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THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

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The Holy Roman Empire:

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Viscount James Bryce Bryce

The Holy Roman Empire

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

The object of this treatise is not so much to give a narrative history of the countries included in the Romano-Germanic Empire – Italy during the middle ages, Germany from the ninth century to the nineteenth – as to describe the Holy Empire itself as an institution or system, the wonderful offspring of a body of beliefs and traditions which have almost wholly passed away from the world. Such a description, however, would not be intelligible without some account of the great events which accompanied the growth and decay of imperial power; and it has therefore appeared best to give the book the form rather of a narrative than of a dissertation; and to combine with an exposition of what may be called the theory of the Empire an outline of the political history of Germany, as well as some notices of the affairs of mediæval Italy. To make the succession of events clearer, a Chronological List of Emperors and Popes has been prefixed¹.

¹ The author has in preparation, and hopes before long to complete and publish, a

The present edition has been carefully revised and corrected throughout; and a good many additions have been made to both text and notes.

Lincoln's Inn,

August 11, 1870.

DATES OF SEVERAL IMPORTANT EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE EMPIRE

	B.C.
Battle of Pharsalia	48
	A.D.
Council of Nicæa	325
End of the separate Western Empire	476
Revolt of the Italians from the Iconoclastic Emperors	728
Coronation of Charles the Great	800
End of the Carolingian Empire	888
Coronation of Otto the Great	962
Final Union of Italy to the Empire	1014
Quarrel between Henry IV and Gregory VII	1076
The First Crusade	1096
Battle of Legnano	1176
Death of Frederick II	1250
League of the three Forest Cantons of Switzerland	1308
Career of Rienzi	1347-1354
The Golden Bull	1356
Council of Constance	1415
Extinction of the Eastern Empire	1453
Discovery of America	1492
Luther at the Diet of Worms	1521
Beginning of the Thirty Years' War	1618
Peace of Westphalia	1648
Prussia recognized as a Kingdom	1701
End of the House of Hapsburg	1742
Seven Years' War	1756-1763
Peace of Lunéville	1801

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE of EMPERORS AND POPES

Year of Accession.	Bishops of Rome, or Popes.	Emperors.	Year of Accession
A.D.			B.C.
		Augustus.	57
			A.D.
		Tiberius.	74
		Caligula.	37
		Claudius.	41
42	St. Peter, (according to Jerome).		
		Nero.	54
67	Linus, (according to Jerome, Irenæus, Eusebius).		
68	Clement, (according to Tertullian and Rufinus).	Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian.	68
78	Anacletus (?).		
		Titus.	79
		Domitian.	81
91	Clement, (according to later writers).		
		Nerva.	96
		Trajan.	98
100	Evaristus (?).		
109	Alexander (?).		
		Hadrian.	117
119	Sixtus I.		
129	Telesphorus.		
		Antoninus Pius.	138
139	Hyginus.		
143	Pius I.		
157	Anicetus.		
		Marcus Aurelius.	161
168	Soter.		
177	Eleutherius.		
		Commodus.	180
		Pertinax.	180
		Didius Julianus.	181
		Niger.	181
193	Victor (?).	Septimius Severus.	193
202	Zephyrinus (?).		
		Caracalla, Geta, Diadumenian.	211
		Opilius Macrinus.	217
		Elagabalus.	218

[2] Reckoning the Anti-pope Felix (A.D. 356) as Felix II.

[3] Crowned Emperor, but at Bologna, not at Rome.

[†] The names in italics are those of German kings who never made any claim to the imperial title.

* Those marked with an asterisk were never actually crowned at Rome.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY

Of those who in August, 1806, read in the English newspapers that the Emperor Francis II had announced to the Diet his resignation of the imperial crown, there were probably few who reflected that the oldest political institution in the world had come to an end. Yet it was so. The Empire which a note issued by a diplomatist on the banks of the Danube extinguished, was the same which the crafty nephew of Julius had won for himself, against the powers of the East, beneath the cliffs of Actium; and which had preserved almost unaltered, through eighteen centuries of time, and through the greatest changes in extent, in power, in character, a title and pretensions from which all meaning had long since departed. Nothing else so directly linked the old world to the new – nothing else displayed so many strange contrasts of the present and the past, and summed up in those contrasts so much of European history. From the days of Constantine till far down into the middle ages it was, conjointly with the Papacy, the recognised centre and head of Christendom, exercising over the minds of men an influence such as its material strength could never have commanded. It is of this influence and of the causes that gave it power rather than of the external history of the Empire, that the following pages

are designed to treat. That history is indeed full of interest and brilliance, of grand characters and striking situations. But it is a subject too vast for any single canvas. Without a minuteness of detail sufficient to make its scenes dramatic and give us a lively sympathy with the actors, a narrative history can have little value and still less charm. But to trace with any minuteness the career of the Empire, would be to write the history of Christendom from the fifth century to the twelfth, of Germany and Italy from the twelfth to the nineteenth; while even a narrative of more restricted scope, which should attempt to disengage from a general account of the affairs of those countries the events that properly belong to imperial history, could hardly be compressed within reasonable limits. It is therefore better, declining so great a task, to attempt one simpler and more practicable though not necessarily inferior in interest; to speak less of events than of principles, and endeavour to describe the Empire not as a State but as an Institution, an institution created by and embodying a wonderful system of ideas. In pursuance of such a plan, the forms which the Empire took in the several stages of its growth and decline must be briefly sketched. The characters and acts of the great men who founded, guided, and overthrew it must from time to time be touched upon. But the chief aim of the treatise will be to dwell more fully on the inner nature of the Empire, as the most signal instance of the fusion of Roman and Teutonic elements in modern civilization: to shew how such a combination was possible; how Charles and Otto were led to

revive the imperial title in the West; how far during the reigns of their successors it preserved the memory of its origin, and influenced the European commonwealth of nations.

Strictly speaking, it is from the year 800 A.D., when a King of the Franks was crowned Emperor of the Romans by Pope Leo III, that the beginning of the Holy Roman Empire must be dated. But in history there is nothing isolated, and just as to explain a modern Act of Parliament or a modern conveyance of lands we must go back to the feudal customs of the thirteenth century, so among the institutions of the Middle Ages there is scarcely one which can be understood until it is traced up either to classical or to primitive Teutonic antiquity. Such a mode of inquiry is most of all needful in the case of the Holy Empire, itself no more than a tradition, a fancied revival of departed glories. And thus, in order to make it clear out of what elements the imperial system was formed, we might be required to scrutinize the antiquities of the Christian Church; to survey the constitution of Rome in the days when Rome was no more than the first of the Latin cities; nay, to travel back yet further to that Jewish theocratic polity whose influence on the minds of the mediæval priesthood was necessarily so profound. Practically, however, it may suffice to begin by glancing at the condition of the Roman world in the third and fourth centuries of the Christian era. We shall then see the old Empire with its scheme of absolutism fully matured; we shall mark how the new religion, rising in the midst of a hostile power, ends by embracing and transforming it; and we shall

be in a position to understand what impression the whole huge fabric of secular and ecclesiastical government which Roman and Christian had piled up made upon the barbarian tribes who pressed into the charmed circle of the ancient civilization.

CHAPTER II.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE BEFORE THE INVASIONS OF THE BARBARIANS

The Roman Empire in the second century.

That ostentation of humility which the subtle policy of Augustus had conceived, and the jealous hypocrisy of Tiberius maintained, was gradually dropped by their successors, till despotism became at last recognised in principle as the government of the Roman Empire. With an aristocracy decayed, a populace degraded, an army no longer recruited from Italy, the semblance of liberty that yet survived might be swept away with impunity. Republican forms had never been known in the provinces at all, and the aspect which the imperial administration had originally assumed there, soon reacted on its position in the capital. Earlier rulers had disguised their supremacy by making a slavish senate the instrument of their more cruel or arbitrary acts. As time went on, even this veil was withdrawn; and in the age of Septimius Severus, the Emperor stood forth to the whole Roman world as the single centre and source of power and political action. The warlike character of the Roman state was preserved in his title of General; his provincial lieutenants

were military governors; and a more terrible enforcement of the theory was found in his dependence on the army, at once the origin and support of all authority. But, as he united in himself every function of government, his sovereignty was civil as well as military. Laws emanated from him; all officials acted under his commission; the sanctity of his person bordered on divinity. This increased concentration of power was mainly required by the necessities of frontier defence, for within there was more decay than disaffection. Few troops were quartered through the country: few fortresses checked the march of armies in the struggles which placed Vespasian and Severus on the throne. The distant crash of war from the Rhine or the Euphrates was scarcely heard or heeded in the profound quiet of the Mediterranean coasts, where, with piracy, fleets had disappeared. No quarrels of race or religion disturbed that calm, for all national distinctions were becoming merged in the idea of a common Empire. The gradual extension of Roman citizenship through the *coloniæ*, the working of the equalized and equalizing Roman law, the even pressure of the government on all subjects, the movement of population caused by commerce and the slave traffic, were steadily assimilating the various peoples.

Obliteration of national distinctions.

Emperors who were for the most part natives of the provinces cared little to cherish Italy or conciliate Rome: it was their policy to keep open for every subject a career by whose freedom they had themselves risen to greatness, and to recruit the senate

from the most illustrious families in the cities of Gaul, Spain, and Asia. The edict by which Caracalla extended to all natives of the Roman world the rights of Roman citizenship, though prompted by no motives of kindness, proved in the end a boon. Annihilating legal distinctions, it completed the work which trade and literature and toleration to all beliefs but one were already performing, and left, so far as we can tell, only two nations still cherishing a national feeling. The Jew was kept apart by his religion: the Greek boasted his original intellectual superiority. Speculative philosophy lent her aid to this general assimilation. Stoicism, with its doctrine of a universal system of nature, made minor distinctions between man and man seem insignificant: and by its teachers the idea of cosmopolitanism was for the first time proclaimed. Alexandrian Neo-Platonism, uniting the tenets of many schools, first bringing the mysticism of the East into connection with the logical philosophies of Greece, had opened up a new ground of agreement or controversy for the minds of all the world. Yet Rome's commanding position was scarcely shaken. Her actual power was indeed confined within narrow limits.

The Capital.

Rarely were her senate and people permitted to choose the sovereign: more rarely still could they control his policy; neither law nor custom raised them above other subjects, or accorded to them any advantage in the career of civil or military ambition. As in time past Rome had sacrificed domestic freedom that she

might be the mistress of others, so now to be universal, she, the conqueror, had descended to the level of the conquered. But the sacrifice had not wanted its reward. From her came the laws and the language that had overspread the world: at her feet the nations laid the offerings of their labour: she was the head of the Empire and of civilization, and in riches, fame, and splendour far outshone as well the cities of that time as the fabled glories of Babylon or Persepolis.

Diocletian and Constantine.

Scarcely had these slowly working influences brought about this unity, when other influences began to threaten it. New foes assailed the frontiers; while the loosening of the structure within was shewn by the long struggles for power which followed the death or deposition of each successive emperor. In the period of anarchy after the fall of Valerian, generals were raised by their armies in every part of the Empire, and ruled great provinces as monarchs apart, owning no allegiance to the possessor of the capital.

The founding of the kingdoms of modern Europe might have been anticipated by two hundred years, had the barbarians been bolder, or had there not arisen in Diocletian a prince active and politic enough to bind up the fragments before they had lost all cohesion, meeting altered conditions by new remedies. By dividing and localizing authority, he confessed that the weaker heart could no longer make its pulsations felt to the body's extremities. He parcelled out the supreme power

among four persons, and then sought to give it a factitious strength, by surrounding it with an oriental pomp which his earlier predecessors would have scorned. The sovereign's person became more sacred, and was removed further from the subject by the interposition of a host of officials. The prerogative of Rome was menaced by the rivalry of Nicomedia, and the nearer greatness of Milan. Constantine trod in the same path, extending the system of titles and functionaries, separating the civil from the military, placing counts and dukes along the frontiers and in the cities, making the household larger, its etiquette stricter, its offices more important, though to a Roman eye degraded by their attachment to the monarch's person. The crown became, for the first time, the fountain of honour. These changes brought little good. Heavier taxation depressed the aristocracy²: population decreased, agriculture withered, serfdom spread: it was found more difficult to raise native troops and to pay any troops whatever. The removal of the seat of power to Byzantium, if it prolonged the life of a part of the Empire, shook it as a whole, by making the separation of East and West inevitable. By it Rome's self-abnegation that she might Romanize the world, was completed; for though the new capital preserved her name, and followed her customs and precedents, yet now the imperial sway ceased to be connected with the city which had created it. Thus

² According to the vicious financial system that prevailed, the *curiales* in each city were required to collect the taxes, and when there was a deficit, to supply it from their own property.

did the idea of Roman monarchy become more universal; for, having lost its local centre, it subsisted no longer historically, but, so to speak, naturally, as a part of an order of things which a change in external conditions seemed incapable of disturbing. Henceforth the Empire would be unaffected by the disasters of the city. And though, after the partition of the Empire had been confirmed by Valentinian, and finally settled on the death of Theodosius, the seat of the Western government was removed first to Milan and then to Ravenna, neither event destroyed Rome's prestige, nor the notion of a single imperial nationality common to all her subjects. The Syrian, the Pannonian, the Briton, the Spaniard, still called himself a Roman³.

Christianity.

For that nationality was now beginning to be supported by a new and vigorous power. The Emperors had indeed opposed it as disloyal and revolutionary: had more than once put forth their whole strength to root it out. But the unity of the Empire, and the ease of communication through its parts, had favoured the spread of Christianity: persecution had scattered the seeds

³ See the eloquent passage of Claudian, *In secundum consulatum Stilichonis*, 129, *sqq.*, from which the following lines are taken (150-60): —'Hæc est in gremio victos quæ sola recepit, Humanumque genus communi nomine fovit, Matris, non dominæ, ritu; civesque vocavit Quos domuit, nexuque pio longinqua revinxit. Hujus pacificis debemus moribus omnes Quod veluti patriis regionibus utitur hospes: Quod sedem mutare licet: quod cernere Thulen Lusus, et horrendos quondam penetrare recessus: Quod bibimus passim Rhodanum, potamus Oronten, Quod cuncti gens una sumus. Nec terminus unquam Romanæ ditionis erit.'

more widely, had forced on it a firm organization, had given it martyr-heroes and a history. When Constantine, partly perhaps from a genuine moral sympathy, yet doubtless far more in the well-grounded belief that he had more to gain from the zealous sympathy of its professors than he could lose by the aversion of those who still cultivated a languid paganism, took Christianity to be the religion of the Empire, it was already a great political force, able, and not more able than willing, to repay him by aid and submission.

Its alliance with the State.

Yet the league was struck in no mere mercenary spirit, for the league was inevitable. Of the evils and dangers incident to the system then founded, there was as yet no experience: of that antagonism between Church and State which to a modern appears so natural, there was not even an idea. Among the Jews, the State had rested upon religion; among the Romans, religion had been an integral part of the political constitution, a matter far more of national or tribal or family feeling than of personal⁴. Both in Israel and at Rome the mingling of religious with civic patriotism had been harmonious, giving strength and elasticity to the whole body politic. So perfect a union was now no longer possible in the Roman Empire, for the new faith had already a governing body of her own in those rulers and teachers whom the growth of sacramentalism, and of sacerdotalism its

⁴ In the Roman jurisprudence, *ius sacrum* is a branch of *ius publicum*.

necessary consequence, was making every day more powerful, and marking off more sharply from the mass of the Christian people. Since therefore the ecclesiastical organization could not be identical with the civil, it became its counterpart. Suddenly called from danger and ignominy to the seat of power, and finding her inexperience perplexed by a sphere of action vast and varied, the Church was compelled to frame herself upon the model of the secular administration. Where her own machinery was defective, as in the case of doctrinal disputes affecting the whole Christian world, she sought the interposition of the sovereign; in all else she strove not to sink in, but to reproduce for herself the imperial system. And just as with the extension of the Empire all the independent rights of districts, towns, or tribes had disappeared, so now the primitive freedom and diversity of individual Christians and local Churches, already circumscribed by the frequent struggles against heresy, was finally overborne by the idea of one visible catholic Church, uniform in faith and ritual; uniform too in her relation to the civil power and the increasingly oligarchical character of her government. Thus, under the combined force of doctrinal theory and practical needs, there shaped itself a hierarchy of patriarchs, metropolitans, and bishops, their jurisdiction, although still chiefly spiritual, enforced by the laws of the State, their provinces and dioceses usually corresponding to the administrative divisions of the Empire. As no patriarch yet enjoyed more than an honorary supremacy, the head of the Church – so far as she could be

said to have a head – was virtually the Emperor himself. The inchoate right to intermeddle in religious affairs which he derived from the office of Pontifex Maximus was readily admitted; and the clergy, preaching the duty of passive obedience now as it had been preached in the days of Nero and Diocletian⁵, were well pleased to see him preside in councils, issue edicts against heresy, and testify even by arbitrary measures his zeal for the advancement of the faith and the overthrow of pagan rites. But though the tone of the Church remained humble, her strength waxed greater, nor were occasions wanting which revealed the future that was in store for her. The resistance and final triumph of Athanasius proved that the new society could put forth a power of opinion such as had never been known before: the abasement of Theodosius the Emperor before Ambrose the Archbishop admitted the supremacy of spiritual authority. In the decrepitude of old institutions, in the barrenness of literature and the feebleness of art, it was to the Church that the life and feelings of the people sought more and more to attach themselves; and when in the fifth century the horizon grew black with clouds of ruin, those who watched with despair or apathy the approach of irresistible foes, fled for comfort to the shrine of a religion which even those foes revered.

⁵ Tertullian, writing circ. A.D. 200, says: 'Sed quid ego amplius de religione atque pietate Christiana in imperatorem quem necesse est suspiciamus ut eum quem Dominus noster elegerit. Et merito dixerim, noster est magis Cæsar, ut a nostro Deo constitutus.' —*Apologet.* cap. 34.

It embraces and preserves the imperial idea.

But that which we are above all concerned to remark here is, that this church system, demanding a more rigid uniformity in doctrine and organization, making more and more vital the notion of a visible body of worshippers united by participation in the same sacraments, maintained and propagated afresh the feeling of a single Roman people throughout the world. Christianity as well as civilization became conterminous with the Roman Empire⁶.

⁶ See the book of Optatus, bishop of Milevis, *Contra Donatistas*. 'Non enim respublica est in ecclesia, sed ecclesia in republica, id est, in imperio Romano, cum super imperatorem non sit nisi solus Deus:' (p. 999 of vol. ii. of Migne's *Patrologiae Cursus completus*.) The treatise of Optatus is full of interest, as shewing the growth of the idea of the visible Church, and of the primacy of Peter's chair, as constituting its centre and representing its unity.

CHAPTER III.

THE BARBARIAN INVASIONS

The Barbarians.

Upon a world so constituted did the barbarians of the North descend. From the dawn of history they shew as a dim background to the warmth and light of the Mediterranean coast, changing little while kingdoms rise and fall in the South: only thought on when some hungry swarm comes down to pillage or to settle. It is always as foes that they are known. The Romans never forgot the invasion of Brennus; and their fears, renewed by the irruption of the Cimbri and Teutones, could not let them rest till the extension of the frontier to the Rhine and the Danube removed Italy from immediate danger. A little more perseverance under Tiberius, or again under Hadrian, would probably have reduced all Germany as far as the Baltic and the Oder. But the politic or jealous advice of Augustus⁷ was followed, and it was only along the frontiers that Roman arts and culture affected the Teutonic races. Commerce was brisk; Roman envoys penetrated the forests to the courts of rude chieftains; adventurous barbarians entered the provinces,

⁷ 'Addiderat consilium coercendi intra terminos imperii.' – Tac. *Ann.* i. 2.

sometimes to admire, oftener, like the brother of Arminius⁸, to take service under the Roman flag, and rise to a distinction in the legion which some feud denied them at home. This was found even more convenient by the hirer than by the employed; till by degrees barbarian mercenaries came to form the largest, or at least the most effective, part of the Roman armies.

Admitted to Roman titles and honours.

The body-guard of Augustus had been so composed; the prætorians were generally selected from the bravest frontier troops, most of them German; the practice could not but increase with the extinction of the free peasantry, the growth of villenage, and the effeminacy of all classes. Emperors who were, like Maximin, themselves foreigners, encouraged a system by whose means they had risen, and whose advantages they knew. After Constantine, the barbarians form the majority of the troops; after Theodosius, a Roman is the exception. The soldiers of the Eastern Empire in the time of Arcadius are almost all Goths, vast bodies of whom had been settled in the provinces; while in the West, Stilicho⁹ can oppose Rhodogast only by summoning the German auxiliaries from the frontiers. Along with this practice there had grown up another, which did still more to make the barbarians feel themselves members of the Roman state. Whatever the pride of the old republic might assert, the maxim

⁸ Tac. *Ann.* ii. 9.

⁹ Stilicho, the bulwark of the Empire, seems to have been himself a Vandal by extraction.

of the Empire had always been that birth and race should exclude no subject from any post which his abilities deserved. This principle, which had removed all obstacles from the path of the Spaniard Trajan, the Pannonian Maximin, the Numidian Philip, was afterwards extended to the conferring of honour and power on persons who did not even profess to have passed through the grades of Roman service, but remained leaders of their own tribes. Ariovistus had been soothed by the title of Friend of the Roman People; in the third century the insignia of the consulship¹⁰ were conferred on a Herulian chief: Crocus and his Alemanni entered as an independent body into the service of Rome; along the Rhine whole tribes received, under the name of Laeti, lands within the provinces on condition of military service; and the foreign aid which the Sarmatian had proffered to Vespasian against his rival, and Marcus Aurelius had indignantly rejected in the war with Cassius, became the usual, at last the sole support of the Empire, in civil as well as in external strife.

Thus in many ways was the old antagonism broken down – Romans admitting barbarians to rank and office, barbarians catching something of the manners and culture of their neighbours. And thus when the final movement came, and the Teutonic tribes slowly established themselves through the provinces, they entered not as savage strangers, but as colonists knowing something of the system into which they came, and not unwilling to be considered its members; despising the degenerate

¹⁰ Of course not the consulship itself, but the *ornamenta consularia*.

provincials who struck no blow in their own defence, but full of respect for the majestic power which had for so many centuries confronted and instructed them.

Their feelings towards the Roman Empire.

Great during all these ages, but greatest when they were actually traversing and settling in the Empire, must have been the impression which its elaborate machinery of government and mature civilization made upon the minds of the Northern invaders. With arms whose fabrication they had learned from their foes, these dwellers in the forest conquered well-tilled fields, and entered towns whose busy workshops, marts stored with the productions of distant countries, and palaces rich in monuments of art, equally roused their wonder. To the beauty of statuary or painting they might often be blind, but the rudest mind must have been awed by the massive piles with which vanity or devotion, or the passion for amusement, had adorned Milan and Verona, Arles, Treves, and Bordeaux. A deeper awe would strike them as they gazed on the crowding worshippers and stately ceremonial of Christianity, most unlike their own rude sacrifices. The exclamation of the Goth Athanaric, when led into the market-place of Constantinople, may stand for the feelings of his nation: 'Without doubt the Emperor is a God upon earth, and he who attacks him is guilty of his own blood'¹¹.

The social and political system, with its cultivated language

¹¹ Jornandes, *De Rebus Geticis*, cap. 28.

and literature, into which they came, would impress fewer of the conquerors, but by those few would be admired beyond all else. Its regular organization supplied what they most needed and could least construct for themselves, and hence it was that the greatest among them were the most desirous to preserve it. The Mongol Attila excepted, there is among these terrible hosts no destroyer; the wish of each leader is to maintain the existing order, to spare life, to respect every work of skill and labour, above all to perpetuate the methods of Roman administration, and rule the people as the deputy or successor of their Emperor. Titles conferred by him were the highest honours they knew: they were also the only means of acquiring something like a legal claim to the obedience of the subject, and of turning a patriarchal or military chieftainship into the regular sway of an hereditary monarch.

Their desire to preserve its institutions.

Civilis had long since endeavoured to govern his Batavians as a Roman general¹². Alaric became master-general of the armies of Illyricum. Clovis exulted in the consulship; his son Theodebert received Provence, the conquest of his own battle-axe, as the gift of Justinian. Sigismund the Burgundian king, created count and patrician by the Emperor Anastasius, professed the deepest gratitude and the firmest faith to that Eastern court which was absolutely powerless to help or to hurt him. 'My people is yours,'

¹² Tac. *Hist.* i. and iv.

he writes, 'and to rule them delights me less than to serve you; the hereditary devotion of my race to Rome has made us account those the highest honours which your military titles convey; we have always preferred what an Emperor gave to all that our ancestors could bequeath. In ruling our nation we hold ourselves but your lieutenants: you, whose divinely-appointed sway no barrier bounds, whose blessed beams shine from the Bosphorus into distant Gaul, employ us to administer the remoter regions of your Empire: your world is our fatherland¹³.' A contemporary historian has recorded the remarkable disclosure of his own thoughts and purposes, made by one of the ablest of the barbarian chieftains, Athaulf the Visigoth, the brother-in-law and successor of Alaric. 'It was at first my wish to destroy the Roman name, and erect in its place a Gothic empire, taking to myself the place and the powers of Cæsar Augustus. But when experience taught

¹³ 'Vester quidem est populus meus sed me plus servire vobis quam illi præesse delectat. Traxit istud a proavis generis mei apud vos decessoresque vestros semper animo Romana devotio, ut illa nobis magis claritas putaretur, quam vestra per militiæ titulos porrigeret celsitudo: cunctisque auctoribus meis semper magis ambitum est quod a principibus sumerent quam quod a patribus attulissent. Cumque gentem nostram videamur regere, non aliud nos quam milites vestros credimus ordinari... Per nos administratis remotarum spatia regionum: patria nostra vester orbis est. Tangit Galliam suam lumen orientis, et radius qui illis partibus oriri creditur, hic refulget. Dominationem vobis divinitus præstitam obex nulla concludit, nec ullis provinciarum terminis diffusio felicitum sceptrorum limitatur. Salvo divinitatis honore sit dictum.' – Letter printed among the works of Avitus, Bishop of Vienne. (Migne's *Patrologia*, vol. lix. p. 285.) This letter, as its style shews, is the composition not of Sigismund himself, but of Avitus, writing on Sigismund's behalf. But this makes it scarcely less valuable evidence of the feelings of the time.

me that the untameable barbarism of the Goths would not suffer them to live beneath the sway of law, and that the abolition of the institutions on which the state rested would involve the ruin of the state itself, I chose the glory of renewing and maintaining by Gothic strength the fame of Rome, desiring to go down to posterity as the restorer of that Roman power which it was beyond my power to replace. Wherefore I avoid war and strive for peace¹⁴.'

Historians have remarked how valuable must have been the skill of Roman officials to princes who from leaders of tribes were become rulers of wide lands; and in particular how indispensable the aid of the Christian bishops, the intellectual aristocracy of their new subjects, whose advice could alone guide their policy and conciliate the vanquished. Not only is this true; it is but a small part of the truth; one form of that manifold and overpowering influence which the old system exercised over its foes not less than its own children. For it is hardly too much to say that the thought of antagonism to the Empire and the

¹⁴ 'Referre solitus est (*sc.* Ataulphus) se in primis ardentem inhiasse: ut oblitterato Romanorum nomine Romanum omne solum Gothorum imperium et faceret et vocaret: essetque, ut vulgariter loquar, Gothia quod Romania fuisset; fieretque nunc Ataulphus quod quondam Cæsar Augustus. At ubi multa experientia probavisset, neque Gothos ullo modo parere legibus posse propter effrenatam barbariem, neque reipublicæ interdicti leges oportere sine quibus respublica non est respublica; elegisse se saltem, ut gloriam sibi de restituendo in integrum augendoque Romano nomine Gothorum viribus quæreretur, habereturque apud posteros Romanæ restitutionis auctor postquam esse non potuerat immutator. Ob hoc abstinere a bello, ob hoc inhiare paci nitebatur.' – Orosius, vii. 43.

wish to extinguish it never crossed the mind of the barbarians¹⁵. The conception of that Empire was too universal, too august, too enduring. It was everywhere around them, and they could remember no time when it had not been so. It had no association of people or place whose fall could seem to involve that of the whole fabric; it had that connection with the Christian Church which made it all-embracing and venerable.

The belief in its eternity.

There were especially two ideas whereon it rested, and from which it obtained a peculiar strength and a peculiar direction. The one was the belief that as the dominion of Rome was universal, so must it be eternal. Nothing like it had been seen before. The empire of Alexander had lasted a short lifetime; and within its wide compass were included many arid wastes, and many tracts where none but the roving savage had ever set foot. That of the Italian city had for fourteen generations embraced all the most wealthy and populous regions of the civilized world, and had laid the foundations of its power so deep that they seemed destined to last for ever. If Rome moved slowly for a time, her foot was always planted firmly: the ease and swiftness of her later conquests proved the solidity of the earlier; and to her, more justly than to his own city, might the boast of the Athenian historian be applied: that she advanced farthest in prosperity, and in adversity drew back the least. From the end of the republican

¹⁵ Athaulf formed only to abandon it.

period her poets, her orators, her jurists, ceased not to repeat the claim of world-dominion, and confidently predict its eternity¹⁶. The proud belief of his countrymen which Virgil had expressed

'His ego nec metas rerum, nec tempora pono:
Imperium sine fine dedi' —

was shared by the early Christians when they prayed for the persecuting power whose fall would bring Antichrist upon earth. Lactantius writes: 'When Rome the head of the world shall have fallen, who can doubt that the end is come of human things, aye, of the earth itself. She, she alone is the state by which all things are upheld even until now; wherefore let us make prayers and supplications to the God of heaven, if indeed his decrees and his purposes can be delayed, that that hateful tyrant come not sooner than we look for, he for whom are reserved fearful deeds, who shall pluck out that eye in whose extinction the world itself shall perish¹⁷.' With the triumph of Christianity this belief had found a

¹⁶ See, among other passages, Varro, *De lingua Latina*, iv. 34; Cic., *Pro Domo*, 33; and in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, Dig. i. 5, 17; l. 1, 33; xiv. 2, 9; quoted by Ægidi, *Der Fürstenrath nach dem Luneviller Frieden*. The phrase 'urbs æterna' appears in a novel issued by Valentinian III. Tertullian speaks of Rome as 'civitas sacrosancta.'

¹⁷ Lact. *Divin. Instit.* vii. 25: 'Etiam res ipsa declarat lapsum ruinamque rerum brevi fore: nisi quod incolumi urbe Roma nihil istiusmodi videtur esse metuendum. At vero cum caput illud orbis occident, et ῥύμῃ esse cœperit quod Sibyllæ fore aiunt, quis dubitet venisse iam finem rebus humanis, orbique terrarum? Illa, illa est civitas quæ adhuc sustentat omnia, precandusque nobis et adorandus est Deus cœli

new basis. For as the Empire had decayed, the Church had grown stronger; and now while the one, trembling at the approach of the destroyer, saw province after province torn away, the other, rising in stately youth, prepared to fill her place and govern in her name, and in doing so, to adopt and sanctify and propagate anew the notion of a universal and unending state.

Sanctity of the imperial name.

The second chief element in this conception was the association of such a state with one irresponsible governor, the Emperor. The hatred to the name of King, which their earliest political struggles had left in the Romans, by obliging their ruler to take a new and strange title, marked him off from all the other sovereigns of the world. To the provincials especially he became an awful impersonation of the great machine of government which moved above and around them. It was not

si tamen statuta eius et placita differri possunt, ne citius quam putemus tyrannus ille abominabilis veniat qui tantum facinus moliatur, ac lumen illud effodiat cuius interitu mundus ipse lapsurus est.'Cf. Tertull. *Apolog.* cap. xxxii: 'Est et alia maior necessitas nobis orandi pro imperatoribus, etiam pro omni statu imperii rebusque Romanis, qui vim maximam universo orbi imminentem ipsamque clausulam sæculi acerbitates horrendas comminantem Romani imperii commeatu scimus retardari.' Also the same writer, *Ad Scapulam*, cap. ii: 'Christianus sciens imperatorem a Deo suo constitui, necesse est ut ipsum diligat et revereatur et honoret et saluum velit cum toto Romano imperio quousque sæculum stabit: tamdiu enim stabit.' So too the author – now usually supposed to be Hilary the Deacon – of the Commentary on the Pauline Epistles ascribed to S. Ambrose: 'Non prius veniet Dominus quam regni Romani defectio fiat, et appareat antichristus qui interficiet sanctos, reddita Romanis libertate, sub suo tamen nomine.' – Ad II Thess. ii. 4, 7.

merely that he was, like a modern king, the centre of power and the dispenser of honour: his pre-eminence, broken by no comparison with other princes, by the ascending ranks of no aristocracy, had in it something almost supernatural. The right of legislation had become vested in him alone: the decrees of the people, and resolutions of the senate, and edicts of the magistrates were, during the last three centuries, replaced by imperial constitutions; his domestic council, the consistory, was the supreme court of appeal; his interposition, like that of some terrestrial Providence, was invoked, and legally provided so to be, to reverse or overleap the ordinary rules of law¹⁸. From the time of Julius and Augustus his person had been hallowed by the office of chief pontiff¹⁹ and the tribunician power; to swear by his head was considered the most solemn of all oaths²⁰; his effigy was sacred²¹, even on a coin; to him or to his Genius

¹⁸ For example, by the 'restitutio natalium,' and the 'adrogatio per rescriptum principis,' or, as it is expressed, 'per sacrum oraculum.'

¹⁹ Even the Christian Emperors took the title of Pontifex Maximus, till Gratian refused it: ἀθέμιστον εἶναι Χριστιάνῳ τὸ σχῆμα νομίσας. – Zosimus, lib. iv. cap. 36.

²⁰ 'Maiore formidine et callidiorē timiditate Cæsarem observatis quam ipsum ex Olympo Iovem, et merito, si sciatis... Citius denique apud vos per omnes Deos quam per unum genium Cæsaris peieratur.' – Tertull. *Apolog.* c. xxviii. Cf. Zos. v. 51: εἰ μὲν γὰρ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν τετυγῆκει διδόμενος ὄρκος, ἣν ἂν ὡς εἰκὸς παριδεῖν ἐνδίδοντας τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ φιλανθρωπία τὴν ἐπὶ τῇ ἀσεβείᾳ συγγνώμην. ἐπεὶ δὲ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως ὁμωμόκεσαν κεφαλῇς, οὐκ εἶναι θεμιτὸν αὐτοῖς εἰς τὸν τοσοῦτον ὄρκον ἑξαμαρτεῖν.

²¹ Tac. *Ann.* i. 73; iii. 38, etc.

temples were erected and divine honours paid while he lived²²; and when, as it was expressed, he ceased to be among men, the title of Divus was accorded to him, after a solemn consecration²³. In the confused multiplicity of mythologies, the worship of the Emperor was the only worship common to the whole Roman world, and was therefore that usually proposed as a test to the Christians on their trial. Under the new religion the form of adoration vanished, the sentiment of reverence remained: the right to control Church as well as State, admitted at Nicæa, and habitually exercised by the sovereigns of Constantinople, made the Emperor hardly less essential to the new conception of a world-wide Christian monarchy than he had been to the military despotism of old. These considerations explain why the men of the fifth century, clinging to preconceived ideas, refused to believe in that dissolution of the Empire which they saw with their own eyes. Because it could not die, it lived. And there was in the slowness of the change and its external aspect, as well as in the fortunes of the capital, something to favour the illusion. The Roman name was shared by every subject; the Roman city was no longer the seat of government, nor did her capture extinguish the imperial power, for the maxim was now accepted, Where

²² It is curious that this should have begun in the first years of the Empire. See, among other passages that might be cited from the Augustan poets, Virg. *Georg.* i. 42; iv. 462; Hor. *Od.* iii. 3, 11; Ovid, *Epp. ex Ponto*, iv. 9. 105.

²³ Hence Vespasian's dying jest, 'Ut puto, deus fio.'

the Emperor is, there is Rome²⁴. But her continued existence, not permanently occupied by any conqueror, striking the nations with an awe which the history or the external splendours of Constantinople, Milan, or Ravenna could nowise inspire, was an ever new assertion of the endurance of the Roman race and dominion. Dishonoured and defenceless, the spell of her name was still strong enough to arrest the conqueror in the moment of triumph. The irresistible impulse that drew Alaric was one of glory or revenge, not of destruction: the Hun turned back from Aquileia with a vague fear upon him: the Ostrogoth adorned and protected his splendid prize.

Last days of the Western Empire.

In the history of the last days of the Western Empire, two points deserve special remark: its continued union with the Eastern branch, and the way in which its ideal dignity was respected while its representatives were despised. After Stilicho's death, and Alaric's invasion, its fall was a question of time. While one by one the provinces were abandoned by the central government, left either to be occupied by invading tribes or to maintain a precarious independence, like Britain and Armorica²⁵, by means of municipal unions, Italy lay at the mercy of the barbarian auxiliaries and was governed by their leaders. The degenerate line of Theodosius might have

²⁴ ὅπου ἂν ὁ βασιλεὺς ᾖ, ἐκεῖ ἡ Ῥώμη. – Herodian.

²⁵ If the accounts we find of the Armorican republic can be trusted.

seemed to reign by hereditary right, but after their extinction in Valentinian III each phantom Emperor – Maximus, Avitus, Majorian, Anthemius, Olybrius – received the purple from the haughty Ricimer, general of the troops, only to be stripped of it when he presumed to forget his dependence. Though the division between Arcadius and Honorius had definitely severed the two realms for administrative purposes, they were still supposed to constitute a single Empire, and the rulers of the East interfered more than once to raise to the Western throne princes they could not protect upon it. Ricimer's insolence quailed before the shadowy grandeur of the imperial title: his ambition, and Gundobald his successor's, were bounded by the name of patrician. The bolder genius of Odoacer²⁶, general of the barbarian auxiliaries, resolved to abolish an empty pageant, and extinguish the title and office of Emperor of the West. Yet over him too the spell had power; and as the Gaulish warrior had gazed on the silent majesty of the senate in a deserted city, so the Herulian revered the power before which the world had bowed, and though there was no force to check or to affright him, shrank from grasping in his own barbarian hand the sceptre of the

²⁶ Odoacer or Odovaker, as it seems his name ought to be written, is usually, but incorrectly, described as a King of the Heruli, who led his people into Italy and overthrew the Empire of the West; others call him King of the Rugii, or Skyrrri, or Turcilingi. The truth seems to be that he was not a king at all, but the son of a Skyrrrian chieftain (Edecon, known as one of the envoys whom Attila sent to Constantinople), whose personal merits made him chosen by the barbarian auxiliaries to be their leader. The Skyrrri were a small tribe, apparently akin to the more powerful Heruli, whose name is often extended to them.

Cæsars. When, at Odoacer's bidding, Romulus Augustulus, the boy whom a whim of fate had chosen to be the last native Cæsar of Rome, had formally announced his resignation to the senate, a deputation from that body proceeded to the Eastern court to lay the insignia of royalty at the feet of the Eastern Emperor Zeno.

Its extinction by Odoacer, A.D. 476.

The West, they declared, no longer required an Emperor of its own; one monarch sufficed for the world; Odoacer was qualified by his wisdom and courage to be the protector of their state, and upon him Zeno was entreated to confer the title of patrician and the administration of the Italian provinces²⁷. The Emperor granted what he could not refuse, and Odoacer, taking the title of King²⁸, continued the consular office, respected the civil and ecclesiastical institutions of his subjects, and ruled for fourteen years as the nominal vicar of the Eastern Emperor. There was thus legally no extinction of the Western Empire at all, but only a reunion of East and West. In form, and to some

²⁷ Αὐγουστος ὁ Ὀρέστου υἱὸς ἀκούσας Ζήνωνα πάλιν τὴν βασιλείαν ἀνακεκτῆσθαι τῆς ἔω ... ἠνάγκασε τὴν βουλὴν ἀποστεῖλαι πρεσβεῖαν Ζήνωνι σημαίνουσαν ὡς ἰδίας μὲν αὐτοῖς βασιλείας οὐ δέοι, κοινὸς δὲ ἀποχρήσει μόνος ὢν αὐτοκράτωρ ἐπ' ἀμφοτέροις τοῖς πέρασιν. τὸν μέντοι Ὀδόαχον ὑπ' αὐτῶν προβεβλήσθαι ἱκανὸν ὄντα σῶζειν τὰ παρ' αὐτοῖς πράγματα πολιτικὴν ἐχὼν νοῦν καὶ σύνεσιν ὁμοῦ καὶ μάχιμον. καὶ δεῖσθαι τοῦ Ζήνωνος πατρικίου τε αὐτῷ ἀποστεῖλαι ἄξιαν καὶ τὴν τῶν Ἰτάλων τουτῷ ἐφείναι διοίκησιν. – Malchus ap. Photium in *Corp. Hist. Byzant.*

²⁸ Not king of Italy, as is often said. The barbarian kings did not for several centuries employ territorial titles; the title 'king of France,' for instance, was first used by Henry IV. Jornandes tells us that Odoacer never so much as assumed the insignia of royalty.

extent also in the belief of men, things now reverted to their state during the first two centuries of the Empire, save that Byzantium instead of Rome was the centre of the civil government. The joint tenancy which had been conceived by Diocletian, carried further by Constantine, renewed under Valentinian I and again at the death of Theodosius, had come to an end; once more did a single Emperor sway the sceptre of the world, and head an undivided Catholic Church²⁹. To those who lived at the time, this year (476 A.D.) was no such epoch as it has since become, nor was any impression made on men's minds commensurate with the real significance of the event. For though it did not destroy the Empire in idea, nor wholly even in fact, its consequences were from the first great. It hastened the development of a Latin as opposed to Greek and Oriental forms of Christianity: it emancipated the Popes: it gave a new character to the projects and government of the Teutonic rulers of the West. But the importance of remembering its formal aspect to those who witnessed it will be felt as we approach the era when the Empire was revived by Charles the Frank.

Odoacer.

Odoacer's monarchy was not more oppressive than those of his neighbours in Gaul, Spain, and Africa. But the mercenary *fœderati* who supported it were a loose swarm of predatory tribes: themselves without cohesion, they could take no firm

²⁹ Sismondi, *Histoire de la Chute de l'Empire Occidentale*.

root in Italy. During the eighteen years of his reign no progress seems to have been made towards the re-organization of society; and the first real attempt to blend the peoples and maintain the traditions of Roman wisdom in the hands of a new and vigorous race was reserved for a more famous chieftain, the greatest of all the barbarian conquerors, the forerunner of the first barbarian Emperor, Theodoric the Ostrogoth. The aim of his reign, though he professed allegiance to the Eastern court which had favoured his invasion³⁰, was the establishment of a national monarchy in Italy.

Theodoric.

Brought up as a hostage in the court of Byzantium, he learnt to know the advantages of an orderly and cultivated society and the principles by which it must be maintained; called in early manhood to roam as a warrior-chief over the plains of the Danube, he acquired along with the arts of command a sense of the superiority of his own people in valour and energy and truth. When the defeat and death of Odoacer had left the peninsula at his mercy, he sought no further conquest, easy as it would have been to tear away new provinces from the Eastern realm, but strove only to preserve and strengthen the ancient polity of Rome, to breathe into her decaying institutions the spirit of a fresh life, and without endangering the military supremacy of his own Goths, to conciliate by indulgence and gradually raise

³⁰ 'Nil deest nobis imperio vestro famulantibus.' – Theodoric to Zeno: Jornandes, *De Rebus Geticis*, cap. 57.

to the level of their masters the degenerate population of Italy. The Gothic nation appears from the first less cruel in war and more prudent in council than any of their Germanic brethren³¹: all that was most noble among them shone forth now in the rule of the greatest of the Amali. From his palace at Verona³², commemorated in the song of the Nibelungs, he issued equal laws for Roman and Goth, and bade the intruder, if he must occupy part of the lands, at least respect the goods and the person of his fellow-subject. Jurisprudence and administration remained in native hands: two annual consuls, one named by Theodoric, the other by the Eastern monarch, presented an image of the ancient state; and while agriculture and the arts revived in the provinces, Rome herself celebrated the visits of a master who

³¹ 'Unde et pæne omnibus barbaris Gothi sapientiores exstiterunt Græcisque pæne consimiles.' – Jorn. cap. 5.

³² Theodoric (Thiodorich) seems to have resided usually at Ravenna, where he died and was buried; a remarkable building which tradition points out as his tomb stands a little way out of the town, near the railway station, but the porphyry sarcophagus, in which his body is supposed to have lain, has been removed thence, and may be seen built up into the wall of the building called his palace, situated close to the church of Sant' Apollinare, and not far from the tomb of Dante. There does not appear to be any sufficient authority for attributing this building to Ostrogothic times; it is very different from the representation of Theodoric's palace which we have in the contemporary mosaics of Sant' Apollinare in urbe. In the German legends, however, Theodoric is always the prince of Verona (Dietrich von Berne), no doubt because that city was better known to the Teutonic nations, and because it was thither that he moved his court when transalpine affairs required his attention. His castle there stood in the old town on the left bank of the Adige, on the height now occupied by the citadel; it is doubtful whether any traces of it remain, for the old foundations which we now see may have belonged to the fortress erected by Gian Galeazzo Visconti in the fourteenth century.

provided for the wants of her people and preserved with care the monuments of her former splendour. With peace and plenty men's minds took hope, and the study of letters revived. The last gleam of classical literature gilds the reign of the barbarian. By the consolidation of the two races under one wise government, Italy might have been spared six hundred years of gloom and degradation. It was not so to be. Theodoric was tolerant, but toleration was itself a crime in the eyes of his orthodox subjects: the Arian Goths were and remained strangers and enemies among the Catholic Italians. Scarcely had the sceptre passed from the hands of Theodoric to his unworthy offspring, when Justinian, who had viewed with jealousy the greatness of his nominal lieutenant, determined to assert his dormant rights over Italy; its people welcomed Belisarius as a deliverer, and in the struggle that followed the race and name of the Ostrogoths perished for ever.

Italy reconquered, by Justinian.

Thus again reunited in fact, as it had been all the while united in name, to the Roman Empire, the peninsula was divided into counties and dukedoms, and obeyed the exarch of Ravenna, viceroy of the Byzantine court, till the arrival of the Lombards in A.D. 568 drove him from some districts, and left him only a feeble authority in the rest.

The Transalpine provinces.

Beyond the Alps, though the Roman population had now

ceased to seek help from the Eastern court, the Empire's rights still subsisted in theory, and were never legally extinguished. As has been said, they were admitted by the conquerors themselves: by Athaulf, when he reigned in Aquitaine as the vicar of Honorius, and recovered Spain from the Suevi to restore it to its ancient masters; by the Visigothic kings of Spain, when they permitted the Mediterranean cities to send tribute to Byzantium; by Clovis, when, after the representatives of the old government, Syagrius and the Armorican cities, had been overpowered or absorbed, he received with delight from the Eastern emperor Anastasius the grant of a Roman dignity to confirm his possession. Arrayed like a Fabius or Valerius in the consul's embroidered robe, the Sicambrian chieftain rode through the streets of Tours, while the shout of the provincials hailed him Augustus³³. They already obeyed him, but his power was now legalised in their eyes, and it was not without a melancholy pride that they saw the terrible conqueror himself yield to the spell of the Roman name, and do homage to the enduring majesty of their legitimate sovereign³⁴.

³³ 'Igitur Chlodovechus ab imperatore Anastasio codicillos de consulatu accepit, et in basilica beati Martini tunica blatea indutus est et chlamyde, imponens vertici diadema ... et ab ea die tanquam consul aut (=et) Augustus est vocitatus.' – Gregory of Tours, ii. 58.

³⁴ Sir F. Palgrave (*English Commonwealth*) considers this grant as equivalent to a formal ratification of Clovis' rule in Gaul. Hallam rates its importance lower (*Middle Ages*, note iii. to chap. i.). Taken in connection with the grant of south-eastern Gaul to Theodebert by Justinian, it may fairly be held to shew that the influence of the Empire was still felt in these distant provinces.

Lingering influences of Rome.

Yet the severed limbs of the Empire forgot by degrees their original unity. As in the breaking up of the old society, which we trace from the sixth to the eighth century, rudeness and ignorance grew apace, as language and manners were changed by the infiltration of Teutonic settlers, as men's thoughts and hopes and interests were narrowed by isolation from their fellows, as the organization of the Roman province and the Germanic tribe alike dissolved into a chaos whence the new order began to shape itself, dimly and doubtfully as yet, the memory of the old Empire, its symmetry, its sway, its civilization, must needs wane and fade. It might have perished altogether but for the two enduring witnesses Rome had left – her Church and her Law. The barbarians had at first associated Christianity with the Romans from whom they learned it: the Romans had used it as their only bulwark against oppression.

Religion.

The hierarchy were the natural leaders of the people, and the necessary councillors of the king. Their power grew with the extinction of civil government and the spread of superstition; and when the Frank found it too valuable to be abandoned to the vanquished people, he insensibly acquired the feelings and policy of the order he entered.

As the Empire fell to pieces, and the new kingdoms which the conquerors had founded themselves began to dissolve, the

Church clung more closely to her unity of faith and discipline, the common bond of all Christian men. That unity must have a centre, that centre was Rome. A succession of able and zealous pontiffs extended her influence (the sanctity and the writings of Gregory the Great were famous through all the West): never occupied by barbarians, she retained her peculiar character and customs, and laid the foundations of a power over men's souls more durable than that which she had lost over their bodies³⁵.

Jurisprudence.

Only second in importance to this influence was that which was exercised by the permanence of the old law, and of its creature the municipality. The barbarian invaders retained the customs of their ancestors, characteristic memorials of a rude people, as we see them in the Salic law or in the ordinances of Ina and Alfred. But the subject population and the clergy continued to be governed by that elaborate system which the genius and labour of many generations had raised to be the most lasting monument of Roman greatness.

The civil law had maintained itself in Spain and Southern Gaul, nor was it utterly forgotten even in the North, in Britain, on the borders of Germany. Revised editions of the Theodosian

³⁵ Even so early as the middle of the fifth century, S. Leo the Great could say to the Roman people, 'Isti (sc. Petrus et Paulus) sunt qui te ad hanc gloriam provexerunt ut gens sancta, populus electus, civitas sacerdotalis et regia, per sacram B. Petri sedem caput orbis effecta latius præsideres religione divina quam dominatione terrena.'—*Sermon on the feast of SS. Peter and Paul*. (Opp. ap. Migne tom. i. p. 336.)

code were issued by the Visigothic and Burgundian princes. For some centuries it was the patrimony of the subject population everywhere, and in Aquitaine and Italy has outlived feudalism. The presumption in later times was that all men were to be judged by it who could not be proved to be subject to some other³⁶. Its phrases, its forms, its courts, its subtlety and precision, all recalled the strong and refined society which had produced it. Other motives, as well as those of kindness to their subjects, made the new kings favour it; for it exalted their prerogative, and the submission enjoined by it on one class of their subjects soon came to be demanded from the other, by their own laws the equals of the prince. Considering attentively how many of the old institutions continued to subsist, and studying the feelings of that time, as they are faintly preserved in its scanty records, it seems hardly too much to say that in the eighth century the Roman Empire still existed in the West: existed in men's minds as a power weakened, delegated, suspended, but not destroyed.

It is easy for those who read the history of an age in the light of those that followed it, to perceive that in this men erred; that the tendency of events was wholly different; that society had entered on a new phase, wherein every change did more to localize authority and strengthen the aristocratic principle at the expense of the despotic. We can see that other forms of life, more full of promise for the distant future, had already begun

³⁶ 'Ius Romanum est adhuc in viridi observantia et eo iure præsumitur quilibet vivere nisi adversum probetur.' – Maranta, quoted by Marquard Freher.

to shew themselves: they – with no type of power or beauty, but that which had filled the imagination of their forefathers, and now loomed on them grander than ever through the mist of centuries – mistook, as it has been said of Rienzi in later days, memories for hopes, and sighed only for the renewal of its strength. Events were at hand by which these hopes seemed destined to be gratified.

CHAPTER IV.

RESTORATION OF THE WESTERN EMPIRE

It was towards Rome as their ecclesiastical capital that the thoughts and hopes of the men of the sixth and seventh centuries were constantly directed. Yet not from Rome, feeble and corrupt, nor on the exhausted soil of Italy, was the deliverer to arise. Just when, as we may suppose, the vision of a renewal of imperial authority in the Western provinces was beginning to vanish away, there appeared in the furthest corner of Europe, sprung of a race but lately brought within the pale of civilization, a line of chieftains devoted to the service of the Holy See, and among them one whose power, good fortune, and heroic character pointed him out as worthy of a dignity to which doctrine and tradition had attached a sanctity almost divine.

The Franks.

Of the new monarchies that had risen on the ruins of Rome, that of the Franks was by far the greatest. In the third century they appear, with Saxons, Alemanni, and Thuringians, as one of the greatest German tribe leagues. The Sicambri (for it seems probable that this famous race was a chief source of the Frankish nation) had now laid aside their former hostility to Rome, and her

future representatives were thenceforth, with few intervals, her faithful allies. Many of their chiefs rose to high place: Malarich receives from Jovian the charge of the Western provinces; Bauto and Mellobaudes figure in the days of Theodosius and his sons; Meroveus (if Meroveus be a real name) fights under Aetius against Attila in the great battle of Chalons; his countrymen endeavour in vain to save Gaul from the Suevi and Burgundians. Not till the Empire was evidently helpless did they claim a share of the booty; then Clovis, or Chlodovech, chief of the Salian tribe, leaving his kindred the Ripuarians in their seats on the lower Rhine, advances from Flanders to wrest Gaul from the barbarian nations which had entered it some sixty years before.

A.D. 486.

Few conquerors have had a career of more unbroken success. By the defeat of the Roman governor Syagrius he was left master of the northern provinces: the Burgundian kingdom in the valley of the Rhone was in no long time reduced to dependence: last of all, the Visigothic power was overthrown in one great battle, and Aquitaine added to the dominions of Clovis. Nor were the Frankish arms less prosperous on the other side of the Rhine. The victory of Tolbiac led to the submission of the Alemanni: their allies the Bavarians followed, and when the Thuringian power had been broken by Theodorich I (son of Clovis), the Frankish league embraced all the tribes of western and southern Germany. The state thus formed, stretching from the Bay of Biscay to the Inn and the Ems, was of course in no sense a French, that is to

say, a Gallic monarchy. Nor, although the widest and strongest empire that had yet been founded by a Teutonic race, was it, under the Merovingian kings, a united kingdom at all, but rather a congeries of principalities, held together by the predominance of a single nation and a single family, who ruled in Gaul as masters over a subject race, and in Germany exercised a sort of hegemony among kindred and scarcely inferior tribes. But towards the middle of the eighth century a change began. Under the rule of Pipin of Herstal and his son Charles Martel, mayors of the palace to the last feeble Merovingians, the Austrasian Franks in the lower Rhineland became acknowledged heads of the nation, and were able, while establishing a firmer government at home, to direct its whole strength in projects of foreign ambition. The form those projects took arose from a circumstance which has not yet been mentioned. It was not solely or even chiefly to their own valour that the Franks owed their past greatness and the yet loftier future which awaited them, it was to the friendship of the clergy and the favour of the Apostolic See. The other Teutonic nations, Goths, Vandals, Burgundians, Suevians, Lombards, had been most of them converted by Arian missionaries who proceeded from the Roman Empire during the short period when Arian doctrines were in the ascendant. The Franks, who were among the latest converts, were Catholics from the first, and gladly accepted the clergy as their teachers and allies. Thus it was that while the hostility of their orthodox subjects destroyed the Vandal kingdom in Africa and the Ostrogothic kingdom

in Italy, the eager sympathy of the priesthood enabled the Franks to vanquish their Burgundian and Visigothic enemies, and made it comparatively easy for them to blend with the Roman population in the provinces. They had done good service against the Saracens of Spain; they had aided the English Boniface in his mission to the heathen of Germany³⁷; and at length, as the most powerful among Catholic nations, they attracted the eyes of the ecclesiastical head of the West, now sorely bested by domestic foes.

Italy: the Lombards.

Since the invasion of Alboin, Italy had groaned under a complication of evils. The Lombards who had entered along with that chief in A.D. 568 had settled in considerable numbers in the valley of the Po, and founded the duchies of Spoleto and Benevento, leaving the rest of the country to be governed by the exarch of Ravenna as viceroy of the Eastern crown. This subjection was, however, little better than nominal. Although too few to occupy the whole peninsula, the invaders were yet strong enough to harass every part of it by inroads which met with no resistance from a population unused to arms, and without the spirit to use them in self-defence. More cruel and repulsive, if we may believe the evidence of their enemies, than any other of the Northern tribes, the Lombards were certainly singular in

³⁷ 'Denique gens Francorum multos et fœcundissimos fructus Domino attulit, non solum credendo, sed et alios salutifere convertendo,' says the emperor Lewis II in A.D. 871.

their aversion to the clergy, never admitting them to the national councils. Tormented by their repeated attacks, Rome sought help in vain from Byzantium, whose forces, scarce able to repel from their walls the Avars and Saracens, could give no support to the distant exarch of Ravenna.

The Popes.

The Popes were the Emperor's subjects; they awaited his confirmation, like other bishops; they had more than once been the victims of his anger³⁸. But as the city became more accustomed in independence, and the Pope rose to a predominance, real if not yet legal, his tone grew bolder than that of the Eastern patriarchs. In the controversies that had raged in the Church, he had had the wisdom or good fortune to espouse (though not always from the first) the orthodox side: it was now by another quarrel of religion that his deliverance from an unwelcome yoke was accomplished³⁹.

³⁸ Martin, as in earlier times Sylvester.

³⁹ A singular account of the origin of the separation of the Greeks and Latins occurs in the treatise of Radulfus de Columna (Ralph Colonna, or, as some think, de Coloumelle), *De translatione Imperii Romani* (circ. 1300). 'The tyranny of Heraclius,' says he, 'provoked a revolt of the Eastern nations. They could not be reduced, because the Greeks at the same time began to disobey the Roman Pontiff, receding, like Jeroboam, from the true faith. Others among these schismatics (apparently with the view of strengthening their political revolt) carried their heresy further and founded Mohammedanism.' Similarly, the Franciscan Marsilius of Padua (circa 1324) says that Mohammed, 'a rich Persian,' invented his religion to keep the East from returning to allegiance to Rome. It is worth remarking that few, if any, of the earlier historians (from the tenth to the fifteenth century) refer to the Emperors of the West from

Iconoclastic controversy.

The Emperor Leo, born among the Isaurian mountains, where a purer faith may yet have lingered, and stung by the Mohammedan taunt of idolatry, determined to abolish the worship of images, which seemed fast obscuring the more spiritual part of Christianity. An attempt sufficient to cause tumults among the submissive Greeks, excited in Italy a fiercer commotion. The populace rose with one heart in defence of what had become to them more than a symbol: the exarch was slain: the Pope, though unwilling to sever himself from the lawful head and protector of the Church, must yet excommunicate the prince whom he could not reclaim from so hateful a heresy. Liudprand, king of the Lombards, improved his opportunity: falling on the exarchate as the champion of images, on Rome as the minister of the Greek Emperor, he overran the one, and all but succeeded in capturing the other. The Pope escaped for the moment, but saw his peril; placed between a heretic and a robber, he turned his gaze beyond the Alps, to a Catholic chief who had just achieved a signal deliverance for Christendom on the field of Poitiers. Gregory II had already opened communications with Charles Martel, mayor of the palace, and virtual ruler of the Frankish realm⁴⁰. As the crisis becomes more pressing, Gregory III finds in the same quarter his only hope, and appeals to him, in urgent

Constantine to Augustulus: the very existence of this Western line seems to have been even in the eighth or ninth century altogether forgotten.

⁴⁰ Anastasius, *Vitæ Pontificum Romanorum* i. ap. Muratori.

letters, to haste to the succour of Holy Church⁴¹.

The Popes appeal to the Franks.

Some accounts add that Charles was offered, in the name of the Roman people, the office of consul and patrician. It is at least certain that here begins the connection of the old imperial seat with the rising German power: here first the pontiff leads a political movement, and shakes off the ties that bound him to his legitimate sovereign. Charles died before he could obey the call; but his son Pipin (surnamed the Short) made good use of the new friendship with Rome. He was the third of his family who had ruled the Franks with a monarch's full power: it seemed time to abolish the pageant of Merovingian royalty; yet a departure from the ancient line might shock the feelings of the people. A course was taken whose dangers no one then foresaw: the Holy See, now for the first time invoked as an international power, pronounced the deposition of Childeric, and gave to the royal office of his successor Pipin a sanctity hitherto unknown; adding to the old Frankish election, which consisted in raising the chief on a shield amid the clash of arms, the Roman diadem and the Hebrew rite of anointing. The compact between the chair of Peter and the Teutonic throne was hardly sealed, when the latter was summoned to discharge its share of the duties. Twice did Aistulf the Lombard assail Rome, twice did Pipin descend to the rescue: the second time at the bidding of a letter written in the

⁴¹ Letter in *Codex Carolinus*, in Muratori's *Scriptores Rerum Italicarum*, vol. iii. (part 2nd), addressed 'Subregulo Carolo.'

name of St. Peter himself⁴².

Pipin patrician of the Romans, A.D. 754.

Aistulf could make no resistance; and the Frank bestowed on the Papal chair all that belonged to the exarchate in North Italy, receiving as the meed of his services the title of Patrician⁴³.

Import of this title.

As a foreshadowing of the higher dignity that was to follow, this title requires a passing notice. Introduced by Constantine at a time when its original meaning had been long forgotten, it was designed to be, and for awhile remained, the name not of an office but of a rank, the highest after those of emperor and consul. As such, it was usually conferred upon provincial governors of the first class, and in time also upon barbarian potentates whose vanity the Roman court might wish to flatter. Thus Odoacer, Theodoric, the Burgundian king Sigismund,

⁴² Letter in *Cod. Carol.* (Mur. R. S. I. iii. [2.] p. 96), a strange mixture of earnest adjurations, dexterous appeals to Frankish pride, and long scriptural quotations: 'Declaratum quippe est quod super omnes gentes vestra Francorum gens prona mihi Apostolo Dei Petro exstitit, et ideo ecclesiam quam mihi Dominus tradidit vobis per manus Vicarii mei commendavi.'

⁴³ The exact date when Pipin received the title cannot be made out. Pope Stephen's next letter (p. 96 of Mur. iii.) is addressed 'Pipino, Carolo et Carolomanno patriciis.' And so the *Chronicon Casinense* (Mur. iv. 273) says it was first given to Pipin. Gibbon can hardly be right in attributing it to Charles Martel, although one or two documents may be quoted in which it is used of him. As one of these is a letter of Pope Gregory II's, the explanation may be that the title was offered or intended to be offered to him, although never accepted by him.

Clovis himself, had all received it from the Eastern emperor; so too in still later times it was given to Saracenic and Bulgarian princes⁴⁴. In the sixth and seventh centuries an invariable practice seems to have attached it to the Byzantine viceroys of Italy, and thus, as we may conjecture, a natural confusion of ideas had made men take it to be, in some sense, an official title, conveying an extensive though undefined authority, and implying in particular the duty of overseeing the Church and promoting her temporal interests. It was doubtless with such a meaning that the Romans and their bishop bestowed it upon the Frankish kings, acting quite without legal right, for it could emanate from the emperor alone, but choosing it as the title which bound its possessor to render to the Church support and defence against her Lombard foes. Hence the phrase is always '*Patricius Romanorum*;' not, as in former times, '*Patricius*' alone: hence it is usually associated with the terms '*defensor*' and '*protector*.' And since 'defence' implies a corresponding measure of obedience on the part of those who profit by it, there must have been conceded to the new patrician more or less of the positive authority in Rome, although not such as to extinguish the supremacy of the Emperor.

Extinction of the Lombard kingdom by Charles king of the Franks.

⁴⁴ The title of Patrician appears even in the remote West: it stands in a charter of Ina the West Saxon king, and in one given by Richard of Normandy in A.D. 1015. Ducange, s. v.

A.D. 774.

So long indeed as the Franks were separated by a hostile kingdom from their new allies, this control remained little better than nominal. But when on Pipin's death the restless Lombards again took up arms and menaced the possessions of the Church, Pipin's son Charles or Charlemagne swept down like a whirlwind from the Alps at the call of Pope Hadrian, seized king Desiderius in his capital, assumed himself the Lombard crown, and made northern Italy thenceforward an integral part of the Frankish empire. Proceeding to Rome at the head of his victorious army, the first of a long line of Teutonic kings who were to find her love more deadly than her hate, he was received by Hadrian with distinguished honours, and welcomed by the people as their leader and deliverer. Yet even then, whether out of policy or from that sentiment of reverence to which his ambitious mind did not refuse to bow, he was moderate in claims of jurisdiction, he yielded to the pontiff the place of honour in processions, and renewed, although in the guise of a lord and conqueror, the gift of the Exarchate and Pentapolis, which Pipin had made to the Roman Church twenty years before.

Charles and Hadrian.

It is with a strange sense, half of sadness, half of amusement, that in watching the progress of this grand historical drama, we recognise the meaner motives by which its chief actors were influenced. The Frankish king and the Roman pontiff

were for the time the two most powerful forces that urged the movement of the world, leading it on by swift steps to a mighty crisis of its fate, themselves guided, as it might well seem, by the purest zeal for its spiritual welfare. Their words and acts, their whole character and bearing in the sight of expectant Christendom, were worthy of men destined to leave an indelible impress on their own and many succeeding ages. Nevertheless in them too appears the undercurrent of vulgar human desires and passions. The lofty and fervent mind of Charles was not free from the stirrings of personal ambition: yet these may be excused, if not defended, as almost inseparable from an intense and restless genius, which, be it never so unselfish in its ends, must in pursuing them fix upon everything its grasp and raise out of everything its monument. The policy of the Popes was prompted by motives less noble. Ever since the extinction of the Western Empire had emancipated the ecclesiastical potentate from secular control, the first and most abiding object of his schemes and prayers had been the acquisition of territorial wealth in the neighbourhood of his capital. He had indeed a sort of justification – for Rome, a city with neither trade nor industry, was crowded with poor, for whom it devolved on the bishop to provide. Yet the pursuit was one which could not fail to pervert the purposes of the Popes and give a sinister character to all they did. It was this fear for the lands of the Church far more than for religion or the safety of the city – neither of which were really endangered by the Lombard attacks –

that had prompted their passionate appeals to Charles Martel and Pipin; it was now the well-grounded hope of having these possessions confirmed and extended by Pipin's greater son that made the Roman ecclesiastics so forward in his cause. And it was the same lust after worldly wealth and pomp, mingled with the dawning prospect of an independent principality, that now began to seduce them into a long course of guile and intrigue. For this is probably the very time, although the exact date cannot be established, to which must be assigned the extraordinary forgery of the Donation of Constantine, whereby it was pretended that power over Italy and the whole West had been granted by the first Christian Emperor to Pope Sylvester and his successors in the Chair of the Apostle.

Accession of Pope Leo III, A.D. 796.

For the next twenty-four years Italy remained quiet. The government of Rome was carried on in the name of the Patrician Charles, although it does not appear that he sent thither any official representative; while at the same time both the city and the exarchate continued to admit the nominal supremacy of the Eastern Emperor, employing the years of his reign to date documents. In A.D. 796, Leo the Third succeeded Pope Hadrian, and signalized his devotion to the Frankish throne by sending to Charles the banner of the city and the keys of the holiest of all Rome's shrines, the confession of St. Peter, asking that some officer should be deputed to the city to receive from the people their oath of allegiance to the Patrician. He had soon need to

seek the Patrician's help for himself. In A.D. 798 a sedition broke out: the Pope, going in solemn procession from the Lateran to the church of S. Lorenzo in Lucina, was attacked by a band of armed men, headed by two officials of his court, nephews of his predecessor; was wounded and left for dead, and with difficulty succeeded in escaping to Spoleto, whence he fled northward into the Frankish lands. Charles had led his army against the revolted Saxons: thither Leo following overtook him at Paderborn in Westphalia. The king received with respect his spiritual father, entertained and conferred with him for some time, and at length sent him back to Rome under the escort of Angilbert, one of his trustiest ministers; promising to follow ere long in person. After some months peace was restored in Saxony, and in the autumn of 799 Charles descended from the Alps once more, while Leo revolved deeply the great scheme for whose accomplishment the time was now ripe.

Belief in the Roman Empire not extinct.

Three hundred and twenty-four years had passed since the last Cæsar of the West resigned his power into the hands of the senate, and left to his Eastern brother the sole headship of the Roman world. To the latter Italy had from that time been nominally subject; but it was only during one brief interval between the death of Totila the last Ostrogothic king and the descent of Alboin the first Lombard, that his power had been really effective. In the further provinces, Gaul, Spain, Britain, it was only a memory. But the idea of a Roman Empire as a

necessary part of the world's order had not vanished: it had been admitted by those who seemed to be destroying it; it had been cherished by the Church; was still recalled by laws and customs; was dear to the subject populations, who fondly looked back to the days when slavery was at least mitigated by peace and order. We have seen the Teuton endeavouring everywhere to identify himself with the system he overthrew. As Goths, Burgundians, and Franks sought the title of consul or patrician, as the Lombard kings when they renounced their Arianism styled themselves Flavii, so even in distant England the fierce Saxon and Anglian conquerors used the names of Roman dignities, and before long began to call themselves *imperatores* and *basileis* of Britain. Within the last century and a half the rise of Mohammedanism⁴⁵ had brought out the common Christianity of Europe into a fuller relief. The false prophet had left one religion, one Empire, one Commander of the faithful: the Christian commonwealth needed more than ever an efficient head and centre. Such leadership it could nowise find in the Court of the Bosphorus, growing ever feebler and more alien to the West. The name of 'respublica,' permanent at the elder Rome, had never been applied to the Eastern Empire. Its government was from the first half Greek, half Asiatic; and had now drifted away from its ancient traditions into the forms of an Oriental despotism. Claudian had already

⁴⁵ After the *translatio ad Francos* of A.D. 800, the two Empires corresponded exactly to the two Khalifates of Bagdad and Cordova.

sneered at 'Greek Quirites'⁴⁶ : ' the general use, since Heraclius's reign, of the Greek tongue, and the difference of manners and usages, made the taunt now more deserved.

Motives of the Pope.

The Pope had no reason to wish well to the Byzantine princes, who while insulting his weakness had given him no help against the savage Lombards, and who for nearly seventy years⁴⁷ had been contaminated by a heresy the more odious that it touched not speculative points of doctrine but the most familiar usages of worship. In North Italy their power was extinct: no pontiff since Zacharias had asked their confirmation of his election: nay, the appointment of the intruding Frank to the patriciate, an office which it belonged to the Emperor to confer, was of itself an act of rebellion. Nevertheless their rights subsisted: they were still, and while they retained the imperial name, must so long continue, titular sovereigns of the Roman city. Nor could the spiritual head of Christendom dispense with the temporal: without the Roman Empire there could not be a Roman, nor by necessary consequence a Catholic and Apostolic Church⁴⁸. For, as will be

⁴⁶ 'Plaudentem cerne senatumEt Byzantinos proceres, Graiosque Quirites.' In Eutrop. ii. 135.

⁴⁷ Several Emperors during this period had been patrons of images, as was Irene at the moment of which I write: the stain nevertheless adhered to their government as a whole.

⁴⁸ I should not have thought it necessary to explain that the sentence in the text is meant simply to state what were (so far as can be made out) the sentiments and notions of the ninth century, if a writer in the *Tablet* (reviewing a former edition)

shewn more fully hereafter, men could not separate in fact what was indissoluble in thought: Christianity must stand or fall along with the great Christian state: they were but two names for the same thing. Thus urged, the Pope took a step which some among his predecessors are said to have already contemplated⁴⁹, and towards which the events of the last fifty years had pointed. The moment was opportune. The widowed empress Irene, equally famous for her beauty, her talents, and her crimes, had deposed and blinded her son Constantine VI: a woman, an usurper, almost a parricide, sullied the throne of the world. By what right, it might well be asked, did the factions of Byzantium impose a master on the original seat of empire? It was time to provide better for the most august of human offices: an election at Rome was as valid as at Constantinople – the possessor of the real power should also be clothed with the outward dignity. Nor could it be doubted where that possessor was to be found. The Frank had been always faithful to Rome: his baptism was the enlistment of a new barbarian auxiliary. His services against Arian heretics and Lombard marauders, against the Saracen of Spain and the Avar

had not understood it as an expression of the author's own belief. To a modern eye there is of course no necessary connection between the Roman Empire and a catholic and apostolic Church; in fact, the two things seem rather, such has been the impression made on us by the long struggle of church and state, in their nature mutually antagonistic. The interest of history lies not least in this, that it shews us how men have at different times entertained wholly different notions respecting the relation to one another of the same ideas or the same institutions.

⁴⁹ Monachus Sangallensis, *De Gestis Karoli*; in Pertz, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*.

of Pannonia, had earned him the title of Champion of the Faith and Defender of the Holy See. He was now unquestioned lord of Western Europe, whose subject nations, Keltic and Teutonic, were eager to be called by his name and to imitate his customs⁵⁰. In Charles, the hero who united under one sceptre so many races, who ruled all as the vicegerent of God, the pontiff might well see – as later ages saw – the new golden head of a second image⁵¹, erected on the ruins of that whose mingled iron and clay seemed crumbling to nothingness behind the impregnable bulwarks of Constantinople.

Coronation of Charles at Rome, A.D. 800.

At length the Frankish host entered Rome. The Pope's cause was heard; his innocence, already vindicated by a miracle, was pronounced by the Patrician in full synod; his accusers condemned in his stead. Charles remained in the city for some weeks; and on Christmas-day, A.D. 800⁵², he heard mass in the basilica of St. Peter. On the spot where now the gigantic dome of Bramante and Michael Angelo towers over the buildings of the modern city, the spot which tradition had hallowed as that of the Apostle's martyrdom, Constantine the Great had erected the

⁵⁰ Monachus Sangallensis; *ut supra*. So Pope Gregory the Great two centuries earlier: 'Quanto cæteros homines regia dignitas antecedit, tanto cæterarum gentium regna regni Francorum culmen excellit.' Ep. v. 6.

⁵¹ Alciatus, *De Formula imperii Romani*.

⁵² Or rather, according to the then prevailing practice of beginning the year from Christmas-day, A.D. 801.

oldest and stateliest temple of Christian Rome. Nothing could be less like than was this basilica to those northern cathedrals, shadowy, fantastic, irregular, crowded with pillars, fringed all round by clustering shrines and chapels, which are to most of us the types of mediæval architecture. In its plan and decorations, in the spacious sunny hall, the roof plain as that of a Greek temple, the long rows of Corinthian columns, the vivid mosaics on its walls, in its brightness, its sternness, its simplicity, it had preserved every feature of Roman art, and had remained a perfect expression of the Roman character⁵³. Out of the transept, a flight of steps led up to the high altar underneath and just beyond the great arch, the arch of triumph as it was called: behind in the semicircular apse sat the clergy, rising tier above tier around its walls; in the midst, high above the rest, and looking down past the altar over the multitude, was placed the bishop's throne⁵⁴, itself the curule chair of some forgotten magistrate⁵⁵.

⁵³ An elaborate description of old St. Peter's may be found in Bunsen's and Platner's *Beschreibung der Stadt Rom*; with which compare Bunsen's work on the Basilicas of Rome.

⁵⁴ The primitive custom was for the bishop to sit in the centre of the apse, at the central point of the east end of the church (or, as it would be more correct to say, the end furthest from the door) just as the judge had done in those law courts on the model of which the first basilicas were constructed. This arrangement may still be seen in some of the churches of Rome, as well as elsewhere in Italy; nowhere better than in the churches of Ravenna, particularly the beautiful one of Sant' Apollinare in Classe, and in the cathedral of Torcello, near Venice.

⁵⁵ On this chair were represented the labours of Hercules and the signs of the zodiac. It is believed at Rome to be the veritable chair of the Apostle himself, and whatever

From that chair the Pope now rose, as the reading of the Gospel ended, advanced to where Charles – who had exchanged his simple Frankish dress for the sandals and the chlamys of a Roman patrician⁵⁶ – knelt in prayer by the high altar, and as in the sight of all he placed upon the brow of the barbarian chieftain the diadem of the Cæsars, then bent in obeisance before him, the church rang to the shout of the multitude, again free, again the lords and centre of the world, 'Karolo Augusto a Deo coronato magno et pacifico imperatori vita et victoria⁵⁷.' In that shout, echoed by the Franks without, was pronounced the union, so long in preparation, so mighty in its consequences, of the Roman and the Teuton, of the memories and the civilization of the South with the fresh energy of the North, and from that moment modern history begins.

may be thought of such an antiquity as this, it can be satisfactorily traced back to the third or fourth century of Christianity. (The story that it is inscribed with verses from the Koran is, I believe, without foundation.) It is now enclosed in a gorgeous casing of gilded wood (some say, of bronze), and placed aloft at the extremity of St. Peter's, just over the spot where a bishop's chair would in the old arrangement of the basilica have stood. The sarcophagus in which Charles himself lay, till the French scattered his bones abroad, had carved on it the rape of Proserpine. It may still be seen in the gallery of the basilica at Aachen.

⁵⁶ Eginhard, *Vita Karoli*.

⁵⁷ The coronation scene is described in all the annals of the time, to which it is therefore needless to refer more particularly.

CHAPTER V.

EMPIRE AND POLICY OF CHARLES

The coronation of Charles is not only the central event of the Middle Ages, it is also one of those very few events of which, taking them singly, it may be said that if they had not happened, the history of the world would have been different. In one sense indeed it has scarcely a parallel. The assassins of Julius Cæsar thought that they had saved Rome from monarchy, but monarchy came inevitable in the next generation. The conversion of Constantine changed the face of the world, but Christianity was spreading fast, and its ultimate triumph was only a question of time. Had Columbus never spread his sails, the secret of the western sea would yet have been pierced by some later voyager: had Charles V broken his safe-conduct to Luther, the voice silenced at Wittenberg would have been taken up by echoes elsewhere. But if the Roman Empire had not been restored in the West in the person of Charles, it would never have been restored at all, and the inexhaustible train of consequences for good and for evil that followed could not have been. Why this was so may be seen by examining the history of the next two centuries. In that day, as through all the Dark and Middle Ages, two forces were striving for the mastery. The one was the instinct

of separation, disorder, anarchy, caused by the ungoverned impulses and barbarous ignorance of the great bulk of mankind; the other was that passionate longing of the better minds for a formal unity of government, which had its historical basis in the memories of the old Roman Empire, and its most constant expression in the devotion to a visible and catholic Church. The former tendency, as everything shews, was, in politics at least, the stronger, but the latter, used and stimulated by an extraordinary genius like Charles, achieved in the year 800 a victory whose results were never to be lost. When the hero was gone, the returning wave of anarchy and barbarism swept up violent as ever, yet it could not wholly obliterate the past: the Empire, maimed and shattered though it was, had struck its roots too deep to be overthrown by force, and when it perished at last, perished from inner decay. It was just because men felt that no one less than Charles could have won such a triumph over the evils of the time, by framing and establishing a gigantic scheme of government, that the excitement and hope and joy which the coronation evoked were so intense. Their best evidence is perhaps to be found not in the records of that time itself, but in the cries of lamentation that broke forth when the Empire began to dissolve towards the close of the ninth century, in the marvellous legends which attached themselves to the name of Charles the Emperor, a hero of whom any exploit was credible⁵⁸,

⁵⁸ Before the end of the tenth century we find the monk Benedict of Soracte ascribing to Charles an expedition to Palestine, and other marvellous exploits. The romance

in the devout admiration wherewith his German successors looked back to, and strove in all things to imitate, their all but superhuman prototype.

Import of the coronation.

As the event of A.D. 800 made an unparalleled impression on those who lived at the time, so has it engaged the attention of men in succeeding ages, has been viewed in the most opposite lights, and become the theme of interminable controversies. It is better to look at it simply as it appeared to the men who witnessed it. Here, as in so many other cases, may be seen the errors into which jurists have been led by the want of historical feeling. In rude and unsettled states of society men respect forms and obey facts, while careless of rules and principles. In England, for example, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it signified very little whether an aspirant to the throne was next lawful heir, but it signified a great deal whether he had been duly crowned and was supported by a strong party. Regarding the matter thus, it is not hard to see why those who judged the actors of A.D. 800 as they would have judged their contemporaries should have misunderstood the nature of that which then came to pass. Baronius and Bellarmine, Spanheim and Conring, are advocates bound to prove a thesis, and therefore believing it; nor does either

which passes under the name of Archbishop Turpin is well known. All the best stories about Charles – and some of them are very good – may be found in the book of the Monk of St. Gall. Many refer to his dealings with the bishops, towards whom he is described as acting like a good-humoured schoolmaster.

party find any lack of plausible arguments⁵⁹. But civilian and canonist alike proceed upon strict legal principles, and no such principles can be found in the case, or applied to it. Neither the instances cited by the Cardinal from the Old Testament of the power of priests to set up and pull down princes, nor those which shew the earlier Emperors controlling the bishops of Rome, really meet the question. Leo acted not as having alone the right to transfer the crown; the practice of hereditary succession and the theory of popular election would have equally excluded such a claim; he was the spokesman of the popular will, which, identifying itself with the sacerdotal power, hated the Greeks and was grateful to the Franks. Yet he was also something more. The act, as it specially affected his interests, was mainly his work, and without him would never have been brought about at all. It was natural that a confusion of his secular functions as leader, and his spiritual as consecrating priest, should lay the foundation of the right claimed afterwards of raising and deposing monarchs at the will of Christ's vicar. The Emperor was passive throughout; he did not, as in Lombardy, appear as a conqueror, but was received by the Pope and the people as a friend and ally. Rome no doubt became his capital, but it had already obeyed him as Patrician, and the greatest fact that stood out to posterity from the whole transaction was that the crown was bestowed, was at

⁵⁹ Baronius, *Ann.*, ad ann. 800; Bellarminus, *De translatione imperii Romani adversus Illyricum*; Spanhemius, *De ficta translatione imperii*; Conringius, *De imperio Romano Germanico*.

least imposed, by the hands of the pontiff. He seemed the trustee and depositary of the imperial authority⁶⁰.

Contemporary accounts.

The best way of shewing the thoughts and motives of those concerned in the transaction is to transcribe the narratives of three contemporary, or almost contemporary annalists, two of them German and one Italian. The Annals of Lauresheim say: —

'And because the name of Emperor had now ceased among the Greeks, and their Empire was possessed by a woman, it then seemed both to Leo the Pope himself, and to all the holy fathers who were present in the selfsame council, as well as to the rest of the Christian people, that they ought to take to be Emperor Charles king of the Franks, who held Rome herself, where the Cæsars had always been wont to sit, and all the other regions which he ruled through Italy and Gaul and Germany; and inasmuch as God had given all these lands into his hand, it seemed right that with the help of God and at the prayer of the whole Christian people he should have the name of Emperor also. Whose petition king Charles willed not to refuse, but submitting himself with all humility to God, and at the prayer of the priests and of the whole Christian people, on the day of the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ he took on himself the name of Emperor, being consecrated by the lord Pope Leo⁶¹.'

⁶⁰ See especially Greenwood, *Cathedra Petri*, vol. iii. p. 109.

⁶¹ *Ann. Lauresb. ap. Pertz, M. G. H. i.*

Very similar in substance is the account of the Chronicle of Moissac (ad ann. 801): —

'Now when the king upon the most holy day of the Lord's birth was rising to the mass after praying before the confession of the blessed Peter the Apostle, Leo the Pope, with the consent of all the bishops and priests and of the senate of the Franks and likewise of the Romans, set a golden crown upon his head, the Roman people also shouting aloud. And when the people had made an end of chanting the Laudes, he was adored by the Pope after the manner of the emperors of old. For this also was done by the will of God. For while the said Emperor abode at Rome certain men were brought unto him, who said that the name of Emperor had ceased among the Greeks, and that among them the Empire was held by a woman called Irene, who had by guile laid hold on her son the Emperor, and put out his eyes, and taken the Empire to herself, as it is written of Athaliah in the Book of the Kings; which when Leo the Pope and all the assembly of the bishops and priests and abbots heard, and the senate of the Franks and all the elders of the Romans, they took counsel with the rest of the Christian people, that they should name Charles king of the Franks to be Emperor, seeing that he held Rome the mother of empire where the Cæsars and Emperors were always used to sit; and that the heathen might not mock the Christians if the name of Emperor should have ceased among the Christians⁶².'

⁶² *Apud* Pertz, *M. G. H.* i.

These two accounts are both from a German source: that which follows is Roman, written probably within some fifty or sixty years of the event. It is taken from the Life of Leo III in the *Vitæ Pontificum Romanorum*, compiled by Anastasius the papal librarian.

'After these things came the day of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and all men were again gathered together in the aforesaid basilica of the blessed Peter the Apostle: and then the gracious and venerable pontiff did with his own hands crown Charles with a very precious crown. Then all the faithful people of Rome, seeing the defence that he gave and the love that he bare to the holy Roman Church and her Vicar, did by the will of God and of the blessed Peter, the keeper of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, cry with one accord with a loud voice, 'To Charles, the most pious Augustus, crowned of God, the great and peacegiving Emperor, be life and victory.' While he, before the holy confession of the blessed Peter the Apostle, was invoking divers saints, it was proclaimed thrice, and he was chosen by all to be Emperor of the Romans. Thereon the most holy pontiff anointed Charles with holy oil, and likewise his most excellent son to be king, upon the very day of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ; and when the mass was finished, then after the mass the most serene lord Emperor offered gifts⁶³.'

⁶³ *Vitæ Pontif.* in Mur. *S. R. I.* Anastasius in reporting the shout of the people omits the word 'Romanorum,' which the other annalists insert after 'imperatorii.' The balance of probability is certainly in his favour.

Impression which they convey.

In these three accounts there is no serious discrepancy as to the facts, although the Italian priest, as is natural, heightens the importance of the part played by the Pope, while the Germans are too anxious to rationalize the event, talking of a synod of the clergy, a consultation of the people, and a formal request to Charles, which the silence of Eginhard, as well as the other circumstances of the case, forbid us to accept as literally true. Similarly Anastasius passes over the adoration rendered by the Pope to the Emperor, upon which most of the Frankish records insist in a way which puts it beyond doubt. But the impression which the three narratives leave is essentially the same. They all shew how little the transaction can be made to wear a strictly legal character. The Frankish king does not of his own might seize the crown, but rather receives it as coming naturally to him, as the legitimate consequence of the authority he already enjoyed. The Pope bestows the crown, not in virtue of any right of his own as head of the Church: he is merely the instrument of God's providence, which has unmistakeably pointed out Charles as the proper person to defend and lead the Christian commonwealth. The Roman people do not formally elect and appoint, but by their applause accept the chief who is presented to them. The act is conceived of as directly ordered by the Divine Providence which has brought about a state of things that admits of but one issue, an issue which king, priest, and people have only to recognise and obey; their personal ambitions, passions, intrigues, sinking

and vanishing in reverential awe at what seems the immediate interposition of Heaven. And as the result is desired by all parties alike, they do not think of inquiring into one another's rights, but take their momentary harmony to be natural and necessary, never dreaming of the difficulties and conflicts which were to arise out of what seemed then so simple. And it was just because everything was thus left undetermined, resting not on express stipulation but rather on a sort of mutual understanding, a sympathy of beliefs and wishes which augured no evil, that the event admitted of being afterwards represented in so many different lights.

Later theories respecting the coronation.

Four centuries later, when Papacy and Empire had been forced into the mortal struggle by which the fate of both was decided, three distinct theories regarding the coronation of Charles will be found advocated by three different parties, all of them plausible, all of them to some extent misleading. The Swabian Emperors held the crown to have been won by their great predecessor as the prize of conquest, and drew the conclusion that the citizens and bishop of Rome had no rights as against themselves. The patriotic party among the Romans, appealing to the early history of the Empire, declared that by nothing but the voice of their senate and people could an Emperor be lawfully created, he being only their chief magistrate, the temporary depositary of their authority. The Popes pointed to the indisputable fact that Leo imposed the

crown, and argued that as God's earthly vicar it was then his, and must always continue to be their right to give to whomsoever they would an office which was created to be the handmaid of their own. Of these three it was the last view that eventually prevailed, yet to an impartial eye it cannot claim, any more than do the two others, to contain the whole truth. Charles did not conquer, nor the Pope give, nor the people elect. As the act was unprecedented so was it illegal; it was a revolt of the ancient Western capital against a daughter who had become a mistress; an exercise of the sacred right of insurrection, justified by the weakness and wickedness of the Byzantine princes, hallowed to the eyes of the world by the sanction of Christ's representative, but founded upon no law, nor competent to create any for the future.

Was the coronation a surprise?

It is an interesting and somewhat perplexing question, how far the coronation scene, an act as imposing in its circumstances as it was momentous in its results, was prearranged among the parties. Eginhard tells us that Charles was accustomed to declare that he would not, even on so high a festival, have entered the church had he known of the Pope's intention. Even if the monarch had uttered, the secretary would hardly have recorded a falsehood long after the motive that might have prompted it had disappeared. Of the existence of that motive which has been most commonly assumed, a fear of the discontent of the Franks who might think their liberties endangered, little or no proof can be brought from the records of the time, wherein the nation

is represented as exulting in the new dignity of their chief as an accession of grandeur to themselves. Nor can we suppose that Charles's disavowal was meant to soothe the offended pride of the Byzantine princes, from whom he had nothing to fear, and who were none the more likely to recognise his dignity, if they should believe it to be not of his own seeking. Yet it is hard to suppose the whole affair a surprise; for it was the goal towards which the policy of the Frankish kings had for many years pointed, and Charles himself, in sending before him to Rome many of the spiritual and temporal magnates of his realm, in summoning thither his son Pipin from the war against the Lombards of Benevento, had shewn that he expected some more than ordinary result from this journey to the imperial city. Alcuin moreover, Alcuin of York, the prime minister of Charles in matters religious and literary, appears from one of his extant letters to have sent as a Christmas gift to his royal pupil a carefully corrected and superbly adorned copy of the Scriptures, with the words 'ad splendorem imperialis potentiae.' This has commonly been taken for conclusive evidence that the plan had been settled beforehand, and such it would be were there not some reasons for giving the letter an earlier date, and looking upon the word 'imperialis' as a mere magniloquent flourish⁶⁴. More weight is therefore to be laid upon the arguments supplied by the nature of the case itself. The Pope, whatever

⁶⁴ Lorentz, *Leben Alcuins*. And cf. Döllinger, *Das Kaiserthum Karls des Grossen und seiner Nachfolger*.

his confidence in the sympathy of the people, would never have ventured on so momentous a step until previous conferences had assured him of the feelings of the king, nor could an act for which the assembly were evidently prepared have been kept a secret. Nevertheless, the declaration of Charles himself can neither be evaded nor set down to mere dissimulation. It is more just to him, and on the whole more reasonable, to suppose that Leo, having satisfied himself of the wishes of the Roman clergy and people as well as of the Frankish magnates, resolved to seize an occasion and place so eminently favourable to his long-cherished plan, while Charles, carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment and seeing in the pontiff the prophet and instrument of the divine will, accepted a dignity which he might have wished to receive at some later time or in some other way. If, therefore, any positive conclusion be adopted, it would seem to be that Charles, although he had probably given a more or less vague consent to the project, was surprised and disconcerted by a sudden fulfilment which interrupted his own carefully studied designs. And although a deed which changed the history of the world was in any case no accident, it may well have worn to the Frankish and Roman spectators the air of a surprise. For there were no preparations apparent in the church; the king was not, like his Teutonic successors in aftertime, led in procession to the pontifical throne: suddenly, at the very moment when he rose from the sacred hollow where he had knelt among the ever-burning lamps before the holiest of Christian relics – the body of the prince of the

Apostles – the hands of that Apostle's representative placed upon his head the crown of glory and poured upon him the oil of sanctification. There was something in this to thrill the beholders with the awe of a divine presence, and make them hail him whom that presence seemed almost visibly to consecrate, the 'pious and peace-giving Emperor, crowned of God.'

Theories of the motives of Charles.

The reluctance of Charles to assume the imperial title is ascribed by Eginhard to a fear of the jealous hostility of the Greeks, who could not only deny his claim to it, but might disturb by their intrigues his dominions in Italy. Accepting this statement, the problem remains, how is this reluctance to be reconciled with those acts of his which clearly shew him aiming at the Roman crown? An ingenious and probable, if not certain solution, is suggested by a recent historian⁶⁵, who argues from a minute examination of the previous policy of Charles, that while it was the great object of his reign to obtain the crown of the world, he foresaw at the same time the opposition of the Eastern Court, and the want of legality from which his title would in consequence suffer. He was therefore bent on getting from the Byzantines, if possible, a transference of their crown; if not, at least a recognition of his own: and he appears to have hoped to win this by the negotiations which had been for some time kept on foot with the Empress Irene. Just at this moment

⁶⁵ See a very learned and interesting tract entitled *Das Kaiserthum Karls des Grossen und seiner Nachfolger*, recently published by Dr. v. Döllinger of Munich.

came the coronation by Pope Leo, interrupting these deep-laid schemes, irritating the Eastern Court, and forcing Charles into the position of a rival who could not with dignity adopt a soothing or submissive tone. Nevertheless, he seems not even then to have abandoned the hope of obtaining a peaceful recognition. Irene's crimes did not prevent him, if we may credit Theophanes⁶⁶, from seeking her hand in marriage. And when the project of thus uniting the East and West in a single Empire, baffled for a time by the opposition of her minister Ætius, was rendered impossible by her subsequent dethronement and exile, he did not abandon the policy of conciliation until a surly acquiescence in rather than admission of his dignity had been won from the Byzantine sovereigns Michael and Nicephorus⁶⁷.

Defect in the title of the Teutonic Emperors.

Whether, supposing Leo to have been less precipitate, a cession of the crown, or an acknowledgment of the right of the Romans to confer it, could ever have been obtained by Charles is perhaps more than doubtful. But it is clear that he judged rightly in rating its importance high, for the want of it was the great blemish in his own and his successors' dignity. To shew how this was so, reference must be made to the events of A.D.

⁶⁶ Ἀποκρισιάριοι παρὰ Καρούλλου καὶ Λέοντος αἰτούμενοι ζευχθῆναι αὐτὴν τῷ Καρούλλῳ πρὸς γάμον καὶ ἐνῶσαι τὰ Ἑωὰ καὶ τὰ Ἑσπερία. – Theoph. *Chron.* in *Corp. Scriptt. Hist. Byz.*

⁶⁷ Their ambassadors at last saluted him by the desired title 'Laudes ei dixerunt imperatorem eum et basileum appellantes.' Eginh. *Ann.*, ad ann. 812.

476. Both the extinction of the Western Empire in that year and its revival in A.D. 800 have been very generally misunderstood in modern times, and although the mistake is not, in a certain sense, of practical importance, yet it tends to confuse history and to blind us to the ideas of the people who acted on both occasions. When Odoacer compelled the abdication of Romulus Augustulus, he did not abolish the Western Empire as a separate power, but caused it to be reunited with or sink into the Eastern, so that from that time there was, as there had been before Diocletian, a single undivided Roman Empire. In A.D. 800 the very memory of the separate Western Empire, as it had stood from the death of Theodosius till Odoacer, had, so far as appears, been long since lost, and neither Leo nor Charles nor any one among their advisers dreamt of reviving it. They too, like their predecessors, held the Roman Empire to be one and indivisible, and proposed by the coronation of the Frankish king not to proclaim a severance of the East and West, but to reverse the act of Constantine, and make Old Rome again the civil as well as the ecclesiastical capital of the Empire that bore her name. Their deed was in its essence illegal, but they sought to give it every semblance of legality: they professed and partly believed that they were not revolting against a reigning sovereign, but legitimately filling up the place of the deposed Constantine the Sixth; the people of the imperial city exercising their ancient right of choice, their bishop his right of consecration.

Their purpose was but half accomplished. They could

create but they could not destroy: they set up an Emperor of their own, whose representatives thenceforward ruled the West, but Constantinople retained her sovereigns as of yore; and Christendom saw henceforth two imperial lines, not as in the time before A.D. 476, the conjoint heads of a single realm, but rivals and enemies, each denouncing the other as an impostor, each professing to be the only true and lawful head of the Christian Church and people. Although therefore we must in practice speak during the next seven centuries (down till A.D. 1453, when Constantinople fell before the Mohammedan) of an Eastern and a Western Empire, the phrase is in strictness incorrect, and was one which either court ought to have repudiated. The Byzantines always did repudiate it; the Latins usually; although, yielding to facts, they sometimes condescended to employ it themselves. But their theory was always the same. Charles was held to be the legitimate successor, not of Romulus Augustulus, but of Basil, Heraclius, Justinian, Arcadius, and all the Eastern line; and hence it is that in all the annals of the time and of many succeeding centuries, the name of Constantine VI, the sixty-seventh in order from Augustus, is followed without a break by that of Charles, the sixty-eighth.

Government of Charles as Emperor.

The maintenance of an imperial line among the Greeks was a continuing protest against the validity of Charles's title. But from their enmity he had little to fear, and in the eyes of the world he seemed to step into their place, adding the traditional dignity

which had been theirs to the power that he already enjoyed. North Italy and Rome ceased for ever to own the supremacy of Byzantium; and while the Eastern princes paid a shameful tribute to the Mussulman, the Frankish Emperor – as the recognised head of Christendom – received from the patriarch of Jerusalem the keys of the Holy Sepulchre and the banner of Calvary; the gift of the Sepulchre itself, says Eginhard, from Aaron king of the Persians⁶⁸. Out of this peaceful intercourse with the great Khalif the romancers created a crusade. Within his own dominions his sway assumed a more sacred character.

His authority in matters ecclesiastical.

Already had his unwearied and comprehensive activity made him throughout his reign an ecclesiastical no less than a civil ruler, summoning and sitting in councils, examining and appointing bishops, settling by capitularies the smallest points of church discipline and polity. A synod held at Frankfort in A.D. 794 condemned the decrees of the second council of Nicæa, which had been approved by Pope Hadrian, censured in violent terms the conduct of the Byzantine rulers in suggesting them, and without excluding images from churches, altogether forbade them to be worshipped or even venerated. Not only did Charles preside in and direct the deliberations of this synod, although legates from the Pope were present – he also caused a treatise to be drawn up stating and urging its conclusions;

⁶⁸ Harun er Rashid; Eginh. *Vita Karoli*, c. 16.

he pressed Hadrian to declare Constantine VI a heretic for enouncing doctrines to which Hadrian had himself consented. There are letters of his extant in which he lectures Pope Leo in a tone of easy superiority, admonishes him to obey the holy canons, and bids him pray earnestly for the success of the efforts which it is the monarch's duty to make for the subjugation of pagans and the establishment of sound doctrine throughout the Church. Nay, subsequent Popes themselves⁶⁹ admitted and applauded the despotic superintendence of matters spiritual which he was wont to exercise, and which led some one to give him playfully a title that had once been applied to the Pope himself, 'Episcopus episcoporum.'

The imperial office in its ecclesiastical relations.

Acting and speaking thus when merely king, it may be thought that Charles needed no further title to justify his power. The inference is in truth rather the converse of this. Upon what he had done already the imperial title must necessarily follow: the attitude of protection and control which he held towards the Church and the Holy See belonged, according to the ideas of the time, especially and only to an Emperor. Therefore his coronation was the fitting completion and legitimation of his authority, sanctifying rather than increasing it. We have, however, one remarkable witness to the importance that was attached to the imperial name, and the enhancement which he

⁶⁹ So Pope John VIII in a document quoted by Waitz, *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte*, iii.

conceived his office to have received from it. In a great assembly held at Aachen, A.D. 802, the lately-crowned Emperor revised the laws of all the races that obeyed him, endeavouring to harmonize and correct them, and issued a capitulary singular in subject and tone⁷⁰.

Capitulary of A.D. 802.

All persons within his dominions, as well ecclesiastical as civil, who have already sworn allegiance to him as king, are thereby commanded to swear to him afresh as Cæsar; and all who have never yet sworn, down to the age of twelve, shall now take the same oath. 'At the same time it shall be publicly explained to all what is the force and meaning of this oath, and how much more it includes than a mere promise of fidelity to the monarch's person. Firstly, it binds those who swear it to live, each and every one of them, according to his strength and knowledge, in the holy service of God; since the lord Emperor cannot extend over all his care and discipline. Secondly, it binds them neither by force nor fraud to seize or molest any of the goods or servants of his crown. Thirdly, to do no violence nor treason towards the holy Church, or to widows, or orphans, or strangers, seeing that the lord Emperor has been appointed, after the Lord and his saints, the protector and defender of all such.' Then in similar fashion purity of life is prescribed to the monks; homicide, the neglect of hospitality, and other offences are denounced, the notions of sin

⁷⁰ Pertz, *M. G. H.* iii. (legg. I.)

and crime being intermingled and almost identified in a way to which no parallel can be found, unless it be in the Mosaic code. There God, the invisible object of worship, is also, though almost incidentally, the judge and political ruler of Israel; here the whole cycle of social and moral duty is deduced from the obligation of obedience to the visible autocratic head of the Christian state.

In most of Charles's words and deeds, nor less distinctly in the writings of his adviser Alcuin, may be discerned the working of the same theocratic ideas. Among his intimate friends he chose to be called by the name of David, exercising in reality all the powers of the Jewish king; presiding over this kingdom of God upon earth rather as a second Constantine or Theodosius than in the spirit and traditions of the Julii or the Flavii. Among his measures there are two which in particular recall the first Christian Emperor. As Constantine founds so Charles erects on a firmer basis the connection of Church and State. Bishops and abbots are as essential a part of rising feudalism as counts and dukes. Their benefices are held under the same conditions of fealty and the service in war of their vassal tenants, not of the spiritual person himself: they have similar rights of jurisdiction, and are subject alike to the imperial *missi*. The monarch tries often to restrict the clergy, as persons, to spiritual duties; quells the insubordination of the monasteries; endeavours to bring the seculars into a monastic life by instituting and regulating chapters. But after granting wealth and power, the attempt was vain; his strong hand withdrawn, they laughed at control. Again,

it was by him first that the payment of tithes, for which the priesthood had long been pleading, was made compulsory in Western Europe, and the support of the ministers of religion entrusted to the laws of the state.

Influence of the imperial title in Germany and Gaul.

In civil affairs also Charles acquired, with the imperial title, a new position. Later jurists labour to distinguish his power as Roman Emperor from that which he held already as king of the Franks and their subject allies: they insist that his coronation gave him the capital only, that it is absurd to talk of a Roman Empire in regions whither the eagles had never flown⁷¹. In such expressions there seems to lurk either confusion or misconception. It was not the actual government of the city that Charles obtained in A.D. 800: that his father had already held as Patrician and he had constantly exercised in the same capacity: it was far more than the titular sovereignty of Rome which had hitherto been supposed to be vested in the Byzantine princes: it was nothing less than the headship of the world, believed to appertain of right to the lawful Roman Emperor, whether he reigned on the Bosphorus, the Tiber, or the Rhine. As that headship, although never denied, had been in abeyance in the West for several centuries, its bestowal on the king of so vast a realm was a change of the first moment, for it made the coronation not merely a transference of the seat of Empire, but a renewal of the

⁷¹ Pütter, *Historical Development of the German Constitution*; so too Conring, and esp. David Blondel, *Adv. Chiffletium*.

Empire itself, a bringing back of it from faith to sight, from the world of belief and theory to the world of fact and reality. And since the powers it gave were autocratic and unlimited, it must swallow up all minor claims and dignities: the rights of Charles the Frankish king were merged in those of Charles the successor of Augustus, the lord of the world. That his imperial authority was theoretically irrespective of place is clear from his own words and acts, and from all the monuments of that time. He would not, indeed, have dreamed of treating the free Franks as Justinian had treated his half-Oriental subjects, nor would the warriors who followed his standard have brooked such an attempt. Yet even to German eyes his position must have been altered by the halo of vague splendour which now surrounded him; for all, even the Saxon and the Slave, had heard of Rome's glories, and revered the name of Cæsar.

Action of Charles on Europe.

And in his effort to weld discordant elements into one body, to introduce regular gradations of authority, to control the Teutonic tendency to localization by his *missi*— officials commissioned to traverse each some part of his dominions, reporting on and redressing the evils they found – and by his own oft-repeated personal progresses, Charles was guided by the traditions of the old Empire. His sway is the revival of order and culture, fusing the West into a compact whole, whose parts are never thenceforward to lose the marks of their connection and their half-Roman character, gathering up all that is left in Europe of

spirit and wealth and knowledge, and hurling it with the new force of Christianity on the infidel of the South and the masses of untamed barbarism to the North and East. Ruling the world by the gift of God, and the transmitted rights of the Romans and their Cæsar whom God had chosen to conquer it, he renews the original aggressive movement of the Empire: the civilized world has subdued her invader⁷², and now arms him against savagery and heathendom. Hence the wars, not more of the sword than of the cross, against Saxons, Avars, Slaves, Danes, Spanish Arabs, where monasteries are fortresses and baptism the badge of submission. The overthrow of the Irminsûl⁷³, in the first Saxon campaign⁷⁴, sums up the changes of seven centuries. The Romanized Teuton destroys the monument of his country's freedom, for it is also the emblem of paganism and barbarism.

⁷² 'Græcia capta ferum victorem cepit,' is repeated in this conquest of the Teuton by the Roman.

⁷³ The notion that once prevailed that the Irminsûl was the 'pillar of Hermann,' set up on the spot of the defeat of Varus, is now generally discredited. Some German antiquaries take the pillar to be a rude figure of the native god Irmin; but nothing seems to be known of this alleged deity: and it is more probable that the name Irmin is after all merely an altered form of the Keltic word which appears in Welsh as Hir Vaen, the long stone (*Maen*, a stone). Thus the pillar, so far from being the monument of the great Teutonic victory, would commemorate a pre-Teutonic race, whose name for it the invading tribes adopted. The Rev. Dr. Scott, of Westminster, to whose kindness I am indebted for this explanation, informs me that a rude ditty recording the destruction of the pillar by Charles was current on the spot a few years ago. It ran thus:—'Irmin slad IrminSla Pfeifen sla TrommenDer Kaiser wird kommenMit Hammer und StangenWird Irmin uphangen.'

⁷⁴ Eginhard, *Ann.*

The work of Arminius is undone by his successor.

His position as Frankish king.

This, however, is not the only side from which Charles's policy and character may be regarded. If the unity of the Church and the shadow of imperial prerogative was one pillar of his power, the other was the Frankish nation. The Empire was still military, though in a sense strangely different from that of Julius or Severus. The warlike Franks had permeated Western Europe; their primacy was admitted by the kindred tribes of Lombards, Bavarians, Thuringians, Alemannians, and Burgundians; the Slavic peoples on the borders trembled and paid tribute; Alfonso of Asturias found in the Emperor a protector against the infidel foe. His influence, if not his exerted power, crossed the ocean: the kings of the Scots sent gifts and called him lord⁷⁵; the restoration of Eardulf to Northumbria, still more of Egbert to Wessex, might furnish a better ground for the claim of suzerainty than many to which his successors had afterwards recourse. As it was by Frankish arms that this predominance in Europe which the imperial title adorned and legalized had been won, so was the government of Charles Roman in semblance rather than in fact. It was not by restoring the effete mechanism of the old Empire, but by his own vigorous personal action and that of his great officers, that he strove to administer and reform. With every effort for a strong central government, there is no despotism; each nation

⁷⁵ Most probably the Scots of Ireland – Eginhard, *Vita Karoli*, cap. 16.

retains its laws, its hereditary chiefs, its free popular assemblies. The conditions granted to the Saxons after such cruel warfare, conditions so favourable that in the next century their dukes hold the foremost place in Germany, shew how little he desired to make the Franks a dominant caste.

General results of his Empire.

He repeats the attempt of Theodoric to breathe a Teutonic spirit into Roman forms. The conception was magnificent; great results followed its partial execution. Two causes forbade success. The one was the ecclesiastical, especially the Papal power, apparently subject to the temporal, but with a strong and undefined prerogative which only waited the occasion to trample on what it had helped to raise. The Pope might take away the crown he had bestowed, and turn against the Emperor the Church which now obeyed him. The other was to be found in the discordance of the component parts of the Empire. The nations were not ripe for settled life or extensive schemes of polity; the differences of race, language, manners, over vast and thinly-peopled lands baffled every attempt to maintain their connection: and when once the spell of the great mind was withdrawn, the mutually repellent forces began to work, and the mass dissolved into that chaos out of which it had been formed. Nevertheless, the parts separated not as they met, but having all of them undergone influences which continued to act when political connection had ceased. For the work of Charles – a genius pre-eminently creative – was not lost in the anarchy that followed: rather are we to

regard his reign as the beginning of a new era, or as laying the foundations whereon men continued for many generations to build.

Personal habits and sympathies.

No claim can be more groundless than that which the modern French, the sons of the Latinized Kelt, set up to the Teutonic Charles. At Rome he might assume the chlamys and the sandals, but at the head of his Frankish host he strictly adhered to the customs of his country, and was beloved by his people as the very ideal of their own character and habits⁷⁶. Of strength and stature almost superhuman, in swimming and hunting unsurpassed, steadfast and terrible in fight, to his friends gentle and condescending, he was a Roman, much less a Gaul, in nothing but his culture and his width of view, otherwise a Teuton. The centre of his realm was the Rhine; his capitals Aachen⁷⁷ and Engilenheim⁷⁸; his army Frankish; his sympathies as they are

⁷⁶ Eginhard, *Vita Karoli*, cap. 23.

⁷⁷ Aix-la-Chapelle. See the lines in Pertz (*M. G. H.* ii.), beginning, —'Urbs Aquensis, urbs regalis, Sedes regni principalis, Prima regum curia.' This city is commonly called Aken in English books of the seventeenth century, and probably that ought to be taken as its proper English name. That name has, however, fallen so entirely into disuse that I do not venture to use it; and as the employment of the French name Aix-la-Chapelle seems inevitably to produce the belief that the place is and was, even in Charles's time, a French town, there is nothing for it but to fall back upon the comparatively unfamiliar German name.

⁷⁸ Engilenheim, or Ingelheim, lies near the left shore of the Rhine between Mentz and Bingen.

shewn in the gathering of the old hero-lays⁷⁹, the composition of a German grammar, the ordinance against confining prayer to the three languages, – Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, – were all for the race from which he sprang, and whose advance, represented by the victory of Austrasia, the true Frankish fatherland, over Neustria and Aquitaine, spread a second Germanic wave over the conquered countries.

His Empire and character generally.

There were in his Empire, as in his own mind, two elements; those two from the union and mutual action and reaction of which modern civilization has arisen. These vast domains, reaching from the Ebro to the Carpathian mountains, from the Eyder to the Liris, were all the conquests of the Frankish sword, and were still governed almost exclusively by viceroys and officers of Frankish blood. But the conception of the Empire, that which made it a State and not a mere mass of subject tribes like those great Eastern dominions which rise and perish in a lifetime, the realms of Sesostrius, or Attila, or Timur, was inherited from an older and a grander system, was not Teutonic but Roman – Roman in its ordered rule, in its uniformity and precision, in its endeavour to subject the individual to the system – Roman in its effort to realize a certain limited and human perfection, whose very completeness shall exclude the hope of further progress. And the bond, too, by which the Empire was held together was

⁷⁹ Eginhard, *Vita Karoli*, cap. 29.

Roman in its origin, although Roman in a sense which would have surprised Trajan or Severus, could it have been foretold them. The ecclesiastical body was already organized and centralized, and it was in his rule over the ecclesiastical body that the secret of Charles's power lay. Every Christian – Frank, Gaul, or Italian – owed loyalty to the head and defender of his religion: the unity of the Empire was a reflection of the unity of the Church.

Into a general view of the government and policy of Charles it is not possible here to enter. Yet his legislation, his assemblies, his administrative system, his magnificent works, recalling the projects of Alexander and Cæsar⁸⁰, the zeal for education and literature which he shewed in the collection of manuscripts, the founding of schools, the gathering of eminent men from all quarters around him, cannot be appreciated apart from his position as restorer of the Roman Empire. Like all the foremost men of our race, Charles was all great things in one, and was so great just because the workings of his genius were so harmonious. He was not a mere barbarian warrior any more than he was an astute diplomatist; there is none of all his qualities which would not be forced out of its place were we to characterize him chiefly by it. Comparisons between famous men of different ages are generally as worthless as they are easy: the circumstances among which Charles lived do not permit us to institute a minute parallel between his greatness and that of those two to whom it is the modern fashion to compare him, nor to say

⁸⁰ Eginhard, *Vita Karoli*, cap. 17.

whether he was or could have become as profound a politician as Cæsar, as skilful a commander as Napoleon⁸¹. But neither to the Roman nor to the Corsican was he inferior in that one quality by which both he and they chiefly impress our imaginations – that intense, vivid, unresting energy which swept him over Europe in campaign after campaign, which sought a field for its workings in theology, science, literature, no less than in politics and war. As it was this wondrous activity that made him the conqueror of Europe, so was it by the variety of his culture that he became her civilizer. From him, in whose wide deep mind the whole mediæval theory of the world and human life mirrored itself, did mediæval society take the form and impress which it retained for centuries, and the traces whereof are among us and upon us to this day.

The great Emperor was buried at Aachen, in that basilica which it had been the delight of his later years to erect and adorn with the treasures of ancient art. His tomb under the dome – where now we see an enormous slab, with the words 'Carolo Magno' – was inscribed, '*Magnus atque Orthodoxus Imperator*⁸²'.

⁸¹ It is not a little curious that of the three whom the modern French have taken to be their national heroes all should have been foreigners, and two foreign conquerors.

⁸² This basilica was built upon the model of the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, and as it was the first church of any size that had been erected in those regions for centuries past, it excited extraordinary interest among the Franks and Gauls. In many of its features it greatly resembles the beautiful church of San Vitale, at Ravenna (also modelled upon that of the Holy Sepulchre) which was begun by Theodoric, and completed under Justinian. Probably San Vitale was used as a pattern by Charles's architects: we know that he caused marble columns to be brought from

Poets, fostered by his own zeal, sang of him who had given to the Franks the sway of Romulus⁸³. The gorgeous drapery of romance gradually wreathed itself round his name, till by canonization as a saint he received the highest glory the world or the Church could confer. For the Roman Church claimed then, as she claims still, the privilege which humanity in one form or another seems scarce able to deny itself, of raising to honours almost divine its great departed; and as in pagan times temples had risen to a deified Emperor, so churches were dedicated to St. Charlemagne. Between Sanctus Carolus and Divus Julius how strange an analogy and how strange a contrast!

Ravenna to deck the church at Aachen. Over the tomb of Charles, below the central dome (to which the Gothic choir we now see was added some centuries later), there hangs a huge chandelier, the gift of Frederick Barbarossa.

⁸³ 'Romuleum Francis præstitit imperium.' – Elegy of Ermoldus Nigellus, in Pertz; *M. G. H.*, t. i. So too Florus the Deacon, —'Huic etenim cessit etiam gens Romula genti, Regnorumque simul mater Roma inclyta cessit: Huius ibi princeps regni diademata sumpsit Munere apostolico, Christi munimine fretus.'

CHAPTER VI.

CAROLINGIAN AND ITALIAN EMPERORS

Lewis the Pious.

Lewis the Pious⁸⁴, left by Charles's death sole heir, had been some years before associated with his father in the Empire, and had been crowned by his own hands in a way which, intentionally or not, appeared to deny the need of Papal sanction. But it was soon seen that the strength to grasp the sceptre had not passed with it. Too mild to restrain his turbulent nobles, and thrown by over-conscientiousness into the hands of the clergy, he had reigned few years when dissensions broke out on all sides. Charles had wished the Empire to continue one, under the supremacy of a single Emperor, but with its several parts, Lombardy, Aquitaine, Austrasia, Bavaria, each a kingdom held by a scion of the reigning house. A scheme dangerous in itself, and rendered more so by the absence or neglect of regular rules of succession, could with difficulty have been managed by a wise and firm monarch. Lewis tried in vain to satisfy his sons (Lothar, Lewis, and Charles) by dividing and redividing: they rebelled;

⁸⁴ Usage has established this translation of 'Hludowicus Pius,' but 'gentle' or 'kind-hearted' would better express the meaning of the epithet.

he was deposed, and forced by the bishops to do penance; again restored, but without power, a tool in the hands of contending factions.

Partition of Verdun, A.D. 843.

On his death the sons flew to arms, and the first of the dynastic quarrels of modern Europe was fought out on the field of Fontenay. In the partition treaty of Verdun which followed, the Teutonic principle of equal division among heirs triumphed over the Roman one of the transmission of an indivisible Empire: the practical sovereignty of all three brothers was admitted in their respective territories, a barren precedence only reserved to Lothar, with the imperial title which he, as the eldest, already enjoyed. A more important result was the separation of the Gaulish and German nationalities. Their difference of feeling, shewn already in the support of Lewis the Pious by the Germans against the Gallo-Franks and the Church⁸⁵, took now a permanent shape: modern Germany proclaims the era of A.D. 843 the beginning of her national existence, and celebrated its thousandth anniversary twenty-seven years ago. To Charles the Bald was given *Francia Occidentalis*, that is to say, Neustria and Aquitaine; to Lothar, who as Emperor must possess the two capitals, Rome and Aachen, a long and narrow kingdom stretching from the North Sea to the Mediterranean,

⁸⁵ Von Ranke discovers in this early traces of the aversion of the Germans to the pretensions of the spiritual power. —*History of Germany during the Reformation*: Introduction.

and including the northern half of Italy: Lewis (surnamed, from his kingdom, the German) received all east of the Rhine, Franks, Saxons, Bavarians, Austria, Carinthia, with possible supremacies over Czechs and Moravians beyond. Throughout these regions German was spoken; through Charles's kingdom a corrupt tongue, equally removed from Latin and from modern French. Lothar's, being mixed and having no national basis, was the weakest of the three, and soon dissolved into the separate sovereignties of Italy, Burgundy, and Lotharingia, or, as we call it, Lorraine.

End of the Carolingian Empire of the West, A.D. 888.

On the tangled history of the period that follows it is not possible to do more than touch. After passing from one branch of the Carolingian line to another⁸⁶, the imperial sceptre was at last possessed and disgraced by Charles the Fat, who united all the dominions of his great-grandfather. This unworthy heir could not avail himself of recovered territory to strengthen or defend the expiring monarchy. He was driven out of Italy in A.D. 887, and his death in 888 has been usually taken as the date of the extinction of the Carolingian Empire of the West. The Germans, still attached to the ancient line, chose Arnulf, an illegitimate Carolingian, for their king: he entered Italy and was crowned Emperor by his partizan Pope Formosus, in 894. But Germany,

⁸⁶ Singularly enough, when one thinks of modern claims, the dynasty of France (*Francia occidentalis*) had the least share of it. Charles the Bald was the only West Frankish Emperor, and reigned a very short time.

divided and helpless, was in no condition to maintain her power over the southern lands: Arnulf retreated in haste, leaving Rome and Italy to sixty years of stormy independence.

That time was indeed the nadir of order and civilization. From all sides the torrent of barbarism which Charles the Great had stemmed was rushing down upon his empire. The Saracen wasted the Mediterranean coasts, and sacked Rome herself. The Dane and Norseman swept the Atlantic and the North Sea, pierced France and Germany by their rivers, burning, slaying, carrying off into captivity: pouring through the Straits of Gibraltar, they fell upon Provence and Italy. By land, while Wends and Czechs and Obotrites threw off the German yoke and threatened the borders, the wild Hungarian bands, pressing in from the steppes of the Caspian, dashed over Germany like the flying spray of a new wave of barbarism, and carried the terror of their battleaxes to the Apennines and the ocean. Under such strokes the already loosened fabric swiftly dissolved. No one thought of common defence or wide organization: the strong built castles, the weak became their bondsmen, or took shelter under the cowl: the governor – count, abbot, or bishop – tightened his grasp, turned a delegated into an independent, a personal into a territorial authority, and hardly owned a distant and feeble suzerain. The grand vision of a universal Christian empire was utterly lost in the isolation, the antagonism, the increasing localization of all powers: it might seem to have been but a passing gleam from an older and better world.

The German Kingdom.

Henry the Fowler.

In Germany, the greatness of the evil worked at last its cure. When the male line of the eastern branch of the Carolingians had ended in Lewis (surnamed the Child), son of Arnulf, the chieftains chose and the people accepted Conrad the Franconian, and after him Henry the Saxon duke, both representing the female line of Charles. Henry laid the foundations of a firm monarchy, driving back the Magyars and Wends, recovering Lotharingia, founding towns to be centres of orderly life and strongholds against Hungarian irruptions. He had meant to claim at Rome his kingdom's rights, rights which Conrad's weakness had at least asserted by the demand of tribute; but death overtook him, and the plan was left to be fulfilled by Otto his son.

Otto the Great.

The Holy Roman Empire, taking the name in the sense which it commonly bore in later centuries, as denoting the sovereignty of Germany and Italy vested in a Germanic prince, is the creation of Otto the Great. Substantially, it is true, as well as technically, it was a prolongation of the Empire of Charles; and it rested (as will be shewn in the sequel) upon ideas essentially the same as those which brought about the coronation of A.D. 800. But a revival is always more or less a revolution: the one hundred and fifty years that had passed since the death of Charles had brought with them changes which made Otto's position in

Germany and Europe less commanding and less autocratic than his predecessor's. With narrower geographical limits, his Empire had a less plausible claim to be the heir of Rome's universal dominion; and there were also differences in its inner character and structure sufficient to justify us in considering Otto (as he is usually considered by his countrymen) not a mere successor after an interregnum, but rather a second founder of the imperial throne in the West.

Before Otto's descent into Italy is described, something must be said of the condition of that country, where circumstances had again made possible the plan of Theodoric, permitted it to become an independent kingdom, and attached the imperial title to its sovereign.

Italian Emperors.

The bestowal of the purple on Charles the Great was not really that 'translation of the Empire from the Greeks to the Franks,' which it was afterwards described as having been. It was not meant to settle the office in one nation or one dynasty: there was but an extension of that principle of the equality of all Romans which had made Trajan and Maximin Emperors. The '*arcanum imperii*,' whereof Tacitus speaks, '*posse principem alibi quam Romæ fieri*⁸⁷,' had long before become *aliud quam Romanum*; and now, the names of Roman and Christian having grown co-extensive, a barbarian chieftain was, as a Roman

⁸⁷ Tac. *Hist.* i. 4.

citizen, eligible to the office of Roman Emperor. Treating him as such, the people and pontiff of the capital had in the vacancy of the Eastern throne asserted their ancient rights of election, and while attempting to reverse the act of Constantine, had re-established the division of Valentinian. The dignity was therefore in strictness personal to Charles; in point of fact, and by consent, hereditarily transmissible, just as it had formerly become in the families of Constantine and Theodosius. To the Frankish crown or nation it was by no means legally attached, though they might think it so; it had passed to their king only because he was the greatest European potentate, and might equally well pass to some stronger race, if any such appeared. Hence, when the line of Carolingian Emperors ended in Charles the Fat, the rights of Rome and Italy might be taken to revive, and there was nothing to prevent the citizens from choosing whom they would. At that memorable era (A.D. 888) the four kingdoms which this prince had united fell asunder; West France, where Odo or Eudes then began to reign, was never again united to Germany; East France (Germany) chose Arnulf; Burgundy⁸⁸ split up into two principalities, in one of which (Transjurane) Rudolf proclaimed himself king, while the other (Cisjurane with Provence) submitted to Boso⁸⁹; while Italy was divided between

⁸⁸ For an account of the various applications of the name Burgundy, see [Appendix, Note A](#).

⁸⁹ The accession of Boso took place in A.D. 877, eleven years before Charles the Fat's death. But the new kingdom could not be considered legally settled until the latter date, and its establishment is at any rate a part of that general break-up of the

the parties of Berengar of Friuli and Guido of Spoleto. The former was chosen king by the estates of Lombardy; the latter, and on his speedy death his son Lambert, was crowned Emperor by the Pope. Arnulf's descent chased them away and vindicated the claims of the Franks, but on his flight Italy and the anti-German faction at Rome became again free. Berengar was made king of Italy, and afterwards Emperor. Lewis of Burgundy, son of Boso, renounced his fealty to Arnulf, and procured the imperial dignity, whose vain title he retained through years of misery and exile, till A.D. 928⁹⁰. None of these Emperors were strong enough to rule well even in Italy; beyond it they were not so much as recognized. The crown had become a bauble with which unscrupulous Popes dazzled the vanity of princes whom they summoned to their aid, and soothed the credulity of their more honest supporters. The demoralization and confusion of Italy, the shameless profligacy of Rome and her pontiffs during this period, were enough to prevent a true Italian kingdom from being built up on the basis of Roman choice and national unity. Italian indeed it can scarcely be called, for these Emperors were

great Carolingian empire whereof A.D. 888 marks the crisis. See [Appendix A](#) at the end. It is a curious mark of the reverence paid to the Carolingian blood, that Boso, a powerful and ambitious prince, seems to have chiefly rested his claims on the fact that he was husband of Irmingard, daughter of the Emperor Lewis II. Baron de Gingsins la Sarraz quotes a charter of his (drawn up when he seems to have doubted whether to call himself king) which begins, 'Ego Boso Dei gratia id quod sum, et coniux mea Irmingardis proles imperialis.'

⁹⁰ Lewis had been surprised by Berengar at Verona, blinded, and forced to take refuge in his own kingdom of Provence.

still in blood and manners Teutonic, and akin rather to their Transalpine enemies than their Romanic subjects. But Italian it might soon have become under a vigorous rule which should have organized it within and knit it together to resist attacks from without. And therefore the attempt to establish such a kingdom is remarkable, for it might have had great consequences; might, if it had prospered, have spared Italy much suffering and Germany endless waste of strength and blood. He who from the summit of Milan cathedral sees across the misty plain the gleaming turrets of its icy wall sweep in a great arc from North to West, may well wonder that a land which nature has so severed from its neighbours should, since history begins, have been always the victim of their intrusive tyranny.

Adelheid Queen of Italy.

In A.D. 924 died Berengar, the last of these phantom Emperors. After him Hugh of Burgundy, and Lothar his son, reigned as kings of Italy, if puppets in the hands of a riotous aristocracy can be so called. Rome was meanwhile ruled by the consul or senator Alberic⁹¹, who had renewed her never quite extinct republican institutions, and in the degradation of the papacy was almost absolute in the city. Lothar dying, his widow Adelheid⁹² was sought in marriage by Adalbert son of Berengar II, the new Italian monarch. A gleam of romance is shed on

⁹¹ Alberic is called variously senator, consul, patrician, and prince of the Romans.

⁹² Adelheid was daughter of Rudolf, king of Trans-Jurane Burgundy. She was at this time in her nineteenth year.

the Empire's revival by her beauty and her adventures. Rejecting the odious alliance, she was seized by Berengar, escaped with difficulty from the loathsome prison where his barbarity had confined her, and appealed to Otto the German king, the model of that knightly virtue which was beginning to shew itself after the fierce brutality of the last age.

Otto's first expedition into Italy, A.D. 951. Invitation sent by the Pope to Otto. Motives for reviving the Empire.

He listened, descended into Lombardy by the Adige valley, espoused the injured queen, and forced Berengar to hold his kingdom as a vassal of the East Frankish crown. That prince was turbulent and faithless; new complaints reached ere long his liege lord, and envoys from the Pope offered Otto the imperial title if he would re-visit and pacify Italy. The proposal was well-timed. Men still thought, as they had thought in the centuries before the Carolingians, that the Empire was suspended, not extinct; and the desire to see its effective power restored, the belief that without it the world could never be right, might seem better grounded than it had been before the coronation of Charles. Then the imperial name had recalled only the faint memories of Roman majesty and order; now it was also associated with the golden age of the first Frankish Emperor, when a single firm and just hand had guided the state, reformed the church, repressed the excesses of local power: when Christianity had advanced against heathendom, civilizing as she went, fearing neither Hun nor Paynim. One annalist tells us that Charles was elected 'lest

the pagans should insult the Christians, if the name of Emperor should have ceased among the Christians⁹³.' The motive would be bitterly enforced by the calamities of the last fifty years. In a time of disintegration, confusion, strife, all the longings of every wiser and better soul for unity, for peace and law, for some bond to bring Christian men and Christian states together against the common enemy of the faith, were but so many cries for the restoration of the Roman Empire⁹⁴. These were the feelings that on the field of Merseburg broke forth in the shout of 'Henry the Emperor:' these the hopes of the Teutonic host when after the great deliverance of the Lechfeld they greeted Otto, conqueror of the Magyars, as 'Imperator Augustus, Pater Patriæ⁹⁵.'

Condition of Italy.

The anarchy which an Emperor was needed to heal was at its worst in Italy, desolated by the feuds of a crowd of petty princes. A succession of infamous Popes, raised by means yet more infamous, the lovers and sons of Theodora and Marozia, had disgraced the chair of the Apostle, and though Rome herself might be lost to decency, Western Christendom was roused

⁹³ *Chron. Moiss.*, in Pertz; *M. G. H.* i. 305.

⁹⁴ See especially the poem of Florus the Deacon (printed in the Benedictine collection and in Migne), a bitter lament over the dissolution of the Carolingian Empire. It is too long for quotation. I give four lines here: —'Quid faciant populi quos ingens alluit Hister, Quos Rhenus Rhodanusque rigant, Ligerisve, Padusve, Quos omnes dudum tenuit concordia nexos, Foedere nunc rupto divortia moesta fatigant.'

⁹⁵ Witukind, *Annales*, in Pertz. It may, however, be doubted whether the annalist is not here giving a very free rendering of the triumphant cries of the German army.

to anger and alarm. Men had not yet learned to satisfy their consciences by separating the person from the office. The rule of Alberic had been succeeded by the wildest confusion, and demands were raised for the renewal of that imperial authority which all admitted in theory⁹⁶, and which nothing but the resolute opposition of Alberic himself had prevented Otto from claiming in 951. From the Byzantine Empire, whither Italy was more than once tempted to turn, nothing could be hoped; its dangers from foreign enemies were aggravated by the plots of the court and the seditions of the capital; it was becoming more and more alienated from the West by the Photian schism and the question regarding the Procession of the Holy Ghost, which that quarrel had started. Germany was extending and consolidating herself, had escaped domestic perils, and might think of reviving ancient claims. No one could be more willing to revive them than Otto the Great. His ardent spirit, after waging a bold and successful struggle against the turbulent magnates of his German realm, had engaged him in wars with the surrounding nations, and was now captivated by the vision of a wider sway and a loftier world-embracing dignity. Nor was the prospect which the papal offer opened up less welcome to his people. Aachen, their capital, was the ancestral home of the house of Pipin: their sovereign, although himself a Saxon by race, titled himself king of the Franks, in opposition to the Frankish rulers of the Western branch, whose Teutonic character was disappearing among the

⁹⁶ Cf. esp. the '*Libellus de imperatoria potestate in urbe Roma*,' in Pertz.

Romans of Gaul; they held themselves in every way the true representatives of the Carolingian power, and accounted the period since Arnulf's death nothing but an interregnum which had suspended but not impaired their rights over Rome. 'For so long,' says a writer of the time, 'as there remain kings of the Franks, so long will the dignity of the Roman Empire not wholly perish, seeing that it will abide in its kings⁹⁷.' The recovery of Italy was therefore to German eyes a righteous as well as a glorious design: approved by the Teutonic Church which had lately been negotiating with Rome on the subject of missions to the heathen; embraced by the people, who saw in it an accession of strength to their young kingdom. Everything smiled on Otto's enterprise, and the connection which was destined to bring so much strife and woe to Germany and to Italy was welcomed by the wisest of both countries as the beginning of a better era.

Descent of Otto the Great into Italy.

Whatever were Otto's own feelings, whether or not he felt that he was sacrificing, as modern writers have thought that he did sacrifice, the greatness of his German kingdom to the lust of universal dominion, he shewed no hesitation in his acts. Descending from the Alps with an overpowering force, he was

⁹⁷ 'Licet videamus Romanorum regnum in maxima parte jam destructum, tamen quamdiu reges Francorum duraverint qui Romanum imperium tenere debent, dignitas Romani imperii ex toto non peribit, quia stabit in regibus suis.' —*Liber de Antichristo*, addressed by Adso, abbot of Moutier-en-Der, to queen Gerberga (circa A.D. 950).

acknowledged as king of Italy at Pavia⁹⁸; and, having first taken an oath to protect the Holy See and respect the liberties of the city, advanced to Rome.

His coronation at Rome, A.D. 962.

There, with Adelheid his queen, he was crowned by John XII, on the day of the Purification, the second of February, A.D. 962. The details of his election and coronation are unfortunately still more scanty than in the case of his great predecessor. Most of our authorities represent the act as of the Pope's favour⁹⁹, yet it is plain that the consent of the people was still thought an essential part of the ceremony, and that Otto rested after all on his host of conquering Saxons. Be this as it may, there was neither question raised nor opposition made in Rome; the usual courtesies and promises were exchanged between Emperor and Pope, the latter owning himself a subject, and the citizens swore for the future to elect no pontiff without Otto's consent.

⁹⁸ From the money which Otto struck in Italy, it seems probable that he did occasionally use the title of king of Italy or of the Lombards. That he was crowned can hardly be considered quite certain.

⁹⁹ 'A papa imperator ordinatur,' says Hermannus Contractus. 'Dominum Ottonem, ad hoc usque vocatum regem, non solum Romano sed et pœne totius Europæ populo acclamante imperatorem consecravit Augustum.' — *Annal. Quedlinb.*, ad ann. 962. 'Benedictionem a domno apostolico Iohanne, cuius rogatione huc venit, cum sua coniuge promeruit imperialem ac patronus Romanæ effectus est ecclesiæ.' — Thietmar. 'Acclamatione totius Romani populi ab apostolico Iohanne, filio Alberici, imperator et Augustus vocatur et ordinatur.' — Continuator Reginonis. And similarly the other annalists.

CHAPTER VII.

THEORY OF THE

MEDIÆVAL EMPIRE

Why the revival of the Empire was desired.

These were the events and circumstances of the time: let us now look at the causes. The restoration of the Empire by Charles may seem to be sufficiently accounted for by the width of his conquests, by the peculiar connection which already subsisted between him and the Roman Church, by his commanding personal character, by the temporary vacancy of the Byzantine throne. The causes of its revival under Otto must be sought deeper. Making every allowance for the favouring incidents which have already been dwelt upon, there must have been some further influence at work to draw him and his successors, Saxon and Frankish kings, so far from home in pursuit of a barren crown, to lead the Italians to accept the dominion of a stranger and a barbarian, to make the Empire itself appear through the whole Middle Age not what it seems now, a gorgeous anachronism, but an institution divine and necessary, having its foundations in the very nature and order of things. The empire of the elder Rome had been splendid in its life, yet its judgment was written in the misery to which it had brought the provinces,

and the helplessness that had invited the attacks of the barbarian. Now, as we at least can see, it had long been dead, and the course of events was adverse to its revival. Its actual representatives, the Roman people, were a turbulent rabble, sunk in a profligacy notorious even in that guilty age. Yet not the less for all this did men cling to the idea, and strive through long ages to stem the irresistible time-current, fondly believing that they were breasting it even while it was sweeping them ever faster and faster away from the old order into a region of new thoughts, new feelings, new forms of life. Not till the days of the Reformation was the illusion dispelled.

Mediaeval theories.

The explanation is to be found in the state of the human mind during these centuries. The Middle Ages were essentially nonpolitical. Ideas as familiar to the commonwealths of antiquity as to ourselves, ideas of the common good as the object of the State, of the rights of the people, of the comparative merits of different forms of government, were to them, though sometimes carried out in fact, in their speculative form unknown, perhaps incomprehensible. Feudalism was the one great institution to which those times gave birth, and feudalism was a social and a legal system, only indirectly and by consequence a political one. Yet the human mind, so far from being idle, was in certain directions never more active; nor was it possible for it to remain without general conceptions regarding the relation of men to each other in this world. Such conceptions were neither made

an expression of the actual present condition of things nor drawn from an induction of the past; they were partly inherited from the system that had preceded, partly evolved from the principles of that metaphysical theology which was ripening into scholasticism¹⁰⁰. Now the two great ideas which expiring antiquity bequeathed to the ages that followed were those of a World-Monarchy and a World-Religion.

The World-Religion.

Before the conquests of Rome, men, with little knowledge of each other, with no experience of wide political union¹⁰¹, had

¹⁰⁰ I do not mean to say that the system of ideas which it is endeavoured to set forth in the following pages was complete in this particular form, either in the days of Charles or in those of Otto, or in those of Frederick Barbarossa. It seems to have been constantly growing and decaying from the fourth century to the sixteenth, the relative prominence of its cardinal doctrines varying from age to age. But, just as the painter who sees the ever-shifting lights and shades play over the face of a wide landscape faster than his brush can place them on the canvas, in despair at representing their exact position at any single moment, contents himself with painting the effects that are broadest and most permanent, and at giving rather the impression which the scene makes on him than every detail of the scene itself, so here, the best and indeed the only practicable course seems to be that of setting forth in its most self-consistent form the body of ideas and beliefs on which the Empire rested, although this form may not be exactly that which they can be asserted to have worn in any one century, and although the illustrations adduced may have to be taken sometimes from earlier, sometimes from later writers. As the doctrine of the Empire was in its essence the same during the whole Middle Age, such a general description as is attempted here may, I venture to hope, be found substantially true for the tenth as well as for the fourteenth century.

¹⁰¹ Empires like the Persian did nothing to assimilate the subject races, who retained their own laws and customs, sometimes their own princes, and were bound only to serve in the armies and fill the treasury of the Great King.

held differences of race to be natural and irremovable barriers. Similarly, religion appeared to them a matter purely local and national; and as there were gods of the hills and gods of the valleys, of the land and of the sea, so each tribe rejoiced in its peculiar deities, looking on the natives of another country who worshipped other gods as Gentiles, natural foes, unclean beings. Such feelings, if keenest in the East, frequently shew themselves in the early records of Greece and Italy: in Homer the hero who wanders over the unfruitful sea glories in sacking the cities of the stranger¹⁰²; the primitive Latins have the same word for a foreigner and an enemy: the exclusive systems of Egypt, Hindostan, China, are only more vehement expressions of the belief which made Athenian philosophers look on a state of war between Greeks and barbarians as natural¹⁰³, and defend slavery on the same ground of the original diversity of the races that rule and the races that serve. The Roman dominion giving to many nations a common speech and law, smote this feeling on its political side; Christianity more effectually banished it from the soul by substituting for the variety of local pantheons the belief in one God, before whom all men are equal¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰² Od. iii. 72: —ἡ μαψίδιως ἀλάλησθε, οἷά τε ληϊστῆρες, ὑπεῖρ ἄλλα, τοῖτ' ἀλώωνται ψυχὰς παρθέμενοι, κακὸν ἄλλοδαποῖσι φέροντες; Cf. Od. ix. 39: and the Hymn to the Pythian Apollo, I. 274. So in II. v. 214, ἀλλότριος φῶς.

¹⁰³ Plato, in the beginning of the Laws, represents it as natural between all states: πολέμος φύσει ὑπάρχει πρὸς ἀπάσας τὰς πόλεις.

¹⁰⁴ See especially Acts xvii. 26; Gal. iii. 28; Eph. ii. 11, sqq.; iv. 3-6; Col. iii. 11.

Coincides with the World-Empire.

It is on the religious life that nations repose. Because divinity was divided, humanity had been divided likewise; the doctrine of the unity of God now enforced the unity of man, who had been created in His image¹⁰⁵. The first lesson of Christianity was love, a love that was to join in one body those whom suspicion and prejudice and pride of race had hitherto kept apart. There was thus formed by the new religion a community of the faithful, a Holy Empire, designed to gather all men into its bosom, and standing opposed to the manifold polytheisms of the older world, exactly as the universal sway of the Cæsars was contrasted with the innumerable kingdoms and republics that had gone before it. The analogy of the two made them appear parts of one great world-movement toward unity: the coincidence of their boundaries, which had begun before Constantine, lasted long enough after him to associate them indissolubly together, and make the names of Roman and Christian convertible¹⁰⁶. Œcumenical councils, where the whole spiritual body gathered itself from every part of the temporal realm under the presidency of the temporal head, presented the

¹⁰⁵ This is drawn out by Laurent, *Histoire du Droit des Gens*; and Ægidi, *Der Fürstenrath nach dem Luneviller Frieden*.

¹⁰⁶ 'Romanos enim vocitant homines nostræ religionis.' – Gregory of Tours, quoted by Ægidi, from A. F. Pott, *Essay on the Words 'Römisch,' 'Romanisch,' 'Roman,' 'Romantisch.'* So in the Middle Ages, Ῥωμαῖοι is used to mean Christians, as opposed to Ἕλληνες, heathens. Cf. Ducange, 'Romani olim dicti qui alias Christiani vel etiam Catholici.'

most visible and impressive examples of their connection¹⁰⁷. The language of civil government was, throughout the West, that of the sacred writings and of worship; the greatest mind of his generation consoled the faithful for the fall of their earthly commonwealth Rome, by describing to them its successor and representative, the 'city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God'¹⁰⁸.

Preservation of the unity of the Church.

Of these two parallel unities, that of the political and that of the religious society, meeting in the higher unity of all Christians, which may be indifferently called Catholicity or Romanism (since in that day those words would have had the same meaning), that only which had been entrusted to the keeping of the Church

¹⁰⁷ As a reviewer in the *Tablet* (whose courtesy it is the more pleasant to acknowledge since his point of view is altogether opposed to mine) has understood this passage as meaning that 'people imagined the Christian religion was to last for ever because the Holy Roman Empire was never to decay,' it may be worth while to say that this is far from being the purport of the argument which this chapter was designed to state. The converse would be nearer the truth: – 'people imagined the Holy Roman Empire was never to decay, because the Christian religion was to last for ever.' The phenomenon may perhaps be stated thus: – Men who were already disposed to believe the Roman Empire to be eternal for one set of reasons, came to believe the Christian Church to be eternal for another and, to them, more impressive set of reasons. Seeing the two institutions allied in fact, they took their alliance and connection to be eternal also; and went on for centuries believing in the necessary existence of the Roman Empire because they believed in its necessary union with the Catholic Church.

¹⁰⁸ Augustine, in the *De Civitate Dei*. His influence, great through all the Middle Ages, was greater on no one than on Charles. – 'Delectabatur et libris sancti Augustini, præcipueque his qui De Civitate Dei prætitulati sunt.' – Eginhard, *Vita Karoli*, cap. 24.

survived the storms of the fifth century. Many reasons may be assigned for the firmness with which she clung to it. Seeing one institution after another falling to pieces around her, seeing how countries and cities were being severed from each other by the irruption of strange tribes and the increasing difficulty of communication, she strove to save religious fellowship by strengthening the ecclesiastical organization, by drawing tighter every bond of outward union. Necessities of faith were still more powerful. Truth, it was said, is one, and as it must bind into one body all who hold it, so it is only by continuing in that body that they can preserve it. Thus with the growing rigidity of dogma, which may be traced from the council of Jerusalem to the council of Trent, there had arisen the idea of supplementing revelation by tradition as a source of doctrine, of exalting the universal conscience and belief above the individual, and allowing the soul to approach God only through the universal consciousness, represented by the sacerdotal order: principles still maintained by one branch of the Church, and for some at least of which far weightier reasons could be assigned then, in the paucity of written records and the blind ignorance of the mass of the people, than any to which their modern advocates have recourse.

Mediaeval Theology requires One Visible Catholic Church.

There was another cause yet more deeply seated, and which it is hard adequately to describe. It was not exactly a want of faith in the unseen, nor a shrinking fear which dared not look

forth on the universe alone: it was rather the powerlessness of the untrained mind to realize the idea as an idea and live in it: it was the tendency to see everything in the concrete, to turn the parable into a fact, the doctrine into its most literal application, the symbol into the essential ceremony; the tendency which intruded earthly Madonnas and saints between the worshipper and the spiritual Deity, and could satisfy its devotional feelings only by visible images even of these: which conceived of man's aspirations and temptations as the result of the direct action of angels and devils: which expressed the strivings of the soul after purity by the search for the Holy Grail: which in the Crusades sent myriads to win at Jerusalem by earthly arms the sepulchre of Him whom they could not serve in their own spirit nor approach by their own prayers. And therefore it was that the whole fabric of mediæval Christianity rested upon the idea of the Visible Church. Such a Church could be in nowise local or limited. To acquiesce in the establishment of National Churches would have appeared to those men, as it must always appear when scrutinized, contradictory to the nature of a religious body, opposed to the genius of Christianity, defensible, when capable of defence at all, only as a temporary resource in the presence of insuperable difficulties. Had this plan, on which so many have dwelt with complacency in later times, been proposed either to the primitive Church in its adversity or to the dominant Church of the ninth century, it would have been rejected with horror; but since there were as yet no nations, the plan was one which did not

and could not present itself. The Visible Church was therefore the Church Universal, the whole congregation of Christian men dispersed throughout the world.

Idea of political unity upheld by the clergy.

Now of the Visible Church the emblem and stay was the priesthood; and it was by them, in whom dwelt whatever of learning and thought was left in Europe, that the second great idea whereof mention has been made – the belief in one universal temporal state – was preserved. As a matter of fact, that state had perished out of the West, and it might seem their interest to let its memory be lost. They, however, did not so calculate their interest. So far from feeling themselves opposed to the civil authority in the seventh and eighth centuries, as they came to do in the twelfth and thirteenth, the clergy were fully persuaded that its maintenance was indispensable to their own welfare. They were, be it remembered, at first Romans themselves living by the Roman law, using Latin as their proper tongue, and imbued with the idea of the historical connection of the two powers. And by them chiefly was that idea expounded and enforced for many generations, by none more earnestly than by Alcuin of York, the adviser of Charles¹⁰⁹. The limits of those two powers had become

¹⁰⁹ 'Quapropter universorum precibus fidelium optandum est, ut in omnem gloriam vestram extendatur imperium, ut scilicet catholica fides... veraciter in una confessione cunctorum cordibus infigatur, quatenus summi Regis donante pietate eadem sanctæ pacis et perfectæ caritatis omnes ubique regat et custodiat unitas.' Quoted by Waitz (*Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte*, ii. 182) from an unprinted letter of Alcuin.

confounded in practice: bishops were princes, the chief ministers of the sovereign, sometimes even the leaders of their flocks in war: kings were accustomed to summon ecclesiastical councils, and appoint to ecclesiastical offices.

Influence of the metaphysics of the time upon the theory
of a World-State.

But, like the unity of the Church, the doctrine of a universal monarchy had a theoretical as well as an historical basis, and may be traced up to those metaphysical ideas out of which the system we call Realism developed itself. The beginnings of philosophy in those times were logical; and its first efforts were to distribute and classify: system, subordination, uniformity, appeared to be that which was most desirable in thought as in life. The search after causes became a search after principles of classification; since simplicity and truth were held to consist not in an analysis of thought into its elements, nor in an observation of the process of its growth, but rather in a sort of genealogy of notions, a statement of the relations of classes as containing or excluding each other. These classes, genera or species, were not themselves held to be conceptions formed by the mind from phenomena, nor mere accidental aggregates of objects grouped under and called by some common name; they were real things, existing independently of the individuals who composed them, recognized rather than created by the human mind. In this view, Humanity is an essential quality present in all men, and making them what they are: as regards it they are therefore

not many but one, the differences between individuals being no more than accidents. The whole truth of their being lies in the universal property, which alone has a permanent and independent existence. The common nature of the individuals thus gathered into one Being is typified in its two aspects, the spiritual and the secular, by two persons, the World-Priest and the World-Monarch, who present on earth a similitude of the Divine unity. For, as we have seen, it was only through its concrete and symbolic expression that a thought could then be apprehended¹¹⁰. Although it was to unity in religion that the clerical body was both by doctrine and by practice attached,

¹¹⁰ A curious illustration of this tendency of mind is afforded by the descriptions we meet with of Learning or Theology (*Studium*) as a concrete existence, having a visible dwelling in the University of Paris. The three great powers which rule human life, says one writer, the Popedom, the Empire, and Learning, have been severally entrusted to the three foremost nations of Europe: Italians, Germans, French. 'His siquidem tribus, scilicet sacerdotio imperio et studio, tanquam tribus virtutibus, videlicet naturali vitali et scientiali, catholica ecclesia spiritualiter mirificatur, augmentatur et regitur. His itaque tribus, tanquam fundamento, pariete et tecto, eadem ecclesia tanquam materialiter proficit. Et sicut ecclesia materialis uno tantum fundamento et uno tecto eget, parietibus vero quatuor, ita imperium quatuor habet parietes, hoc est, quatuor imperii sedes, Aquisgranum, Arelatum, Mediolanum, Romam.' —*Jordanis Chronica; ap. Schardius Sylloge Tractatum*. And see Döllinger, *Die Vergangenheit und Gegenwart der katholischen Theologie*, p. 8. 'Una est sola respublica totius populi Christiani, ergo de necessitate erit et unus solus princeps et rex illius reipublicæ, statutus et stabilitus ad ipsius fidei et populi Christiani dilatationem et defensionem. Ex qua ratione concludit etiam Augustinus (*De Civitate Dei*, lib. xix.) quod extra ecclesiam nunquam fuit nec potuit nec poterit esse verum imperium, etsi fuerint imperatores qualitercumque et secundum quid, non simpliciter, qui fuerunt extra fidem Catholicam et ecclesiam.' — Engelbert (abbot of Admont in Upper Austria), *De Ortu et Fine imperii Romani* (circ. 1310). In this 'de necessitate' everything is included.

they found this inseparable from the corresponding unity in politics. They saw that every act of man has a social and public as well as a moral and personal bearing, and concluded that the rules which directed and the powers which rewarded or punished must be parallel and similar, not so much two powers as different manifestations of one and the same. That the souls of all Christian men should be guided by one hierarchy, rising through successive grades to a supreme head, while for their deeds they were answerable to a multitude of local, unconnected, mutually irresponsible potentates, appeared to them necessarily opposed to the Divine order. As they could not imagine, nor value if they had imagined, a communion of the saints without its expression in a visible Church, so in matters temporal they recognized no brotherhood of spirit without the bonds of form, no universal humanity save in the image of a universal State[113]. In this, as in so much else, the men of the Middle Ages were the slaves of the letter, unable, with all their aspirations, to rise out of the concrete, and prevented by the very grandeur and boldness of their conceptions from carrying them out in practice against the enormous obstacles that met them.

The ideal state supposed to be embodied in the Roman Empire.

Deep as this belief had struck its roots, it might never have risen to maturity nor sensibly affected the progress of events, had it not gained in the pre-existence of the monarchy of Rome a definite shape and a definite purpose. It was chiefly by means

of the Papacy that this came to pass. When under Constantine the Christian Church was framing her organization on the model of the state which protected her, the bishop of the metropolis perceived and improved the analogy between himself and the head of the civil government. The notion that the chair of Peter was the imperial throne of the Church had dawned upon the Popes very early in their history, and grew stronger every century under the operation of causes already specified. Even before the Empire of the West had fallen, St. Leo the Great could boast that to Rome, exalted by the preaching of the chief of the Apostles to be a holy nation, a chosen people, a priestly and royal city, there had been appointed a spiritual dominion wider than her earthly sway¹¹¹. In A.D. 476 Rome ceased to be the political capital of the Western countries, and the Papacy, inheriting no small part of the Emperor's power, drew to herself the reverence which the name of the city still commanded, until by the middle of the eighth, or, at latest, of the ninth century she had perfected in theory a scheme which made her the exact counterpart of the departed despotism, the centre of the hierarchy, absolute mistress of the Christian world.

Constantine's Donation.

The character of that scheme is best set forth in the singular document, most stupendous of all the mediæval forgeries, which under the name of the Donation of Constantine commanded for

¹¹¹ See [note f, p. 32.](#)

seven centuries the unquestioning belief of mankind¹¹². Itself a portentous falsehood, it is the most unimpeachable evidence of the thoughts and beliefs of the priesthood which framed it, some time between the middle of the eighth and the middle of the tenth century. It tells how Constantine the Great, cured of his leprosy by the prayers of Sylvester, resolved, on the fourth day from his baptism, to forsake the ancient seat for a new capital on the Bosphorus, lest the continuance of the secular government should cramp the freedom of the spiritual, and how he bestowed therewith upon the Pope and his successors the sovereignty over Italy and the countries of the West. But this is not all, although this is what historians, in admiration of its splendid audacity, have chiefly dwelt upon. The edict proceeds to grant to the Roman pontiff and his clergy a series of dignities and privileges, all of them enjoyed by the Emperor and his senate, all of them shewing the same desire to make the pontifical a copy of the imperial office. The Pope is to inhabit the Lateran palace, to wear the diadem, the collar, the purple cloak, to carry the sceptre, and to be attended by a body of chamberlains. Similarly his clergy are to ride on white horses and receive the honours and immunities of the senate and patricians¹¹³.

¹¹² This is admirably brought out by Ægidi, *Der Fürstenrath nach dem Luneviller Frieden*.

¹¹³ See the original forgery (or rather the extracts which Gratian gives from it) in the *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, *Dist.* xcvi. cc. 13, 14. 'Et sicut nostram terrenam imperialem potentiam, sic sacrosanctam Romanam ecclesiam decrevimus veneranter honorari, et amplius quam nostrum imperium et terrenum thronum sedem beati

Interdependence of Papacy and Empire.

The notion which prevails throughout, that the chief of the religious society must be in every point conformed to his prototype the chief of the civil, is the key to all the thoughts and acts of the Roman clergy; not less plainly seen in the details of papal ceremonial than it is in the gigantic scheme of papal legislation. The Canon law was intended by its authors to reproduce and rival the imperial jurisprudence; a correspondence was traced between its divisions and those of the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, and Gregory IX, who was the first to consolidate it into a code, sought the fame and received the title of the Justinian of the Church. But the wish of the clergy was always, even in the

Petri gloriose exaltari, tribuentes ei potestatem et gloriæ dignitatem atque vigorem et honorificentiam imperialem... Beato Sylvestro patri nostro summo pontifici et universali urbis Romæ papæ, et omnibus eius successoribus pontificibus, qui usque in finem mundi in sede beati Petri erunt sessuri, de præsentī contradimus palatium imperiī nostri Lateranense, deinde diadema, videlicet coronam capitis nostri, simulque phrygium, necnon et superhumera, verum etiam et chlamydem purpuream et tunicam coccineam, et omnia imperialia indumenta, sed et dignitatem imperialem præsidentium equitum, conferentes etiam et imperialia sceptrā, simulque cuncta signa atque banda et diversa ornamenta imperialia et omnem processionem imperialis culminis et gloriam potestatis nostræ... Et sicut imperialis militia ornatur ita et clerum sanctæ Romanæ ecclesiæ ornari decernimus... Unde ut pontificalis apex non vilescat sed magis quam terreni imperiī dignitas gloria et potentia decoretur, ecce tam palatium nostrum quam Romanam urbem et omnes Italiæ seu occidentalium regionum provincias loca et civitates beatissimo papæ Sylvestro universali papæ contradimus atque relinquimus... Ubi enim principatus sacerdotum et Christianæ religionis caput ab imperatore cœlesti constitutum est, iustum non est ut illic imperator terrenus habeat potestatem. The practice of kissing the Pope's foot was adopted in imitation of the old imperial court. It was afterwards revived by the German Emperors.

weakness or hostility of the temporal power, to imitate and rival, not to supersede it; since they held it the necessary complement of their own, and thought the Christian people equally imperilled by the fall of either. Hence the reluctance of Gregory II to break with the Byzantine princes¹¹⁴, and the maintenance of their titular sovereignty till A.D. 800: hence the part which the Holy See played in transferring the crown to Charles, the first sovereign of the West capable of fulfilling its duties; hence the grief with which its weakness under his successors was seen, the gladness when it descended to Otto as representative of the Frankish kingdom.

The Roman Empire revived in a new character.

Up to the era of A.D. 800 there had been at Constantinople a legitimate historical prolongation of the Roman Empire. Technically, as we have seen, the election of Charles, after the deposition of Constantine VI, was itself a prolongation, and maintained the old rights and forms in their integrity. But the Pope, though he knew it not, did far more than effect a change of dynasty when he rejected Irene and crowned the barbarian chief. Restorations are always delusive. As well might one hope to stop the earth's course in her orbit as to arrest that ceaseless change and movement in human affairs which forbids an old institution,

¹¹⁴ Döllinger has shewn in a recent work (*Die Papst-Fabeln des Mittelalters*) that the common belief that Gregory II excited the revolt against Leo the Iconoclast is unfounded. So Anastasius, 'Ammonebat (sc. Gregorius Secundus) ne a fide vel amore Romani imperii desisterent.' — *Vitæ Pontif. Rom.*

suddenly transplanted into a new order of things, from filling its ancient place and serving its former ends. The dictatorship at Rome in the second Punic war was not more unlike the dictatorships of Sulla and Cæsar, nor the States-general of Louis XIII to the assembly which his unhappy descendant convoked in 1789, than was the imperial office of Theodosius to that of Charles the Frank; and the seal, ascribed to A.D. 800, which bears the legend 'Renovatio Romani Imperii'¹¹⁵, expresses, more justly perhaps than was intended by its author, a second birth of the Roman Empire.

It is not, however, from Carolingian times that a proper view of this new creation can be formed. That period was one of transition, of fluctuation and uncertainty, in which the office, passing from one dynasty and country to another, had not time to acquire a settled character and claims, and was without the power that would have enabled it to support them. From the coronation of Otto the Great a new period begins, in which the ideas that have been described as floating in men's minds took clearer shape, and attached to the imperial title a body of definite rights and definite duties. It is this new phase, the Holy Empire,

¹¹⁵ Of this curious seal, a leaden one, preserved at Paris, a figure is given upon the cover of this volume. There are very few monuments of that age whose genuineness can be considered altogether beyond doubt; but this seal has many respectable authorities in its favour. See, among others, Le Blanc, *Dissertation historique sur quelques Monnoies de Charlemagne*, Paris, 1689; J. M. Heineccius, *De Veteribus Germanorum aliarumque nationum sigillis*, Lips. 1709; Anastasius, *Vitæ Pontificum Romanorum*, ed. Vignoli, Romæ, 1752; Götz, *Deutschlands Kayser-Münzen des Mittelalters*, Dresden, 1827; and the authorities cited by Waitz, *Deutsche Verfassungs-geschichte*, iii. 179, n. 4.

that we have now to consider.

Position and functions of the Emperor.

The realistic philosophy, and the needs of a time when the only notion of civil or religious order was submission to authority, required the World-State to be a monarchy; tradition, as well as the continuance of certain institutions, gave the monarch the name of Roman Emperor. A king could not be universal sovereign, for there were many kings: the Emperor must be, for there had never been but one Emperor; he had in older and brighter days been the actual lord of the civilized world; the seat of his power was placed beside that of the spiritual autocrat of Christendom¹¹⁶. His functions will be seen most clearly if we deduce them from the leading principle of mediæval mythology, the exact correspondence of earth and heaven. As God, in the midst of the celestial hierarchy, ruled blessed spirits in paradise, so the Pope, His Vicar, raised above priests, bishops, metropolitans, reigned over the souls of mortal men below. But as God is Lord of earth as well as of heaven, so must

¹¹⁶ 'Præterea mirari se dilecta fraternitas tua quod non Francorum set Romanorum imperatores nos appellemus; set scire te convenit quia nisi Romanorum imperatores essemus, utique nec Francorum. A Romanis enim hoc nomen et dignitatem assumpsimus, apud quos profecto primum tantæ culmen sublimitatis effulsit,' &c —*Letter of the Emperor Lewis II to Basil the Emperor at Constantinople*, from *Chron. Salernit. ap. Murat. S. R. I.* Illam (sc. Romanam ecclesiam) solus ille fundavit, et super petram fidei mox nascentis erexit, qui beato æternæ vitæ clavigero terreni simul et cœlestis imperii iura commisit.' —*Corpus Iuris Canonici*, *Dist. xxii. c. 1*. The expression is not uncommon in mediæval writers. So 'unum est imperium Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, cuius est pars ecclesia constituta in terris,' in Lewis II's letter.

he (the *Imperator cælestis*^[120]) be represented by a second earthly viceroy, the Emperor (*Imperator terrenus*^[120]), whose authority shall be of and for this present life. And as in this present world the soul cannot act save through the body, while yet the body is no more than an instrument and means for the soul's manifestation, so must there be a rule and care of men's bodies as well as of their souls, yet subordinated always to the well-being of that which is the purer and the more enduring. It is under the emblem of soul and body that the relation of the papal and imperial power is presented to us throughout the Middle Ages¹¹⁷. The Pope, as God's vicar in matters spiritual, is to lead men to eternal life; the Emperor, as vicar in matters temporal, must so control them in their dealings with one another that they may be able to pursue undisturbed the spiritual life, and thereby attain the same supreme and common end of everlasting happiness. In the view of this object his chief duty is to maintain peace in the world, while towards the Church his position is that of Advocate, a title borrowed from the practice adopted by churches and monasteries of choosing some powerful baron to protect their lands and lead their tenants in war¹¹⁸. The functions

¹¹⁷ 'Merito summus Pontifex Romanus episcopus dici potest rex et sacerdos. Si enim dominus noster Iesus Christus sic appellatur, non videtur incongruum suum vocare successorem. Corporale et temporale ex spirituali et perpetuo dependet, sicut corporis operatio ex virtute animæ. Sicut ergo corpus per animam habet esse virtutem et operationem, ita et temporalis iurisdictio principum per spiritualem Petri et successorum eius.' – St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Regimine Principum*.

¹¹⁸ 'Nonne Romana ecclesia tenetur imperatori tanquam suo patrono, et imperator

of Advocacy are twofold: at home to make the Christian people obedient to the priesthood, and to execute their decrees upon heretics and sinners; abroad to propagate the faith among the heathen, not sparing to use carnal weapons¹¹⁹.

Correspondence and harmony of the spiritual and temporal powers.

Thus does the Emperor answer in every point to his antitype the Pope, his power being yet of a lower rank, created on the analogy of the papal, as the papal itself had been modelled after the elder Empire. The parallel holds good even in its details; for just as we have seen the churchman assuming the crown and robes of the secular prince, so now did he array the Emperor in

ecclesiam fovere et defensare tanquam suus vere patronus? certe sic... Patronis vero concessum est ut praelatos in ecclesiis sui patronatus eligant. Cum ergo imperator onus sentiat patronatus, ut qui tenetur eam defendere, sentire debet honorem et emolumentum.' I quote this from a curious document in Goldast's collection of tracts (*Monarchia Imperii*), entitled '*Letter of the four Universities, Paris, Oxford, Prague, and the "Romana generalitas," to the Emperor Wenzel and Pope Urban,*' A.D. 1380. The title can scarcely be right, but if the document is, as in all probability it is, not later than the fifteenth century, its being misdescribed, or even its being a forgery, does not make it less valuable as an evidence of men's ideas.

¹¹⁹ So Leo III in a charter issued on the day of Charles's coronation: '... actum in præsentia gloriosi atque excellentissimi filii nostri Caroli quem auctore Deo in defensionem et provectionem sanctæ universalis ecclesiæ hodie Augustum sacravimus.' – Jaffé *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, ad ann. 800. So, indeed, Theodulf of Orleans, a contemporary of Charles, ascribes to the Emperor an almost papal authority over the Church itself: —'Cœli habet hic (sc. Papa) claves, proprias te iussit habere; Tu regis ecclesiæ, nam regit ille poli; Tu regis eius opes, clerum populumque gubernas, Hic te cœlicolas ducet ad usque choros.' In D. Bouquet, v. 415.

his own ecclesiastical vestments, the stole and the dalmatic, gave him a clerical as well as a sacred character, removed his office from all narrowing associations of birth or country, inaugurated him by rites every one of which was meant to symbolize and enjoin duties in their essence religious. Thus the Holy Roman Church and the Holy Roman Empire are one and the same thing, in two aspects; and Catholicism, the principle of the universal Christian society, is also Romanism; that is, rests upon Rome as the origin and type of its universality; manifesting itself in a mystic dualism which corresponds to the two natures of its Founder. As divine and eternal, its head is the Pope, to whom souls have been entrusted; as human and temporal, the Emperor, commissioned to rule men's bodies and acts.

In nature and compass the government of these two potentates is the same, differing only in the sphere of its working; and it matters not whether we call the Pope a spiritual Emperor or the Emperor a secular Pope. Nor, though the one office is below the other as far as man's life on earth is less precious than his life hereafter, is therefore, on the older and truer theory, the imperial authority delegated by the papal. For, as has been said already, God is represented by the Pope not in every capacity, but only as the ruler of spirits in heaven: as sovereign of earth, He issues His commission directly to the Emperor. Opposition between two servants of the same King is inconceivable, each being bound to aid and foster the other: the co-operation of both being needed in all that concerns the welfare of Christendom at large. This

is the one perfect and self-consistent scheme of the union of Church and State; for, taking the absolute coincidence of their limits to be self-evident, it assumes the infallibility of their joint government, and derives, as a corollary from that infallibility, the duty of the civil magistrate to root out heresy and schism no less than to punish treason and rebellion.

Union of Church and State.

It is also the scheme which, granting the possibility of their harmonious action, places the two powers in that relation which gives each of them its maximum of strength. But by a law to which it would be hard to find exceptions, in proportion as the State became more Christian, the Church, who to work out her purposes had assumed worldly forms, became by the contact worldlier, meaner, spiritually weaker; and the system which Constantine founded amid such rejoicings, which culminated so triumphantly in the Empire Church of the Middle Ages, has in each succeeding generation been slowly losing ground, has seen its brightness dimmed and its completeness marred, and sees now those who are most zealous on behalf of its surviving institutions feebly defend or silently desert the principle upon which all must rest.

The complete accord of the papal and imperial powers which this theory, as sublime as it is impracticable, requires, was attained only at a few points in their history¹²⁰. It was finally

¹²⁰ Perhaps at no more than three: in the time of Charles and Leo; again under Otto III and his two Popes, Gregory V and Sylvester II; thirdly, under Henry III; certainly

supplanted by another view of their relation, which, professing to be a development of a principle recognized as fundamental, the superior importance of the religious life, found increasing favour in the eyes of fervent churchmen¹²¹. Declaring the Pope sole representative on earth of the Deity, it concluded that from him, and not directly from God, must the Empire be held – held feudally, it was said by many – and it thereby thrust down the temporal power, to be the slave instead of the sister of the spiritual¹²². Nevertheless, the Papacy in her meridian, and under the guidance of her greatest minds, of Hildebrand, of Alexander, of Innocent, not seeking to abolish or absorb the civil government, required only its obedience, and exalted its dignity against all save herself¹²³. It was reserved for Boniface

never thenceforth.

¹²¹ *The Sachsenspiegel* (*Speculum Saxonicum*, circ. A.D. 1240), the great North-German law book, says, 'The Empire is held from God alone, not from the Pope. Emperor and Pope are supreme each in what has been entrusted to him: the Pope in what concerns the soul; the Emperor in all that belongs to the body and to knighthood.' *The Schwabenspiegel*, compiled half a century later, subordinates the prince to the pontiff: 'Daz weltliche Schwert des Gerichtes daz lihet der Babest dem Chaiser; daz geistlich ist dem Babest gesetzt daz er damit richte.'

¹²² So Boniface VIII in the bull *Unam Sanctam*, will have but one head for the Christian people. 'Igitur ecclesiæ unius et unicæ unum corpus, unum caput, non duo capita quasi monstrum.'

¹²³ St. Bernard writes to Conrad III: 'Non veniat anima mea in consilium eorum qui dicunt vel imperio pacem et libertatem ecclesiæ vel ecclesiæ prosperitatem et exaltationem imperii nocituram.' So in the *De Consideratione*: 'Si utrumque simul habere velis, perdes utrumque,' of the papal claim to temporal and spiritual authority, quoted by Gieselser.

VIII, whose extravagant pretensions betrayed the decay that was already at work within, to show himself to the crowding pilgrims at the jubilee of A.D. 1300, seated on the throne of Constantine, arrayed with sword, and crown, and sceptre, shouting aloud, 'I am Cæsar – I am Emperor'¹²⁴.'

Proofs from mediæval documents.

The theory of an Emperor's place and functions thus sketched cannot be definitely assigned to any point of time; for it was growing and changing from the fifth century to the fifteenth. Nor need it surprise us that we do not find in any one author a statement of the grounds whereon it rested, since much of what seems strangest to us was then too obvious to be formally explained. No one, however, who examines mediæval writings can fail to perceive, sometimes from direct words, oftener from allusions or assumptions, that such ideas as these are present to the minds of the authors¹²⁵. That which it is easiest to prove is

¹²⁴ 'Sedens in solio armatus et cinctus ensem, habensque in capite Constantini diadema, stricto dextra capulo ensis accincti, ait: "Numquid ego summus sum pontifex? nonne ista est cathedra Petri? Nonne possum imperii iura tutari? ego sum Cæsar, ego sum imperator.'" – Fr. Pipinus (ap. Murat. *S. R. I.* ix.) l. iv. c. 47. These words, however, are by this writer ascribed to Boniface, when receiving the envoys of the emperor Albert I, in A.D. 1299. I have not been able to find authority for their use at the jubilee, but give the current story for what it is worth. It has been suggested that Dante may be alluding to this sword scene in a well-known passage of the *Purgatorio* (xvi. l. 106): —'Soleva Roma, che 'l buon mondo feo Duo Soli aver, che l' una e l' altra strada Facean vedere, e del mondo e di Deo. L' un l' altro ha spento, ed è giunta la spada Col pastorale: e l' un coll' altro insieme Per viva forza mal convien che vada.'

¹²⁵ See especially Peter de Andlo (*De Imperio Romano*); Ralph Colonna (*De*

the connection of the Empire with religion. From every record, from chronicles and treatises, proclamations, laws, and sermons, passages may be adduced wherein the defence and spread of the faith, and the maintenance of concord among the Christian people, are represented as the function to which the Empire has been set apart. The belief expressed by Lewis II, 'Imperii dignitas non in vocabuli voce sed in gloriosæ pietatis culmine consistit'¹²⁶, ' appears again in the address of the Archbishop of Mentz to Conrad II¹²⁷, as Vicar of God; is reiterated by Frederick I[132], when he writes to the prelates of Germany, 'On earth God has placed no more than two powers, and as there is in heaven but one God, so is there here one Pope and one Emperor. Divine providence has specially appointed the Roman Empire to prevent the continuance of schism in the Church'¹²⁸; ' is echoed by jurists and divines down to the days of Charles V¹²⁹. It was a doctrine which we shall find the friends and foes

translatione Imperii Romani); Dante (*De Monarchia*); Engelbert (*De Ortu et Fine Imperii Romani*); Marsilius Patavinus (*De translatione Imperii Romani*); Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini (*De Ortu et Autoritate Imperii Romani*); Zoannetus (*De Imperio Romano atque ejus Iurisdictione*); and the writers in Schardius's *Sylloge*, and in Goldast's Collection of Tracts, entitled *Monarchia Imperii*.

¹²⁶ Letter of Lewis II to Basil the Macedonian, in *Chron. Salernit.* in Mur. S. R. I.; also given by Baronius, *Ann. Eccl.* ad ann. 871.

¹²⁷ 'Ad summum dignitatis pervenisti: Vicarius es Christi.' – Wippo, *Vita Chuonradi* (*ap. Pertz*), c. 3. Letter in Radewic, *ap. Murat*, S. R. I.

¹²⁸ Lewis IV is styled in one of his proclamations, 'Gentis humanæ, orbis Christiani custos, urbi et orbi a Deo electus præesse.' – Pfeffinger, *Vitriarius Illustratus*.

¹²⁹ In a document issued by the Diet of Speyer (A.D. 1529) the Emperor is called

of the Holy See equally concerned to insist on, the one to make the transference (*translatio*) from the Greeks to the Germans appear entirely the Pope's work, and so establish his right of overseeing or cancelling his rival's election, the others by setting the Emperor at the head of the Church to reduce the Pope to the place of chief bishop of his realm¹³⁰. His headship was dwelt upon chiefly in the two duties already noticed. As the counterpart of the Mussulman Commander of the Faithful, he was leader of the Church militant against her infidel foes, was in this capacity summoned to conduct crusades, and in later times recognized chief of the confederacies against the conquering Ottomans. As representative of the whole Christian people, it belonged to him to convoke General Councils, a right not without importance even when exercised concurrently with the Pope, but far more weighty when the object of the council was to settle a disputed election, or, as at Constance, to depose the reigning pontiff himself.

The Coronation ceremonies.

No better illustrations can be desired than those to be

'Oberst, Vogt, und Haupt der Christenheit.' Hieronymus Balbus, writing about the same time, puts the question whether all Christians are subject to the Emperor in temporal things, as they are to the Pope in spiritual, and answers it by saying, 'Cum ambo ex eodem fonte perfluxerint et eadem semita incedant, de utroque idem puto sentiendum.'

¹³⁰ 'Non magis ad Papam depositio seu remotio pertinet quam ad quoslibet regum prælatos, qui reges suos prout assolent, consecrant et inungunt.' —*Letter of Frederick II* (lib. i. c. 3).

found in the office for the imperial coronation at Rome, too long to be transcribed here, but well worthy of an attentive study¹³¹. The rites prescribed in it are rights of consecration to a religious office: the Emperor, besides the sword, globe, and sceptre of temporal power, receives a ring as the symbol of his faith, is ordained a subdeacon, assists the Pope in celebrating mass, partakes as a clerical person of the communion in both kinds, is admitted a canon of St. Peter and St. John Lateran. The oath to be taken by an elector begins, 'Ego N. volo regem Romanorum in Cæsarem promovendum, temporale caput populo Christiano eligere.' The Emperor swears to cherish and defend the Holy Roman Church and her bishop: the Pope prays after the reading of the Gospel, 'Deus qui ad prædicandum æterni regni evangelium Imperium Romanum præparasti, prætende famulo tuo Imperatori nostro arma cœlestia.' Among the Emperor's official titles there occur these: 'Head of Christendom,' 'Defender and Advocate of the Christian Church,' 'Temporal Head of the Faithful,' 'Protector of Palestine and of the Catholic Faith'¹³².

The rights of the Empire proved from the Bible.

Very singular are the reasonings used by which the necessity and divine right of the Empire are proved out of the Bible. The

¹³¹ *Liber Ceremonialis Romanus*, lib. i. sect. 5; with which compare the *Coronatio Romana* of Henry VII, in Pertz, and Muratori's Dissertation in vol. i. of the *Antiquitates Italice Medii Ævi*.

¹³² See Goldast, *Collection of Imperial Constitutions*; and Moser, *Römische Kayser*.

mediaeval theory of the relation of the civil power to the priestly was profoundly influenced by the account in the Old Testament of the Jewish theocracy, in which the king, though the institution of his office was a derogation from the purity of the older system, appears divinely chosen and commissioned, and stood in a peculiarly intimate relation to the national religion. From the New Testament the authority and eternity of Rome herself was established. Every passage was seized on where submission to the powers that be is enjoined, every instance cited where obedience had actually been rendered to imperial officials, a special emphasis being laid on the sanction which Christ Himself had given to Roman dominion by pacifying the world through Augustus, by being born at the time of the taxing, by paying tribute to Cæsar, by saying to Pilate, 'Thou couldest have no power at all against Me except it were given thee from above.'

More attractive to the mystical spirit than these direct arguments were those drawn from prophecy, or based on the allegorical interpretation of Scripture. Very early in Christian history had the belief formed itself that the Roman Empire – as the fourth beast of Daniel's vision, as the iron legs and feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image – was to be the world's last and universal kingdom. From Origen and Jerome downwards it found unquestioned acceptance¹³³, and that not unnaturally.

¹³³ The abbot Engelbert (*De Ortu et Fine Imperii Romani*) quotes Origen and Jerome to this effect, and proceeds himself to explain, from 2 Thess. ii., how the falling away will precede the coming of Antichrist. There will be a triple 'dissessio,' of the kingdoms of the earth from the Roman Empire, of the Church from the Apostolic

For no new power had arisen to extinguish the Roman, as the Persian monarchy had been blotted out by Alexander, as the realms of his successors had fallen before the conquering republic herself. Every Northern conqueror, Goth, Lombard, Burgundian, had cherished her memory and preserved her laws; Germany had adopted even the name of the Empire 'dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly, and diverse from all that were before it.' To these predictions, and to many others from the Apocalypse, were added those which in the Gospels and Epistles foretold the advent of Antichrist¹³⁴. He was to succeed the Roman dominion, and the Popes are more than once warned that by weakening the Empire they are hastening the coming of the enemy and the end of the world¹³⁵. It is not only when

See, of the faithful from the faith. Of these, the first causes the second; the temporal sword to punish heretics and schismatics being no longer ready to work the will of the rulers of the Church.

¹³⁴ A full statement of the views that prevailed in the earlier Middle Age regarding Antichrist – as well as of the singular prophecy of the Frankish Emperor who shall appear in the latter days, conquer the world, and then going to Jerusalem shall lay down his crown on the Mount of Olives and deliver over the kingdom to Christ – may be found in the little treatise, *Vita Antichristi*, which Adso, monk and afterwards abbot of Moutier-en-Der, compiled (cir. 950) for the information of Queen Gerberga, wife of Louis d'Outremer. Antichrist is to be born a Jew of the tribe of Dan (Gen. xlix. 17), 'non de episcopo et monacha, sicut alii delirando dogmatizant, sed de immundissima meretrice et crudelissimo nebulone. Totus in peccato concipietur, in peccato generabitur, in peccato nascetur.' His birthplace is Babylon: he is to be brought up in Bethsaida and Chorazin. Adso's book may be found printed in Migne, t. ci. p. 1290.

¹³⁵ S. Thomas explains the prophecy in a remarkable manner, shewing how the decline of the Empire is no argument against its fulfilment. 'Dicendum quod nondum

groping in the dark labyrinths of prophecy that mediæval authors are quick in detecting emblems, imaginative in explaining them. Men were wont in those days to interpret Scripture in a singular fashion. Not only did it not occur to them to ask what meaning words had to those to whom they were originally addressed, they were quite as careless whether the sense they discovered was one which the language used would naturally and rationally bear to any reader at any time. No analogy was too faint, no allegory too fanciful, to be drawn out of a simple text; and, once propounded, the interpretation acquired in argument all the authority of the text itself. Thus the two swords of which Christ said, 'It is enough,' became the spiritual and temporal powers, and the grant of the spiritual to Peter involves the supremacy of the Papacy¹³⁶. Thus one writer proves the eternity of Rome from the seventy-second Psalm, 'They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations;' the moon being of course, since Gregory VII, the Roman Empire, as the sun, or greater light, is the Popedom. Another quoting, 'Qui

cessavit, sed est commutatum de temporali in spirituale, ut dicit Leo Papa in sermone de Apostolis: et ideo discessio a Romano imperio debet intelligi non solum a temporali sed etiam a spirituali, scilicet a fide Catholica Romanæ Ecclesiæ. Est autem hoc conveniens signum nam Christus venit, quando Romanum imperium omnibus dominabatur: ita e contra signum adventus Antichristi est discessio ab eo.' —*Comment. ad 2 Thess.* ii.

¹³⁶ See [note z, page 119](#). The Papal party sometimes insisted that both swords were given to Peter, while the imperialists assigned the temporal sword to John. Thus a gloss to the *Sachsenspiegel* says, 'Dat eine svert hadde Sinte Peter, dat het nu de paves: dat andere hadde Johannes, dat het nu de keyser.'

tenet teneat donec auferatur¹³⁷ ,' with Augustine's explanation thereof¹³⁸, says, that when 'he who letteth' is removed, tribes and provinces will rise in rebellion, and the Empire to which God has committed the government of the human race will be dissolved. From the miseries of his own time (he wrote under Frederick III) he predicts that the end is near. The same spirit of symbolism seized on the number of the electors: 'the seven lamps burning in the unity of the sevenfold spirit which illumine the Holy Empire¹³⁹.' Strange legends told how Romans and Germans were of one lineage; how Peter's staff had been found on the banks of the Rhine, the miracle signifying that a commission was issued to the Germans to reclaim wandering sheep to the one fold. So complete does the scriptural proof appear in the hands of mediæval churchmen, many holding it a mortal sin to resist the power ordained of God, that we forget they were all the while only adapting to an existing institution what they found written already; we begin to fancy that the Empire was maintained, obeyed, exalted for centuries, on the strength of words to which we attach in almost every case a wholly different meaning.

Illustrations from Mediæval Art.

It would be a task both pleasant and profitable to pass on

¹³⁷ 2 Thess. ii. 7.

¹³⁸ St. Augustine, however, though he states the view (applying the passage to the Roman Empire) which was generally received in the Middle Ages, is careful not to commit himself positively to it.

¹³⁹ *Jordanis Chronica* (written towards the close of the thirteenth century).

from the theologians to the poets and artists of the Middle Ages, and endeavour to trace through their works the influence of the ideas which have been expounded above. But it is one far too wide for the scope of the present treatise; and one which would demand an acquaintance with those works themselves such as only minute and long-continued study could give. For even a slight knowledge enables any one to see how much still remains to be interpreted in the imaginative literature and in the paintings of those times, and how apt we are in glancing over a piece of work to miss those seemingly trifling indications of the artist's thought or belief which are all the more precious that they are indirect or unconscious. Therefore a history of mediæval art which shall evolve its philosophy from its concrete forms, if it is to have any value at all, must be minute in description as well as subtle in method. But lest this class of illustrations should appear to have been wholly forgotten, it may be well to mention here two paintings in which the theory of the mediæval empire is unmistakeably set forth. One of them is in Rome, the other in Florence; every traveller in Italy may examine both for himself.

Mosaic of the Lateran Palace at Rome.

The first of these is the famous mosaic of the Lateran triclinium, constructed by Pope Leo III about A.D. 800, and an exact copy of which, made by the order of Sextus V, may still be seen over against the façade of St. John Lateran. Originally meant to adorn the state banqueting-hall of the Popes, it is now placed in the open air, in the finest situation in Rome, looking from the

brow of a hill across the green ridges of the Campagna to the olive-groves of Tivoli and the glistening crags and snow-capped summits of the Umbrian and Sabine Apennine. It represents in the centre Christ surrounded by the Apostles, whom He is sending forth to preach the Gospel; one hand is extended to bless, the other holds a book with the words 'Pax Vobis.' Below and to the right Christ is depicted again, and this time sitting: on his right hand kneels Pope Sylvester, on his left the Emperor Constantine; to the one he gives the keys of heaven and hell, to the other a banner surmounted by a cross. In the group on the opposite, that is, on the left side of the arch, we see the Apostle Peter seated, before whom in like manner kneel Pope Leo III and Charles the Emperor; the latter wearing, like Constantine, his crown. Peter, himself grasping the keys, gives to Leo the pallium of an archbishop, to Charles the banner of the Christian army. The inscription is, 'Beatus Petrus dona vitam Leoni PP et victoriam Carulo regi dona;' while round the arch is written, 'Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax omnibus bonæ voluntatis.'

The order and nature of the ideas here symbolized is sufficiently clear. First comes the revelation of the Gospel, and the divine commission to gather all men into its fold. Next, the institution, at the memorable era of Constantine's conversion, of the two powers by which the Christian people is to be respectively taught and governed. Thirdly, we are shewn the permanent Vicar of God, the Apostle who keeps the keys of heaven and hell, re-

establishing these same powers on a new and firmer basis¹⁴⁰. The badge of ecclesiastical supremacy he gives to Leo as the spiritual head of the faithful on earth, the banner of the Church Militant to Charles, who is to maintain her cause against heretics and infidels.

Fresco in S. Maria Novella at Florence.

The second painting is of greatly later date. It is a fresco in the chapter-house of the Dominican convent of Santa Maria Novella¹⁴¹ at Florence, usually known as the Capellone degli Spagnuoli. It has been commonly ascribed, on Vasari's authority, to Simone Martini of Siena, but an examination of the dates of his life seems to discredit this view¹⁴². Most probably it

¹⁴⁰ Compare with this the words which Pope Hadrian I. had used some twenty-three years before, of Charles as representative of Constantine: 'Et sicut temporibus Beati Sylvestri, Romani pontificis, a sanctæ recordationis piissimo Constantino magno imperatore, per eius largitatem sancta Dei catholica et apostolica Romana ecclesia elevata atque exaltata est, et potestatem in his Hesperiae partibus largiri dignatus est, ita et in his vestris felicissimis temporibus atque nostris, sancta Dei ecclesia, id est, beati Petri apostoli germinet atque exsultet, ut omnes gentes quæ hæc audierint edicere valeant, 'Domine salvum fac regem, et exaudi nos in die in qua invocaverimus te;' quia ecce novus Christianissimus Dei Constantinus imperator his temporibus surrexit, per quem omnia Deus sanctæ suæ ecclesiæ beati apostolorum principis Petri largiri dignatus est.' —*Letter XLIX of Cod. Carol.*, A.D. 777 (in Mur. *Scriptores Rerum Italicarum*). This letter is memorable as containing the first allusion, or what seems an allusion, to Constantine's Donation. The phrase 'sancta Dei ecclesia, id est, B. Petri apostoli,' is worth noting.

¹⁴¹ The church in which the opening scene of Boccaccio's *Decameron* is laid.

¹⁴² So Kugler (Eastlake's ed. vol. i. p. 144), and so also Messrs. Crowe and Cavalcaselle, in their *New History of Painting in Italy*, vol. ii. pp. 85 *sqq.*

was executed between A.D. 1340 and 1350. It is a huge work, covering one whole wall of the chapter-house, and filled with figures, some of which, but seemingly on no sufficient authority, have been taken to represent eminent persons of the time – Cimabue, Arnolfo, Boccaccio, Petrarch, Laura, and others. In it is represented the whole scheme of man's life here and hereafter – the Church on earth and the Church in heaven. Full in front are seated side by side the Pope and the Emperor: on their right and left, in a descending row, minor spiritual and temporal officials; next to the Pope a cardinal, bishops, and doctors; next to the Emperor, the king of France and a line of nobles and knights. Behind them appears the Duomo of Florence as an emblem of the Visible Church, while at their feet is a flock of sheep (the faithful) attacked by ravening wolves (heretics and schismatics), whom a pack of spotted dogs (the Dominicans¹⁴³) combat and chase away. From this, the central foreground of the picture, a path winds round and up a height to a great gate where the Apostle sits on guard to admit true believers: they passing through it are met by choirs of seraphs, who lead them on through the delicious groves of Paradise. Above all, at the top of the painting and just over the spot where his two lieutenants, Pope

¹⁴³ Domini canes. Spotted because of their black-and-white raiment. There is of course a great deal more detail in the picture, which it does not appear necessary to describe. St. Dominic is a conspicuous figure. It is worth remarking that the Emperor, who is on the Pope's left hand, and so made slightly inferior to him while superior to every one else, holds in his hand, instead of the usual imperial globe, a death's head, typifying the transitory nature of his power.

and Emperor, are placed below, is the Saviour enthroned amid saints and angels[149].

Anti-national character of the Empire.

Here, too, there needs no comment. The Church Militant is the perfect counterpart of the Church Triumphant: her chief danger is from those who would rend the unity of her visible body, the seamless garment of her heavenly Lord; and that devotion to His person which is the sum of her faith and the essence of her being, must on earth be rendered to those two lieutenants whom He has chosen to govern in His name.

A theory, such as that which it has been attempted to explain and illustrate, is utterly opposed to restrictions of place or person. The idea of one Christian people, all whose members are equal in the sight of God, – an idea so forcibly expressed in the unity of the priesthood, where no barrier separated the successor of the Apostle from the humblest curate, – and in the prevalence of one language for worship and government, made the post of Emperor independent of the race, or rank, or actual resources of its occupant. The Emperor was entitled to the obedience of Christendom, not as hereditary chief of a victorious tribe, or feudal lord of a portion of the earth's surface, but as solemnly invested with an office. Not only did he excel in dignity the kings of the earth: his power was different in its nature; and, so far from supplanting or rivalling theirs, rose above them to become the source and needful condition of their authority in their several territories, the bond which joined them in one harmonious body.

The vast dominions and vigorous personal action of Charles the Great had concealed this distinction while he reigned; under his successors the imperial crown appeared disconnected from the direct government of the kingdoms they had established, existing only in the form of an undefined suzerainty, as the type of that unity without which men's minds could not rest. It was characteristic of the Middle Ages, that demanding the existence of an Emperor, they were careless who he was or how he was chosen, so he had been duly inaugurated; and that they were not shocked by the contrast between unbounded rights and actual helplessness. At no time in the world's history has theory, pretending all the while to control practice, been so utterly divorced from it. Ferocious and sensual, that age worshipped humility and asceticism: there has never been a purer ideal of love, nor a grosser profligacy of life.

The power of the Roman Emperor cannot as yet be called international; though this, as we shall see, became in later times its most important aspect; for in the tenth century national distinctions had scarcely begun to exist. But its genius was clerical and old Roman, in nowise territorial or Teutonic: it rested not on armed hosts or wide lands, but upon the duty, the awe, the love of its subjects.

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