Early Beginnings of Holy Roman Rule

Church Politics in the Sustaining of the Western Empire
(4th-8th centuries)

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This study focuses on the developments of the Roman Catholic Church, particularly its emergence as a persecuted sect, all the way to becoming a respected institution, the official religion of the Empire, which gave continuity to the role of imperial power with global ambitions and dimensions.

It is generally agreed by historians that the Holy Roman Empire started in the year 800 AD, via the coronation of Charlemagne by pope Leo III at the St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. This thesis argues that such empire, even if at first devoid of bona fide structures that would render an imperial title appropriate, in fact had its beginnings much earlier than in the 8th century. Throughout this study, key dates are presented and shed light upon, so as to support the claim that already in the 4th century a Church establishment was growing exponentially, in terms of membership, wealth, and reputation, particularly through crucial imperial decrees that lent further credence to religious authorities in their claims of legal basis and divine right to govern the west.

With focus on political measures and achievements on the part of the Church authorities, with special attention to the papacy, the concept of imperial regency is used to explain the many centuries necessary for the empire to be brought back. It was the Church the one actor capable of maintaining the Roman imperial legacy in the west after it fell in the 5th century. Despite having re-created the title of emperor, via an alliance with the powerful Franks, the Church, led by the pope, acted as the sole and real governor of a renovated, overwhelmingly Christian Empire.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords
Christian Empire, Roman Catholic Church, Holy Roman Rule, Church and State, Franks, Papacy.
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Introduction

Civilization goes through many cycles, among which some are at times symbolized by the advent and prevalence of empires. Tribes and clans within a given context, perhaps living in isolation or amid a diverse population, may pool in their efforts either to assert their significance or to overthrow hegemons, in both cases in order to improve their conditions. Out of all the kingdoms the earth has seen, this story deals with a specific feature of the Roman Empire. It does not cover the chronology of their trajectory, for that, while worthy of studying, would be long and arduous to properly assess. Rather, what is relevant for the unfolding of this analysis are the intricacies of Roman rule.

In particular, their rationale for empire, and the justification for their success in the conquering of territories and the subduing of peoples are among the components to be analyzed. This story is about the continuation of the Roman Empire by other means. The alternative vehicle that allowed for such prolongation was religion, one specifically, Christianity. While in its first days struggling to maintain its existence, it later became the center of a new empire. When combined with imperial elements and instruments of governance, it was able to reach a ubiquitous scope, both in the minds of individuals, but also visibly present throughout many lands. Its physical manifestation came in the form of architecture (e.g., churches, cathedrals, statues, monuments, etc.), as well as in the actions of rulers and citizens alike.

Before the scene for the following chapters is set up, some clarifications need to be made, as well as definitions plainly stated. Firstly, despite its rough start, within three centuries Christianity had reached a point where it could no longer be ignored by a still active Roman state. Besides, special events served as the catalyst for that faith to be held in high esteem in the eyes of certain powerful Romans. In the 300s, dreams and visions would boost the reputation of what was until then a sect, as also prepare the grounds for succession after Rome fell.

To be sure, a developed empire did not come into existence until the 8\textsuperscript{th} century. It could be argued, nevertheless, that in a way, a new empire had been born long before, and unable to rule in its initial stage, it was then submitted to a period of incubation, where the ideal circumstances for development were being hatched. Another analogy would be with the period of regency that is seen in monarchies.
For when a monarch is not yet apt to rule due to age, an interim governor takes over until adulthood on the part of the former is reached. The year 476 AD is agreed as the official fall of Rome, while 800 AD is usually understood to represent its rebirth, by way of a Holy Roman Empire. Within this period, there were emperors at Constantinople and Barbarian kings throughout the west. The revival of Rome, nonetheless, would not have played out the way it did if not for its regent *par excellence*, i.e. the Church.

Having become the official religion of the state in 380 AD, already in 445 AD major claims of divine right to rule were made by the Bishop of Rome, claims which were officially acknowledged by then Emperor Valentinian III in a decree. From then on, the scope of power of that office kept reaching greater proportions. Further popes would recognize the figure of the emperor but hint at papal superiority due to their privilege in doing the works of God. With that, the Church gained more respect, especially as the Christian faith won the hearts of barbarians, and defeated other religious schools deemed heretic by synods. When Christianity was adopted by the most prominent of barbarian rulers, Clovis, there was little doubt as for the sway of the Church in the new experiment breeding in the west.

Now, with respect to medieval chronology, some historians refer to the period between the fall of Rome in the 5th century up to the Renaissance of the 14th and 15th centuries, as the Dark Ages. In this study, however, such label shall be attributed from the late 5th century up to 800 AD, when the title of ‘emperor’ reappeared in Rome. Dark Ages here specifically refer to the anarchical times of barbarian invasions in the west, when the fall of the empire gave way to a much tangible power-gap. Out of that chaos, (religious) order emerged yielding fruits that blossomed into a renovated project. That very project involved the Church and its association with the Franks, the most prominent of barbarian clans.

Aside from their military might, Frankish rulers were to form the bulk of kings and emperors of the early empire, which initiated in the High Middle Ages, here to be understood as ranging from 800-1200 AD. What is crucial to be analyzed within that new organization is the political role of the Church. Medieval popes made use of skilled diplomacy in order to approach kings, ask them for favors, set up alliances, and promote their legitimacy. That new creature, i.e. that new empire, was a construction of the papacy, under the guise of restoring a legacy of universal dominion. Here lies one main difference between the ancient and the medieval empire.
During antiquity, universal rule was to be attained through conquest, through a militaristic society with incredible regiments, thus allowing for the annexation of territories, with religion playing a role, though not the most important one. During the middle ages, on the other hand, military might colluded with a mighty religious institution. Whereas Romans incorporated captives into their army, the Church incorporated the saved ones, i.e. the converts, into the Lord’s army. A new rhetoric was born, i.e. that of spreading the Word of God throughout the world, constituting a universal, or Catholic, Church. That body, however, was inherently Roman, and so it is no coincidence that the words ‘Roman,’ ‘Catholic’ and ‘Church’ go together.

The merging of Church and State in terms understood in medieval times, i.e. with both sides being extremely powerful in their own way, consisted of a grandiose test for Europe, one that once experimented with *ad nausea*, eventually exhausted. After it had run its course, that continent went through yet another of those cycles that come about from time to time. It is important to emphasize that the core of the analyses in this study are political. Yet, since religion and politics were one in the middle ages, the encounter with policies pertaining to the religious realm is inevitable. In sum, what is going to be seen in the next chapters is the way the Church acted politically in order to restore a lost legacy, while at the same time asserting a powerful position so that it too could rule, bringing back its own brand of empire.

Initially, it is important for the reader to understand what the Church was attempting to restore. Church authorities realized that religion was an effective vehicle to vindicate imperial ambitions. In Rome, military might, appeal to predecessors’ glorious past, and their special relationship with the gods, were what gave Romans the sense of a mission to spread their values to the world. As for the Church, salvation through the Word of Christ was the mission statement which justified their expansion and domination.

In a medieval paradigm, there emerged, in addition to emperors, popes who acted as co-rulers of a restored empire. It could be said, then, that those two offices were the adaption of ancient positions to new circumstances. For *Imperium*, or the power by which the kings ruled at Rome, was inherited by two consuls, whose collegiality acted as a brake on
excessive influence in the hands of one man, both taking turns to possess such symbol of authority.¹

As it shall also become clear, this dual-rule did not take place without conflicts and frictions. The point is, however, that from antiquity’s final years in the 5th century, the institution of the Church attempted to replace the Roman state by defending a similar rationale, i.e. to spread its superior ideals throughout the world. With that in mind, it sought to emulate aspects of imperial rule, e.g. by exalting the image and capabilities of the Bishop of Rome, which were first equaled to, then claimed greater than, those of former emperors. By drawing its rights from the legitimization of Christianity, it perpetuated the goal of universal empire, while at the same time keeping Rome alive, for the pope himself resided and ruled from there.

Furthermore, institutionalization of religion was already taking place even before the advent of Christianity. Important priestly colleges, pontifices, and augurs were founded, largely replacing, being more important politically, old agricultural brotherhoods like that of the Fratres Arvales, or martial fraternities like that of the Salii.² Therefore, in order for the way religion unfolded at Rome to be properly understood, the political factor must never be ruled out. Failure to do so might render episodes like the conversion of authorities, or the very assimilation of the Church into the state, to be misinterpreted as having been done out of sheer faith.

The element of divine right already existed inside the Roman mindset, prior to the coming of Christ. Perhaps that fact made it easier for the Church powers to justify their own urge for empire. Ancient Rome had developed the aim of universal dominion. It was underpinned by the political strength of its constitution, with incentives such as the prospects of military glory on the part of senators, plus financial incentives stemming from warfare for both the elite and the citizenry, and the need to secure its allies.³

After all, providence doubtless ordered the universal monarchy, which only universal war could establish, for the good of the world at that time, for the advancement of

² Ibid., 44.
The Roman decision to a constant state of warfare was seen in light of their absolute and consistent reverence towards the gods as of first priority to be proved by the favor which they had received from them on that account. The religious authorities of late antiquity drew on such imperial ideologies to form and uphold their own political apparatuses, ushering in their own Catholic era, mostly known as middle ages.

Research Goals and Questions

The intention of the study is to verify two facts: (1) whether Holy Roman Rule started at a time previous than that agreed by most historians, i.e. prior to 800 AD (the coronation of Charlemagne), and (2) whether the Catholic Church acted on the ideal of reviving the western empire or whether it instead strove to create a Christian version of it. Interesting points to keep in mind in relation to that question are the restoring of old Roman ideals of art, culture, governance methods, and its association with barbarian peoples and kings. Plus the west’s split with an already existing empire at Constantinople, whose emperors claimed Rome and the west as their spheres of influence, entailing subservience from that side of Europe towards Byzantium, thus including deference from the Church and the pope.

Needless to say then, the Roman Catholic Church was an element of immeasurable relevance for the unfolding of medieval times, since it was able to achieve a degree of autonomy that, in many occasions, surpassed that of the emperor. Besides, the papacy kept its residence in Rome, at one point restoring the imperial aspect that city once held. The fact that even during medieval times, kings still referred to the Lateran, specifically to the figure of its bishop, is indicative of the continuing importance of that capital. Given the sway the Church, and particularly the popes, were able to garner, the reader will be hard-pressed to admit that Holy Rule only came about in 800 AD.

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Papal letters, decrees, and other important documents show how the papacy was in a position to demand and succeed, the follow-up actions of rulers in response to the appeals of the Church serving as evidence for the capabilities of that religious body. Papal achievements include: the conversion of kings, political favors via diplomatic negotiations, successful pleas to kings’ wives, requests for exemptions from taxation, from punitive laws, commands on the way tithing should proceed, how others should be taxed, letters containing donations to the pope’s treasury, recognition of superiority on the part of emperors, dethronement of kings, and even decrees that included ludicrous orders such as kissing the pope’s toe as a sign of reverence.

Even if Holy Rule did not begin before 800, it is undeniable that upon the fall of Rome, such type of governance was already in the making, being fed constantly, showing tremendous growth, and when it eventually started, the papacy behaved in a unique way. It was unique because without necessarily waging war, devoid of its own consolidated body of troops, it did what no Roman emperor could have ever done, with the power of preaching.

As for the disposition of this work, it is divided into four chapters. The first one discusses the trajectory of a sect that constituted a social and religious pariah in the eyes of the empire, but which went on to become the creed of the emperor. The second chapter deals with the political gap that was witnessed in the west after the reins of power were transferred to Constantinople, together with interactions amid barbarians, Byzantium, and the Church. The third chapter elucidates on the nature and personality of one group that emerged out of the many peoples that invaded the western empire, the Franks, their main leaders and their involvement with Christianity.

The fourth unit demonstrates how by the 8th century, the Church was an institution capable of demanding its own state, and creating its own emperor out of thin air. The Conclusion chapter reflects on the nature of the Church’s appropriation of the west. The claim that a Christian empire began prior to 800 AD is defended by an overview of key dates that symbolize the aggrandizement of a religious establishment, as explained in more detail throughout the manuscript. Concepts are also shed light upon, research questions are addressed, and final considerations are made. An Afterword chapter briefly analyzes the consequences of Church and State rule for Europe, as well as the essence of the Investiture conflict, showing that the potential for challenged authority was what ignited the discord between emperor and pope.
In regard to the timeframe of this study, the period between the 4th to 8th centuries AD is when the events discussed in the chapters took place, with the exception of the Afterword section, which deals with one episode from the 11th century that ended up spilling over into the 12th and 13th. That section also expounds on the state of Western Europe upon the end of the medieval era into the threshold to the Modern one. The intention of this research is not to narrate a chronology of the middle ages, but rather pinpoint key events that happened from the 300s up to 800 AD, and interpret how they support the claim that the Church began building its empire starting from 312 AD.

In a few words, this thesis deals with the political maneuvers of the Catholic Church in its goal to maintain an imperial status in the west, with it dictating norms of morality, spirituality, and above all governance. The pope, or the vicar of God, i.e. the intermediate between the Creator and those inhabiting this earth, as the head of the Church, was to be the ruler of that new, overwhelmingly Christian, empire. As for the sharing of authority with a king, pontiffs made it clear that their power was superior. Even if the Church, embodied in the figure of the pope, was not the only ruler in the west, it certainly was a main one, without whom Rome would have perhaps not been revived the way it was, had that remnant of ancient times (i.e. the Roman Church) not taken the reins of the empire.
"In fact, the whole conception of that mighty Church which conquered the world, including the barbarian invaders, was the offspring of the Roman political system. It was her genius for statecraft which made Rome the Eternal City. In one form or another she had governed the world for twenty centuries." 

From Persecuted Sect to Emperor’s most-favored Ally (4th century)

“The Great Persecution marked the coming of age both of the new empire and of the Christian Church.”

Every era has an ending. At times, it might take place as majestic as its beginning was, or likewise be symbolized by a gradual decay. It could be said the latter was the case with the Roman Empire. From a city supposedly founded by two brothers sheltered by a she-wolf, back in the 700s B.C., to a place in the Mediterranean striving to assert its influence, Rome became a Republic, and later turned into a mighty empire. It was universal,—the only universal empire which ever existed on this earth,—and it was won with the sword.

An era of brilliancy, of foreign conquests, of the spread of a culture into distant lands, of the development of trade and road networks, sophisticated city infrastructure, effective city-management, sound diplomacy and governance (even if dictatorial), a solidified body of language (itself an extremely useful vehicle of culture), all this was met with degeneracy and complacency, brought about by extravagance. The tyranny of rulers at the top followed decadent values exalted by a populace with a penchant for panem et circenses, entertainment in the form of circus, theater, life-sacrifices, and drunkenness.

There remained, nonetheless, an element of spirituality and superstition. That aspect preserved not only traditions and practices, but above all faith in the minds of individuals. Roman religion for a long time guided important aspects of life, namely agriculture and war, two key components in the fabric of that society. That very superstition kept many from rebelling, perpetuating the state of affairs in the empire. Upon the last three centuries of a hegemonic Rome, nonetheless, there came a change of biblical proportions (literally), which would put its partakers through ordeals. For by going against the norm, many were rebuked and scoffed at, countless lives being ultimately taken away.

This change is referred to the advent of Christianity. The birth and teachings of Jesus promoted a bigger paradigm-shift than the fall of Rome itself, one of its many lasting impacts being seen in the very notion of time prevalent in the Western world. For even

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individuals of faiths other than the Christian one, or atheists for that matter, are forced to recognize the Anno Domini system when engaging in their everyday activities. While other religions adopt the use of alternative calendars, the ubiquity of the “year of our Lord” stands as just one example of the influence of Christianity over the world.

The fact of the matter was that Jesus came at a time when the Roman Empire reigned supreme, and with the absence of violence he spread messages of peace, forgiveness, honesty, in a word, salvation. Not of the body, however, with its propensities to worldly habits, but salvation of the soul, for a world to come, after the current material one was abandoned. His teachings, registered by his Apostles, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,\(^{10}\) preached his guidelines for a life of hard-work and humility, wherein believers should seek to rebuke widespread and inevitable sins.

That way, the one precondition for the inheritance of his heavenly kingdom was belief in his words, particularly the belief that he died on the cross to wash away all vices, that alone being the one thing capable of securing salvation. For according to Scripture: there is none righteous, no not one...for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.\(^{11}\)

Such messages, however, e.g. that the belief in Jesus alone would safeguard one’s place in heaven, or the urging to renounce worldly habits, including festivities, sacrifices, idolatries, all of which were so commonplace within Roman society, none of these demands came without their discontents. The idea of forsaking the established faith of Rome-with its practices not only institutionalized but politicized- due to their impurity, wickedness, and gateways into perdition, was nothing short of an insult to the Roman culture of the time, as well as to Rome’s old-age institutions.

What is more, the fact that the “sect” kept gaining more and more adherents angered certain governors. Since its tenets were contrary to the ideologies the Roman state

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\(^{10}\)“2 Peter 1:21.” In The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments : Translated out of the Original Tongues, and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised by His Majesty's Special Command : Appointed to Be Read in Churches : Authorized King James Ve. Glasgow: Collins, 2011. 1119.

\(^{11}\)“Romans 3:10, 23-25.” In The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments : Translated out of the Original Tongues, and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised by His Majesty's Special Command : Appointed to Be Read in Churches : Authorized King James Ve. Glasgow: Collins, 2011. 1032.
embodied, that faith itself constituted a potential threat to the powers that be. That was despite such facts as Christians being few in number, not to mention they were chiefly confined to the humble classes.\textsuperscript{12} Clearly, something needed to be done in order to placate the emergence of that cult. Something was indeed done, but again, not without repercussions.

**Persecution**

As it may be imagined, in its early stages Christianity consisted of a small group, whose messages were yet to gain the proportion they would attain in such a swiftly manner as it was. Among the ones who followed Jesus during his time on earth, the twelve Apostles, or those who composed the main body of believers in charge of spreading his word to every race, were incredibly successful in carrying out just that. Considering their humble characters, their triumphs were far-reaching, for it is unprecedented that the teachings of fishermen should have supplanted those of Jewish rabbis and Grecian philosophers, amid so great and general opposition.\textsuperscript{13}

Indeed, Christianity’s birth place plus the corroboration with the Old Testament rendered it comparable to the doctrines of the Jewish. At first, Christianity was confounded with Judaism, which had already begun to make converts at Rome without seeking for them, and the Roman government was extraordinarily tolerant towards the creed, but it demanded compliance to the Caesar-worship which it imposed as a test of loyalty.\textsuperscript{14}

Evidence of both this tolerance and obedience is found in the correspondence between Pliny the Younger and Trajan. In 112 AD, the former was a governor in the province of Bythnia (present-day Turkey), while the latter was then Emperor. When Pliny seized a group of Christians, confessions of belief in Christ eventually culminated in execution due to obstinacy towards that deviant behavior.\textsuperscript{15}

Pliny explained that in addition to the sequestering of that group of believers, a written defamation about specific names of supposedly Christians had also been sent to him, a case which though copiously examined, had a different outcome. Upon interrogation, some


\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., 540.


of the accused denied being Christians straightaway, while others claimed they used to partake in that religion, but had ceased to do so, after which they went on to profess their predilection for the religion of Rome, disclosing the dynamics of Christian gatherings.\footnote{16}{Ibid.}

In the last section of Pliny’s letter to Trajan, the former touched on the dissemination of the cult of Jesus, as some sort of epidemic spreading throughout the empire. He mentioned, however, that an awakening of the old practices in Roman religion was being observed, to which the Emperor warned he did not intend for imperial Rome to set up an inquisition, whereby men would be punished for their faith.\footnote{17}{STOBART, John Clarke, and Frederick Norman PRYCE. “The Growth of the Empire.” In The Grandeur That Was Rome ... Third Edition, Revised by F.N. Pryce. Pp. Xxi. 391. Pl. 97. Sidgwick & Jackson: London, 1934. 338.}

He did plead, moreover, for Christians not to be witch-hunted, but instead to be punished only in case of being found guilty, being pardoned upon repentance, in addition for anonymous libels not to be given much attention, so as not to set an erroneous and disingenuous precedent to his reign.\footnote{18}{“Letters of Pliny the Younger and the Emperor Trajan.” PBS. 1987. William Whiston. Accessed October 29, 2015. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/maps/primary/pliny.html.} That episode goes to show that though Christianity was an undesirable, there was at first no prompt persecution campaign against that denomination, its reprimanding stemming more out of suspicion and despise towards the unknown than particular intentions to suppress it.

Aside from practical examples where the followers of the new faith were dealt with before the law, there are extant written perceptions on the features of early Christianity and of its followers. Exchanges about the judgment and potential punishment of Christians did not only take place between governors and emperors. Intellectuals also debated on theological and doctrinal questions, criticizing each other’s writings.

Celsus, a Greek writer, provided observations on the emerging religion and its overall tenets. He accused Christians of having invented Jesus’ birth from a virgin, who was ousted from home by her husband on charges of adultery, eventually giving birth to an illegitimate child, who in Egypt acquired miraculous powers that were demonstrated in his country as a sign of his divinity.\footnote{19}{“Celsus’ View of Christians and Christianity.” Celsus’ View of Christians and Christianity. August 7, 1997. Gerald W Schlabach. Accessed October 29, 2015. http://www.bluffton.edu/~humanities/1/celsus.htm.}
As for the way they proceeded in spreading their faith and to whom they manifested it, Celsus strove to expose his resentment towards the nature of secrecy of the faith, which was confined not to those of great intellect, but rather to the young minds, who could still escape the contagion of wickedness. He demonstrated his disdain for Scriptural passages about the commitment towards following Jesus without measuring costs, claiming that by such types of appeals Christians were able to win the hearts of those with a penchant for rebelling against established norms.

For that matter, let a passage from the Gospel according to Luke be contrasted with what Celsus had to say about that specific issue, in that order:

“25 And there were great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said to them, 26 If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. 27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. 28 For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to find it? 29 Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, 30 Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.”

“But that if they wish (to avail themselves of their aid,) they must leave their father and their instructors, and go with the women and their playfellows to the women's apartments, or to the leather shop, or to the fuller's shop, that they may attain to perfection;--and by words like these they gain them over.”

One interpretation of the above-mentioned Scriptural passage is that lest anyone had doubt about the certainty of their move to follow Jesus, then he or she was not being sincere. For such types of decision would have been taken in the spur of the moment, when both anger and confusion were susceptible to take over one’s mind and cloud their thoughts with deception. In other words, Jesus was warning potential disciples that their decision, i.e. to attain salvation by faith, could only be accepted if done full-heartedly. For many would make such moves based on earthly considerations of financial and, above all, moral risks, namely losing resources and the respect of others through ridicule and rejection.

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Another point Celsus made was with relation to the lack of agency and tradition of Christians, whereby he compared them to the case another religious people. The Jewish, despite deviating from the worship of the Roman gods, seemed to have been vindicated by their achievement in establishing a land of their own, thus constituting institutions set for public advantage, making their legacy resist the test of time.\(^\text{22}\)

Such comments indicate distrust towards a fledgling cult, which formed by uneducated individuals, could prove not only ephemeral, but also a nuisance for the state. In other words, unlike the Jewish, who veered away from Roman religion but were able to somehow benefit the public through their works, the Christians brought messages that went against the liking of those in power.

His words were rebuked by theologian Origen. Himself an adept of the new religion, he defended his faith against Celsus’ attacks. For instance, to the claim that "to help the king with all our might, and to labor with him in the maintenance of justice, to fight for him; and if he requires it, to fight under him, or lead an army along with him," Origen stated that Christians were already doing so when putting on the whole armor of God, suggesting their work to be analogous to that of high priests during wartime, who offered spiritual aid to the efforts of the king, while at the same time not enlisting in the army.\(^\text{23}\)

He went on to argue that through prayer Christians did their part, by seeking to appease spiritual forces that instigated conflict, as well as by abstaining from worldly pleasures, thus not fighting under the king, but on his behalf, forming a special army--an army of piety--by offering our prayers to God.\(^\text{24}\) In a way, it seems that part of the skepticism towards Christians was due more to the lack of contributions they provided to society, particularly by being absent from the army, than specifically about the nature of their gatherings. It was difficult for others to comprehend the claim that their contributions came from a change inwardly, and that conversion entailed the renouncement of one’s old ways of living.

Lastly, to Celsus’ appeal to "take office in the government of the country, if that is required for the maintenance of the laws and the support of religion," Origen explained that Christians were to recognize power founded by the Word, exhorting those with

\(\text{\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.}\)
\(\text{\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.}\)
\(\text{\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.}\)
authorities over the Churches, rejecting ambitious lust for power, for even the religious leaders were under the constraints of Jesus. Moreover, obedience referred only to those rules in accordance with divine will, and so the absence of Christians in public offices was not justified by fear or unwillingness to assist the affairs of the state. Rather, the followers of the Son of God were allotted greater, more divine services, such as the salvation of men.\textsuperscript{25}

This way, guaranteeing that men did not lose themselves, but instead be saved in Jesus Christ, as well as protecting the innocent from wickedness, those were to be the main goals of a governor ordained by God, salvation and a life in Christ taking precedence above all other rules. A noteworthy passage from the Scriptures in regard to authority and the following thereof is found in the Epistle of Paul addressed to the Romans, which reads:

\begin{quote}“Let every soul be subject unto higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. \\
2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. \\
3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and though shalt have praise of the same: \\
4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. \\
5 Wherefore ye must needs subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake. \\
6 For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.”\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

It is clear then, by Romans chapter 13 alone, that ruling powers should terrorize evil, thus safeguarding the well-being of the honest. That way, God’s law shall come before any other law, and by simply doing good and what is right, one fulfills his wishes. That passage, since the days of Paul twisted by many, should come as a caveat for blindly following the orders of those in ruling positions, for whereas individuals have the obligation to, say, pay taxes and abide by other decrees, there remains a moral, ethical, law that should take precedence before compliance.*

*To make that principle clear through its social application in the past, one example from recent history could be cited. A lesson similar in its ethical nature was extracted from the Nuremberg trials in the aftermath of World War II, i.e. individuals were

\begin{flushright}\textsuperscript{25} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{26} "Romans 13." In \textit{The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments: Translated out of the Original Tongues, and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised by His Majesty’s Special Command: Appointed to Be Read in Churches: Authorized King James Ve}. Glasgow: Collins, 2011. 1040.\end{flushright}
not vindicated for their cruel actions merely because they were doing what they were being
told, in other words, following orders from the state without questioning their morality.

With respect to the targeting of Christians, there was one specific episode that
took place within the first century of existence of that religion. A fledgling Christianity,
backed mostly by the humble, meeting in concealment, struggling to assert its place and
spread the gospel of Jesus throughout the Romanized world, was used as a patsy, a scapegoat.
That was done in order for its believers to be discredited, so that through demoralization the
remainder of the populace, loyal to the empire and its religion, would see Christians with
different eyes. It happened in AD 64, during the emperorship of Nero, when an instance of
severe conflagration consumed extensive parts of Rome, leading to chaos and panic. Those
responsible for the incident were not found guilty, but fingers were pointed at the Christians.

Tacitus, in his Annals of Imperial Rome, vividly described the atmosphere of an
episode that had its due repercussions for the future of that religion, where terror-stricken
crowds panicked in a struggle for their lives and that of their loved ones, all amid a state of
tremendous agitation. Additional puzzling incidents were seen in the presence of individuals
behaving atypically during the chaos. For instance, no one dared to stop the mischief,
because of incessant menaces from a number of persons who forbade the extinguishing of the
flames, because again others openly hurled brands, and kept shouting that there was one who
gave them authority, either seeking to plunder more freely, or obeying orders.27

Much inclined to believe that the fire had been orchestrated, Emperor Nero
blamed the segment of society that already shared the discontent of most. Scores of
Christians were arrested, and added to the charge of arson, was that of hatred towards
humanity, which rendered the guilty ones to be mocked, aside from suffering torture and
humiliation such as being nailed to crosses and being burnt.28

In spite of the lack of evidences, and more intriguingly, of clarification on the
identity of the people kindling the fire, the Christians were the ones who bore the brunt of it
all. It is undeniable that the emperor reaped political benefits from his decisions, for by
punishing the Christians he spoke for a grieved, still shocked population, and whether right or
wrong, took action to address the case.

27 "The Annals by Tacitus." The Internet Classics Archive | The Annals by Tacitus. William Jackson Brodribb and
28 Ibid.
Another instance of persecution was a bizarre account of supposed ritual cannibalism. Whether the author, Minucius Felix Octavius, expressed his claims due to an honest misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the tradition of apostolic mass, or whether he was intent on denigrating the image of Christians, it is unknown. History is left, however, with his testimony.

Elaborating on the features of the Christian mass, he brings attention to their act of promiscuously and incestuously calling each other brothers and sisters, accusing them of adoring the head of an ass, of worshiping the genitals of their pontiff and priest, and of worshipping nature in their nightly meetings. They revered a man punished in a cross for his wickedness, even building him altars. More aggravating to Octavius was the initiation ceremony carried out by the followers of the sect:

“An infant covered over with meal, that it may deceive the unwary, is placed before him who is to be stained with their rites: this infant is slain by the young pupil, who has been urged on as if to harmless blows on the surface of the meal, with dark and secret wounds. Thirstily - O horror! they lick up its blood; eagerly they divide its limbs. By this victim they are pledged together; with this consciousness of wickedness they are covenanted to mutual silence.”

Such disturbing depiction, which more resembles barbaric satanic rituals than a Christian one, while a genuine historical account, deserves the benefit of the doubt, for there is a chance that it was potentially confounded with the sayings uttered by Jesus himself, in the book of Matthew, when he offered bread and wine to the disciples, symbolizing his body and his blood, respectively.

Further potential misunderstandings may have arisen with the sayings of the priests conducting masses, when they professed their worship towards a dead person who had been resurrected, i.e. Jesus. For instance, through bread and wine, giving thanks for the remission of sins, and begging for the Holy Spirit to be sent upon the offering of the holy church, to gather into one all who have received it.

Now, to be sure, Christianity was not the only religion persecuted by the empire. There were indeed, other practices and cults that much differed from the faith in Jesus, and which were harshly decried by other ancient voices. Roman historians elaborated and chided on the facets of certain sects, with a similar, if not greater disdain shown when

30 Ibid.
referring to Christianity. Livy wrote about the cult to *Magna Mater*, who was evoked for matters of peace in order to drive out enemies, lest war was waged against Italy, thus igniting the interest of senators.

He denounced the state of ecstasy that it set in, where clouded by superstition, signs were reported to have been seen, e.g. two suns in the sky, meteors, lightning, roars, all of which promoted public aggravation and exacerbation of a frenzy in Rome. Corroborating with Livy’s account, Prudentius explained how a bull-sacrifice ritual within the cult of *Magna Mater* proceeded, elucidating the rite’s aspect of salvation, which was achieved through the contact with the blood of a freshly-sacrificed ox, carried out by a priestess, who was worshipped while washed in blood, becoming by it purified and born again for eternity.

Livy wrote about yet another cult, that of Bacchanalia. It was with horror and repugnance that he explained the beliefs and practices of the followers of that sect. Their barbaric nocturnal rites of promiscuity and sexual acts and wine-consumption spread diseases and mischief throughout the empire, reaching Rome, defending the idea that nothing was to be made unlawful. He mentioned consul Postumius, who addressed the Senate, which in turn demonstrated wariness and fear towards the rabid, and rapid, dissemination of that doctrine throughout Rome. Taking action for the sake of the young generation, the consul warned about the perils and potential for moral disasters at the societal level posed by the worshippers of Bacchus.

To this day, the word “Bacchanal” is still used to refer to environments of orgy, sexual promiscuity, and overall lewdness. With respect to other foreign cults, Strabo briefly described death rituals in Gaul, while Suetonius talked about Egyptian and Jewish superstition. Both referred to the role of the Roman state in eradicating or suppressing those. Strabo mentioned that the Romans put an end to the custom in Gaul of embalming the heads of enemies, as well as sacrifices and divinations aided by the Druids. Suetonius explained that Tiberius abolished foreign cults, especially Egyptian and Jewish ones, as well as

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32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
astrologers, by forcing religious vestments and other articles to be burned, while at the same time conscripting people into the army, or turning them into slaves.\textsuperscript{36}

In regard to Jewish practices, the New Testament provided in the Book of Acts further evidence for the view of their effect on the identity and safety of Roman society. While preaching in Macedonia, Paul, having expelled a spirit out of a woman, did attract the attention of elders. Having been caught and taken to the marketplace, his entourage of believers and he, being Jews, were accused of exceedingly troubling the city, with teachings which were not lawful for the locals, after all, Romans were neither to receive nor to observe such customs.\textsuperscript{37}

When comparing the features of the mentioned practices with those of Christianity, in addition to accusations without evidence such as liability for the great fire of 64 AD, or the charge of cannibalism, one is compelled to admit that the followers of Jesus, as a rule, did not engage in violent endeavors in their meetings, but instead abdicated from vices and worldly habits prevalent throughout the empire. That way, their persecution was due to their effective change in the minds of its followers without disturbances, in comparison to the raucous caused by other cults. While considered radical, the teachings and actions of Christians were mostly peaceful.

This is not to say, though, that all members always behaved in peaceful ways, for there were deviants. Later in the 4\textsuperscript{th} century, some believers were indeed responsible for serious acts of violence against pagans, but others attempted to find common ground.\textsuperscript{38} Perhaps the very reason why they were persecuted in the first place was that Christ’s messages went against the zeitgeist of the time, thus angering those who feared nonconformity from the established order.

**On the Assimilation of the Church into the State**

By the fourth century, adamant efforts at persecuting Christians had ceased due to their ineffectiveness. This was so because of the action of prohibition and oppression, which resulted in the reaction of curiosity towards the messages propagated by the followers

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
of Jesus and the eventual conversion of many, who witnessed and felt spiritual changes taking place. Also, the lifestyle that came with the rules to be followed according to the Scriptures was a lure to many. What is more, the shed blood of martyrs, or believers who literally died for their beliefs, enticed others to inquiry if it such mentality was justifiable. After all, if despite the many deaths, their numbers kept rising, then what Christianity had to offer had indeed to be worth dying for.

So it happened that the Church gradually grew into a more influential agency. For instance, regular synods had assembled in the great cities of the empire; the metropolitan system was matured; the canons of the church were definitely enumerated; great schools of theology attracted inquiring minds; the doctrines of faith were systematized; all that to the point where Christianity had spread so extensively that it had to either be persecuted full-force or legalized. If a rival cannot be beat, then it is expedient to become allies. That is a fine allusion to what ended up happening between the Church and the Roman state.

Such union, nevertheless, did not take place without opposition. There indeed was a great deal of debate within the Christian community itself, e.g. about its similarities with the Jewish faith, namely the New Testament being a sequel to the Old. One source of fierce contention, furthermore, was the compatibility of Christianity with Rome and its world order. The imperial capital had been envisioned by John in the Book of Revelation, as the whore of Babylon, soon to be laid low by pestilence, mourning, and famine. Soon, however, none of that would seem to matter, for like Rome, the Church would be capable of dictating change, at its own pace. Far from being what put an end to the empire, it undoubtedly gave it the shape, and most important, the impetus for continuance into the middle ages.

To reiterate a fact, by the 3rd century the religion, represented by the institution of the Church, had acquired so much influence that it could no longer be ignored, let alone persecuted. Constantine the Great, who became emperor in AD 306, converted to Christianity in 312, thus forever altering the history of that faith, the future of Europe, and of the world. After three centuries of persecution and martyrdom, the tiny Messianic movement born under

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Emperor Tiberius among the fishermen on the shores of Lake Galilee could now claim the public adherence of the Roman emperor himself.\textsuperscript{41}

Historian and theologian Eusebius was responsible for biographical writings on the life of Constantine, which included the episode of his submission to Christ. In a heroic style, he narrates whence the emperor’s initial moves came, as well as his distrust for the gods previously chosen by his predecessors, who holding such beliefs, were met with defeat and bitterness. Constantine’s father, nonetheless, reaped success made possible by manifestations of power granted by his Christian God, making it advantageous then, that he followed in the same footsteps of his dad.\textsuperscript{42}

According to Eusebius, after deciding to adopt his father’s religious doctrine (i.e. the Christian one), majestic visions came to the emperor while he campaigned with his regiment. During prayer, Constantine and his army saw a sign in the sky, a Cross, indicating that by it his conquests would be attained. Slow to process what had been revealed, the emperor received yet further messages, this time during his slumber. In a dream, a cross reappeared to him, Christ urging him to use that symbol as a protection from enemies, to which the Roman emperor acquiesced and implemented as a measure to bless his combat incursions.\textsuperscript{43}

What followed next was of key, divine importance, for by consulting Christian priests and deciding to worship the God of the Scriptures, Constantine set the precedent for a fusion between Church and State which would endure for over a millennium to come, drastically shaping European politics to unimaginable extents. Eusebius wrote that after consulting those well-versed in the Scriptures, it became clear to Constantine that his experience had indeed consisted of a form of communication with the Creator, to which the emperor promptly reacted by converting to Christianity. He also demonstrated immense interest on the content of the “inspired writings,” turning priests into his counselors, thus using his newly-acquired beliefs to guide him in the governance of the empire.\textsuperscript{44}

The aftermath of the 312 AD conversion was of equally immense benefit for the Church. By gaining the support of the emperor, that institution saw its assets and powers

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 296.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
increase, with a consequent growth in the number of adherents. In 313 AD, as per the Edict of Milan, Constantine restored Church property in the west, made huge donations to it from the public treasury and granted exemption to the clergy from compulsory civic duties, making a public statement that the Christian Church was of benefit to the Roman state, and that imperial favor from now on was behind Christianity and not the traditional cults.\textsuperscript{45}

In spite of that, lingering influences of paganism remained in some parts, especially in the countryside. This was perpetuated by the fact that Christianity had still not become the \textit{de jure} religion of the state. Thus religious eclecticism continued to exist, where the so-called “last pagans” of Rome, most of them nominally Christians, combined their admiration for classical culture while at the same time replacing worship of pagan deities for the God of the bible.\textsuperscript{46}

This was also extended to pagan religious festivals, many festivities persisting in an adapted form. Christian authorities reinterpreted holidays as sources of amusement, e.g. the Lupercalia and Kalends, while Christian dates began to be assimilated: Sunday became the Sabbath day (AD 321); the Easter period was instituted (AD 325); and the birth of the Sun, December 25\textsuperscript{th}, was incorporated by the Church to symbolize the birth of Christ (AD 354).\textsuperscript{47}

Another eventful episode was the foundation of Constantinople (AD 330), which bears the name of the emperor who “legalized” Christianity. In the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century, military pressures on the empire required an alternative imperial hub for its heads of state, who had come to spend long periods of time outside the capital so that the emperor and his troops would be enabled to respond more immediately than if residing at Rome.\textsuperscript{48} Sozomen, in his Ecclesiastical History, described the atmosphere of the founding of the new capital.

After being victorious against an enemy, the emperor decided it was time to establish a center of power reflected on his legacy, bearing his name, whose magnitude and relevance were to be akin to those of Rome. Steered by divine inspiration, he ended up in Byzantium, which though renamed Constantinople, was also referred to as New Rome, with its own Senate and attributes. It became the new capital of the empire after the emperor’s

\textsuperscript{46}Ibid., 316.
\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., 318.
\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., 305.
religious conversion. Unlike Rome, however, with its myriad of altars and temples, Constantinople was from the beginning a Christian city, as evidenced by its many churches.\textsuperscript{49}

The advent of that new imperial point was significant for many reasons. For one thing, it paved the way for a split between east and west, which later would be marked by two different languages, shapes of governance, and above all, two different churches. Special attention must be placed on the distance of Constantinople, and how geography hindered control of the west, leaving that side of the empire susceptible to conquest, but above all leaving the Church as one effective, respected authority in Rome. Such facts, plus other changing circumstances served as a validation for enlarged authority in the hands of the pope.

**On the Political Benefits of the 312 AD Conversion**

As regards his conversion, it is possible to observe slick political ploys of discourse and other actions, which bore the effect of promoting his own image, thus rendering him a popular ruler. Whether the emperor intentionally capitalized on his own conversion, namely by squeezing political acclamations from that event or not, there was a lot at stake and much to gain by distinguishing his (Christian) imperial realm from others that started to emerge. For in the 4\textsuperscript{th} century AD, the empire had been divided between four co-emperors, two sharing the Roman East (Greece, Turkey, Syria, Egypt and so on), while the West fell under Licinius and Constantine.\textsuperscript{50}

A fifth would-be co-emperor, Maxentius, usurped the power in Rome and Italy, and it was in a campaign against him that Constantine trusted the Christian God and secured victory.\textsuperscript{51} That is why that conquest, or rather, the recounting thereof, was so laden with heroism and glory. Once again, if his conversion consisted of a ruse to seize and maintain power, it is unclear. It just so happened that by attributing the recapturing of Italy to the Christian deity, the emperor validated his, Christianity’s, and the empire’s raison d’

More to the point, Constantine considered himself a visionary with revelations emanating from the creator himself, the narration of his many experiences being so powerful that each acted as some sort conversion.\textsuperscript{52} Firstly, he made use of his supposed intervention from pagan deities, like Apollo, thus identifying himself with that God, later being indicated


\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 4.

by orators as holding divine authority to govern, with the know-how to win.\textsuperscript{53} He believed himself to have been chosen, destined by a divine decree to play a providential role in the thousand-year old system of salvation.\textsuperscript{54}

By associating himself at times to pagan divinities, while at other occasions praising Christian elements, he then catered to two segments of society, in a question where religious disagreement abounded, through skilled politics standing as a revered figure.\textsuperscript{55} One such instance is found in the policy he applied to the community of Hispellum, whose inhabitants demanded a temple to be used for festivals, including theatrical shows and gladiator games.\textsuperscript{56} In his response, the emperor conceded such favors while at the same time imposing demands.

In what was entitled the \emph{Inscription to Hispellum}, Constantine demonstrated great compromising efforts, first by not making overt reference to Christianity nor by responding to Hispellum’s petition in overtly Christian terms, while also not openly condemning pagan practices and rites.\textsuperscript{57} In the rescript, he bestowed upon that city the new name of \emph{Flavia Constans} and allowed the construction of a new shrine (\emph{aedis}) dedicated to the Flavian dynasty.\textsuperscript{58}

He did, moreover, impose that the shrine built in his name would not be polluted with the deceits of any contagious superstition.\textsuperscript{59} It is possible to notice a political aspect in that concession. Despite having written the rescript as a Christian, he granted Hispellum the right to perpetuate pagan practices, with his impositions aside, promoting the contentment of that community, earning their respect, his image being exalted.

Back to his “many conversions,” his visions astutely involved critical figures such as the military, the clergy, and the Messiah himself. In one of his revelations, he was commanded to turn the cross he had seen into a military symbol, in addition to insisting that the troops had also witnessed the miracle.\textsuperscript{60} He then used his conversion to present himself to

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\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 135.
\textsuperscript{56} Van Dam, Raymond. "Constantine's Rescript to Hispellum." In \emph{The Roman Revolution of Constantine}. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. 29.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 29.
\end{flushleft}
the clergy as a bishop appointed by God to act for those outside the church. On that same note, he made use of his newly-acquired relationship with Jesus to compare himself to him, with the effect that the population of certain cities perceived him as equivalent to the Savior, to the point of worshipping his statue.

Clearly, such moves helped Constantine promote his own image before the empire. With support from the armed forces he assured loyalty in battles, while with the support of the clergy, he secured that of the Christian community. By tolerating pagan practices he also had support from the ones who identified with such beliefs, which were still somewhat pervasive. More importantly, the Church became a power to reckon with, as the Roman throne became Christian.

Lastly, his statue stood as the hallmark of Constantinople’s eminence, representing a fight against heresy [however that might be defined], demonstrating resilience, and ultimately the survival of both the capital and the empire. That way, the mutual benefit of his conversion for both Church and State must not be forgotten, much like the political and strategic effects it had on the empire and for the very office of the emperor.

The Church upon the End of the Roman Era

It is remarkable to realize the main essence of the founding of Constantinople, its spirit, and its geo-political aspects. The place was admirably sited for an imperial residence, being over against Asia which the Persians were threatening, and in easy touch with the Danube, where the Northern Barbarians were always swarming, not to mention that it was from the outset a Christian city, as contrasted with old Rome, where old practices still kept a firm grip.

So it was that from 312 onwards, imperial patronage was put behind Christianity and not paganism, pressure was put on senators to convert, and imperial legislation gradually defined more and more aspects of pagan religious rituals as illegal.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{61}}\text{Ibid., 139.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{62}}\text{Ibid., 140.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{65}}\text{Davis, William Stearns. “Sozomen, How Constantine Founded Constantinople.” In } \text{Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1913. 295.}\]
Equally significant, after Constantine, with the exception of Julian (360-363 AD) and his failed reversal attempts at implementing policies more traditionally pagan in nature, all emperors were Christians. An interesting reversal was observed. In 324, Christianity went global due to Licinius’ defeat in the East by Constantine, who in turn re-united the empire under his Christian scepter, thus marking the beginning of a Christian Empire, or what became known as Christendom.

Another incredibly relevant milestone in regard to Church and State relations came in 380 AD. The Codex Theodosianus, given by Gratian and Theodosius I, made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. Urging all peoples to turn to and obey the tenets of that religion, such as the Holy Trinity, the edict went on to coin the term ‘Catholic Christians,’ to refer to the followers of that religion:

“We desire all people, whom the benign influence of our clemency rules, to turn to the religion which tradition from Peter to the present day declares to have been delivered to the Romans by blessed Peter the Apostle, the religion which it is clear that the Pontiff Damasus and Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic holiness, follow; this faith is that we should believe, in accordance with apostolic discipline and Gospel teaching, that there is one Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in an equal Majesty and a holy Trinity. We order those who follow this doctrine to receive the title of Catholic Christians, but others we judge to be mad and raving and worthy of incurring the disgrace of heretical teaching, nor are their assemblies to receive the name of churches. They are to be punished not only by Divine retribution but also by our own measures, which we have received in accordance with Divine inspiration.

Given on the 3rd Kalends of March at Thessalonica, Gratianus and Theodosius being Consuls.”

In addition to pointing at non-believers as mentally unstable, such deviants were to be physically punished by the empire’s law-enforcement agencies. That was a groundbreaking one-hundred-and-eighty-degree spin for Christianity. Whereas its followers were once pariahs for professing their faith, the tables have turned for them, in that now the heathen were to be chastised. Christians began to regard themselves as members of the empire and subjects of the emperors for whose preservation (pro incolumitate imperatorum) they beseeched the Lord at length every week.
This way, by the end of the 4th century, the Church had not only long ceased to be persecuted, but it had become the official religion of the state, with punishments for criticism and heresy against it being enforced by the government. While in its first three centuries it constituted a sect, or a group that individuals choose to join, in the 4th century it became a ‘church,’ i.e. a collection of beliefs into which one was born and which were held by all members.71

While the Church saw its status rise in importance, the empire was split between old and new Rome, the new one being Constantinople. The dynamics in the east differed due to local realities. The barbarian invasions of the 3rd and 4th century in the west had their counterparts in Byzantium, e.g. the Slavs, Turks, Bulgars, Khazars, all making their own impact.72 Likewise, two Christian Churches grew more and more dissimilar in both sides. To make matters more clearly different, in the realm of language, Latin in the west was contrasted with Greek predominance in the east, and with that, two sets of culture.

Whereas significant for Roman, and thus European history, the Byzantine Empire does not concern the ambitions of this study. Instead, the developments on the western side of the continent are the focus, for it was there where the legacy of a crumbling Roman Empire was restored, thus perpetuated, by the Catholic Church. While the eastern empire was also a spin-off of Rome, it was clearly not the same thing as what stood in the Mediterranean, again due to differing circumstances. At the end of Antiquity and upon the onset of the middle ages, the Church was the one institution capable of wielding rule on Roman standards, to create and maintain an empire of its own.

Wherefore, the following chapters shall focus on: the political maneuvers devised by an established, yet ever-growing, Church and its authorities in order to: (1) ascertain its place amid a power-vacuum provided by the obscurity of times (i.e. Dark Ages); (2) to boost its reputation to an even more divine, godly-like position; and (3) to grant upon itself the status of government, to an extent that had not been seen since the times of Roman preeminence in the West.

Hurried Quest for the West (5th-6th centuries)

The ideological goal of universal Empire was still pursued after Rome ceased to be a political center. In the west, such ideology was continued by the Church, as it grew as a relevant institution. At the same time, a prominent Constantinople with booming trade routes in the east, and large swaths of territory in the west occupied by different warring Barbarian tribes, serve as evidence for a stark contrast between two imperial poles in a changing Europe.

The empire, therefore, did not come to an end in 476, for in the east authority over the entire Roman world was being claimed and exercised so far as emperors could obtain obedience. An influential Church would, nevertheless, not kowtow so easily to a distant ruler. As the state’s religion, it sought to take the reins of former western imperial territories to the best of its capabilities. In a way then, Rome continued to rule over the world as before, her two great legacies being Roman law and the Roman Church, where Church and State were one, that itself being the grand conception of a Christian Republic.

Prior to delving into the medieval world of a fragmented continent occupied by barbarian kingdoms and their relation to what was left and pulsating at the eternal city, it would be prudent to understand the status of the Church in an early medieval context. Already with a few centuries of experience, it sought to promote new trends and consolidate itself even more as an institution. Pertinent changes were: the concept of temporal power that served to justify the authority of the Bishop of Rome; and the notion that life was to be dedicated to Christ, which was taken to its full meaning, namely by those who alienated themselves from society in order to live as purely as possible.

The trends mentioned above refer to the papacy and to monasteries, respectively. The first institution was clearly significant for the unfolding of medieval times, for its role in European governance, the appointing and dismantling of kings, not to mention their influence in current world affairs remaining a reality. The latter, also still in existence, was relevant for the intellectual contributions it provided, e.g. the emphasis on the art of writing, on culture, and on the preservation of classical history.

74 Ibid., 353.
On the Office of the Papacy

Within early Christianity, the authority in matters of faith and doctrine, as well as in the running of the mass, was allotted to the bishop. As the religion grew, so did the significance of the house of prayer. In the second century, there was an organized fellowship among its members: bishops had become influential, not in society, but among Christians; dioceses and parishes were established; there was a distinction between city and rural bishops; while in the third century, they basically ruled the growing church.\(^75\)

Two consequences arose: the Church developed in size and relevance (1), as also did the aspirations of those in positions of power (2), the latter generating negative effects for the faith. Within the clergy, the reverence from an ever-passionate body of converts and thus, staunch supporters, was perhaps unhealthy for a proper following of the messages in the Scriptures. Clerics, now composing courts and seeking temporal powers, became ambitious and worldly, no longer supported by the voluntary contributions of the faithful, but by revenues supplied by government, or property inherited from the old temples.\(^76\)

As it might be imagined, the fame of the Church grew in proportion after 312, not only because of its status as the religion of the emperor, but also due to other grants by him mandated, as mentioned in the previous chapter. By the time of what is considered the official fall of the Rome (476), it had acquired a reputation of prestige and respect. Indeed, Church authorities began to claim certain prerogatives, placing the Holy See on top of a ruling hierarchy, as if trying to replace the capability at *imperium*, once held by emperors in the west, whose power now resided with the rulers of a faraway Constantinople.

One key biblical principle defended by bishops in the last years of the old empire and thereafter, gave rise to the rationale that St. Peter was to be the patron of the Church, and so the latter’s divine role rested on that assumption. Emperor Valentinian III (425-455 AD) vouched for that right of the Church in a decree issued in 445, in the following terms:

“Since, then, the primacy of the Apostolic See is established by the merit of St. Peter (who is the chief among the bishops), by the majesty of the city of Rome, and finally by the authority


\(^76\) Ibid., 560.
of a holy council, no one, without inexcusable presumption, may attempt anything against the authority of that see. Peace will be secured among the churches if everyone recognizes his ruler. Lest even a slight commotion should arise in the churches, or the religious order be disturbed, we herewith permanently decree that not only the bishops of Gaul, but those of the other provinces, shall attempt nothing counter to ancient custom without the authority of the venerable father [Papa] of the Eternal City. Whatever shall be sanctioned by the authority of the Apostolic See shall be law to the, and to everyone else; so that if one of the bishops be summoned to the judgment of the Roman bishop and shall neglect to appear, he shall be forced by the moderator of his province to present himself. In all respects let the privileges be maintained which our deified predecessors have conferred upon the Roman church."

That way, just as Constantine had turned Christianity into state religion *par excellence*, Valentinian granted utmost authority to the Church’s main legate, i.e. the pope. Already in 343, as per the Council of Sardica, it was decided that the bishop of Rome had jurisdiction over cases related to the indicting of other clergymen, having a final say in their verdict, a rule to which all bishops present agreed. By issuing his decree, Valentinian furthermore referred to the Bishop of Rome as the *Papa*, or the pope, who at the time was Leo I. The latter, in turn, building on the example of St. Peter as the father of the Church, went on to justify the bishops’ spiritual power as given for perpetuity, an idea referred to as the ‘Petrine Doctrine.’

Such ideology had its origins in the scriptural passage of the book of Matthew, where Jesus blesses Peter for correctly answering who the Son of God is, setting the precedent for the inviolability of the true ministry, stating: *upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shall loose on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.*

The idea was of tremendous significance for the power-grab on the part of religious authorities. Claiming that Peter had not abandoned the helm of the Church, for he was pronounced the Foundation, Leo asserted that *if anything is rightly done and rightly decreed by us, if anything is won from the mercy of GOD by our daily supplications, it is of his work and merits whose power lives and whose authority prevails in his See.* Lastly,

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80 Ibid.
Pope Leo I, in his Sermon number 82, made telling indications on the role of St. Peter in the perpetuation of the Roman Empire, asserting that the advent of God’s Word, materialized in the flesh of Christ Jesus, allowed for the maintenance of a governing structure, whose scope had reached so far as to make possible to bring nations into close connection with God:

“For the Divinely-planned work particularly required that many kingdoms should be leagued together under one empire, so that the preaching of the world might quickly reach to all people, when they were held beneath the rule of one state. And yet that state, in ignorance of the Author of its aggrandizement though it rule almost all nations, was enthralled by the errors of them all, and seemed to itself to have fostered religion greatly, because it rejected no falsehood. And hence its emancipation through Christ was the more wondrous that it had been so fast bound by Satan.”

Leo interpreted, therefore, that the Church’s intentions complied with the will of the Lord, and their merits and efforts should be attributed, as well as allowed, for divine reasons. There lies a key reasoning for empire. Leo justified the need for a Christian Empire, whose main goal was to impart the Word of God, thus promoting salvation. The presence of an already-established and experienced Roman Empire was all the more helpful towards that assignment, for conquered territories would more easily be exposed to the teachings of Christianity. That way, the pope took it upon himself, and upon his predecessors, to not only retain the capabilities of the old emperors, but to preserve the empire, whose raison d’être was now to serve the Catholic Church.

Not only popes, but fellow Christians also joined the mindset that the extant structures of the Roman Empire were put in place and annexed due to divine providence. Especially following the period of persecution, many were delighted at the idea of a universal Church for a Universal Empire such as the Roman. Roman Christian poet Aurelius Prudentius wrote about Roman supremacy and how the Lord was behind all the glory: “O Roman, wouldst thou have me tell what is the true cause of thy triumphs, the hidden seat of thy glory, the arms by which though hast enchained the world? It is God.”

For Prudentius, much like for Leo I, God had paved the way, made it possible for his word to be heard, learned, and lived by, by allowing Rome to build its empire. The next stage would be, he wrote: “Now, verily, the way is made straight for the coming of

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83 Ibid., 297.
Christ…Rome and Peace are the two bonds of the universe, and now are they blended in one…For thy [Christ’s] Peace is thy delight, and that Peace is wrought by the excellence of Rome."\(^{84}\)

It seems as if what the gospels had to offer were so sacred that they united people into the same faith as delineated in the Scriptures. One such commonality was the rationale that the empire was to be used for Christ’s purpose, that reason serving also as a justification for previous, current, and future imperialism. Christianization was to be superior to all other creeds and cultures that deviated from the teachings of Jesus.

Building on that idea of the preeminence of Church authority, pope Gelasius I (492-496) wrote to emperor Anastasius I (491-518) in 494, saying that there existed two powers: that of the emperor (or royal power), and the sacred authority of the priests, the latter being more relevant, weightier, due to its superior jurisdiction, being accountable for divine judgment, even of kings. While emperors ruled over peoples, in spiritual matters they should bow down to the clergy, who helped them achieve salvation. Rulers were thus admonished to be subordinate rather than superior to the religious order, to defer to the Church in many aspects. Moreover, if obedience was due to the priests in general, then even greater submission to the Bishop of Rome was demanded, whom the See of the Church was ordained.\(^{85}\)

Gelasius, basing himself on the ideas of theologians such as Augustine of Hippo, defended yet another theory of the divine rights of the Church. According the Scripture found in the Book of Luke: *Lord, behold, here are two swords*,\(^{86}\) an interpretation emerged that the swords symbolized the powers of the Church. The pope believed that one sword stood for the spiritual power of the Church, while the second sword (i.e. temporal power) also belonged to the Church, but was given to the emperor so that it could be

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\(^{84}\) Ibid., 298.


protected, in other words, both the sword and the emperor were there to serve and defend the Church.\textsuperscript{87}

Such ethos had key implications because it served as a validation of the authority of the clergy, so that they could spread the Word of God to the world, promoting salvation, thus setting a standard for their divine right to rule, which prevailed for well over a millennium, up until the time when major splits occurred between the Church and sovereign European nation-states. It might as well be noticed how in a way the Church usurped the role of the Roman state. Though the western empire was dispossessed of its old authority, it retained its main function of universalism, which now according to Pope Leo I, was to make known the word of God through Christianization.

Based on those statements, plus the 445 decree recognizing the extent of papal authority, an ancient legacy of domination and universal rule was carried on. Whereas Rome did so via military conquest, claiming their special status as chosen people by their own pagan gods, the Church, itself an offshoot of Rome, now claimed salvation through Jesus Christ in order to seize power and authority. The actions of that institution at the European-wide level, with special attention to those of the pope, shall henceforth be interpreted in light of that goal: i.e. kingdoms were to be spliced together under the authority of one state, so that by way of a Christian empire the word of God may reach all with more ease.

The confusion of the Dark Ages was indeed beneficial for the figure of the pope, for it represented an opportunity for him, as the head of the Church, to take lead in the re-organization of societies. During the Gothic invasions of Italy in the early 5\textsuperscript{th} century, bishops had shown considerable skill as civic leaders, rallying their congregations at times of crisis.\textsuperscript{88} Besides, during the Lombard invasions the figure of the bishop had become the most prominent citizen of many communities, the uncertain times of the 5\textsuperscript{th} and 6\textsuperscript{th} centuries only accelerating this process.\textsuperscript{89}

Another sign of the relevance of the Church was its impact in the architecture and design of cities, most evident by houses of worship. There can be no more graphic

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 540.
demonstration of the rising social prominence of that institution than the topographical changes which occurred in many Italian cities, whereby the civic center came to be focused on the main church building.90

Beyond the confines of individual centers, the church inherited the old Roman administrative and social networks which underlay the development of episcopal dioceses, that religious organization thus developing an elaborate bureaucracy.91 It is fundamental to view the church as a physical representation of governance, for what became of it was just that, its personification into what public governmental buildings provide as services for society.

Church units throughout communities in the west, nevertheless, responded to their headquarters in the old capital, with the pope delegating those social efforts and other directives. As defender of Rome against its enemies and guarantor of its ideological supremacy, the papacy was coming to fill the role once performed by the emperors, one great example being its administration of corn distribution, which entailed the management of sizeable estates, as well as agricultural crops and buildings.92

With such changes occurring in favor of the Church powers, it became clear it had incorporated and inherited the state, actually thriving in the absence thereof, i.e. in the absence of active and effective imperial authorities. That is also why to a pope like Leo I, the removal of the imperial presence from Rome only served to highlight God’s plan for the Christian greatness of the city, and efforts to give Constantinople a status similar to that of Rome met with strong opposition.93

Therefore, it could be argued that a Holy Roman Empire was in the making, if not already born. It was Holy due to the authority of the Holy See, and it was Roman because ancient values and practices were adapted to new realities, its prestige attempted to be maintained. As for the Empire component, that was where a more tangible gap could be felt. It would take yet a few centuries for that tripartite formula to gain full force, but it is hard to deny that Holy Roman Rule was by the 5th century already a reality in the west, though blurred and so not as perceptible as to lead one to acknowledge it without hesitation.

90 Ibid., 540.
91 Ibid., 540.
92 Ibid., 541.
93 Ibid., 543.
Justinian’s Code of Law and the Siege of Rome of 537-538 AD

In the 6th century, the clout of the papacy would be reaffirmed by yet another emperor. Prior to going through that story, it might be worth to reflect upon one change that had occurred in the west. After the empire began its transfer to Constantinople in the 4th century, perceptively more so in the following years, officers of the Eastern Empire then made their presence in Rome and other areas of the Mediterranean. Since those governors, i.e. the Exarchs, wielded their See on mere fiscal, military, and jurisdictional bases, not having much contact or appreciation for locals, it so happened that individuals started to develop stronger ties with the clergy of their villages rather than with magistrates, politicians, kings and queens, most of whom, due to the threat of barbarian invasions, had long relocated.94

Such situation rendered the religious authorities as extant sources of wisdom and authority in cities, and definitely in more remote and rural areas. Priest and bishops were the only ones left to address the power gap created by the absence of cities’ elite, as also issues of safety amid continuous wars, casualties, diseases, and overall situations of scarcity.95 In 527, Justin I’s nephew, Justinian, would take over the throne upon the death of his uncle. Striving to revive imperial supremacy in the west, he would set out to promote reforms by instituting measures of integration, given the split between east and west which grew more and more evident.

Amid his efforts of imperial reunification, political elements were heeded to, as also religious ones, the latter not less driven by the emperor’s Christian faith. Less than a year had passed since his accession when on February 13th 528, Justinian appointed a commission to produce a new code of imperial law which would revise the existing ones and add legislation passed subsequently; by April 7th 529 the task was completed, the Codex Justinianus being then formally promulgated, a later revised and updated edition being issued in 534.96

95 Ibid., 125.
Aside from the range of the work, itself containing a plethora of books of law, thus promoting a sense of uniformity for a proper conduct at the imperial level, it had also significant guidelines for issues of faith. Noteworthy was the favoring of the teachings of the Roman Church trumping those of any other religion. Justinian was severe in his measures against pagans, and indeed all who deviated from the orthodox norm became targets of a series of laws beginning very early in his reign; he also built churches and involved himself in further religious affairs.97

Right in the beginning of his Code, considerations were made for the recognition of the legitimacy of the Roman Church. Title I of Book I, “Concerning the most exalted Trinity and the Catholic Faith and providing that no one shall dare to publicly oppose them,” read like a reinstatement of the Codex Theodosianus of 380, in its urge for the empire to be united under the same religion, also coining the name ‘Catholic Christians,’ and deeming deviants demented and heretics, and prohibiting them from forming assemblies.98 Next, it restored Valentinian’s decree of 445, aside from promoting due punishment of those who dared to dis the Church and its doctrines publicly, including the removal of membership from the clergy, demotion of military ranks, and banishment from the city, not to mention sanctions decided by court.99

Lastly, a written exchange between Justinian and then pope John II (533-535 AD), wherein they acknowledge each other’s authorities, serves as a reminder that the papacy at times wielded its ruling powers also with the approval of the eastern emperor. In a letter from Rome to Constantinople, the pope expressed his contentment for the Emperor’s work in safeguarding the authority of the See of Rome. More important was the mentioning of scriptural passages that allegedly defended the alliance between Church and State, namely the book of Proverbs chapter 21, verse 1, where the Bible reads that “The heart of the King is in the hand of God.”

The pope stated that the safeguarding of the empire was for the benefit of the Church and for the unity of the religion, the emperor’s power thus being divine in his duty to spread and maintain uniformity within the Church, which would not stand lest divided.100 It is

97 Ibid., 70.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
then possible to observe that, despite the papacy’s clear intentions to assert the Church’s authority and influence over the world, it did compromise when emperors showed submission to Christianity. Later in the middle ages, it was in the interest of kings and emperors not to irritate popes, for their political backing on the part of the pontiff were of great benefit for their public image, if not a *sine qua non* for their holding of those very titles.

Justinian, in addition to acknowledging the supreme authority of the Bishop of Rome over all churches, replied by confirming that it was also his intention to unite all the priests of the empire under the jurisdiction of the Holy See at Rome.101 Now, such bestowal of authority, added to the previously-mentioned prominence in civil affairs of bishops throughout Italy in times of the absence of imperial power in Rome and its surroundings, served to legitimize and foster political actions on the part of the papacy. Nevertheless, barbarian threat was still lurking over the west, especially in Italy, where the Ostrogoths had set in.

In light of that, Justinian included the ousting of those invaders to his imperial aims. He launched the first stage in the enterprise for which he is probably best known, the so-called ‘reconquest’ of the west.102 That marked another shift in the affairs of Constantinople. He then dispatched an army to Italy in 535 led by Belisarius, who conquered Naples from the Ostrogoths in 536, after which he entered Rome, where a siege began early in 537 and lasted for over a year, carried out by those same barbarians.103

It was during that episode when papal power started to be wielded more freely in that capital. For not only did Belisarius remove pope Silverius and put in his place Vigilius, but the siege ended in March 538, after the Ostrogoths had run out of provisions, that fact being compounded by news that other posts had fallen to Byzantine troops.104

Despite multiple instances of future disruption to Rome, the year of 538 AD marks a period when the papacy was free to exercise its power, now undeniably backed by past and present emperors, thus capable of setting a pattern for the authority of that agency not only over all churches, but in regard to the affairs of Italy, particularly the management of

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101 Ibid.
104 Ibid., 74.
Rome. What is more, it had the opportunity to act on the provisos stated in Justinian’s Code of Law, unencumbered by restrictions or the fear of political backlash. What was seen after such instances of involvement of the East in the West via Justinian was a decrease in authority on the part of the exarchs, which gradually gave way to the figure of the pope, who in turn gradually moved from managing simple city services to more relevant ones such as justice and the levying of taxation.105

Monasteries

At the closing of a glorious era such as that of Antiquity, symbolized by the Vandal invasion of Rome in 410 AD, subsequent sacks, and its official fall in 476 AD, a period of rampant hostility set in, with cities and rural areas being susceptible to raids, violence, and above all, conquest. The absence of a de jure authority capable of controlling the chaos that gained strength in the west, coupled with a plummeting population, scarcity of food and infrastructure, all led many during the Dark Ages to seek a much-needed refuge based on Christ’s example.

With that, came the trend of monasticism, whereby the first monachoi (‘solitaries’) were devout laymen who aimed at fulfilling Christ’s precepts of humility and self-denial by removing themselves from the temptations of secular life.106 Monastic communities, thus, soon emerged, some loyal to the original hermit life-style, others organized on a communal basis under an abbot, shifting the emphasis of life towards a moderate, disciplined regime.107 Throughout Western Europe, the Church came to rely increasingly on monks, since the collapse of Roman urban society left the secular clergy morally and materially ill-equipped for the immense tasks of conversion and reform which confronted it.108

The impact of the Christian faith, thus, became even clearer, as seen in the structural design and altered landscape of many cities of both east and west. The point is that, the uncertainty and blatant hostility of the Dark Ages created a change in the mindset of many, who feared the imminence of invasions. Cities decayed, hastened by the destruction of

106 Ibid., 43.
107 Ibid., 43.
108 Ibid., 44.
the barbarians, towns being a favorite target due to their accumulated riches acting as both a provocation and a lure.\textsuperscript{109}

Given that grim scenario, a natural reaction on the part of many individuals was to leave the city, in the search of peace, tranquility, and above all, means of subsistence in the countryside. The implication of that trend is extremely huge for the unfolding of medieval times and social relations. City-life reached sophisticated levels during the days of the Roman Empire, but with its demise came poor city-management, where lack of maintenance rendered overall infrastructure not to function to its full potential. The very quest for safety and peace of mind went hand in hand with the growth of monasteries, where a life within walls provided one of the tools needed for seclusion and alienation from worldly habits, at least in theory.

For the wealthy segments of society, it was the necessity of feeding themselves which above all explained the flight of the rich to the land, and the exodus of the poor onto the estates of the rich, resulting on the social phenomenon of a shift to the country.\textsuperscript{110} Again, it is interesting to consider that in the High Middle Ages, cities would again grow in both size and significance, so that as the Modern Era set in, yet another shift, this time back to the city, would be witnessed, as evidence of many cycles societies go through in history.

Attention now should be paid to other architects of medieval Europe, who through conquest reshaped the map of that continent, and through battle decided who would reach ruling positions in the new empire.

**Barbarian Tribes and Invasions**

In the AD 400s, it was evident that Rome had lost the capacity to react to foreign invaders. In that century, three dates mark the demise of the old empire, and thus that of an era. In 410 and 455, Rome was sacked, in the first episode by Visigoth king Alaric, and in the latter by the Vandals. In 476, Ostrogoth general Odoacer deposed the last western emperor, Augustulus, making official the end of Rome as it was known.

The empire had spread too thin, and centuries of hegemony resulted in complacency, to the extent that generations of conquerors degenerated into apathetic rulers.


\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 24.
The emperors thought they could avert their fate by abandoning their previous tutelary deities, who had failed, for the new God of the Christians, whereas for the Church, the Roman structures were only a framework on which it could model, support, and strengthen itself.\textsuperscript{111}

The territories that composed the western empire then, with the absence of the Roman see, were all susceptible to invasions, their populations subdued, and lands conquered. Such hostilities were brought by tribes devoid of the established culture and civilization that was seen and imposed by Rome. The barbarians, as they were referred to, and whose title is to this day used to describe savage, uneducated, coarse people and acts, were significant for the implementation of a new order. The following are the names of the main tribes that were scattered throughout Western Europe: Visigoths, Burgundians, Franks, Sueves, Vandals, Ostrogoths, and Lombards. Those were the peoples who gave the early medieval period the title Dark Ages.

The key notion to be understood with respect to the incursions, those hasty occupations, is that there was by the 5\textsuperscript{th} century, a relative absence of imperial power in the west, leaving the pope at Rome to manage the affairs of the Church, and later that of the city, at times fending for its own security via compromising with barbarian rulers. Christianity was a key protagonist in the survival of certain kingdoms, as also for the friendly relationship between the Church and the future rulers of Europe. That autarchic element enjoyed by the Church allowed for the pope to approach and deal with barbarian leaders. In time, such facet rendered Constantinople unnecessary in the safeguarding of the west, despite Eastern emperors’ disagreement towards that claim.

On top of that, the Dark Ages were times of fierce family feuds, with assassinations and conspiracies between fathers and sons, among brothers, and needless to say, amid rival tribes, all competing to assert their own brand of empire. To be sure, so-called barbarians had represented danger and a burden to the imperial state long before the latter’s fall in the 5\textsuperscript{th} century.

Already in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century, Marcus Aurelius initiated a military campaign in which he died in 180 AD, and the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century saw a general assault on the Roman limes, one overall consequence being the incorporation of barbarians as federates or allies into the

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 4.
imperial army.\textsuperscript{112} Also, great raids by the Alamans, Franks, and other Germanic peoples had ravaged the region of Gaul, Spain, and northern Italy already in 276 AD.\textsuperscript{113}

What such precedents indicated was that so long the Roman state was capable of keeping those peoples under their reins they did not constitute major threats to the future of the empire. Once supreme authority waned and was transferred further east, scores of territories became vulnerable and thus prone to being taken-over. Nevertheless, agreements were reached between imperial authorities and representatives of certain tribes.

Alliances played a huge role during this time, an era when a remote Constantinople, with the intent to secure order in the west, attempted to measure forces with barbarian rulers and use certain events at its favor whenever possible. Emperor Justinian seized opportunities to exploit situations of instability within barbarian kingdoms, for instance when he sent an army to assist one of the rebelling parties in Visigoth Spain in 533, which then succeeded in establishing an imperial enclave along the south-east coast of the peninsula.\textsuperscript{114}

When in the 540s the Lombards were encouraged by Justinian to cross the Danube into western Pannoia as a counter to possible Frankish aspirations in the Balkans, such move eventually resulted in the invasion of Italy by these same peoples in 562.\textsuperscript{115} At the same time that both the Byzantine emperors in the east and officers in the west mobilized efforts to cooperate with barbarian kings, that same involvement occasionally generated imperial distraction, and thus their exposure to further invasions.

Under Aetius, the western empire was too involved in conflict with the Visigoths in Gaul to undertake any punitive measures against the Vandals, who attacked Rome in 455, making the elimination of their kingdom in Africa a primary aim of imperial policy over the following decades.\textsuperscript{116} That very historical and decisive invasion provided for new opportunities for the Visigothic kingdom to enlarge itself, for now the threat from Vandal Africa not only replaced that of the Visigoths as the prime concern of the Roman

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 123.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 130.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 125.
Senate, but also as Roman imperial authority fragmented in the west, the holding of certain areas was enhanced.117

The western part of the empire was being attacked from many fronts, at times simultaneously. With “no-man’s lands” available, warfare between tribes occurred, with the effect that balance of power in the west was constantly affected by clashes of minor kingdoms, explaining why many lasted for a relatively brief amount of time when compared to the consistency of Roman rule: Visigothic Gaul (418-507); Burgundians (412-534); the Suevic kingdoms (425-584); Visigothic Spain (456-601); Vandal Africa (429-533); Ostrogothic Italy (493-535); Lombards in Italy (568-590); and even Frankish Gaul (481-596).118

Barbarian admiration of Roman Culture

The early medieval era was the stage of new experiments with elements of an old order, e.g. the extant physical structures in Rome, a Church which survived to instill a mindset of classical and religious values into its medieval newcomers, and the presence of different cultures and forms of military with the barbarians. Those elements came to implement a new order, with remnants of Roman principles added to a fledgling culture instituted by invaders. Most of them had experienced the influence of Asiatic traditions, of the Persian world and of the Greco-Roman world itself, thus carrying refined skills in metal-working, e.g. damascening, leather-working, and the wonderful art of the steppes with its stylized animal motifs.119

Besides, admiration existed on their part towards Rome. They were often captivated by the cultures of neighboring empires, with attraction for their knowledge, and luxury.120 Barbarian chiefs often aped Roman customs, bestowing upon themselves Roman titles – e.g. Consul, Patrician – appearing not as enemies but as admirers of Roman institutions.121

117 Ibid., 113.
119 Ibid., 13.
121 Ibid., 14.
It must be understood that no state in the early middle ages was strong enough to enforce a compact legal order of its own, of taking precedence over other laws, or of treating them as enactments confined to aliens, to the point where even the most powerful of barbarians, e.g. the Lombards or the Franks, dealt with a mixture of legal arrangements.\textsuperscript{122} Interesting enough, institutions such as monasteries, held the status of ecclesiastical corporations, and as such entitled to a judgment according to Roman law, at times requiring the presence of experts in just that subject.\textsuperscript{123}

This way, aspects of Roman agencies reflected on the mode laws were later implemented. It is true that imperial administrative structures were replaced by that of Germanic kingdoms, but those were, however, dependent on Roman traditions of government, where Law codes were largely Roman in content and in the forms they took.\textsuperscript{124} Another noticeable facet was that of Romanization in the figure of Barbarian kings. Roman bureaucrat and historian Jordanes explained how king Theoderic, upon his entrance into Italy in 493 AD after vanquishing some rivals, traded his tribal raiment of private citizen for one with a royal mantle, as he then was both a Goth and Roman ruler.\textsuperscript{125} The pomp and prospects of Roman Emperorship was appealing to many, even barbarian rulers.

Visigothic king Theodoric II mirrored great part of his self-portrayal, dynamics of his kingdom, as well as his habits, on Roman practices. He took the name of Flavius and wrote to the emperor in the east: \textit{ego qui sum servus vester et filius} (I who am your slave and son), and declared to him that his only ambition was to make his kingdom ‘an imitation of your own, a copy of your unrivalled empire.’\textsuperscript{126} Sidonius Apollinaris, writing about the personality of king Theoderic, said that in addition to being a Christian, there was a mixture of high culture and simplicity that made him a unique ruler, the elegance of Greece and promptness of Italy being observed at his royal residence.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{122} Davis, William Stearns. "Legal Conditions and the Personality of Law during the Barbarian Settlement." In \textit{Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources}. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1913. 353.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 354.
\textsuperscript{125} Davis, William Stearns, and Willis M. West. "Jordanes, The Youth and Rise to Power of Theodoric the Ostrogoth," In \textit{Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources}. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1913. 325.
That urge to Romanitas seen in the acts of certain barbarian kings was actually advantageous for the powers that be, both at Rome and at Constantinople. By attempting to become Romans, those kings willingly adopted features of that ancient civilization. Whereas empire on Roman molds was made possible due to the absence of a prompt state in the old capital, contrasted with an administration in the east busy with other problems, there was one element whose authority remained in the west, alive and constantly gaining power, i.e. the Church. That, i.e. Christianity, kings and tribes also came to admire and eventually adhere to.

Among the features of Roman culture that kings acquired, Christianity had at first a small role. Rome, after all, tried to play off one lot (i.e. tribe) against the other, and hurriedly attempted to Romanize the first arrivals and turn them into a tool for use against the following groups. Later on, the Dark Ages, through conversion into Christianity, little by little began to lose its darkness. Moreover, skilled popes weeded out the allies who benefitted them the least, though still using those as pawns, up to the point where it found one on whom it could more significantly rely. Following that trend, great examples of high politics were witnessed with Pope Gregory the Great in his plight to defend Rome.

**On the Pope’s Diplomacy with the Lombards**

As mentioned previously, the Lombards made their incursion into Italy in 562 AD. In 590, a new pontiff started his administration, Gregory the Great, the first pope of the middle Ages, and yet the last one of Christian antiquity, a product of ancient Rome, Christianized. With the appropriation of large parts of the Italian peninsula by the Lombards since 568, the possessions of the Church were equally threatened, but Gregory achieved a truce with the invaders, which was annually renewed.

Paulus Diaconus wrote about the success of that pope in reaching settlements with the Lombards. Through the use of the Christian faith, he appealed to the king’s wife, considering her strategic position in coaxing her husband into concluding a firm peace with

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130 Ibid., 60-61.
the Pope and with the Romans, which generated a letter of gratitude from Gregory to the Lombard queen.\textsuperscript{131}

While that letter of acknowledgement consists of an important document showing a gesture of cordiality, it is not as pertinent to this study as the political maneuverings made by Gregory, and above all, their repercussions. The achievements of the pope were trailblazing, and a lot to take for a still sovereign Byzantine Empire, whose claims to the west were constantly ignored and invalidated by events such as the close dealings between the papacy and barbarians in the west.

Therefore, the truce of Gregory was not welcomed by Byzantium: neither by the emperor, nor by his powerless and inefficient officials at Rome, who were at times a rapacious nuisance.\textsuperscript{132} Competition came about between the Church, the emperor in the east, and the barbarian kings, a hurried quest for the west, all three elements jockeying for legitimacy, playing and preying on each other, allying and deceiving, the party ruling from Rome, a city with tradition of governance, arguably ahead in that race, being the one closest to accomplishing its goal, i.e. the attempt at empire and control.

A precedent of papal autonomy was set, one that would yield great fruits in the years to come. What is more, it demonstrated the divide between east and west, not less clear by the predominance of Greek in the former, and Latin in the latter. In short, the Church increasingly assumed, and was forced to take on, the functions and responsibilities of a temporal, independent ruler of Rome and of the lands of St. Peter, from Central Italy to Sicily.\textsuperscript{133}

Again, the split between Constantinople and Rome grew stronger, as did the hegemony of the papacy in the western parts of Europe. Out of the strife between Eastern officials and bishops at Rome and throughout Italy, emerged a more sovereign Church with temporal power, respect, and sympathy from their local populations.\textsuperscript{134} What came next was a very meaningful alliance, one that sought to restore the legacy of a classical, golden age,

\textsuperscript{131} Davis, William Stearns, and Willis M. West. "Paulus Diaconus, How Pope Gregory I made Peace with the Lombards and Corresponded with the Lombard Court." In \textit{Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources}. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1913. 367.


\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Ibid.}, 71.

where civilization was to elevate its potential, creating the cultural and political European factions that centuries later culminated into sovereign nations.

Even more significant, with the western imperial government’s financial structure broken down, an affluent Church had to act as paymaster to the troops, and an energetic pope like Gregory would not only take a hand in military matters, but he would also negotiate truces like the one he did with the Lombards. Then there was the element of conversion. The pope’s future allies would be weighed in terms of their faith, their contributions to the Church, their military might, and their prospects of conquest.

More importantly, the ambitions of kings, princes, and emperors were not supposed to eclipse those of the papacy, lest they be eliminated. The successful allies would soon learn that they were being lifted up not due to their primacy, but rather to help out reviving and sustaining a project that had been lost in Antiquity, waiting to be found again in the middle ages.

\[135\] Ibid., 71.
Early Expansion across the West

By the 600s AD, the map of Europe was considerably more defined. While still chaotic and devoid of the presence of a strong empire in the proximities of what Rome used to be, by that time it was more possible to observe how certain barbarian kingdoms had been wiped-out, subdued, or incorporated into more powerful ones. Among those, one stood supreme. The Franks, whose due mentioning was purposefully avoided in the former unit and delayed up to this present one, displayed incredible military might. That itself enabled them to conquer significant portions of territory. Another element of their success was religion. Conversion into Christianity yielded cooperative fruits with the papacy.

Like other barbarians, the Franks inherited a great deal of Roman traditions and concepts, religion being just one of them. What was crucial in their history was, aside from their warlike capabilities, their urge to power and control of ever-growing territories, which was shared with papal ambitions, though in a different way. By now it shall be no surprise that the Church’s legates were deeply immersed in the politics of their individual pontificates, with a high degree of influence over the regions wherein they preached. Still, the impulse to turn their Church, and thus their empire, away from the control of the eastern emperors could not be done solely through religion.

There was the need for material power, not only spiritual, in order to prove that the west was a sphere of its own, or rather, of the Church, and not of anyone else. Wherefore, the advent of a martially powerful people was crucial for the unfolding and consolidation of western sovereignty *vis-à-vis* that of the east. That was precisely the role the Franks played in the early middle ages. Establishing their own dynasties, they helped to integrate classical values to those of the Church and its *Weltanschauung*. The result of that equation was Medievalism. That being the case, let their beginnings, which led to their glories, to first be understood, so that further developments and events can be put into a more proper context.

It is commonly said that the Franks came originally from Pannoia and first colonized the banks of the Rhine, then crossing the river, marching through Thuringia, and setting up in each country district and each city, long-haired kings chosen from the foremost
and most noble family of their race. Clodio, a man of high birth and marked ability among his people, was king of the Franks, and he lived in the Castle of Duisburg in Thuringian territory, with the river Loire marking the borders of Roman occupations (south of the river) and that of the Goths (north of the Loire).

Next, the Franks conquered territories from the Romans. Clodio sent spies to the town of Cambrai, and when they had discovered all they needed to know, he himself followed and crushed the Romans and captured the town, living there only a short time and then occupying the country up the river Somme.

**The Rise of the Franks: The Merovingians**

A powerful dynasty, the Merovingian, sprang up from the Frankish kingdom. Clodio was its first king, and some say that Merovech, Clovis’ grandfather and the father of Childeric, was descended from Clodio. A Frankish presence was established in the far north-east of Gaul in the mid-4th century, and they were never thereafter dislodged. Other Franks remained east of the Rhine, and the limited nature of evidence makes it impossible to delineate the cultural and political differences between the various groups. From those divisions stemmed factions such as the Ripuarian and Salian Franks, for instance.

Proximity with Rome gave certain officers an advantageous position when the empire was in a state of decadence. One of the Frankish military commanders who saw in the fragmentation of administrative structures an opportunity of aggrandizement was Childeric. His power was built up partly on the basis of alliances, with some of the competing Roman commanders contending for control of parts of northern Gaul in the 460s and possibly also for support from his wife’s people, the Thuringians.

Civilization and order were two facets present during the Merovingian period. That was despite the militaristic society it constituted, whereby values of war, coarseness and force made for harsh contrasts. French historian Parmentier famously described Frankland,
today known as France. About the overall aspects of that domain, he mentioned the advent of a new society, a blend between German and Roman cultures, exemplified by the Merovingian kings.

Those long-haired warriors portrayed in their coat of arms a spear in their hands, gradually giving way to the insignia of the emperors. Roman military costume was adopted, as was the toga and imperial diadem, represented in their coins. Their settlements included villages guarded by walls, plots destined to agriculture, and abundance in production, of tools, constructions, and cultivation of foods and drinks.\textsuperscript{143}

As for the features of city-organization and economic activities in Frankland, he described the exodus of the rich towards the countryside, for in the last years of the empire many had taken refuge against the barbarian incursions within walled cities, which re-built in wood were susceptible to conflagration. Houses were grouped around the basilica, and industry existed to a certain amount, stimulated by commerce and demand for products such as spices, silks, cotton goods, jeweler’s wares, among other articles. Still, a state of constant war joined famine in the ravaging of districts, bringing more misery into times of Dark Ages.\textsuperscript{144} Notice how the church was mentioned as an important unit around which the city revolved.

Other indicators of societal order were the laws and regulations that were adopted and enforced. Despite the split between the Ripuarians and Salic Franks, there were similarities, especially with regard to questions of inheritance. The personality of laws within barbarian settlements differed according to one’s nationality. That meant that legal rights acted in a specific way whether one was a Salian, a Ripuarian, a Bavarian, a Burgundian, or a Roman.\textsuperscript{145} With a man’s legal status being rigidly defined by law codes, it followed that each man had his own price.\textsuperscript{146}

Further signs of the organization brought about by the Franks had to do with monetary means. While initially not intended for financial purposes, the \textit{wergeld} constituted an important precursor to pecuniary exchange, especially as trade increased between east and

\textsuperscript{143} Davis, William Stearns. "Parmentier, Manners and Life in Frankland in the Merovingian Period." In \textit{Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources}. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1913. 343.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 344.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 353.
The institution of *wergeld* consisted of a system of reparations for crimes of murder, whereby the sum paid to a victim’s relatives assumed that name, the absence of relatives directing the amounts to the treasury. In certain barbarian law codes, it was stated that whoever had to pay compensation for a murder, could pay their *wergeld* in forms other than coins, e.g. one could give a bullock instead of two gold *solidi*, a cow for one *solidus* and a horse for six *solidi*.\(^{147}\)

The state, thus, could potentially benefit from this concept of compensation for crimes. At the same time, such regulations promoted incentives for prosecution moved by the family of victims. Similar prospects of financial benefits were also devised by the Church, that being just one sign of commonality that brought their association with the Franks closer. That way, the kin-group was an important social and legal institution, by having certain duties in law, e.g. bringing those who had wronged their relatives to justice, due trial, and subsequent punishments (so-called ‘blood feuds’), which in turn were condoned because without the threat of the law, the guilty parties would seldom be induced to come to court.\(^{148}\)

The cultural context of such law codes must be remembered in order to make sense of the nature of that form of legislation. Developments in many areas notwithstanding, that remained a primitive society, which rendered most litigation to be over crimes of violence, while cases of broken contracts, questions of land title, among other matters, were far less important.\(^{149}\) Moreover, there was still a great deal of cruelty, namely the issue of slavery. Barbarian society was strictly stratified, with slaves and semi-free at the bottom, and some kind of aristocrats and royalty at the top.\(^{150}\)

The above-mentioned laws, depictions of cities, overall life, cultural habits, and mentalities, go to show the developments achieved by a people that, through survival, had the chance to expand their way of living, and highly influence the implementation of a new,

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medieval world order. Great part of the laws cited, like that of the Salian Franks on rights to private property, inheritance, plundering, and wergeld, were composed by 500 AD.\textsuperscript{151}

It is important to mention that fact, for the following segments deal with events that took place before that time. Therefore, it must be clear that anachronistic writing was here done with a purpose, and so there shall not be confusion in regard to such dealings. It is, furthermore, expedient that specific actors such as kings receive their own section for the sake of clarity and due historical merit. That is certainly the case with Frankish ruler Clovis.

**Clovis**

Upon Childeric’s death, succession came upon his son Clovis, whom the Franks owe great part of their reputation and success. This was due to his campaigns, in which he subdued enemies and unified territories. He is usually seen as the real founder of Frankish power in Gaul, uniting the north of that territory under his rule, by force of arms.\textsuperscript{152} Clovis also set up various alliances with other barbarian kings, many of which served as mere façades for alternative aims, like the one with the Burgundians. In 500 AD he allied with king Godigisel, in the latter’s failed war against his brother Gundobad, making Clovis his new ally, both of whom posterior to the 507 Battle of Vouillé (after which Clovis was victorious) took over the remainder of Visigothic lands in Gaul.\textsuperscript{153}

One major historical episode involving that Frankish king was his adoption of Christianity, especially at a time when Frankish rivals had not yet adhered to that faith. The Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Burgundians, and later the Lombards, had all been converted to Arianism, which had been considered a heresy after the Council of Nicaea.\textsuperscript{154} Clovis’ decision to embrace the “true Church,” nonetheless, was significant because of Frankish favored political position in posterior times. Aside from their martial capabilities, they received the backing of the papacy, which would later on ask for their protection.

Before explaining the process and events which led him to be born again into the faith of Christ, it is crucial to understand the warring, power-seeking nature of his

personality. Whereas he did indeed change his religion, as well as that of his people, some of the atrocities he committed while a worldly mortal were actually perpetuated, nay, aggravated after his conversion. After all, he united the Romans of north Gaul under his rule, through coercion and by conversion to the religion of the Roman Church, while also uniting the Franks under his own rule by, say, having rival kings assassinated.  

Historian and bishop Gregory of Tours (538-594 AD) wrote about the trajectory of that people in his *History of the Franks*, elucidating on certain episodes involving Clovis, namely the incident of the Vase at Soissons. On that occasion, non-believer Clovis smashed his soldier’s head the same way the latter disobeyed the command to preserve and protect one vessel, while campaigning at Soissons in 486 AD, Clovis reportedly having said to his subordinate "thus didst thou to the vase at Soissons."  

Thus coldly he acted when opposed by his minions. Let this be an example of the way he was wont to run the affairs of his kingdom, for other such instances will soon resurface. Also cold was his initial reaction towards Christianity. Given to paganism, Clovis worshipped the plethora of Roman gods the ancients used to invoke when in need. After marrying Clotilda, nevertheless, he began to be preached by her about the Word of the “true God.” Gregory explains that upon the birth of their first son, Ingomer, who ended up dying as a baby, Clotilda wished for the child to be baptized, telling Clovis that his gods were not able to help themselves, let alone others, emphasizing their inferiority by being carved out of wood, in comparison to the Creator of the universe, i.e. the Christian God.  

Already incredulous, and even more so after Ingomer’s death, Clovis staunchly rejected his wife’s beliefs, remaining in his pagan worship. Clotilda’s efforts at conversion notwithstanding, it was not until war with the Alamanni broke out in 496 AD, with his army’s imminent annihilation in sight, that Clovis had a divine epiphany. On the verge of defeat, he saw a vision of the Messiah, whom his wife worshipped, and begged for help, promising not only to convert, but be baptized, if he was granted victory. He explained that he had appealed to his gods and was without success, his relationship with Christianity thus being kicked off.
with a haggling maneuver: “I want to believe in you, but I must first be saved from my enemies.”

So it happened, just like Constantine had his vision of a cross while in battle, so did Clovis receive a revelation that saved the future of his army. Eerily, both reports, a mere 184 years apart, had the paradigm-shifting consequence of uniting religion and politics due to the emotional experiences of two rulers. Whereas Clovis was not as powerful a king as Constantine, both set a precedent that would later bestow tremendous authority and prestige upon the Christian faith, and above all upon its legate.

Indeed, that is precisely the allusion made by Gregory when describing Clovis’ baptism. The queen and the king met with the bishop of Rheims in order to arrange more formal proceedings for the conversion. The remainder of Franks was still walking in disbelief. Much to his surprise, however, his people willingly embraced their king’s new faith. Like some new Constantine, Clovis was baptized, professed his belief in the Trinity, and urged by the bishop to “worship what you have burnt, and burn what you have been wont to worship,” in a ceremony that followed the baptism of more than three thousand of his army.

In addition to Gregory of Tours’, there are other accounts of Clovis’ repentance and baptism. In a similar version, St. Denis’ chronicle agrees with Gregory’s writings, when the former explained that the king, upon realizing the potential defeat of his troops, called the name of the Lord, won the battle and converted. It adds, though, that his adoption of the faith went beyond personal conviction, since it served as a tool to safeguard victory in future campaigns against enemies.

In the Chronicle of Frodoard, more explanations arise with regard to the aftermath of the conversion, namely the festive atmosphere of worship in the city of Rheims. A bold and pretentious allusion to the heavenly realm is in it stated. On the day of Clovis’ baptism, the Bishop of Rheims prepared a great procession. Upon glancing at the solemnity,

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the king asked if that was the Kingdom of Heaven which had been promised to him, to which
the priest responded: “Not so, it is the road that leadeth unto it.” 161

Whether mere heroic writing or fact, such chronicles highlight the significance
of his conversion, namely the blessing of the Franks under Clovis, now acting with the
approval of bishops and in defense of Christianity. Legitimacy was granted then to both sides,
to the Church and to the Frankish polity. Now, his religion was especially important for the
justification of his attitudes towards rivals.

In spite of commanding his people to follow after his example and adhere to
Christianity, certain Franks still held on to paganism, and found a leader in Prince and
Clovis’ relative Ragnachairus. 162 Once again, Gregory reported the incident between Clovis
and that kin of his, which not surprisingly resulted in the latter’s defeat, his kingdom
eviscerated and usurped by the newly-converted Christian ruler. 163

In another initiative, Clovis set out to oust the king of Cologne. He did so,
however, through genuine political cunning and deceit. With his real intentions disguised in
diplomacy, he knew how to approach rivals and hedge against their weak points, so that their
decay would take place internally, in brilliant illustrations of “divide-and-conquer” tactics.
Gregory expanded on how Clovis instigated conflict between father and son, urging Cloderic
to get rid of his father Sigibert king of Cologne, and inherit the throne.

After usurping the kingdom, the prince met with Clovis’ messengers, who took
advantage of one of Cloderic’s vulnerable moments to crush his skull. 164 Clovis, having
eliminated two kings with virtually no effort, then addressed the people of Cologne,
informing them that an accident had befallen both Cloderic and Sigibert, to which the ill-
informed population reacted by welcoming him as their new ruler. 165

To be sure, though, in contrast to those vile actions on the part of a king faithful
to God, there were instances where he not only used the name of the Almighty as part of
motivational rhetoric for his troops, as he also acknowledged the blessings bestowed upon

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161 Ibid., 333.
162 Ibid., 335.
163 “Book II, Chapter 42—The Death of Ragnachar and his Brothers.” In Gregory of Tours, The History of the
Lewis G. M Thorpe. 156.
164 Davis, William Stearns. "Gregory of Tours, How Clovis Disposed of a Rival." In Readings in Ancient History:
Illustrative Extracts from the Sources. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1913. 336.
165 Ibid., 336.
him, which gave him superiority and the right to conquer. In a campaign against the Visigoths, he allegedly urged his soldiers to conquer the lands of the Arians holding a portion of Gaul and make them submit to their lordship. Other instances of his faith were seen in statements where he demanded signs that would indicate the Lord’s approval of his initiative to take over territory from non-believers who had always been hostile to the Christian deity.

By making use of opposing terms such as ‘Arians,’ ‘unbelievers,’ and vindicating conquest in the name of God, Clovis added a spiritual element to his campaigns, which after victory promoted further unity with the Catholic Church, as well as within the Frankish kingdom, thus highlighting the dominance of that clan. His reign, which lasted from 481-511 AD, did much for the future of the Franks. His conversion constituted a pioneering event, for as it shall be learned later, that relationship with the Church would benefit not only subsequent Merovingians, but the other segments of Franks which came up in the centuries leading up to the High Middle Ages.

His brand of Christianity, a mix of faith and submission as long as it was to him expedient, did not hinder, neither did it quench, his thirst for conquest and territorial annexation. Both before and after his nominal conversion, he showed himself a wholly evil, unscrupulous savage, who prospered by a combination of lion-like bravery and vulpine cunning, the churchmen of the age, nevertheless, willing to condone almost all his acts.

**Frankish Military Genius and Conquest**

As it were with other barbarian settlements, at times their power, and definitely their opportunities, grew stronger as a still existent Roman clout diminished in the 400s. After the de jure emperorship was transferred to Constantinople in the 4th century, the gradual absence of a ubiquitous Roman see in the west contributed even more for the spread of many tribes. In spite of that, emperors such as Justinian (527-565 AD) rebutted in his *Institutes* the idea of barbarian success, claiming that they had been in fact dominated by the empire, with him at the forefront, as evident in the preamble of his work:

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It seems as if Justinian, two-hundred years after the rise in status on the part of the Church, seemingly neglectful of the power-gap that set in upon the fall of the western empire, sought to reverse history, not admitting that the reality west of Constantinople had changed. Despite his efforts at lingering wars, the very fact that he compromised with barbarians, e.g. in the form of treaties, portrays the figure of not as mighty and authoritative an emperor as he depicts in the above writings. Again, without taking away his merits with respect to the invaders, there was another element he seemed to have neglected.

With the emergence of many barbarian tribes, conflict amongst themselves was inevitable. From an imperial perspective this was good, for through division, conquering could follow. However, one of the kingdoms, i.e. the Franks, emerged supreme over all others, to the point where their power could not be belittled, let alone ignored. Another variable was the papal urge to not only preserve the legacy of Rome, aspects of which barbarian kings were fond of, but also to exert their influential position of control via religion.

In that atmosphere, the Franks put themselves in a privileged position after the glories of Clovis, who died in 511 AD. The kingdom was inherited by his four sons: Theuderic I, Chlodomer, Childebert I, and Chlothar I. Lust for power provided for actions of utmost hostility within the clan, following the footsteps of Clovis and his moves against the lives of fellow Frankish rulers.

Emperor Justinian would join the scene and do his share of compromising with the Franks and other barbarians, disrupting the balance of power with the intent to assure their mutual destruction. Theuderic I’s son, Theudebert I, presented himself to the emperor in 533, as a potential Catholic ally against the Arian Goths, while at the same time he negotiated with the Ostrogoths, deceiving both sides and in 539 invading Italy aiming for more

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With Frankish control established over several regions north of Italy, Justinian ceded Northern Pannoia to the Lombards, not least to block the perceived threat of a Frankish move into the Balkans, possibly aimed at Constantinople.  

The trend of family feud, with the division of the kingdom inherited by brothers, continued to be a constant among the Franks and was seen even in the 800s with Charlemagne’s sons. When Theudebert’s son and successor Theudebald suffered an early death (thus bringing this branch of the Merovingian dynasty to an end), Clovis’ youngest son, Chlothar I, inherited the kingdom in 555, only five years later for it to be once again partitioned, this time among his four sons: Charibert I, Sigebert I, Chilperic I, and Guntram.

Chilperic’s son, Clothar II, became the king of all Franks in 613, until 629 after which, one of his two sons, Dagobert I, assumed the throne until his death in 638, after which Sigibert III ruled in Austrasia and Clovis II took over Neustria and Burgundy, both sons under regents. Dagobert’s power stretched over the whole of northern France and the Low Countries, and much of the Frankish kingdoms in 613 after torturing to death the dominant figure in Frankish politics for twenty years, his aged aunt Brunhild.

The eastern Emperors’ claims that the west was still under Byzantine jurisdiction became constantly ignored. With the Franks reigning unrivalled, they emerged as a western power par excellence. Particularly, the Merovingian claim to rule was never questioned, this being due to the dynasty’s old legacy, its immense prestige, mystique, and eventually because, in a way, it was so powerless that it was harmless. More important yet was the model set by Rome in regard to governance and its dynamics. The example of Roman emperorship, e.g. the idea that “the word of the prince is law,” was always there to inspire western kings, to the extent that it persuaded barbarian rulers to have the customary law of their peoples written down.

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170 Ibid., 119.
171 Ibid., 119.
172 Ibid., 119.
174 Ibid., 93.
175 Ibid., 95
176 Ibid., 84.
Superiority due to a Roman style of rule began to be seen among the Franks. Claiming to be the heirs to Roman power, Frankish pride in their own achievements bore fruit in Dagobert’s reign, in the emergence of the tradition that the Franks were descended from the Trojan royal family, thus being equal to Romans.\textsuperscript{177} Not surprisingly, later in the 8\textsuperscript{th} century, a new sense of self-entitlement appeared. This time was the claim that the Franks were superior to Romans, for whereas the ancients had persecuted Christians, that medieval clan was a staunch protector of the Church.\textsuperscript{178}

Now, another historical leap is necessary to give a better effect of the impact the Franks had for the future of Europe. Since this unit deals with their accomplishments, one would be remiss in not mentioning their lasting place within such a significant aspect of European societies, i.e. military forces. The Romans prided themselves in their martial cunning, together with governing authorities and a populace, both of which granted immense valor and honor to combatants. Indeed, great part of their excellence stemmed from just these aspects. It was no different, and definitely not surprising, that the successful barbarian segments would prove their right to rule through the sweat and blood of their regiments.

The Franks became known for their ferocity, toughness, and Spartan mentality turned to battling. In medieval times, un-stratified rural communities were transformed into stratified orders with a powerful monarchy and a landed aristocracy accustomed to a military way of life, thus witnessing the militarization of society.\textsuperscript{179} A few medieval voices might help conjuring up a fairer picture of that people, who went from their beginnings as a small tribe, constituting their own kingdom, their typical demeanor being marked by their fighting.

St. Denis in his chronicle on the conversion of Clovis compared the Franks and their foes, stating that: “...the Franks fought to win glory and renown, the Alemanni to save life and freedom.”\textsuperscript{180} Gregory of Tours clarified the zeal of that ruler: “Daily did God cause Clovis’ enemies to fall into his hand, and increased his kingdom; seeing that he went about with his heart right before the Lord, and did that which was pleasing in His eyes.”\textsuperscript{181} Saracen Musa, the conqueror of Spain, described to Kalif Abd-el-Melek upon his return to Damascus,

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 95  
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 95  
some features of those people: “They are a folk right numerous, and full of might: brave and
impetuous in the attack, but cowardly and craven in event of defeat.”

That last comment illustrates a picture that was unique in European history. In
the 600s AD, a new doctrine appeared to truly rival the then august and unquestioned
Christianity, for beliefs such as Arianism, Manichaeism, Pelagianism, among other heresies,
did represent opposition, but their defeat proved also their insignificance when compared to
the worthier opponent the still existent religion of the prophet was.

The emergence of Islam constituted a problem for the Church, in the sense that
it gained adherents rapidly, and that believers of Allah sought to conquer areas of Europe, as
evidenced by Musa’s writings. Their emphasis in science and their prominence in trade
certainly changed the dynamics of a Europe transitioning from antiquity, with a Christian
Church already consolidated. The crusades of the 11th century, mandated by the Church, and
heavily aided by Frankish fighting, were but a small reflex of that rivalry.

Back to the glory of the Franks, in 732 AD, a battle at the city of Poitiers took
place with the Moslems. Isidore of Breja depicted the “hammer victory” of the inhabitants of
Frankland, referring to Charles Martel as a mighty warrior, from his youth trained in all the
occasions of arms, where in the shock of battle the men of the North seemed like unto a sea
that could not be moved. Firmly they stood, one close to another, forming as it were a
bulwark if ice; and with great blows of their swords they hewed down the Arabs.

Interestingly, Isidore of Breja refers to those Frankish warriors as ‘Europeans,’
providing further distinctions between a predominantly Christian people and the emergence
of an Islamic organization, all taking place in a continent gaining political form. Another
account, this time by an Arabian, provides for a version with the same ending, with different
details and exaltations, making the Moslem defeat sound more like a victory by other means.

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182 Davis, William Stearns. "Arabian Chronicler, The Opinion of Musa, the Saracen Conqueror of Spain, as to the
Franks." In Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1913. 362.
183 Davis, William Stearns. "Isidore of Breja, An Early Story of the Battle of Tours or Poitiers." In Readings in
Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1913. 363.
For instance, the author claims that all the nations of the Franks trembled at that terribly Moslem army, their fury against the Franks being akin to that of raging tigers.\textsuperscript{184} That narrative brings attention to the clash between the hosts of two languages and two creeds. Moslem defeat, according to the author, having occurred not necessarily due to Frankish superiority, but to ungainly circumstances that ambushed the Moslem leader, leading to his death.

Lastly, St. Denis shared his view in a chronicle, granted one more contemplative of Frankish accomplishments. In it, he compares the glorious Prince Charles’ fight to that of hungry wolves falling upon a stag, and who by the grace of the Lord slaughtered the enemies of the Christian faith. Having defeated three-hundred thousand men while losing only fifteen-hundred of his, it was after this battle when Charles became known as the ‘Martel,’ \textit{for as a hammer of iron, of steel, and of every other metal, even so he dashed and smote in the battle all his enemies.}\textsuperscript{185}

As it were, Charles gained the moniker of “Martel,” which is translated as “hammer,” in an allusion to his groundbreaking victory over non-Christian warriors. This goes to show the power of history in collective memory, but above else, the destiny of the Franks for grandeur. Other names such as Karl der Große (or Karolus Magnus, Charles the Great, i.e. Charlemagne) symbolize the legacy of great Frankish rulers. Indeed, military reputation was enjoyed by that people well into the High Middle Ages. When it comes to European expansion during that period, Frankish aristocrats provided numerous ruling dynasties for the continent, with an astounding eighty percent of Europe’s kings and queens being Franks, by the Late Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{186}

Frankish presence in Crusading efforts was also of great importance. In the knightly culture of the 10\textsuperscript{th}-13\textsuperscript{th} centuries, the vocabulary of all the peoples on the peripheries of Frankish Europe was marked by loanwords, often originally from French, describing the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item \textsuperscript{185} Davis, William Stearns. "Part of Another Account of the Same Battle by the Chronicle of St. Denis." In \textit{Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources}. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1913. 364.
\end{thebibliography}
equipment and habits of the immigrant mounted fighters who settled during that time. In a way, the Franks instilled notions strongly based on military values into medieval societies.

The Hungarian words for ‘helmet’, ‘armor’, ‘castle’, ‘tower’, ‘tournament’, ‘duke’, ‘fief’, and ‘marshal’ are all loanwords from German, several of them, like ‘tournament’, having been in turn borrowed by Germans from French. Likewise, the Germanic word ‘rider’ (Ritter) was used in medieval Ireland (ritire) and Bohemia (rytiry) for ‘knight;’ or the Polish and Czech words for ‘fief’ are direct borrowings from the German Lehen. In southern Italy, the Normans made the word ‘fief’, which had been a rarity, common currency, evidencing that new arrivals brought new terms, reflecting different concepts of social and legal relationships.

Whereas militaristic features were definitely seen in the antique world, in the middle ages, an empire not as consolidated as the Roman, and thus susceptible to overthrow and invasions from many fronts, shaped the way centers of power developed and interacted with each other, as example of the kingdoms that grew into nations. In light of that, the spread of Frankish aristocracy entailed diffusion of military technology –armaments, fortifications and methods of waging war –from its place of origin in the Carolingian heartlands into other parts of the continent.

As Europe expanded its frontiers, and migration gave rise to a unique blend of peoples and cultures, the images of those conquerors also became ingrained in historical rhetoric in the forms of oral tradition, literature, and above all in the written retelling of what would later become “national histories.” A fief, or a piece of property held by a vassal from a lord, was commonly granted for prescribed services, usually military, itself being at the heart of the feudalist society of medieval times. Much to their self-promotion, a feature observed since the early middle ages, the Frankish combatants came to see themselves as men ‘to whom God has given victory as a fief.’

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187 Ibid., 54.
188 Ibid., 54.
189 Ibid., 54.
190 Ibid., 54.
Just like Frankish emperors became famous for their battles and (cruel) acts, giving them specific names, so did those who set out to conquer lands beyond the ones in their home-countries. In the Late Middle Ages, a shorthand term was popularized that had the connotation of ‘aggressive westerner,’ that term was ‘Frank,’ once again showing the power of symbols and the strength of ethnic visions at a time of (hostile) intercultural interactions.\textsuperscript{194} From the perspective of outsiders, it was easy to identify colonizers by a generic label. The title of Frank was convenient in the sense that it served both for members of the clan to characterize themselves, as well as for outsiders in need of labeling a group of foreigners, in a way that in the two cases the word referred to ‘a Frank away from home.’\textsuperscript{195}

Therefore, the name became an umbrella term to distinguish the outsiders who migrated from Europe in order to conquer lands, and defend the Christian faith. Later to be known as ‘the deeds of the Franks,’ the crusades helped the term go from its original meaning of ethnic marker, to one that came to be associated with their own realm, i.e. \textit{Regnum Francorum}.\textsuperscript{196} Frankland has been referred to by Muslims, who spoke of its inhabitants as chilly but fertile, distinguished by their bravery and lack of hygiene; likewise, the Byzantines referred to Norman mercenaries by ‘Franks,’ defending the generalizing idea that they were accustomed to call all westerners Franks.\textsuperscript{197}

In the 12\textsuperscript{th} and 13\textsuperscript{th} centuries, to be a Frank implied modernity and power, and its connotation of westerner and aggressive settler was reassured. Namely, when the Portuguese and Spaniards arrived off the Chinese coasts in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, they had natives call them ‘Fo-lang-ki,’ a name adapted from the Arabic traders’ ‘Faranga,’ both terms resembling the original name of the European tribe.\textsuperscript{198} That way, according to their achievements, and somewhat similar to an also emerging Church, the Franks shaped a world order of their liking. Out of their kingdom, France and Germany were born. They helped to bring back the empire, restoring vividness to Europe. They proved to be not only one out of many, but out of many, one.

The intention of this chapter was not to merely commend the accomplishment of that tribe of warriors. Their accomplishments were, nevertheless, key for the papal

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 101.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 102.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 102.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., pg. 103.
decision to form alliances with them. The year of 496 AD marks the start of a relationship that would later be responsible for reviving the empire. Ideological and spiritual power already rested in the hands of the Church authorities, more specifically on the hands of the pope at Rome.

The element of strength, and military might was what was missing from the equation. Once combined, i.e. once the king of the Franks sided with the Catholic Church, the religion could be defended by the sword, and the legitimacy of kings could be backed on divine grounds. Noteworthy, a slight repetition of the executive system of ancient times would be witnessed upon the restoration that took place in the west. Much like Rome used to have two consuls, the new empire was to be led by two actors, pope and emperor.

This way, for a consistent imperial revival to happen, both needed each other. Neither could the Church bring about a kingdom on its own, nor could the Franks, no matter how powerful and crafty their leaders were, sustain titles other than that of ‘king.’ In order for emperorship to occur, those two actors had to join forces, cooperate, and act together, even if in disregard for the already-existent structures of Constantinople. It is intriguing, nonetheless, that the pope held a great deal of his authority solely on religious claims of divinity.

Devoid of a *bona fide* military regiment of its own (at least at first), still, in many aspects the pope went on to surpass the capabilities of kings. For if the Church in Rome was not in possession of greater control than its barbarian counterparts, it would not have been able to oust rulers and impose conditions the way it did. In any case, the Franks served their purpose: to eliminate rivals; to protect Christianity, the figure and security of the pope, which ended up making them protectors of Rome; and most importantly, to provide the missing piece for the project of restoration. For those reasons were the Franks the perfect allies, the co-heirs of medieval Europe.
The Birth of a Prerogative: The Practice of Coronation (8th century)

As the Early Middle Ages became ‘Late,’ the Church became a grown-up. In the 700s, turning-points occurred for that institution, which had once again the effect of binding religion and politics. What happened this time, however, did not consist of an act of good faith on the part of an emperor, no revelations through dreams, no visions of crosses, no bargaining with the Lord for victory in exchange of faith. While there were military matters involved in that story, the tables have turned to the benefit of the papacy, and thus for the good of the Church.

The capacity of that agency to manipulate events in the west, and dictate its will by setting the standards by which certain traditions would unfold in the centuries to follow, suggests that the Church had acquired tremendous influence since its inception in the 1st century AD. Indeed, it incrementally transitioned from the religious realm to the political one, to the point where its demands were heeded to by rulers. Rulers, in that sense, are referred particularly to the barbarian tribes that had been converted to the faith, and perhaps incorporated by the Franks, who in turn became a relevant polity in the west, not necessarily in that order.

For as it will be explained, remnants of other barbarian tribes made a comeback in the 8th century, whose intentions of conquest backfired, culminating in a sort of governing apparatus that would last for another thousand years. The lands of the old Roman Empire were no longer territories devoid of imperial surveillance, susceptible to take-overs by warring factions. Nay, things indeed had changed dramatically in a span of one-hundred years. There stood now two powers: the Church and the Franks, none of which had de jure authority to constitute an empire. This was due to the continued presence of a distant kingdom, in Constantinople, whose emperor still claimed the west as his sphere of influence.

It was the east’s urge for dominance over both the papacy and the unofficial barbarian occupation, just like the Lombard invasion of the 700s, which drove the two western forces to join their capabilities. Shared interests played an insurmountable role in this historical episode. As it shall become clear, a request was met with a favor, a head was met with a crown, diplomacy joined defense, political cunning joined military might, the king joined the pope, emperor joined emperor, kingdoms fused together, ‘holy’ married ‘empire,’ and a new child was thus born.
The Status of the Church upon the Closing of the Early Middle Ages (500s-700s)

Comments about the growth of Christianity, the power of bishops, the advent of the office of the papacy, and the alterations of entire landscapes, have all already been made *ad nauseam*. With the arrival of barbarian peoples into the western territories, however, norms and dynamics went through changes, as different languages and cultures came into contact with those of an old civilization.

To reiterate, notions of law as those of the Franks, at times lumped together as Germanic law, also contrasted with Roman customs of justice. Such changes, however, belonged to the secular world. In the realm of the church, its practices, edifices, and even customary dressing, did go through modifications while at the same time certain aspects remained since antiquity. Take for instance, the attire of the priests. At first, the Christian clergy dressed like other men, but from the 5th century onward, the laymen, little by little, abandoned the old Roman costume, while the clergy preserved it, and so distinguishing themselves from the rest of society.199

As a reminder, trends of monastery-building, of a monastic life of seclusion and, above all, purity in the example of Christ, brought together segregation between the ones residing at those centers and the ones who did not. Such differences could equally be indicated by dressing. Already, attire had distinguished the two kinds of clergy—the “Regular Clergy” –monks under a “rule” for their mode of life, and the “Secular Clergy,” –who mingled in the doings of the world.

Distinction in clothing did not exclude the figure of the Church’s major legate, the pope. Both his bishops and he wore a special insignia, the *pallium*, a long tippet of white wool, draped around the shoulders and the two tips whereof fell one in front, one behind, decorated at the ends by little black crosses; not to mention the fact that the priests were already tonsured, and that the pope later in the 8th century adopted a tiara.200

Another significant change was in the numbers of converts, reflected in church attendance, in addition to the number of congregations throughout both east and west. Two kinds of houses of worship sprang up. The *Cathedrals*, where a bishop had his seat, and the churches built at burial places, used for funerary services, anniversaries, and other

200 Ibid., 346.
solemnities, both often built upon the tomb of a famous martyr and next to *baptisteries*, or small structures containing the bathing places into which new Christians were baptized.\(^{201}\)

Now, the reason for exposing such changes is to form a foundation for the prestige the Church had acquired throughout early medieval times. Aside from the imperial concessions made by Constantine (313), Theodosius (380), and Valentinian (445) back in Ancient times, the first sign of that respect in the middle ages came from the barbarian kings, who converted to Christianity, not necessarily from an agnostic or atheistic mind, but departing from paganism, Arianism, or other Christian variations, which had both been demonized by synods and other councils. That rulers moved from that into the faith of Jesus was certainly a great victory for the Roman Church.

There were also cases like that of Frankish king Clovis and Lombard king Agilulf, both immersed in heathenism, but whose Christian wives played an important role in their conversion, as well as for peace with the pope, in the case of the Lombards. Clovis, furthermore, who held beliefs in the old pagan gods of the Romans, subsequent to his conversion, slayed a rival who, among other things, retained the pagan beliefs he once held, regardless of the fact that that very act of murdering was anathema to the Christian faith. That is, however, a different story.

The point is that, with conversion came strings attached. Namely, the condition of obeying the law of God, indicated by the pope, his commands not subjected to questioning, defiance, or violation. While such bestowals of power belonged to the realm of religion, they could easily spill over into that of politics. The protection of Christianity, after all, had to be sanctioned by kings, and at times the conditions of certain rulings were of the discontent of the clergy, which were then reported to the pontiff.

From the 500s onwards, there were a few demands made from churches to kings, particularly involving questions of taxation. Popes and priests alike were often unsatisfied with the imposition of levies by rulers, and sought to dispute those. Gregory of Tours, always a great light for research in the past of the Franks, described an instance of indignation of Pope Injuriosus towards king Lothar, where the first implied his right to fiscal exemption. The king had ordained that all the churches within his realm paid a third part of their revenues, to which all bishops unwillingly agreed.

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\(^{201}\) Ibid., 346.
Pope Injuriosus, nonetheless refused, raising his tone of voice, saying: “If you have made up your mind to seize what belongs to God, then the Lord will soon take your kingdom away from you, for it is criminal for you, who should be feeding the poor from your own granary, to fill your coffers with the alms which others give to them.” The monarch, feeling threatened by the spiritual prospects his move might incur, overturned his own decision to collect taxes from the churches, and begged the pontiff for pardon, evidencing the compelling rhetoric the pope possessed, capable of turning decisions and directives to the Church’s favor, without the use of force.

Gregory then, illustrated yet another episode involving a Frankish king, wherein not only the clergy, but the populace, was displeased with policies. When king Chilperic strove to cover for costs in the management of his kingdom via high taxation, the citizenry took it to the streets to protest it, the king’s officials, furthermore, accusing abbots and priests of instigating the people into revolting. Those charges are signs of the fame religious figures had acquired due to their constant dissatisfaction towards the monetary exploitation of their properties by Frankish rulers, which had the capability of mobilizing the Christian population into effecting change.

In the 6th century, a precedent was set by the clergy to protest fiscal policy on the grounds of protecting the Church, so that it could carry on its functions more freely and more properly. Much like a divine right to immunity from taxation was often invoked, shame and blasphemy were equally cast by the religious authorities over the wanton charging of duties. Gregory of Tours again registered many incidents and clashes that occurred within Frankish domains.

King Childebert forgave all the arrears of tax owed by churches, monasteries, clergy belonging to a given parish, as well as from anyone employed at places of worship. Moved by God, and perhaps by the difficulties involved in gathering such sums, the tax-collection system was reformed, in a way that no servant of the Church could be persecuted.

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for unpaid dues from past administrations. Tax exemption is a privilege granted mostly to those in high positions of power, with connections within governing bodies, and while in disregard for the rule of law, it has been (and still is) a constant throughout history. The fact that such benefit applied to the Church and to its staff is but one sign that that institution was held in tremendous esteem by kings and princes. In addition to tithes and other sources of donation, from the rich and the poor, such types of treats allowed for the Church to amass the amount of riches it did throughout medieval times.

Pope Gregory the Great, ever fortunate in his diplomatic skills and persuasion, while striving to improve the quality of the Church at Rome, and implementing doctrinal changes that altered the face of the religion, wrote about his disdain towards some of the practices of taxation over Church lands, while simultaneously (and ludicrously) demanding the levying of dues on other individuals such as serfs. Decrying the unfair custom of demanding payments from the holdings of the Church, Gregory wished that obligation to be eliminated, labeling it ‘filthy exaction,’ demanding immunities for the Church estates and prompt acquittal and dismissal of punishment from their former offenses.

Gregory, wishing to see the Church’s purse untouched with regard to debts to the government, pleaded for the discharge from such obligations on the part of tenants holding Church lands, for that would likely render the estates uncultivated, urging that the goods the Church had ordered the king to purchase be acquired from a third party. Religious authorities then, sought to implement order and regulations for the dynamics of kingdoms, but because they spearheaded those changes, they saw themselves above the law, thus stating their exemptions to be commonsense, for they were also engaging in the divine service of taking care of society.

The last example of this section is that of a grant of estate by Frankish king Dagobert. It consisted of a huge act of charity towards the Church establishment, in this case being made for the purposes of maintaining a monastery. The scope of the donation evidences not only the dimension of wealth on the part of the king, but equally the magnitude

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206 Ibid.
of the influence of religious figures, the king’s deference towards the Church being displayed in his massive bestowal of estates.

Having previously exchanged a piece of property for a bigger one in order to increase his fortune, Dagobert then donated that second asset to the monks of St. Denis, giving their monastery the ownership of those lands, together with its houses, serfs, bondsmen, woods, meadows, pastures, flocks, shepherds, all in its entirety, to be administered perpetually in the name of God, by the hand of the Abbot in whose care the monks lived.207

Such was the Church upon the onset of what is known as the High Middle Ages. With a sense of entitlement for doing the service of God, it adamantly opposed, and sought freedom from, important issues such as heavy-taxation. The hypocrisy, however, lies in the fact that it was against such practice when done against its employees (i.e. the clergy), against its lands (i.e. churches and monasteries), but concurrently permissive of it when done to, say, serfs, the third and most opposed leg of the medieval feudal tripartite society.

In that atmosphere, it pursued the protection and favors of the prominent authorities of the time. One specific demand triggered a new era for Europe. As it might be imagined, that favor was asked to the Franks, to one clan specifically. Before learning about that episode, one must first get to know that family.

The Carolingians

Dagobert, who reigned over the Frankish kingdom in the 600s, had two advisers, Arnulf and Pippin. Arnulf’s son married Pippin’s daughter, and out of that marriage came Pippin II.208 It was Pippin II’s illegitimate son, Charles Martel, who began the reunification of Gaul—which was witnessing fragmentation due to the waning Merovingian see—and who gave his name to another powerful dynasty, the Carolingians.209

The power and prestige that was observed with the Merovingians seemed to have run its course, thus transmitting its legacy to yet another mighty house. Once again, the

209 Ibid., 97.
success of the Carolingians was due to their victorious military campaigns. Unlike with the Merovingians, however, the Christian faith was already in the heart of Charles Martel, much like in that of his predecessors and successors.

Charles also assumed a key function for Frank-papal relations, kick-starting a series of favors that would render the Carolingians the true co-inheritors of the west. In 739, then Pope Gregory II appealed to Charles Martel for protection against the Lombards, who in turn resurfaced from nearly a century of silence, invading the lands of the Church in central Italy, plus Byzantine possessions around Ravenna.210

The pope explained that the Lombards hated and oppressed what the Church represented, seeking Frankish aid, asserting that Charles would receive prompt favor in his afterlife in the presence of the Lord, commensurate with the help he provided to the Church and the pope, especially due to the lasting fame on earth he would receive after having defended St. Peter and his chosen people.211 Thus the Lombards were appeased, no less by the interference of the papacy. Papal skillful negotiation was seen, moreover, when king Liutprand was persuaded to deposit his arms at the tomb of St. Peter, as well as ten year later when a new Lombard threat once again loomed, but was mitigated by Pope Zacharias, who took over in person the frontier towns returned by the enemy.212

That latter pope would start a practice that prevailed in Europe for centuries. Zacharias “created a king,” in the sense that he made someone a monarch, the validity of that title being unquestioned. St. Denis explained the coronation process:

“Prince Pepin, when he saw that the King of the Franks who then was, wrought no profit to the kingdom, sent to the Pope Zacharias his messengers –Burkart the archbishop of Wurzburg and Fulrad Abbot of St. Denis to ask advice as to, ‘Who ought to be King? –He who had not the least power in the kingdom, and who bore the name only: or he by whom the kingdom was ruled, and who had the power and the care over all things?’ And the Pope replied to them ‘that he ought to be called king who ruled the kingdom and who had the sovrain power.’ Then he gave sentence that Pepin be crowned as King. In this same year Pepin was declared King by the decision of Pope Zacharias and by the election of the Franks. He was consecrated in the city of Soissons by the hand of St. Boniface the martyr in the year of the incarnation of Our Lord 752. Childeric [the last Merovingian] who had been called King was shorn and cast into a monastery. Then King Pepin reigned 15 years 4

months and 20 days. He had previously held the lordship over the palace and the kingdom, since the death of Charles Martel his father, for 10 years.”

In order to understand the reason behind this radical move on the part of the pope, one must not ignore the actions, or lack thereof, of the eastern empire. It would be too much to say that the coronation of Pepin was done solely out of sheer rivalry on the papal side. Whereas that was an element, there were other circumstances that compounded the issue. This ceremony was the first in Francia to incorporate anointing with holy oil, and perhaps the first in Europe to emphasize the act of crowning by a bishop, while concomitantly the Carolingians were established as the new protectors of the papacy, replacing the increasingly ineffective Byzantine emperor.

For some time, clergy, great families, and militia, provided an effective basis of support for the papacy as a temporal power and for its seat, i.e. Rome, and despite the ground being ready for a split with Byzantium, imperial emancipation would not be easily conceded by the latter. In 726, an Iconoclastic controversy took place in the east, and the popes’ siding with the iconodules, plus the inability of the Byzantines to protect them, resulted in the popes turning increasingly in the 8th century towards the Franks, making a series of alliances, in particular, with the Carolingian majors of the palace.

That explains the shift in the political axis of the west, from east (Constantinople) to north, where the Franks were. Added to that, was not only the promptness and willingness of the Carolingians in rescuing the pope and defending Christianity, but also their success in doing so. A sense of security and trust gained strength in the eyes of the papacy, confirming that house to be its loyal and fierce protector.

This way, such favors had to be rewarded, and one manner to do so while the Church at the same time benefitted from it, would be by blessing the kingship of those who were able to provide defense, who were mighty in military affairs, in governance, and in faith. When the Lombards took Ravenna and besieged Rome in 753, Pope Stephan II once

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again turned to now King Pepin I, whose legitimacy was taken one step further when he was declared “Patrician of the Romans,” for securing the “republic of God’s Holy Church.”

Another account of the deeds of Pepin is found in the Annals of Lorsch. While brief, it details some acts by year, from 749-753. A conflict in the chronology of Pepin’s coronation seems to arise when yet contrasted with a third report. For instance, the Oxford History of Medieval Europe states that: Pippin III, who still called himself ‘duke’ or ‘prince,’ sent an embassy to Pope Zacharias to ask if it was just that he who held the power should not have the title of ‘king,’ to which Zacharias sent back the correct answer and in 751 had Pippin III himself inaugurated at Soissons. In the Chronicle of St. Denis, it is stated that the pope consecrated Pepin in 752. The Annals of Lorsch, on the other hand, defend Pepin was named king in 750, by way of papal sanction.

Regardless, the fact of the matter is that the Church saw in the Carolingians a worthy ally, while rulers saw in the papacy a tool to legitimize their titles, thus giving their campaigns divine vindication. That means, by joining forces the two actors could back each other up so long their interests did not clash, which eventually happened in the 11th century. One caveat is, while perhaps it was not in the primary intentions of the Carolingians to rule an empire, that did end up occurring, and certainly future monarchs and popes alike took advantage of their privileged position.

The role which the Church has thus provided in royal inauguration held important consequences in later European history: Pepin’s grandson (Louis the Pious) was to be deposed as emperor from 833-834 by bishops, who felt that if they could make kings, they could unmake them as well. Before moving on to the Carolingian successor who was crowned via the same mechanism used by Zacharias, this time giving Europe a new name and a new identity, it would behoove one to first learn about a technicality pointed out by the Church higher-ups, one from which the religious establishment benefitted a great deal.

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219 Davis, William Stearns. "Chronicle of St. Denis, How Pepin the Short became King of the Franks." In Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1913. 369
The Birth of another Prerogative

Before the Church fused with the Frankish state, it had first to acquire its own. That had somehow started already in 728, when Lombard king Liutprand gave Pope Gregory II a castle, in what became known as the Donation of Sutri. The acquisition of decades later would, however, be of much greater scope and significance. In the 8th century, the religious authorities of Rome began claiming that they were entitled to their own polity, which had been granted to them by late emperor Constantine, back in the 4th century. Such claims were grounded on a document forged by the papal chancery between 756 and 760 AD, the so-called Donation of Constantine, whereby the papal state or Patrimony of St. Peter was born, reestablishing the temporal power of the papacy.

The title of the document, “donation,” becomes manifest upon the mentioning of important grants of land to the religious authorities, but not without chronological inconsistencies. Namely, it grants the Bishop of Rome supremacy over: four chief seats-Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Jerusalem—the lands of East and West, in the northern and southern coast, e.g. Judea, Greece, Asia, Thrace, Africa, and Italy, divers islands, plus over all churches in the world. All lands were to fall under the auspices of the pope and his successors, to better serve God and promote uniformity within the faith.

It must be pointed out that in the time the document was supposedly written (4th century), Constantinople, even if already so named, did not yet hold the status of "chief seat," since imperial transition took a while to go into effect, given geographical distances, delays in construction, among other limitations. Such variables thus, add disrepute to Constantine’s supposed affidavit. The parchment continues to delineate the legal imperial bases for the Church to act upon, as well as imperial paraphernalia, its powers of Senate and Consul, and authority over all Churches and clergy members the world over.

To pope Sylvester and all his successors, the imperial Lateran palace, ranking above all others, was conferred; further imperial raiment included the diadem, the purple mantle, the crimson tunic, imperial scepters, spears, standards, banners, ornaments, cavalry;

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224 Ibid.
most importantly, pontiffs were to enjoy the same pomp and glory shared by emperors, and the same power held by the Senate, which meant they were to be made into patricians and consuls. Given that the letter was illegitimate, the Church was granting itself geographical domains, in addition to imperial powers and features. Because it would not bode well for it to attribute to Christianity the label of empire, it had to revive what existed in Rome, the pope therefore resembling ancient emperors, both in their power and splendor, commanding from the same place many rulers had governed.

That is why in its final segment, “Constantine” bequeaths the pope not only a crown (the diadem), a symbol of power in imitation of the authority of the Caesars, summing up that such rights must endure until the end of times, but also the city of Rome and all its provinces, districts and cities of Italy or of the western regions, together with all the containing property, e.g. palaces, ordering that they shall rest with the holy Roman Church, such commands to remain uninjured and unshaken until the end of the world.

It is extremely intriguing, if not disturbing, that such blatant claims to power were made in great disregard to the written evidence left behind by Constantine himself, as well as by people like Eusebius, who wrote extensively about his life. The Donation contradicts Eusebius’ account of imperial conversion. As mentioned previously, the emperor, while campaigning with his troops, first through a vision, then in a dream, had divine revelations which hinted at the need for his adherence to Christianity, lest he be defeated, and his glories minimized.

After that, the emperor embraced the Christian cause, its Church, faith, and sought to assist that institution through many grants, favors, and privileges. One example of such favoring was seen in the Edict of Milan of 313 AD, a year after his visions came to him. In that brief document, he made the worship of Christianity legal in the eyes of the law, alleging that one should have the freedom to worship the deity they saw fit.

Another point in the text was the restoration of possessions once sequestered by the state from the persecuted Christians. Constantine ordered Christian property that had been seized and sold, to be restored to their original owners without payment or claim of

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225 Ibid.
226 Ibid.
reparation, fraud or deception, and without deferment, especially of assets which served Christians collectively, like churches and conventicles.\textsuperscript{228} Perhaps the papacy did indeed base its forged document on a precedent of restitution set by Constantine himself and in the process ended-up getting carried away by its position of supreme religious authority. For, among other things, if that grant was legitimate, it would award both spiritual and temporal powers onto the hands of the pope, in addition to an immovable place in the west, especially as it gradually escaped control of Constantinople.

Lastly was the claim that because he had ceded the Lateran Palace to the papacy, plus the city of Rome, “all the provinces, places, and towns of Italy and the western regions,” due to that cession, he had moved his capital to the east.\textsuperscript{229} As far as reasons for such decision, the document goes on to justify that \textit{where the supremacy of priests and the head of the Christian religion has been established by a heavenly ruler, it is not just that there an earthly ruler should have jurisdiction}.\textsuperscript{230}

That version of history, as problematic as it is, served the interests of the Church in the 8\textsuperscript{th} century. By that time enjoying a virtually untouchable reputation, it took those steps to assert its power over Rome and over lands of the former empire. A king was missing, but the pope also took care of that. Pepin’s coronation had to be returned to the papacy with yet another favor. The king seems to have promised to give the pope the lands in Italy which the Lombards had taken from Byzantium.\textsuperscript{231} After all, as a customary practice, the Carolingians compensated their close followers with land from their extensive estates.\textsuperscript{232} In one of the most famous forgeries in history, Constantine’s alleged gift made it possible to interpret Pepin’s grant not as a benefaction but as a restoration.\textsuperscript{233}

Now with extensive lands and authority of its own, which to an extent already existed but waited still for legitimate approval, the papacy felt validated in making its own


\textsuperscript{231} Ibid.


kings. With Pepin’s promise of land-grants, the Church used that as a pretext to defend its phony document. Since the 4th century, when it joined forces with Rome, that institution incrementally grew in importance, and above all, in its sway, to the point where it was able to re-create (or give continuity to) an empire, though not single-handedly. Therefore, what came at the turn of the 8th century was something extraordinary. A mighty Church joined forces with an also powerful kingdom. The result was, say, ‘Holy Roman.’

**Charlemagne**

By the 760s, then, there was a king ordained by the pope, a state under the auspices of the latter, and an empire out east constantly ignored by both. Through the coronation of Pepin, a condition started that a king could only be legitimately declared so if with the approval of the papacy. Needless to say, that aspiring monarch would need to show his kingdom’s utmost faith towards Roman Catholicism, its works and doctrines.

He would have to protect it from enemies, foreign and domestic, and defer to the pope in a myriad of cases. That was the precursor for Church and State rule, at that stage still somewhat shy to display its relationship, not out of fear of reprimanding or rejection, but simply due to the fact that a title more meaningful than that of ‘king’ was necessary to conjure up a stronger, more encompassing picture of power.

That eventually came with Pepin’s son. Karolus Magnus, or Charles the Great (Karl der Große in German), henceforth referred to by Charlemagne, had a long reign (768-814 AD) which changed the face of Europe politically and culturally, his figure and legacy remaining fixed in the minds of people in the Middle Ages as the ideal king.\(^{234}\) Much like his father, he would cater to the interests of the pope, thus perpetuating the Frankish role as protector of the eternal city and, above all, of its Church. In a last uprising in 773, when the Lombards once again attacked Rome plus the towns securing the road to Ravenna, pope Hadrian I turned to Charlemagne, who moved in, conquered the Lombard capital Pavia, and annexed their kingdom in 774, the Franks and the papacy now ruling together northern and central Italy.\(^{235}\)

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Just like Constantine had Eusebius as a biographer, or Clovis and generations of Franks had Gregory of Tours to narrate their trajectory, Charlemagne had Einhard, who wrote about his life, including some features of his personality and his deeds as a warrior and king. Einhard recounted the war against the Lombards. Charlemagne exhausted his rival Desidarius, besieging and forcing him to surrender, driving the king’s son, Adalgis, out of Italy, restoring to the Romans all their lost property, stifling potential revolts, ending the war and ultimately bringing Italy to his sway, putting his son Pepin in control over it.  

To be sure, he also had several other military conquests. Among some of those, he: concluded Pippin’s wars with Aquitaine, proclaiming his son Louis as king in 781; added Saxony to his realm; destroyed the kingdom of the Avars in Hungary; subdued the Bretons, the Bavarians, and other Slav peoples; and began the reconquest of Spain from the Arabs. Einhard, writing about the conquest of the Saxons, explained that in addition to victory, Charlemagne made them renounce their native religious cults and devil-worshipping, forcing them to accept instead Christian sacraments, not to mention their annexation by the Franks into one Christian people.

Military campaigns now not only made use of divine justification to conquest, but they defended the Christian faith, both elements working in tandem to aggrandize the other. Amid all that, both Charlemagne and the papacy were to benefit from their mutual alliance, one where proximity played a big role, and the more the former spread and conquered lands, the more integrated his kingdom was, the safer the pope felt in relying on his protection. The papacy, no longer linked to the east nor looking primarily to the Mediterranean, but to the north, had become both in fact and name a sovereign western power—the spiritual ruler of Europe and the temporal ruler of a large territory in Central Italy, while Rome, became the capital of the pope, in turn the successor of St. Peter on his see and the ruler of his lands.

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Charlemagne and Leo

It was no longer a secret, nor was it astonishing, that the realm of the Carolingian Franks was the most-favored nation in the eyes of the pope. Neither was it a surprise that the former were fierce protectors of a faith which was also theirs, since the times of Clovis. As Carolingian power grew, so did the number of converts. After all, baptism came to be seen as a test of allegiance to the Franks.

So that in 785 Charlemagne decreed that refusal to baptize, or insults to Christianity by, e.g. eating meat during Lent, were to be punished by death penalty, Christianity thus being enforced with the help of the Frankish army. Moreover, it was Charlemagne who inaugurated a tradition of conquest in which massacre and conversion were combined, the forced conversion to Christianity which the middle ages was to practice for a long time.

Equally significant, the aspect of the Church as an autonomous organization, with its state, laws, and kings, was still not pleasing to the east. There were forces in the west who opposed the emergence of the pope as some sort of sovereign who could appoint his own monarchs and by them be politically, religiously, and more serious than all, militarily backed. After all, according to the Donation of Constantine, everyone, the king included, was supposed to recognize the authority of the Bishop of Rome, the text suggesting great reverence towards him. In short, a “barbarian king,” was still a “barbarian.”

A conspiracy befell Pope Leo III in 799. On that year, he was ambushed by a rival party of Roman aristocrats, fleeing to Charlemagne, who in turn ordered the pontiff to be restored, a year later coming to Rome himself. What happened next restored a legacy lost since antiquity. The title and legitimacy that were missing for the pope to conclusively assert its place in the west, and thus in history, had finally been found.

The papacy needed something heftier than the title of ‘king.’ Charlemagne’s visit to Rome was the final straw that changed it all for Europe. From then on, ‘restoration’

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contrasted the ancient with the medieval era. Einhard described what happened on Christmas of the year 800 AD:

“When Charlemagne made his last journey to Rome he had other end in view. The Romans had inflicted many injuries upon Pope Leo, tearing out his eyes and cutting out his tongue, so that he was compelled to summon help from the King. Therefore Charles repaired to Rome to regulate the sorely confused affairs of the Church; and at Rome he passed the whole winter. Then it was he received the titles of ‘emperor’ and ‘Augustus.’”

If Byzantium still claimed authority over Rome, and if it did not give due recognition to the barbarian king of the pope, it could no longer do that, though it took a while for that event to be processed in the east. Einhard indeed reported the indignation coming from Constantinople, but not without sharing his mind with respect to praising Charlemagne’s superiority over his imperial counterparts:

“Very patiently he bore the jealousy of the [Eastern] Roman Emperors, which they showed when he assumed these titles; for they took this step very ill; and by means of repeated embassies and letters, in which he saluted them as his “Brothers”; at length their haughty attitude yielded to his magnanimity—a quality in which he beyond doubt far surpassed them.”

At any rate, the pope had finally done it. Charlemagne was no longer a king, but rather an emperor. Whereas in 312 AD the Church had been given support by the Roman emperor, it now had the capacity to crown one at its own will. And so it continued to do for centuries more. During the four hundred years which separated the death of Theodosius in 395, from the coronation of Charlemagne in 800, a new world had been born in the west, which had slowly grown out of the fusion of both the Roman and the barbarian worlds.

With that act came what historians today call the Translatio Imperii. Translatio, or ‘transfer’ in Latin, is used to refer to the interim period that preceded the Holy Roman Empire, itself a refurbished, more consolidated version of imperial rule aided by the Church. There are debates within the academic community as to whether the Holy Roman Empire began in 800 AD or little over a century later. For in February 962 AD, German king Otto I was crowned emperor by Pope John XII, after the latter appealed to Otto’s protection against Berengar of Italy’s attacks near Rome, as an act of recognition of his role as protector of the

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244 Davis, William Stearns. "Einhard, How Charlemagne was Crowned Emperor." In Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1913. 376.
245 Ibid., 376.
papacy, thus instituting the *Renovatio Imperii Romanorum*, or renewal of the Roman Empire.\(^{247}\)

Irrespective to what date constitutes the conception of that somewhat trivial label, what is undeniable is that in three key occasions, the same process was repeated. Whether in the 750s with Pope Zacharias and Pepin I, in 800 with Pope Leo III and Charlemagne, or in 962 with Pope John XII and Otto I, there was an active papacy in charge of bestowing the title that changed the lives of those men and altered the future of European regions. Kings, together with their dominions, came and went, dynasties waned, borders moved, brothers killed each other, and families were hostiles from within. The papacy, however, together with the Church, was, nay, is an office that resists the test of time.

Likewise, all three coronations mark something much more relevant than the birth of a tradition. They symbolize the practical end of the Greco-Roman civilization, and the beginning of a new society on foundations largely Germanic.\(^ {248}\) That fusion of Church and State, *Sacerdotium et Imperium*, is something purely medieval, for the way it was set up belongs to that era. For the first time in the west, Church and State united to try to bring Christianity to all under their control.\(^ {249}\)

One problem with the interpretation that the empire required a monarch to exist is the neglect of the scope of influence of the Church. Even if the empire officially started in 800 or 962 AD, one cannot deny that the heads of the Church were already laying the groundwork for it centuries earlier. Plus, no other institution in the Middle Ages was capable of acquiring so much sway in its hands the way it did, without shedding blood and conquering militarily. The Church, or better the papacy, did get an imperial decree in 445, whereby the temporal authority of the pope was acknowledged by the emperor. It did have kings and individuals converting to its faith without coercion (unless a people were captured and forced to, as it was done by the Franks). Conversion was instead achieved through visions, signs, and wonders.


\(^{248}\) Davis, William Stearns. "Einhard, How Charlemagne was Crowned Emperor." In Readings in Ancient History: Illustrative Extracts from the Sources. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1913. 376.

It did receive grants of lands, of estates, exemptions from taxation, and overall special treatment from kings and princes. It did forge a document, conferring upon itself its own political domain. It did negotiate with kings and queens, allies and foes, arriving at positive outcomes through diplomacy. Ultimately, it did crown kings and emperors. In short, it did create, or restore, its own brand of empire. Its empire, it could be said, was conquered on the basis of ideology, through preaching, in the most literal sense. In regard to the imperial office, Einhard reported the newly-crowned emperor’s reaction and thoughts on his label:

“…To these titles he had such repugnance at first that he asserted that ‘he would not have set foot in the church the day they were conferred, although it was a great festival day,’ if he had surmised the intention of the Pope…”

This way, the re-establishment of imperial rule in the west seems in fact to have been an idea of the pope. That ought to explain Charlemagne’s indifference upon his visit to Rome. That might also explain his skepticism towards the very title of emperor. He was caught up in the position where he inherited the legacy of his predecessors, one that should be passed on down the generations, the success in his military campaigns not making the evasion from this task any easier. He was probably entirely willing to assume the imperial title, but foresaw the perils likely to arise from an emperor’s reigning, not in his own right, but because of an apparent grant of the crown by the Pope.

That notion hints at the fact that there seemed to have been more interest, not only in creating but in sustaining the empire, on the part of the pope than on that of the emperor. Perhaps even if he did not take the title as seriously as the bishop wanted, taking from his will of 806 AD, whereby he divided lands among his sons, making no provision at all for the survival of the imperial title, God intended the empire to survive as a unity. His wishes and true intentions notwithstanding, a precedent had been set, one that ignited a new era for the west, giving it a new name, and providing Europe with a new identity. A new, Holy Empire had at last been established.

Conclusions: Early Beginnings of the Holy Roman Empire

“Emperors and governors gave way, not because they were frequently unsure of themselves, ill-informed, or easily corrupted; rather, they had been moved by the sheer grace and wisdom of carefully composed speeches."\(^{254}\)

Throughout this research, it became obvious that there was a goal, a project, an agenda it could be said, to constitute an empire with universal dimensions according to the example set by ancient Rome. The transition from antiquity to middle ages saw the fall of a giant, and the birth of another. In addition to the latter’s growth, circumstances arose that allowed for it to assert its place in a new map of the west, one where it did possess its own authority, rather than one made possible by the state. It is remarkable how the Church was able to conquer so much in those initial stages of its experiment as an institution, without the blatant use of force.

As a rule, empires achieve the status of hegemons by military conquest, shedding the blood of both compatriots and foreigners. With that “Christian Empire,” however, and its ideology in the form of doctrines adapted to barbarian realities, the institution of the Church was revered to the point that clergymen assumed relevant roles of control in society. That is not to say there were not legitimate conversions, that the Christian faith was not a valid reason for the acceptance of new religious practices, for the alteration of landscapes through the building of churches, monasteries, baptisteries, works of art, among other community-mobilizing initiatives.

The ascent to power on the part of specific figures, nonetheless, with special reference to the Bishop of Rome, provides telling signs of new, medieval trends. First was the adoption of Christianity by the Roman state in the last years of antiquity, which made it the empire’s official religion. Then there was the recognition of the spiritual powers of the pope, which had its due repercussions for the future of politics and overall governance in the west, allowing for the clout of the papacy to grow to further proportions.

The conversion of barbarian kings rendered the Church even more relevant, for now those leaders would not only refer to the bishops of many localities, but above all show their deference towards Rome, the old capital made eternal by the living pope. Eventually the

pontiff also attained temporal powers, by claiming to own possession of lands “donated” by Constantine, which allowed for a papal state to be created.

The location of that bishop was also noteworthy. Because Rome was for a long time an imperial city, whence the reins of the world were guided, that being also the place where the papacy operated from, in a way the capital did not forfeit that image. In addition to its grandiose architecture, there remained a legacy of Augustan rule, a sense and duty of Imperium that was simply not ignored. Many medieval popes strove to restore Rome to its ancient status, with the aid of the Roman people, who bore in mind their predecessors’ past of glory, conquest, pomp, and excellence. The presence of wealthy, aristocratic families was of no short significance to boost that restoration.

To bring Rome back to earth, nevertheless, merely meant to turn it once more into an imperial center: Translatio Imperii, to be reborn was to set out again, not to return.\(^{255}\) Translatio, furthermore, implies in this case not only that period when the empire was not as solidified as one would imagine it to be. It might also symbolize episodes of transfer (the literal meaning of that Latin term), for instance when there were gaps in the presence of political rulers, giving the papacy carte blanche to manage the west. There was no emperor in the west from 476 to 800, and there was, practically speaking, none from 899, or at any rate from 924, until 962, and then gain, no emperor during the Great Interregnum between the death of Frederick II (1250) and the election of Rudolf of Habsburg in 1273.\(^{256}\)

This way, Imperium, so the Romans believed, was not only the power to command men in the field or in general, but it was also the power by which the kings had ruled at Rome, and had led their armies out of war.\(^{257}\) A new rhetoric, i.e. of mobilizing the army of God, boded well for the papacy in its entitlement to impose upon the west and, hopefully for Church higher-ups, over the world, its universal rule. That is, after all, the meaning of the word ‘Catholic,’ i.e. Universal. Moreover, legal bases and claims to power changed to favor Christianity. Whereas emperors were always lauded to hold divine authority, being the son of the gods, to rule over men, the concept of “God’s paternity” over


all indiscriminately brought new and cagey reasons for control to be placed in the hands of clergymen, and in those of the pontiff, at the higher levels of governance.²⁵⁸

When addressing the question of whether there was a revival of Rome as a state, or whether a new empire was created, what was observed was an invention of the Church, with the pope taking the lead to continue imposing rules from the old capital. That Christian empire, though with obvious Roman aspects to it, governed in its own way, making use of Rome’s reputation and tradition of being where emperors resided. Restoration, therefore, did not entail bringing back a carbon copy of ancient Rome.

After all, the Church had to remain alive during the Middle Ages. For that purpose, it required political legitimacy and diplomatic shrewdness in order to handle the often hectic situation of a Europe in the making. It also had to make use of the image of Rome, as a glorious empire that amazed future generations, and whose prestige was not to wither away so easily. J.C. Stobart said it best when he stated that the whole conception of that mighty Church which conquered the world was the offspring of the Roman political system, her genius for statecraft being what made Rome the Eternal City, allowing for her to have governed the world for twenty centuries.²⁵⁹

The idea was to reestablish specific elements that allowed for power to be exercised. Imperial governance went a different way than in ancient times because circumstances had changed at the continental level, e.g. barbarian invasions in the west and the transfer of power to an eastern center in Constantinople. That brought new rulers to the stage, i.e. the pope and kings such as the Merovingians and Carolingians. The constant mentioning of Frankish individuals is justified by the fact that the focus in this study is the origin of Holy Rule in the west, meaning the experiment between Church and State that made empire possible once again, as one needed the other in order to stand. Medieval Holy Rule emerged out of an alliance between the Franks and the Church.

There stood a clear difference between the Roman and the Holy Roman Empire. In the former, emperors ruled in spite of the religious figures, faith in the gods being important but the relationship being a bargaining one, guided by superstition and ceremonial

formalities. In the latter, on the other hand, religious figures not only aided with the unfolding of politics and the dynamics of the state, but in a way the Church was the state. Evidence for such claim is found in the sway held by the pope, namely in the administration of Rome, as well as in influential clergymen throughout communities. Also, his self-portrayal by way of attire, mentioned in the Donation of Constantine, set a precedent for future pontiffs to be decked with their own crown (the papal tiara), garments, scepter, and a score of other imperial capabilities and privileges.

The added word ‘Holy’ before ‘Roman Empire,’ bears more weigh and significance than what meets the eye. For with the power of speech, cunning politics, and diplomacy, the papacy reached far in continental governance, being able to dismiss the authority of emperors at Constantinople, to split with the Eastern Church, to legitimately crown an emperor, to promote immense reforms in art, literature, and education, to (incrementally) restore the glory and status of Rome, and last but definitely not least, to dethrone kings when it saw appropriate.

The main question attempted to be answered in this study was whether Holy Rule, meaning governance stemming from the Church with the pope at its forefront, started with the coronation of 800 AD or before. It can now be said that such governing apparatus began prior to the 8th century. The Church, specifically the papacy, did give continuity to the Roman project of ruling the world by providing the necessary impetus to recreate the empire. It did even more than that, it brought about an empire of its own, in its own way. While it is ambitious to characterize Church power in medieval times as encompassing universal proportions, there is no doubt that at least the west was a papal territory.

Even in the 4th century, there was the contentious issue of negotiating the terms by which an emperor could share a bishop’s space. It was fast that religious authorities guaranteed the Church as their exclusive sphere of influence, pushing the emperor out of internal affairs and technicalities of that institution. As concerns Constantine, he was a ‘bishop of those outside the church,’ i.e. while bishops ‘oversaw’ their flocks he could not even see what his subjects were doing when they were within the churches. The struggle of the pope in asserting its place in the empire, therefore, was not due to the urge of having the title of emperor. It was the legitimacy of that office what the Church sought after.

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261 Ibid., 240.
Whereas such claims were not openly seen right at the early middle ages, the very backing of the Church and of the office of the pope by emperors like Constantine, Theodosius, Valentinian, Justinian, plus the jurisprudence of councils and synods, all hinted at a degree of high regard, which gave the Church a good reputation, paving the way for future popes to behave the way they did, i.e. as spiritual kings and emperors in this earth. The sense that the representatives of the church could touch the levers of power on every level of the imperial system ensured that the “unyielding languidness of ancient Mediterranean communities” turned in the direction of Christianity.262

In the 300s, clear political and financial aspects of the emergence of the faith and the prominence of the Church are to be accounted for its own apostasy, i.e. its deviance from the true messages of Christ. Wealthy individuals, now fond of the teachings of Jesus, began providing material contributions and political support to the causes of that institution. By initially approaching the lower ranks with messages of humility, giving and receiving alms, and later associating with the elites by keeping an imperial ideology and rhetoric alive, an always-growing “Church establishment” gained endorsement and admiration, while at the same time accumulating wealth.

That way, it marched towards what Peter Brown identifies as a Christian Empire.263 As members of the clergy assumed positions of authority in city-management, the infiltration of the Church into politics -namely by increasingly assuming state roles- became a reality more and more evident by the day. If that reality, nevertheless, could not be clearly seen and perceived by contemporaries, it is understandable. After all, such reality was being formed and gaining shape during dark ages.

The point is, Christians constituted a proportion of the population in which all classes were represented, including educated, prominent citizens who were powerful within their cities, as well as ‘middle-ranking plebeians’ who owned a house, ran a household, and were literate.264 The Church, furthermore, was an extension of the assembly of the chosen

263 Ibid., 142.
people, where one could not be a Christian without joining, thus replacing national exclusivity by the selectness of an international ‘party,’ i.e. the party of Christ.\textsuperscript{265}

The Roman state, in turn, granted lands and other benefits so that the new religion could be exercised unencumbered from previous hindrances. Priests at times dictated rules for proper societal conduct, while at the same time being lenient, for during antiquity Christianity was not yet as consolidated, with remnants of paganism and other Roman habits still lurking around. Still, this was a religion that was also a Church, a belief that exercised authority over all those who shared it and over every aspect of life, supported by a hierarchy, a clergy by its very nature superior to the laity, Christian psychology under such circumstances thus incorporating a taste for authority.\textsuperscript{266}

As for the beginnings of this Holy Rule, key dates mark certain events that allow one to ascertain significant grants of power to the Church, starting in the 4\textsuperscript{th} century. The first would be 312 AD, when then Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, thereafter ending the persecution of Christians, allowing for restitution of property to those members who had been wronged in former times, as per the Edict of Milan of 313. From that point on, the Church saw its respect, estates, treasury, and power, increase exponentially.

By 324, Constantine had defeated both Maxentius and Licinius, thus bringing the empire not only under his control, but under his Christian control.\textsuperscript{267} The 380 Codex Theodosianus sealed the deal by making Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, coining the term Roman Catholics to refer to its members, with punishments being imposed on heretics and critics. Therefore, around 400, Christians could feel that they would soon triumph totally.\textsuperscript{268}

The 5\textsuperscript{th} century saw two crucial years: one was 445, when the Decree on Papal power was issued by emperor Valentinian III. The other is 496, when the Church initiated a closer relationship with the Franks, via the conversion of king Clovis. That event symbolized the beginning of a holy alliance, though a shy and fledgling one. In the 6\textsuperscript{th} century, another episode of increased papal power took place in 538 when Justinian, who much praised the primacy of the Church in his Codex Justinianus, removed one pope and replaced him with

\textsuperscript{265} Ibid., 38.  
\textsuperscript{266} Ibid., 36.  
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid., 15.
another of his liking, who was in turn given power over significant administrative services of Rome.

That appointment allocated tremendous authority to the hands of the pontiff, at a time when the city had been sieged by barbarian invaders, that way exposing the capital to a papal government. In the 7th century, the papacy created the practice of legitimizing kings, by crowning Pepin in the 750s. So, when Charlemagne came to Rome on Christmas of 800 AD, his coronation was a mere culmination of a power that had been originated long before that year, but only then gaining enough strength to start its tenure with proper name and reputation.

What is then observed is a state of imperial regency. By the fall of Rome in 476 AD, the Church was not yet ready to carry on the role of the Roman state, but certain structures and standards of authority already existed. Regents, i.e. barbarians and eastern emperors, came to fill in the power-gap only the Church had the capability to duly address, much like a monarch has to wait for maturity in order to govern. It was a matter of time until it could assume the affairs of the state. As Christianity expanded, the figures of magistrates and politicians incrementally gave way to that of the pope, at the local level represented by scores of bishops and priests, up to when it replaced that of the emperor, when the papacy became an imposing, sovereign, civil power.269

Again, care must be taken so as not to infer that an immediate Christian empire was formed upon the Conversion of Constantine, or even through the decree that made that religion Rome’s official faith. Nevertheless it would be negligent (if not foolish) to deny that from that time already the stage was being set for the Church authorities to take over the west. With a desire in mind to maintain a legacy of grandeur at Rome, it was soon after the fall of the empire that a duty of continuity was seen on the part of religious powers, they being the most affluent and influential in a crumbling west. Moreover, the pope, the one legitimate representative of antiquity still in the old imperial capital, remained supported by the emperor in Constantinople, although the Bishop would later act unilaterally and sever ties with Byzantium.

With a firm grip over the affairs at Rome, the pope gradually distanced the western Church from that in the east. Taking advantage of local circumstances, the papacy allied itself with barbarians, particularly the Franks. If it took until 800 AD for the title of emperor to reappear in the west, it was because only then was the pope able to bring it to the fore. Before that year, the Church was still gathering strength, respect, and experience to make its majestic entrance as the ruler of a renovated (i.e. Christian) empire.

The duality of medieval governance rested on the power of the pope and on that of the emperor. Yet, those, especially the latter, were but labels over a much deeper aspect, i.e. legitimacy. The pope’s aim, therefore, was not to usurp the crown. After all, the papacy willingly inaugurated the tradition of bestowing it to the rulers it saw fit for emperorship. It was the concept of rule, the ancient Roman notion of Imperium, i.e. legality to govern, what the papacy, once under the possession of spiritual power only, acquired and was not willing to relinquish. Particularly not to a governor whose office was a product of its own creation.

The papacy’s target was rather to exercise the power that stemmed from that office. That is why throughout the middle ages popes did not openly ask for the label of ‘emperor.’ Aside from a Christian Empire par excellence, the papacy’s aspirations constantly referred to their rights to spiritual and temporal powers. Both these concepts are meant to outlast individuals, monarchs, even the state, the first denoting metaphysical notions of an everlasting presence, i.e. eternal life; whereas the second, by definition, entails longevity.

It would thus be inappropriate to characterize the actions of the Church prior to 800 as a state of latency, for that would suggest inactivity on its part. Hence the analogy with regency, for while not fully in control, a position of authority had been allotted to the office of the pope, and whereas physical power rested on the hands of others, e.g. with eastern emperors, or barbarian kings, both the pontiff at Rome and his minions throughout the west were extremely observant of the actions of others, as well as of the correct timing to engage in their politics.

In addition to an always-active clergy, there appeared other, wealthy individuals who began to opine in favor of that religion. Christian spokesmen, representing the needs of Christian congregations in the cities, began to intervene in the politics of the empire,
frequently doing so by engaging in confrontation with those in power. Consequently, one last element that must not be neglected in the growth of the Church was the presence and support of elites. With both true belief in mind plus the lure of prospects of riches by associating with that institution, nobles vied for their share of control, privileges, and other benefits in a west relatively absent of an imperial see.

What is more, such variable demonstrates that the Church was able to cater, initially to the humble masses, and later to the nobility. Its takeover was observed in all fronts, making it evident that it had come to stay. What it lacked, and thus what it tried to acquire during the early Middle Ages all the way to 800 AD, was imperial legitimacy to rule the west. While a full-fledged, Renovated Roman Empire came to fruition only on that year, that goal of governance by the Church dates back to the threshold between antiquity and medieval times. Therefore, in a way, Holy Rule also started back then.

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Afterword

Church & State Jockeying for Control over the West

The prospects of better times, foreseeable with Charlemagne’s *Translatio Imperii*, as well as the rule of his successors, proved to be short-lived. One might point at his lukewarm reactions upon coronation, leading to the belief that the revival of the empire was more of an assertion of papal legal basis to make kings than a ruler’s intention to consolidate his territories. In attempting to sustain its own empire, the Church took on drastic measures when the stability of its plans, as well as the validity of its authority, was put in check. This was also due to the hurt feelings on the part of the head of that institution, himself deeply entranced in a power-trip.

Already before 800 AD, the figure of the pope had acquired a great deal of authority, which had been building up since ancient times. Always invoking divine providence, the pope had become an infallible, immovable, godly-like figure. Geography made such dual-rule even more unfeasible in practice. That meant local realities were bound to take their own shape, independent from the dictates coming from the Lateran palace in Italy. Consequently, misunderstandings happened due to the sheer defiance of authority, ignored in light of that of kings, whose in their own local spheres of influence were believed to trump that of a distant pope.

It was indeed a new experiment for Europe. First the merging between Church and State, then the unbalanced authority which tilted at times to the king’s side, and at times to that of the papacy, the latter often ending up better off due to the ideological inculcation that was conveyed through the power of religion. The conflict, furthermore, was not one. There were in fact phases, or rounds of battles between the two powers. The argument that started in the new millennium was simply a glimpse of something that would resurface throughout European history. Institutionalized religion as a tool of control would be harshly debated in the next centuries, wars would be waged, treaties struck, theses written, and internal dissent would jeopardize the credibility of the Church of Rome. One recurrent element, however, constituted the essence of those conflicts.

In the period which immediately followed the year 1000, two figures appeared to be leading Christendom, the pope and the emperor, antagonism between them to occupy
the front stage for the whole of that century.\textsuperscript{271} Already in AD 962, upon the coronation of Otto I, whom yet another renovation of the Roman Empire is attributed, an agreement was settled with Pope John XII. The \textit{Ottonianum} had clauses which demanded that a newly-elected pope should take an oath to fulfill his obligations to the emperor, though these were, dangerously, not spelled out, while the emperor would undertake to protect the interests of the Church and the See of St. Peter.\textsuperscript{272}

Such technicality was absent from the event of 800 AD, which consisted more of a token of appreciation on the part of the pope, who in turn tested his power to bless a monarch and make a title out of thin air. That sign of gratitude originated from Charlemagne’s protection of the papacy. The granting of the crown, thus, was not predicated on an agreement between the two. Otto’s move was a sign that not only times were quickly changing, but that as swiftly as they were moving, so was conflict looming in the horizon.

With kings growing fonder of asserting their own authority over their direct domains, especially with respect to the nomination of religious positions, the power of the pope was being tested. With that, limitations were imposed by the pontiff on purely political actors, so as not to disturb the internal affairs of the Church. The goal of the papacy of freeing not only itself, but the whole Church from the grip of lay lords was seen in what became known as the Gregorian Reform, implemented by Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085 AD).\textsuperscript{273} It consisted not only of an attempt to re-assert the place of the Church as a respected authority throughout the west, but it was also a message to those who tried to defy papal mandates.

Henry IV did just that. Believing to have righteousness on his side, he sought to denounce a most-revered figure. He had clearly undermined the pope’s capability for unilateral action, forgetting that if he was in his current position, it was because the pope had decided so. The Investiture Controversy had begun. Gregory stripped Henry from his emperorship, as a reminder that the title of Holy Roman Emperor had been a creation of the papacy, thus giving it power to revoke it.\textsuperscript{274}

The Bishop of Rome now reigned dictatorially and implemented policies in unquestioned manner, always claiming divine authority. With the strike of a pen he ousted Henry from office, and ruined his reputation of ever ruling again. Moreover, the papacy set some other rules to be followed. The Papal Dictates (Dictatus Papae) set important directives for a proper functioning of the Catholic system of churches throughout the world, as well as stipulating requirements and standards of respect to be shown towards the pontiff. Twenty-seven impositions were made, among which, the most striking were:

2. That the Roman pontiff alone can with right be called universal.
6. That among other things, we ought not to remain in the same house with those excommunicated by him.
8. That he alone may use the imperial insignia.
9. That of the pope alone all princes shall kiss the feet.
12. That it may be permitted to him to depose emperors.
18. That a sentence passed by him may be retracted by no one; and that he himself, alone of all, may retract it.
19. That he himself may be judged by no one.
22. That the Roman church has never erred; nor will it err to all eternity, the Scripture bearing witness.
26. That he who is not at peace with the Roman church shall not be considered catholic.

Bravado eked through the papal urge of being recognized as a supreme figure, promoting the humiliation of his subjects, placing the papacy above the law, clearly making the pope some sort of dictator for life, literally forcing princes to kiss his feet as a sign of superiority. By the audacity of that document alone, it is evident that the emperor was not the one calling the shots in the Holy Roman Empire. Yet another conflict, this time more religious in nature, involved the papacy. In 1054 AD, a Schism, or split, took place between the western and eastern Churches. That break was due to a doctrinal conflict which did not find agreement between those two segments of Christianity. Such disagreement came together with eastern distrust towards the pope.

That way, doctrinal, geographical, linguistic (Latin predominant in the west and Greek in the east), and above all political divergences (e.g. on the legitimacy of the pope), provided for the establishment of two Christian factions: the Orthodox Church out of Constantinople, and the Roman Catholic Church, based out of Rome. What was seen then, much like with the excommunications of Henry and the decrees of Gregory, was an issue with challenged authority, which tradition mandated to be granted to the pope. It was the

potential for instability, and possible ousting from imperial affairs, whether political or religious, what made the papacy govern tyrannically, e.g. fighting not only with emperors but with those who were supposedly fellow Christians.

Since the core of those conflicts between popes and emperors was not the mere investing of the clergy, but rather an issue of authority, controversy was not bound to go away. Because the reason for the clashes was the same, that incident could perhaps be more properly named Authority Controversy rather than an Investiture one. In every single instance of the Investiture episodes, the lust for power was at their very core. Memory of subservience towards a distant figure was contrasted with that of power over local domains. For the popes of the 12th and 13th centuries, they, rather than the German emperors, viewed themselves as the heirs of ancient Rome, her past glories having been absorbed by the greater ones incurred by a Christian Rome, the seat of an imperial papacy, claiming world supremacy. 276

Despite the prevalence of Christianity, it ended up spreading too thin, being rivaled by powerful kings who refused to obey papal rules in their entirety. The mere investing of local bishops by laymen terrorized the pope at Rome, for the potential of losing authority and the grasp of the dealings within the Church were not tolerable whatsoever. It is almost laughable then, that events like the Investiture controversies were ignited by such petty matters. The unwillingness on the emperor’s side and on that of the pope to accept each other’s commands was compounded by their physical distance, which hindered communication and gave way to prompt actions within kingdoms of the empire, in disregard to the orders coming from Rome.

**From Restoration to Reformation**

Now, despite the Investiture Conflict having had its first phase ended with the Concordat of Worms in 1122 AD, it was revived soon thereafter. Indeed, that carried into the 1300s. The precedent of such conflicts provided signs of disagreements, at first in the political realm, and later purely in the religious one. In the following centuries, there emerged figures that started to challenge the Church’s authority and credibility in the teaching of the Scriptures, as well as with respect to other arbitrary practices that displayed the type of tyranny usually seen when a significant amount of power is conferred upon an office such as that of the papacy.

In such circumstances, people like Martin Luther in the 1500s helped to start a process that is known as the Reformation. Preaching justice through the reform of Church practices, Luther, Erasmus, and many others, denounced that house, the pope in particular, and engaged in the paradigm-shifting practice of translating the Scriptures from the Church Latin into vernacular languages. Such initiatives drew a clear divide between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant ones, evidencing yet another split, since also within those very Protestant schools of thought further religious factions emerged.

With the centralized power of the papacy at Rome not only challenged but diminished, local lords, princes, and kings, began to support those alternative segments of Christianity. That way, further Church-and-State alliances were perpetrated in their local realms, wherein they could wield their authority, in addition to promoting their own identity, distinguished by history, language, and now, religion. That description is a brief and very simplistic glimpse of the end of the medieval era and the start of the Modern one.

Reform indeed happened, and religion played a big role in it. With the movement for religious change becoming more amalgamated, as per the emergence of other institutions, the Roman Church made efforts to reassert its once supreme authority. The advent of the office of Inquisition and the Jesuit order, to name a few, were part of the Church’s reactions of Counter-Reform. However, with the embracing of Protestant Churches on the part of many monarchs, wars followed, as did the fragmentation of the Holy Empire. The Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648 AD) represented just that, the ideological clash between Protestant and Catholic kingdoms.

Upon its culmination, another sign that the Middle Ages had long ended was seen. The 1648 Treaty of Westphalia stated that the exercise of religion fell within the jurisdiction of a prince or king. Henceforth, on the basis of sovereignty, rules would be implemented and enforced within borders. Born were the nation-states. That war was fought between Christians, who belonged to different factions of a faith that had the same God. What both that conflict and treaty symbolized, nonetheless, is what Jacques Le Goff identified as being the two heads of Christianity: those being Sacerdotium and Imperium. It was not enough to head a supreme religion. Political legitimacy was also necessary for full-fledged Church governance to occur. Haste and greed, however, always make waste.

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