MATERIALS FOR THE STUDY OF THE WORK AND THOUGHT OF ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE

by Teodoro Tagliaferri (University of Naples Federico II)

No. 27
(September 5th, 2023)

WRITINGS ON THE EMPIRES IN WORLD HISTORY, XXIII

1955

Arnold Joseph Toynbee, *Turban and Tiara*, review of Steven Runciman, *The Eastern Schism. A Study of the Papacy and the Eastern Churches during the 11th and 12th Centuries*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1955, in «The Observer», Sunday, 9 October 1955, p. 11.

NOTE (with a request)

The last paragraph is incomplete. Is there by any chance anyone among the readers who can have access to a less damaged copy of the «Guardian» than the one from which I made the transcript and fill in the seven lines or so that I indicated with the square brackets? Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

TURBAN AND TIARA

by Teodoro Tagliaferri

This book is a welcome addition to Mr. Runciman's magnificent *History of the Crusades*. The schism between the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Western Church is an historic event that deserves a study in its own right, and it is also an event of current interest, because it is one of the roots of the present ideological schism between Russia and the Western World. Misunderstandings and wrongs that occurred in the eleventh and twelfth centuries have not yet ceased to produce their unhappy effects.

My Runciman's reconsideration of the history of the schism is timely. There was a conventional view of it which had been taken over uncritically by one historian after another till it was challenged by the reinterpretation of the already known evidence and by the discovery of additional documents. Mr. Runciman has carried on the revisionary work of Dr. Dvornik and other contemporary scholars. It used to be thought that the breach between the Churches occurred during the patriarchate of Photius, in the third quarter of the ninth century, and that, after having been patched up then, it recurred, this time irrevocably, in the year 1054. Dr. Dvornik has shown that the Photian schism (there was one only, not two) was less serious than had been supposed, and Mr. Runciman has gone on to show that the incident in 1054 was also not the historical landmark that it had been taken to be.

The fatal break did not come till the quarter of a century beginning in the year 1182. The deadly deeds were the atrocious massacre of the insufferable Western Christian residents in Constantinople by the Greeks in 1182; the conquest of Cyprus by King Richard I of England in 1191; and, worst of all, the sack of Constantinople in 1204 by the French and Venetian adventures on the so-called Fourth Crusade. The true date of the schism – in so far as a definite date can be assigned to what was a gradual process – thus proves to be rather more than 200 years later than the traditional date, and, during those two centuries, repeated efforts to preserve the unity of the Church were made by men of good will on both sides. The schism was, in fact, a tragedy with the same plot as the American Civil War. Statesmanship and charity fought a losing battle against forces «far removed from their control», which made the latent conflict «irrepressible» in the long run.

The main adverse force was a progressive divergence between the cultures of Byzantine and Western Christendom. The divergence can be traced at least as far back as the great convulsion through which the Roman Empire passed in the third century. It was accentuated in the fifth century when the Empire broke down in its culturally and economically backward western provinces. By the time when, in the sixth century, Italy was reconquered by Justinian for the Empire and for civilization the Romans already felt their Constantinopolitan "liberators" to be at least as alien as their late Gothic barbarian masters.

Theoretically, it was possible for Byzantine and Western Christendom to remain in ecclesiastical communion even when they had become culturally alien to one another. […]. And this dislike was converted into hatred by the crimes committed on both sides – but mostly on the Western side – at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. When the Greek Orthodox Christians eventually had to choose between ecclesiastical servitude to the Roman See and political servitude to the Ottoman Empire, which allowed them their ecclesiastical independence, they opted for the Prophet's turban in preference to the Pope's tiara. Here is an episode of history that the heirs of Barbarossa, Coeur de Lion and Dandolo should take to heart.