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1. A Brief Survey of Christendom, 500-1100

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1. A Brief Survey of Christendom, 500-1100

Abstract

The towering institution of the Middle Ages was the Church. From birth until death both the highest lord and the lowest serf felt its influence in some way or another, directly or indirectly. After about the year 1000 all men in Western Europe, except for a few Jews and Muslims, were its members. They were expected to support the Church in every way. It was not possible for one with a secular turn of mind to go to the priest and ask, in effect, to have his name erased from the Church's rolls. Even the passing of time was now reckoned from the supposed year of Christ's birth, following the calculations of a sixth century monk. [excerpt]

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Contemporary Civilization, Middle Ages, Christianity, Church

Disciplines

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Comments

This is a part of [Section III: The Medieval Church](#). The [Contemporary Civilization](#) page lists all additional sections of *Ideas and Institutions of Western Man*, as well as the [Table of Contents](#) for both volumes.

More About Contemporary Civilization:

From 1947 through 1969, all first-year Gettysburg College students took a two-semester course called Contemporary Civilization. The course was developed at President Henry W.A. Hanson's request with the goal of "introducing the student to the backgrounds of contemporary social problems through the major concepts, ideals, hopes and motivations of western culture since the Middle Ages."

Gettysburg College professors from the history, philosophy, and religion departments developed a textbook for the course. The first edition, published in 1955, was called *An Introduction to Contemporary Civilization and Its Problems*. A second edition, retitled *Ideas and Institutions of Western Man*, was published in 1958 and 1960. It is this second edition that we include here. The copy we digitized is from the Gary T. Hawbaker '66 Collection and the marginalia are his.

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III. THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH

1. A Brief Survey of Christendom, 500-1100

The towering institution of the Middle Ages was the Church. From birth until death both the highest lord and the lowest serf felt its influence in some way or another, directly or indirectly. After about the year 1000 all men in Western Europe, except for a few Jews and Moslems, were its members. They were expected to support the Church in every way. It was not possible for one with a secular turn of mind to go to the priest and ask, in effect, to have his name erased from the Church's rolls. Even the passing of time was now reckoned from the supposed year of Christ's birth, following the calculations of a sixth century monk. *Inescapable part of life. If you were in society you were a member of the Church.*

In its services the Church claimed to provide the only acceptable way to worship the Creator, Sustainer, and Saviour of all men. In its preaching it claimed to speak accurately and fully the will of God regarding the life of men on earth and the prerequisites of salvation. In its sacraments it claimed to possess the means of grace and redemption. By these alone man could be saved from the eternal death into which the sin of Adam had plunged him, and gain the eternal bliss which the sacrifices of God in Christ had made possible. It was assumed that men wanted this bliss, that human destiny was not to be fulfilled merely by living out one's years on earth. For the medieval man Heaven was very real and inviting. There is no reason to believe that more than a very few persons denied either the need for salvation or the ability of the Church to assist one in getting it. [The medieval Church was notably successful in establishing the idea that true religion was its monopoly] It frowned alike on the occasional skeptic and on the devout man who thought that he did not need its help in expiating his sins, who believed that religion was entirely an individual matter between a man and his God. ✓

out of Christendom out of society. outside the church there was no salvation.
As we have seen, by the year 500, the conventional beginning date for the Middle Ages, the Church already had a working organization. The institutions of the bishopric and the papacy as well as the priesthood were in operation. It had a theology, the accepted essence of which was in the creeds. The sacramental system was partially constructed. For more than a century Christianity had been the only recognized religion in many areas of Western Europe. For a long time the Church had spoken

M.A. 500-1450 Early MA, 500-1000 High MA. -1000-1300

Late MA 1300-1450.

with the voice of authority on matters of faith and morals, and occasionally on other matters. The atmosphere was such that it could continue to speak with this voice and receive general acceptance for a long time to come.

By the year 500 Augustine and others had already summarized the marks of the true Church in a way that the Middle Ages regarded as basic to its faith. [The true Church was one; it was one for the simple reason that God was one. The true Church was apostolic; founded by Christ, its power was held to have been derived by the bishops in direct succession from the apostles to whom Christ had given it. The true Church was holy, made so by Divine sanctification and by the continued presence of the Holy Spirit. Finally, the true Church was universal; the word "catholic" means worldwide. The Church claimed that it could, and should, embrace all men everywhere. No one could assert this claim more forcefully than did Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem (c. 315-386).]

The Church, then, is called Catholic because it is spread through the whole world, from one end of the earth to the other, and because it never stops teaching in all its fulness every doctrine that men ought to be brought to know: and that regarding things visible and invisible, in heaven and on earth. It is called Catholic also because it brings into religious obedience every sort of men, rulers and ruled, learned and simple, and because it is a universal treatment and cure for every kind of sin whether perpetrated by soul or body, and possesses within it every form of virtue that is named, whether it expresses itself in deeds or words or in spiritual graces of every description. *

It is important to remember that the medieval Church was primarily a religious institution dedicated to the salvation of souls. But it was more than that. The Church was older than the characteristic political and economic institutions of the Middle Ages. When feudalism and manorialism came onto the scene the Church was already there. During the violence and disorder which preceded and accompanied the Dark Ages there was no institution comparable in strength. Particularly in northwestern Europe, where Western Civilization came into being, the Church was the sole bearer and preserver of literary culture to and among men who recently had been barbarians. During much of the Middle Ages the Church was able to dominate culture -- political and economic life, philosophy, literature, art, architecture, and the like -- in a way that was impossible before, in the Roman Empire, or since, in the modern world. At no time has the Church ever had a better opportunity to create a Christian

* William Telfer, ed., Cyril of Jerusalem and Nemesis of Emesa (Volume IV, The Library of Christian Classics) (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1955), p. 186. Used with permission.

*By 1000 institutions were pretty well established.
gap between ideals & practices. (usually able to live with this.)
" gets to big & civilization falls apart.
Late MA - Medieval world breaking up.*

civilization than it had during the Middle Ages.

In the year 500 Christianity was confined almost entirely within the limits of the former Roman Empire in southern Europe, western Asia, and northern Africa. During the five crisis-ridden centuries which followed Christendom both expanded, largely in one direction, and was forced to contract, largely in another. By the year 1000 the Church had succeeded in converting almost all of Europe but an area along the southeastern and eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. But during the same period Christianity had suffered a severe loss at the hands of another vigorous religion -- Islam. The sweep of the Moslems which began in the seventh century had replaced Christianity in Spain, North Africa, and in the general area known as Syria-Palestine. Very little of this territory was ever to be regained. The Christians were much more successful in converting rather primitive pagans than they were in converting adherents of one of the world's higher religions.

The Christianization of Europe during the Dark Ages was accomplished in several different ways. Some missionaries were dispatched by the papacy and remained under direct papal control. Others worked very closely with secular rulers, particularly in the task of converting the inhabitants of conquered lands. At this time the Irish Church was independent of the papacy. In it the monastery greatly overshadowed the bishop's castle in importance and scholarship flourished even during the Dark Ages. Irish missionaries were active at many places on the Continent, often competing with those sent out by the pope. Scandinavia was Christianized largely on the initiative of its monarchs, who summoned missionaries from England and other places to work among their people. In Scandinavia, as elsewhere, many of the missionaries were monks who had left the cloister to spread the gospel.

While all of this was taking place there was a companion movement in southern and eastern Europe, as a result of which the line between Western and Orthodox Christendom was eventually extended northward to the Arctic Circle. West of that line the Poles and Hungarians accepted Roman Christianity. East of it, the conversion of the Bulgarians, the Serbs, and the Russians by the year 1000 led to the founding of national churches which were affiliated with Constantinople. This division within Christendom still exists today.

When Christianity was a persecuted minority sect within the Roman Empire people were generally attracted to it individually or in small groups. They were likely to have gained at least a fair comprehension of what the Church taught at the time. Many who lacked such a comprehension dropped by the wayside in the face of social disapproval or persecution. By the time of the Dark Ages the situation was quite different. Then, pagans were often "converted" by the hundreds or even by the thousands. For example, if we can believe the account which has come down to us,

Following the decision of the Frankish king, Clovis, to become a Christian, he and more than 3000 of his followers were baptized at one time. Like many other tribal leaders, Clovis in all probability had embraced Christianity for reasons that were mainly political in nature. As a matter of course his followers accepted the decision and submitted to baptism. Such "converts" as these were apt to be superficial Christians. During the Dark Ages their numbers were large enough to threaten Christendom with engulfment.

That the Church ever did reach the mass of the people was due, in no small measure, to an extension of its organization beyond the bishoprics which had always appeared first with the Christianizing of an area. This extension was the parish system. Its establishment was a herculean endeavor which was not completed in western Europe until the late twelfth century, and elsewhere even later. Before the renewal of town life which got under way in the eleventh century, parishes in Western Europe frequently coincided with manors. They were supported in large part by their share of the tithe, payable in money or in kind and compulsory on all after the late eighth century. The parish system brought the Church to the people in a very real way. The priest baptized the infants, married the young, administered extreme unction to the dying, and buried the dead. He celebrated Mass and heard confession. He offered whatever education there was in the parish. If it be granted that the primary purpose of the Church was to save souls, then here in the parish is where its most important work was done. There were all kinds of priests. In moral caliber and ability they were good, poor, and indifferent. Many of them were recruited from the ranks of serfdom and given a bare minimum of training. During the whole medieval period the Church wrestled with the problem of educating the parish clergy, but its efforts met with little success.

The Middle Ages in general, and the first half especially, may strike us as having been a particularly superstitious and credulous era. While sometimes exaggerated when so used, these adjectives do help to convey a basically accurate description of the period. Superstition and credulity have been common among the masses during most of man's history. They were very evident during the Dark Ages, when there was no outstanding intellectual figure such as Plato or Aristotle to illuminate the cultural scene. The problem of the Church at this time was far different from what it had been earlier. It now had to present the gospel to people whose level of culture was lower than the level of its followers in the time of Constantine. Over the years the Church did devise a number of ways to accomplish this. For the benefit of men to whom ceremony was awe-inspiring and educational, it developed an elaborate liturgy with which its many services were conducted. For men to whom paganism with its numerous and specialized gods was not far removed, it had many saints who were considered worthy of devotion, who were themselves somewhat specialized, and who were able to intercede with God on man's behalf. To help men for whom the miraculous was both real and present, it encouraged the veneration of

relics of saints and martyrs, and with this the belief that relics possessed magical powers. The Church undertook to teach men who could not read by using drama, painting, sculpture, and in time, stained glass.

Perhaps there was no more striking example of the accommodation made to medieval man's needs than the place accorded to the Virgin Mary. Although the mother of Jesus was highly regarded from the earliest times, the cult of the Virgin really began in the eleventh century, from which dates the Ave Maria. In the Middle Ages God was usually pictured as the righteous and immovable judge who, even in His mercy, would cast sinners into the fires of Hell. Christ was intimately associated with this Divine justice. But Mary, while considered to be the Mother of God, was also thought of as being distinctly human and was so portrayed in painting and in sculpture. There was little theology surrounding her, a fact which helps explain why she was always approachable. The knight and the serf alike besought her intercession before God with humility but with confidence.

Dotting the countryside of Christendom by the year 1000 were literally hundreds of monasteries. We have already noted how and why monasticism began in the third century East and how it spread. In the West it was aided greatly by the rule drawn up about 529 by St. Benedict of Nursia (c. 480 - c. 543) for a monastery which he had founded at Monte Cassino, midway between Rome and Naples. The Benedictine Rule prescribed an ascetic life but it was one strongly tempered by a concern -- many have described it as a typically Roman concern -- for order. Those who followed the rule took oaths of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Since Benedict regarded idleness as the "great enemy of the soul," he prescribed that the monks should add to their daily regimen of meditation, prayer, and worship some work in the form of manual labor and reading. This rule met the objections of those who had opposed what they took to be the lack of order and discipline in earlier monasticism. It spread beyond Italy into northwestern Europe and by the eighth century, strongly supported by the papacy, had been accepted by virtually all monasteries. Monks were known as the regular clergy because they lived according to a rule (regula). They were to be distinguished from the secular clergy -- the priests and bishops -- who lived and worked in the world (seculum).

*Domestication
last, order,
system*

Benedictine monasteries (or abbeys) were under the control of an abbot and, until after the early thirteenth century, each was independent of the others. The original goal was to make the monastery as self-sufficient as possible so that it could exist apart from the world. This was in harmony with the prevalent medieval belief that the contemplative life, although not practicable for the majority of men, nevertheless was more acceptable in the eyes of God than the life of the ordinary person.

Although the primary purpose for their existence was to provide a place where men could withdraw from the temptations

*separation - Augustine not in the world, but of it. (Pantullien)
aesthetic - revels in the simple life.
monasteries - going off to the desert to obtain a holier life.*

of the world, the monasteries did have a tremendous impact on medieval society. On the negative side, they withdrew many men (and the nunneries withdrew many women) from that society and from reproduction. On the positive side, the monasteries long sent forth monks in the role of missionaries. Some of the best medieval farming and craftsmanship, and some of the best schools, were associated with the monasteries. Since abbeys were desirable stopping-off places for travelers who wanted a good meal and a safe bed, the monks constantly received news of passing events. Some of them recorded what they learned in this way and the resultant chronicles constitute an important historical source for the Middle Ages. As early as the sixth century monks began to add the copying of manuscripts to their task of reading them. Books tended to find their way into monasteries. One way to preserve them for later use was to make copies. In this manner the monks performed what was perhaps their most useful service. Many scarcely understood what they were copying. They made errors which were later repeated and compounded. But these shortcomings cannot outweigh the fact that almost all of the Roman literary works that survived the Dark Ages have come down to us through copies which the monks made.

leaders in agriculture

Monasteries early began accepting gifts, many in the form of land. After a time these houses, pledged by their rule to a life of poverty, became the wealthiest part of the Church. This helps to explain the intense rivalry that often existed between the abbot and bishop, who were competitors for the gifts of the faithful. The presence of this great wealth was a standing challenge to all of the monastic ideals. This was particularly true during the violence and disorder of the Dark Ages, when much of the remainder of Christendom seemed poor by comparison. Some houses were able to adhere steadfastly to their ideals, but they were in the minority. By the tenth and eleventh centuries there was widespread agreement that a thoroughgoing reform of monasticism was necessary.

Generally, monastic reform movements were prone to abandon their original tenets after a time and yield the banner of reform to others. For example, in the year 1098, when one such movement had about run its course, the Cistercian Order was founded, with the express purpose of restoring the Benedictine Rule to its original purity. The Cistericans stressed manual labor and were noted for their farming, viticulture, and wool-growing; for their success in reclaiming waste lands; and for their work of clearing land and converting people on the eastern frontiers of Germany. Public response to their labors turned the order from poverty to wealth and from humility to pride. The Carthusian Order, which was founded in 1084, asserts that it is the only one which has adhered to the ideal of poverty and hence has never needed reformation.

There were periods during the Dark Ages when the Church was almost the only going institution, but it was greatly affected by the violence and disorder of the times. Its wealth was primarily in land. Its properties, like secular properties,

*sought to do things in a today (get the monasteries together)
early middle ages - learning in the monasteria.
monk's life was an honored one.*

needed protection. When feudalism appeared as the system devised to afford such protection, the Church was bound to become involved in it. Some of its properties were surrendered to feudal tenure; some were seized by feudal lords who wanted a measure of control over them; and some were given in feudal tenure. In this way, bishops and abbots became both lords and vassals. They were expected to fulfill the duties associated with this status, or provide for someone who would fulfill them in their stead.

[Even before the advent of feudalism, Church officials had begun to perform some of the functions normally associated with the state. They did this not so much by design or desire as by default. A good example is provided by the role of the Church in the administration of justice, the beginnings of which can be traced to early Christianity. In the Middle Ages the Church claimed the right to exercise complete jurisdiction over all "clerics," a term taken to include bishops, priests, monks, and even university students. It claimed complete jurisdiction in cases concerning such matters as marriage, adultery, inheritance, and heresy. Not only did the Church claim this jurisdiction, but it was also generally able to exercise it.]

[Churchmen -- especially bishops and to a lesser degree abbots -- were in great demand for the services which, as administrators, they could render the feudal state.] For all practical purposes they were the only educated persons in Western Europe. They alone knew anything of the old Roman administrative techniques, many of which the Church had long since appropriated and put to use. Their political orientation usually made them loyal public servants, since they believed in the state as a divinely ordained institution whose existence and well-being were necessary to the peace and order of the Church. Furthermore, at a time when there was a strong tendency for a position once given to fall into the possession of one family and weaken still further the royal power, monarchs were fully aware that the posts that bishops held under them were not going to become hereditary, since bishops were expected to be celibate. There was another reason why feudal monarchs were deeply involved in high ecclesiastical offices. [No monarch who was able to prevent it would allow the enormous wealth of the Church in his realm to fall into unfriendly hands. The most effective way to forestall this was by controlling selection of the bishops who administered much of that wealth. Bishops were elected by the clergymen who were assigned to the cathedral of the diocese.] Therefore, it was necessary for the monarch or his representative to be present at the election and indicate his choice of candidates. This control had several important ramifications. For example, if a monarch could dictate the choice of a bishop he could also, if he wished, exact a payment from the candidate of his choice. Or, if he so desired, the king could give his approval to a trusted friend whose chief qualification for the office might have been the fact that he was due for a reward. The king's own revenues were limited; here was a gift that would cost him nothing. This explains how there could be bishops who

*Church was the head of a world wide organization.
Clergy had information of news
Clergy was trained in running an organization.*

were, in background and training, feudal magnates and administrators.

The feudalization and secularization of the Church could be expected to continue either until political developments made the assistance of the bishops no longer necessary to feudal magnates, or until some internal movement effected a lessening of lay influence and control. Such a movement could originate from several sources in the Church. In the tenth and early eleventh centuries it was unlikely that it would originate from Rome. Just as conditions had made not the king, but the lord with a strong castle, the center of power in the feudal hierarchy, so like conditions had made not the pope, but the bishop, the center of power in the Church's organization.

In the first chapter we traced the development of the papacy to the reign of Leo I, the Great (440-461), and observed that the Roman emperor had decreed in 455 that the decisions of the pope were to be "law for all" in the Church. Now it was up to succeeding popes to try to translate this weeping grant of authority into reality. The most significant of Leo's successors in the next six hundred years was Gregory I (590-604), who is the only other pope to be called the Great. His activity was evident in many directions. All of it was characterized by a desire to exalt the papacy as the actual head of a great spiritual institution. Forced to take a stand in maintaining order and in defending Rome against Lombard invaders, he conducted himself as the temporal ruler of the city. He reorganized the extensive properties which had been left to the papacy and which could be an important source of income. He asserted himself as the overseer of those churches in Italy which he could supervise directly, but was less successful in attempts to supervise those elsewhere. He worked to gain general acceptance of the Benedictine Rule. Because of his numerous writings he is often considered to have been the last of the Latin Church fathers, though there was a marked decline in intellectual stature from Augustine to Gregory. Had it been possible for his successors to expand upon what he achieved, the papacy of the Dark Ages would have been a much stronger institution than it actually was. Instead, for four and one half centuries there were only a handful of popes who managed to be much more than shadows in the Church at large. Given the times, Christendom was simply too large in size for the pope to govern.

Ever since the victories of the fourth century the papacy had been accumulating land through the gifts of the state or of individuals seeking Divine favor. These properties, mostly in central Italy, were measured in terms of hundreds of square miles and were larger in area than the state of Rhode Island. With the decline of temporal power in Italy the popes were forced to act as governor of these estates (known as the Patrimony of St. Peter) as well as landlord. This process was well advanced when Gregory became pope. These lands strengthened the papacy at a time when the Church at large provided it with very little financial support. The popes regarded this strength

as indispensable to maintain their position in Christendom. But the estates long lacked one thing vital for their preservation, and that was an army to defend them. In quieter times Gregory and his successors might have been able to use prestige instead of force to protect what was theirs, but these were not quiet times. During the course of the eighth century the popes, who were never successful in gathering and maintaining a dependable army of their own from the unruly noblemen on their lands, entered into a close relationship with the rising power in northwestern Europe: the Frankish state.

It was a Frankish official, Charles Martel, whose victory at the battle of Tours (732) marked both the high tide of Moslem penetration into western Europe and the beginning of the rise of France. His son, Pepin, had himself elected king of the Franks in 752. At this point the needs of pope and king brought the two together. The pope wanted protection for his estates and something to support himself in his assertion of independence from the emperor in Constantinople. Pepin wanted papal sanction for his usurpation of the Frankish throne. The pope crossed the Alps, crowned and anointed Pepin, and returned to Rome with the promise of a Frankish military campaign to relieve the Lombard pressure on his patrimony. In time the king formally bestowed part of his conquest on the pope. This Donation of Pepin (756) was an actual grant of territory and it marked the creation of the Papal States, a last remnant of which exists today in the Vatican City. It made the pope a secular ruler over lands and people like Pepin himself.

A climax in the entente between Frankish king and pope came in the year 800. There had been an uprising in Rome which forced the pope to flee for protection to the son of Pepin, Charlemagne. The king used troops to restore the pope to power. On Christmas Day, while worshiping in St. Peter's, he was crowned by the pope and hailed as "Charles Augustus, crowned of God, great and pacific emperor of the Romans." It appeared that after more than three hundred years there would again be a resident emperor in the West, with the blessing of the Church. But if the coronation was undertaken in the expectation of restoring one powerful political force in the West -- a new Roman Empire -- it was premature to say the least. The death of Charlemagne and then of his son brought an eventual division of the empire among three grandsons. The vast land area which Charlemagne controlled was, under existing conditions, too large for the "great and pacific" emperor, or anyone else, to govern.

After the decline of the Carolingians the papacy experienced what was without a doubt the worst period in its long history. With no outside protection it became the plaything of the Roman nobility and mob, who in the early tenth century made and broke popes as they wished. Then, in the year 962 the pope crowned as Roman emperor a German king who had offered him protection and who was willing to claim as a sort of reward the imperial crown of Charlemagne, which had gone begging for almost

forty years. For nearly a century thereafter, from 962 to 1059, the Holy Roman emperor exercised the dominant voice in the choice of popes. Most often the men chosen were of good moral caliber, a distinct improvement over their immediate predecessors. There was but one serious reservation against them: they were not entirely free agents once they reached the papal throne.]

The rise of a powerful medieval papacy can be traced directly to a reform movement which began with the founding of a monastery at Cluny in southern France in the year 910. By the stipulation of its patron, this monastery was free of all secular and episcopal control and was subject only to the pope. The Cluniacs wanted to restore monastic discipline by placing more emphasis on daily devotions and less on manual labor or reading. They also wanted to free monasticism and the Church in general from what they thought were three great evils: lay control, the sale of Church offices (simony), and marriage among the clergy.] Monasteries which wanted to affiliate with the Cluniac movement had to place themselves under the direction of the abbot of Cluny, a step which as many as three hundred houses took. It is indicative of the improving conditions in western Europe that this reform movement, which involved the abandoning of widespread practices, attracted so many followers from different levels of medieval society. In time many Cluniacs came to believe that the quickest and most effective way to achieve their objectives was through a reform of the papacy which would place it in undisputed control of the Church.

[In 1049, upon the initiative of the emperor, a pope assumed office who had Cluniac sympathies. He brought with him to Rome a monk named Hildebrand (c. 1020-1085) who was destined, until his death thirty-six years later, to be a key figure in invigorating the papacy. Hildebrand succeeded in getting a papal electoral decree from a synod in 1059, which provided that henceforth the pope was to be chosen by certain specified bishops in the immediate vicinity of Rome. To preserve the traditions of election by clergy and people, the decree allowed other clergymen to approve the nominee and the people of Rome to acclaim him. This reform, which was lasting and which presaged the present method of election by a college of cardinals, operated against both Roman mobs and Holy Roman emperors.]

In time Hildebrand became pope, significantly enough taking the name Gregory VII (1073-1085). At once he set about enlarging the reform program which had already brought the papacy to a position of strength and respect perhaps greater than it had ever before enjoyed. Gregory's pontificate was dominated by his attempt to lessen lay influence in the Church, during the course of which he clashed with every important ruler in Western Europe. We shall return to this clash later in the chapter. But first we must consider briefly the papal monarchy which resulted from the eleventh century reform movement in which Gregory played the leading role. Some of the features of this monarchy were much older than the reform, but for our purposes they can all be considered together.

Papal monarchy was built upon the doctrine of Petrine supremacy which had been formulated as early as the time of Leo the Great and which in turn rested upon an interpretation of Matthew 16:16-19:

Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona.' For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. *

This passage was interpreted to mean that Christ had bestowed spiritual power in the Church upon Peter. Since Peter was considered to have been the first bishop of Rome, this spiritual power came to be vested in his successors in the papacy. Here was no mere human sanction for the office. The pope was the head of Christendom because it was the will of God that he occupy that position. *Papacy thought that Peter was the first Pope.*

Every monarchy needs a body of law. That of the papal monarchy was called canon law. It not only dealt with theological matters, such as definitions of the sacraments, but it also defined the powers and duties of all ecclesiastical persons -- clerics -- and the procedures to be followed by laymen in their relations with the Church. It was used in Church courts. Canon law was based upon the Bible, the writings of the Church fathers, and decrees of church councils and of popes. There were a number of local codes in existence when, about the year 1141, a monk named Gratian made the first important codification of the canon law. One thing that stood out in Gratian's code was the emphasis that the pope was the head of the Church and that in governing it he had plenitudo potestatis, the fulness of power. This emphasis has been traced to the reviving interest in Roman law in Western Europe. It served as the basis for a refinement of the definition of papal authority in increasingly precise and sweeping legal terms. *Papal law*

Every monarchy needs an administration to do the royal bidding and effect the royal will. For a time between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries the pope had the most effective bureaucracy in Europe. The papal court (curia) consisted of secretaries, clerks, and other functionaries. Part of it dealt with the enormous correspondence by which the papacy kept in touch with the far reaches of Christendom. Part of it dealt with meting out justice. There were cases which came directly before papal courts while others were brought by appeal from lower Church courts. After the eleventh century there was a great increase in the number of cases handled. Part of the administration dealt with the key matter of finance. Now that the pope

* Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible. *Papal courts*

could make levies on the Church at large and expect them to be paid, increasing sums of money began pouring into the treasury from the Papal States and from the rest of Christendom. Certainly this was one of the most fundamental aspects of the reform. Without larger revenues the papal monarchy would have remained weak. Finally, part of the administration dealt with such purely religious matters as the granting of exceptions to the rules of the Church, such as, for example, those governing marriage.

Every monarch needs advice in making up the royal mind. To this generalization the pope was no exception. He could turn for counsel to trained administrators or to trusted friends who had important posts in the bureaucracy. Under ordinary circumstances their services would be sufficient to insure smooth operation of the papal office. But occasionally the pope wanted to sound out a wider circle of sentiment. For this purpose he could rely on two devices which had been used in the early Church. Gregory VII and his successors summoned Italian clergymen to meetings, called synods, at which matters of common concern were discussed and decisions sometimes reached. The pope could also summon a general church council (such as the Council of Nicaea had been), whenever he considered it necessary to discuss particularly weighty matters. One such council met in the year 1123. It was the first of seven which were convened in the Western Church during the succeeding two centuries. The most famous of these was the Fourth Lateran Council, which brought together more than 400 bishops and 800 abbots in the year 1215. This body made authoritative pronouncements on such diverse subjects as the meaning of the sacraments, the education of the clergy, the election of bishops, the regulation of monasticism, the need for a crusade, and heresy. These synods and councils were controlled by the pope. This fact should not obscure the truth that he used them to obtain a broader base of support than was possible through completely unilateral action on his part.

The reformed papacy sought every opportunity to extend its influence into the Church at large and especially to bring the bishops under effective control. It made every effort to participate in the selection of bishops and to require them to make periodic visits to Rome. Gregory VII and his successors insisted that archbishops come to Rome to receive the pallium, the symbol of their authority. In addition to these measures, the popes dispatched legates as ambassadors to represent them and protect their interests before bishops and kings. These legates publicized and tried to enforce papal decrees. Outranking other churchmen, they often presided over local synods or other meetings. All in all, they tried to be the pope's ears and arms in the Church at large.

Every state needs the means by which it can enforce its will. If it is successful in commanding the allegiance of its people, then its moral authority is normally sufficient to insure obedience to its demands. When this is not the case, then a state must employ its police, and in grave emergencies, when

disobedience is widespread, its armies. The papal monarchy had ways by which it attempted to enforce its will. It could brand violation of its commands a sin and paint, in no uncertain terms, the discomforts of Hell It could excommunicate an offender, which meant cutting him off from all the aids and comforts which the Church claimed to have. Excommunication was a severe punishment for medieval man, since it deprived him of the sacraments without which salvation was impossible and left him in a state of mortal sin. He could be ostracised socially and the Church could ask the state to act against him. As we shall see, there was a period of about two and one half centuries during which the papacy attempted to intervene rather extensively in the affairs of feudal states. Then the pope sometimes made use of several other weapons in his arsenal. He could place entire countries under the interdict, which amounted to excommunication on a mass scale. When an interdict was in force only a few services of the Church, such as the administration of baptism and confession, were permitted. In several instances, popes even went so far as to announce the deposition of rulers and absolve their subjects of the need to give them further allegiance. Occasionally, popes preached crusades against recalcitrant monarchs.]

In the remainder of this chapter, we shall examine more closely several facets of the medieval Church after the Cluniac reform. First, since the Church was primarily a spiritual institution dedicated to the saving of souls, we shall see how a late medieval pope explained the seven sacraments. Second, we shall examine the Crusades as an attempt by an eleventh century pope to put himself at the head of the Church through an heroic act in which all Europe would join: the recapture of the Holy Land. Third, we shall see how the Church tried to meet the challenge of a vast body of non-Christian learning which thrust itself into twelfth and thirteenth century Europe. Fourth, we shall trace the reappearance of heresy in the twelfth century and follow the arguments which the Church advanced in opposing it. Fifth, we shall view the attempt of the Church to define the Christian ethic of the market place at a time when far-reaching changes were taking place in the way many Europeans were making their living. Sixth, we shall examine the development of the medieval theory of church and state at a time when both institutions were increasing in power. Seventh and finally, we shall note briefly how the Church used art, in the form of Gothic architecture, along with every other medium of human expression, in the attempt it was making to create a universal Christian civilization in Western Europe.

Popes were temporal rulers, secular & religious.