A Glorious Institution: The Church in History

Parts 1 & 2

Stanford E. Murrell

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Part One: When the Church Was Young

AD 33 - 754

Chapter 1

The Birth of the New Testament Church

Background of the Church

The story of human history may rightly be called "His-Story," or the story of God's work in the affairs of man. There is a grand central theme to be found in history and that is God's redeeming love. Viewing history from this perspective, where God is actively working out His plan of redemption in the affairs of men, could be called a "divine interpretation" of history. The Bible teaches us that, "God so loved the world he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (Joh 3:16). The Son was given about 2,000 years ago.

Born in humility, raised in obscurity, Jesus Christ came in the fullness of time (Gal 4:4-5) to accomplish the great act of redeeming His people from their sins (Mat 1:21). The Lord of Glory came to earth through the lineage of the house of David in the nation of Israel. The Hebrew people were privileged to be the recipients of divine truth. Their prophets had predicted the Messiah was to come, and He came. Matthew was careful to record many incidents in the life of the Lord and then wrote, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets" (Mat 2:15; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 21:4).

During the days of the Lord's earthly ministry, most people in Palestine did not believe that the ancient prophecies were being fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Because of this, the religious leaders arrested Jesus; He was tried, sentenced, and executed on a wooden cross at Calvary (Mat 27:27-35). But on the third day Jesus arose from the dead (Mat 28:1-6). His resurrection became the foundation on which the New Testament Church would be built (1Co 15:3-8).

The Nature of the Church: Visible and Invisible

It was the Lord's desire to establish a spiritual kingdom (Joh 18:36) that would touch all the nations of earth (Mat 28:19-20). It was the Lord's design to call unto Himself a peculiar people (1Pe 2:9) from every tongue and tribe (Rev 5:9), who would be indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Joh 14:16,26). This called-out assembly would be a most glorious institution, the Church (Eph 5:25-27)!

Here we must draw a careful distinction between the visible and the invisible church. In the New Testament, the word "church" is the translation of the Greek word ecclesia, which means simply "an assembly." We find the word ecclesia used in the following senses in the New Testament (taken from Easton's Bible Dictionary):

1. It is sometimes translated "assembly" in the ordinary sense (Act 19:32, 39, 41).
2. A few Christians associated together in observing the ordinances of the gospel are an

ecclesia (Rom 16:5; Col 4:15).

3. All the Christians in a particular city, whether they assembled together in one place or in several places for religious worship, were an ecclesia, as at Antioch (Act 13:1), Jerusalem (Act 8:1), and Ephesus (Rev 2:1).

4. The whole visible body of professing Christians throughout the world are called the church (1Co 15:9; Gal 1:13; Mat 16:18). It is called "visible" because its members are known and its assemblies are public. God has ordained His people to organize themselves into distinct visible church communities, for the great purpose of giving visibility to His kingdom, of making known the Gospel of that kingdom, and of gathering-in all its chosen subjects.

In our day, as throughout history, the visible professing church is a mixture of "wheat and chaff," of the saved saints and the unsaved (Mat 13:24-30). It simultaneously has become polluted with the values of the world. In the visible church, great discernment is required in order not to judge but yet correctly to follow God's ways of holiness.

5. Ecclesia also denotes the invisible church, the whole body of the redeemed, all those whom the Father has given to Christ (Eph 5:23-29; Heb 12:23). The church invisible is a pure society, the church in which Christ dwells, the body of Christ. It is called "invisible" because the greater part of those who constitute it are already in heaven or are yet unborn, and also because its members still on earth cannot be distinguished with certainty. The qualifications of membership in it are internal and hidden. It is unseen except by Him who "searches the heart." "The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2Ti 2:19). The church to which the promises appertaining to Christ's kingdom belong, is a spiritual body consisting of all true believers. It can be characterized by:

a. Its unity. God has ever had only one church on earth. The Apostles did not set up a new organization. Under their ministry, disciples were "added" to the church already existing (Act 2:47).

b. Its universality. It is the "catholic" church: not confined to any particular country or outward organization, but comprehending all believers throughout the whole world. This use of the word "catholic" does not refer to any specific religious institution.

c. Its perpetuity. It will continue through all ages to the end of the world. It can never be destroyed. It is an "everlasting kingdom."

For our purposes in this history of the Church, we treat the recognized visible Church up until the time of Constantine (chapter four), as approximately representing Christ's true invisible Church on earth. This was true in times of persecution because it was mainly only true believers who were willing to pay the costs (in suffering) associated with outward profession. However, as the State entered into Christian decisions beginning with Constantine, the resulting "institutions" of the visible Church became increasingly corrupt through sensuality, greed, pride, and political intrigue (1Jo 2:16), creating a great departure from the principles given by God in Scripture.

Therefore, especially from the time of Constantine, we should understand our use of the word "church" herein to mean only the visible Church. Christ's true invisible Church would continue in the hearts of men, not in the institutions of mankind!

Preparation for the Church

Physical preparation

To enhance the physical spread of the Gospel in "the fullness of time" (Gal 4:4), God used the Roman Empire. Peace and safety replaced tribal warfare. Widespread and easy travel became

possible through a network of roads and bridges, like the famous Via Apia on the Italian peninsula. The pirates were driven from the sea to protect travelers and trade. Roman justice was swift and severe, which reduced robbery and rioting.

Spiritual preparation

While physical conditions of Roman life helped the cause of Christ, there was a spiritual and intellectual hunger in the hearts of people. The Greek altars and philosophy that had "conquered" Rome caused many people to doubt the multitude of gods with their fatal flaws. Myths and legends abounded. Superstitious travelers considered it wise to sail under the figurehead of two Greek gods, the Dioscuri or "Twin Brothers," Castor and Pollux, sons of Zeus and patrons of seafarers. The state religion of Rome offered no real change of heart or life. There was a moral vacuum as individuals became saturated with sins of the flesh. Then came the Gospel with its promises of peace from troubled consciences, pardon from all sin, and rest for heavy hearts. In Christ, people could find assurance of salvation, divine forgiveness, and eternal life—for Jesus was the Son of God.

Rapid expansion

Armed with a powerful message of hope, the early Church was poised for rapid expansion. The primary cause for the expansion was the sovereign movement of God visiting people and converting hearts. The book of Acts is careful to record that "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved" (Act 2:47). As God worked directly, so He also worked through secondary causes, such as the stoning of Stephen (Act 7:54-60) and the persecution by Saul and other religious leaders (Act 8:1-3). The Church was forced to flee for protection. In the flight to safety the Gospel was shared continuously, many were saved, and the Church grew.

Character of the Church

People looked at the suffering saints and were impressed by their faith, commitment, and perseverance. The Gentiles wanted to come to Christ and were welcomed (Act 10:44-48). People looked at the spiritual body of the earthly Church and found it attractive. An enthusiastic belief that Jesus was alive, the good news of eternal life, high moral standards, followed by miraculous power (Act 4:33), all these caused sinners to seek out the Savior. In addition, individuals were impressed with the unity of the saints (Act 2:44), their firm doctrinal conviction (Act 2:42), their acts of generosity (Act 2:45), their joy (Act 2:46), and the success that was present (Act 2:41, 47).

Unfortunately, the early New Testament Church soon knew the pain of corruption and dissension as the world, the flesh, and the devil found a way into the local assemblies. Division, taking others to court, drunkenness during communion, open immorality, greed, pride, posturing for position, and many other sins were manifested. Still, in spite of transgressions, in spite of human failures, in spite of outward fears and inward corruption, the gates of hell would not prevent the Church's expansion (Mat 16:17-18). In the power of the Holy Spirit, the Stone which the builders rejected was about to fill the earth (Luk 20:17; Act 4:11; 1Pe 2:7; cp. Dan 2:35).

Selected Early Church Leaders

Apostolic Fathers

Clement of Rome	died c. AD 100
Ignatius	died c. AD 107
Hermas of Rome	died c. AD 150
Polycarp of Smyrna	AD 70-156
Barnabas of Alexandria	died c. AD 130
Papias	AD 60-130
Justin Martyr	AD 100-165

Church Fathers

Melito of Sardis	AD 100-170
Hegesippus	c. AD 120-190
Tatian	died c. AD 180
Irenaeus	c. AD 175-195
Tertullian	c. AD 160-225
Clement of Alexandria	c. AD 155-220
Origen	c. AD 185-254
Hippolytus	c. AD 160-236
Cyprian	c. AD 200-258
Lactanius	c. AD 240-320

Selected Early Writings of the “Fathers”

The Didache
Apology of Aristides
Apologies of Justin Martyr
Shepherd of Hermes
Dialogue with Trypho
Epistle of Diognetus, E. of Ignatius, E. of Barnabas
Epistle to the Corinthians Clement
Epistle to the Philippians, Sayings of the Lord Polycarp
First and Second Epistles Clement of Rome
Address to the Greeks, Harmony of the Gospels Tatian
Apologetics Tertullian
Against Heresies Irenaeus
Miscellanies, Outlines of Scriptures Clement of Alexandria
Against Celsus, Hexapla, Tetrapla Origen
Ecclesiastical History Eusebius
Confessions, Revisions Augustine
Concerning the Trinity, Concerning Doctrine Augustine
The City of God Augustine

Chapter 2

The Suffering Saints
AD 33 - 313

The Age of Heroes

The Greek word thilipsis is a very important word in the Christian vocabulary, for it speaks of tribulation. Christ had forewarned His disciples that they shall know something about suffering for righteousness by saying, “If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (Joh 15:20). During the first three hundred years of its existence, sometimes called “The Heroic Age of the Church,” the people of God knew persecution.

The Apostolic Church Is Persecuted

Peter was put in prison for preaching the Gospel (Act 12:5). Stephen and James died violently as faithful witnesses to Christ (Act 7:59-60; 12:1-2). While in Corinth, Paul was taken by force into the court of the Roman governor Gallio (Act 18:12).

At first the sufferings of the Church came primarily from the Jewish community. With the passing of time, the attitude of the Roman government toward the Christian community changed as specific charges were made. Christians were accused of atheism, cannibalism, immorality, and antisocial behavior. The charge of atheism arose because Christians refused to worship the emperor or the gods of Rome. The charge of cannibalism was based upon a misunderstanding of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Spiritual language of “eating the body of Christ and drinking His blood” was taken literally by those who were not spiritually-minded (1Co 11:23-26). Because religious services were often conducted in secret or after dark out of necessity, and because Christians displayed great love for each other, they were accused of immorality. Finally, Christians were charged with being antisocial, since many Christians found it necessary to remove themselves from public life, rather than to honor false gods in social gatherings or to engage in unholy relationships (2Co 6:14).

The blood of the early Church flowed freely. Leading the path to martyrdom were the twelve Apostles (1Co 4:9). According to tradition, each of the Apostles met a violent death with the exception of John (but even he suffered for righteousness sake).

- Simon Peter, the first notable leader of the Church (Act 1-15; Gal 2:9) was executed at Rome. It is said that he was crucified upside down (cf. Joh 21:18-19).
- James, the son of Zebedee, preached in Judea. He was beheaded by Herod Antipas about AD 44 (Act 12:1-2).
- John, the son of Zebedee, labored in Jerusalem, and then from Ephesus among the Churches of Asia Minor. He was banished to the isle of Patmos, liberated, and died a natural death at Ephesus (cf. Joh 21:20-23).
- Andrew, once a disciple of John the Baptist, preached in Scythia, Greece, and Asia Minor.

He died by crucifixion.
- Philip preached in Phrygia, and died a martyr's death at Hierapolis.
- Bartholomew became a missionary in Armenia. He was flayed to death.
- Thomas labored in Parthia, Persia, and India. He suffered martyrdom near Madras, at Mount St. Thomas.
- Matthew ministered in Ethiopia and was martyred.
- James the Less preached in Palestine and Egypt, where he was finally crucified.
- Jude preached in Assyria and Persia, where he was martyred.
- Simon the Zealot was crucified.
- Judas Iscariot hanged himself following his betrayal of Christ (Mat 26:14-16; 27:3-5; Act 1:16-20).

Of the twelve original disciples, one committed suicide, one died a natural death, ten suffered martyrdom—four of them by crucifixion.

The Glory and the Power of the Roman Empire

The Roman Emperors from Augustus to Commodus

The Julio-Claudian Dynasty

30 BC - AD 14 Augustus
AD 14 - 37 Tiberius
AD 37 - 41 Gaius (Caligula)
AD 41 - 54 Claudius
AD 54 - 68 Nero

The Year of the Four Emperors and the Flavian Dynasty

AD 68 Galba
AD 69 Otho
AD 69 Vitellius
AD 69 - 79 Vespasian
AD 79 - 81 Titus
AD 81 - 96 Domitian

The Antonine Emperors

AD 96 - 98 Nerva
AD 98 - 117 Trajan
AD 117 - 138 Hadrian
AD 138 - 161 Antoninus Pius
AD 161 - 180 Marcus Aurelius
AD 161 - 169 Lucius Verus
AD 180 - 192 Commodus

A Beast Named Nero

There was another reason why the attitude of the Roman government changed toward the Christians. There was a need to blame someone for a tragic fire in Rome itself that occurred in AD 64, during the reign of the emperor Nero. Beginning on June 18, the fire burned brightly for six days and seven nights, destroying the greater part of the city. Ten of the fourteen sections of the city were destroyed. Initially, Nero himself was suspected of starting the fire. His dreams of rebuilding the ancient city were well known. In all probability, Nero was several miles away in his palace at Antium. As soon as he heard the news he went to Rome and tried to fight the fire. Still, the people clamored for justice.

In order to dispel the rumors and growing hostility away from himself, Nero accused the Christians of starting the fire. The accusation seemed plausible—the Church taught that Jesus was coming again and that the earth was to be destroyed by fire (2Pe 3:10). And so terrible persecution came to the Church. Some Christians were sewn up in the skins of wild beasts. Fierce dogs were let loose upon them and their bodies were ripped to pieces. On at least one occasion, Nero held a dinner party in which he burned Christians at the stake. His purpose was to use them to illuminate the nighttime skies when daylight ended. And so the slaughter of Christians went. The tides of hostility ebbed and flowed in strength from AD 68 onward. Only one thing was constant: Christians were made to suffer and die because of their faith.

Ignatius, Justin, and Polycarp

Standing out among the martyrs of the early Church were Ignatius, a Syrian bishop of Antioch; Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna; and Justin the Apologist, who wrote extensively and spoke verbally in defense of Christianity. These leaders and others are sometimes called Church Fathers because of the esteem in which they were held by loyal members of the local assemblies. The men who led God's people from AD 90 to 460 are frequently divided into four groups:

Apostolic Fathers AD 90 - 150
edified the Church

Apologists AD 130 - 180
defended the Church against Roman persecution

Polemicists AD 180 - 225
led the Church against internal heresy

Theologians AD 225 - 460
attempted to harmonize Christianity with popular philosophy.

Ignatius (AD 67-107). About AD 107, Ignatius was arrested by the Roman authorities because of his Christian profession, and was sent to Rome to be executed by being thrown to the wild beasts. The emperor at this time was Trajan (AD 98-117), who was usually a moderate ruler. Though he did fear secret societies, it was not Trajan's official policy to engage in random persecutions of Christians. He allowed no arrests to be made solely on the basis of anonymous tips. However, an open profession of faith could be dangerous, as Ignatius discovered, when he was arrested and sent to Rome. Along the way Ignatius wrote letters to different congregations stressing the importance of Church unity. Unity, he taught, was to be enhanced by rooting out all heresies denying the deity of Christ. Finally, the hour of death came. Ignatius met his fate unafraid, saying, "May the wild beasts be eager to rush upon me. If they be unwilling, I will compel them. Come, crowds of wild beasts; come, tearing and mangling, wracking of bone and

hacking of limbs; come, cruel tortures of the devil; only let me attain unto Christ."

Justin Martyr (c. AD 100-165). As Ignatius faced death bravely, so did the philosopher Justin Martyr, who was scourged and beheaded in Rome with six other Christians. Born about AD 100 in a small town in Samaria, Justin was a natural scholar. After studying the various philosophical systems of his day, he embraced Christianity and became a capable defender of the faith. He wrote two apologies[1] to the emperor Antionius Pius (AD 138-161) and to his adopted son Marcus Aurelius, who would one day reign from AD 161 to 180. He also wrote a dialogue with Trypho the Jew, in which Justin contended that Jesus was the Messiah.

On his second stay in the city of Rome, Justin engaged in a public debate with a philosopher by the name of Crescens. Shortly thereafter, about AD 166, he was put to death by Marcus Aurelius, who was probably influenced by pagan philosophies. Justin's last words were, "We desire nothing more than to suffer for our Lord Jesus Christ, for this gives us salvation and joyfulness before His dreadful judgment seat."

Polycarp (AD 70-156). Perhaps the best known of the early martyrs is Polycarp, who ministered in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) as bishop of Smyrna. He was a disciple of the Apostle John. In his messages to the Church, Polycarp emphasized faith in Christ and the necessity of working out faith in daily life. When the hour of his execution came, the proconsul offered Polycarp a way to escape. "Revile Christ, and I will release you," said the proconsul. But Polycarp replied, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He has never done me wrong: how can I blaspheme Him, my King, who has saved me? I am a Christian!"

Though he is now famous for his thoughtful Meditations, the emperor Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180) proved to be a terrible foe of Christianity. It was his decree that the property of Christians should be given to those who accused them. As a result of this policy, ruthless individuals came forward with false accusations against the saints. Christians were sought out, brought to trial, convicted, and condemned. Their property was confiscated and given away.

In Lyons and Vienne in southern Gaul (France), persecution was severe. Christians who could not be made to deny their faith were beheaded if Roman citizens. Others were thrown to wild beasts in the arena of the amphitheater. One such martyr was Blandina. She had been a spectator of the death of others, exhorting them to remain faithful to the very end. Among those who died was Ponticus, her fifteen year old brother. Finally, Blandina's moment came. She entered the arena. A net was thrown over her and she was tortured in various ways, including being burned in a frying pan. In the end, she was put in a basket and exposed to the fury of a raging bull, which took her upon his horns and tossed her into the air. Death came swiftly after that. Blandina's body along with others were burned, and the ashes thrown into the river Rhone. Along the banks of the river stood the heathen, laughing and saying to one another, "Now we shall see whether there will be a resurrection of their bodies." But even the heathen acknowledged that never in their experience had a woman endured so many terrible sufferings.

Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: AD 193-476

The Roman Emperors from Pertinax to Romulus Augustulus

The House of Severus

Pertinax AD 193
Didius Julianus AD 193
Septimius Severus AD 193 - 211

Pescennius Niger AD 193 - 195
Clodius Albinus AD 195 - 197
Caracalla AD 211 - 217
Geta AD 211
Macrinus AD 217 - 218
Elagabalus AD 218 - 222
Severus Alexander AD 222 - 235

The Struggle for Survival

Maximinus I AD 235 - 238
Gordian I AD 238
Gordian II AD 238
Balbinus AD 238
Pupienus AD 238
Gordian III AD 238 - 244
Phillips I AD 244 - 249
Trajanus Decius AD 249 - 251
Trebonianus Gallus AD 251 - 253
Aemilian AD 253
Valerian AD 253 - 260
Gallienus AD 253 - 268
Postumus AD 260 - 268

The Period of Military Rule

Claudius II Gothicus AD 268 - 270
Quintillus AD 270
Aurelian AD 270 - 275
Tacitus AD 275 - 276
Florian AD 276
Probus AD 276 - 282
Carus AD 282 - 283
Carinus AD 283 - 285
Numerian AD 283 - 284

The Tetrarchy and the Dynasty of Constantine

Diocletian AD 284 - 305
Maximian AD 286 - 305/307-308
Carausius AD 286/287 - 293
Constantius I Chlorus AD 305 - 306
Galerius AD 305 - 311
Severus II AD 306 - 307
Maxentius AD 306 - 312
Constantine the Great AD 306 - 337
Licinius AD 308 - 324

Maximinus II Daia AD 310 - 313
Constantine II AD 337 - 340
Constantius II AD 337 - 361
Constans I AD 337 - 361
Magnentius AD 350 - 353
Julian the Apostate AD 361 - 363
Jovian AD 363 - 364

The House of Valentinian Rulers of the West

Valentinian I AD 364 - 375
Valens [East] AD 364 - 378
Gratian AD 375 - 383
Valentinian II AD 375 - 392
Theodosius I the Great AD 379 - 395
[East only, then the whole empire]
Magnus Maximus AD 383 - 388
Arcadius [East] AD 395 - 408
Honorius AD 395 - 423
Constantine III AD 407 - 411
Theodosius II [East] AD 408 - 450
Constantius III AD 421
Johannes AD 423 - 425
Valentinian III AD 425 - 455

The Survival of the Eastern Part of the Roman Empire and the Fall of the West

Marcian [East] AD 450 - 457
Petronius Maximus AD 455
Avitus AD 455 - 456
Leo I the Great [East] AD 457 - 474
Majorian AD 457 - 461
Libius Severus AD 461 - 465
Anthemius AD 467 - 472
Olybrius AD 472
Glycerius AD 473 - 474
Julius Nepos AD 474-475/477-480
Zeno [West] AD 474 - 475
[East] AD 476 - 491
Basiliscus [East] AD 475 - 476
Romulus Augustulus AD 475 - 476

Peace Before Persecution

With the death of Marcus Aurelius (AD 180), a general period of peace came to the Church, which lasted about seventy years. There was one exception to this peace, when persecution broke out during the reign of Septimius Severus (AD 200-211). Great violence broke out against

Christians in Egypt. Origen (c. AD 185-254), the most famous of the Alexandrian writers, was put to death for the faith, along with many others.

Origen encouraged the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures. Simply stated, this method of understanding the Scriptures holds that the literal meaning of the Bible conceals a deeper meaning that can only be perceived by the mature believer. He taught that this concealing of the truth by God under the guise of common words was designed to prevent "pearls" from being cast before the uninterested and unbelieving (Mat 7:6).

Renewed Efforts of Destruction

In AD 249 another general persecution of the Church broke out under the emperor Decius. In the providence of the Lord, his reign only lasted two years (AD 249-251). Then came Valerian (AD 253-260) and the Church suffered again. There was hardly any reprieve. Hostility was endured through the reigns of Galienus (AD 260-268), Aurelian (AD 270-275) and on into the reign of the emperor Diocletian (AD 284-305).

Perhaps the most severe of all the persecutions came under Diocletian. Beginning in February 303, three edicts of persecution were issued in quick succession. The Churches were to be burned, all sacred books were to be confiscated, and the religious leaders were to be imprisoned or compelled to offer a sacrifice. Many lives were lost. Mental cruelty was added to physical hardships, as Satan's servants assaulted the Church in order to destroy it completely.

During these dark days many Christians in the city of Rome found a small place of security. Under the city in the soft stone were the catacombs. These underground passageways wound and crisscrossed in every direction, making up over 500 miles of subterranean passages, thirty or more feet below the surface. In the sides of the galleries or passages, excavations had been made in rows upon rows so that the dead could be buried. Here among the burial chambers, the living found a hiding place.

The Grace of Galerius

Despite her great hardships, the Church never lost hope, and the Lord began to honor such faith. When the emperor of the East, Galerius, became ill, he suffered excruciating torment. In his hours of agony Galerius had opportunity to consider the pain of the Christians. In the will of the Lord, Galerius manifested a measure of grace. From his deathbed in the year AD 311, he issued an edict granting Christians permission to worship freely. He even invited prayers for his own soul. By receiving more freedom to worship, and by manifesting a willingness to pray for one's enemies, little by little, the Church began to gain the spiritual victory that Jesus had promised (Mat 16:18).

The Doctrine of Tribulation

1. The word tribulation is found twenty two times in the Authorized Version. The word tribulations is found four times.

2. To suffer tribulation (Gk. thilipsis) is to suffer affliction, to be troubled, to suffer due to the pressure of circumstances or the antagonism of persons.

3. In examining the passages that speak of tribulation, it becomes evident that all God's people in all ages have known emotional, spiritual, and physical affliction (Deu 4:30; Jdg 10:14; 1Sa 26:24; 1Sa 10:19; Mat 13:21).

4. Tribulation also comes to those who are not God's people, in the form of divine discipline (Mat 24:21, 29; Mar 13:24; 2Th 1:6; Rom 2:9).

5. Of particular concern is the Christian and tribulation. The Bible clearly makes the following statements.

For as long as they are in the world, the disciples of Christ shall have tribulation (Joh 16:33).

Only through much tribulation will the saints enter into the kingdom (Act 14:22).

The value of tribulation is that it works patience (Rom 5:3; 12:12).

To endure tribulation is not to be loved less by Christ, for nothing shall separate Christians from His faithful love (Rom 8:35).

God finds a special way to comfort the saints who suffer (2Co 1:4).

Paul could find reasons to rejoice in the very midst of tribulation (2Co 7:4; Rom 5:3; 2Th 1:4), and therefore did not want anyone else to worry on his behalf (Eph 3:13).

When believers at Thessalonica were surprised at the suffering they had to endure, Paul reminded them he had taught that Christians must suffer (1Th 3:4).

John on the isle of Patmos does not divorce himself from tribulation, nor does he ever say of himself that he represents those who shall not suffer tribulation. On the contrary, John considers himself at the moment of his writing to be a companion in suffering (Rev 1:9).

The tribulation of the saints is well known to the Lord (Rev 2:9-10), and is for a stated purpose.

Always, God's people emerge victorious out of tribulation, no matter how great (Rev 7:14).

6. In all the biblical passages, there is not a single word that God will spare His people from the purifying effects of tribulation. Just the opposite is stated and demonstrated time and again.

7. The story of the Old Testament, the writing of the New Testament, and the documentation of 2,000 years of history testify to the blood of the saints in the Church.

8. Any teaching that seeks to exempt God's people from tribulation during any period of human history, will not find support from the twenty-six passages in the Scriptures that use this word.

Chapter 3

The Foundations of Faith
AD 33 - 325

Church Doctrine and Organization

Bible doctrine is essential to proper spiritual maturity (Pro 4:2; 1Ti 4:13). Sound doctrine is the foundation of faith (Ti 1:9). What people believe about sin, salvation, the Scriptures, and the Savior will determine their eternal destiny, as well as their relationship with God the Father (Joh 7:17). Doctrine does not divide the Church as much as it unites the saints around the truth that has been entrusted for preservation and proclamation (Jude 1:3). Any attempt to minimize the importance of doctrine should be challenged (2Jo 1:9-10). The Church of Jesus Christ would not be the powerful force it is in the world today apart from the faithful defense of basic Bible doctrine. While it is unfortunate that controversies about doctrine occur, such discussions are necessary (1Co 11:18-19) as they form an essential part of the history of the Church.

The Importance of Doctrine

The importance of Bible doctrine is demonstrated in the life of Christ. People were astonished at His words (Mat 7:28; 22:33; Mar 11:18; Luk 4:32). Through doctrinal teaching Jesus set forth the reality of His kingdom and how the citizens of His domain should live. The disciples the Lord chose to be with Him learned His thoughts well; His doctrine become their doctrine. Following the Lord's ascension into heaven, new converts were taught, so that they continued steadfast in the apostle's doctrine (Act 2:42). As a result, the Church grew stronger (Act 5:28).

A Canon of Scripture for the Church

The Old Testament Canon

The early Church trusted the Apostles' doctrine because they knew it was grounded in the teachings of the Old Testament, which they believed to be inspired by God (2Ti 3:16). While the Christian community did not embrace the idea that God inspired all men and all writings, there was selected material considered unique. By the end of the first century AD, thirty-nine books were listed as being canonical (inspired and given by God) according to Bishop Melito of Sardis in modern Turkey.

Bishop Melito had been asked by a friend to provide an accurate listing of the ancient books as to their number and order. He honored the request. Leaving out the book of Esther, the list Melito provided is recognized by Jews and Protestants today. It had taken many centuries to determine which books would be held in high esteem, and which writings would not be

received. But finally, the canon on the Old Testament was closed after centuries of consideration. God had been faithful to preserve His Word.

The process of preserving the sacred Scriptures started immediately after the first recording of the same. The divine revelations of the Old Testament began when specific speeches and sayings were written down. God Himself was the first author of Holy Scripture, according to Deuteronomy 5:22: it was the Lord who wrote the Ten Commandments in stone. Later, Moses put into writing the Book of the Covenant, including the Ten Commandments (Exo 20:1 through 23:33). The people of Palestine promised to obey all that had been written and rehearsed in their hearing (Exo 24:3-8), because they received it as the Word of God through Moses (Deu 31:24-26).

Subsequent generations would also submit to these Scriptures. In 625 BC, for example, when repairs were being made on the temple in Jerusalem, a scroll containing the Law of God was discovered. King Josiah had it read before all the people; this led to a time of spiritual renewal (2Ki 22-23).

As the centuries passed, other speeches and wise sayings were written down and recognized by the Hebrew people as being the authoritative voice of God. The message of Micah (Mic 3:9-12), for example, caused King Hezekiah to repent (Jer 26:17-19). Ezra is credited with gathering the many Old Testament writings into the approximate collection we have today.

When the collection of inspired material became larger, Judas Maccabeus and his associates (c. 164 BC) divided the canonical books into three divisions: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. It was this division and this canon that Jesus accepted (Luk 24:44) and that the early Church embraced.

The Old Testament Canon as History

The Pentateuch

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

12 Historical Books

Pre-Kingdom: Ezra, Joshua, Judges, Ruth
Kingdom: 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles
Exile and after: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

5 Books of Poetry

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

5 Major Prophets

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel

12 Minor Prophets

Pre- and Assyrian: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum
Chaldean (Babylonian): Habakkuk, Zephaniah
Post-Exile: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

The New Testament Canon

While the Old Testament had taken many years to formulate, the New Testament Scriptures were written within one hundred years of each other. However, like the Old Testament canon, it would take time until the multitude of various writings (Luk 1:1) could be duly considered by Church leaders and a canon carefully formulated.

There were good reasons why the Church wanted to settle upon an official body of Scripture.

First, there was the matter of persecution. Soon after the ascension of Christ into heaven (Act 1:9-11), physical acts of hostility were inflicted upon the saints. Initially, the Jewish community was responsible for the ill treatment of believers in Christ as the true Messiah (Act 8). Later, the Roman government officially attacked the people of God (Jam 1:1; Rev 13:1-7). If Christians were called upon to suffer for their faith, they would do so (1Pe 2:21), but there was no need to suffer needlessly for non-canonical books, which were found only to be offensive to religious and civil authorities. Those spurious writings gladly could be given up or destroyed.

Second, there was the matter of heresy. Some of the enemies of Christ and the Gospel were brazen enough to tell those in the Christian community which books in their possession were inspired of God and which were not. These heretics tried to set the scriptural boundaries for the Church!

One such bold enemy of Christ was a man named Marcion. In about AD 140 Marcion arrived in Rome to spread his heretical ideas about God and Christ. Marcion denied the physical resurrection of Christ and the Judeo heritage of the Church. Therefore, he excluded the early apostolic writings, which placed great emphasis upon the doctrine of the resurrection and the deity of Christ. The Canon Muratori forced the Church to consider more closely and more formally which books should make up the New Testament.

It was not always easy. Writing in the early part of the fourth century, Eusebius of Caesarea confessed that some texts were still being debated, such as the letters of James and Jude, the second letter of Peter, the second and third letters of John, and the letter to the seven churches of the Revelation. And yet progress was being made. By the middle of the fourth century, the Codex Vaticanus, a Greek volume of both Old and New Testaments, listed the complete New Testament as it is known today. The discussion continued, however. There were other writings that were under consideration for canonicity, such as the Letter of Barnabas and The Shepherd of Hermas.

It was not until AD 367, in his annual Easter Festal Letter, that Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, explained to all the churches and monasteries within his sphere of authority what the Old Testament and the New Testament canon of Scripture should be. Though his list did not conclude the discussion for everyone, it hastened the day when the debate over the canon would end.

By the first part of the fifth century, the consensus of tradition concerning the canon of Scripture was established and honored. Jerome, in a letter written in 414, accepted the New Testament books listed by Athanasius, though he was also willing to include the Letter of Barnabas because, in his opinion, the author was the traveling companion of Paul and was therefore an apostle.

A key in understanding the formation of the New Testament canon, is that it was never an arbitrary choice based on the decisions of men. Four criteria were used powerfully by the Holy Spirit among widely dispersed groups to bring unity in the formation of the canon. Inspired books should have:

1. authors who had been in direct contact with Christ or the Apostles,
2. consistency in doctrine,
3. wide acceptance and use by churches in all regions, through the guidance of the Spirit,
4. produced dynamic changes in lives, as used by the Spirit.

The New Testament canon meets these criteria in a unique and special way; it truly has been formulated by the hand of God!

Finally, all the discussions were over. In the providence of God since the days of Jerome, the twenty-seven books that make up the New Testament have been confirmed by the Church.

Spiritual healing has come to those who read the sacred words. Worthy men have debated and defended these particular books of the Bible against unworthy opponents (Jude 1:4). God has been faithful to give to His people a particular body of truth (Jude 1:3). Fundamental to Christian faith is the fact that we have a God-breathed book without error, the Bible. There is a canon of Scripture for the Church!

Development of the New Testament Canon

Marcion	The Canon Muratori	Eusebius	Athanasius
c. 140	c. 200	c. 325	367
	Matthew	Matthew	Matthew
	Mark	Mark	Mark
Luke	Luke	Luke	Luke
	John	John	John
	Acts	Acts	Acts
Romans	Romans	Romans	Romans
1 Corinthians	1 Corinthians	1 Corinthians	1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians	2 Corinthians	2 Corinthians	2 Corinthians
Galatians	Galatians	Galatians	Galatians
Ephesians	Ephesians	Ephesians	Ephesians
Philippians	Philippians	Philippians	Philippians
Colossians	Colossians	Colossians	Colossians
1 Thessalonians	1 Thessalonians	1 Thessalonians	1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians	2 Thessalonians	2 Thessalonians	2 Thessalonians
	1 Timothy	1 Timothy	1 Timothy
	2 Timothy	2 Timothy	2 Timothy
	Titus	Titus	Titus
Philemon			Philemon
			Hebrews
			James

	1 Peter	1 Peter
		2 Peter
1 John	1 John	1 John
2 John		2 John
		3 John
Jude		Jude
Revelation	Revelation	Revelation
Wisdom Of Solomon		
The Revelation Of Peter		

The Apostolic Fathers

The leaders of the churches during the first century after the Apostles are called the "Apostolic Fathers" because they effectively continued the work of the Apostles. They too believed that, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2Ti 3:16-17). By teaching the Scriptures, men like Clement, Hermas of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, and Barnabas of Alexandria were able to establish others in the doctrines of grace.

Special note: While the Apostolic Fathers were not without their own theological biases, they did want to exhort and edify the Church. In some instances, the Apostolic Fathers seem to assign a rather significant place to baptism as a medium of forgiveness of sin. Martyrdom and celibacy are also thought to have special power to atone for sin. Therefore, in reading the Apostolic Fathers, much spiritual discernment is needed.

Clement of Rome (died AD 100) was a presbyter and bishop in Rome. In AD 96 he wrote a letter to the Church at Corinth, admonishing the Christians to restore some older presbyters who had been ousted by younger members. Quoting extensively from the Old Testament and from the words of Jesus, Clement tried to teach the way of humility that yields to God's divine order and peace (Ti 2:10).

Hermas of Rome (died c. 150) also taught the doctrines of Christ in his writings such as The Shepherd. After providing some biographical information as to how he came to faith, Hermas' book set forth a series of visions about Christian life and morality. The Shepherd contains three main parts: five visions, twelve mandates, and ten similitudes concerning an ethical life.

Ignatius (died c. 107) was bishop of Antioch in Syria. Prior to suffering martyrdom for his faith, Ignatius was able to teach the Church to stand against false doctrines. He opposed the Ebionite heresy, which demanded that the regulations of the Jewish faith be kept as a means of salvation. He also challenged Docetism, which held that Christ only appeared to have a real birth, death, and resurrection.

Polycarp (c. 70-156), bishop of Smyrna, joined Ignatius in a martyr's death. By life and by lip

he defended sound doctrine, through opposing some of the Valentinian heretics who had embraced Gnosticism. When Polycarp encountered Marcion, a leader of Gnosticism, he fearlessly characterized him as "the first born of Satan." Only one of Polycarp's letters has been preserved, and that is the letter addressed to the Philippians.

Barnabas of Alexandria in North Africa (died c. 130) may have gone a little too far in his zeal to combat false doctrine. He became so anti-Judaic as to almost deny a historical connection between Judaism and Christianity. Still, his life throbbed with missionary zeal as he taught individual responsibility.

Justin the Apologist (born c. 100) was probably the most dramatic defender of the faith. He was a prolific writer. Around the year AD 153, while in Rome, Justin wrote his famous Apology, whereby he defended Christianity against the charges of atheism and immorality. He tried to prove that Christians were loyal citizens by teaching that the Lord's kingdom was not of this world. Therefore, the Roman Empire had no reason to fear a social insurrection from the Christian community. In the midst of his many literary efforts and his faithfulness to sound doctrine, Justin was beheaded for his faith in AD 165.

Early Heresies

Heresy may be defined as a radical departure from the truth. It differs from "incorrect" teaching by matter of degrees. In the last half of the second century, several heresies emerged that shook the foundation of the Church. They were Gnosticism, Montanism, and Arianism.

Gnosticism

The name "Gnosticism" derives from the Greek word gnosis, which means "knowledge." According to the Gnostics, they possessed a special mystical knowledge that was the secret key to salvation. Salvation was their main concern. Unfortunately, the Gnostics came to believe that all matter is evil, or at best unreal. A human being, they said, is an eternal spirit trapped or imprisoned in a body that is evil, being made of matter.

How did this happen? Gnosticism taught that the supreme being had no intention of creating a material world, but only a spiritual one. Therefore, only a number of spiritual beings, called eons, were made. One of these eons, far removed from the supreme being, fell into error, and created the material world.

Since this world was made by a spiritual being, there are still "sparks" or "bits" of spirit in it. These are imprisoned in human bodies and must be liberated through "gnosis" (knowledge). This liberation is accomplished by listening to special heavenly messengers who have been sent to give individuals that knowledge, without which there is no salvation. One messenger, some believed, was Christ.

Since Christ was a heavenly messenger, and since body and matter are evil, Gnostics rejected the idea that Christ had a body like ours. Some said that His body was just an appearance of a real body. Later, the Church would call this heresy Docetism, meaning "to seem," and would refute it totally (1Jo 1:1-4).

Montanism

Montanism is named after its founder, Montanus, who had been a pagan priest until his conversion to Christ in AD 155. After a time, Montanus began to teach that he was possessed

by the Holy Spirit. Soon two women, Priscilla and Maximilla, followed him and also began to prophesy. Together, they claimed that their movement was the beginning of a new age demanding a rigorous moral life. To claim, as the Montanists did, that the end of time was beginning with the giving of the Spirit to Montanus and his followers, was to deny the significance of the Person and work of Christ. His teachings made the Gospel into just one more stage in the history of salvation. Because of these issues, the rest of the Church opposed Montanism.

Arianism

The Arian Controversy began in Alexandria, Egypt, when Licinius ruled in the East and Constantine ruled Rome in the West. The bishop of Alexandria, Alexander, clashed with Arius, one of the most prestigious and popular presbyters of the city. The main issue at stake was whether the Word of God (Christ) was co-eternal with God. One important phrase of the Arian motto said, "There was when He was not." With these words the Arians denied both the deity of Christ and His eternal pre-existence.

From its foundation, the Church had worshipped Jesus Christ. Arius' proposal forced the Church to decide whether it would cease such worship, or to declare that it was worshipping a creature. At the Council of Nicea the Church solved the Arian Controversy, by declaring that Jesus Christ was "very God of very God," and Arianism was rejected as heresy (discussed further in chapter 5).

The Church Fathers

The Church found spiritual champions to combat these heresies. These are called "Church Fathers" (as distinguished from "Apostolic Fathers") because 1) they too were used of the Lord to teach and strengthen the churches, and 2) they lived in the second and third centuries and therefore were not close to the Apostles. Among the most capable of these defenders of the faith were Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement, and Origen.

Irenaeus was born sometime between AD 115 and 142. Reared in Smyrna, he saw Polycarp and heard him preach. Moving to Lyons in Gaul (France), Irenaeus became a bishop in the Church. In the year AD 200 he suffered a martyr's death, having defended the faith in such works as Against Heresies.

Tertullian was born sometime between the years AD 150 and 155 in North Africa in the city of Carthage. After studying law, he practiced in Rome where he was converted to Christ. After his salvation, Tertullian returned to Carthage and became a presbyter in the Church.

Clement of Alexandria was a very able instructor in the theological school in Egypt. During his years as a teacher (AD 190-202), Clement wrote the majority of his works, in which he covered almost every aspect of Christian conduct. Later, when religious persecution broke out under the Roman emperor Septimius Severus, about AD 202, Clement fled Alexandria. He died in Asia Minor.

Origen (c. 185-254), a pupil of Clement of Alexandria, was a great scholar in the Church. As a prolific writer he wrote many books in defense of Christianity, including Against Celsus. One of his monumental works was The Hexapla, an enormous edition of the Bible arranged in six columns. It contained the text from the Hebrew Scriptures, a Greek translation of the Hebrew, the Septuagint, and the Greek versions by Symmachus, Aquila, and Theodotion. His life ended as a teacher in Caesarea.

A Creed For Christendom: The Apostle's Creed

From the struggles of the Church with the early heresies came three foundational aspects of the Church: several creeds, the canon of Scripture, and a formal Church organization. The word "creed" comes from the Latin word credo and means, "I believe."

The Apostles' Creed was the most universally accepted Christian creed in the early Church period. Being Roman in origin, the Apostles' Creed is known and used only in churches of Western origin, such as the Roman Catholic Church and those stemming from the Protestant Reformation.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And in Jesus His only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy universal Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

New Forms of Church Government

As the Church struggled to formulate a core set of beliefs based upon an accepted canon of Scripture, so the Church was determined to preserve what it professed. Many felt a strong form of Church government had to be found, and it was. The controversy with the Gnostics and Montanists produced the episcopal form of government, whereby Church authority was invested in spiritual rulers who came to be called "bishops" (Greek: episcopos; overseer). Organizational complexity had found Christianity. But it had taken a long time, for at first the organizational structure had been very simple. The ecclesia, or Church officers, were presbyters or elders, and deacons (1Ti 3:1-13; Act 14:23; 1Ti 5:17; 1Pe 5:1).

As the Church grew in number and the affairs of the Church grew more complex, local assemblies would chose a priest or layman in each city to be an episcopos, overseer or bishop, to help manage its affairs. As the number of bishops grew, they in turn required superintendence and co-ordination. By the fourth century we hear of archbishops, metropolitans, or primates, governing the bishops and the churches of a province. Over all these levels of clergy were the patriarches who ruled at Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Rome. During this time, the foundations were laid for the Bishop of Rome to begin to feel that additional power was within his grasp. He could claim authority over other bishops, since some interpreted "the keys of the kingdom" to have passed to the Roman patriarch through the Apostle Peter (Mat 16:19).

A patriarch or an emperor could call the bishops and archbishops to convene in synods, or councils, to discuss important matters and to make rules and regulations that were binding. If a council represented only a province, it was called a provincial council; if it represented only the East or the West, it was called a plenary council; if both, it was a general council. If the decrees of the council were accepted as binding upon all Christians, it was an ecumenical council. In this way the Church grew in organizational intricacy.

Chapter 4

The Sign of the Saviour
AD 313

Constantine the Great

Constantine the Great (c. 285-337) is known as the first "Christian emperor" of the Roman Empire. He ruled from AD 306 to 337. Constantine's parents were Constantius Chlorus, the western co-emperor of the Roman empire, and Helena, a concubine. When his father died in 306, the Roman army in Britain proclaimed Constantine emperor. This meant that he ruled over Britain, Gaul [France], and Spain. Maxentius ruled over Italy and North Africa. A military conflict for power was inevitable.

In a surprise move made in order to get the military advantage, Constantine marched into Italy leading an army of forty thousand men. At Saxa Rubra, ten miles from Rome and a little to the north of it, the two great armies of Maxentius and Constantine met. The date was October 27, 312. On the morning of October 28, the battle would begin. During the night, the only thing separating the army of Constantine from the army of Rome was the Tiber River, and the Milvian Bridge, which crossed the river.

Constantine had reason to be concerned as his soldiers made their final preparations for battle. He was outnumbered three to one and the army of Maxentius contained the Praetorian Guard, the elite of all the Roman armies. As the twilight faded away, the outcome of the engagement on the next day was in grave doubt. Constantine felt he needed spiritual help.

Like his father, Constantine's heart was drawn toward the worship of Mithra, the Persian sun god, who was believed to be a great warrior and the champion of truth and justice. Mithra was a soldier's god. Perhaps Constantine was thinking of Mithra when he fell into a fitful sleep that night and dreamed an unusual dream. According to one account, Constantine dreamed of a monogram composed of the first two Greek letters of the name of Christ. The next day he had his soldiers inscribe the monogram on their shields. According to another version, on the evening before the battle, as he watched the setting sun, Constantine suddenly saw a cross above the sun. In letters of light the cross bore the words: Hoc Signo Vinces, "In this sign, conquer." On October 28, Constantine and his soldiers won the victory. The army of Maxentius was completely defeated. Although the Praetorian Guard fought like lions, they were cut down where they stood.

The Edict of Milan

Constantine believed he had won the battle because he had received help from the God of the Christians. He too would become a Christian and worship the true Light of the world. Whether or not Constantine was indeed converted has been a subject of great debate; certainly he was very tolerant toward Christians. During the winter of AD 312-313, he instructed an officer in North Africa to provide money to the bishop of Carthage so that the ministers could be paid.

At Milan in 313, he issued an edict granting all persons the freedom to worship as they wished. Persecution of Christians stopped! They were placed upon a level of equality, before the law, with the other religions of the Empire. New laws allowed bishops to decide civil lawsuits. The branding of the face was banned because it marred the image of God. Law courts and workshops were closed on Sundays, and the gladiatorial games were stopped.

The Blood of the Martyrs

While the Edict of Milan did not establish Christianity as the only and official religion of the Empire, it did mark the victory of the Church over heathenism. Despite three hundred years of fierce persecutions, the Church had not only survived, it had triumphed. The blood of the martyrs had not been spilt in vain. Upon the throne of Rome finally sat a man who confessed Christ. At one time buildings where Christians met were burned; now in Constantinople, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and other places, magnificent Church buildings were erected to the glory of God.

AD 313: A Date to Remember

The date 313 should be remembered by all Christians, for in that year the Church was granted the same rights and privileges that the followers of other religions had. But as the date is remembered, let it also be remembered that the Church won her rights not by fighting, but by suffering. The Church survived not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Living God (Zec 4:6).

The Eagle and the Cross

After 313 the emblem of the Roman armies was replaced. The eagle gave way to a cross. However this was not all good, for as the Church transformed the world, the world invaded the Church. Suddenly, the Christian name became an avenue to political, military, and social promotion. Individuals became Christians in name only.

The Relation between Church and State

Because Constantine granted the Church freedom of religion and many special favors, he felt freedom to take an arbitrary and active role in the internal affairs of the Church. For example, when the appointment of Caecilian as bishop of Carthage was challenged in AD 313, Constantine intervened to settle the dispute in Caecilian's favor.

The Donatists

The Donatists were named after their leader, Donatus. While orthodox in faith, the Donatists caused division in the Church by teaching that those who had denied the faith during periods of severe persecution should not be re-admitted to the Church. Constantine instructed the bishops of Rome to hold a formal hearing to review the matter. When the Donatists were not satisfied with the opinion of the commission, Constantine heard the case himself, and in 316 declared

Caecilian to be the rightful bishop. Constantine also summoned the Council of Nicea in 325, which ruled against Arianism, a heresy that denied that Christ as the Son of God was co-eternal with the Father. It was the Edict of the emperor that provided legal force to the Nicene council.

This merging of Church and state became a mixed blessing to the nations of the earth. While some good did come out of the arrangement, the blending of the two became the occasion for misunderstanding, hostility, and bloodshed. It can be argued that more harm than good was done by the merging of Church and state. Certainly the spiritual vitality of the Church was weakened because of the many concessions that had to be made to sinful men and worldly practices, in order to survive politically in a sinful society. Instead of transforming the kingdoms of this world by truth, righteousness, holiness, and separation, the Church was transformed and then corrupted by the world. In many ways, the Church first embraced and then practiced all that makes up the satanic world system (2Co 4:4).

Julian the Apostate

In the year 361, the new emperor was Julian, a nephew of Constantine the Great. He had been brought up as a Christian but was never converted. Once he was in power, Julian made it clear that his heart preferred the old gods. Because he forsook Christianity, he is known as Julian the Apostate.

In his hostility to the Church, Julian persecuted the Christians. His chief weapon against the Church was the pen. As a gifted writer, Julian attacked Christianity with satire and ridicule. All the while Julian tried to restore pagan worship. There is a wonderful legend that Julian acknowledged his failures in AD 363, when he was mortally wounded in battle against the Persians. A spear pierced his thigh. As the blood spurted out, Julian took some in his hand, threw it toward heaven and cried, “So Thou hast conquered after all, Galilean.” He was 32 years old.

Chapter 5

In the Councils of the Church AD 325 - 451

Various Types of Councils

The Bible teaches that there is safety in a multitude of counselors (Pro 11:14). When the early Church became concerned over problems that arose as a result of the conversion of the Gentiles, a council was held by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (Act 15). This established an important precedent followed in the centuries to come.

There were various kinds of councils, such as a provincial council which represented only one province, and a national council where an entire nation was represented. A general or ecumenical council was one in which all churches of all countries present were represented. In a small town in Asia Minor called Nicea in 325, the first general or ecumenical council was held.

The Council of Nicea

The Council of Nicea fully debated a great question that had occupied the mind of the Church for over three hundred years: whether Jesus Christ, the Son, was truly and fully God, the same as the Father. This Arian Controversy, as it came to be known, had raged for a long time, resulting in deep division in the Church.

Finally, Constantine (c. 285-337) called the first general council to settle the dispute. More than 300 bishops made their way to Nicea, located on the shores of the Bosporus Sea, forty-five miles from Constantinople. The men met in a magnificent hall in the palace of the emperor. Most were from the Greek-speaking East, although some were from the West. Some of the bishops in the council bore in their bodies the marks of the sufferings they had endured for the Savior.

The atmosphere was euphoric as the ministers of God began to discuss many legislative matters. They approved a standard procedure for bringing back into the Church those who had not been faithful in the days of persecution. They also established the procedure for the election and ordination of presbyters and bishops. But the most difficult issue that the Council faced was the Arian Controversy.

The Arian Controversy

Arius (d. 336), a presbyter in the Church in Alexandria, Egypt, taught that Jesus, the Son of God, was not truly deity as was God the Father. Athanasius (born c. 295) was another presbyter in the same Church; he taught that Jesus was fully God. The question was important to settle because the value of the saving work of Christ depends upon what kind of Person He is. If Christ is not God, He cannot be the Saviour of man, for only God can save man from the

desperate state of sin into which he has fallen. Athanasius understood the importance of the controversy and said, “Jesus, whom I know as my Redeemer, cannot be less than God.”

The debate grew fierce between the young Athanasius and the more mature Arius, a man of integrity and a capable orator. Still, the young “David” was ready to challenge his “Goliath,” who was popular with a large number of people.

Arius truly thought that to believe that the Son is God as well as the Father is God, would mean to believe that there are two Gods. If this were true, then the Church was in danger of falling back into heathenism and polytheism, the belief in many gods. To stop this from happening, Arius thought that Jesus, although He is somewhat like God, is not after all fully God, with all of God’s attributes and virtues. According to Arius, Jesus Christ is the first and highest of all created beings and is worthy of honor and veneration, but Jesus does not exist from eternity past, and is not of the same substance or essence as the Father.

Athanasius argued that if Jesus were not God, then He would be a great blasphemer—for He certainly claimed to be God (Joh 8:28, 58). Furthermore, if Jesus is not God, then millions upon millions of people have been foolishly misled into idolatry, for Christ has been worshipped. Only God is worthy of worship. Athanasius defended the worshipping of Christ in a famous book entitled On the Incarnation of the Word of God.

The debate concerning the deity of Christ was monumental in importance. Man’s salvation was at stake, for Christ’s Person and work are inseparably united. At His birth an angel had announced, “Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sin” (Mat 1:21).

At this historic Council of Nicea in the year AD 325, and after much debate, the views of Arius were condemned as heresy. A statement of the true doctrine of the Person and work of Christ was finally adopted and articulated in the Nicene Creed. This creed is accepted by both the Western churches and those of the East, including the Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox churches. The following is an early version reviewed at the council.

The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, that is, from the substance of the Father, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, of one substance [Greek: homoousios] with the Father, through whom all things were made, both in heaven and on earth, who for us humans and for our salvation descended and became incarnate, becoming human, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended to the heavens, and will come to judge the living and the dead.
And in the Holy Spirit.
But those who say that “there was when He was not,” and that before being begotten He was not, or that He came from that which is not, or that the Son of God is of a different substance [hypostasis] or essence [ousia], or that He is created, or mutable, these the universal Church anathematizes.

The Greek words are very significant, speaking as forcibly as possible for the deity of Christ, and unity in the Godhead:

homoousios - one and the same substance
hypostasis - person, distinction, mode of subsistence
ousia - essence, substance, nature, being

The final version included an expansion of the third paragraph, and in Christian charity omitted the judgments of the last paragraph, so that it ended in this way:

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from [Latin: filioque, “from” and not “through”] the

Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.
And we believe in one catholic [universal] and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

"Athanasius against the World"

As the Nicene Creed exalts Christ by declaring Him to be God, it also serves to remind the Church to be grateful for faithful men such as Athanasius (c. 295-373), Bishop of Alexandria, Egypt. Who would want to forget his famous saying Athanasius contra mundum, which means "Athanasius against the world"? The point was made that even if he were the only person in the whole world defending the truth of the deity of Christ, he still would defend it against all opponents. Athanasius was responsible more than anyone else for the defeat of Arianism in 325. One of the three Ecumenical Creeds is associated with his name (the other two being the Apostles' and the Nicene).

The Athanasian Creed

Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the universal Faith: Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish ever-lastingly.
And the universal Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance [Essence]. For there is one Person of the Father: another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost.
But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is: such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreated: the Son uncreated: and the Holy Ghost uncreated.
The Father incomprehensible [unlimited, infinite]: the Son incomprehensible: and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.
The Father eternal: the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternals: but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated: nor three incomprehensibles [infinites], but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible [infinite].
So likewise the Father is Almighty: the Son Almighty: and the Holy Ghost Almighty. So the Father is God: the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods: but one God.
So likewise the Father is Lord: the Son Lord: and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords: but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity, to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord; So are we forbidden by the universal religion to say, There be [are] three Gods, or three Lords.
The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created: but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten: but proceeding.
So there is one Father, not three Fathers: one Son, not three Sons: one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is afore, or after another; none is greater, or less than another.[2] But the whole three Persons are co-eternal, and coequal.
So that in all things, as aforesaid: the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, must [let him] thus think of the Trinity. Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation: that he also believe rightly [faithfully] the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the Substance [Essence] of the Father; begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the Substance [Essence] of his mother, born in the world. Perfect God; and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.
Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead: and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood. Who although He be [is] God and Man: yet He is not two but one Christ. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking [assumption] of the Manhood into God.
One altogether: not by confusion of Substance [Essence]: but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man: so God and man is one Christ; who suffered for our salvation: descended into hell [Hades, the sphere of the dead]: rose again the third day from the dead.
He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father God [God the Father] Almighty. From whence [thence] He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies; And shall give account for their own works.
And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting: and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire. This is the universal Faith: which except a man believe faithfully [truly and firmly], he can not be saved.

The Doctrine of the Deity of Christ

1. The Gospel of John declares that Jesus is the eternal divine Word (logos), and the source of life and light (Joh 1:1, cp. 1:14; 1:1-5, 9).

2. Through becoming flesh, the Word was revealed as the Son of God and the source of "grace and truth," as "the only begotten of the Father" (Joh 1:14, 18).

3. The Lord used the divine name (cp. Exo 3:14) for Himself seven times. The claims to deity are explicit:

The bread of life Joh 6:35, 48, 51
The light of the world Joh 8:12; 9:5
The door for the sheep Joh 10:7, 9
The good shepherd Joh 10:11, 14
The resurrection and the life Joh 11:25
The way, truth, and life Joh 14:6
The true vine Joh 15:1, 5

4. Thomas worshipped Jesus declaring Him to be, "My Lord and my God" (Joh 20:28). The Lord pronounced a blessing on all who share the faith of Thomas (Joh 20:29-31).

5. Paul declares that in Christ "dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col 2:9; cf. 1:19).

6. Jesus is the Father's image and His agent in creating and upholding all things (Col 1:15-17).

7. All who would be saved must call upon Christ for salvation, just as one calls upon Jehovah (Joe 2:32; Rom 10:9-13).

8. Jesus is "God over all" (Rom 9:5), our "God and Saviour" (Ti 2:13), and the source of divine grace (2Co 12:8-9; cp. 2Co 13:14).

9. In Hebrews, the perfection of Christ's high priesthood is presented, declaring Him to have full deity and unique dignity as the eternal Son of God (Heb 1:3, 6, 8-12).

10. There are many other passages that teach the deity of Christ.

a. In the Old Testament, study: Psa 2:6-12; cp. Heb 1:5; Psa 45:6-7; cp. Heb 1:8-9; Psa 110:1; cp. Heb 1:13; Isa 9:6; Jer 23:6; Dan 7:13; Mic 5:2; Zec 13:7; Mal 3:1.

b. In the New Testament, study: Joh 1:1-3, 14, 18; 2:24-25; 3:16-18, 35, 36; 4:4, 15; 5:18, 20-22, 25-27; 11:41-44; 20:28; 1Jo 1:3; 2:23; 4:14-15; 5:5, 10-13, 20; Rom 1:7; 9:5; 1Co 1:1-3; 2:8; 2Co 5:10; Gal 2:20, 4:4; Phi 2:6; Col 2:9; 1Ti 3:16; Heb 1:1-3, 5, 8; 4:14; 5:8.

The Council of Constantinople

Unfortunately, the Nicene Council did not put an end to the Arian Controversy. Falsehood does not die easily. There were still many in the Church who agreed with Arius. Until the day of his death, Athanasius had to contend for the doctrine of the deity of Christ as expressed in the Nicene Creed. Following the death of Athanasius (c. 373), other champions of orthodoxy (historic Christian truth) emerged. Among the most capable were three men from the province of Cappadocia in Asia Minor: Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa.

Basil of Caesarea (c. 330-379) came from a very famous Church family and studied at Athens. In 356 he started a monastic community in Pontus. In 370 Basil became Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, which put him in the middle of the Trinitarian controversy. He was influential in the eventual triumph of orthodoxy, and worked to heal the schism at Antioch.

Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 330-389) was a friend of Basil of Caesarea. He was a notable Eastern theologian and leader in the monastic movement. In 379 Gregory was called to become

the orthodox bishop in Constantinople. He faithfully preached the doctrines of grace[3] and presided at the start of the Council of Constantinople in 381. After being persecuted for his faith, Gregory resigned as bishop in 381 and devoted the rest of his life to study and meditation.

Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330-395) was the younger brother of Basil of Caesarea. He was a champion of orthodox doctrine during the years of the Trinitarian controversy. He was a great preacher and a faithful theologian.

When the Council of Constantinople was called in 381 to reaffirm the Nicene Creed and to articulate the beliefs of the Church in the deity of the Holy Spirit, the influence of these three great Cappadocians was felt. Because of their strong defense of the teachings of Scripture, Arianism was completely and finally rejected by the Church.

The Council of Chalcedon

As there had been a variety of views in the Church concerning the deity of Christ, so there was diversity regarding His humanity and His two natures in their relation to each other. How could Jesus be both God and man? Was He two persons or one? Did Jesus cease to be God during the days of His humiliation? Was there ever a moment when He was not God?

Nestorius (late fourth century, c. AD 451), Bishop of Constantinople, was one of those who saw the two natures of Christ in a loose mechanical co-existence, so that neither nature partook in the properties of the other. According to Nestorius, the divine did not have a part in the sufferings of the human nature of Christ. This teaching needed to be contested, for if Nestorius was right, a sinner would be redeemed by the suffering sacrifices of a mere man. But a mere man could accomplish no eternal redemption. In 431 a Third Ecumenical Council was called at Ephesus, which condemned Nestorius and his followers. When the Nestorians arrived to defend their position, they were not welcomed, so they established a rival council. When the controversy continued to rage, the Emperor finally decided the matter against the Nestorians. Nestorius himself entered into a monastery afterwards.

Following the Council of Ephesus, there was a great deal of dissatisfaction on the part of many. Eutyches, abbot of a monastery near Constantinople, in an effort to demonstrate the unity of the person of Christ, began to teach that after the incarnation of Christ the two natures fused into one so that the one nature partook of the properties of the other. Distinctions between the two natures were obliterated. This teaching only served to heighten the controversy considerably.

Complete confusion would have reigned if Eutyches were right! Omniscience is an attribute of Deity only; according to the flesh, Christ grew in wisdom and knowledge and favor with God and men (Luk 2:52). Omnipresence is an attribute of Deity only; one of the characteristics of the human body is that it is confined to a specific locality. If Christ is already physically omnipresent, how can He come a second time from heaven?

Because of these considerations, the stage was set for another Church council. In the year 451 a Fourth Ecumenical Council was held in Chalcedon near Nicea. Over six hundred bishops were present. Finally, after much debate, a creed was formulated that stands equal in importance to the Creed of Nicea. Once again the Church affirmed its belief in the full deity of Christ, but also confessed its belief in His full and complete humanity, without the surrender of His divine attributes or diminishing His true humanity. The Church confessed the mystery of the existence of the two natures in the unique Person of Christ: the human and the divine. The Church maintained that they exist in Christ without confusion, change, division, or separation. While Christ has two natures, He is one Person, not two persons.

The Creed of Chalcedon

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; con-substantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and con-substantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only begotten—God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.

The Latin Church Fathers

The passing of the Apostolic Fathers (who were taught the Christian faith by the Apostles directly) brought forth the Eastern and Latin [Western] Church Fathers. These men were ordained by God to keep on defending the truth of the Scriptures against heretical teachers. In their writings we find the history, doctrines, and traditions of the Church. Three of the Latin Fathers were Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine.

Ambrose (AD 339-397), the son of a Roman governor in Gaul (France), became the Bishop of Milan. Educated in the law in Rome, he became a faithful defender of the faith for the Western Church against Arianism. Ambrose wrote extensively. More than half of his many writings were commentaries on Scriptures. In his interpretation of the Bible, Ambrose used the allegorical-mystical method. He admits to a literal sense of the text, but sought a deeper mystical meaning. A lover of music, Ambrose wrote many songs. A lover of souls, he sought to bring people to Christ. It was to him that Augustine owed his conversion. When he died many mourned his passing, for they greatly loved him. People remembered that he remained firm in the face of intense opposition.

For one event in particular Ambrose should always be remem-bered. It concerned the atrocious behavior of the Emperor Theodosius. Despite a confession of faith, Theodosius had murdered 7,000 people in the city of Thessalonica as punishment for a rebellion in which Roman officers had been killed. Ambrose wrote a letter to the Emperor but received no reply. When the Emperor presented himself at the Lord's table, the Bishop met him at the door to the Church and turned him away by saying, "How will you lift up in prayer the hands still dripping with the blood of the murdered? How will you, with such hands, receive and bring to your mouth the body and blood of the Lord? Get out of here, and do not dare to add another crime to the one you have already committed!" This bold move caused the Emperor, eight months later, to make a public confession of his sins and seek forgiveness.

Jerome (AD 341-420) was born in Eastern Europe but was converted in Rome. He labored for thirty-four years in a monastery at Bethlehem (AD 386-420), and gave to the Church the Vulgate, the Latin translation of the Bible from the Hebrew of the Old Testament and from the Greek of the New Testament. For over 1,000 years, the Vulgate became the only form in which the Bible was known to Western Europe. It remains to this day the authorized version of the Roman Catholic Church. He was careful about his sources of information and extensively used early manuscripts of the Bible that no longer exist. Jerome did much to promote asceticism and celibacy.

Augustine (AD 354-430) was born in the province of Numidia, North Africa, near ancient Carthage. Little did anyone realize that he would one day become the Bishop of Hippo, North

Africa. His father Patricius was a pagan, but his saintly mother Monica prayed earnestly for many years that her son might be converted. A good bishop living near her home assured her that, "A son of so many prayers and tears would not be finally lost." By the grace of God, Augustine did come to faith and helped to change the world. His conversion happened in a very dramatic way.

At the age of thirty-one Augustine was in a garden in Milan, weeping and pleading with God to deliver him from sin. In despair he suddenly heard the voice of a child from a house nearby repeating in a kind of chant, "Take and read; take and read." Augustine immediately took up a New Testament and read Romans 13:13-14. The first words on which his eyes fell: "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof." At once, all shadows of doubt were removed from Augustine. In a moment of time, he passed from death into life!

His journey—from moral darkness and philosophical speculation to a spiritual crisis of the soul and conversion—is told in two volumes. His Confessions tells of his moral change, while his Revisions describes the changes in his intellectual thought over the years.

Following his salvation, Augustine gave his life to the Church and to defending the faith. As a student of the Bible, Augustine stands pre-eminent among the theologians of all time. His influence upon all faiths has been notable. His teaching that the millennium (Rev 20:1-6) referred to the period between the Lord's first and second comings, during which time the Church would conquer the world, has influenced amillennial[4] and post-millennial[5] writers of past and present.

A prolific writer of about 250 volumes, Augustine's greatest book might be The City of God, which took fourteen years to write. In this work, Augustine traces the development of the city of earth and the city of God through two cities: the former to eternal judgment and the latter to eternal happiness. It sets forth the sovereignty of God in the affairs of men and the ultimate triumph of good over evil, despite the fact that the reverse seems more often true. Much of Augustine's pastoral time and energy were spent contending with the Manicheans, the Donatists, and the Pelagians.

The Manicheans

This religion had its origin in southern Babylonia, having been founded by Mani in the third century AD (c. 240). It spread rapidly through Persia, India, China, Egypt, North Africa, and Italy. It became the official religion of Turkey. Like Gnosticism, Manicheism was a dualistic system. According to Mani, the internal conflict of good and evil found in each person is because of the presence of two principles. One principle, called "light," is spiritual; the other principle, of "darkness," is matter. Throughout the universe are these two principles, both eternal: light and darkness. Somehow the two have mingled and the present human condition of good and evil is a result of that mixture. Salvation consists in separating the two elements, and in preparing the spirit for its return to the realm of pure light, in which it will be absorbed. Since any new mingling of the principles is evil, true believers must avoid such things as the sexual act of procreation. According to Mani, what he taught had been revealed in various fashions to a long series of prophets, including Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus, and Mani himself.

For a short period, as a young man, Augustine embraced Manicheism, because the system seemed to offer an answer to some of his perplexing concerns about the Scriptures and the origin of evil. As Augustine considered the problem of evil in particular, he wondered where it came from. He had been taught by his Christian mother, Monica, that all things were created by

the Divine, who was supreme and good. However, if God did not create evil, who did? How did it come into existence? Perhaps God was not altogether good or wise. Augustine wanted to know and Manicheism offered an answer.

The Bible, taught Mani, was not in truth the word of the eternal principle of light. Nor was evil a creation of that principle, but of its opposite, the principle of darkness. What do all of these metaphysical phrases mean? Who really knows!

Because Augustine was not satisfied with such speculative teaching, he continued to search until he found the Savior, the true Light of the World. His heart returned to trusting the Bible, which reveals the true origin of sin in the rebellion of Satan (Isa 14) and in the fall of man (Gen 3).

The results of the teaching of Mani had far reaching repercussions for the Church because it was so divisive. In the system of Manicheism there were two classes: the elect and the auditors. The elect were ascetic and concerned themselves with religious activity. The auditors participated in the holiness of the elect, in return for supplying the elect with the necessities of life. Manicheism encouraged an ascetic spirit in the churches, while dividing Church members into clergy and laity. It also promoted the concept that the primary function of the priest was to be an intermediary between God and man. The priest was believed to have extraordinary power with God.

The Donatists

The Donatists received their name from their leader, Donatus. It was his position that professing Christians who had denied the faith during the days of persecution in the reign of Diocletian (284-305), should not be re-admitted to the Church. Because some bishops had given their copies of the Scriptures to the government officials to be burned, Donatus did not believe that they were worthy to minister the sacraments or to ordain others as bishops. The Donatists withdrew and started their own churches.

The Pelagians

Far more serious were the teachings of the Pelagians. Pelagius was a British monk who denied the doctrine of original sin (that the human race had fallen into moral corruption in Adam). Pelagius argued that man was not born corrupt; he was not totally depraved; and he was not predestined to heaven or hell. Babies, he said, are innocent. They become bad when they grow up and are influenced by others. Each person has a free will that determines his eternal destiny.

Augustine taught every man is conceived and born in sin, and can be saved only through the grace of God according to His divine pleasure. The General Council of Ephesus in 431 officially condemned the teachings of Pelagius. Later, in 529, the Synod of Orange condemned the teachings of Semi-Pelagianism, which hold that it is up to the individual to accept or refuse the gift of God's grace, which he can discern because although he is depraved, there is still a spark of goodness in him. The Church contended for God's sovereign act of free grace, not man's free will to choose.

The Ecumenical Councils

1. In AD 325 the First Council of Nicea was held. It condemned Arianism by saying that the Son is of one substance with the Father and that Christ is divine. The Nicene Creed was adopted.

2. In AD 381 the First Council of Constantinople took place. It restated the decisions embraced at Nicea, established the divinity of the Holy Spirit, and condemned Apollinaris.

3. In AD 431 at Ephesus, the Church council condemned Nestoranism and upheld the doctrine of the natural depravity of man.

4. In AD 451 at the Council of Chalcedon, Eutyches was condemned, while the divine and human natures of Christ were contended for.

5. In AD 553 the Second Council at Constantinople was held. Theodore of Mopsuestia was condemned, as were Theodoret and Ibas of Edessa. The Council also settled the Monophysites controversy.

6. From AD 680 to 681, the Third Council of Constantinople took place. This Council condemned polytheism and Pope Honorius.

7. In AD 787 the Second Council of Nicea was held. It officially condemned iconoclasts,[6] but allowed that some images were worthy of veneration, though they were not to be worshipped.

8. From AD 869 to 870, the Fourth Council at Constantinople was in session. This Council ended the schism of Photius.

9. In AD 1123, the First Lateran Council met to confirm the Concordat of Worms between the Papacy and the Empire. It was decided that Bishops would be appointed by the Pope.

10. In AD 1139 the Second Lateran Council met. Celibacy was made compulsory. It also tried to heal the schism between East and West.

11. In AD 1179 the Third Lateran Council took place. It determined the method of papal election.

12. In AD 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council convened to embrace the terrible doctrine of transubstantiation,[7] while condemning Joachim of Fiore, the Waldensians, and the Albigensians. It was determined that the Inquisition would be regulated.

13. In AD 1245 the First Council of Lyons met. It declared Emperor Frederick II to be deposed, thus settling the quarrel of Pope and Emperor.

14. In AD 1274 the Second Council of Lyons came together. New regulations for papal elections were adopted.

15. From AD 1311 to 1312, a council met in Vienne (France). Here the Templars were suppressed.

16. From AD 1414 to 1418 at Constance, another Church Council met to put an end to The Great Schism. This Council condemned John Huss. It also decided that the Pope was to be subject to Church Councils. Plans were made for reformation and future councils.

17. From AD 1431 to 1435, another Church Council met at Basel/Ferrara, Florence. There was a token effort to be re-united with Constantinople, Armenia, and with the Jacobites.

18. From AD 1512 to 1517, the Fifth Lateran Council met. It condemned the schismatic Council of Pisa.

19. From AD 1545 to 1563, the important Council of Trent was in session. This Council condemned the Protestants. It officially established the authority of tradition alongside that of Scripture.

20. From AD 1869 to 1870, the First Vatican Council met to establish papal infallibility.

21. From AD 1962 to 1965, the Second Vatican Council met to renew Catholic liturgy, and to respond to modern concerns such as nuclear war, religious freedom, and openness to other Christians.

Chapter 6

Sowing Seeds of Self-Destruction AD 100 - 461

The Sins of the Saints

The study of Church history is the study of men and women of great faith and courage. Those who have known so little of physical suffering for the cause of Christ have to be humbled by the testimony of the blood of the martyrs. The Church has a rich spiritual heritage to look back upon with thanksgiving.

However, there is a tendency to idealize the past and to think that somehow it was better than the present. We are inclined to believe that the early Christians were more godly, more spiritual, and less sinful than the Church today. That is not the case. From the very start, the Church struggled against a hostile society from without the sanctuary, and personal sins of the saints from within. In Acts 6, the story is told of inner conflict among the brethren:

"And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration."

As the New Testament narrative continues, a host of problems are set forth—including the most heinous sins against nature (1Co 5:1-6). In the letters to the seven churches in Asia (which Christ Himself dictated to John on the isle of Patmos), direct references are made to spiritual deterioration (Rev 1-3).

Following the close of the Apostolic Age (c. AD 100), the spiritual climate of the Church did not improve. By the end of the fifth century, a number of unscriptural doctrines and practices had become deeply rooted in the Church.

Demonism. As demonic activity was part of the evil which the Lord had to face while on earth during His incarnation, so the demons of darkness plagued the Church, as people opened themselves up to the Wicked One. Exorcism, the expelling of an evil spirit, was practiced by the Church leaders.

Prayers for the Dead. While it is normal to remember loved ones, it is not right to pray for the dead, or to the dead as if their state of existence could be changed, or as if they have influence in human affairs.

Purgatory. In the name of humility, the teaching was introduced to the Church that no person was good enough to go directly into the presence of the Lord. It seemed "logical" to some to believe that an intermediate state existed between heaven and earth where purification takes place. In essence, what this doctrine really teaches is that all men go to a form of hell. Apparently, the hell of purgatory does not last forever, because individuals will move from there into heaven, but only after having helped to redeem themselves through suffering. The whole concept of purgatory goes against the teaching of the Bible, for it diminishes the glorious and finished work of redemption which Christ accomplished at Calvary on behalf of His own (Mat 1:21). Worst of all, purgatory makes man his own partial savior (cp. Eph 2:8-9).

The Forty Day Lenten Season. The emphasis is again placed upon man doing something for

salvation and for sanctification. Set aside is the biblical doctrine that “the just shall live by faith” (Rom 1:17).

Mass. The Lord’s Supper was transformed from a memorial service, “Do this in remembrance of me” (1Co 11:24), into a repeated daily sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ.

Veneration. It was encouraged to give adoration to the martyrs, saints, Apostles, and above all others, Mary. The old heathen gods of Rome were being replaced by the new “gods” of the Church.

Relics. Miraculous powers were attributed to pieces of wood, said to be part of the Cross of Christ. There were so many pieces in Europe, that the Church taught that the wood was reproducing itself! Healing powers were ascribed to the relics of the saints and martyrs, such as bones, hair, and fragments of clothing. The Church became the object of ridicule. Emperor Julian the Apostate called Christians “bone worshipers.”

Iconoclasts. Pictures, images, and altars in the churches were endorsed, not as aids of worship but as objects of spiritual power.

Vestments. Gorgeous garments began to be worn by the clergy, as the trappings of regal power found expression in the kingdom of God.

Ritual. Rather than pray and preach spontaneously in natural acts of worship, formal ritual services were encouraged.

Monasticism. In an effort to be truly spiritual, some Christians began to withdraw from society to become monks and nuns. The word “monk” is derived from the Greek monachos, which means “solitary.”

The Rise of Monasticism

Christian monasticism began in Egypt when men like Anthony of Thebes took up the life of a monk. The year was AD 270. According to Athanasius, Anthony was born in a small village on the left shore of the Nile River, the son of well-to-do parents. When they died, Anthony was able to live off of his inheritance. One day in church, the text was read of the story of the rich young ruler. Anthony took the words of Matthew 19:21 literally. He disposed of his property and gave the proceeds to the poor. He left for the desert, after placing his sister under the care of the virgins of the Church (who served as nuns dedicated to the work of the Lord, later gathering in convents, similar to the monasteries for monks). After about fifteen years, Anthony went to live alone in a tomb in an abandoned cemetery.

Others followed the example of Anthony, such as Pachomius. Pachomius was born around AD 286, in a small village in the southern portion of Egypt. As a young man he was drafted into the army. Finding himself far from home and lonely, Pachomius was impressed by a group of Christians who came to console him. He decided to devote himself to the service of others. The opportunity came when he was allowed to leave the army. He sought someone to instruct him in the Christian faith, and to baptize him. Years later he decided to go to the desert, where he was able to establish a monastery. There was one basic rule and that was the rule of service. By the time he died, Pachomius had founded nine communities. Meanwhile Mary, his sister, founded similar communities for women.

While many Christians in the Church sought to be holy by joining monasteries and engaging in good works, the Church was often very unholy in its attitude towards other Christians. Persecution replaced Christian love far too often. For example, because of a bishop of Alexandria named Theophilus, John Chrysostom was banished to a miserable little village.

Chrysostom

Chrysostom (c. 347-407), patriarch of Constantinople, was a preacher of great ability. His name means “golden mouth.” This name was given to him because of his eloquence. Born in Antioch into a wealthy Christian family, Chrysostom was a natural and brilliant student. He studied philosophy, logic, and rhetoric with a view to becoming a lawyer. However, being a religious man, Chrysostom desired to join a monastic order, but was unable to do so because of responsibilities to his family. But even at home, he lived an austere life. Finally, in AD 373 he retired to the mountains, where he stayed for about ten years. His health broke under the physical stress. Returning to Antioch, Chrysostom studied under the bishop Melitius, who ordained him a deacon in 381. Five years later he became a priest.

As a gifted preacher, Chrysostom attracted a wide following. When the patriarch of Constantinople died in 397, Chrysostom was appointed to replace him. Reluctantly he was made a bishop. In the years to follow, Chrysostom preached boldly against the vices of the congregation and corruption in high places of government. He even criticized the empress Eudoxia and the immorality of the imperial court. Outraged, Eudoxia enlisted the support of the bishop of Alexandria to remove Chrysostom from office based upon frivolous charges. Exiled in 403, he was recalled, but soon offended the empress again and was banished once more to Pontus. Forced to march through the hot sand without any covering on his head, he died on the way. Such unnecessary sufferings bore bitter fruit in the years to come.

Chapter 7

New Trials and Great Triumphs
AD 376 - 754

By the fifth century AD, the Church had grown in power, wealth, and numerical strength. The spiritual army of Christ had marched victoriously through many lands: Greece, Italy, Gaul, Egypt, and North Africa. In many cities the Gospel had taken many hearts captive for Christ. Christians could be found in Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea, Antioch, Smyrna, Nicea, Chalcedon, Constantinople, Rome, Milan, Bethlehem, Lyons, Alexandria, Carthage, Tagaste, and Hippo.

Disciples of Christ could also be found in remote and dangerous places. They lived in caves and dwelt in the desert. They confined themselves to small cells as monks and served in dark dungeons. Christian men, women, and young people went bravely to a martyr's death, as wild beasts devoured them in public arenas. The saints prayed and worshipped among the dead in damp catacombs. However, overall, the Church militant had become the Church triumphant—despite all that the world, the flesh, and the devil could do to destroy and discredit her. While the empires of this world crumbled, the kingdom of Christ grew stronger and stronger, moving from one spiritual victory to another.

German Tribes Invade the Empire

The success of the Church can only be explained according to God's sovereign grace. God the Father had promised many souls for the labors of His Son at Calvary (Heb 2:10). Without the divine undergirding, the kingdoms of this world will always collapse, as illustrated in the Roman Empire. That mighty empire did not trust in the true God. Her spiritual strength was placed in myths and pagan gods. Her moral strength existed only in the form of a social contract, which her subjects grew weary of trying to implement. No man can be more moral than his nature. The nature of man apart from Christ is depraved (Jer 17:9).

It was inevitable that the social contract that had bound Roman society together would cease to be honored. The culture of Rome collapsed as men "did that which was right in their own sight" (Jdg 21:25). The Roman Empire, for all of its military might, was but a shadow that passed on the dial of time. In the dusty pages of the history books, people can still read at their leisure about the rise, decline, and fall of the Roman Empire. The fall of Rome was all the more sad because of the glory that she once held in the eyes of this world.

In an initial advance to glory and greatness, the city of Rome had extended power over Italy, Sicily, North Africa, and Spain. Its legions of warriors turned east and conquered many of the territories of Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. Later Rome stormed the strongholds of Gaul (France), and what is now Belgium, the Netherlands, and Britain. When it had reached its zenith, the Roman Empire was bounded by the Sahara Desert on the south, by the Atlantic Ocean on the West, by the Rhine and Danube rivers on the north, and by the Euphrates River on the east.

It was on the northern frontier of the Empire that Rome would find new and terrible forces to

fight. East of the Rhine and north of the Danube were two great German tribes: the Ostrogoths ("bright Goths") in the Ukraine, and the Visigoths ("wise Goths") in the area that is now called Romania.

Warring against the German tribes were the Mongolian Huns. These fierce horsemen instilled fear into the hearts of German tribes. As a result, in 376, two hundred thousand Visigoths crossed the lower Danube, fleeing before the Huns. It was the first tribe of barbarians to enter into the Roman Empire.

At first they were allowed to settle in a peaceful manner. But then the Visigothic settlers protested that they were being exploited and oppressed by the east Roman administration. Open revolt resulted. Under the leadership of their chieftain Fritigern, the Visigoths ravaged the Balkan peninsula. At the same time, new waves of German invaders moved across the Danube.

Valens (ruler, AD 364-378), the Roman Emperor of the East, hastened from Asia to engage in battle with the Visigoths near the city of Hadrianopolis. The year was 378. In the battle that followed, the Roman army was severely defeated. Valens was killed, but his body was never found. Ambrose (c. 339-397), the Bishop of Milan in northern Italy, viewed the catastrophic battle as "the massacre of all humanity, the end of the world." Ambrose was not far from being right. The world was changing, but it was the western and not the eastern part of the Empire that was destined for destruction.

The conflict with the barbarians was not to be halted until the days of Theodosius I, who ruled from AD 379 to 395. Unable to continually battle against the Visigoths or expel them, Theodosius instead concluded a treaty with their leaders in 382, accepting them all as one block of federates within the imperial borders. By virtue of this new arrangement they were given lands in Thrace and permitted to live under their own laws and rules, on the condition that they provide soldiers and farm workers to the Roman government.

While relative peace came to the eastern part of the Roman Empire, the Goths, together with other German tribes, attacked the western part. Years of constant conflict depleted Rome of her strength to the point that she was ready to collapse. During these last and dark days of the Roman Empire lived Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine.

As the barbarians slashed their way through the various parts of the Empire, a bloody trail was left. Virgins (nuns), bishops, and priests were ridiculed, raped, insulted, and killed. Churches were destroyed or turned into stables for animals. The relics of the martyrs were dug up and destroyed. Monasteries were torn down. Rivers ran red with the blood of innocent people. Men and women and young people were dragged into slavery as captives of conflict. The world of the Roman Empire was moving towards utter destruction.

The Fall of Rome: AD 410

In 410 Rome itself was finally attacked by the Goths under Alaric. For six days and nights the barbarians ravaged the city. The streets were wet with blood and tears. The palace of the emperors and the residences of the wealthy citizens were looted of their costly furniture, expensive vessels, and valuable jewelry. Silken and velvet hangings and beautiful objects of art were plundered.

The defilement of the "Mistress of the World" shocked both pagans and Christians alike. Jerome (c. 345-419) was sitting in a cave in Bethlehem and writing his Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel when he heard the news. He became distraught with anguish and grief. Believing that the Antichrist was nearby, he said, "The world is rushing to ruin. The glorious city, the capital of the Roman Empire, has been swallowed up in one conflagration. Churches once hallowed have sunk into ashes. Virgins of God have been seized, maltreated, and murdered."

It was in the midst of this mass destruction and loss of all that was beautiful and holy, that Augustine began his work on The City of God. Augustine wanted to prove in part that the Church was not to be blamed for the fall of Rome. Rome had fallen because of her own pride and sins.

When the Goths were through plundering Rome, the Vandals came. While occupying Spain and North Africa, they crossed the Mediterranean Sea and took Rome in the year 455.

Meanwhile, the Huns had been waging war against and subduing various tribes under the leadership of Atilla, king of the Huns. Known as the "Scourge of God," Attila had annihilated his enemies or absorbed them into his vast domain. At the height of his power, he commanded an army of seven hundred thousand men, held together by a large number of vassal kings. For nine years Attila made war in the Eastern Empire. At one point, his fierce forces were ready to destroy the walls of Constantinople, but this did not happen: Attila was promised an annual tribute, and given the immediate payment of six thousand pounds of gold!

At the request of a Frankish king, who had been driven to the east side of the Rhine River, Attila turned his army from Constantinople and invaded Gaul. In one of the greatest conflicts in the history of the world, the Huns were defeated at the Battle of Chalons in 451, by an alliance of Romans, Franks, and Visigoths, led by Western Emperor Aetius, the "Last of the Romans." One hundred sixty-two thousand of the barbarians were killed! Attila retreated back across the Rhine into Germany—but only temporarily.

He was defeated, but not destroyed as a military might. In the spring of 452, Attila moved his army into Italy to attack Rome itself. This time, only the political negotiating intervention of Pope Leo I spared the city from certain destruction (died 461; Pope 440-461). Peace was made with the Emperor Valentinian III, and Attila retired from the area. In the providence of God, Attila died the next year in 453 from a burst blood-vessel! Thereafter, the Huns ceased to be a threat to the Empire.

But the damage had been done; the empire in general, and Rome in particular, could not recover from the repeated invasions of immense hordes of barbarians. The Goths, Vandals, Huns, and various other tribes had desolated the area, constantly attracted by the rich fertile plains which were its earlier source of strength. The city of Rome had been taken repeatedly, and pillaged twice. Finally, every province of the western part of the Roman Empire had been conquered, including Italy, North Africa, Spain, Gaul (France), the Netherlands, and Britain. Yet despite all the political chaos and a world in upheaval, the Church would remain steadfast.

A Divided People

While Rome was given over to the barbarians, the eastern part of the Empire survived. It was not conquered nor occupied. The eastern part of the Empire embraced the Balkan Peninsula, Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. It is known as the Eastern or Byzantine Empire. Its capital was Constantinople.

The invasion of the western part of the former Roman Empire brought new people to settle the land. After the invasion by the barbarians, the Ostrogoths settled in Italy among the native population. They embraced the established Church, having been converted to Christianity before they invaded the Empire. One human instrument of their salvation was Ulfilas (c. 311-383).

Born in Cappadocia (east Asia Minor), Ulfilas may have been taken captive by Gothic raiders as a youth. As an adult he found his way to Constantinople, the eastern capital of the Roman Empire. It was here that Ulfilas was educated and began his service to the Church. In 341 Eusebius of Nicomedia, bishop of Constantinople, consecrated Ulfilas as bishop. Soon

afterward the young bishop went to Dacia (north of the Danube River), where he served as a missionary to the western Goths in this region. He was very successful in winning converts to Christ, in part because of his translation of the Old and New Testaments into the Goths' vernacular language. Just as the Ostrogoths had settled in Italy, the southern part of Gaul and the northern half of Spain were occupied by the Visigoths. Like their near relatives, the Ostrogoths in Italy, the Visigoths had accepted Christianity.

In addition to the Goths, there were many other German tribes that settled in the newly conquered territory, such as the Burgundians, who settled in eastern Gaul. They too were Christians. Finally, the Vandals conquered southern Spain and North Africa, and they too claimed to be Christian. Unfortunately, the Goths, the Burgundians, and the Vandals were Arian Christians.

In Northern Gaul and in Britain the situation was far different. Heathenism still claimed the lives of the Franks who took northern Gaul, Belgium, and the southern Netherlands; the Frisians, who lived in the northwestern part of the Netherlands; the Saxons, who settled in the eastern part of the Netherlands; and the Anglo-Saxons, who conquered Britain.

Then there were the people who lived in countries which had never been part of the Roman Empire, such as the Celts in Ireland; the Scandinavians in what is now called Denmark, Norway, and Sweden; the many German tribes east of the Rhine; and in the east beyond them, the tribes in what is now called Russia. These vast territories were populated with millions of people who still needed to hear the name of Christ.

Two Challenges for the Church

With the fall of Rome and the division of the Empire into so many diverse groups, two challenges faced the Church. The people of God had the opportunity 1) to evangelize the barbarians and 2) to educate the newly formed nations. Would the Church be obedient to cultivate these open doors, and would it be successful?

The Preservation of a People

In the midst of economic chaos, social unrest, and cultural readjustment caused by the collapse of the Roman Empire, the Church found itself trying to preserve as much of her own culture and heritage as possible. A Dark Age had descended upon a large portion of the earth. The sword seemed to be more powerful than anything else. Still, while strong military arms fought for supremacy, godly men sat in small cells and began to copy the Scriptures. Slowly, laboriously, they copied the Bible and other important books in an effort to keep education and the knowledge of the true God alive. The day would come when men would grow weary of bathing themselves in blood and would want a better way to live. The Church would then be ready to make new disciples of all nations and to fulfill the mandates of the Great Commission (Mat 28:19-20).

The Franks Find Christ

Among the first of the unconverted Germanic warriors to embrace Christianity were the Franks. Their king was a man named Clovis. The story of his conversion is very similar to that of Constantine. In the middle of a desperate battle, Clovis saw the sign of the cross in the sky. He

made a pledge that he would become a Christian if he won the battle. The victory was his and Clovis kept his word. He was baptized into the Christian faith together with 3,000 of his warriors, on Christmas day in 496 in the city of Rheims.

Rejecting Arianism, Clovis adopted the orthodox Christianity of the Nicene Creed. This set the stage for religious civil warfare against other German tribes who had embraced Arianism, and thus were officially heretics.

Something else of significance happened with the conversion of Clovis. Up to this time in history, it was individuals who had accepted Christianity. Now, whole tribes technically became Christians when their kings were converted to Christ. As a result, many mere "professors," i.e., Christians in name only, were coming into the church, bringing their worldly ways with them.

Bringing the British Isles to the Cross

Prior to the final fall of the Roman Empire in the west, Christianity was introduced into BritainC by Christian Roman soldiers. Elsewhere, a British monk named Patrick (c. 390-461) became the "Apostle of Ireland." Patrick was born to a deacon named Calpurnius at Ailclyde (now Dumbarton). When he was sixteen years old, Patrick was captured in a raid by Irish pirates and sold to Milchu, an Antrim chieftain. He was forced to serve as a slave. Six years later Patrick escaped to Gaul where he became a monk. Following a desire to minister the Gospel as a missionary in Ireland, Patrick returned about 431, meeting with great success until his death.

The Gospel for Germany and the Netherlands

Once converted to Christ, the English became great missionaries as they took the Gospel to those without the Lord in the northern part of Europe. One of the most effective missionaries was Boniface (680-754), "The Apostle of Germany." His real name was Wynfrith. He was an Anglo-Saxon, born in Devonshire. Boniface became a monk while excelling as a preacher and scholar.

After ministering successfully in Frisia, Hesse, and Thuringia in the Netherlands (719-722), Boniface went to Rome where he was consecrated a bishop. With that title he crossed the Rhine into Germany to win many more converts to Christianity. His initial success came when Boniface cut down a large oak tree which was believed to be sacred to the god of thunder named Thor. When he was not struck down by lightening, people were willing to listen to the Gospel message and believe. Boniface used the wood of the oak tree in the building of a chapel. When he was 73 years old Boniface returned to minister among the Frisians. In 754, while baptizing some converts, he and fifty-three of his fellow laborers were murdered by hostile Frisians.

Willibrord (c. 658-739) was another English monk; he labored in the Netherlands from 690 to 739. A native of Northumbria, Willibrord was educated at the monastery of Ripon near York. As a young man he went to Ireland to the monastery at Rathmelsigi, where he remained from 678 to 690. He was ordained a priest and began to minister in the cause of Christ. Leaving Ireland in 690, he went to preach the Gospel in the Frisian Islands (the Netherlands and northern Germany), where the Lord blessed him with great success. Multitudes of conversions were witnessed in all northwestern Europe. Monasteries and Church buildings sprang up everywhere. The monastery and cathedral Willibrord constructed at Utrecht became the center for the Frisian work, from which he emphasized the training of native Church leaders. Little by

little, the Gospel continued to spread. By the year 1000, Christians could also be found in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Russia.

Gregory the Great

Gregory the Great (c. 540-604) was perhaps the most important pope to emerge during the days when the new barbarian kingdoms were being built upon the ruins of the Roman Empire in the West. He was the first monk to become a pope, ruling from 590 to 604. He called himself "the servant of the servants of God." Born in Rome of wealthy parents, Gregory received a comprehensive education. Distinguishing himself in legal studies in 573, he was given the imperial appointment of prefect of Rome. Being deeply religious, however, he renounced the world. He gave up his wealth following the death of his father and devoted himself to good works. He established seven monasteries in Sicily and one in Rome. With a humble spirit, Gregory labored faithfully to advance the kingdom of God. He moved through the organizational structure of the Church until he was elected pope in 590.

Gregory was the first of the popes to take unto himself broad political powers outside the Church. He had more real power in Italy than did the emperors, although legally and theoretically Italy still belonged to the Eastern Empire. Gregory appointed heads of cities, raised armies, and enforced peace treaties. He neutralized the effects of the Lombards, who had conquered northern Italy. The power and prestige of the Church was further enhanced when the Church took on the responsibilities of education of the population, care of the poor, and the maintaining of justice.

Despite the good that he did, Gregory also brought much harm to the cause of Christ. He taught that the Lord's Supper is a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ, that the saints in heaven can be of help to us, and that there is a purgatory. The end result was that as the Church went forth to conquer and grow, and as she increased in power and wealth, the Church also underwent radical doctrinal changes that would challenge her spiritual effectiveness in the centuries to come.

Map of the Roman Empire

ROMAN EMPIRE
THIRD CENTURY A.D.
Roman Miles
English Miles
OCEANUS ATLANTICUS
BRITANNIA
GERMANIA
SARMATIA EUROPEA
SARMATIA ASIATICA
GALLIA
DACIA
HISPANIA
MEDITERRANEUM MARE
MAURITANIA
CYRENAICA
LIBYA
ARABIA
ARMENIA
MESOPOTAMIA
MEDIA
Libya Deserta
Syria Deserta

Chapter 8

Diminishing

The Arabs Attack the Eastern Part of the Empire

Between AD 325-681, six great ecumenical councils were held. These were turbulent times in the political and religious history of the world. The Church was torn apart by theological controversies; but these controversies produced great statements of faith. Meanwhile, the barbarians continued to challenge the borders of the Roman Empire, until they finally conquered the whole western portion of it.

In the East, the Empire struggled for survival against the German tribes from the north, and then against the Persians. A desperate war was fought against the Persians by the Emperor Heraclius (c. 574-641; ruler of the East 610-641), ending at the Battle of Nineveh in the year AD 628. The Persian army was destroyed, while the Empire in the East survived despite the advances of the Arab army. The Arab warriors were Semitic by race, and Muslim (followers of Mohammed) in their religion.

A Man Named Mohammed

As the inhabitants of Arabia, the Arabs were the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham and his wife's handmaiden, Hagar (Gen 16). Therefore, Ishmael was also the half brother of Isaac whose mother was Sarah. With the passing of time, many of the Arabs had forsaken the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to embrace many gods. In this idolatrous country of Arabia, there was born in the city of Mecca a boy named Mahomet, who came to be known as Mohammed. The year was AD 570. Mohammed claimed descent from the family of Hashem and the tribe of Koreish.

During his childhood Mohammed was in poor health because he suffered from epilepsy. Being orphaned when he was very young, he was reared by his uncle, Abu Talib. At the age of 25, Mohammed was employed by Kajijah, a rich widow. He carried on her husband's business and prospered. He also married Kajijah, who was fourteen years older than himself.

Being a merchant, Mohammed moved often with his caravan of camels, traveling the traditional trade routes of the Middle East. His journeys brought Mohammed into contact with both Jews and Christians. After considering their claims and customs, he rejected both as the basis for religious truth. In his fortieth year, Mohammed temporally retired from society to meditate in a mountain cave near Mecca called the Cave of Hira. He returned to his friends and family to announce that he had received a revelation from an angel which said to him, "Mohammed, of a truth thou art the prophet of God; fear not, I am his angel, Gabriel."

This was the first of many revelations allegedly given by Gabriel, who came to teach Mohammed the way of truth. Later, the teachings of the prophet were collected and written in a sacred book called the Koran, meaning literally "Rehearsal" or "Readings." Many of Mohammed's sayings had first been recorded on bones or palm leaves. While the prophet could neither read nor write Arabic, Mohammed claimed that the various sections of the Koran came down to him from heaven during a period of twenty-three years.

The Koran teaches that God used prophets to bring reformation to men. Such prophets included Jesus and Moses, but Mohammed himself was the greatest of them all and is to be followed above all others (cp. Joh 16:23; Act 10:43). Because of this, Mohammedans deny that Jesus is the Son of God (cp. Joh 5:19-23). They also deny His deity (cp. Joh 5:17-18) and His resurrection from the dead (cp. 1Co 15:1-3). They hold the atoning death of Christ in contempt, while embracing a system of salvation by good works (cp. Eph 2:8-9). The main tenets of the

Islamic faith are five in number.

1. Confession is made that there is no other God but Allah and that Mohammed is his prophet.
2. Five times each day, prayer is offered with the supplicant facing Mecca.
3. Alms are to be given.
4. Fasting is to take place during the period of Ramadan. The fast is to last from sunrise to sunset each day.
5. A pilgrimage to Mecca must be made at least once in a person's lifetime.

Going to the city of Mecca, Mohammed began to share his new beliefs, which challenged many of the merchants of that city who sold idols. While the Prophet gained a few converts, the opposition to his teachings was so strong, he and his followers had to flee to the city of Medina in the year AD 622, where his thoughts were better received. This flight, which began on July 16, is called the Hegira.

In Medina, Mohammed formed his faithful followers into a killing war machine, and then went forth to conquer by the sword. In 630 Mohammed returned to Mecca in military triumph and destroyed the 360 idols of the city. Overwhelmed by his success, the inhabitants of Mecca shouted, "There is one God, Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet." This encouraged many others to embrace Islam, which means "Obedience" or "Surrender."

The Influence of a False Prophet

In AD 632 Mohammed died at the age of 63, leaving no son and only one daughter, Fatima. His body was buried in a grave dug under the same bed on which he departed this life. Though Mohammed died, his tremendous influence lived on. He taught his followers not to argue or discuss the different religions, but to kill with the sword all who refused obedience to the law of the Koran. Those who died in this spiritual battle were promised to receive a glorious reward in paradise. While prayer leads half-way to God, and fasting leads to the gates of heaven, and alms-giving opens the door, it is only Jihad (waging holy war) that gives actual entrance into heaven.

During the next 100 years, the leaders who succeeded him were known as Caliphs. Four of them founded the Mohammedan or Moslem Empire. The Muslims took their bloody swords and butchered their way over the hot deserts of Arabia to conquer Persia, penetrate India, and defeat the imperial province of Asia Minor. Twice Constantinople was attacked. While the city was able to protect itself, other places such as Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and North Africa fell to Islamic conquest.

In the year 637, Caliph Omar took Jerusalem, and built on the site of the old Jewish temple the mosque that bears his name to this day. It was Omar who also destroyed the famous library located at Alexandria in Egypt. He believed that no book other than the Koran was needed, and so he destroyed some of the greatest pieces of literature of the ancient world.

North Africa, where once Augustine and Cyprian had labored for the cause of the Christ, fell to the Arabs. In 711, the Muslims crossed the Straits of Gibraltar to conquer Spain. After Spain, the Islamic forces crossed the Pyrenees Mountains to penetrate into the Roman province of Gaul (France). During these many years of bloody violence, thousands of Christian churches were destroyed or converted into mosques.

The Battle of Tours

Just when it seemed as if all of Europe might become Moham-medan, Charles Martel ("The Hammer") led a great army against the Islamic forces. In the year 732, on a Saturday in October, the battle lines were drawn on the Plain of Tours. The Arab army consisted mainly of cavalry, while the Frankish army consisted of foot soldiers.

The Franks drew up their army in close order. There was no gap to be found in the ranks. The Arabs charged swooping down headlong and furiously. Bodies began to fall as swords flashed in the sun. It was to be a fight to the finish. The banners of the cross waved defiantly and in the end; the Arabs retreated from the field of conflict.

Accepting defeat on the Plain of Tours, the Arabs retreated behind the Pyrenees into Spain, where they would remain influential for over 700 years. It was not until 1492 that Ferdinand of Aragon was able to drive the Moors (as the Mohammedans were then called) out of their last stronghold in Granada to force them back into Africa.

The Cross and the Sword: The Expansion of Mohammedanism

Though the Islamic conquest had been halted, there were permanent wounds that had been inflicted upon the Church, for the Christian Church lost many potential mission fields. India fell under the influence of the Islamic faith. Persia was dominated by the Mohammedans. Lands in the Orient were closed to Christian evangelism. Historic places that once housed believers of the Lord were conquered—such as Jerusalem, the cradle of the Church. Other places that fell under the the Islamic sphere of influence included Bethlehem, where Jerome once lived and had given the Church his Latin translation of the Bible. Antioch in Syria was no longer Christian, the place that Paul used as the gateway to bring Christianity into the Roman Empire. Alexandria in Egypt fell to the Arabs, which had been the home of Clement, and of Origen the great scholar of the East, and of Athanasius, the champion of the deity of Christ against Arianism. Carthage and Hippo in North Africa now belonged to the Muslims, where men like Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine had taught. Seville in Spain fell as well, where Isidore, the leader of the Church of Spain, had labored to impart the knowledge of the cultured Greeks and Romans of the ancient world to the German barbarian tribes of the Middle Ages. All these places and more were officially lost to Christianity.

Looking back upon this time period, the question arises as to why the Church suffered such a strategic setback. Several reasons may be discerned from a human point of view.

First, the mindset for world conquest was radically different for the Mohammedans than for the Christians. The Lord said that He did not come bearing a sword to advance His kingdom by physical violence (Joh 18:10; Joh 18:36), but Mohammed did. He was ready from the first to kill anyone who did not accept his teachings.

Second, the wild desert life had hardened the Mohammedans, which suited them for the vigors of violent warfare. The Church was more civilized and therefore physically softer.

Third, Mohammedanism promised paradise to those men who fell in battle while fighting for the faith. Fierce Arab horsemen fought with reckless courage without regard for life or limb unto death, believing in the special privileges and pleasures in the world to come.

Finally, to a certain extent, the salt of the earth had lost its savor (Mat 5:13). The Eastern Church had become formal in its religion, and failed to continue to evangelize. In the Western part of the Church, attention was turned inward, to the point that Christians began to persecute other Christians for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was to maintain purity of faith.

Map of the Mohammedan Crescent

Chapter 9

New Political Alliances
AD 751 - 800

The Lombards

In the year AD 568, the Po Valley in the northern part of Italy was taken by force from the ever diminishing Roman Empire. The German tribe that conquered the area was called the Lombards, meaning "long-beards." The remaining part of the Italian peninsula continued as part of the Roman Empire.

During their military adventures, the Lombards came into contact with the Gospel. Many were converted to Christ. Although they embraced the teachings of Arius for a while, the Lombards eventually accepted the orthodox Christianity reflected in the Nicene Creed.

Anxious to establish friendly relations with the Lombards, Pope Gregory I (c. 540-604; Pope, 590-604), bestowed a crown upon their king, Alboin. It was called The Iron Crown because into it was put what was believed to be a nail from the cross of Christ.

Gregory I

Despite this unhealthy honoring of religious relics, Gregory I was a believer in the verbal (word for word), inerrant (without error), plenary (in all parts) inspiration of Scripture. He thought it was fruitless to investigate the authorship of the books of the Bible. He said, "When we are persuaded that the Holy Spirit was its author, in stirring a question about the human author, what else do we do than in reading a letter inquire about the pen?"

Unfortunately, Gregory went beyond the logical boundaries of his own confession concerning the Bible, by teaching things that are not found in the Scriptures. He taught that sin might be forgiven on condition of repentance, which he defined to involve contrition, confession, and satisfaction. Satisfaction could be found in penance, with the penance being in proportion to the sin. In this system, man can earn and deserve not only salvation but also sanctification. On this understanding of holiness, a vast and complex penitential system was constructed in the Middle Ages. The fruit of this system was a mechanical theory of penance and indulgences, against which Martin Luther and others would one day vigorously protest.

Other doctrines that Gregory developed would also be chal-lenged later by the Reformers, such as purgatory and transubstantiation, which is the belief that in the mass or communion the bread and wine are transformed in a miraculous way to become the actual body and blood of Christ.

Whatever his failures as a scholar and a theologian, Gregory did manage to enhance the prestige of the Church. He successfully withstood the claim of the Patriarch of Constantinople to the title of "Universal Bishop." By the time he died in 604, the pope was viewed as the chief bishop of the Church in the West, the natural arbiter and court of appeal in ecclesiastical (Church) cases, and the one person who could intervene with authority in cases involving

serious scandal. One of his best decisions was made in 596, when he sent Augustine of Canterbury (died c. 604) on a mission to convert the English to Christ.

In his personal life Gregory was known for his humility as “the servant of the servants of God.” As a lover of music Gregory reorganized the Schola Cantorum in Rome, a center for singing. The Gregorian Chant is named for him. The Church mourned his death in AD 604.

While Gregory was able to establish a good relation with the Lombards, succeeding popes were never certain of their status for a long time. Civil war with the Lombards was a matter of constant concern. This caused the popes to look to the Franks of Gaul (in modern day France) for military and political support.

Pepin the Short

One notable Frankish monarch was Clovis, who converted to Christianity in 496. Clovis was a strong and influential ruler. However, his descendants were not. This fact allowed Pepin III (Pepin the Short, c. 714-768), to rise to power. Pepin was the son of Charles Martel. He deposed Childeric III, the last of the Merovingian dynasty, to establish his own, the Carolingian dynasty. Pepin put Childeric in a monastery and then assumed the throne.

Looking for ecclesiastical approval for all his actions, Pepin received it when he was anointed by Archbishop Boniface in 752 and again by Pope Stephen II in 754. By reviving an Old Testament practice recorded of the Davidic monarchy (1Sa 16:13), Pepin symbolically placed the State beneath the authority of the Pope. The precedent was set to believe that the pope had the right to give kingdoms and to take them away. The State had become subservient to the Church.

Within this new religious and political context, Pope Zacharias (d. 752, the last of the Greek popes, 741-752) did not hesitate to ask Pepin to help bring stability to the Lombards, who were still perceived to be a threat to papal power and safety. Pepin agreed to help. He marched against the Lombards and forced them to relinquish much of their territory to the pope, thereby beginning the States of the Church (also known as the Papal States). The pope now held not only ecclesiastical power, but secular power as well. He would do so until 1870, when the new Kingdom of Italy was established.

Charles the Great (Charlemagne)

Following the death of Pepin the Short in 768, his two sons succeeded him, Carloman and Charles. When Carloman died in 771, Charles was free to rule alone. On December 25 of AD 800, while kneeling in St. Peter’s Church in Rome, Charles was crowned King of the Franks by Pope Leo III, and became known as Emperor Charlemagne, which means Charles the Great.

Pope Leo III was born in Rome of humble origins (d. 816; Pope, 795-816), and little is known of him until his election to the papacy. During his time in this office, Leo was beset by many conspirators and dissidents. He was also subordinate to the wishes of the emperor Charlemagne.

Charlemagne (742-814) brought three important factors to his reign as emperor: law and order, civilization, and Christianity. None of these came easily, for the empire was filled with barbarians, lawlessness, and the encroachment of the Islamic faith.

Charlemagne ruled from 768 to 814 over France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and western Germany. He increased the borders of his empire by military force, but maintained power by a wise administrative system. Dividing the realm into districts called counties, and supervised by

appointed officials called counts, Charlemagne was able to keep effective control on what was happening. Border areas were administered by military leaders of operation. New regions were called marks or marches and a “count of the march” (or marquis) was basically unrestrained to govern as he pleased. The counts were overseen by two officials called “missi,” who were continuously visiting the regions. One was a layman and one was a minister.

Though he considered himself a Christian, Charlemagne was not always faithful to the morals of the Church. This therefore necessitated social and ecclesiastical reforms following his death. However, he did enjoy reading The City of God by Augustine. He liked to think of his empire as the Kingdom of God upon earth.

Also, during his reign, feudalism reached many of its distinctive medieval characteristics. Charlemagne has been regarded as the founder of Europe. When Charlemagne died in 814, there were three great empires in the world. The oldest was that of the Eastern Roman Empire consisting of the Balkans, Asia Minor, and southern Italy. The largest empire was that of the Mohammedan Arabs. It stretched from the border of India through Persia, Syria, Palestine in Asia, and all of north Africa up to the Ebro River in Europe. The newest and strongest of the empires was that of Charlemagne, which consisted of the northern half of Italy; the northeast corner of Spain; all of France, Belgium, and the Netherlands; and a large portion of Germany and Austria.

Chapter 10

The Growing Power of the Papacy AD 461 - 1073

Growth through Organization

As the Church grew larger and more complex, it was necessary for efficient administration to take place for both practical and doctrinal reasons. One practical need for a strong centralized voice to help solve concerns was manifested in the actions of Novatian, Bishop of Rome (251-253). Novatian was a very zealous Christian. When individuals who had renounced their faith during days of persecution wanted to be readmitted to the Church, Novatian denied the right of the Church to restore such people. He advocated a position of absolute fidelity to the cause of Christ at all times. The result was a schism that extended over the entire Empire, lasting until the sixth century! Many of the clergy thought that only a strong authoritative voice could keep the Church from continuing to fragment into splinter groups over non-essential issues; for this reason they supported a strong papacy.

Doctrinally the Church felt a strong voice was needed to combat heresy. One of the earliest errors, found in the second century, was Ebonism [Hebrew: "poor"], which insisted on law-keeping as a way of life. Many who embraced Ebonism denied the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, and the efficacy of His sufferings.

Another early heresy was Manicheanism, which struggled with the unity of the Godhead in the face of Trinitarianism. It stressed the unity [Greek: monarchia] of the divine nature as opposed to personal distinctions within the Godhead. It was believed by some that the Father alone possessed true personality; the Word [logos] and the Holy Spirit were merely impersonal attributes of the Godhead. Thus, the power of God came upon the man Jesus Christ and gradually saturated His soul until His humanity became deity. The Manicheans said that Jesus must not be considered God in a pure and absolute sense.

Other Manicheans believed the three persons of the Godhead were merely modes of expression or ways of describing God. They were not distinct divine persons at all. Later, this modalistic type of Manicheanism became known as Sabellianism and Nestorianism, after two of its leading exponents.

Sabellius, who lived in the third century, affirmed that there is but one divine essence, which became operative in three temporally successive manifestations: as Creator and Law-Giver in the Father, as Redeemer in the Son, and as Life-Giver in the Holy Spirit.

Growth through Politics

In addition to practical problems and doctrinal disturbances, the power of the papacy grew because of political intrigue in the secular world and social unrest. The rivalries and uncertainties of political rulers were in plain contrast to the steadiness and uniformity of the government of the Church. Rulers came and went. After the Roman Empire fell in the fifth

century, Europe was in constant chaos until the Empire of Charlemagne was established in the ninth century, a period known as the Dark Ages. People cried out for an extensive and enduring authority, and they found it in the papacy.

Growth through Deception

It is unfortunate that the men who held the office of the papacy did not realize just how powerful the Church was becoming. Foolishly, a number of "pious frauds" were committed to ensure popular and widespread support for the authority of Rome. One of these "pious frauds" was the forged documents called the Donation of Constantine. These bogus papers were circulated purporting to show that Constantine, the first Christian emperor, had legally given to the bishop of Rome, Sylvester I (AD 314-335), ultimate authority over all the European provinces of the empire. The documents proclaimed the bishop of Rome to be the true ruler of the western empire, even above the emperors.

While secular rulers probably smiled at such fraudulent docu-ments, they took seriously the Decretals of Isidore, published about AD 830. These false documents pretended to be decisions handed down by the early bishops of Rome, beginning with the Apostles, declaring the absolute supremacy of the pope of Rome over the Church universal, and the independence of the Church from the State. In practical terms this meant that in matters pertaining to the clergy or the Church, no secular court could act as judge.

Growth through Fantastic Claims

In addition to using these false documents, other fantastic claims were made by such men as Pope Gelasius (Pope, 492-496), who instituted the concept of moral supervision over political rulers on the part of the pope. The thinking was that while there are two spheres of rule, the spiritual and the temporal, it is the Church that must one day give an account to God for the deeds of kings. Therefore, the kings should submit to the Church in spiritual matters. Symmachus (Pope, 498-514) added the axiom that no civil tribunal could compel the appearance of a pope or sentence him in his absence.

Pope Nicholas I (d. 867, Pope, 858-867) embraced these thoughts and embellished upon them to gain even more power for the papacy. He was the son of an aristocratic Roman family. Receiving an excellent education, Nicholas was well suited for service in the papal court, which he entered in 844. During the fourteen years that followed, Nicholas held various important offices that further prepared him for his election to the papacy.

His tenure as pope was controversial and stormy, as he strove to consolidate the power of the papacy in Rome—even over the Eastern Church! The great issue was control of the office of the bishop at Constantinople, which was the second most important place in the Church. The eastern Emperor Michael III replaced Ignatius (the duly elected bishop and head of the Church of Constantinople), with his own choice, named Photius. Pope Nicholas (in Rome) vigorously opposed the appointment, and he excommunicated Photius at the Synod of Rome in AD 863!

In retaliation, Photius excommunicated Nicholas in AD 867. Then Photius took the situation a step further by accusing the Western church of "heresy" for accepting the Filioque Doctrine, a true dogma that contends the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son [see the third paragraph of the Nicene Creed in chapter 5]. In this bid for papal power, Nicholas set the stage for a full break between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism in the eleventh century.

Nicholas would have better success in the other major controversy of his tenure in office: control of the bishop's office at Soissons (northwest Gaul). In 861, Rothad, bishop of Soissons, was deposed by Hincmar, the leading Church figure of Gaul. Rothad appealed this decision to Nicholas, who ruled in his favor. Hincmar accepted the papal decision, so that in this and other matters Nicholas enhanced the power of the papacy.

Chapter 11

The Church in the World; The World in the Church AD 885 - 1049

Feudalism

Following the death of Charlemagne in 843, the Empire fell to his son Louis "The Pious." Though he tried to be a conscientious ruler, he was not the strong ruler his father had been. Louis did the best he could by endorsing the reformation of monasteries under the leadership of Benedict of Aniane, and ordering that two thirds of the money received as tithes be given to the poor. He encouraged the bishops to be elected by the people and the clergy. Unfortunately, the last years of his reign saw the outbreak of civil wars in which Louis' own sons fought him. When Louis died, the empire was divided among his three sons.

One of them obtained the land east of the Rhine, known in history as the East Frankish Kingdom; this was the beginning of Germany. Another son received the land west of the Meuse and the Rhone; this was known as the West Frankish Kingdom and included what is now France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The third son took the long strip of land in between the other two territories. It included Italy and was called the Middle Kingdom.

In addition to the inner divisions and internecine warfare, the Empire was attacked from the east by the Slavs and the Hungarians, who used fast horses. From Scandinavia in the north came rugged Norsemen sailing speedy ships up the rivers, where they made landings in the Netherlands and France. Without mercy the Norsemen plundered and burned churches and monasteries while murdering many of the inhabitants. For three hundred years the people of God in Europe cried, "Lord, deliver us from the Norsemen!"

Also, there was the presence of the Arabs. Prior to the Islamic conquests, there was widespread commerce along the Mediterranean and into the Orient. Because of military success, the Arabs were able to curtail trade with the Orient and rule the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean. Money in Europe almost ceased to circulate. Gold coins were rare. To deal with the chaos of constant conflict and the shortage of money, a way of life emerged called feudalism, whereby land became the main source of wealth.

Feudalism was a hierarchical system based on the holdings of lands. The system began when the kings of various kingdoms divided their territory among leading warriors, provided they granted military aid upon request. Using this pattern, each of the subsequent princes divided his estate among lesser nobles, who in turn granted sections of land to still lesser tenants called vassals, who then contracted with fiefs. Initially, grants of land were for one lifetime, but eventually the grants became hereditary and therefore more permanent.

The Church became part of this system when pious people left land to churches or monasteries. In this way bishops, archbishops, abbots (heads of monasteries), and popes became landowners. Unfortunately, the emperors looked upon the popes as their vassals!

At the top of the feudal system were the lords who answered to no one. At the bottom of the

system were vassals who were not lords over anyone. In the middle of the hierarchy were individuals who were both lords (over others) and vassals (under others). Each part of the system was designed to render mutual aid to the other. One result of feudalism was the decentralization of power and the loss of nationalism.

Dependency on Emperors

The development of feudalism had a direct bearing on the stability of the Church. Between the death of Stephen VI in 897 and the accession of John XII in 955, there were no less than twenty popes who sat on the papal throne. Pope succeeded pope in breathtaking rapidity. Some were strangled, or died of starvation in the dungeons where they had been cast by their successors. To offer one example of the horrors of this period, there was the action of Stephen VI. In 891 he presided over what came to be called the "Cadaveric Council." One of his predecessors, Formosus, was dug up from his grave, dressed in his papal robes, and paraded on the streets. Then Formosus was tried, found guilty of a multitude of crimes, and mutilated. What remained of his body was thrown into the Tiber!

The Church had to endure this long period of shame and disgrace, because the Church was in bondage to the secular rulers. As one nobleman in Italy won a strategic victory, he would put the man of his choosing on the papal seat in Rome. Finally, John XII had enough and called for outside aid from Otto I, a strong ruler in Germany.

Otto I had been able to consolidate his land holdings while bringing the dukes of Germany under his will. Once in power, Otto I controlled the appointment of bishops and abbots through a process called lay investiture. Lay investiture took place when a non-authorized Church person, such as an emperor, bestowed a Church office upon someone, and invested him with the three symbols of spiritual authority: ring, staff, and keys. Between 1059 and 1122, a tremendous conflict emerged over this practice. From the reign of Nicholas II (Pope, 1059-1061), the popes made every effort[8] to reform the Church by freeing it from this plague, which often led to simony and sexual licentiousness.

When Otto I came to the assistance of John XII, the pope expressed his appreciation by crowning Otto emperor on February 2, 962. By this action, the Empire in the west was restored and was called the Holy Roman Empire. It continued to exist in association with Germany until 1806—when Napoleon brought that which was neither holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire, to a decisive end.

By recognizing Otto I as king of Germany, John XII wrote a new chapter in the history of the papacy. An old tradition of having only Italian popes was broken during this period. Otto III placed his tutor upon the papal throne in 999, Gerbert of Aurillac, formerly the archbishop of Rheims. Changing his name to Sylvester II, Gerbert was the first French pope and one of the most educated men of his time. He made a courageous but unsuccessful attempt to reform the papacy as well as the whole Church. Gregory V, who had preceded him, was the first German pope.

Simony: The Selling of the Papal Office

The depths of human depravity became manifested in the highest Church office, when an Italian noble family made Benedict IX pope in 1033. He was only twelve years old. As the years passed his undisciplined behavior moved the Crescenzio family, rivals of the Tuscom party, to drive him from Rome in 1045. In his place they appointed Sylvester III pope. However, Benedict

returned to Rome to resume the pontificate, only to become bored with it. He literally sold the office for one thousand pounds of silver to the man known as Gregory VI.

News of this act of simony, the selling of a Church office for money, created a backlash of protest, which made Benedict decide to refuse to surrender the papal office after all! As a result, three men now claimed to be pope: Benedict IX, Sylvester III, and Gregory VI.

This matter was finally settled by Henry III of Germany. After an interview with Gregory VI, he gathered a council that deposed all three popes and named Clement II. The same council also passed ecclesiastical legislation against corrupt practices, particularly simony. Still, it was plain for all to see that the Church had gone into the world, and the world had come into the Church!

Map of the Holy Roman Empire

Holy
Roman
Empire
KINGDOM OF NORWAY
KINGDOM OF SWEDEN
GOTHLAND
KINGDOM OF DENMARK
KINGDOM OF SCOTLAND
IRELAND
KINGDOM OF ENGLAND
NORTH SEA
BALTIC SEA
LITHUANIA
DUCHY OF POMERANIA
KINGDOM OF POLAND
KINGDOM OF FRANCE
Normandy
Maine
Toulouse
KINGDOM OF LEON
KINGDOM OF CASTILE
KINGDOM OF ARAGON
COUNTY OF BARCELONA OR CATALONIA
Balearic Is.
KINGDOM OF HUNGARY
KINGDOM OF CROATIA
DALMATIA
P. OF SERVIA
MACEDONIA
ADRIATIC SEA
TYRRHENIAN SEA
IONIAN SEA
SICILY
Zeirids
Crete
1060 - 1147

Chapter 12

A House Divided
AD 1054

The Eastern Church

In the year 1054, the Church of Jesus Christ was formally and forever divided. The Pope of Rome sent his messenger to lay the decree of excommunication upon the altar of St. Sophia in Constantinople. In retaliation, the patriarch of the East issued his own decree, excommunicating Rome and the churches submitting to the pope. In this manner, the Greek Eastern part of the Church, and the Latin Western part (with the majority of its members belonging to the Germanic race), separated from each other. Several factors had brought about this great division.

The Iconoclastic Controversy

An iconoclast is a person who destroys religious images or opposes their veneration. In the East in 726, Byzantine Ruler Leo III (c. 680-741; ruled, 717-741) had issued the first iconoclastic decree (forbidding the worship of images), largely because the Mohammedan's were charging Christians with being polytheistic. Leo was supported by the Patriarch of Constantinople and the higher clergy. However, many of the monks and common people opposed this decree. At Rome, Pope Gregory II denounced this imperial interference because the charges of idolatry did not really affect the Western Church, and because he believed that the secular political powers had no right to interfere in the affairs of the Church.

The controversy continued during the reign of Byzantine Emperor Constantine V (741-774). But during the reign of the Empress Irene, it concluded with a victory for image worship. Irene was born of a humble family in Athens. In 769 she married Emperor Leo IV (750-780). After her husband's death she ruled as regent for her minor son, Constantine VI (771?-797). However, when Constantine did come of age to rule, Irene contested him for the throne. In the struggle, she had her own son imprisoned and blinded in 797.

Irene's rule was not contested seriously again until 802, when the patricians revolted and forced her into exile to the island of Lesvos. Still, while she reigned, Irene was able to influence the Church. A devoted worshipper of images, she called the Second Council of Nicea, which was the Seventh Ecumenical Council. Held in 787, it was decreed by this Council that images should be venerated but not worshipped.

During the reign of Leo V (813-820), the controversy broke out again, as the effort again was made to impose iconoclasm upon the Church. This time, the chief defender of iconodulism (or the use of images), was Theodore of Studion (759-826). He was born in Antioch, and educated there along with his friend and fellow-student, John Chrysostom.

The attempt to remove images from the Church failed once more in the reign of Theodora. Empress Theodora (810-862) was the second wife of Emperor Theophilus (829). On his death in 842, she was made regent for their son Michael III. As a devoted iconodule, Theodora called

a Church Council in 843, which restored the worship of images and drove from office the iconoclasts. In the Greek Orthodox Church, this event is still celebrated in The Festive of Orthodoxy. In 858, the Empress herself was forced to retire to a convent. These constant attempts to rid the Church of images produced a deep and lasting rupture between Rome and Constantinople.

The Filioque Controversy

This doctrinal issue was also instrumental in separating the Church in the West from the Church in the East. The Latin (Western) theologians argued that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son; in Latin it is the word filioque. The Greek (Eastern) theologians said that the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father, leaving out the word filioque. Over that one word countless debates have been held, a multitude of books have been written, blood has been shed, and the Church has divided.[9]

The Authority Controversy

As the power of Rome grew, so did the authority of the office of bishop in Constantinople. Finally, there was an unwillingness on the part of the patriarch of Constantinople and the pope at Rome to be subservient to each other, and the Church divided.

Territorial Dispute

Because there was no sharp definition of the boundaries of the territories to be ruled by Rome and Constantinople, frequent struggles arose over administration of border areas, and the Church divided.

Cultural Differences

In the ceremonies of the Church, different practices became the custom in the East and in the West, and these customs were formulated into Church laws. For example, the marriage of priests became forbidden in the western church, while they were sanctioned in the East. In the western church, the adoration of statues was practiced, while the Greek churches embraced pictures as well as statues. In the communion service of the western churches, the wafer of unleavened bread was used, while common bread was used in the Greek communion. These cultural differences are still honored today, and the Church is still divided over them.

Political Differences

In the East, the Church had no real concerns with being subservient to the emperor, while the Western Church insisted upon 1) independence from the state and 2) the right of moral supervision of rulers of state. And so the Church divided.

The Western Church

Following the great ecclesiastical division in 1054, the Church in the West was to be found in Italy, France, the Netherlands, England, Germany, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Ireland, Scotland, and Russia. In these nations the papacy would seek unity, peace, and stability. Unfortunately, this was not to be. The Church in the West would continue to experience constant upheaval as religious reformers met firm opposition from secular rulers, who did not want to recognize any Church authority over them.

Part Two: The Church in the Middle Ages

AD 754 - 1517

Chapter 13

Monasticism and the Cluny Reforms

Asceticism

As the struggle for Church unity and papal authority was constant, so was the struggle for spiritual reality. In the quest for personal integrity many Christians embraced asceticism, which refers to extreme acts of self-denial. In the western Church the cloister[10] life developed inside the monasteries. The cloister life is the life that is designed to be hidden in God. To that end monks and nuns renounced all possession of earthly goods. They did not eat or drink more than was necessary. Many monks ate only bread and drank only water. Rigorous periods of fasting were followed. Monks would flagellate themselves with whips or cords in a vain attempt to rid themselves of unworthy thoughts. Monks and nuns did not marry, but devoted themselves to good works, prayer, meditation, reading of religious books, and writing copies of the Scriptures.

Unfortunately, the record reveals that the very place which was designed to become a sanctuary from sin, instead became a breeding place of debauchery. All forms of immorality found freedom to express themselves, because of the isolation of the monasteries, the silence of those committing sin, and the inherent trust allowed between men and women who had come together in the name of Christ.

Reform at the Monastery of Cluny

Not all monks and nuns were hypocritical. There have always been faithful servants of the Lord who were sincere in their religious zeal. Some of these were Abbot Berno and his immediate successors, who founded a monastery in Cluny in eastern France in 910.

Reform was needed in part because the monasteries had become a convenient place to promote sexual misconduct. In addition, Church leaders abused their spiritual authority over others, while enjoying a lavish lifestyle incompatible with their vows of poverty.

At Cluny, the Benedictine rules of asceticism were diligently enforced, and reforms were developed. For the next two hundred years, the Cluny reform movement spread to other monasteries as a means of genuine spiritual awakening and social reform. With the new reforms, emphasis was once more placed upon true religion, scholarship, and the cultivation of the arts. Over two thousand monastic establishments grew out of this effort. It was the Cluny movement that produced noteworthy men such as Hildebrand, who as pope became known as Gregory VII.

The Doctrine of Fasting

1. Fasting refers to the voluntary abstention from food for religious purposes (Est 4:3; Dan 6:18; Mat 15:32; Luk 2:37; Act 14:23; 2Co 6:5).

2. Fasting was common among God's people. While much fasting became ineffectual (Isa 58:3-9), a solemn fast could elicit the grace and mercy of God (Est 4:15).

3. Fasting was commonly accompanied by the refusal to drink wine or water or both. Fasting was also accompanied by:

a. abstaining from work (Lev 16:29)
b. not using a razor or touching the dead (Num 6:1ff)
c. assembling (Num 29:7; Neh 9:1)
d. pulling the hair on the head (Ezr 9:3)
e. weeping (Jdg 20:26) and mourning (2Sa 1:12)
f. presenting an offering (Lev 23:27; Jdg 20:26; Jer 14:12)
g. pouring out water (1Sa 7:6)
h. tearing of the clothes (2Sa 1:11)
i. putting on sackcloth (1Ki 21:27)
j. covering oneself with ashes (Dan 9:3)
k. refusing to talk (2Sa 12:16f).

4. In the early Church, The Didache[11] (1:3) urged fasting for one's enemies as a means of showing grace towards them (cp. Psa 35:13).

5. People in the Bible fasted for a variety of reasons:

a. when they were dedicated or separated unto the Lord (Num 6:1ff) for special service
b. in an act of worship (Jer 14:12)
c. as an expression of sorrow (1Ch 10:12)
d. as a sign of repentance (1Ki 21:27-29)
e. in order to seek the Lord's grace (Est 4:15).

6. Fasting, prayer, and the giving of alms were three acts of devotion that were highly respected in the early Church. They are often mentioned together (cp. Luk 5:33; Luk 18:12; Act 10:31).

7. For a while, the early Church may have observed the fast on the Day of Atonement as the Law required (Lev 16:29ff). In The Didache (8:1), Christians were instructed to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays.

8. Though the Law of Moses commanded only one fast on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29ff), other fasts were added to commemorate traumatic moments in Hebrew history, such as the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the murder of Gedaliah.

Chapter 14

The Church Cries Out for Spiritual Reform AD 1049 - 1073

The Cluny Reforms: AD 1049-1058

As a reaction to the appalling spiritual conditions in the Church during the tenth century, there took place a religious renewal. This time of spiritual awakening began with the founding of the monastery at Cluny. The objective was to bring spiritual vitality back to the clergy, the monks, and the papacy; the changes became known as the Cluny reforms.

To help reform and stabilize the papacy, the Cluny reformers enlisted the aid of German Emperor Henry III, who was political leader of the Holy Roman Empire. Being a devout man, Henry III was willing to help advance the cause of Christ and bring about spiritual reform. In time he was able to place on the papal seat Clement II. Unfortunately, both Clement and the next pope after him died very soon after taking office. Henry III then appointed his cousin Bruno, bishop of Toul, to be the pope. He would become known as Leo IX.

Pope Leo IX

Leo IX (Pope, 1049-1054) was a strong supporter of the Cluny spiritual renewal, reflected in the great change he made in the College of Cardinals. From the inception of the papacy, there had been cardinals in Rome. These men were leading bishops who served as personal assistants and advisers to the popes. When Leo IX became pope, he realized that this spiritual advisory cabinet consisted entirely of representatives of Rome's noble families, who really controlled the papacy. These same families also contributed to the corruption of the papacy, and therefore were not at all sympathetic to the Cluny reform movement. So the first change Leo IX made was to find men who were spiritually-minded. The new cardinals came from various parts of the Church, which meant that Leo had individuals around him whom he could trust and who had the best interest of others at heart.

In other ways Leo IX promoted spiritual renewal. He traveled through France and Germany holding synods and stressing three things. First, the priests were not to marry. Second, they were not to practice simony. Third, no one should obtain a Church office apart from the consensus of the clergy and the people (no lay investiture).

Despite these positive improvements, the administration of Leo IX was not without stress, for it was during his tenure that the two parts of the Church separated from each other. It was Leo IX who excommunicated the patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius, thereby creating the Greek Eastern Church and the Latin (Roman) Western Church.

Following the death of Leo IX in 1054, Emperor Henry III ap-pointed another German to the papacy, who took the name of Victor II. He would hold the office of the papacy for only two

years, from 1055-1057. In 1056 Henry III died unexpectedly, creating a political opportunity for Victor II. He immediately moved to have Henry's son, a child of six, established as successor to the imperial throne. His mother Agnes would rule as empress until Henry IV came of age.

By involving himself in this political strategy, Victor II had created a dilemma for the Church. Whereas it had been successful in freeing itself from the Roman nobility due to the Cluny reforms, it was in danger of subjecting itself to the imperial favors of Germany. And now at the head of the Holy Roman Empire was not a strong ruler like Henry III, who could protect the papacy, but a weak regent named Agnes. For thinking reformers in Rome, it seemed that the stage was set for breaking the imperial bonds with all earthly rulers. Perhaps a climate could be created in which the papacy could protect itself, without being unduly influenced or submissive to either the nobility or imperial rulers.

Pope Stephen X

With these thoughts in mind and without consulting the Empress Agnes, the reformed party in control in Rome elected Stephen X as their new pope. Stephen wanted to be a strong and capable religious leader. To that end, he insisted that appointments to Church office must be made by the Church and not by lay investitures. By declaring this policy, Pope Stephen X was in effect weakening the power of the German emperor, who had been enhancing his own political prestige by appointing bishops favorable to himself.

Had Stephen tried to carry out the new policy he had announced, it would have resulted in a great conflict between pope and emperor, for no ruler would give up the right of lay investiture without strong opposition. But Stephen X did not bring the impending conflict to a confrontation. He acquiesced instead, by asking the regent mother (Empress Agnes) to approve his own ascension to the papal office. Her approval was granted. Soon thereafter Stephen died.

Following the death of this pope, the Roman nobility perceived a renewed opportunity to re-assert their power over the papacy. Within a week of Stephen's death, the nobility elected one of their own kind, a pope with the title Benedict X. Suddenly thrown into panic, the reform-minded cardinals fled Rome. It seemed as if the dark days of Benedict IX had returned. The Church needed help! It was to come, but from an unusual source.

Hildebrand: The Power behind the Throne

Within the Church structure was a capable man named Hilde-brand (c. 1021-1085), who had served Pope Leo IX as a sub-deacon in charge of the financial affairs of the papacy. In this hour of crisis, with the nobility of Rome trying to unduly influence the papacy, Hildebrand decided their movements should be challenged.

He did this by seeking out a man who was sympathetic to the Cluny reforms. Hildebrand selected as his candidate the bishop of Florence. Enlisting the support of the Duke of Tuscany and a portion of the people of Rome, Hildebrand appealed to the empress Agnes to recognize his candidate, as opposed to the one selected by the nobility. The Empress agreed. Her support allowed the reform-minded cardinals to come back to Rome from their flight to safety. When the cardinals met to select the next pope, Hildebrand's candidate was elected, and assumed the title Pope Nicholas II (Pope, 1058-1061), originally Gerard of Burgundy. While Nicholas II occupied the papal seat, therefore, the real power behind the throne was Hildebrand.

Movement toward Maturity: 1059-1073

A New Method for Electing a Pope

Hildebrand's later success in bringing about Church reform had its basis in a new method for electing the pope, which significantly strengthened the papacy. The new process was introduced after the papal administration of Nicholas II; it was formulated at the Second Lateran[12] Council (1059).

At this council, it was decided that the power of election of the pope was to rest with the cardinals who also held the title of bishop. The intent of this new method was to remove the election of the popes (and thus the control of the papacy), out of the hands of the Italian nobility, out of the hands of the emperors, and out of the hands of other religious leaders who were not reform-minded. Predictably, bishops in Germany and Lombardy, the nobility of Italy, and select government rulers did not like this new method; it would be challenged on all sides.

The first person duly elected under this new process was Anselm of Lucca, who as pope was known as Alexander II (d. 1073; Pope, 1061-1073). Because Alexander II was a reformer, he was opposed by the German bishops. They set up an anti-pope in Hororius II. In the contest that ensued, Hororius came close to being the victor! In the providence of God, however, the Cluny reforms would stand—due to an incident in Germany in 1062.

An archbishop of Cologne named Anno kidnapped the young Henry IV, and was made his guardian in the place of his mother, the empress Agnes. Being an ambitious man, Anno believed his own interests could be advanced by the Cluny reform party, so he displaced Hororius II and recognized Alexander II as the rightful pope. This established the new powers of the papacy.

Nevertheless the old temptations to become involved in worldly affairs would return, thus losing focus on spiritual issues. Very interested in politics, Alexander engaged in voluminous diplomatic correspondence and support of military activity. For example, when William Duke of Normandy was planning his conquest of England, Alexander gave his approval. He also sanctioned military action against the Muslims.

However, when he did engage in more pastoral matters, Alexander II was able to make two of the most powerful archbishops in Germany do penance, after confessing to the sin of simony. He also refused the request of Henry IV to divorce his queen, thereby upholding the sanctity of marriage. By enforcing spiritual decisions consistent with the cause of Christ, Alexander II strengthened the power of the papacy, thereby making it possible for principled men like Hildebrand to make further reforms.

The Hope of Hildebrand

Hildebrand was born in Tuscany, Italy, the son of poor parents. Although his early years are obscure, it is known that as a young Benedictine monk in the St. Mary's monastery at Rome, he was affected by the Cluny reforms. Hildebrand was respected for personal integrity, steadfastness to principle, and common sense. For many years in his pastoral ministry, "Monk Hildebrand" had directed pointed attacks against concubinage of the clergy, simony in the obtaining of ecclesiastical benefits, and lay investiture (Church appointments by secular rulers). His monastic life ended when his administrative abilities were recognized by higher Church officials. By 1046 he was an assistant to Pope Gregory VI.

During the following years of service at the center of papal power, Hildebrand saw the

desperate need for religious reform. He discovered that secular rulers made regular appointments to ecclesiastical offices of individuals who were not morally or spiritually qualified, but who were willing to pay a high price for a place within the Church (simony). Hildebrand began working for change. His efforts would continue after Gregory VI, during the papal administrations of Leo IX, Victor II, Nicholas II, and Alexander II. Although he had denied himself the office of the papacy on several occasions, his words of wisdom were widely appreciated. His influence was far reaching: when he spoke, people listened. So finally, upon the death of Alexander II in 1073, Hildebrand himself received the unanimous support of the cardinals and was elected to the papacy as Gregory VII (Pope, 1073-1085).

Hildebrand's election was in a surprising manner, which circumvented the new reforms, almost undoing them as their opponents had tried to do without success. While conducting the funeral services of Alexander II in the Basilica of St. John Lateran, the crowd suddenly and unexpectedly began to shout for Hildebrand to be recognized as pope. Amidst scenes of the wildest enthusiasm, the people literally carried him to the Church of St. Peter. There he was consecrated and placed upon the papal throne. Though the cardinals had no part in this spontaneous selection (against the council decree of 1059), they later legalized Hildebrand's exaltation by formally electing him pope in the appointed way.

An ambitious and strong leader, Hildebrand (whose name literally means "brilliant flame") drew up his famous Dictaus Papae, outlining his vision for uniting all of the main elements of western Europe under Church control. He next moved to institute clerical reforms. No longer would Church offices be sold (simony), and the rules of celibacy would be enforced.

To ensure these things, Hildebrand issued two other general decrees: the reaffirmation of the supreme authority of papal decrees, and a final dissolution of all non-ecclesiastical investiture of Church office. Despite initial opposition to his actions, spiritually concerned members of the Church could hope that in Hildebrand further reforms would come.

Chapter 15

The Struggle for Independence from the State 1073 - 1122

The Fight for the Right of Investiture

For both pope and emperor the right of investiture was critical. Ultimate power was at stake. If an emperor gave up the right to make Church appointments, he was seriously undermining and weakening his political position. If the pope did not have this right exclusively, there could be no hope for clerical reform, and no holding of individuals accountable in an ecclesiastical court for their attitudes and actions within the body of Christ. The great conflict came to a head in the persons of Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand) and Henry IV.

Henry IV Challenges the Church

The opening move in this great debate began in 1075, when Henry IV of Germany was believed by Pope Gregory VII to be at his weakest. In a bold move Gregory VII forbade investiture by layman. Although Henry was angered by the decision, he waited before responding. When he felt politically strong a few months later, Henry defied Gregory by conferring investiture upon three bishops. The world waited to see what Gregory would do next. In December, 1075, the answer came in a letter. It began as follows:

"Bishop Gregory, servant of the servants of God, to King Henry, greeting and apostolic benediction–that is, if he be obedient to the Apostolic Chair as beseems a Christian king. Considering and carefully weighing with what strict judgment we shall have to render account for the ministry entrusted to us by St. Peter, chief of the Apostles, it is with hesitation that we have sent unto thee the apostolic benediction."

The pope continued by listing the many sins of the emperor. He then reminded Henry IV that he was under the authority of Peter and his successors. Furthermore, Gregory argued that Henry deserved excommunication, which meant that he should be cut off from membership in the Church and thus face a certain damnation. Henry was young, proud, determined, and fresh with military victory. The more he read what Gregory had written, the more angry he became. In this state of fury, Henry called a council of bishops, which met in Worms on January 24, 1076. Upon orders from the king, the council declared that it no longer recognized Gregory VII as pope and sent a letter to that effect. The letter began,

"Henry, king not through usurpation but through the ordination of God, to Hildebrand, at present not pope but false monk."

Implied in the letter is that Pope Gregory VII had taken the office by force and not by proper means (cp. 1Pe 5:2). The letter from the emperor continued:

"Thou, therefore, condemned by the judgment of all our bishops and by our own, descend and relinquish the Apostolic Chair which thou hast usurped. Let another ascend the throne of St. Peter who shall not practice violence under the cloak of religion, but shall teach the sound doctrine of St. Peter."

Not to be surpassed in pride, power, or a show of strength, Gregory chose February 14, 1076 as the date on which he would issue a solemn sentence, deposing the emperor and excommunicating him. Said the pope,

"Blessed Peter, prince of the Apostles, lend me, I pray thee, a favoring ear. It is because I am thy representative that thy grace has descended upon me, and this grace is the power granted to God to bind and loose in heaven and in earth. Strong in this faith, for the honor and defense of the Church, on behalf of Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, by virtue of thy power and authority I deprive Henry, son of the emperor Henry [Henry III], who has opposed thy Church with unheard-of insolence, of the government of the whole kingdom of Germany and of Italy; I release all Christians from the oath which they have made to him or that they shall make to him. I forbid everyone to obey him as king."

The next move was up to Henry and he wasted no time in making it. Henry chose to appeal to the people of Rome, and to that end sent a message urging the citizens in the strongest language to banish the "monk Hildebrand" from their city. In like manner, Gregory sent a letter to the people of Germany telling them to choose someone else as their king unless Henry repented.

The outcome of this exchange of correspondence was that the people of Rome ignored the appeal of Henry, while the lords of Germany decided to honor the request of the Pope. The feudal lords were all too happy to have papal sanction for continuing their disobedience to Henry, who had been ruling them in an oppressive manner.

In October, 1076, the German nobility held a meeting. Some wanted to dispose the king; all wanted to humble him. The nobles decided that they would meet again in Augsburg on February 2, 1077, under the presidency of the pope. At that meeting Henry would be given a chance to repent and to clear himself of the many sins of which he was accused. If Henry had not freed himself from the papal ban of excommunication by that time, he was to forfeit the throne.

Henry knew that his situation was desperate and he had to do something drastic. He was willing to agree to anything to save it. He would even repent. To the pope Henry finally wrote saying,

"In accordance with the advice of my subjects, I hereby promise to show henceforth fitting reverence and obedience to the apostolic office and to you, Pope Gregory. And since I have been accused of certain grave crimes, I will either clear myself by presenting proof of my innocence or by undergoing the ordeal, or else I will do such penance as you may decide to be adequate for my fault."

While Henry was openly offering his public apologies, in private he was preparing to regain his former position. But first he had to get out from under the ban (decree) of excommunication, and be restored to full Church membership by receiving absolution of his sins. Before all this could happen, a person had to do penance and give proof of repentance. So it was that on the morning of January 25, 1077, Henry climbed the hill to the castle of Canossa where Pope Gregory VII had come, and knocked at the outer gate. The gate was opened and Henry was allowed to pass through the gates of the first and second walls. There he was stopped to stand before the closed third gate.

All day long Henry fasted. Over his kingly garments he wore the garb of a penitent, a coarse woolen robe. He was bareheaded and barefooted. In this manner he stood in the courtyard in the cold and snow. Darkness descended and still the inner gate remained closed. The next morning Henry appeared again only to be forced to stand all the day long barefoot in the snow.

By nightfall the gate remained shut and Henry returned to his lodging. The third morning dawned. Henry arose and went to stand as a penitent in the courtyard of Canossa. The hours slowly moved by. Noon time came and nothing happened. Then the afternoon arrived. Finally, on the evening of January 27, 1077, the inner gate slowly opened; Henry was told to enter. As Henry made his way into a large room, there sat at one end Hildebrand, an old man—once a poor boy but now powerful enough to humble a king. Before him stood the young and strong king dressed in the clothing of a penitent. With tears in his eyes, the emperor prostrated himself to the ground. He kissed the foot of the pope and begged for his forgiveness. The absolution was granted and the ban of excommunication was lifted.

As dramatic as this encounter was, it would not be the end of the story nor of the struggle, for the people in Germany and Italy were confused and divided into warring camps. The opponents of Henry in Germany in 1077 went on to elect Rudolph of Swabia to be king. From 1078 to 1080 civil war ensued, until Rudolph was wounded in battle and bled to death.

Pope Gregory had tried to resolve the conflict but was told not to interfere. Rather than do that, in 1080 Gregory VII again put Henry under the ban. However, this time there would be no acts of repentance. Powerful cardinals had finally turned against the pope to support the king. This time it would be Henry who would humble the pope. In fact, he would drive Gregory from the papal chair. Henry did this by marching his army into Italy and placing on the papal throne the anti-pope Guibert (Clement III, 1084).

When Gregory heard the approaching hoof-beats of Henry's army, he fled into the castle of St. Angelo on the left bank of the Tiber River, and called for help from the Normans in southern Italy. They came to his aid, and Henry was forced to retreat. However, the Normans stayed in Rome to plunder it. The people blamed Gregory and drove him from the city and into exile. In Salerno, Gregory died in 1085, a broken man. His last words were: "I have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore I died in exile."

The Concordat of Worms

Despite all that Gregory VII was able to accomplish as pope, the struggle over investiture continued for thirty-five years until the Concordat of Worms resolved the issue in 1122. According to the terms reached between Emperor Henry V and Pope Calixtus II on September 23, Henry V would relinquish investiture by ring and staff, while permitting the free election of bishops. Calixtus agreed that all elections would be conducted before the emperor, who would retain the right to invest the elected ecclesiastic with the temporal prerogatives of the office.

Summary Timetable

1046 Hildebrand becomes assistant to Pope Gregory VI
1073 Hildebrand is made Pope Gregory VII
1075 Gregory forbids lay investiture to Henry IV of Germany
1/76 Henry no longer recognizes Gregory as pope
2/76 Gregory excommunicates Henry
10/76 German nobles side with the pope
1/77 Henry repents and receives absolution
78-80 Civil war in Germany
1080 Gregory again excommunicates Henry
1084 Henry marches on Rome and drives Gregory into exile
1122 Concordat of Worms resolves controversy over lay investiture

The Doctrine of Repentance

Extracted with modification from the writings of A.W. Pink[13]

1. Gospel repentance does not belong to a Jewish dispensation[14] in the past, but is for men today as per Acts 17:30: "But God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."

2. There is nothing meritorious in a sinner's compliance with the righteous demand of God to repent.

3. It is the gospel duty of man to repent (Pro 28:13; Isa 55:7).

4. The necessity for Gospel repentance is rooted in the fact and consequences that the Law of God has been broken, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20).

Here in part may lay a practical reason as to why repentance is no longer preached, practiced, or even understood by a large part of society today or by the Church. A new generation has arisen believing that the Law of God has no place in this "age of grace."

Can there be any wonder that our country and the nations of the Western world are in moral and spiritual chaos? A particular teaching in the Church has united with Humanism, Communism, and anarchy in a common contempt for the Law of God. Why should men have respect for human laws if they are taught that the Law of God has no rule and reign over their lives today?

In contrast to popular theology of recent origin, the Apostle Paul plainly affirms, "I had not known sin, but by the law" (Rom 7:7). The exceeding sinfulness of sin (Rom 7:13) is only exposed or made manifest when the Holy Spirit turns the light of God's Law upon our conscience and heart.

"Practical godliness consists in conformity of our heart and life to the Law of God, and in a sincere compliance with the Gospel of Christ" (A.W. Pink). This is not legalism. It is the antidote for anti-nomianism (or lawlessness), which pervades our society and our churches.

The requirements of the Law are summed up in the Word of Christ, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deu 6:5; Mat 22:37). Man is required to love God. The ground or reason for this love is because He is the Lord our God. The extent of this duty is to love God with all the heart.

Sin is failure to love God in this manner. Sin is saying, "I renounce God who made me; I disallow His right to govern me. I care not what He says to me, what commandments He has given, nor how He explains His Word: I prefer self-indulgence to His approval. I am indifferent to all He has done to and for me; His blessings and gifts move me not; ultimately I am going to be lord of myself." Sin is rebellion against the Majesty of heaven; it is to treat the Almighty with contempt.

5. In contrast to sin, repentance results from a realization in the heart, wrought therein by the Holy Spirit, of the sinfulness of sin, of the awfulness of ignoring the claims of God and defying His authority. It is therefore a deep hatred of sin, both an acknowledgment and a complete heart-forsaking of it before God. When we turn to God, we turn away from our sin. It is in this repentant faith that God will pardon us (cp. Lev 23:29; 1Ki 8:47-50). No change in dispensation has wrought any change in the character of the thrice holy God. His claims are ever the same.

6. The Prophets taught repentance (Psa 32:3-5; Pro 29:13; Jer 4:4; Eze 18:30-32; Hos 5:15; Joe 2:12-18).

7. John the Baptist preached repentance (Mat 3:2; Luk 1:16-17).

8. The Lord Jesus preached and illustrated repentance (Mar 1:15; Mat 5:3; Luk 4:18; 5:32; 13:3, 5; 15:17-20).

9. When risen from the dead, Christ commissioned His servants "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations" (Luk 24:47), and Acts 5:31 tells us that both repentance and forgiveness of sins were given to the Church.

10. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter did not say that the people were to do nothing but "receive

Christ by a decision" they make. Rather, he preached repentance, saying, "Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out!" (Act 3:19).

11. When Paul was converted and sent to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, it was to "open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins" (Act 26:20; cp. 20:21).

12. Only to those who shut their eyes, stopped their ears, hardened their hearts, and were given up to destruction in the days of the Prophets (Isa 6:10), of Christ (Mat 13:15), and of the Apostles (Act 28:27), would the sentence be, "Lest they should see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them" (Mar 4:12).

13. The nature of true evangelical repentance should be clearly understood (Luk 13:3).

a. Trembling beneath the preaching of God's Word is not re-pentance. Felix "trembled" (Act 24:25), but he was not converted.

b. Being almost persuaded is not repentance. Agrippa illustrates this (Act 26:28; see also Mat 13:20-21). A person may be conscious of his evil doing and acknowledge the same without being converted, just as Pharaoh confessed his sins (Exo 10:16).

c. Humbling ourselves beneath the mighty hand of God on occasion, is not repentance. A solemn example of this is Ahab, who was sorry he had killed Naboth (1Ki 21:27-29). Yet in the next chapter he again is rebelling against God.

d. Confessing sins is not repentance. Thousands have gone forward to the "altar" or "mourners bench" and then backwards into the same sin.

e. A person may even do works meet for repentance and yet remain impenitent, just as Judas confessed his sins to the priest, returned the money, but then committed suicide (Mat 27:3-5).

f. Repentance is more than conviction of sin or fear of wrath to come. In Act 2:37-38 men were already under such fear, but then still were commanded to repent. Their legal fear of punishment did not produce saving repentance, in which there is an evangelical judging of self, and a mourning over sin out of a sense of God's grace and goodness.

14. What then is repentance? In the words of A. W. Pink (paraphrased):

Repentance is a supernatural and inward revelation from God, giving deep consciousness of what I am in His sight, resulting in a bitter sorrow for sin, a hatred for sin, a turning away from or forsaking of sin. It is the discovery of God's high and righteous claims upon me, and of my lifelong failure to meet those claims. It is the recognition of the holiness and goodness of His Law, and my defiant insubordination thereto. It is the perception that God has the right to rule and govern me, and of my refusal to submit unto Him. It is the apprehension that He has dealt in goodness and kindness with me, and that I have repaid Him with evil, by having no concern for His honor and glory. It is the realization of His gracious patience with me, and how that instead of this melting my heart and causing me to yield loving obedience to Him, I have abused His forbearance by continuing a course of self-will.

Evangelical repentance is a heart apprehension of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It is the recognition of the chief thing wherein I am blameworthy, namely, in having so miserably failed to render unto God that which is His rightful due.

True repentance is always accompanied by a deep longing and a sincere determination to forsake that course which is displeasing to God, out of a motive of love for Him. With what honesty could any man seek God's pardon while he continued to defy Him and to part not with that which He forbids? Would any king pardon a traitor, though he seemed ever so humble, if he saw that he would be a traitor still? True, God is infinitely more merciful than any human king, yet in the very passage where He first formally proclaimed His mercy, He at once added that He "will by no means clear the guilty" (Exo 34:5-7), i.e. guilty-hearted, those with false and disloyal hearts toward Himself, who would not be subject to Him in all things, and who decline to have

their every thought brought into captivity to obedience unto Him (2Co 10:5).

God's mercy (Psa 130:4) is never exercised at the expense of His holiness. God never displays one of His attributes so as to dishonor another. To pity a thief, while continuing as a thief, would be folly, not wisdom. Well did the Puritan Thomas Goodwin15 say, "Resolve either to leave every known sin and to submit to every known duty, or else never look to find mercy and favor with God" (cp. Deu 28:19-20).

15. Biblical repentance presupposes several factors.

a. It presupposes a recognition and acknowledgment of God's claims upon us as our Creator, Governor, Provider, and Protector. Thus repentance does presuppose that a supernatural enlightenment has been given by God (1Jo 5:20).

b. Biblical repentance presupposes a hearty approval of God's Law and a full consent to its righteous requirements. "The Law is holy, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good" (Rom 7:12). It cannot be otherwise, for God is its Author.

c. Biblical repentance presupposes that the Law was never repealed.

1). Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to earth to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill (Mat 5:17-18).

2). Jesus condemned the Pharisees, because they pretended that their rules and regulations surpassed the Law (Mat 5:20).

3). That the Law of God was never to be repealed is taught in the Psalms (Psa 119:142, 144, 152, 160).

4). Christ did not die to annul the Law so that now it wholly ceases to be a rule of life to believers, but rather to recover His people unto a conformity thereto (Ti 2:11-13). Though men love their corruptions, God sitteth as king forever (Psa 29:10), and He will assert His crown rights (Luk 19:27).

5). Only a regenerated man can delight in the Law of God after the inward man (Rom 7:22).

6). By righteousness we establish the Law (Rom 3:31), that all the world might become guilty before God (Rom 1:18, cp. 3:19).

7). Without God's Law, there is no sin (Rom 5:13).

8). If the Law were repealed, what is the need to argue, as Paul does, that "by deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Rom 3:20)? It would have been sufficient to say that a repealed Law could neither justify nor condemn anyone. Instead, the Apostle shows that the Law requires a "patient continuance in well doing" and threatens "tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil" (Rom 2:5, 7).

9). The New Testament speaks in a uniform manner, teaching that those who have no saving interests in Christ's righteousness by faith are under the wrath of God and the curse of the Law, as though He had never died.

10). Christless sinners are really awakened by the Holy Spirit to see and feel what a dreadful state they are in: under the wrath of God and the curse of His Law (see Rom 7:9-11) because they have broken it! But this argument could not be made if the Law had been repealed.

11). God the Father, as the Governor of the world, gave the Law. God the Son magnified it (Isa 42:21) by expounding its purity, by obeying its precepts, and by enduring its penalty. God the Holy Spirit honors the Law by pressing upon the sinner its holy demands, and by using it as a schoolmaster to bring the soul to Christ (Gal 3:24). It is the special, secret, sovereign work of the Holy Spirit to impress the Law of God upon the hearts of those God draws to Himself (Heb 8:10), so that it becomes their very nature to love God with all their hearts, and so

that they might serve Him in holiness and righteousness all the days of their lives without servile fear (Luk 1:74-75).

d. True repentance presupposes an honest and broken-hearted acknowledgment of sin—our wicked failure to keep God's righteous Law.

16. Unfortunately, it is this enforcing of the infinite glory of God, of His governmental supremacy, of His holy Law, of His righteous claims, of His demand for loving obedience, that is left out of much of the professing Church even today, due in large part to the excesses of "dispensational teaching."[16]

17. There are three kinds of repentance spoken of in Scripture.

a. The Repentance of desperation illustrated in the lives of Esau, Pharaoh, Ahithophel, and Judas.

b. The Repentance of reformation such as was manifested by Ahab, and by the people of Nineveh under the preaching of Jonah.

c. The Repentance of salvation (Act 11:18; 2Co 7:10) based upon an evangelical conviction of sin.

1). A legal conviction fears hell; evangelical repentance reveres God.

2). A legal conviction dreads punishment, while evangelical repentance hates sin.

3). Legal conviction informs the mind, while evangelical repentance melts the heart.

4). Legal conviction excuses itself and claims the finished work of Christ as a basis to continue in sin, while evangelical repentance makes no excuses and has no reserves, but instead cries, "I have dishonored Thy name, grieved Thy Spirit, and abused Thy patience!"

18. There is discernible fruit when repentance is genuine.

a. There is a real hatred of sin as sin, not merely its consequences (Eze 14:6; 20:43; Psa 119:104).

b. There is a deep sorrow for sin (2Co 7:9-10; Mat 26:75; Lev 16:29; Joe 2:12-13; Gal 5:24).

c. There is a confessing of sin (Pro 28:13; Psa 32:3-4).

d. There is an actual turning away from sin, as an integral part of turning to God. It is not a separate "act or work," but part of saving faith.

Charles Spurgeon on Repentance

Psalm 7:12

Repentance to be sure must be entire. Many will say, "Sir, I will renounce this sin and the other, but there are certain darling lusts which I must keep." O Sirs, in God's name let me entreat you: it is not the giving up of any one sin, nor fifty sins, that is true repentance; it is the solemn renunciation of every sin. If thou dost harbor one of these accursed vipers in thy heart, thy repentance is but a sham; if thou doest indulge in but one lust and dost give up every other, that one lust, like one leak in a ship, will sink thy soul. Think it not sufficient to give up thy outward vices; fancy it not enough to cut off the more corrupt sins of thy life—it is all or none which God demands. "Repent," says He, and He bids you repent. He means repent of all thy sins, otherwise He can never accept thy repentance as being real. He says, "Guild thee as thou wilt, O sinner, I abhor thee! Aye, make thyself gaudy, like the snake in its azure scales, I hate thee still, for I know thy venom, and I will flee from thee when thou comest to Me in thy most specious garb." All sin must be given up, or else you shall never have Christ; all transgression

must be re-nounced, or else the gates of heaven must be barred against thee. Let us remember this, that repentance to be sincere, must be entire.

True repentance is a turning of the heart, as well as the life; it is the giving up of the whole soul to God to be His forever; it is a renunciation of the sins of the heart, as well as of the crimes of the life. Ah, dear hearers, let none of us fancy we have repented when we have only a false and fictitious repentance; let none of us take that to be the work of the Spirit which is only the work of poor human nature; let us not dream that we have savingly turned unto God, when perhaps we have only turned to ourselves; let us not think it is enough to have turned from vice to virtue. Let us remember it must be a turning of the whole soul to God, so as to be made anew in Christ Jesus; otherwise we have not met the requirements of the text.

Lastly upon this point, true repentance must be perpetual. It is not my turning to God during today that will be a proof that I am a true convert; it is forsaking my sins throughout the whole course of my life, until I sleep in the grave. You must not fancy that to be upright for a week will be a proof that you are saved; it is a perpetual abhorrence of evil. The change that God works is neither a transitory nor superficial one; not a cutting off the top of the weed, but an eradication of it; not the sweeping away of the dust of one day, but the taking away of that which is the cause of the dust.

You may today go home and pretend to pray; you may today be serious, tomorrow honest, and the next day you may pretend to be devout; but yet, if you return—as Scripture has it, like the dog to its vomit and like the sow to its wallowing in the mire (2Pe 2:22)—your repentance shall but sink you deeper into hell, instead of being a proof of divine grace in your heart.

FromTurn or Burn, Sermon 106, New Park Street Pulpit,
vol. 2, page 417

Luke 13:24

To learn by heart that which others say from the heart, to get the outline of a believer's own experience, this is a thing so simple that instead of wondering that there are hypocrites, I often marvel that there are not ten times more. And then again, the graces—the real graces within—are very easy to counterfeit. There is a repentance that needs to be repented of, and yet approaches near as possible to true repentance.

Does repentance make men hate sin? They who have a false repentance may detest some crimes. Does repentance make men resolve that they will not sin? So will this false repentance, for Balaam said: "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God" (Num 22:18). Does true repentance make men humble themselves? Yes, but so does false repentance, for Ahab humbled himself before God, and yet perished (1Ki 21:29). There is a line of distinction so fine that an eagle's eye hath not seen it; and only God Himself, and the soul that is enlightened by His Spirit, can tell whether our repentance be real or not.

FromSelf-Delusion, Sermon 475, Metropolitan
Tabernacle Pulpit, vol. 8, page 577.

Chapter 16

Killing in the Name of Christ: The Crusades 1096 - 1291

Raising an Army of God

The history of the Church has its origin in the East where, during the first centuries of its existence, the Church formulated the great foundational documents in the Creeds of the Ecumenical Councils. From the East the Church moved West to proclaim the good news of redeeming grace.

For more than a thousand years all orthodox Christians were united in one Church, embracing the doctrines of a common faith. Though it was not without corruption and chaos, and was in need of cleaning and spiritual renewal, the visible Church was still essentially one.

Then in 1054 the Church divided into the Greek Eastern and the Latin Western Church. From that point on, the dream for many was to see the Church reunited. Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand) in particular longed to see the Church made whole. But it would not be easy, because many of its members were now under the rule of Mohammedanism (Islam).

Like Christianity, the faith of Islam had its origin in the East. With violent and bloody hands the Mohammedan Arabs drew their swords to hack their way through all opposition, to become the religious masters and political rulers of the East. They took from the old Roman Eastern Empire the provinces of Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and North Africa. From Africa they moved through Spain and into the center of France. Only at Tours was the bloodthirsty appetite and quest for power of the Mohammedans stopped by Charles Martel, “The Hammer.” The year was 732.

As time moved forward and the centuries passed, the Arabs lost their political and military strength. They were supplanted by the Turks, who also followed the Islamic faith. By 1070 the Turks had seized Palestine and Syria from the Arabs. They had invaded Asia Minor and were at the doorsteps of Constantinople. What was left of the Eastern Empire and the Christian Church was about to be conquered. The Church in the East needed help—and found it in Gregory VII.

In 1073 Gregory VII (Hildebrand) became pope. Anxious to bind up the wounds that had separated the Church in 1054, Gregory also wanted to liberate his fellow Christians from the oppression of the Mohammedan Turks. The opportunity to do something came when the Emperor Alexius I, who ruled the Eastern Church, appealed to the pope in Rome for help. The promise was made that if help from the West came, an end would be put to the schism started by Patriarch Michael Cerularius.

Gregory was ready to provide assistance. He believed that a threefold objective could be reached all at once:

1. the Eastern Church could be saved from the Mohammedans;
2. the Eastern and Western Churches could be reunited;

3. and the universal rule of the papacy could be re-established.

Gregory envisioned himself raising an army of Christian soldiers of God and, with himself leading the way, marching to free the captives in the Church for Christ. But the dream would never materialize, because Gregory soon found himself involved with the investiture conflict with Henry IV. All of his time and energies had to be spent dealing with domestic issues. Meanwhile, the fate of Christians in the East grew worse.

When the Mohammedans first conquered the Christian lands, they did not mind Christian pilgrims coming to their religious artifacts, because the travelers brought money. Tourism was a profitable business. But all this changed when the Seljuk Turks took the Holy Land away from the Arabs. The Seljuk Turks hated Christians because they were Christians. They did not want the money of the Christians, nor did they want the followers of Christ visiting any sacred places. Personal insults and injuries followed the Christian pilgrims. When reports of this reached the West, natural resentment set in. Hearts were inflamed to go to the East and retake the Holy Land for the Lord.

The First Crusade

Leading the way for military conquest was Pope Urban II (Pope, 1088-1099). In the fall of 1095 in Clermont, this tall, handsome, impressive man of oratorical skills assembled before him a large audience of eager warriors from France, the Netherlands, and Italy. He spoke of the life of Christ, reconstructing the Lord's birth, public ministry, arrest, crucifixion, death, and burial. Urban II recreated the travels of the Lord, making every place sacred that the Savior visited. This land, he said, must be reclaimed for Christ. All who were willing to fight would be rewarded. For one thing, their time in purgatory would be reduced.

Purgatory is an imaginary place of suffering, where Roman Catholics believe that all souls must first go for purification prior to entrance into heaven. This doctrine teaches that all men go to a "hell" of some sort, after which they will move on to heaven. Heaven can then be entered because the right has been earned through pain and suffering. The soul is purified. Instead of heaven being a provision of God based upon the free grace of the Gospel (the finished work of Christ on the cross, whereby we are washed clean by His blood, and which is embraced by faith in Christ), men have a part in their own salvation. Purgatory is therefore contrary to the teachings of the Bible (cp. Phi 1:21-23; Joh 14:1-4; Luk 23:39-43).

For those who might die in battle, Urban promised eternal life in heaven immediately. The vast assembly who heard Urban speak went wild with excitement. With one voice the multitude cried out, "God wills it! God wills it!"

Pleased with this response, Urban had red cloth cut up into strips which were sewn together in the forms of crosses. A cross was attached to the sleeve of every one who agreed to belong to the holy "cross" or "crusade." In this manner military expeditions were formed by the Christians of Western Europe, for the purpose of taking back by force from the Mohammedans the Holy Land and its sacred places. The vain pursuits of religious conquests for Christ were about to begin.

The First Crusade began in 1096 and met with great success. The Holy City was retaken in 1099, and The Kingdom of Jerusalem was established. Though the Kingdom was to last for eighty-eight years until 1187, it was by no means strong or spiritual.

The Second Crusade and More

Subsequent military adventures to Palestine were sent forth to strengthen the weak and vacillating Kingdom of Jerusalem. In the Second Crusade (1147), the king of France and the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire led the armies, but the expedition was unsuccessful. The City of Peace was left in greater danger than ever. This is why Jerusalem was recaptured in 1187, by Saladin, Sultan of Egypt and Syria.

This led to the Third Crusade (1189-1192), known as the Crusade of the Three Kings. It was founded by Richard I (the Lion Hearted) of England, Philip of France, and the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. The effort was a disaster. Barbarossa drowned while crossing a river in Cilicia; and Philip returned to France, leaving Richard I alone. After much fighting, all Richard could achieve was to gain a treaty with Saladin that allowed Christians to visit the Holy Sepulcher.

The Fourth Crusade began in 1201, under the leadership of Pope Innocent III (Pope, 1198-1216). He urged the capture of Egypt in order to use it as a base of operations against Palestine. When the army was finally assembled on the beaches, the discovery was made that it was without the shipping that Venice had agreed to supply. So another decision was made. The Crusaders would capture Constantinople to pay for provisions and transportation. A battle was fought and won. One Church-related result of this victory was that Pope Innocent III suddenly had control of both the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Eastern Empire. Not until 1261 would the Eastern Empire regain her independence from Rome.

As pope, Innocent III proved to be a powerful personality, as illustrated in his ability to humble royalty. Innocent humiliated Philip Augustus of France for example, by forcing him to take back the wife he had divorced, after she had appealed to the papacy for help. Shortly after this, in 1208, Innocent humbled King John of England, in a clash of wills over the appointment of a new arch-bishop of Canterbury. To have his way, Innocent used the interdict, which meant placing the whole country outside the grace of the Church. No church service could be officially held. The next year King John was excommunicated. His subjects were no longer required to obey him and he was deprived of his throne. The pope also invited Philip of France to invade England if John refused to humble himself. In 1213 John submitted to the pope, and England became a self-acknowledged slave of the papacy.

During this same period, Innocent interfered in the affairs of Germany by dictating the imperial succession there. Finally, Innocent convened the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 to deal with practical concerns, one of which was making confession mandatory once a year for all laymen. The Council also considered the doctrinal issue of transubstantiation. This doctrine teaches the belief that the communion bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Christ. Accordingly, the Roman Church teaches that the priests are able to perform an actual sacrifice of Christ every time the mass is said.

The Children's Crusade

Of all the major crusades, the most tragic was the attempt of the Children's Crusade. In 1212 a German youth named Nicholas proclaimed that God had ordained him to lead a crusade of children to the Holy Land. The idea captured the imagination of the children. Thirty thousand young people (including some girls dressed as boys), averaging twelve years of age, slipped away from their parents to follow Nicholas. As they marched from Cologne, down the Rhine and over the Alps, they sang:

"Fair are the meadows,
Fairer still the woodlands,

Robed in the pleasant garb of spring;
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer,
He makes the grieving heart to sing."

Many died of hunger. Some stragglers were devoured by wolves. Thieves mingled with the marchers and stole money, food, and clothing. The survivors reached Genoa in Italy only to discover that no ships would carry them to Palestine. Pope Innocent III told the children as kindly as possible to go home. Some did, but many stayed.

In France, in the same year of 1212, a twelve year old shepherd named Stephen came to Philip Augustus, and announced that Christ had appeared to him while tending his flock, and commanded him to lead a children's crusade to Palestine. The king ordered him to return home. Still, twenty thousand young people gathered to follow Stephen, wherever he would lead them. He chose to lead them across France to Marseille where, Stephen promised, the ocean would divide in a miraculous manner and they would walk to Palestine on dry ground. The ocean did not open like the Red Sea, but two ship owners did offer to take as many young people as possible to Palestine without charge. The children crowded into seven ships and sailed forth singing hymns of triumph. On the way two of the ships were wrecked off Sardina, with the death of all on board. The other children were brought to Tunisia or Egypt, where they were sold as slaves. The ship owners were hanged by the order of Frederick II.

The Results of the Crusades

The Crusades never accomplished the original purposes for which they were designed, despite two hundred years of conflict. However, the Crusades did change the world. A few results may be noted:

a. the rise of towns
b. the destruction of feudalism
c. the decay of serfdom, and the rise of the middle class be-tween lord and serf
d. the development of national monarchies
e. the rise of romantic literature
f. greater interest in international trade and commerce
g. increase of heretical teaching
h. increase of banking and shipping industry
i. increased hostility between Christianity and Islam
j. increased power of the papacy
k. increase in population and wealth of Palestine
l. protection of sacred places
m. a blockage of the Moslem aggressions on Europe
n. a better acquaintance of nations with one another
o. an increase of wealth for the Church, which bought lands or loaned money on them as security to the knights who went forth to fight in the name of Christ
p. the slaughter of thousands upon thousands, including Turkish women, children, and infants.

By the middle of the 1200s, the Crusades were over. The Turks would remain in ultimate control of Palestine until 1917, when Jerusalem was turned over to the British General Allenby on December 8, during World War I. While the Crusades may initially have been based upon good motives, no one seemed to be asking if such adventures were the will of God.

The Major Crusades

First Crusade 1095

Second Crusade 1147-1149

Third Crusade 1189-1192

Fourth Crusade 1201-1204

The Children's Crusade 1212

Fifth Crusade 1216-1217

Frederick II's Crusade 1228-1229

Sixth Crusade 1248-1254

Seventh Crusade 1270-1272

Chapter 17

The Height of Earthly Power
1198 - 1216

Innocent III

The Church of Jesus Christ rose to the height of earthly prestige and power under Innocent III. His papal administration lasted from 1198 to 1216. Well educated, Innocent had studied languages in Paris and law in Bologna. He was an eloquent speaker and singer. At the young age of twenty-nine he was made a cardinal, and at age thirty-seven was elected to the papacy. Innocent had exalted ideas about the office he held. Five factors guided his beliefs and behavior.

The Example of Pope Gregory VII. Even though Gregory's attempt to establish the power of the Church over the State ended in failure, his example was established for others to follow.

The "Donation of Constantine." These false documents were accepted for over a century as genuine, and were used in that way to furnish Innocent with a strong legal basis for claiming great papal power.

The Crusades. These military adventures were inspired by the popes, who encouraged the kings and emperors to lead the soldiers into combat while obeying the pope. In this manner the pope gave the appearance of being the head of all Christendom.

The Principle of "Ratione Peccati." This Latin term means "by reason of sin." The popes tended to accept the political authority of the rulers, but they maintained that they, the popes, were supreme in the areas of religion and morality. However, since every political action has a moral side, the principle of Ratione Peccati gave the pope ultimate authority also in political matters. In this way the popes became dictators over kings and emperors.

Political Acumen. Being politically astute, Innocent knew how to assert his authority. In individual confrontations with rulers, he knew how to win. For example, when the emperor Frederick Barbarossa challenged the pope's authority in 1177, it was Frederick who finally knelt before the pope under the porch of the Cathedral of St. Mark in Venice. Spreading his cloak upon the pavement, Frederick knelt upon it and kissed the pope's foot. When Frederick arose, the pope gave him the kiss of peace. But it was not Frederick alone who became a vassal of the Church. One after another of the emperors and all the kings, lords, and princes of Europe acknowledged the pope as spiritual lord.

In addition to his political acumen, Innocent flexed his political power by reclaiming the patrimony of St. Peter, as the Papal States were called. This territory, located in the middle of the Italian peninsula, had been gradually diminished as succeeding popes made sacrifices of the land to the Holy Roman Emperor in exchange for protection. Now back under papal control, the boundaries would remain for the next six hundred years as Pope Innocent III had made them.

Beyond political acumen and the exercise of papal power, Innocent III attempted to bring about spiritual reform. In 1215 he held an ecumenical council in the Lateran Church in Rome. In summoning this council Innocent declared, "Two things I have especially at heart: the

reconquest of the Holy Land, and the reform of the Church universal."

Over fifteen hundred persons attended this Lateran Council, including the highest ranking clergy in Christendom. The patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem were present, as were emissaries from Emperor Frederick, the kings of France, England, Aragon, Hungary, Jerusalem, and Cyprus. Representatives of the Italian cities came. A number of decisions were made.

1. A new Crusade should be conducted. Pope Innocent III offered to lead this one in person.
2. The teachings of the Waldensian and the Albigensian movements were condemned.
3. Punishment of all unrepentant heretics was prescribed.
4. The granting of indulgences should be restricted.
5. Bishops were instructed to appoint competent men to preach the Gospel, and to provide free education for scholars too poor to pay.
6. It was ordered that Jews and Saracens [nomadic people of the deserts between Syria and Arabia] should wear distinctive clothing.
7. No Jews were to be allowed to hold public office that would give them any authority over Christians.

The year following the council Innocent III died.

Continual Need for Reform

The continual need for reform in the Church was universally recognized. The spiritual condition of many of the clergy was abominable. A clerk in Paris said, "I can believe everything, but I cannot believe that any German bishop can be saved." Pope Innocent himself had written, "The prelates[17] in southern France are the laughing stock of the laity." In addition, the Church had amassed enormous wealth. For many people the Church was nothing but an easy and enjoyable way to live.

Not all who were identified with the Church abused the system. There were many devout individuals such as Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), who wrote lovely hymns that are still sung today. "O Sacred Head Now Wounded" was written by this devout monk. His motto has been embraced by countless Christians: "To Know Jesus and Jesus Crucified." Bernard challenged popes and political princes about the depth of their Christian lives, and challenged all of Christendom to seek mystical devotion. To the pope, Bernard once wrote, "Who will permit me to see before I die the Church of God so ordered as it was in the old days, when the Apostles cast their nets to fish for souls, and not for gold and silver?"

As monks and nuns took the efforts of spiritual renewal seriously, they attracted others. Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny, said, "The innumerable multitude of monks covers almost all the lands. It fills the cities, castles, and fortified places. What a variety of garbs and customs is in this army of the Lord, which has taken an oath to live according to the rule, in the name of faith and charity!"

In Palestine three military monastic orders were established to care for the sick, and to protect Christian pilgrims on their journeys to the sacred shrines. These were the Templars, the Hospitalers, and the Teutonic Knights. The Teutonic Knights had their headquarters in Acre until it fell in 1291. By 1226 they were found in Hungary and Prussia, where they battled the Slavs and Tartars as they brought Christ to the Baltic lands. The order was dissolved during the Reformation when the Grand Master, Albert of Brandenburg, became a Protestant.

The Mendicant Orders

Another important order of this time was the Dominicans. The Dominicans adopted the vow of poverty, for they were a mendicant order, which means they begged for their needs. Dominic was a monk who had been born and schooled in Spain. His special burden seemed to be a desire to preach the Gospel, in order to bring back into the Church those who had withdrawn and were teaching other doctrines. At the Lateran Council of 1215, he received formal recognition for his order from Pope Innocent III. The Dominicans adopted the name of "Preaching Friars," which speaks of their ideals. They were to preach as "friars," a name derived from the word frater, or brother. However, these men were not monks. They were not to live in a cloister but in the midst of society. In just four years time, this movement saw the establishment of sixty convents in eight prov-inces.

Another important order of this time period, the Franciscans, was established by Francis of Assisi, who was born in Italy in 1182. The son of a rich merchant, Francis abandoned himself to a life of licentiousness in his youth. At the age of twenty he became violently ill and was gloriously converted. After recovering his health, Francis devoted himself to a life of poverty and charity. Many others joined him in following his example.

At the Lateran Council of 1215, Francis and his followers ap-pealed to the pope for formal recognition of their order. The request was granted and the Minorites or Friars Minor (lesser) began their work. Francis insisted upon absolute poverty. If he saw anyone more poor than himself, he would try to give what he could. The brethren were to labor with their hands, but were not allowed to receive any wages for what they did. They were to "take no thought for the morrow" (Mat 6:34).

A man with a tender heart, Francis loved all of creation and was even known to preach to the birds. With his eloquence in preaching, he persuaded many people to follow Christ. One result of the mendicant orders is that people were attracted to the Church because of the simplicity and sincerity of its followers, who did good and not evil to men. Loving actions and attitudes conquered hearts!

Teachers of the Church

In the midst of good deeds, the mental life of the Church was also being stimulated. Many universities sprang up in Italy, Germany, France, and England. From these, many great teachers emerged.

Anselm (1033-1109)

Born in Aosta, Italy, of a noble family, Anselm was educated at the abbey of St. Leger. His father wanted him to train to have a career in politics, but Anselm wanted to become a monk. In 1057 he left home and wandered in Burgundy, France, and Normandy before taking up residence in a Benedictine monastery at Bec, Normandy. There he took the monastic vows and began to teach. Later he became Abbot of Bec (1078-1093), and after that, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

As a teacher he showed wisdom and compassion. Once, when a visiting abbot complained that he could not get the students to learn no matter how much he beat them, Anselm replied gently, "Have you tried not beating them?" A man of spiritual sensitivity, Anselm prayed, "Grant that I may taste by love what I apprehend by knowledge, that I may feel in my heart what I touch through the Spirit."

As a scholar, Anselm returned to the works of Augustine. As a theologian he wanted to prove

and demonstrate the existence and attributes of God by an appeal to reason alone. With this objective in view, Anselm set forth the Ontological Argument, which contends that the existence of the idea of God necessarily implies the objective existence of God. However, Anselm always insisted that faith must precede reason: "I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand."

Anselm is also credited with the Satisfaction Theory of the atonement, which views God as the offended party and man as the offender. Only the One who is the God-man can provide satisfaction to the infinite God, which justice demands because of the penalty of sin. Anselm rejected the Ransom Theory of the atonement, whereby a lawsuit was settled between God and the devil. Because of his appeal to reason based upon faith rather than the traditions of men, Anselm is described as the founder of Scholasticism.

Peter Abelard (1079-1142)

Peter Abelard became a medieval French philosopher, teacher, and theologian. Born in Brittany, Abelard studied with some of the great teachers of his day, and then taught at Melun, Corbeil, and later at Paris. While in Paris, Abelard lived at the house of Fulbert, who was the canon[18] at Notre Dame. While living with Fulbert, Abelard fell deeply in love with his niece, Heloise. A son was born to her, although the couple was not married. Abelard offered to marry Heloise, but Fulbert was furious. He ordered Abelard castrated. Heloise entered into a convent, believing it was better to do this than to hamper Abelard's career in the Church. Abelard himself retired to the monastery of St. Denis. Despite these decisions, the couple continued to carry on a lifelong correspondence.

In 1121 Abelard was condemned by the Council of Soissons for heresy, and was forced to flee into exile. He found asylum in the distant monastery of St. Gildas in Brittany, where he stayed for ten years. He was abbot there until forced to leave by the monks. Returning to Paris, Abelard became popular with the students, but again faced new charges of heresy regarding the Trinity, from Norbert of Premontre and Bernard of Clairvaux. Again Abelard was condemned by the Church, this time at the Council of Sens in 1141.

Despite his philosophical speculations, Abelard is on record as saying "I do not wish to be a philosopher if it means resisting St. Paul; I do not wish to be Aristotle if it must separate me from Christ." Aristotle (Greek philosopher, 384-322 B.C.) was the master of a world-centered philosophy and of the rational scientific method, which dispensed with "God" and faith that was transcendental (i.e., abstract and altogether above this world). While Abelard did not dispense with God, he did give his life to his motto: "I understand so that I might believe [in God]." He gave his life to rationalism. It is to be noted that this motto is the reverse of that embraced by Augustine of Hippo and Anselm of Canterbury.

Peter the Lombard (c. 1095 - c. 1164)

Peter the Lombard was an Italian theologian, bishop, and disciple of Abelard. Born at Novara, which was then in Lombardy, Peter studied at Bologna and afterwards in France. He taught at the cathedral school of Notre Dame in Paris, where he became an important figure in scholasticism and spokesperson for the Church. Peter may have been the first to contend that there are seven sacraments. This number was finally accepted by the Council of Florence in 1439. According to Peter, a sacrament is not only a symbol of divine grace, but a means of actually conveying divine grace.

A prolific writer, Peter produced commentaries on the Psalms, Job, and the Pauline Epistles.

His most famous manuscript was Libri Quatuar Sententiarum ("Four Books of Sentences"), written between 1147 and 1150. This work is a summary of Catholic doctrine. Though he was once accused of heresy by his arch-enemy, Walter St. Victor, Peter was declared to be a faithful Christian by the Fourth Lateran Council, in 1215. When the Protestant Reformers came, they did not find the writings of Peter Lombard to be altogether disagreeable to their cause, because he had raised a number of important doctrinal questions in his book Yes and No.

Albertus Magnus (1193-1280)

Albertus Magnus was born in Bavaria. In 1223, as an adult, he entered the newly established Dominican Order in Padua, Italy. Albertus taught in several Dominican schools in Germany (1228-1245), in Paris (1245-1248), and then at Cologne (1248-1255), where he had Thomas Aquinas as a student. A profound scholar, Albertus mastered the thoughts of Aristotle while reading widely the works of Jewish thinkers, such as Gabirol and Maimonides. He also read the Arab philosophers: Averroes, Avicenna, and Algazel. In his reading and extensive writings (twenty-one volumes in all), Albertus was careful to acknowledge that many things could only be determined with certainty by revelation, because of the limitations of rational thought. Like other scholastic theologians, Albertus believed that human knowledge could be used to discover the divine mysteries of God.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

This distinguished medieval theologian and philosopher has had a tremendous impact upon the Church to the present hour. Born in the town of Aquino, Italy, about eighty miles southeast of Rome, Aquinas was a large man, which caused him to be mocked by his fellow students as a "dumb ox." However, he was not dumb but brilliant. Educated at the Universities of Naples, Paris, and Cologne, he entered the Dominican order of preachers.

Thomas is most criticized by Protestants for his attempt to synthesize Aristotelian philosophy and biblical theology, which led to a compromise of the doctrines of the sovereignty of God and the total depravity of man. In his defense, Thomas insisted that while theology is the "queen of science," philosophy is its servant and can establish what theology assumes: the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. Still, Protestants feared that Thomas leaned too much toward the autonomy of natural reason, which would disregard or diminish divine revelation.

Despite these things, Thomas Aquinas has contributed to the theological discussion by arguing for a natural theology and a natural law ethic. With respect to ethics, Aquinas made a distinction between eternal law, divine law, natural law, and human law. With respect to the existence of God, he formulated five ways of proving the existence of God, although he rejected the ontological argument formulated by Anselm of Canterbury. Nor did Thomas regard the existence of God as being self-evident to human beings, since they initially do not know enough about God to know that His existence is necessary.

In summary, Thomas argued from universal truths about nature to the cause of nature and its creator, God. His thinking today is still studied; it is both prevalent and profound.

John Duns Scotus (1266-1308)

John Duns Scotus was a medieval scholastic theologian. Because of his Scottish birth, he acquired the Latin nickname Scotus ("the Scot"). Scotus was educated to be a priest. He

became a member of the Franciscan Order. Though he spent most of his career as a teacher at Oxford, Scotus taught also at Paris and Cologne.

Though in many areas Scotus agreed with Thomas Aquinas, he introduced distinct changes into the philosophy and theology that Thomas had set forth. Upon evaluating the five proofs by Thomas, Scotus argued that many assertions in theology are not philosophically demonstrable or even probable. He believed that God does not act out of logical necessity nor out of the inner necessity of His own nature. Since God does not act of necessity; God acts as He freely chooses.

In another area, in contrast to the rationalism of Thomas, Scotus suggested a "voluntarist" view of life, arguing that a choice by the will determines what a person does. Reason is merely an instrument to that end. Such an emphasis helped to drive a dramatic division between faith and reason, which eventually led to the decline of scholasticism itself.

Another contribution of Scotus was to teach the uniqueness of individuals. Aquinas had taught that a human being consists of a body and soul, with the soul comprising the essence of human nature. Scotus insisted on a third component, personal individualism. He believed that God purposely created individuals, not merely a universal human nature, which lineage and circumstances have made particular. Each person possesses an eternal individuality that has been granted both freedom and value.

Scotus also believed that Christ's incarnation would have oc-curred even if the Fall had not, a position with which Aquinas would not have agreed. Even more disturbing is the fact that Scotus was the first major Catholic theologian to argue for the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. This doctrine teaches that the mother of Christ was conceived in holiness without the pollution of original sin, even though she was born of two human parents. Thomas Aquinas, who died in 1274, had earlier rejected this whole notion. In December, 1854, Pope Pius IX (a Franciscan) declared that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was to be regarded as a divinely revealed fact and an official Catholic dogma.

Summary

Together, these men and others called Schoolmen, imparted the knowledge known as scholasticism. The emphasis on learning influenced other areas such as architecture and art. It was the medieval individuals who built the ornate cathedrals such as those in Milan, Italy; Rheims, France; and Cologne, Germany, perhaps the most elaborate and beautiful cathedral ever erected.

Chapter 18

The Passing of Power
1294 - 1417

Boniface VIII

Beginning with the reign of Boniface VIII (Pope, 1294-1303), a definite decline took place in the temporal power of the Church. One of the great conflicts that brought about the decline came over the matter of taxation. Philip the Fair, king of France, was determined to tax the clergy in his country. The pope instructed the clergy not to pay their taxes. The king retaliated by forbidding the exportation of gold, silver, and precious stones. In this way he would be able to keep the currency within the country at his discretion, and would cut off the pope receiving Church revenues.

Boniface VIII responded to this act by issuing a papal bull, which is an official pronouncement or declaration. The bull is so named because on such a papal document is affixed a round seal of lead, called in Latin a bulla. In the bull Unam Sanctum (One holy), Boniface set forth his argument for ultimate authority in the matter in question, and what he proposed to do to King Philip and also to France. Said the pope, "the Church has two swords at its command, the spiritual and the temporal...Each of these is the power of the Church, but the former should be drawn by the Church and by the hand of the Pontiff [or pope]; the latter by the hand of kings and soldiers, but on behalf of the Church—at the command and with the authorization of the Pontiff. One of these swords must be subordinate to the other, that is to say, the temporal power must be subordinate to the spiritual power. It belongs to the spiritual power to establish the temporal power and to judge it if it goes astray...It is necessary for salvation for every human creature to submit to the Roman Pontiff." With these words, Boniface put King Philip and France under the ban. Appealing to the Scriptures to prove his right to universal dominion, the pope quoted Jeremiah 1:10, "Behold, I have set thee over nations and kingdoms."

Many years earlier, when Pope Gregory VII had placed the Emperor Henry IV under the ban, it had the desired effect of subduing the king. The same result would not happen with King Philip of France. The times had changed. Feudalism had fallen into decline, replaced with the rise of nationalism. The papal bull was perceived to be an attack not only on King Philip, but upon France herself. Boniface had failed to understand and appreciate this.

Knowing that he had popular support for resisting the ban, Philip decided to send two representatives with a band of soldiers to Anagni in Italy to arrest the pope. This was a mistake on Philip's part, for the soldiers did not use wisdom. They treated the Pontiff roughly, which caused the citizens of Anagni to come to the defense of the eighty-seven year old pope. Though Boniface was not arrested, he was badly shaken up and his spirit was broken. A few days after he returned to Rome he died.

Still, Philip had won the victory for the States-General of France, composed of nobles, clergy, and the commoners. These all united to officially declare that in civil matters the pope had no authority, and that the king had no superior but God. The Church was learning afresh that it has no more power than what people are willing to give it, according to human wisdom.

Factors Contributing to Decline

To further humiliate the papacy, Philip was able to have the seat of power moved from Rome to Avignon in Provence, immediately adjacent to France. The year was 1309. For about seventy years the popes would rule from Avignon as the virtual prisoner of the French king. This period would become known as "the Babylonian Captivity" (1305-1377), because it lasted about the same length of time as the captivity of the Israelites in Babylon in Old Testament times (c. 586-516 BC). In addition to the political impotence caused by the Babylonian Captivity, at least seven other factors contributed to the decline of the power of the Church.

Intolerance. Feeling threatened with the rise of nationalism, the Church tried to keep its members subservient by the rigid enforcement of doctrine and practice. Heresy was to be rooted out and the faithful were to be encouraged to remain true to the Church. To accomplish these goals, the Inquisition was established under the guidance of the Dominican Order, which was known for having men of great learning. The harsh methods that were eventually used created tremendous opposition and dissent. The Church brought shame upon herself.

Greed. While they were living in Avignon, many of the popes maintained a very luxurious lifestyle, which cost a great deal of money. To obtain the money the popes openly resorted to simony and the selling of indulgences, which are documents that represent papal forgiveness of sin even prior to the sins being committed. Many people began to say that the pope was the Anti-Christ and the son of Satan.

Bureaucracy. The increasing cost of maintaining the hierarchy of the Church and the oppressive means of securing money for it also brought shame, loss of respect, and loss of power to the Church.

Immorality. There was an ever-increasing moral laxity among the clergy, especially during the fifteenth century. The lifestyle of monks and nuns and popes was an open scandal to the Savior.

Secularization. When morality declines in the Church, so does spirituality, which allows the Church to become more secularized. The world offered an alternative way of thinking and living to the Church: the Renaissance. Captured by the concepts of the Renaissance was Nicholas V (Pope, 1447-1455), who was a great lover of classical literature. He founded the Vatican Library.

The Renaissance was not just a rebirth of knowledge as the name implies, but a revitalization of the classical spirit with its rationalistic outlook on life. Ethics were once more viewed as being relative. Morality did not follow an unchangeable revealed standard. What was wrong in one culture or for one person might be just fine in another time and place. Also, the Renaissance saw the rise of the middle class with new wealth—which it chose to spend not on the Church, but upon itself and on art, literature, education, pleasure, and travel.

The Crusades. The military expeditions into foreign lands caused the eyes of many serfs in Europe to be opened. No longer could they be held in bondage through religious superstitions of the time. There were new ideas to embrace, and new ways of living and thinking. The East had met the West and changed it, by weakening the ties of many to the Church.

Church Division. Perhaps the thing that hurt the papacy more than anything else, including the Babylonian Captivity, was the Papal Schism, which was to last from 1378 to 1417.

The Papal Schism (1378-1417)

The Great Schism resulted when the French and Italian cardinals could not agree on ending

the Babylonian Captivity. Because there was a division in the college of cardinals, two popes were elected, one at Rome and one at Avignon. When the Council of Pisa tried to resolve the controversy in 1409, the result was the election of a third pope! Each one of these men anathematized and excommunicated one another, so that the Church as a whole was confused and disgusted.

Reform parties grew rapidly in the midst of this chaos. Leading the way in the quest for spiritual renewal were men such as John Huss (1369-1415) and John Wycliffe (1320-1384). Huss was a professor of philosophy at the University of Prague, who preached with great success in Bohemia as he called upon individuals to repent and believe. Wycliffe gathered around him a group of men, called Lollards, who helped change the Church in England and Scotland by preaching the doctrines of redeeming grace. The voice of the Reformers was beginning to be heard.

At last, in 1417, the Council of Constance managed to elect Martin V as pope, an Italian cardinal. The other three competing popes, weary with the social and political instability, gave Martin their support so that once more the Church in the West had one spiritual leader. The Great Schism was healed. But the wounds that were inflicted on the papacy were to prove to have far reaching repercussions.

Chapter 19

The Search for Sanctification
1200 - 1517

The Albigenses

As people returned from the Crusades in the East to their lands in Western Europe, they brought much back with them, including some ancient heresies. One such doctrinal error was that of Manicheism. Although Augustine had effectively combated this teaching, driving it from the West, it had lingered on in the East. During the Crusades, the Manichean ideas filtered back into Western Europe through Bulgaria, along the newly established trade routes. In the town of Albi in southern France, the Manichean ideas flourished. Those who embraced them were called Albigenses or Cathari.

The Cathari were dualists in that they embraced the idea of a good god and a bad god. The visible world is the result of the evil god. In some manner the souls of men have been taken captive by this bad god, and are being held in bondage. They must be set free. This is done by emphasizing the spiritual over the material.

Rarely does heresy concentrate itself on only one point. Like an octopus with its many tentacles, heresy reaches out to touch other truths. Some of the Albigenses rejected the Old Testament, considering it to be the work of the evil god. Others accepted the Psalms and the prophets. All accepted the New Testament as the work of the good god. However, they did not believe its teachings in every part, especially concerning the body of Christ. Since all material things are evil, Christ could not have had a real body and He did not really die a real death. Thus the Cross held no respect or reverence for the Albigenses. In like manner, the sacraments were rejected because their elements are material. Church buildings were not allowed because they were built of material things. Feeling themselves superior to other professing Christians because of their spiritual knowledge, some of the Albigenses met resistance by the Church. Feeling this rejection, they turned into a hostile group.

The Waldenses

In contrast to the Albigenses were the followers of Peter Waldo. This wealthy merchant placed great emphasis on the Scripture. Taking the teachings of Christ regarding wealth literally, around 1176 Waldo sold all of his goods and gave his money to the poor. Then he translated portions of the Bible into the language of the people. Peter stressed preaching by laymen to include men and women. Sending out seventy disciples two by two, dressed in simple woolen garments and barefoot, Waldo encouraged the Gospel to be proclaimed in southern France, Italy, Spain, and the Rhine Valley. The Waldensians, as the disciples became known, fasted on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. They would not take an oath nor serve in the military. Peter taught that the Church was subject to error, and so rejected the doctrine of purgatory and the saying of prayers for the dead. The Church was not infallible, he argued.

Though Peter Waldo had no intention of breaking with Rome, the pope excommunicated him and his followers.

Then Came the Inquisition

As the Church found itself powerless against the various movements it considered heretical, the decision was made by several councils to persecute the heretics. As a result of this decision, the Inquisition emerged, which was guided by the Dominican Friars. A person who was suspected or accused of heresy could be brought before this formal Church board. Once assembled, the trial followed established procedures.

Anyone discovered with heretical ideas would be instructed to recant (to deny the erroneous beliefs). If this happened, there was freedom to leave. If a person did not recant but held to a certain position, he was to be abandoned by the Church and turned over to the affairs of the civil government for the purpose of punishment. Officially, the Church did not shed blood. However, since the state was subject to the will of the Church at this time, the Church was not guiltless when punishment was administered. The most frequent form of chastisement was death by fire: the heretic was burned at the stake. Short of this, an alleged heretic could be tortured—until he confessed the error of his ways or died from the wounds inflicted.

Many Albigenses and Waldenses were murdered as a result of the methods and madness of the Inquisition. When the number of people being put to death in southern France grew too large for the Church to handle, the pope resorted to other methods, such as calling the nobles to fight a “holy war” against their own countrymen.

For twenty years blood flowed like water in southern France. The country was ravaged by civil war. The loveliest of France’s provinces was turned into a scorched earth as the Albigenses were utterly destroyed, much to the delight of Pope Innocent III, who had encouraged their annihilation. The Waldenses found refuge in the high valleys of the Alps, where some of their descendants still live today. Of all the gatherings who broke away from the Roman Catholic Church during the Medieval Age, the Waldenses are the only group to have survived to the present time.

John Wycliffe

Despite the torture inflicted upon individuals by the Inquisition, courageous souls still became champions in the search for personal and corporate sanctification. Two of the most important men that God ever raised up to criticize and cleanse the doctrine and government of the Roman Catholic Church were John Wycliffe and John Huss.

Wycliffe was born in England in 1320. After studying at the University of Oxford he later became a professor there. In 1378 he began to openly criticize the Church and the clergy. The Church was called into account for amassing tremendous wealth, while the clergy were chastised for their moral corruption. Wycliffe believed that the Church should return to poverty, simplicity, and holiness of life.

Moving into other areas, Wycliffe taught that the Bible should be the only rule of faith. It also should be placed into the hands of the common people. With this objective in mind, Wycliffe translated the Bible into the English language. Outraged at his teachings and his audacity to give the common people the Word of God, the Church hunted Wycliffe—but could not hurt him because he was protected by the nobles. Wycliffe died in peace on December 31, 1384.

Those who followed the teachings of Wycliffe were called the Lollards. They too denounced

the pope, opposed a corrupt clergy, practiced poverty, and acknowledged the Bible as the only standard of faith and practice. For these beliefs, the Lollards were branded as heretics. Many suffered as martyrs in the flames. Still, their movement lingered on until the time of the Reformation, for in other places other men were taking up the cause of Christ. One such man was named John Huss.

John Huss

In Bohemia, John Huss (b. 1369) was introduced to the teachings of Wycliffe and embraced them with a passion, despite the fact that he had been trained for the priesthood. Huss had become dean of the theological faculty at the University of Prague in the capitol of Bohemia, and later became the leader of the institution. Encouraged by the teachings of Wycliffe, John Huss began to preach with great boldness against the corruption of the clergy. He also taught many ideas which were later part of the main teachings of the Reformers during the Reformation, which were:

1. God has predestined souls to salvation.
2. There is a distinction between being in the Church and being of the Church.
3. A person can be in the visible Church and yet not be a real member of the invisible true Church.
4. Jesus Christ is the true leader of the universal Church and not the pope.
5. The pope and cardinals are not necessary to the government of the Church.
6. The selling of indulgences is an abomination to the Lord.

Because of these teachings, Pope John XXIII in Avignon excommunicated John Huss. Huss declared his excommunication to be null and void, and appealed from the pope to the Church Council. He wanted an ecclesiastical trial. In 1414 Huss thought that his chance to be heard in a fair trial would be realized when a general council assembled in Constance. The council had been called by the emperor Sigismund (1368-1437) for the purpose of putting an end to the Great Schism. Reforms were to be introduced and reformers would be heard.

Sigismund was emperor of the Holy Roman Empire from 1411-1437; king of Hungary, 1387-1437; and king of Bohemia, 1419-1437. Exercising his royal prerogative, Sigismund invited John Huss to attend the council under a safe conduct pass. Huss made the fatal mistake of trusting the sovereign, and accepted his invitation. A few weeks later, Huss found himself imprisoned by Pope John XXIII for heresy. After being left to suffer in prison for more than eight months, Huss was to be burned at the stake, despite an outpouring of public protest.

Without a chance to defend himself, Huss was brought from the dungeon to the cathedral in Constance, where on July 6, 1415, he was degraded before bishops and royalty. The Emperor Sigismund did not move to help him. The articles of clothing of Huss were removed piece by piece with an appropriate curse pronounced on each one. Then a paper cone picturing three hideous demons was placed upon his head. The cone bore the inscription, “The Heretic.”

From the cathedral Huss was taken to a place before one of the gates of the city, where a high stake had been posted and surrounded with firewood. Huss was tied to the stake with cords which had been soaked in water, to make sure he was held securely when the flames rose up around him. A torch was put to the wood, and John Huss died for the sake of Jesus Christ. Then his followers were hunted down; Bohemia became engulfed in civil war. Despite these efforts of the Catholic Church to silence the voices of those calling for sanctification, the land of Huss would still know reform.

Three General Church Councils

Between the years 1409 and 1449, three general Church councils were held. The first was held in Pisa in 1409. The second was in Constance from 1414 to 1418. The third council was held in Basel and met from 1431 to 1449. The purpose for holding these councils was to heal the Great Schism, bring spiritual renewal to the Church, and suppress heresy and heretics.

The Council of Pisa was not able to accomplish very much, but the Council of Constance did bring an end to the Great Schism by appointing Martin V to be the legal pope. It was this Council that condemned Huss to death, and ordered the writings of John Wycliffe to be burned. In its foolish wisdom, the Council of Constance ordered that the body of Wycliffe should be dug up and burned and his ashes poured into a river. This was done.

When the Council of Basel met, one of its objectives was to return unity to the Church in Bohemia, where the bloody work of the Inquisition had failed to stop the followers of John Huss from carrying on his work. In 1436 an agreement with the Hussites was reached. There would be freedom of preaching, better attempts made to reform the clergy, and those Church members of Bohemia who so desired could partake of the bread and the wine in Holy Communion.

The Council of Basel was also able to make an agreement with representatives of the Eastern Church. In exchange for military assistance against the Islamic Turks, who were again threatening to destroy the Eastern Empire and Church, the Church in the East would accept the doctrines of the Western Church. Unfortunately for Rome, when reports of this agreement reached the East, there was violent opposition to such official acceptance. The representatives were denounced. Ten years later the Turks conquered Constantinople. All attempts to reunite the Eastern and Western churches would end.

The Renaissance

While the Church searched for sanctification and unity, the Renaissance surfaced to change the world. The word renaissance means “rebirth,” and carries with it both a secular and religious meaning. It denotes an intellectual, aesthetic, and spiritual awakening. The Renaissance arrived in force—first in Italy with the power of a revolution. Its guiding principle was the need for a philosophy of secular humanism as opposed to a religious revival. This new emphasis was on the recognition of human and worldly values. These things were declared to have validity apart from theological considerations or ecclesiastical approval. Sin and grace were no longer the focal point of discussion. Rather, attention would be upon the natural man. It was argued that man, by his own powers, could expand the resources of knowledge and have very satisfying personal experiences. The Church was not needed. Formal religion could be relegated to the rubbish of history.

The Renaissance leaders appealed to the literature of classical antiquity to justify this conscious, but unashamed, new delight in life. They would teach people not to feel guilty nor to be apologetic for what was said or done. Man, not God and not the Church, would be the court of final appeal of what was right and what was wrong. From these philosophical tenets came several more distinctives of the Renaissance revolution.

1. The ideal of liberty was exalted.
2. There was a high degree of individualism, both in thought and in the conduct of one’s private life.
3. There was a more free exercise of criticism in regard to accepted ideas and existing institutions.
4. There was the development of the spirit of experimentation and exploration.
5. Creativity was stimulated.
6. Sensuous beauty was loved for its own sake and the pleasures it produced.

7. There was a more realistic attitude toward human and natural phenomena, so that the miraculous was constantly doubted. Scientific investigation was honored.
8. The Christian moral code of conduct (which was considered oppressive and unattainable) would be modified or discarded for a new set of rules.
9. The ideal of versatility was considered more admirable than specialization in one field of endeavor. Ideally, the Renaissance man was well rounded in his knowledge, culture, and tastes.

The effects of the Renaissance upon the Church were immediate.

1. The Church lost prestige and control over the masses and especially over the intellectuals, even where its authority was not challenged.
2. The Church hierarchy justified its own corruption. Bishops and cardinals adopted the pagan morality and sensuality of Renaissance philosophy, without adopting its intellectual processes. Apparently, free living was easier than free thinking!
3. There developed new techniques of thought and criticism that, when used by wicked men, served to destroy the authority of the faith (which was once and for all delivered unto the saints). The Church should have been contending for the Bible, morality, miracles, and the divinity of Christ, instead of finding ways to explain faith away.

It is no wonder that the Reformers spent much of their time and efforts combating the influences of the Renaissance upon the people of God in particular, and upon society in general.

Savonarola

As the Church began to be affected by the Renaissance, a fiery monk named Savonarola stood up to oppose the intellectual and moral corruption he was witnessing. Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) became an itinerant preacher ministering in Florence, Italy. After the fulfillment of his prophetic utterance concerning the invasion of France by Charles VIII, he was able to lead a theocratic reform movement there. Initially, there was great change in outward morality. Encouraged by what he saw, Savonarola found freedom to speak out against the corruption of the Church and the authority of the pope. He preached salvation apart from the Church, but a reaction set in. Pope Alexander VI issued a formal condemnation of this Dominican monk. He was captured by a fanatical mob and condemned to be burned at the stake. He was hanged in 1498 and then his body was burned.

The Brethren of the Common Life

Around 1350 there arose in the Netherlands and Germany another reform-minded movement characteristic of this time period. This movement was called “The Brethren of the Holy Life,” or “The Brotherhood of the Common Life.” It was founded by Gerard [Gregory] Groote (1340-1380). At thirty years of age, while still a distinguished professor of theology and philosophy in Cologne, Groote gave up honors and wealth to follow Christ. Though a gifted preacher, he was noted for his strong emphasis on the Christian education of youth. By establishing many Christian schools, Groote hoped to bring reform to the Church by means of education. His labors were not in vain, for among those who attended one of the schools of this movement in Magdeburg was Martin Luther.

Future Leaders

Other future luminaries were John of Wessel, Erasmus, and Thomas `a Kempis.

Johann of Wessel (c. 1420-1489) was one of the leading thinkers of his day. He knew Greek and Hebrew and studied theology at Paris. From 1445 to 1456 he was a professor in the University of Erfurt in Germany. Forty-nine years later Martin Luther would receive his degree of Master of Arts from this same university. Wessel has been called "The Light of the World" because he denounced the doctrine of transubstantiation, attacked indulgences, taught the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and insisted that the elect are saved by grace alone. Declared Wessel, "Whom God wishes to save, He would save by giving him grace, even if all the priests should wish to damn and excommunicate him." Luther would later say of him, "If I had read the works of Wessel beforehand, it might well have seemed that I derived all my ideas from him."

The Catholic Church did not approve of Wessel's teaching, and, despite his old age, tried him for heresy before the archbishop of Mainz. Wessel recanted only to be cast into prison anyway, where he died in October, 1489.

Erasmus (1466-1536). One of Wessel's most famous students, Erasmus would fare better than Wessel despite his own criticisms of the Church. While Erasmus never did leave the Catholic structure, he was able and willing to use his great learning and agile pen to ridicule the ignorance of the monks and to condemn the abuses of the Church that he saw. One of his most famous works is titled In Praise of Folly. It has been said that: "Erasmus laid the egg [of the Reformation], and Luther hatched it."

Thomas `a Kempis. Another man of great influence who followed the spirit of the Brethren of the Common Life was Thomas `a Kempis. Thomas lived in the Netherlands near the city of Zwolle. He is credited with writing The Imitation of Christ, one of the most famous books in the world. The spiritual counsel of this work is very simple: read the Bible and flee the vanities of this world. Such counsel was needed, for the world was about to change once more. Little did anyone realize it, but the western world was on the doorsteps of true reformation.

On the Doorsteps of the Reformation

For so many years, faithful Christians had pleaded and prayed for a divine outpouring of the Holy Spirit and a genuine reformation of the Church of Jesus Christ. Such a reformation would come.

1. The Reformation would come in response to the prayers of the saints.
2. The Reformation would come in honor of the blood that had been spilt by the martyrs.
3. The Reformation would come because of the impetus for change integral to the Renaissance.
4. The Reformation would come as an answer to the prayers of the early reformers.
5. The Reformation would come because there was obvious corruption of the clergy.
6. The Reformation would come because the power of the papacy was being diminished.
7. The Reformation would come because of the rise of nationalism.
8. But most of all, the Reformation would come because of a gracious and merciful God.

The Lord was about to shake up the world with the great and glorious doctrines of free grace. Millions would be swept into the kingdom of God, and the Christian community would be given some of the finest leaders and literature it would ever have!

Soli Deo Gloria
To God Alone Be the Glory

Please also read

"A Glorious Institution: The Church in History, Parts Three and Four"

A Glorious Institution: The Church in History, Parts Three and Four is the second volume of the four part series which encompasses the breadth of Church history from its beginnings up to the present day.

Part Three: The Reformation and Its Aftermath 1517-1648 observes the tremendous upheaval when brave men were transforming the spiritual Church into conformity with God's inerrant Word, in deliberate departure from the traditions of men. We see Luther's increasing conviction in Germany, then Zwingli, Calvin, and Farel in Switzerland—at great personal cost. We see the spreading flame of reformation come to France, the Netherlands, Scotland, and England, including incredible struggle for supremacy between popes, monarchs, and ideas. We see the rise of different Protestant denominations as men struggled to understand the clear teachings of Scripture.

In Part Four: The Church in the Modern Age 1648-1900s, we see the difficulty men have when given freedom to study the Scriptures, to avoid false doctrines springing out of pride and greed. Nevertheless, "our God reigns!"—there were Great Awakenings as the Holy Spiritrevived true Christianity repeatedly and brought evangelical missions movements worldwide. Though it faces real challenges, the Church Triumphant continues to grow as a blessing to the world.

Short Biography of Stanford E. Murrell

Stanford E. Murrell, Th.D., is an experienced pastor and Bible teacher in Viera, Florida. A complete overview of Church History is also available as a local seminar taught in your own church assembly. For more information, contact Dr. Murrell directly: stanfordmurrell@yahoo.com and www.stanmurrell.org.

Footnotes

1apologies – verbal or written defenses of a particular doctrine; the word is so used by the Apologists.
2none is afore…less than another – there is nothing before or after; nothing greater or less.
3doctrines of grace – the historic doctrines recovered in the Reformation that exalt God's sovereignty and holiness.
4amillennial– that doctrine which holds the millennium to be a picture of the present reign of Christ ("the kingdom of God is within you," Luk 17:21) and of the saints in heaven (analogous to Rev 6:9-10). The "first resurrection" (Rev 20:5) is either the life of Christians who have died and are with Christ in heaven, or life in Christ that starts with spiritual new birth (Rom 6:8-11; Eph 2:6; Col 3:1-4). Satan has been bound through the triumph of Christ in His crucifixion and resurrection (Joh 12:31; Col 2:15).
5post-millennial – that doctrine in which the kingdom of Christ and the Church will experience much more expansion on earth before the Second Coming. The thousand years are understood by some as a final period of earthly Christian triumph following the spread of the gospel. Others agree with amillennialists in identifying Revelation 20:1-6 with the entire period that begins with the resurrection of Christ.
6iconoclasts – a person who destroys religious images or opposes their veneration.
7transubstantiation – the doctrine that Christ's physical body and blood are present in the bread and wine of the Lord Supper, upheld to this day by the Roman Catholic Church.
8every effort – the struggle reached its climax in 1075, when Gregory VII (Hildebrand) delivered an ultimatum to the emperor Henry IV. Henry resisted, but then was excommunicated. The conflict was finally resolved by a compromise in the Concordat of Worms in 1122, between Henry V and Callistus II. All this was yet to come (described in chapter 15).
9See the third paragraph of the Nicene Creed in chapter 5.
10cloister – Latin: claustra ; bar, bolt, bound. Refers to an open court in a monastery or cathedral surrounded by an arched walkway. This secluded area was intended primarily as a place for monks and clergy to walk in.
11Didache – The Didache ("The Teachings of the Apostles," or "The Teaching of the Lord through the Twelve Apostles") refers to a short manual of Church life and morals, written c. AD 150. The first part provides a series of prohibitions and warnings. The second part provides instructions as to baptism, fasts, prayer, and the Lord's Supper. It was discovered in 1873 and published in 1883.
12Lateran – there were five ecumenical councils held at the Lateran Palace of the popes in Rome. These councils were so called because in history the Laterani family once occupied the site.
13A.W. Pink (1886-1952): Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, voluminous author of Studies in the Scriptures and many books including his well-known The Sovereignty of God and The Attributes of God. Born in Nottingham, England, immigrated to the U.S., and later returned to his homeland in 1934.
14dispensation – age; period.
15Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) – born in Norfolk and educated at Cambridge, he became vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Cambridge. He became a Congregationalist in London in 1634. In 1639 persecution drove him to Holland, where he pastored a church at Arnheim. He returned to London and became a member of the Westminster Assembly, and leader of the Dissenting Brethren in it. In 1650 he was appointed president of Magdalen College, Oxford. He was a prominent member of the Savoy Assembly in 1658
16dispensational teaching – system of theology that divides the Word of God into arbitrary periods with supposed differences in the way God saves men from their sins. It proposes that the Old Testament saints were not a part of the Church of God, and that the Law has no bearing on the Christian as a guide to moral living.
17prelates – Church leaders of superior rank, such as bishops or abbots.
18canon – in this context: a clergyman who is on staff of a cathedral or collegiate church.

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