

**HINCMAR; AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY  
OF THE REVOLUTION IN THE ORGANIZATION  
OF THE CHURCH IN THE NINTH CENTURY.  
A DISSERTATION. REPRINTED FROM VOL. VIII.,  
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THE NINTH CENTURY

By

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TION OF THE CHURCH IN THE NINTH CEN-  
TURY.<sup>1</sup>

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In a consideration of the ninth century we realize that the Frankish world was bound to the old Roman world by more potent ties than those of memory. As we study the so-called superficial continuations of Roman institutions we discover that they are not dead and worthless relics, but living things. They grow even as we examine them. They strike deep roots into the very heart of Frankish institutions.

In the Frankish nation there was a force peculiarly Teutonic. This wrought upon and changed the very nature of the Roman survivals. So powerful was the detrusion, that tribes and peoples, crushed upon each other, were fused and melted together by the very pressure of their impact. Localism was eliminated by the same power that forced extraneous elements into homogeneity with the Teutonic mass.

From this conflict of forces came a new nation, animated by a new spirit, an entirely new spirit through which the world was to be regenerated—the free spirit which reposes on itself—the absolute self-determination of subjectivity. To this self-involved subjectivity, the corresponding objec-

<sup>1</sup> This monograph is a condensation of a somewhat larger work on the same subject.

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tivity stands opposed as absolutely alien. The distinction or antithesis which is evolved from these principles is that of church and state.<sup>1</sup>

The intellectual and political movements of the ninth century were to such a degree the natural and almost necessary expression and accompaniment of the adolescence of a great nation, that a parallel is clearly and easily seen between the intellectual attitude of Paschasius Radbertus and others in connection with the controversies concerning the doctrine of transubstantiation and that movement in which the so-called Pseudo-Isidore is so prominently identified.<sup>2</sup>

The metamorphosis of a more or less hazy and ambiguous belief in the real presence of Christ in the heart of a believer into a belief in a real presence in the host was a strict counterpart to the transformation of the moral authority of the universal Christian consciousness into a legal institution.<sup>3</sup> The indefinite, hazy, and ineffectual was obliged by the philosophy of history to become definite and active. One might have been satisfactory for mystic contemplation, the other was needed for real life work.

Under the iron hand of Charles the Great a Frankish empire was created. A sense of Teutonic nationality found expression. The church, too, grew in strength and influence, yet this growth was not normal; it was, if we may speak biologically, a metabolism in the molecular structure, a metensomatosis by which the very nature of the church was changed. The church of Charles the Great was not so much a Roman as a Frankish church. It had by katabolism become a national church, co-existent with the conception of a distinct political entity.<sup>4</sup>

A feeling of self-sufficiency in the spiritual as well as in the temporal affairs of the nation took possession of the Franks.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, p. 354.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Bunsen, C.C.J., *God in History*, vol. iii., c. viii.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Bunsen, *op. cit.*, p. 475.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Caroli Magni, *selecta Capitula ecclesiastica*, apud Labbé, ix., tit. i., cap. i., p. 232. *Ibid.*, c. iii., p. 233. *Headship of King and Queen. Concil. Aquisgr.*, an. 802. Labbé, ix., 265.



The position of the Frankish church was, in the nature of things, abnormal. The development of its individualism had been artificially stimulated. Its growth was, therefore, too rapid for the needs of the times. Withdrawal of stimulus, by the death of Charles the Great, brought arrestment, decay, and an end of self-sufficiency.

The work of Charles was by no means without its permanent influence. Though the detail of his administration did not endure; though his empire was divided, yet the social unity of the Teutonic peoples had been established. This consciousness of social unity found its counterpart in a realization of religious unity.

The ninth century has given to ecclesiastical history two great names. Yes, more—two personalities, whose importance in the development of the appellate jurisdiction of the Papacy and the centralization of church government is unique in their age. These powerful statesmen and learned churchmen were Nicholas, Bishop of Rome,<sup>1</sup> and Hincmar, Metropolitan of Rheims.<sup>2</sup>

Hincmar was the champion of the national rights of the Gallican church.<sup>3</sup> He strove to strengthen and extend the power and authority, whether executive, legislative or judicial, of the metropolitan sees. He maintained that it belonged, of right, to the metropolitans exclusively, to judge, as a court of the first instance, their suffragan bishops; to call provincial synods and to exercise control over the priests and bishops

<sup>1</sup> *Epistles of Nicholas I.* Mansi, *Conc.* xv., Migne, *Patrologia S. Lat.* v., cxiv., p. 769 *et seq.*; v., cxxix., p. 1011, *et seq.*; *Anastasius Vita. Nicol.*

<sup>2</sup> *Opera omnia juxta editionem Sirmondianam*, 1852, 2 v. (Migne, *Patrol. S. Lat.*, v. 125, 126.)

Duchesne, A., *Hist. Franc. Script.*, v. 2, pp. 414, 456, 475, 484.

D'Achery, J. L., *Spicileg.* v. 3, p. 337.

Bouquet, M., *Rec. Hist. Gauls.* v. 9, p. 254; v. 7, pp. 292, 518; v. 6, p. 252; v. 7, p. 292, 518; v. 9, 254.

Noorden, C. von, *Hincmar*, Bonn, 1863.

Gess, W. F., *Merkwürdigkeiten aus d. Leben u. d. Schriften Hincmar*, Göttingen, 1806.

<sup>3</sup> *Cf.*, *de Jure Metropolitanorum*; Migne, *Patrol. S. Lat.*, v. 125; also Fleury, *Histoire Ecclesiastique*, xi., pp. 331, *et seq.*

of their dioceses, without the intervention or interference, except by law provided, of the Pope.

Such a conception of the rights of the metropolitans led Hincmar to inevitable conflict with the Roman See, for its Bishop, Nicholas I, as the champion of papal rights was bold, aggressive and strong with claims that were bounded by possibilities, not by law.<sup>1</sup>

In considering the change in the church constitution that was consummated in the ninth century, we are obliged to study that remarkable set of documents known as the decretals of Pseudo-Isidore. Their effect upon the policy of the Roman See was profound and lasting.

The changes produced by the application of the Pseudo-Isidore to the organization of the church may be segregated thus:

- I. Those accentuating the papal headship over a universal church.<sup>2</sup>
- II. Those by which the power of the metropolitan sees was overthrown.<sup>3</sup>
- III. Those by which the suffragan bishops were given greater power and placed in direct connection with Rome.<sup>4</sup>

In discussing the change which occurred in the ninth century in the constitution of the church, it is imperative that we correctly conceive the status of the Papacy at the period in which the change took place. From such knowledge we may deduce the extent of papal jurisdiction over the ecclesi-

<sup>1</sup> "No branch of the papal theocratic monarchy, whether in relation to spiritual matters or not, could unfold itself at any later period, which had not been already contained in the idea of the papacy as apprehended by Nicholas." Neander, *History of the Christian Religion and Church*. Eng. Trans., iii., 361 Cf.; Milman, *Latin Christianity*, Bk. 5, c. 4; Plank, *Geschichte des Papsttums von der Mitte des neunten Jahrhunderts*, an, 1, 35-147.

<sup>2</sup> Consequent on II and III post. Cf., *Capitula Hadriani*, lxxii; Labbé, viii., 606.

<sup>3</sup> Agobard, *De privilegio et jure sacerdotii*, c. 1; Agobard, *De dispensatione ecclesiasticarum rerum*, c. xv., Pii I, Ep. 1; Cf. Zephyrini. Ep. 1

<sup>4</sup> Urbani I, Ep. § 4; Pontiani, Ep. 1.

astics of the Western world with which we are primarily concerned. In a consideration of the papal states four questions immediately arise :

I. The claim of the Roman See to have been established by St. Peter.

II. The assertion that the Roman bishops are the lineal successors of St. Peter.

III. The unbroken sequence of the apostolic succession.

IV. The supremacy of the Roman See.

With the truth or falsity of the three first questions we are not here concerned. They have furnished the basis of arguments that are not yet closed. Yet these three questions are of vital importance to the examination of our subject, because, whatever may be the ultimate decision regarding their truth or falsity, they were in the ninth century believed throughout Western Christendom. They were part of the fundamentals of the Catholic faith. As such they formed a foundation for the aggrandizement of the Roman See, and with this our enquiry is directly concerned.

In considering the fourth, and to us the most important, question, that of the supremacy of the Roman See . . . we may conclude that the admitted supremacy of the Bishop of Rome was not existent in earliest times, and that it was the result of a gradual though uneven development.

In the history of this development, as well as in the history of the Frankish church, the personality of Boniface<sup>1</sup> has left an indelible impress. To Boniface the Papacy owes a debt of gratitude, for he was the servant of Rome and the faithful extender of its propaganda. By direct papal commission as vicar apostolic, by the pallium and by his oath upon the tomb of the apostles he was bound to the Petrine See.<sup>2</sup>

He reorganized the Austrasian and Neustrian churches.

<sup>1</sup> Cook, *Life of Boniface*, Lond., 1883; Hope, *Boniface*, Lond., 1872; Fischer, C., *Bonifacius*, Leipzig, 1881; Maclear, *Apostles of Western Europe*, Lond., 1869; Pfahler, G., *Bonifacius und seine Zeit*, Heilbronn, 1880; Werner, A., *Bonifacius d. Apostel d. Deutschen*, Leipzig, 1875.

<sup>2</sup> *Bonif. Ep. ad. Serarii*, 118.