

# # 9: The Era of Papal Domination, part 3

Church History Study

**ELM GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH**

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## Church History Study

### Three Phases

- The Era of Papal Domination, approx. AD 590-1517, also known as the Era of Christendom (Middle Ages), developed in three distinct (yet sometimes overlapping) phases: Rising Power, Supreme Power, and Declining Power. It is during this era that the Pope in Rome comes to dominate not just the church, but also nearly all of Europe.

### Factors Contributing to the Decline in Papal Domination

#### *Socio-Economic Changes*

- The development of a monetary economy (as opposed to trade and barter) made business transactions less direct and personal, while promoting a greater distance between the rich and poor.
- The growth of cities made traditional parish ministry more difficult, particularly relating to the meeting of the needs of people within the church (there were many who flocked to the cities and the priests could not keep up)
- Monasticism at this point tended more toward “mendicant” orders, in which monks lived by begging
  - One such group was founded by Peter Waldo, the Waldensians, who later became Protestant
  - Francis of Assisi was also involved in this movement
  - The Dominican monks came from this movement as well

#### *Intellectual Changes*

- The monastic movement gave rise to a strong desire for theological and philosophical education
- “Scholasticism” was the name given to the movement that developed schools of theology
- Universities eventually came as a result of the desire for centralized education
- Important people in the Scholastic movement
  - Anselm: applied reason to questions of faith; He believed in God, but sought to understand more deeply what that existence meant
  - Peter Abelard: he argued that theology must not be content with simply citing authorities (such as the Bible and other ancient Christian writers), since there are often disagreements; he wanted to find ways to reconcile the differences
  - Peter Lombard: wrote a systematic theology book, dealing in an orderly fashion with the main themes of Christian theology
- Two important developments
  - Growth of the universities
    - This happened in part because of the rise of cities
    - Students gathered in urban centers, first in cathedral schools and other such centers; these were eventually united in what came to be called “general studies”
  - The main universities of Europe developed from this

- They were more like guilds of scholars, both teachers and students, which organized in order to defend the rights of their members, and to certify the level of proficiency achieved by each
- The thirteenth century saw the universities become the main centers of study; some soon became famous for particular areas of study
  - Medicine: Montpellier or Salerno
  - Law: Ravenna, Pavia, and Bologna
  - Theology: Paris and Oxford
- Reintroduction of Aristotle to Western Europe
  - Plato had dominated to this point; he taught Phenomenal world, physical stuff, is only a shadow, an inferior copy of the real world; Real world is unseen, immaterial
  - Aristotle's philosophy emphasized the material and physical world; caused some to question the teachings of the church about God and eternity (unseen)
  - Some, like Thomas Aquinas, used the new emphasis on philosophy as a way to argue in favor of biblical theology

### *Corruption*

- The papacy had risen far beyond its integrity
- Several practices contributed to its decline in morality and prestige
- Annates
  - Requirement that the pope had that either a bishop or an abbott must give his first year's income be given to the pope
  - Pope had given him the job; in response, he got the first year's income
- Collations
  - Not all areas were same; some were big and some were small
  - Bishops promoted from smaller to larger, shifted from one position to another, in order to secure more annates
- Commendations
  - Annual tax that a person paid for the right to remain in a certain office
  - Avoided being demoted, etc.
- Expectancies
  - Office often sold to highest bidder
  - Took place among bishops who hoped to be promoted into that position
- Reservations
  - Very best and richest of diocese, reserved for papal use
- Jus Spoliorum
  - Just Spoils
  - What the papacy demanded when a person had achieved in benefits while an officer of the church
  - Everything willed to the pope
- Tithing

- A tax on church property
- Taxing first began during the crusades to support it, continued when crusades ended
- Dispensations
  - Ecclesiastical violations
  - Paid to avoid excommunication
- Indulgences
  - Piece of paper with name, money contributing, and years off purgatory
  - A little bit of hell and heaven; only for those on the way to heaven; discover that not all sins are gone, so they must be paid for in purgatory;
  - No way to know for sure how long you'd be in purgatory
  - Any "extra" years bought could be applied to anyone you wanted
  - Also could be for sins not yet committed

### *Rising Nationalism*

- The monetary economy led to credit systems, trade, and manufacturing, all of which gave increasing power to the upper class in the cities, which clashed with the interests of the feudal lords
- For the bourgeoisie, a strong central government was appealing, in order to protect trade, suppress banditry, regulate coinage, and put an end to petty wars. The bourgeoisie supported the efforts of kings to centralize power.
- Out of this came several modern nations: France, England, Scandinavian countries
- Before this time, many Europeans considered themselves to be from a particular county or city; now there was greater talk of being from a nation
- Such nationalism undermined the pope's claim to universal authority. For example, if the pope favored France, the English were ready to disobey and oppose the papacy.
- The result was that the papacy lost a good deal of prestige and authority, and many began to hope that a reform of the church would come from a source other than the pope

### *Division and Embarrassment*

- In 1294, Celestine was chosen as pope; he was a plain monk who had no desire for the luxury that was now associated with the papacy, nor did he want to play the necessary political games; five months into his term, he resigned
- Boniface VIII took over; he was ruthless as a politician and desired to gain power over all the kings of Europe
  - He issued the Unam Sanctum, which was a papal decree stating that the pope had authority over every king
  - The French king responded by having the pope kidnapped; Boniface died a month later
- His successor was forced into exile
- It was apparent that the papacy could no longer exercise the rule and authority it once enjoyed over the political and military rulers in Europe
- The next pope set up his headquarters in Avignon, France; this "relocation" became known as "The Babylonian Captivity," when the church's dignity was captured and taken into captivity in France

- In 1377, Pope Gregory XI returned the papal operations to Rome
- Upon Gregory's death, most of the Cardinals wanted a French pope; the crowds outside the Vatican wanted a Roman pope; the Cardinals compromised by electing an Italian (not Roman pope)—Pope Urban VI
- Urban didn't support the pro-French Cardinals, and they revoked his election and elected a different pope in Avignon
- Urban refused to give up the office, so there were now two popes, resulting in the "Great Papal Schism"
- The Cardinals met at the Council of Pisa and decided that councils could make decisions for the church; they also rejected both existing popes and elected a new one—three popes now!
- All the popes excommunicated each others' followers
- At this point, the church was a mess and reform was around the corner

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