Martin in the fourth century, of Cassian in the fifth, of Benedict in the sixth, and ignore this repeated and overwhelming testimony that there was a chronic and widespread monastic hypocrisy during the whole of this time. It is not possible to say positively what was the relative proportion of virtue and vice in the monastic world at this early period, but any man who surveys the whole literature will feel that, as Benedict describes his own situation, the strict monastery or nunnery was a rare center of virtue in a broad world of monastic hypocrisy, apart from certain short periods, in particular places, of special fervor. The picture which is so often presented by historians, of Europe dotted with austere institutions in which artists and scholars found peace and virtue was protected, is ludicrously partial. By the end of the fifth century monasticism seems to have been generally corrupt, just at the time when quiet refuges for virtue and culture were most needed, and the Popes were generally indifferent to the situation. What happened after the sixth century we shall see later.

### CHAPTER III

#### WHAT ROME DID FOR EUROPE



POSITIVIST writer and distinguished educator once told me that he read with sympathy and profit all my work except when I discussed Catholicism and the Middle Ages. My readers will, however, have perceived by this time that in no other historical work of mine have I clung so closely to the original Latin and Greek authorities, and that amongst those authorities I do not select the less flattering but endeavor to reproduce the good and the evil in the proportions in which they are actually chronicled. On a strict and balanced view of the entire Latin literature of this period one is bound to say that such accounts of virtue as we find, apart from acknowledged forgeries, are vignettes, sketches of isolated persons or small groups, while the accounts of vice are panoramic pictures of entire communities or countries. The new Christendom which the legal suppression of rival religions had created was at least not a whit superior, morally, to the paganism it had displaced. Even the "zealots," and ascetics of the new era have their analogues in the cultivated pagans and the austere Mithraists and Manicheans of the fourth century.

This any quite candid person would be disposed to expect after what we have seen about the degeneration of the early Christian creed into the Roman Church and the compulsory incorporation of tens of millions of people therein. In any case, the evidence for the general moral situation in the fourth century is inexorable, and it is this general situation, not occasional instances of virtue, that the serious historian has to consider. The claim that the Church raised the moral level of Europe fails lamentably at the bar of history. The next question is: Why? Can we admit that the devastation of the Empire sufficiently explains the failure? Did civilization collapse in spite of the strenuous efforts of the Popes to prevent it? Would the degeneration have been worse, the restoration have been even slower than it was, but for the efforts of the Church?

Again let us confine ourselves to the fifth century; though I may say at once that we are going to find the general moral situation even worse in the succeeding centuries, at least until the eleventh. And again let us try to proceed with reason and discretion. If we find that the Church had little influence, this does not at all mean that the Popes did not wish or endeavor to reform the morals of Europe, or that bishops did not attempt such reform in their own spheres. This we will consider in the next chapter. But one may justly raise the question whether their methods and machinery were any more suited to the work than the reasoning of a Stoic or a Neo-Platonist philosopher or than the crude ritual and esoteric doctrines of the Mithraists. We will devote a chapter to the consideration of this.

# HOW THE POPE'S POWER WAS MADE AND ENFORCED

## CHAPTER I

### THE BEGINNINGS OF PAPAL SUPREMACY

**F**ROM the year 600 B. C., when the Greeks had begun to apply their genius to the development of civilization, to the year 400 A. D., when the Goths and Vandals broke upon the Roman Empire, is a very great millennium in human history. During that stretch of time the race had made more progress in art and culture, in humane ideals and political freedom, than during the previous three thousand years. Next let us observe that about the year 400 A. D. the Roman Church established itself as the sole religion of Europe, and in the course of the next half century it destroyed the last traces of all other religions and its Pope became the spiritual ruler of the western world. Those are two outstanding and familiar facts of history. And it is an equally outstanding and familiar fact of history that from the latter date, 400 A. D., the civilization of Europe steadily sank until, by the tenth century, this world which bowed in subjection to the Bishop of Rome was in a condition which historians describe as barbaric.

This is the next phase of the history of the Church of Rome that we have to study, and our chief interest in it is, obviously, to ascertain whether the Church of Rome was in any degree, and in what degree, responsible for this collapse of civilization. The Romanist indignantly says no, but his Church offers us, as usual, two different versions of this stretch of history: one to be presented to the uneducated mass of the faithful, the other for Catholics who have had a college education. The first, which is still found in popular Catholic literature and which the average priest is quite ignorant enough to include honestly in his sermons, is that there was no collapse of civilization. The Goths and Vandals who broke upon the Roman Empire at this time may have shattered its material frame and dissipated its wealth, but this loss was compensated by the conversion of the Roman world to ways of sobriety and virtue. It is becoming increasingly difficult to protect this ancient fairy tale, even in the mind of the uneducated, when the Church has, in order to retain its small cultivated minority, to tolerate such fairly candid historians as the late Mgr. Duchesne, the distinguished French scholar who preferred to remain in the Church and endeavor to modernize its culture. I have in the previous two books quoted many candid admissions from Duchesne's *History of the Early Church*, and it will be useful here to make a final reference to the significance of his work.

sustaining the crowds of vagabond monks alone would have built and maintained thousands of elementary schools.

The truth is that the Church despised education. In the earlier days, in competition with the pagans, especially in centers of culture like Alexandria, some of the bishops had been compelled to open "catechetical schools," to instruct converts in the faith, but in the fourth century, when great crowds had to be admitted owing to the close of the temples, this system broke down. The Fathers began to speak disdainfully of knowledge, especially in the western Empire. Education was, Tertullian said, "a robbery of God." The next eminent Christian writer, Lactantius, asked scornfully: "How much happier shall I be if I know where the Nile rises or what the physicist thinks about the heavens?" St. Augustine began with a great zeal for education, but he ended on a note of complete contempt for it. "It is the ignorant who enter heaven," he said in a famous phrase. Both he and St. Jerome speak of "that fool Plato." There were, even in the west, Christian writers who made little compilations of expurgated knowledge from the pagan literature, but they had no influence in comparison with these great leaders.

Modern educationists who tell of the works of Donatus, Martianus, etc., and do not tell how the Latin Fathers generally despised education, are not following their own rules; and there is just the same tendency in recent histories of education to spare the Catholic Church as in general histories of the Middle Ages. Dr. W. Boyd's "History of Western Education" (1921), for instance, clearly shows it at this point, as I have explained in detail in my Little Blue Book, "The Church and the School" (No. 1128). Other recent writers tell of the great zeal of St. Augustine for culture and education: that is to say, they quote the works of his earlier years and conceal the fact that he completely changed his views. I have read all the expert research into the schools of the fifth and sixth centuries. Only two or three schools can be traced, in sheltered parts of Gaul, in the latter part of the fifth century. By the year 500 all schools seem to have been closed. Nothing in recent research has altered the verdict of Compayré, who, after describing the pagan schools, says: "These schools once closed, the Church did not open others, and, after the fourth century, a profound night enveloped humanity." And the worst offenders, once more, were the Popes. Rome continued to have the greater part of what wealth remained in Europe, and it never concerned itself about education. The first Roman Council to show a mild interest in it is in 826; the next is the Third Lateran Council of the year 1179. But, of course, the Popes civilized Europe.

Historians who want us to pay compliments to the Church because in the course of the next three centuries they find two or three men (Cassiodorus, Isidore, etc.) who show some concern for learning, and say almost nothing about the universal crass ignorance, have at least a strange sense of proportion. No one will be so stupid as to say that in three centuries Christendom did not produce one strict monastery, one pious bishop, or one man who regretted the appalling state of culture. An historian ought, indeed, to tell

of exceptions, but his chief function is to describe general conditions and events. Europe certainly passed into a "profound night," and the one "great" Pope who appeared in this period was hostile to education. Cassiodorus was a Roman, but he got no help from Rome, and his feeble effort soon languished. St. Benedict, whose monastic Rule he followed, had not (as anybody may read in the Rule) directed his monks to study, and he despised culture. Cassiodorus had tried to redeem the fault, but he had only a brief and local success. It was in Britain and Ireland, and for a time at Seville in Spain, that we find learning in some of the monasteries.

The period I am surveying ends with the pontificate of the monastic Pope Gregory the Great, and it will be enough to notice his attitude. We no longer have the genial companionship of Duchesne, but at this point another large and pretentious and recent Catholic historical work takes up the story. This is Dr. H. A. Mann's "Lives of the Popes in the Early Middle Ages," in a score of volumes, and I may at once give you an illustration of its untruthfulness; for it is of the moral quality of the Catholic Encyclopaedia. Gregory, says Dr. Mann, greatly praises even secular learning in his "Commentary on the First Book of Kings"; and the truth is that even Catholic authorities admit that Gregory did not write the book and it often misrepresents his ideas. On the other hand, says Dr. Mann, it is true that Gregory forbade a bishop to teach "profane letters," but this was because the bishop was holding his classes in the church. Thus are saints defended. Not only is there not a word in Gregory's letter (vi, 54) to Bishop Desiderius about teaching in church, but it plainly says that such teaching is a "horrible occupation" and not fit even "for a religious layman." One of Gregory's spies has reported to him that this bishop has opened a small school at Vienne in Gaul. Gregory at once writes to him:

We heard a thing that cannot be repeated without a feeling of shame: namely, that you are teaching grammar to some. . . . Think how grave and horrible it is for a bishop to repeat what even a religious layman should not.

We gather that the poor bishop had been trying to give a very few of his people a taste for Vergil. But the Papal arm now stretches over the whole of Christendom, and these are the uses to which the authority is put, as far as education is concerned. The one tiny school which redeems the barbaric ignorance of Europe about the year 600 is closed by the "great" Pope. We shall see later what happened in the days of Charlemagne and the monasteries of Britain and Ireland.

## §2. THE DUPING OF THE IGNORANT MASSES

I have said that the pagan schools had been poor, for there was little real knowledge to communicate, but even the children of the workers had been taught to read, and a large number even of these had gone on to the free school of "the grammarian" until the age of sixteen. A community with at least this education would be very different from one in which not a soul could read and books were

unknown. Even the education of the clergy grew worse and worse. If in the early part of the eleventh century, when a reform was in progress, "there is more than one bishop who cannot count the letters of the alphabet on his fingers," as Bishop Adalberic of Laon tells us of his own country, we can guess the condition of the lower clergy. Very few, in any case, could do more than mechanically read out the words of the ritual books. The Latin even of the clerks who write the Popes' letters at Rome gradually becomes barbaric. Numbers of writings of the sixth and seventh and later centuries are as crude as the English letters of ordinary Polish peasants who have been only a year in America.

I will tell in the fifth chapter how the Gothic king Theodoric made a noble attempt to arrest the decay of civilization and how the Popes frustrated his work. Here let us attempt to estimate a little more closely the relation of the Papacy to the deepening ignorance of Christendom. Gregory is the only Pope who expressly writes on the subject, and his grievance is mainly that, as all good literature is pagan, a Christian can have nothing to do with it. John of Salisbury tells us ("Polycraticus," ii, 26) that Gregory burned all that remained of the imperial library at Rome ("all that the Palatine Apollo held," he says in the words of Horace), and, since he praises Gregory for it, we have no reason to suspect that it is a libelous rumor. But in view of the generally low character of the Roman court, which we shall see presently, we may fairly ask ourselves whether the Popes did not find it more profitable to have Christendom universally illiterate and densely ignorant. The educated world of the fourth century had given the Church terrible trouble. In the west it had been most reluctant to change its religion: in the east it had started one formidable heresy after another. A Europe which was now illiterate to the extent of ninety-nine and a fraction percent was not likely to ask questions; and it is a sheer historical fact that Rome has always been more concerned about intellectual docility than about morals.

Any reader who finds this an unpleasant suspicion must remember one indisputable fact: this period, the early Middle Ages, is for shameless forgery almost unique in history, and Rome was the chief center of fabrication. Now was written the official "Pontifical Chronicle" which is described in the introduction to the Columbia University translation as (we saw in the last book) full of deliberate perversions of the truth as well as childish errors. A little later, as we shall see, there were even bolder and more profitable forgeries, the false titles of the Papacy to its temporal power, with which even a great monarch like Charlemagne was duped: pray, do not shudder at the word duped, for we shall see that these documents were deliberately fabricated and deliberately used to get vast estates for the Papacy. We have already seen how the Papacy falsified canons of the Councils for the deliberate purpose of winning an illegitimate authority over other churches.

In the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries this duping of ignorant Europe chiefly took the form of fabricating those spurious lives of saints and martyrs of which I spoke in the last book. The practice

had begun, as we saw, in the last century, when the ridicule of the educated pagans had compelled the Pope to draw up the first "prohibited list" of the crudest forgeries. Now that all Europe was too densely ignorant to suspect the grossest anachronism or absurdity the work went on merrily. The Papacy was not the only offender. The eastern world, without any impulse from barbarians, abandoned the school-system as well as the western, and was soon just as densely ignorant and just as industrious in fabricating martyrs. In their interludes of friendliness the clergy of the Latin and Greek worlds made very profitable exchanges of legends of martyrs. But, naturally, the European martyrs were mainly fabricated in Italy, and their "lives" grew steadily from the fifth century onward.

The analysis of this literature by modern scholars is humorous reading. Even the fabricators of the legends were so grossly ignorant that they introduce a "Governor of Tuscany" in the days of Nero, turn the mildest of the Emperors into bloodthirsty tyrants, and make a weird mess of both the chronology and geography of the Empire. The forgers became so bold that they invented tortures of which no Roman had ever dreamed, repeated the same story under ten different names, and made whole legions of soldiers die for the faith. For the details, however, see my Little Blue Book, "Legends of Saints and Martyrs" (No. 1107). I repeat my conclusions that something less than one in one hundred of the "martyrs" of the Roman Church can be proved to have died for the faith, and something more than ninety-nine statements in one hundred in the actual lives of the martyrs is a fabrication, and Rome was the chief center of fabrication.

### §3. EUROPE FLOODED WITH SPURIOUS RELICS

The few Catholic writers who have devoted themselves to this new science of "hagiography," or the analysis of the lives of the saints and martyrs, want us to take a lenient view of the perpetrators. They fancy a monk who has been intrusted with the life of a saint to copy. His pious fancy is captivated and he, not thinking whether he is deceiving anybody, but just to make the story more edifying and impressive, adds a few details: makes Lawrence say, "Turn me over," makes the lions veil their faces before the nude virgin, and so on. Is the harm serious? Will not millions of good readers be simply assisted spiritually by the little touches of pious fraud?

It sounds plausible to people who forget the historical conditions, but I have just explained that by the sixth century **hardly any person in Europe could read except the clergy**. The matter begins to look different, and, if I add that it is equally far from the historical truth to imagine all the priests preaching sermons every week, often about the martyrs, as they now do, we wonder still further what is the meaning of it. Let us admit that it is quite probable that many a pious monk added imaginative touches to the manuscript he was copying, but, insofar as these fictions have been traced, it is not in pious monasteries but in such places as the Papal

chancellery at Rome that the industry flourished. Pope Damasus, we saw, set an example in the fourth century, and he was certainly no devout enthusiast. The forgers of the fifth and sixth centuries who write as eye-witnesses of the events were not innocent enthusiasts. The plain truth is that the cult of the martyrs had been very profitable to the Church from the fourth century onward. At first banquets, often of a riotous character, had been permitted in the churches on the supposed anniversaries of martyrdoms, and St. Augustine naively admits, when he is trying to put an end to these a century later, that they had been instituted to attract pagans to the Church.

But authentic graves of martyrs were extremely rare in the fourth century, and there began a series of "discoveries" of forgotten graves—under inspired guidance, of course—to reward the piety of the faithful. The devotion to the dead bones spread through the Church. Augustine first condemned it austerely, but before the end of his life, when he saw how it brought people to church, he fully approved it. By the fifth century churches everywhere were clamoring for relics. Bones were uncarthed from the Catacombs and scattered over Europe. Simple folk felt themselves a long way from the invisible God and ashamed even in the presence of the miraculously chaste Mary, but these dead bones of men and women who could intercede for them could be approached. Rumors of miracles spread, and people flocked miles to kiss the silver reliquary, with a little glass window, that contained the bit of bone or garment. On festival days, when the peasants trooped in to the nearest town, the first thing to do was to go and kiss the relics in the great church. It covered a multitude of sins. So from all over the world Rome, which had to authenticate the relics—for a consideration—was implored to find more relics; and what was the use of a relic without a picturesque account of the martyrdom of the saint to whom the bone had belonged?

So Europe was flooded with relics, with accompanying legends. Gregory the Great tells us how in his own time, about 600 A. D., Greeks were caught rifling graves, and they confessed that they were in the relic trade. The Jews of Palestine took an ironic joy in "finding" relics of the time of Christ and palming them off on Rome or Constantinople, the wholesale houses which distributed them in the provinces. If two bodies of ordinary obscure saints were in the impoverished eleventh century worth ten thousand gold coins—the deposit of the French king in the dispute about them—what was the value of the full set of the milk-teeth of the infant Jesus, which had, as they had fallen out, been treasured by his mother? Such a full set was exhibited at the abbey of Charroux; though the abbey of St. Medard not many miles away had the effrontery to exhibit one. In about a hundred churches of Europe there were little phials of the blood of Christ, and little phials of the milk of Mary were exhibited in Spanish churches until the nineteenth century. The manger in which the infant Christ had lain was exhibited for centuries in one of the greatest churches of Rome, Sta. Maria Maggiore: full sets of his baby-linen were prized

in a large number of churches, and a number of different churches claimed to possess the essential relic of his circumcision. So sodden had the mind of Europe become that, in spite of the dogma of the miraculous birth of Christ, seven great churches claimed to have his umbilical cord. Others had duplicate, or triplicate, or multiplycate, chemises of the Virgin Mary—one of these is still the great treasure of the cathedral of Chartres, though the priests now call it a "veil"—and her stockings, shoes, combs, wedding rings, girdles, locks of hair, etc. There were six heads of John the Baptist, several lances with which Christ had been pierced, enough "wood of the true cross" to build a dance hall, and so on. They had all, of course, been miraculously multiplied; though towns sometimes went to war with each other to settle which had the genuine relic.

The time came when Rome declared that every altar in the world must contain a relic—bought from itself—but from the fifth century onward the demand was enormous. In this lucrative and sordid trade you have the chief reason for the forgery of stories of martyrs. The few genuine stories that remained from the early Church were short and dry accounts that would not move a maid of seventeen: the few authentic bodies would not have met the demand for six months. And as, in that gross world, it was quite impossible to strain any person's credulity, the manufacture of relics and legends was gorgeous. If you can read medieval Latin try to see a copy of Abbot Gilbert's "*De Pignoribus Sanctorum*" (*On the Pledges of the Saints*), from which I have taken most of the above. You will get a more correct idea of what the Roman Church did for Europe than by reading certain recent college-manuals of European history.

## CHAPTER IV

## TRICKERY OF THE GREATER POPES

**I**N the preceding chapter I have passed beyond the fifth century, in order to show the continuous and deepening degradation of Europe, and some readers may feel that it is difficult to accept the appalling facts in spite of the unquestionable evidence. This hesitation will be removed when, in the next chapter, I illustrate the general character of the Roman clergy and people and the clergy and people of Gaul in the sixth century from the safest and contemporary documents; and in the next book we shall find Roman character sinking at times to the level of brutality. But my story is almost so uniformly dark after the conversion of Constantine that I must occasionally turn to such instances of virtue or culture as we can find. Let me explain that the more serious and substantial Catholic history which you may open to see to what extent such a work may give a different impression is so full of purely ecclesiastical matters that your attention is distracted from the general character of the times. Long chapters are given to the missionary labors of a St. Augustine, St. Patrick, or St. Boniface (which are, in any case, largely legendary), to the zeal for virtue of a St. Benedict or for culture of a Cassiodorus or an Alcuin, while broad characterizations of whole nations, such as those of Salvianus or Gregory of Tours, are ignored. Six figures in a century are drawn on such a heroic scale and adorned with such pleasant colors that you forget to ask about the millions of other people who lived in that century. It is a trick perfected by long experience. For the rest you have long accounts of synods and councils, schisms and heresies, kings and wars, so that you lose sight of the essentials of history.

Let us apply the proper historical standard to the Popes of the fifth century. The Papacy was as yet by no means so corrupt as we shall find it later, though at the beginning of the sixth century it will appear in a lamentable light, and you may find it difficult to believe that a series of thirty Popes in a hundred and fifty years looked on, either helplessly or indifferently, while Europe thus slowly sank into barbarism. You will, however, reflect at once that only a man of exceptional strength of character could have made any impression on such a world as Salvianus and Gregory describe, and there are only three such Popes in the first eight centuries of Papal history.

Of the character of the others, after the death of Damasus, we have seen a little and shall see more. Certainly other Popes whom we have no reason to discuss here, as their work was purely administrative, were of more deeply religious character than some of those we have found quarreling with the African or the oriental bishops,

but they do not make history, and their virtues are known to us only from Papal panegyrists in an age of forgery. We must not forget that the Roman relic-and-martyr industry flourished under all of them. However, it will be best to select two of the three Popes who are counted greatest in the period I am reviewing and study what effort they made to arrest the barbarization of Europe and why they failed. After that we can take up the chronicle of events at Rome in the sixth century and survey the darkening world as far as the time of Charlemagne. The third and less important Pope, Hadrian, may be left to the last chapter.

### §1. THE AMBITION OF LEO THE GREAT

The first of these, indeed the first Pope to be decorated with the title "Great," which was nevertheless granted so generously in those days, was Leo I, or St. Leo the Great (440-461). In the entire series of Popes down to the middle of the fifth century we have found only three men of any prominence—St. Victor, St. Callistus and St. Damasus—and you probably agreed with me that the first was a spiritual adventurer, the second a rogue and the third a very ambiguous person. Leo was a much stronger and a more deeply religious man than any of his predecessors. He had considerable ability and (in the purely ecclesiastical sense) culture; and he was austere in morals.

But we have already seen part of the reason why even this stern and strong moralist failed to make any large or deep impression on the rude morals of his age; for it is the Europe over which Leo ruled that Salvianus describes. In the first place the almost sudden expansion of the sphere of influence of the Popes from the Italian diocese to half of Europe found them quite unequipped for such a task, and it is mere poetry to say that they inherited the imperial organization. That organization was wrecked, and the slender and clumsy organization at the command of the Popes was ridiculously unequal to the needs of that disordered world. But a still worse defect was that Leo was absorbed all his life in claiming Papal power where it was not acknowledged, rather than in using it where it was acknowledged. The eastern provinces were, as the "Robbers' Council" at Ephesus showed him, in a sad condition, but he forfeited all respect there and made the whole of the east impervious to Papal influence forever by his procedure. His outstanding aim was to induce the Emperor to say that he had authority over the Archbishop of Constantinople. The tone of his letters, which is painful, offended everybody, and it is impossible to doubt that he told untruths and used a spurious canon.

This last point no Catholic writer will admit, but I have further shown in my "Crises in the History of the Papacy" that after the Council of Chalcedon he wrote (Letter 103) to tell the bishops of Gaul that the heretic Dioscorus had been condemned, and he inclosed a copy of the condemnation. The copy which was preserved with his letter is admitted to be spurious, for it makes the Greeks acknowledge him as "head of the universal Church." This may be

a forgery of a later date, but there is no proof, and the preceding forgery (of the Nicene canon) makes us hesitate. His courtly language to "Leo the Butcher," a glorified peasant who in his time mounted the eastern throne, is almost as bad; and his harsh conduct to St. Hilary must not be forgotten. He was more concerned about getting more power than using what he had. He was one of the great makers of the Papacy but certainly not of European civilization. It is true that he wrote scores of letters rebuking vice here and there, but with little effect, and he was the first Pope to advocate the execution of heretics—the Priscillianists of Spain—and treated the surviving Manicheans of Rome with barbarity.

These points will suffice to show how an austere and strong Pope completely failed to arrest the degradation of Europe. His task, we must admit, was too much for any man, and Leo was no genius. The story which is still told in Catholic literature of how he went out from Rome to prevent the king of the Huns from coming to sack the city, and how the savage monarch was awed by the majesty of the pontiff and spared Rome, is legend. The contemporary bishop, Idatius, who does not mention Leo, explains that the Hun king's army was depleted by war, famine and disease, and threatened in its rear, so he turned back. Leo had great nervous energy, but he either did not possess, or he used up in his Papal ambition, the power of a statesman to check the growing degeneration.

## 82. THE DUPLICITY OF GREGORY THE GREAT

There are seventeen Popes between Leo the Great and Gregory the Great, and none of them has left any mark in the history of Europe. Even the Catholic could not offhand tell you a single fact about any of them, much less describe their character; though he would be quite sure they were saintly men. We have merely the official assurance that they were, and it is as valuable as the title of a Japanese emperor. Almost the only men amongst them who enter general history are two or three, who, as we shall see later, caused bloody feuds once more in the streets of Rome, such as we saw in the days of Pope Damasus. Another vice was now appearing in the Roman Church; for an indulgence in forgery easily leads to a general deterioration of character. This new vice was the sale of sacred offices, or simony, and it would pervade the whole Church until the Reformation. It spread chiefly in the sixth century, and the general moral character of the clergy also sank still lower, as we shall see in the next chapter. By the year 600 Europe was in a very deplorable condition, and it was just then that one of the strongest and most religious of the Popes, Gregory I, mounted the throne. It will be of particular interest to see how such a man, using his power very autocratically, watching Europe from end to end with untiring industry, completely failed to arrest the degeneration.

Gregory belonged by origin to such nobility as was left in Rome and he received such education as could still be given. Cath-

olic lives of him and references to him must be read with discretion, as they are chiefly based upon a very legendary biography of him written by John the Deacon, nearly a hundred years after his death. People who ask me to be more liberal in seeing the greatness of the great Popes do not know these things. Even statements about Gregory in neutral encyclopedias are often taken from the legendary life. It is generally said, for instance, that he had a fine education and was distinguished in culture. In point of fact, his works, which are numerous, betray the rank credulity of a peasant, and his learning is a weird collection of myths and superstitions. I have already said that he regarded the reading of the classics as a crime and burned the last great library in Europe.

But about his piety and purity there is no dispute. Rome had now sunk so low that only forty thousand people found a miserable living in the ruins of the mighty city, and they crossed themselves with awe and dread as they passed the white shells of the old temples and palaces at night. Theodoric, the Gothic king, had tried to restore it, but the Popes had never cooperated with him, since he was a heretic, and they had seen the city sink decade by decade into the condition of a corpse. Gregory was Prefect (Mayor) of this miserable community when, in 573, the Lombards, the latest invaders of Italy from the north, laid siege to it. The land was devastated once more, and Gregory, like others, came to the conclusion that the end of the world was really not far off. He sold his property and converted his mansion at Rome into a very strict monastery. Here he wrote his large works: child-like compilations of myths about devils and angels, saints and martyrs, expressly scorning any art of writing.

You will have heard of the Castle of Sant' Angelo at Rome, and you may have seen a photograph of the angel which soars above the great tower which was built as the tomb of the Emperor Hadrian. Catholic books or guides will tell you what it means. In the time of Pope Gregory Rome was visited by one of those plagues which were beginning to sweep with increasing deadliness over the darkening medieval world. Gregory knew nothing about sanitation and the danger of the neighboring marshes. Civilization was dead. The Middle Ages had begun. The Pope summoned the Romans to walk in procession through the fetid streets and pray and sing hymns in crowds. And, the Catholic tells you, a glorious angel appeared in the sky above the Castle and the ravages of the plague were miraculously arrested. Thus is Catholic piety fed. The writers of the time will tell you, on the contrary, that, as we should expect, the crowding together of the people helped the infection. Eighty people fell dead on the streets in an hour, and the pest, the new symbol of the Middle Ages, went on.

This is the beginning of the explanation of the ineffectiveness of Gregory in spite of all his piety, strength and industry. Europe was a scientific problem, and Gregory was as far removed from the scientific spirit as from lyric poetry. The Romans dragged him out of his monastery and made him Pope: which shows that there were still many good men amongst the clergy. As I said, the end of

the world was expected. He ruled the Church for fourteen years. He had agents everywhere and knew everything, and his enormous correspondence shows that he worked prodigiously. In Rome he drove worldly clerics out of office and promoted strict priests and monks. He relieved distress most generously, and his sense of justice was such that even the Jews never appealed to him in vain if they had been treated illegally. Whenever he heard of simony in any place or of immoral monks and priests he sent one of his long letters or an agent and demanded reform. His letters show vice and crime everywhere; but we shall see that later. What we want to know, instead of repeating all these familiar things, is why, in spite of fourteen years of this drastic rule of the world by an austere moralist, the corrupt Europe of the sixth century became the still more corrupt Europe of the seventh. It is a point which historians fail to notice.

And no historian will find the answer unless he, after telling of Gregory's great zeal and virtue, tells also certain facts about him that are not usually told. These facts are known on even better authority than the Pope's virtues: I take them from Gregory's own letters, eight hundred and fifty of which have been preserved. They show very clearly that the character of Gregory was warped by the interests of the Roman See, and over and over again he resorted to duplicity and sanctioned untruth and violence. We shall see presently, for instance, that the state of Gaul was far worse than it had been under Salvianus, and Gregory's letters acknowledge this. Simony, drunkenness, vice and violence were appallingly prevalent amongst the clergy and monks, and the royal houses and their tame bishops and abbots were the worst of all. One of the most licentious and notorious of the remarkable women of the time was Queen Brunichildis (or Brunchaut), yet Gregory speaks only in his letters to her of her "devout mind" and finds her "filled with the piety of heavenly grace" (Letters vii, 5, 50, 59, etc.). The one bishop who rebuked her vice and violence was Bishop Desiderius of Vienne. Gregory, we saw, snubbed him for teaching, and, when he asked for the pallium of an archbishop, Gregory harshly refused it. But when the arch-sinner Brunichildis asked a pallium for her favorite Bishop Syagrius, who did not cavil at her peccadilloes, Gregory granted it.

In the Pope's relations with the east we find many instances of the same preference of expediency to principle. At this time the Lombards had settled in Italy, though they still roamed and plundered, but the Greeks held the city of Ravenna and the surrounding province. The archbishop of Aquileia and his clergy had been for years independent of Rome, and Gregory, at his accession, sent a troop of soldiers to bring the prelate to Rome, "in accordance with the orders of the most Christian and most serene lord of all." The Emperor had given no such order, and, when appeal was made to him, he very sharply ordered the Pope to retire. Gregory then bribed the Lombards to leave Rome in peace, which enabled them to concentrate their forces against the Greeks, and the Emperor wrote to censure him very severely. From Gregory's reply we learn

that the Emperor Maurice called him "a fool" and hinted that he was also a liar and traitor. A lampoon to the same effect was posted on the walls of Rome, where the Pope's wretched "statesmanship" was bitterly attacked. His correspondence with the archbishop of Constantinople is just as painful. This prelate was ascetic and religious, but because he sustained the unwavering Greek tradition that Constantinople had in its own sphere the same power as Rome, Gregory spitefully ridicules his ascetic life, accuses him of lying, and loses all sense of dignity and justice. We are compelled to smile when the Pope complains to the Emperor that John claims a "blasphemous title" which ought to be "far from the hearts of all Christians" (v, 20). It is exactly the title which the Pope wants to monopolize!

But the end of the dispute is positively repulsive. The Emperor Maurice was a decent man who, like all the Greeks, regarded the Pope as rather stupid and very obstinate and bad-tempered. In 602 the Emperor, his father, his five brothers and five sons, were brutally murdered, and a certain Phocas, a very vile leader of the troops with an equally brutal wife, seized the crown. There was a terrible orgy of cruelty and bloodshed. Phocas sent word to the Pope, and Gregory's reply (xiii, 31) begins, "Glory be to God on high," and ends, "Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice." Let us suppose that the messengers of Phocas had given the Pope a false account. But seven months after the horrible butcheries we find the Pope writing fulsomely to Phocas about "the day of liberty" (the day of the murders) which had ended a period of tyranny (xiii, 38), and writing to the Empress Leontia, who was as coarse and brutal as her husband, that she is "a second Pulcheria" (the most chaste and virtuous of all Greek empresses) and he trusts his Church will experience some of her liberality (xiii, 39). By that time the whole world knew the truth. Gregory's language is loathsome and we begin to understand his failure. A very large proportion of the clergy of the time despised his conduct, and it was a later age that called him "Great."

Let us notice, too, how Gregory built up the "temporal power" of the Papacy. He insisted—I believe he was sincere in this—that the end of the world was near, and large numbers got rid of their wealth and property and entered monasteries to prepare for it. But the Church, of course, got their wealth and property. The Papacy now became the greatest landowner and slaveowner in Europe. It is estimated that its estates covered from 1400 to 1800 square miles, yielding an annual revenue of about two million dollars: a prodigious income in that age. Gregory's letters show that he took the closest and most business-like interest in these estates everywhere.

They were mainly worked by slaves—not serfs, but slaves—and Gregory did nothing for slaves. He reaffirmed the law that they could not marry free Christians and could not enter the ranks of the clergy. To convert the remaining pagans—there were still plenty—he raised their rents; but if they were slaves he recommended "blows and tortures" (ix, 65). Catholics quote from one

of Gregory's letters the statement that all men are "born free" and slaves are only such by "the law of nations." Curious language from the greatest slaveowner in the world! The fact is that he writes this to two slaves whom he has freed because they have inherited money, and Gregory wants the money. Neither he nor any other Pope condemned slavery or did anything for the slaves. In the rest of Europe slavery was being replaced by serfdom, but the Papacy was the slowest of all to free slaves on its vast estates.

Lastly let me notice the Pope's duplicity in correcting vices. It is clear from his letters that the monastic world is generally corrupt and he sends scolding letters all over the world and orders apostate or vagabond monks to be rounded up and driven back. But amongst his letters are some of a most courteous and friendly character to one Venantius, who was an apostate monk. Yet the man remained so friendly with the Pope that in his will he left his daughters (fruit of the vilest sin according to the Church) to the Pope's guardianship, and the Pope wrote very politely to assure them that he accepts, on account of "the debt we owe to the goodness of your parents" (xi, 35). What is the meaning of it? Simply that Venantius was a wealthy noble.

I have told how he compromised in Gaul, which was in a barbarous condition. Let us turn to Sicily, where the Papal estates were so extensive that Gregory ruled the island. His letters show that the bishops have women in their houses: the priests, deacons and subdeacons are married: the archbishop, at Cagliari, is sensual and licentious. This must cease, says Gregory, and he summons the archbishop Januarius to come to Rome. But Januarius did not go to Rome, did not cease to be archbishop, and did not quit drinking. If you care to read Gregory's half-hearted letters you may be tempted to think that the archbishop sent money instead. Anyhow, vice continued to flourish in Sicily, in Gaul and everywhere else.

It is very wicked, of course, to burrow in the vast correspondence of a great Pope in search of things which make one wonder in what his greatness consisted. But most readers will perceive that unless these facts are made clear the development of Europe is left unexplained. If Leo and Gregory and so many other Popes were the stern and uncompromising guardians of virtue that they are represented to have been, and if their power in Europe was not complete, how is it that, long after Goths and Vandals had settled down, the moral condition was appalling and growing steadily worse, and corruption was spreading through every rank of the clergy? Perhaps these facts help you to understand. The next two chapters will complete the explanation.

## CHAPTER V

## THE ROMAN CHURCH OF THE SIXTH CENTURY

**L**ET us keep clearly in mind that the two points which at this period concern any serious and dispassionate student of Papal history are: what were the general conditions of the Church of Europe, and, if they were as degraded as I represent, what was the cause? Against the Catholic contention that the moral condition was not so deplorable my reply is easy. I quote from contemporary and admitted documents in every age, while they quote from legends or they inflate rare individual cases to the proportions of general facts. The Catholic writer and the general historian seem at first to be more successful when they hold that the barbaric invasions sufficiently explain the second point: why there was a deterioration in Europe. But notice carefully the looseness of their procedure. In the fifth century probably between one and two million barbaric or half-barbaric people wandered over Europe and wrecked its civilization. That is true, but the rest of the argument is not fact: it is loose assumption, and it is in many respects opposed to historical facts.

The assumption is that what wrecked civilization in the fifth century explains why it did not recover, but grew steadily worse, for five succeeding centuries. The general historian, who knows how quickly the Goths in Italy acquired a taste for civilization and how short a time it took to civilize the Arabs in the seventh century, recognizes that the argument requires strengthening. He therefore often says that from the fifth to the tenth century barbarians from the north continued, at intervals, to pour over Europe, and so the work of reconstruction was necessarily delayed. But this also is a loose statement. By the year 500 the Vandals had settled in Africa, the western Goths in Spain, the Franks in the northern part of Gaul, the eastern Goths in Italy, and the Anglo-Saxons in England. After that time invasions were rare and local. The Lombards later harassed northern Italy, but they settled down in a peaceful civilization in the seventh century; and it was near the end of the eighth century when the Danes began to raid England, and two centuries later when the Norsemen or Normans ravaged the east coast of Europe. It is absurd to suggest that this explains five centuries of barbarism all over Europe.

Moreover, these barbarians, as we rightly call them in the scientific sense of the word, showed repeatedly that in one or two generations from the time they settled down in a country, or even at once, they were ready, if not eager, to accept civilization. Since it is now claimed that the Roman Church was corrupted by the barbarians, not by its internal development, let us glance at what happened in Italy. The eastern Goths settled in it, mingling with the inhabitants

of the north, at the end of the fifth century. It was in 490 when their king Theodoric, who had left a trail of blood and cruelty across a thousand miles of the Empire, led them across the Alps and took over Italy. Yet within ten years this handsome and robust barbarian had become the patron of arts and letters, the restorer of Rome, an enlightened statesman anxious to repair all the ravages of Italian civilization. His court was luxurious and splendid, and tourists still go to Ravenna to admire the marble buildings he raised. For his councilors he summoned some of the most cultivated of the Romans, such as Cassiodorus, he gave every encouragement to learning, and "his reign of three and thirty years was consecrated to the duties of civil government." He might at any time have proclaimed himself Roman Emperor, but he respected the sentiments of the Romans and sought to inspire them with a genuine zeal for reconstruction; he was an Arian, but he decreed toleration and was never known to violate his policy. In the year 500 he visited Rome, and for six months he urged and helped the citizens to restore the glory of the city and recover their commerce. He spent large sums on the repair of the dilapidated buildings, had the great sewers and aqueducts restored, reopened the theaters and the amphitheater and Circus, and made a generous free distribution of corn. Once more the Romans cheered the charioteers in the Circus and gloated over the games in the amphitheater, and, though fights of gladiators were now forbidden and it was chiefly beasts that tore each other in the arena, men were hired to fight the beasts. Rome seemed to be rising from the tomb.

### §1. ROME UNDER THE GOTHS

In view of these notorious facts no historian ought to permit or repeat the loose statement that the barbarian invasions of the fifth century paralyzed the beneficent action of the Roman Church. Theodoric desired nothing so ardently as the restoration of Roman civilization, and all the cities of Italy shared in his generous assistance. What the Goths did later, and why, we shall see presently, but at the close of the fifth century, and long afterwards, they were eager to provide funds and protection while the Romans restored the city and the country. We turn to the Roman Church and people, therefore, for the reason of the failure, and we find the Church very gravely responsible for it by its own lamentable character.

I spoke in an earlier chapter of the Popes who succeeded Leo I and sustained his arrogant claims. We find that within twenty years of the death of Leo bribery was being used in Papal elections, for at the election in the year 483 a high imperial officer was present and he issued an edict condemning clerics who alienated Church property; an edict which the Popes afterwards annulled. Another symptom of grave deterioration is that as late as the year 492 the ancient pagan festival of the Lupercalia was still annually celebrated in Rome. Half-hearted attempts were made by various Popes to suppress it, but the people violently resisted and claimed that their calamities might be traced to interference with this fes-

tival of the god Pan. Youths stripped in public and put on aprons of goat skins, and they then ran through the crowded streets striking matrons with leather thongs to insure their fertility. One gathers again how superficial had been the conversion from paganism. Pope Gelasius at length obtained the abandonment of the festival in the usual way: he substituted for it the festival of the Purification of Mary (Candlemas Day), which seems to have been taken from the religion of ancient Egypt.

I described how in the quarrel with the Greeks Pope Anastasius II, whom the poet Dante (xi, 4) puts in a particularly fetid part of Hell, made concessions to the heterodox and alienated the stricter clergy. At his death in 499 the majority of the clergy and people elected Symmachus, but the minority chose the archpriest Laurentius and declared him Pope. Anastasius had sent the leading Roman Senator to the east with his olive branch. This man had now returned and he led the opposition. He bribed a large number of the clergy—and the Senate, the people and the clergy were sundered into fierce factions as in the time of Damasus. For weeks Rome was red with blood. Many priests as well as laymen were slain, and nuns were dragged out of their convents, indecently exposed to the crowd and beaten. They appealed to Theodoric, and we can imagine the disdainful smiles of that royal heretic. It was no mere mob-violence but a feud that involved the highest clergy and Senators. Theodoric declared that Symmachus was properly elected, and Laurentius was consoled with a provincial bishopric.

This was the Rome in which Theodoric spent six months in the year 500. He had not been long back in Ravenna when he heard that the struggle was as fierce as ever. A deputation of "noble" Roman ladies came to his court to impeach the Pope for adultery, sequestration of Church property and secret adhesion to the Manichean heresy (which still existed, for the Pope himself is described as a convert from it). He summoned the Pope, under guard, to Ravenna, but Symmachus escaped and fled back to Rome. His rival, Laurentius, had in the meantime returned, and the bloody struggle was renewed. Laurentian Senators seized some of the slaves from the Pope's palace and tortured them to provide evidence against him. A synod of Italian bishops met at Rome to adjudicate, but, either because they suspected the guilt of the Pope or feared his opponents—a mob waited outside with stones and staves—they declared the Pope free to resume his duties but left to God the question whether the charge against him was true. For four years the sanguinary fights continued, and Theodoric was compelled to forbid the Romans to carry arms.

With the terrible events which darkened the later years of Theodoric we are not concerned. He declared that he had detected a conspiracy against him in the Roman Senate, and the last Roman of any considerable culture, the philosopher Boetius, and the equally distinguished Senator Symmachus were executed. Mr. Hodgkin, the modern biographer of Theodoric, finds grave reason to suspect that there was such a conspiracy, and the historian Gregorovius shows that, in spite of the magnificent work of Theodoric, Boetius

repeatedly and contemptuously spoke of him as a barbarian. There is strong reason to think that the Romans stupidly failed to appreciate their opportunity and began to intrigue with the Greeks. The Goths were heretics as well as alien conquerors, and the Popes sullenly opposed them. I have said that Pope John went to the east as an envoy of Theodoric, but he went under compulsion, and he acted in such fashion that Theodoric threw him into prison on his return.

Theodoric died in 526, and his daughter Amalasantha, the Regent, continued his work. She paid the finest available teachers to come to the Roman schools, and there seemed to be an excellent prospect of a restoration of culture. Unfortunately, the Gothic soldiers resented the rule of a woman and rebelled, and the kingdom that had promised so much began to break up in disorder. The Byzantine troops landed in Italy and were welcomed at Rome by the Pope. The country was now devastated for thirty years by a deadly struggle of Goth and Greek. Time after time Rome was besieged, taken, and retaken. The whole country was desolated, and production almost ceased. The aqueducts to Rome were cut, and while the Romans thirsted and ate dead-mule sausages in the heart of summer, the water converted the surrounding region into marshes from which deadly pestilences began to issue. It is estimated that between one and two million Italians perished in thirty years. It was now, and as much by the fault of the Roman and Greek Christians as of the Goths, that civilization perished in Italy. And the sober and conscientious Dean Milman lays the chief blame on the Roman clergy, who summoned the Byzantines and hoped for material advantages to the Church. He concludes the second volume of his famous "History of Latin Christianity":

Rome, jealous of all temporal sovereignty but her own, yielded up, or rather made, Italy a battlefield to the Transalpine and the stranger, and at the same time so secularized her own spiritual supremacy as to confound altogether the priest and the politician, to degrade absolutely and almost irrevocably the kingdom of Christ into a kingdom of this world.

That is genuine history, and the historian of the city of Rome, F. Gregorovius ("Rome in the Middle Ages") concurs in that verdict. Both writers give the facts I have given and the further incidents which I must now describe to make clear the character and aims of the Church.

## §2. THE DEGRADATION OF THE ROMAN SEE

Bribery and corruption were now so flagrant in the Papal elections—we shall find them continuing, apart from certain periods, until the sixteenth century—that in 532 the Senate had to rebuke the clergy by passing a decree in condemnation of them, and this decree was cut in marble on the walls of St. Peter's. They complained that the funds for the relief of the poor were loaded with debt and that even the sacred vessels were sold from the churches

by priests who wanted heavy bribes for the election. It was one effect of the introduction of Greeks instead of Goths. The imperial officials were greedy, and the priests of Rome were ready to purchase their influence.

It was Pope Silverius who had welcomed the Greeks to Rome and brought about a terrible siege by the Goths. In the midst of it he was summoned to the Pincian Palace, in which the Greek commander Belisarius lived, and accused of treacherous dealings with the Goths. Suborned witnesses were produced, and, when he protested, a subdeacon stripped him of his pontifical garments and dressed him as a monk. He was hurried on board a ship for Greece, and Rome was informed that the Pope was deposed and had become a monk.

It was the opening of one of the most disgraceful chapters yet recorded in the history of a Church which boasted, and boasts, that a special Providence watched over its pontiffs. On the throne of Constantinople at the time was the Emperor Justinian, but his wife, Theodora, was one of the strangest figures of that extraordinary period. As a young girl she had won fame as quite the lowliest actress in Constantinople, and from mistress she had become the wife and Empress of Justinian. Her ferocious temper now embodied all the energy which in her girlhood she had expended on amorous adventures, and in her new zeal for religion she had espoused a heresy and wanted to enforce it in east and west. For some time there had been in Constantinople a Roman priest named Vigilius as envoy or representative of his Church in the east. It is futile for Catholic writers to say that this man was a rare type of adventurer who had somehow got into the ranks of the Roman clergy. He was of a noble Roman family, and he was so prominent in the Roman Church that he had been nominated by Pope Boniface as his successor and had then been appointed to the important post of ambassador at Constantinople. There he made the acquaintance either of the Empress or of some of her friends, and they made acquaintance with his character. He was prepared to sink to any depth to get the wealthy bishopric of Rome.

The wife of the commander at Rome, Antonina, had been one of Theodora's loosest companions in her youth and remained an entirely unscrupulous woman. It was through her that the Empress proposed to Vigilius that, if he were made Pope, he would pledge the Roman Church to her doctrinal irregularities. Silverius had refused every bribe—which can hardly be hailed as heroism—and was removed. Vigilius had stipulated that he must receive also a large sum of money, for the purpose of bribing the electors, and two days after the abduction of Silverius he became Pope, and he proceeded to carry out at least part of the designs of the Empress. The situation was ironic. The Goths still besieged Rome, and the citizens, almost deprived of food and water, were ravaged by disease, while a partially converted prostitute in Constantinople and an unscrupulous bishop in Rome, with an entirely unconverted prostitute as intermediary, tried to direct the doctrinal conscience of Christendom. Silverius had somehow broken loose from his captors

and appealed to the Emperor Justinian. He professed to know nothing about what his wife had done, and he sent Silverius back to Rome to await an inquiry. But Vigilius and Antonina abducted him once more and sent him to the bleak island of Pandataria, where the hand either of nature or of man—we are not clear—soon put an end to his sufferings.

Vigilius enjoyed for some years his position as head of the Roman Church and Vicar of Christ. The whole of the clergy and the citizens accepted him. But he had not been able to comply with all the requirements of Theodora, and in 544 she sent an officer to Rome to bring Vigilius to her. "If you fail," the royal tigress said, "I will have your skin torn from your body." Their sufferings from the war during his pontificate had by this time soured the Romans, and they crowded to the quays to fling stones and curses on the vessel that bore the Pope away. He was now, they said, known to them in his true character: had murdered one of his secretaries, and so on. He was dragged through Constantinople with a rope round his neck, "like a bear," an old writer says, and thrown into prison. Justinian himself—Theodora died at this point—had his heresies and wanted Vigilius to comply. After a period of exile the Pope yielded, and we perceive how little truth there is in the claim that the great Justinian had no share in these horrors when we learn that the Emperor restored the Papal adventurer to his "dignity" and sent him back to Rome. Ten years of suffering had, however, broken his health and he died during the voyage.

As Justinian was the last "great" Emperor of the east we see what a comprehensive degradation had fallen upon Christendom. The "barbaric" Goth, who is now blamed for the decay of civilization, had made every effort to restore it: the Roman Church had refused to cooperate and had brought in the refined corruption of the Greeks. The next Pope, Pelagius, was elected at the orders of the Emperor, and the Church was once more filled with turbulence. But there is nothing of further interest to be told of the Popes of the sixth century until Gregory I was elected, and we have already considered his pontificate. We begin to see the historical truth that lies behind the vague statement that the Goths destroyed the civilization of Rome and Italy and corrupted the Roman Church. It is true that the Greek-Gothic war ruined civilization in Italy and prepared the way for further invasions; but the Goths had themselves fairly re-established civilization in Rome and the Italian cities, and the blunders and selfishness of the Popes had been largely responsible for the tragic overthrow. The Roman Church was not corrupted by barbarians.

### 83. EUROPE SINKS BACK INTO BARBARISM

During this sixth century we shall scarcely expect to find any beneficent action of the Church of Rome, in the narrower sense, outside Italy, but the whole of western Christendom was now, and henceforward, the Roman Catholic Church, as distinct from the Greek Catholic Church, and we must glance at its condition. Sev-

eral provinces of the old Empire were now rapidly sinking once more into barbarism. The African Church, which had played so great a part in the earlier period, was ruined by the Vandals, and the whole prosperous region was then made desolate by the war of Greeks and Vandals. The island of Britain, in which there had been so remarkable a growth of monasteries, had become once more almost entirely pagan. The Angles and Saxons who had occupied it had not been, like the Goths and Vandals, converted to Christianity before they set out on their conquering expedition. Christianity was almost extinct in Britain by the end of the sixth century, and we shall see later how it was re-converted and how misleading it is to regard it as the home of virtue and culture. The province we know best is Gaul, or the kingdom of the Franks, as it had now become, and, just as Salvianus describes it for us in the fifth century, so Bishop Gregory of Tours throws a broad and lurid light on it in the sixth.

We need not here describe how the Franks, another nation of Teutonic barbarians, had expelled the western Goths and taken over Gaul. Before the end of the fifth century they were converted to Christianity: not to the Arian creed, as the Goths and Vandals had been, but to the Trinitarian creed of Rome. By the middle of the sixth century the country had a larger number of wealthy bishoprics and abbeys, and it is one of the stricter bishops, Gregory of Tours (538-594), who has left us an invaluable history of the time. His crude literary style reflects the low state of culture, and in his credulity and superstition he is quite childish. But he came of what was at this time regarded as a noble and wealthy family, and his knowledge of the events of his time was very extensive. A translation of the work has recently been published in two volumes ("The History of the Franks," 1927) by O. M. Dalton, but the American reader will find it sufficient to consult the abridged translation published in 1916 by Columbia University, which preserves some of the most picturesque accounts of the time and omits the less interesting portions.

The historical part opens at once with murderous and half-savage princes and bishops who get their Sees by bribery and spend the revenue in debauchery. Theuderic, son of the converted king Clovis, ends his murders and adulteries by dying in the year 534, when his son Theudebert, whom Gregory naively describes as a great and pious king, takes over his father's chief mistress Deuteria, and this lady drowns her daughter lest she become a rival for the royal affections. The sister of Clovis has a daughter who elopes with one of her slaves, and the mother sends men to kill the slave and beat and bring back her daughter; whereupon the daughter—apparently with clerical assistance—puts poison in the "blood of Christ" which the queen-mother drinks in the mass, and the daughter herself is barbarously executed in a hot bath for her crime. These two were Arians, as the mother had married Theodoric of Italy, and the bishop-historian does not fail to point the moral; if they had only been sound Trinitarians, he says, they could have drunk the poison with impunity.

The story of royal adulteries and murders goes on, and some quaint clerics are introduced. Bishop Cautinus is a terrible drunkard—it takes four men to carry him to bed at night—and seizes the property of others to keep up his treasury. He has a priest, who refuses to give up his property, buried alive. The king (who is described as raping with impunity the daughters of the highest senators) indignantly sends soldiers to arrest Cautinus as he marches in a religious procession, and we have a picture of the bishop dashing for his horse and flying across the country. This king's father, Lothar, advances against him, conquers him, and burns him and his wife and daughters alive. Then the good king Lothar (another son of the royal convert Clovis), who has seven sons "by divers women" and is married to his deceased wife's sister, comes to the tomb of the Blessed Martin, at Tours, to do penance for "all the evil acts which **by negligence** he might have committed"; and a few months later he dies with a blasphemy on his lips. Next "the good king Guntram takes to his bed a concubine," then marries, but, as his wife out of jealousy kills his son by the concubine, he dismisses her and weds another. King Charibert comes next, and he was a bad one. "The mind can conceive no lust and debauchery that he did not practice"; and Gregory can be quite candid about it as this particular prince was very rude to bishops and a thorough pagan. One of his mistresses was a nun.

But the really picturesque part begins when another son of the gay Lothar, Chilperic, "the Nero and Herod of our time," hears that his brother Sigibert has got a beautiful wife from Spain, named Brunhild, and, though he has a good supply of Frankish wives already, Chilperic sends to Spain for Brunhild's sister and weds her. We gather, incidentally, that the Visigothic kingdom in Spain, though apparently a little more cultivated, was not reluctant to send its princesses amongst the Franks. However, Chilperic remains enamored of his beautiful and spirited mistress Fredegond, and she persuades him to strangle his new queen. After that the book is lit by the ghastly feud of Brunhild and Fredegond. Brunhild had been at first of fair character, though unscrupulously ambitious, but she was in her worst days, a murderess of flaming passions, when Pope St. Gregory, as we saw, addressed her as his "dearly beloved daughter" and awarded ecclesiastical honors to the corrupt prelates of her court. Childebert was stabbed, and Brunhild is reasonably suspected, but at the time Fredegond wanted vengeance on a noble who had repelled her advances, so she accused him, and "the good king Guntram" swore a ponderous oath that he would destroy his family "to the ninth generation."

Quite a number of bishops are commended by Gregory for their piety but we rarely read of protests against these incessant murders and still more rarely against the universal license of morals. Churches and monasteries are robbed of their sacred vessels, and nuns are raped in their convents. Two bishops at table at the court fall into a drunken brawl and shout out each other's "adulteries and fornications," and many of the other diners laugh. The bishop of Lyons and his wife commit many murders. The bishop of Soissons

goes mad through drink. The bishop of LeMans and his wife are monsters of murderous greed: "Often did she cut men's virile members together with the skin of the belly and burned with red-hot plates the privy parts of women." A nun of royal blood seizes a convent and hires a gang of cutthroats to protect her and her gay companions and kill the clerics who try to evict them. Another royal lady makes her husband promise on oath, before she "breathes out her vile spirit," that he will kill the two doctors who have failed to cure her.

But let us finish with the two chief heroines. In Book vii we find Queen Fredegond exiled to her estates and under suspicion. She sends "a cleric of her court," a royal chaplain, so to say, to murder her rival. He contrives to get service in Brunhild's court, but he is found out and sent away; and the angry Fredegond cuts off his hands and feet. She then prepares poisoned knives and sends two more clerics with savage detailed instructions to kill Brunhild and her husband. They are rather nervous about the business so she doses them with some mysterious drug, which gives them "stout hearts," and she gives them a little phial of it to drink before the murder. They are caught, however, and, after their hands, ears and noses have been cut off, they are brutally executed. A bishop plucks up courage and scolds Fredegond, and she has him stabbed. A noble reproaches her and is poisoned. All the time, apparently, her crimes are under investigation but nothing is done. She then sends men to murder King Guntram, who is displaying some curiosity about her conduct, attempts to murder her daughter, murders three men whom she has invited to a banquet. . . . The story ends with a clotted mass of murders and rapes and adulteries.

Most of this is a description of thirty or forty years of life in one of the largest and most prosperous provinces of western Christendom. Rome was too busy to interfere. All that we read is that when John III was Pope (561-574) two of the worst of these ruffianly bishops were deposed in Gaul and went to Rome to complain. John was, as Popes always were by such appeals, flattered, and he got them restored to their Sees, where they went on merrily with their adventures. What little Gregory I attempted, or how little he could attempt while he supported Brunhild, we have seen. Such was Christendom under the spiritual guidance of the Popes in the sixth century.

## CHAPTER VI.

## ROME AND EUROPE BECOME BRUTAL

**I**N THIS book I propose to carry the story of the Roman Church as far as the beginning of the ninth century, when the Papacy secures its temporal power and opens a new era of forgery. We shall find the Church at its lowest depth of degradation in the tenth century, and I am here taking it century by century so that we shall understand in a genuine historical way how it sank to such a depth of barbarism. We have now, I hope, definitely set aside the vague customary statement that the invasion of the fifth century necessarily involved the collapse of civilization. We find Italy actually inspired by the Goths to restore its splendor and culture, and a cordial cooperation of Rome with them might have changed the history of the Middle Ages. We find the western Goths settling peacefully in Roman Spain and protecting it from further invasion. No Theodoric arose amongst these, but there was a fair restoration of civilization, or continuance of the Roman civilization. Some of the most important Church councils of the time were held there, and the archbishop of Seville, Isidore, was one of the best scholars of the seventh century. But that does not mean much, except that the prosperous Church in Spain did produce one man who recognized the value of some degree of intellectual culture. The Church had no intellectual vitality, and Spain, in spite of its prosperity, remained at a low moral and mental level.

We will therefore turn back to Rome and Italy and see what happened there in the seventh and eighth centuries. The usual theory, which has to explain how the Papacy became so degraded by the end of the ninth century, is that before Italy could recover from the appalling devastation of the Gothic-Greek war—at the close of which, as I said, we find the Papacy owning fifteen hundred square miles of land, an army of slaves, and an income of millions of dollars a year—further streams of northern barbarians poured down from the Alps, and the Lombards settled in Italy and checked the work of reconstruction. And once more the legend is a mendacious attempt to lessen the responsibility of Rome. Let us grant that Italy suffered terribly in the second half of the sixth century, but the anti-cultural spirit of Gregory counted for more than the Lombards in the slow recovery. It is Gregory's successor, Pope Sabinianus, who tells how he burned the Palatine library, and, if we are to believe the tradition, Gregory also destroyed many of the monuments of Rome. Sabinianus was so contemptuous of the work of his predecessor, whom a later generation would call great, that according to popular rumor of a later age, Gregory came back from the grave after two years and slew him. Catholic apologists scorn these Roman ideas about Gregory but do not attempt to explain how they arose.

From that time for more than a hundred and fifty years the chronicle of the Papacy is almost devoid of interest. One obscure and mediocre man succeeds another, and we shall find almost nothing to say about them except that they built churches, until once more a sanguinary feud leads to murders in Rome. The Papacy not merely had no marked influence on the world but it deteriorated with it. For this, as I said, the settlement of the Lombards in Italy is blamed, but modern history is discrediting these old excuses for the Popes. The Lombards were crude enough when they reached Italy, but, like the Goths, they very quickly proved sensible to the lesson of the glorious monuments amongst which they had settled and they created a very promising civilization of their own. The chief modern authority on them and the Goths, Dr. T. Hodgkin, has in his "Italy and Her Invaders" redeemed the character of both. The north-central part of Italy, which still bears the name of Lombardy, became civilized once more. How and why the Popes failed to cooperate with these Lombards we shall now see; but I may say at once that the chief reason was that the Popes wanted to become the temporal as well as the spiritual rulers of Italy.

### §1. ROME SINKS TO SAVAGERY

With all his faults Gregory I had been a profoundly religious and, in practical matters, a very able man, and one requires some better explanation than is usually given how or why the Papacy sank in the next two centuries to a condition in which we shall find the most distinguished clerics gouging out each other's eyes. Of the majority of the thirty Popes who follow Gregory in a century and a half we have little of interest to tell, but we will not fail to notice the unusual firmness and integrity of Pope Martin I. The Eastern Church had been caught in the toils of a new heresy, and for years Christendom was torn and reddened over the question whether it was proper to say that there were two wills in Christ, the divine and the human, or only one. Rome said, as modern theologians say, two, but the Greek emperor was converted to the heretical view, and as Rome and Italy were subject to him, he claimed to dictate even the beliefs of Popes. Honorius I agreed in an ambiguous confession to the heresy, but his successor Martin was of the stuff of martyrs. In solemn synod he condemned the error of the Greeks, and an imperial officer was sent to bring him to Constantinople. Rome offered to do battle with the imperial troops for his liberty, but he commanded the citizens to refrain and took ship for Constantinople. There, after spending three months in prison, he was dragged through the streets to the place of execution, then put back into prison for three months, and finally sent into an exile from which death soon delivered him.

Fortunately for the other pontiffs of the seventh century they were not similarly tested. The Greek Emperor who had so brutally treated the Pope, and still sought to impose a heresy on Christendom, came a few years later to Rome. Pope Vitalian received him with the abject humility which the eastern monarchs demanded of everybody, and the Emperor displayed his disdain for the degen-

erate Romans by stripping their city of nearly all the finest bronzes that remained in it. Some years earlier one of the Popes had, in his effort to inflict a particularly deadly anathema on the Emperor, mingled a few drops of the "blood of Christ" from the chalice with the ink with which he wrote his malediction. The Emperors smiled and prospered, though the eastern world was now as barbaric as Europe. Twenty years later the heresy was conquered and the Churches reunited; until, thirty years later, another heresy of the Greek Church would lead to a final separation.

During all this time the Popes remain obscure and with little influence on Europe, but the Pontifical Chronicle lets us see that Rome was continuously degenerating. I have said that it was now customary for candidates for the Papacy to bribe the imperial authorities, and this led once more to lamentable struggles at the elections. In 687 two Popes were again elected, and each, with his followers, occupied one half of the Palace and anathematized his rival. The leading citizens and clerics went to the palace to make peace, and, when they failed, they elected Sergius Pope, stormed the fortified gates of the palace, and installed him. Paschalis, however, one of the two rivals, sent to Ravenna for the imperial representative and promised him a large sum of money if he would secure his recognition. The exarch came, but Sergius was willing to pay as much as Paschalis and he was confirmed. It was during his pontificate that the preposterous forgery known as "the veil of Veronica"—a cloth bearing a crude face which was said to be a miraculous imprint of Christ's face—was received with great honor at Rome. Culture was so low that no one seems to have known that Veronica was not a woman's name, and most particularly not a Hebrew name, but simply the Greek for "true portrait."

In the first quarter of the eighth century there spread over the east the famous campaign against the cult of statues which is known in history as Iconoclasm. In this obscure movement there seems to have been much more than a horror of the practical idolatry which had spread over Christendom, but the Greek world had sunk so low that it will be enough to describe some of the methods by which the Emperor Leo enforced his doctrine. The Archbishop of Constantinople, who had the courage to resist it, was driven on an ass round the Hippodrome while the mob loaded him with spittle, and he was then castrated: which was only one of the many mutilations (gouging out eyes, cutting off ears, hands, or feet, slitting noses, etc.) that were common in the Greek Church by the seventh century. The monks also resisted. The Emperor had their beards saturated with oil and set aflame, made them walk around the Hippodrome arm in arm with prostitutes—here the crowd roared with delight—and coupled them with nuns. The world swam with blood: Rome had, therefore, more than doctrinal reasons to rebel against the Greeks, and some historians suspect that one of these reasons was that the Popes now dreamed of becoming themselves the secular as well as the religious rulers of Italy. We may grant that Gregory II and Gregory III thought only of religion. They defied the Greeks, and the city was rent into pro-Greek and pro-

Lombard factions, with the usual bloodshed. Several nobles were slain on the charge of the Pope that they sought his life. The Lombards were now at the height of their prosperity, and nothing better could have happened to Italy than that they should take over and peacefully develop the entire land. Roman writers have loaded them with calumny, but they were really in a fair way to restore civilization when the Popes, as I will tell in the next chapter, treacherously assisted the Lombard king's vassals in a rebellion and then summoned the Franks to Rome and desolated Italy with war once more. To the next chapter I leave also, since it concerns the acquisition of the temporal power, the gross forgery by which the Pope induced the Frank monarch to come to his assistance.

Let me complete this section by showing how from the time when, at the middle of the eighth century, the Popes became secular rulers Rome degenerated more rapidly than ever. Pope "St." Paul I died in 767. In what precisely the saintliness consisted even the most resolute modern falsifiers of Papal history are not quite clear. I have said that at this point, the seventh and eighth centuries, we begin to get the guidance of a recent Catholic historian, the Rev. Dr. H. A. Mann ("The Lives of the Popes in the Early Middle Ages"), a cleric of the thoroughly Papal school, yet he confesses that the few letters which give us our chief information about Paul and his activity are "melancholy" reading, since they are full of querulous complaints about his property and nauseous praise of King Pippin. Paul, I may add, became so unpopular at Rome that one single cleric remained at his side when he died, in a monastery outside the walls. Then began a series of events which threw a lurid light on the state of Rome. They merely, Dr. Mann assures his Catholic readers, show that the laity no longer heeded the austere counsels of their clergy. On the contrary the leading clerics were as active in them as the leading nobles, and a Pope was responsible for one of the most brutal acts of the orgy of blood. Except on the latter point, for which the evidence (carefully ignored by Mann) is the Pontifical Chronicle itself, there is not the least dispute about the facts, and I may therefore just describe what happened.

Paul was the first Pope-King, in the Catholic phrase, and there at once began the age-long struggle of the nobles of Rome and Italy to wrest this profitable secular power from the clergy. Duke Toto, one of the chief nobles, was on his estates in the country when he heard of the Pope's illness, but he gathered his troops, forced his way into Rome, and entrenched himself in his Roman palace: obviously expecting a sanguinary struggle. When the Pope died, Toto convoked an assembly and forced it to elect his brother Constantine. He was a layman but obliging bishops put him through the various sacred orders in record time and made him Pope. There were, however, two very important clerical officials of the Papal palace, Christopher and his son Sergius, who framed a plot against Constantine, and they asked permission to retire to a monastery. They were suspected, but they swore ponderous oaths to be loyal to the Pope—the most solemn oaths were now all over Europe broken almost daily—and they at once went to the Lombards to ask them

for an army. The Lombard king sent troops before the Papal officers were back in Rome, and in a furious battle on the streets of the city, Toto and his party were routed. The Lombard faction hastily converted a monk named Philip into a Pope, but Christopher and Sergius now returned and, in a regular election, the priest Stephen was elected.

We have the usual assurance of the Pontifical Chronicle and the Catholic historians that Stephen was an austere and virtuous man, but we prefer the facts. The most brutal vengeance was taken on the supporters of Constantine. The temporary Pope was put on horseback on a woman's saddle, his feet heavily weighted, conducted through the streets of Rome and consigned to a monastery; and from this he was later dragged to have his eyes cut out. Bishops, priests, and military officers had their eyes or their tongues cut out. Numbers were murdered in whatever savage fashion occurred to the Pope's supporters. As Stephen had been appointed in opposition to the Lombard king's wishes, the treacherous clerics persuaded Stephen to turn to France for help, and a number of Frank bishops—we shall see their character presently—were sent to Rome. A solemn synod was held, and the blind ex-Pope Constantine was brought before it. He had committed the most terrible of crimes: a mere layman had broken into the privileges of the sacred caste. When he attempted to defend himself, the clergy felled the blind man with their fists and threw him out of the church. His end is left to our imagination.

Christopher and Sergius—remember always that these are not laymen but the highest clerical officials after the Pope—now ruled their protegee so arrogantly that the saintly Pope became restless and, with the connivance of his Chamberlain, secretly made terms with the Lombard king, who wanted the blood of the two traitors. A disturbance was to be created in Rome and the people incited to kill Christopher and Sergius, but they suspected the plot and, with an armed guard, invaded the chapel in which the Pope took refuge. He swore loyalty to them; and then retired to the inviolable sanctuary of St. Peter's and sent out a rumor into Rome that he was a prisoner of the Lombards until the people removed the two clerics. They were captured in an attempt to escape from the city and were brought to the Pope in St. Peter's. Mean and crafty to the end, the Pope left them in St. Peter's while he went to his palace, and they were dragged out and deprived of their eyes. Christopher died at once from the brutal operation—eyes were simply dug out of their sockets with knives—and Sergius was later murdered in prison.

Not only is all this not mere civilian strife, as Mann calls it, but the apologist quotes a letter in which Stephen denies that he was an accomplice and refrains from quoting the authentic words of the Papal Chronicle. From this we learn that the great Pope, Hadrian, who succeeded Stephen, assured the Lombard envoys that Stephen had admitted to him that he himself "caused the eyes of Christopher and Sergius to be put out," and he stooped to this act of savagery because the Lombard king promised to restore

some of his temporal possessions if he did it. The Papacy was already cursed by its greed. However, the Lombard king refused to return the cities, and the Pope turned again to the Franks. When he presently heard that the two sons of Pippin were about to marry Lombard princesses he became frantic in his appeals and threats. He believed, his letter (No. 4) shows, that they were both already married, but he says little about the sin of divorce. It is the prospect of their marrying into that "family of lepers"—which would end his hope of recovering his territory—that appals him. He assured them that he was laying this letter, with its heavy anathemas, on "the tomb of the apostle." The elder son Carlomann drew back in terror, but Charlemagne placidly married his Lombard princess. How Carlomann died in 771, and Charlemagne was induced by the Pope—this was at least one of the factors—to dismiss his Lombard wife and take up the cause of the Papacy we shall see in the next chapter.

## 52. THE STATE OF EUROPE

We shall scarcely expect this Papacy of the early Middle Ages to exercise much influence on the moral and spiritual condition of Europe. It is only historians who are too courteous to our Roman Catholic fellow-citizens to reproduce these bloody pages of the Papal Chronicle who imagine Gaul and Britain at this time being slowly molded into the shape of civilization by the firm hands of the Popes. Naturally the whole of Europe was not corrupt. An age of such savage violence and coarseness was bound to excite a feeling of revulsion in the minds of many men and women, but if we find a group of (for the time) scholarly and religious monks and clerics gathering round Bede in England, or Boniface in Germany, or Isidore in Spain—we find none in Rome and Italy—we shall certainly find there no traces of Papal influence. Moreover, the newly converted barbarians were all totally illiterate and profoundly ignorant, and the forged lives of saints and martyrs, and the wonderful crops of contemporary miracles in the histories of Bede and Gregory, which priests recited to them, persuaded many a princess to retire to a nunnery and even succeeded at times in checking the passions of a prince. There were saints, but, to translate a line of Vergil, "Few are the forms that float in that vast whirl." We may fully recognize the extensive but peculiar learning of a Bede, the virtue of a Hilda, the zeal of a Boniface, but if we are concerned to have a genuine knowledge of the age we shall look rather for general characterizations.

The African Church was now in ruins, and in the seventh century the Arabs moved over the ruins and, while restoring civilization, extinguished the last dull glow of Christian belief. The same Arabs crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and by the year 712 had taken nearly the whole of Spain, so that we need not return to it. In spite of its great wealth the country had fallen so low under the Spanish Church that a few thousand Arabs and Moors were able to sweep it from the Mediterranean to the Bay of Biscay. The

Catholic historian would direct our attention rather to England, where, by the middle of the seventh century, the Anglo-Saxons had been converted to Christianity, and the "Ecclesiastical History of England" of the Venerable Bede suggests a great school of learning and depicts a land of virtue and miracles.

It is just these miracles which compel us to read Bede—there are several English translations—with very considerable reserve. A Catholic may in some peculiar way persuade himself that in the seventh century miracles of the most startling description were daily events in England and are now, when they are most needed, as rare as megatheria, but most of us think of the crass ignorance of the age. An historian of the accommodating school may persuade himself that Bede is entirely wrong in his miracles but entirely right in his records of virtue, but most of us wonder. What, however, we do see is that even Bede's History is peculiarly suggestive. In the midst of the smooth narrative of sanctity, for instance, we are suddenly introduced (Bk. iv, ch. 25) to a large monastery of monks and nuns—they at that time often had separate quarters in the same cluster of buildings—which was so thoroughly corrupt in a single generation after its royal foundation that God destroyed it by fire; and, in his letter to King Egbert, Bede speaks of large numbers of nuns who have nothing religious about them but the name.

I will, however, deal separately with monasticism in the next chapter. The authentic record of British royal conduct in the seventh and eighth centuries is really not much better than that of France. The petty kings often lapse back into paganism and are in most cases as violent as their predecessors. The Church itself is rent by passionate quarrels, as one reads clearly enough in Bede. The great St. Wilfrid spends most of his life in fighting his brother bishops, and the differences between the missionaries who have come from Ireland (and are distinctly anti-Papal) and those who have come from Rome lead to bitter controversies. The Archbishop of Canterbury drives the Bishop of York into exile. Milman finds consolation in the fact that "the sad scenes of sacerdotal jealousy and strife are lost in the spectacle of the blessings conferred by Christianity on our Saxon ancestors." He does not clearly describe the blessings, but we do trace a restoration of industry and wealth and a few places in which some sort of culture is esteemed: just a few small areas in the country, and, to judge by Bede's book, the culture is hardly worth the name. Bede tells us that great numbers of the clergy did not know Latin, and they could therefore not read his own book. He wrote, says Milman, for "a very small intellectual aristocracy"; and these aristocrats clearly had the credulity of Mexican peasants.

When we turn to France—the ancient Gaul having now become France through the settlement of the Franks—we find very little improvement on the general condition described by Gregory of Tours. A detailed history like that of Martin ("Histoire de France") is a heavy record of crime and passion. King Dagobert has a court in which "saints rub shoulders with prostitutes, and,

orgiastic songs mingle with the strains of sacred hymns." The king, in fact, enjoys all the debauchery of his pagan ancestors, but he pours wealth on the churches, and he forces Jews and pagans to receive baptism. His sons cling to the polygamous tradition of the Franks, which scarcely seems to trouble the bishops or Popes. At last comes the great Charles Martel, the savior of civilization in our text-books, since he routed the Moors and drove them back to Spain. The Pope, who wanted his troops, flattered him extravagantly and sent him gorgeous presents. You may be surprised to hear—any history of France will tell you—that to the French bishops themselves he was Judas and Anti-Christ combined in one. He treated the Church with the utmost contempt and divided the richer sees and abbeys among his thoroughly pagan nobles. "Barbarians," says Martin, "who had barely abjured Odin, installed themselves with their wives, soldiers and hunting dogs in the episcopal palaces." Charles Martel was, in fact, the worst and most cynical corrupter of the French Church, and he was the idol of Pope Gregory III.

The letters of St. Boniface, the English missionary to Germany, confirm all this. To the Bishop of Winchester he writes (Letter No. 12): "Some [in France] say that murderers and adulterers may, although they persist in their crimes, become priests." He lays the whole situation before Pope Zachary (No. 44). The French bishops, he says, have not held a synod for more than eighty years! His picture to the Pope (who did nothing) is as dark as it is comprehensive. "For the most part," he says, "the bishoprics are given to greedy laymen to possess or to adulterous clerics, fornicators and publicans for their secular enjoyment." Deacons "spent all their time from their boyhood in adultery, fornication and all kinds of filth," and they have now "four or five or more concubines in bed with them at night," yet they continue in office and persevere in their vices when they become priests and bishops. Other bishops who boast that they are chaste are drunkards or devoted to hunting. One noble boasts that he got from Rome permission to marry a close relation, who was also a nun. Some of the licentious bishops say that they have been to Rome and have got permission to continue in office. Zachary in his reply denies that Rome had given these permissions—it was really the beginning of the sale of dispensations and indulgences—and urges Boniface to depose the sinners. He knew quite well that Boniface could not, but he could, and did not.

Then there came a new dynasty, its usurpation blessed and consecrated by the Pope (who wanted its assistance), and it soon produced Charlemagne, the friend and great benefactor of the Popes, the restorer of civilization. Quite certainly Charlemagne was a great monarch, and, if the clergy had cooperated with him, the age of darkness in Europe would have been much shorter. But let me tell you a few undisputed facts about Charlemagne which are not included in school-manuals, yet are important from our present viewpoint. He was married five times, and after the death of his fifth wife he had four concubines. By these various ladies he had

eighteen known children, fifteen of whom were illegitimate. Some of them were made bishops, abbots and abbesses. He would not permit his daughters to marry, and he smiled when some of them sought satisfaction elsewhere. But he loved to have the works of St. Augustine read to him and he had, as we shall see, a most profound veneration for the Blessed Peter.

### §3. THE MONKS AND NUNS

Yes, sighs the Catholic historian, there was much vice and violence in these converts from paganism, and all that the Church could do was to provide the peaceful and fragrant cloister for the scholar and the refined. Let us note, in passing, that Rome founded or inspired very few monasteries and paid very little attention to the state of the world and none to the state of culture. One may claim, however, that its creed inspired or sustained the monastic life, and we must examine this very familiar legend of a Europe dotted with thousands of homes of clotted virtue, which averted the divine wrath from the sinful community, and of colonies of learned monks who kept culture alive and preserved classical literature for us. I will reserve the last point for the next book and will be content here to collect any references of a general character to the monasteries. I have already pointed the fallacy of the usual procedure: a few good abbeys are described and the condition of the majority is ignored. Let us see if we can at this period find any evidence that gives us a better appreciation of the relative proportions of virtue and vice.

Bede's history is one of the most serious historical documents of the time, but I have explained why we have to read it with very great reserve, and that Bede in other documents is much less flattering to the monks and nuns. Bede wrote in the first quarter of the eighth century, and within twenty years we have much more reliable and less rhetorical statements about English monachism in the letters of St. Boniface, who lived in English monasteries at the same time as Bede and was not nearly so dreamy a person. We have a letter (No. 57) which Boniface wrote to King Ethelbald of Mercia (one of the small kingdoms in England) in 745, and one has to be pretty sure of one's facts in writing to rebuke a king. Boniface is remarkably polite, but he is shocked to hear that the king, a bachelor, is very immoral. "What is worse," he goes on, "we hear that you commit this ignominy **generally** in monasteries, with nuns and virgins consecrated to God." He hears that these nuns "**for the most part** kill the children that are born to them." He begs his "beloved son" not to do these things, and he incidentally tells us of two other English kings—one of whom was a full contemporary of Bede, who does not mention his vices—who, with their nobles, were just as industrious in corrupting the nuns throughout their dominions.

That is a far sounder historical document than Bede's History, and we find plenty of confirmatory evidence. In the year 747 we find the Archbishop of Canterbury presiding at the Council of Clovesho, which seeks to improve morals. Its twentieth canon says: "Therefore let not the houses of nuns be hotbeds of lewd conversa-

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tion, feuds, drunkenness and vice." Forty years later the Council of Chelsea repeats the censure of disorderly nunneries, but we shall see that there was no serious reform of the British monasteries and nunneries until the latter part of the tenth century, and then only for a time. They will hardly be expected, after what we have seen about the bishops of Gaul, to be any better in that country, and there is plenty of evidence that they were not. In one of Charlemagne's Capitularies for the year 802 we read: "It has come to our ears that numbers of abominable cases of fornication have been detected in monasteries." An attempt to reform the nuns led, as we shall see, to a growth of infanticide in nunneries, yet again in 836, at the Council of Aix la Chapelle, we read that "in some places the houses of nuns seem to be brothels rather than convents." There is ample evidence that the majority of the monasteries and nunneries during this period were loose and hypocritical.

## CHAPTER VII

## THE FORGED DEEDS OF THE TEMPORAL POWER

**T**HAT fatuous phrase, "The Prisoner of the Vatican," which recent Popes have applied to themselves, has stirred the pulse of the Catholic world for more than half a century, yet few Catholics could give you an accurate and coherent account of its meaning. It is centuries since any Pope was confined to the Vatican Palace. The Pope means that he is the lawful king of Rome and of a large part of Italy, and that the Italian government, in taking over the city and the Papal States or provinces—at the invitation of the inhabitants, as we shall see—and leaving him, as free and independent territory, only the land on which the Palace and St. Peter's stand, has made it impossible for him to tread territory which he regards as his own. How the matter stands between the Pope and the Fascist government today, and what the Pope now claims we shall see later. So delicate and unscrupulous is the balance of interests that the situation may once more be entirely changed before I reach my last volume. But the beginning of this "temporal power"—that is to say, not merely the ownership of but political authority over whole provinces—goes back to the period we are surveying, and what happened crowns the series of forgeries we have reviewed and inaugurates a new and bolder series of forgeries.

The acquisition of such a temporal power is, from a secular point of view, the gravest blunder the Papacy ever committed. The theoretical argument used by Catholics to defend it is that an international spiritual power ought to be politically independent, or not subject in any sense to a national authority, so as to preserve complete impartiality in its decisions; and that such independence is best secured by assigning the Pope his own political territory. How educated Catholics can listen patiently to such sophistry is not easily understood. Since 1870, when the Papacy has been confined to its little strip of territory in Rome, it has enjoyed a more complete immunity from national pressure than it had had for more than a thousand years. On the other hand, its possession of a secular sovereignty had trailed it for centuries in the mud and hatred of warfare, for from the seventh century onward its title has been disputed and the provinces of central Italy have been soaked with the blood of contending armies. It would be impossible to conceive anything more remote from the humble and ascetic spirit of the Roman Church of the first century. Nor must we for a moment suppose that the Popes clung to their temporal dominions so that the inhabitants might continue to enjoy a just and benevolent rule. These Papal States were almost the last part of Europe to be civilized in the nineteenth century, the last refuges of medieval tyranny and

inefficiency, and their inhabitants voted by large majorities to be included in the superior civilization of the united kingdom of Italy.

But these considerations are mild in comparison with our reflections when we regard the beginning of the temporal sovereignty of the Popes. In the disorder of Europe during the early part of the Middle Ages, when the older political authority disintegrated, it was natural that the Popes should quietly and unofficially take over the reins of government. To such rule as they exercised they had no legal title, and, when the Lombards and the Byzantines came, as we saw, to create principalities of their own in Italy, a dispute arose at once. It is now established beyond dispute, though most non-Catholic and many Catholic historians have recognized it for centuries, that the title which the Popes produced, the document or documents in virtue of which they were formally installed as secular rulers of Rome and the Papal States, are brazen forgeries. The study of this will fitly crown the period of degradation which I survey in the present book.

### §1. THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT

The Gothic king Theodoric, to whom I have referred in an earlier chapter, became king of all Italy (and nearly the whole of the western Empire) by the recognized title: conquest. He preferred to live a sober life at Ravenna, but he was the lord of Rome and Italy. We saw how Popes and Greeks intrigued and overthrew this most promising rule, and how Rome passed under the authority of Constantinople. Troubles in the east distracted the Greeks, and in the second half of the sixth century the Lombards (Long-Beards, or northerners who had already reached the Danube valley) crossed the Alps and conquered most of Italy. Rome and the province of Ravenna remained nominally part of the eastern Empire, but Pope Gregory, as we saw, had enormous estates in southern Italy and Sicily, and, in default of other authority, his agents punished crime and administered the provinces. In the eighth century, when a new heresy (that of the Iconoclasts or Image-Breakers) had spread over the eastern Empire and been adopted by the court, the Popes led a rebellion in Italy. It succeeded at least in intimidating the Greek Emperors from forcing their heresy upon Europe, and the Popes then proposed that Rome and Ravenna should remain under the nominal sovereignty of Constantinople.

In effect Rome now became a republic, its judges and military leaders being chosen by the people themselves. But it was natural that among the local leaders the Pope, the spiritual lord of the world, should have the highest place, and we find him, about 730 A. D., styled "Lord" of the city. At this time Rome was almost at the lowest level it had known in its whole history. The Romans were despised all over Europe, as well as in the east. Bishop Liutprand, a Lombard of the tenth century, says that the most contemptuous epithet which the Franks, Saxons, Lombards—the men, be it noted, who are accused of preventing the pious Romans from restoring

civilization—could apply to a man was that he was a "Roman"; and by that, says the bishop, they meant "all that is ignoble, cowardly, greedy, luxurious, lying, and every other vice." A miserable population shrank within the walls, dreading every hour the appearance of the Lombards, whose frontier was not far away. At length the Lombards came to take over the almost helpless city. For a time the Pope worked on the superstition of the king and induced him to retire, but by the middle of the eighth century the Lombard king declared himself king of all Italy, by the recognized title of conquest, and he summoned the Pope and the Romans to pay homage and render tribute.

## §2. THE BLESSED PETER WRITES A LETTER

I have thought it useful to include this little epitome of the history of Rome down to 750 as Catholic writers, and even a few other writers, give the impression that the Pope had continued to rule a large part of Italy until the wicked Lombards had robbed him of his power and property. You will notice, incidentally, that the right of conquest is not questioned in any other connection. The victories and annexations of all the Christian kings of the time are blessed by Popes and historians without reserve. It is only when the Pope's provinces are conquered that one hears of robbery and sacrilege. However, the Papacy had up to that time no kind of title to a secular authority, and it is from 750 onward that we have to study carefully how they acquired such authority.

In the eighth century the Frank king Charles Martel won fame throughout Christendom by defeating the Spanish Moors and, as the textbooks are apt to put it, "saving civilization"; though it would be more appropriate to say that he saved the barbarism of Europe. Pope Gregory III appealed to Charles to come and deliver Rome from the Lombards. But Charles resented the political intrigues of the Pope, who had encouraged the Lombard king's vassals to rebel, and he refused to listen. In 753, when the Lombards finally pressed Rome to submit, Pope Stephen II went to France in person to ask for help. Some years earlier the Mayor of the Palace of the Frank king had decided to usurp the royal authority and he had asked the counsel of the Pope. You not only may, but you must, assume the royal power, the astute Pope had replied; so from that moment the Papacy could remind Pippin and his famous son, Charlemagne, that they owed the beginning of their dynasty to it. Pope Stephen went further. His predecessor had sanctified the rebellion of Pippin. Stephen now pronounced that Pippin and his dynasty were protected against a similar rebellion forever by the most terrible anathemas of the Church. So Pippin—who always loved a fight—came to Italy and crushed the Lombards. And in his crass ignorance he was easily persuaded that Rome and "divers cities and territories of the province of Italy" and the whole province of Ravenna (to which the Popes had not even the shadow of a title) belonged to the Papacy, and he handed them over. What documents, if any, were shown to his councilors at this date we do not

know. The "Pontifical Chronicle" calls this the "Donation of Pippin."

As soon as the Franks had recrossed the Alps, however, the Lombard king refused to comply, and for three years Pippin took no notice of the Pope's frantic appeals for help. Then, in 756, the Frank king received a letter which at once drew him to Italy. It is included amongst the letters of Pope Stephen (No. 5), but it is written throughout in the name of St. Peter: that is to say, it professes to be a letter written in heaven by the Blessed Peter summoning Pippin to come and protect "my body" and "my church" and "its bishop." There are non-Catholic historians who find it incredible that the Pope forged this letter with intent to deceive, but we shall see presently that Rome at this period perpetrated forgeries just as gross which even the Catholic Encyclopaedia has to admit. Writers who hesitate to admit that the Pope meant to deceive Pippin are thinking of Popes as we know them in modern times. Such considerations must be dismissed from our minds. Rome was at the time, as we have seen, utterly vicious, and even the greater Popes of its history had in effect sanctioned the maxim that the end justifies the means—when there is question of the power of the Church. The prompt action of Pippin after his long refusal shows that he was duped. The Papacy again secured its temporal power, and by a gross piece of deceit. The Greek Emperor protested in vain that much of the territory belonged to himself. The Pope's golden letter had won for him twenty-three profitable cities and the first Papal States. "This remarkable invention," says Gregorovius, "constitutes one of the most authentic witnesses to the gross spirit which pervaded, not the century alone, but the Church itself." The Byzantine or Greek rule was now confined to a small region round Venice in the north—hence the oriental character of the great church of St. Mark's at Venice—and the southernmost part of Italy.

### 83. THE MASTERPIECE OF FORGERY

I described in the last chapter how Rome further degenerated under the influence of its new possessions. Almost its whole energy was now spent in getting its "rights" from the Lombards, and in 772 there mounted the Papal throne the third "great" Pope of the first thousand years of its history. This was Hadrian I, and it is important to bear in mind that he was a profoundly religious, indeed an ascetic, priest. We shall find that these "good" Popes have almost done more mischief to European civilization than the "wicked." Hadrian came of a noble Roman family, and he is described in reference books as equally distinguished for virtue and culture. There is no dispute about his personal virtue but his culture was very elementary. I wrote better Latin than one finds in his letters before I had been studying the language for six months; and the Latin in which his clerics compose the Pontifical Chronicle at this period is vile. His culture is best seen in his concern for the artistic decoration of the churches. As I have already said, the

Iconoclast heresy was raging in the east, and this drove large numbers of Greek artists into Italy. From his new estates, moreover, the Pope derived a very large revenue, and St. Peter's and other churches were finely decorated; nor did he forget the civic needs of Rome and the duties of charity and philanthropy.

Yet this is the Pope who, whatever he may have had to do with its origin, at least made a profitable use of what he must have known to be a brazen forgery. All through his career he showed that personal piety is in a Pope consistent with a most dangerous casuistry when the interests of the Church are in question. Pippin had left the Frank kingdom to be divided between his two sons, Carlomann and Charlemagne, and they had been deaf to the appeals of the Pope. Charlemagne further, as we saw, ignored the most solemn warnings of the Pope and allied himself with the Lombards by marrying the king's daughter. It is said that Charlemagne dismissed her after a few years on the ground that she was childless: to the delight of Hadrian, who found that for once theology did not compel him to condemn divorce and remarriage. When Carlomann died, and the Lombard king urged the Pope to declare the right of his sons to the throne, Hadrian refused, and the Lombard armies marched against Rome once more. The Pope summoned Charlemagne, and, thirsting for new fields of military glory, he came.

It was in 774 that the blue-eyed, golden-haired northerner, his magnificent frame robed in a simple silver-bordered tunic and blue mantle, approached the city of Rome and courteously asked permission to enter it. He even walked the last mile afoot, and on his knees he kissed every step of St. Peter's as he entered it. There, a few days later, in the supposed presence of the body of the blessed Peter, some legal document was signed which handed over the greater part of Italy to the Popes. One copy of the deed was put into "the tomb of the Apostle" and a second copy was taken away by the Franks. By right of conquest, a recognized title in those days, this territory belonged to Charlemagne, and he gave it to the Popes. What more could one desire?

But historians began some centuries ago to find it singular that neither copy of this most important document has been preserved, and that the only source from which we learn the extent of the gift is the Pontifical Chronicle, an account written by Papal clerks to whom the art of forgery was an accomplishment. It is the general opinion of recent historians that the deed was suppressed and this false description of the amount of territory assigned to the Papacy was then inserted in the Papal Chronicle. Not only had Charlemagne not conquered the whole of Italy (apart from Lombardy and the Greek regions in the south), but Hadrian's own letters, which are full of his claims, imply that several of the provinces that are supposed to be included in this donation were not regarded by him as belonging to the Papacy. All that we can gather from Hadrian's genuine letters is that Charlemagne confirmed the gift of his father, with certain additions. The letter which Dr. Mann quotes to prove

the Catholic claim is, in that passage, acknowledged even by greater Catholic scholars to be a forgery.

It is more serious that the Pope seems to have influenced Charlemagne in his donation by quoting one of the worst forgeries of the Middle Ages. In 777 Hadrian wrote to Charlemagne (No. 60):

Just as in the time of the Blessed Sylvester, Bishop of Rome, the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Roman Church was elevated and exalted by the most pious Emperor Constantine the Great, of holy memory, and he **deigned to bestow on it power in these western regions . . .**

This is a plain reference to a document known to historians as the "Donation of Constantine," and its character is so crude that even the Catholic Encyclopaedia admits it to be a forgery. Some recent historians, it is true, see in Hadrian's words a reference to certain "Acts of St. Sylvester," but this document is equally admitted to be a forgery; and there is a third forgery on the same lines known as the Fantuzzian Fragment. The authorities are agreed that the Donation of Constantine and Acts of St. Sylvester, which describe Constantine as handing over Italy to the Papacy when he went to build Constantinople, were fabricated between 750 and 780, and most probably in the Papal offices; nor can anyone suggest why they should be, or even plausibly could be, forged elsewhere. They coincide entirely with the new ambition of the Papacy to have a temporal dominion, and Hadrian quite plainly quotes them in his letters to Charlemagne. There is every reason to suppose that these forgeries were shown to Charlemagne, to whom no doubt of their genuineness could occur, and were the basis of the gift.

Until he died, twenty years later, Hadrian was chiefly concerned with the attempts of the Lombards and Greeks and others to recover the provinces from Rome, and Charlemagne seems to have been frequently disgusted. Often he made no reply to the Pope's letters, and in many cases his replies have not been preserved, from which one may gather their tone. On one occasion, in 777, he committed the "unprecedented act," the Pope says (No. 62), of arresting the Papal Legate for insolence. On the whole he protected the chief provinces for the Papacy, and from their revenues the Pope decorated St. Peter's once more with great splendor. Someone at Charlemagne's court, probably the English monk Alcuin, wrote a book on the worship of images which drastically condemned the practices of the Roman Church itself, such as that of burning lamps or candles before statues, and Hadrian remained dumb when he found that this work bore, as author, the name of Charlemagne himself. However, in 795 Hadrian died, having spent the greater part of his twenty-three years as Pope over the distracting principalities which he had secured. How, five years later, Charlemagne once more visited Rome, and the Pope opened a new chapter of history by making him Roman Emperor we shall see in the next book.

In that book we shall have to study Rome and Europe in their

deepest degradation: in a state of at least semi-barbarism that lasted for two centuries and a half. But by dividing the Middle Ages into sections, as I do in this work, we are able to see clearly the untruth of popular, and especially Catholic, ideas about that period. Indeed, I know few historical works published in recent years, apart from large academic works, which give the reader even an approximately correct idea of the period I have covered in this volume. I have just looked over half a dozen such historical works which are used today in American colleges, or even universities, and find them all very misleading. It is rare for me to quarrel with any work that issues from the historical school of Columbia University, but Dr. Lynn Thorndike's "Short History of Civilization" (1926) is most unsatisfactory at this stage. Very ominously this section of his work opens with the motto:

A recent writer on the history of education wittily suggests that successive investigations keep pushing the "dark ages" so much further and further back that they will probably ultimately cover no time whatever (p. 295).

Earlier writers, he says, meant by the Dark Ages the period from 400 to 1500—I can recall no modern writer who did not say 500 to 1000 or 1100—but the name now applies only to the earlier part of that period and "even it is perhaps dark more in the sense that we lack information concerning much civilization during it than that we are sure it was an age of ignorance and backwardness" (299). The broad pictures which I have given from authentic documents seem dark enough. Does Dr. Thorndike quote something that I have missed or suppressed? Not in the least. He just makes the general statement, based on Catholic legend instead of historical documents, that the monks, the bishops, and the Papacy did a great deal to preserve the elements of civilization in that disorganized world.

Professor G. B. Adams of Yale is even worse in the revised edition of his "Civilization During the Middle Ages" (1922) which is much used in colleges. The popular (which means non-Catholic) idea of the Dark Ages is all wrong, we are told. The simple fact is that by 400 A. D. "the creative power of antiquity seems to have been exhausted," and the "only evidence of energy and hopeful life" is in the Roman Church. It was natural and inevitable—not one of these writers examines the rapid education of the Goths, Lombards, and Arabs—that the Church should take a thousand years to civilize the barbarians. The Papacy and the monks . . . And so on: it might be copied from a Catholic tract. It ignores contemporary documents such as I have quoted.

The latest work I find is Prof. Clarence Perkins' "History of European Peoples" (1927), but I need only say that the story is the same. There was more culture (no evidence of this is given, of course) in the Dark Ages than we used to suppose, and the Roman Church made "most important contributions to civilization," and so

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on. Most of these historians seem to be criticizing Milman. I will only say that it would be difficult to name a history more directly based on the original authorities than that of Milman, while these "new" historians rarely even refer to such authorities. They all give, without evidence, a quite wrong idea of the period I have covered. But we have still to see the worst of the Dark Ages, and I will then examine very carefully the grounds on which Professor Thorndike and other writers claim that the Church and its institutions contributed to the development of European civilization.

Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

***The True Story of the Roman Catholic Church***

*Joseph McCabe*

**In Six Double Volumes**

**Volume 3**

**How the Pope's Power Was  
Made and Enforced**

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## CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter I. Fights for the Papacy.....	5
(1) The Ugly Beginning of Nepotism. (2) Charlemagne and the Papacy. (3) The Age of "Pope Joan."	
Chapter II. Charlemagne Reforms Europe.....	15
(1) The Attempt to Purify Morals. (2) The Founding of Schools.	
Chapter III. The Myth of the Learned Monks.....	22
(1) The Monks Refuse to Educate. (2) The Preservation of the Classics. (3) The General Life of Monks and Nuns.	
Chapter IV. Another Great Pope—and More Forgeries.....	31
(1) The Diplomacy of Pope Nicholas. (2) The False Decretals.	
Chapter V. The "Rule of the Whores" at Rome.....	38
(1) The Failure of the Spiritual Machinery. (2) The Curse of the Temporal Power. (3) The Papacy in the Abyss.	
Chapter VI. Renewed Degradation of the Papacy.....	49
(1) A Papal Don Juan. (2) The Tragi-Comedy Continues. (3) Europe Reforms Its Popes.	
Chapter VII. Europe in the Iron Age.....	57
(1) The Festival of Fools. (2) The Character of the Clergy. (3) The General Condition.	

# HOW ROME MADE AND RULED THE DARK AGES

## CHAPTER I

### FIGHTS FOR THE PAPACY

**I**N THE present book we shall survey two and a half centuries of Papal history, and this is essentially the period which is known as the Dark Ages. One would imagine from many of the historical manuals which are now published that the more careful research or the more critical spirit of our time has discovered that older writers were entirely wrong, or at least excessively severe, in applying this phrase, the Dark Ages, to any period of European history. It is suggested that we must reconsider our estimate of the nations which lived in Europe during the central part of the Middle Ages, from about 800 to about 1050 A. D., just as we have reconsidered and changed our estimate of the character of the ancient Babylonians or the Saracens. No new documents have been discovered, but, since the Church of Rome ruled Europe with its anathemas at this period, it is plausibly maintained that the historians of the nineteenth century, who were either Rationalists or Protestants, were too conscious that the more darkly they painted the time the more heavily they discredited the Roman Church. Modern history is a science rather than an art: it is nearer to photography than to painting. And we are told that its precise and impartial description puts the character of the early Middle Ages in a more favorable light and to that extent exonerates its spiritual rulers.

But if any reader who has access to a large library cares to compare a group of historical works of the last century with works on European history published in the last ten years he will at once notice a significant difference. Take, on the one hand, Dean Milman's "History of Latin Christianity," Bistop Creighton's "History of the Papacy," Lecky's "History of European Morals," Gregorovius' "History of the City of Rome," and (for certain aspects) Lea's "History of Sacerdotal Celibacy." You will see that these large works are based strictly upon the contemporary chronicles for each age with which they deal, and there are copious references to and quotations from these on every page. Now take any half-dozen manuals of European history published in the last ten years, and you will rarely find any reference to the original authorities. In most cases one suspects that the historian could not read the mediæval Latin: in not one single case does he show that he has, like the

older men, spent years in the study of chronicles of the ninth and tenth centuries. There is the further difference that the older historians are more concerned with concrete facts while the writers of the new manuals are more prone to be content with general statements, which in history are particularly delicate and apt to be misleading.

A second point of considerable interest is that, as many of our modern professors do not seem to know, Milman and Creighton, Lecky and Gregorovius, really followed the work of earlier Catholic scholars, who were far more learned and more truthful than the Catholic writers of our own time. If this seems paradoxical, let me remind you of two facts. The Catholic Church refused to recognize the personal infallibility of the Popes and its writers were therefore more candid about the character of its Popes until 1871 A. D. The dogma that the Popes are infallible in their official dogmatic statements does not, of course, imply that they are men of high moral character, but the manufacture of this dogma in recent times means that the prestige of the Pope in his own Church has actually increased. The other fact is that until modern times a learned man could easily remain in the Church of Rome. Now any man of outstanding intellectual ability who happens to be born in it and reared in its clerical world quits it. The consequence is that scholarship in the Catholic world today a poorer thing than it has been for many centuries, and the older Catholic historians were far more learned and more candid than their successors who falsify the record of their Church today. All the uglier facts which I tell in these volumes are found in the pages of Cardinal Baronius, Pagi, Mansi, Tillemont, and other leading Catholic historians between the Reformation and the Revolution.

The new fashion of defending the Church of the Middle Ages and of pretending to find more light than was supposed in the Dark Ages does not, therefore, intimidate me. It means in part that many historians no longer find it necessary to have a command of medieval Latin and read for themselves the medieval literature on which all accounts of the Dark Ages must be based: in part that the enormous extension of education in our time causes the historical writer to produce primarily for schools and colleges, and a candid description of the Dark Ages in such manuals would be deemed "anti-Catholic." Few large historical works are now written which do not seek to be adopted in the higher colleges. The most important work of that kind is the Cambridge Medieval History, but it is a general history with a bewildering mass of detail. Of the Dark Ages, as I will show later, it gives the same account as I give here. In any case it is the popular manuals, the smaller works on European history and the history of science and education, which concern us here, since from these the world at large is educated. They are quite commonly tainted in some degree or other: though the new fashion is now so fixed that many repeat the untrue statements—that we have found the Dark Ages less dark than was supposed, that barbaric invasions fully explain the collapse of civilization, that the Roman Church protected and reconstructed civilization, and so

on—in an innocent belief that they are modern discoveries instead of modern compromises with the truth.

You shall judge for yourselves. In this volume we shall find the one great man of our period, Charlemagne, the one man who for a time arrests the decay of civilization, indulging his amorous impulses, without the slightest rebuke from Pope or prelate, more publicly and freely than any man dare do today; and we shall find most other kings imitating his license and stooping at times to incredible barbarities. We shall find at the very outset of this section of our story two of the highest ecclesiastics of Rome gouging out the eyes of the Pope with their knives on the floor of a church, and we shall close it with Popes who enliven the "sacred palace" with crimes and vices of every description. We shall find Rome repeatedly reddened with blood and sordid with bribery at the Papal elections and most of the fifty Popes who succeed each other in the "holy See" during two centuries—an average pontificate of four years each—completely indifferent to the degradation of Europe. We shall find the spread all over Europe of the barbaric practice of cutting out the eyes, or cutting off the ears, tongues, hands and feet, of one's enemies. We shall find kings and nobles, bishops and abbots, turning the convents of their regions into brothels. We shall find archbishops hunting and carousing and corrupting for twenty and thirty years of archiepiscopal life. We shall find culture sink so low that nobles, and even some kings, cannot write their own names, and priests cannot understand the Latin of their ritual. We shall find that there is no dispute whatever about these facts. Where some modern Jesuit pretends to have discovered an error in detail I will, as usual, give the reference to the original authorities, but these claims are trifles in comparison with the admitted general condition of crass ignorance and barbaric violence. Then you may please yourself whether you continue to use the phrase, the Dark Ages.

Just one other necessary introductory remark. We shall try, as before, to extract from the contemporary chronicles general statements about the condition of the world, rather than particular instances of virtue or vice, but one ought to notice carefully that while a single case of high virtue may prove nothing beyond itself, a single instance of conspicuous vice may throw some light on the general condition. If a vicious or brutal Pope peacefully occupies the Papal chair for some years, as many do, we know something about the state of his clergy and Church. If archbishops of loose and romantic life remain in office for decades, the fact has a general significance which the virtue of some other prelate does not possess. If a large number of monasteries and convents in a region are corrupt, all their authorities, spiritual and secular, are implicated: whereas the fact that there are several virtuous monasteries in a region tells us nothing about the character of their authorities or of the country. It is the proper function of the historian to point out this significance and describe this corruption, not to assume that bishops and monks were generally virtuous and then say that "at times they yielded to the corruption of the age."

## §1. THE UGLY BEGINNING OF NEPOTISM

In the year 800 the Papacy had, we saw, become a temporal as well as a spiritual monarchy. Charlemagne, who was most probably duped by forged documents, had confirmed the rule of the Popes over the greater part of Italy under his own overlordship as Roman Patrician. We found that the Pope Hadrian who secured this arrangement was a religious man, of more pronounced personality than most of the Popes, but the unquestionable appeal to forged documents in his letters to Charlemagne and his overwhelming concern throughout his life with his temporal dominions do not impress the historian. But he had a third and worse defect which I reserved for this volume, since it introduces a new phase in the history of the Papacy. We shall see in a later book that what led to the most prolonged and most picturesque period of corruption in Rome was the practice of even good Popes of promoting their nephews and other relatives to high and profitable offices. This practice is known as Nepotism. It has been one of the most mischievous and momentous faults of religious Popes, and it was Hadrian I who began it.

Hadrian belonged to a noble family of Rome, and he secured high office and wealth for his nephews Paschalis and Campulus. However hypocritical they may have been, the sequel will show that they were men whose brutality of character cannot possibly have been hidden during the lifetime of the Pope. But their rivals were on the alert, and at the death of Hadrian a new Pope, Leo III, was elected with a haste which surprises historians. Leo hurriedly sent the keys and the banner of Rome to Charlemagne, to secure his recognition and protection, and that monarch duly recognized him and sent to Rome magnificent treasures which he had taken in his latest war. It is clear that there were factions, and the faction opposed to Hadrian's nephews moved with great speed and forestalled them. But there was presently, the documents say, a dangerous agitation in Rome, and in the fourth year of Leo's pontificate there occurred an event which puts the character of the Roman clergy and nobles in a ghastly light: as if a lamp were suddenly introduced into a dark room and it revealed an unexpected corruption.

In April of the year 799 the Pope went in solemn procession to one of the churches of Rome for the celebration of an annual festival. He rode on horse, as was then customary, and, as the procession passed a certain monastery, a band of men rushed out from the shelter of the building, pulled him from his horse, and tried to cut out his eyes and tongue. It is a curious reflection on the age that we have not a single accurate account of the appalling outrages which were committed. The Pope later stated that his eyes were twice cut out—some of the chronicles make this stupid statement in so many words—and were then miraculously restored by St. Peter. The reasonable view, which no one questions, for the numerous authorities include the official Papal Chronicle, is that

two attempts were made to cut out the Pope's eyes but the ruffians must have been interrupted. The men who had sprung upon the Pope fled, leaving him bleeding on the street. But the amazing thing is that the clergy and people also must have fled and deserted him, for the Papal Chronicle says that Paschalis and Campulus presently returned, found the Pope still on the street, dragged him into a church, beat him furiously, and again attempted to mutilate him. At night they took him to a monastery and made him prisoner. But his faithful chamberlain broke into the monastery, lowered him over the walls by ropes, and took him to St. Peter's, and, when he was sufficiently recovered, he fled secretly to the Duke of Spoleto, the nearest representative of Charlemagne.

We can understand this fearful story only by supposing that the nobles and clergy were divided into factions, and that while their battle proceeded on the streets the Pope was rescued from complete mutilation by his loyal servants. From Spoleto he urgently appealed to Charlemagne to come to Rome, but that monarch was busy with a revolt of the Saxons and not a little disgusted at the incessant appeals of the Popes, and he bade his men bring the Pope to Paderborn. The Pope's story of the miraculous restoration of his sight by St. Peter deeply impressed Charlemagne, and a poet of his court has described for us the magnificent banquet at which king and Pope quaffed their wine together and the awe with which the nobles and army regarded the head of their Church. Leo's success was disturbed for a time when there presently arrived letters from Rome charging him with the gravest crimes. Like so many other inconvenient documents of the Middle Ages these letters have not been preserved, but we gather that Leo was accused of bribery (which was common at Papal elections), perjury and adultery. Charlemagne now said that he would come to Rome to hold an inquiry, and he sent the Pope back under protection.

It was November of the year 800 when Charlemagne reached Rome. The people seem to have been won to the support of the Pope, but there was a strong party of the nobles who insisted that Leo was guilty and a long and very obscure trial had already taken place in Rome. Again the records of the trial have "not been preserved," so that the charges and evidence against the Pope could be suppressed. It looks as if the tribunal in Rome found the Pope guilty after several weeks of investigation but reserved sentence for Charlemagne. And on December 1st there was a solemn gathering in St. Peter's for the final step. A crescent of bishops in their silk robes and of gowned abbots spread on either side of the Pope and king, the nobles of Rome and France confronted them, the people and soldiers filled the church. The inquiry was "long and difficult," says the French chronicler, but Charlemagne decided that the accusers had not proved their case and must be punished for the outrage. Paschalis and Campulus were condemned to death, but the Pope thought it prudent to disarm their faction, and at his request they were exiled to France. Leo then offered to submit to the further procedure of "purgation": in other words, he swore

publicly and solemnly that he was innocent of the "sins" of which he was accused. Probably that was the decisive factor for Charlemagne, and historically the Pope remains under suspicion.

## §2. CHARLEMAGNE AND THE PAPACY

There then occurred an event which had a profound effect on the later history of Europe. At the close of the mass on Christmas Day the Pope is said to have taken Charlemagne by surprise and imposed on him the dignity of Roman Emperor. The vast audience of clerics and generals, nobles and plebeians, broke into wild rejoicing when an imperial crown and purple mantle were suddenly produced, and it was announced that the old Roman Empire was restored. We need not discuss here whether there had been a secret agreement in advance of Leo and Charlemagne, or whether the king was genuinely surprised, or whether Leo had learned that he designed to make himself Emperor and forestalled him: points on which historians are still not agreed. All that matters to us is that the Pope acted with great cunning in making Charlemagne and his successors owe the imperial dignity to the Papacy. The chief Frank chronicler—and we must understand that at this time there was more culture in Charlemagne's capital than at Rome—tells us that Charlemagne afterwards said that, solemn as the day was, he would not have gone to church if he had known what the Pope intended to do. He acquiesced, however, and the Pope "adored" him, in the language of the time; and from that moment Popes could remind Emperors that it was St. Peter who had founded their dynasty.

What this meant for the civilization or re-civilization of Europe we shall consider later. Some of our historians seem to be singularly blind to the recorded facts when they try to persuade us by purely theoretical arguments that the firm unity of an Empire and a spiritual monarchy was just what Europe needed in that turbulent age. Gregorovius is speaking with a simple regard of those facts when he says:

The whole history of the human race affords no example of a struggle of such long duration, or one so unchanged in motive, as the struggle of the Romans and Italians against the Temporal Dominion of the Popes, whose kingdom ought not to have been of this world.

We are going to find Italy and Europe soaked with blood for ages over this imperial title which the Popes created solely to protect their temporal power in Italy: we are going to see how within thirty years the sordid historical facts make a mockery of the claim that the unity of Empire promoted civilization. Any historian who pleads that the Popes, in creating it, consulted the interests of civilization, is arbitrarily ascribing to Leo III ideas which are entirely inconsistent with his character and that of the Roman clergy. Leo made Charlemagne Emperor to secure his protection against the powerful faction in Rome which was opposed

to him. To credit such a man with broad views of the interests of Europe is absurd. What soon happened in Rome will enable us both to recognize the Pope's motives and to smile at the idea that the new institution promoted the interests and improved the character of Rome, of Italy, or of the world.

Charlemagne died in 814 and his son Louis the Pious, the one member of the family who merited that epithet, became Emperor. But the news that the Pope's protector was dead inspired a new revolt amongst the nobles when it reached Rome, and blood flowed once more. Pope Leo mastered the rebellion and had its surviving leaders executed for high treason. It seemed to Louis that the Pope acted with un-Christian harshness, and he sent a noble to Rome to make an inquiry into his conduct. The revolt was, in fact, only driven from the city to the surrounding country. What the chroniclers call at this stage the "nobles" of Rome were chiefly men who owned large estates in the Roman region and had what are politely called palaces in Rome. They were just medieval swashbucklers, of no culture, whose hands itched constantly for their swords: and the higher clergy of Rome were, as in most other parts of Europe, recruited from the ranks of these degenerate successors of the highly cultivated and refined Roman Senators of the fourth century. Those of them who supported Paschalis now fled to their country estates and armed their serfs. The Papal farms were burned, and rebellious regiments threatened to advance on Rome. The Franks suppressed them, but Leo, worn with trouble and anxiety, died in 816. His twenty-year pontificate is more deeply stained with blood than that of any preceding Pope, and there is much uncertainty about the serious charges against him: but he occupies a high place in the Catholic Calendar of the Popes, for with the great wealth he obtained from France he lavishly decorated the churches of Rome.

### §3. THE AGE OF "POPE JOAN"

This ninth century is the age in which legend has placed a female Pope of the most romantic description. No historian now condescends to notice the worthless legend, but it is at least instructive to know how the legend itself became possible and was so widely accepted. At the death of Leo a more tactful prelate, Stephen IV, was elected and he went at once to France for the coronation of Louis and to secure the protection and generosity of that feeble and ignorant Emperor. He was doubtless pleased to be away from Rome during the continued disturbances there, and he made some effort to reconcile the factions by asking for the return to Rome of the exiles. He died, however, a few months after his return to Rome. The course of events under his successor, Pope Paschal, is very scantily recorded, for Europe now passed into a period of sordid and bloody quarreling of the various members of the imperial family. This will be told, as far as it concerns us, in the next chapter. All that I need note here is that Louis made his

eldest son, Lothair, king of Italy, and this resolute and unscrupulous monarch very soon encouraged the Roman rebels.

Pope Paschal laid claim to the great abbey of Farfa. The time had not yet come, though we shall soon reach it, when Papal anathemas could bring monarchs to their knees, and the Pope had to submit the quarrel to Lothair, who decided against him. The rebels now felt that there was a very unsubmissive king of Italy between them and the arm of the Emperor, and the war broke out afresh. Two of the highest clerical officers of the Papal court, members of leading noble families and amongst the most distinguished of the Roman clergy, had their eyes cut out and were then beheaded in the Papal palace itself. The chief chronicler of the time, Eginhard, says in his Annals (year 823): "There were some who said that this was done by the command or advice of Pope Paschal," and there is little room for doubt that the "worthy abbot" who now wore the triple crown was deeply implicated in, if not the instigator of, the brutality.

The Emperor sent two commissioners to Rome to investigate, and there is no dispute about the fact that the Pope arrogantly refused to permit the inquiry. Two men who had been guilty of treason had been executed, he said, and those who were responsible for the condemnation and execution were of the Pope's household and not subject to secular authority. In the presence of thirty bishops the Pope solemnly "purged" himself by swearing potent oaths that he had had no share in the murders. It was the second time in a quarter of a century that a Pope had, like some marauding baron, to purge himself, in the fashion of the barbarians, of a charge of crime. And let me add, to warn readers against the statement of some writers that the Pope's conduct was natural and regular, that losing one's eyes in those days meant that they were dug out of their sockets with a knife, and that, when Pope Paschal died shortly afterwards, the Roman clergy and people refused to have him buried in St. Peter's.

At the ensuing election the nobles and the clergy of the imperialist faction had the advantage of the general disgust and they set up a Pope of their own party, Eugenius II. Catholic historians attempt to reconcile their readers—in the small and popular manuals, of course, these things are not mentioned—by representing the outrages as the work of wicked nobles; though they forget to try to explain how the Popes permitted the nobles of Rome to sink to and persist in this brutality for several hundred years. The attempt is foolish. We have seen two Popes (and shall see more) implicated, as well as the highest of their clergy, and there was now an inquiry at Rome and an effort by lay authorities to reform the corruption which had grown up at Rome under these spiritual rulers whom some imagine as the protectors and restorers of European civilization. King Lothair, who was by no means Lothair the Pious, probably enjoyed the task which the Emperor committed to him. We are told that he improved "the state of the Roman people which had been disturbed by the perversity of certain rulers." The Catholic Dr. Mann translates the last word "judges," and a part

of the reform was to drive from Rome various corrupt judges whom the Popes had appointed. But the Latin word is one that would scarcely be applied to judges and I take it to mean "certain Popes." The world was making a second attempt to reform the Papacy, and the effect lasted no longer than the effect of the efforts of Charlemagne.

Italy and a large part of western Europe were, in fact, now sinking rapidly to a still lower depth. For this, it is true, the ravages of fresh invaders were in part responsible, though the fault lay just as much in the terrible, prolonged and savage struggle of the descendants of Charlemagne, which laid waste those parts of Europe that the invaders spared. To this we return later. In Italy it was the inroads of the Saracens, who had settled in Sicily, that caused a new confusion. Presently we shall find these Saracens founding in Sicily a brilliant civilization—another proof that it need not take a single century to civilize barbarians—which will do more than all the Popes for the restoration of Italy, but in the middle of the ninth century these Mohammedans who had crossed to Sicily were still in a condition of raw religious fanaticism. They spread terror over southern Italy, castrating the monks, raping the nuns on the altars of their own chapels, plundering and murdering on every side. In 846 they sailed up the Tiber, and Rome shuddered from its strong walls at the fierce and swarthy pirates. The walls protected the city, but St. Peter's, being across the river and outside the walls, was taken and looted, with St. Paul's and other chapels in that quarter. Even in the midst of their disasters the Romans still fought for the Papacy, and fires and floods, earthquakes, famines and pestilences added to the horror. Pope Leo IV, who was elected in 847, formed a league of the Italians to check the Saracens, and he extended the walls so as to enclose St. Peter's and the Vatican district. Hence the phrase for this district, "the Leonine City," which you still read occasionally in disputes about the temporal power—and hence also it became possible for the Popes, who had hitherto lived in the Lateran Palace in the city, to have a permanent palace on the Vatican Hill.

Leo's vigorous work has won for him the title of "Saint," yet the age was so crude and ignorant that it is just here that a later legend puts "Pope Joan," as the successor of Leo IV. The story is amusing but too childish to give at length. Joan was a beautiful English girl who, disguised as a man, followed her lover into a monastery and later became a wandering teacher. At Rome she impressed and astonished all by the brilliance of her teaching, and at the death of Leo she (still, of course, in male disguise) was elected pope. A love-affair with one of the servants in the Papal Palace led to her exposure, for she was seized with the pangs of labor during a religious procession. The story cannot be traced further back than the eleventh century and is therefore not now seriously discussed, but the medieval mind was so gross that from about 1400 to the Reformation it was widely believed. Pope Joan was included in the series of busts of the Popes in Siena Cathedral,

and the Romans believed that a crude statue in their city had been set up in her honor in the ninth century.

The events which followed the death of Pope Leo were not so picturesque but they were, as usual, romantic. Eight years under a vigorous saint had not altered the character of the Romans. The people and the clergy elected Benedict III and conducted him to the Lateran Palace. But the imperialist Cardinal Anastasius—the title “cardinal” now begins to be given to the clergy of the chief churches of Rome—an ambitious prelate, won the nobles and many of the higher clergy. Anastasius had been deposed under Pope Leo, who had hung up in St. Peter’s a painting of the synod that had deposed him. At the head of a troop of armed men Anastasius entered St. Peter’s and tore down the painting, and, sharing the iconoclastic views of the northerners, he also fell with an ax upon the sacred images. Then he and his troop marched to the Lateran and shattered the doors. Benedict, who sat trembling in the Papal chair in the palace, was stripped of his pontifical garments, thrashed by the soldiers, and handed over to the clergy whom Leo had deposed. Imperial representatives were present and supported Anastasius, but the Roman people supported Benedict, and, to avoid a civil war, the imperial legates recognized Benedict. This miserable and undisputed chronicle of the Popes whose “beneficent influence on Europe” is so much appreciated by some historians brings us to the pontificate of the first man, Pope Nicholas I, who had any serious influence, and what the effect of it was we shall see later. First we must try to ascertain the condition of Europe itself at the time.

## CHAPTER II

## CHARLEMAGNE REFORMS EUROPE

**T**HE new Roman Empire which was founded in the year 800 was almost as extensive as the western or European part of the old Empire had been. The rule of Charlemagne extended from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean, from the shores of France and the Netherlands to the Black Forest in Germany. Spain was now occupied by the Mohammedans; England vegetated under its Saxon kings and would soon be flooded by the fierce Danes; Scandinavia and Prussia were not yet civilized; Russia was a barbaric extension of the Greek Church. Apart from these Europe now recognized the drastic and despotic authority of Charlemagne, and, once his empire had been fully formed and pacified, he had designed to raise it once more to the ancient level of civilization. Of the general ignorance and the very widespread clerical and monastic corruption to which most of the Popes were indifferent he was entirely ashamed. He gathered about him the most learned clerics he could find, and he devoted his magnificent energy—he was a giant of a man—and his real if poorly educated genius to the work of restoring civilization.

Since the effect of the work of Charlemagne was soon lost in the turbulent and sordid life of Europe we need not here describe it in detail, but obviously his attempt is of the greatest historical significance. The myth which the Church of Rome has grafted with some success on the modern teaching of history, that its Popes gradually checked the passions of the barbarians and restored civilization, is a palpable falsehood. We have already seen that the first serious attempt to preserve civilization was made by a Gothic king, Theodoric, and his daughter, Amalasintha; and that Theodoric was a heretic and anti-Roman, and the Popes actually frustrated his work. We saw that the next serious and successful attempt to restore civilization in Italy was made by other "barbarians," the Lombard kings, and that once more the Popes were bitterly opposed to them, did not cooperate in their cultural work, and in the end summoned the still semi-barbaric Franks to destroy them. We have now to see how, about the year 800, Charlemagne, with no assistance or inspiration whatever from Rome, makes a new and broader attempt to restore civilization; and we shall later see how the final and successful attempt to restore culture in Italy came from the Saracens and the "barbaric" Normans. We have seen, on the other hand, that the strongest of the early Popes, Gregory the Great, lived just at the time when brutality was increasing in east and west, yet, in the interest of his Church, he not only did not check the passions of the Franks or the Greeks, but sent flattering letters to their most

vicious leaders; and we have found that nine Popes out of ten had no more influence on the life of Europe than has the log on the course of the boiling stream which bears it along.

### §1. THE ATTEMPT TO PURIFY MORALS

I have already said that Charlemagne, like the Frank kings who had preceded him, entirely refused to recognize the moral law as it was formulated by the Church, and none of the Popes who flattered him or the prelates who swarmed in his palace at Aix-la-Chapelle censured his conduct. It was just in the years when he was most closely associated with the Popes, after the death of his fifth wife, that his sexual conduct was most irregular. One is almost tempted to think that monarchs like Charlemagne, who was certainly quite Christian in his beliefs, got the impression from their clerics that polygamy was in a prince certainly undesirable but not worth a quarrel. The mind of most of these princes is to us almost impenetrable. They did not, as some say, bring on into their Christian days a license to which they had been accustomed in the earlier pagan days, for most of the Teutonic peoples had not tolerated adultery. They did, however, bring the vices of violence and heavy drinking, and the frame of mind of most of them was probably not far from that of an Italian or a Mexican bandit: somehow, they understood from the priests, the blood of Christ would atone for their vicious lives.

Charlemagne was exceptionally sober for a Teutonic prince, and he had an intelligence of a very high order. How precisely he mapped his personal life we have not the least idea. He allowed the same liberty to his daughters, and since he prevented most of them from marrying and had them in camp with him, some of the chronicles seem to hint that he was intimate even with them. But being, as I said, sober and highly intelligent, he realized that priests, monks and nuns had no reason of existence unless they kept their vows, and he attempted to enforce the Christian law in their case. Priests, it is true, still, and for two or three centuries later, married. Popes and councils had sought to keep the clergy celibate, but until the eleventh century celibacy was rather the ideal, enforced by a saintly bishop here and there, than the general law. With this Charlemagne did not interfere. What he chiefly did was to create a complete ecclesiastical as well as secular scheme of government for Europe. Every district in his Empire had a bishop as well as a count. Both were on the same level of nobility, and both had to render feudal service to the Emperor and take an oath of loyalty. He organized the bishops themselves under a score of metropolitan or archiepiscopal sees, and upon these and the large abbeys he lavished great wealth, while for the common clergy he instituted the "tithe," or a right to one-tenth of the annual produce (including animals) of each of their parishioners.

So far Charlemagne merely restored and completed the scheme of authority which the Church itself had gradually developed, though in this respect he did more work than any dozen Popes. But he

took very seriously his position as feudal sovereign of the bishops as well as the secular nobles, and the immense number of decrees and regulations he has left are just as much concerned with the life of the Church as with that of the state. He generally saw that worthy men were selected for the bishoprics, and he ordered them to visit regularly every parish and monastery in their dioceses and punish all irregularities. Priests and monks and nuns were equally subject to their authority, and in their visitations they were to make inquiries into the graver crimes of the laity. Time after time, in the periodical "chapters" he held with his nobles and bishops, he returned to this scheme of reform of the Church and ordered the bishops again to suppress clerical drunkenness, heavy oaths, hunting and dissipation. It is a very gross world that is mirrored in his ordinances, and the constant repetition of his censures shows how little effect he had on it. Abbots, it appears, are accustomed to put out the eyes of and "mutilate" (which seems to include castration) the monks they have to punish. Prelates have hawks and hounds and jugglers. Drunkenness is general, and the most fearful of medieval oaths issue from clerical lips.

There can be little doubt that during the last fifteen years of his reign Charlemagne did something to chasten the grossness of the majority of the clergy. He had the advantage, which Popes had not, of being able to use secular weapons to enforce his reforms. But his biographer, Eginhard, makes it clear that only a minority of the higher clergy cordially supported him; and one can quite imagine that many of his prelate-nobles would ask themselves whether Charlemagne's example in love-affairs was not more easily followed than his law. The very efforts which he made to complete his scheme of church government contained dangers. The collection of tithe led to sullen resistance and sanguinary insurrections among the peasants, and the better revenue gave the clergy more wine to drink. The feudal duties of the bishops, which included military service, helped to bring on the type of prelate which would soon be familiar in the Middle Ages: one who led his own troops in the fight and kept his hounds and falcons for the hunt. The wealth that was given to the monasteries and nunneries was supposed to be freed from danger by the duty of the bishops to visit them regularly, but the less religious of the bishops sold them immunity from visitation and ignored their irregularities. We see clearly that, as we should expect, the success of the scheme was very imperfect under Charlemagne, and we shall find it break down badly under his weak or degenerate successors; but it is a notable historical fact that the one great attempt to reform the Church in two centuries and a half—from Gregory the Great to Nicholas I—came from a very wilful monarch who would, if the ecclesiastical writers were quite consistent, be described as grossly sensual and immoral.

## 12. THE FOUNDING OF SCHOOLS

Charlemagne saw clearly that the Church would never be reformed until the general level of Europe was raised once more; that

the crass illiteracy of the mass of the people and the comparative ignorance of the clergy were the real sources of the grossness and violence that made reform so difficult. The work, therefore, for which he is especially commended in history is his restoration of education. Coarseness of mind was the chief disease of Europe that revealed itself in the horrible practices of cutting out eyes and tongues, inflicting the most ghastly tortures on enemies and criminals, and general license, drunkenness, and use of the knife. His greatest service was his attempt to restore culture, and we accordingly find a very high appreciation of this in our manuals of history. We read how, in cooperation with the bishops and monasteries, Charlemagne created a system of schools which worthily reproduced that of the old Roman Empire.

But the careful reader will here ask a few questions that do not occur to some of these writers. We are, for instance, commonly assured that the Church itself had already provided a system of monastic and episcopal schools, and the Catholic writer would have us believe that Charlemagne merely repaired the ravages of this system which the invasions had caused. If we recollect how the Gothic king had tried to restore education in Italy, how the Popes had ruined his work, how Gregory the Great had forbidden secular instruction (and no later Pope had withdrawn the prohibition), and how at the end of the eighth century Charlemagne found such general and profound ignorance, we feel that there is need of a more careful inquiry. Further—and perhaps this is even more important—we shall find Europe at the end of the ninth and in the tenth century more gross and ignorant than ever. What had become of all these admirable schemes of education? The truth is, as usual, that the general statements of popular manuals are grossly inflated, and the truth, which special students have gathered with great labor from the scanty documents of the times, is exceedingly modest.

The most careful study of the schools that existed in Europe between the fall of the Roman Empire and Charlemagne will be found in J. Bass Mullinger's "Schools of Charles the Great" (1877), to which little has since been added. He shows that there were at the end of the fifth century a number of monastic and episcopal schools, but that they were purely religious: their purpose was simply to teach monks and priests to read religious and ritual books. By the end of the sixth century, he finds, quoting the words of Bishop Gregory of Tours, "the study of letters has perished in our midst": that is to say, any concern for literature and knowledge as such, for there were certainly still schools to teach monks and priests to read. Catholic writers quote Ozanam's account of "the polite and cultivated society of the sixth century." Mullinger (p. 36) examines his proofs and finds that this society "had little existence save in his own imagination." He concludes that "the condition of the episcopal and monastic schools at the accession of Charles Martel [714 A. D.] was one of utter demoralization." Twenty years later "the voice of the teacher was silent in the city [bishop's seat] and the monastery," except in England and Ireland and amongst the Lombards, and nothing was done until, in 789, Charlemagne or-

dered every bishop and monastery to open a school. With this Dr. W. Boyd's recent but less learned "History of Western Education" (1928) is so far in agreement, and we find the same in the excellent summary, given in the twenty-second chapter of Vol. V of the Cambridge Medieval History (1926).

We may note next that, although the chief adviser and teacher of Charlemagne was the British monk Alcuin, it was neither from the British monks nor Rome that Charlemagne got his inspiration. It was from the Lombards, who had in a hundred years passed from barbarism to a high state of culture: in antagonism, all the time, to Rome. Charlemagne had married a Lombard princess, and it was the fine culture of the Lombard cities in north Italy, that had first impressed him. He summoned several clerics from those cities to his capital, and we soon find such maxims as this put out in his name:

Desirous as we now are of improving the condition of the Churches, we impose on ourselves the task of reviving with the utmost zeal the study of letters, well-nigh extinguished through the neglect of our ancestors.

Thus the impulse again came, not from Rome, but from the "barbarians" who are supposed to have kept Europe back while the Popes tried to educate it.

The educational zeal of the Popes is easily told. Not one of them promoted education until, in 826—that is to say, thirty years after Charlemagne had founded his system—a General Council under Pope Eugenius ordered that "in bishop's Sees and other places, where necessary, care and diligence should be exhibited in the appointment of masters and doctors to teach faithfully grammar and the liberal arts, because in them especially God's commands are made clear and explained." Catholic writers who reproduce this with pride do not point out (1), that it is ten years after the death of Charlemagne, (2), that the so-called General Council was merely a synod of sixty-two Italian bishops, and (3), that nothing seems to have been done since in 853 we find Leo IV deciding to open twenty schools in Rome and complaining that he cannot find sufficient teachers. Rome, we saw, was industriously decorating its churches and had schools of singing of which it was proud. It did not lead Europe in any respect. "Roman" was, as I said in the previous book, a term of contempt amongst the other nations.

How many schools were opened in the reign of Charlemagne, and how long they remained open after his death, no man can say. There are no figures or statistics in medieval literature. It is quite arbitrary for any writer to say that even most of the monasteries opened schools. There was a school in the palace, and Charlemagne himself learned to speak colloquial Latin fluently and to read Greek; but to represent him as a man of learning is absurd, for he never even learned to write well. As Dr. Mullinger says, not a single teacher or scholar of name arose in any of his schools. Even the learning of men like the British monk Alcuin, who was

for some years what we might call the secretary of education, was extremely limited, as we shall see in the next chapter. The fact is that during most of his life Charlemagne was too much occupied with war to enforce his great ideal, and there was a good deal of reluctance amongst the clergy and monks. One historical fact is significant enough: Charlemagne died in 814, and in 817 a council of bishops and abbots at Aix-la-Chapelle, the imperial capital, forbade monasteries to teach any but their own inmates. The work of Charlemagne was, as Mullinger says, "premature and transient." Dr. W. Boyd evades this point in his "History of Western Education," but Professor C. L. Wells in his useful work, "The Age of Charlemagne" (1898) judiciously and impartially states the general opinion of the experts when he says:

Through the dark age which intervened between the age of Charles the Great and the twelfth century there were at least a few monasteries, and perhaps one or two cathedrals, where the fame of some great teacher drew students from distant lands (p. 304).

Although some of the bishops of France begged Louis the Pious to carry out his father's plans, he did little and cared little for secular education. His son Lothair, king of Italy, found, as I have said, that there was considerable zeal for education and culture in the cities of the Lombards, and in 825 he ordered a restoration of learning, which, he said, "through the carelessness and laziness of certain princes is everywhere extinct." He certainly cannot refer to the Lombard princes, for Adalberga, daughter and successor of King Didier, was herself a highly cultivated woman and patroness of learning. In view of his attitude toward the Papacy I imagine that by princes Lothair means the Popes as temporal rulers. It is precisely in the following year, 826, that we find the Papacy suddenly, and for the first time, discovering the importance of education, as I have already explained.

One or two of the descendants of Charlemagne took some practical interest in the schools, but the historical development was itself unfavorable. A terribly destructive and prolonged war broke out between the various members of the family, the Saracens ravaged south Italy, the Magyars raided eastern Europe, the Norsemen descended on the western coast, the Danes poured over Britain and Ireland. Only two centers of higher culture, or what was in those days regarded as higher culture, remained in France in the second half of the century, and we find one of the best scholars of the time, Abbot Lupus, saying (Letter No. 1): "In our time those who seek to gain a little knowledge are hardly tolerated." The devastation of Britain and Ireland destroyed the schools there and drove a few scholars to France, so that in these one or two centers a few men sustained the zeal for learning through the tenth century. But the scheme of Charlemagne had completely collapsed. A denser night than ever settled over Europe until, as far as we can discern, less than one in one hundred could read. The chief apolo-

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gíst for the period, the Rev. S. R. Maitland ("The Dark Ages," 1844), merely discovers that there was a scholar or a small library or a regular monastery here and there in the course of several centuries: which no one ever denied. He admits that several kings could not sign their names. But this is a matter of learning rather than schools, and we must devote a separate chapter to it.

## CHAPTER III

## THE MYTH OF THE LEARNED MONKS

**I**T WOULD be more agreeable probably, both to myself and my readers, if I could confine my pen to broad and picturesque descriptions of these strange ages through which we are following the fortunes of the Roman Church. To crowd my pages with dates which no man need memorize, and with the uncouth names of men and women of that remote world is, unless it be entirely necessary, an offense against the simplicity of my own educational ideal. But it would be quite useless merely to oppose another set of general statements to those of which I complain in modern manuals of history. The facts must be stated, and as far as schools are concerned, I have now adequately stated them. During the seventh and eighth centuries there were doubtless plenty of schools in which monks and priests were taught to read, especially as it was now the custom to receive boys into the monasteries. It would be a truly amazing situation if even a bare majority of the monks and priests could not read ritual and religious books. These things, however, do not really concern the history of education or of civilization. Charlemagne, conquering Europe, found almost no schools except in Lombardy for the education of secular persons, and, though he made a noble effort to found such schools, Europe had by the end of the ninth century returned to its earlier condition. This situation did not materially alter during the period we are reviewing in this book. When, and why, the genuine school-life of the Middle Ages began we shall see in the next book. Europe spent six centuries in a state of crass general illiteracy.

We must now enter into detail once more in connection with the intellectual activity of the monks. This is the second cuckoo's egg that has been planted in the nest of recent American historical literature, and we must examine with some patience our supposed indebtedness to the medieval monks. The chief authority for what has now become almost a tradition—that learning and the ancient literature were preserved by the monks during the turmoil of the Middle Ages—is a work in six volumes by the French Catholic writer, the Count de Montalembert (*"The Monks of the West,"* English translation 1891). We have in modern times so extensive a literature that probably few who quote this as a scholarly and authoritative book have ever read it. One does not need to read much of it to realize that it is neither one nor the other. The author has merely collected facts which are very well known in ecclesiastical history, and might easily have been stated in a single volume, and he has filled the rest of his work with rhetorical generalizations. If he had entitled his work *"Some Monks of the*

West," and reduced the comments by about two-thirds, his book might serve as a popular manual for Catholic circles. In scholarly literature one is surprised to see it mentioned. A work that devotes more than a hundred pages to a glorification of the Monk-Pope Gregory I, the enemy of culture and probably the destroyer of the last relics of Roman literature, cannot teach us much.

Since we must now confine ourselves to the work of the monks from about 800 to about 1050 A. D., I may very briefly recall what we owe to the monks of the preceding four and a half centuries. We saw that until Benedict gathered the really serious monks under his Rule we had only a great swarm of "vagabond" monks, whose "vile life" is whipped by Benedict himself and a number of strict monasteries, especially in Gaul, which were too religious to care anything about culture. Benedict, we saw, and any person may read in his Rule, cared nothing about culture and would have been the last man to permit his monks to read and copy the Latin classics. For a time in the fifth century the Abbot Cassiodorus induced a few small communities of monks to cultivate some intellectual life, but then came Gregory I with his condemnation of any but religious knowledge.

This was the period of gravest disturbance, and we see at once how misleading it is to represent the monasteries as the refuges of learning. Learning in Italy did not need to seek refuge in monasteries: it was welcomed at the courts of the Gothic and the Lombard kings. Learning in Spain from the middle of the fifth century onward had no movements of barbarians to fly from, and the one modest center in which it was treasured was in the bishopric of Seville, not in the idle monasteries. During all this time there were thousands of monasteries, yet when Charlemagne opens schools he has to send to Lombardy or Britain for teachers. I will deal with the British and Irish monks presently. They were exceptional. But if we learn from Alfred the Great, the English king, that in his time "very few" even of the priests could translate the easiest Latin—as Maitland admits—and if we find large and famous monasteries in Gaul much later in which (as we shall see) not a single monk could read or write, we feel justified in concluding, as all the evidence suggests, that the vast majority of the monks were as ignorant as they were idle.

### §1. THE MONKS REFUSE TO EDUCATE

Let us first consider the question of monastic schools. "Every monastery was a school," says the rhetorical Montalembert. It is necessary to keep clearly in mind the distinction between an internal school, for the monks themselves only, and an external school. With the former we are not concerned. There had grown up an enormous religious and theological literature, and, since all books were handwritten, it was natural that the copying should be relegated to the monks. Some of their number had, therefore, to be taught to read and write, and it is to these that we owe the preservation of the voluminous works of Augustine and Gregory. But if the assurance

that every monastery was a school be taken, as it usually is, to mean that the monks educated outsiders, it has not only no evidence but it is against the very nature of the monastic life. The essence of monasticism was isolation from the world. That was the pretext of the abbots who, as soon as Charlemagne was dead, successfully induced the bishops to direct that outsiders be no longer taught in monasteries.

Dr. Boyd, who is usually lenient in his account of medieval education, points out that it was (except during the few years of Charlemagne's activity) very exceptional for the monks to have a school for outsiders. Of the great majority of the monasteries he says:

Under critical scrutiny the evidence available on the subject goes to negative the idea of the monasteries as homes of scholarship from which learning radiated forth into an ignorant world.

Apart from Britain and Ireland, and at a later date, some of the Frank monasteries which felt their influence, it was rare, and considered improper, for monks to concern themselves with the education of seculars. In Ireland and Britain the circumstances were peculiar. It is said that at some of the monasteries there were more than a thousand pupils, and that, at least in many places, youths from the outside world were admitted to the classes. Allowing for a period of demoralization when the Anglo-Saxons settled, we may say that there was a considerable educational activity for about two centuries. One of the most cultivated heretics of the Latin world, Pelagius, was, as we saw, a Briton, and the only original thinker who appeared in Europe before the eleventh century was an Irish monk, John Scotus Erigena.

We know also that the study of Greek was maintained in Britain and Ireland long after it was virtually abandoned in the rest of Europe, and we read "that some of the monks also had a knowledge of Hebrew." But what Latin and Greek literature they had, and what was taught in their schools, we do not know. We shall see in a moment that the classical Greek literature almost perished in Europe, and I presume that no one will ask us to believe that the monks of Britain and Ireland read the Latin pagan literature to their pupils. We may take the learning of Bede and Alcuin as what one might call the highest university standard of culture at the time. It was, from our modern point of view, very poor stuff. History and science were known only from early medieval compilations (of Cassiodorus, Isidore, etc.) at which one smiles today. They were equally erroneous about nature and about man. The Bible and Christian literature contained all truth. Until the time of Scotus Erigena, the middle of the ninth century, all this intellectual life never produced a thinker; and Erigena was at once condemned as a heretic. Let us fully appreciate this monkish zeal for schools of religious knowledge in Britain and Ireland until, in the tenth century, the Danes made an end of it, but we may decline to regard it as very wonderful that the monks were taught to read pious books:

we find extremely few scholars or men of learning amongst the millions of monks who filled Europe from 600 to 1100; and the Roman Church had nothing to do with what education they gave and what learning they possessed.

## §2. THE PRESERVATION OF THE CLASSICS

Maitland's "Dark Ages" is a good example of a really scholarly attempt to relieve the reputation of the period. That is to say, it is based upon considerable historical research—the author was librarian in an archiepiscopal palace—but it ignores historical science. It covers several centuries and jumps from country to country and age to age in search of particular instances of virtue or learning. When you have read through some scores of such instances, and you are not reminded that they are selected from the whole of Europe during four or five centuries when there were monasteries every few miles, you vaguely feel that the Dark Ages have been misrepresented. As a matter of fact, such books refute only the historical writer, if there is such a person, who says that there were **no** monks with a desire of learning in the early Middle Ages. And when you take one of the best instances of this zeal for learning, say Abbot Lupus of the ninth century, you see how easy it was in those days to be learned. From the good abbot's letters to his friends we learn that he, with great trouble, secured some of the works of Livy, Sallust, Caesar, Suetonius, Vergil, Horace, Terence, Martial, Macrobius, and a few minor Roman writers, as well as the ecclesiastical writers. We will assume also that he read the very modest and still more inaccurate summaries of knowledge of Cassiodorus and Isidore. You could digest the whole in five years; and Latin was as familiar to these abbots as English is to us.

Lupus had studied under the similarly learned monk Rhabanus Maurus at the great monastery of Fulda. In other words, a rare and exceptional type of abbot had arisen, and for a time he inspired a number of monks with a zeal for such culture as was obtainable. The usual type of abbot at the time was a man of noble birth who accepted the office on account of the great wealth of the chief monasteries. He hunted and lived like any other noble and was completely indifferent to culture. Other abbots were, though very rarely, chiefly religious men, and such men would never have tolerated the reading of Livy and Vergil, to say nothing of Terence and Martial, who are quite indecent. Just here and there we find an abbot like Lupus: sincere in religion but broad-minded. Such men rendered service in making their monks devote a part of their abundant leisure to the work of copying the classics. But the common belief that it was the general custom of medieval monks to have a writing-room in which they were industriously copying books from one end of the year to the other is absurd. Sometimes not a single monk in a great abbey could read or write, and as a rule it was only a few who were set aside for the work. Their task, moreover, was for the far greater part to produce the beautifully

illuminated ritual books for which there was a constant demand all over Europe and copy the works of the Fathers. These monks, in fact, did a very serious disservice to literature: When the Saracens took Egypt and cut off the supply of parchment, the monks washed off the classics from the parchment to fill the space with stuff which no man reads today. They have carefully preserved for us the pitiful works of Gregory the Great and destroyed nearly the whole of Livy.

Several scholars have tried to ascertain what we really owe to the monks of the Middle Ages in this respect. Without research any man who reflects can see that the common idea, that we owe all our classical literature to the monks, is absurd. In the first place we certainly do not owe any of the Greek classics, which are immensely more important than the Latin, to them. At the most, some scholars hold, only three small Greek works were known to the Middle Ages, and this is disputed. Scarcely any monks or priests in Europe knew Greek from about 800 to about 1450. The Greek classics were preserved in the Greek world. Next we reflect that if there were, as we saw, periods when monarchs (Theodoric, Didier, etc.) promoted culture, a great deal of collecting and copying of the Latin classics would be done by laymen. Finally, if you will read how it took the scholars of the Renaissance period, when a real zeal for the classics began, a hundred years of travel all over Europe and search in the dusty and neglected masses of manuscripts in the monasteries to get together the small collection of the Latin writers that we have today, you realize how very few of the monks had cared the toss of a coin about the preservation of the classics. We may be grateful that there was an abbot here and there, once in a while, who, in defiance of the commands of the monastic founders and the Popes, got his monks to copy Vergil or Horace. Seeing that, through the failure of the Church to provide schools for the laity, the art of writing was almost confined during the early Middle Ages to priests and monks, we ought to smile when we read how the laity neglected the classics and the monks preserved them.

As to literature in general, in fact culture in general, a modern historical writer ought to know better than to reproduce the naive admiration of Montalembert. The French writer was no scholar, and, when he tells us with enthusiasm how some medieval abbey had a library of 6700 handwritten volumes, he is quite unaware that at the same time the Mohammedans had an enormous number of libraries, from Spain to Egypt and Syria and Persia, each containing hundreds of thousands of books. He does not even know that the Greeks and Romans had had libraries rising in some cases to more than half a million volumes. A private library in Mohammedan Spain during the Dark Ages contained 600,000 volumes. At the very time when Montalembert is delighted to discover some abbey in France which condescends to use a trifle of its enormous wealth and of the leisure of its hundreds of monks in providing a very elementary school for a few score of the laity, we now

know that in the Mohammedan world (Spain, Sicily, Egypt, Syria and Persia) schools were provided in every village, colleges in the superb cities were thronged with thousands of pupils, who studied the most advanced science and philosophy, and there was in every class of the community an intense zeal for letters and learning. But I must refer to other works of mine for these things. What has really happened in modern historical science is not that the darkness of the Dark Ages has been mitigated but that, by comparison with the series of brilliant civilizations that then stretched from Portugal to China, this Holy Roman Empire over which the Popes are supposed to have exerted a spiritual sway, appears black and barbaric; yet these Arabs and Moors had started from the barbaric level long after the Goths and Vandals and Franks. That broad historical view compels us to laugh at the idea that the monks and Popes promoted civilization. It was clearly just the opposite.

### §3. THE GENERAL LIFE OF MONKS AND NUNS

We have next to try to ascertain, for this stage of history, what was the general character of the monks and nuns. And the only serious and sensible question we can ask, as we did for the earlier period in the last book, is whether a very large proportion of them were idle, sensual and vicious. Everybody knows that many monasteries were strict and virtuous, and everybody ought to know that many were lax and vicious. We might leave the matter there, but unfortunately many historical writers now represent that the normal or usual life of the monks and nuns was most edifying and beneficent. We get general pictures of "the life of the monks in the Middle Ages"—preserving agriculture by tilling vast estates (which they made regiments of miserable serfs do for them as a rule), copying the classics, feeding the poor, checking crime in the district, and so on—and in the end, perhaps, a short statement that "some" fell short of this high ideal. We saw, on the contrary, that for the earlier period, up to 800 A. D., the ideal was rare and exceptional, and the general condition was one of idle sensuality; and we shall now find the same for the Dark Ages.

Let us first take the monasteries of Britain. That zeal for education and culture (mainly religious) which I have described is used by some authors to give their readers the impression that during the early Middle Ages at least the island was fragrant from shore to shore with virtue and piety. In the last book we saw that, on the contrary, in the days of the learned and pious Bede himself two kings, as St. Boniface tells us, encouraged a quite general debauchery of the nunneries of their kingdoms. Bede's history, with its general picture of virtue, is always quoted: Boniface's comprehensive picture of vice is almost never quoted. You will remember how he says that the great majority of the nunneries in these two kingdoms were corrupt and that the nuns in them "for the most part" killed the children born to them. We found this confirmed by the Council of Clovesho at the same period, and by the Council of Chelsea in 787, forty years later. Therefore we have at last as much evidence of vice as of virtue in the eighth century.

In the ninth century the Danes poured over Britain and wrought some such demoralization as the Franks had brought about in Gaul. Instead of these calamities leading, as the Catholic legend supposes, to the formation of quiet colonies of virtuous men and women who seek refuge in monasteries, they promoted the spread of corruption. We have only a few scanty references to the irregularities until the second half of the tenth century, and then we learn of an appalling state of things. In 963 King Edgar raped a nun, and the vigorous monk-archbishop of Canterbury, St. Dunstan, a statesman of great influence, used the event to terrify the young king—he was a weak libertine, about twenty years old—and enforce his ideas of reform. The land was in a condition of semi-barbaric violence, but we are here concerned with the monasteries. It appears that by this time only two monasteries in England (Abingdon and Glastonbury) were inhabited by strict monks. All others which were not in ruin were held by married secular priests, or, as the chronicler vaguely hints, were places of debauch. In 969 Dunstan put into the mouth of King Edgar a speech to the bishops which has been preserved. It runs:

If you had watched vigilantly such horrible and abominable things would not have come to our ears. . . . I speak with sorrow of the way in which they indulge in banquets, drunkenness, chambering and impurity, so that one would think that the houses of the clergy were the brothels of whores or the halls of actors.

The people sing songs about the gaieties of the priests and monks, says the king, yet the bishops do nothing. "If," says a synod of the time, "a priest puts away his wife and takes another woman, let him be anathema," and the contemporary *Life of St. Aethalwald*, one of the reformers, says that this was a common practice. The *Life of St. Dunstan* (by Osbern) says that the conduct of the clergy was more scandalous than that of the laity: which was half-barbaric. Pope John XIII (Letter xxii) authorizes King Edgar (really Dunstan) to evict the canons of Winchester and replace them by monks because they are "hateful to all the true faithful for the open turpitude of their vices," and John XIII was by no means a puritan. The monks and priests fought vigorously for their comfort and several times tried to poison Dunstan and his helpers. Half the nation hated him for his harshness and ambition, and he was a few years later driven from office and died "in grief and vexation"; and ten years after his death we find the clerical councils returning to the eternal theme of the vices of the monks and nuns.

Such was "the island of saints" in the Dark Ages. On the continent the letters and decrees of Charlemagne and his successors suggest much the same situation. One regulation attributed to Charlemagne speaks of infanticide in nunneries much as Boniface does, but the experts believe that this belongs to a later date in the ninth century. The very important council held at Aix-la-Chapelle

in 836 says in the twelfth canon of the third part of its proceedings (in Mansi's Collection of Councils) that "in some places they [the houses of nuns] seem to be rather brothels than monasteries." The fourteenth canon of the same council reads:

The superioresses of nunneries are admonished to see that in their convents there be not all sorts of corners or other places which are dark or not open to the eyes of the superiors, for the crimes committed in which God may be provoked to anger.

In 845 we have the bishops of the Council of Vernon complaining that they cannot prevent the marriages of nuns and monks or their licentious wandering about the country. Several councils repeat that priests must have no woman, even relatives, in their houses. The important Council of Mainz in 888 says in its tenth canon (in Mansi—I translate these things direct here from this Catholic collection of the councils or verify Lea's translation):

We have heard many times that owing to the permission to do this [have female relatives] many crimes have been committed, in such fashion that some of the priests have slept with their own sisters and had children by them.

In the next year we find the zealous bishop of Soissons, Riculf, sternly forbidding his priests to permit either mother or sister to pass a single night in their houses, and the Council of Metz complaining of the same practice of incest by priests. In 895 the Council of Nantes renews the prohibition to have even "canonical women"—the women allowed by the canons of the Church, as mother, sister and aunt—in a priest's house for "even with these or their servants crime is often committed." Certainly a fragrant state of things from end to end of the Empire; and in 876 we have the Emperor Charles the Bald complaining to the Pope that Rome is very largely to blame, as, when the French and German bishops depose the clerical offenders, they fly to Rome and get (buy) dispensations. The granting (for money) of these dispensations was one of the ways in which the Papacy now "checked the passions of the barbarians."

Through the tenth and eleventh centuries the scandalous chronicle continues. How the repeated attempts at reform were baffled and the gaiety was maintained may be understood. From 942 to 989 the very important archbishopric of Rouen was ruled by a dissolute noble, Hugh, a "violator of the laws of God," says the historian of the next century, Ordericus Vitalis. His father had provided for him by making him archbishop. At his death Duke Richard of Normandy provided for his own son in the same way. This archbishop of Rouen was already married, and he used his opportunity to provide for his wife and children out of the revenue of the Church. Duke Richard, by the way, was a rare type of noble. He was really pious, and he evicted the monks of the great

abbey of Fecamp because he found them "walking along the broad road of perdition." However, his son, "a good and wise prelate," the chronicler naively says, after telling how he provided for his children, died in 1037, and another son of a duke was appointed. This man held the great See for seventeen years, yet he was so "indecently addicted to the pleasures of the flesh and worldly affairs" that in the end he had to be deposed. Then at last a really strict man became archbishop of Rouen: a saintly abbot whose monks, at Florence, had tried to poison him and had then driven him out. We can guess what the monks and nuns of the archbishopric of Rouen did during the hundred years of lax rule.

But the case is not exceptional. We read how Archembald, archbishop of Sens, another of the great Sees, evicts the nuns from an abbey and instals his harem and his hounds there. We read (in a letter of Cardinal Peter Damian, iv, 8) how Bishop Alberic of Marsico wants to marry, so he transfers his bishopric to his son and retires; but he presently fancies that he would like to be head of the famous abbey of Monte Cassino, and the monks whom he bribes cut out the abbot's eyes and bring them to him. We read in the life of St. Abbo, abbot of Fleury, that, when he tries to reform the dependent abbey of La Reole, the wives of the monks egg on their husbands to the defense of their liberty and they almost murder the reforming abbot. We read (in Bouquet, x, 384) how Segenfried, bishop of Le Mans, plunders the church, and, "as a culmination of his wickedness," in advanced years takes to himself a woman named Hildeberg, who is commonly known as "the Bishopess," has several children, and, after peacefully enjoying this important bishopric for **thirty-three years** of disorderly life, slinks into a monastery when he feels death near. We have St. Ives, bishop of Chartres, writing that the famous convent of St. Fara is "no longer a place of nuns but a brothel of diabolical women, prostituting their bodies to all kinds of men."

You will remember my remark that a single instance of vice has a broader significance than a single instance of virtue. If a bishop or archbishop of sensual life rules a large region for twenty or thirty years we shall not expect much strict virtue in the priests, monks and nuns of that region. But apart from these we have seen sufficient statements of a general character, and in the next period we shall see even more. But we will conclude soberly. There were even in the Dark Ages many very worthy bishops and abbots, ruling their clergy or monks with rare occurrence of scandal. Which type was the more numerous, the strict or the irregular monastery or nunnery, we simply do not know, except in those periods and regions where an adequate authority assures us that the majority were corrupt, as in England in the earlier years of Dunstan. Monasteries and nunneries, in fact, changed their character constantly, vacillating between license and reform. But to describe the monks and nuns of the Middle Ages, or any part of the Middle Ages, as generally virtuous or industrious or studious, and only "occasionally yielding to the corruption of the time," is a false historical statement.

## CHAPTER IV

## ANOTHER GREAT POPE—AND MORE FORGERIES

**F**ROM the fifth century onward the Roman Church means the whole of Christian Europe that is subject to the Pope, and to write in a few small books the history of this vast region during twelve or thirteen centuries would be a delicate task. The usual custom nowadays is to devote even less space to it and compress its life into a few misleading or entirely false generalizations. The most practical service I can do for my readers, therefore, is take these general statements and compare them with such evidence as we can extract from the contemporary letters, chronicles, biographies and reports of synods. To do this satisfactorily I generally take three aspects of the subject separately: the activity and character of the Popes, the work and character of the clergy and monks, and the life of the people. The chief myth that I have to refute is that the Popes and clergy and monks were a mighty and beneficent influence slowly molding a mass of very refractory material in the forms of civilization, and I submit that, on the contrary, they retarded the restoration of civilization in Europe, and that the partial recognition of the Papal claim in our educational works is an amazing historical swindle.

In order that we may proceed clearly and sensibly, let me here point out a fallacy which sends many writers astray. From about 500 to 1000 the Roman Church tolerated no educational influence in Europe except itself. It got every other religion suppressed by law, and it resisted every effort to revive a culture that was independent of itself. The question is not, therefore, whether, through its more worthy members, it did good at times during the Dark Ages, but whether its monopoly of what we may broadly call cultural influence prevented or retarded the restoration of civilization: whether, in short, some other cultural influence would not have brought social order and intellectual life out of chaos more speedily. Again I submit that history affords a decisive reply to that question, and it is fatal to the Catholic claim. We have during this period four instances of a successful reintroduction of civilization: under the Goths, the Lombards, Charlemagne and the Mohammedans. All arose independently of the Roman Church, but the first three were within its sphere of influence and perished. The fourth was wholly beyond its reach and was permanently and brilliantly successful.

And this historical argument is confirmed when we examine in detail what the Popes did or tried to do. Instead of indulging in speculation as to the advantage that ought to accrue to Europe from the spiritual monarchy which the Popes had created we here examine what in point of fact each of them did. We have the official record of their conduct, the letters they wrote, the proceedings of the synods and councils they held. These let us see at once that nine-tenths of

the Popes exerted no influence whatever over Europe. They rarely interfered in the affairs of any bishopric but their own. Of the eighty-six Popes who ruled the Church during the Dark Ages, in the broader sense of the phrase, or from 600 to about 1050, fifty-six did not hold office more than four years, and not less than forty-two did not remain Popes for more than two years, and a large number of those who lived longer as Popes were entirely unworthy men who had no spiritual prestige with which to influence the world. Most of them, moreover, were desperately occupied with their political relations to the Greeks, the Lombards, and then the Empire, the defense of their temporal dominions, and the chronic rivalries and feuds against them in Rome. They were rarely men of outstanding personality or great energy—one, who lasted a few weeks, was, from gout brought on by gluttony, unable to feed himself when he was elected Pope—and the few Popes who had commanding character were mainly occupied with other matters than the moral and social and intellectual condition of Europe. We saw this in the case of Pope Hadrian, and we shall now study the action in Europe of the greatest Pope between the death of Gregory I (604 A. D.) and the accession of Gregory VII (1073 A. D.).

### §1. THE DIPLOMACY OF POPE NICHOLAS

We are, as usual, assured that Nicholas was the highly cultivated son of a cultivated Roman father. The value of these official compliments you will gather when I remind you that while Nicholas was still a priest Pope Leo IV had tried to establish twenty elementary schools in Rome—after King Lothair had ordered them in Italy generally—and he complained that it was difficult to find teachers for them. Nicholas wrote decent Latin, unlike some of his predecessors, and from the point of view of secular culture that is all one can say. But he was unquestionably pious: and he was by no means one of the Popes who intrigued and bribed for the office. When, however, they compelled him to accept it, he developed an astonishing idea of his position. I need quote only from his very numerous letters, all of which I have read, that he held that as Pope he was "prince over all the earth," he was "divinely inspired," he had to watch vice and crime "in every part of the world," and not a council was to be held, a church to be built, or a book to be published without his permission.

I will explain in the next section how this enormous and unprecedented power which he claimed was based on forgeries, but I may at once point out how the circumstances of the time permitted him to assert the claim and thus make the medieval Papacy. Charlemagne, who had given his own name to a book that almost described the Pope and his church as idolators, who ruled the churches of two-thirds of Europe without ever consulting Rome, and who is even said to have bluntly told one of the Popes to mend the morals of his clergy and certainly did pass judgment on the morals of the Pope, would have met such a claim with scalding irony. But Nicholas had to deal with neither Charlemagne nor Louis the Pious. He had to deal with a set of distracted and degenerate successors who had

divided the Empire between them and were ever ready to fly at each others' throats. The higher prelates and abbots with whom he had to deal were very often men of such scandalous life yet superstitious mind that, if they believed in hell, as they did, his anathemas could make them tremble. So Nicholas became the spiritual monarch of Europe, the first Pope of the kind since Gregory the Great.

Notice the dates: Gregory I in 604, Nicholas in 858, Gregory VII in 1076. Between the three, as I said, the Popes had very little influence on the moral condition of Europe, none on its social and cultural condition. Any historian can easily verify that. And just as Gregory I restricted his own moral influence by truckling to princes, however vicious, and paying too much attention to the material interests of the Papacy, so Nicholas, who in my opinion deserves the title "the Great" more than either Leo or Gregory, spoiled his influence by his official arrogance, his diplomacy in the interest of Papal power, and his use of forged credentials. He had a superb opportunity, for Europe and a very large part of its clergy were in a repulsive condition, and he loathed and thundered against unchastity, but he looked more to the strengthening of the Papal power than to the effect of its exercise and he sanctioned the maxim that the end justifies the means. And if any historian pleads that, after all, the condition was desperate and we must not be too critical about the remedies, I answer, on the ground of the most notorious of historical facts, that this first Pope to attempt to check passions and really rule Europe **left the world worse than he found it**. Within five years of his death Rome was more vicious than ever: within thirty years the Papacy was degraded: within half a century Europe sank to its lowest depth.

We shall see these things in detail presently, but I emphasize them because here we are dealing with the one Pope in five centuries who really made a large attempt to influence Europe. I will take three of the more important cases in which the use of his moral authority is most praised, and perhaps we shall understand his failure. The first is, in a sense, amusing. One day a superb delegation comes to Rome from the rival Church in the east, lays before the Pope a magnificent set of jeweled altar-vessels, and asks his approval of the new Archbishop of Constantinople. We are asked to admire the Pope's sense of justice in refusing to comply until he had made a personal inquiry. Let us admit that, but it was not his only motive. The appeal to him reminded him that he was prince of the east as well as the west, and he wrote a most arrogant letter asking how they had dared to act without his permission and when they were going to restore the rights and properties of the Popes in the east (Letter No. 4). It is amusing because, owing to the isolation of the Greeks, Nicholas was probably unaware that the Greek Church was then ruled by Michael the Drunkard, his paramour Eudocia, and his chief minister in vice; and the new Archbishop was the imperial secretary and very congenial to them. Nicholas sent legates, and they were, as usual, corrupted at the Greek court and confirmed the election. When he learned the truth he wrote scalding letters to the Greek court, but his language was too violent

and his claims exorbitant. The Greek world closed its gates once more and ignored the Papacy.

The second case is famous in history. Lothair, King of Lorraine and brother of the Emperor, had married Theutberga, the daughter of Count Boso of Burgundy, and after a few years he accused her of incest with her brother Hubert, the unholy abbot of St. Maurice. I propose to describe the princes and nobles and people of the time in a later chapter, but a word must be said here. This Hubert was quite one of the worst of the abbot-nobles of the time and capable of anything. Pope Benedict III had already written in a letter (No. 2) that he went about with troops of actresses and naughty ladies, debauched the nunneries of his part of France, and quartered his women and hounds in the monasteries. The mother of the pair, the Countess Ingeltrude, had quitted her husband and was leading a life of such gaiety that Nicholas had already ordered the Archbishop of Rheims to excommunicate her. On the other hand, everybody knew that King Lothair had a fascinating mistress named Waldrada and wanted to marry her. And the French prelates, who were very largely sons, legitimate or illegitimate, of the nobles, had yielded to him. The queen appealed to the right of ordeal, and her champion successfully passed the hot-water test of innocence. She was restored, but her husband treated her with systematic brutality until she "voluntarily" signed a confession of guilt. The greatest prelate of Europe after the Pope, Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims, was consulted about this, and one reads his report (in the Migne collection) with disgust. "The most glorious king Lothair," he says, "in familiar and private conversation with us, with devout purity and humility, explained his needs to us and sought counsel and remedy." The king, he goes on, explained "with tears and sighs" how ardently he desired to retain Theutberga but she was determined to become a nun. Theutberga was brought and she repeated her confession—in terms which, I fear, the police would not allow me to translate, as it was not ordinary adultery—and the austere bishops told the king that he not only might, but must divorce her. A second council ratified the decision, and two of the French archbishops conveyed it to Rome.

It may not really be very high praise to say that the Pope refused to join in this tragi-comedy, though most historians seem to think so, but we must not forget that he was, in addition, delighted at the opportunity of asserting his supreme authority. With more vigor than delicacy he called the synod of the French prelates, with the greatest archbishops in Europe at its head, "a brothel," excommunicated the two gorgeous prelate-nobles who brought its decision, and wrote to the king himself a letter that made men gasp. "Thou hast," he said, "so yielded to the movements of the body and loosed the reins of pleasure that thou hast cast thyself into a lake of misery and a bed of filth." The two archbishops fled to the camp of Louis, King of Italy and brother of Lothair, and he marched on Rome. His troops lay near St. Peter's, outside Rome, while Nicholas prayed day and night, fasting for forty-eight hours in the church. A religious procession he had ordered passed near the troops, and the

soldiers fell upon it, one of them cutting down the great crucifix which was said to contain a fragment of the true cross. But one of those miracles which swarm in the Chronicles saved the Pope. The soldier who had struck the cross died suddenly, and Louis himself fell ill. He hurried away from Rome with his army, leaving the two archbishops to save themselves. One of them, Archbishop Gunther, of Cologne, fiercely attacked the Pope as "the new emperor of the whole world," and excommunicated him, and when the Pope declined to receive the document, bade some of his men cut their way into St. Peter's and lay it on the tomb of the apostle.

But the opportune death of the impious soldier had changed the course of history. It was no sense of their fitness to the needs of their times that reconciled men to the new Papal pretensions, as some historians now say. It was sheer superstition: these stories of sudden death and the terrors of hell conjured up by the Pope's anathemas. Scourging all three kings and all the bishops and archbishops, Nicholas sent Theutberga back to Lorraine in charge of his legate Arsenius—a peculiar instrument of a mission of virtue, as we shall see later—who almost outdid the Pope in his flow of maledictions. He put Theutberga back in her husband's bed and returned to Rome with the wicked Waldrada. By the use of either her charms or her money, however, Waldrada escaped from the care of Bishop Arsenius and returned to Lorraine and the arms of the king. The wretched queen now suffered so much that she begged the Pope to relieve her and allow the king to wed Waldrada. Never, not even if the queen dies, shall he marry that "whore," says the Pope; and the air rang again with anathemas, in the midst of which the Pope died. I may tell the sequel here. Pope Hadrian received magnificent presents from Lothair and lifted the ban of excommunication from Waldrada, but he would not divorce the king. And Lothair came to Rome and was admitted to communion when, standing before the sacrament, he and his nobles swore a ponderous and most transparently false oath that he had never misbehaved with Waldrada: and within six months Lothair and all his men were dead! It was providential that there was a pestilence raging in Italy at the time. Never before had plague and malaria played so momentous a part in human affairs.

For nearly ten years Nicholas continued to hurl anathemas at high-placed offenders, whether bishops, nobles or kings. The sons of Charles the Bald rebel, and, although they are reconciled before Nicholas hears of it, he orders them to appear before his legates. Charles, who was a modest patron of culture, invites John Scotus Erigena, the one philosopher of the Dark Ages, to translate a book from the Greek, and Nicholas writes to say that it must first be submitted to him. Judith, the daughter of Charles, and under restraint on account of her gay life, elopes with the Count of Flanders. The Pope mediates for them: but let me add that in this case the Count had threatened to join the Normans. There are mixed motives in all the Pope's interferences, but there is one invariable element: he is concerned above all things to secure recognition of Papal supremacy, and he presses his power with a vio-

lence, arrogance and often inhumanity which make his letters painful.

## §2. THE FALSE DECRETALS

This harshness partly explains why Nicholas completely failed to alter the morals of Europe, which we shall presently find worse than ever, but in some of his actions we find a graver fault. His action against the French and German archbishops in the matter of Theutberga may have had an admirable moral basis—we must not press it too much, for even the Pope never attempted to find by a proper trial whether the queen was guilty or not—apart from his love of power, but in other quarrels with them he used unclean weapons.

The second greatest prelate of Europe was, as I said, Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims. This prelate had been guilty of a manifest injustice. One of his bishops had degraded a priest who had been caught in adultery by his parishioners and castrated by them. Hincmar disliked this bishop and deposed him for exceeding his authority. The bishop appealed to Rome, and Nicholas wrote in his customary harsh and violent language to the archbishop and forced him to reinstate the bishop. In one of his letters he says:

If thou hadst any respect for the Fathers or the Apostolic See, thou wouldst not have attempted to depose Rothrad without our knowledge.

Since there was nothing whatever in "the Fathers" or any genuine canons of the Church that forbade an archbishop to act without consulting Rome, this is a vague appeal to certain forged documents which were then circulating. But in a later letter (No. 75) he is quite clearly referring to them and relying on them:

Even if he had not appealed to the Apostolic See, you had no right to run counter to **so many and such important decretal statutes** and depose a bishop without consulting us.

The French bishops replied that there were no such decretals in the collection which they had received from Rome. All decretals of which Rome approves are genuine, the Pope replies; and he adds two things which sweep away like clouds all the quibbles by which Catholic writers try to show that the Pope did not rely on forgeries. In the first place he reminds them that they make use of these Decretals themselves when it suits their purpose. In this he was correct, and it is the reason why able and cultivated prelates like Hincmar had to submit when they knew that the Papacy made use of forged canons: Hincmar based some of his own actions on them. But the reference of the Pope is still plainer when he says that he has in mind the decretals of "ancient" or "early" Popes, not those of Gregory or Leo, or of letters written in "the times of the pagan persecutions." All such decretals were spurious, for in the genuine collection there were none earlier than the end of the fourth century.

A decretal means, in the old ecclesiastical language, a rule or decree of Pope or Council, and the official collection, supplied by Rome to the churches until the ninth century, began with Pope

Siricius (384-398). About the middle of the ninth century copies of a new collection, which was supposed to have been made by Isidorus Mercator and so is often described as the Isidorean, began to circulate. It added fifty-nine letters and decrees of the earlier Popes and the Donation of Constantine, thirty-nine new decrees from the fourth to the seventh century, and several new canons of councils. Everybody admits that these are, in whole or in part, forgeries, so they are known as the Forged Decretals. Even before the Reformation certain Catholic scholars had hinted that the documents were forged, and no Catholic now questions it. It is further generally admitted that, unlike the earlier forgeries, these were not manufactured in Rome. The general opinion is that they were fabricated by priests or bishops of the French Church about the middle of the ninth century. And this fact shows the purpose of the document. It enormously enlarged the powers of the Pope, especially over archbishops, so that the lower clergy could appeal from their decisions to Rome. The instances of appeal which I have given sufficiently illustrate this. Any reader who wants to go further into the matter will find a discussion and bibliography in the sixth chapter of my "Crises in the History of the Papacy."

The only serious point in dispute is whether Pope Nicholas knew of and used the forgeries—later Popes certainly did—and even some of the Catholic writers on the subject admit that occasionally he did use them. The quotations from his letters which I have given, and which they seem to have overlooked, leave no room for doubt. But apart from particular texts—and we can quite understand that two prelates like Hincmar and Nicholas would not care in their correspondence with each other to make definite quotations from documents which both knew to be forgeries—the whole inflated claim of Pope Nicholas to decide everything in Christendom is based upon the Forged Decretals. No Pope had ever before claimed such power or been permitted to exercise it. "Head of the Church" and "Vicar" or "Vicegerent" of Christ, as the Pope called himself, is a vague title. It would seem that from such an admitted title one could derive almost any power. But the Pope's powers were limited by the existing canons or decretals, and in his earlier letters, before he discovered the new and profitable forgery, Nicholas admitted, for instance, that bishops could be deposed without consulting Rome. Then he was informed—we learn this in his letters—that a new collection of decretals was circulating in France, and he got a copy. Both he and his legal staff at the Lateran knew quite well that they were forgeries, but—the end justified the means. The spiritual power of the medieval Popes was based upon as gross a forgery as was their temporal power; and we shall see that the one led to as grave abuses and sordid quarrels as the other. Your modern history-writer may hold, like Nicholas, that the end justifies the means, but in point of history, instead of theory, the end was never attained. The perfecting of this machinery for the moral and spiritual ruling of Christendom coincides with the beginning of the worst degradation of the Papacy, of Rome and of Christendom.

## CHAPTER V

## THE "RULE OF THE WHORES" AT ROME



DISTINGUISHED British scientist, a skeptic, once protested sourly to an association to which we both belonged, because it had published a small work in which I candidly stated some of the facts which I have now to describe. The work was distasteful and served no useful purpose, he said. That is just the attitude which has enabled the Catholic Church to force into modern literature, to some extent, the fictitious version of its history, and of its beneficent influence on European civilization. My critic was a famous master of his branch of science and he knew little more about history than I do about Chinese music. He accepted with a feeling of liberality and broad-mindedness the common assurance that it was good for Europe that it was ruled by so august and despotic an authority in the Dark Ages. He consented that they were probably not so dark as older historians had painted them; and then he refused to read a full and accurate statement of the facts and did not want any other person to read it.

One can imagine the offended delicacy of these people at sight of the title of the present chapter. They may be surprised to learn that I have taken it from the older Catholic historians to whom I have referred. They call the first thirty years of Roman history in the tenth century the Pornocracy, which is merely Greek for "the rule of the whores," and it expresses the unquestioned historical fact that during that period two women whom the contemporary bishops and chroniclers repeatedly call "whores"—in the sense of being women of complete license of morals—ruled Rome and the Popes. This extraordinary reign began less than forty years after the death of Pope Nicholas, the only Pope in five centuries to whom historians could seriously look for any justification of their claim that the Papacy checked the passions and rebuked the vices of a brutal age. I have therefore not merely to state the facts but to explain how the degradation was caused and whether, or to what extent, it is related to new barbaric invasions.

There are very few points in the long and extraordinary narrative I am going to give which are disputed by any Catholic historian. It was an age of dense illiteracy and very rare scholarship, so that the four chronicles are not always quite consistent. At just a few points, therefore, the modern Catholic pits one chronicler against another—choosing his authority, of course, not for his general worth, but because it suits the purpose of the moment—or the silence of some bishop against the statement of some abbot. These points will be duly noted, and, if the matter is important, the reference to the original authorities will be given.

But the sordid events of the next hundred and fifty years are substantially undisputed, and the questioning of one particular fact in ten years does nothing to relieve the appalling significance of the long degradation.

Some readers will ask how, if the facts are generally admitted, the Catholic reconciles his belief to them. They are, in the first place, known to very few Catholics, though not disputed by their historians. Very few Catholics ever read any history of their Church or are encouraged to do so. They may read rhetorical small works in which the vices of the pagans and virtues and heroism of the Christians, the wickedness of kings and heretics and the sublime firmness of the Popes, and so on, are glowingly recorded, but as a rule they read at the most lives of saints and martyrs, largely based on the early medieval forgeries. Their Catholic Encyclopaedia is too prudent to give them a complete narrative of the history of the Popes, and in dealing with each Pope under his own name it is humorously diplomatic or starkly untruthful. I need not quote it at every turn, but if the reader cares to compare what it says about some of the Popes I am going to describe he will be rewarded with a smile.

When, however, some Catholic boldly ignores the assurance of his Church, that he incurs eternal torment if he reads *my* books, and ascertains the truth, he is met with the bland reminder that the Church never claimed that its Popes are "impeccable." It is the official, not the personal, conduct that is guaranteed. And with this flimsy sophism the Catholic is generally content. The broader bearing of these periods of degradation of the Papacy, lasting from a hundred to a hundred and fifty years, on his belief that the "Holy Ghost" takes a special interest in his Church does not occur to him. With that, however, I am not concerned. I am going to show once more that the Papacy did not promote the civilization of Europe and was quite incapable of promoting it: that while the humanism of the Mohammedans created a brilliant civilization in the south of Europe the crude and selfish action of the Papacy helped to detain the rest of the continent in a state of profound ignorance, gross immorality and incredible brutality.

### §1: THE FAILURE OF THE SPIRITUAL MACHINERY

Pope Nicholas died in 867, after pouring over Europe such a flood of anathemas as had never been known previously. Before a new Pope could be elected Rome had painful proof that even Italy had not been reformed by his use of his powers. The Duke of Spoleto descended upon the city with his army and gave his soldiers a free hand. The Popes had, he said, invited their French protectors to Italy, and he was going to repay himself for their greedy and disgusting outrages. So for some days the churches and monasteries of Rome were systematically looted, for the hundredth time, the nuns were raped in the traditional Catholic way, and the troops even took away with them a number of the fairer

maids and matrons of Rome. It was a significant event. Nearly all the princes of Italy, which was now divided into a number of small principalities and duchies, hated the Popes on account of their claims to power and territory.

Clergy and people got together and elected Pope Hadrian II, a man of strict ideals, but seventy-five years old; and very soon there was another scandal. In the last chapter I referred to a Bishop Arsenius who was a favorite legate of the great Nicholas: the legate from whom the fascinating Waldrada had somehow "escaped." At the close of the first chapter I referred also to a Cardinal Anastasius, who, having been deposed by Pope Leo, had come back and used an axe on the paintings and statues of the Papal chapel. He was a son of Arsenius, and, as Pope Hadrian declared an amnesty, he returned. Now Hadrian had, like Arsenius, been married, and his wife and daughter still lived in Rome. In his new office he felt that he could do something for his daughter, and she was betrothed to a noble. A second son of Bishop Arsenius, a man named Eleutherius, got possession of her, carried her off to his father's fortified palace in Rome, and compelled her to marry him: which probably means that he did not trouble about the ceremony. It is justly suspected that the whole family of Arsenius, who may have been disappointed in his hope of the Papacy, was involved in the outrage, for the bishop at once gathered his treasures and fled with them to the emperor's camp at Benevento. The Empress Ingelberga, whose greed was notorious, kindly undertook the care of his money, but a troop was sent to Rome, and Arsenius very conveniently died. His son, finding his palace besieged, killed the Pope's daughter and wife and was then taken and beheaded; and Cardinal Anastasius disappeared under a new sentence of excommunication.

So opened the pontificate of Hadrian II. The murders seem to have modified the very arrogant note he had at first struck, and, as I said, he pardoned Lothair—frowning severely on him but not refusing his rich presents—and Waldrada. But Lothair died, as we saw, and Charles the Bald and the emperor and king of Italy, Louis, quarreled about the inheritance. Hadrian tried to play the Nicholas. He declared Louis the rightful heir to Lorraine, bade Archbishop Hincmar recognize him, and threatened to excommunicate everybody in Europe who did not obey him. A new weapon that the Popes had forged was to excommunicate a whole region, or, as later Popes would say, put it under an "interdict," so that no priest could say mass or even give the dead Christian burial. Hadrian brandished this terrible weapon, and King Charles and Hincmar and everybody else smiled. France would settle its own affairs, Hincmar told him.

Charles the Bald had, in the usual way of the time, made his youngest son, Carloman, abbot of St. Medard, to provide him with an income. He took orders as a deacon, secured a "large number" of other abbeys, and settled down to enliven the region in the customary way. No one minded that, but he at last conspired

against his father and was imprisoned. After a time he was released, and with certain noble companions he formed a large band of brigands and lived merrily on the countryside. The king got the bishops to excommunicate him. Carloman was utterly corrupt, but he knew that the Pope was sore about the Lorraine succession, and he appealed to him. Again without inquiry the Pope espoused his cause, forbade the bishops to excommunicate him, and wrote a violent letter to Charles about his sins. In the end the king wrote the Pope—it was probably written in his name by Hincmar—a letter that told him some very plain truths about his “indecent letters” and hasty censures. Carloman was degraded from the clergy, deprived of his eyes, and imprisoned in an abbey; though I may add that his friends rescued him and he spent his remaining years in comfort as the abbot of Esternach in Germany.

The Pope's surrender was facilitated by another blunder that he made; and as these things illustrate the true quality of the Dark Ages as well as the true action of the Popes, I will briefly describe it. Hincmar, the great archbishop, had provided for a nephew of his of the same name by making him bishop of Laon. The man was greedy and unjust, and the king had to prevent him from seizing the estates of nobles. On the strength of the Forged Decretals, Hincmar of Rheims ordered the king to desist, but, when his nephew continued to grasp estates and put the whole district under an interdict when the troops chased him to the shelter of his church, the archiepiscopal uncle had to sacrifice him. All through 871 the poor folk of the diocese were uneasy about their salvation, for the bishop said they were excommunicated and the archbishop said not. The totally unworthy nephew appealed to the Pope, and Hadrian, as usual, sent a supply of anathemas against his opponents and ordered the case to Rome. It was then that king and archbishop very firmly told the Pope to mind his own business. Bishop Hincmar, the nephew, had his eyes cut out and was degraded. The only other exercise of Hadrian's authority which I need describe, to show why the new Papal powers failed to influence Europe, was that one of the Italian dukes cleverly captured the Emperor himself and his troops and called him to account. After relieving them of all their treasures he exacted of Louis a most solemn oath to take no revenge and released him; and the Pope obligingly released the king from the terms of his terrible oath. There was now nothing cheaper or less reliable in Europe than fearful oaths on the blood, the bowels, etc., of Christ.

Hadrian lasted five futile years, and a stronger man, John VIII, succeeded him for ten years. I like John. He was a great fighter. One can hardly boast that it was very spiritual, but when the Pope found that the Saracens were laying waste the whole of southern Italy and had a serious prospect of turning Rome into a Mohammedan city, when he found the kings too busy fighting each other to help him and the Italian princes mostly unwilling and often in league with the Saracens, he threw off his Papal garments, created a small navy and a good army, and under his own command they

saved Rome. I am not sure that I like the way he cut off the heads of prisoners, however, and one series of incidents is decidedly unpleasant. The Duke of Naples was one of the south-Italian princes in alliance with the Saracens. By this time the Saracens had a splendid and prosperous civilization in Sicily, in comparison with which Rome was quite barbaric, and it was profitable and pleasant to deal with them. Their common soldiers were, it is true, still fanatics who mutilated monks, burned down the greatest abbeys and laid nude nuns on the altar, but there was a high culture and great wealth in Sicily. The bishop of Naples was brother to the duke, and he one day seized the ducal power, cut out the eyes of his brother, and sent the miserable man as a present to the Pope. John sent a glowing letter of congratulation to the new duke-bishop, and either killed the blind man or let him die in great misery in prison. But after a year or two he learned that the bishop-duke was merely continuing the policy of his brother. He went down to Naples, and, when argument failed, he gave the duke an immense sum of money to quit the Saracen alliance. He later found that the duke was still secretly sharing the spoils of the Saracens, and he threatened to excommunicate him unless he agreed to seize and send to Rome as many as possible of the leading Saracens, and, in the Pope's own language, "cut the throats of all the rest." The Annals of the Abbey of Fulda, which are as good an authority as any other at the time, say that in the end a relative of the Pope poisoned him, and, as the action of the poison was slow, smashed his head with a mallet. He certainly died in misery and hostility. His unscrupulous diplomacy and fearful anathemas, of which few nobles took any serious notice, brought the Papacy into disrepute.

## §2. THE CURSE OF THE TEMPORAL POWER

There is another aspect of John's work and to this, since it is vitally connected with the coming corruption of the Papacy, I must prefix a short political introduction. The Holy Roman Empire which the Popes had created for Charlemagne, so that they might secure the protection of imperial troops for their temporal dominions, was bound to break up at the death of Charlemagne in order to provide for his sons. The title of Emperor could be retained by one only: the others became kings, and we have therefore already introduced into this narrative a king of Italy, of Provence, and so on. The kingdoms of Europe, as we know them, were being sorted out. But in that lusty age the births still outnumbered the deaths, and there were always rival ambitions ready to unsheathe the sword at the death of every prince. When the Emperor Louis died in 875 there were four claimants of the title, but the Pope sent three bishops to invite Charles the Bald to come and be crowned at Rome. All the annalists of the time agree that Charles, whose title was anything but legal, paid John VIII and the Senators an "immense price" for the coronation, and John obliged him by at once threatening to excommunicate the rival claimants and their nobles and bishops if they did not acquiesce. They nevertheless gaily

went to war, and Charles was defeated and died; and the prestige of the Papacy fell once more.

From this time onward Rome was to be rent by passionate factions in favor of France or Germany, while the Italian princes fought to reject the yoke of both as well as of the Popes. In 878 the Duke of Spoleto with his adventurous sister and the Margrave of Tuscany entered Rome and compelled everybody to swear allegiance to Carloman as king of Italy. John, who refused, was imprisoned by them. When he was released he fled to the south of France, where he was most honorably and piously received by Boso, Duke of Lombardy. The Pope adopted Boso as a son and moved heaven and earth to make a kingdom for him; and, as all the world knew that Boso was an unmitigated scoundrel who had poisoned his wife to marry the Emperor's daughter, the Pope's anathemas once more went astray. John was in the end compelled to put the imperial crown on the head of Charles the Fat, of Germany, and a strong German faction was formed in Rome.

Pope John's fiery anathemas had included in their victims half of the more distinguished clerics and nobles of Rome, but it will be too confusing if we attempt to follow the fortunes of each. Three Popes followed John in the course of the next nine years, and the fact that one of them had a Roman noble blinded and had a lady whipped naked through the streets of Rome sufficiently enables us to pierce through the gathering gloom. In 891 Pope Formosus was elected. He seems to have been a superior type of cleric, as clerics then were. He had great repute as "the apostle of the Bulgarians" and had been Papal ambassador before Pope John disgraced and exiled him. But, whereas the preceding Pope had given the imperial crown to Guido of Spoleto, Formosus pledged the Church to the support of the Germans. The opposite faction in Rome was led by the important priest, Sergius, who had almost won the election when he was displaced by Formosus. Passion was now white-hot. The German Arnulf (bastard son of the last of Charlemagne's family and a brute of the common type) fought his way to Rome for his coronation; while, the best historian of the time, Liutprand, tells us, his troops made merry in the churches of priests of the Italian faction, carousing with prostitutes in the sacred buildings, raping nuns and leading the priests out in chains. For this crime (unless you prefer to ascribe it to his unbridled debauches) the Emperor got a paralytic stroke and fled back to Germany; and a few weeks later Pope Formosus died, not without suspicion of poison in the interest of his rival, Sergius.

The Italian faction now put on the Papal throne Boniface VI: a gouty glutton who had been in earlier years suspended from the priesthood for immorality and who succumbed to the luxury of the Papal table in a fortnight. The Italians were now all-powerful, and their Emperor, Lambert, was in Rome with his virago of a mother, one of the great fighters of the time. They elected Stephen VI, and it was decided to hold a trial of the corpse of Pope Formosus. His body had lain in the grave for eight or nine months,

and you can guess what it was that they dressed in pontifical garb and solemnly placed on the Papal throne, while bishops and cardinals sat around to try it. The pretext was that Formosus had violated the canons by passing from another bishopric to that of Rome, but it was sheer livid hatred that somberly lit the council chamber. Formosus was found guilty. The three fingers of his right hand, with which he had been wont to give the papal blessing, were cut off, and the putrid body, stripped of its vestments, was dragged through the streets amidst the yells of the rabble and thrown, like a dead dog, into the Tiber. A few months later the German faction recovered power, and Pope Stephen was flung into prison and murdered. It was barely thirty years since the death of Nicholas; and note carefully that this unprecedented piece of barbarism was perpetrated entirely by the highest clergy and the Pope.

Six Popes had died or were murdered in fifteen years, and seven more would follow in the next fifteen years, but the factions were fairly balanced, and the short pontificates passed in obscurity until Leo V was elected in 903. A few months later he was deposed and imprisoned by the Cardinal Christopher. A few months later again Christopher was deposed and consigned to a monastery, and history leaves a veil over his further experiences. The Italian faction was now supreme, and the exiles returned after seven years' absence. Their leader was the vigorous Sergius, who had got rid of Christopher, and he became Pope; and now began the really wicked years of the history of the Holy Fathers.

### §3. THE PAPACY IN THE ABYSS

We have here an excellent opportunity to test the excuse of historians, that continued invasions of barbarians prevented the Popes from restoring the character and culture of Europe. The Norsemen had not yet reached Italy—when they came, at a later date, they came at the invitation of the Popes—the Lombards had been civilized for three hundred years (more civilized than the Romans themselves), and the Saracens had a higher civilization than either. If the ravages of the fanatical Saracen soldiers, with the assistance of allied Christian soldiers, be invoked, we must remember that they never entered Rome or affected the prosperous central and northern parts of Italy. As to the Normans on the western coast of Europe and the Hungarians in the east, they tore only the fringes of Christendom, and it was the savage mutual quarrels of the princes that permitted them to do this. England was the only country for which we can allow this excuse, and it was restored in a generation by one king, Alfred. Rome was corrupt for three reasons: the contempt of intellectual culture, the fierce determination of the Popes to cling to their temporal power for the sake of its revenue, and the materialization of religion by the Popes. The Papacy was strictly and entirely responsible for its own sordid demoralization.

In introducing the Roman nobles who were now to dominate the Papacy during the tenth century, the Age of Iron, as the older Cath-

olic historians shudderingly called it, let me illustrate the first point, the contempt of culture. Gregorovius has in his *History of the City of Rome* (III, 258) reproduced a diploma signed by a lady of the most famous and powerful family, the one which ruled Rome for two or three generations. She has put a mark, as a Russian peasant would today, instead of signing her name; and there is here no place for the plea that there may have been other reasons, because the letters "lra n," which mean "she cannot write," are in the document. There are several of these, and it is clear that the greatest noble ladies of Rome in the tenth century could not read or write. These are the "whores" who made Popes.

The first woman of the great family to come to our notice is Theodora, a very handsome and robust woman, and, says Bishop Liutprand, the historian—a Lombard and therefore cultivated—"a shameless whore." Her husband was the head of the Roman nobility and held all the highest offices of the city and some of the Papal palace. She had two daughters, Marozia (of whom we shall hear much) and Theodora, who were just as handsome and seductive as she, and, says Liutprand, "even more prompt in the service of Venus." Theodora again had two daughters, and these are the illiterate ladies to whom I referred above. There were many such women, masculine, aggressive and quite unscrupulous, in Italy at the time. Few even Catholic writers have ventured to question the entanglements of these women with the Popes. The older Catholic historians (Cardinal Baronius, Pagi, Mansi, the Benedictine editors of the *Fathers*, etc.) never hesitated to admit the testimony of the Bishop of Cremona, the best educated and best informed of the writers of the time, that Theodora ("the most powerful, most noble and most shameless whore," says the Cardinal) was the mistress of Pope John X, who owed his promotion to her, and that Pope Sergius III was the lover of Marozia and father of Pope John XI. The *Pontifical Chronicle* admits that John XI was "the son of Sergius III," and Duchesne agrees that Marozia was the mother. Even that dexterous and supple Catholic writer, Dr. W. Barry, admits ("*Papal Monarchy*," pp. 146 and 150) the charge against Sergius. A complete refutation of the more recent sophistry of Dr. Mann may be found in the seventh chapter of my "*Crises in the History of the Papacy*."

Sergius III was an ambitious and totally unscrupulous man. He was twice Anti-Pope, seven years an exile, and he fought his way back to Rome and was accused by contemporaries of murdering two Popes. He sat in the chair of Peter for seven years, and all that the official chronicle tells us of him is that he built and decorated churches and was the father of John XI. He seems to have sought only the wealth and luxury of the pontificate and to have left the political power to the nobles and the ambitious ladies. In his case the evidence for the adulterous connection with Marozia is overwhelming. We shall see far more immoral Popes later and we need not profess surprise that the Age of Iron produced one or two. Half the bishops of Italy, we shall see, lived sensually and

immorally. The nobles of the Italian faction were in power and they ruled Rome uneventfully. Two Popes in three years followed Sergius, and then came John X.

John was a priest of Bologna, who, during a visit to Rome attracted the tender interest of the "mistress of robes" (Papal) as she was called, Theodora. He quickly became bishop of Bologna, then archbishop of Ravenna, and, when Pope Lando closed his year of office, bishop of Rome. It was, you will remember, for passing from another bishopric to that of Rome, which the canon forbade, that Formosus had been outraged even in death; but the affections of Theodora were above the canons, and this irregularly elected Pope, set in the Papal throne by his mistress, had the longest reign of any Pope of the tenth century—almost in two centuries—and not a murmur arose from the Roman or any other clergy. All Christendom was degraded. One or two desperate Catholic writers ask their readers to smile at the calumny that the Pope was the lover of Theodora, on the ground that, as her daughter was married in the year after his election, she must have been old. They do not seem to know that in those days Italian girls were often women and mothers at fifteen. There is nothing to imply that Theodora was more than forty years old, and some of the women of the time, if not of our time, were amorous at fifty.

John made a vigorous use of his fourteen years' pontificate. However handsome and courtly he may have been, he set out against the Saracens at the head of his own troops and was very successful. When he and the young noble Alberic of Camerino returned to enjoy a great triumph at Rome, Alberic was wedded to the second of these historic ladies, Marozia. Unfortunately a new struggle for the imperial crown broke out, and the Pope's protector brought into Italy Hungarian troops to help him, and there was a fresh trail of blood, rape and loot. He and the Pope lost and the king of Burgundy won and settled at Rome.

Meantime John had quarreled with the all-powerful Marozia—her father and mother were now dead—as he had summoned his brother Peter to Rome and loaded him with honors. He was obviously trying to break "the rule of the whores," but his new allies were not exactly fragrant with the odor of virtue. You remember the fascinating French adventuress, Waldrada, who could not be torn from the arms of King Lothair. She had left behind her an illegitimate daughter Bertha, who was like unto herself, and this lady left a similarly robust and unscrupulous daughter, Irmengard, and a son named Hugh. They wanted the crown of Italy for Hugh, and Irmengard won, in her own way, the support of the nobles and corrupt bishops of northern Italy. To get rid of the imperious Marozia the Pope allied himself with this equally unsavory crowd and invited Hugh to Rome. The events that followed are obscure, but one thing is clear: Marozia remained in power and the Pope lost. The Romans drove John's brother, Peter, out of the city, and he committed the deadly sin of hiring Hungarian mercenaries to beat the path to Rome for him. He returned, and he and John kept

armed troops about them, but Marozia's men forced their way into the palace, slew Peter, and carried the Pope off to prison. He died in the following year, some of the authorities say murdered. We smile when we are asked to admire how John X decorated churches, encouraged the monastic reform which had now begun in France, or sent legates to restore discipline here and there. His character is plain enough.

Marozia was now more powerful than her mother had been and she bore the highest titles. Her first husband, Alberic, having died, she had met the ambition of Hugh of Provence by marrying his step-brother, Guido of Tuscany. Guido also soon, and very conveniently, died and she turned to Hugh himself. The bishop-historian, Liutprand, to whom we owe the best of our knowledge of this period, was a page in the court of Hugh, and it is an amusing symptom of the age to read how he describes his former master. A most noble and excellent prince, he says, though unfortunately addicted to the pleasures of the flesh. In point of fact, Hugh of Provence was quite one of the most dissolute and unscrupulous characters of the age. As Count of Provence he had sold abbeys and bishoprics to the highest bidder, and his numerous mistresses were known all over Europe. Such was the ally of the Pope who "encouraged the reform of the monasteries."

But Hugh saw the policy of an alliance with the victorious Marozia, and in spite of the canonical impediment—he was the step-brother of her late husband—he decided to marry her. The impediment was removed in characteristic fashion. Hugh cheerfully accused his own mother of whoring and said that Guido and his two brothers were bastards. One of the brothers, Lambert of Tuscany, challenged him (by proxy, of course) and won; and Lambert was drawn into a trap, blinded and put into prison. Hugh's wife conveniently died at the same time, and in 932 he came to Rome to marry Marozia. They were married in the Papal palace of Sant' Angelo, and we cannot doubt that the Pope blessed the marriage. In quick succession two nominees of Marozia had held the Papal title from 928 to 931, and she had then crowned the infamy of the Papacy by making her own son, by Pope Sergius II, the "Vicar of Christ." John XI, as he was titled, was on the throne when his mother married Hugh of Provence, and, though we are told only that the wedding was a superb ceremony and in the Papal castle, we cannot doubt that the Pope presided at his mother's appalling marriage.

Marozia, whom I estimate to have been still a woman in her thirties, had now reached the height of her ambition. Her husband, fiery and sensual like herself, could become king of Italy, if not Emperor, and she ruled Rome and the Papacy. But she had a son named Alberic by her first husband, and this youth smarted under the arrogant and brutal treatment he received from his step-father. Moreover, the conduct of the French troops stirred the Romans to anger. Soon after the wedding Hugh struck his step-son in the face for spilling water on him at table, and the youth ran out to call a rising of the Romans. The material was probably quite ready, for

the Romans always hated to see a new brood of foreigners brought in to monopolize the offices. They now found the marriage unnatural and disgusting, and Hugh and Marozia found themselves besieged in Sant' Angelo by a furious crowd. Hugh, with the selfishness of his type, escaped and deserted his wife, and Marozia yielded to her son and the Romans. Alberic put her in prison, and we know nothing further about her. The "rule of the whores" was over, for we do not find Alberic's name connected with any prominent women. He took the title of Prince and Senator of Rome, and he ruled the city and the Papacy, vigorously and much better than they had been ruled for a long time, for the next twenty years.

There is nothing to be said about the Popes of that period. John XI was permitted to say his masses in St. Peter's and the Lateran, but he was severely isolated from politics and he died after five years of colorless existence. Four Popes succeeded him in the next ten years, one of them, Leo VII, a strict monk of the new reform; but he was Pope only for two or three years. They were all apparently chosen by Alberic because they would raise no question about the temporal dominion of the Papacy and would strictly avoid politics. There were still conspiracies in Rome, which Alberic drastically suppressed, but until he died in 954 Alberic maintained some show of decency in Rome and its Papal establishment.

## CHAPTER VI.

## RENEWED DEGRADATION OF THE PAPACY

**WE** HAVE in the last chapter surveyed half a century of degradation, during which more than twenty Popes occupied the chair of Peter under the shadow of disreputable women. Half a dozen of them at least were murdered. Of influence on Europe during that time there can be no question. The machinery of spiritual government set up by Nicholas I, which historians profess to admire, was used merely in attempts to attain the selfish purposes of corrupt popes. A few diplomas granted to abbeys that demanded or paid for them, a few pious letters written by the more respectable Popes who were at times placed on the throne for the sake of their political neutrality, are mere trifles in comparison with the record I have reproduced. Europe, we shall see, was bad enough, but Rome was the worst city in it and was regarded with contempt by the Christian nations; and no barbaric invasion can be made the excuse for its depravity.

We have, at all events, you will say, emerged from this period of degradation and shall now see how the Popes purify their own world and proceed to the reconstruction of Europe. Not in the least. We now find the Papacy entering upon a longer period of demoralization, and, although the depravity of the Popes is not quite continuous, we shall find several of them worse than any of their predecessors and almost none of them making a vigorous or wise attempt to destroy the malady that infected the Papacy. We shall find that the Europe which is so commonly represented as being patiently led back to the ways of civilization by the Popes has, on the contrary, to come itself and reform the Popes; as we shall find it doing several times in the course of our history until at last half of it despairs of a reform of Rome and severs its connection. Wealth and power infected the Papacy, and we find very few Popes strong enough to resist the infection since the days when Damasus and his rival fought bloodily for the prize in the fourth century. Even the greater Popes were perverted by the thirst for power. If to these we add the encouragement of a dense ignorance which prevented people from seeing the forgeries of the Papal credentials and the conversion of the creed of Paul into a mechanical ritualism, a thing of prayer-wheels and relics and bought dispensations, we have a sufficient explanation of the continued paralysis of European civilization.

## §1. A PAPAL DON JUAN

The strong man who had now ruled Rome for twenty years. Alberic, son of Marozia, is sometimes, in order to find virtue somewhere in that vicious age, represented as a chaste man who was

concerned about the character of the Popes. This is wholly wrong. He put virtuous Popes on the throne for a few years only because he could rely on them not to intrigue against him for the temporal power. His own morals were in the fashion of the time. He had an illegitimate son Octavian—his ambition clearly appears in his thus giving the name of the first Roman Emperor to his son—and we shall presently find this son charged officially with adultery with “one of his father’s concubines.” All that we can say for Alberic is, as I explained, that his women were confined to the harem and he suffered no petticoat rule in Rome; though the line of Amazons in the famous family was, as we shall see, not yet extinct. But Alberic, who is applauded by historians for his work, did as much for the corruption of the Papacy as his mother had done. In order to prevent any danger of Papal intrigue against the secular authority he decided to make his bastard son Pope, and before he died he made the chief nobles and clergy swear that they would elect him at the next vacancy. The youth was still in his teens or Alberic would have had him elected earlier. In 955 Pope Agapetus died, and Alberic’s bastard was, in defiance of every principle of Church law and decency, elected Pope by the nobles, clergy, and people of Rome.

For secular purposes, as ruler of Rome, he remained Octavian, but as Pope he adopted the name of John XII: which was the beginning of the practice of changing the name when a man became Pope. He was then nineteen years old, and for nearly ten years he led a life of the most complete license and dissipation in the Papal palace. He gathered about him the fastest youths of Rome and used the wealth of the See to entertain them in drunken carouses and gambling. Over the dice he invoked the aid of “Jupiter and Venus and other devils”—I am quoting these things from the official indictment—and half his time was spent in hunting in the country round Rome. It was noticed that he never read his breviary or made the sign of the cross, and one day he showed his contempt by consecrating a bishop in a stable, and he drank toasts to the devil. He seems to have had no belief in his religion. In regard to sexual morals he recognized no restraint of any sort. The highest of the clergy testified that he even had incestuous intercourse with his sisters and one of his father’s concubines, and handsome women coming from the provinces on a pilgrimage to St. Peter’s were seduced or raped by him. “He liked to have a collection of women,” says the monk Benedict. He “made the Papal palace a brothel and a stable.” When a few of the clergy murmured he castrated one (a cardinal), cut out the eyes of another, and so on.

John was not an effeminate libertine. He not only hunted very vigorously and drank heavily, but he got out the Papal army and tried to win back the estates of the Church in the north. In this he was checked by the powerful and equally robust nobles of North Italy, and he, in conjunction with other nobles and bishops, summoned Otto of Germany. Otto had come to Rome, professedly on a pilgrimage but for the real purpose of seeking the imperial crown, during his father’s lifetime, but Alberic had refused to admit him

to the city. He now came, in 960, and was crowned by John; and they swore ponderous oaths on the body of Peter to be loyal to each other and respect each other's rights. "It is impossible to doubt that Otto heard what sort of life the head of the Church led but as long as the Pope was useful to him, he and his bishops were silent. In fact, when deputies of the Roman nobles presently reached the Emperor, who had moved back to North Italy, and told him that the Pope was a monster of vice, that no respectable woman dare approach St. Peter's, and that the rain poured through the roofs of the dilapidated churches of Rome while the Pope spent the treasury on wine and women, the Emperor, the chroniclers say, replied merely that John was young and would presently settle down! But he found it a very much more serious matter when proof was given him that the Pope, in spite of his solemn oath, had begun to conspire against him as soon as his back was turned. He was in league with the northern nobles whom Otto was trying to reduce, and he was calling upon Hungarians, Saracens and Greeks to distract the Emperor in other fields. So when envoys of the Pope came with a letter impudently complaining that all his estates had not yet been restored, Otto produced the Pope's letters which his officers had intercepted, and announced his intention to return to Rome.

After a short defense of the city the Pope packed up all the treasures he could reach and fled to Tivoli (963). Otto summoned a great assembly in St. Peter's. It included eight Italian, French, and German archbishops, a crowd of bishops, all the Roman clergy and nobles, and the chief representatives of the people. John had been twice summoned to come forward for the trial, and had sent the reply that "the Pope had gone into the country to hunt." So the Emperor, who presided, asked for the charges against him. One of the chief and most cultivated bishops present was the historian Liutprand, Bishop of Cremona, and we have (in his Latin work "On the Exploits of Otto," chs. 9 to 11) a picturesque and authentic account of that extraordinary trial. The crowd of nobles and clergy broke at once into superlatives about the infamy of their Pope. The Emperor commanded silence. He must have specific charges by individual witnesses, and one by one the leading priests told of the vices and crimes I have described. There is here no loophole for even the most ingenious of Papal apologists. The Emperor made them seal their testimony with solemn oaths, and, as John's only reply to his letters was a shower of ex-communications, he was deposed, and the Emperor compelled the Romans to swear that they would not in future elect a Pope without imperial approval.

We are told that it was impossible to find a priest of blameless life amongst the Roman clergy, and a clerk from the offices, a layman, was hastily put through the various orders and elected Pope Leo VIII: and we shall see presently what sort of man this "ideal" Pope really was. He was elected in November, the whole of Rome, apparently, repudiating the monstrous conduct of the late Pope; and in January, while the Emperor was still at Rome, there was a revolt. Otto was staying in the Vatican palace, and, at a signal from the

bells nobles and people swarmed round the palace and attacked his troops. Fortunately he had retained a sufficient force, and he reduced the Romans, and, receiving a new oath of loyalty, departed in heavy disgust for the north.

As soon as he was far away, Pope John and his wild companions were at the gates. They were opened to him and Rome welcomed him with wild rejoicing. His money and the zeal of the loose women had opened the gates for him. Pope Leo fled to the Emperor, and Pope John fell upon his supporters. A distinguished cardinal lost his nose, tongue, and two fingers, and others were scourged and mutilated. Another synod was held in St. Peter's, and the bishops and nobles who had only three months before made the church ring with their horror at John's vices, now swore loyalty to him. And within another three months the Pope was brought to his palace, fatally wounded, from a house in the suburbs. The husband had caught him in one of his adulteries and broken his skull. He died a week later and was buried with full Papal honors in the Lateran; and you may learn from his official epitaph that he was "the ornament of the globe," and "with what zeal, what modest mind, the apostolic ruler pleased the Lord."

## §2. THE TRAGI-COMEDY CONTINUES

The Romans had sworn also that they would never again elect a Pope without imperial authorization, but the Emperor was as far away as St. Peter, and they ignored Leo VIII and elected one of their own rank, Benedict V. Otto returned and laid siege to Rome, the new Pope valiantly leading the defense on the walls. But the imperial troops broke in, and presently Benedict appeared, very humble and apologetic, at the feet of Pope and Emperor at a council. For a man of "blameless" life Leo acted with remarkable energy. He stripped Benedict with his own hand and the Emperor had to intercede to temper his severity. The Emperor took the man with him to exile in Germany, so he did not lose any eyes, ears, hands, etc., and early in the next year Leo died, and the Romans humbly asked the imperial counsel. The exiled Benedict also had died, and John XIII, a distinguished Roman and bishop, was elected. Surely now there would be a careful choice! Before the end of the year the Romans imprisoned their Pope for his intrigues and then drove him from the city. Ten months later he came back, with the Emperor, and his vengeance was appalling. It is nauseous to keep repeating these things, but the compliments to the Papacy of modern history-writers compel me. The Emperor handed over to the Pope the Prefect (Mayor) of Rome who had led the revolt against him. The Pope first hung him by his hair from an equestrian statue in the city, then had him mounted, face backward, on an ass in ignominious garb and driven through the city, and finally scourged and imprisoned. Twelve tribunes of the people were hanged. Other distinguished Romans were mutilated. Dead bodies were dug up from their graves, cut to pieces, and thrown out of the

city. So John XIII was able to rule Rome in peace, and enrich his friends, for five years.

Benedict VI, of German origin, followed; and in the second year of his pontificate a Roman deacon led a revolt, threw the Pope into prison, strangled him, and took his place. The new Holy Father, duly elected by the Romans, Boniface VII, is described by the best Pope of the Dark Ages, Sylvester II, as "a horrid monster." There was, we shall see, a synod at Rheims in France in 991 at which the terrible record of the Papacy was openly described. When the speaker came to Boniface VII he called him "a man who in criminality surpassed the rest of mankind." But the German or imperialist faction was stronger than Boniface thought, and he presently packed up the Papal treasury and fled to Constantinople. For ten years this faction and the imperial influence kept Rome quiet, though we know nothing of the character of the Popes, but the Emperor Otto II died, leaving a boy of three to inherit his throne, and Benedict returned to Rome. Again he imprisoned and murdered the Pope and removed various clerical eyes from their sockets. And again the German faction prevailed, slew Boniface and dragged his body through the streets, and elected John XV. He ruled, hated by the Romans for his avarice and nepotism, for nearly twelve years, and the virtuous abbot of Fleury has left us this epitaph of him: "He was covetous of filthy lucre and venal in all his actions."

The young Emperor now chose for the Papacy his own cousin and chaplain and compelled the Romans to elect him. He was a German youth, of the familiar, aristocratic-clerical type, only twenty-four years old. Within six months he fled back to Germany before the anger of the Romans, who set up an Anti-Pope, and six months later Gregory V was back with the Emperor. Let me summarize the horrors. The poor Anti-Pope, who had fled, was captured and deprived of his eyes, ears, nose and tongue. In this state what was left of him was conveyed back to Rome for trial and brought before a council in the Lateran. He was degraded, driven on a mangy ass, with his face to the tail, round Rome, and thrown into prison. What further happened to him we are not told. The leader of the nobility lost his eyes and hands, was dragged through the streets, beheaded, and hanged feet upwards. We are expressly told that the Holy Father refused to listen to appeals for moderation. The widow of this noble, Stephania, one of the last women of the Marozia family to make history, was—I had better translate literally the language of the chronicle—"handed over to the German soldiers to be raped." The city crouched in terror at the feet of the Pope and his imperial cousin. And within a year Pope Gregory died or, as some of the authorities say, was poisoned. I hope he was. But so curiously is Papal history written that even Dean Milman, who gives all these facts, then copies the official panegyric of Pope Gregory and speaks of "the blamelessness of his life, his gentle virtues"!

In 999 this singular series of Holy Fathers was suddenly interrupted by the election of the most learned scholar in Christendom, the remarkable early scientist, Gerbert, whose name you will find

in every history of mathematics or physics. As he sat on the Papal throne only three or four years, and during half the time he was in exile, he does not much concern us here, but a word of explanation is necessary, as Catholic writers, who suppress the century and a half of degradation, boast much of their scientific Pope, Sylvester II. 'In his youth he had studied in Spain and learned the science of the Arabs. When Milman describes him as "in learning peerless, in piety unimpeachable," he is in the second phrase drawing, as usual, upon the official panegyric. Gerbert seems to have been a man of regular life, but he was very ambitious and the terms of the oath which he took at his election are so peculiar that his orthodoxy is very justly suspected. Until 998 he was tutor to the Emperor, who then made him archbishop of Ravenna and in the next year forced him on the Romans. Possibly under Gerbert's influence, Otto III dreamed of a restoration of civilization. There was at the time, as I said, a splendid civilization both in Spain and Sicily—indeed from Spain across the planet to China—and Otto was heartily ashamed of the condition of Europe. He and Gerbert were to cooperate in restoring culture. Otto was a young man of curiously unbalanced character yet great ideals. We have seen how barbarous he could be, and for chastity he cared no more than any other prince in an age when, Milman says, it had become so rare that the Romans called it an angelic virtue. However, we need not notice Gerbert's few attempts at reform. He was soon driven out of Rome, where his astronomy and science merely gave him a reputation for the black arts—"He rendered homage to the devil and came to a bad end" is his epitaph—and joined the Emperor. But Otto died in 1003 and the Pope in 1004: and we cannot lightly disregard the story that Stephania, the woman who had been so barbarously punished, had them both poisoned, like the preceding Pope.

Rome cleansed itself of the aroma of science and returned to its ignorance. I have said how at the synod of Rheims in 991 there was read a scorching indictment—not improbably written by Gerbert himself—of the Papacy. Amongst other things it is said: "The ignorance of other priests is in some degree pardonable when compared with that of the Bishop of Rome." Replying to the charge of general ignorance at Rome, the Pope's Legate actually said (I translate the Latin literally): "The Vicars of Peter and their followers will not have as their master Plato or Vergil [a poet] or Terence [a comedian] or any other of those philosophical cattle." But we shall see in the next book how culture was at the time beginning to steal back into Europe. Rome remained one of its most ignorant and barbaric cities. Even the school of music for which it had once been famous was in decay. It entered upon the second millennium of the Christian Era as degraded as ever; indeed one may almost say it sank even deeper.

### §3. EUROPE REFORMS ITS POPES

We shall, as I said, study carefully in the next book the real causes of the rise of Europe in the eleventh century, and here I will just carry on the chronicle of Papal demoralization to the point

where the Germans at last take drastic action. The handsome and embittered Stephania for a time restored the power of her house, and a few obscure Popes, apparently nominated by her, "stood aloof in unregarded insignificance." Her rule came to an end in 1012, but it was taken over by another branch of the same family, the Counts of Tusculum, and their unscrupulous greed for wealth led to a further demoralization of the Papal chair. They sold it openly to the highest bidder, and, though under their strong rule Rome witnessed few of its barbarous faction-fights during the next twenty years, the Popes were not the men to render any useful service to the world. After Benedict VIII, a robust military Pope, his brother, a layman, bought the lucrative job, and, when he in turn died in 1033, the family, which they had enriched, bought the Papacy for their nephew, a boy of twelve, who at once became Pope Benedict IX.

I have already described how the longest reign of all the Popes of these two fearful centuries was that of a thorough scoundrel. The second longest, thirteen years, was that of Benedict IX; and there was no kind of crime or vice in which he did not excel. The later Pope Victor III assures us that an enormous price was paid for his election, and that his life was "so base and vile and execrable that I shudder to think of it." His brother was at the head of the city, and the Pope indulged his impulses with impunity. He gathered round him a group of men who were really bandits, and they plundered, murdered, and raped for years. The Pope committed murders with his own sword, and he is accused of unnatural vice. The Romans, after eleven years of this kind of thing, drove him out of the city and elected an Anti-Pope Sylvester III. But his Tusculan protectors brought this singular Vicar of Christ back and put him back in St. Peter's and the Lateran. He began, however, to tire of his position, or, as another chronicler says, and it seems more probable, he fell in love with the beautiful daughter of a provincial noble whom he could get only by marriage. So he sold the Papacy in 1044, to a very wealthy and quite "pious and virtuous" Roman, and Christendom was apprised that it had a third Pope, Gregory VI. In fact, Gregory, in spite of his piety and virtue, spent so much time fighting in the provinces, to recover the Papal states and to crush the brigands who held up pilgrims (and so diverted money from St. Peter's), that the Romans gave him a colleague and thus gave Christendom a fourth Pope. I will not be tempted to ask where the Holy Ghost was.

Benedict seems by this time to have spent the money for which he had sold the Papacy and had failed to win his bride, and he returned to Rome. There were now three regularly elected Popes. Benedict and his bandits held the chief palace, the Lateran: Gregory, to whom he had sold his office, occupied the Church of Sta. Maria Maggiore: the third Pope bespattered his rivals with anathemas from St. Peter's in the Vatican. The situation was intolerable to everybody except the violent supporters and office-seekers of the three Popes, and the new Emperor, Henry III, began to receive entreaties from all parts of Christendom to put an end to it. Even in Rome there was now at least one strict monastery, and

from it a better feeling reached a few Romans. Pope Gregory VI, in fact, was, although he had bought the Papacy, a man of strict life and in his earlier years a teacher. But Rome could not reform itself, much less reform Europe, and in 1046 the Emperor arrived, with a company of very resolute bishops and abbots.

In a solemn council the titles of the three claimants to the Papacy were examined and rejected, and the Emperor proposed to appoint a German. When the Romans objected that it was uncanonical to appoint a man who had never been a deacon and priest of their Church, the Emperor replied, the contemporary Bishop Bonito tells us, that "in the whole Church hardly a single man could be found who was not either illiterate, simoniacal, or living in concubinage." It was an exaggeration, no doubt, but a contemporary biographer of St. John Gualbert says that simony pervaded all orders of the Roman clergy, and "clerics who were not either married or living with concubines were extremely rare." So in the year 1046, just one hundred and fifty years after the trial of the corpse of Formosus had inaugurated this long spell of barbarism, the Germans began the purification of Rome. The bishop of the remote city of Bamberg was chosen, and the Romans did not even have the satisfaction of witnessing his consecration. A ready-made Pope was brought to Rome, and imperial troops protected him. How the struggle against depravity fared in the next quarter of a century, and by what dark blunders it defeated its aim and led to a fresh degradation, we shall see in the next book.

## CHAPTER VII.

## EUROPE IN THE IRON AGE



HAVE on several occasions protested against the way in which the history of the Middle Ages is now being taught and written, and indeed it is one of my most serious purposes in this and the next few books to expose the erroneous general statements that have recently found favor. I have just received a work, "Medieval Foundations of Western Civilization" (1929), which, since it is a special study of this period and is written by two academic authorities, Professor G. C. Sellery and Professor A. C. Krey, will doubtless be used for the instruction of youth in large numbers of colleges and universities. The preface is written by Professor (and Dean) G. S. Ford of the University of Minnesota, and it opens with these words:

"There was a time when a goodly part of the period covered by this volume was called the Dark Ages. The title was justified by the way in which the age was treated by most of the writers who dealt with it. . . . Happily the clouds of dust have cleared from the pages of modern writers, and we see now the works and worth of the centuries between Romulus Augustulus and Richelieu."

I am not aware that any scholar ever meant by the Dark Ages the period from Romulus Augustulus (498 A. D.) to Cardinal Richelieu (born in 1585 A. D.), and certainly none ever questioned that there were "works and worth" from, say, 1100 to 1600 A. D. It is, at all events, eighty years since Maitland wrote his apology for, or extenuation of, the Dark Ages, and the modern historian need not go further back than that. By the Dark Ages, even at that time, Maitland understood that historians meant the period from the sixth century to the end of the eleventh. I am limiting the term here to the period from about 830 to 1050, though we saw that, apart from the quarter of a century of the age of Charlemagne, it is quite just to regard the whole period from about 500 to 1050 as dark and semi-barbaric. But since Dean Ford speaks of a "goodly part" of the Middle Ages as the Dark Ages he presumably means the period I have indicated and is merely confused when he next speaks of our vindication of the period from 500 to 1600.

Now there is no justification whatever in the book for the opening words of the preface. It removes no "clouds of dust" and gives no new discoveries. It does, it is true, follow the new fashion of which I have complained. It, for instance, devotes two pages to Gerbert and does not mention any single one of the other Popes of that century and a half; it does not give the reader the slightest

idea of the long degradation and moral paralysis of the Roman Church. It devotes four pages to the reform of many of the monasteries which started at Cluny in the tenth century, and it says nothing about the appalling state of the monasteries in the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, and of the great majority in the tenth and eleventh. All this new literature removes, not clouds of dust, but clouds of facts, and this makes its generalizations about the beneficence of the Papacy and the monks entirely false. It shows no acquaintance with medieval literature. Yet even with all this diplomacy, all this wilful ignoring of the savage violence, the general grossness of conduct, and the appalling illiteracy of the period I have covered, it finds almost nothing of a constructive character to record, and it never even attempts to explain why six hundred years after Theodoric the Goth had learned the lesson of civilization Rome remained in the condition I have described. One can prove that any murderer was a quite estimable citizen by writing his biography with a complete omission of his crimes. It is not new science but very ancient diplomacy.

I have looked carefully over the narrative I have given in the last two chapters: the record of a century and a half of Papal life. Hardly a single fact in it is challenged. A detail here and there—whether, for instance, Pope John X as well as Pope Sergius was guilty, or whether Benedict IX was guilty of unnatural vice in his orgies—is disputed by some Catholic writers, because one chronicler may make the charge and another omit it. These are trifles in comparison with the narrative as a whole. The period opens with an unprecedented outrage to a corpse, it includes such mutilations and murders as would shock us amongst savages, and it closes with a Pope sustaining for nearly ten years the vices of a Nero. If this were a description of the Mohammedan world at the time the phrase "Dark Ages" would probably be found too lenient. We should speak of it as barbarism. And from the scientific point of view it is the duty of the historian to record these facts frankly, for in no other way can the postponement of the revival of civilization in Europe be in the least explained. But it is only by the suppression of the facts—not isolated facts but general characterizations of whole ages and countries—that the fiction can be sustained that the Papacy and the monks materially aided in the reconstruction of civilization. The work of the one good man or good abbey in one hundred had far less influence on Europe than the gross life of the ninety-nine.

### II. THE FESTIVAL OF FOOLS

In recording how the clergy of France or Germany regarded Rome throughout this period as a city of peculiar corruption and ignorance I may have given an undue impression of the virtue or culture of these other countries. Rome seems certainly to have been the worst city in Europe during the Dark Ages, but if I were to compile a similar chronicle of a dozen other archiepiscopal sees in Europe at that time you would be astonished at the prolonged

corruption. Let me give a general illustration of church-life from an annual festival which was then celebrated in the churches, and with the co-operation of the clergy, in all parts of France and most parts of Europe. You probably read at times of the miracle-plays that were given in some of the churches. How naive and worthy of sympathetic understanding! But few in this generation read about the Feast of Fools (or of the Ass, or of the Drunken Deacons), yet it will tell you a great deal more about that age than the learning of Gerbert or the asceticism of Cluny or the pious miracle-plays.

When and how this extraordinary festival began we do not know, but, although we find French archbishops trying—in vain—to suppress it in the thirteenth century, it survived, little modified, until the explosion of Protestant contempt in the sixteenth century forced the Catholic prelates to mend their ways. It was held on different dates and in different forms, but we may take the common celebration on the feast of the Holy Innocents in late December. A fool is spoken of in old French as an “innocent,” and some connection may have arisen in this way; but the date points to the survival of the pagan midwinter festival, the Saturnalia. Sometimes separately, sometimes in conjunction, was celebrated the Feast of the Ass (variously said to be in honor of Balaam’s ass, the stable at Bethlehem, etc.), when “hee-haws” actually replaced the sacred responses in the mass in the cathedral, an ass was led to the altar, lewd songs were sung in church, and the celebration ended in an orgy.

On the Feast of Fools proper a young cleric was selected as the Bishop of Fools (in some places the Pope of Fools), dressed as a bishop except that he wore a foolscap instead of a mitre, and was led to the bishop’s throne in the church or cathedral. The priests were robed in fantastic garments, and they danced and sang obscene popular songs as they entered the choir. The deacons and sub-deacons ate puddings and sausages on the altar, burned stinking rags in their censers, and squatted about the sanctuary playing cards and dice during the celebration of “the mass.” At the close of the mass the clerics were dragged through the streets of the town in carts which were heavily daubed with dung, while they amused the crowd by lewd gestures and postures, often by nude exposure. The gross Feast of the Ass, which we can trace back to the ninth century, was in many cases combined with the Feast of Fools. Both, in any case, ended in an orgy of drink and sex. Not only in the greatest cathedrals of France did this fearful burlesque have the hearty co-operation of the clergy at least until the thirteenth century, when the grosser features began to be modified, but it was a general festival sanctioned by the Church and was commonly celebrated also in the chapels of the monasteries and nunneries. In many convents the nuns dressed in men’s clothing for the day. Our historians are too polite to mention these things in any of their modern characterizations of the Middle Ages.

## §2. THE CHARACTER OF THE CLERGY

Unquestionably there must have been many a bishop even in the Dark Ages who resented this gross profanation of his cathedral,

but hardly any attempted to check it until the twelfth century, and Rome was silent about it. The fact is that such a very high proportion of the higher clergy were themselves so sensual and unscrupulous that an isolated reformer could do little. It is one of the most notorious facts of the Dark Ages that the bishops and the abbots were almost entirely sons of the nobility, generally younger or illegitimate sons who were thrust into these positions to provide them with a living. The very grossness and violence of the majority of the nobles led them to give immense wealth to the churches and monasteries in their later years or at death, since this was the recognized way of cheating the devil. Towns and cities were then small, and there was almost no middle class. Wealth was chiefly concentrated in—that is to say, the great estates, worked by serfs, which were then the chief source of wealth, belonged to—the feudal castles of the nobles, the episcopal sees, and the larger abbeys. It had become the general custom for members of the noble class to enter the Church so as to enjoy the incomes of these bishoprics and abbeys. What proportion of these were or became genuinely religious no man can say, but the historian who speculates on the slowness of the restoration of civilization in Europe and refuses to notice that in a very high proportion the Popes, prelates, and monks were corrupt is bound to give his readers a false impression.

In the course of the preceding chapters we have seen a good many instances of these "worldly" prelates, as they are politely called. To a very great extent they differed from the ordinary nobles only in the fact that they did, as a rule, conduct ceremonies in their churches. Otherwise they drank, hunted, caroused, and even led their troops just like the other nobles. You may remember an Abbot Hubert, son of Count Boso, whom I described in one chapter. The Pope of the time tells us of his "murders and adulteries, vile fornications and illicit depredations": how he completely debauched a large neighboring nunnery, so that it became "full of whores, hawks, hounds, and wicked men!" He welcomed adulterous nuns from all quarters and went about with troops of actresses. There were many cases even as flagrant as this, and he would never have been censured had the Pope not been drawn into a quarrel with his family.

A much broader characterization is found in a work of the tenth century by Ratherius, Bishop of Verona. Nearly the whole of the fifth chapter of his *Praeloquia* is devoted to an attack on the bishops of Italy. Their churches, he says, are in dust and decay, but their palaces magnificent. They gallop through the mass in the morning and then put on gorgeous dresses of purple velvet and gold and set out with their hounds and falcons. The spurs are on their feet while they say mass. Their horses have gilt bridles, and daggers hang from their belts. On other days they travel in superb coaches surrounded by parasites. At table they have gold and silver wine vessels of great size, while musicians and dancing girls entertain them and hounds wander about the room. Their beds are inlaid with gold and silver and have silk sheets and pillows, and they take their dancing girls or female companions with them. In other words, they are wealthy enough to import all the luxury of the Saracen civilization and have

not the least regard for religion or morals. Men of this kind, the monkbishop says, are seen "most frequently" in Italy in his time. As all the dukes and counts and margraves who appointed them were violent and unscrupulous, we are not surprised. There were, as far as we can ascertain, very few bishops of the type of RATHERIUS himself. One such, Bishop ALTO of Vercelli of the same period, has left us a letter (No. 90) which he addressed to the priests of his diocese. The polite and patient way in which he argues with them to quit their adulteries and fornications, their wives and mistresses, shows us that, as we should expect, the priests were as bad as the bishops.

For the French clergy we have a corresponding document in the important council of TROSLÉ of the year 909 (in Mansi's Collection, vol. xviii, pp. 263-308). The Archbishop of Rheims and his bishops, who confess that they have held no synod for a very long time, survey the morals of one of the greatest dioceses in Europe, and it is a terrible picture. There are ten folio pages of it. The Christian religion seems to them "on the edge of the abyss." They take up in succession the generally prevalent crimes and vices, remarking that they leave smaller matters to the priests. There are long sections on simony, sacrilege, extortion, murder, rape, fornication, and incest: which are, they say, quite common amongst the clergy as well as the laity. As to the monasteries, they will, they say, not discuss their "condition," but their "fall." A few still survive—this, remember, at the time when our historians place their idyllic pictures of the pious and industrious monks—but "even in these no forms of the regular life are observed." We saw the same thing at the same time in England. The monks and nuns "lead a loose life," have no proper superiors, and engage in business. The nuns appreciate jewels and luxurious dress, and laymen eat and drink in their refectories.

Compare the contemporary chronicle of the great abbey of FARFA in Italy. It was rebuilt and its revenue restored in 936. Two noble youths who were inmates of it at once poisoned the abbot, and one of them bribed the prince to make him abbot. By his various mistresses he had seven daughters and three sons, and for these and his companions in debauch he provided out of the revenue of the abbey. His associate in the murder became abbot of FERMO, which became even more gay. All his monks married and gave the silk vestments of the church to their wives to convert into dresses. At one banquet Abbot HILDEBRAND and his mistresses and children got so drunk that they set the place afire. ALBERIC of Rome (the strong man I described) sent reformers, and they tried to strangle these men. ALBERIC sent soldiers and enforced a strict abbot on them; and five years later the monks succeeded in killing him and returning to their gay ways. And the most authoritative recent work on the Middle Ages, the Cambridge Medieval History (v. 5), says "The story of the great Italian monastery of Farfa is typical."

### §3. THE GENERAL CONDITION

It is difficult to draw a line in any of these contemporary documents between nobles and prelates, laity and clergy. We just have

comprehensive pictures of a morbid society in which princes, princesses, nobles, bishops, monks, etc., live a life of vice and violence. The chronicles of every country tell much the same story. We saw that in England, for instance, the monk Dunstan, a man of fierce energy, set about the reform of the clergy and monasteries, and the raping of a nun by the young king Edgar put that monarch in his power. Before he died he boasted that there were in England fifty strict abbeys—which must mean that there were still hundreds of loose abbeys—whereas there had twenty years earlier been only two. But how long did even this restricted reform last? When King Edgar died, his powerful cousin Elphere and other anti-monastic nobles got Dunstan's nuns expelled from most of the monasteries and accused Dunstan of trickery and deceit. The canons of Winchester—I told how Dunstan got them expelled for their loose ways—took action to recover their house. Dunstan presided over the crowded court, when the floor gave way and all fell, many being killed, to a lower story except Dunstan and his chair. Dunstan claimed a miracle and his opponents claimed that he had had the beams sawn through and was a murderer.

In any case the course of English history in the tenth century shows how little Dunstan's creation of fifty monasteries affected the general character. Edgar's widow was left with a step-son, Edward, the legitimate king, a youth of sixteen, and a son, Ethelred, for whom she was ambitious. Edward was stabbed horribly in the belly as he drank a cup of mead at the door of his step-mother's house, and even the Catholic historian Lingard calls her "murderess." Ethelred was only ten years old and he wept for the loss of his brother, and she beat him so cruelly that she nearly killed the boy. This lady was Dunstan's ally against the anti-monastic nobles. It was the time of the Danish invasions, and Ethelred, now grown to some sort of manhood, decided, after stupidly buying them off for some years, to murder them. Tens of thousands of them had settled in England. He secretly organized a massacre for November 13th, 1002, when there was supposed to be peace between the two peoples, and men, women, and children were butchered with great barbarity. Some were burned in their houses while they slept. Many fled to the Christian churches and were cut down at the altars. The sister of the Danish king, a Christian, had her husband and children killed before her eyes, and she was then dispatched. Naturally the king of Denmark came over and ravaged England. What remained of Dunstan's monasteries went up in flames. Yet there was later another of these barbarous massacres.

France, ravaged by the Normans while its princes fought each other, was just as barbaric. Take twenty years of its history in the ninth century as recorded in the Bertinian Annals. King Louis has set over his court a vigorous and fascinating chamberlain, Count Bernard, and, as he displaces nobles to reward his friends, conspiracy begins. The rumor spreads over France that the queen is Bernard's mistress. The king's sons rebel, depose him, send his wife to a nunnery, cut out various eyes, and so on. The sons quarrel and Louis and Judith come back and have their revenge, but in a year

or two the sons win again, and the king is tried and imprisoned. In short, for seven years the balance of power changes from one side to the other, and there are deaths and mutilations at each change. A sister of Duke Bernard, a nun, is enclosed in a cage and drowned in the river. The most horrible torments and executions are multiplying in Europe. Louis dies in 840, and his sons enter upon such a ferocious struggle that in one single battle one side is said to have lost forty thousand men. Instead of the Normans being responsible for the condition of France in the tenth century the French, including the prelates, were themselves responsible for the success of the Normans.

There was no improvement in the tenth century. Consider this little picture of morals from one of the chronicles. In 990 the Archbishop of Rheims, the most important see in France, dies, and a bastard son of the royal house, Arnoul, asks King Hugh Capet to secure the succession for him. King Hugh solemnly recommends the youth to the clergy and people of Rheims for this most important clerical function in Europe as "son of Lothair of divine memory [the famous adulterer] by a concubine." The clergy accept him. But in spite of his solemn oath to be loyal to the king, Arnoul is found at once to be in conspiracy with the king's enemies. (The scholar Gerbert, by the way, later Pope Sylvester II, was Arnoul's secretary, and his conduct in these intrigues was deplorable.) So the Archbishop is put on trial, found guilty of unnatural vice and all sorts of offenses, and degraded. (It is at this very synod, in 991, that Gerbert and the French bishops pride themselves on their superiority to Rome.) Bishop Adalberon of Laon (reputed to be the paramour of Queen Emma and the poisoner of her husband) has joined the conspiracy, but he secretly comes to terms with the king and treacherously delivers his enemy to him; and the good bishop is rewarded by being made Count as well as Bishop of Laon. That is two years of French history in the tenth century.

Of the Italians it is hardly necessary to speak after what we have seen, but I may have given a wrong impression that the northern cities were, in comparison with Rome, quite civilized. They were more advanced in culture, but if I again condense a few pages from the chronicles of the time you will see that character was the same all over Europe. "The Italian character," says Milman, "was now a strange fusion of lust and ferocity. The emasculation of their enemies was now a common revenge." The Italians were, as a matter of fact, no worse than the French. Castration was, in both European and Greek Christendom, now as common as cutting out eyes, and it was included in the code of law for certain offenses. But I will select a few facts from the tenth-century chronicles, as I have done in the case of France.

Hugh of Provence settles at Pavia as King of Italy, builds a magnificent palace, and takes not the slightest notice of ecclesiastical or moral rules. The Archbishop of Milan is a noble who has bought the See from the Emperor, and most of the other bishops are of the type described by RATHERIUS, so Hugh is not troubled. He wants to marry ALDA, daughter of King Lothair, so he declares his first mar-

riage null. Alda presently dies and he returns to his first love, and in addition he marries her daughter to his son. He has also various concubines and he puts their sons in the Church. One is made Bishop of Piacenza, another archdeacon of Milan with a prospect of the archbishopric; and when the ruling archbishop is slow to die Hugh sends a few men to dispatch him. He appoints bishops and abbots all over Italy, and we may assume what their character was.

But the Italians tire of Hugh, and they summon Berengar, the Marquis of Ivrea (who is married to his niece) to displace him. Nobles and bishops now crowd round Berengar and he begins to displace Hugh's bishops, and sometimes to replace them by worse men. He gives the bishopric of Como to a ferocious brigand who is notorious for eye-extracting, and he sells many other bishoprics. Hugh sends men to murder him, but Hugh's son Lothair, who is with him, saves his life; and, to remove this possible rival, he has his deliverer Lothair poisoned. Lothair leaves a beautiful young widow, Adelaide, and Berengar wants her to marry his son. She declines to marry into the family of her husband's murderers—it was commonly done in those days—and she is stripped and beaten. Her hair is torn from her head, and she is flung into a particularly foul dungeon. Fortunately she escapes and ultimately finds refuge in Germany. Berengar and his son continue their merry ways, and the German Emperor sends his son to chastise them. They poison him, and go on with the story.

Dip into any chronicle of the time that you please and you will find passages like these. The crabbed and generally badly written pages are crowded with cruel murders and mutilations, ghastly tortures and spoliations, adulteries and rapes and incest. None of these chronicles are translated into English but you can, as I said, read most of these things in older works like those of Gregorovius and Milman. The new fashion is to omit them entirely, as if it were a symptom of Protestant prejudice to tell the truth. But to those of us who can read these barbaric chronicles of the Dark Ages the proposal to abandon that phrase seems quite ludicrous; and we see plainly enough that no pagan invaders were responsible, but the Church was utterly corrupt and wedded to its corruption and the moral teaching of the early Christians was lost in a mass of empty ceremonies and priestly tricks.

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