

STUDY PAK 9

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PAPACY

“In my humble person St. Peter may be recognized and honoured, in whom abides the care of all the shepherds, together with the charge of the sheep commended to him, and whose dignity is not abated even in so unworthy an heir.”

~~Pope Leo the Great (d. 461 A.D.)~~

I. THE BISHOP OF ROME

The preeminence of the bishop of Rome over the entire Catholic Church, an institution known as “the papacy,” took centuries to develop.

In the first few hundred years of the church, the term “pope,” which means “father,” was used for any important and respected bishop, and the bishop of Rome was one of several important bishops in Christendom.

Rome had always been honored for her association with Peter and Paul and her position as the church in the Empire’s capital, but especially after Christianity was legalized under Emperor Constantine, the special status of that office grew even more with each passing Roman bishop.

Most of the claims for the authority of the pope have rested on one basic argument:

1. The bishop of Rome is the successor of St. Peter; and
2. Jesus gave St. Peter authority over the entire church.

Because the word “Peter” means “rock,” the Catholic Church has long interpreted Jesus to be teaching that _____ and that Peter has spiritual authority over it. (Protestants argue that “this rock” refers not to Peter but to his confession of faith.) The Matthew 16 passage is also the basis for the imagery of St. Peter guarding the gates of heaven.

II. PROMINENT CITIES AND BISHOPS

In the early history of Christianity, five cities emerged as important centers of Christianity: Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople. Although the Roman church was always highly respected, the churches in the East generally had more numbers and more authority than those in the West. This was referred to as the _____.

After the Edict of Milan granted Christianity legal status, the church adopted the same governmental structure as the Empire: geographical provinces ruled by bishops. The bishops of important cities therefore rose in power.

Rome was not the only city that could claim a special role in Christ's Church. Jerusalem had the prestige of being the city of Christ's death and resurrection, and an important church council was held there in the first century. Antioch was the place where Jesus' followers were first called "Christians" and, with Alexandria, was an important early center of Christian thought. Constantinople became highly important after Constantine moved his capital there in 330 A.D.

By the fifth century, however, the bishop of Rome began to claim his supremacy over all other bishops, and some church fathers also made this claim for him.

The primary theological reason for the eventual primacy of Rome is the city's association with Peter. Tradition held that Peter visited Rome during his lifetime and, more importantly, was martyred there (his remains are believed to reside beneath St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City). St. Paul was believed to have been martyred in Rome as well.

But there were political reasons for the upsurge in the pope's authority as well. First, Rome was the historical capital of the empire and an important city politically, so it was natural that the bishop of that city would also be important. And when Constantine moved the capital of the empire to Constantinople in 330, the pope was the most powerful figure that remained in Rome.

Also influential were the barbarian invasions of the fifth century. Leo I, who is regarded by many as the first pope in the modern sense, was instrumental in persuading Attila the Hun not to attack Rome in 452. When the city finally fell to the Vandals in 455, Leo convinced their leader not to burn the city. These accomplishments added to the prestige to the bishop of Rome.

Moreover, when Rome fell to the barbarians in 455 A.D., _____

_____. The Roman bishop was instrumental in regaining the unity and stability that had been shattered by the invasions. In the East, on the other hand, the empire survived for another 1000 years, so the bishops there did not have the same opportunity for political importance as their Roman counterpart.

Another important development for Rome came in 756, when Pepin the Short (Charles Martel's son and the father of Charlemagne) donated land to the Roman church. This "Donation of Pepin" established an alliance between the pope and the rulers of the future Holy Roman Empire. This important alliance culminated with Pope Leo III's crowning of Charlemagne as emperor on Christmas Day, 800 A.D.

A final factor that must not be overlooked in analyzing the rise of the papacy is the personalities who held the office of bishop of Rome. These men – some of which were worldly, some of which were very devout – regarded themselves as holding a special place in Christendom and did not hesitate to claim this supremacy.

III. POPES EXPANDING THE POWER OF THE PAPACY

A. Damasus I (366-384)

An important early figure in the rise of the papacy is Damasus I. A Spaniard, Damasus came to the chair of Rome amid great scandal. He was elected in October 366, but an Arian group wished to see Ursinus as bishop instead. In 367 the Emperor Valentinian recognized Damasus and banished Ursinus from Rome.

During his reign as bishop of Rome, Damasus contended against the heresies of Apollinarianism and Arianism, presiding over two Roman synods in 368 and 369 and sending his legates to the important Council of Constantinople in 381, all of which condemned these and other heresies. He also commissioned the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible, which became the standard translation used by the Catholic Church throughout the Middle Ages, and built a marble monument in honor of Peter and Paul.

Damasus was the first to declare himself the “Apostolic See.” St. Jerome, Damasus’ secretary and the translator of the Vulgate, clearly agreed with this designation. The church father wrote in a letter to Damasus:

As I follow no leader save Christ, so I communicate with none save your Beatitude, that is, with the chair of Peter. For this, I know, is the Rock on which the Church is built. This is Noah’s ark, and he who is not found in it shall perish when the flood overwhelms all...

In 381, during Damasus’ reign, the Council of Constantinople granted the bishop of Constantinople “primacy of honor next after the Bishop of Rome.”

B. Siricius (384-399)

Siricius was the first to apply the term “pope” to himself and the first to issue a formal decretal – a ruling with binding legal precedent – on disputes in the Church. It remains the Catholic view today that “in all his decrees the pope speaks with the consciousness of his supreme ecclesiastical authority and of his pastoral care over all the churches.”

C. Innocent I (402-416)

During Innocent’s pontificate, the Emperor Honorius moved the capital of the Western Empire from Rome to Ravenna, in northwest Italy, in 402. Rome was no longer a strong political center, and it would not regain its political strength until the rise of the papal states in the 8th century. Taking advantage of this weakness and the absence of a strong emperor, Alaric and the Visigoths sacked Rome in 410. As would not be the case later, the pope was powerless to stop the barbarian invasion.

However, Innocent did advance the idea of the supremacy of the pope further by introducing the concept of “primacy of jurisdiction.” Replying to African bishops who had appealed to the pope to support them against Pelagianism, Innocent wrote:

...nothing which was done even in the most remote and distant provinces should be taken as finally settled unless it came to the notice of this See, that any just pronouncement might be confirmed by all the authority of this See, and that the other churches might from thence gather what they should teach.

D. Pope Leo the Great (440-461)

Leo I has been called “_____.” He is considered by many to be the first pope in the modern sense of the term, for he put the idea of primacy of jurisdiction fully into practice. Leo was ideal for the task; by all accounts he was a good man, highly disciplined, truly religious.

Leo took the title *pontifex maximus*, “chief priest,” which had been used by the Roman emperors in reference to the state cult. In his writings appeared all the traditional arguments for papal authority, including the idea that Jesus had made Peter and his successors the rock on which the church would be built, and that the bishop of Rome is the successor of Peter.

Several important events for the development of the papacy occurred during Pope Leo’s reign. In 445 Emperor Valentinian said the Bishop of Rome was the law for all. In 451, Pope Leo convened the important Council of Chalcedon although that job had traditionally been reserved for emperors.

But most important of all, Pope Leo was instrumental in saving Rome from Attila the Hun. In 452, the Huns had taken a nearby Italian city, the road to Rome was open to them, the Western emperor was weak in character and resources, and the East gave no indications it would help. It seemed certain the Huns would sack Rome, but Leo left Rome and marched to meet Attila himself. We do not know what was said between the two men – legend has it that Attila saw Saints Peter

and Paul marching with Leo and threatening the barbarian. In any case, Attila decided not to attack Rome. He turned to the north instead, and died shortly thereafter.

Three years later, Pope Leo saved Rome from the Vandals. This time he couldn't stop them from invading, but he led negotiations with the Vandal leader and prevented the burning of the city.

E. Gelasius I (492-96)

Pope Gelasius was the first to take _____.
He taught a dualistic power structure in which the pope held ultimate spiritual authority while the emperor held temporal authority.

F. Gregory the Great (inaugurated 590)

Gregory the Great fought with all his might to avoid being elected to that office. Gregory was a monk, an abbot of St. Andrew's, and he loved the monastic life. But in 590, in a time of disastrous flooding and rampant disease, Pope Pelagius II died, and Gregory was unanimously elected to take his place.

Gregory begged those that had chosen him to be relieved of the election and wrote to the Emperor personally to plead that the ruler not confirm the election. But the letter was intercepted and six months later Gregory received word that the Emperor had confirmed his election. Gregory contemplated flight, but he was forcibly brought to St. Peter's Basilica and consecrated pope on September 3, 590.

Despite his reluctance for the job (which never abated throughout his reign), Gregory threw himself into his appointed role and became only the second pope to receive the appellation "the Great." Pope Gregory the Great organized the distribution of food to the needy, oversaw the rebuilding of aqueducts, and negotiated peace with the barbarian Lombards.

In his theology, Gregory was heavily influenced by St. Augustine. The pope elaborated and developed Augustinian ideas such as _____ and _____.

IV. FALSE DOCUMENTS EXPAND THE POWER OF THE PAPACY

- A. The _____ was a fake document that claimed that on his death Constantine willed all his power and wealth to the bishop of Rome. This was made public in the Eighth Century and was used by a number of popes to support their actions. The document was later proven to be a forgery.
- B. The Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals is a document released in the _____. It purports to be a series of letters written by early church fathers and early popes. The letters declare the authority of the Bishop of Rome over secular rulers. These letters were obviously phony and were unknown before the Ninth Century. This did not stop several popes from using them as a basis for their actions.

V. FURTHER EXPANSION OF THE PAPACY BY POPES

- A. Gregory VII/Hildebrand (1073-1085)
The pontificate of Gregory VII began a movement towards the peak of the papacy. Gregory made many uncontested decisions and demanded that all priests be celibate. He was also involved in the famous investiture struggle with Henry IV that ended with Henry standing barefoot in the snow at Canossa for three days until he was forgiven by the pope.
- B. Innocent III (1198-1216)
The rule of Pope Innocent III represents the zenith of papal power. At his inauguration, Innocent quoted Jeremiah 1:10 in reference to himself: "See, today I appoint you over nations..." He also taught that the Pope stands between God and man as a mediator and vicar of Christ.

It was on Innocent's watch that the Fourth Lateran Council developed the doctrine of transubstantiation. The Pope also showed his political power on several occasions: he caused King Philip II to take back his queen because he had

unjustly divorced her; he caused another king to get a divorce because his wife was too closely related to him; and King Peter of Aragon received his kingdom as a fief from the pope. Pope Innocent III threatened secular rulers _____ and all 85 times they gave in to him.

C. Boniface VIII (1294-1303)

Contemporaries said of Pope Boniface that he “crept in like a fox, reigned like a lion, and died like a dog.” Today, his Catholic Encyclopedia article admits, “Though certainly one of the most remarkable pontiffs that have ever occupied the papal throne, Boniface VIII was also one of the most unfortunate. His pontificate marks in history the decline of the medieval power and glory of the papacy.”

Pope Boniface’s reign was characterized by pomp and circumstance from the very first:

The ceremony of his consecration and coronation was performed at Rome, 23 January 1295, amid scenes of unparalleled splendor and magnificence. King Charles II of Naples and his son Charles Martel, titular king and claimant of Hungary, held the reins of his gorgeously accoutred snow-white palfrey as he proceeded on his way to St. John Lateran, and later, with their crowns upon their heads, served the pope with the first few dishes at table before taking their places amongst the cardinals.

During his pontificate, Boniface was known to wear imperial robes and a richly jeweled crown, and cry, “I am Caesar. I am emperor.” Pope Boniface made even higher claims than Innocent but could not support them. He taught that the pope held both the temporal and spiritual swords, meaning that he is the ultimate authority in both realms.

In his capacity of spiritual leader, Pope Boniface instituted the first Holy Year with the Jubilee of 1300: he announced a “full and copious pardon of all their sins” for all who reverently visited the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul in that year. The papacy made a great deal of money from the pilgrims who poured into Rome as a result. In 1301, tradition holds that he was visited by the great poet Dante, but this is doubted by some scholars. The Pope’s story is included in

Dante's Purgatorio. Boniface also oversaw a great deal of restoration of churches, revived the Vatican Library and was apparently a great lover of the arts.

Boniface was not as successful in the temporal realm. His attempts to resolve conflicts in Naples, Venice, Genoa and Tuscany were failures. In 1296 Boniface issued *Clericis laicos*, which threatened excommunication for anyone who taxed clergy, but both Philip of France and Edward I of England wanted to tax the clergy to finance their military campaigns so Philip put an embargo on export of jewels from his domain. This deprived the pope of much of his revenue, so Boniface backed down, saying an exception to the non-taxation rule was for "defense" in "dire need".

After another run-in in 1301, Philip's minister said Philip's sword was made of steel but the pope's was made only of words. A few months later, Boniface issued the *unam sanctam*, declaring that every human being is subject to Roman pope.

Undeterred, King Philip prepared to depose Boniface on grounds of illegal election, heresy, simony and immorality. Several Roman churches had called for this in 1297 as well. Boniface was 86 and summering in foothills of Apennine Mountains at Anagni, his birthplace, Philip's troops broke into the aged pope's bedroom and kept him prisoner for three days. The people of Anagni rescued him and he was escorted back to Rome, but Boniface died within a few weeks of the ordeal. He was buried in a marble tomb in St. Peter's Basilica. The ignoble end to Boniface's reign is significant: "it marks the first open rejection of papal spiritual dominance by the rising national monarchies of the West."