

CHAPTER 5

THE CHURCH IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

After achieving such a prominence over the empire and the kings of the emerging nations in the beginning of the thirteenth century under Innocent III, the papacy rapidly fell in power to the time of Boniface VIII at the beginning of the fourteenth century. This century saw the result in the humiliation of the church and the popes at the hands of the secular rulers, especially the king of France. Since the popes had relied on the French king to enforce their will on the English king then on the Holy Roman (German) emperor, the French became their masters.

A. Clement V and the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity

[name given to the time the papacy was moved to France and was under the control of the French king]

1303, Boniface VIII died; end of powerful Italian popes; afterwards, one year of confusion before the next pope, Clement V.

Clement V (1305-1314)

Frenchman, first of seven French popes; under control of French king Philip IV, enemy of Boniface VIII

1309, settled papacy in Avignon, France, 460 miles southeast of Paris; popes ruled from there for 68 years (“Babylonian Captivity”)

Clement V a tool of Philip IV, exempted him from Boniface’s bulls; thus other rulers, including the emperor, show disrespect for papacy

meanwhile, Rome reduced to poverty (under 20,000 population by 1370; cattle grazing up to St. Peter’s altar)

Philip wanted posthumous trial of Boniface VIII, Clement put it off; Clement arranged a compromise: Philip could plunder the Knights Templars

B. Destruction of the Knights Templars

by now, rich and indulgent; Philip IV wanted their wealth; 1308, Clement V put them under the inquisition, charged them:

- spitting on the cross
- worshiping idol Balfomet
- crude moral offenses
- sodomy
- meeting with devil as black cat
- carnal intercourse with female demons

Templars denied charges; put to terrible tortures; some confessed, many died first

1311, council at Vienne investigated, said Templars innocent of charges

1312, Clement V dissolved Templar order anyway; Philip got 260,000 pounds of silver for “guard fees”; rest of property transferred to Hospitallers

1314, Philip had grand marshall of Templars burned at stake (before re-trial could come up); he said, “You (Philip and Clement) will meet me at the judgment bar within a year.” (both Clement and Philip died in 1314)

C. Pope John XXII (1316-1334)

Clement V died 1314; 27 months before new pope elected—strife between Italians and French; finally elected old man (but lived eighteen years more); Italians made him promise, “I will never mount a donkey except to ride to Rome.” (for eighteen years, never mounted a donkey)

got in a long battle against the German emperor, but not successful; many scholars wrote against the pope’s interference

tried his hand in theology, also got burned—wrote book on Beatific Vision, said saints in heaven did not see God until last judgment; his doctrine and book were condemned by a council in 1333; they demanded that he change his view; no evidence that he did (infallible pope?)

very successful in amassing a huge fortune for himself

D. Popes of the rest of the Captivity

purchased land in Avignon, built palace, lived in luxury; many popes, including Clement V, openly adulterous; palace popularly referred to as “one vast brothel”

*increasing pressure from outside to return papacy to Rome; King Edward III of England sent an embassy (including Wycliffe) to try to straighten out problem; ca. 1377, Italian St. Catherine of Siena and St. Bridgite of Sweden begged the pope to go back to Rome

E. Beginning of the Great Schism (1378-1417)

[ca. forty years; cf. article in *NIDCC* by C. T. McIntire]

1377, pope Gregory XI (1370-1378) decided it was safe to return to Rome; Papal States somewhat pacified by powerful cardinals; great celebration in Rome; but, 1378, Gregory died

majority of cardinals French, but mobs in Rome wanted Italian pope, threatened cardinals; mobs got wrong impression, thought an old Roman was elected (cardinals fooled them to save their necks); as was the custom, mobs looted his house

actual new pope, Italian (not Roman) Urban VI; unanimously elected and recognized; good morals, but not tactful, insulted French cardinals and tortured some to death, failed to appoint new cardinals, refused to return to Avignon

cardinals moved to Avignon, Italians went with them, elected another pope, fast-living young Clement VII; they deposed and anathematized Urban VI, who in return appointed new cardinals

thus two popes, each elected unanimously by same college of cardinals, each with support for forty years:

Urban VI in Rome

German empire
England
Hungary
Scandinavia
Italy (mostly)

Clement VII in Avignon

France
Naples (S. Italy)
Savoy (Italian Alps)
Scotland
Spain
Sicily

early in fifteenth century (1409) Council of Pisa appointed a third pope after deposing other two; schism not ended until 1417 by council of Constance, which appointed Martin V

F. Raymond Lull (1236-1315)

wealthy Spanish family, in Spanish court; life of dissipation, disenchanted by woman with loathsome disease; ca. thirty years old, writing love poetry, saw Christ crucified in window; converted, became Franciscan (1272)

had Muslim slave; studied Arabic ten years from this slave; worked out rational arguments to use with Muslims

two desires: (1) chairs of Arabic and Hebrew in the universities; failed to get action, only promises from pope, and (2) missionaries to Arabs

age 58 (1291), first mission to Tunis, northern Africa; preached in Arabic and was imprisoned; debated with scholars; admired for courage; released and sent home

1309, second mission to Algiers; beaten, rescued by admiring merchants, expelled

1314, third mission to Tunis; after one year, stoned to death (June 30, 1315; ca. eighty years old)

*first “modern” missionary; first to write extensively about theology and related topics in a national language, instead of only in Latin—wrote in Catalan and in Arabic

G. Scholastics of the fourteenth century

[golden age of scholasticism over by then; intellectual Renaissance not yet entrenched; therefore, not many prominent scholastics in this century]

1. Marsilius of Pádua (ca. 1275-1342)

medical student in Italy, became rector of University of Paris; interested in political philosophy; supported secular rulers over pope, especially emperor Louis IV over pope John XXII

1324, major work, *Defensor Pacis* (“Defender of the Peace”)

all power derived from people; people give power to state; state should have jurisdiction over people, property, including church property; church power not secular; opposed popes; supported councils called by secular power

Biblical Considerations

- Acts 6:3 “choose from among yourselves...”
- 1Pet 5:1 “not lords over the congregation...”
- Priesthood of believers

studied by reformers, his work published in 1517; placed on RC Index (*Index Liborum Prohibitorum*) in 1559; exerted big influence on Reformers

Marsilius condemned by pope; for a time, made imperial legate over Rome during emperor's war against John XXII; retired to Bavaria

2. William of Occam (ca. 1280-1349)

Early life English Franciscan schoolman; taught at Oxford; summoned to Avignon to answer charges of heresy

during these years, theological and philosophical works; opposed Realism, assumed in thirteenth century by Thomists, that universal essences exist; in contradistinction, Occam asserted an epistemology of Nominalism

- Nominalism = “belonging to a name;” universal essences are in mind only and not in reality (nominalism is anti-realism); only particulars exist in the known world, and these may be associated in the mind by convenient labels (names)
- empirical evidence is the basis of knowledge; one must begin with particulars and reason toward general ideas; these ideas remain in the mind rather than existing independently in the real world
- since universals are created by reason, there is no rational proof for the “universal essence” of God; He must be taken on faith

*opposed unnecessary assumptions—“Occam's Razor”

This attack on deductive scholasticism struck at RCism's use of natural theology and of its presuppositions. Occam's Razor required that one make as few assumptions as possible while working with empirical evidence.

Later Life fought pope John XXII concerning Franciscan division; excommunicated; sought protection with emperor Louis of Bavaria; said, “You defend me with your sword and I will defend you with my pen.”

rest of life, wrote powerfully against popes, favored emperor; e.g., wrote *Compendium of the Errors of John XXII*; opposed *Unam Sanctam*, etc.

very zealous and influential; but influence faded after his death; Occam had the misfortune of favoring a Pelagian view of grace

H. Spiritual writers

An undue emphasis on *Mysticism always stresses personal development by union/communion with God at the expense of intellectual and doctrinal develop. Understandably, mysticism often rises in reaction to dead orthodoxy.

1. Gerard Groote (1340-1384)

Dutch mystic, converted from worldly youth; unsatisfied with monasteries

1380, formed Brethren of the Common Life

not an order, no vows, but groups living together for greater devotion and education; stressed preaching, teaching, training; Erasmus later spent time in one of their schools

wrote and translated many mystical and devotional writings (perhaps Thomas a Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*); Luther printed some of their writings

2. Thomas à Kempis (ca. 1380-1471)

German mystic; educated in school run by Brethren of the Common Life; became Augustinian monk and prior; copyist, copied Bible four times

classic devotional work, *The Imitation of Christ*

stressed Christ, love to Christ, union with him, etc.; thus used by many Protestants

also glorified the monastic life and retreat from the secular world; interesting comparison: the *Imitation* vs. Calvin's *Golden Booklet of the True Christian Life (Institutes, Bk. 3, ch. 6-10)*

I. Beginnings of national literature

Italian writers

1. Dante (1265-1321)

greatest Italian writer; wrote in Italian language instead of in Latin

Divine Comedy: "Hell," "Purgatory," "Paradise"; a great classic; opposed papal attitudes—one pope in heaven, one pope in hell, all the other popes in purgatory

exiled from Florence for opposition to pope

2. Petrarch (1304-1374)

married, but loved another married woman (Laura) from a distance; wrote poetry to her

studied classics; gathered manuscripts (almost fanatical about old manuscripts); first such private library in Europe; thus began Italian Renaissance

visited Avignon; horrified by luxury and wickedness there; coined the phrase, “Dark Ages” on the brink of the Renaissance

3. Boccaccio (1313-1375)

wrote biography of Dante; friend of Petrarch; also collected manuscripts, at Monte Cassino

wrote *Decameron* (100 stories told in ten days), some good, many ribald; many describe lewdness of priests, monks, popes; e.g., story about Jew named Abraham: went to Rome to see Christianity firsthand; decided it must be true because it survived lewdness and wickedness of its leaders

converted on old age; could not take back “harm” of the *Decameron*; 1573, edition appeared revised by pope—kept indecent parts, but applied them to laymen instead of to clerics

English writers

4. William Langland (1332-1400)

English poet; wrote *Piers Plowman*; very critical of pope; used to be thought to be of multiple authorship, but not any longer (except Fowler)

5. Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400)

most famous poet for Middle English; wrote *Canterbury Tales*, stories told by pilgrims on way to Canterbury; stories both good and damaging to church; many think Parson in stories is Wycliffe (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* 6:314)

K. John Wycliffe (1320-1384)

[also spelled Wyclif, Wycliff, etc.]

“Morning Star of the Reformation,” greatest reformer of fourteenth century; attacked not only immorality and abuses, but emphasized return to Bible; thus attacked foundational false doctrines

biblical scholar and translator; taught at Oxford; represented English king Edward III in embassy to pope John XXII at Avignon, dropping vassal payment begun by King John to Innocent III.

Wycliffe was given this task by the king because of Wycliffe’s teachings on the “Dominion of Grace”

- leadership is a stewardship vs. idea of divine right
- faithless stewards could be deprived of office
- this teaching led to the Lancasters’ pillaging of church properties to defray expenses for the 100 Years War in France

continued studies in England; studied Bible; wrote tracts and treatises; translated Bible from Latin Vulgate into English

at first mendicant orders defended him because he attacked the wealth and decadence of the church; later, monks were against him, as was the pope; but English king and clergy defended him

sent out Lollards (“mutterers, mumblers”)—poor preachers, whom he called “Evangelical men or Apostolic men,” sent out to towns and villages reading his English Bible and preaching; great effect on populace; knights went with them

*1380, came out against transubstantiation in the mass (not taught in Bible) in his work, “On Apostasy and the Eucharist”

In 1382 the Black Friars Council concluded that the Bible was not the final authority and convicted Wycliffe of heresies and forced out of Oxford

He went into forced retirement as rector at Lutterworth, not punished further; he was able to finish translating the Vulgate into English, a work that helped shape the English language

many followers (for two centuries) burned to death (e.g., John Oldcastle, friend of Henry V, killed—cf. Shakespeare’s characterization of him in *Henry IV*; changed in second edition to Falstaff; “Oldcastle a Martyr”)