

RISE

OF THE

PAPACY

AND

CRIMES

OF THE

POPES

from **CRIMES OF CHRISTIANITY**

by **G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler**

The Rise of the Papacy and Crimes of the Popes

Two Chapters from "*The Crimes of Christianity*"

by G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler

This selection has been reprinted, because, faced with the present Papal assault, we find a growing demand for a handy weapon of combat. With the exception of out-of-print volumes on library shelves, there is nothing to serve the purpose of debunking the "Infallible Popes". Claims are made, even by secular historians, that, despite its evil record in recent times, the Church in the past was an instrument of progress and light, and, it is only necessary to return to its pristine purity to be acclaimed of all mankind! These claims are false. A complete refutation is contained in these chapters from Foote and Wheeler's "*Crimes of Christianity*". These free thought champions gave so much careful investigation and erudition to the compiling of this work, that, in so small a compass, it is unequalled let alone surpassed in the quality and quantity of the historical information it contains.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE RISE OF THE PAPACY.

AN ecclesiastic, who paid heavily for his benefice at Rome (an offence known as Simony), was once asked if he believed in the story of Peter being the first bishop of that city. He candidly replied "I do not think that Peter was ever there, but I am quite sure that Simon was."

While there is abundant proof of the constant existence of Simon or Simony in Rome, the only evidence of Peter's having ever been in that city is the alleged fact of his having written a letter from Babylon. Forgery and fraud, however, soon supported the tradition that Peter was the first bishop of Rome, a tale which was first put forward in what are called the *Clementine Recognitions*, a theological romance fraudulently ascribed to Clement of Rome. The story is discountenanced by Justin Martyr, who mentions Simon Magus, whom Peter is said to have followed and confuted, as having been at Rome, but no more mentions Peter as having been there than does the Acts of the Apostles.

Being at the opulent seat of the empire, the early Church of Rome assumed considerable dignity after the destruction of Jerusalem, the primitive Holy City of the faith. But for a long time it had no superior authority, and certainly no jurisdiction, over the churches of Alexandria and Antioch. In the second century, however, Victor, Bishop of Rome, took upon himself to excommunicate the Eastern churches

for not conforming to the Roman practice in keeping Easter. But the fulmination was harmless, and it was not until the removal of the capital by Constantine (A.D. 330) that the Roman Church found the opportunity for asserting its predominance. No longer checked by the presence of the civil rulers, the Bishop of Rome had less difficulty in exercising authority.

The constant struggle for precedence among the rival bishops, and the fierce feuds which raged at their synods, showed the necessity for a central head; but, although many cases were referred to Rome for arbitration, a long time lapsed before its predominance was admitted. It was first asserted at the Council of Sardica (A.D. 343) when the oriental bishops protested and left the Council. The decisions of this Council were, however, at Rome, fraudulently ascribed to the first general council of Nice. Archbishop Usher, in his answer to a challenge made by a Jesuit, says:

“Neither hath this corrupting humor stayed itself in forging of whole councils and entire treatises of ancient writers; but hath, like a canker, fretted away divers of their sound parts, and so altered their complexions that they appear not to be the same men they were.”¹

We have seen (p. 32) how, in the time of Theodosius, the bishops of Alexandria and Rome were associated as joint authorities on orthodoxy, but Damasus, the Roman bishop, was the first who took the Pagan title of Pontiff. Already the centralisation of wealth at Rome had made the bishopric so lucrative that when Damasus attempted to convert Prætextatus, the governor of the city, the Pagan answered with a sarcasm which is full of historical instruction: “Make me Bishop of Rome and I will turn Christian directly.”²

Leo the First (A.D. 440—461), taking advantage of the disturbed state of the African Church, which was divided concerning the Donatian heresy, claimed jurisdiction over its bishops. He also assumed a tone of superiority in a letter to Dioscorus, Bishop of Alexan-

¹ Quoted in the “Delineation of Roman Catholicism,” by the Rev Charles Elliott, D.D., p. 77; 1851.

² Gibbon. chap. xxv.

dria. In A.D. 448 the Council of Constantinople, under Flavianus, deposed Eutyches, the friend of Dioscorus; but in the following year the bishops at the Council of Ephesus (called by the Romish Church the Robber Synod) reinstalled him, extolled Dioscorus, who had armed soldiers within and without the church, and kicked Flavianus to death.³ In A.D. 451 the bishops at the Council of Chalcedon vehemently shouted "Damn Dioscorus, Christ deposes Dioscorus." Yet, although this bishop was obnoxious to Rome, the Council did not give that see any primary power.

Leo excommunicated Dioscorus, who boldly retorted the excommunication; but his defeat broke the power of Alexandria, and left Rome and Constantinople face to face.⁴ Rome took to appointing legates, otherwise spies and informers, at Constantinople.⁵ The strife between the rival Churches was bitter and prolonged. Felix II. of Rome (483—493) went to the length of excommunicating Acacius, the patriarch of Constantinople, and as this had come to imply not only expulsion from the Church, but eternal perdition, it was no light sentence. "A difficulty," says Draper, "arose as to the manner in which the process should be served; but an adventurous monk fastened it to the robe of Acacius as he entered the church. Acacius, undismayed, proceeded with his services, and, pausing deliberately, ordered the name of Felix, the Bishop of Rome, to be struck from the roll of bishops in communion with the East. Constantinople and Rome thus mutually excommunicated each other."⁶ The result was a complete schism which lasted over thirty years. Gelasius I. (492—496) mockingly called the patriarch of Constantinople bishop of the parish of Heraclea. In a Council at Rome he asserted the primacy of the eternal city as founded on Christ's remark to Peter,⁷ and proclaimed that the Pope's authority was higher than that of kings and

³ Gibbon, chap. xlvii. Milman, "Latin Christianity," Book II, chap. iv.

⁴ H. C. Lea, "Studies in Church History," p. 283.

⁵ Jortin, vol. ii., p. 429.

⁶ Vol. I., p. 342.

⁷ Matt. xvi., 18, a passage which Dr. Pfeleiderer unhesitatingly sets down as a forgery.

emperors. Addressing the emperor, he said, "There are two powers which rule the world, the imperial and pontifical. You are the sovereign of the human race, but you bow your neck to those who preside over things divine. The priesthood is the greater of the two powers; it has to render an account in the last day for the acts of kings."⁸

The break up of the Western empire (A.D. 476) contributed to Romish supremacy. The Papacy throve on the confusion of Italy. The decay of the imperial power gave freer scope to the bishops, and led the credulous people to look to them as their natural protectors. The memories of the ancient empire still hung round the walls of Rome, and even her barbarian conquerors bowed in awe before the glories of her mighty past. Hobbes has well observed that the Catholic Church is but the ghost of the dead Roman empire sitting throned and crowned on the grave thereof.

The conquest of Italy by Theodoric, the Ostrogoth, (493) gave to the bishops of Rome an Arian sovereign. A heretic appointed God's vicar on earth. He clipped the secular prerogatives of the Church, but allowed the election of the Bishop of Rome to follow its ordinary course. There was a contest between two rival candidates, whose factions "filled the city with murder."⁹ Symmachus triumphed in the struggle and became Pope. In A.D. 503, being accused of adultery and other offences, he was acquitted by a Council at Rome. His partisans even went to the length of declaring that the Council could not pass judgment on the successor of St. Peter; and one Eunodius (subsequently Bishop of Padua) vindicated this decision in a work, asserting that the Roman bishop was above every human tribunal, and responsible only to God.¹

Professor Heinrich Geffcken, in his great work on *Church and State*, says :

"Parallel with these growing pretensions increased that system

⁸ Draper, vol. i., p. 342.

⁹ Draper, vol. i., p. 342; Gibbon, chap. xxxix.

¹ McClintock and Strong's Encyclopædia. Article "Papacy."

of denying or falsifying historical facts, which was to minister to the glorification of Rome and the power of her bishops. The decrees of the first Council of Nicæa were interpolated. The story was fabricated of the conversion and baptism of Constantine, by Sylvester, and forged writings, like the 'Constitutum Sylvestri,' the 'Gesta Liberii,' and others, were circulated in order to prove the inviolable supremacy of the See of Rome."²

The ignorance and corruption of the ages we have rapidly traversed enabled the Papacy to exalt its power by contrivances that could only impose on a credulous and degraded people. One of these was auricular confession. It was introduced by Pope Leo, and its object, in which it succeeded, was to give the Church possession of domestic secrets, and to place the communicants and their relatives at the mercy of the priests. Prior to this time confession had been public as in Buddhism.³

Another circumstance that contributed to the authority of Rome was its constant censure and suppression of the multitudinous "heresies" that distracted the less practical and more speculative provinces of the empire. The influence of Rome, as well as its policy, in such matters was more ecclesiastical than doctrinal. While the Eastern Church concerned itself with dogmatic subtleties, the Western Church was concerned with priestly power. "Rome," as Heine remarks, "always desired to rule; when her legions fell she sent dogmas into the provinces. Every discussion on matters of faith had reference to Roman usurpations; it was a question of consolidating the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome, who was always very tolerant regarding mere articles of faith, but fretted and fumed whenever the rights of the Church were assailed."⁴ The Latin genius was one of government; it did not invent Christianity, but it naturally gained an ascendancy in the spiritual organisation. Yet the supremacy of Rome was not gained till the empire had been shaken, and sometimes desolated, by repeated struggles between the great Western Bishop and the sees of Constantinople and Alexandria.

² Chap. vi., 148, vol i., E. F. Taylor's translation, 1877.

³ Waddington, p. 126.

⁴ "Religion and Philosophy in Germany," p. 22.

"The history of the time is a record of the desperate struggles of the three chief bishops for supremacy. In this conflict Rome possessed many advantages; the two others were more immediately under the control of the Imperial Government, the clashing of interests between them more frequent, their rivalry more bitter. The control of ecclesiastical power was hence perpetual in Rome, though she was, both politically and intellectually, inferior to her competitors."⁵

Gregory the First (A.D. 590—604) was, next to Leo the First, the greatest of the early Roman pontiffs. He stoutly repudiated the claim of the patriarch of Constantinople to be called universal bishop. This title, which in the next century was taken by his successors, he maintained to be blasphemous and diabolical, and he called himself "servant of the servants of God." None the less, he aimed at establishing the power of the Church, which he did much to promote by political intrigues as well as by the establishment of the doctrine of purgatory. Shortly before his death the Emperor Maurice and his five sons were barbarously murdered by Phocas, who, heading a rebellion, usurped the throne of Constantinople. Gregory, rejoicing at the overthrow of an emperor who supported the pretensions of the rival primacy, no sooner heard the news than he had the statues of Phocas and his wife carried through Rome in triumph, and wrote to congratulate him on his success.⁶ This Phocas was a monster of vice—lewd, drunken, and sanguinary. Dean Milman says :

"It is astonishing that even common prudence did not temper the language of the triumphant pontiff, who launches out into a panegyric on the mercy and benignity of the usurper, calls on earth and heaven to rejoice at his accession, augurs peace and prosperity to the empire from his pious acts, and even seems to anticipate the return of the old republican freedom under the rule of the devout and gentle Phocas."⁷

But the reward was to come. The patriarch of Constantinople having angered the devout and gentle Phocas by not delivering the murdered emperor's

⁵ Draper vol. i., p. 297.

⁶ "The History of Romish Treasons," by H. Foulis, p. 114. Gibbon, chap. xlv. Riddle's "History of the Papacy," vol. i., p. 225.

⁷ "Latin Christianity," vol. ii., p. 143.

wife and daughters to his cruelty, he acceded to the request of Pope Boniface the Third and decreed (A.D. 606) the Romish See as head of all the Churches."⁸

Another potent instrument in the fight for supremacy was the assumption of the power of excommunication, and afterwards of interdict. The conversion of the barbarians, who had been used to the exercise of this power in Druidism,⁹ facilitated the use of the weapon. When Christianity was predominant, there was no refuge for the person excommunicated, unless he could take shelter with Mohammedans or heathens. In time it became generally recognised in the jurisprudence of all Europe, that the civil power was bound to aid in enforcing ecclesiastical censures. Providence was always supposed to vindicate the anathemas of the Church; and if temporal visitations were insufficient, there was always the authority of the saints, to whom the secrets of futurity were revealed, for asserting that the most terrible of all the fires of hell was reserved for those who died excommunicate. The Church took care to supplement this with earthly penalties and disabilities. The excommunicate could not marry, and was outlawed from all civil rights and social intercourse.

"The liability to share the punishment of an excommunicate, for the simplest office or greeting tendered to him, was universally admitted. No one was even to salute him, and the confessor was instructed, among the regular questions addressed to his penitents, to inquire whether they had exchanged a word or a greeting with anyone under the ban of the Church. Worse than a leper, he was to die like a dog, and all the promptings of humanity on his behalf were to be sternly repressed. . . The excommunicate thus shed around him a contagion, which cut him off from all human society, and left him to perish in misery and starvation. This was no mere theoretical infliction, but a law enforced with all the power of the Church, and applied so liberally that it became almost impossible for the innocent to escape its effects."¹

The truth of this is illustrated by the fact that Popes granted, as a special privilege, the right not to be excommunicated without cause. A bull of this nature is

⁸ Foulis, p. 115.

⁹ Mosheim, vol. ii., p. 136.

¹ Lea, "Studies of Church History," pp. 380, 381.

extant, issued by Pope Celestin, in favor of a monastery, and another by Innocent III., for the protection of an archbishop.²

An English historian of the Papacy tells us that :

“When a crime had been committed against the Church, for which no satisfaction could be obtained on account of the power of some haughty offender, or for any other reason, then the bishop put the whole place in which the offender lived, or the whole district to which that place belonged, under an interdict—that is to say, he caused all offices of public worship to cease or be suspended. All the churches of that place were closed, and all relics which they contained were withdrawn from public view; all crucifixes and images of saints were shrouded; no bells were rung; no sacraments were administered; no corpse was buried in consecrated ground; and notice had been given that this state of things would be continued until the demands of the Church should have been fully satisfied, and the alleged injury repaired. By this means such a ferment was raised in a whole population, that even the most powerful were at length obliged to yield.”³

The priestly pretensions were supported not only by the dread powers of excommunication, which was even held in terror over the dead,⁴ but by the doctrine of the immunity of priests from the jurisdiction of secular tribunals. Thus a peculiar sanctity and personal inviolability were given them, which proved an enormous advantage in all contests with the civil power. According to Rufinus, Constantine, at the first Council of Nice, declared that the priests could not be judged by men. “For you are gods, given us by God, and it is not fitting that man should pronounce judgment on gods.”⁵ It is not to be supposed that Constantine really said this, or that the civil power so readily acknowledged such a monstrous claim; yet it was continually put forward, and was soon asserted in the forged Decretals (see p. 81). Justinian conceded to the bishops the right to have episcopal judges, and the overthrow of the empire facilitated the privilege. The Frank, the Roman, the Goth, and the Burgundian, how-

² Lea, p. 403.

³ Riddle, “History of the Papacy,” vol. ii., pp. 83, 84.

⁴ That detestable scoundrel, Theophilus of Alexandria, excommunicated the learned Origen for heresy long after he was dead.

⁵ Lea, p. 170.

ever intermingled, had each a right to be tried by his own code, and it seemed natural that the ecclesiastic should have the benefit of the canon law, which could not be expounded by the secular courts. As early as A.D. 538 the third Council of Orleans enacted that episcopal assent was necessary before a cleric could appear in a secular court, either as plaintiff or defendant, and many following Church Councils anathematised judges who tried and condemned ecclesiastics.⁶ Pope Nicholas, in a rescript to the Bulgarians, said to them: "You who are laymen ought not to judge either priest or clerk; they must be left to the judgment of their prelates." Thus the members of the clerical body, to the lowest degree, were freed from the secular jurisdiction.⁷

Mohammedanism exercised an important influence over the Papacy. The Saracenic armies wrested from Christendom its Asiatic and African possessions. The sees of Carthage, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Antioch disappeared from the Christian system. Constantinople and Rome only were left, and centuries of ecclesiastical dispute were terminated by the swords of Islam. As the Greek emperors were pressed by the Infidels, they were forced to leave to the Papacy the chief defence of their Italian provinces, and the independence of Rome was soon displayed in its refusal to obey the heretic emperor Bardanes.⁸

In converting the Pagans, Christianity became completely paganised, and it was only after the rise of a rival religion that any attempts at reform were made. They were, however, most strenuously resisted by the Popes. When Leo, the Isaurian, who had associated much with the Mohammedans, published an edict prohibiting the worship of images (A.D. 726), Pope Gregory the Second absolved the people from their allegiance. This occasioned a civil war both in the East and in the West. Draper observes, however, that the issue was fictitious; the Papacy simply took the opportunity of revolting from a weak master.

⁶ Lea, pp. 176—184.

⁷ "The Papal Power" (From the French, Dublin, 1825), vol. i., p. 57.

⁸ Giessler, vol. i., p. 547.

The Iconoclasts went about destroying images, and were violently opposed by the monks. Milman remarks :

“Nor did this open resistance take place in Constantinople alone. A formidable insurrection broke out in Greece and in the Ægean Islands. A fleet was armed, a new emperor, one Cosmos, proclaimed, and Constantinople menaced by the rebels. The monks here, and throughout the empire, the champions of this, as of every other superstition, were the instigators to rebellion.”⁹

The opponents of image worship were termed arraigners of Christianity, and considered little better than Saracens. The dispute led to numerous battles by land and water. Constantine, nicknamed Copronymus, carried on the contest inaugurated by his father Leo, and rigorously quelled popular tumults in favor of image worship. In A.D. 754 he convened a Council at Constantinople, which the Greeks call the Seventh General Council, and which anathematised at once all persons making images and all opponents of the religious veneration of Mary and other saints. The monks were violent in opposition to the first of these decrees, and were severely treated in consequence by the emperor. But they were countenanced by Gregory the Third, who excommunicated all who dared to attack the images. The emperor Leo the Fourth (A.D. 775) also issued penal laws against image worshippers, but he was poisoned by his wife, Irene, with whom Pope Adrian the First made an alliance on condition that image worship should be restored. It would require a volume to fully describe the bloodshed and crimes of this prolonged controversy, which distracted the Church for about a hundred and fifty years, when image worship finally prevailed.

As it emancipated itself from the Byzantine empire, the Papacy sought new alliances. Gregory III. offered to Charles Martel the sovereignty of Italy if he would drive out the detested Lombards. With the most barefaced defiance of political morality, Pope Zacharias (A.D. 741—752) sanctioned the dethronement of the

⁹ “History of Latin Christianity,” vol. ii, p. 356.

weak Merovingian dynasty, by the declaration that "whoever possessed the power should have also the name of king."¹ His successor, Stephen III. (A.D. 752—757), anointed the usurper, Pepin the Short, as king of the Franks. In return for these services, Pepin came to the aid of Rome against the Lombards, and gave to the Pope, instead of the emperor, to whom they belonged, the conquered provinces. One inducement to Pepin to support Stephen was the forged letter from St. Peter, to which we have already referred, and which is well worth preserving :

"Pepin, the princes his sons, the Frankish nobility, and the Frankish nation ; in the name of the Holy Virgin, the thrones, dominions and powers of heaven ; in the name of the army of martyrs, of the cherubim and seraphim, of all the hosts gathered round the throne, and under threat of utter damnation, not to let his peculiar city, Rome, fall into the hands of the hell-brand Longobards."²

Charlemagne confirmed and enlarged the donation his father had made, and on December 25, A.D. 800, laid the deed of the enlarged donation on the bogus tomb of St. Peter. Thus the popes became temporal princes ; and though Charlemagne was not a monarch to be trifled with, they soon conceived the plan of restoring the ancient empire of the Romans by the universal rule of the Papacy. They availed themselves of the weakness and superstition of Charlemagne's successors to emancipate themselves from their authority ; and, in order to efface the recollection of the gift, forged the story that Constantine the Great had given Rome and Italy to Pope Sylvester, and that this was the reason why the seat of empire had been removed to Constantinople. The Papal claims were also supported by the forged Decretals already referred to, the whole purport of which was to make the Church independent of the State, and to establish its universal dominion.

How little trouble it cost a mediæval Pope to impose

¹ McClintock and Strong's Cyclopædia, article "Papacy."

² A. O. Legge, "The Temporal Power of the Papacy," p. 25, 1870.

on the pious barbarian of his day, may be seen by glancing at a few sentences of this useful forgery :

“ ‘ We ascribe,’ Constantine is represented as saying, ‘ to the see of St. Peter all dignity, all glory, all imperial power. . . Besides, we give to Sylvester and his successor our palace of the Lateran, which is beyond question the most beautiful place on earth ; we give him our crown, our mitre, our diadem and all our imperial vestments ; we remit to him the imperial dignity. We give as a pure gift, to the holy pontiff, the city of Rome and all the western cities of Italy, as well as the western cities of the other countries. In order to give place to him, we yield our dominion over all these provinces by removing the seat of our empire to Byzantium, considering it not right that a terrestrial emperor should preserve the least power where God hath established the head of religion.’ ”

Considering that this terrestrial emperor ruled the Church roundly, called Councils by his own authority, insisted that the orthodox should commune with the Arians, and set up Pagan images at pleasure, one marvels at the ignorance and impudence of the forger of his “donation.” Yet “as late as 1478 Christians were burnt alive in Strasburg for doubting its authenticity.”³

Even Dante seems to have believed the fable, writing in the bitterness of his noble heart :

“Ah, Constantine, di quanto mal fu matre
Non la tua conversion, ma quelle dote
Che de te prese il primo ricco patre !”⁴

By every kind of trick the popes endeavored to evade acknowledgement of allegiance to the civil power. They were willing enough to crown monarchs but did not want monarchs to crown them. One after another slipped into the chair without waiting for the imperial warranty ; and then, in explanation of his irregularity, alleged pressure of circumstances over which he had no control. The experiment could be tried often, for the persons selected to wear the tiara were generally old men, and the pontificates were

³ J. W. De Forest, “The Growth of Giant Pope,” *Galaxy*, January, 1873.

⁴ Ah Constantine, to how much ill gave birth,
Not thy conversion, but those rich domains
That the first wealthy Pope received of thee !

naturally brief. To secure the supremacy of the throne, Louis the Second caused Pope Nicholas the First to be chosen (A.D. 858) in his own presence. But the emperor committed the blunder of honoring him as never pope had then been honored by prince; he served him as squire, went on foot before him, and led his horse by the bridle. The stirrup was soon dashed in the King's face. How it came about deserves the telling, for it strikingly exhibits how much the establishment and propagation of Christianity had done for the world.

Lothaire, King of Lorraine, who was brother to the Emperor Louis, married in A.D. 856 Teutberga, sister of Hubert, Abbot of St. Maurice, who was accused of incest with her brother. Lothaire also took a mistress, one Walrada, niece of Gunther, Archbishop of Cologne, who called a Council of bishops at Aix-la-Chapelle, which declared that Teutberga was not Lothaire's wife on account of the alleged incest. The queen successfully went through the ordeal of water—by proxy. Nevertheless, Lothaire insisted on her guilt and she was forced to confess. After the decision of the Council his nuptials with Walrada were immediately celebrated, and Gunther received his reward in the elevation of his niece to the throne. Charles the Bald of France, however, with whom Teutberga had taken refuge, appealed on her behalf to the supreme arbiter at Rome. Nicholas, who had first stamped with pontifical authority the forged decretals of the early popes, seized the occasion with joy. He had said nothing as to Lothaire's concubinage with Walrada, but the marriage he pronounced void. He denounced the Synod of Aix as a brothel of adulterers, deposed the archbishops of Cologne and Trèves, and brandished a sentence of excommunication over the heads of the rest. Mr. Lea remarks that :

“The comparison is instructive between his alacrity and the prudent reticence of Adrian in the previous century. A moralist would find it difficult to draw the line between the connubial irregularities of Charlemagne and those of Lothaire; but Hermengarda found no puissant pope to force her inconstant husband into the paths of dissimulation, or to justify wrong by cruelty.

When Charlemagne grew tired of a wife he simply put her aside, nor would Adrian or Leo have thanked the meddling fool who counselled interference.”⁵

The Emperor Louis, however, espoused the cause of his royal brother and the German bishops, but being backed up by Charles the Bald, the Pope would not budge. To suppress his insubordination Louis marched on Rome. The fasts and prayers of Nicholas availed little against the soldiery; a massacre ensued, and the Pope, escaping in a boat across the Tiber, lay hidden for two days in the Cathedral of St. Peter. Most opportunely a sudden fever seized the emperor, which was at once attributed to the sacrilege he had committed. Louis therefore sent for Nicholas, made his peace and withdrew, commanding the archbishops to return home and consider themselves degraded. Lothaire, Waldrada, and Charles the Bald, were threatened with excommunication and yielded. Before his triumph was complete Nicholas died, but Adrian the Second received the submission of Lothaire, who was admitted to communion on the oath, which no one believed, that he had obeyed the commands of Nicholas, as though they had been those of heaven, and had abstained from all intercourse with Waldrada.⁶ Such was the termination of this trial of strength between the tiara and the crown. The victory of the pope was as complete as the abasement of the king, and the supremacy of the papacy over domestic concerns was firmly established.

The dissolution of the Frankish empire, and the invasion of the Norseman, brought confusion into Italy. The Popes were frequently under the thumb of an aristocratic faction, and sided now with this potentate and now with that, in order to gain their own ends. Legge says :

“ During the first half of the tenth century the Papacy sank back into utter confusion and moral impotence. Three dissolute women, Theodora and her daughters Marozia and Theodora, contrived to bring the whole patrimony of St. Peter under their

⁵ Lea, “ Studies of Church History,” p. 160.

⁶ Lea, “ Studies of Church History,” pp. 159—164

sway, and disposed of the tiara at their pleasure. Crimes too odious to narrate, and before which murder pales, were perpetrated to gratify their lusts. Laymen of infamously notorious character filled the chair of the apostles, which was bought and sold like a piece of merchandise. The Papal palace became a vast seraglio; the very churches echoed to obscene songs and bacchanal festivities.”⁷

Hallam also observes :

“This dreary interval is filled up in the annals of the Papacy by a series of revolutions and crimes. Six Popes were deposed, two murdered, one mutilated. Frequently two or even three competitors, among whom it is not always possible by any genuine criticism to distinguish the true shepherd, drove each other alternately from the city.”⁸

Throughout the year 1045 Europe witnessed the spectacle of three popes, Silvester III., Benedict IX., and Gregory VI., “disgracing the Papal chair, and rivalling each other in the most disgraceful acts of vice.”⁹

A Council was called at Sutry (1046) which affirmed the right of the emperor to nominate to the “holy see,” and supported the claims of Gregory VI. :

“No sooner, however, had this sentence been passed, than the emperor, to Gregory’s astonishment, demanded of him an account of the means by which he had procured his appointment; and Gregory, not being able to deny that he had bought the popedom from Benedict, was deposed. It now became manifest that the emperor had left Germany with the design of his predecessor, Otho III., to have a German Pope. He had even fixed upon the man—Suidger, Bishop of Bamberg, whom he caused to be elected by the Council, and then conducted him into Rome under the title of Clement II.”¹

But a genius arose who was determined to establish sacerdotal supremacy. This was Hildebrand (Gregory VII., A.D. 1073-85), the ablest of the popes. Under his leadership a party grew whose settled purpose was to raise the papacy above all secular control, and to make the Pope supreme arbiter of the world. When Leo IX.

⁷ “Growth of the Temporal Power of the Papacy,” p. 31.

⁸ “Europe During the Middle Ages,” vol. ii., p. 171.

⁹ Riddle, “History of the Papacy,” vol. ii., p. 63.

¹ *Ibid*, p. 65.

was chosen as pope by the German emperor, Henry the Third, Hildebrand boldly declared the nomination invalid until confirmed by the superior clergy of Rome, and he induced the pontiff to seek their suffrages. During five pontificates Hildebrand served as prime minister and pope-maker. To strengthen the Church he was resolute that the clergy should have no family ties. At that time a large proportion of the clergy were married, and in Milan and elsewhere they set up an anti-pope, Cadalus, rather than resign their right of marriage.² After a long and bloody controversy the policy of Hildebrand was triumphant. He also sought to abolish all simony, by which term he principally understood the bestowal of benefices by the civil power. At the same time he claimed the right of the papacy to dispose of kingdoms, and gave the crown of England to William of Normandy and that of Naples and Sicily to Robert Guiscard.

When elevated to the papal chair Hildebrand issued a decree invalidating all sacraments performed by simoniacal or married priests, and involving in their guilt and anathema whoever received communion from them. This he followed up with another (A.D. 1075), prohibiting sovereigns from granting churchly dignities, deposing every ecclesiastic who accepted a benefice from a layman, declaring such offenders idolators interdicted from communion, and placing under the same ban every potentate who should claim the right of investiture. These proceedings caused a collision with the emperor Henry IV. of Germany. The Saxons being in rebellion, Gregory took occasion to admonish the king to abstain from the presentation of benefices. The German ecclesiastics revolted, and a synod at Metz renounced Gregory as pontiff. Another at Brixen pronounced his deposition and elected in his place Guibert, Archbishop of Ravenna, under the title of Clement III. Henry wrote commanding Gregory to vacate the chair. The Pope retorted by excommunicating the emperor, his adherents, and the antipope. The pontiff's curse proved stronger than the prince's

² Lea, "Sacerdotal Celibacy."

sword. The antipope died suddenly, and dread of excommunication seized Henry's followers. Political wavering and disintegration ensued, and Henry was forced to sue for mercy. For three winter days and nights the emperor was kept barefooted, and without food and shelter, in the courtyard of the castle where Gregory was staying, before the pontiff would revoke the dread sentence of excommunication.

Henry's enemies caused Rudolph of Swabia to be elected emperor in his place. The pope's legates confirmed the choice. This was a breach of faith with Henry. Again he took to arms and was a second time excommunicated. Gregory even ventured a prophecy, and declared: "If he be not deposed or dead before the festival of St. Peter, may men cease to believe in me." But Gregory's god, however, was asleep or on a journey this time. Henry overcame his enemies and marched on Rome. Gregory had to send to Robert Guiscard for relief. He raised the siege and kissed the pope's toes, while his followers took to pillaging the citizens and violating their wives and daughters. The Romans rose on the invaders, and Guiscard fired the city, sparing, at the intercession of Gregory, only the churches. Thus commenced the wars of the Investitures, which lasted over fifty years, "costing, without exaggeration, a hundred battles and the lives of two millions of human beings."³ The wars of the Guelphs and Ghibbelines were essentially a prolongation of the same quarrel. In the second sentence of excommunication, which Gregory passed on Henry IV., are these words :

"Come now, I beseech you, O most holy and blessed fathers and princes, Peter and Paul, that all the world may understand and know that if ye are able to bind and loose in heaven, ye are likewise able on earth, according to the merits of each man, to give and to take away empires, kingdoms, principedoms, marquisades, duchies, countships, and the possessions of all men."⁴

Doctrines such as these struck equally at all civil government. Nor were the successors of Hildebrand

³ J. W. De Forest. Gregory VII. *Galaxy*, November 1872.

⁴ Prof. Jas. Bryce, "The Holy Roman Empire," p. 161

slow to apply them. Pope Innocent III.—who excommunicated our king John, absolved England and Ireland from allegiance to him, and even gave the kingdom of England and Ireland to Philip Augustus, King of France—declares, in his third sermon on consecration, that the vicar of Christ stands midway between God and man—less than God, but greater than man.⁵ The doctrine perhaps found its culmination in the celebrated bull of Boniface (A.D. 1302), which declared that “for every human creature it is a condition of salvation to submit to the Roman pontiff.” The use which God’s vicegerents made of their wealth and power we shall see in the next chapter.

⁵ “Minor Deo sed major homine.” Migne. *Patrologie*, tom. 217, p. 658.

CHAPTER VII.

CRIMES OF THE POPES.

WE now give a rapid summary of the crimes and vices with which many of the popes disgraced the chair of St. Peter ; and before we conclude, the reader will see that every villainy the imagination can conceive has been practised by the vicegerents of God. Peculation, theft, cruelty, murder, fornication, adultery, and incest, not to mention still darker crimes, have all been notoriously committed by the supreme rulers of Christendom, who sat in the seat of infallibility, and claimed universal jurisdiction over the thoughts and consciences of mankind.

ST. DAMASUS (366—84). He was the first to assume the title of Pontiff. His election was opposed by Ursicinus, whose partisans accused Damasus of adultery.¹ Riddle says :—

“ After some deadly conflicts between the followers of the two rivals, Ursicinus was banished from the city ; and a similar sentence was about to be carried into effect against seven presbyters of his party, when the people interfered, and lodged them for safety in one of the churches. But even here they found no shelter from the fury of their opponents. Armed with fire and sword, Damasus, with some of his adherents, both of the clergy and of the laity, proceeded to the place of refuge, and left no less than a hundred and sixty of their adversaries dead within the sacred precincts.”²

That this was a massacre and not a faction fight is

¹ Bale's "Pageant of Popes," folio 26.

² "History of the Papacy," vol. i., p. 143.

shown by the fact that on the side of Damasus not a single person was killed.³ Ammianus Marcellinus, the contemporary historian of the event, says of the contention between Damasus and Ursicinus :—

“ I do not deny, when I consider the ostentation that reigns at Rome, that those who desire such rank and power may be justified in laboring with all possible exertions and vehemence to obtain their wishes ; since after they have succeeded, they will be secure for the future, being enriched by offerings from matrons, riding in carriages, dressing splendidly, and feasting luxuriously, so that their entertainment surpassed even royal banquets.”⁴

Damasus gained the title of *Auriscalpius Matronarum*, ladies' ear-scratcher.⁵ He died of fever, and the Romish Church still invokes the aid of this saintly vicar of God in fever cases.⁶

SIXTUS III. (432—40). This pope, according to both Baronius and Platina, was accused of debauching a virgin, but was acquitted by a Council under the Emperor Valentinian, who is said to have referred the pronouncing of the sentence to the Pope himself, “ because the judge of all ought to be judged by none.” It was without doubt to establish this maxim that the “ acts ” of the Council were forged.⁷

ST. LEO THE GREAT (440—61). Jortin calls him “ the insolent and persecuting Pope Leo, who applauded the massacre of the Priscillianists, and grossly misrepresented them.”⁸

SYMMACHUS (498—514). His election was violently opposed by the antipope Laurentius, and three Councils were held to decide the schism. Accusations of the most heinous crimes were laid against Symmachus. Bower says :—

“ This gave occasion to the re-kindling of the war between the two parties in Rome ; and several priests, many clerks, and a great number of citizens, fell daily in the battles that were fought in the different parts of the city. No regard was shown by either party to rank or dignity ; and not even the sacred virgins were spared by the enraged multitude in their fury.”⁹

³ A. Bower, “ *History of the Popes*,” p. 84.

⁴ Bk. xxvii., chap. iii., § 14.

⁵ Jortin, vol ii., p. 300.

⁶ G. A. F. Wilks, “ *The Popes*,” p. 20.

⁷ Bower, vol. ii., p. 188.

⁸ Vol. II., p. 425.

⁹ Vol. I., p. 298.

Eunodius declared that the Pope was "judge in the place of the most high, pure from all sin, and exempt from all punishment. All who fell fighting in his cause he declared enrolled on the register of heaven."¹

ST. HORMISDAS (514—23). He was a married man, and had a son, who was raised to the popedom. He was full of ambition, and insolent in his demands to the emperor, whom he exhorted to the persecution of heretics.

BONIFACE II. (530—32). His election was disputed by the antipope Dioscorus. Each accused the other of simony, but Dioscorus opportunely died. Boniface "began his pontificate with wreaking his vengeance on the memory of his deceased competitor, whom he solemnly excommunicated, as guilty of simony, when he could not clear himself from the charge, nor retort it on him, as perhaps he otherwise might."² This sentence was removed by Pope Agapetus.

SILVERIUS (536—38). He was accused of betraying the city of Rome to the Goths, and was in consequence expelled from his see.

VIGILUS (537—55). He was a deacon elected by bribery. He engaged himself to obey the Empress Theodora, who gave him money to gain the suffrages of the clergy. Anastasius tells us that he killed his own secretary in a transport of passion, and caused his own sister's son to be whipped to death. He is considered to have been accessory to the banishment and death of Silverius. When banished himself by the emperor, he speedily repented, in order to save his seat.

PELAGIUS (555—60). He was accused of poisoning his predecessor. This is uncertain; but it is certain that, like most of his predecessors and successors, he incited the civil powers to the persecution of heretics.

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT (590—604). According to Gibbon, this pontiff was "a singular mixture of simplicity and cunning, of pride and humility, of sense and superstition."³ Jortin's picture is still less flattering:

"Pope Gregory the Great was remarkable for many things—for exalting his own authority; for running down human learn-

¹ Wilks, p. 32.

² Bower, vol. i., p. 331.

³ Chap. xlv.

ing⁴ and polite literature; for burning classic authors; for patronising ignorance and stupidity; for persecuting heretics; for flattering the most execrable princes; and for relating a multitude of absurd, monstrous and ridiculous lies, called miracles. He was an ambitious, insolent prelate, under the mask of humility.”⁵

Draper says that Gregory not only forbade the study of the classics, mutilated statues, and destroyed temples but also “burned the Palatine library, founded by Augustus Cæsar.” Gibbon, however, throws doubt on this destruction, while admitting that it was generally believed.⁶

Gregory does not appear to have been fond of women and wine, like so many other popes; but he possessed the darker vices of bigotry and ambition. His congratulations on the usurpation of the cruel, drunken and lascivious Phocas, after a wholesale massacre of the emperor’s family, simply because the successful villain favored the pretensions of Rome (p. 109), are a sufficient proof that Gregory would scruple at nothing to advance the glory of his see.

SABINIAN (604—6). Bower says he rendered himself so odious to the Roman people by his avarice and cruelty to the poor, that they could not forbear abusing him whenever he appeared. In a dreadful famine he raised the price of corn to exorbitant rates. He accused St. Gregory of simony; but according to Baronius, that departed saint having vainly reproved him in three different apparitions for his covetousness, gave him in a fourth apparition so dreadful a blow on the head, that he died soon after.⁷

BONIFACE III. (607). By flattering Phocas as Gregory had done, he induced him to take the title of universal bishop from the bishop of Constantinople, and confer it upon himself and his successors.

THEODORUS (642—49). He commenced the custom of dipping his pen in consecrated wine when signing

⁴ So intense was Gregory’s hatred of learning, that he angrily rebuked the Archbishop of Vienna for suffering grammar to be taught in his diocese, and contemplated burning all the writings in existence that were not devoted to the cause of Christianity.

⁵ Vol. III., p. 169.

⁶ Chap. xlv.

⁷ Bower, vol. i., p. 425.

the condemnation of heretics,⁸ thus sanctifying murder with the blood of Christ. Of Adeodatus, Donus I., Agatho, and Leo II., we only know that they carried on fierce contests with the archbishop of Ravenna for refusing to acknowledge their supremacy. Leo II. anathematised his predecessor, Pope Honorius, for heresy.⁹ Neither Benedict II., John V., nor Conon, lived a whole year after assuming the tiara.

ST. SERGIUS I. (687—701). He had to purchase his seat from the exarch of Ravenna by pawning the ornaments of the tomb of St. Peter. He was accused of adultery, but his innocence was strikingly proved; for, upon the child of whose parentage he was accused being baptised when but eight days old, he cried out, "The pontiff Sergius is not my father." Bruys, the French historian of the Papacy, says, "What I find most marvellous in this story is, not that so young a child should speak, but that it should affirm with so much confidence that the pope was not its father."¹

CONSTANTINE (708—15). He is said to have excommunicated the Emperor, Philip Bardanes, for being of the same heresy as Pope Honorius. To oblige Constantine, Justinian II. cut out the tongue and blinded the eyes of the Archbishop of Ravenna, who refused to pay the obedience due to the apostolic see.²

ST. GREGORY II. (715—31). He was chiefly noted for his endowing monasteries with the goods of the poor, and for his opposition to the Emperor Leo's edict against image worship.³ Rather than obey the edict, he raised civil war both in Italy and elsewhere. He prayed that Christ might set the Devil on the emperor, and approved the barbarous murder of the imperial officer.⁴ Yet the priests place in the list of saints a pontiff who, to establish the Christian idolatry of image worship, filled Italy with carnage.

STEPHEN III. (768—72). When elected he found on the pontifical throne a lay pope, one Constantine,

⁸ Jortin, vol. iii., p. 56.

⁹ 682 A.D., Jortin, vol. iii., p. 62.

¹ Bruys, "Histoire des Papes," vol. i., p. 499; Bower, vol. i., p. 496.

² Bower, vol. ii., p. 14.

³ See p. 112.

⁴ Bower, vol. ii., pp. 63, 65.

who, after a violent struggle, was dislodged and punished with the loss of his eyes,⁵ many of his friends sharing the same fate.⁶

ADRIAN I. (772—95). He made a league with Irene, the murderess of her son, to restore image worship, and presented to Charlemagne the pretended donation of Constantine.⁷ Avarice was the vice of this able pontiff. He left large sums to his successors.

ST. PASCAL I. (817—24). At the Diet of Compeigne this pope was charged with being accessory to the mutilation and murder of two Roman priests. The Pope denied the charge, but refused to deliver up the perpetrators of the crimes, alleging that they belonged "to the family of St. Peter."⁸

EUGENIUS II. (824—27). He had the honor of inventing the barbarous practice of ordeal by cold water.

NICHOLAS (858—67). He excommunicated Photius, the Greek patriarch, and the emperor Michael as his abettor, and threatened King Lothaire with the ecclesiastical sword if he suffered any bishop to be chosen without his consent.⁹

ADRIAN II. (867—72). He was a married priest. He congratulated Bazilius, the murderer of the emperor Michael, and entered into alliance with him.¹

JOHN VIII. (872—82). The meek and holy nature of this worthy successor of St. Peter may be judged by his ordering the Bishop of Naples to bring him the chief men among the Saracens in that city, and cutting their throats in the presence of his legate.² A letter of John is extant, in which he justifies Athanasius, Bishop of Naples, for having plucked out the eyes of Sergius, Duke of Naples, who favored the Saracens in despite of the papal anathemas. He even cites the Gospel text as to plucking out offending eyes. Cardinal Baronius declares that this pontiff perjured himself, and that he rather deserved the name of a woman than

⁵ Wilks, p. 64.

⁶ La Châtre, "Histoire des Papes," vol. i., p. 350.

⁷ Wilks, p. 66.

⁸ Wilks, p. 69.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 74.

¹ H. Foulis, p. 134.

² Bower, vol. ii., p. 292.

that of a man.³ The annals of the Abbey of Fulda relate that John VIII. was poisoned by the relations of a lady whom he had seduced from her husband.⁴

FORMOSUS (891—96). He had been repeatedly excommunicated by John VIII. He invited Arnulf, the German emperor, to invade Italy, which he did, committing great atrocities. Formosus, however, had a great character for piety. He is said to have been well versed in scripture, and to have died a virgin in his eightieth year.

BONIFACE VI. (896). Even according to Baronius, he was a man of most infamous character. He had been deposed for his scandalous life, first from the rank of sub-deacon, and afterward from the priesthood.⁵

STEPHEN VI. (896—7). He intruded into the see in the room of the intruder Boniface. Being of the opposite faction to Pope Formosus, he caused the body of that pontiff to be taken out of the tomb and to be placed, in the episcopal robes, on the pontifical chair. Stephen then addressed the dead body thus: "Why didst thou, being Bishop of Porto, prompted by thy ambition, usurp the universal see of Rome?" After this mock trial Stephen, with the approbation and consent of a Council of bishops, ordered the body to be stripped, three of the fingers (those used in blessing) to be cut off, and the remains to be cast into the Tiber. At the same Council all the ordinations of Formosus were declared invalid.⁶

Then followed what Riddle calls "a rapid succession of infamous popes," of whom we may mention that Leo V. (903) was deposed and cast into prison by his chaplain, Christopher, who was in turn ejected and imprisoned by Sergius III. (904—11). This pontiff also had been excommunicated by John VIII. He was, says Baronius, "the slave of every vice and the most wicked of men."⁷ Riddle says:—

"This Sergius III. was a monster of profligacy, cruelty and vice in their most shameless and disgusting forms. But it was

³ Bruys, vol. ii., p. 176.

⁴ La Châtre, vol. i., p. 463.

⁵ Bower, vol. ii., p. 299.

⁶ Bower, vol. ii., p. 300; Jortin, vol. iii., p. 105.

⁷ Bower, vol. ii., p. 306.

this very character which made him useful to his party, the duration of whose influence at Rome, could be insured only by a preponderance of physical power, and this again only by violence which should disdain all restraints of morality and religion. Sergius was the man for this purpose, who, while he lived in concubinage with Marozia, did not hesitate to yield all the treasures of the Roman Church as plunder to his party.”⁸

To him succeeded other paramours of Marozia and of her mother the prostitute Theodora. John X., for instance (914—28), received his chair because he was the lover of Theodora, while Leo VI. and Stephen VIII. (929—31) were creatures of Marozia. Adultery and assassination form the staple of the annals of their pontificates.

JOHN XI. (931—36). He was the son of Pope Sergius III. by Marozia, and if possible he surpassed his parents in crime. Elected pope at the age of eighteen, Alberic, his half brother, expelled him from Rome and imprisoned their mother Marozia. Stephen VIII. (939—942) made himself so obnoxious to the Romans that they mutilated him.⁹

JOHN XII. (956—64), the son of Alberic, was the first to change his name, which was originally Octavian. He nominated himself pope at the age of seventeen. Wilks says: “His profaneness and debaucheries exceeded all bounds. He was publicly accused of concubinage, incest, and simony.” This pope was so notorious for his licentiousness that female pilgrims dared not present themselves in Rome.¹ Bower says that he had changed the Lateran Palace, once the abode of saints, into a brothel, and there cohabited with his father’s concubine; that women were afraid to come from other countries to visit the tombs of the apostles at Rome; that he spared none, and had within a few days forced married women, widows, and virgins to comply with his impure desires. He was at length deposed by Otho, at the solicitation of a council of bishops and laymen, on charges of sacrilege, simony, blasphemy, and cruel mutilation. He had

⁸ “History of the Papacy,” vol. ii., p. 36.

⁹ Bower, vol. ii., p. 313.

¹ Wilks, p. 87.

deprived one deacon of his right hand and made him an eunuch. He put out the eyes of Benedict, his ghostly father, cut off the nose of the keeper of the archives, and scourged the Bishop of Spire.² On the deposition of John, Leo VII. was put in his place. John fulminated anathemas against his opponents, and soon after died, from a blow on the head while in bed with a married woman.³ Jortin remarks that, "Baronius says, from Luitprandus, that it was the Devil who gave John that blow; but it seems not probable that Satan would have used his good friend in such a manner. It is more likely that it might be the husband of the adulteress."⁴

Mosheim says "that the history of the Roman pontiffs of this century [the tenth] is a history of monsters, a history of the most atrocious villainies and crimes, is acknowledged by all writers of distinction, and even by the advocates of popery."⁵

BONIFACE VII. (974). The old authors in derision call him Maliface. Having had his predecessor Benedict murdered, he plundered the Basilica and escaped with his spoils to Constantinople, whence he afterwards returned and murdered John XIV. (984), then on the papal throne.

GREGORY V. (996—99). He was turned out of his see by Crescentius, who elected the antipope John. Upon Gregory's restoration he had this unfortunate creature deprived of sight, cut off his nose, and tore out his tongue. He then ordered him to be led through the streets in a tattered sacerdotal suit, and mounted upon an ass with his face to the tail, which he held in his hand.⁶

SERGIUS IV. (1009—12). This pope was called Os Porci, or Swine's Mouth. Of his doings little is known, but he is asserted to have gravely declared "that the pope could not be damned, but that, do what he would, he must be saved."⁷

BENEDICT VIII. (1012—24). He saved the city of

² Wilks, p. 88; Bower, vol. ii., p. 317.

³ Bower, vol. ii., p. 320. ⁴ Vol. III., p. 309. ⁵ Vol. II., p. 278.

⁶ La Châtre, vol. i., p. 570

⁷ Wilks, p. 96.

Rome from a great storm, which it seems was caused by some Jews. The Jews being immediately executed the storm ceased.⁸

JOHN XIX. (1024—33). He was a layman, brother of Benedict, yet he was raised to the see. Wilks says :

“It was by gold, and not by imperial power, that the Romans consented to this uncanonical election. The rapacity of this pope was so great that he offered to sell the title of ‘Universal Bishop’ to the see of Constantinople for a sum of money!”⁹

By his exactions, debauchery and tyranny, he became so odious to the Romans that he had to flee for his life.

BENEDICT IX. (1033—46). A nephew of the last two pontiffs. Some say he was raised to the papacy at the age of twelve—others, at eighteen. He “stained the sacred office with murder, adultery, and every other heinous crime.”¹ Desiderius, afterwards pope under the name of Victor III., styles Benedict the successor of Simon the sorcerer, and not of Simon the apostle, and paints him as one abandoned to all manner of vice.² Being eager to possess the person and property of a female cousin, he sold the papacy to John Gratianus, “the most religious man of his time,” for a sum of money, and consecrated him as Gregory VI. Benedict afterwards poisoned Pope Damasus II. The Romans, weary of his crimes, expelled him from the city, but he was reinstated by Conrad. “But,” says Jortin, “as he continued his scandalous course of life, and found himself despised and detested both by clergy and laity, he agreed to retire, and to abandon himself more freely to his pleasures.” Stipulating therefore to receive a sum of money, he resigned his place to Gratianus, called Gregory VI., and went to live in his own territories.³

Mosheim calls Benedict IX. “a most flagitious man and capable of every crime.”⁴

We have already seen how Benedict, Sylvester, and Gregory, were alike declared unworthy of the pontificate, and Clement placed in the see, and by what means Hildebrand contrived to extend the

⁸ Bower, vol. ii., p. 336.

⁹ P. 99.

¹ Wilks, p. 100.

² Bower, vol. ii., p. 340.

³ Vol. III., p. 124.

⁴ Vol. II., p. 328.

papal power. This great pontiff, Gregory VII. (1073—85), has been accused of poisoning his predecessors in order to obtain the popedom, and also of committing adultery with Matilda, Countess of Tuscany, who bestowed all her possessions on the pope. But these accusations probably arose from the spite of the many enemies aroused by Hildebrand's high-handed measures.

PASCAL II. (1099—1118). He was a disciple of Hildebrand, and inherited his ambition without his talents. He compelled Henry IV. to abdicate, but on his son Henry V. marching against him, after a sanguinary struggle, he gave up to the emperor the right of investiture. Afterwards he excommunicated all who should declare his own grant to be valid.⁵

ADRIAN IV. (1154—59). The only Englishman who ever became pope. He caused Arnold of Brescia to be burnt at the stake (1154) for preaching against papal corruption. The Irish should remember that it was this pope who, in virtue of the pretended Donation of Constantine, made over to Henry II. of England the right to take and govern Ireland on condition of the pope receiving an annual tribute of one penny for each house.⁶

ALEXANDER III. (1159—81). The Lateran Council (1179) declared war against all heretics, and a crusade against them was sanctioned by this pontiff.⁷

CLEMENT III. (1188—1191). He published the third crusade (1189).

INNOCENT III. (1198—1216) also preached a crusade. He claimed for his see universal empire and established the Inquisition to support the claim. He excommunicated Philip II. of France and put the whole nation under interdict. Afterwards he placed England under interdict, excommunicated John, bestowed the crown on Philip of France, and published a crusade against England. He also instituted a crusade against the Albigenses, butchering them by tens of thousands with every circumstance of atrocity.⁸

⁵ Wilks, p. 120.

⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 127 and 286.

⁷ Mosheim, vol. ii., p. 455.

⁸ Wilks, p. 231

GREGORY IX. (1227—41). He formally established the Inquisition ; and, to support his ambition and the unbridled luxury of his court, raised taxes in France, England and Germany, excommunicated kings, and incited nations to revolt ; finally causing himself to be driven from Rome.⁹

INNOCENT IV. (1243—54). He conspired against the life of the Emperor Frederic, through the agency of the Franciscan monks. To avoid confronting his accuser, he retired to France, summoned a council at Lyons (1244), and excommunicated and deposed the emperor, whom he coolly denominated his vassal. He also excommunicated the kings of Arragon and Portugal, giving the crown of the latter to the Count of Bologna. He persecuted the Ghibellines, and pretending to have the right of disposing of the crown of the two Sicilies, offered it to Richard, Earl of Cornwall, brother to Henry III. of England. Innocent made exorbitant claims to the bishoprics and benefices in England.¹

BONIFACE VIII. (1294—1303). He had his predecessor, Celestine, put in prison, where he died.² He openly styled himself "Kings of Kings," trafficked in indulgences, and declared all excluded from heaven who disputed his claim to universal dominion. He persecuted the Ghibellines, and ordered the city of Bragneste to be entirely destroyed. He was publicly accused of simony, assassination, usury, of living in concubinage with his two nieces and having children by them, and of using the money received for indulgences to pay the Saracens for invading Italy.³

CLEMENT V. (1305—1314). He is noted for his cruel suppression of the order of Knights Templar, so as to appropriate their property. He summoned the grand master of the Templars under false pretexts to his court, and issued a bull against the order in which he brought against it the most unfounded and absurd charges, and finally pronounced its abolition, having the Grand

⁹ La Châtre, vol. ii., p. 117 ; Mosheim, vol. ii., p. 548.

¹ Wilks, p. 137.

² Bower, vol. iii., p. 45.

Wilks, p. 145, and La Châtre

Master and many leading members burnt alive.⁴ After sharing the spoils of the Templars with the king of France, Clement V. fixed his court at Avignon, and gave himself publicly to the most criminal debaucheries. He preached a new crusade against the Turks and gave each new crusader the right to release four souls from purgatory. Dante places him in hell.

JOHN XXII. (1316—34). Like his predecessors, he persecuted and burnt heretics. He anathematised the emperor of Germany and the king of France, and preached a new crusade. Money was raised in abundance by the sale of indulgences, and was misappropriated by the pope. He left enormous treasures. Villani, whose brother was one of the papal commission, states that this successor of the fisherman amassed altogether twenty-five million florins.⁵ Gieseler says: "He arbitrarily disposed of the Benefices of all countries, chiefly in favor of his own nephews, and the members of his curia."⁶

URBAN VI. (1378—89). In his time occurred what is known as "the great Western schism," which lasted from 1378 till the Council of Constance (1414). There were during that time two popes, one residing at Rome and the other at Avignon. But which of the popes was the true one and which the antipope has not yet been decided. Urban VI. was a ferocious despot. He ordered six cardinals, whom he suspected of opposing him, to be brutally tortured.⁷ Nor was his competitor, Clement VII., behind him in violence and crime. For fifty years they and their successors excited bloody wars and excommunicated one another. The schism, which cost thousands of lives, was ended by the deposition of John XXIII. (1415), who was found guilty of murder and incest. He was accused before the Council of having seduced two hundred nuns. Theodoric de Niem informs us that he kept two hundred mistresses in Bologna, and he is described by his own secretary as a monster of avarice, ambition, lewdness and

⁴ McClintock and Strong's Encyclopædia, Clement V. ; and La Châtre.

⁵ Wilks, p. 149.

⁶ Vol. IV., p. 84.

⁷ Bower, vol. iii., p. 137

cruelty.⁸ The same author says that an act of accusation, prepared against him, presented a complete catalogue of every mortal crime.

MARTIN V. (1417—31). His crimes were not of a kind to be censured by a Council of bishops. He had John Huss and Jerome of Prague burnt alive, and to put down their heresies excited civil war in Bohemia. He wrote to the Duke of Lithuania: "Be assured thou sinnest mortally in keeping faith with heretics."

EUGENIUS IV. (1431—47). His first act was to put to torture the treasurer of his predecessor, Martin V. He seized that pontiff's treasures and sent to the scaffold two hundred Roman citizens, friends of the late pope.⁹ The Council of Basle was called and deposed the pope, setting up an antipope, Felix V. Civil war and much cruelty of course followed.

PAUL II. (1464—71). He broke all the engagements he had made to the conclave prior to his election. He persecuted with the greatest cruelty and perfidy the Count of Anguillara. He strove to kindle a general war throughout Italy, and excommunicated the king of Bohemia for protecting the Hussites against his persecutions. He also persecuted the Fratricelli. "His love of money," says Symonds, "was such that, when bishoprics fell vacant, he often refused to fill them up, drawing their revenues for his own use, and draining Christendom as a Verres or a Memmius sucked a Roman province dry. His court was luxurious, and in private he was addicted to all the sensual lusts."¹ The same writer says that "He seized the chief members of the Roman Academy, imprisoned them, put them to the torture, and killed some of them upon the rack."² He died suddenly, leaving behind him an immense treasure in money and jewels, amassed by his avarice and extortion.³

SIXTUS IV. (1471—84). He strove to excel his predecessors in crime. According to Symonds, "He began his career with a lie; for though he succeeded,

⁸ Wilks, p. 158.

⁹ Wilks, p. 161.

¹ "Renaissance in Italy," vol. i., p. 318.

² P. 320.

³ Wilks, pp. 166, 167.

to that demon of avarice, Paul, who had spent his time in amassing money which he did not use, he declared that he had only found five thousand florins in the papal treasury." The historian continues :

"This assertion was proved false by the prodigality with which he lavished wealth immediately upon his nephews. It is difficult even to hint at the horrible suspicions which were cast upon the birth of two of the Pope's nephews and upon the nature of his weakness for them : yet the private life of Sixtus rendered the most monstrous stories plausible, while his public treatment of these men recalled to mind the partiality of Nero for Doryphorus. . . . The Holy Father himself was wont to say, 'A Pope needs only pen and ink to get what sum he wants.' . . . Fictitious dearths were created ; the value of wheat was raised to famine prices ; good grain was sold out of the kingdom, and bad imported in exchange ; while Sixtus forced his subjects to purchase from his stores, and made a profit by the hunger and disease of his emaciated provinces." ⁴

Ranke declares :

"He was restrained by no scruple from rendering his spiritual power subservient to his worldly views, or from debasing it by a mixture with those temporary intrigues in which his ambition had involved him. The Medici being peculiarly in his way, he took part in the Florentine troubles ; and, as is notorious, brought upon himself the suspicion of being privy to the conspiracy of the Pazzi, and to the assassination which they perpetrated on the steps of the altar of the cathedral : the suspicion that he, the father of the faithful, was an accomplice of such acts ! When the Venetians ceased to favor the scheme of his nephew, as they had done for a considerable time, the pope was not satisfied with deserting them in a war into which he himself had driven them ; he went so far as to excommunicate them for persisting in it. He acted with no less violence in Rome : he persecuted the Colonnas with great ferocity : he seized Marino from them ; he caused the prothonotary Colonna to be attacked, arrested and executed in his own house. The mother of Colonna came to San Celso in Branchi, where the body lay—she lifted the severed head by the hair, and cried 'Behold the head of my son ! Such is the faith of the pope. He promised that if we would give up Marino to him he would set my son at liberty ; he has Marino : and my son is in our hands—but dead ! Behold thus does the pope keep his word.' " ⁵

⁴ Symonds, vol. i., pp. 321—328.

⁵ "The Popes of Rome during the 16th and 17th centuries," vol. i. p. 31 ; 1886.

Jortin says that "Sixtus IV. erected a famous bawdy-house at Rome, and the Roman prostitutes paid his holiness a weekly tax, which amounted sometimes to twenty thousand ducats a year."⁶

INNOCENT VIII. (1484—92). Schlegel, in his notes to Mosheim, says he "lived so shamefully before he mounted the Roman throne, that he had sixteen illegitimate children to make provision for. Yet on the papal throne he played the zealot against the Germans, whom he accused of magic, and also against the Hussites, whom he well-nigh exterminated."⁷ Wilks says: "He obtained the votes of the cardinals by bribery, and violated all his promises."⁸ The practice of selling offices prevailed under him as well as under his predecessors. "In corruption," says Symonds, "he advanced a step even beyond Sixtus, by establishing a bank at Rome for the sale of pardons. Each sin had its price, which might be paid at the convenience of the criminal: one hundred and fifty ducats of the tax were poured into the Papal coffers; the surplus fell to Franceschetto, the Pope's son."⁹ The Vice-Chancellor of this rapacious pontiff, on being asked why indulgences were permitted for the worst scandals, made answer that "God wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should pay and live." It must be added that "the traffic which Innocent and Franceschetto carried on in theft and murder filled the Campagna with brigands and assassins."¹ The Pope's vices cost him so much that he even pledged the papal tiara as a security for money.

ALEXANDER VI. (1492—1503). Roderic Borgia was one of the most depraved wretches that ever lived. His passions were so unbridled that, having conceived a liking for a widow and two daughters, he made them all subservient to his brutality. Wilks calls him "a man of most abandoned morals, deep duplicity, and unscrupulous ambition. Like his predecessors, he had but one object at heart, the temporal and hereditary

⁶ Vol. III, p. 384.

⁹ Vol. I., p. 338.

⁷ Vol. III., p. 31.

¹ Symonds, vol. i., p. 399.

⁸ P. 169.

aggrandisement of his family.”² Mosheim says : “ So many and so great villainies, crimes and enormities are recorded of him, that it must be certain he was destitute not only of all religion, but also of decency and shame.”³ This pope, at a certain feast, had fifty courtesans dancing, who, at a given signal, threw off every vestige of clothing and—we draw a veil over the scene! “ To describe him,” says Symonds, “ as the Genius of Evil, whose sensualities, as unrestrained as Nero’s, were relieved against the background of flame and smoke which Christianity had raised for fleshly sins, is justifiable.”⁴ His besetting vice was sensuality ; in oriental fashion he maintained a harem in the Vatican. He invited the Sultan Bajazet to enter Europe and relieve him of the princes who opposed his intrigues in favor of his children.

In regard to his death we follow Ranke :

“ It was but too certain that he once meditated taking off one of the richest of the cardinals by poison. His intended victim, however, contrived, by means of presents, promises and prayers, to gain over his head cook, and the dish which had been prepared for the cardinal was placed before the pope. He died of the poison he had destined for another.”⁵

JULIUS II. (1503—13). He obtained the pontificate by fraud and bribery,⁶ and boldly took the sword to extend his dominion.⁷ Mosheim says :

“ That this Julius II. possessed, besides other vices, very great ferocity, arrogance, vanity, and a mad passion for war, is proved by abundant testimony. In the first place, he formed an alliance with the Emperor and the King of France, and made war upon the Venetians. He next laid siege to Ferrara. And at last, drawing the Venetians, the Swiss and the Spaniards, to engage in the war with him, he made an attack on Lewis XII., the king of France. Nor, so long as he lived, did he cease from embroiling all Europe.”⁸

PAUL III. (1534—49). He was as much a man of the world as any of his predecessors. He acknowledged an illegitimate son and daughter.⁹ The

² Vol. III., p. 31.

³ P. 170.

⁴ Vol. I., p. 346.

⁵ Ranke, vol. i., p. 35. See also Waddington, p. 655.

⁶ Mosheim, vol. iii., p. 84.

⁷ Ranke, vol. i., pp. 36, 37.

⁸ Vol. III., p. 84.

⁹ Ranke, vol. i., p. 163.

emperor once remonstrated with him on having promoted two of his grandsons to the cardinalate at too early an age. He replied that he would do as his predecessors had done—that there were examples of infants in the cradle being made cardinals.¹

We now close this horrid list of criminals. Since the Reformation the popes have been obliged to live more decently, or at least to conceal their vices instead of flaunting them before the world. Should the Protestants object that they are in no way responsible for the crimes of the Papacy, we shall cheerfully concede the plea ; but at the same time we beg to remind them that Catholics are also Christians, and that the historian must deal with the whole system through all the centuries. Besides, as Michelet observed, Protestantism is after all only an estuary, and Catholicism the great sea.

¹ Ranke, vol. i, p. 164