

CHAPTER XXI

THE POPES AND THE COUNCILS

I. QUESTION WHETHER THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT MIGHT
TAX THE VAST POSSESSIONS OF THE CHURCH

A struggle between the papacy and the temporal rulers over the proportion of the vast income of the Church which each should enjoy could hardly be avoided. When Philip the Fair of France and Edward I of England applied to the clergy for a part of the revenue necessary to meet the expenses of the state, Boniface VIII, who believed in claiming the most exalted prerogatives for the papacy,¹ met them with the following emphatic and unconditional denial of the right of the civil power to take any part of the ecclesiastical property or revenue. But two years later he consented to make certain exceptions, admitting the propriety of the *dons gratuits*, or free gifts, on the part of the clergy to the king, and even of exceptional exactions which, in cases of urgent necessity, might be collected by the king without waiting for the papal sanction.

Bishop Boniface, servant of the servants of God, in perpetual record of this matter. Antiquity shows that the laity have always been exceeding hostile to the clergy; and this the experience of the present time clearly demonstrates, since, not content with their limitations, the laity strive for forbidden things and give free reign to the pursuit of illicit gain.

¹ See above, pp. 346 *sqq.*, for bull *Unam Sanctam*, which he issued in 1302.

205. The bull *Clericis Laicos* issued by Boniface VIII (1296) denying the right of the state to tax the clergy.

They do not prudently observe that all control over the clergy, as well as over all ecclesiastical persons and their possessions, is denied them, but impose heavy burdens upon the prelates of the churches, upon the churches themselves, and upon ecclesiastical persons both regular and secular, exacting tallages and other contributions from them. From such persons they require and extort the payment of a half, a tenth, a twentieth, or some other quota of their property or income, and strive in many other ways to subject the churchmen to slavery and bring them under their control.

And (with grief do we declare it) certain prelates of the churches and ecclesiastical persons, fearing where they ought not to fear, and seeking a temporary peace, dreading to offend a temporal more than the eternal majesty, do, without having received the permission or sanction of the apostolic see, acquiesce in such abuses, not so much from recklessness as from want of foresight. We, therefore, desiring to check these iniquitous practices, by the counsel of our brothers, do, of our apostolic authority, decree that all prelates and ecclesiastical persons, whether monastic or secular, whatever their order, condition, or status, who shall pay, or promise or agree to pay, to laymen, any contributions or tallages, tenths, twentieths, or hundredths of their own or of their churches' revenues or possessions, or shall pay any sum, portion, or part of their revenues or goods, or of their estimated or actual value, in the form of an aid, loan, subvention, subsidy, or gift, or upon any other pretense or fiction whatsoever, without authority of this same apostolic see: — likewise emperors, kings and princes, dukes, counts, barons, podestà, captains, officers, rectors, whatever their title, of cities, castles, or other places, wherever situated, or any other persons, whatever their rank, condition, or status, who shall impose, exact, or receive such payments, or who shall presume to lay hands upon, seize, or occupy the possessions of churches or of ecclesiastical persons deposited in the sacred edifices, or who shall order such to be seized or occupied, or shall receive such things as shall be seized

or occupied, — likewise all who shall consciously lend aid, counsel, or support in such undertakings, either publicly or privately, — shall, by the very act, incur the sentence of excommunication; corporations, moreover, which shall show themselves guilty in these matters, we place under the interdict.

We strictly command all prelates and ecclesiastical persons above mentioned, in virtue of their obedience, and under penalty of deposition, that they shall not hereafter acquiesce in any such demands, without the express permission of the aforesaid chair. Nor shall they pay anything under pretext of any obligation, promise, or declaration made in the past, or which may be made before this notice, prohibition, or order shall be brought to their attention. Nor shall the above-mentioned laymen in any way receive any such payments. And if the former pay, or the latter receive anything, they shall incur, by the act itself, the sentence of excommunication. No one, moreover, shall be freed from the above-mentioned sentences of excommunication or of the interdict, except in the article of death, without the authority and special permission of the apostolic see, since it is our intention to make no kind of compromise with so horrible an abuse of the secular power; and this notwithstanding any privileges, whatever their tenor, form, or wording, conceded to emperors, kings, or other persons above mentioned, for we will that such concessions as are in conflict with the preceding prohibitions shall avail no individual person or persons. Let no man at all, therefore, violate the page of this our decree, prohibition, or order, or with rash assumption contravene it. Whoever shall presume to attempt this, let him know that he shall incur the indignation of omnipotent God and of the blessed Peter and Paul, his apostles.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, on the sixth day before the Kalends of March, in the second year of our pontificate.

II. MARSIGLIO OF PADUA AND HIS "DEFENDER OF PEACE"

The earliest uncompromising attack upon the temporal power of the pope and the clergy is that of Marsiglio of Padua. Marsiglio was born in 1270 at Padua and probably took the ordinary course of study in the university there. He then led a wandering life until he became rector of the University of Paris in 1312. The struggle which had begun between Louis of Bavaria, an aspirant for the imperial crown, and his opponent, Pope John XXII (1316-1334), aroused Marsiglio's interest in the great problem of the relations between the civil and ecclesiastical powers. In 1324 he planned out, with a co-worker, the *Defender of Peace* (*Defensor Pacis*), which has quite properly been called "the greatest and most original political treatise of the Middle Ages." In 1328 he accompanied Louis of Bavaria to Italy and became the papal vicar of an antipope whom the emperor had set up in place of his enemy, John XXII. Louis, however, utterly failed to establish himself in Italy. We know nothing about Marsiglio's later life. He probably died not long after 1336. His book is far more important than the little that we know of his career.

Only peace can furnish the necessary conditions for progress, for peace is the mother of all the higher arts. The evils of discord and strife have nearly all been described by Aristotle; but one great and important cause of trouble naturally escaped him, — a potent, hidden influence which interferes with the welfare not only of the empire but of all the governments of Europe. [Marsiglio cleverly refrains from revealing this modern cause of discord until he has described the proper nature and organization of the state.]

206. Brief summary of Marsiglio of Padua's *Defender of Peace*.

Popular
sovereignty.

The power of making the laws should belong to the whole body of citizens, for there is no lawgiver among men superior to the people themselves. The argument that there are an infinite number of fools in the world may be met by pointing out that "foolish" is a relative term, and that the people know their own needs best and will not legislate against their own interests. Any particular class of people is, however, likely to be self-seeking, as is shown by the decrees of the popes and the clergy, where the self-interest of the law-maker is only too apparent.

The actual administration must, nevertheless, be in the hands of a single person or group of persons.¹ Perhaps a king is the best head for the state, but the monarch should be elected and not hold his office hereditarily, and should be deposed if he exceed his powers.²

Unfounded
claims made
by the pope
and clergy
the chief
obstacle to
peace.

[At the end of Part I the time comes to take up the chief cause of trouble which has grown up since Aristotle's time, — namely, the papacy and the clergy.] The bishops of Rome have extended their jurisdiction not only over the clergy but, since the Donation of Constantine, over secular rulers as well. This is illustrated by the acts of the popes of the time (including the famous bull *Unam Sanctam*) and of the existing bishop of Rome, John XXII, who claims, both in Italy and Germany, to have supreme jurisdiction over the emperor and over the lesser princes and communities, even in purely temporal and feudal matters.

Churchmen
= Christian
believers.

In its original meaning the "church" meant all believers in Christ, — all those for whom he shed his blood. "Churchmen" (*viri ecclesiastici*) then include all the faithful, whether they be priests or not. The assumed supremacy of the bishop of Rome is without foundation. Even if Peter was ever in Rome, — which is doubtful, — there is no reason to suppose that he handed down any exceptional power to the succeeding bishops.

¹ All this is strikingly similar to the teachings of Rousseau in his *Social Contract*. See *History of Western Europe*, § 214.

² Rather singularly Marsiglio appears to have no enthusiasm for a universal monarchy or empire.

The third part of the *Defensor Pacis* contains a brief summary of the main arguments of the book. It is possible that this résumé was not prepared by Marsiglio himself, but it furnishes a clear analysis of the whole treatise. It opens as follows:

In our preceding pages we have found that civil discord and dissension in the various kingdoms and communities is due, above all, to a cause which, unless it be obviated, will continue to be a source of future calamity, — namely, the claims, aspirations, and enterprises of the Roman bishop and of his band of ecclesiastics, bent upon gaining secular power and superfluous worldly possessions. The bishop of Rome is wont to support his claim to supreme authority over others by the assertion that the plenitude of power was delegated to him by Christ through the person of St. Peter, as we showed at the end of Part I, and in several chapters of Part II. But in reality no princely authority, nor any coercive jurisdiction in this world — to say nothing of *supreme* authority — belongs to him or to any other bishop, priest, or clerk, whether jointly or severally. This we have proved by sound human arguments in Part I, chapters xii, xiii, and xv. We have, in Part II, chapters vi and vii, further supported our conclusions by the testimony of eternal truth and by the discussions of the saints and learned men who have interpreted this truth.

Marsiglio's
own sum-
mary of his
work.

Then in the sixth and seventh chapters we established from the Scriptures and by sound reasoning what was the character and extent of the legitimate authority of the priests and bishops. We demonstrated that the plenitude of power to which the clergy, especially the Roman bishop, lays claim belongs neither to the clergy as a whole nor to any of its members. In this way the foundations of the bishop of Rome's malign assumptions would seem to be completely undermined.

Now, in order that this plague which has scattered the seeds of discord and strife in kingdoms and communities,

nor has ceased to provoke dissension, may be the more speedily checked and prevented from further increase, we add a third and last part to the preceding two. This is nothing more than a collection of the clear and inevitable deductions from the statements and demonstrations given above. If these conclusions be duly attended to and acted upon this plague and its sophistical source will be easily abolished, now and hereafter, from the various kingdoms and other states.

Of Marsiglio's conclusions the most interesting are the following :

It is necessary to accept as true and essential to salvation *only* the holy and canonical Scriptures, together with their clear implications as interpreted by a general council of the faithful. This is assuredly true and may be assumed.

Doubtful points in the Christian belief are to be determined by a general council, — in no case by a single person, whoever he may be.

No one, according to the gospel, may be forced to observe the divine law by a temporal penalty or any punishment of this world.

The human lawgiver can only be the whole body of citizens or a majority of them.

No one may be compelled by temporal penalties to obey the decretals or ordinances of the bishops of Rome, or of any other bishop, unless the decrees are issued with the sanction of the human lawgiver [namely, the people].

No bishop or priest, as such, has any coercive authority or jurisdiction over any clerk or layman, even over a heretic.

No bishop or priest, or assembly of bishops or priests, may excommunicate any person, or interdict the performance of divine services, except with the authority of the lawgiver [namely, the people].

All bishops have equal authority immediately from Christ, nor, according to divine law, can it be shown that any one of them is superior to, or subordinate to, another, either in divine or temporal matters.

With the consent of the human legislator, other bishops may, together or separately, excommunicate the Roman bishop and exercise other forms of authority over him.

The determination of the number of churches and of priests, deacons, and other officials necessary to administer them, belongs to the rulers who shall conform to the laws of the faithful people.

The temporal possessions of the Church, except such as are necessary for the support of the priests and other ministers of the gospel and for the maintenance of divine services and the relief of the helpless poor, may properly, and according to divine law, be devoted, in whole or in part, by the human law, to public needs and the public defense.

Marsiglio's modern independence of thought and methods of criticism may be illustrated by the following passage, in which he questions a universally accepted belief of the Middle Ages.

Since, then, it is evident from the Scriptures that Paul spent two years in Rome, there received all the gentiles who were converted, and preached there, it is clear that he was in a special sense bishop of Rome, since he fulfilled the duties of pastor there, having his authority immediately from Christ through revelation and, by the consent of the other apostles, through election.

As for St. Peter, on the other hand, I maintain that it cannot be proved by Holy Scripture that he was bishop of Rome, or, what is more, that he ever was in Rome. It is true that, according to a certain popular ecclesiastical legend of the saints, St. Peter reached Rome before St. Paul preached the word there, and was later arrested; moreover it is related that St. Paul, on his arrival at Rome, engaged with St. Peter in

Marsiglio's
discussion
of Peter's
presence in
Rome.

many conflicts with Simon Magus, and at the same time stoutly withstood emperors and their ministers in the cause of the faith. Finally, according to the same story, both were decapitated at the same time for confessing Christ, and slept in the Lord, thus consecrating the Roman Church in Christ.

Improbability of the current tradition of Peter's episcopate.

It is most astonishing, however, that neither St. Luke, who wrote the Acts of the Apostles, nor St. Paul, makes any mention of St. Peter. Moreover the last chapter of Acts makes it very probable that St. Peter had not arrived in Rome before them. For when Paul addressed the Jews upon his arrival, in explaining the reason for his coming to Rome, he said, among other things, "But when the Jews spake against it [his liberation] I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar." And they said unto him, "We neither received letters out of Jerusalem concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect [of the Christians] we know that every where it is spoken against."

I would that any one anxious for the truth, and not bent upon mere discussion, should tell me if it be probable that St. Peter had preceded Paul in Rome and yet had made no proclamation of Christ's faith, which the Jews, in speaking to Paul, call a "sect." Moreover would not Paul, in reproving them for their incredulity, have spoken of Peter had he been there preaching, and have called as a witness one who, according to the third chapter of Acts, beheld Christ's resurrection? Then, from what has been said, who could suppose that Paul could spend two years in Rome and still have no intercourse or communication with St. Peter? And if he had, why did the author of Acts make absolutely no mention of the fact? In other less important towns, when Paul came upon Peter he makes mention of him and associated with him, for example, in Corinth (1 Cor. iii), and in Antioch (Gal. ii), and so in other places. Why does he say nothing of Peter if he found him in Rome, the most celebrated of all cities, where, according to the story mentioned above, Peter was conspicuous as bishop?

Such a state of affairs is well-nigh incredible, so that the story or legend ought not to be regarded as probable in reference to the matter in hand, and should be reckoned as apocryphal. We must, however, following Holy Scripture, hold that St. Paul was bishop of Rome, and if any one else was there with him, Paul was nevertheless in charge, and in a special sense bishop of Rome, as is shown by the reasons adduced. Peter would seem to have been bishop of Antioch, as appears in the second chapter of Galatians. I do not deny that Peter was ever in Rome, but hold it as probable that he did not precede Paul, but rather the contrary.

Marsiglio claims that Paul was apparently the first bishop of Rome.

III. WYCLIFFE'S ATTACK UPON THE POPE, CLERGY, MONKS, AND THE ROMAN CATHOLIC TEACHINGS

Wycliffe wrote many treatises, pamphlets, and sermons, in both Latin and English. In his sermons, which are generally very brief, he often refers to the evil life and what he regarded as the perverse teachings of the pope and clergy, especially of the mendicant friars, most of whom seemed to him to be the servants of Antichrist. The following extracts illustrate his spirit:¹

[We should put on the armor of Christ, for Antichrist has turned] hise clerkes to covetise and worldli love, and so blindid the peple and derkid the lawe of Crist, that hise servantis ben thikke, and fewe ben on Cristis side. And algatis [= always] thei dispisen that men shulden knowe Cristis liif, for bi his liif and his loore shulde help rise on his side, and prestis shulden shame of her lyves, and speciali thes highe prestis, for thei reversen Crist bothe in word and dede.

207. Wycliffe on the evil state of the clergy.

And herfore oo greet Bishop of Engelond, as men seien, is yvel paid [= pleased] that Goddis lawe is writun in

¹ It seemed a pity to modernize the ancient spelling; it, of course, somewhat impedes the inexperienced reader, but does not prevent his coming at the full sense of the passages.

The opposition of the Primate of England to the translating of the Scriptures into English.

Englis, to lewde men [= laymen]; and he pursueth a preest, for that he writith to men this Englishe, and somonith him and travelith him, that it is hard to him to rowte. And thus he pursueth another preest by the helpe of Phariseis, for he prechide Cristis gospel freeli withouten fablis.

O men that ben on Cristis half, helpe ye now agens Anticrist! for the perilous tyme is comen that Crist and Poul telden bifore. Butt oo confort is of knygttis, that thei savoren myche the gospel and han wille to rede in Englishe the gospel of Cristis liif. For aftirward, if God wole, this lordship shal be taken from preestis; and so the staaff that makith hem hardi agens Crist and his lawe. For three sectis figten here, agens Cristene mennis secte. The firste is the pope and cardinals, bi fals lawe that thei han made; the secounde is emperours [and] bishopis, whiche dispisen Cristis lawe; the thridde is thes Pharisees possessioners and beggeris. Alle thes three, Goddis enemyes, traveilen in ypocrisie, and in worldli coveitise, and idilnesse in Goddis lawe. Crist helpe his Chirche from these fendis, for thei figten perilously.

Three chief enemies of Christ's law, namely, the pope and cardinals, bad bishops and rulers, and the mendicant friars.

In another sermon Wycliffe speaks of the pride and arrogance of the clergy.

The pride and arrogance of the clergy.

And Crist sitting, clepide [= called] thes twelve, and seide, "yif any of you wole be the firste, he shal be the laste of alle and servant of alle, for he must be moost meke of alle other." And Crist take a child, and putte him in the middil of hem; the which child whanne Crist hadde biclippid, he seide thus to hem, "Who ever takith oon of thes children in my name resseyveth me, and whoever resseyveth me, resseyveth not me, but my fadir." And, for this lore is profitable to governaile of holy Chirche, therefore seith Crist, as he seith ofte, "He that hath eeris to heere, heere he."

The pope and prelates are given over to avarice.

And in this point synnen specially grettete of the Chirche, for thei suen not Crist heere but Anticrist and the world. Loke the pope first and his cardinals, where thei taken no worldli worship, but ben the laste, moost servisable, and

moost meke of alle othir. More foul pride and coveitise is in no Lord of the world. Go we to bishopis binethe thes, and riche abbotis, fadirs in coventis, and thes axen worldly worshipis, and bi this mai men knowe hem. Yif thou wil wite which of thes is more, loke which takith more worldly worship.

And yif thou go doun to freris, that ben beggeris, and shulden be mekerste, more worship of their bretheren takith no man in this world, as bi kneling and kissing of feet; take thou the ministre of freris and other service at mete and bedde, more than ony bishop doith. And so Cristis reule in thes preestis is more reversid than in worldli lordis. And sith thei professen and seien this gospel bothe in word and in oth, it is open that thes false ypocritis disseyve the peple, and harmen the Chirche.

Arrogance of the friars.

But on this men douten ofte how that thes shriftes [= confession] camen in. For Goddis lawe spekith not but of schrift maad to God, and of general shrifte to men, and to stire hem to leve ther synne; and thes shriftes ben ofte betere for this than thes newe rownyngis. Here men seien, yif thei dursten, that noo shrifte that now is usid is good to man, but in as myche as it lettith man to synne. And so yif prestis prechiden faste as Crist hath ordeyned hem to preche, it semeth that this were ynow, with general confessioun. And so, al if it do good, netheles it doith myche harm, for confessores han her menes to spuyle the peple by symonye, and to foyle hem many weies by coveitise and lecherie.

208. Wycliffe on auricular confession and transubstantiation.

Thes ben to rude heretikes, that seien thei eten Crist bodili, and seien thei parten ech membre of him, — nekke, bac, heed, and foot. And alle siche heresies springen, for thei witen not what this oost [= host] is. This oost is breed [= bread] in his kynde, as ben other oostes unsacrid, and sacramentaliche Goddis bodi; for Crist seith so, that mai not lye. And so, yif this sacrament be foulid in that it is breed or wyn, it may not thus be defoulid in thingis which it figurith. And so a man brekith not Goddis bodi, ne drynkith his blood with his mouth, alyif he ete and drynke the breed

Denial of transubstantiation.

and the wiin that is thes; for thei ben not thes in kynde. . . . And thus a mous etith not Cristis bodi alyif he ete this sacrament; for the mous failith goostli wiit, to chewe in him this bileve.

209. Statement of the views of Wycliffe's followers.

Shortly after Wycliffe's death his followers drew up a reply to the charges brought against the "pore Cristen men." The first charge is discussed as follows:

Furste, that this pope Urban tho sixte beres not strength of Seint Petur in erthe, but thai affermen hym to be tho son of Anticriste, and that no verrey pope was sith tho tyme of Silvester [I] pope.

Contrast between the life led by the pope and Christ's life.

Here Cristen men seyne pleyntly, that whatever pope or other preste, in maner of lyvyng or techyng or lawis-makyng, contrarius Crist, is verrey Anticrist, adversary of Jesus Crist, and of his apostlis, ande of alle Cristen pepul. See inwardely, alle ye Cristen pepul, tho meke life of Jesus Crist, pore and symple to the worlde, and ful of brennyng charite, and puttyng hym selfe to penaunce and travayle in prechyng and prayyng, and willeful [= voluntary] schedyng of his precious blode, for to make pes and charite and for to save mennes soules. Ande sees ye tho open lyif of popes, how proude thai bene, that Cristen kyngus schal kysse ther fete, and with ther fote thai schal kroune tho emperoure, ther lorde and founder, ande that emperours, barfot, leden openly, as men sayne, ther bridelis, and that all men that schal with hem speke schul kisse ther fete, and calle hem moste holy faderis, and moste blessid and moste merciful and gracijs. And loke whether this be contrarie to Cristis mekenes, that weysche his disciplis feete, and coome not for to be served but to serve other men, and to gif hys lyife for redempcioun of mony. And he coome not to seche his owne glorie by manhed, but in alle thingus to do tho wille of his Fadir of heven.

Tho secunde tyme, See ye Cristen peple, tho willeful poverté of Jesus Crist, how he hade nougt by worldly lordschipe one howse where he mygt reste his heved, but lyved

by temporale almes of Mary Mawdeleyne ande other holy wymmen, as tho gospel sais. Ande see ye wisely, whether oure popis, makyng stronge palayces with pore mennes lyvelodis, with al ther glorie of riches and jewelis, acordem with this porenes of Criste.

Tho thrid tyme, See, yee Cristen pepul, tho charitabul lyif of Crist, ande like whether oure popis contrarien hym. Where he was moste bisye in spirituale occupacione, these popis bene most bisy in delyng of beneficis to him that moste muck brynggen or worldly favour. Where Criste willefully gafe tribute to tho emperoure, these popis robben cristes rewenes by the furste frutes of mony thowsande poundis, by manyschyng of suspending and enterdytynge of londis.

Where Criste mekely travelid with grete penaunce upon his fete for to preche tho gospel, these popes, more then emperoures, resten in palaycis chargid with pretious in ther feete and in al ther stynkyng carione, ande prechen not tho gospel to Cristen men, but crien ever aftur glorie and riches, and make newe lawes for to magnify ther worldly state, that Crist and his apostlis durste never do.

Where Crist gafe his precious blode and lyif for to make pes and charite, these popis maken ande mayntenys werre thorowout Cristendame, for to hold ther worldly state, moste contrarie ageyne Crist and his apostlis, ande herto spenden tho almes of kyngis, and oppresen Cristen rewenes by newe subsidies.

And, that is werst, thai senden indulgencis, foundid as thai faynen on Cristis charite and his dethe, to sle alle men contrarie to there lustis. Certis this semes contrarious to Crist and his lovers. Seynt Robert Grosthe¹ sais that this court is cause, welle, and begynnyng of destruccione of Cristendame, and loser of al tho worlde. Ande trewly, if thai be thus contrary to Crist in lyvyng and techyng, as ther open dedis and tho world crien, thai ben cursid here-tikis, manquellars bodily and gostly, Anticrist, and Sathanas

¹ Bishop of Lincoln (d. 1253), an ardent advocate of reform.

transfigurid into aungelis [of] ligt. Ande, as this worthi clerk Grosthede proves, ande certis no man is verrey pope but in als myche as he sewis Crist; and in so myche Cristen men wole do aftur hym, ande no more, for alle bulles and censuris, for no creature of God.

IV. THE SOJOURN OF THE POPES AT AVIGNON. THE ORIGIN OF THE GREAT SCHISM

The residence of the popes at Avignon (1316–1377) did much to undermine their prestige. Avignon was so near France that the English and Germans suspected that the French king really directed the papal policy. Besides, the pope maintained a very luxurious court, and an ever-increasing burden of taxation was necessary to maintain the splendor which Petrarch, long a resident of the city, describes in the letter given below. Petrarch's criticism is especially noteworthy, for, in the first place, he had ample opportunity for forming his opinions from personal observation; in the second place, he was an ardent adherent of the papacy and a devout member of the Roman Catholic Church, — unlike Marsiglio and Wycliffe, who were openly heretical in their denial of some of the fundamental teachings of the mediæval Church. This letter is undated, but was written probably between 1340 and 1353, when he left the detested Avignon forever, and removed to Italy.

210. A letter of Petrarch's describing the papal court at Avignon.

. . . Now I am living in France, in the Babylon of the West. The sun in its travels sees nothing more hideous than this place on the shores of the wild Rhone, which suggests the hellish streams of Cocytus and Acheron. Here reign the successors of the poor fishermen of Galilee; they have strangely forgotten their origin. I am astounded, as

I recall their predecessors, to see these men loaded with gold and clad in purple, boasting of the spoils of princes and nations; to see luxurious palaces and heights crowned with fortifications, instead of a boat turned downwards for shelter.

We no longer find the simple nets which were once used to gain a frugal sustenance from the lake of Galilee, and with which, having labored all night and caught nothing, they took, at daybreak, a multitude of fishes, in the name of Jesus. One is stupefied nowadays to hear the lying tongues, and to see worthless parchments turned by a leaden seal into nets which are used, in Christ's name, but by the arts of Belial, to catch hordes of unwary Christians. These fish, too, are dressed and laid on the burning coals of anxiety before they fill the insatiable maw of their captors.

Instead of holy solitude we find a criminal host and crowds of the most infamous satellites; instead of soberness, licentious banquets; instead of pious pilgrimages, preternatural and foul sloth; instead of the bare feet of the apostles, the snowy coursers of brigands fly past us, the horses decked in gold and fed on gold, soon to be shod with gold, if the Lord does not check this slavish luxury. In short, we seem to be among the kings of the Persians or Parthians, before whom we must fall down and worship, and who cannot be approached except presents be offered. O ye unkempt and emaciated old men, is it for this you labored? Is it for this that you have sown the field of the Lord and watered it with your holy blood? But let us leave the subject.

Commiserate the cruel fate which holds your friend here. He may merit punishment, but certainly not one like this. Here I am, at a more advanced age, back in the haunts of my childhood, dragged again by fate among the disagreeable surroundings of my early days, when I thought I was freed from them. I have been so depressed and overcome that the heaviness of my soul has passed into bodily afflictions, so that I am really ill and can only give voice to sighs and groans. Although many things offer themselves which

I wanted to communicate to you, as both my stomachs¹ are troubling me you need look for nothing agreeable from me to-day. Sweet water cannot come from a bitter source. Nature has ordered that the sighs of an oppressed heart shall be distasteful, and the words of an injured soul harsh.

211. The beginning of schism in holy Church. (From Froissart's *Chronicles*.)

Froissart, in his famous *Chronicles*, gives the following account of Pope Gregory XI's return to Rome and of the opening of the Great Schism due to the election of Clement VII.

Ye have heard herebefore how Pope Gregory, the eleventh of that name, was in the city of Avignon. And when he saw that he could find no manner of peace to be had between the kings of England and France, wherewith he was in great displeasure, for he had greatly travailed thereabout and had made his cardinals to do the same, then he advised himself and had a devotion to go and revisit Rome and the see apostolic, the which St. Peter and St. Paul had edified. He had made promise before that, if ever he came to the degree to be pope, he would never keep his see but there where St. Peter kept his and ordained it.

How Gregory XI resolved to return from Avignon to Rome.

This pope was a man of feeble complexion and sickly, and endured much pain, more than any other. And he thus being in Avignon was sore let with the business of France, and so sore travailed with the king and his brethren that with much pain he had any leisure to take heed anything to himself or to his Church. Then he said to himself that he would go farther off from them to be more at rest, . . . and then he said to his cardinals, "Sirs, make you ready, for I will go to Rome."

Of that motion his cardinals were sore abashed and displeased, for they loved not the Romans, and so they would fain have turned his purpose, but they could not. And when the French king heard thereof he was sore displeased, for he thought that he had the pope nearer at hand there than

¹ Perhaps a pun on the Latin *stomachus*, which means ill humor as well as stomach.

at any other place. Then the king wrote incontinent to his brother, the duke of Anjou, who was at Toulouse, signifying him that after he had received his letter he should go to Avignon to the pope and break his voyage to Rome, if it were possible. The duke did as the king commanded him, and so came to Avignon, where the cardinals received him with great joy, and so he was lodged in the pope's palace, the offer thereby to speak with the pope.

Ye may know well that he spoke with the pope and showed him divers reasons to have broken his purpose; but the pope would in no wise consent thereto nor take any heed of any business on this side of the mountains. . . . When the duke saw that he could not come to his intent for no reason nor fair words that he could show, he took leave of the pope, and said at his parting, "Holy father, ye go into a country among such people where ye be but little beloved, and ye will leave the fountain of faith and the realm where holy Church hath most faith and excellence of all the world. And, sir, by your deed the Church may fall into great tribulation. For if ye die there, the which is right likely, and so say the physicians, then the Romans, who be malicious and traitors, shall be lords and masters of all the cardinals and shall make a pope at their own will."

How the king of France sought to dissuade the pope.

Howbeit, for all these words and many others, the pope never rested till he was on his way. . . . The Romans were right joyful of his coming, and all the chief men of Rome mounted on their horses and so brought him into Rome with great triumph and lodged him in St. Peter's palace. And oftentimes he visited a church called Our Lady the Great [Santa Maria Maggiore] within Rome, wherein he had great pleasure and did make therein many costly works. And within a while after his coming to Rome he died and was buried in the said church, and there his obsequy was made, as to a pope appertained.¹

¹ Here Froissart inserts a fabulous story of the election of a pope one hundred years of age, who straightway died, worn out by the celebration which the enthusiastic Romans prepared in his honor. His account of the election of Urban VI and Clement VII, given below, is,

Of the orgulous words that the Romans said at the election of a new pope.

[When the cardinals had entered the conclave] the Romans assembled themselves before the conclave and made semblance to break it up and slay them all if they did not choose a pope according to their minds, and cried to the cardinals and said, "Sirs, advise you well. If ye deliver us a Roman pope, we be content; else we will make your heads redder than your hats be." Such words and menaces greatly abashed the cardinals, for they would rather a died confessors than martyrs. Then to bring themselves out of that danger and peril they made a pope. But he was none of the college of cardinals: he was the archbishop of Bari, a great clerk, who greatly had travailed for the wealth of holy Church.

With this promotion to the papality the Romans were appeased, for the cardinal of Genoa put out his head at a window of the conclave and said on high to the people of Rome, "Sirs, appease you, for you have a Roman pope, and that is Bartholomew des Aigles, archbishop of Bari." The people answered all with one voice, "Then we be content." The same archbishop was not then at Rome; I think he was in Naples. Then he was incontinent sent for, of the which tidings he was right glad; and so came to Rome. And at his coming there was a great feast made to him, and so he had all the rights that pertained to the papality and was called Urban, the sixth of that name.

The Romans had great joy. His creation was signified to all the churches of Christendom, and also to emperors, kings, dukes, and earls, and the cardinals sent word to all their friends that he was chosen by a good and true election. Howbeit some of them repented them after that they had spoken so largely of the matter.¹ . . .

however, essentially correct, except that, with a view to justifying the desertion of Urban by the cardinals, he exaggerates the disorder which attended his election and which formed the only possible excuse for a new election.

¹ There appears to be no doubt that Urban was admitted by all at the time to have been regularly elected, and that the plea that the cardinals had been intimidated by the Roman populace was trumped up later, when Urban had made himself hated by his rudeness and austerity.

The intention of divers of the cardinals was that when they might see a better hour and time they would return again to their election, because this pope was not profitable for them, nor also for the Church, for he was a fumish man and melancholious, so that when he saw himself in prosperity and in puissance of the papality, and that divers Christian kings were joined to him and wrote to him and did put them under his obedience, he waxed proud and headstrong, and would have taken from the cardinals divers of their rights and old customs, the which greatly displeased them. And so they spake together and imagined how he was not well worthy to govern the world; wherefore they purposed to choose another pope, sage and discreet, by whom the Church should be well governed. . . .

[Accordingly when they left Rome for the summer] all of one accord assembled together and their voices rested on Sir Robert of Geneva, son to the earl of Geneva. He was first bishop of Therouanne and later of Cambrai, and was called cardinal of Geneva. At his election were most of the cardinals, and he was called Clement [VII]. . . .

And when the French king who as then reigned was certified thereof, he had great marvel, and sent for his brother and for all the nobles and prelates of his realm and for the rector and master doctors of the university of Paris, to know of them which election, whether the first or the second, he should hold unto. This matter was not shortly determined, for divers clerks varied, but finally all the prelates of France inclined to Clement, and so did the king's brethren and the most part of the university of Paris; and so the king was informed by all the great clerks of his realm; and so he obeyed the pope Clement and held him for the true pope, and made a special commandment throughout his realm that every man should take and repute Clement for pope and that every man should obey him as God on earth. The king of Spain was of the same opinion and so was the earl of Savoy, the duke of Milan, and the queen of Naples.

The believing thus of the French king upon Clement greatly strengthened his cause, for the realm of France was

The cardinals desert Urban and choose a new pope, Clement VII.

Decisive action of the French king in declaring for Clement.

reputed to be the chief fountain of belief of the Christian faith, because of the noble churches and prelacies that be therein. . . . The Christian realms were in variation and the churches in great difference because of the popes. Urban had the greater part, but to speak of the most profitable revenues and plain obedience, Clement had it. And so Clement, by consent of the cardinals, sent to Avignon to make ready the palace there for him, for his intent was to go thither as soon as he might.

The disorders of the Great Schism offered little opportunity for improvement in the Church, so that during the generation preceding the opening of the Council of Constance the complaints are as loud as ever that the popes, whether those at Rome or their rivals at Avignon, are hopelessly corrupt. In a work on *The Downfall of the Church*, a cleric connected with the court of the popes at Avignon writes as follows :

212. Nicholas Clamanges on the three vices which have corrupted the Church.

After the great increase of worldly goods, the virtues of our ancestors being quite neglected, boundless avarice and blind ambition invaded the hearts of the churchmen. As a result they were carried away by the glory of their position and the extent of their power, and soon gave way to the degrading effects of luxury. Three most exacting and troublesome masters had now to be satisfied. *Luxury* demands sundry gratifications, — wine, sleep, banquets, music, debasing sports, courtesans, and the like. *Display* requires fine houses, castles, towers, palaces, rich and varied furniture, expensive clothes, horses, servants, and the pomp of luxury. Lastly is *Avarice*, which carefully brings together vast treasures to supply the demands of the above-mentioned vices or, if these are otherwise provided for, to gratify the eye by the vain contemplation of the coins themselves.

So insatiable are these lords, and so imperious are their demands, that the Golden Age of Saturn, which we hear of in stories, should it now return, would hardly suffice to meet

the requirements. Since it is impossible, however rich the bishop and ample his revenue, to satisfy these rapacious harpies with that alone, he must cast about for other sources of income.

For carrying on these exactions and gathering the gains into the camera, or Charybdis, as we may better call it, the popes appoint their *collectors* in every province, — those, namely, whom they know to be most skillful in extracting money, owing to peculiar energy, diligence, or harshness of temper, those, in short, who will neither spare nor except but would squeeze gold from a stone. To these the popes grant, moreover, the power of anathematizing any one, even prelates, and of expelling from the communion of the faithful every one who does not, within a fixed period, satisfy their demands for money. What ills these collectors have caused, and the extent to which poor churches and people have been oppressed, are questions best omitted, as we could never hope to do the matter justice. From this source come the laments of the unhappy ministers of the Church, which reach our ears, as they faint under the insupportable yoke, — yea, perish of hunger. Hence come suspensions from divine service, interdicts from entering a church, and anathemas, a thousandfold intensified in severity.

Such things were resorted to in the rarest instances by the fathers, and then only for the most horrible of crimes; for by these penalties a man is separated from the companionship of the faithful and turned over to Satan. But nowadays these inflictions are so fallen in esteem that they are used for the lightest offense, often for no offense at all, so that they no longer bring terror but are objects of contempt.

To the same cause is to be ascribed the ruin of numerous churches and monasteries and the leveling to the ground, in so many places, of sacred edifices, while the money which was formerly used for their restoration is exhausted in paying these taxes. But it even happens, as some well know, that holy relics in not a few churches — crosses, chalices, feretories, and other precious articles — go to make up this tribute.

Papal collectors and the ills they bring with them.

Who does not know how many abbots and other prelates, when they come to die, are, if they prove obnoxious to the papal camera on account of their poverty, refused a dignified funeral, and even denied burial, except perchance in some field or garden, or other profane spot, where they are secretly disposed of. Priests, as we all can see, are forced, by reason of their scanty means of support, to desert their parishes and their benefices and, in their hunger, seek bread where they may, performing profane services for laymen. Some rich and hitherto prosperous churches have, indeed, been able to support this burden, but all are now exhausted and can no longer bear to be cheated of their revenue.

A German writer of the early fifteenth century in his *History of the Council of Constance* shows the inevitable manner in which the corruption spread from the prelates downward to the simple priests, who were tempted to indemnify themselves for the outlay they had been obliged to make in obtaining their offices.

213. How corruption spread from the prelates to the lower clergy. (From Dietrich Vrie.)

The supreme pontiffs, as I know, are elected through avarice and simony, and likewise the other bishops are ordained for gold. These in turn will not ordain those below them—the priests, deacons, subdeacons, and acolytes—except a strict agreement be first drawn up. Of the mammon of unrighteousness the bishops, the real rulers, and the chapters each receives a part.

The once accepted maxim, "Freely give, for freely ye have received," is now most vilely perverted: "Freely I have not received, nor will I freely give, for I bought my bishopric for a great price and must indemnify myself impiously for my untoward outlay. I will not ordain you as a priest except for money. I purchased the sacrament of ordination when I became a bishop, and I propose to sell you the same sign and seal of ordination. By beseeching and for gold I obtained my office, and for beseeching and for gold do I sell you your place. Refuse the amount I demand and you shall not become a priest."

V. THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE

The two most interesting acts, historically, passed by the Council of Constance were the decree *Sacrosancta*, in which it declared that as a general council of Christendom it had the right to reform even the papacy; and, secondly, the decree *Frequens*, which provided that general councils should thereafter be assembled regularly and so form a sort of parliament which, with the pope, should govern the Church.

In the name of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity, of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

This holy synod of Constance, constituting a general council for the extirpation of the present schism and the union and reformation of the Church of God in head and members, legitimately assembled in the Holy Ghost, to the praise of omnipotent God, in order that it may the more easily, safely, effectively, and freely bring about the union and reformation of the Church of God, hereby determines, decrees, ordains, and declares what follows:

214. The decree *Sacrosancta* passed by the Council of Constance (April 6, 1415).

It first declares that this same council, legitimately assembled in the Holy Ghost, forming a general council and representing the Catholic Church militant, has its power immediately from Christ, and every one, whatever his position or rank, even if it be the papal dignity itself, is bound to obey it in all those things which pertain to the faith, to the healing of the schism, and to the general reformation of the Church of God in head and members.

It further declares that any one, whatever his position, station, or rank, even if it be the papal, who shall contumaciously refuse to obey the mandates, decrees, ordinances, or instructions which have been, or shall be, issued by this holy council, or by any other general council legitimately summoned, which concern, or in any way relate to, the above-mentioned objects, shall, unless he repudiate his conduct, be