

## CHAPTER 1

### THE DARK AGES

This period takes in over 500 years of European history. The term “Middle Ages” covers a longer period of about A.D. 500 – A.D. 1500. The first half of that period, ca. A.D. 500 – A.D. 1000, was marked by widespread spiritual, military, political, academic, and economic decline, and is styled by the term “Dark Ages”

#### A. Political and cultural situation

##### 1. Great cultural decline

Literacy declined from nearly universal (in the empire) to ca. 2%

##### 2. Lack of law and order

No strong center to maintain law and order

##### 3. Development of feudal system

Suzerain over vassals  
Protection given in return for service  
Little travel possible for most  
Widespread poverty; manorial system

##### 4. Theoretical continuance of Roman Empire

Romulus Augustus deposed in A.D. 476

But empire theoretically preserved by Eastern emperors, who appointed “patricians” among the barbarian leaders

Idea still in popular mind; barbarian rulers tried to have “Roman” courts (e.g., Clovis); idea contributed to growing power of the papacy

## 5. Beginnings of nationalism

Latin still the language of culture

Different areas developed Latin differently (e.g., Portugal, Romania); Germanic tribes fused many of their languages

European nations begin taking cohesive form culturally

But still many language barriers (e.g., in fourteenth century, Marco Polo from Venice and cell-mate from Genoa had to converse in French)

## 6. Preservation of culture in the monasteries

Copied and preserved manuscripts: Bible, classical works, early fathers

Some copyists apparently illiterate themselves

In this way about 1/3 of Roman and Greek literary culture preserved

E.g., best texts from Homer preserved (Homer lived ca. 900 B.C., writing of civilization from ca. 1100 B.C.); ruins have now been excavated of places Homer wrote about

## 7. New migrations

### a. Slavic

Little known of previous locations; settled in eastern Europe; many were slaves, thus called "Slavs"; from 600 to 1300, all were converted to Christianity: Bulgarians and Croats Roman Catholic, Serbs Greek Orthodox; Croats and Serbs made up Yugoslavia

### b. Scandinavian

Starting ca. A.D. 700, many marauding expeditions; attacked Britain, France (Normandy), even Sicily; mixed with populations

Vikings especially active in the North and Baltic and Mediterranean Seas after the collapse of the Carolingian empire (after 850)

## 8. Political effects of the rise of Islam

"Islam" = "submission"

Perhaps result of lack of evangelism by Eastern church

Mohammed:

Started preaching shortly after A.D. 600; in 622, Hegira, flee from Mecca to Medina; next ten years, character change, use force; during Dark Ages the Muslims conquered Arabia, Palestine, Egypt, Syria, north Africa, Spain, into France (stopped in France by Charles Martel at battle of Tours in 732)

## 9. Eastern empire

Withstood many attacks: Goths, Slavs, Persians, Mohammedans; but continued shrinking

Two important emperors:

Justinian I (483-565, ruled 527-565)

Greatest Byzantium emperor; fought Goths, Slavs, Persians; re-conquered north Africa from Vandals, even most of Italy from the Goths; codified Roman laws, famous law code finished by 529; strongly orthodox; built the Hagia Sophia; wife a monophysite; he tried to win over monophysites, failed to do so

Leo III, the Isaurian (= "north Syrian"); ca. 680-741, ruled 717-741, about 200 years after Justinian)

Defeated Arabs in series of battles; tried to argue against Mohammedans, thus an iconoclast; tried to enforce iconoclasm, great opposition; finally compromise: no statues, but bas-reliefs (icons) allowed in Eastern churches

## 10. France and Germany

### a. The Merovingians

Ca. 500, Clovis and France converted to orthodox Christianity; over 100 years, Merovingians ruled France, but became degenerate; by A.D. 700, "mayors of the palace" more powerful than the Merovingian kings

### b. The Carolingians

732, Battle of Tours, Charles Martel, mayor of palace, defeated Mohammedans, saved Europe; died 741

Pepin the Short; son of Charles Martel, new mayor of the palace; Lombards (an Arian tribe) trying to unite Italy under their control; pope Zacharias afraid for orthodoxy; asked help from Pepin; Pepin defeated Lombards twice, gave much of Italy to the pope; 751, pope Zacharias allowed Pepin to be crowned as king of France, replacing the weak Merovingian king (the ceremony was performed by the pope's representative Boniface, the famous missionary to Germany); Pepin continued to aid the popes against the Lombards; in 754 Stephen, the next pope, himself crowned Pepin king in a second great ceremony; Pepin gave to the pope all the lands captured from the Lombards—these became the Papal States (existed from 756-1870)

Charles the Great (Fr. Charlemagne)

Son of Pepin; successful and brilliant general and ruler; brilliant light in Dark Ages

Lombards uniting Italy again, Charles defeated them three for four times, thus helped pope Leo III; also pushed Mohammedans back to Spain and conquered Saxons in north Germany

“Carolingian Renaissance”: furthered learning; himself illiterate; but interested in Latin and Greek; imported scholars (e.g., Irish teachers; note “Charlemagne and Education” in Bettenson, pp. 97-98); studied theology

797, Empress Irene put her son to death, seized crown of eastern empire, caused trouble for pope

\*Key event entangling church and state:

Christmas, 800, pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne “Charles Augustus, crowned by God, the great and pacific emperor of the Romans, life and victory!”; thus Charles called “Holy Roman emperor,” first western emperor since 476 (324 years); set precedent for pope crowning emperor (the “Holy Roman Empire” officially began later under the German king Otto I in 962 and continued until its dissolution by Napoleon in 1806)

Charlemagne widely recognized; Mohammedans sent ambassadors

When Charlemagne died, he divided his empire among three weak sons; it then fell apart

c. Hugh Capet

Officer and noble under later Carolingians; controlled small province, including island near Paris and surrounding territory

Last direct descendant of Carolingians died in 987; Hugh Capet then crowned king of France; first in line of the later French kings; generally capable, did not over-extend his kingdom; built a solid base

d. Otto I, the Great, and Germany

As the Carolingians disintegrated, various nobles took territories, one of which was considered king (in name) by the others; Otto, ruler of Saxony, received his title in 936, “king of Germany”

Otto embarked in conquests, put together a large but shaky dominion, including much of Italy

\*962, pope John XII (one of the worst profligates) crowned him Holy Roman emperor; thus official beginning of Holy Roman Empire (HRE never as widespread as the earlier empire of Charlemagne)

Otto weakened his German rivals and strengthened the German church over against Rome by putting bishops on a par with the German nobles. These bishops were at his appointment.

11. England

Irish missionaries came to England in the 500s

After 600, missionaries from Rome gradually evangelize island; throughout period, many raids and invasions, including Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Danes

Alfred the Great (871-900); Saxon king, able, united many in England against the Danes, tried to establish education in England

By 1000, Saxons in control of most of the country; officially (Roman) Christian

12. Italy

Theodoric, leader of Ostrogoths, sent by eastern emperor Zeno against Odoacer, Visigoth ruler of Italy; Theodoric won, set up Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy (489 - d. 526)

Ca. 530, eastern emperor Justinian defeated Theodoric's successors; Italy then subject to east for a while

Authority in Italy gradually fell apart; Lombards (Germanic tribe) gradually took control of northern Italy, but defeated by Pepin, Charlemagne, etc.

Normans sailed from northern Europe, took control of southern Italy

Pope now squeezed in middle of Italy; papal states fluctuate in area

## B. Monasticism in the Dark Ages

### 1. Continuation of older traditions

Individual monks and hermits and pillar saints, etc.

Augustinians died out, to be reinstated in eleventh century

Various monasteries continued under control of local bishops

But all these eclipsed in Dark Ages by the Benedictines

### 2. The Benedictine order

Oldest continuous monastic order; started by Benedict of Nursia (in southern Italy, ca. 480-547); Benedict started twelve monasteries, but most important, established The Rule for monks (cf. "The Rule of S. Benedict" in Bettenson, 116-28):

Reasonable hours

Mix spiritual and physical exercise

Three-year trial for novices, can leave during that time

Three vows: poverty, chastity, perpetual obedience

Order spread, dominated Middle Ages until thirteenth century, when Dominicans and Franciscans started

### 3. Preservation of learning in monasteries

Benedict and many other monks not fond of learning

Cassiodorus (ca. 477-570), Gothic statesman in west, gave up secular life, became monk; very fond of learning, established monasteries for studying and copying

Influence of Cassiodorus spread into Benedictine monasteries, and they ended up preserving much learning and literature (e.g., Ethiopic version of Bible)

### 4. Good and bad features of monasticism

Good: Get away and meditate

Culture

Civilization

Refuge

Independent supplies

Copying

Bad: Escapism

Deprived society of needed men and women

Wealth brought idleness

Sin (increased)

Salvation by routine

### 5. Cluny reform

Benedictine monastery founded at Cluny in France, 910; severe discipline developed by abbots (esp. Count Bruno and Odo); fought monastic corruption and laxness

Reform spread to many other monasteries, up to over 1100 of them; became a “sub-order” of the Benedictines, produced some of the strongest popes

## C. Spiritual life in the Dark Ages

### 1. Widespread poverty, ignorance, violence

### 2. Place of monasteries

Many spiritually minded people fled to monasteries; lost their influence on society; monasteries in turn became isolated, rules to themselves

### 3. Growth of popular superstition

#### a. Mariolatry

Developed mostly in tribes with polytheistic backgrounds; development of *theotokos* to the extreme; after Jerome, included perpetual virginity of Mary

#### b. Worship of saints

Not done until after last persecutions in fourth century and death of confessors, ca. 400; included shrines to martyrs, famous saints; included veneration of relics, prayers referring to saints, miracles done by them

The first papal canonization was by John XV in 993; after 1170, pope Alexander III claimed exclusive right to canonize saints

Saints said to be able to hear prayers

#### Parsing of worship through semantics

<i>Dulia</i>	=	honor/service	for saints
<i>Hyperdulia</i>	=	veneration	for Mary
<i>Latria</i>	=	worship	for God

#### c. Image worship

Eighth century, iconoclastic controversy (see below); worship increased with increasing illiteracy

#### d. Purgatory

Associated with practice of prayers for the dead (cf. 1 Cor 15:29); some fathers suggested idea (Cyprian on Matt 5:25-26; Augustine on 1 Cor 3:12-15)

*American Catholic Bible* gives these references: 2 Macc 12:43-46 (Judas prays for dead); Matt 5:25-26; 12:32; Luke 12:58-59; 1 Cor 3:13-15 (saved so as by fire); 1 Pet 3:18, 20 (Christ in limbo); (Apocrypha later made firmly canonical for R. C. Church)

Ca. 600, Pope Gregory the Great stressed it; belief essential for orthodoxy; purgatory a cleansing fire for venial sins

#### e. Transubstantiation

Definition: bread and wine of Lord's Supper become literal body and blood of Christ (although appearance does not change)

No evidence of any such belief before ninth century

844, Radbertus, pious French monk, well versed in Scriptures and church fathers; wrote book *On the Body and Blood of the Lord*; dedicated it to Charlemagne's grandson; taught physical transubstantiation of elements; based on statements in 1 Cor 11 and in gospels, "this is . . ." and on John 6:41-59, esp. 53-57 [but note v. 63]

Ratramnus, monk in Radbertus's abbey; opposed Radbertus and transubstantiation; held to spiritual presence, as Augustine had

Rabanus Maurus, scholarly archbishop of Mainz; also wrote against transubstantiation

These opponents of transubstantiation not persecuted, but accepted in church office, etc.; in eleventh century, controversy renewed, idea of transubstantiation victorious

#### 4. Gospel never completely forgotten

No other continuing Christian groups

### D. Missions in the Dark Ages

#### 1. Irish missions

These missions penetrated into Scotland, then France and Switzerland; independent from Rome at first; went forth by 12s with a leader

Columba (521-597)

Hot tempered Irishman; presbyter; but great dedication and self-discipline and scholarship

Involved in an Irish civil war; left to go to Iona, a small island off Scotland; evangelized northern Picts; established monastery on Iona, which became center for missions

Comgall (517 - ca. 601)

Close friend of Columba; established monastery and school in Ireland; at one point, over 3000 students

Columbanus (ca. 543-615)

Student of Comgall; passion for learning, studied Greek and Hebrew (!); nearly fifty years old, felt call to be missionary; established strict monastery-school in Burgundy, France; expelled by clergy; formed other monasteries in Switzerland, Italy

Many scholarly works—e.g., letter to pope against Eutychianism; defend independence of Celtic church in letters to popes Boniface IV and Gregory I

## 2. Conversion of England

As late as 590, most still idolaters; when Gregory abbot, he impressed with fair-haired slaves in market (“angels, not Angles”); desired to evangelize England; when still an abbot, made a quick missionary trip to England, no success

After pope seven years Gregory sent Augustine of Canterbury and forty Benedictine monks to evangelize Angles and Saxons (cf. “Gregory the Great and the Church of England” in Bettenson, 151-53)

King Ethelbert’s wife a French princess, Christian; king converted; Augustine settled at Canterbury, died ca. 604; Canterbury ever since the center of English church

English church willingly subservient to Rome for over 900 years; Britons driven out to Wales, their church independent of Rome until ca. 750 (cf. “The First National Synod of English Clergy: The Council of Hertford, 673” in Bettenson, 153-55)

## 3. Boniface, “Apostle to Germany” (680-754)

English Christian, named Wynfrith; sent by pope to counteract Irish missions on the continent; went to join missionary Willibrord in Holland, but did not stay; pressed on to Hessa and Saxony; found religious confusion and chaos among German tribes

Many perilous mission journeys; always loyal to popes, commissioned by them; first a bishop, later an archbishop; in 746 became archbishop of Mainz; as the pope's representative he crowned Pepin the Short king of the Franks

One occasion, cut down sacred oak of Thor, used lumber to build a chapel; thousands baptized; baptized up to 100,000 during his life

In old age did not retire; new journey to Holland; martyred—beheaded by heathen

#### 4. Conversion of Scandinavia

Took somewhat longer; Willibrord not too successful; but amazing change when converted

#### 5. Conversion of Slavs and Hungarians

After new tribes settled down, missionaries came from Rome and Constantinople; conflict; different language, liturgy, loyalty:

Latins—Croatians, Hungarians

Greeks—Serbians, Bulgarians

#### 6. The Khazars

Originally Turkish, lived in southern Russia, between Slavs (Greek Christian) and Moslems, on border of Europe and Asia; fairly stable kingdom by this time

Ca. 700, had a contest to determine ruler's religion: Jewish, Moslem, or Christian; leader accepted Jewish religion, with tolerance for others

Attacked by Byzantium, then by Russians (ca. 900); rulers fled to Spain; by 1000, about a hundred mosques in capital city

#### 7. Russia

Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 3:1) records the legend that the Apostle Andrew evangelized the Scythians and Russians

Many fighting tribes during Dark Ages

989, province Rus (Kiev) became officially Christian (Byzantine); lasted as such until Russian Revolution of 1917

## E. Four more ecumenical councils

Councils assumed by time of Reformation to be authoritative; Luther appealed to a future council

Roman Catholic Church lists total of 21 (last one—Vatican II)

First four very important, universally recognized; second four less important

All Christian churches recognize first four; Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches recognize first seven; Roman Catholic Church recognizes all eight; Eastern Orthodox churches replace the eighth with a counter-council held in 879

### 1. Fifth ecumenical council: Constantinople, 553

Fifth and sixth councils continued subject of the fourth council, unity of person of Christ in two natures

Monophysites (Eutychians) (“Christ is one person and has one nature”) were condemned at Chalcedon in 451, but continued on; riots, bishops assassinated, etc.

Eastern emperor Zeno tried to enlist Monophysite support against the Persians (later, tried the same against the Arabs); Zeno wrote *Henoticon* (“Edict of Reunion”), an attempt at compromise--failed to be accepted, was condemned by pope Felix III (see “The Hentikon of Zeno, 482” in Bettenson, 89-91)

Eastern emperor Justinian had monophysite wife, allowed the statement “God who suffered for us”; condemned a book written by three anti-Monophysites (led by Theodore of Mopsuestia) called *Three Chapters*, book against Alexandrian Monophysites; Justinian’s opposition to this book cast reflections on the Council of Chalcedon and led to conflict with pope Vigilius

553, Justinian called for fifth general council in Constantinople; attended by 160 bishops; this council condemned the orthodox book *Three Chapters* and approved the formula “God suffered” to appease the Monophysites; it also condemned Origen as a heretic (see “The Canons of the Second Council of Constantinople” in Bettenson, 91-92)

The western bishops failed to go along with this council; Justinian forcibly brought pope Vigilius to Constantinople and kept him there until he signed his approval for this council; Vigilius then changed his mind and wrote a condemnation of the council; he was thrown back into prison for eight years;

during this time he changed his mind several times (what about the “infallible” pope?), and finally signed his approval again; he was sent home, died on the way

Pope Gregory I did not recognize this council

## 2. Sixth ecumenical council: Constantinople, 680

Ca. 634, Eastern emperor Heraclius (610-640) and patriarch of Constantinople Sergius tried to gain Monophysites to fight Arabs; 6 million monophysites in Egypt compared to 300,000 orthodox; suggested “one human-divine energy”; wrote to pope Honorius (625-638) in Rome

Honorius made mistake, tied Jesus’ will to his person instead of to his natures; wrote back: “Therefore we confess one will of our Lord Jesus Christ”; thus monothelite (*mono* [one] + *thelema* [will])

Caused big controversy; patriarch of Jerusalem Sophronius wrote letter to all bishops favoring two wills [about this time, in 637, the Saracens captured Jerusalem]

Arguments for two wills of Christ: human will required for true humanity (endure temptations, etc.; Heb 4:15) and for true substitution for us; thus will tied to the nature; Bible verses:

Matt 26:39, “not my will”

Luke 2:51, child Jesus obedient to parents

John 6:38, “not to do my own will”

John 5:21, also a divine will: “Son gives life to whom he wills”

Phil 2:8, obedient to death on cross

Two local synods at Constantinople supported monothelite idea; 648, emperor Constans II (642-668) issued edict enforcing one will, threatening excommunication

649, Pope Martin I (649-655) called Lateran synod, condemned monothelitism

Constans II had Pope Martin removed, imprisoned in Constantinople with criminals—cold, hunger, etc.; sent him to cavern on Black Sea; Martin died there, martyr for two wills of Christ

Constans II also persecuted Maximus, a monk in Constantinople who was a good debater for the two wills; had him scourged and had his tongue and right hand cut off; Maximus died of these injuries (called Maximus Confessor); two others died with him

668, Constans II was strangled in a bath in Syracuse; his son Constantine IV favored two wills, wanted harmony between east and west; pope Agatho (678-681) agreed, wrote a good letter to Constantine IV, which later became the basis for the creedal statement of the council (Schaff, *Church History* 4:493; cf. pope Leo I and his letter used by the fourth ecumenical council); \*Agatho's letter also claimed papal infallibility, quoting Luke 22:31-32 (how to reconcile this with previous pope Honorius?)

680, Constantine IV called council in Constantinople; attended by 174 bishops and 3 papal representatives; council condemned monothelitism, affirmed two wills of Christ, added to the Chalcedon statement; it also denied Agatho's claim to papal infallibility (see "The Third Council [*in Trullo*] of Constantinople, 681" in Bettenson 92-93)

The council condemned many monothelites, including former Pope Honorius; Honorius anathematized as "the former pope of Old Rome, who with the help of the old serpent had scattered deadly error"; this anathema was repeated by the seventh and eighth general councils (all these councils are recognized by the R. C. Church)

Pope Agatho never mentioned Honorius; his successor pope Leo II (682-683) expressly approved the decision of the council and condemned the former pope Honorius; a statement condemning Honorius was thereafter included in the papal oath for every pope for the next 500 years (good discussion of Honorius and the infallibility issue in Schaff, *Church History* 4:500-507; note the conclusion in 505-506)

### 3. Seventh Ecumenical Council: Nicaea, 787

#### a. The iconoclastic controversy

Controversy over pictures and statues in churches stemmed from the veneration given to them and from the Mohammadan claim that the Christians were idolaters; lasted ca. 730-842

Worship defined at various levels:

Veneration to saints

Higher veneration to Mary

Adoration to God

Worship included prayers, bowing before images, etc.; Western church tended to rely more heavily on images than did the Eastern church, probably because Eastern Christians more literate while Western Christians mostly illiterate

Led to (1) sacramentarian theology, (2) importance of tradition vs. radical change, and (3) strengthening of the papacy

b. Development of the controversy

730, Emperor Leo III (716-41) fought Arabs, became iconoclast, ordered removal of images from churches; great popular opposition, riots, etc.

743, his son Emperor Constantine V (741-775) called iconoclastic council (supposedly seventh general council, but not recognized by most churches now); anathematized image worshipers, including their greatest proponent John of Damascus

Constantine V enforced the edict with great cruelty, including imprisonment, flagellation, mutilation, even death; his son Leo IV (775-780) continued policy, with some moderation

780, Leo IV died, his wife Irene became empress during minority of her son Constantine VI (780-797), and continued ruling after his death until 802

c. Council of Nicaea, 787

Irene strong for images; after much preparation called general council at Nicaea, 787

Ca. 350 bishops, including two papal representatives

Actions of council:

Anathematized iconoclasts

Approved images (not specifically statues)

Approved limited worship (*proskunesis*, but not *latreia*, which was reserved for God); *proskunesis* includes bowing the knees and other demonstrations of reverence

\*However, the NT uses *proskunesis* in connection with worship of God (Matt 4:10; John 4:24; Acts 24:11; Rev 4:10)

Also approved the *aspasmos* (“greeting”), the salutation and kissing of an icon

This council set the tone for future worship in both the Roman Catholic Church and in the Eastern Orthodox churches; Protestant churches do not recognize this council (see “Definition of the Second Council of Nicaea, 787” in Bettenson, 93-94; see Calvin’s criticism of this council in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1:11:14 [vol. 1, pp. 114-15])

#### d. Reactions to the council

Popes accepted council of Nicaea, went farther: statues (graven images) permitted also

\*The R. C. position defends this practice by listing the Jewish and Protestant second commandment as a subsection of the first commandment; thus the worshiping of images is forbidden only if it is in conjunction with the worship of a false god, not if it is used to worship the true God.

790, Charlemagne and Alcuin wrote *Caroline Books*, moderate, opposed council (“almost Protestant,” Schaff, *Church History* 4:467-468), but did approve of the use of the cross and the veneration of relics; strongly supported toleration for iconoclasts

794, Charlemagne called council in Frankfort; he acted as a moderate between the Nicene council and the iconoclasts; this council rejected the Nicene council position

English church (through Anglo-Saxon Alcuin) agreed with Charlemagne; Charlemagne’s friend pope Hadrian II tried to answer his arguments, but soon died

Two other writers in the west opposed image-worship:

Agobard, bishop of Lyons (816-841). Opposed superstition, and all images but the cross; but intolerant himself; still was later honored as a saint

Claudius, bishop of Turin (814-839). Wrote many Bible commentaries, relied on Augustine; used Augustinian arguments against Pelagius against image-worship—it limits God's grace; became fanatically iconoclast

e. Final defeat of iconoclasm

In the West, influence of popes and ignorance of masses gradually won the day, even in France

In the East, more protracted struggle:

797, Irene had son's eyes gouged out in his sleep, to disqualify him; he died of the injury

Irene's contemplated marriage to Charlemagne fell through

802, Irene banished; penalty reduced to weaving thread in island of Lesbos; died in 803; end of the Isaurian dynasty

War continued in the East; soldiers iconoclasts; monks and people image-worshippers; next several emperors iconoclasts, persecuted many—most cruel was emperor Theophilus (829-842)

842, Theophilus's widow Theodora (a second Irene, without her vices) ruled during minority of Michael the Drunkard; worked effectively to replace officers and clergy to eliminate iconoclasm

First Sunday in Lent (Feb. 19, 842) to be "Sunday of Orthodoxy"; annual blasting of heretics, including iconoclasts; images restored to churches

4. Eighth ecumenical council: Constantinople, 869

a. The *Filioque* issue

Nicene Creed originally had "Holy Spirit which proceeds from the Father"; Eastern church held that John 15:26 was temporary, not eternal; in the West the phrase "and from the Son" (*filioque*) was added to the creed to support the deity of the Son as equal to the Father (cf. Gal 4:6, "Spirit of his Son")

b. History of the dispute

[See Bettenson 25, n. 6]

589, Synod of Toledo (Spain) inserted phrase in creed against lingering Arianism in Spain

790, *Caroline Books* of Charlemagne supported *filioque* idea

Eastern church rejected the phrase: no council support; the “mother of all heresies”; ca. 800, violent argument began, fellowship broken

858, Photius elected patriarch of Constantinople, great scholar (ca. 800-891); election irregular, contested; two parties called on pope Nicholas I (858-867) to mediate; Nicholas took advantage of newly produced *Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals* (“letters in reply to inquiries”), which were forged “ancient” documents supposedly giving the pope jurisdiction over the whole church (as well as over the whole Western empire; they contained the forged “Donation of Constantine,” his grant of leadership to the bishops of Rome for Sylvester’s healing him).

863, Nicholas in a Roman synod declared Photius deposed, threatened him with anathema if disobedient; 867, Photius enraged, held counter-synod, deposed Nicholas; accused him of heresy and schism (charges in Schaff 4:314)

867, Eastern emperor killed; new emperor Basil replaced Photius, friendly to new pope Hadrian II, reinstated patriarch Ignatius

c. The council of Constantinople

869, Basil and Ignatius called eighth general council, in Church of St. Sophia in Constantinople

Only 18 bishops arrived at first, increased to over 100; pontifical legates presided

Condemned Photius, approved *filioque*

d. Events after the council

New pope John VIII alienated Basil and Ignatius; Ignatius died; Basil reappointed Photius

879, Photius called a new council; over 300 bishops and papal legates; council condemned *filioque* (with anathema) and praised Photius; even papal legates assented (pope later rejected)

John VIII anathematized Photius, etc.

Thus Roman church recognizes 869 council as the eighth, while Eastern churches recognize 879 council as the eighth

Photius continued life of writing, conflict; deposed again before he died

Photius laid the base for the theological distinctions of the Eastern church against the Roman church; declared the Greek church independent of Rome; led way for the formal division in 1054

## F. The papacy in the Dark Ages

### 1. Uniqueness of Leo I and Gregory I

Leo I (the Great, ca. 450) and Gregory I (the Great, ca. 600) the only two outstanding popes of the period

[This period provides some good examples to disprove the theory that the Roman pope is infallible, the “vicar of Christ”; following, along with Gregory, are some examples of more noteworthy (or notorious) popes]

### 2. Vigilius

Disagreed with fifth general council of 553; imprisoned by Justinian; changed mind four times about the orthodox book *Three Chapters*

### 3. Gregory I, the Great (590-604)

Civic officer, capable; became Benedictine monk, very strict with himself (ruined health, much of life in bed); pious, good preacher

Interested in missions; sent Augustine to England (English church loyal to Rome for 1000 years)

One blot on career: argued with emperor Maurus; Phocas murdered Maurus and family and became new emperor; Gregory praised Phocas

Patriarch of Constantinople claimed title “universal bishop”; Gregory said bishops of Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome were equal to bishop of Constantinople; said “whoever calls himself universal bishop is a forerunner of Antichrist” (later, popes claimed the title)

Established doctrines of purgatory, purgatory fire, and masses for the dead as required orthodox doctrine

Established a liturgy, including “Gregorian chant” (solemn monotone)

Recognized as the pivotal pope who established the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages

#### 4. Honorius I (625-638)

*Ex-cathedra* heretic (monothelite); condemned by sixth general council of 680; anathematized by all succeeding popes for 500 years

#### 5. The papacy in the eighth century

Lombards controlled northern Italy, were seeking to unite all Italy under them; Merovingian dynasty of the Franks in decline

Pope Zacharias (741-752) crowned Pepin king of France (752) after Pepin defeated the Lombards

Pope Leo III (795-816) fighting his rivals and the Lombards; helped by Charlemagne; crowned Charlemagne “emperor of the Romans” Christmas day, 800; popes afterwards dependent on the French (and the Germans)

#### 6. Nicholas I, “Nicholas the Great” (858-867)

Great administrator; tenacious fighter for papal authority

Accepted *Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals* as genuine (now recognized to be forgeries) and used them to further his ambitions; claimed extravagant power and jurisdiction over the whole church; great conflict with Photius of Byzantium (cf. “The Donation of Constantine” in Bettenson, 98-101)

#### 7. Formosus and Stephen VII (or VI)

Pope Formosus (891-896), former ambassador to the Franks; had ability and ambition; tied himself to Guido, a remote descendent of Charlemagne who was a duke who then controlled Rome

Formosus crowned Guido's son Lambert emperor in 894; but soon asked German King Arnulf to take his place; Arnulf was victorious over Guido, and in 896 Formosus crowned him the new emperor

In revenge, Lambert had Formosus murdered; next pope Boniface VI ruled only 15 days (perhaps wicked); Lambert then recaptured Rome; following pope Stephen VII (or VI) loyal to Lambert

Lambert and Stephen VII then had the corpse of Formosus exhumed, clad in pontifical robes, and arraigned in a mock trial; found guilty; his body mutilated and decapitated, dragged through the streets, and thrown in the Tiber

897, another party took over Rome (Berengar), imprisoned Stephen VII; Stephen then strangled in prison

#### 8. Papacy in the tenth century

Called the "darkest age," though perhaps worse in the eleventh century; called the \*Pornocracy (detailed study in E. R. Chamberlin, *The Bad Popes* [Barnes and Noble, 1969])

Papacy dominated by two families, from two daughters of a Roman noble Theophilact, Marozia and Theodora; six popes came from these families; they were "bold and energetic women of the highest rank and lowest character, . . . (and) filled the chair of St. Peter with their paramours and bastards" (Schaff 4:284)

"The main facts of this shameful reign . . . are frankly admitted (by good Catholic authorities and historians), but turned by them into an argument for the divine origin of the papacy, whose restoration to power appears all the more wonderful from the depths of its degradation." (Schaff 4:284-284, footnote)

Worst pope of the century, John XII (955-963, killed 964); grandson of Marozia; crowned Otto I, the first "Holy Roman emperor" in 962; many crimes (some listed in Schaff 4:287); when Otto I finally convinced how bad he was, he removed him and replaced him with Leo VIII

Bloodshed and violence and immorality continued in the papacy into the 990's, as various Italian and German backed candidates vied for the throne

991, synod was held by bishop of Orleans to try to clean up church; no approval from king or pope; strong speech by the bishop (Schaff 4:290-292); secretary of the synod was French scholar Gerbert

Gerbert's career after that: archbishop of Rheims, archbishop of Revenna (Vienna), personal secretary for Otto III, in 999 pope Sylvester II (changed views about power of the papacy)

996, chaos and violence continued in Rome; Otto III marched to Rome, installed his worthy chaplain, cousin Bruno, as pope Gregory V, the first German pope; Gregory V then anointed Otto III Holy Roman emperor

After Otto left Rome, war between Gregory V and antipope John XVI (became next pope, but listed as John XVII); Otto returned to Rome; John XVI mutilated and paraded backwards through streets on an ass with a wine bladder on his head

999, Gregory V died (probably murdered); Otto elected and clergy confirmed Gerbert as pope Sylvester II (significant name: Sylvester I received the so-called *Donation of Constantine*; cf. Otto), first French pope (999-1003); "He had abandoned the liberal views he had expressed at the Council of Rheims, and the legend says that he sold his soul to the devil for the papal tiara" (Schaff 4:295)