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## THE MEDIEVAL WORLD: KINGDOMS, EMPIRES, AND WAR COURSE GUIDE



Professor Thomas F. Madden  
SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY

# **The Medieval World I: Kingdoms, Empires, and War**

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Professor Thomas F. Madden  
Saint Louis University



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The Medieval World I:  
Kingdoms, Empires, and War  
Professor Thomas F. Madden



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## **Course Syllabus**

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## About Your Professor

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### Thomas F. Madden

Thomas F. Madden is a professor of history and director of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Saint Louis University. His publications include *Empires of Trust: How Rome Built—and America Is Building—A New World* (Dutton, 2008), *The New Concise History of the Crusades* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), *Enrico Dandolo and the Rise of Venice* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), and *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), coauthored with Donald E. Queller. He is a recognized expert on pre-modern history, frequently appearing in such venues as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, National Public Radio, the Discovery Channel, and the History Channel. His scholarly awards include the Haskins Medal of the Medieval Academy of America and the Otto Gründler Prize of the Medieval Institute.

**The following books provide an excellent supplement to the lectures in this course:**

John M. Riddle's *A History of the Middle Ages: 300–1500* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008).

Joseph R. Strayer's *Western Europe in the Middle Ages: A Short History*, 3rd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1991).

Brian Tierney and Sidney Painter's *Western Europe in the Middle Ages: 300–1475*, 6th ed. (Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill, 1998).





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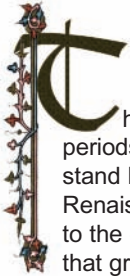
*Knights Before a Fortress*  
Folio 5V of *Le Jouvencel*, a late fifteenth-century French manuscript;

## Introduction

The period between antiquity and the Renaissance has been termed the "Middle Ages," and sometimes even the "Dark Ages," but despite a lingering perception of this time as being one of barbarism and decline, the medieval world in fact proves an age of much interest. During the course of the following lectures, Professor Thomas F. Madden discusses the history, politics, and religion of this oft-misunderstood period. In so doing, Professor Madden not only sheds light on this remarkable time, but he illustrates how the accomplishments of this period laid the groundwork for the "rebirth" to follow.

## Lecture 1: The End of an Empire and the Beginning of the World

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Timothy D. Barnes's *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*.



The name "Middle Ages" naturally defines the period in relation to the periods that precede and follow it. The thousand years of the Middle Ages stand between antiquity—in particular ancient Greece and Rome—and the Renaissance (or "rebirth"). Historians in the fifteenth century looked back to the greatness of ancient Rome and saw their own period as a rebirth of that greatness. Everything in between was simply "the middle." And thus the name. Historians no longer believe that the Middle Ages was a time of barbarism and decline simply waiting for a new rebirth, but the name has stuck just the same.

And it is true that the Middle Ages, like all ages, was built on what came before. In this case, it was the massive Roman Empire. The greatest political and military achievement in Western history to that time, the Roman Empire spanned the entire Mediterranean, at one point stretching all the way from Scotland to the Persian Gulf. For the first time ever, that area was united and enjoyed unprecedented levels of peace and prosperity. However, by the third century A.D., all of that was beginning to unravel. The Roman Republic had long since given way to an imperial form of government in which one man or dynasty ruled. When the man was good and his family held power securely, all was well. But that was increasingly rare by the third century. Competition among various leading generals led to frequent civil wars and a corresponding increase in military spending. Instability and increased taxation took a hard toll on the Roman economy, which began to experience runaway inflation and unemployment. Adding to Rome's problems were the continued pressures on their western European borders caused by population migrations among Germanic barbarians. The Roman world was beset from within and without.

In 284 A.D., Emperor Diocletian came to power and immediately began instituting comprehensive reforms. He reorganized the provincial administration, creating twelve dioceses, each under a vicar, who were themselves answerable to four praetorian prefects, who were directly under the control of the emperor. The emperor's position as ruler was codified into Roman law. No longer a princeps or first citizen, he was now a dominus or lord. More dramatically, Diocletian's reforms divided the Roman Empire between two emperors, called Augusti, who would be assisted by two vice-emperors, called Caesars. Diocletian hoped that the division would allow emperors to better respond to usurpers and other uprisings in their portion of the empire and that the designation of a clear successor would reduce the number of those usurpers.

Rome remained the sole capital, at least at first, although Western emperors often ruled from Milan or other Italian cities.

Diocletian's other reforms were less successful. Although he attempted to restore confidence in the coinage, the state no longer had sufficient quantities of precious metals to mint. In 301, he issued a Maximum Price Edict, but it only served to create a black market. To combat the exodus from highly taxed professions, he made professions such as baker, soldier, farmer, and member of city government "compulsory services," which became hereditary. He also attempted to remove what he saw as the evil influence of Eastern cults. In particular he targeted Christianity, which claimed some 10 percent of the Roman population. The Diocletian Persecution was the most comprehensive effort yet of the Romans to stamp out the religion. The persecution was unevenly applied and, as it happened, did not last long enough to have the desired effect. Indeed, Christianity was about to have an extraordinary change of fortune.

On October 27, 312, a Roman military leader, Constantine, defeated Maxentius, the emperor in Rome, and claimed the throne himself. Earlier, Constantine had had a vision in which he believed that Jesus Christ gave him a sign, the Chi-Rho, to carry into battle for victory. As a result of his victory, Constantine immediately converted to Christianity. This one conversion would



*The Emblem of Christ Appearing to Constantine*  
by Peter Paul Rubens, 1622



constitute one of the most profoundly important actions in all of history. It is difficult to imagine what the world would look like today had Constantine lost the Battle of Milvian Bridge. As a result of his victory, persecution of Christianity was stopped with the Edict of Milan (313). Indeed, as the religion of the imperial family, Christianity became attractive to Romans of all walks of life. Conversions skyrocketed. Within a few decades it was difficult to find any pagans left. The Roman Empire had itself become a Christian state.

As a Christian, Constantine took a keen interest in the state of his new faith. At the time, the Church was reeling from a dispute between Athanasians, who held that Christ was one in being with God, and Arians, who believed that Christ was less than a deity. Breaking previous Roman precedent, Constantine did not take the title *pontifex maximus*. Instead, he created a model that would become a uniquely Western component of civilization—the separation of church and state. Constantine saw himself as chosen by God, but he accepted that the rule of the Church must be left to ordained churchmen, the successors to the Apostles of Jesus Christ. He had them, therefore, meet at his palace in Nicaea in 325, where they debated, prayed, and finally created the Nicene Creed, which thereby defined Arianism as heresy.

A few years later, in 330, Constantine formally dedicated a new capital of the empire in the East. Called New Rome, it was popularly known simply as “Constantine’s city,” or Constantinople. The city, founded at the crossroads of the world, would become the touchstone for the medieval eastern Roman Empire, which historians today call the Byzantine Empire.

Outside pressures on the empire continued, however. In 376, the Eastern Emperor Valens allowed many thousands of Goths to cross the Danube and settle in Thrace. Problems in the resettlement camps eventually led to a massive revolt. At the Battle of Adrianople in 378, the Roman legions suffered their first major defeat since the Second Punic War more than five centuries earlier. The new emperor, Theodosius I, made a treaty with them, but the damage was done. New tribes, such as the Vandals and Franks, began to dismember the empire in the West. In 476 the last emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed. Rome would no longer rule over the Roman Empire.

## FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



### Questions

1. What reforms were instituted by Emperor Diocletian when he came to power?
2. In what way did Constantine's conversion to Christianity have a profound effect on history?

### Suggested Reading

Barnes, Timothy D. *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982.

### Other Books of Interest

Jones, A.H.M. *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

———. *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*. 2 Vols. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

## Lecture 2: The Empire Strikes Back: Justinian I and the Reconquest of the West

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is J.A.S. Evans's *The Age of Justinian: The Circumstances of Imperial Power*.



The eastern portion of the Roman Empire (what we will henceforth refer to as the Byzantine Empire) was not immune from the problem of the German barbarians. Thrace was overrun by Goths and many of them had become very powerful, even preeminent, in the imperial government in Constantinople. Their leader was Theodoric. Emperor Zeno (474–91) appointed Theodoric as a patrician and gave him authority to remove the Gothic usurper Odovacer, who had deposed the last emperor in the West. The move was clearly designed to remove the Goths from the East, and it worked. Theodoric marched to Italy and defeated Odovacer, killing him with his own hands during a peace banquet in 493. Now Theodoric, an Arian ruler of Arian Goths, became the new ruler of a Catholic Italy. Nonetheless, he was careful to maintain a balance. He was proud of the fact that his authority derived from the Roman emperor in Constantinople. Although he called himself “king” (rex), he never defined over what he was king. Was it Italy or merely the Goths? He maintained that he was merely a military ruler charged with the protection of Italy. Catholics, including the pope, were allowed to practice freely. Although strongly opposed by his own people, he decreed that all Italians, both Roman and Gothic, would live under Roman law.

Theodoric's attempted commonwealth began to crumble, however, when the Catholic Franks began to attack Gothic lands. The Roman population in Italy was clearly not displeased. When the emperors in Constantinople (who had been Monophysite heretics) returned to Catholicism in 518, Theodoric began to feel genuinely threatened. In 523 he forbade Romans to bear arms. In 525, he sent Pope John I to Constantinople to convince Emperor Justin I to stop persecuting Arians in Thrace. The pope was successful, but his hero's welcome in Constantinople led Theodoric to suspect him of intrigue against him, and so he had him thrown into prison upon his return to Rome. The pope died there a few weeks later. Finally, on August 30, 526, Theodoric decreed that Catholic churches in Italy must be handed over to the Arians. Hours later, Theodoric died. The decree was never enacted.

While the Gothic kingdom in Italy declined under a regent government, power in Constantinople continued to grow. Nowhere is this clearer than in the reign of Emperor Justinian I (527–65). Justinian was the last of a breed. Firmly Catholic, he was also from the West and spoke Latin as his native tongue. As such, Justinian never viewed the western half of the empire as permanently lost. He hoped to use the wealth and stability of the East to reverse the gains of Germanic barbarians for the past several centuries.

Justinian's wife, Theodora, was both colorful and useful. A commoner, Theodora came to Justinian's attention because she was an actress and comedienne, which meant also a prostitute. Over the objections of the aristocracy, he married her. As emperor, his first task was to shore up the empire's eastern frontier, where the Persian Empire was an ever-present threat. In 532, his *magister militum*, Belisarius, fought the Persians to a standstill and finally made the Endless Peace, in which Constantinople agreed to pay 11,000 pounds of gold for peace. However, no sooner had Justinian taken care of that problem than an even worse one came to Constantinople itself. That year a massive riot broke out in the Circus factions—team fans of the two chariot racing teams, the Blues and the Greens. The riot spread so widely that much of Constantinople was in flames and the leaders were demanding a new emperor. Justinian's plan to flee was thwarted by Theodora herself, who professed that she would rather die an empress than live as an exile. At last Belisarius returned and was able to corner the leaders and many of the most belligerent rebels in the Hippodrome, where he massacred them all. The uprising, called the Nika Revolt because of the chant of the rioters, was over. Justinian's hold on the empire was never again in question.

A few years later, Justinian surprised everyone by sending Belisarius and a fleet containing 18,000 soldiers to North Africa to defeat the Vandal king Gelimer, who had begun persecuting Catholics. Belisarius landed near Carthage, where he met Gelimer in battle and decisively defeated him.



Byzantine Mosaic of Emperor Justinian

Mosaic from San Vitale Cathedral in Ravenna, Italy, showing Byzantine Emperor Justinian the Great.

North Africa was restored to the empire. Belisarius returned to Constantinople and received a massive triumph. Although many expected that he would claim his victories for himself and possibly even seek to overthrow Justinian, Belisarius remained loyal, prostrating himself before the imperial loggia in the Hippodrome.

In 535, Belisarius returned to the West, landing in Sicily and capturing it almost without a fight. He then landed in southern Italy, which also surrendered quickly until Naples, which fell after a short siege. Rome, still under the control of the Goths, fell shortly thereafter. Pope Silverius warmly welcomed the conquerors, who had now restored Rome to her empire.

During the next five years, Belisarius was able to conquer the rest of Italy with the exception of Ravenna, where the Gothic king Vitigis held out. With the Persians again threatening the eastern frontier, Justinian began negotiating a settlement with the Goths. He agreed to allow Vitigis to keep half his treasury and all lands north of the Po River. Yet Belisarius refused to honor the deal. Instead, he made a separate agreement in which the Goths would surrender completely to him, but would serve under him as the emperor of a restored Roman Empire in the West. This was the treachery that many in Constantinople had expected for some time. But it was only a ruse. Once he had control of Ravenna, Belisarius renounced the deal, proclaimed his loyalty to Justinian, and returned to the East to deal with the Persians.

Justinian was happy about the settlement in Italy, but nervous about Belisarius. In the 540s, Constantinople was hit by a devastating plague that took Theodora and nearly took Justinian. The Goths in Italy, under the command of their new leader Totila, took advantage of the situation to reclaim lost territories. The two sides warred across the peninsula. Rome changed hands several times with disastrous results. Finally, in 550, Justinian was able to make peace with Persia, and the following year he sent the aged eunuch, Narses, with 30,000 troops to crush the Goths. In the same year, he also conquered southern Spain. Despite all expectations, Justinian had managed to restore the Mediterranean Sea as a Roman lake.



## FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



### Questions

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1. What was Justinian's first task as emperor?
2. What was specified for Constantinople in the Endless Peace?

### Suggested Reading

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Evans, J.A.S. *The Age of Justinian: The Circumstances of Imperial Power*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

### Other Books of Interest

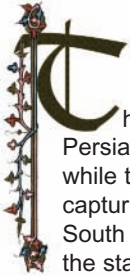
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Browning, Robert. *Justinian and Theodora*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003.

Heather, Peter. *Goths and Romans, AD 332–489*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1992.

### Lecture 3: Storm in the East: The Rise of Islam

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Walter E. Kaegi's *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium*.



he gains of Justinian remained remarkably resilient. Although the Persians were always a threat, they were a manageable one. Similarly, while the Lombards—another Arian Germanic people—invaded Italy, capturing much of the mountain areas, the Byzantines held onto the South as well as the major cities in the North, including Rome. However, the stability of the empire was shaken by the continued problem of the Monophysite heresy, which was particularly strong in Syria and Egypt. Monophysites believed that Christ has only one divine nature. But it was also a political battle, for Monophysites were naturally opposed to the imperial government, which persecuted them. Into all of this came the Persians, who launched a massive attack on the empire, capturing Syria and Palestine, including Jerusalem. The Zoroastrian Persians sacked the city, killed many, and took the True Cross back to their capital. They were openly helped by Jews and Monophysite Christians.

Emperor Heraclius (610–41) led his armies directly toward Ctesiphon, while the Persian military leader Khusrau did the same, heading for Constantinople. The massively fortified city of Constantine held out, while the Persian capital did not. In March 630, the victorious Heraclius returned the True Cross to Jerusalem and then received a glorious triumphal procession in Constantinople. The Persian Empire was prostrate and the Byzantine Empire was severely drained.

And then something happened that no one could have predicted. Within the space of a few years armies out of backwater Arabia would invade the Byzantine and Persian Empires with extraordinary force. Lands like Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, where Greek had been the dominant language since the days of Alexander the Great, would become filled with a new language of power, Arabic. And all of this occurred because of the life and legacy of one man, Mohammed (570–632).

Born into a poor family in Mecca, Mohammed became a camel dealer who traveled frequently to Syria. There he learned all about the religions of Judaism and Christianity. At the age of twenty-five he married the wealthy widow of the man who owned the camels as well as other property in Mecca. By Roman standards, Mecca was a small, primitive town—a place where Arabs worshipped spirits called djinn as well as a black meteoric rock. At the age of forty, Mohammed announced that he had received an order to “recite” prophecies from the angel Gabriel, which continued to be given to him

throughout his life. He attracted some followers, including his family, to his religion, which was itself based on the God of the Christians and Jews. Mohammed believed that he was a prophet of that same God. His message was a simple one of strict monotheism and the submission to the will of God. This naturally did not please people in Mecca, particularly the leading families, who relied on pilgrimage to the black rock for steady income. Although he preached for twelve years, he attracted only a small following of believers, but a large number of enemies. Mohammed's wife was able to defend him, but after her death he was exposed. In 622, Mohammed fled to Medina, a small town 280 miles north.

Mohammed came to Medina as its new leader. It was here that Islam became not just a religion, but a means of government. Mohammed was not merely a prophet, but a military and civil ruler. The law of Medina was not just the laws of men, but the divine commandments of God. All of the citizens of Medina were required to convert to Islam. When Mohammed subsequently waged war against Mecca between 622 and 630, it was a holy war, a jihad. As the doctrine of jihad was developed it became the



*Saint Helena and the Emperor Heraclius  
at the Gate of Jerusalem*

Detail from the altarpiece of Santa Cruz de Bleza  
by Martin Bernat, ca. 1480

compulsory duty of all Muslims to wage the greater jihad against internal passions and sinfulness as well as the lesser jihad against infidels, heretics, and unbelievers. At last, in 630, Mohammed succeeded in conquering Mecca and forcibly converting its population. The Kaaba, or shrine that housed the black rock, was cleansed of pagan associations, but it remained a pilgrimage site, now for Islam. Mohammed appears to have planned to next attack Syria, but in 632 he died.

Mohammed had made no provisions for his successors, nor did he have any sons. The new state/religion was still ruled from Medina and the "Companions," those who had been with him on the hejira, took power as caliphs. Abu Bakr ruled for a few years, followed by Omar. Yet there was a fair amount of discontent among the leading families in Mecca who, now Muslim, wanted access to power. When Omar was assassinated in 644, it was thought that Meccans were behind it.

However, in the meantime, the forces of Islam followed their founders' directives and moved out of Arabia to spread their power and creed. They moved at a remarkable speed, helped, of course, by the state of the Eastern powers in the wake of the Persian War. By 640 both Syria and Palestine were conquered and in 642 Egypt also fell. In 644 all Persia came under Muslim rule. But it was not just the ruined condition of these lands that helped the Arabs to victory. The Monophysite heresy played its own role as well. Heraclius had begun a general persecution of Monophysites, so they were naturally favorable to the Muslims who, like the Persians before, did not make such distinctions between Christians. Islamic law allowed Christians and Jews to retain their faith—Monophysite or not—and practice freely, although non-Muslims were of inferior legal status, were required to pay a special tax, were forbidden to proselytize, and could not display public images of worship. For the Monophysites of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, that was much preferable than Constantinople's persecution.

It was when they left the lands of the Byzantine Monophysites that the Muslim conquerors found their task more difficult. The Berbers of Tunisia put up a staunch defense, but they too were defeated in 695. With that, all of North Africa was under Muslim rule. Crossing over the straits, Muslim armies proceeded to conquer the Visigoths in Spain, capturing almost the entire peninsula and even advancing into France itself. In 732, at the Battle of Poitiers, Charles Martel turned back the attack.

The rapid expansion of the Islamic state saw a similarly rapid splintering of its unity. A dispute over the rightful caliph occurred after the assassination of Othman in 656. The Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, Ali, was forced to flee, becoming the basis for the Muslim Shi'ite sect. Under the Umayyad Dynasty (667–750) the capital was moved to Damascus. In 750, non-Arab Muslims, called mawali, effected the creation of the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258), which again moved the capital to Baghdad. For the Mediterranean world, the expansion of Islam shattered a Christian unity left over from the Roman Empire. It produced a new world in which Islam was the dominant power.

## FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



### Questions

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1. What led to Mohammed's becoming a military and civil ruler?
2. What happened to Muslim rule after the death of Mohammed?

### Suggested Reading

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Kaegi, Walter E. *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

### Other Books of Interest

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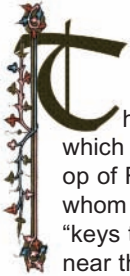
Jones, A.H.M. *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*. 2 Vols. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

Kaegi, Walter E. *Byzantium and the Early Islamic Conquests*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.



## Lecture 4: The New Masters of Rome: The Popes

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is R.A. Markus's *Gregory the Great and His World*.



The title “pope” is not official. It is an Anglicized version of “papa,” which is the popular name for the pope in Italy. Officially, he is the bishop of Rome and in that position he is also the successor of St. Peter, to whom Christ gave the authority of binding and loosing as well as the “keys to the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 16:13–19). Peter was crucified near the Vatican hill circus during a Neronian persecution in the 60s A.D. Although popes commanded authority in the Church, they had no such authority in secular affairs. That began to change after the conversion of Constantine. As controversies and heresies in the Church took on political ramifications, the decisions and attitudes of the popes were of great consequence in the Roman Empire. Popes such as Damasus I (366–84) and Innocent I (401–17) steadfastly refused to accept heresies, even when supported by emperors and other church leaders. All of the popes insisted that disputes and questions of faith and morals must be referred to them.

The secular authority of the popes also began to grow after the conversion of Constantinople. In large part this was because after Constantine’s departure to the East it was rare for any emperor to be in Rome. They preferred to rule from Constantinople or, while in the West, from Milan or Ravenna. As the leader of the Church and one of the most important men in the city, the pope’s position in the city government continued to grow through the fourth century. Not surprisingly, popes were increasingly drawn from the families of the highest elites and their power meant that any uncertainty in the office often led to civil unrest. In 366, for example, Pope Damasus ordered the civil authorities in Rome to disburse the opponents to his election. By 400, it was no exaggeration to say that the pope was the de facto ruler of the city of Rome. Pope Leo I (440–61) brought this idea to its logical conclusion. Having been baptized by the blood of SS. Peter and Paul, Rome was now their special charge. Leo decreed that June 29, for centuries the day dedicated to Romulus and Remus, would henceforth be the feast of SS. Peter and Paul.

Leo was pope at a time when the empire was crumbling around Rome. Indeed, Rome itself had already been sacked once in 410. It appeared to be about to happen again in 452 when Attila the Hun entered Italy and prepared to make his way to Rome. Pope Leo personally traveled to Mantua to meet with Attila and convince him not to capture Rome. Scholars still debate over just what was said in that meeting. But one thing is sure. When the meeting was finished, Attila left Italy and Rome in peace. A few years later, Gaiseric, the Vandal leader, arrived at the gates of Rome with his army. Leo

was unable to convince him to return home, but he was able to convince him to allow his troops to loot, but not destroy the city. That was the best that he could do, but it was enough.

After 484, the popes in Rome were beset from all sides. Theodoric, the ruler of Italy, was an Arian, although he still tolerated Roman Catholics. Theoretically, both the pope and Theodoric were servants of the emperor in Constantinople. Yet after 484 the emperor and patriarch in Constantinople were both Monophysite. That changed in 518 when Emperor Justin I came to the throne in Constantinople. He was Catholic and he immediately asked for a statement of orthodox belief to be signed by all bishops in the East. Esteem for the popes as protectors of orthodoxy amid the chaos of the West grew. As we saw earlier, Pope John was welcomed with unprecedented honors when he visited Constantinople in 526. Of course, he was subsequently imprisoned by Theodoric.

At first it seemed that the reconquest of Rome by Belisarius in 533 would be good news for the popes. The hope was that imperial forces would once again make Rome safe in a perilous world. But the subsequent Gothic Wars that stretched on for decades saw the city change hands several times, destroying it in the process. Roman aristocratic families and their wealth began to move to Constantinople. Even the imperial government did not return to Rome, preferring to work through officials in Ravenna, the new capital of the province of Italy. Added to all of this was the new threat of the Lombards, an Arian Germanic group that conquered much of the Italian hinterland and was a constant threat to Rome. Bereft of its people and its wealth, Rome and the popes who ruled it relied on the good graces and charity of Constantinople to defend it.

It is sometimes said that Pope Gregory I the Great (590–604) was the first pope of the new medieval world. To Gregory, though, the world seemed to be in its old age, preparing for an impending death. Gregory was an elite Roman who received a superb education and took a civil position that paid well. However, at the age of thirty-five he gave all of it up and retreated to his family house, which became a monastery dedicated to St. Andrew. In one form or another, Gregory would spend the rest of his life in that monastery—or at least



*Saint Gregory in Glory*

by Andrea (Vincentino) Michieli, ca. 1590

© Etna Chalcobris

as much time as he could. He served popes, first as a deacon, then as an ambassador to Constantinople, seeking aid against the Lombards. While in the capital city Gregory was shocked at the Greek nature of the Roman Empire's capital. He began to see that the Eastern empire was becoming something very different than the West.

After his election as pope, Gregory brought his monastery into the papal residence, trying to remain both a prelate and a monk. But he was also a city governor when no one else was willing to care for Rome. He reorganized the papacy's land holdings in Italy and abroad so as to use the income for Rome's defense and to care for its poor. He raised troops and commissioned public works for the defense and support of the city. Without permission from imperial authorities, he negotiated agreements with the Lombards for the good of Rome rather than an empire that had forgotten it.

Gregory was also eager to see Christianity spread in Europe. He sent one of his fellow monks, Augustine, to Kent in England in 596 to attempt to reevangelize the people there. The mission was remarkably successful. New archbishoprics were established in the North at places like Canterbury and York, which received the pallium directly from Rome, thus forging a direct tie with the popes. This practice would continue throughout the expansion and consolidation of Christianity in Europe, thus connecting all of the Church in the West to the keybearer in Rome.

## FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



### Questions

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1. How did the role of the popes change after the conversion of Constantine?
2. What steps did Gregory take in his role as city governor of Rome?

### Suggested Reading

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Markus, R.A. *Gregory the Great and His World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

### Other Books of Interest

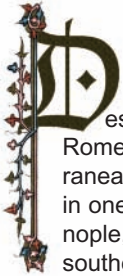
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Richards, Jeffrey. *Consul of God: The Life and Times of Gregory the Great*. Routledge: London, 1980.

Straw, Carole. *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

## Lecture 5: A New Empire: The Carolingians

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Ian N. Wood's *The Merovingian Kingdoms*.



Despite the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, the focus of Rome itself as well as much of western Europe remained the Mediterranean, around which the empire had flourished. Popes continued to live, in one form or another, under protection from the emperor in Constantinople, and Byzantine troops remained stationed in Rome, Ravenna, and southern Italy. To the north, in Gaul, Germany, and Britain, were the tribes of barbarians who had settled in the ruins of the western empire and created their own primitive kingdoms. Although the popes were anxious to convert them to Catholicism (all were either Arian Christian or pagan) and establish the Church in their kingdoms, their attention was naturally fixed on the Mediterranean world in which Roman civilization still survived. That, however, was about to change.

The first Germans to invade the Roman Empire were, because of centuries of living nearby, already somewhat Romanized. Goths and Vandals, for example, spoke a dialect of Latin and were Arian Christians. East German tribes had less interaction with the Romans and so retained more of their native culture. Angles and Saxons, for example, were pagan and spoke their own Germanic tongue. Another tribe, the Franks, were also pagan, although their language was a mixture of Germanic and Latin. The Franks were renowned for their martial skills and striking appearance. They were usually large and with golden hair, which their tribal kings let grow very long. By the sixth century the Franks had conquered all of Gaul, which would increasingly be referred to as Frankland, or France. Although the Franks were not very Romanized, they, like most Germans, wanted to be. For them, Rome was the font of authority, government, and sophistication. Even while dismembering the empire, the Germans wanted to acquire its honors and cover themselves in its rhetoric. No one, least of all the Germans, wanted to admit that the empire was no more.

Frankish Gaul was really two different places. The south remained heavily Romanized, with a large Gallo-Roman population. It was in these lands of beautiful scenery and pleasant climate that the Romans had built large villas, and those villas remained. The south of Gaul remained firmly connected to the Mediterranean world. One could find their Syrian merchants or travelers from Constantinople. There Roman law was still used. In northern Gaul, however, Roman settlement had always been much more sparse. Damp and heavily wooded, the Romans built small towns mainly to service frontier garrisons. These towns had the basics for Roman life, a circus, aqueduct, and



bathhouse, but little else. Still, from the perspective of the Franks, even the empty shells of these towns were impressive, bespeaking a great civilization that had passed away. The Franks wished to re-create it.

To that end, the king of the Franks, Clovis, was receptive to Roman missionaries who urged him to convert to the Roman religion, Catholicism. In 496 Clovis accepted baptism, which meant the conversion of all of the Franks. They were proud of their new religion, not least because it set them apart from the other barbarians, who were all Arians. It also naturally strengthened ties between themselves and the popes. This was not appreciated by King Theodoric in Italy, who was an Arian and who feared an alliance between his own Roman Catholic population and the Franks. The Frankish ruling dynasty of Clovis is known to historians as the Merovingian dynasty. It remained in power from 482 until 751.

Although the Franks were Catholic, they remained barbarian in almost every other way. They lived under their own customary law, and the Merovingian ruling class was rife with assassination, treachery, and vice. Because Germanic law lacked a conception of the state beyond the property of the king, Merovingian rulers were required to divide up their kingdoms among their sons at death. This led to a fragmentation of power and plenty of fratricide. It was a rare event for one Merovingian king to claim authority over all of Frankish Gaul. Nevertheless, the lives of the Gallo-Romans remained relatively stable. The Merovingian system was grafted onto the old Roman provincial administration. Each of the 122 districts was given a Frankish count, who acted as judge, military leader, and tax collector. Each also had a bishop, who was always Roman and often from senatorial families. Gregory of Tours, for example, who wrote the famous *History of the Franks*, was such a bishop. Elected locally, the bishops looked after the interests of the district and its people. They kept the peace, paid for improvements, and administered charity. They formed the only link between the Gallo-Roman population and Merovingian government.



Clovis (466–511), Merovingian king, founder of Frankish kingdom

Two events in the life of Clovis are captured in a woodcut from *Les grandes chroniques des rois de France* (*Great chronicles of Kings of France*) by Robert Gaugin (1514). At the left, Clovis is incited to war against Burgundy by his wife Queen Clothilde; on the right, Clovis is baptized a Christian by Saint Remigius.

Because of the strife within the Merovingian dynasty, the rulers became weak while the mayors of the palace became the real power behind the throne. The three mayors of Neustria, Austrasia, and Burgundy were usually at war with each other. However, in 687 Pepin II in Austrasia defeated the other two mayors and became mayor of all three palaces. His family held power firmly after that. In 732 Charles Martel achieved great fame when he turned back the Muslim advance at Poitiers. It was his name that would be attached to the dynasty of his family, the Carolingians.

Although the Carolingians wished to claim the Frankish throne, they were prohibited by the belief that the blood of the Merovingians held a magic or lucky character. However, when the Lombards defeated the Byzantines in 751, capturing Ravenna and heading for Rome, the Carolingian mayor, Pepin III the Short, saw his opportunity. He sent an embassy to Pope Zacharias asking whether it would be right for him to hold the kingship in name since he already wielded its power. Zacharias responded favorably and had St. Boniface anoint Pepin as king. This was a break with previous practice, but it would forge a link between kingship and the Church throughout the Middle Ages. In 755, King Pepin invaded Italy, conquered the Lombards, and then gave to the popes the central areas of Italy surrounding Rome and stretching to Ravenna. This "Donation of Pepin" constituted the creation of the Papal States, which would exist until the nineteenth century. They were a necessity in a new medieval world in which the popes would need the resources of a small kingdom to carry out their responsibilities.

Pepin's accomplishments were impressive, but he was outdone by his son Charlemagne. The latter greatly expanded the holdings of the Frankish kingdom through annual campaigns. He conquered Lombardy and Saxony, extending his kingdom into what is today Germany, France, and northern Italy. In 800 Pope Leo III crowned him "Emperor of the Romans" to signify the restoration of a western empire. The rulers in Constantinople naturally refused to accept such a thing.

## FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



### Questions

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1. What constituted the basics for Roman life?
2. What led to Pepin's anointment as king?

### Suggested Reading

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Wood, Ian N. *The Merovingian Kingdoms*. Essex, UK: Pearson Education Ltd., 1994.

### Other Books of Interest

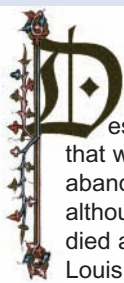
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Fichtenau, Heinrich. *The Carolingian Empire*. Trans. Peter Munz. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978 [1957].

Noble, Thomas F.X. *The Republic of St Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680–825*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984.

## Lecture 6: Devastation Again: The New Invasions of Europe

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Gwyn Jones's *A History of the Vikings*.



Despite all of Charlemagne's achievements, his empire remained one that was really only as strong as the man who ruled it. He could not abandon the Frankish practice of dividing his lands between his sons, although as it happened only one son outlived him. In 814 Charlemagne died and his son, Louis the Pious (814–40), became king and emperor. Louis hoped to forge even closer ties with the Church, building more Benedictine monasteries, enforcing regulations on bishops, and imposing strict moral regulations on all (including Charlemagne's pampered daughters). He attempted to enforce primogeniture for the kingdom, for he feared that it would be divided up after his own death. He had three sons, Lothar, Pepin, and Louis the German. Lothar, the eldest, was pleased to receive it all, but Pepin and Louis the German gathered vassals to their causes and waged wars against their father and brothers. Finally, around 821, Louis gave up and began to draw up inheritance maps to stop the bloodshed. A problem arose when Louis's new wife, Judith of Bavaria, bore him a son, Charles (later called "the Bald"). Judith did not want her son to have nothing, so the inheritance maps were redrawn to include him. After more wars a plan was agreed upon, although shortly thereafter Pepin died, requiring another revision. Finally, as he neared death, Louis again insisted on primogeniture, which only led to more warfare.

All of his preparations did nothing to stop the strife that ensued after Louis the Pious's death in 840. Louis the German and Charles the Bald united against Lothar, who claimed the imperial title and all of the holdings. The war ended with the Treaty of Verdun in 843, which redrew the map of Europe in a way that would have dramatic and long-lasting effects. Charlemagne's empire was divided three ways. Charles the Bald received West Frankland, or what would be called France. Louis the German received East Frankland, or what would become Germany. Lothar received the lands in the middle, including the capital at Aachen as well as northern Italy. Lotharingia (or Lorraine) would remain until Lothar's death in 855, when it was divided between his three sons and later subsumed into the other two kingdoms. Thus, in this treaty, modern France, modern Germany, and their regular battlefield were defined.

Even had the Carolingians not been immersed in their own family troubles, they would have had a difficult time coping with the new invasions that would descend upon Europe in the ninth and tenth centuries. The effects of these invasions were profound, for no place was spared and the devastation was significant. The Germanic barbarian invasions of Europe had been softened

by the fact that the Germans were, at one level or another, Romanized. They were usually Christians and they appreciated the culture of the empire that they hoped to join or at least emulate. None of these things were true for the new invaders. They were not Romanized, not Christian, and not interested in anything save plunder and conquest.

There were three main invaders. The first were Muslim naval forces launched from Tunisia in North Africa. Their object was to raid infidel lands, capture their wealth, take slaves for sale back home, and destroy what they could not take. The first attacks came in 827 when Muslim forces landed in Sicily and southern Italy. Palermo was captured in 831 and Bari in 840. In 846, Muslim raiders even sailed up the Tiber River toward Rome itself. Although they could not capture the fortified city itself, they burned down St. Peter's (which was outside the walls) and narrowly missed capturing the pope himself. As a result, Pope Leo IV ordered the building of new fortifications that would include the Vatican hill (the "Leonine Walls"). Despite successes in southern Italy, the geography of the peninsula made it difficult for them to make much progress in the north. The Franks were able to hold them in check and in 871, Emperor Louis II was able to remove them from Bari altogether. They still held Sicily, though. In southern France and Spain, Muslim pirates raided with impunity. Nice was sacked in 813, and Marseilles fell in 838. By 860, the Muslims had established a base in southern France and were leading regular raids into Burgundy and the Alpine passes.

While Europe was still dealing with Muslim invaders, a new group, the Magyars, invaded from the East. Because they were excellent horsemen, many Europeans believed that they were the Huns returned. They were not, although the name would stick, leading many to refer to them as the Hungarians. In 900, the Magyars ravaged Lombardy and then moved on to Bavaria, which they conquered. In 906, they twice raided Saxony and then went on to cause havoc in much of East Frankland. By 917, they had pressed westward into Lorraine and Burgundy. The Magyars would remain a formidable threat until they were finally defeated by Emperor Otto the Great in 955. Subsequently they settled into Hungary and became Christian.

But the devastation brought by the Muslims and Magyars was dwarfed by that which the Vikings visited upon Europe. Scholars are still unsure precisely why Scandinavians began to board the longboats and spread out across the known world in the eighth century. But they did and the effects were dramatic. They first appeared in southern England in 787 and later forced Charlemagne to augment his own coastal defenses in 800. Their first major target was Ireland, a place that had embraced Christianity earlier but had never been part of the Roman Empire. By 834, they had conquered most of the island, destroying much of the ancient civilization





there. They built coastal bases in Ireland from which they were able to launch raids on Britain and the continent. By 843, they were established in France. In 845, they led one hundred twenty ships up the Seine River and destroyed Paris. Because of the design of their boats, the Vikings (or Norsemen or Normans) were able to sail to almost any point in Europe. The main Danish army attacked England in 866, conquering part, but not all, of the area. The Vikings also spread into Germany, where they sacked Aachen in 881.

By the early tenth century the Vikings in Europe were ready to settle. The French gave them lands in the North, henceforth called Normandy. Other Normans later captured Sicily and southern Italy from the Muslims and Byzantines, creating a new kingdom there. Still others sailed into the East and settled at Novgorod. There the Rus, as they called themselves, created a new country, Russia. They moved downward toward the Black Sea too, even attacking Constantinople in 865 and 907. The Byzantine emperors were so impressed by them that they hired them as personal bodyguards. The Varangian Guard would for centuries be renowned for its bravery, loyalty, and skill with the single-edged axe. And still other Vikings followed the fish to Iceland, Greenland, and even the Vinland colonies of North America.



*Arrival of Danish Viking Hordes under Chief Hrolf on Normandy Coast*  
by Poul S. Christiansen, 1911

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## FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



### Questions

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1. What differences were there between the Germanic barbarian invaders and the invasions of the ninth and tenth centuries?
2. Why did many Europeans refer to the Magyars as “Hungarians”?

### Suggested Reading

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Jones, Gwyn. *A History of the Vikings*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2001.

### Other Books of Interest

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Barracough, Geoffrey. *The Crucible of Europe: The Ninth and Tenth Centuries in European History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

Sawyer, Peter H. *Kings and Vikings: Scandinavia and Europe A.D. 700–1100*. New York: Routledge, 1984.

## Lecture 7: To Reform and Rebuild: The Eleventh-Century Reform Movement

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is H.E.J. Cowdrey's *The Cluniacs and Gregorian Reform*.



By the year 1000, Europe was dramatically different than it had been in 300. Waves of invaders had torn apart the Roman Empire and then wrecked the kingdoms planted in its ruins. The ultimate effect was the birth of a new civilization. But that was hard to see in 1000, with everything in such shambles. The initial effects of the new invasions were twofold. First, there was a dramatic localization of focus and concern for everyone. Because of the rapid attack and departure of the invaders, only local leaders with local resources could defend a locality. Kings were too far away. Because of the unwieldy nature of the feudal system, a vassal whose lands were being attacked could not reasonably hope for assistance from his lord for months after making the request. By that time the Vikings would have looted, burned, and destroyed everything they wanted and moved on. Powerful leaders who held sway over vast regions, like Charlemagne, were no longer feasible. One powerful local leader with the means to defend his people and property was worth twenty far-off emperors. Vassals, therefore, had less contact with their lords and came to view their holdings as their own. Royal power became almost honorary. Everyone was worried about local survival, not the survival of ideals like Roman antiquity. Although the Catholic Church continued to insist on the pope and the metropolitans as far-reaching ecclesiastical leaders, the conditions on the ground made that impossible as well. Bishops and abbots became lords with the same need to defend their property as any other lord. They had no time for popes. And popes, who were struggling to defend Rome, had no time for them. When the Carolingian dynasty died out in France, the nobles selected a lord local to Paris, Hugh Capet, who had the means to protect the area.

The second major effect was the fortification and militarization of Europe. Without the ability to call for significant reinforcements from one's lord, local nobles and other leaders were forced to provide for their own defense. That included the building of fortifications that could safeguard the people and property long enough for help to arrive. Fortifications were also placed along key areas of rivers, which forced invaders to besiege them lest they be cut off from retreat. This was the era of castle building, when great fortifications sprang up across Europe. Those castles, which provided the aristocracy with the ability to hole up for considerable periods of time, became potent symbols of noble power and independence in future centuries.

The new invasions took a particularly heavy toll on the Catholic Church, which relied on communication with Rome to maintain discipline, liturgical

uniformity, and doctrinal purity. With the absence of that communication bishops and abbots went their own way, defining what was acceptable and what was not. Since both positions came with power and a good income, they were worth purchasing from the king or other local lords. And they were. This practice, known as simony, meant that the leading churchmen were not chosen for their sanctity, but their ability to pay. The result was a lack of discipline throughout the Church. Bishops allowed their clergy to marry and even they sometimes married or kept a concubine. Abbots allowed their monasteries to become small corporations with little regard for the Benedictine Rule or monastic discipline. And these same problems beset the bishops of Rome, the popes, many of whom also purchased their office and were lazy, incompetent, or both.

Calls for reform were first heard at a Benedictine monastery in France at Cluny. The monastery had been founded by William of Aquitaine in 909 and, unusually, it was given immunity from all lay control and placed under the protection of the pope. It was, therefore, answerable only to the pope. St. Berno,



Twin Tower Entrance to Châteaubriant Castle, Brittany, France

In the eleventh century, Brient (an envoy of the Count of Rennes), constructed a castle on a moat bordering the la Chère river. He later founded the Priory St. Sauveur de Béré. A city developed around the castle and was named Châteaubriant. The fortress was a part of the Brittany defensive line along with the other townships, Vitré (Ille-et-Vilaine) and Fougères, which formed the first line of defense against the French kingdom.

a strict adherent of the Rule, was the monastery's first abbot. His reputation for sanctity and discipline not only attracted many monks, but also led other noble families to seek his help in reforming their own monasteries. The monasteries formed an important link between the warrior aristocracy and the Church. They were founded on their lands in order to take some of their children but, most of all, to pray for the souls of the deceased nobles. They had an interest in making certain that monasteries were places in which men and women lived to whom God would listen.

Berno's successor, St. Odo, followed this same pattern. He traveled throughout France and Italy reforming monasteries. In each case, he would enter as the new abbot and, when he had converted at least a body of the monks, he would leave, often leaving one of his brothers from Cluny as the new abbot. However, some worried that the reformed monasteries would lapse into their old ways once the Cluniacs left. To forestall this, many began the practice of having the abbot of Cluny also be the abbot of the reformed monastery, thereby forging a direct tie between the two houses. The abbot's representative, a prior, would manage the reformed house in the abbot's absence. It was in this way that the monastery of Cluny acquired daughter houses, an innovation in Christian monasticism. By the eleventh century Cluny had approximately one thousand four hundred fifty dependent priories. In 1025, Pope John XIX decreed that Cluniacs were at all times free from episcopal jurisdiction, thus strengthening this bond.

There was no doubt that the Cluniac reforms had a remarkable effect. They had managed to reform hundreds of lax or corrupt monasteries and spread the reform zeal across Europe. But there was still the problem of the bishops and popes, a great many of whom were still both lax and corrupt. How to reform them? That was the question to which the Cluniac reformers next turned their attention. The answer was not difficult. They had reformed the monasteries by imposing a central authority. The Church must do the same, restoring the authority of the pope. Only he, as the successor of St. Peter, had the power to enforce clerical discipline on bishops, who after all had no abbots.

Therefore, all of the Cluniac reformers agreed that papal authority must be restored. Yet some went even further. The root cause of the corruption, they argued, was lay control over ecclesiastical offices. That must be removed so that the Church would be free to pursue the true path to God.



A Benedictine monk of the Cluniac congregation as illustrated in *English Monastic Life* by F.A. Gasquet, 1904.



## FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



### Questions

1. In the year 1000, what were the initial effects of the new invasions?
2. What was the effect on the Church of simony?

### Suggested Reading

Cowdrey, H.E.J. *The Cluniacs and Gregorian Reform*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.

### Other Books of Interest

Duckett, Eleanor Shipley. *Death and Life in the Tenth Century*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989.

Johnson, Edgar Nathaniel. *The Secular Activities of the German Episcopate, 919–1024*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1932.



## Lecture 8: The Clash of Church and State: The Investiture Controversy

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is H.E.J. Cowdrey's *Pope Gregory VII, 1073–1085*.



It was all well and good to say that papal authority over the Church must be restored, but the trouble was convincing the popes of that necessity. Most popes during the tenth and early eleventh centuries had no interest in reform of the Church or anything else for that matter. They, like most bishops, were men of powerful families who had clawed their way to the position because it was the local ruler. There was no king of Rome.

The city was ruled by the pope. The office, therefore, became the football of local aristocracy. Between 896 and 904 there were ten popes, and all of them died violently. During the eleventh century, two leading families fought over control of Rome, the Tusculum and the Crescentii. The Tusculum held the papacy after 1012. In 1045, the Crescentii began an armed rebellion in which they crowned their own pope, Sylvester III, to oppose the Tusculum Benedict IX. Benedict ran off Sylvester, although the latter continued to assert his claim. Benedict later agreed to sell the office to his godfather, who took the name Gregory VI. When Benedict returned later wanting to be pope again, Gregory refused. The result was three popes—a scandal of some moment.

In Germany, a new king had arisen who was able to assert solid control over the usually recalcitrant nobles of the Holy Roman Empire. Henry III (1039–56) was an extremely pious man. Like Otto I before him, Henry believed that he was king by the grace of God and that his position gave him charge over the souls of his people. The job of the Church was to care for those souls and to perform the sacraments. Royal power, therefore, was all-encompassing, and it included the right to appoint or depose churchmen who did not do their jobs properly. For Henry, the situation in Rome was intolerable. He knew many Cluniac reformers and he was convinced by them that the papacy must be repaired so that it could repair the Church. He marched into Italy and in 1046 called the Synod of Sutri. There he deposed all three popes and installed a German, Clement II (1046–47). And he continued to do so, putting in reformers who would reform the papacy itself.

The first great reform pope was Leo IX (1049–54). He traveled tirelessly, convening local synods in which he would have the relics brought out and the simoniacs punished. Because Leo was supported by Henry III, his efforts bore fruit, although not without a great deal of criticism from the affected bishops. The episcopacy was being cleansed and the papacy was restoring its authority over the Church. But many of the reformers who were now in Rome wanted farther-reaching reforms. They realized that the current reform was only made possible by Henry and his appointment of reformers. The Church

must have the means to continue reforms even with a negligent or even hostile secular ruler. Their opportunity arose after Henry died in 1056. His son, Henry IV, was only six years old. When new popes were needed in 1057 and 1058, leading reform clergy in Rome (called cardinals) elected the pope and sent the name to the regent, Agnes, for confirmation. She confirmed them. Then, in 1059, Nicholas II issued the Papal Election Decree, which stated that henceforth only the cardinals would elect popes. Agnes refused to confirm it and demanded that it be rescinded or face military action. Nicholas turned to the Normans in southern Italy for assistance. In return for the title of duke and the legal holding of southern Italy and Sicily as papal fiefs, Robert Guiscard swore to defend the independence of the papacy. The bonds between the German emperors and the reform papacy were breaking apart.

The reforms reached their zenith during the papacy of Gregory VII (1073–85). Indeed, the reforms themselves are often referred to as Gregorian. Gregory immediately began vigorous attacks on simony and clerical marriage and concubinage. He sent scholars into the Roman archives to marshal evidence to use against those bishops who maintained that Gregory's demands were novel, unprecedented grabs for power. In so doing, he and the other reformers laid the foundation for canon law, organizing collections of decretals. In the *Dictatus Papae*, Gregory organized the rights of the popes and their proper relationship to secular lords.

Relations between Gregory and the now adult Henry IV were bad from the start. In 1075, Gregory decreed that henceforth no cleric was to receive investment of ecclesiastical properties or powers from the hands of a layman. Henry not only opposed this decree, but when the pope threatened excommunication and deposition for Henry after his attack on Milan, the king retaliated dramatically. On January 24, 1076, he called an assembly of German bishops at Worms. Twenty-four bishops and two archbishops attended. There they asserted that Gregory was a false pope who had been improperly chosen. Henry then sent his own letter denying the validity of Gregory's office and demanding that he resign immediately. In Gregory's response, which was addressed to St. Peter, he excommunicated Henry and deposed him.



On February 22, 1076, Pope Gregory VII deposed and excommunicated German king Henry IV as depicted in this illustration from a twelfth-century French manuscript.

Henry had overreached. When the pope's letter was sent out, rebellions broke out across Germany. At the Diet of Tribur in October 1076, they gave him until February 1077 to obtain absolution from the pope or they would elect a new king. Henry disguised himself and made it to Canossa in January, where the pope was wintering. There he begged for forgiveness. Gregory gave it to him. After receiving absolution Henry promised to obey the pope in all things. He kept that promise as long as it took him to crush his opponents in Germany. When that was finished he invaded Italy in 1081 and headed straight for Rome. Gregory holed up in Castel Sant'Angelo while Henry IV took the rest of the city. He appointed his own pope, Clement III, who was enthroned in St. Peter's basilica and who subsequently crowned Henry emperor. Gregory responded by calling in the Normans. Robert Guiscard and his men invaded the city and rescued the pope, but the damage they inflicted on the city was so great that Gregory had to leave with them, lest the Romans kill him.

Although Gregory died in exile, in 1085 it was not the end of the reform papacy. Indeed, the reform had so firmly been set in place that it was no longer possible for German emperors to reassert their position as lords of western Christendom. They kept their anti-popes for years, but only they recognized their validity. At the Council of Clermont in 1095, Pope Urban II even replaced the emperor's traditional role of defending the faith, calling the First Crusade. The size and success of that enterprise made clear that the pope was now the leader of the Church and Christendom. Although the investiture controversy would only be concluded in 1122 with the Concordat of Worms, the effect on the papacy and empire were evident before that. Papal power was growing, while the German Empire was split and fractious.

## FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



### Questions

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1. What was stated in the Papal Election Decree?
2. How did Henry and Gregory attempt to oust each other?

### Suggested Reading

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Cowdrey, H.E.J. *Pope Gregory VII, 1073–1085*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1970.

### Other Books of Interest

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Blumenthal, Uta-Renate. *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.

Robinson, I.S. *Henry IV of Germany, 1056–1106*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

## Lecture 9: The Crusades

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Thomas F. Madden's *The New Concise History of the Crusades*.

**T**he Crusades were a result of both internal and external factors affecting medieval Europe. Externally, it was clear that Christendom was under siege. Since the Muslim invasions in the 630s, the Christian world was succumbing to the powerful armies of Islam. By 1000, two-thirds of Christendom was lost to Muslims, including three of the five ancient Christian patriarchates. All that was left were Rome and Constantinople. And their prospects did not look promising. In 1071 Seljuk Turks defeated a Byzantine army at Manzikert, which left all of Asia Minor to their mercy. They quickly conquered it, creating a new Sultanate of Rum. The Byzantine Empire was reduced to not much more than Greece and Thrace. In desperation, Emperor Alexius I Comnenus sent a plea for help to the pope. Gregory VII toyed with the idea of leading a great army of knights to Asia Minor himself, but the Investiture Controversy soon put that plan on hold. In 1095 Alexius again asked for help and this time the pope was in a position to respond. At the Council of Clermont, Pope Urban II called on the knights of Europe to join an expedition to the East. Their object would be to restore those lands taken from eastern Christians from Asia Minor all the way to Jerusalem. In return, he offered them a plenary indulgence for their sins. This defined the Crusade as a penitential act as well as a pilgrimage.

The internal dynamics that led to the Crusades can be seen principally in the reform movement. Just as the reformers had reformed the monasteries, then the papacy, and then the bishops, they now sought to reform Christian society itself. The Crusade represented a sanctification of violence, a means by which the



Pope Urban II blesses the Crusaders at Clermont in 1095. The assembled knights responded with "Deus vult!" ("God Wills It!"). From an illustrated French manuscript, ca. 1482.

warrior aristocracy of Europe could use their profession for goodly acts of mercy rather than evil acts of greed. In so doing, they would make expiation for their sins, which they had in abundance. Crusaders took a quasi-monastic vow for the duration of the enterprise, making the Crusade, as one scholar has called it, “a monastery on the march.” As a penance, the Crusade was naturally a difficult sacrifice. Crusading was extraordinarily expensive. Many families risked bankruptcy by crusading. Booty, while always hoped for, was always scarce. And the death rates among Crusaders were between 30 percent and 50 percent, depending on one’s resources. They paid that cost and took those risks because they were deeply aware of their sins and eager to make amends, while at the same time defending what was left of their world.

The First Crusade was a startling success. It managed to reconquer Nicaea and Antioch before heading south to Jerusalem, conquering it in 1099. Although most of the surviving Crusaders returned home as heroes, some remained in the Holy Land and created a group of states, such as the Principality of Antioch and the Kingdom of Jerusalem. At their farthest extent they accounted for the entire coast of the eastern Mediterranean—in what is today Syria, Lebanon, and Israel. However, once the various Muslim groups began to unify, the Crusader states were in great difficulty. The conquest of Edessa led to the calling of the Second Crusade. In 1187, Saladin defeated the combined armies of the Kingdom of Jerusalem at the Battle of Hattin. Not only did he capture the relic of the True Cross, but he subsequently conquered Jerusalem itself as well as much of the kingdom. The response was the Third Crusade, led principally by Richard the Lionheart, who was able to restore the coastal areas but not Jerusalem itself. Subsequent Crusades had no better luck. The Fourth Crusade veered hopelessly off course, landing instead at Constantinople, which it conquered and sacked. The Fifth Crusade

managed to conquer Damietta in Egypt, but just as quickly lost it again. The problem was that the Muslim empires were simply more powerful than the Crusaders. In 1291 the Mamluk sultan finally dispatched the last of the Crusader states.



*Return from the Crusade*  
by Carl Friedrich Lessing, ca. 1840



For Europeans, the continual failure of the Crusades was clear evidence of their sinfulness, which had so displeased God. This led to large-scale movements to purify Christian society, such as new reform orders, the mendicants, and better control over inquisition. Every Christian in Europe knew about the state of the Holy Land. They prayed for its delivery in church and they donated large sums of money for its recapture. But nothing worked. Furthermore, crusading energy was frequently directed not at the recovery of the Holy Land, but the defense of Christianity or the Church at home. So, for example, the Albigensian Crusade of the thirteenth century was aimed against a powerful heresy that had taken root in southern France. Other crusades were also called against the pope's enemies.

In the fourteenth century the Ottoman Turks crossed over the straits at Gallipoli, capturing Greece and thereby directly entering Europe. They would continue to press westward, driving ever deeper into Europe. At that point the Crusades were no longer aimed at rescuing faraway Christians, but instead became desperate attempts to save Europe itself. But those too were unsuccessful. The Crusade of Nicopolis and the Crusade of Varna brought extraordinarily large armies to wage war against the Turks, but both failed horribly. It seemed to many that the last remnant of Christendom was in its last days.

There was a time when scholars believed that the Crusaders were lacklands and ne'er-do-wells who marched off to the Muslim East to win wealth and lands for themselves. We now know that to be inaccurate. The Crusaders took the vow of the cross for very medieval reasons. They believed that Christ Himself was crucified again in the suffering of His people. Holy violence was not an oxymoron for them, as it is for most modern people, who adopt a modern approach to the subject. The Crusades were not a side issue for medieval Europeans; they were the barometer of the soul of Europe. They infused everything and shaped their world view. Although the individual campaigns were largely unsuccessful, the Crusades as a phenomenon shaped Western culture and, not unimportantly, bought the West some time, thus saving it from Muslim conquest.

## FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



### Questions

1. Why was the first crusade called a “monastery on the march”?
2. How did Europeans perceive the continual failure of the Crusades?

### Suggested Reading

Madden, Thomas F. *The New Concise History of the Crusades*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005.

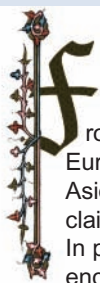
### Other Books of Interest

Riley-Smith, Jonathan. *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*. New York: Continuum, 2003.

———. *What Were the Crusades?* San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002.

## Lecture 10: Growing Kingdoms: England and France

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Michael T. Clanchy's *England and Its Rulers, 1066–1272*.



From the eighth through the eleventh centuries the dominant power in Europe was the German empire, often called the Holy Roman Empire. Aside from their land holdings, the emperors, crowned by popes and claiming a Roman heritage, had an ecumenical character that was unique. In part this was built on the image of Charlemagne, but it was also a reference to the universal nature of the old Roman state. The German emperors were seen, at least theoretically, as the leaders and defenders of the Christian West. As we have seen, that began to change when the emperors squared off against the other ecumenical leaders in Europe, the popes. Those struggles would continue throughout the twelfth century, although by the thirteenth century it was clear that the papacy had overturned the old order, subordinating the emperors to their preeminent authority.

But away from the high-profile clashes of armies and words, two other kingdoms with no such pretensions of universality were growing up. And they would have a profound impact on the subsequent history of Europe and the world. It is worth considering the kingdoms of England and France in tandem because of the numerous interactions between the two as well as the parallel growth of royal authority there.

After the extinction of the Carolingian line in France, the French barons selected Hugh Capet, the lord of the Ile-de-France, as the new king. In part he was chosen because he had the local authority to defend the small area. In part, though, it was because of his relative weakness and therefore unlikelihood that he could impose on the nobility. Although theoretically under his command, the French counts were no longer officials but independent potentates. They neither owed nor paid the king anything. But Hugh and his successors did have the moral authority of the kingship given to them by the Church. It was always in the Church's interest to see strong central governments that could protect church property and institutions. Churchmen therefore supported royal authority, teaching that all should be obedient to the king, and even verifying a miraculous power given to them known as the king's touch, which could cure scrofula. Kings in both France and England claimed this power, which was a clear indication of their favor with God. By the late eleventh century, the kings of France only truly controlled the royal demesne that ran a narrow strip from Paris to Orleans.

It did not help matters that one of the king's vassals, the Duke of Normandy, was also the King of England. Duke William of Normandy had launched an

invasion of England in which he defeated King Harold at the Battle of Hastings of 1066. The Norman invasion of England constituted a definitive break with the past and a new direction for English history. All previous legal arrangements and holdings were wiped away. The kingdom of England now belonged to William and he would parcel it out to trusted men as fiefs. Most of these vassals were Normans, although a few were English. In 1086, the Domesday Book was completed, a survey of the entire kingdom, county-by-county, so that the king would know precisely what he owned and what was owed to him. The book fixed “incident” payments that would be a great boon to the English crown. For example, when a noble son succeeded his father, the king was owed one year’s revenue. Thanks to the Book, he knew how much that was.

Naturally, the Duke of Normandy would not be taking any orders from the weak king of France, although he remained his vassal. The same went for other powerful French barons such as the dukes of Burgundy, Brittany, and Aquitaine, as well as the counts of Flanders, Toulouse, Anjou, Champagne, and Blois. The French kings, therefore, focused their attention on the royal demesne. Philip I (1060–1108) spent his reign attempting to fully control the demesne, although even that was difficult. His son, Louis VI the Fat (1108–37), followed his father’s example. In a poorly literate society such as medieval Europe, custom was everything—and twice made a custom. Rights that were not exercised quickly disappeared. Louis recognized this, so he spent most of his reign on horseback traveling to every manor or village in the demesne collecting tolls, exacting hospitality, and subduing petty vassals. By 1122, Louis had a firmer control of his own demesne than any other prince in France. The respect that came with that allowed him to begin to intervene in other affairs as well. When the German king Henry V invaded France in 1124, Louis summoned the whole army of France, something that had not been done for centuries. Most of the nobles came, with the exception of Normandy, who as king of England, was allied with Henry. The Germans retreated and Louis had exercised a right long dormant.



Engraving of King Louis VI “The Fat,” from an eighteenth-century French history.

Louis VI’s son, Louis VII (1131–80), was married to Eleanor of Aquitaine, the only heir to the massive land holdings of William of Aquitaine. This seemed to be a great boon, but as it happened the two divorced in 1154 and Eleanor went on to marry the duke of Normandy and king of England, Henry II (1154–89). She brought with her almost half of France, which when joined to Normandy, made Henry the largest holder of lands in France.

Philip II Augustus (1180–1223) was determined to remove the English control of so much of France. He fomented troubles between the impetuous sons of Henry II, particularly Richard, who waged war against his father. Yet, when Richard was crowned king of England in 1189, the partnership ended. When the two kings went on the Third Crusade, Philip returned home early and began making war on Richard's French lands in violation of Church law. Richard put a stop to it upon his return, but his death in 1199 put the lands again within Philip's grasp. Richard was succeeded by his brother, John, who did not share Richard's military prowess. He managed to lose most of the French territory in short order, and taxed the English nobles for the effort. Philip attempted to capitalize on his successes by trying to control rich Flanders, the center of the wool trade. John did his best to avoid this and finally he organized a grand alliance of himself, Raymond of Toulouse, Ferrard of Flanders, and Otto IV of

Germany to attack Philip at the Battle of Bouvines in 1214. Against long odds Philip II won. Otto lost his claim to the throne and Ferrard was brought back to Paris in chains. As for John, he was forced to sign the Magna Carta.



Philip II (right) and Richard I accept the keys to Acre while on Crusade in the Holy Land. Illustration from the *Grandes Chroniques de France* completed in 1461.

## FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



### Questions

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1. Why did the French barons select Hugh Capet as the new king?
2. What happened when John succeeded his brother Richard?

### Suggested Reading

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Clanchy, Michael T. *England and Its Rulers, 1066–1272*. 2nd ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998.

### Other Books of Interest

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Baldwin, John W. *The Government of Philip Augustus: Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Chibnall, Marjorie. *Anglo-Norman England, 1066–1166*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991.



## Lecture 11: The Rise and Fall of the Papal Monarchy

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Colin Morris's *The Papal Monarchy: The Western Church from 1050–1250*.

**T**he twin rise of royal power and papal power could not continue indefinitely. These two spheres of control had already clashed during the Investiture Controversy, with disastrous results for Germany, which was shredded politically into autonomous, antagonistic areas. As the twelfth century progressed, the power of the popes only grew. When a monarch like Frederick I Barbarossa of Germany opposed the popes, he would invariably lose. In 1177, Frederick, the most powerful man in Europe, bowed before the throne of Pope Alexander III in defeat and kissed the pontiff's feet. The popes no longer only controlled the Church, they had come to be the true heads of western Christendom.

The pinnacle of that rise to power is the pontificate of Innocent III (1198–1216). In a sign of the times, Innocent had been a canon lawyer before his elevation to the throne of St. Peter. He made use of that law, for much of what went on in the curia was directly related to it. Because of the success of the reformer, all roads led to Rome as a court of last appeal. The numerous cases that arose because of property disputes or rights involving Church property throughout Europe frequently found their way to the pope. In addition, there were the problems of faith and morals of secular lords as well. For example, when King Philip II of France decided to divorce his new wife, Ingeborg of Denmark, it was Innocent III who ordered him to take her back. When the king refused, the pope responded with excommunication and interdict, which convinced Philip to change his mind. A similar situation arose in England in 1209 when King John refused to accept the canonically elected archbishop of Canterbury, appointing another in his stead. Innocent excommunicated him and placed his domains under



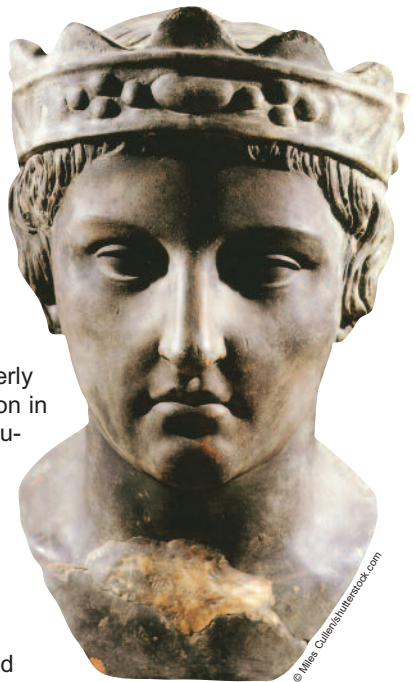
Thirteenth-century Italian fresco painting of Pope Innocent III

interdict. In the final settlement, John was forced to render England to the pope and accept it back as a papal fief.

Innocent and his successors also extended the use of Crusade. Like most Christians, Innocent believed that the rescue of the Holy Land should be the paramount concern of Christendom. One of his first acts in 1198 was to call a new Crusade that would enlist the most powerful lords in Europe, combining them with the maritime might of the Republic of Venice. The result was the Fourth Crusade, an enterprise that veered off course and, contrary to Innocent's commands, conquered Constantinople in 1204. Innocent subsequently called a Crusade against heretics in the south of France known as Cathars. The so-called Albigensian Crusade would drag on for more than two decades.

The culmination of papal monarchy was the Fourth Lateran Council held in 1215. The size alone of this council made clear that times had changed. The pope was clearly in command. Even patriarchs from the faraway East were in attendance. The council was a far-reaching reform effort, seeking to root out evil and the enemies of the Church. It defined the doctrine of transubstantiation, which had come under debate in the Church's new universities. It also required annual reception of Communion and therefore Confession for all faithful. And finally, it called for a new Crusade to reclaim the Holy Land. Innocent did not live to see the Fifth Crusade launched. Although it successfully captured Damietta in Egypt, it was later defeated by the Muslims.

Because of the continued rise of royal authority in Europe, subsequent popes found it increasingly more difficult to impose their will on them and even to keep them from imposing their will on the Church. Emperor Frederick II managed to do what no other medieval ruler could—he combined the German Empire with the Norman kingdom of the Two Sicilies. This meant that he controlled almost all of Italy, save Rome and the papal states. Frederick and Pope Gregory IX (1227–41) fought bitterly over crusading as well as imperial jurisdiction in the North. Although Frederick was excommunicated, he crusaded anyway. Gregory's successor, Innocent IV (1243–54), took an initially conciliatory tone with Frederick, but this only emboldened the emperor. Therefore, in 1245 Innocent called the Council of Lyon, which condemned Frederick as a heretic and enemy of the Church. He was declared deposed and a Crusade was called against him. Frederick responded with relentless war against papal lands and those of his allies, yet the



Frederick II  
(1194–1250)

Bust modelled on a seal, ca. sixteenth century

pope maintained the allegiance of other secular monarchs—most notably Louis IX of France (St. Louis). When Frederick died in 1250, it seemed that the papacy had once again won the day.

But the real royal authority was growing in France and England, not Germany and Italy. This growth of power led France and England into war in 1294. Desperate for funds, both kingdoms began taxing their clergy—something that was forbidden by canon law. In 1296 Pope Boniface VIII issued his *Clericis laicos*, which officially forbade any secular lord to levy a tax on clergy without papal permission. King Philip IV (“the Fair”) in France retaliated by cutting off all payments from France to the Holy See. After a number of years of failed compromises between Rome and Paris, Boniface in 1302 issued *Unam Sanctam* in which the pope laid out completely the duty of every Christian to obey the pope in matters of sin. “It is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff,” it said. Philip was given one year to repent.

But it was no longer 1077. The days in which a pope could topple a monarch by writing a stern letter had passed. Philip called his own council of French clergy, who condemned Boniface. He then sent a detachment of troops to Anagni, where the pope was preparing to issue the formal excommunication. They arrested the pope. Although he was subsequently released by the people of the city, Boniface was badly shaken and died shortly thereafter. Times had changed. The power of the popes was waning and a new world of powerful monarchs and powerful states was emerging in medieval Europe.

## FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



### Questions

1. How did Innocent and his successors extend the use of Crusade?
2. What was stipulated by the Fourth Lateran Council?

### Suggested Reading

Morris, Colin. *The Papal Monarchy: The Western Church from 1050–1250*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1991.

### Other Books of Interest

Moore, John C. *Pope Innocent III (1160/61–1216): To Root Up and to Plant*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009.

Robinson, I.S. *The Papacy, 1073–1198: Continuity and Innovation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

## Lecture 12: Europe Asunder: The Avignon Papacy and the Great Schism

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Guillaume Mollat's *The Popes at Avignon, 1305–1378: The Babylonian Captivity of the Medieval Church*.

At the beginning of the Middle Ages the Catholic Church was all that was left to bind western Europe together. As the centuries progressed, it had given an identity to Europeans, who identified themselves as Christians in communion with Rome. As we have seen, the power of the Church to unify was declining rapidly in the wake of the growth of secular powers, in particular the kings of France. Indeed, the Church would be so buffeted about by the winds of these new, struggling powers that it would itself serve as a source of disunity in an age that seemed increasingly chaotic.

After the death of Pope Boniface VIII, the Conclave of Cardinals took their time selecting a successor. What they wanted was a man who would seek peace with King Philip while still defending the rights of the Church. In 1305 they settled upon Clement V (1305–14), a Frenchman who was crowned in Lyons with the king himself in attendance. At once Clement moved to conciliate the Church with the king. He withdrew all bulls and sentences against Philip. When the king pressed his advantage by ordering the arrest of all Knights Templar in France and the confiscation of their considerable property, Clement ratified the action and in 1312 suppressed the order.

To make peace with the king, Clement had remained in France for several years. To prepare for a journey to Rome, he and the curia settled in Avignon. However, this temporary measure soon became permanent. The increasingly complex bureaucracy of the Curia was more at home in pleasant and protected



Fifteenth-century manuscript illumination of Pope Clement V from the *Decretale Clementinae*

Avignon than in the dangerous, faction-torn Rome. Further, as cardinals were replaced, the French popes naturally selected French prelates. The hierarchy of the Church was becoming French and so it naturally found Avignon more to its liking.

The Hundred Years War was taking place at this time and France's enemies—in particular, England—assumed that their tithes to the papacy were being funneled to the French king to finance his war. It was not true, but it was a good excuse to cut off those tithes. As a result the popes were poor, and so they made use of many of the same fiscal reforms being implemented by monarchs to strengthen their cash flow. It worked very well. Indeed, perhaps too well, for reformers in the universities and elsewhere began to criticize the great wealth of popes and cardinals as inconsistent with the poverty of Christ. Abuses of absenteeism and pluralism became commonplace and the need for reform more acute.

Pressure to return to Rome became overwhelming as the Mongol invasions and Black Death underscored God's anger. Pope Urban V (1362–70) finally went to Rome in 1367, but the instability and danger of the place led him and the cardinals to flee back to Avignon in 1370. Pope Gregory XI (1370–78) again moved the Curia to Rome in 1377, but he died shortly thereafter. When the Conclave met in Rome for the first time in living memory the Roman mobs demanded an Italian pope. They chose Urban VI (1378–89), who transformed into a firebrand reformer after his election. Thirteen cardinals fled and issued a declaration that the previous election was invalid, electing a new pope there, "Clement VII," and returning to Avignon.

And so it was that western Christendom was divided into two. Both Rome and Avignon had their own popes, bishops, communion, and authority. France naturally recognized the Avignon popes, while England and much of the rest of Europe continued to recognize Rome. The problem lay heavy on everyone's minds because there was no doubt that this scandal was causing the wrath of God to descend upon his people. The problem was, how to judge a pope's claim when popes, by definition, could be judged only by God? Some masters at the universities began to suggest that a church council had the authority to do such a thing—indeed, some suggested that council should replace the pope altogether. These "conciliarists" were considered radical, but they did at least have a solution.

In 1409, Emperor Sigismund called together the Council of Pisa. The calling of the council and its extraordinary attendance made plain that the authority



Monks, disfigured by the plague, being blessed by a priest. From a fourteenth-century English manuscript, ca. 1360.



and reputation of the popes had declined precipitously. This was the opposite of Fourth Lateran. Both popes refused to attend the council, so the council deposed both of them and elected a new pope, a Franciscan bishop who took the name "Alexander V." Alexander was popular and may have been able to end the Great Schism, but he died suddenly (probably by foul play) and Baldassare Cossa, a former pirate, was elected "John XXIII." As a result, Pisa had only served to make the schism worse, dividing Europe between three popes.

The solution was found at the Council of Constance (1414–18). Although the council declared itself superior to popes, it managed only to depose John. In 1415 Pope Gregory XII in Rome offered to call the council into being and then resign if the council would recognize him and his predecessors in Rome as the legitimate popes. This was important, for the authority of the pope is derived from the holder's succession from Peter. The members of the council agreed, which was itself a setback for conciliarists, but a step forward for ending the schism. The council elected Martin V and with support for the Avignon pope virtually gone, the schism ended.

The Avignon Papacy and the Great Schism seriously eroded the image of the popes among Europeans. No longer leaders of Christendom, they began to look increasingly like self-centered Italian princes. And sometimes they were. But subsequent popes were able to fend off the main attack of the conciliarists. The requirement to call regular church councils was condemned in 1460 when Pope Pius II declared it null and void. But the desire for reform continued. Across Europe there was an explosion in private devotion and the desire to be certain of salvation. The popes responded with easier access to indulgences. Thus the stage was set for the Protestant Reformation.

## FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



### Questions

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1. Why did the temporary settlement in Avignon become permanent?
2. What solution to the Great Schism was presented by the “conciliarists”?

### Suggested Reading

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Mollat, Guillaume. *The Popes at Avignon, 1305–1378: The Babylonian Captivity of the Medieval Church*. New York: Harper & Row, 1965.

### Other Books of Interest

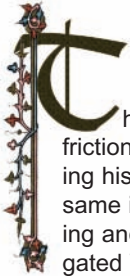
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Renouard, Yves. *The Avignon Papacy: The Popes in Exile, 1305–1403*. New York: Archon Books, 1970.

Smith, John H. *The Great Schism, 1378: The Disintegration of the Papacy*. New York: Weybright & Talley, 1970.

## Lecture 13: The Hundred Years War

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Christopher Allmand's *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War, c. 1300–c. 1450*.



The rise of royal authority in England and France not only caused friction with the pope, but with each other. While Philip IV was consolidating his power in France, Edward I (1272–1307) was doing much the same in England. Edward developed standardized legal codes, streamlining and centralizing justice throughout his kingdom. In addition, he subjugated Wales in 1282 and in 1301 gave it to his eldest son and heir, thus beginning the practice of using the title “Prince of Wales” to designate the heir to the throne. However, Edward’s attempts to capture Scotland failed and his expensive wars sparked opposition in many quarters.

In 1297 Philip IV fought an inconclusive war with England and Flanders. The resulting treaty required Edward I’s son, the future Edward II, to marry Isabella, the young and beautiful daughter of Philip IV. Edward II, though, was almost certainly homosexual and so had little interest in her charms—although he was certainly interested in producing heirs. After becoming king in 1307 Edward neglected his nobles and wife, preferring to lavish gifts and honors on his royal “favorites.” First was Piers Gaveston, who was executed by nobles in 1312. Then was Hugh Despenser, who had a firm hold on the king for many years. When a dispute broke out between England and France, Edward sent Isabella there along with their son to settle the matter. Isabella made common cause with her lover, Roger Mortimer, and invaded England. So disgusted were the nobility and the Londoners with Edward that Isabella was able to defeat the royal forces, kill Despenser, and force the resignation of Edward in favor of his son, Edward III (1327–77).

Shortly after Edward III came to the throne in England, the Capetian dynasty of kings in France ended with the death of Philip IV’s three sons. Because Edward III was the nephew of Philip IV, the crown by rights should have gone to him. But the French did not want the king of England as their king. Instead, a council of barons in France invoked Salic law, a customary body of law from the earliest days of the Franks under Clovis. The law—at least as the barons interpreted it—forbade inheritance through the female line. Since Edward III’s claim was through his mother, this had the handy effect of invalidating it. The barons instead offered the crown to a nephew, Philip IV, in the male line, a member of the Valois family, who was crowned Philip VI (1328–50). In England, Edward III was only sixteen and under the control of the regent, Roger Mortimer. However, the following year he managed to depose the regent and took the reign himself. He would rule for fifty years.

In 1337, Edward III declared himself to be the rightful king of France and began what would be called the Hundred Years War (1337–1453). Edward planned to use the traditional enemies of France against them. That meant Flanders, which had a close relationship with England because of the wool trade. Edward was able to land there, and in Ghent in 1340, he formally assumed the title of king of France. However, the military situation was not favorable and he had problems at home, so one of many truces was declared until 1346. It was then that the numerically superior French forces managed to trap the English king at Crécy. However, the relatively new English longbows dealt a devastating blow to the fabled Frankish charge. As a result, thousands of French nobles were killed in the mud. This was a surprising change. The Frankish charge had ruled the battlefields of medieval Europe. Nobles that were unhorsed were, by chivalric custom, captured and held for ransom. And yet at Crécy, the lower classes had managed to fell the flower of French chivalry. Many consider this battle to be the first death knell of chivalry. It certainly saw the obsolescence of the Frankish charge—something that French nobles would take a long time to learn.

By 1355, Edward III's eldest son, the Black Prince, was leading English armies on the continent. In 1356 the new French king, John II (1350–64), managed to corner the Black Prince at Poitiers. The battle was in many ways a reenactment of Crécy. Once again the French forces charged into longbow fire and were decimated. The numerically inferior British forces crushed the French, even capturing John himself. The Estates General met in 1360 to get back their king. They pledged an enormous ransom as well as the secession of Gascony to England. As it turned out, however, they were able to pay only half the promised ransom. John was released in order to raise the rest, but when he found it impossible he returned to English captivity, where he died.

The new French king, Charles V (1364–80), began rebuilding French forces and even married his younger brother, Philip the Bold, to the heiress of Flanders. Charles then began to hear appeals from Gascony in violation of the peace treaty, leading Edward III to again assert his title to the throne of



The battle of Crécy between the English and French in the Hundred Years War. From a fifteenth-century illuminated manuscript of Jean Froissart's *Chronicles* (BNF, FR 2643, folio 165v).

France and to resume the war. This time the war went badly for the English, particularly after the death of the Black Prince in 1376. Edward himself died in 1377, leaving twelve children.

It was now the turn of England to have dynastic problems, although by an abundance of heirs rather than a lack of them. The Black Prince's son was crowned Richard II (1377–99), although since he was only ten he was controlled by his uncles. One of those uncles, John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, was Edward's eldest surviving son. He kept Richard in check; however, after his death in 1399, Richard struck out on his own against John and the nobles. He exiled his son, Henry, Earl of Derby, and confiscated his lands. Henry, who was in France, returned to England and with noble support defeated Richard and forced him to abdicate. Henry IV (1399–1413) did little to further English claims in France. Because he was beholden to Parliament, his rule was relatively weak.

Henry V (1413–22) took a much more active role in the war. He truly believed that he was called by God to be the king of France. He began a major English offensive in France at the perfect time. Charles VI (1380–1422) went in and out of sanity while two factions, each surrounding either the Duke of Burgundy or the Duke of Orleans, vied for power. In 1384, Philip the Bold of Burgundy became Count of Flanders through his wife. Then in 1407, a thug hired by John the Fearless, the son of Philip the Bold, killed the Duke of Orleans in Paris. Civil war erupted in France between the two factions. The streets of Paris were bloody and the Estates General refused to act to resist an English invasion until reforms were implemented. In 1414, Henry V made a secret alliance with the Duke of Burgundy and in 1415, he invaded France. At the Battle of Agincourt, the longbow once again defeated the cavalry, thus giving the king of England Normandy.

In 1419, the eldest son of Charles VI (the dauphin) left Paris to join the Orleans party. The new Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, openly allied with Henry V against the dauphin. In 1420, they signed the Treaty of Troyes, in which Henry V became the regent for the old Charles VI, he married the king's daughter Catherine, and their children would rule France. The following year they had a son, but in 1422, Henry V died. His one-year-old son Henry VI was crowned king of England and France.

The war seemed to be over; however, the English were stymied by the siege of Orleans in 1429. A peasant girl, Joan of Arc, convinced the dauphin to fight the English at Orleans, which was successful. Joan and her voices served to rally the French troops, allowing them to capture other towns. A few months later the dauphin was crowned in Rheims as Charles VII. The following year, Joan was captured by Burgundians who sent her to England, where she was burned in 1431. But the tide of war had shifted. In 1435, the Duke of Burgundy made peace with Charles VII and, after the French retook Normandy and Gascony, a final peace was made in 1453, leaving England only Calais.

## FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



### Questions

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1. What is Salic law and how was it interpreted by French barons who opposed the kingship of Edward III?
2. What turned the tide of war for the French?

### Suggested Reading

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Allmand, Christopher. *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War, c. 1300–c. 1450*. Rev. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

### Other Books of Interest

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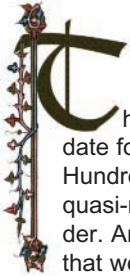
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## Lecture 14: Europe Stands Alone: The Fall of Constantinople

The **Suggested Reading** for this lecture is Steven Runciman's *The Fall of Constantinople, 1453*.



The end of the Hundred Years War in 1453 is often used as an end date for the Middle Ages as well. There are good reasons for this. The Hundred Years War saw the effective end of feudal levies and the rise of quasi-national armies. It saw the fall of chivalry and the rise of gunpowder. And it saw the creation of a proto-nationalism in England and France that would replace the ecumenical Christendom that had existed before. But 1453 was important in another way as well. For it was in that year that the last remnant of the Roman Empire and the last Christian state in the East died. The behemoth that was Islam now controlled what had been the ancient Roman world, with the exception of western Europe. And the sultans made plain that the exception would not prove the rule.

The Byzantine Empire had been weak for centuries before its collapse. The constant internal struggles, including regular armed coups and rebellions, left it vulnerable not only to the Fourth Crusade in 1204, but also to Turks in the fourteenth century. It was the Byzantines themselves who, while fighting yet another civil war, had ferried the Ottoman Turks across the straits into Greece and thereby Europe itself. As a result, by 1391, all that remained of the empire were a few ports in Thrace, a few Greek islands, part of the Peloponnesus, and, above all, Constantinople. And even Constantinople was a dilapidated and depopulated shadow of its former glory. Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425) was a vassal of the Turkish Sultan Beyazid. He was required to pay tribute and to come when summoned. Only the mighty walls of Constantinople kept Byzantium alive, and they could not hold out forever.

Western Europe was not unaware of the danger in the East. Popes had for some time urged Europeans to put away their petty squabbles and unite in a great Crusade against the common enemy. The Crusade of Nicopolis, largely made up of Hungarians, French, and Venetians, was one of the largest forces ever assembled. Yet it too was crushed by the sultan in 1396. In 1400, Emperor Manuel slipped out of Constantinople while it was besieged by the Turks to make a grand tour of royal courts in Europe. It was his task to convince the last crowned Christian rulers in the world to defend Constantinople, which was shorn of its empire and surrounded by the Muslim enemy. Charles VI in Paris and Henry IV in London toasted the emperor and gave him every honor. Wherever he went he was treated as a celebrity and promised impressive military aid. Yet none of it ever materialized. It was not that the European rulers were insincere. It was just that they had their own problems closer to home and feared the repercussions of sending thousands of men away.

In 1402, it seemed that the last blow would fall. Beyazid had captured everything save Constantinople, which was in a desperate state. Just then it seemed that the long-hoped-for rescuer, Prester John, arrived from the East. It was not Prester John. It was Tamerlane, a Turkish/Mongol ruler who led massive Mongol armies into Anatolia and personally defeated and killed Beyazid. As a result, Byzantium was given a reprieve. The Ottoman Empire was divided among the warring sons of Beyazid, allowing Manuel to restore some of its Greek holdings. But it was only a respite, and the Byzantines made poor use of the time given to them. When Sultan Murad finally won the struggle he made it plain that he planned to end the problem of Constantinople once and for all.

The new emperor, John II Palaeologus (1425–48), like his father before him, came to the inescapable conclusion that only the West could save Constantinople. In 1437, Pope Eugenius IV called an ecumenical council at Ferrara to examine the problems of an ever-shrinking Christian world. This council was also in direct opposition to a conciliarist council attempting to wrest authority from the pope. Emperor John VIII and Patriarch Joseph II of Constantinople came to Ferrara, making clear just which council was valid. During the two years of the council it moved to Florence because of plague. The emperor, patriarch, and leading churchmen from the Byzantine East accepted papal primacy and placed themselves in communion with Rome. In return, the pope called a new Crusade against the Turks. However, back home the union with Rome was deeply unpopular. The Russians repudiated it, as did Eastern patriarchs, while the Greeks were divided. Nevertheless, the pope still launched a major Crusade, which was crushed by Murad at Varna in 1444.

John was succeeded by his younger brother, Constantine XI (1448–53). The new sultan, Mehmed II, immediately began building a fortification just north of Constantinople in preparation for a major siege. Once again the situation was dire. Constantine at once became a Catholic and proclaimed Constantinople to be in communion with Rome. Begging the West for



Constantine XI Palaeologus  
(1405–1453)

aid, Constantine received troops from the pope as well as Venice and Genoa. Mehmed's siege last for two months. It included 'round-the-clock bombardment of the city walls, which, while strong, had never been designed to defend against such power. On May 29, 1453, the walls were breached, the Turks rushed in, and the emperor—the last in the line of the Caesars—died fighting to defend his capital. Rome at last had fallen.

In Europe, the news of the fall of Constantinople had a dramatic effect. A flurry of plans were drawn up to retake the city, none of which ever turned into action. The problem was that Europe was too internally divided to take any concerted action against the common enemy. And in a matter of decades the last bond of unity, the Catholic Church, would also be shattered into warring splinters by the Protestant Reformation. The world had changed again and the Middle Ages were no more.

*Mehmed II Outside Constantinople*  
by Fausto Zonaro, 1903

This painting shows Mehmed II leading his army as they march from Edirne to begin the siege of Constantinople in 1453. At the far right, oxen are shown hauling one of the "Great Turkish Bombard" cannon used in the siege.



Cast in bronze by a Transylvanian Romanian named Orban, these cannon were twenty-seven feet long (assembled) and weighed eighteen tons. The guns fired a 1,500 pound granite stone with a diameter of thirty inches.

Each gun was moved into position by sixty oxen and two hundred men. Once in place, the guns fired their stones seven times a day into the walls of Constantinople. After nearly ninety days, on May 29, 1453, the guns breached the walls and the infantry attacked through the breach, storming the city and capturing it.

The guns were made in two parts: The barrel that held the shot and the chamber that held the charge. The two parts screwed together using levers in a ring of sockets at the ends of each piece.

Below the painting is a recent photograph of one of the guns on display at the Royal Armouries at Fort Nelson, Portsmouth, England.

## FOR GREATER UNDERSTANDING



### Questions

1. What did Emperor Manuel hope to accomplish with his grand tour of the royal courts of Europe?
2. What effect did news of the fall of Constantinople have on Europe?

### Suggested Reading

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Riley-Smith, Jonathan. *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*. New York: Continuum, 2003.

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Smith, John H. *The Great Schism, 1378: The Disintegration of the Papacy*. New York: Weybright & Talley, 1970.

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