

## **Chapter 14**

### **Church and Society in Western Christendom**

**Note:** What we have been studying and what follows is largely confined to the history of the Church as a religious institution and a political power. From our viewpoint, there seems to be as many dark aspects to this history as there are those of light and glory. However, Christendom for all its failings was more light than darkness. The Gospel was preached and accepted by millions of people.

Our central focus has been on the recorded struggles of popes and emperors for supreme authority over the Church and/or entire kingdoms. About the “little people”, the ordinary Christians we have little information. Why is this so? Because most of the historical records naturally reflect only the activities of the “big players” of history - popes, emperors, reformers, saints and heretics.

There is another history, much more difficult to uncover, the history of the authentic life of ordinary Christians and simple religious. Countless dedicated Christians tended to the needs of their families, the sick, the poor. They began the early hospitals and orphanages. They led lives of quiet holiness trying to live out the Gospel in ordinary experiences of everyday life. Typically they had never seen or knew of the activities of the powerful movers and shakers which we have been studying in this course.

The true history of the Church in the Middle Ages is their history too and probably more importantly so. Most of the details of their lives is lost to history. Therefore, if the Church is truly “the people of God”, the “history of the Church” in our history books is only a tiny portion of the Church’s history and perhaps not the most important portion after all.

#### **The Spread of Christendom**

From the 6th century through the 12th century Christendom - the religious union of diverse western kingdoms - extended its domain and gave form and substance to medieval social, political and religious life.

In general, Christendom in the West spread through the conversion of various barbarian peoples:

6th - 7th centuries - conversion of Franks, Lombards, Angles, Saxons and Visigoths.

7th - 8th centuries - Frisians and Hessian Germans.

8th century - Forcible conversion of Saxons.

9th - 11th centuries - Hungarians, Northern Germany and Western Slavs

13th- 14th centuries - Baltic peoples - Prussia, Lithuania, Denmark, Norway and Sweden

In the East, the lands of present day Russia were visited in the 9th century by missionaries from the West and from the Eastern Byzantine Church. It was ruled by Vladimir, the grand prince of Kiev, whose dynasty was of Viking decent. After consulting with the Pope, the eastern Patriarch, Muslims and Jews, Vladimir decided to make a treaty with the Byzantines and cemented his treaty by converting to Christianity in 987 and marrying Anne, the sister of the Emperor Basil II.

He then forcibly converted his subjects to Christianity in the Byzantine Rite (Orthodox). This Rite used the old Slavonic language with an alphabet (Galgolithis) developed by St. Cyril in the 9th century. This alphabet was based on Greek and would form the basis for the Cyrillic alphabet that is still used in Russia today. Given this eastern orientation, Russia moved away from the political and religious influence of the West and would later join the East in the Schism of 1054. Russia remains predominately Orthodox to this day.

**Church and State Spread the Faith** - While popes and various monastic communities were instrumental in converting the various “barbarian” peoples of Europe, emperors were also instrumental. Like Constantine, some emperors saw Christianity as an ethical religion that would help hold society together and others had the same vision, but were also devout Christians who saw the Christianization of their peoples as their duty before God.

In the 9th century, as we noted in Chapter 11, Charlemagne (r. 771 -814) was a notable champion of Christianity and has been hailed as the founder of Christendom in Europe. He promoted learning by founding schools to teach the classics and theology. He protected the pope in Rome from the Lombards in 772 and renewed the Donation of Pepin to continue the existence of what would become the Papal States. He both protected and spread the Christian message.

However, in his zeal, he went so far as to “convert” the Saxons at the point of a sword. In 802, his “Capitulary for the Saxons” decreed death for anyone who postponed baptism, cremated bodies, continued pagan practices, injured clergymen or damaged Church property. In practice, many bishops and abbots mitigated Charlemagne’s policies. Again, the marriage of Church and State was not without its problems.

In the 10th century, Prince Mieszko established his Polish kingdom, married a Catholic princess from Bohemia and was baptized in 966. He established close ties with Rome and in 1000, Pope Sylvester II granted him a charter to establish an ecclesiastical organization of bishoprics and thus brought Poland into the orbit of Western Christianity.

In the 11th century, Hungary became part of Western Christianity. Hungary had been invaded in the 9th century by the Magyars. As they became settled, missionaries came from Germany and Byzantium to bring them the faith. King Stephen I established a monarchy and chose to adopt Western Christianity. For his efforts to protect the faith, Pope Sylvester II (999-1003) honored him with the title “Apostolic King”. It was also in the 11th century that King Sven and his son Canute brought missionaries into Denmark,

as did two kings named Olaf in Norway.

### **The Medieval Christendom - the Unity of Church and State**

As we have seen in the last few chapters, Christendom was an ideal often shared by Popes and Emperors alike. Although they each vied for supreme authority within Christendom and each were successful from time to time, Popes and Emperors did indeed establish that unity of Church and State that is known as Christendom. As with all human endeavors, Christendom was good news and bad news.

The good news was that the Gospel was preached and lived and thus Christianity did indeed become the religion of Europe. Christianity was a powerful source of cultural unity among a wide variety of peoples and kingdoms. Often the Church filled a political vacuum and saved Europe from anarchy. The Church also sponsored and supported education, literature, architecture and the arts.

The bad news was that Christianity was often forced on people by over zealous Emperors and popes, as we have seen. Such conversions were often very shallow and the religious orders had their hands full bringing Christianity to the “Christians”. Political unity was also often established by force of arms. Heretics were viewed as enemies of the Church and the State. The result was a real, but fragile political unity and a real, but fragile acceptance of Christianity.

Given this situation, those centuries between the 9th and the 15th saw a succession of political and religious reforms, decay and reforms. Dedicated popes and religious orders sponsored and sustained many much needed reforms of Christian life and practice.

Christendom - The Romanization of Western Christianity - By the time of the 13th century and the reign of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), Western Christianity, now dominated by the pope in Rome, had developed several characteristics that still define it today. Many of these characteristics were modeled on the Roman Empire after the time of Augustus when Roman law and the absolute power of the emperor made the empire “work”. These characteristics were: centralization, legalization, politicization, militarization and clericalization.

1) CENTRALIZATION - While the early Church and the Eastern Church understood itself in terms of a fellowship (*koinonia*) with a loose confederation of local churches under a Patriarch, by the time of Innocent III the West was defined in terms of the pope in Rome. The papacy operated as an absolute monarchy in imitation of the Roman emperors and the secular monarchs of the day - complete with rings, crowns, robes and genuflections. Innocent had even replaced the title “representative of Peter” with the title “representative of Christ”. Today, visitors to the Lateran Basilica in Rome (official church of the bishop of Rome) can still read this inscription: “Mother and Head of All Churches of the City and the Earth”.

2) LEGALIZATION - When Peter and Paul came to Rome their mission was to spread

the Gospel and accept converts into the Christian community. By the time of Innocent, Europe had been “converted” and the mission was now viewed as one of governance, with the Pope as supreme ruler, legislator and enforcer. Roman law was the wonder of the ancient world. There had been nothing like it in Western history and it worked.

Thus, in the exercise of their juridical authority, popes adopted the ancient Roman legal model and promulgated church laws. The rule of law for the Church was called “canon law”. The word “canon” is from the Greek word “*kanon*”, literally “rule of practical direction”. As a result of the ongoing Gregorian Reform (10th - 12th centuries) a collection of laws and treaties were put together.

Canon law covered such matters as norms for the celebration and administration of the sacraments, especially marriage, for preaching the gospel, for the organization of clerical life, for the administration of Church property, for the allocation of penalties, including excommunication and for the rights and duties of lay Christians.

In the 12th century there was an explosion of church laws. The popes of the 12th century promulgated more laws than all the previous popes put together. This vast collection of some 4,000 laws was first organized by a monk named Gratian around the year 1140. His collection became known as the *Decretum*, which quickly became the standard canon law textbook and was not replaced until 1917. \_

Canon law helped strengthen the power of the popes. To help validate the juridical authority of the pope, Gratian even included the 324 passages that described in detail the supposed juridical proceedings of the earliest popes, however, 313 of the passages were demonstrated as forgeries taken from the largely forged *Decretals of Pseudo-Isidore* of the 7th century and the *False Decretals* of the 9th century. These forgeries were meant to strengthen the power of the popes against the Christian Emperors.

3) POLITICIZATION - We have seen in earlier chapters how the spiritual powers (popes) and the secular powers (kings) were bound together in the reciprocal partnership known as Christendom, in which supreme authority alternated from secular to spiritual domination. While Roman Emperors had, from time to time, professed their divinity, the popes had come to settle for the title “vicar of Christ”(vicar, “one who acts with the authority of another”). The Emperors had always assumed complete civil control, the popes assumed absolute power over the civil authorities when they could.

From the Middle Ages on, the Church was able to remain an independent ruling body, often with great influence or even dominance over the secular powers. The long struggle over the corruption that resulted from lay investiture (lay rulers appointing bishops and popes) was finally won by the Church and the disappearance of this instrument of lay control made a large contribution to the independence of the Church and the reform of the clergy. However, even since the Middle Ages, the Church and State were often closely allied. Many of the Church/ State treaties and alliances endured into the 20th century.

4) MILITARIZATION - When Christianity came upon the scene, the Roman armies set the boundaries of the empire and enforced its laws. For some 600 years, no tribe or nation could prevail against the armed might of Rome. The power and success of Rome was largely expressed and dependent on its armies.

In the first three centuries, no Christian writings condoned war and most Christian theologians insisted that Christians could not join the Roman armies. The great theologian Tertullian (160-222) wrote: “The Lord in disarming Peter ungirdled every soldier”. That there were definite pacifist leanings in the early Christian community is reflected in the 2nd century remarks of the pagan writer Celsus. In his attack on Christians, he states that if all were to act as the Christians, the Empire would soon fall to the lawless barbarians.

Origen, in his reply, *Against Celsus* (248), does not deny that Christians are pacifists, instead he argues that if all would become Christians, including the barbarians, this would establish true peace and preserve the Empire. However, after Constantine adopted Christianity as the religion of the State in the 4th century, Christians now saw the interests of the Church and State as identical and were willing to take up arms to protect them both.

Much later, in an unfortunate turn of events, the Church legitimized and even participated in “holy wars”. There were wars of conversion, wars against pagans, wars against heretics (fellow Christians) and worst of all, the Crusades (see below). The cross of the Prince of Peace was perverted into a banner for murder, rape and pillage. Perhaps with the best of intentions, Popes inaugurated and blessed Crusades. They guaranteed Crusaders forgiveness of sins and temporal punishments due to sins. Centuries later, the Church would take a cue from Augustine and adopt a much saner “just war” policy, which legitimized war as a last resort for conflict resolution, required that it be a war of defense, prohibited the death of non-combatants and limited the magnitude of destruction.

5) CLERICALIZATION - In the early days of Christianity as the authority structure of the Church evolved to meet the needs of the community, there was no sharp distinction between clergy - bishops, presbyters and deacons - and the rest of the people. St. Paul in his analogy of the Church as the Body of Christ had tried to show that different functions within the community did not set some apart as “better” than others - many parts, but one body. Organizational positions in the Church were designed, not as offices of prestige and power, but as callings to service to the community, following teaching and example of Jesus. The call to service would involve them in the daily life of the faithful, not set them apart as a higher class.

As time went on, the notion of presbyters as “priests” and the mass as “sacrifice”, began to establish a priestly class. Historically, in Judaism and other religions, priests were set apart from the people and sacrifice was the exclusive domain of the priests. And so the process of “clericalization” began. In the West the seeds were also planted for the requirement of priestly celibacy. However, the path was not smooth nor linear. In the

East, priests (not bishops) could marry and in the West many priests were married or lived with concubines. Our author, Bokenkotter (p. 130), relates that while the Second Lateran Council in 1139 had made an attempt to enforce celibacy by declaring all clerical marriages null and void, records show that on a single day, July 22, of 1342, (some 200 years later), there were 484 dispensation granted to bastard children of priests, so that they could be married in the Church. Clerical celibacy was not firmly established until the 16th century.

In any event, a celibate, clerical class did developed and was defended as a higher calling than the married laity within the Church. Clerical domination continues to this day.

The Organization of Christendom - An instructive snapshot of Christendom can be taken at the beginning of the 13th century during the reign of Pope Innocent III, one of the foremost popes of the medieval Christendom. At that time it is estimated that there were some 70 million Christians in Europe. They were geographically organized into some 400 dioceses, each with their own bishop, who was from time to time subject either to the pope or the emperor. Each diocese was subdivided into parishes usually run by secular priests.

The bishop functioned not only as the spiritual leader and ecclesiastical administrator of the diocese, but also as a secular administrator and judge within the diocese. Bishops were often selected from powerful families and given the office of bishop as a reward for secular service or in lieu of money (simony). Kings and Emperors enlisted the bishops in their secular service, because they were usually some of the few educated people in the region. Again, it was preferred that they be celibate to avoid the risk that they might pass on church property to their children. The bishop was in fact a feudal overlord and, indeed, a busy one at that.

As the spiritual leader of the diocese, the bishop made visits to the various religious institutions under his control. On arrival at a local church, he would summon the clergy and some lay people. He would inspect the credentials of the clergy and interrogate the lay people concerning the behavior of the clergy - how they carried out their duties, how they dressed, whether they hung out in taverns or played dice. He would then inquire about the behavior of the laity. He also inspected the physical plant and the lands that were owned by the Church.

The bishop would often call a synod of the clergy and review the ecclesiastical and secular laws pertaining to the diocese. He could also conduct a law court and rule on matters such as morality, marriage and last testaments.

One special spiritual duty was to ordain men to the priesthood. Since seminaries would not be established until the 16th century, candidates (at least 24yrs old) presented themselves for a three day oral examination on their understanding of the faith and their ability to communicate it. On passing the exam they were ordained and appointed or elected by the people to administer a parish.

Priests administered the sacraments and cared for the poor. Since the Gregorian Reform of the 11th century, the clergy were to avoid temptations to simony, were encouraged to be celibate and to be set apart in dress and lifestyle from the laity. However, in the 13th century most priests were still barely distinguishable from the laity, especially those who were married with families or living with concubines.

### **Liturgical Life in the Middle Ages**

The medieval liturgy was a symbolic microcosm of Christendom. The characteristics of centralization, legalization and clericalization discussed above, were evident in the liturgy, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. The Eucharist reflected centralization in directives from Rome which standardized the language and form of the liturgy and in appointment and/or approval of the clergy after the victory over lay investiture. The liturgy was also governed, often in great detail, by the code of canon law. Canon law spelled out the functions of clergy and laity in the liturgy.

The most prominent characteristic that was evident in the middle ages was the clericalization of the liturgy. In the apostolic church and for centuries later, the Eucharist was a community event with full participation of all present and no clear distinction between celebrant and those assembled. Participants brought their own bread and wine to the celebration and took what was left over for those not present and to consume themselves during the week.

During the middle ages, the laity were gradually excluded from participation. The priest was the central actor and the laity were reduced to spectators. The priest was no longer in ordinary clothing, but robed in vestments of royalty and, with his back to the people, whispered prayers in Latin, which was no longer intelligible to those assembled. The bread, now unleavened and in small wafers, was provided by the priest. The people no longer took the bread in the own hands, but had to kneel and receive it on their tongues and the wine was withheld from them.

Frequent reception of communion was in practice restricted to nuns, monks and the priest. The consecrate bread was now more an object of silent adoration, more to be looked at than to be consumed. The highlight of the Mass was the elevation of the host by the priest after consecration, accompanied by the ringing of bells. As we have noted, finally legislation had to be passed requiring reception of the Eucharist at least once a year.

A quote from Bokenketter is instructive:

A warning bell was rung beforehand to alert the faithful, many of whom would wander around town going from church to church just to be present at the elevation. Sometimes they would pay the priest a special stipend just to hold the host up higher and for a longer time, and some even engaged in

lawsuits in order to get the best place for viewing the host. This attitude gave rise to various devotions that focused on the host. The entire town would come out on such feasts as Corpus Christi in June, when the priest would carry the host through the town encased in a glittering gold monstrance. (p. 131).

## **Monastic Life - Its Glories and Its Failures**

After breakdown of the Carolingian Empire in the early 9th century, the monastic life fell prey to that same evils and disorders of the secular culture. Monasticism was in need of drastic reform. In fact, by the 9th century, organized monastic life in England had ceased. In the 10th century a Benedictine reform culminated in the publication of the *Concordance of the Rule* which was to successfully govern English monasticism until its suppression during the English Reformation in the 16th century.

The Benedictine Reform at Cluny - In Europe, the reform was begun and sustained by the reform of the Benedictine Rule at the monastery of Cluny in Burgundy. As mentioned in earlier chapters, Cluny had been established in 910 by William of Aquitaine and freed from lay control and local bishops. It reported only to Rome. Even the decadent popes of the 10th century protected Cluny.

A series of strong, reform minded abbots restored the Rule of St. Benedict at Cluny during the 10th and 11th centuries. Gone, however, was the simple Rule of St. Benedict - "pray and work". Manual labor was discarded and the recitation of the Divine Office constituted almost the entire life of the monks. Simplicity was replaced by ceremony. Cluny became a mecca for those seeking spiritual perfection. Unlike the autonomy experienced by earlier Benedictine monasteries, the Clunaic monasteries were grouped together in a religious "order" under the absolute control of the abbot of Cluny. By the beginning of the 12th century Cluny encompassed some 2,000 abbeys, priories and cells.

While the popes protected Cluny, Cluny championed the popes. Cluny was the spiritual power behind the Gregorian reform and Pope Gregory VII, (the great reformer), was a monk from Cluny as were the less reform minded popes Urban II and Paschal II. In an interesting historical footnote, while Cluny produced pope Urban II who initiated the bloody Crusades, Cluny was also the spiritual force behind two peace movements - The Peace of God (989) and the Truce of God (1027). Both of these movements were an attempt to curb the violence of feudal warfare.

The "Peace of God" was decreed in order to make the roads safe for pilgrims and merchants. It set out codes of behavior for knights and soldiers that stipulated the rights of the noncombatant peasants and established churches as "sanctuary", where those attacked could seek safety. Any who violated the rights of noncombatants and broke sanctuary were banned from all the sacraments and/or faced excommunication. Oddly enough, those knights who broke the Peace of God could expiate their sins by joining a Crusade!

The “Truce of God” established “closed seasons” on fighting. These included the seasons of Lent and Advent (through Epiphany), holydays, and every week of the year “from sunset on Wednesday to sunrise on Monday”.

While most historians view these peace movements as largely ineffective, they were signs that at least some in the Church recognized the madness of war and its radical departure from the Gospel. Later St. Augustine’s “just war” theory was revived, but with the advent of modern weapons and guerilla warfare the just war theory has fallen on hard times.

The Cistercians - By the 12th century the life in the Cluniac monasteries had become too luxurious for some. Thus another monastic reform movement resulted in a new order, the Cistercians. Its most notable abbot was Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153), who set the tone for the new order. He implemented the “Charter of Love” written by abbot Stephen Harding in 1119. This charter called the monks back to manual labor, simplified the liturgy and enforced strict asceticism. Bernard was to be a leader in the Church and in the general spiritual revival of the 12th century that included a reform of the parish clergy. He also helped organize the unsuccessful Second Crusade.

Unlike Cluny, the various Cistercian monastic houses were fairly autonomous. In other words, this was a reformation of Cluny by returning to ancient Benedictine practices. By the end of the 12th century the Cistercian movement which included some 600 monasteries had taken root in Italy, Germany, England, Spain, Ireland, Poland and Hungary.

An offshoot of the Cistercian Benedictine reform was the formation of orders of hermit monks who practiced very strict austerity and give themselves to prayer and meditation. Two of these orders were the Camaldolese (1072) and the Carthusians (1084).

The Mendicant Orders - Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites and Augustinians - These were the orders known as friars, from the Latin *fratres* (brother), and called mendicant, from the Latin *mendicare* (to beg), because they supported themselves by begging alms. They pursued their monastic ideals while living an active life in society - preaching and performing works of charity. They worked in the slums of the new cities that were forming in Europe.

The orders were founded by such saints as St. Francis (1181-1226) who preached love and lived in poverty. Dominic de Guzman (1170-1221) founded the Order of the Friars Preachers or the Dominicans. He preached to the Albigensian heretics and was somewhat successful, but, as we noted earlier, Innocent II initiated a Crusade against the Albigensians. Ultimately the Dominicans would be attracted to the universities and produced such famous scholars as St. Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus.

The Franciscans and Dominicans were joined by the Carmelite and Augustinians in their mission to the poor who populated the slums of the growing cities. All of these orders

were directly subject to the Pope and supported the reform efforts and missionary activities of the Church.

### **The Social Mission and Social Theory of the Church**

The Mission - Unlike today, clerics and religious orders constituted a sizable portion of the population. In large numbers, they were often available for and dedicated to all kind of social work, especially directed to the sick and the poor. Since the 5th century bishops had been required by canon law to spend a portion of their revenues on the needs of the poor. They founded hospitals that not only served the sick, but also the hungry, homeless and insane. Records in 14th century England show 8 such hospitals in Canterbury, 17 in London, and 18 in York. During and following the Black Death in the middle of the 14th century, these hospital served mainly the sick.

The Theory - Medieval scholars devised a social theory that accepted the social structure as a fact of life and argued that this structure was rightly ordained to the achievement of spiritual goals. By birth, each person was assigned to a particular social class and each class functioned for the good of the whole. There was no theoretical opening for social change or even social reform. Upward mobility - either social or economic - was a rare phenomenon.

All the social evils - slavery, serfdom, war, poverty - were blamed on human sin and were simply to be endured. Individual suffering could be addressed, but the social structures and conditions that caused individuals to suffer, were simply a fact of life and, indeed, perhaps part of divine providence.

There was one social reality that was suspect: the pursuit of economic profit and especially, the practice of usury. Usury was defined as the charging of interest simply for lending money. The Old Testament had forbidden it and a number of Councils, including the Council of Lyons (1274) and the Council of Vienne (1312) made usury virtually a crime. Interestingly, people often did need loans and since Jews were banned from many occupations, the business of “money lending” was assigned to the Jews. They were outside the Christian moral orbit and held to be destined for damnation anyway. And so Jews became the money lenders and eventually the bankers of Europe.

### **The Crusades - The “Holy Wars”**

As discussed above, the Peace of God (989) and the Truce of God (1027) had attempted to curb the violence of feudal wars in which Christians killed other Christians. And in 1045 the Council of Narbonne had stated that: “A Christian who kills another Christian spills the blood of Christ.”

And, indeed, in 1095 when Pope Urban II proclaimed the First Crusade he first reminded Christians of the Truce of God and that they were to live at peace with one another and then he called on them to redirect their violence toward the infidel Moslems in a holy war

to free the Holy Land. He said:

“reenact the law of our ancestors known as the Truce of God. And now that you have promised to maintain the peace among yourselves you are obligated to succor your brethren in the East, menaced by an accursed race, utterly alienated from God....wrest that land from the wicked race and subject it to yourselves.

Armed with a holy purpose, guaranteed of eternal rewards, blessed with the first plenary indulgence and marked with red crosses on their tunics (crusade means, “taking the cross”), thousands of knights and soldiers embarked on the first Crusade shouting “God wills it”. For those searching the mind of God, they may well have reread these words of Jesus: “Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.” (Mt. 26:52). And die they did, along with thousands of innocents - men, women and children.

The First Crusade (1096-99) was deemed the most successful, even though one-half of the 25,000 crusaders died. Jerusalem was captured and Crusader “states” were set up along the Mediterranean coast. The circumstances surrounding the First Crusade were very complex and only a brief outline is possible here.

Christians had already defeated the Moslems in the lands of the western Mediterranean. Since the papacy of Gregory VII (1073-85) people looked to the pope for leadership. The Eastern Emperor Alexius had appealed to Urban for help against the Seljuk Turks, new fanatical converts to Islam, who had seized Jerusalem and defeated the Eastern armies in the Battle of Manzikert (1071). There were rumors that Christian pilgrims had been mistreated by these Turks in the Holy Land. For some of the details of the First Crusade (1096-99), see Chapter 13, (p. 12-13).

The Second Crusade (1146-48) was called by Pope Eugenius III (1145-53) and preached by Bernard of Clairvaux. It was designed to recapture the kingdom of the city of Edessa, in modern Turkey, which had fallen to the Moslems in 1144. It now posed a threat to the Crusader States established in the First Crusade. It was unsuccessful.

The Third Crusade (1189-92) was initiated in response to the Islamic recapture of Jerusalem in 1186. It was initially led by the powerful Emperor Frederick I and accompanied by armies led by Philip of France and Richard the Lion-Hearted of England. Frederick died en route to the Holy Land and, after some dispute, the leadership fell to Richard who fought various battles for five years. While Jerusalem was not recaptured, there was one positive diplomatic result negotiated by Richard and the Turkish leader Saladin: the guarantee of safe passage to Christian pilgrims from Jaffa to Jerusalem.

The Fourth Crusade (1202-4) was initiated by the powerful Pope Innocent III (1189-1216). It witnessed a turning away from the ideal of “freeing the Holy Land” to a sheer economic enterprise. On their way to the East, the Crusaders attacked Christians in

Hungary and incurred a papal excommunication.

This Crusade was deemed “successful” in military terms. However, Western Christians conquered Eastern Christians, sacked their ancient capital Constantinople and established the Latin Empire of Constantinople, which lasted from 1204 until 1261. A Latin Count, Baldwin of Flanders, was placed on the imperial throne and a Latin Patriarch was appointed. It was unsuccessful in that it did not recapture Jerusalem and by killing fellow Christians, destroying their city and churches, forcing them to practice their faith according to the Latin Rite and occupying their city, it incurred the wrath and hatred of Eastern Christians and, in the view of many historians, put the final seal on the Eastern Schism begun in 1054, (as related in Chapter 13).

The Children’s Crusade (1212) was the next sad episode. Its reporting is a mixture of history and legend. Children from France and Germany journeyed to Italy expecting to cross the Mediterranean “dry-shod” as in the story of the Exodus. Their goal was to take back Jerusalem from the Turks. In the end, their senseless journey was one of misery and death. They died by the thousands from disease, starvation and slaughter. Most of the survivors were sold into slavery by the Turks and taken to Egypt.

The Fifth Crusade (1218-1221) was actually called in 1215 by Pope Innocent IV (1198-1216), but he died before it could be organized. This Crusade was another disaster. Its strategic target was Egypt. Fredrick II of Germany had promised troops, they never materialized.

A small papal army joined by troops from Jerusalem and some Teutonic Knights had the misfortune of coming under the command of an incompetent papal legate, Cardinal Pelagius. Pelagius considered himself supreme commander on the basis that he represented the pope. After losing thousands of troops to floods and unsuccessful battles, the crusaders finally withdrew after negotiating an eight-year truce and acquiring a few relics.

The Sixth Crusade (1228-29) was both strange and successful. Fredrick II had greatly displeased the popes for not showing up for the Fifth Crusade. Therefore, he decided to go the Holy Land. He departed in 1227, but returned immediately to Sicily when a fever broke out on his ships. Thinking this delay intentional, Pope Gregory IX excommunicated Fredrick. Undaunted Fredrick continued on only to find on his arrival in Palestine that the Latin States, upon instructions from a “snubbed pope”, refused to cooperate with him.

Fredrick then accomplished the near impossible. He negotiated with the Moslem and through shrewd diplomacy won control of the cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth on the condition that toleration be granted to the Moslem population. Incredibly, Pope Gregory, still feeling offended, refused to acknowledge the treaty. Thus Fredrick was forced to crown himself king of Jerusalem in 1229 with only his army in attendance. When Fredrick left, there were internal problems and in 1244 Jerusalem again fell to the Moslems, never again to be taken by the West.

The Seventh Crusade (1248-54) and the Eighth Crusade (1270) were called by Pope Innocent IV (1243-54) and led by King St. Louis IX of France. They were both unsuccessful and military disasters. The last Crusader strongholds fell from 1271-91.

### **The Crusades - An Evaluation**

Whatever can be said for the claim that all popes are indeed the Vicar of Christ on earth, it is impossible for any thoughtful Christian to picture the Jesus of the Gospels initiating a "holy war" of mass destruction against anyone. The Crusades were clearly a perversion of the message of Jesus. Jesus had taken up the cross as an example of one who overcomes evil, not by reflecting it back, but by overcoming evil by the power of love. Jesus was the defining example of nonviolent resistance to evil.

In any event, historians have endeavored to outline the positive and negative results of the Crusades:

#### Positive Results-

- The stimulation of economic growth, especially of the Italian cities.
- European contact with the high civilizations of the Near East.
- Aided the spread of Christianity to the east shores of the Baltic and later to Central Asia and the Far East.

#### Negative Results -

- Attempted to establish the Kingdom of God by physical violence.
- Reversed of the early Christian attitude toward war.
- Failed to restore the Holy Places to Christian control.
- Weakened the ties between Eastern and Western Christianity.
- Deepened the hatred between Moslems and Christians.
- Institutionalized, under the popes, the warrior traditions of the European barbarians who had been converted to Christianity.

### **Lessons from History?**

1) **The union of church and state** -- A great temptation, but resist it. It seems so logical. The Church, based on the Word of God and with the divine assistance of the Holy Spirit, should be the final authority on truth and morals in society. Thus, the Church should express the “laws of God” in the laws of the State and the State should enforce them for the good of all. There is some truth in this. Murder, theft, lying under oath, child abuse are immoral and also ought to be illegal. However, not everything that is immoral - divorce, adultery, fornication, alcohol abuse - can be made illegal. And since faith is a gift, it cannot be forced on anyone. Religious liberty is a basic human right.

Like the concept of the “benevolent dictator” as the best form of government or the Socratic idea of “the one who knows how to rule ought to rule”, these may work conceptually, but not in real life. Lord Acton was right - “power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely”.

Once Church and State are joined then heresy becomes an offense against the State and often a capital offense at that. The Inquisition was a perfect example - the Church identifies the heretics (often through torture) and the State punishes them.

Church and State must be separate so that neither will corrupt the other. The Church at its best can be a helpful critic of the State in whatever political form it takes. There is no perfect form of civil government. Thus the Church should be active politically, but only as an advocate for what it thinks will contribute the flourishing of society, not as an advocate for any particular form of government.

2) **There is no one “right way” to organize the Church** -- The Western model of the monarchical papacy has problems with too much power in the hands of one person and his curial bureaucracy. The Conciliar Model, with ecumenical Councils as the final word, can have difficulty making final decisions on fundamental disputed issues. The Eastern Patriarch Model can lead to too much diversity in practice and theology.

All models have good and bad points. However, the distribution of juridical authority in the Eastern Model, the ability to make final doctrinal decisions in the Western model and the power of collective thought and expression in the Conciliar Model should all find expression in the way the Church is organized.

And throughout all its organizational history the Church has proven to always be in need of self reflection and reform.

3) **The Church should never sponsor war** - If nations need to protect themselves in a defensive war, the Church can be supportive and/or critical of how war is waged with its continuing efforts to define a “just war theory”. However, if the mission of the Church is to make Jesus and His message present to the world, it can never imagine that it can accomplish this mission through armed force.

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