

## Chapter Twenty-three

### Christianity from the Fifth to the Eleventh Century

While the Dar al-Islam was prospering, much of Christendom was impoverished and the rest of it was under attack. In western Europe the Roman empire had disintegrated, and what had once been highly civilized lands entered a long Dark Age. Military and therefore political power was in the hands of Germanic warlords, whose territories soon evolved into kingdoms. Social and economic conditions deteriorated to a level not seen since before the original Roman conquests. In the east, the Byzantine empire not only surrendered everything south of the Taurus mountains to the Arabians, but also suffered on its western and northern frontiers the same kind of barbarian raids and takeovers that had earlier ruined western Europe and Britain. Although the Byzantines survived the barbarian onslaught, their empire was much diminished by it: from the fifth through the seventh century the Byzantine empire lost not only the Levant, Egypt and North Africa to the Arabians, but also most of southeastern Europe to Slavic- or Avar-speaking warlords. In the bleakest periods the empire consisted only of Anatolia and, in Europe, Constantinople itself and its hinterland.

For Christianity, nevertheless, the fifth through eleventh centuries were a time of remarkable growth as the faith spread through the British isles and all of Europe. As Germanic and Slavic speakers were converted, paganism disappeared and by the beginning of the crusades almost everyone in western Eurasia worshiped God. Although the Christian communions in the Dar al-Islam tended to dwindle, both Catholic and Orthodox Christianity grew substantially. Judaism shrank throughout all of Europe controlled by Christians: only in Muslim Spain did the synagogues flourish. Although diminished in numbers, however, Judaism became as ecumenical as Christianity. Within or close to almost every Christian city, as far as eastern Europe and finally even central Britain, could be found a tiny Jewish community.

Although Christians were considerably more numerous at the end of the eleventh century than they had been in the fifth, the old ideal of a single catholic (“universal”) church was in sharp contrast with the reality of a handful of regional Christianities, most of which had severed relations with most of the others. It is a paradox that although Christianity - unlike Judaism and Islam - had a highly organized structure, which was designed to weld it together into a single *ekklesia katholicē*, the structure could not prevent Christianity from being riven by deep divisions. To some extent the structure itself - or the perception that there ought to *be* a comprehensive structure - encouraged the divisions.

#### The structure and government of the catholic church

The catholic church was governed, in theory, by majority votes of its bishops (*episkopoi*) in council. This “conciliar” form of government began in the late second century and was institutionalized in the reign of Constantine. Decisions were to be made when the bishops

gathered together at ecumenical councils: a majority of bishops *was* the catholic church. For the routine maintenance of doctrine and discipline, however, an episcopal hierarchy was deemed necessary (the political structure of Diocletian's tetrarchy was perhaps the model for the Church in the early fourth century). The several hundred bishops were supervised by their "metropolitans." In any given province of the Roman empire, that is, the bishops of the smaller cities were ordained and supervised by the bishop of the province's *mētropolis* (capital). The several dozen metropolitans, in turn, were ordained and supervised by the patriarchal bishops. Initially these were three: the bishops of Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. By the sixth century the patriarchs numbered five, the bishops of Jerusalem and Constantinople having been elevated to that status. Each of the patriarchs was *autocephalous*, subject to no authority other than the ecumenical councils.<sup>1</sup>

### **Languages and the proliferation of Christian communions**

A language is a community, embracing all of those who speak it. Most languages in antiquity were not literary, and as a result the communities they formed had relatively weak diachronic dimensions. The spatial dimension, that is, was far more important than the temporal, which consisted mostly of oral traditions. The varieties of Christianity by the seventh century were to a considerable extent the result of its spread over many language communities. The remarkable growth of the catholic church owed much to the translation of the New Testament and the Septuagint from Greek into most of the principal languages found in and around the Roman empire. The first of these were Syriac, Latin, and Coptic, and by the end of the fifth century these had been joined by Gothic, Ethiopic, Armenian and Georgian. Initially Latin was the only truly literary language into which the Christians' sacred texts were translated, although a few pieces of Syriac and Coptic literature did pre-date the earliest Christian texts in those languages. Because Gothic, Ethiopic, Armenian and Georgian were not yet written languages when the Christians undertook to translate the Bible into them, the translators had first to devise an alphabetic script with which to convey the sounds peculiar to the language in question.

It is well known that the Christian patristic literature in Greek and Latin is voluminous: so voluminous that today even patristic specialists do not live long enough to read all of it. Not surprisingly, the Latin tradition of Christianity differed considerably from the Greek. Eusebius, whose native language was Greek and who was also fluent in Syriac, was scarcely able to read Latin, and as a result he misunderstood what Tertullian had written. On the other side, Augustine was a master of Latin literature but had trouble with Greek and so read very little of what the Greek Fathers had written. Because Greek was the original language of the New Testament, Latin bishops for a long time felt obliged to learn enough Greek to read at least some Greek patristic literature. But Latin translations of the most important Greek works (Irenaeus' *Against Heresies*, for example, or the theological books of Origen) soon became available and made it possible for a Latin bishop to be essentially monolingual. Greek bishops seldom learned Latin, on the parochial assumption that whatever was essential in Christian theology was written in Greek.

By the end of the fourth century considerable literatures - almost all of it Christian - had

also been produced in Syriac and Coptic, and these were followed in the fifth and sixth centuries by Christian compositions in Armenian, Georgian and Ethiopic. With the proliferation of literatures, the temporal or diachronic dimension of each of these linguistic communities became far more robust than it had been heretofore, books uniting readers with authors who had written generations or centuries earlier. As the several linguistic communities matured, what had ideally been a single catholic church tended to splinter into a constellation of what we might call “national” churches. The most important of these by far were the Greek and the Latin churches, because in the Roman empire these were the languages of government, of education, and culture. It was inevitable that the various language communities would eventually differ from each other in doctrine and practice.<sup>2</sup>

A prime example of this differentiation is the legacy of Augustine, including his idea of sexual desire as a manifestation of the Original Sin of Adam and Eve. Augustine spoke and wrote in Latin. Because of his immense importance in Latin Christianity, neither in medieval nor in Renaissance and Reformation times did western Christendom have much room for the belief that people are of themselves capable of drawing closer to God. In contrast, Greek-speaking Christianity put less emphasis on Original Sin, and retained a more optimistic view of human potential.<sup>3</sup> In the Latin west the vast Augustinian corpus had a wide and lasting influence, but in the Greek east its influence was negligible. Few clergy in the Greek east were able to read Augustine’s works in Latin, and even fewer did so. Although an occasional piece by Augustine was translated into Greek (and soon forgotten about), the vast majority of his writings were accessible only in Latin.

### **Fractures along language lines after the Council of Chalcedon (451)**

The “conciliar” form of government in the early catholic church created problems, because the stakes - an eternity in Heaven or in Hell - were too high for the minority always to acquiesce in the will of the majority. When divisions among the bishops occurred, they often followed the fault-lines of languages. During the heated Christological controversies in the fourth and fifth centuries many Christians could not bring themselves to accept the decisions of the catholic majority, and these dissidents - usually grouped along the lines of language - gradually pulled away to form communions of their own. The “Arian” communion was brutally suppressed, but other minority communions have survived to the present day.

A controversial decision of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 spawned minority churches and made the catholic church more exclusively Greek and Latin. The majority of bishops at Chalcedon decided that Jesus the Christ had two natures, one human and one divine. Most Latin and Greek Christians, including all five patriarchs, subscribed to the Chalcedonian doctrine. However, many Christians whose first language was Egyptian, Syriac, Ethiopic or Armenian found the doctrine incomprehensible, in part because it had been articulated primarily by Greek theologians and writers. As decades passed these “Monophysite” Christians (like their opponents, they called themselves “orthodox”) formed their own communions, each of which was led by a Monophysite archbishop, or patriarch, who spoke the pertinent vernacular.

By subtraction the catholic church in the eastern empire thus became more uniformly

Greek-speaking. At Antioch, for example, a Syriac-speaking Monophysite and a Greek-speaking catholic both claimed to be the city's bishop. This tension was unresolved so long as Anastasius was emperor (491-518), because Anastasius himself sympathized with Monophysite doctrines. But when Justin became emperor in 518 the catholic majority at Antioch expelled the Monophysite bishop from the city. In the sixth century Jacob Baradaeus rallied the Syriac Monophysites into a viable communion, which continues today as the Syriac Orthodox Church but which trinitarians disparaged as "Jacobite."<sup>4</sup> Of course the Syriac Orthodox Church traces its lineage back through Jacob Baradaeus to Ignatius and ultimately to the Apostle Peter: it is the Syriac church that maintains the true faith, and it is "the Chalcedonians" who in the fifth century went astray. Similarly, the Coptic-speaking bishops of Egypt formed their own Monophysite church, as did the Armenian-speaking bishops in Armenia and the Ge'ez-speaking bishops in Ethiopia. The Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian and Syriac churches remained in communion with each other, and stoutly maintained the "orthodox" label. From 451 until the early seventh century these "heretical" churches were usually suppressed by the Byzantine emperors, but after the Arabic conquests in the 630s and 640s the Monophysite churches - now under the protection of the Muslim califs - were allowed to flourish for a very long time.

Despite the defection of the Monophysite Christians after Chalcedon, the catholic church remained a very large communion. Until the Great Schism in 1054, "the Church" had a Latin wing in the west and a Greek wing in the east. The Iconoclasm that rocked the eastern wing of the Church in the eighth and ninth centuries was defeated in part because of the western wing's firm attachment to icons. And both the Latin and the Greek wings, although often for self-interested reasons, extended Christianity.

## **The spread of Christianity and the end of paganism in western Europe**

The edicts issued by Theodosius the Great in the 390s were intended to eradicate paganism, and they certainly contributed much to that end. But so deeply rooted was the worship of the old gods that centuries passed before it was eliminated. When Theodosius died in 395 the empire was divided between his sons. Arcadius, seventeen years old, was made emperor of the east, with his residence at Constantinople. In this "Byzantine" half of the empire the languages were Greek, Aramaic and Coptic, and the population was mostly Christian. In the Latin-speaking west, the new emperor was ten-year-old Honorius, whose first capital was at Milan and who depended primarily upon Stilicho, the *magister militum*. In this western empire pagans outnumbered Christians: although Christianity had by the 390s gained considerable ground among the lower classes in the cities of the Latin west, relatively few educated urbanites had converted, and in the countryside of Italy, Gaul, Spain and Britain the old local gods were still worshiped.

The Christianizing of Italy itself occurred mostly in the fourth and fifth centuries. While Rome was supposed to have had a Christian *ekklesia* and a bishop since the days of the Apostle Peter, in most cities of Italy Christian churches are not attested until the late third century. Northern Italy was especially slow to embrace the new religion. A few cities there - Aquileia and Verona among them<sup>5</sup> - had bishops in the third century, but many other cities had no church

at all until Constantine's rise to power and the publication of the Edict of Milan (313).<sup>6</sup> Once it was not only legal but supported by the emperors, Christianity made rapid gains. By the middle of the fourth century thousands of the inhabitants of Milan were Christians, and Bishop Auxentius (an "Arian") was a figure of considerable importance. We have seen that his successor, the trinitarian Ambrose, did not hesitate to reprimand Emperor Theodosius. In other cities in the Po valley Christianity also became conspicuous in the fourth century.

Much of the countryside, in contrast, seems to have remained pagan through the fourth century. We have some information about the Val di Non, in the mountains to the west of Tridentum (Trento, or Trent).<sup>7</sup> Christianity had come to the city of Tridentum in the 380s, and the first bishop of the place was a certain Vigilus, who exchanged letters with his metropolitan, Ambrose of Milan. In the wake of Theodosius' edicts Vigilus decided to send three priests into the Val di Non, to preach the gospel and to denounce the pagan cults that flourished there. The priests met with limited success, persuading some villagers to accept baptism and to build a small church for Christian worship. One day in May of 397 supporters of the pagan cults descended upon the church and destroyed it. They seized the three priests, tied them to timbers taken from the ruins of the church, and burned them to death.<sup>8</sup> Thus did the three enter the list of Christian martyrs.

In Gaul Christianity was hardly visible at all before the third century. The only exception was an *ekklesia* at Lugdunum (Lyon), established by Greek-speaking immigrants from Anatolia. The Lugdunum *ekklesia* lost forty-eight members in 177, when local reaction against the newcomers and their religion culminated in a spasm of persecutions and martyrdoms. Christianity survived at Lugdunum, however, and was strengthened by another vigorous newcomer, Irenaeus (d. 202). Nothing is known about Gallic Christians during the next hundred years, but the number of churches obviously multiplied during that time. In 314, taking advantage of the recent legalization of Christianity, a council of Gallic bishops met at Arles to debate the Donatist schism. Of the sixteen bishops in attendance most came from cities in Provence, but two came from Cologne and Trier, far to the north. The bishop's church was evidently the only church at Trier, a city with tens of thousands of inhabitants, and so we may suppose that Christians were at that time a very small minority there.

Although the churches in Gaul grew considerably during the fourth century, even at the century's end the wealthier classes were pagan, as was most of the countryside. Attempts to convert the rural population of Gaul began with Martin (Martinus), who was bishop of Tours (Caesarodunum Turonensis) from 372 until his death in 397. In the hagiography written by Sulpicius Severus soon after Martin's death, the saint works many miracles - including several resurrections - and so weans the rustics away from their traditional idols. Even the rural population of Gaul understood Latin well enough by the fourth century (although many people also spoke one of the Keltic languages), and Martin's evangelizing was done in Latin. Despite the celebration of Martin's miracles, through much of the fifth century paganism survived in rural Gaul. Its end was hastened by the building and growth of monasteries, the monks lending their numbers and physical strength to enforcement of Theodosius' edicts. By the time of Gregory of Tours, in the second half of the sixth century, Gaul had become Christian.

In Spain, at the beginning of the fourth century fewer than half of the cities had even a single Christian church. Nineteen bishops attended the Council of Elvira *ca.* 306. Again, the countryside would have been almost entirely pagan, so it is likely that at the accession of Constantine no more than five per cent of the population in Spain was Christian. By the end of the fourth century the proportion was changing rapidly. A letter sent from Bishop Siricius of Rome to the bishop of Tarraco (Tarragona) in 385 indicates that in the late fourth century many people at Tarraco were being baptized into the Christian faith, and it may be that early in the fifth century Christians became a majority in Spain. Unfortunately, the writings of Prudentius and Orosius give no indication of the strength of Christianity in their day. After the edicts of Theodosius and after the Vandals, Suevi and Visigoths had done their pillaging in Spain most of the pagan cults must have ceased to exist. Private worship of the old gods, of course, could have continued for a long time.

### **The conversion of the Germanic chiefdoms and kingdoms**

An important factor in the end of paganism and the spread of Christianity in western Europe was the early conversion of the Germanic warlords and kings. As we have seen in Chapter 17, Fritigern and his Visigoths converted to Christianity in the 370s, in hopes of securing an alliance with the Roman emperor Valens. Fritigern's conversion was facilitated by the work of Ulfilas (311-381), whose native language was Gothic and who devoted the last half of his life to bringing the gospel to the Gothic-speaking population north of the Danube. When his first efforts failed, Ulfilas decided that what was needed was the Bible in the Gothic language. He therefore devised a Gothic script (until his time nobody was literate in Gothic, although snippets of the North and West Germanic languages were occasionally written in runes) and, with help from his students, translated all of the New Testament and most of the Old Testament into Gothic. Armed with the sacred text in their own vernacular, missionaries persuaded Fritigern and other Gothic leaders to renounce their old gods and to be baptized as Christians. The conversion of the Gothic warlords was immediately followed by the conversion of their followers. Other Germanic war-bands along the frontier followed the example of the Visigoths, and it is likely that by the end of the fourth century the Vandals, Suevi and Burgundians were also nominal Christians.<sup>9</sup>

So it happened that when, in the early fifth century, western Europe and North Africa were overrun by Germanic barbarians, the new rulers were themselves already Christians. Taking their new religion seriously, in their sacking of cities they spared the Christian churches and clergy, while despoiling everything secular. They also made a special point of looting and destroying those temples of the old gods that were still standing. In places where Christians were still a minority, and few monks were available to carry out Theodosius' edicts, it was the Germanic invaders who ruined the temples. Once they had carved out kingdoms for themselves, the invaders continued the imperial policy of prohibiting public paganism.

The Christianity of the Goths, Suevi, Vandals, Burgundians, and perhaps of the Lombards in the sixth century,<sup>10</sup> was not Nicene but monotheist ("Arian"), and the distinction alienated them from most of their subjects. For a long time the invaders' Christianity was also tied to the Bible that Ulfilas had produced in the Gothic language,<sup>11</sup> while the subjects' Bible was of course

in Latin, whether a *Vetus Latina* or Jerome's newer version. Latin Christians had all along opposed "the Arians," and we have seen that Gratian and Theodosius I enforced a Nicene orthodoxy in all of the empire, rooting out "the heretics" from all positions of importance in church and state. The doctrinal differences were not of great concern to the Germanic warlords, and although they and their warriors continued in their monotheist beliefs they made little attempt to suppress or even to discourage trinitarianism. In the eyes of their subjects, however, the Germanic invaders were heretical "Arians." The Burgundians' situation was more complex. While the rank-and-file of Burgundians seem to have maintained their Arianism quite happily, for political and diplomatic reasons the Burgundian kings - in their capital at Lyon (Lugdunum) - were attracted to the faith of the Latin-speakers. Thus King Gundobad (473-516) remained a monotheist, but two of his sons and several other members of his family became trinitarian.

The Franks, unlike most of the war-bands of Germanic conquerors, were still pagan when they took over northeastern Gaul in the fifth century. The Franks' tardiness in converting to Christianity eventually worked to their political advantage. In 496 or 497 the Frankish warlord Clovis (ruled 476-511) married Chlotilde, the niece of the Burgundian king Gundobad. The bride, who was a trinitarian, insisted that before Clovis married her he must first put aside his idolatry and adopt her religion. When Clovis finally forsook his old gods, therefore, it was into the catholic rather than into the Arian communion that he entered. Along with their lord came the Frankish troops, tens of thousands undergoing baptism into the catholic church. This religious affiliation helped Clovis to consolidate Frankish rule first in north-central Gaul and finally over most of what is today France. Establishing his palace at Paris, Clovis enjoyed relatively good relations with the Latin-speaking bishops of the realm and also with the bishop of Rome. The mutual support continued through more than two hundred years of Merovingian rule.

The Visigothic rulers of Spain maintained their monotheistic Christianity for almost two hundred years, during which time relations with the more numerous catholic Christians were tense. The religious divide perhaps cost the Visigoths their hold on southwestern Gaul, and especially the city of Tolosa (Toulouse): in 507 Clovis the Frank drove the Visigoths south of the Pyrenees, and Clovis' catholic faith was an advantage in this encounter. Finally, the Visigothic king Reccared (586-601) renounced his ancestral beliefs, anathematizing Arius as a heretic and adopting the catholic faith as the true faith. This Reccared did in a public way, at the Council of Toledo in 589. His nobles and courtiers followed him into his new church, and for the next century and a quarter catholic Christianity was the religion of both subjects and rulers in Spain.

## **Christianity in early medieval Britain and Ireland**

Christianity seems hardly to have existed in Britain before the rise of Constantine. During the fourth century it must have arrived in the person of Christians who were attached to the imperial service, with military or political responsibilities. Most famously, at the end of the fourth century Calpornius and Concessa, the parents of Patricius (St. Patrick), were Christians living at a place called Bannavem Taburniae on Britain's western coast, and probably not far south of what today is Scotland. The town evidently had a small Christian community, because in his *Confessio* Patricius mentions that his grandfather had been a priest and his father a deacon

(Calpornius was also a *decurio* in the town government).<sup>12</sup> When he was sixteen Patricius was seized by Irish pirates and carried off to Ireland, where he spent the next six years herding sheep. After making his escape to Britain he became a priest and then, because he knew the Irish language, he returned to Ireland with the intention of converting the people to Christianity. Evidently Patricius was quite successful, and so began the Christian history of Ireland. It is remarkable that neither Patricius nor his converts thought it necessary to translate the Bible into Irish. The first Irish New Testament did not appear until the end of the sixteenth century, with the Old Testament following in the seventeenth. Irish Christianity was therefore - in its scriptures, its prayers and its liturgy - Latin from the beginning.

The presence of Christian communities in Ireland encouraged the spread of Christianity to various Keltic-speaking communities in western Britain. Again, the language of worship in these churches was Latin, although the vernacular of the worshipers was one of the Keltic languages of Britain (Cornish, Welsh, and possibly Pictish). About Christianity in the Latin-speaking towns of Britain virtually nothing is known after the Saxon (Anglo-Saxon)<sup>13</sup> raids and conquests of the fifth century. The Saxons themselves remained pagans for almost two hundred years after their conquests. This changed suddenly when toward the end of the sixth century Aethelbert, a Saxon king in Kent, married Bertha, a Merovingian princess. A catholic, like the rest of the Franks, Bertha persuaded her husband to receive at his court an emissary sent by Pope Gregory. This was a priest named Augustine, destined to become St. Augustine of Canterbury and not to be confused with the more famous St. Augustine of Hippo, who had lived two hundred years earlier and had written the *City of God*. Our Augustine is supposed to have arrived in Britain in 597 and to have promptly converted Aethelbert to Christianity. At Christmas of that year ten thousand of Aethelbert's Saxons underwent baptism at Canterbury. Augustine's successes were capped by the building of two monasteries at Canterbury, made possible by Aethelbert's gift of land and resources. From Kent the new religion spread to other Saxon kingdoms, but paganism persisted for a time. The last of the great pagan kings among the Saxons was Penda of Mercia, who was killed in 655 (Penda's sons converted to Christianity).

## **The Christianizing of central and northern Europe**

It was from the Saxons of Britain that the gospel was first brought to West Germanic speakers on the continent. The Germanic tribes east of the Rhine had not been part of the Roman empire, and were relatively late in adopting Christianity. The most storied conversion here occurred in the 720s, when a Saxon from Britain was sent by Pope Gregory II to preach to the heathen in Germany. This was Winfrid, who had entered the priesthood and had in 716 made a missionary journey to Friesland (now in the Netherlands). The Frisian language was a close enough cognate to Saxon that Winfrid was able to make himself understood, but the Frisians were hostile to him and to Christianity and he was forced to return to Britain. Winfrid came to the attention of Pope Gregory II, however, and Gregory promised him support. So too did Charles Martel, the major-domo of the Merovingian palace, and soon to become the founder of the Carolingian line. Accepting the name *Bonifacius*, or Boniface, that Gregory conferred upon him, the "Apostle to the Germans" made his way to Hesse, the homeland of the ancient Chatti. The Chatti, or Hessians, also spoke a West Germanic dialect and listened to Boniface but resisted him. The legend of St. Boniface tells how in the year 723 he brought down the Oak

of Donar, or of Thor, a mighty tree that the Hessians identified with the god of storms: at the first stroke of the saint's axe, a miraculous wind toppled the tree, and the Hessians converted to Christianity *en masse*. Boniface continued to work among the Germanic tribes, but was not everywhere successful: as an old man he met a violent death among the Frisians.

The Christianizing of western Germany was accelerated when the Carolingians - Charlemagne especially, but also his son and successor, Louis the Pious (814-840) - extended the Frankish kingdom far across the Rhine. Charlemagne fought against the Saxons of Saxony intermittently from 772 until 804, by which time he had reduced the region (today Niedersachsen, or Lower Saxony), Christianized it, and created the Duchy of Saxony. The most terrible action of Charlemagne occurred after a victory in 782, when he ordered 4500 Saxon captives to renounce their gods, be baptized into Christianity, and swear allegiance to him. When they refused, Charlemagne ordered that they be slaughtered. The atrocity occurred near Verden, on the Aller river and a few miles upstream from the point at which the westward flowing Aller joins the Weser.

The Christianizing of populations that spoke one of the North Germanic (Scandinavian) languages came still later. In the ninth and early tenth centuries, the heyday of Viking raids on Britain and the European continent, the "Norsemen" were pagans and had no scruples about sacking churches and monasteries. Little is known about the evangelizing of the Scandinavians, but the work was apparently done by missionaries who came primarily from England and secondarily from northern Germany. In the ninth century some of the Danes worshiped Jesus the Christ, although alongside the old gods of the land, and only in the tenth century did the Vikings begin to call themselves Christians.. Harald Bluetooth, king of Denmark between ca. 940 and 985, set up an inscription claiming that he made the Danes Christians.

At about the same time that catholic Christianity came to Scandinavia it was brought to "heathen" who spoke Polish, one of the West Slavic languages (Czech and Slovak are the other major languages in this sub-group of the Slavic language family). The aggressions of Otto I eventually brought him east of the Oder river and into contact with a tribe called the Polans, who lived around Poznan and were destined to give their name to a much larger territory. The king of the Polans at the time was Mieszko (962-92), who entered into negotiations with Otto that culminated in the emperor's conferring upon Mieszko the title of duke. Along with the title came the obligation to confess the Christian religion, and in 966 Mieszko was baptized into the catholic church. The conversion of Mieszko's subjects soon followed. In the next twenty years Mieszko extended his realm considerably beyond what is today western Poland, conquering lands as far north as Pomerania and as far south as Silesia.

By the end of the tenth century, then, catholic Christianity had spread to most of Europe, from Portugal to the Baltic. The number of catholic Christians at this time can only be estimated, since no population figures are available for medieval Europe, but informed estimates tend to range between twenty and thirty million people. Unlike the Dar al-Islam, in which large Christian and Jewish populations lived alongside Muslims, western and central Europe and the British Isles were overwhelmingly Christian. In the countryside a very few pockets of paganism remained, in most towns and cities a tiny Jewish minority coexisted uneasily with the Christians,

and Muslims were not to be found at all.

## **Monasticism in Orthodox Christendom**

From a modern perspective one of the strangest phenomena in medieval Christianity was the prevalence of monasteries. By the hundreds of thousands, both men and women pledged themselves to a life of celibacy and poverty. Renouncing sex, family life and personal property, Christians supposed that they were thereby ensuring their entry into Heaven.

As we have seen toward the end of Chapter 17, monasticism began in Egypt early in the fourth century, and soon Egypt was teeming with monks. The great model for anchorite monks was St. Anthony, who lived in the desert. Athanasius' biography of Anthony described how the saint there won miraculous victories over the Devil and a vast number of demons. The anchorite monks lived in solitude, ate very little, seldom if ever bathed, and altogether mortified the flesh. Cenobite monks lived together in monasteries, but in Egypt and the Levant they were almost as abstemious as their anchorite brethren, inflicting an extreme asceticism upon their bodies. Long and frequent fasting, and occasionally even self-flagellation, served to torment the body and elevate the soul.

In the Greek east the patterns of monasticism were set especially by Basil of Caesarea (now Kayseri, in central Turkey). One of the "Cappadocian Fathers," Basil in the 360s or 370s wrote his *Asketikon*, laying down a set of rules for monastic life. Although quite Spartan, these rules were less severe than those followed in Egypt, Palestine and Syria: they emphasized prayer, work and community service over pain and deprivation. So influential was "the Rule of St. Basil" that ever since the late fourth century monastic life for both men and women in Orthodox Christendom has been organized according to it. Because of the monks' and nuns' obligation to serve their fellow Christians, monasteries in the Greek east were usually located in towns and cities. The monasteries in inaccessible places were built much later: although anchorite monks had been living in the caves of Mt. Athos from early on, the monasteries date only from the tenth century (the Meteora monasteries were not built until the fourteenth).

The importance of monasticism in Orthodox Christendom was enormous.<sup>14</sup> In his description of Byzantine theology John Meyendorff stated succinctly, "The Byzantine Church was primarily monastic."<sup>15</sup> In the city of Constantinople alone stood several hundred monasteries. So high was the value set upon monastic renunciation that even people who had spent their lives in the laity would end them as monks or nuns. In her informative introduction to Byzantine monasticism Alice-Mary Talbot observed that "countless Byzantines, when they realized they were on their death bed, took the monastic habit for their last hours or days, in the belief that, by dying in the holier monastic state, they were more likely to achieve salvation in the world to come."<sup>16</sup>

Only during the Iconoclast controversy of the eighth and early ninth century was monasticism in decline in Orthodox Christianity. Because in their daily devotions they knelt before the icons, monks and nuns were the great champions of the icons and therefore incurred the wrath of the iconoclasts. Several monasteries were attacked, and many more suffered from a

withering of gifts and endowments. Many founders and benefactors had made their gifts “in exchange for commemorative requiem masses in perpetuity,”<sup>17</sup> and the benefactions declined while such masses were being denounced as idolatrous. After 843, when the “Council of Orthodoxy” decreed that icons were an essential part of Orthodox worship, the monasteries began once again to flourish.<sup>18</sup>

## **Monasticism in Latin Christendom: the Rule of Benedict**

Although by the end of the fourth century monasteries were a prominent feature in the Greek East, they were much less common in the Latin West. Here their growth came later and owed much to a manual called the *Regula Benedicti* (“Rule of Benedictus”). Arranged in 73 chapters, the *Rule* provided guidance for many aspects of communal monastic life. The author of the manual is supposed to have been Benedict of Nursia (ca. 480-547), about whom very little is known. He is reputed to have established more than a dozen monasteries, the last of which became the famous Benedictine abbey at Monte Cassino. Our information about Benedict comes largely from the *Life and Miracles of St. Benedict*, attributed to Pope Gregory the Great. Miracles in a saint’s biography had been traditional ever since the *Life of Saint Anthony* was published in Egypt in the late fourth century. Most of Gregory’s little text is devoted to the miracles wrought by Benedict, and for the historian is valuable mostly as an index of the credulity of Gregory and his contemporaries. Toward the end of the *Life*, however, Gregory mentions - in an offhand manner - that in addition to his many miracles Saint Benedict wrote “a rule for the monks” (*regula monachorum*).

Benedict’s *Rule* left no doubt that discipline was essential for a monastic community. Each monastery should be headed by an abbot (a “father”), a senior monk to whom all the rest owed strict obedience. Because idleness was a notorious characteristic of monks, Benedict did his best to ensure that a monk’s life would be devoted to work, to prayer, and to praising the Lord. The abbot was to assign to each monk whatever work was appropriate for him. In the field, garden, orchard and carpenter shop the monks worked alone, in pairs, or in small groups. The rest of their life was to be communal: all of them were to sleep in a common dormitory, to eat together in a refectory, and - most importantly - to assemble in a chapel eight times a day for the religious “offices.” It was at the offices that the *opus Dei* (God’s work) was done, and the *Rule* stipulated the prayers to be said and the number of psalms to be sung in each office. The *Rule* also provided details on more mundane matters. Every dinner served in the refectory should include two cooked vegetable dishes (meat was not part of the normal diet). Each monk should be given no more than one *hemina* (a little more than a pint) of wine daily. Every monk was to wear a tunic and a woolen cowl, and to be given two of each. The monks were to own nothing: whatever was needed was to be dispensed to them from the common store.

In the sixth and seventh centuries many monasteries and convents were set up on the Benedictine model. It was in the Benedictine monasteries - especially after ca. 800 - that the copying of old manuscripts was done. An abbot would identify several *fratres* who had the skills necessary for the task, and would assign them to the monastery’s *scriptorium*. There they would copy out the Latin texts that the abbot put before them. Most of these were Christian: Biblical texts and commentaries, the writings of the Latin Church Fathers, prayer books, saints’

lives, and many more. Less often an abbot instructed a monk to copy the books of a famous pagan author. The monks were thus responsible for preserving most of the texts of Classical Latin literature that have come down to us.

## **The Assumption of the Virgin**

Parallel to the spread and growth of monasticism was a greater emphasis upon the Virgin Mary. By the fourth century, as described in Chapter 13, most Christians were agreed that Mary, mother of Jesus, had remained a virgin all her life. Along with that belief came another, that Mary had led a sinless life and was therefore pure to an extent matched by nobody but her son. In the fifth century the story of Mary was further elaborated, to include her bodily “assumption” into Heaven: there she remains as an intermediary between believers and the trinity, or more specifically as an intercessor who strengthens the prayers of a suppliant as she passes them on to her son, Jesus the Christ.<sup>19</sup>

The high Christology of the church councils at Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381) resulted in Jesus the Christ being identified as one of the three masks or *personae* of God. A corollary, although evidently not intended, was that Mary thereby became the *theotokos*, “Mother of God.” The epithet struck some bishops as blasphemous or at least inappropriate and this minority opinion - articulated especially by Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople - occasioned the Council of Ephesus. At Ephesus in 431 Nestorius and “Nestorianism” were condemned, and Mary’s title as “Mother of God” was confirmed throughout the Church.

Not long after the Council of Ephesus various “Dormition narratives” began to appear (none of them is earlier than ca. 450). “Dormition,” or *koimesis* in Greek, is literally a “sleeping” but is a Christian euphemism for death. The Dormition stories vary, but all describe the “assumption” of Mary to Heaven. In the early fifth century pilgrims to Jerusalem had visited and venerated a tomb at the base of the Mount of Olives, believing it to be the tomb of Mary (by the sixth century the Church of the Assumption had been built at the site). The Dormition narratives explained why the tomb was empty. In most of the narratives Mary dies, in the company of all twelve disciples (who have been miraculously gathered from distant lands). On the third day Jesus himself appears and raises Mary from the dead, uniting her soul with her body and translating both to Heaven. The bodily Assumption of the Virgin was not made an official dogma of the Catholic church until Pope Pius XII pronounced it so in 1950, but for almost a millennium and a half it had been so de facto, both in Catholicism and in all the Christian churches of the east (Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopic, Greek, and Syriac), whether Monophysite or Chalcedonian. In the Orthodox (as in the Catholic) churches the Feast of the Assumption was set at August 15. In the Coptic church, where fasting was common, a fifteen-day fast in mid-August was mandated to commemorate the Dormition and Assumption of the Virgin.

Once in Heaven, the Virgin quickly became by far the greatest of all the saints. While the departed soul of any saint could assist the believer’s prayers to God, the assistance rendered by the Virgin - who was bodily in the presence of God - was supposed to be much more effective. Devotion to Mary manifested itself in icons (“likenesses,” or “images”), which were visual representations of her. From the fifth century onward, Marian icons were produced throughout Christendom and especially in the east. Most of the early icons were destroyed in

the Iconoclasm (726-843), but eight icons of Mary - five of them in Rome - from before the Iconoclasm are preserved.<sup>20</sup> Christians knelt before an icon of the Virgin while praying to her. In theory the Christian was not praying to the icon, but was merely focusing on it while praying to the Virgin. In fact, once word began to spread that prayers made in front of a particular icon were unusually successful, the icon itself came to be regarded as holy and as having supernatural powers.

## **The rise of the papacy**

We have seen that from at least the end of the second century, when Irenaeus was writing *Against the Heresies*, the church at Rome was regarded as a spiritual guide for Christians in the western provinces. Two hundred years later this was stated clearly in the edict that Gratian and Theodosius promulgated against “the Arians”:

It is our will that all the peoples who are ruled by the administration of Our Clemency shall practice that religion which the divine Peter the Apostle transmitted to the Romans, as the religion which he introduced makes clear unto this day... That is, that we believe, according to the apostolic teaching and the evangelical doctrine, that there is one deity of father, son and holy spirit, with equal majesty and holy trinity.

The authority of the bishops of Rome in these early centuries, however, was not yet institutionalized. That came in the fifth century: as the Roman emperors weakened, the bishops of Rome gained strength.

The imperial dynasty founded by Theodosius I (“the Great”) had none of the qualities needed to meet the dangers that beset the empire. When the Germanic barbarians - in this instance, the Visigoths - began to threaten Italy and the western provinces, Honorius (395-423) retreated for security from Milan to the marshes of Ravenna. He lived in splendor at his Ravenna palace, but he had little control over the western empire and by the end of his reign Britain, Spain, and much of Gaul had been lost and North Africa was under attack.

Valentinian III (425-455), the nephew of Honorius, was only six years old when he was made emperor. Even in his adult years he had no ambition to save the western empire and for most of his reign he did the bidding of his mother, Galla Placidia, and of his older sister, Justa Grata Honoria. As the Vandals took over North Africa and as other barbarians carved out kingdoms from the empire, Valentinian was content to enjoy the luxuries that were still made available at Ravenna. When Attila invaded northern Italy in 452, having been defeated but not broken at Chalons, it did not occur to Valentinian to lead an army against the Huns. Instead, reckoning that Ravenna was no longer safe enough, the emperor and his entourage fled to Rome.

While the emperor headed south, the bishop of Rome went north to meet Attila, not as a general but as a negotiator. The bishop was Leo I (“the Great”). Born into an aristocratic family, Leo had by the 430s become the most prominent deacon in Rome, and had undertaken important diplomatic assignments. In 440 the clergy and laity of Rome chose Leo as bishop, and for the next twenty-one years he presided over Rome’s several hundred thousand Christians and indeed over the city itself. His mission to Attila was therefore in keeping with his

responsibilities, and the two met on the Mincio river, a northern tributary of the Po, and not far from Mantua. By promising a huge tribute of silver, Leo persuaded Attila to withdraw his Hunnic raiders from Italy. The actions of Valentinian III and of Leo I in the crisis of 452 made it quite clear that the emperor of the western provinces was far weaker a leader than was the bishop of Rome. Although the facts were sufficient, myth elevated Leo beyond the reach of any emperor: when Leo met with Attila, so an anonymous medieval chronicler reported, at his side were apparitions of Peter and Paul, each holding a sword over the warlord's head, and the ghostly apostles so terrified Attila that he agreed forthwith to evacuate Italy and retreat across the Danube.<sup>21</sup>

A second crisis managed by Leo, although not quite so successfully, occurred in 455. When Valentinian III was assassinated Genseric, the Vandal ruler of North Africa, embarked his army and sailed to Rome to "avenge" the emperor's death. Leo negotiated with Genseric and agreed to open the city's gates to him on condition that the Vandals would neither kill the inhabitants nor destroy the city. For the next fourteen days the Vandals looted the homes of the wealthy but honored their pledge and departed. The city and its inhabitants survived the sack, and the credit for that mercy was given to Leo.

Valentinian was succeeded by a series of puppet emperors, none of them taken seriously by either their subjects or the Germanic warlords. The last of the puppets, Romulus Augustulus, was in 476 deposed by the Germanic warlord Odoacer, who took for himself the title, *rex Italiae* ("king of Italy"). The title was confirmed by Zeno, emperor of the east. The western half of the empire was now both *de facto* and *de jure* in barbarian hands, and the absence of any imperial authority heightened the responsibilities and prestige of the bishop of Rome. In 552 the emperor Justinian managed to defeat the Ostrogoths and to recover control of much of Italy. For a short time the bishop of Rome was again subordinate to the emperor in Constantinople, but when Justinian died in 565 Italy was once more essentially on its own.

A new wave of Germanic raiders, the Lombards (Langobards), crossed the Alps in 568. They quickly conquered the Po valley, driving out the Byzantines and establishing their capital at Pavia on the Ticino. For the third time the people of Italy turned to the bishop of Rome for security against Germanic warlords. Bishop Pelagius II (579-90) kept the city together when the Lombards besieged Rome, and his successor more or less solved the Lombard problem. Gregory I ("the Great") came from a distinguished family, and before his elevation to the bishopric he served as Prefect of the City, the highest secular office in Rome. Elected as bishop in 590, Gregory came to terms with Agilulf, king of the Lombards. Just as Leo had bought off the Huns and Vandals, so Gregory ransomed Rome from the Lombards. That was a short-term solution, and much more important was the conversion of the Lombards to catholic Christianity. This Gregory accomplished largely through the good offices of Queen Theudelinda. Many of the Lombards were still pagan and most of those who had become Christian were Arians. But Gregory persuaded Theudelinda to become a catholic Christian, and the queen soon brought her husband, King Agilulf, into the fold. Agilulf was thus transformed into the protector and temporal lord of northern and central Italy, while recognizing Gregory as his spiritual head. And thus did the best part of Italy north of the Po become Lombardy.

Eventually the Lombard crisis greatly increased the popes' political power. In the early

medieval period the city of Rome and dozens of neighboring towns were effectively ruled by the pope. The pope's temporal power was formalized in the eighth century, with the Donation of Pepin. After defeating the Lombards in 755, Pepin the Short, son of Charles Martel and father of Charlemagne, created the so-called Papal States, making the pope the ruler of the exarchate of Ravenna and of whatever other lands in northern and central Italy had until then been the nominal possessions of the Byzantine emperor. The justification for appointing the pope as a temporal ruler was the Donation of Constantine, which shortly before 755 had been forged precisely for this purpose.

The rise of the papacy was not simply the result of external crises and of the default of imperial power in the western provinces. Successive bishops of Rome made a concerted effort to exercise authority over the bishops in the other cities of Latin Christendom. A clear example of this was Leo the Great's assumption of power over the bishops of Gaul. Because Arles was the capital of the southernmost Gallic province, Bishop Patroclus of Arles had a "metropolitan" authority over the bishops of other cities in the province in the early fifth century. Patroclus's successor at Arles, Hilary, inherited this authority and made use of it by deposing Bishop Chelidonius of Vesontio (Besançon). The charges were that Chelidonius had married a widow rather than a virgin, and that before becoming a bishop Chelidonius had as a civil magistrate condemned persons to death. Either of those actions, Hilary insisted, disqualified a man for the office of bishop. Chelidonius refused to give up his bishopric at Besançon, however, and appealed to Leo in Rome, asking him to overrule Hilary. That Leo did, and when Hilary protested that responsibility for the churches of Gaul rested with the bishop of Arles and not with the bishop of Rome, Leo met the challenge directly. Declaring that the metropolitan bishops of all the provinces were under the authority of the bishop of Rome, Leo published an order that Hilary, although he might continue as bishop of Arles, was no longer to have metropolitan rights over the churches of Gaul. Leo's order was accepted by the Gallic bishops, who thereafter regarded themselves as answerable to Leo rather than to Hilary. In contrast, Leo's attempt to extend his authority to the eastern, Greek-speaking provinces was ineffective.

A language factor must therefore be included in explaining the rise of the papacy. In the eastern half of the Roman empire Greek was the dominant language, against which Latin made no headway. Other languages, however, remained strong. Coptic Christianity had begun in the late third century, and Syriac even earlier. Until the fifth century, when Monophysitism split them from the majority of bishops gathered in ecumenical councils, these churches were a part of the catholic church. Trinitarian Christianity was also translated into Armenian, Georgian and Ethiopic. In the western provinces of the Roman empire Latin had no competitor as an ecclesiastical language, and Rome had no competitor as a center of the Latin-speaking world. No Keltic-language culture had arisen, nor were the Punic- and Berber-speaking populations of North Africa literate in those languages. Throughout the western half of the empire, if you worshiped the Christian trinity you did so in Latin. The Germanic invaders, it is true, had their Gothic Bible and conducted their worship in the Gothic language, but that was the extent of their literary culture, and their Christianity was "Arian." When the barbarians joined the civilized world and learned Latin they more readily were converted to trinitarianism and to obeying the bishop of Rome.

The decline of monotheistic or "Arian" Christianity also strengthened the position of the

Roman papacy, which all along was staunchly trinitarian. So long as the Vandal kingdom in Africa, the Visigothic kingdom in Spain, and the Burgundians in Gaul were “Arian” they provided protection for monotheist churches. In 534 the Vandal king, Gelimer, was defeated by the Byzantine general Belisarius, ending the Vandals’ control over North Africa. The Byzantines of course restored trinitarian Christianity and persecuted the Arians. In Gaul the Burgundians gave up “Arianism” in the sixth century, after their combination with the Franks. Finally, the conversion of Reccared to the catholic creed added the churches of Spain to the dominion of Rome.

By the time of Gregory’s death in 604 the catholic church throughout the Latin west was firmly controlled by the bishop of Rome, whom we may hereafter call “the pope.”<sup>22</sup> To avoid confusion we may use the term, “Catholic,” with a capital C, to refer to this church. We must note, however, that the Greek-speaking church in the eastern Mediterranean also called and still calls itself “catholic” (*katholikē* is a Greek word, for which a Latin equivalent would be *universalis*). But the new term “orthodox” was also much used by Greek Christians,<sup>23</sup> and that adjective was not borrowed by the Latin church. It is therefore conventional to use the term, “Orthodox church,” for the catholic church in the Byzantine empire, and “Catholic church” for the catholic church in the Latin west. Although relations between the Catholic and the Orthodox churches were somewhat strained by the beginning of the seventh century, both churches still regarded themselves and each other as constituents of the one catholic church, the *ekklesia katholikē*.

## **The beginnings of the Holy Roman Empire**

When Pope Leo III anointed Charlemagne as *imperator Romanorum* (“emperor of the Romans”) on Christmas day of 800, Leo intended the ceremony and the title as a challenge to Empress Irene in Constantinople. Until then the city of Rome had been nominally subject to the emperor in Constantinople. With Charlemagne’s coronation that changed, and the city of Rome was now coupled with the *regnum Francorum*, the “kingdom of the Franks,” which at its height stretched from the Bay of Biscay to Budapest, and from the English Channel to Rome. This Carolingian empire remained intact under Louis the Pious, Charlemagne’s son, but at Louis’ death it was divided among his three sons.

The last of the Carolingian line to rule east of the Rhine was Konrad I, whose kingdom consisted of Franconia and Saxony. Dying without an heir in 919, Konrad was succeeded by the Duke of Saxony, Henry the Fowler (Heinrich der Vogler). Henry and his son, Otto I (936-973), were both conquerors, who extended their realm to cover not only most of what is today Germany but also northern Italy and western Poland. The relationship of Henry and his dynasty to the Catholic church was unusual, and evolved into what is conventionally called the Holy Roman Empire. When Henry I became king of Franconia and Saxony in May of 919 he refused to be anointed, regarding that sacrament as an admission that he was under the authority of the pope. He treated the bishops and abbots of Germany as his own vassals, a policy that Otto elaborated and confirmed. But Otto and the popes, most of whom were relatively weak, recognized that they needed each other. In 962 Otto went to Rome and there was crowned by Pope John XII as emperor, the first such coronation since Charlemagne’s. In 964 Otto returned to Rome to oust Benedict V, whom the Romans had installed as the new pope when John XII

died. Otto installed his own favorite, Leo VIII, and made the Roman people and clergy swear that they would henceforth install no new pope without the confirmation of their candidate by Otto or his heirs.

In retrospect the coronation of Otto by Pope John can be seen as the beginning of the Holy Roman Empire, but that name was not used by Otto or his immediate successors. Most often, Otto described himself as the king of Germany. Only toward the middle of the eleventh century did the name *imperium Romanum* ("Roman empire") begin to be used for the German empire, and occasionally it was joined by the adjective *sacrum* ("holy").

## **The Greek Orthodox church and the ecumenical councils**

In the fifth century the language of the Bible and the liturgy in four of the five "patriarchal" cities was Greek. When the bishop of Rome began to claim monarchical power over the other patriarchs, the Greek-speaking churches initially ignored him. Rome, along with the rest of Italy and the western provinces, was at the time overrun by barbarians, and the city itself had been sacked twice. What survived of the Roman empire was now centered in Constantinople, and in this empire most people spoke Greek. In the fifth and sixth centuries the center of gravity for the catholic church was clearly in the eastern Mediterranean.

The size and strength of the Greek-speaking church was greatly diminished by the Arabic conquests in the 630s and 640s. By the end of Umar's califate he was the temporal master of three of the Greek-speaking patriarchs, leaving the patriarch of Constantinople as the chief ecclesiastical figure in the Byzantine empire. Although the Muslim calif treated the three catholic patriarchs in the Arabian empire with dignity, he permitted all Christians to believe what they wished to believe. Many Christians therefore took the opportunity to leave the Orthodox church and to join the Nestorian or one of the Monophysite communions (especially the Coptic church in Egypt and the Jacobite Syriac church in the Levant). By the eighth century the Greek-speaking wing of the catholic church was becoming almost coterminous with the Byzantine empire: Anatolia, and a small part of southeastern Europe.

And yet this church could still claim to be the catholic or universal Christian church. The patriarch of Constantinople was addressed as "the Ecumenical Patriarch," and had the honor of presiding whenever an ecumenical council assembled. This small dignity was not contested by the other patriarchs in the east (the pope in Rome, however, objected). All seven ecumenical councils were held either in Constantinople itself or in the nearby cities of Ephesos, Chalcedon and Nicaea. To these ecumenical councils came bishops from the Dar al-Islam as well as from the Latin west, and their presence seemed to confirm that the Byzantine empire was indeed the heart of Christendom. The last ecumenical council was held at Constantinople in 787, and its work was to reassert the value of images (icons) in Christian worship. That controversy deserves a closer look.

## **The Iconoclasm**

The success of Islam and - more dramatically - of the Arabian empire greatly influenced

the history of Christianity. An early example of this influence is the episode that is conventionally called the Iconoclasm, or the Iconoclastic controversy. For most of the eighth century and almost half of the ninth, the Byzantine empire was riven by a struggle - often spiraling into violence and bloodshed - between those Christians who adored icons (the Greek word *eikon* meant “image”) and those who abhorred them. At issue in the conflict was what some Christians regarded as the worship of images, and what other Christians thought of as the pious veneration of statues and pictures - some of them endowed with miraculous power - of Jesus, Mary, the apostles, martyrs, saints, and various figures from the Old Testament.

From the early third century, and especially since the conversion of Constantine, many Christians had become accustomed to visual representations of scenes and persons described in the Bible. Visual representation had always been a salient characteristic of Greco-Roman civilization, and as pagans became Christians they brought with them their fondness for representational art in the service of religion. By the late fourth century statues, reliefs, mosaics and paintings had made their way into the churches, and by the seventh century it was common for a Christian in a church or monastery to kneel and pray before an *eikon* of Jesus, Mary (these were especially popular), or one of the saints. Prayers before these images often were accompanied by the lighting of a votive candle or the burning of a pinch of incense.

It is very clear that many Christians supposed that the image itself possessed a miraculous power to heal and to help. This belief had been powerfully abetted in 544, when a Sassanid attack on the city of Edessa was supposed to have been miraculously foiled by the *acheiropoieton* (“not made by human hands”) image of Jesus on a linen cloth. This cloth, which after 544 was celebrated and nicknamed the *mandylion* (“handkerchief” or “towel”), was supposed to have been brought to Edessa by the apostle Thaddeus soon after Jesus’ Ascension into Heaven. In the wake of the Edessan “miracle,” other images in other cities were reported to have displayed similarly miraculous powers. It was not uncommon that in a parish, whether in the Greek or the Latin wing of the catholic church, one particular icon would match or even surpass the parish’s relics and reliquary as a worker of miracles.

Although icons were found in most of the “Melkite” (Orthodox) churches and monasteries of Egypt, the Levant and Mesopotamia, other communions were less friendly to icons. Any picture or statue of Jesus was anathema to the Paulicians in eastern Anatolia, a dualist sect that made its appearance in the middle of the seventh century and that flourished until the middle of the ninth, when many of its members were slaughtered by their Orthodox opponents. Monophysite and Nestorian Christians also were generally opposed to images in their churches. It was especially in the Latin west and in the Greek-speaking churches of the Byzantine empire that Mariolatry flourished and that icons of her and of her divine son were the object of devotion. The higher clergy looked upon images as merely a means of instruction for the largely illiterate laity, but for much of this laity (and also for many monks) the images were in fact objects of worship.

In contrast to their centrality in Christianity, miracles in Islam were of little importance. Muslims acknowledged that Moses, Aaron, Jesus and other early prophets had worked miracles. But the last demonstration of God’s miraculous power, so Muslims believed, was the revelation of the Quran to Muhammad: since the death of the Prophet, miracles have ceased. A mosque

therefore had neither icons nor relics. In the Hijaz of pre-Islamic Arabia divine images were invariably “idols.” It was against idols - such as those of the three goddesses at Mecca - and against idolatry that most of Muhammad’s energies had been expended. His antipathy against images extended beyond the statues and figurines of the old gods and goddesses. Perhaps under the influence of Talmudic synagogues in the Hijaz, Muhammad denounced representational art of any kind. One of the *hadiths* recounted the Prophet’s scolding of Aisha for having brought into the house a pillow embroidered with figures:

Narrated Aisha (mother of the faithful believers): I bought a cushion with pictures on it. When Allah’s Apostle saw it, he kept standing at the door and did not enter the house. I noticed the sign of disgust on his face, so I said, “O Allah’s Apostle, I repent to Allah and His Apostle. (Please let me know) what sin I have done.” Allah’s Apostle said, “The painters (*i.e.* owners) of these pictures will be punished on the Day of Resurrection. It will be said to them, ‘Put life in what you have created (*i.e.* painted).’” The Prophet added, “The angels do not enter a house where there are pictures.”<sup>24</sup>

In none of the mosques, from the humblest to the great Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, did the Muslims install representational art, nor did most Muslims display any image in their homes.

The anti-iconic religion of their Muslim conquerors, reinforced by a similar aversion to images in rabbinic Judaism, confirmed for many Christians in the east that icons as such were displeasing to God. For a long time the Muslim califs and their provincial governors made no effort to remove icons from churches: as protected *Dhimmis*, the Christians were allowed to worship as they chose in their churches. But in 723 the Umayyad calif Yazid II issued an edict ordering the destruction of all representational art throughout his empire.<sup>25</sup> Yazid’s successor revoked the edict, but among Christians themselves the anxiety grew that venerating an icon was nothing less than idolatry. Iconoclasm, or “the breaking of icons,” began among the Christian subjects of the Umayyad califs. From Iraq, Egypt and Syria, the movement spread to the Byzantine empire.

In 726, three years after the edict of Yazid II, the Byzantine emperor Leo III ordered the destruction of a statue of Jesus that had long been prominent in the Bronze Stoa of his palace at Constantinople. A crowd of monks and women, believing the stories of miracles that the statue had wrought, gathered to protect it. In the riot that followed the crowd killed the imperial officer in charge of the demolition (in retaliation Leo ordered the execution of the riot’s ringleaders). The public outcry did not deter Leo from his convictions, and in 730 he assembled a small council of bishops to prohibit the veneration or even the display of icons in the churches. Attempts to enforce the edict were often met with resistance and in some places the icons were defended by armed rebels who had to be put down by the army. At his death in 741 Leo was succeeded by his son, Constantine V (741-775), an occasionally brilliant emperor who was also a fierce iconoclast. In 754 Constantine convoked what he called an ecumenical council. The 338 bishops in attendance (the pope, three patriarchs, and many lesser bishops opposed the emperor and boycotted the council) issued a ringing denunciation of the images:

Supported by the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers, we declare unanimously in the name of the Holy Trinity, that there shall be rejected and removed and cursed out of the Christian

Church every likeness which is made out of any material whatever.<sup>26</sup>

The declaration was followed by riots, rebellions, murders, exiles, and executions, with the two sides demonstrating equal zeal for their cause. The empress Irene restored the images in 787, convoking a council at Nicaea toward that end. To the anathematizing of the iconoclasts the council added that no church building could be properly consecrated unless it housed at least one Christian relic. Icons were banished again by a council convened by Leo V in 815, but were finally restored in 843 by the so-called Council of Orthodoxy.<sup>27</sup>

## The Paulicians

A Christian sect of considerable importance in Anatolia from the seventh century to the eleventh was that of the Paulicians.<sup>28</sup> The name “Paulicians” was conferred on them by their opponents (they called themselves Christians, and claimed that they alone were true Christians), possibly because of the centrality of the Apostle Paul in their teachings. The origins of the movement may have lain in the sixth century, but it did not become noticeable until the seventh. It began in Armenia, expanded into the eastern provinces of the Byzantine empire, and smaller Paulician communities were eventually to be found in western Anatolia and even in the southern Balkans.

The Paulicians turned their back on the established Orthodox church of the Byzantine empire, and in some respects were medieval forerunners of Protestantism. They set great store by the New Testament, did not venerate saints or the Virgin, and regarded icons as Satanic. Unlike Protestants, however, the Paulicians were Adoptionists. They believed, that is, that Jesus was not the incarnate *logos* or the eternal Son of God: he became the Son of God by adoption at about the age of thirty, when he was baptized and the Holy Spirit descended upon him from Heaven. As the Paulicians saw it, Mary was not the *theotokos* (Mother of God), but merely Jesus’ human mother.<sup>29</sup> The mass, or eucharist, was of little value for the Paulicians, as were the other traditional sacraments, but baptism was of surpassing importance. Rejecting infant baptism, the Paulicians baptized only adolescent or adult believers. The Paulicians are usually described as dualists, or even as a relic of Gnosticism or Manichaeism, but that characterization seems to be due largely to Greek Orthodox writers, who wished to deny that the Paulicians were Christians at all. Armenian sources tend not to reflect this bias.<sup>30</sup>

Because the Paulicians’ creed was attractive in Anatolia (the Iconoclasm seems to have sprung from the same roots as Paulicianism) their numbers grew. Emperor Michael I, early in the ninth century, tried to suppress them, in part because of their aversion to icons. As a result of Michael’s policy, the Paulicians became openly rebellious and were given some support by the Muslim amir of Melitene, along the upper Euphrates. The rebellion of course increased the imperial hostility against the Paulicians, and Empress Theodora persecuted them without mercy. During her regency (842-56) the imperial forces - in the service of the Orthodox church - killed Paulicians by the tens of thousands.<sup>31</sup>

Seeing that they could maintain their religion only by establishing it in a sovereign state, the Paulicians created a small state for themselves near the upper Euphrates, based first in the

vicinity of Melitene and then at Tephrike (today Devriğu), in the mountains south of Trebizond. They became famous as fighters, and from their base in eastern Anatolia they made raids into Byzantine territory, often in conjunction with the Muslim amir of Melitene.<sup>32</sup> Under the leadership of one Chrysocheir (“Golden hand”) a Paulician army reached the Aegean. After they took the walled Ayasuluk hill, just outside the harbor city of Ephesos, the raiders vented their fury on the Basilica of St. John, which since its construction by Justinian had been a favorite destination for icon-worshipping pilgrims. To show his contempt for the basilica, Chrysocheir turned it into a stable for his horses. One of the proud accomplishments of the emperor Basil I (867-886), himself of Armenian parentage, was his defeat of the Paulicians and his dismantling of their state. Chrysocheir was killed, Tephrike was razed to the ground, and the Paulicians were once more a persecuted minority within the Byzantine empire.

### **Byzantine tensions with Rome, and the Photian schism**

While the Umayyads still ruled in Damascus, at Constantinople Leo III (717-741) had established what has conventionally (although erroneously) been called the “Isaurian” dynasty of the Byzantine empire.<sup>33</sup> The dynasty had begun well, but was then plagued by the Iconoclast controversy. At the death of Leo IV in 780 rule passed to his widow, the Athenian Irene, and to their son Constantine VI, still a child. Irene and Constantine VI ruled jointly until August of 797, when Irene ordered that her son be arrested and blinded, an atrocity that caused his death soon thereafter. Irene’s orders were perhaps religiously motivated: she was an Iconophile while Constantine was suspected of harboring Iconoclast sympathies.<sup>34</sup> As empress, Irene reigned alone from 797 to 802.

It was at this time that western Europe was finally severed from Constantinople. Although Italy, Gaul, Spain, and Britain had been (except for occasional and brief interludes) outside the empire ruled from Constantinople since the late fourth century, the fiction of a single “Roman empire” had been maintained all along. This ideal empire was ruled by one sovereign who was the viceroy of the Christ, and the inhabitants of the empire professed the Orthodox creed of Christianity. By the time of the Christ’s triumphant return, so it was believed, the entire world would be brought within the Roman empire and the True Church. The Byzantine emperors of the fifth and sixth centuries had regularly supported those Germanic kings (especially the Franks) who were “catholic” against their Arian enemies. And the Frankish kings had with some seriousness regarded themselves as vassals of the Roman emperor in Constantinople.

For many Christians in the west this view of the world was given up during Irene’s reign as empress. Because the Byzantine throne was now occupied by a woman who had effectively murdered her own son, many Christians in western Europe supposed that there no longer *was* a Roman emperor. Accordingly, the pope invited the Frankish king Charles the Great - Charlemagne - to Rome and on Christmas Day of 800 crowned him as the Roman emperor. Had the old widower Charles married the middle-aged widow Irene, a match that was in fact contemplated, a single Roman empire stretching from Anatolia to the English Channel and the Pyrenees might have been reconstituted. In the event, however, there was no marriage and the coronation in 800 ended the fantasy of a single Roman empire and widened the gulf between

eastern and western Christianity. In 802 Irene was deposed in Constantinople, ending the “Isaurian” dynasty. The Byzantine empire was taken over by Nikephoros I (802-11).

Pope Leo III’s coronation of Charlemagne as emperor of Rome signaled that Leo no longer considered himself even nominally subordinate to the emperor or empress in Constantinople. Although the Latin and Greek churches remained formally in communion with each other, they were obviously now rivals rather than partners. No more ecumenical councils were held. Late in the reign of the Byzantine emperor Michael III (842-867), and the patriarchate of Photios, a temporary separation of the two churches occurred. Pope Nicholas I excommunicated the learned Photios, and Photios reciprocated by excommunicating Nicholas. The breach was repaired at a council in Constantinople in 879.

Already in the Photian schism the *filioque* doctrine was seized upon by both sides as a pretext for excommunicating the other, although the actual point of contention was Nicholas’ support of Photios’ rival for the Constantinopolitan patriarchate. Because grounds for excommunication were traditionally the “heresy” of the party being excommunicated, a doctrinal difference was required and the *filioque* controversy provided one. The point of this minor difference was that some western churches had added (perhaps in the sixth century) the word *filioque* to their Latin version of the Nicene creed. According to this Latin version of the creed, that is, the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from God the Father but also from God the Son.

### **Conversion of South Slavic and East Slavic kingdoms to Orthodox Christianity**

One of the consequences of the ninth-century rivalry between the Latin and the Greek churches, or the Catholic and the Orthodox, was the conversion to Christianity of two Slavic kingdoms. As had been the case in many other kingdoms, the conversion of the ruler was tantamount to the conversion of all his subjects. Thus it was that the Moravians and Bulgarians became Christian, and they were eventually followed by millions of other Slavic speakers.

The South Slavic languages were those spoken south of Romania and the Danube river: most importantly, these were Serbo-Croatian and Bulgarian. Linguistic evolution north of the Danube and Romania had gone in a quite different direction, resulting in the West Slavic language group (Polish, Czech, Moravian and Slovak). To the east, on the Eurasian steppe and perhaps especially in the vicinity of the Dnieper river, Proto-Slavic had evolved into the East Slavic language group (Ukrainian, Russian, Belarusian).

In the early ninth century almost all Slavic speakers were still pagan. The Byzantine emperor Michael III was anxious about the Bulgarians on his northern frontier, and in order to press them on two sides Michael courted the Moravians, who lived along the Morava river in what is now the eastern half of the Czech Republic. Missionaries from western Germany, controlled by the Frankish Carolingians, had come to Moravia and tried to convert the king and his subjects to Catholicism, but the Moravians were resistant to Latin Christianity and suspicious of the empire-building Carolingians.

Michael exploited the Moravians’ fears and persuaded Rastislav, the Moravian ruler, to invite into his kingdom Orthodox evangelists and priests. The two men whom Emperor Michael

and Patriarch Photios selected were superbly suited for the task. These were Cyril and Methodius, brothers from Thessalonike who had grown up speaking both Greek and the South Slavic dialect then current in Macedonia. In addition to being priests and monks the brothers were linguistically talented (by the 860s they were also fluent in Hebrew and Arabic). With help from Rastislav and Photios, the brothers began translating the most important parts of the Bible into their own South Slavic dialect, which modern linguists for obvious reasons have named Old Church Slavonic.<sup>35</sup> In order to make their translation Cyril and Methodius made use of the Glagolitic alphabet, which could adequately express Slavic phonemes (the so-called Cyrillic alphabet is a slightly later script, less cumbersome than the Glagolitic). Although Old Church Slavonic was not readily intelligible for the West Slavic Moravians, it did not sound to them nearly so foreign as Latin, and with some effort they could learn it. In 863 Prince Rastislav and his court were baptized into Orthodox Christianity, and most of the Moravians followed.

The Orthodox phase of Moravian Christianity did not last long. In the 870s and 880s Charles the Fat and his successor as Holy Roman Emperor, Arnulf of Carinthia, extended their sway over the Moravians, and this military and political domination meant that Moravia now fell under the Roman pope rather than under the patriarch of Constantinople. In 885 Pope Stephen V ordered the Moravians to use Latin in their worship and to put aside their Old Church Slavonic Bible and liturgy. Latin remained the liturgical language of the Moravians until the middle of the fifteenth century, when the “Hussite” Moravians broke away from Rome and began using their own language in worship.

In 864, a year after Rastislav and his Moravians were converted from paganism to Christianity, the Bulgarians were likewise converted, although for slightly different reasons. In order to gain an ally against the Byzantines Pope Nicholas was eager to convert the Bulgarian ruler, Boris I, to Catholic Christianity. To prevent such an outcome Emperor Michael went to war with Boris and defeated him. The treaty imposed by Michael required Boris to become a vassal of the Byzantine empire and to be baptized into the Orthodox church. Along with King Boris came the rest of the Bulgarians. Unlike the Moravians, most Bulgarians spoke a South Slavic dialect, not too distant from Old Church Slavonic.

Once converted, the Bulgarians became zealous in their Christianity. Many of the oldest texts in Old Church Slavonic were written in Bulgaria. It was in Bulgaria that the transition from the Glagolitic to the so-called Cyrillic alphabet was made. From Bulgaria missionaries brought Orthodox Christianity to Serbians and other South Slavic speakers, and they also carried it eastward to the vast pagan steppes where Ukrainian, Russian or another East Slavic language was spoken. In the late ninth and early tenth centuries a few churches were established among the East Slavic speakers, but it was not until ca. 1000 that Christianity was formally declared the religion of the Russian kingdom of Kiev. Vladimir I (“the Great”), the pagan king of Kievan Rus’, negotiated with the Byzantine emperor Basil II a military alliance and a marriage to Basil’s sister. The prerequisite, however, was Vladimir’s conversion to Orthodox Christianity. Vladimir was accordingly baptized, and proceeded to demolish the pagan shrines throughout his realm. His baptism, and therefore the establishment of the Russian Orthodox Church, is traditionally dated to 988.

## **The centrality of the Church in catholic, orthodox Christendom**

Christianity in both the Latin west and the Greek east during the early Middle Ages was inseparable from the Church. For modern Protestants religion can be largely a personal or familial matter, and only in part dependent upon a church. Martin Luther insisted upon “the priesthood of all believers,” denying that the Church and its clergy were essential for the individual Christian’s salvation. Luther’s motto was “faith alone, scripture alone” (*sola fides, sola scriptura*), a formula that intentionally omitted “the Church.” For five hundred years the Bible and belief have been the essence of Protestant Christianity.

In medieval Christianity, whether called catholic or orthodox, this was not the case. The Bible played a relatively small role. Few Christians were literate enough to read the Bible, and even those who could read would have had difficulty understanding what they were reading, since the available Bibles were written in Latin (in the west) or in a koine Greek (in the east) that by the seventh century was not easily intelligible. At worship services passages from the Gospels and from the letters of Paul were read aloud in the ancient languages by the priest, but not much of the readings is likely to have been understood by the congregation. On most Sundays the priest gave a short “talk” (*sermo*) to the parishioners in the vernacular language, but such a “sermon” was among the least important features of the worship service.

The main feature of worship in both the Greek and the Latin wings of the Church was the sacrament of the eucharist, or mass. The eucharistic liturgy became more and more elaborate as time went on. The repetition of blessings, prayers, litanies and responses; the consecration of the bread and wine; the uncovering of the Host, the elevation of the Chalice; all of this was done with great and moving ceremony. The changing of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ was performed by the priest at what was appropriately called an “altar,” because the eucharist was understood to be a repetition of Jesus’ sacrifice at Golgotha. The priest distributed the bread and wine to the congregants, thereby providing them with remission of their sins. Over the centuries the practice of regularly distributing bread and wine to the laity lapsed, in principle because of concern lest crumbs of bread and drops of wine spilled on the floor desecrate the body and blood of Christ. In the Latin church another change was directed toward the same concern: by the eleventh century the bread used for the mass in Latin churches was usually unleavened, thus reducing the dropping of crumbs. That all communicants must actually eat the bread and drink the wine (which in northern climes was not so readily available as in the Mediterranean) came to be regarded as inessential: communicants received the benefits of the eucharist simply by joining in the confession of sins and being present when the priest effected the transubstantiation of the bread and wine.

The other sacraments of the Church were also performed only by the clergy. Baptism, confession, and the marriage ceremony were the responsibilities of the local priest. The sacraments of confirmation (*chrismation*) and of ordination into holy orders were reserved for the diocesan bishop. To these six sacraments was eventually added a seventh: the anointing of the critically sick (*unctio extrema*). This sacrament too, like the eucharist, provided the recipient with forgiveness of sins. The oil that the local priest used in “extreme unction” came from a supply that had been blessed by the bishop. With all of these sacramental responsibilities, the medieval clergy was a class sharply distinct from the laity. The concerns of the laity were temporal, while those of the clergy were spiritual. As had been declared already by Cyprian in the third century, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*: “there is no salvation outside the Church.” This

doctrine was unquestioned so long as the Latin and Greek churches regarded themselves as equal parts of the same catholic Church.

Medieval church buildings - the physical structures - were important in ways that to modern Protestants are unfamiliar. It was only in the churches that the first six sacraments were performed. And it was in the churches that the holy relics and icons were kept. Because all of the relics and many of the icons were believed to have worked miracles from time to time, they were the objects of devotion. A statue of Jesus or the Virgin was almost invariably attended by an array of votive candles.

### **The Great Schism and its consequences for the Church**

The “Great Schism” between the Greek and the Latin churches occurred in 1054. Suspicions and resentment had been increasing for centuries, but the split came when Michael Keroularios (Cerularius) was patriarch of Constantinople and Leo IX was the pope. Ill-will between these two men began when Keroularios criticized Leo for condoning the Latin practice of using unleavened bread in the eucharist. This was followed by mutual recriminations about the *filioque* doctrine (by the time of Leo’s papacy the word was included in the Nicene Creed throughout Latin Christendom). These were pretexts, however, and the real issue was the refusal of the four eastern patriarchs to recognize the pope as their superior. Whereas the patriarchs regarded the pope as their colleague in the Latin west, the pope recognized no colleague and saw himself as nothing less than the earthly vicar of Jesus the Christ. In 1054 Pope Leo sent three legates bearing a papal bull of excommunication for Keroularios, and the bull was placed on the altar of Haghia Sophia. Keroularios retaliated by excommunicating Leo from the catholic and orthodox church. The consequences of all this were not immediately recognized, because it was expected that the excommunications - like those in the Photian schism in the ninth century - would after a short time be rescinded. They were not rescinded until 1965.

The consequences of the Great Schism are incalculable. The most obvious casualty was the idea of a single church that was both catholic and orthodox. Although “the Church” - a singular noun with no limiting adjective - continued to be a term regularly used in both Greek and Latin discourse, it no longer corresponded to reality. Nor did the adjectives, “catholic” and “orthodox.” After 1054, Cyprian’s formula of “no salvation outside the Church” was necessarily followed by the question, “Which church?” One may speculate that the spread of Bogomilism in the east, and the appearance of the renegade Cathar and Waldensian movements in the west, were in part enabled by the fracturing of “the Church.” The Great Schism may also have been one of the essential conditions for the success of such “heretics” as John Wycliffe and Ian Hus, and finally for the Protestant Reformation.

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1. The Council of Chalcedon, in 451, decided to remove Jerusalem from the jurisdiction of the bishop of Antioch and to make the bishop of Jerusalem autocephalous. In 466 the bishop of

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Antioch also gave up jurisdiction over Georgia, making the metropolitan bishop of Georgia (located in the small city of Mtskheta) autocephalous. One reason for the bishop of Antioch's decision may have been to spare himself having to deal with the Georgians, who lived along the southern slopes of the Caucasus and most of whom did not understand Greek. In the fifth century no uniform terminology was yet in use for the handful of autocephalous bishops. They were usually called either bishops or archbishops, and the bishop of Mtskheta was addressed by the Georgians as *Katholikos*. By the middle of the sixth century the term "patriarch" had become conventional.

2. On the few Greek translations of Latin literature in the fourth century see Fisher 1982.

3. See Meyendorff 1983, p. 2: "The central theme, or intuition, of Byzantine theology is that man's nature is not a static, 'closed,' autonomous entity, but a dynamic reality, determined in its very existence by its relationship to God. This relationship is seen as a process of ascent and as communion - man, created in the image of God, is called to achieve freely a 'divine similitude'." Meyendorff goes on to generalize that Byzantine theology "can easily be contrasted with the static categories of 'nature' and 'grace' which dominated the thought of post-Augustinian Western Christianity." Tennant 1968, p. 328, observed that Theodore, bishop of Mopsuestia, who repudiated the doctrine of Original Sin and who was an exact contemporary of Augustine, "represents the opposition which served to give definiteness to the Augustinian doctrine." Theodore wrote voluminously but almost no one in Latin Christendom read his books.

4. Traditionally called the Syrian Orthodox Church, the communion in 2000 changed its name to the Syriac Orthodox Church. "Syriac" refers to the Eastern Aramaic language used in the church. The adjective "Jacobite" is used often by outsiders and seldom by insiders.

5. Zeno, who died in the 370s, is supposed to have been the eighth bishop of Verona. Some 93 sermons - in Latin - of Zeno are preserved. At Aquileia a fine Christian basilica was evidently begun in 313, immediately after the Edict of Milan was issued (the original basilica was destroyed, along with most of the city, by Attila in 452).

6. The Christians of Vicenza remembered two martyrs, Felix and Fortunatus, who were victims of the Great Persecution at the beginning of the fourth century.

7. On this see Lizzi 1990.

8. Lizzi 1990, pp. 169-70.

9. Sokrates *Hist. Eccl.* 7.30 reports that the Burgundians converted to Christianity when they were pressed by the Huns, on the assumption that the god of the Roman empire was necessarily stronger than their traditional pagan gods.

10. For reservations about the Arianism of the Lombards see Fanning 1981.

11. Two partial manuscripts of Ulfilas' Gothic Bible survive, both dating from the 6<sup>th</sup> century. By the 7<sup>th</sup> century Gothic was almost everywhere a dead language, having been driven out by the

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Romance languages or dialects.

12. In his *Epistola ad Coroticum* Patricius says that he was the son of a decurion (*decurione patre nascor*).

13. In what follows I shall subsume the Angles under the name, “Saxons.” In classical literature the Saxons are first mentioned by Claudius Ptolemy (*Geographia* 2.10) in his ethnography of Germany. The Saxons, according to Ptolemy, were neighbors of the Cimbri on Germany’s northern coast. By the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century the Saxons had become a somewhat wider coalition of raiders. Just as the name *Franci* (Franks) came from the small throwing-ax known as a *francisca*, the Saxon name seems to have come from the *seax*, a long knife carried as a personal weapon. In the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, as barbarian raids into the Roman empire became chronic, the Saxons emerged as one of the most formidable coalition of raiders. The Angles may have been another such coalition, but they may also have been only a geographical subset of the Saxon raiders: the Angles may have been, that is, “Saxons from Angeln.” The place called *Angeln*, on the eastern coast of Schleswig-Holstein, was a small promontory reaching out into the Bay of Kiel. The original Angles must have been a tiny population group. The *Anglii* are briefly mentioned by Tacitus (*Germania* 40.2) as one entry in a list of seven “unremarkable” and soon forgotten peoples barricaded behind forests and rivers on Germany’s northern extremity. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century raiders and conquerors on Britain’s east coast called themselves “Angles,” while their accomplices in southern Britain identified themselves as “Saxons.” Because the Saxon name was in the 5<sup>th</sup> century embarking on a triumphal career in Germany itself, the name *Saxonland* could hardly be transferred to Britain without much confusion. The name *Angleland*, on the other hand, caused no such problem, because few people outside of Schleswig-Holstein had ever heard of the original Angeln.

14. It has seldom, however, been the subject of scholarship. The most comprehensive study of it is Morris 1995. A brief but excellent survey is Talbot 1887.

15. Meyendorff 1983, p. 6.

16. Talbot 1987, p. 229.

17. Talbot 1987, p. 230.

18. On the resurgence see Morris 1995, pp. 9-10. At pp. 64-89 Morris presents the evidence on the post-Iconoclast founders and benefactors of monasteries.

19. See Stephen Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary’s Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

20. On these eight icons see Wendy Beckett, *Encounters with God: In Quest of the Ancient Icons of Mary* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books 2009).

21. Medieval Soucebook: Leo I and Attila, at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/attila2.html>

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22. In the late medieval period it was believed that the supreme authority of the popes in the western half of the Roman empire began during the reign of Constantine. In the *Donations of Constantine* the emperor Constantine - about to leave Rome and take up residence in Constantinople - elevates the bishop of Rome to full ecclesiastical and political power in the city of Rome and the western provinces. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century Lorenzo Valla demonstrated that the *Donations* were a medieval forgery.

23. On the coinage and increasing usage of the noun ὀρθοδοξία and the adjective ὀρθόδοξος by Greek patristic writers see Chapter 18. Because “orthodox” was an entirely positive adjective, it was claimed just as vigorously by Monophysite communions as by the Chalcedonian Christians in the Greek East.

24. From the *Sahih* of Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 34, Number 318. Taken from the website <http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/bukhari/>.

25. Jenkins 1969, pp. 81-82. According to Greek Christian sources, Yazid fell ill and was close to death when a Jewish magician named Tessarakontapechys (“Forty Cubits”) promised the calif forty more years of life if he would rid his empire of all figured art. It is likely that Orthodox Christian sources, hostile to Iconoclasm, understated the degree to which eastern Christians themselves were opposed to the cult of images.

26. Vasiliev 1958, vol. 1, p. 260.

27. Jenkins 1969, pp. 154-55.

28. On the Paulicians see Garsoïan 1967.

29. Garsoïan 1967, pp. 151-54.

30. Garsoïan 1967, pp. 231-33.

31. Jenkins 1969, p. 159: “The persecution of the Paulicians - almost the only systematic attempt in Byzantine history to extirpate a whole religious sect - was ... as impolitic as it was cruel. The regiments of Theodora fell on them like wolves. One hundred thousand Paulicians were slaughtered, drowned, or hung on crosses. Their lands were confiscated to the treasury. And their remnant, still formidable, escaped eastwards into the territories about Melitene, where the Saracen emirs welcomed them with delight.”

32. Garsoïan 1967, pp. 127-29.

33. Isauria was a small district of southeastern Anatolia, immediately to the west of Cilicia. Leo’s birthplace, however, seems to have been to the east of Cilicia, near Commagene. Leo grew up speaking both Greek and Arabic. See Jenkins 1969, p. 61.

34. Jenkins 1969, pp. 101-02.

35. On this language see David Huntley, “Old Church Slavonic,” pp. 125-87 in Bernard Comrie

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and Greville Corbett, *The Slavonic Languages* (London: Routledge, 1993).