

Key Events In Church History: Part II

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This article continues the discussion of sixteen key events that shaped the first two millennia of the history of the Christian church.

5. The Rise of Islam

It is always interesting to try to put yourself back into history and to imagine what the people of the time were thinking. What was running through Pope Boniface's mind in 622 as he considered the state of the church? In hindsight we would expect that Boniface V could have been thinking about how well things had been going for the Western Church. Many of the Arian Germanic tribes had converted to Nicene orthodoxy. The Vandal Kingdom had disappeared in North Africa. The work of Augustine of Canterbury and of those who followed him was becoming quite successful in Britain. In 589 King Ricared of Spain had embraced the catholic faith, converting from Arianism. The catholic Franks were consolidating their power in France. Did Boniface imagine that the major threats to Rome and Roman Christianity had been conquered? Did he foresee a time of almost unlimited growth for the Western Church in Northern Europe and North Africa?

What was occupying the thoughts of Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople as he considered his patriarchate and the vitality and prospects of the Eastern Church in 622? What did his emperor Heraclius think of the world of his day? The last phases of the Christological controversies were still causing damage. Small Monophysite groups were splitting from the Eastern patriarch. But the new mono-energistic approach agreed upon by both Sergius and Heraclius seemed for a time to be a way of finally resolving the conflict. Things were no worse than usual in the east; one might even say that they were a little better. Heraclius was beginning his long wars of reconquest of territory taken from the Eastern Empire by Persia, starting with Armenia in 622. The empire was expanding, and there were some prospects on the horizon for religious unity in the empire.

But then a new threat appeared in the desert of Arabia that would be very damaging to Christianity. The threat was Islam.

Mohammed, the Driving Force of Islam.

Mohammed was born in 570. He was from the prestigious Koreish clan, who were the guardians of the Kaaba in Mecca. The Kaaba was a stone that served as a center of pagan worship. The merchants of Mecca grew rich off the large pilgrim trade that the Kaaba brought to their city. But Mohammed made a drastic break with this tradition when he claimed that the angel Gabriel delivered revelations to him which called him from polytheism to monotheism. These revelations, delivered and preserved orally at first, were written down by the third caliph, or successor to Mohammed, as the *Quran*.

Mohammed incorporated elements of paganism, Judaism, and corrupted Christianity into his new religion. Mohammed based much of what the *Quran* would teach about Christ and his work and his person upon the Judeo-Christian teachings of the Ebionite Elkesai. Mohammed came to view Jesus as a virgin-born prophet, greater in power and importance than Moses, but not God incarnate. The work of Jesus was to teach moral precepts and to gather the righteous. Forgiveness is not connected with Jesus or his work on the cross. Mohammed believed that the followers of Jesus had corrupted his teachings.

Mohammed's monotheism refers to a single God who is both just and merciful. He rules all things and requires obedience from all. (Islam means submission. A Muslim is one who submits.) Mohammed claimed that he had not founded a new religion but was simply teaching the culmination of what God had revealed in the

Hebrew prophets and in Jesus. Islam is the height and the end product of God's revelation to man. Mohammed is God's prophet.

The orthopraxis of Islam is found in obedience to the laws, regulations, traditions, and lifestyle demanded in the *Quran* and the traditions that elaborate on it. The Five Pillars of Islam remain to this day. They are:

- Faith
- Almsgiving
- The Fast of Ramadan
- Pilgrimage to Mecca
- Prayer.

The orthodoxy of Islam, or its faith, may be simply summarized in the saying: "There is no god but God (Allah) and Mohammed is his prophet." If a person believes that simple statement, that person may be considered to be a Muslim.

The Spread of Islam

Mohammed began preaching his monotheism in Mecca. Since polytheism was so important to the merchants of Mecca because of the pilgrims it drew to the town, they opposed the teachings of Mohammed, and he had to flee to a nearby oasis, called Medina. The date of that flight, 622, is the beginning of Muslim history. In Medina Mohammed set up the first Muslim community in which worship as well as civil and political life followed the guidelines set up by him. After a period of organization in Medina, Mohammed and his followers set out on a pattern of political and military conquest which would gain them Mecca in 630. Polytheism was overthrown, and the Kaaba became the most holy place of Islam, now visited by millions of pilgrims each year. By the time of Mohammed's death in 632, much of Arabia was under Islamic control.

Islam spread rapidly under the first caliphs. Abu Bakr defeated a large Byzantine army. Omar (634-644) invaded Syria and conquered Damascus (635) and Jerusalem (637). By 712 Islamic forces had conquered to the east as far as the Indus River and the Black and Caspian Seas and as far as Lake Aral on the north. The Islamic push west through Africa was just as explosive. Alexandria fell in 642. Tripoli fell in 644. Gibraltar was captured by 710, and much of Spain fell into Islamic hands by 737. In the battle of Tours/Poitiers in 732, Charles Martel pushed the Islamic invaders out of Gaul back south of the Pyrenees. That battle would mark the end of Islamic expansion into Europe from the west.

Islamic forces gradually ate away at the remains of the Byzantine Empire in Asia Minor. The Ottoman Turkish Empire, begun in 1288, gave new impetus for conquest into Europe from the east. Constantinople finally fell in 1453. The Christian Slavic peoples of the Balkans formed the buffer in the battles against Islamic expansionism until the battle of Kosovo in 1389 and beyond. Islamic forces would besiege Vienna in 1529, their last serious threat to Europe.

Some Reasons for the Successful Spread of Islam

Weak Governments

The Persian and the Byzantine Empires were both in decline as Islam began its conquests. These two great empires had exhausted each other by years of war. The feuding tribes of Arabia, united into a single armed force under a single creed and led by effective leaders, were a conquering force the world had not seen since Alexander. Add to this the zeal of soldiers who believe they will enter paradise through their participation in holy war and you have the political, military, and religious basis for the success of the conquering Islamic armies.

A Weakened Church

The Eastern Church had been divided by the long, exhausting struggles of the Trinitarian and the Christological controversies. Disenchanted elements in the church were alienated from the patriarch of Constantinople and the emperor.

Another reason for the successful spread of Islam was the belief of Islam that Christians and Jews were also "people of the book." The Jews had the Old Testament, God's first revelation. The Christians had the New Testament, which was the second revelation. Mohammed received the *Quran* which was the third and final and the most perfect and complete revelation of God to man. Islam, therefore, allowed a certain toleration for Christians and Jews. Christians and Jews were not required to convert to Islam, but they were taxed more severely than Muslims. The virtual disappearance of Christianity from the Islamic lands was not due to rapid forced conversion but to a long war of attrition, which is still going on today. The Armenian nation, the Syrian Melkites, and several Monophysite sects, especially in Egypt, were noteworthy holdouts. Spanish Christians and Islam coexisted in the Iberian Peninsula with a brief period of persecution between 850 and 859, until the Christians reestablished themselves as the rulers of Spain.

Significance of the Rise of Islam for the Church

- Three of the five patriarchates came under Muslim control. Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria lost much of their influence in the church. They often lost all connection with the rest of the church. Constantinople and Rome were the only two patriarchates left with substantial power. Constantinople spent its energies in defense of itself and later in spreading the gospel north and east. The power of the papacy was diminished by the loss of North Africa and Spain, but it became the only enduring religious power in Europe.
- The spread of Islam often made communication between the West and the East nearly impossible. In this way Islam accelerated the division between the East and the West in the church.
- The growth of Christianity was stopped in Africa and Asia. Conversions to Christianity were prohibited. Many Christians converted to the Muslim faith. The Christian church lost North Africa, which had produced such early leaders as Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Cyril, and Athanasius. The expansion of the gospel into sub-Saharan Africa was stymied by the blockade of Islam for centuries. Islam also blocked the spread of Christianity to India and China and the rest of Asia. One wonders where Christianity might have spread beyond the borders of Europe and western Asia if Mohammed and his creed had been held in check.
- Islam's spread forced the papacy to turn its attention from the south and east to the north. A vision of a new Roman Empire in the north developed.
- Islam became the papacy's greatest rival in the Mediterranean world. The papacy solidified its power in Europe by initiating crusades to free the Holy Land from Muslim control.
- The Islamic blockade which hindered the spice trade as well as kept Christianity from spreading east was an impetus to sail west across the Atlantic searching for the riches of India. It might be said that Islam had a role in the spread of the gospel to the Americas.

The world has not been the same since the rise of Islam. Religious strife and religious war have continued to this very day. The conquests back and forth over the centuries have left people embittered in the

Balkans, Africa, and the Middle East. The Islamic conquests mark the end of antiquity and the beginning of the Middle Ages.

6. The Evangelization of the North

The evangelization of the North was a long process. Key steps in the process were the Roman mission to Britain in the 6th century, the work of the Celtic and later Roman/Celtic missionaries on the continent of Europe, the policy of forced conversions established by the Carolingian Kings of France, the pattern of royal conversions in Scandinavia, mission work to the Slavs during the great mission century from 950 to 1050, and, finally, the disturbing pattern of mission work in the Baltic region to the 14th century.

The Barbarian Invasions

Barbarian tribes invaded Europe in the late 300s and early 400s as the Roman Empire crumbled in the West. The Arian and pagan invaders became a vast mission field for the Western Church, right in its own back yard. The Arian church lacked centralization and a monastic movement. It worshiped in the vernacular and was not consciously anti-catholic. The Roman church and its papacy not only survived but also won the day.

Pope Gregory the Great was severely threatened by the Lombard invaders who set up kingdoms north and south of Rome. The threat was both political and spiritual because the Roman pontiff was not only the spiritual leader of the west, but also the political representative of the eastern emperor. No help came from the east. Gregory defended Rome and worked to convert the Lombards to catholic Christianity. Gregory's successes made the papacy stronger.

Christianity in Britain, Ireland, and Scotland

- The first British Christians

Christianity first came to Britain through merchants and traders and through members of the Roman legions occupying the area. Tertullian mentioned the presence of Christians in Britain around 200. Three British bishops were present at the Synod of Arles in 314. But as the Empire declined and Rome withdrew its legions from Britain, the pagan Picts and the Scots were free to cross Hadrian's wall, and the British/Roman civilization declined, and the first British Christianity declined with it. The Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, who were invited to defend Britain, took over by a process of gradual invasion that lasted from 449-577. Britannia had become Angleland. England was more pagan than Christian.

- Celtic Christianity

A more vibrant Christianity was preserved in Ireland. Christian communities had been founded in Ireland by settlers from Gaul and by fugitives from Britain. The Celtic Church developed quite independently from Rome in many traditions of worship and the forms of church government.

Another special activity of the Irish Celtic Church was the monastic missionary practice called peregrination. A leader and twelve disciples set out from a monastery to do mission work in the pattern of St. Paul. They established small mission stations in one area and then moved to work in another area.

About 565 Columba, who became known as the apostle to Scotland, established a monastic mission house on the small island of Iona, off the northwestern coast of Scotland. Iona became the jumping off point for mission work in Scotland, northern Britain, and on the continent. Fridolin, Columban, and Gallus are the best known of the Ionian missionaries to the Germans on the continent.

- Rome's Return

For years Pope Gregory the Great had a mission goal of bringing the gospel to the Anglo/Saxon people of Britain. When Ethelbert of Kent married Bertha, a Frankish catholic princess, Gregory seized on the opportunity to serve her with the gospel. He sent Augustine, a Benedictine monk, from Rome to Kent in England. Arriving in 597, Augustine came with letters from Gregory advocating a cross-cultural style of liturgy for the new mission, but the rudeness of Augustine in a meeting with seven representatives from the Celtic monastery in Bangor sealed the separation of the Roman mission to England from the indigenous Celtic church until the famous Synod of Streaneshalch (Whitby) in 664. There King Oswy of Northumbria was persuaded by the misuse of Matthew 16:18 that Romanism was the more perfect way. All of Ireland would be Romanized by 700, and Wales would shortly follow.

Missionaries from the British Isles to the Continent

Though they preserved some Celtic features and the Celtic monastic zeal for missions, these Anglo-Saxon missionaries were loyal to Rome. Chief among them were Willibrord who worked in Frisia (the low countries) and Boniface, who has been called the apostle to the Germans. Boniface worked among the Frisians, the Saxons, and the Thuringians. Wherever Boniface went and whatever he did, he pointed to the primacy of Rome. More than any other person of his time, he tied the German and Frankish nations to the papacy.

The Carolingian Kings and Mission Work

Clovis, King of the Franks, converted to catholic Christianity on Christmas Day, 496. In a pattern for things to come, from 500 to 507 he conducted "holy wars" against the Arians. Charlemagne continued the policy of forced conversion to Christianity during his campaigns among the Frisians and the Saxons. Imperial conquest and forced conversion to Christianity became so synonymous to the heathen people surrounding the Carolingian Empire that it was felt that when a pagan was baptized, he was not only becoming a Christian but also a citizen of the Carolingian Empire. For this reason, the Catholic church's close ties to Charlemagne and his descendants hurt the spread of Christianity in Northern Europe at times. For example, Louis the Pious designated Hamburg and Bremen as missionary outposts with the objective of evangelizing the Scandinavian people from them. Ansgar, the "Apostle to the North," had some success in Denmark, especially in Jutland. But after his death in 865 the prospects for success out of Hamburg and Bremen looked so dim that only the reluctance of the papacy to close the two mission outposts kept them going. A big reason for their failure seems to have been a fear on the part of the Scandinavians of Frankish imperialism. Church and state were so closely aligned in Germany and France that the Scandinavians were fearful of German or French missionaries.

The Great Mission Century, 950-1050

During this one hundred year period Christianity made rapid advancement in Scandinavia and among the Slavic people in Eastern Europe.

- The Evangelization of Scandinavia

There are some similarities in the evangelization of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

- In each country conversion was accomplished as a community affair. Large groups of people became Christian at one time.
- In each country the royal initiative was the deciding factor.
- In each country, baptisms, instruction, and the nurturing of the infant churches were chiefly accomplished by missionaries from England. There were two reasons for this:

- Denmark had conquered England at this time, so there were close ties between the English and the Scandinavian people. The English, however, were a subject people and did not pose the imperialistic threat that the Franks and the Germans to the south did.

A key British contribution to the evangelism of Scandinavia was the education of Scandinavian royalty. In Denmark, Harold Bluetooth became a Christian, but his successor, Svend I, was the pagan conqueror of much of England. But Svend's son Canute, who was educated in an English monastery, became a Christian and worked hard to Christianize both Denmark and Norway, which was ruled by Denmark at the time.

Harold Fairhair (d. 933) was a pagan king who conquered much of Norway. His son, Haakon the Good, was educated in the English court and became a Christian. As king, Haakon was unable to Christianize Norway because of the opposition of many pagan landholders. King Olaf Tryggvason worked by persuasion and force to evangelize Norway. King Olaf Haroldson (St. Olaf), d. 1030, continued and furthered the work. In 1154 Norway became an archepiscopal see, and the church became a national church.

The evangelization of Sweden took place under the direction of King Olaf Skoetkonung. Prior to his reign merchants and raiders had brought Christianity from England, and several catholic bishops are recorded following 950. King Olaf inaugurated a bishopric under the authority of Hamburg-Bremen. The ties to Germany were significant, but much of the preaching, teaching, and baptizing was done by missionaries from England. Northern Sweden would not be evangelized until the mid 1150s.

- The Evangelization of the Southern and Eastern Slavs

The evangelization of the Bulgars became a matter of contention between Constantinople and Rome. Whichever patriarchate controlled the mission work would get the country into its sphere. Khagan Boris of Bulgaria, who was baptized in 865, tried to use Christianity to subdue and unite his nobles behind him. His son Simeon began the pattern of national churches, independent administratively, but agreeing in doctrine with the Patriarch of Constantinople.

Scandinavian Varangians controlled the trade routes through present-day Russia from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. After several failed attempts from Constantinople and at least one by King Otto I of Germany, Christianity came to Russia when Vladimir was baptized in 987. Vladimir had the populations of both Kiev and Novgorod baptized. Most of the active missionaries were monks, and it was monastic Christianity that was held up as the ideal.

Patriarch Photius of Constantinople sent the brothers Cyril (Constantine) and Methodius north to do missionary work among the Slavic peoples in and around Moravia. About 863 Cyril devised a Slavonic alphabet and the Gospels were written in the language of the people. German (Roman) missionaries were the chief rivals of the missionary monks working under Cyril and Methodius. They opposed placing the Bible and the liturgy into the language of the people. The brothers went to Rome for a decision. After several reversals, the people were allowed to have the Bible and the liturgy in their own Slavonic tongue, but the pope ultimately gained control over much of the area.

Some of the mission practices of these brothers are noteworthy as methods still followed today.

- Give the people a written language.
- Translate the gospel into that language.
- Allow them to have a liturgy consistent with their culture.

Evangelization South and East of the Baltic Sea

The history of the evangelization of the Balts, the Obotrites, the Wends, the Liutizians, the Pomeranians, the Prussians, the Lithuanians, the Letts, the Estonians, and the other Baltic tribes is much too complicated to

cover in this brief survey. Sweden and Denmark were involved, as were English merchants involved in the Baltic Sea trade. A key role was played by German knights involved in the Northern Crusades.

The German young man who wanted to gain fame and fortune acted on the urge to move eastward (*Drang nach Osten*). The entire nation pushed its borders east along the Baltic through swamps and forests. A key goal was control of the southern and eastern Baltic, with its rich fisheries, and of the many rivers that provided trade routes through Russia to the east and south. It may be too strong a statement to say that the prime reason for German conquest along the Baltic Sea was power, wealth, and trade. If we say that, we would also have to say that one of the justifying excuses for conquest was the evangelization of the pagan Slavs and Balts. One has to remember that within any "crusade" in this period of history one finds the twin goals of conquest and evangelization. But evangelization always is hurt when it is attached to conquest and subjugation of the people you want to convert.

The goal of the Teutonic Knights and the Knights of the Sword seems to have been to conquer the Baltic peoples and to baptize them in their own blood rather than to preach and teach and to baptize in the saving water of the sacrament. The three hundred years of the Northern Crusades is a record of the shed blood of humans rather than a record of the proclamation of the shed blood of Christ. Yet the Baltic became and remained a Catholic sea until the Reformation. Then it became a Lutheran sea.

Summary

From little mission seeds, great churches grow. Gregory the Great sent Augustine to Canterbury. Columba established a missionary training monastery on the island of Iona. The organizational ability of Rome combined with the mission zeal of the Celts to convert Scotland, England, Frisia, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and the Baltic, along with much of France. Photius of Constantinople sent out Cyril and Methodius to work among the Slavs. The impact of their work in the Slavic language affected mission work in Bulgaria, Moravia, Serbia, Russia, and all of Eastern Europe.

The evangelization of Northern Europe gives us examples of how to do mission work and how not to do mission work. We see how the gospel seeks its own forms, and how culture is used or abused to the good or the detriment of the spread of the gospel.

The evangelization of northern and eastern Europe shows us the power of God working through his Word in spite of the corruption of his message by false doctrine, work-righteousness, monasticism, and the greed and violence of human beings. Europe became a Christian continent because of the evangelization of its northern reaches. Northern Europe produced the Reformation with God's blessings. From northern Europe the gospel spread to North America.

7. The Rise of the Papacy

It is hard to call something that happened over the course of 600 years a "key event." Yet, one cannot talk about the history of the Christian church without talking about the rise of the papacy. The rise of the papacy, gradual as it was, nevertheless remains the event that has had the most impact upon the history of Christianity between the coming of Christ and the Lutheran Reformation.

What factors enabled Rome and the Roman Bishop to gain primacy over the entire church?

The Development of the Episcopacy in the First Five Centuries

Church government was very flexible in New Testament times. Each congregation seems to have had elder/bishops and deacons who were under the supervision of the apostles. Jerusalem had church-wide influence and authority because the apostles were there (Acts 15).

In the early part of the second century the offices of elders and bishops became separate. Each large congregation seems to have been governed by bishops, elders, and deacons, in descending order of authority.

By the latter part of the second century, diocesan bishops, who were thought to be successors of the apostles, governed a geographical area rather than just one church.

By the middle of the third century Cyprian viewed elders (*presbyteroi*) as sacrificing priests. He recognized the bishop of Rome, who was thought to be seated in power in the church where Peter and Paul had shed their blood, as the symbol of the church's unity and the bishops collegial authority.

An imperial synod and three church councils each contributed to the power of the monarchic episcopate and of the bishop of Rome. Emperor Constantine called the Synod of Arles in 314 to settle the Donatist struggle in North Africa. This was a step toward confirming the role of metropolitan bishops as arbiters in what was soon to be a national church.

It is interesting to note that the bishop of Rome was absent from the Synod of Arles, as he was absent from every major church council during this period. His absence only seemed to increase his power. The bishop of Rome was not a part of the front line argument. He was often the one to whom the protagonists deferred to settle the dispute. This procedure increased his prestige and power.

The three significant church councils were the councils of Nicea in 325, Constantinople in 381, and Chalcedon in 451. At Nicea in 325, the metropolitan bishops wore the scars of the persecutions they had endured as badges of power and faithfulness. Now that the church was at peace with the empire, they were the heroes of the faith. Their perseverance and martyrdom in the face of persecution had increased the power of the metropolitans.

By the time of the Council of Constantinople in 381 the bishops of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, and Jerusalem were held in special honor. Each was considered to be a patriarch in the church. Constantinople was given primacy next to the bishop of Rome. Yet Constantinople's power was based upon its position as the imperial capital. It was not an historic episcopate.

The patriarch of Rome looked to the patriarch of Alexandria as an ally in his efforts to retain his recognized supremacy in the face of the emerging threat from Constantinople. But Rome would lose this ally at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Leo of Rome's *Tome*, which described the two natures of Christ in scriptural and Western Church terms, became a basic document for the *Definition of the Faith of Chalcedon*. The prestige of the bishop of Rome was increased as Rome, though not present at the council, once again was helpful in supplying the needed solution. The Alexandrians, however, found the Definition distasteful and no longer served as Rome's ally. In addition, Canon 28 of the Council of Chalcedon had elevated the patriarch of Constantinople to equal privileges with the Roman patriarch. The effect of this was to lower the position of Alexandria and to raise the power of Constantinople as the "New Rome."

Bishop Leo I of Rome appealed to a misapplication of Matthew 16:18 as the basis of Rome's power. Leo was convinced that Jesus had made Peter the head of the church. As the successor to Peter in Rome, the bishop of Rome must be the head of the church for all time. Leo also referred to the Council of Sardica, Canon 3, (342) which directed all bishops to write to Bishop Julius of Rome for help in deciding cases. Leo expanded this directive from a reference to Bishop Julius of Rome as an arbiter of specific disputes to every Roman bishop as arbiter of all disputes. *Sic semper habuit Roma primum*, Leo wrote.

The bravery of Leo in confronting and turning back the invasion of Attila the Hun at the gates of Rome in 452 is another factor in the verdict of most historians that Leo was the first real pope of Rome.

Powerful Leaders Strengthen Rome Primacy

A power vacuum was created by the decline of the Roman Empire. The West was particularly vulnerable because a weakened Constantinople could not defend it. The bishop of Rome became the political head of central Italy under the authority of the emperor in Constantinople. Several powerful leaders occupied the office of bishop of Rome, for example, Julius I (337-352), Damasus (366-384), Siricius (384-399), Innocent I (401-417), and Zozimus (417-418). Each reacted to controversies, disputes, and challenges by stressing in one way or another the authority of Rome because Rome is the church of St. Peter.

Pope Gregory I the Great (590-604) built on the foundation laid by Leo. As a wealthy Roman patrician he had led an unsuccessful delegation to Constantinople to secure aid to defend Rome against the Lombards. After he had entered the Benedictine monastery he founded, he very reluctantly accepted the bishopric of Rome. With the help of his fellow-monks he rebuilt the city of Rome, defended her against the Lombards, ended famine and plague, began mission work among the Lombards, sent Augustine to work among the Anglo-Saxons in Britain, wrote a pastoral theology textbook (*The Pastoral Rule*) that was used for centuries in the church, and promoted the superstition and the miracle stories of what became known as vulgo-catholicism.

Political Events that Contributed to the Rise of the Papacy

Islam aided the rise of the bishop of Rome because it diminished the power of the patriarchates of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria. It also preoccupied the imperial government at Constantinople. Rome became the ecclesiastical power center of Christianity as the centuries progressed.

The papacy's tie to the Carolingians solidified its power in Europe. Charles Martel, the great major domo of the Frankish kings who ended the expansion of Islam into western Europe at the Battle of Tours/Poitiers in 732, also aided Boniface in his mission work among the Germans of Northern Europe. Since Boniface was working as an agent of Rome, relationships between the family of Charles Martel and Rome were enhanced. Like his father before him, Pepin the Short did not hold the title of king. In 751 Pope Zacharias sanctioned the crowning of Pepin the Short and the deposition of the Merovingian king, Childeric. In 754 Pepin and his sons, Karl and Karloman, were crowned king and princes by Pope Stephen. In exchange for this honor, Pepin agreed to defend the papacy against the Lombards and to secure central Italy as a feudal state ruled by the papacy. Rome's reliance upon the emperors of Constantinople was over. Pepin got what he wanted - legitimacy for his coup. The papacy got what it wanted - feudal power and land in central Italy and the protection of the powerful new Frankish dynasty of kings. But in the process the papacy set the precedent for a papal prerogative: kings can be deposed by popes, and popes can grant the crown to kings. This prerogative was exercised when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne on Christmas Day, 800. The concept of a "Holy Roman Empire" impacted the history of Europe for the next 700 years.

Two Forgeries

The supremacy of Rome was aided by a spurious document that appeared sometime between 751 and 774. It was called *The Donation of Constantine*. This document claimed that Emperor Constantine the Great had received absolution from Pope Sylvester, and that the emperor in turn had given to the bishop of Rome absolute supremacy over all the churches in Christendom and secular supremacy over Rome and over all of Italy and western Europe.

A second collection of forgeries, the *Pseudo-Isidorean Decretals*, appeared about 850. They were written to emphasize papal supremacy, to suppress the power of archbishops, to add prestige and power to lower bishops and common clergy as supporters of the pope, and to improve the moral and spiritual life of the church.

Both forgeries were accepted for centuries as a part of valid church tradition because the people of the time could not critically evaluate their authenticity.

The Papacy Strengthened by its Relationship to the German Kings

After the disintegration of the Carolingian Empire, the idea of a Holy Roman Empire was renewed in the reign of Otto I of Germany. He, his successors, and the German dynasties that followed them pursued Charlemagne's ideal of theocracy. The emperors used the church's bishops, who also ruled over land within the empire, to undergird their rule. Therefore, whoever invested the bishops (controlled their appointment to office)

had control over the empire. This dream of theocracy kept Germany from becoming a united nation. Since the bishops wore two hats, an ecclesiastical hat as ruler within the church and a secular hat as ruler within the nation, the emperors and the popes fought over who controlled their appointment.

But the German kings and emperors could not conceive of an empire without the papacy. It must be a Holy Roman Empire. When the papacy reached a low ebb, as it did around 1046 when 12 year old Theophylact became Pope Benedict IX, King Henry III of Germany settled the resulting conflict. Time after time the German emperors would strengthen the papacy by coming to its aid as it faced numerous political enemies in Italy.

The reforms instituted by the Cluniac monastic movement, which stressed allegiance to neither king nor prince but only to the papacy, greatly increased the power of the papacy. The Cluniac Hildebrand acted as reformer and pope-maker until he was elected as Pope Gregory VII. The struggle between pope and German king/emperor over who would invest bishops and archbishops with their office in the church and their control over imperial lands produced a brief highpoint for papal power when Gregory VII forced Emperor Henry IV to stand barefoot in the snow in penance at Canossa in 1077. The balance of political power in Europe would bounce between papacy and emperor for centuries.

Urban II proclaimed the first Crusade in 1095. The Crusades were successful in really only one thing. They increased the power of the papacy in Europe.

The high point of papal authority was reached during the pontificate of Innocent III (1198-1216) who held Portugal, Poland, Hungary, Serbia, and England as vassal states to the papacy. Innocent orchestrated the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Canon I states: "There is one universal church of the faithful, outside of which there is absolutely no salvation." Pope Innocent called himself the "Vicar of Christ."

Summary

Long before the time of Innocent III, the history of the church had become the history of the papacy. The history of Europe had also become the history of the papacy. Such was its power. Such was its rule. Work-righteousness in the form of indulgences and penitential acts, purgatory and relics, and the veneration of Mary and the saints had been promoted by the Roman papacy already before the time of Gregory the Great. These false teachings became power tools in the construction of the papal throne. Political struggles between church and state, the support of certain monastic communities, and the struggle for primacy among the various patriarchates all worked to elevate the throne of the bishop of Rome from within the church to over the church. The man of lawlessness "opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, and even sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4).

But the Holy Spirit has power to overcome all the obstacles that man places in the way of his Word. Despite the garbage of false doctrine that the papacy helped pile on top of the Word of God, despite the false work-righteous teachings of the papacy, God the Holy Spirit still made the papacy the guardian of the gospel in the West. Islam was turned back. The gospel, partly hidden by an overlay of false doctrine, was, nevertheless, spread throughout a significant portion of the world. God used the papacy, despite its rejection of the truth, to spread a kernel of the truth in the world. There the seed lay, waiting for other key events to bring it forth to flourish anew.

8. The Schism of 1054

One of the problems for Western churchmen as we look back on history is that we understand the history of the church largely from a Western perspective. Much of the history of the Eastern Church following the Council of Chalcedon in 451 is ignored in the West. We study the rise of the papacy, and we concentrate upon the evangelization of the North. We imagine falsely that the spread of Islam ceased when Charles Martel defeated

the Moorish forces at the Battle of Tours/Poitier. We study the Western Church from that time on and largely ignore the Eastern Church.

But it was the Eastern Church that bore the brunt of the expansion of Islam. It was the Eastern Church that was hurt by the Crusades, while the papacy in the West was strengthened. It was the Eastern Church that evangelized the vast expanses of Russia. It was the Eastern Church that moved the gospel into Asia. We feel that we understand the impact of monasticism upon the West, but few of us comprehend the way monasticism affected the Eastern Church. We study the conflict between the Papacy and the Holy Roman Emperors, but we have little understanding of the ties that bound the patriarch of Constantinople to the emperor of Constantinople. Much of this myopia is due to the Great Schism between East and West in 1054.

The Great Schism of 1054 was the result of years of strife. During those years, which were also years of isolation of the East from the West, the struggle for primacy on the part of Rome offended the East, which was willing to view the Roman patriarch as first among equals, but rebelled against the claim of Rome to be lord of all.

The Paschal Controversy

The paschal controversy of the 2nd century revolved around when the church should celebrate Easter. The Roman practice was to celebrate Easter on the Sunday after the 14th of Nisan. The practice in Asia Minor was to celebrate Easter on the 14th of Nisan, no matter what day of the week it fell on. At first, each agreed to respect the practice of the other.

But by 190 the problem had become so acute that synods were held in Rome, Palestine, and elsewhere which decided in favor of the Roman practice. The churches of Asia Minor, led by Polycrates, the bishop of Ephesus, held out for the 14th of Nisan. Victor I, the monarchic bishop of Rome, excommunicated Polycrates and all who did not accept the Sunday after the 14th of Nisan as the date for Easter. At the urging of Irenaeus, Victor soon lifted the excommunication.

Already in this incident we have the bishop of Rome trying to assert himself in a juridical, political, and governmental way as leader of the whole church. Various bishops of Asia Minor resisted his grab for power.

"Old Rome" versus "New Rome"

When Constantine established Constantinople in the early 300s as the new capital of the Roman Empire, the bishop of Constantinople received a power boost by becoming the fifth of the five patriarchs. Politically, Constantinople had become the "New Rome." What did this mean for the patriarch of Constantinople and his relationship to the patriarch of Rome?

Over the years the practice grew that the patriarch of Constantinople would be approved, accepted, or ratified by the patriarch of Rome as if Rome were the first among equals. Many factors frustrated the regularity of this practice. As the empire became weaker, communication between Rome and Constantinople became more difficult. Yet, Rome remained for much of this time an outpost of the eastern empire in Italy.

At the First Lateran Council in 649 Rome decreed that the *Typos* of Emperor Constans II, which forbade any and all discussion about whether Christ had one or two wills and one or two energies, was contrary to the *Definition of the Faith of Chalcedon*. The council also decided that the emperor in Constantinople was not competent to decide doctrinal matters. Pope Martin I was sent into exile and suffered martyrdom for this act. In the east, the great Maximus Confessor also was persecuted for opposing the emperor's decree. Rome had challenged the power of the emperor and the alliance of the patriarch of Constantinople with the emperor. As Islam spread throughout the east, it became more important for the emperor to solidify the ties of the empire to the west. The Council of Constantinople (VI) (680-681) reaffirmed the *Definition of the Faith of Chalcedon*. Pope Leo II approved the decisions of the council. The Western Church had again triumphed over important elements of the Eastern Church, as it had at Nicea and Chalcedon.

Then the Second Trullan Council (VII) (692), made up of only eastern bishops, declared that the patriarch of Constantinople was equal with the bishop of Rome. It allowed deacons and presbyters to marry. It forbade the Roman custom of fasting on Saturdays during Lent. It forbade the Roman custom of using the symbol of the Lamb to represent Christ. It condemned various Latin councils. While these actions of the Second Trullan Council were not very important in and of themselves, they did further divide the East from the West.

The Photian Schism

During the iconoclastic controversies in the east, Rome had supported the eastern monastic community and the eastern laity in the use of icons. This widened the gap between the Roman popes and the eastern emperors and patriarchs, most of whom were officially iconoclasts.

Photius was a great lay theologian and scholar. He was declared patriarch of Constantinople when his predecessor, Ignatius, was deposed in 858. Ignatius protested his deposition to Rome. Pope Nicholas I (858-867), the powerful pope of the time, envisioned the papacy as the spiritual and political ruler of Europe and the world. Nicholas did not acknowledge the accession of Photius and sent two papal legates to investigate the matter. They were instructed not to accept Photius as patriarch without an agreement that Constantinople would allow Rome the right to evangelize Bulgaria. When Nicholas found out that the two legates had been bribed, he declared Photius deposed and declared Ignatius patriarch. Photius nevertheless continued to be patriarch and sent an encyclical letter to eastern bishops. Among other charges Photius condemned the Western Church for adding the word filioque to the Nicene Creed. The Roman papacy had never really used this Spanish and Frankish addition to the creed in Italy, but the papacy also did not oppose the filioque doctrine of the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son. Photius also accused Rome of all kinds of errors in what we would call matters of adiaphora. Nicholas excommunicated Photius. In 867 Photius declared Pope Nicholas deposed and excommunicated.

In 869 Basil the Macedonian became emperor when he murdered Emperor Michael the Drunkard and his advisor Bardas. Photius was deposed. He became the tutor of Emperor Basil's children in what must be viewed as a strange form of exile. When Ignatius died, Photius was again made patriarch (878-886). This time his appointment was accepted by the West. The breach between the East and the West was healed temporarily by the Synod of Constantinople in 869.

Schism Renewed and Made Permanent in 1054

The Eastern Empire went into a political decline between 1025 and 1081. During this period Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus needed Rome's help to defend his possessions in Italy against the Normans. He was willing to recognize Pope Leo IX's claim to primacy in return for that help. But Michael Cerularius, Patriarch of Constantinople, 1043-58, had other plans. He envisioned himself as pope of the Eastern Church so that the Eastern Church could be independent of the emperor's control. He planned a clear schism between the East and the West. When Leo IX was defeated in the war against the Normans in 1053, Cerularius began his scheme. He closed the Latin churches in Constantinople. He encouraged the Bulgarian patriarch, Leo of Achrida, to write a circular letter to the bishops of southern Italy. The letter alleged all kinds of errors by the papacy. It repeated the charges of Photius.

Pope Leo IX was very angry. Emperor Constantine Monomachus asked Leo to send legates to Constantinople. In the course of the dialogue, Cerularius had a tractate which addressed the issues from a Roman perspective burned in the presence of the Roman legates. On July 16, 1054, the Roman legates placed a decree of excommunication on the high altar of the Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. In this decree the Roman Church excommunicated everyone in the Eastern Church. Michael Cerularius and the eastern patriarchs replied by excommunicating everyone in the Roman church. The schism was complete.

Summary

Many attempts have been made over the past 1000 years to reconcile the differences. The crusades and the conquest of Constantinople and the establishment of the Latin Empire of Constantinople (1204-1261) hardened the Christians of the east in opposition to the Western Church.

For the most part the church of Constantinople was left to fight Islam on its own. It would eventually lose the battle, and Moscow would become the Third Rome.

The Eastern Church became isolated from the West and the West from the East. Each developed and expanded its own liturgies, its own concepts of the mass, its own forms of government, and its own history. The Eastern Church would be only slightly affected by the Protestant Reformation, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment. Cultural and theological differences between the East and the West have been stressed down to the latter part of the 20th century. Each has viewed the other with suspicion through the centuries. Wars have been fought in the Balkans between Catholics and Orthodox. The schism has helped to produce the recent strife in what was once Yugoslavia.

In 1965, in the ecumenical spirit of Vatican II, the mutual anathemas of 1054 were revoked. Dialogue between the two groups resulted and has produced some results, but tensions remain high especially in disputed territories formerly part of the Soviet Union.

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