

# Civil authority of the popes: the kingdom that the popes established

Panelists discussed this general topic during our webinars on August 3, August 17, and August 24, 2019.

## Questions for discussion

**X1.** The fact that the popes exerted civil authority by establishing and maintaining a kingdom in central Italy for over 1,000 years has nothing to do with the true teachings of Jesus and appears to be an obvious and palpable contradiction. Do you agree? In any case, please provide your net appraisal of these political arrangements that finally ended in 1870.

**X2.** The historian Norman Cantor refers to the so-called “Donation of Constantine” as “the best-known forgery in history.” How does this misrepresentation of historical events for the sake of one’s own personal, organizational, or institutional advantage compare with the practices of historical revisionism, deception, and deliberate falsehoods that were standard techniques of the totalitarian regimes that operated in the 20th century (*i.e.*, Nazi Germany, the former Soviet Union, and Communist China)? Does there seem to be a broad parallel to the deceptive practices that George Orwell caricatured in his celebrated novel *1984*?

**X3.** Although there is little reason to infer that Michael Cerularius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, was impressed when Pope Leo IX mentioned the so-called Donation of Constantine in an official document that he sent to Cerularius in the year 1054, Christians living in Western Europe appear to have accepted the validity of the so-called Donation for quite a few centuries (until the Renaissance). Why did the popes of those centuries get away with these palpable falsehoods?

**X4.** In effect, the Syllabus of Errors (December 8, 1864) consists of a series of analytical statements and opinions that Pope Pius IX formally condemned (attachments 6 and 7). On the understanding that the church’s assertion of authority over marriage (and the enactment of many ecclesiastical laws and regulations constraining marriage and regulating it) did not occur until after the year 1000, please comment on the following paragraph and its implications.

65. The doctrine that Christ has raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament cannot be at all tolerated. — Apostolic Letter “Ad Apostolicae,” Aug. 22, 1851.

**X5.** In the introduction that the German theologian Hans Küng wrote for the book by August Bernard Hasler, Küng repeatedly cites the Roman Catholic teaching called “the magisterium.” In brief, the word *magisterium* comes from the Latin word for “master,”

the same concept that is the basis for a master's degree. From a theological perspective, the idea of "the magisterium" amounts to asserting that the Roman Catholic Church is the master of all Christian doctrine and has the authority to insist on conformity, uniformity, and obedience. Please comment.

**X6.** If we combine the introduction by Hans Küng (attachment 9) with the excerpts from the book by August Bernhard Hasler (attachment 12), we find repeated references to the Vatican's tendency to release information about the First Vatican Council (1870) slowly and selectively, as well as tactics that deserve to be considered high-handed or even tyrannical (*e.g.*, censorship, punishment of dissenting bishops). If you find these accounts convincing, who bears the primary responsibility? Can the events of that Council be considered valid and fair? Please explain your conclusions.

**X7.** Please comment on the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal infallibility that was adopted during the First Vatican Council.

**X8.** In December 1979, Pope John Paul II disciplined the German theologian Hans Küng by stripping him of his ecclesiastical teaching privileges, so that he could "neither be considered a Catholic teacher nor engage in teaching as such" (page 3 of attachment 12). Further, in the year 2000, the same pope beatified Pope Pius IX (*i.e.*, by presiding over a formal ceremony in which Pius IX was given the title "blessed"). How do these two official actions of John Paul II compare with his carefully cultivated public image as a kindly and congenial grandfather?

**X9.** Although the preceding eight questions serve to explore key aspects of the documents that I attached, I am confident that examining this detailed and complex material led you to additional insights. Please permit me to offer you the opportunity to comment on any factor that you may wish to identify and focus on.

## **Documents pertaining to the kingdom that the popes established**

— “Appendix B: The Donation of Constantine.” (This is an appendix to a memorandum dated July 26, 2005 in which I maintained quite strenuously that Urantia Foundation — the sponsor and chief publisher of *The Urantia Book* — should not use images or symbols drawn from the traditions of Christianity, for in my view this would leave an inaccurate and misleading impression.)

— “Civil authority from the chair of Peter: Papal ideology rooted in ‘the Donation of Constantine’” (excerpted from pages 176-179 of *The Civilization of the Middle Ages* by Norman F. Cantor, a book published in 1993).

— “Papal States” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015).

### **Pope Pius IX**

— “Pius IX” (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

— “Syllabus of Errors” (Wikipedia).

— “The Syllabus: Pope Pius IX” (the text, downloaded from an Internet website).

### **Infallibility / First Vatican Council 1870**

**[Source: *How the Pope Became Infallible* by August Bernhard Hasler (1981) ]**

— Biographic information about the author appearing on the dust jacket, along with excerpts from a review.

— Introduction by the German theologian Hans Küng.

— “Küng, Hans” (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

— “Hans Küng” (Wikipedia).

— Excerpts from the book.