

CHAPTER 4 :

THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH

*From the fall of Rome, 476 A. D., to
the fall of Constantinople, 1453 A. D.*

A. The growth of the papacy: In the days of the apostles, the church knew nothing of a pope. Jesus himself was considered the chief shepherd of the church - 1 Peter 5:4; Ephesians 1:22,23. But by approximately 600 A. D., one person on earth had come to be considered the head of the church universal, and ruled the church from Rome. How did such a strange and powerful office come to be, since it was unknown in the early church? Here are some reasons for its development:

- 1) The church did not keep to the simple organization and offices given by the Lord Jesus and the apostles. We have seen that in the apostolic church, every local congregation had a plurality of bishops (overseers, also called elders or pastors), equal in authority, having authority only in their own local congregation. But by about 115 A. D. we begin to hear of one of the elders of a local church being raised above his fellow elders in authority, with the title of "bishop" reserved to him alone. The other elders obeyed him and kept their title of "elders." At first the authority of the "monarchial bishop" was confined to his own local congregation, but as time went on, the bishops of the city churches began to be looked to by the bishops of village and rural congregations for leadership, and they came under his authority. Still later, the bishops of the largest and most influential cities began to oversee the bishops of other cities, and the bishop in the capital city eventually became leader of all the churches in his country.

By 400 A. D., the bishops of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople and Rome ruled over the whole church in five parts. By 451, Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria had come under the bishop of Constantinople, and the Council of Chalcedon divided all authority in the church universal between the bishop of Constantinople in the East, and the bishop of Rome in the West. Because the two capitals of the Empire

were Rome and Constantinople, we can see that the church was following the organization of the Empire. There was contention between the bishops of Rome and Constantinople as to who was the greatest, and by about 600 A. D., the bishop of Rome had emerged as world bishop. And so it was through the gradual growth and change of the office of bishop that the papacy finally came to be.

- 2) After the death of the apostles some church leaders, contending with a growing number of heresies, began to say that the true doctrine can be known, not from the scriptures alone, but also from the oral traditions handed down from apostolic times through the succession of bishops who succeeded the apostles. It was also said that the true and faithful churches are those who can trace a succession from their present bishop back through a chain of previous bishops to the apostles. Others stated a tradition that the church at Rome was founded by Peter and Paul. We know that this is not an accurate tradition, because according to Paul himself in Romans 1:9-15 and 15:19-24, the church at Rome existed long before Paul ever reached there. And there is no evidence that Peter founded the church at Rome. The Roman Catholic Church says Peter went to Rome in 41 A. D. and was the first bishop there. But we find in Acts 12 that Peter was still in Jerusalem when James was killed by Herod in about 44 A. D. And he was still there in 50 A. D. at the time of the Jerusalem Conference on circumcision, Acts 15. We also know that at that time Peter and Paul agreed that Peter would work with the Jewish churches but Paul with the Gentile churches, such as the church at Rome - Galatians 2:7-9. But many believed the tradition that the Roman church was founded by Peter and Paul, and this made the church at Rome, with its bishop, seem more authoritative than others, since its tradition supposedly came down from the two most illustrious apostles, with the Roman bishop occupying the "chair of Peter." Thus the power of the church at Rome grew.
- 3) The church at Rome, with its bishop, had more power and honor because Rome was the capital of the Empire. People wanted to elevate the Roman church and bishop in order to follow the organization of the Empire, which had the Emperor at Rome ruling over governors in the lands and provinces.
- 4) Some of the Roman bishops were wise and strong leaders, and they were looked to for the solution of hard questions, and for leadership in times of trouble.
- 5) The Western Empire fell in 476 A. D., and there was no one king or political leader in the West strong enough to unite people as the emperor had done. So people began to look to the Roman bishop as a notable person with wide respect and authority, for help with secular as well as religious matters. The bishop stepped into the power vacuum left by the deposed emperor, and this enhanced his authority greatly.
- 6) The Roman bishops promoted themselves to greater and greater authority. Some of them strongly preached the universal supremacy of

the Roman bishop.

- a. Victor (190-202) called himself the universal bishop and said that he was worthy to decide the difficult case being argued in the church about the proper date for the celebration of Easter, the time of the death and resurrection of Christ. But the other churches did not pay him any attention, and some of his fellow bishops rebuked him for his claims. It is clear from this that the church was not commanded by Jesus and the apostles to obey the bishop of Rome as universal bishop, and that the idea was a strange one to the churches at large.
- b. Calixtus (218-223) called himself "bishop of bishops" and cited Matthew 16:18 as his evidence. But Bishop Tertullian of Carthage condemned him for wanting to take this power to himself without the authority of God.
- c. Stephen I (253-257) wanted to decide a question about baptism for the churches in the area of Carthage in Northern Africa, but Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, condemned him, saying that each bishop has sovereignty in his own diocese, and that the bishop of Rome has no authority in the churches overseen by the bishop of Carthage.
- d. In the time of Julius I, Bishop of Rome in 337-352, a council of the churches in the West at Sardica in 343 gave the bishop of Rome authority over the church everywhere. But the bishops of the Eastern churches were not called to the council, and the ruling was not accepted by the universal church, and so came to nothing.
- e. Siricius (385-398) called himself the ruler of the whole church. But at that time the bishops of Constantinople, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Antioch were ruling in their own respective areas and did not obey the bishop of Rome. All five bishops were called *papa* ("pope").
- f. Innocent I (402-417) called himself the "Ruler of the Church of God," and said that he should decide questions for the whole church.
- g. Leo I, seen by some as the first actual pope, said that he was the first of all bishops, and persuaded the emperor to name him such in 445. Leo called himself the lord of the whole church, and said that anyone who disobeyed him would go to hell. He said that any teacher who teaches doctrines different than those taught by the One Catholic Church should receive the death penalty. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 ruled that Leo alone should wear the title of "pope," but this ecumenical council also ruled that authority in the universal church should be divided equally between the bishop of Rome in the West and the bishop of Constantinople in

the East. Therefore Leo failed to gain supremacy in the church as universal bishop.

- h. Gregory I (590-604) is thought of by many as the first real universal pope. He certainly ruled the Western Church. He did not state clearly that he was the universal bishop, but he said he occupied the seat of Peter, and that he was the vicar of Christ (the one who stands in place of Christ) on earth. When the Bishop of Constantinople took for himself the title of "universal bishop" in 588, Gregory sternly rebuked him and said that a man should not wear such a title. Others feel that the first Roman bishop who actually exercised universal authority was Boniface III, who became bishop in 606. But it is clear that by about 600 A.D., a universal papacy was a reality.

We can see from these things that the papacy is not something that originated with Christ and the apostles, but something that gradually developed from human thinking after the time of the apostles, over a period of 500 years.

- B. A comparison between the apostolic church and the church of 600 A. D.: Because the church changed its beliefs and practices so gradually over a long period of time, people did not realize clearly that the church was changing and growing away from what had been established by the Holy Spirit through the apostles at the first. If you are with a child daily as he is growing up, he looks no different today than yesterday. But if you do not see him for two years, you notice great change. In reality he changes slightly every day, but the change is not evident until we make a wider comparison. In the same way, the church was changing in its character, but people were not alert to what was happening, and many did not question the changes that gradually appeared. We have seen that by 600 A. D. the Roman Catholic Church was a reality, the fruit of the great changes that had gradually occurred over 500 years. When we compare the apostolic church with the church of 600 A. D., we realize just how greatly the church had changed.
- 1) In the time of the apostles, every local church was governed by its own elders, but by 600 A. D. one man, the pope, ruled the church everywhere. Under him were the bishops ruling the national and regional churches, and the priests ruling the local churches. The New Testament church had no earthly headquarters or holy place - John 4:19-24; its headquarters were in heaven. Jesus himself was the only head of the church - Ephesians 1:22. But by 600 we have Rome as headquarters with the pope ruling from there.
 - 2) In the time of the New Testament, the local elders of the church were teachers and shepherds. But by 600 they had become priests. (In some translations of the Bible made by Roman Catholics, the Greek word for "elder" is actually mistranslated "priest"). In the early church every Christian was a priest - 1 Peter 2:9; Hebrews 13:15,16; Romans 12:1. But by 600, a special group had been chosen as priests to stand between Christians and God.

- 3) In the early church, the Lord's Supper was simply a memorial meal - 1 Corinthians 11:24; Luke 22:19. But by 600 A. D., it had been changed into a sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ, offered by the priest. Also had been added the belief that when the priest gave thanks for the bread and the cup, they were transformed into the literal body and blood of the Lord. (This doctrine was later known as the doctrine of "transubstantiation"). This doctrine was strengthened in 831 and was officially promulgated as a doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church in 1215.
- 4) In the time of the apostles, there was no doctrine of purgatory. But this doctrine was widely held by 600. It was said that if a person died in "mortal sin," he would go straight to hell. But if he died in sin that was not mortal, he would go to a place of suffering called "purgatory," where he would suffer for a long period of time until his sins were all burned away by the cleansing fires. Then he would be allowed in heaven. Augustine greatly strengthened this doctrine. It was officially adopted as a doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church in 1439. It produced many evils, because based on this belief, leaders of the church eventually sold letters of forgiveness called "indulgences" by which the souls of loved ones in purgatory could be quickly released from suffering. Fees were also charged for prayers for the dead offered at masses.
- 5) Something else that had developed since the time of the apostles was the practice of praying for the dead, and praying to the departed saints so that they might intercede for the worshiper. After belief in purgatory became widespread, people began to pray that the dead be released from purgatory quickly and allowed into heaven. All Christians were called "saints" in the early church, but later that name was reserved for those who were considered very righteous or who had done great work for God. The belief developed that such persons had special influence with Christ and God and could intercede with God on behalf of persons praying on earth. And so by 600 A. D. many people were praying to saints who had died and not to God alone, a practice very contrary to the New Testament scriptures - Romans 1:25; Matthew 4:10; Colossians 2:18; Acts 10:25,26; Revelation 19:10. People would cry to the "saints," "Pray to God for us; intercede for us!" But in the time of the apostles, Christ was known as the only mediator between God and man, and the only person worthy to intercede for us - 1 Timothy 2:5,6; Hebrews 7:25.
- 6) By 600 A. D. many people were praying to Mary and worshiping her. The Council of Ephesus in 431 called Mary the "mother of God." Their intention at that time was to show that Jesus born of Mary was not just human, but also was God. But as could be expected, the expression was abused and served to raise Mary far above any standing she had in scripture. As people began to elevate Mary, some objected, but many accepted the practice and began to hold feasts and celebrations in praise of Mary. By 600, many believed that Mary could intercede for Christians more effectively than any other of the saints, being Christ's own mother. Many offered prayers to her and some worshiped her. This practice continued to grow in Roman Catholicism. This partly had its roots in

paganism. The Greeks and Romans had had many female idol goddesses. In the worship of Demeter and Cybele, the pagans had praised the "mother of god." It was not strange that converted pagans wanted to transfer this feeling to Mary.

- 7) In the time of the apostles, a sinner could confess his sin directly to God, and also to his wronged brother or to the whole church, according to the number of people affected - Acts 8:22; Matthew 5:23,24; 18:15-18; James 5:16. But by 600, the sinner had to come to the priest and confess his sins. The priest had authority to command deeds of penance and to forgive sins.
- 8) The early Christians had no special places of worship or holy places, but worshiped anywhere, even under a tree or in a person's home. They believed that Christians themselves are the temple of the Holy Spirit - 1 Corinthians 3:16,17; 6:19; John 4:19-24. But by 600, Christians built many ornate, temple-like buildings for worship, appealing to the senses and the flesh more than to the spirit.
- 9) The early Christians abhorred idols and images just as the Jews did. But by 600 A. D., there were many images of Christ, Mary, and the "saints" in the churches, and prayers and worship were offered to the images. The church tried officially to make a distinction between adoration and worship, but this would not stand up in practice among the common people. This again was a holdover from pagan idolatry.
- 10) Many other objects and actions had entered worship which are not seen in the early church, such as special vestments for leaders, incense, holy oil, holy water, salt, candles, bells, and musical instruments. Many of these were inspired by Old Testament worship or by paganism, and all of them represented a movement from the inward and spiritual to the outward and fleshly. Congregational singing disappeared as special choirs took their place. The early church did not use musical instruments in worship, but between 400 and 500 A. D. they were introduced into Christian worship. The first organ began to be used in the 8th century.
- 11) The early church baptized only persons old enough to believe the gospel, but by 600 A. D., infant baptism was widespread. The early church baptized by immersing the whole body in water, but by 600, many were baptized by sprinkling or pouring water on the head. In the beginning, baptism was the expression of one's faith in the promises of God; we may say that it was a way of believing God's promises and believing in Christ. But by 600, baptism was to many people an act that had magical powers in itself to take away sins, with the grace of God coming through the water itself, along with the right words pronounced by the administrator, without faith on the part of the recipient. And only the bishop, or one authorized by him, could baptize, except in emergencies.
- 12) In the time of the scriptures, an elder or bishop of the church was to be "the husband of one wife" - 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:5,6. Peter and others of the apostles were married men - 1 Corinthians 9:5; Mark 1:29,30. But

by 600 A. D., many were teaching in the church that priests and bishops should be celibate (unmarried). This doctrine was even more firmly established in 1074. It became the source of many evils in the church, as the clergy had no legitimate way to satisfy sexual need - 1 Corinthians 7:1-5. Many were also teaching that it is better to shut oneself away in the monastic life and seek holiness by severity to the body. But Paul had taught that asceticism is of no use in denying the desires of the flesh - Colossians 2:20-23. He said Christians should conquer wrong desire by the grace of Christ through the Holy Spirit - Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:16-24; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:14; 3:17,18. The church also began to restrict the eating of certain foods for those who would become very holy, in contrast to the freedom of the early Christians to eat all foods if received with thanksgiving - Mark 7:19; Acts 10:9,10; 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

- 13) By 600 A. D., the Roman Church was teaching that there are seven sacraments (outward signs of the inward grace of God). These were the Eucharist, Baptism, Confirmation, Extreme Unction (anointing of those near death), Penance, Marriage, and Ordination. In the scriptures there is no mention of "sacraments" or any statement that there are seven sacraments. In the early church we see no stated ceremony or custom for marriage or repentance. There was no practice of confirmation; this only became necessary after infants began to be baptized, since these infants had never had a chance to dedicate themselves to Christ of their own free will. The laying on of hands, now practiced at confirmation, had occurred immediately after baptism in the early church. And the practice of the Eucharist, baptism, anointing the sick, and ordination was much different in 600 A. D. from what it was in the apostolic period.

- C. In view of all these changes, the question arises, "Is the Roman Catholic Church, which has clearly developed by 600 A. D., the same church as that founded by Jesus and the apostles in the time of the New Testament?" This can be answered both "Yes and "No." Yes, the Roman church developed in a historical continuity from the church seen in the scriptures. But no, it is not the same church in terms of doctrine, worship or organization. If the church changes very gradually over a long period of time, until it becomes greatly changed, at what point or degree of change does the church lose God's approval? How much can the church change from apostolic teachings before God ceases to tolerate its disobedience? God knows better than we can. But the scriptures do teach that the time comes when God no longer recognizes disobedient segments of the church as his faithful people.

In the scriptures we have the parables of the grapevine and the olive tree - John 15:1-8; Romans 11:16-24. Branches which did not bear the expected fruit were cut off. They might seem to still be branches of the same tree, but they were separated and dead because of disobedience to the Lord. But other branches remained in the plant, obedient to the teaching of the Lord. Parts of the church which have left the teaching of Christ are like branches cut off. In every time since the church began, some branches have remained faithfully in the Lord, but others have been cut off from time to time because of disobedience. Groups of Christians who depart far enough from truth are not still kept by the Lord as his,

although they may continue to have the appearance of following the Lord. Throughout the history of the church, God has had his obedient people. God knows those who are his - 2 Timothy 2:19; compare 1 Kings 19:10,18; Romans 11:2-5.

There is also the scriptural figure of the lampstands before the Lord in heaven, representing the faithful congregations of the church on earth - Revelation 1:12-20; 2:1. When one congregation stopped obeying Christ, the Lord warned, "If you do not repent, I will remove your lampstand from its place" - Revelation 2:5. Congregations can exist visibly on earth and yet have no fellowship remaining with the Lord in heaven, while others have always had their lampstand before the Lord. Even in a local congregation where most of the members had disobeyed the Lord and were pronounced by him as dead, Jesus knew and accepted the few who had not defiled their spiritual clothing with the evils of their fellow-members - Revelation 2:24,25; 3:4.

Without a doubt, the Roman Catholic Church is very different from the church seen in the scriptures. What determines if a church is faithful to Christ? The church is not a true church because its leaders were ordained by leaders who were ordained by leaders who were ordained by the apostles, for leaders can sin and carry into unfaithfulness the portion of the church which they lead. A church is not a true church because it was founded by a local church which was founded by a local church which was founded by the apostles, because local churches can leave the Lord and bear false fruit in the future. The church is true to Christ when it receives, believes, and obeys the word of Christ. The word of God is the true seed - Luke 8:11, and wherever the true seed sprouts, the true church of the Lord grows up and bears fruit as it obeys his word. In ancient times, the Egyptians used to put grain and other food in the tombs of their kings to provide food for the spirit's journey. In recent times archaeologists have uncovered corn which had lain in a tomb for thousands of years. They planted it and it produced corn just as it would have in the days of the Pharaohs. Seed always bears after its kind. In the same way, although many people may leave apostolic truth, and the faithful church may be hardly visible for long periods of time because its people are few, the word of the Lord will still produce the faithful, apostolic church whenever it is planted in the hearts of obedient people.

- D. The rise of Islam. Muhammad, the founder of Islam, was born in the town of Mecca in Arabia in 570 A. D. At the age of 40, in 610 A. D., he began to believe that he was a prophet. He had already learned some things from the Law of Moses through contact with Jews, and also had had some contact with heretical Christian sects who only possessed apocryphal gospels. Muhammad believed he was receiving revelations from God (Allah) in a cave in the desert where he went to pray. He began to preach against idols and said that people should obey him as the true prophet of Allah. People were offended with his preaching and he fled to the town of Medina in 622. In 631 he returned with soldiers and conquered Mecca. Before his death in 632, he had conquered all of Arabia. Afterward, his followers conquered many more lands, forcing people with the sword to adopt the religion of Islam. By 712, they had swallowed up all of North Africa and the Near East as far as India. Palestine, the Holy Land, was one of the lands they conquered. Later on they expanded eastward even as far as China. Many parts of what had been the Eastern Roman Empire fell to the Muhammadans. The Christian church was

largely wiped out in the patriarchates of Alexandria, Jerusalem and Antioch, and only a few Christians remained. Many church buildings were turned into mosques. The Muslims intended to conquer Europe as well, but were held off militarily. This was the hand of God, for if Islam had expanded further, Christianity might have been nearly extinguished in the world. Jerusalem was under Muhammadan control, for the most part, until 1917, when it came under British control during the First World War.

Muhammad wrote his "revelations" in a book called the Koran. Muslims accept Jesus as only a prophet, like Moses or Abraham, but do not believe that he is the Son of God, or the Messiah of God who was to come in the flesh. Therefore they are in the category referred to in Christian scripture as "antichrist" - 1 John 2:22,23; 4:2,3; 2 John 7-9. Even until now the question of the divinity of Christ is the question which most seriously divides Christians and Muhammadans.

- E. The rise and decline of papal power. The power of the popes grew greatly in the church and in the world between 600 and 1200. By 600, the Roman bishop had come to rule the universal church; by 1200 he had become a world ruler.
- 1) Gregory the Great, also called Gregory I, is considered by many scholars to be the first real pope. He ruled between 590 and 604. In 573 he had become the head of the city of Rome. People in Rome and Italy looked on him as the leader of the church and of the land as well. He owned large estates in Italy and other countries, and this formed a precedent for the "temporal" or earthly rule of the popes. Gregory was a strong and wise leader. He was known for his righteous life. But he increased the power of the papal office greatly. He sent missionaries to England and other countries in Europe, and enlarged the boundaries of the Roman Catholic Church. In 588, John the Faster, Bishop of Constantinople, who headed the Eastern Church, took the name of "Universal Bishop." Gregory strongly condemned him, saying that to take such a title was "proud, profane, wicked and blasphemous," and that John might be the "forerunner of antichrist." Gregory called himself the "servant of servants," but he also said he was the "successor of Peter" and the "vicar of Christ on earth." The church in the East gave Gregory primacy in honor, but refused his authority over their churches (following the ruling of the Council of Chalcedon in 451). But by the time of Gregory's death in 604, the authority of the Roman bishop had effectively been established everywhere. During his time in office, Gregory greatly strengthened the use of images and the doctrines of purgatory and transubstantiation, things which had not originated with the apostles but had gradually grown up after apostolic times.
 - 2) Secular rulers helped to increase the power of the papacy. As we have seen, the Western Roman Empire fell to its enemies in 476. The Eastern Empire remained, but in the West, in Italy and Europe, there was no longer any ruler strong enough to unite all the people as the Roman emperor had done. There were many lesser rulers who were weak and who often fought each other. But in the church the pope remained a strong figure with power and influence everywhere. Sometimes, for lack of a secular ruler to whom they could appeal, the kings and the people

went to the pope with their disputes. Therefore the pope gained secular and political influence.

When the Muhammadans threatened to conquer Europe after 700, the European rulers began to cooperate in order to resist them. A ruler named Charles Martel led all the European rulers in the war with the Muhammadans. The pope encouraged these rulers in their fight. The Muhammadans were defeated and turned back. After the death of Charles Martel, his son Pepin succeeded his father. Pepin and the pope agreed to help each other. In 752 the pope sent his legate to crown Pepin king. In return, Pepin gave the pope some territories in Italy to be ruled by the pope. The temporal rule of the pope really began here. The son of Pepin, Charlemagne, succeeded his father on the throne. Charlemagne wanted to have an empire like the Roman Empire which had fallen. He gathered many rulers and many countries under his leadership. He also sought the help of the pope. More than once he sent soldiers to rescue the pope from the wrath of the people of Rome who were offended in the pope. In the year 800, the pope crowned Charlemagne as emperor of the "Holy Roman Empire of the West." Charlemagne considered this a revival of the old Roman Empire. In return for the help of the pope, Charlemagne gave more lands to the pope, and the temporal rule of the pope grew.

In this way the pope and the emperor helped each other. The pope commanded church members to obey the emperor. The emperor protected the pope and punished people who did not obey him. The emperor also went into unconverted territories with his troops and forced people with the sword to be baptized and to come under the pope's authority. Thus the power of the pope grew. But in future, even though the popes and the emperors helped each other, there was jealousy and conflict between them. There was always the question, "Who is greatest, the pope or the emperor?" Should the emperor obey the pope, or should the pope obey the emperor? The pope reasoned, "The emperor should be subject to me because I crowned him and I am the representative of God on earth." The emperor reasoned, "I have given the pope his lands and temporal power, and I protect him. The pope should not interfere in matters of my kingdom, and he should not rule over me." As time went on, there were many clashes between pope and emperor over authority.

- 3) The power of the popes was also increased by the use of false documents. Around 850 A. D., some unknown scholar or scholars in the church wrote some forged documents which greatly raised the power of the papacy. One of the documents is called The Donation of Constantine. It purported to be a written decree of the Roman emperor Constantine, written in 324 A. D., giving to Sylvester, Bishop of Rome, authority over the lands of the Roman Empire in Europe. The document also stated that the bishop of Rome exceeds the emperor in authority. The purpose of the forgery was to help the pope in his struggle with the emperor over temporal authority. Many popes used the document as evidence for their claims to temporal, not just spiritual, authority. The document made it difficult for kings and emperors to refuse the authority of the popes in

matters of the state.

Other false documents written about this same time are called the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals. The documents were supposed to be a collection of decrees, pronouncements and decisions of the bishops of Rome since the time of the apostles. There was a genuine scholar in the Catholic Church named Isidore, who had made a collection of real pronouncements of some of the later bishops of Rome. The false documents pretended to be more of the same collection of Isidore. The documents declared that the pope is the universal head of the church, the successor of Peter and Paul; that the church cannot be judged by the secular government; and that all the bishops should obey the pope. The forger put into the mouths of church leaders many things that they had not said. He mentioned judgments of councils which the councils had never made, and even invented councils which are unknown in history.

Many people were deceived by the Donation of Constantine and the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals between 850 and 1400 A. D. When knowledge and scholarship began to revive after 1400, these documents were discovered to be forgeries. Roman Catholic scholars acknowledge this. But even though the deceit was discovered, the later popes did not relinquish any of the power which the papacy had gained illegitimately through the use of the documents.

We believe that the first pope to use the forged documents to his advantage was Nicholas I (858-867). He conquered some bishops who had rebelled against his authority and made them obey him. Many of the popes who came later followed the example of Nicholas in the use of the documents and greatly raised the authority of the pope, not only in the church, but also in secular rule. Some of the popes were strong and some were weak.

- 4) The papacy went through a period of weakness and moral corruption between 850 and 1050. The emperors who ruled after Charlemagne were weak and loved wickedness. Disorder came in; the lesser rulers fought over authority. Because bishops of the church were now receiving wealth and lands, many people sought church office. The rulers gave church offices to those who offered them the most money. The emperors gave even the papacy to whomever they chose. Because the popes were not chosen for their righteousness, but because of politics and money, many of the popes of this period were wicked men, guilty of immorality, lying, fighting, and other kinds of evil. Many of the popes only lasted a short time in office, being killed or imprisoned by their enemies. During this time there lived a wicked woman of the nobility named Theodora the Elder, who had two daughters, Marozia and Theodora. These three women caused the papal chair to be given repeatedly to their lovers or to their illegitimate children. Roman Catholic scholars agree that this was an evil time in the history of the papacy.

In 960, Pope John XII, one of the evil popes, got into trouble and appealed to Otto, king of Germany, to rescue him from his enemy, the king of Italy.

Otto helped the pope, and also revived the "Holy Roman Empire" which had been founded by Charlemagne. Later the pope became the enemy of Otto, and Otto brought charges against the pope because of his wicked life. Pope John was removed and another pope chosen. About 1044, there were three unworthy men all claiming at the same time to be pope. In 1046, the church asked the emperor to choose the popes in the future, and the confusion subsided.

- 5) In 1054 A. D., the church in the East refused the authority of the Roman pope and divided from the church in the West. From that time, the head of the Eastern Church has been the Patriarch of Constantinople, while the pope has retained authority in the Western Church. The Eastern and Western Churches disagreed on various points such as these: the Romans (West) said that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, while the Greeks (East) said the Spirit proceeds from the Father. The Romans used images in their churches, but the Greeks used only pictures ("icons"). The Romans did not allow the clergy to marry, but the Greeks did. The Romans used unleavened bread in the Eucharist, while the Greeks used leavened bread. The Romans fasted on Saturday, but the Greeks did not. The Romans baptized by sprinkling water on the head, but the Greeks immersed a person three times. The Romans used musical instruments in worship, but the Greeks refused these. But the greatest factor in the division was that the Greeks did not accept the universal authority of the Bishop of Rome. The Eastern Church is spoken of as the "Greek" church because Greek was spoken in the East. The Roman (Western) church used Latin and is sometimes spoken of as the "Latin" church.
- 6) Outstanding teachers in the Catholic Church during this period included Anselm (1033-1109), Abelard (1079-1142), Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Anselm, Abelard, and Thomas were leaders in the philosophical trend called Scholasticism, in which the methods of formal logic were applied to the solution of theological problems. Thomas Aquinas formulated much of modern Catholic theology.

- F. The height of papal power. Around 1050 there appeared in Rome a group of church leaders who wanted to combat some of the corruption that had gotten into the clergy. They also wanted to revive the power of the papacy, which had begun to wane. The leader of the group was Hildebrand. Hildebrand became the advisor of several successive popes and was the real power behind the throne. Hildebrand and his associates wanted the pope to be chosen by the cardinals (high officers) of the church, not by the emperor or his council.

In 1073 Hildebrand himself was chosen to be pope. He took the name of Gregory VII. He claimed to be the vicar of Christ on earth; he claimed the power to give and take away kingdoms and said that all people from the emperor to the slave must recognize his authority. He made many changes in the church. He stopped for a time the evil practice of "simony" (selling offices in the church). He forced the bishops and priests to leave off some evils. He also made them stop keeping wives or concubines. In 1075 Gregory ruled that in future, popes and church

leaders were not to be chosen by the emperor and that the cases of church leaders were not to be judged in secular courts.

The emperor of that time, Henry IV, was offended by Gregory's ruling and called a German Council to depose Gregory. Gregory in turn placed Henry under interdict (church discipline) and forbade Henry's subjects to obey him or help him in any way, lest they be put out of the church. Fearing that they would lose their souls if they disobeyed the pope, the people stopped obeying Henry. When Henry saw that he was losing his kingdom, he made the long journey to the pope's palace in Italy to repent. The pope made Henry stand outside barefoot in the snow for three days before he finally let him come in and bow at his feet, begging for forgiveness. In time, however, Henry's rule became more secure, and he drove the pope into exile away from Rome at Salerno, where the pope died in 1085. Later, the church and the state came to a compromise on the matter of making and judging leaders in the church.

About 1143 the Lombards, who lived in Northern Italian cities, rose up against the pope. Their leader, Arnold of Brescia, taught that the church should leave the traditions of Roman Catholicism and return to the way of the New Testament. There was war between the Lombards and the followers of the pope. One pope was killed and his successor had to flee for his life. He appealed to the emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, for help. Frederick came with his army, suppressed the Lombards and rescued the pope. Arnold was killed. Later the Lombards rose again and defeated Frederick. When Frederick saw that his power was gone, he spread his cloak out on the pavement, knelt before the pope, kissed his feet, and then held his horse for him, as a slave would do. The humiliation of these two rulers, Henry and Frederick, before the pope, raised the pope greatly in the eyes of people at large.

The most powerful pope of all was Pope Innocent III (1198-1216). Upon ascending the throne, he said, "The successor to the chair of Peter stands between God and men; he is beneath God and above men; he is the judge of all people, and he himself is judged by no man." In another letter, Innocent wrote that God has placed in the hands of the pope not only the church, but also the whole world; and that the pope has authority to give or take away imperial authority as well as other kingly authority. He also compared spiritual authority and secular authority to the sun and moon. The sun is greater than the moon and the moon receives its light from the sun. In like manner, the spiritual authority is greater than the secular authority, and the secular ruler receives his glory from the spiritual ruler, the pope, who receives his glory from God. Pope Innocent chose an emperor, removed him, and chose another. He forced kings to obey him. When King Philip of France put away his wife, Innocent made him take her back again. Innocent chose John and made him king of England. When John displeased him, Innocent made him lay down his crown and take it again as a servant of the pope. Innocent sent soldiers to persecute and kill members of a sect called the Albigenses, as well as others who were considered heretics by the Catholics.

- G. Papal power was also increased by the crusades. A "crusade" is a journey or battle for the cross, a "military pilgrimage." These wars happened because the Holy Land was in the hands of the Turkish Muslims, who were troubling Christian pilgrims who wished to visit the holy places such as Jerusalem and Bethlehem. In

1095, Pope Urban gathered the kings of Europe and entreated them to send their armies to liberate the Holy Land from the Muslims. The pope promised that any Christian killed in the crusade would be forgiven of his sins and have eternal life. Prison sentences and debts were also canceled for those who would go, and many responded. By 1099 the armies had liberated Jerusalem and a large part of the Holy Land and had set up a Christian kingdom in Palestine.

Later the Muslims began to re-take Palestine. So the emperor and other rulers in Europe set out on the second Crusade (1147-1149). They failed in their task, and Jerusalem returned to the control of the Turks. The rulers mounted the Third Crusade (1188-1192), which also failed. The rulers were able to negotiate an agreement with the Muslims whereby Christian pilgrims were allowed to visit the holy places without harassment. A Fourth Crusade (1201-1204) was intended for the liberation of Jerusalem, but it was only a little effective. The Fifth Crusade (1228) was a complete failure, and the Sixth Crusade (1248-1254) was only successful in a small way. The Seventh Crusade was a failure. There were other smaller efforts which accomplished nothing. During the crusades great numbers of people who joined them died on the way from cold, hunger, disease, accidents, and battle. Many others were taken and sold as slaves. But there was great popular approval of the pope because he had led in the effort to rescue the Holy Land from the infidels.

- H. The growth of monasticism: We have seen earlier that there were some Christians who wanted to withdraw from the world, shut themselves away, and devote themselves to prayer and the service of God. The men who did this were called "monks," and their houses were called "monasteries." The whole concept is called "monasticism." The best-known monastic communities in Roman Catholicism are the Benedictines, begun by Saint Benedict in 529; the Cistercians, begun by Saint Robert and Saint Bernard in 1098; the Franciscans, begun by Saint Francis of Assisi in 1209; and the Dominicans, begun by Saint Dominic in 1215. In their early years, when these orders kept their original disciplines, they accomplished much good. In the "Dark Ages" of the medieval period, they helped to keep learning alive by preserving books and language and knowledge of the past. They helped many needy and sick people. This was the beginning of hospitals. But as these communities grew and became wealthy and powerful, they left their ideals and their disciplines and went into spiritual decay. Laziness and immorality sometimes came in. The Dominicans were given the work of hunting down and persecuting those who opposed Roman Catholic doctrine and practice.
- I. The decline of papal power: Because of the pride and extreme power of Pope Innocent III and his immediate successors, many people and many rulers began to be offended in the papacy. The power of the papacy began to decline from the time of Boniface VIII who was pope from 1294 to 1303. Boniface tried to rule with the same power and arrogance as Innocent had done. He wrote that no person can be saved if he does not obey the Roman pope. But the kings of England and France grew tired of this and began to refuse the authority of the pope over them. King Philip of France sent soldiers who arrested the pope. The pope was ill-treated and soon died. King Philip himself chose another pope to replace the one who had died. The new pope resided in France under Philip's dominion, rather than in Rome. The new throne of the pope was at Avignon in France. Successive popes ruled from there for almost 70 years before the papacy returned to Rome.

Catholics call this the "Babylonian Captivity of the Papacy," comparing it to the captivity of the Jews in Babylon for 70 years. In 1377, Pope Gregory XI moved back to Rome and the captivity in France ended.

When Gregory XI died, the Italian church leaders chose a new pope, Urban VI. But the French church leaders also chose a new pope, Clement VII, who was enthroned at Avignon where the popes had stayed during the recent captivity. People in some countries obeyed the pope at Rome while those in other countries obeyed the pope in France. Since the two popes were each contending to be the real pope, a church council was called at Pisa in 1409. The council removed both popes and chose another. But the first two popes refused to step down. Now there were three popes all claiming to be the successor of Peter and head of the church on earth. The emperor called the Council of Constance, which met periodically from 1414 to 1418, to settle the conflict. All three rival popes were removed and a new one appointed, Martin V. Thus the conflict, now called the Great Schism, was settled. But this schism, along with the captivity of the papacy in France, caused many people to wonder about the papacy and lose faith in it as well as in the Roman Catholic Church.

Between 1400 and 1550, many of the popes were wicked men. They committed many immoralities and installed many of their illegitimate children as bishops, archbishops and cardinals. The popes sold many church offices. Boys as young as 8 or 9 years old became church leaders through payments by their parents. The popes lived lives of elegant wealth and luxury and indulged in many pleasures like kings. Pope Julius II had his own private army and rode with it into battle, in spite of the words of Jesus, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight..." The popes of this period caused government soldiers to be sent to kill many religious people who differed with Catholicism. And these popes caused the governments to burn and otherwise execute thousands of people who taught differently from the Catholics. They also sold "indulgences" releasing people from punishment in purgatory, and took in great amounts of money.

J. Some people who opposed the teachings of Roman Catholicism

- 1) Groups who opposed Romanism: For many centuries there had been Christian groups who saw the evils and erroneous teachings in Roman Catholicism and wanted to return to the way of the scriptures. Many of these groups refused infant baptism, the use of images, and other errors in Catholic worship. They also refused the authority of the pope and the bishops and believed the church should be ruled by the scriptures. These groups did not understand all the scriptures correctly, and they taught some errors, but many of them were closer to the New Testament church than the Roman Catholics were. Some of the groups which differed with Roman Catholicism were:
 - a. The Paulicians, who lived near the Euphrates River in Mesopotamia around 650 A.D.
 - b. The Bogomils, who lived in Bulgaria and Bosnia between 900 and 1000 A.D. Their name means "Friends of God."

- c. Various groups called the Cathari ("the holy"), who were very careful about the scriptures and lived an ascetic life. They appeared in Europe from about 1000 A.D.
- d. The Beghards, a people of prayer, who appeared in Germany and the Netherlands from about 1200 A.D.
- e. The Arnoldians, followers of Arnold of Brescia in Italy. Arnold was taught by the famous Catholic scholar Abelard. Arnold taught people that they should return to the scriptures for guidance in religion. He was hanged by the Catholics about 1155 A.D.
- f. The Petrobrusians, who derived their name from their leader, Peter of Bruys. Peter was a Roman Catholic priest about 1110 A.D. He condemned Catholic errors and accepted the New Testament as his authority in religion. Because of these things he was killed in 1130 and a man named Henry succeeded him in the leadership of his people. Henry was later imprisoned by Catholic authorities.
- g. The Waldenses in Northern Italy, who were led by Peter Waldo. Waldo was a Catholic and began to study the Bible about 1160. He persuaded some of the monks to translate the scriptures into the language of the common people, and began to gather the people for Bible study. He and his followers gave up all their wealth and began to oppose the wrong things they saw in Catholicism. They were persecuted and Peter died in the mountains where he was hiding. But the Waldenses held to their beliefs and are still in existence in Northern Italy.
- h. The Albigenses who appeared in Southern France, particularly around the town of Albi (and thus their name). By 1200 there were large numbers of them. Some of the princes protected the Albigenses but Pope Innocent III raised an army to destroy them. He promised forgiveness of sins to all who would leave their work and join the army. He also promised that the soldiers would be allowed to loot the property of the slain Albigenses. The people of many towns and villages were killed. In one town alone 23,000 were killed by the soldiers. The Albigenses were wiped out.

Near 1200, the Catholic church instituted a church court called the Inquisition in which were tried those accused of heresy (false teaching). (The Catholics viewed any teaching contrary to their own as false). This court and its machinery were operated by the Dominican Order. If a person was accused of heresy, he was not allowed to know his accuser or to defend himself by examining his accuser. If he confessed voluntarily to heresy, he was severely punished. If he did not confess to heresy, he was tortured with various instruments and machines until he confessed. Then he was handed over to the secular government for execution. Many of these were burned to death. Because of the terror of this court

and its punishments, most people did not have the courage to oppose the teachings of the Catholic church.

2) People within the Catholic Church who attempted to reform the church:

- a. William of Occam (1300-1349) was a well-known teacher. He denied the infallibility of the pope. He said that a general council of the church has more authority than the pope, and that only the scriptures have infallible authority in the church.
- b. John Wycliffe (1320-1348) was a teacher at Oxford University in England. He denied the universal authority of the pope, transubstantiation, and the veneration of images and relics (remains of the saints or objects associated with them). The Catholic church was accustomed to keep and venerate relics of the saints such as bones or hair from the "saints," milk from the Virgin Mary, pieces of the cross, and other such things. They believe that the power of God for healing and performing other miracles is in such objects, therefore they put these things under church altars or kept them in places of honor and venerated them in the same way that others fear or reverence magic charms. But Wycliffe said that the church should follow the worship of the church of the New Testament. He translated the scriptures into English and this translation helped greatly in the work of reformation in England. The pope was very angry about this translation, but some of the princes in England protected Wycliffe from death. Some call Wycliffe the "Morning Star of the Reformation" because he heralded the light at the end of the Dark Ages. After Wycliffe's death, a Catholic court condemned him posthumously as a heretic and had his bones dug up, burned, and the ashes cast in a river. Possession of his translation of the Bible carried the death penalty. This opposition to the translation of the scriptures was common because the church did not want the people to have the scriptures lest they judge and question the practices and beliefs of the church.
- c. John Hus (1369-1415) of Bohemia read the writings of Wycliffe and preached the same teachings to his people. He firmly rejected the authority of the pope. Hus was the rector of the University of Prague. The pope excommunicated him and called him to judgment at the Council of Constance. The emperor promised Hus safe conduct and Hus agreed to go. At the council he was condemned as a heretic and sentenced to death. The church leaders at the council said that a promise to a heretic is not valid, and Hus was burned at the stake. The death of Hus caused many people to forsake the Catholic Church. Because of his teachings, some people in Bohemia began to read the scriptures and founded the Moravian Church.
- d. Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498) was a Catholic monk at the city of Florence in Italy. He preached from the scriptures and

condemned the evils of the Roman Catholic clergy. The pope offered him a high office in the church if he would be quiet, but he refused. He was tried and executed in 1498.

- e. John Colet (1466-1519) was a teacher in Oxford University in England. He studied under Savonarola at one time. Colet taught from the epistles of Paul and condemned the sins of the Catholic clergy. Colet condemned the practice of setting up a special priesthood between God and people and also condemned the doctrine of transubstantiation.
- f. Desiderius Erasmus (1467-1536) was born in Holland but taught in England. He was a Catholic and wanted to remain a Catholic, but he wanted to reform the church. He pointed out many errors in the church and among the clergy. He studied the New Testament scriptures in Greek and produced a Greek text of the New Testament from old manuscripts. (The New Testament was originally written in Greek). Erasmus' Greek text helped people to understand the scriptures more accurately. Before this time most people had to read the New Testament scriptures in Latin or in translations made from Latin. Now they could read in the language used by the apostles, or translations could be made directly from the Greek.