

During these three hundred years the relations between the Greek and Latin churches did not fundamentally alter. No one was anxious to push the division further than was necessary. The strength of the East during these centuries kept alive the possibility of a final conquest of the lost territories in the West which would restore the bonds of unity. The weakness of the West discouraged gestures of independence on its side, and arrested the progress of disunity. Throughout these centuries the balance of power and prestige was tilted even more decisively towards the East than hitherto. In the range of their ideas and experience, the scholars and statesmen of the West with very few exceptions were small men, whose strength lay in not knowing how small they were. They knew just enough about the thoughts of the Greeks to think that they were contemptible, and they knew nothing at all about the thoughts of their contemporaries in Islam. In this ignorance the West was able to develop a measure of confidence, however misplaced it might be.

The threads which had been broken in the eighth century were never replaced. This is the ultimate secret of the division of Christendom. Nothing that happened ever seemed irremediable, but from the eighth century onwards every impulse to disunity had a disproportionate effect because the political and social situation allowed no contrary impulses to survive. By the middle of the eleventh century Christendom was held together only by the force of inertia. The West still lacked coherent power. The East was strong within very wide limits, but these limits stopped short – as several fruitless efforts had proved – at the ports of Italy. Except for the *Filioque* question the area of disagreement had not greatly changed in the last few centuries. On this question both sides in their cooler moments agreed that either formula, correctly interpreted, was admissible. As late as 1050 Pope Leo IX defended the orthodoxy of both statements with an illustration: a fruit (he said) may be said to come from the trunk of a tree, or from the branch, or from the trunk through the branch; so the Spirit may be said to come from the Father, or from the Son, or from the

Father through the Son. The illustration is an example of a persistent desire of the popes till this time not to press the division further than need be. But the moment had now come for this and every other point in dispute to take a sharper edge.

## II. THE TWO CHURCHES

It has long been held that the year 1054 was the year of the great confrontation between the two churches when, in the words of Gibbon,

The rising majesty of Rome could no longer brook the insolence of a rebel; and Michael Cerularius (the Patriarch of Constantinople) was excommunicated in the heart of Constantinople by the pope's legates.

It is true, Gibbon adds, that

according to the emergencies of the church and state a friendly correspondence was sometimes resumed; the language of charity and concord was sometimes affected; but the Greeks have never recanted their errors; and from this thunderbolt we may date the consummation of the schism.<sup>11</sup>

Recent historians have had their doubts about this interpretation of the events of 1054. They have pointed out that the thunderbolt was not noticed by contemporaries nor remembered by their successors, that the authority of the legates had expired before the anathema was delivered, and that everything went on as if nothing had happened. And certainly if we grade events with reference to the number of further events which they cause, the confrontation of 1054 will take a very lowly place. But if we look at events to discover the characteristics of an age Gibbon's judgement will be found to be substantially right. It was in 1054 that all the elements of disunity which had come to

11. *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ch. lx (World's Classics, vi, 401). For a recent interpretation of the incident, see S. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism: a Study of the Papacy and the Eastern Churches during the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, 1955.

light over the centuries were first concentrated into a single event.

There was nothing new in any single element of this disunity. The different social and ecclesiastical habits, the disagreements about ecclesiastical and political authority, the disagreement about doctrine, the dispute about areas of jurisdiction – they were all old. But in 1054 they were all brought together, and they were brought together without any of the reluctance that the popes had so far shown in enlarging the area of disagreement. The papal documents of this year enlarged the differences with all possible clarity and emphasis; and they did so although – almost one may say because – their immediate purpose was to bring about a reunion of Christendom.

It seemed indeed that the moment for reconciliation had come. The pope and the Greek emperor had now a common enemy against whom they could unite: the Normans of southern Italy. This was the only part of western Europe where the government in Constantinople still retained a shaky political and ecclesiastical control. Politically it had always been part of the Byzantine empire; but ecclesiastically it had been subject to Rome until the eighth century when – in retaliation for the pope's political betrayal – the Greek emperor transferred the area to the patriarch of Constantinople.<sup>12</sup> The pope was anxious to re-establish his ecclesiastical authority, while the emperor was eager to restore his political control. The interests of both of them were threatened by the Normans, who – in the words of Leo IX –

everywhere destroy the churches with more than pagan brutality, murdering Christians and torturing them to death with new and

12. For the removal of the provinces of Sicily and Calabria from papal authority and their subjection to the patriarch of Constantinople in the time of the Emperor Leo III (717–41), see F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiser – Urkunden des Oströmischen Reiches*, 1924, i, no. 301. For an argument for a later date see V. Grumel, 'L'annexion de l'Illyricum oriental, de la Sicile et de la Calabre au patriarchat de Constantinople', *Recherches de sciences religieuses*, 1952, lx, 191–200.

horrible torments. They spare neither young nor old, and they respect neither humanity nor holiness.<sup>13</sup>

In 1053 the pope had followed up these words with a military campaign against the Normans, and he had been defeated and made a prisoner of the Normans. This was the first papal defeat in an area that was to be fought over again and again in the next two hundred years, and it taught a lesson that was never forgotten: without allies success was impossible. The Greek emperor on his side also needed allies. Southern Italy was at the end of his lines of communication, and it could only be held with Italian help. There had never been a moment when collaboration between the two great powers of East and West promised greater dividends. Naturally both sides would have to make concessions: the pope would expect the restoration of his ecclesiastical, the emperor of his political, authority. Neither aim seemed beyond the realm of possibility.

The situation however was complicated by a dispute about ecclesiastical customs. The churches of southern Italy at this time were Greek in discipline and customs, and in 1052 the bishop of Trani in Apulia received a letter from the metropolitan of Bulgaria, defending the Greek use of leavened bread in the Mass and the practice of fasting on Saturdays, and attacking the Latin usages in these and other matters. The bishop of Trani was urged to bring these criticisms to the notice of the pope and the western bishops. By the standards of theological controversy the letter was not particularly violent, but naturally it said some hard things about the Latins who were alleged to have broken the unity of Christendom.<sup>14</sup> The effect of the letter, however, on the impending negotiations between Rome and Constantinople was disastrous. It raised in a most acute form the whole problem of the authority of Rome, and it aroused tempers already eager for fresh inflammation.

It was in these circumstances that the pope sent his

13. Leo IX to the Emperor Constantine Monomachus, *P.L.* 143, 777–81 (Ep. 103).

14. *P.G.* 120, 836–44.

legates to Constantinople in 1054 to begin comprehensive negotiations with the Greeks. The papal letters which they carried with them had been written in captivity, and it is an extraordinary indication of the strength and consistency of papal policy that the letters show no sign of the weakness of the pope's position. With consummate skill and passion they surveyed the whole area of dispute, and enunciated the papal claims with a new breadth of vision and vigour of argument. At the same time they initiated a policy which lasted almost till the end of the Middle Ages.<sup>15</sup>

Briefly the policy was this: to speak fair words to the emperor and stern ones to the patriarch; to offer friendship to the emperor and demand obedience from the patriarch; to treat the patriarch like a delinquent and the emperor like a son. To the emperor the pope wrote as to a favoured son who might, if he would, bring peace and concord after long-drawn-out and ruinous discords. In moderate terms he urged the need for unity with the Roman church. He described the obligations of the emperor's great ancestor Constantine towards Rome, and exhorted him to imitate his example. He sought cooperation against the Normans, their common enemy. In this soothing discourse we note the mixture of firmness and pliancy. Even at this critical moment, the pope did not fail to safeguard the rights of Henry III of Germany, the western emperor, 'in his own sphere'. Then, in the next sentence, he softened the harshness of this reference to an imperial rival by a subtle turn of phrase that was certainly not fortuitous. In speaking of Henry III he called him simply *clarissimus*, giving him no higher dignity than that anciently accorded to consuls or patricians; then at once he turned to the Greek ruler and distinguished him with the imperial epithet *serenissimus*. The writer of the letter must, I think, have smiled as he added this touch. These verbal dexterities are an essential

15. The letters discussed below in which this policy was adumbrated are printed in *P.L.* 143, 744-81. They are placed in their setting by Richard Mayne, 'East and West in 1154', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 1954, xi, 133-48. For their authorship, see A. Michel, *Humbert und Kerullarius*, 2 vols., 1924-30.

part of the diplomatic game, and we must not forget that reunion on both sides was an exercise in diplomacy.

When it came to writing to the patriarch the language of diplomacy was abandoned. Two letters were addressed to him, and the longer of them (it is about 17,000 words long) is a masterpiece of comprehensive and passionate argument. It set forth a history of Rome as it appeared through papal eyes - a history of the Church controlled from its earliest days by St Peter and his successors; endowed by Constantine with imperial authority over the West; acknowledged by Councils as standing above all human judgement; opposing an unswerving orthodoxy to the multifarious heresies of Constantinople and the East; standing in the relation of a Mother to her daughter churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople. To this patient, suffering, persecuted Mother, Constantinople was a disobedient, insolent, corrupt daughter

sitting at home in delicate security, in pleasure and lasciviousness, in the dissipation of a long leisure, refusing to take part in the fight waged on her behalf by the pious Mother, repaying her efforts by mocking her Mother's old age and her body worn out by long labours, claiming the Mother's primacy, and with girlish levity offering to feed the Mother with the daughter's milk.<sup>16</sup>

Rome is the Mother and her spouse is God. Any nation which dissented from Rome was nothing but a 'confabulation of heretics, a conventicle of schismatics, a synagogue of Satan'; and to attack the observances of Rome was simply to display to the world the sacrilegious temerity, and filthy, lunatic, Manichaean scurrility of the Greeks. I do not think that language quite like this had ever been used before. Certainly the papal theme had never before been brought so comprehensively before the Greek church, nor had it been expressed with such abundance of illustration and imagery, nor with such an emphatic demand for overall obedience.

It has often been regretted that the papal case was stated with such vigour on this occasion, and the blame in recent

16. *P.L.* 143, 761.

years has generally been laid at the door of Cardinal Humbert, whose hand has been detected in the phraseology of these letters. But whatever Humbert's rôle may have been it is a mistake to attribute too much to him, and to speak as if these phrases were simply the result of his unbridled violence of speech. There is no sign that the letters were composed in a hurry. There is no sign that they went an inch beyond what almost the whole western church would have acclaimed. The letters bore the pope's name, and he had a long leisure between June 1053, when he was taken as a prisoner to Benevento, and January 1054, when he dispatched his legates, to consider every circumstance of the case. The differences between the letters to the emperor and the patriarch are sufficient to show how much care went into their composition, and the policy behind these differences was not a casual one. Above all, the view of unity they expressed faithfully reflects the view which became the mainspring of action in the following centuries.

Until this time East and West had simply fallen apart, and such unity as there was came not from common activity but from inactivity and lack of contact. But all this was changing. The Mediterranean was again coming into its own as a main highway for western Europe. The relations with Constantinople were bound to become closer. As relations became closer differences became more acute, and the needs for a real as opposed to a nominal unity became more urgent. From now on, unity was seen (at least in the West) in terms of discipline, obedience, and uniformity. This was the main contribution of the Latin Middle Ages to the problem of Christian unity. Perhaps it was a great mistake. It certainly wrenched further apart whatever could not be more tightly pressed together. But it meant the beginning of serious thought about reunion and the means of achieving it.

### III. THE SEARCH FOR REUNION

Roughly speaking there were three methods of uniting Christendom which received serious attention after 1054-

They were the method of military conquest, the method of political negotiation along the lines of what would now be called a package deal, and lastly the method of religious conciliation. The first is purely western; the second is the joint product of papal diplomacy and Greek imperial necessity. As to the third, in the end both East and West made a contribution characteristic of the two communities. It is only the last that is of any practical interest today, but it is important to remember the military and political solutions, for they were the only ones which offered much chance of success in the Middle Ages, and it was out of their failure that the third emerged.

#### *The military way*

There can be no doubt that the military method offered by far the best chance of success. Many people recognized this at the time, and they were right. If only a fraction of the effort lavished on the Crusade between 1095 and 1261 had been devoted to the task of defeating and taking over the Greek empire, not only would Christendom in all probability have been reunited, but even the Crusade against Islam would have had a far better prospect of success. We shudder at the thought. But if we accept the presuppositions of medieval western thought it is hard to see what could be urged against this method of solving the problem. An attack on the schismatic and probably heretical Greeks was much easier to justify than an attack on Islam. The West was never very happy in its justification of the Islamic Crusade. The violence of its advocates covered some very weak points in their arguments. There was a much stronger theoretical case for the use of the secular arm against heresy and schism. Why then was this method not used except in 1204, when confused aims and papal disapprobation robbed the enterprise of half its force?

I think there were three main reasons for the reluctance to settle the question by the sword. Firstly, the weakness of the Greeks was not appreciated until the Crusades were launched in a direction from which it was impossible to

recall them. Secondly, people became adjusted to habitual modes of action, and there was a natural reluctance to settle by violence a problem which had grown from imperceptible beginnings until it had almost become part of the normal life of the church. Thirdly, and most important, the political dangers to the papacy of a successful military action against Constantinople were very great. The obvious leader of such an action was either a Hohenstaufen or, later, an Angevin, and no pope could contemplate an extension of the power of either of these two families. Politically these fears were well-founded, for only a western ruler already too strong for papal political safety could have held the East by military force. Consequently the papal curia always preferred political negotiation to military action.

#### *The political package deal*

A political solution in practice meant papal support for a Greek emperor in return for the obedience of the Greek church to the pope. This was a solution which had so much to offer both the Greek emperor and the pope that it was never far from their counsels. As we have seen, it was the policy already adumbrated in the abortive negotiations of 1054. At that time the *point d'appui* for the policy of co-operation lay in South Italy; but the policy survived the Byzantine collapse in this area, and it was revived as a counter-weight to Hohenstaufen and Norman power in the twelfth century. Again it survived the collapse of the Hohenstaufen; and was revived by the threat of Angevin ambitions. Momentarily in 1274, it succeeded. The policy had the simplicity of a great idea. Hence its persistence.

Nothing could be simpler. In return for ecclesiastical obedience, the Greek emperor would obtain relative security from western attack and the possibility of help against Islam. The pope would have an emperor without Italian entanglements. He might even again contemplate a single emperor at Constantinople. The Crusade would have a new hope. It was a vision of peace and unity to attract at once the idealist and the practical man. Pope Clement IV, who

combined both these qualities, put the plan in its clearest terms when he wrote to Michael VIII Palaeologus in 1267:

The Crusade is being prepared, and the whole of Europe is rising at our bidding. If you will attack the Moslems on one side while the Crusaders attack them on the other, we shall see an end of their damnable religion for ever. And if you say you are afraid the Latins will attack *you* while your troops are engaged on your other frontier, the answer is simple: return to the unity of the Roman church and all fears of this kind can be put aside for ever.<sup>17</sup>

This passage outlines with all possible clarity the plan which successive popes had followed with growing conviction and intensity. It is the culmination of all that had happened since 1054. If we are alienated by its frankly political message, we must remember that it was a policy full of brilliant promise for the unity of Christendom. It was still plausible in 1267. The pope had not yet lost the power of directing a sizeable proportion of the military resources of the West; he could still hope that this proportion would grow; and, given a firm political base in the eastern empire, the Crusade against Islam was not yet hopeless. The policy enunciated by the pope had the essential characteristic of all great political plans of combining idealism and self-interest in nicely balanced proportions. All in all it was the grandest and most carefully elaborated of all the plans of medieval statesmanship.

There was, however, a snag. The plan depended on the willingness of large numbers of people, lay and ecclesiastic, to accept what their leaders had agreed. The Greek emperor probably always had doubts about this, but if he were to negotiate at all he had to act as if the doubts did not exist. As for the pope and his advisers, there was every reason why they should long remain blind to this difficulty. In the first place they exaggerated the extent to which the emperor was the effective head of the Greek church. They saw

17. A. Potthast, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, 1874-5, no. 20012; Martène and Durand, *Veterum Scriptorum Amplissimo Collectio*, 1724, ii, 469-70.

everything in terms of papal power. Just as they imagined that the caliph in Baghdad was a kind of pope in Islam, so they imagined that the emperor was a sort of pope in Constantinople. They knew that he had deposed and set up patriarchs; they did not know, or they forgot, how often the patriarch had humbled the emperor. A most curious illustration of this misunderstanding is to be found in a letter written by Paschal II to the Emperor Alexiūs I in 1112. Talking about the emperor's proposals for negotiating a settlement he says:

We are in a great difficulty in this business, because owing to their great diversity, *our* peoples cannot easily agree on one opinion. But, by the grace of God, this is easy for you because the opinions of clerks and laymen, prelates and subjects, depend on your decision.<sup>18</sup>

This gives us a fascinating glimpse of the pope's own views of his difficulties, and it presents a surprising contrast to our own view of the situation. Where we are impressed by the ease with which papal declarations of orthodoxy were accepted in the West, Paschal felt the difficulty of obtaining a general assent to his decisions, and he supposed that the Greek emperor had a stronger grip on popular opinion in the East than the pope in the West.

Yet the situation was in fact very different. In the West popular opinion in theological and disciplinary matters did not yet exist, and ecclesiastical opinion was highly amenable to papal authority until at least the end of the thirteenth century. The Greek emperor, even in collaboration with the patriarch, was in a much weaker position: there was an active body of lay theological opinion, an even more active and firmly entrenched monastic opinion, and a profound danger of popular disturbance. In the face of these potential sources of opposition the emperor's power to make ecclesiastical decisions was very limited. He must have known his limitations, but he could not express them without destroying his power of negotiation: he had to talk as if he could enforce whatever settlement he wished.

18. P. Jaffé, *Registrum Pontificum Romanorum*, 2nd ed. by W. Wattenbach, 1885-8, no. 6334.

Politicians must attempt many things which in their hearts they know to be impossible, either because there is no alternative or because the only alternative is one which they refuse to contemplate. As we have seen, the solution by violence had to be ruled out because of its political dangers from a papal point of view. If the political solution were also to be ruled out on grounds of impracticability, the only alternative would be a discussion of the ecclesiastical issues between the two sides on a more or less equal footing.

Neither side was ready for this. In principle the Greeks favoured discussion, but with their long tradition of intellectual superiority they doubted the capacity of the Latins to discuss: they saw them as the barbarians, the intellectual incompetents. The Latins on their side were against discussion on principle. To discuss, as if they were open questions, matters already decided by the popes was to admit a doubt about the papal authority which was the basis of the whole Latin case against the Greeks. To quote once more Paschal II's letter to the Emperor Alexius:

The first step towards unity is that our brother the patriarch of Constantinople should recognize the primacy and dignity of the apostolic see . . . and correct his former obstinacy. The causes of diversity of faith and custom between Greeks and Latins cannot be removed unless the members are first united to the head. For how can questions be discussed between dissenting and antagonistic bodies when one refuses to obey or agree with the other?<sup>19</sup>

In other words debate is futile unless we first agree who is right; and then of course it is unnecessary. It must be said that the few debates between Greeks and Latins which took place in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries tended to confirm this judgement about the futility of discussion when there was no ultimate authority to impose a decision.<sup>20</sup>

19. *ibid.* The passage is quoted in W. Norden, *Das Papsttum u. Byzanz*, 1903, p. 94<sup>n</sup>.

20. This is not to belittle the considerable efforts on both sides to make intellectual contact with the other camp: see for example A. Dondaine, 'Hughes Ethorion et Léon Tuscan', *Archives de l'hist. doctrinale et litt. du Moyen Âge*, 1952, xix, 67-134 (for the twelfth century), and (for the thirteenth century), besides the work of Humbert de Romanis mentioned

If both war and debate were ruled out there was nothing left but to resort to that type of negotiation which we now call the package deal – that is to say the kind of negotiation which aims at an exchange of benefits between parties who have no common principles on which to conduct discussion. In 1274 this kind of negotiation achieved a momentary success. After a vast amount of intensive preparation stretching back over nearly quarter of a century a settlement was reached at the Council of Lyons.<sup>21</sup>

The settlement attained all the objectives that Leo IX's legates had so signally failed to reach in 1054. The timing was admirable. Conditions so favourable for this method of reunion could never recur. But it came to nothing. The reason was simple: what the emperor had accepted in Lyons, clergy and people refused to accept in Constantinople. This was the forgotten factor in all these negotiations, and it was fatal. 1274, like 1054, became one of the great years in which nothing happened. In a sense it was the last hopeful year in the Middle Ages. Henceforth the Greeks were engaged in a losing struggle for survival against external attack, and the Latins were beset with the rising difficulties of internal disintegration.

Western leaders did not at once or easily understand the main lesson, that an ecclesiastical union, arranged for political reasons over the heads of clergy and people, could not succeed. They preferred to ascribe the failure to the perfidy of the Greeks. Nevertheless it became clear that something had been lacking in the type of negotiation which led to the fiasco of 1274. It was not clear what it was, and there was little time left for finding out. But circumstances helped to bring home to both sides some elements of the truth.

below (p. 82), A. Dondaine, 'Premiers Écrits polémiques des Dominicains en Orient', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 1931, xxi; M. Roncaglia, *Les Frères mineurs et l'Église grecque orthodoxe au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 1954. But in all cases the aim was to provide a confutation of the opposing view, and this was doomed to failure from the beginning.

21. On these negotiations see D. J. Geanakoplos, *The Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West*, 1959; also *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, 1409, ix (art. 'Le II<sup>e</sup> Concile de Lyon' by F. Vernet and V. Grumel).

### The way of understanding

Up to 1274 all plans for reunion had assumed that the ecclesiastical and dogmatic views of the West would prevail without the slightest deviation, and that Greeks would buy political safety at the price of ecclesiastical submission. This view of the way in which reunion might best be achieved never died out, but it was supplemented in various ways in the two centuries after 1274, and the interest of these developments is that on both sides they led – though too little and too late – to something approaching a spirit of sympathy and conciliation.

There are three symptoms of this new spirit. The first is an appreciation of the merits of the other party; the second a spirit of self-criticism; the third a sense of the corporate incompleteness of each side without the other. Before 1274 a sympathetic appreciation of the other side was almost wholly lacking in both camps. As for the spirit of self-criticism, it was widespread in the West but only with regard to individual vices, and it was linked with a compulsive optimism about the self-sufficiency of western institutions and ways of thought. Most important of all, the sense of mutual need existed on the Greek side only as a political need, and on the Latin side only as a theoretical need to complete the papal system of authority. The inadequacy of this basis for reunion was demonstrated in 1274. What more could be done?

#### MUTUAL APPRECIATION

If we look first for a developing sympathy and understanding of the other side there can be no doubt that the Greeks went much further than the Latins in the last two centuries of the Middle Ages. The sympathy was partly inspired by sheer fright. The Greek empire lived under sentence of death, and it was the first of all public duties for those who loved their church and civilization to try every way of coming to terms with the West. This great need produced a succession of Greek theologians whose efforts at understanding the literature and life of the Latin Middle Ages

are one of the glories of the fourteenth-century Byzantine church. These efforts took two main forms: the translation of the classics of medieval Latin theology and an attempt to appreciate them as part of the general life of the church.

The translations into Greek of works by Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, Peter Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas, which were made in the fourteenth century, gave the Byzantine world its first view of what had really been happening in the West since the falling apart of the two halves of Christendom.<sup>22</sup> The *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas was especially important, for no writer has ever been better equipped to convey to an alien world the intellectual qualities of his own age. His breadth and lucidity, his orderly rationality and fair-mindedness, and his unshakeable allegiance to the tradition of the western church, have made him the repository of everything that was best in thirteenth-century western thought. His effect on his Greek admirers in the fourteenth century can be compared with his influence in the modern world since 1870. The reason for his profound influence was the same in both cases: he suddenly showed that a previously despised society had virtues that provided a challenge to the growing chaos of the contemporary world. To a generation beset by uncertainty and surrounded by incalculable dangers he offered safety and certainty. To men struggling with confusion he demonstrated the possibility of systematic and clear-cut theological statements. His writings placed the western church in a quite new light. For some of the best minds in the Greek church he became 'the marvellous doctor', 'the most useful of all the doctors of the church', 'the flawless theologian - barring his error about the Holy Spirit'. One nameless Greek reader wrote in the margin of his copy of the *Summa Theologiae*:

Oh Thomas, I would that you had been born in the East and not in the West. Then you would have written as truly about the

22. For the beginnings of this movement in the late thirteenth century, see G. Hoffman, 'Patriarch Johann Bekkos u. die lat. Kultur', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 1945, xi, 141-64.

Procession of the Holy Spirit as about all the other questions which you here treat so well.<sup>23</sup>

The same vision of order and discipline, which was presented by the works of St Thomas, was also experienced by some of those many Greeks who found their way to the papal court in the course of the interminable negotiations from about 1330 onwards. Among these the outstanding man was a Calabrian monk of Greek parentage called Barlaam. In the end he became a convinced supporter of the papal primacy, and for the Greeks he came to represent the type of those whose Latin sympathies had turned them from their native ecclesiastical obedience. The stages by which he reached this position would make a fascinating study. Barlaam was in many ways the Newman of the fourteenth-century orthodox revival. He wrote no *Apologia pro vita sua*, so it is impossible to define at all accurately the influences which dislodged him from his Byzantine allegiance. But in a letter to his friends after his conversion he gives a vivid account of the impression which the western church had made on him. When he looked round in the West he saw (or thought he saw) a wonderful scene of order and integration. Everything had its proper place:

The whole people is ruled by laws. Even the smallest matters are subject to regulation and orderly administration. All ranks of society are taught how to behave towards each other. They know how sins are punished and good deeds rewarded and conduct examined: all these things and everything else that is useful for preserving society in peace is defined and guarded by law.<sup>24</sup>

He declared that he had found western society well instructed in the faith and full of reverence for papal decisions, which were accepted as the ordinances of Christ himself. In contrast to this scene of supernatural virtue, he saw among the Greeks nothing but confusion: church and state in decline, law at the whim of the mighty, learning debased, many conversions to Islam. It is in these

23. Quoted by M. Jugie, 'Demetrios Cidonos et la théologie latine à Byzance aux xiv<sup>e</sup> et xv<sup>e</sup> siècles', *Échos d'Orient*, 1928, xxvii, 385-402.

24. P.G. 151, 1255-83.

sentences that we seem to hear the voice of Newman, and it is ironical that we should hear them from a Greek at the moment when the Latins were beginning to be filled with doubt and despair at their failure to create the order which Barlaam thought he saw in the West.

The West never discovered the Byzantine church as the Greeks discovered the Latin church in the fourteenth century. There were Greek theologians like John of Damascus and the Pseudo-Denys whose works had long held an honourable place in western thought; but they belonged to a remote age before the separation of the churches. They stimulated no interest in the Byzantine church or the Greeks of the present day.

It is one of the curious limitations of the West that, with all its intellectual vigour and curiosity and despite its vast debt to Greek science, it had no interest in the modern Greek world. The men who were enthusiasts for Greek science looked right through the Byzantine Greeks without noticing their existence. They inspired neither emulation nor fear in western minds; hence there was no incentive – as to some extent there was with Islam – to understand them. The superficial and often erroneous impressions of Greek religion which reached the West discouraged any closer acquaintance. As Humbert de Romanis, the adviser of Pope Gregory X on reunion, told the pope, the great sin of the Latins in this matter was that they did not care.<sup>25</sup>

This attitude has run through western history with astonishing consistency. When Pope Pius II heard of the fall of Constantinople in 1453, he shed a tear over the second, symbolic, death of Plato and Homer, but he saw the destruction of the Greek church only as a fresh opportunity for the display of his literary and diplomatic skill. And three hundred years later, Gibbon took his 'everlasting farewell of the Greek empire', on which he had

25. This remark occurs in the course of a searching analysis of the causes of the schism, in preparation for the Council of Lyons in 1274. See K. Michel, *Das Opus Tripartitum des Humbertus de Romanis O.P.: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Kreuzzugsides u. der kirchlichen Unionsbewegungen*, 1926.

lavished all his genius, without a word of sympathy for the vanquished, but with a eulogy on the 'lofty genius' of the conqueror Mahomet II. Both the pope and the historian were the unconscious legatees of a medieval tradition of indifference to Byzantine virtues.

#### SELF-CRITICISM

Yet the West did not quite stand still in its attitude to the Greek church, though the change came less from a deepening observation or sympathy for the Greeks than from a deepening introspection and self-criticism. The growing criticism of the institutions and habits of the West, beginning with the rather flimsy satires of the twelfth century and ending with the tremendous indictments of the later Middle Ages, is one of the greatest themes in medieval history. It began to affect the Latin attitude towards the Greeks at the time of the occupation of Constantinople after 1204. The friars in the occupied city were the first who realized the extent to which western vices were a cause, if not of the schism itself, at least of its continuance. In 1252 the Dominicans in Constantinople reported that the ostentation and exactions of the papal legates were alleged by Greeks to be one of the causes of the continuance of the schism; and Matthew Paris, who had a finger on every pulse, took up this cry in his own fashion and made the remarkable discovery that the schism had originated quite recently in the rapacious exactions of the Roman church under Gregory IX.<sup>26</sup> The story he told to justify this assertion illustrates the vast ignorance of otherwise well-informed westerners about the state of the Greek church; but it also shows the beginning of a tendency for western writers to attribute the schism to their own shortcomings.

Unluckily there was nothing that could be done about these shortcomings except deplore them. The recognition that there were faults on both sides was something new and important; but those who insisted most strongly upon these faults were more concerned to belabour their enemies at home than to help or understand the Greeks abroad.

26. *Chronica Majora* (A.D. 1237), iii, 448–69; see also v, 191; vi, 336–7.

Wycliffe took to its furthest limit the line of thought initiated in England by Matthew Paris. He argued that the schism had been caused by the pride and cupidity of the Roman pontiff, and that the Greeks alone were faithful to Christ.<sup>27</sup> But he did the Greeks very little good. The western establishment had become by this time very resistant to domestic criticism. Nevertheless the idea that western pride and ambition had contributed to the state of schism became part of the mental equipment of many moderate men, and it helped to soften the asperity of earlier attitudes towards the Greeks.<sup>28</sup>

#### THE NEED OF ONE FOR THE OTHER

This movement of self-criticism in the West brought the two sides slightly nearer together. But there were two developments which did more. The first of these was the evident decline and impending dissolution of the Greek empire; the second was the Conciliar movement. The first touched the hearts of men of goodwill in the West. Goodwill towards the Greeks rose as the collapse of their church and civilization became ever more imminent. The visit of the Greek emperor, Manuel Palaeologus, to Paris and London during the years 1400 to 1403 gave an opportunity for this generous spirit to show itself among the people of the great cities and the nobility of two kingdoms. The open celebration of the Greek rites in Paris and the presence of the schismatic Greeks at great ecclesiastical ceremonies scandalized the disciplinarians; but rulers and people vied with each other

27. *De Christo et Antichristo*, ii, 8 (*John Wiclif's Polemical Works in Latin*, ed. R. Buddensieg, 1883, ii, p. 672).

28. Besides Matthew Paris and Wycliffe, many other western writers after 1250 mention the pride and avarice of papal legates and of the whole Latin church as an important cause of the schism, e.g. the report of the Dominicans in Constantinople in 1252, *P.G.* 140, 540; Cardinal Simon of Gramaud in a letter to the archbishop of Canterbury c. 1400, Martène and Durand, *Thesaurus Novus Anecdotorum*, 1771, ii, 1235; Boniface Ferrier, *General of the Carthusians 1402-10*, *ibid.*, ii, 1450; Thomas Gascoigne, *Loci e libro Veritatum*, ed. J. E. Thorold Rogers, 1881, p. 102-3.

in offering tokens of sympathy and friendship.<sup>29</sup> The mood throughout these proceedings was one of chivalrous understanding in the face of a common enemy. But it went no further. Manuel Palaeologus returned as poor as he had come, and he owed the survival of his empire not to the chivalry of France and England, soon to be otherwise employed, but to the ravages of the bloodthirsty Tamberlaine among his enemies.

Yet the spirit of goodwill persisted. It got practical and intellectual support from the outburst of Conciliar activity in the West. This long dormant strain in western thought got sudden strength from the growing conviction that, whatever might be true of the Greek schism, the schism in the papacy could only be solved by invoking the authority of a General Council. This was what the Greeks had consistently demanded as the only method for settling the points at issue between Rome and Constantinople. If it were now to prove the only means of saving the unity of the Roman church, the reunion of Greeks and Latins would be within sight.

The noblest expression of these hopes and plans is to be found in a sermon preached by Jean Gerson, chancellor of the University of Paris, before the king of France in 1410.<sup>30</sup> Gerson's sermon marks the furthest limit to which a combination of liberality and orthodoxy in the West could go in seeking an accommodation with the Greeks. Gerson indeed insisted on the necessity for the papal primacy, but this in itself was not unacceptable to the Greeks. The real issue arose over the source and scope of this primacy: did it derive from the authority of the church expressed in the decisions of General Councils, or from Christ's original mandate to St Peter; and how far did it extend? On the first point, Gerson was silent; but he went very far in meeting the Greeks everywhere else. No papal decision even in a General Council was binding (he declared) except on matters directly affecting the truth of the Faith and the

29. See G. Schlumberger, 'Un Empereur de Byzanz à Paris et à Londres', *Revue des deux mondes*, 1915, xxx, 786.

30. J. Gerson, *Opera Omnia*, ed. du Pin, 1706, ii, 141-53.

Gospel. All those matters of local usages which had caused so much trouble – the use of leavened bread in the Mass, the marriage of priests, the differing practices with regard to confession, and so on – lay outside the scope of papal authority. As for the General Council, the Greek demand was justifiable, and their claim to proper representation was fair. In a word, the moment for unity was at hand, and there was no agent so suitable as the king of France – whose patron was the Greek saint, Denis, the Apostle of France – acting in conjunction with the pope, Alexander V, who was the first pope of Greek birth since Zacharias in the middle of the eighth century. A Greek pope and a French king with a Greek patron saint seemed to be instruments divinely fashioned for the cause of unity.

For a brief moment it looked as if the search for unity might take a new direction, guided no longer by the political and ecclesiastical assumptions of an earlier age, but by the melancholy and enlightening experiences of the last hundred years. As Jean Gerson surveyed the limitless disorders of the West, and contrasted them with the western claim to impose peace on the whole world, he began to understand something of the Greeks' point of view. He supported their refusal to be bound by decisions of Councils at which they were not represented; he foresaw the possibility and wisdom of recognizing wide areas of local autonomy in ecclesiastical usage; he looked without horror at leavened bread, married clergy, and a whole range of customs that had long been anathema in the West. These were hopeful signs. But the Greek pope soon died, the French king soon forgot his Greek patron in the midst of more immediate struggles with England, and the whole Conciliar idea was soon to sink into discord and impotence. The sermon of Gerson, and the whole line of thought that it represented, remained – like the chivalrous reception of Manuel Palaeologus – without effect.

### *Regression*

Time was now running out. From the middle of the fourteenth century the Greeks were not so much declining as

doomed. It was evident to everyone that unless unity came quickly there would be nothing left to unite. In some chivalrous hearts this appalling prospect inspired a desire to give the Greeks more than their strength could have exacted. But in others – and they were the majority – it simply made it seem more than ever foolish to give anything at all. Moreover, as time went on, the whole corporate theory of ecclesiastical government ran into insuperable difficulties. These difficulties were partly the result of the chaotic conditions of the Councils which embodied the corporate being of the church, and partly they arose from the inability of popes – even when they had themselves been adherents of Conciliar principles – to renounce any part of the authority that had been claimed for them in the past. The machinery of papal government was too strong for the exercise of papal liberality. In the midst of all these doubts and difficulties the spirit of generosity was choked.

Moreover the opportunity for its exercise was slipping rapidly away. The Greeks were in a position of great perplexity. Faced with the certainty of total destruction unless help came from the West, denied help because of ancient disagreements which seemed to many of their leaders irrelevant, confused by promises which no one could dismiss as certainly illusory, they were pressed on every side.

In 1422 Pope Martin V wrote words to the Emperor Manuel Palaeologus which take us right back to the letter of Clement IV to Michael Palaeologus nearly two hundred years earlier:

The Turks will fear to attack you if they know you are united to the rest of Christendom, and Christians will come to your help with more eagerness if they know that you are in full agreement with them.<sup>31</sup>

These were the terms: submit or be destroyed. In the thirteenth century these terms were still backed by the possibility of effective papal action; now they were empty words. But no one, not even the pope, could be quite sure

31. O. Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 1752, viii, p. 545.

that they were nonsense. In the end, in 1439, the Greek delegates at Florence, led by their emperor and weakened by deaths, desertions, and sheer fatigue, agreed to submit. They subscribed to the doctrine that the Holy Spirit had 'His essence and substantial being equally from the Father and the Son', that 'the word *Filioque* had been lawfully and reasonably added to the Creed', and that the pope was 'the true vicar of Christ with full power given him by our Lord Jesus Christ in St Peter to nourish, rule, and govern the universal church'.<sup>32</sup> These phrases – although accompanied by some ambiguities which gave some of the Greeks the illusion of safeguarding their ancient position – were an uncompromising statement of the Latin claims and a denial of all the main points that the Greeks had consistently asserted.

Opinions about this agreement and the way in which it was obtained will perhaps always differ. But it is impossible not to feel indignation at the spectacle of western Christians offering to those of the East a salvation which they were unable to provide, in return for a submission which the Greeks could not conscientiously make. It was left to the clergy and people of Constantinople – no doubt for the wrong reasons and under the influence of ancient hatred and ignorant confidence – to refuse to give up what they had long held to be the truth in exchange for help that could never come. Their steady opposition brought the union almost to a standstill. Although it was at last proclaimed in St Sophia on 12 December 1452, it had been too long delayed and it was too little accepted to leave any mark on the Greek church. Within six months the city and empire fell. By that time the unionist patriarch had fled to Rome, and the last of the emperors perished on 29 May

32. The terms of union were declared in a document of Pope Eugenius III, 6 July 1439 (*Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, ed. J. Alberigo and others, 1962, 499–504). For an account of the last phase of the negotiations, see J. Gill, *The Council of Florence*, 1959, 270–304. It should be added that although the Greeks were obliged to submit on the main points, they obtained a declaration of the legitimacy of their use of leavened bread in the Eucharist. Three centuries earlier this stood high on the list of Greek errors.

1453 at the breach in the walls on the last day of the siege. The problem of the rival patriarchate was solved, as that of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria had been eight hundred years earlier, by Islam.

Rome had now no rival. Pope Pius II hastened to address the conqueror, offering to make him emperor of the Greeks in return for baptism:

Be baptized and no prince in the world will be your equal in glory and power. We will call you Emperor of the Greeks and of the Orient, and what you now possess by force and injury, you will hold by right. All Christians will venerate you, and make you the judge of their disputes. . . . The see of Rome will love you like any Christian king, and so much the more as your position will be greater than theirs.<sup>33</sup>

This was the last expression of that vision of a politically and ecclesiastically united Christendom, based on the twin foundations of papal authority in Rome and imperial power in Constantinople guaranteed by the pope, which had given an intermittent direction to the larger policies of the papacy since 1054. If at this moment the miracle of the conversion of Constantine and Clovis had been repeated, the vision might yet have become a reality. But it was not to be. What actually happened was something that seemed even more unlikely in 1453 – the destruction from within of that undivided papal supremacy that had been so clearly established in the eyes of the world by the destruction of the Greek church and empire.

The historian, however, in looking forward sees too much. In 1453 the papal view of Christendom had triumphed. More than any other force it had been responsible for giving western Christendom an independent existence in the eighth century, and for providing a doctrinal basis for western supremacy from the eleventh century onwards. The movement towards Conciliar government in the church, which might have offered a new path to unity, had in the end collapsed, not least because of the strength

33. Letter of Pius II to Mahomet II, ed. G. Toffanin, 1953, pp. 113–14.

of the papacy. So, from the point of view of Christendom as a whole, the papacy was the great divisive force throughout the Middle Ages. But, from the point of view of the West, it was the source of unity and the symptom of strength. To this aspect of the papacy we must now turn.

## 4

*The Papacy*

To write briefly about the medieval papacy without being superficial requires a strict limitation of the questions to be discussed. Even then it will not be easy. The splendour and overwhelming authority of the papal position during most of our period, the wealth of documents, and the ramifications of papal activity into every corner of Europe and into every branch of European life make limitation difficult. The thirteenth-century formula *Papa qui et ecclesia dici potest*: 'the Pope who also can be called the Church' has sufficient truth in it to make it hazardous to treat the papacy as an institution apart from the body which it animated. We may however introduce a certain degree of simplification by concentrating on the following questions. What power did the popes at various periods of the Middle Ages actually possess? What relation had this practical power to the authority which they theoretically claimed, or which was claimed on their behalf? Why was this power, great as it was, not greater?

These are the questions, and in discussing them it will be convenient to observe the division of periods which has been sketched above.

## I. THE PRIMITIVE AGE,

c. 700-c. 1050

A convenient starting point for considering the claims and powers of the papacy in this period, and indeed throughout the Middle Ages, is provided by a famous document that has already been mentioned – the *Donation of Constantine*.<sup>1</sup>

1. The latest and most valuable edition is H. Fuhrmann, *Das Constitutum Constantini* (*M.G.H. Fontes Iuris Germanici Antiqui*, vol. x), 1968. The history of the document down to the fourteenth century is discussed in F. Lachr, *Die Konstantinische Schenkung in der abendländischen Lit. des Mittelalters bis zur Mitte des XIV Jhts.*, 1926 (*Hist. Studien*, vol. 166).