



HIST 414 CHURCH HISTORY FALL SEMESTER 2010 LECTURE #5: THE RISE OF PAPACY

THE FIRST MEDIEVAL POPE

The consecration of Gregory I to the Roman See serves a dividing point between ancient Christianity and Medieval Christianity. While the seeds of the Supremacy of the Rome were laid in ancient Christianity, it would be Gregory I who would be the first Bishop of Roman to willingly capitalize on this doctrine. Born into one of the most noble and wealthiest families in Rome, Gregory would receive the best classical education that Rome could afford. Shortly after his father's death Gregory would forsake all the family's wealth and become a monk. He would use the family fortune to build seven monasteries in Italy. Upon his return to Rome he was appointed the Abby of Saint Andrews monastery. In 590 A.D. he would be appointed to the Roman See. The greatest work of Gregory I was to expand the power of the Roman Bishop. He would challenge the patriarch of Constantinople when he attempted to claim the title of universal Bishop. Despite his disdain for the title of Pope, he would lay the foundation for future Popes by exercising all the powers of later Popes. His preference was to be called the Servant of God's servants. In addition to his able administrative abilities, Gregory I was also an outstanding theologian. He is considered one of the great doctors of the Western Church. He laid the groundwork for the theology of the Roman Church throughout the middle ages, only surpassed by Thomas Aquinas. His greatest work is the Canon of the Mass, in which we see the beginnings of many Catholic dogmas. Thus in both church polity and doctrine Gregory I stands as a dividing point between ancient Christianity and Medieval Christianity.

CHRISTIAN LOSSES AND EXPANSION

During the middles ages Europe experienced a great migration of people as a result of the Roman Empire crumbling. This created numerous challenges for the church. Between 590 A.D. and 800 A.D. (the first stage of the middle of ages) the Western church experienced significant gains while the Eastern church barely held its own against the rise of Islam- the last of the three great monotheistic religions of the world. Its founder Muhammad would marry into a wealthy family which afforded him a significant amount of free time to devout to religious studies. In 610 A.D. he became proclaiming monotheism. His

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forceful preaching would cause his exile from Mecca. By 630 A.D. Muhammad gained enough traction with this new monotheistic religion to capture Mecca. It would become the capital of the Islamic faith. Despite its negative impact on Christianity, Islam has a strong impact on the cultural and religious landscape of Western Europe.

The Western church free from the threat of Islam would make great missionary gains. Between 590 A.D. and 800 A.D. the Irish church would see the greatest gains. Planted by St. Patrick, the Irish church would be indirectly responsible for the evangelization of northern England. Once in England, Christianity would develop a reputation for its scholastic achievements. England would become known throughout the entire world as having the best educational system which was based on the Holy Scripture.

Boniface also known as Winfrid, introduced Christianity to the Germans. After becoming a learned and devout priest, he received permission from the authorities in Rome in 718 A.D. to preach the gospel in Germany. His success earned him the title of archbishop by 732 A.D. Boniface was the first known to use women in missionary work. His cousin Lioba assisted in overseeing the convent in 748 A.D. Along with the nuns, she would be instrumental in converting many Germans. Progress in Italy and Spain would require more effort. By the time the Catholic Christianity was to arrive, the people and governing authorities were already committed to Arian Christianity. From the first visit in 610 A.D. by the Irish monk Columbanus it would take until 800 A.D. before the Arian threat to the papacy in Italy and Spain would be nullified.

THE REVIVAL OF IMPERIALISM IN THE WEST

Prior to the fall of Rome the Roman See only needed to concern himself with one temporal power: The Roman Emperor. The fall of Rome and the massive migrations in Europe would pave the way for multiple temporal rulers throughout Europe. It would also make for a revival of religious ideas that has not been experienced since prior to 451 A.D. Both would challenge the authority of Papacy. One temporal ruler is worth discussing in more depth. Clovis was the first leader to unify the Franks. Through war and marriage Clovis would unify the Burgundian territories. After his death his sons would cede the administrative affair of the territory to the mayors of the Palace while continuing to enjoy the palace. This would be the beginning of the Carolingian dynasty. The dynasty would climax under the ruler known as Charlemagne. It would cover much of the territory of the Old Roman Empire. While friendly to the church, he would challenge her authority by claiming that the Pope was to never dispute a decision made by the ruler of the state and that bishops should be subordinated to the ruler of the state. This would be seeds of the Holy Roman Empire to which our next lecture will discuss in detail.