

CHAPTER 2

THE CHURCH IN THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

In this century Western culture 1) began to climb out of the dark ages, 2) the papacy underwent reform and continued to gain strength relative to the leader of the Holy Roman Empire, 3) and the doctrine of transubstantiation became the accepted belief in the Roman church. This century also saw 4) the final parting of the ways between the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches.

A. Political events

1. England

century of great overturning; for a brief time the Saxon king Alfred the Great in the tenth century had been able to resist the Danes, but by this century the Danes began to control and weaken the Saxons (e.g., Danish king Knut ruled over England and Denmark, 1016-1035)

by 1040 the Saxons were able to free themselves from the Danes; the Saxon king Edward the Confessor (actually more of a monk) ruled England 1042-1066

the (illegitimate) duke of Normandy, William, had a relative marry Edward

1064, Harold, brother-in-law of Edward, was shipwrecked off Normandy; visited William, was forced to stay, was enlisted to help William to get throne of England upon death of Edward (swore on sacred relics—hair of Virgin, Christ, etc.); returned to England

1066, Edward died; Harold had himself proclaimed king; William said Harold broke oath; pope Alexander II backed him (wanted England to be a Norman colony, with Norman bishops appointed by pope)

1066, William landed with troops in England; Battle of Hastings; Harold killed; William proclaimed king

thus, Saxon + Norman = English duality

two groups hostile for some time; eventually intermarried and reconciled; stayed loyal to pope



2. France

still feudal system; Carolingians becoming weak; leadership of Holy Roman Empire already transferred to German king Otto (962); Capetians (named for Hugh Capet) a stronger family; secured area around Paris; recognized more as “king of France”; eventually developed into absolute monarchs

3. Germany and Italy

Italy divided into districts based on tribes (e.g., Ostrogoths, Lombards) as well as the Papal States; petty tyrants; divided until 1870; theoretically under the Holy Roman Empire

Germany likewise fragmented under feudalism; five or six main sections, ruled by dukes; after Carolingians faded out, dukes elected one of themselves emperor

Otto I had been crowned emperor in 962; he appointed decent popes; later Otto III appointed Sylvester in 999 (n.b., no “college of cardinals” yet)

in eleventh century, Saxon dukes were weakened; Franconians elected; second Franconian emperor was Henry III (1039-1056)—height of power of Holy Roman emperor over the church

from Henry III on, emperor had to go to Rome to be crowned emperor (for 500 years, called “king of the Romans” until crowned by pope as emperor); involved much expense and difficulty

4. Eastern empire

Islam’s had diminished Byzantium, but the East still claimed a big empire, considered themselves superior to western empire; patriarch claimed to be “at least equal to the pope”

autocratic rule in Byzantium; emperor ruled over the patriarch

B. Papacy in the eleventh century

There was a great leap forward in this century from the pornocracy in the tenth century and the first half of the eleventh century to a strong reformed papacy in the second half of the eleventh century.

1. Sylvester II (999-1003)

Gerbert, the first French pope, Sylvester II (elected amid great excitement for second coming of Christ in AD 1000); Gerbert a scholar: introduced Arabic numerals into Europe; and invented the pendulum clock

encouraged missions in Poland and Hungary; tried to reform the church; against secular control of appointments, simony, nepotism; but his reforms short-lived

2. Benedict VIII (1012-1024) and John XIX (1024-1033)

from powerful Italian family; Benedict was first pope to publicly buy the office; crowned by Holy Roman emperor Henry II (1014-1024), the last emperor from the Saxon house, a good and pious emperor

*when Benedict died, his brother John XIX, a layman (!), also bought the papal office; John was elevated through all the ranks of the clergy in one day

3. Benedict IX (1033-1046)

nephew of Benedict VIII and John XIX; a boy, only ten (some say twelve) years old; obtained office through bribery; even worse than John XII (see Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 4:298-299)

January 1044, people appointed antipope, Sylvester III, and expelled Benedict; April 1044, Benedict returned; May 1044, Benedict sold the papacy to his relative John Gratian for 1000 (or 2000) pounds of silver; Gratian became pope Gregory VI; Benedict IX then stripped the treasury and left Rome

1046, Henry III (first emperor from Franconian line) came down to Rome and held a synod; he deposed all three claimant popes; Gregory VI (Gratian) resigned peacefully (for simony) after synod deposed the other two (Benedict and Sylvester); Gratian returned to Germany with his young friend Hildebrand, a Cluny man

after the synod Henry could find no Roman clergyman free of the pollution of “simony and fornication” (!); finally he appointed a pious German as pope, who ruled only for nine months; another German pope lived only 23 days, died of fever (poison?)

during the time of these German popes, 1047, Benedict IX returned and reclaimed title of pope; but 1048, Benedict again was expelled from Rome, for the last time

4. Leo IX (1049-1054)

Henry III appointed Bruno, a German bishop, a capable and pious Cluny man; Bruno's friend was Hildebrand (again); Bruno invited Hildebrand to go to Rome with him, but Hildebrand refused because Bruno was not elected by the Roman clergy; Bruno finally convinced him to go, since Bruno would be going as a pilgrim and begging election by the Roman clergy

1049, Bruno and Hildebrand arrived in Rome as pilgrims, barefoot and weeping; people impressed; Bruno unanimously elected pope, Leo IX

* began strong reformation of the papacy; treasury empty; Leo IX made Hildebrand papal secretary, sub-deacon, financier, etc.; held position through next five popes until his own election in 1073

5. Gregory VII, Hildebrand (1073-1085)

Cluny monk; friend and helper to Gratian (Gregory VI) and Bruno (Leo IX) and next five popes; desired church independence from the emperor

1056, Henry III died, son Henry IV became emperor

*Hildebrand worked out system of papal independence and supremacy:

1. Augustine: Catholic church = kingdom of God
2. Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals (ninth century) considered as authentic
3. Cited Scripture passages:
 - Mt. 16:18-19, church built on rock Peter; keys given to Peter (first pope)
 - 1 Sam. 15:23, Samuel deposes king Saul
 - Jer. 48:10, sword to fight for God (against Moab)

thus pope can depose kings and release their subjects from their authority; this would be enforced through the pope's "interdict," a refusal to allow the sacraments in the territory of a stubborn monarch

1073, at age of sixty, Hildebrand elected pope by popular demand; the last pope to get emperor's approval

strong moral reformer:

- decreased simony
- enforced celibacy
- much resistance; priests' women sent away as "harlots" (many driven out and died); celibacy enforced after this, but much illegal fornication

Investiture Controversy: struggle over investitures (ordinations):

who appoint bishops, etc.? pope or emperor? bishops had both religious and secular power, were both under pope as religious leaders and under emperor as his feudal vassals

* conflict continued fifty years; compromise in 1122: emperor gave up appointment power, but still had veto and could demand homage from bishop before allowing ordination (this compromise generally understood as favoring pope; for text, see Bettenson, “*The Concordat of Worms*, September 1122”)

in 1059, Hildebrand also moved the election of the pope from the Roman mob to the College of Cardinals

6. Canossa (1077)

little castle in the Alps

Henry IV in conflict with Hildebrand over investiture, also unpopular with dukes

Jan. 24, 1076, Henry deposed Gregory as pope (Bettenson, “*Letter of the Synod of Worms to Gregory VII*”)

Feb. 22, 1076, Gregory deposed Henry as emperor, said subjects did not have to obey him (for Gregory’s side of the story, see Bettenson, “*Gregory VII’s Letter to the Bishop of Metz*, 1081”)

Henry’s followers deserted; Henry invited Gregory to come to Germany to decide further; Henry at same time started south toward Rome; Gregory started north; met at Canossa

Gregory made Henry wait outside castle door three days, barefoot in snow and cold; Gregory finally let him in and “forgave” him—most dramatic moment of papal superiority over a powerful emperor (but in a way a victory for Henry, since pope was compelled to “forgive” him and restore him to office for his penitence)

later Henry opposed Gregory again, defied Gregory’s (weaker) excommunication, chased Gregory from Rome; Gregory appointed another emperor (but ineffectual); terrible civil war in Italy and Germany; Henry ultimately won; Gregory died in exile in Salerno



7. Urban II (1088-1099)

Cluny man, French; had been counsellor to Hildebrand; continued war against Henry IV

1095, delivered great speech against Seljuk Turks; *inspired first crusade (started in 1099); crusaders captured Jerusalem in 1099, but Urban died before he could hear the news

C. Separation from the eastern church *1054*

under Pope Leo IX and Hildebrand his powerful secretary

simmering differences solidify between East vs. West churches:

- iconoclasm dispute
- *filioque* dispute
- clerical marriage dispute
- dispute over Photius

new differences appear:

- cup withheld from laity in west
- west now used unleavened bread
(eastern church said west was copying unbelieving Jews)

*1054, church leaders excommunicated each other; final act when papal legates laid excommunication of eastern church on the altar of the Church of St. Sophia in Constantinople

later attempts at reunion (e.g., by Urban II) failed; churches still separate to this day

eastern Orthodox churches joined the (Protestant and liberal) World Council of Churches in the 1960s

D. Triumph of transubstantiation

ninth century, Radbertus first promoted transubstantiation; fought by Ratramnus, who was not condemned

tenth and eleventh centuries, popular superstition continues; priests and monks favor transubstantiation; “real presence” interpreted physically

Berengar (1000-1088), pious monk, friend of Hildebrand; ca. 1040, published anti-transubstantiation views, caused great sensation; 1050, Lanfranc (an old school friend, abbot, later archbishop of Canterbury) opposed Berengar, showed his writings to pope Leo IX

1054, synod in France was held, presided over by Hildebrand; Berengar was tolerated

1059, council in Rome; against Berengar who recanted his views; later Berengar re-expressed his original views

1078, Berengar again forced to sign statement favoring transubstantiation, “chew Christ with the teeth” (Gregory VII unable to protect him otherwise)

Berengar retired to France; died in dejection in 1088

transubstantiation universally accepted in Catholic church from then on