

CHAPTER 3

THE CHURCH IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

This century saw the Roman Catholic Church gain in strength over western world and even inspire armed incursions into Muslim-dominated Palestine. Theologically the church was active and more confident, even while reform movements gained in importance.

A. The papacy in general

Continued strife between papacy and empire; investiture struggle continued (compromise of 1122 contested)

Popes tried to maintain power of Gregory VII, but unable to do so

Papacy never again as low morally and in reputation as in tenth and eleventh centuries

No outstanding pope in the twelfth century

Hadrian IV (1154-1159), the only English pope

Gave English king Henry II (1154-1189) permission to conquer Ireland; 1171, Henry carried it out; many bloody battles; Irish hatred for England continued to this day (see under fifth century)

Popes remained strong during twelfth century; power came to peak in thirteenth century

B. Thomas à Becket (1118-1170)

English kings appointed archbishop of Canterbury

E.g., William II (1087-1100) was king when archbishop Lanfranc died; did not replace him until on his death bed (he thought); then appointed Anselm; but when William II recovered; compromises eventually were worked out with Anselm and king Henry I

(Bettenson, “*The Constitutional Position of the Archbishop: Henry’s Letter to Anselm, 1100,*” and “*The Settlement of Bec, 1107,*” pp. 156-157)

Later king Henry II (1154-1189) appointed friend and civil servant Thomas à Becket to be archbishop of Canterbury; Thomas changed loyalties, supported pope over Henry; Henry irritated, said he wished Thomas dead; four knights took Henry seriously, murdered Thomas in the cathedral

Henry excommunicated by pope; nation ordered to repent; rebellion against the king starting; 1174, Henry made penitent’s pilgrimage to tomb of Thomas, there was publicly scourged, then readmitted to church

Thomas à Becket a leading martyr and saint in England up to the time of Reformation; mentioned in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (fourteenth century)

C. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)

Mystic theologian and monk; single most influential person in the twelfth century

Dogmatic and energetic; yet emphasized God’s love and salvation over his judgment

Tried to reform lax rules in monasteries, even in Cluny monasteries by that time; founded a monastery in France in the “valley of robbers”—remained abbot his whole life; area became known as “clear valley” = “Clairvaux”

Opposed “rationalist” theologians Abelard and Gilbert de Porree; had great influence with popes

Founded order of Knights Templars; preached in favor of the Second Crusade (1147-1149), which ended in failure

Wrote many letters and hymns:

“O Sacred Head Now Wounded”
“Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts”
“Jesus, The Very Thought of Thee”

[Not to be confused with another monk of the twelfth century, Bernard of Cluny, who wrote “Jerusalem the Golden”]

Luther and Calvin thought much of Bernard of Clairvaux

D. The crusades

The crusades had tremendous effects in Europe at the time, but not many permanent effects (except the introduction of Oriental learning into the West, and a kindled interest for trading in the East). They had a temporary effect in Palestine and in Constantinople, mainly during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (1095-1291).

Purposes of the crusades:

- Assist Byzantium, and thus hopefully end the schism
- Liberate the holy sites and make travel safe for pilgrims, and thus expedite the fulfillment of Luke 21:24, “Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled”
- Occupy the warring knights of Europe

1. First Crusade (1095-1099)

Most successful crusade; but was preceded by an unplanned crusade which ended in disaster

Arabian Muslims were tolerant of Christians, as “people of the Book”; allowed them to worship at holy sites

Seljuk Turks conquered Jerusalem and Palestine in middle of eleventh century; intolerant; mistreated pilgrims and desecrated holy places

1095, pope Urban II in great speech called for armed conquest of the holy places; promised eternal life for those killed in battle

Peter the Hermit and Walter the Penniless gathered together a huge, motley “army” of several hundred thousand enthusiastic followers; no planning or provisions; had to live off the land; led it through Bulgaria and Hungary; many killed by people there; the rest killed by Turks

Better organized knights, led by Godfrey de Bouillon, duke of Lorraine, with 80,000, succeeded in taking several important cities (Nicea, Antioch, Edessa, and Jerusalem in 1099), along with much of Palestine; many people in these cities slaughtered

Godfrey made ruler of Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, “Defender of the Holy Sepulcher”; the Dome of the Rock (finished in AD 691) was named the “Temple

of the Lord,” and the al Aqsa Mosque (from the eighth century) was named the “Temple of Solomon”

The “Kingdom of Jerusalem” reached its zenith ca. 1125-1150; Jerusalem fell to the Muslim Saladin in 1187; Acre, the last Palestinian city held by the crusaders, was retaken by Muslims in 1291

2. Subsequent crusades

Second Crusade:

Strength of crusaders in Palestine waned; Bernard of Clairvaux preached for another crusade

1147, French and German kings set out to take Damascus with a great army; dissent and treachery broke it up; disastrous failure; never reached the Holy Land

*Third Crusade:

1187, Saladin captured Jerusalem

This the most brilliant crusade: Richard the Lion-Hearted (England), Philip Augustus (France), and Frederick Barbarossa (Germany, emperor of Holy Roman Empire)

1191, recaptured Acre; rivalry and hard fighting took toll on armies; Richard the Lion-Hearted the last king to stay in Palestine to fight; unable to take Jerusalem again; finally, a truce with Saladin: Christians to have tolerance and free access to holy places

[Third crusade immortalized in Sir Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*]

Crusades continued on into the thirteenth century:

Fourth Crusade:

1202-1204, pope Innocent III stirred up new crusade

Venice supplied ships, wanted booty; incited crusaders away from Palestinian goal

Took orthodox city Zara on coast of Hungary; then applied a great siege on Constantinople and took city with great slaughter (since Eastern church did not accept *filioque* terminology, they called “Christ-deniers,” thus justifying this action)

Latins ruled Constantinople for fifty years; crusaders never reached the Holy Land

Children’s Crusade:

1212, German boy Nicholas, ten years old, recruited children; 30,000 left Cologne, crossed Alps; many died of cold and starvation and wolves; reached Genoa

Ships would not carry them; Innocent III told them to go home; some did

French shepherd-boy Stephen, twelve years old, said that King Christ appeared to him; king of France sent him home; Stephen collected 20,000 children; crossed France to Marseille; said ocean would divide to let them pass through; it didn’t

Two ship owners offered to take children to Holy Land at no cost; children thought this a sign from God; children put on seven ships; two ships wrecked in storm and sank; other five ships sailed to north Africa, where children sold as slaves; none ever heard from again; ship owners were hanged

Fifth, Sixth, Seventh Crusades

These also in thirteenth century; all end in failure; not as imposing as the first four crusades

3. Knightly orders

These orders were established because of the crusades and the needs that developed from them. They took the same vows as monks, and pledged their arms to fight.

a. Hospitallers (Knights of St. John)

Founded ca. 1100; to care for sick and wounded; continued throughout Middle Ages

Suppressed by Napoleon in 1798

b. Knights Templars

Founded in 1118 in Jerusalem; headquarters near the temple

Purpose, to aid and protect pilgrims; grew rapidly in twelfth century, used to protect the Latin state

Adopted rule written by Bernard of Clairvaux; became rich and powerful throughout Europe; they became the sovereign military order controlling Malta through the late middle ages

1312, order dissolved; 120 Templars executed in France by King Philip IV; assets transferred to Hospitallers

c. Teutonic Knights

Began in 1199 by German knights; used in fighting in Palestine, later in Europe (east Prussia)

Modified in twentieth century to purely religious activities

E. The Lateran councils

Since the church was permanently divided in 1054, there were no more truly ecumenical councils after the first eight. These councils were called by the pope without civil authority. They met in the Church of St. John Lateran, a major Roman basilica; hence the name Lateran councils. The numbering system is a bit confusing, since they kept the pretence of ecumenical councils by continuing the numbering, while using different numbers to indicate which Lateran council each was:

1 st Lateran	=	9 th Ecumenical
2 nd Lateran	=	10 th Ecumenical
3 rd Lateran	=	11 th Ecumenical
4 th Lateran	=	12 th Ecumenical
5 th Lateran	=	13 th Ecumenical

In the twelfth century:

First Lateran Council (1123); celibacy of priests; investiture compromise, that granted pope the power of appointment, while the emperor could veto the appointments and the priests must pledge allegiance to their monarch

Second Lateran Council (1138); established college of “cardinals” (Roman clergy), who vote for pope; prevented dynasties

Third Lateran Council (1179); two-thirds of cardinals must vote for pope; “Truce of God” expanded—no fighting Thursday through Sunday (“Peace of God” had previously been established to ban attacks on women and clergy)

In the thirteenth century:

*Fourth Lateran Council (1215); controlled by Innocent III; established inquisition against Cathari and Waldensians; condemned the *Magna Carta* as an affront to the pope and to King John; confirmed new Franciscan order; required distinctive dress for Jews and Saracens living in Christian areas; provided for the Fifth Crusade

In the sixteenth century:

Fifth Lateran Council (1512); condemned recent anti-papal councils; refused to correct abuses in church; provided impetus for Protestant Reformation

F. Independent religious movements

These movements were a new thing since the supremacy of Roman Catholicism began in the Dark Ages. They often contained heretical ideas, but some of them also contained more biblical ideas, and can be counted as precursors to the Reformation.

1. Cathari

Remnant of Manichaeism; heretical, dualistic, ascetic; followers called “pure ones”; also called Albigenses (town of Albi)

Grew during twelfth century; Catholics sponsored a bloody and cruel war against them, 1208-1229; later the Catholics argued against lay use of the Bible based on Cathari claims that they had been following the Bible.

2. Waldenses

Named for Peter Waldo (second half of twelfth century); poor man of Lyons

Waldo read Bible; opposed purgatory, infallible church; lived a simple life; sent out preachers two-by-two

Waldenses condemned in Third Lateran Council, driven out of France; many settled in mountains in north Italy; 1215, big war launched against them by pope; many survived though

Group survived through time of Reformation; they liked Luther and dialogued with the Reformers in Switzerland and Germany

1650, great massacre of Waldenses by Catholics; inspired Milton's sonnet "Revenge, O Lord, Thy Saints"; Cromwell powerful in Europe, able to demand an end to this persecution

1848, finally given toleration and freedom

Group continues to this day; now ecumenical; about 20,000 members

G. First century of scholasticism

Scholasticism flourished from the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries, with the greatest scholastics living in the thirteenth century. These theologians used both the Bible and the fathers for their sources. Many of them also thought highly of the Greek philosophers. They employed Aristotle's method of deductive logic that followed a "painstaking arrival at logical conclusions, after all questions were exhausted, and then arranged in systematic order" (Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, p. 216 [1st ed.]). Some of the scholastics lived godly lives, others did not.

1. Anselm (1033-1109)

In Lanfranc's monastery; followed him as archbishop of Canterbury; a man of great ability intellectually and in administration, as well as recognized piety

Two major contributions to theology:

Proslogion—ontological argument for the existence of God (excerpts in Bettenson, pp. 137-138)

Anselm argues that there must be design behind the universal experience of man's self-consciousness. From the knowledge of self-existence, man is able to posit an infinite and eternal Existence. God has given hints of his conscience existence in the knowledge of our own existence.

Phrased another way, "Existence is the necessary quality of the highest conceivable being."

Cur Deus Homo?—satisfaction theory of Christ's [vicarious] atonement: Christ's death not a ransom to the devil ["ransom theory"], but satisfies God's righteousness; there is an infinite penalty for sin—thus Jesus must be God; and he must substitute for us—thus Jesus must be man (excerpts in Bettenson, pp. 138-139)

2. Abelard (1079-1142)

Brilliant monk, but intolerant French skeptic; promoted "doubtful inquiry" in the pursuit of the truth; wrote *Sic et Non* (*Yes and No*), containing 158 contradictions in the church fathers

Was a popular teacher, but opposed by Bernard of Clairvaux, who responded that the "faith of the righteous believes—it does not dispute;" Bernard persuaded the pope to excommunicate Abelard

Had celebrated affair with intellectually gifted woman Heloise; wanted to marry her, give up his vows; her uncle angry, had him emasculated by force at night; both Abelard and Heloise entered seclusion; she became a nun

By end of his life, out of favor with most people, including the pope

3. Gilbert de Porree (1070-1154)

Doubter (similar to Abelard); but clever wording, hard to pin down; also opposed by Bernard of Clairvaux

4. Peter Lombard (1100-1164)

German lecturer and bishop of Paris; greatest influence on Scholasticism until Thomas Aquinas

Collected and systematized the sayings of the fathers, in four books (*Sentences*); used most of Augustine

One of the first theologians to promote the observance of the seven sacraments; taught *ex opera operato* (“operates out of the operation”), a belief that the grace of God is infused by the mechanical operation of the sacrament

This book widely used as a text for three centuries; Englishmen alone wrote 160 commentaries on the *Sentences*