

given the papacy when only 16 years old, offered him a new title.. "Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire" with all the plaudits that should come to it. Flattered, I think, Otto accepted the title..and whether he thought it would give him broader powers or not, moved to return to Germany satisfied. The scheme worked so well that when, a few months later John XII was threatened by barbarous Normans from the south, he made the same proposal to their leader and he also was glad! Hearing the word Otto was somewhat disturbed and returned to Italy on the warpath...but John XII died as a result of his debauched life before Otto could take it from him otherwise. In a very intense way from this time onward there is a great effort by the kings to rule the papacy and an incurable powerthirst in the papacy to rule the kings. There is an excellent discussion of this in Malachi Martin: THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN CHURCH.

But what was created is called the Holy Roman Empire, a paper empire that would continue through the Napoleonic era. The idea was that the western nations loyal to the Roman ecclesiastical system would be banded together under a single leader for political or militant spiritual causes. The leader would be large in prestige but might not have much power of his own. The amount of "clout" he could wield would depend on his own territory and the size of his own wealth, but in theory he could call the nations of the church world to support him and so while the actual power may have been limited the theoretical power was impressive.

Otto III (983-1002) offered even more interference in the life of the church...seeking to control the designation of the papal chair. By force of arms he captured the Vatican and secured the office of Bishop for his cousin who ruled the church as Gregory V (996) and was the first "German pope." When he died in 999, Otto secured the election of Sylvester II, a French cleric loyal to Otto. As both of these men supported the Germanic policies, Otto's hopes were that the election of non-Italians might weaken the catholic clergy in Italy and make the office more international--that is, more subject to the control of the Emperor than to the cardinalite and the Italian clergy. Neither of these ends were met but the office did become more subject to the whims of the emperors and the powers of the kings. The Italian