

CHURCH HISTORY: FROM PENTECOST TO THE GREAT SCHISM

WEEK 9: CHARLEMAGNE AND THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

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Christian Life in the Early Middle Ages (c. 476-800)

God as Ruler – people had little control over their lives (disease, environment, occupation, travel); there was a clear sense that God ruled creation; Christians identified with the suffering Jesus and hoped for the joy of heaven as a reward for earthly hardship; God looked down on them, blessing the good and punishing the wicked

The Mass and Sacraments – Sunday Mass is central to the lives of all Christians, although it began to become unintelligible because the language of the liturgy continued to be Latin even as new vernacular languages emerged; Mass became a way for the faithful to glimpse heaven while enduring the most difficult of lives on earth; little participation of the people and infrequent communion became standard; baptism was important for newborns because of high infant mortality rates; reconciliation took the form of public penitence for the most serious sins

Veneration of Saints – became widespread during the Early Middle Ages as intercessors in heaven; relics were treasured in local churches; saints' feast days begin to appear in local calendars

The Clergy – qualifications for the priesthood became uniform: not done public penance, not served in the army, not paid for pagan games, not been a pagan priest, literate, not a proven criminal, not physically deformed; priests often chosen by local townspeople or lords; no formal training or education (seminaries not established until the 16th Century Council of Trent) – candidates for the priesthood underwent a three-day oral exam on the basics of the Catholic faith; duties of priests: celebrate sacraments, bury the dead, care for the sick, arrange for the needs of the poor; celibacy encouraged (especially after Gregory the Great), but not required (until 1139)

From the Fall of the Western Roman Empire to the Rise of Charlemagne

Barbarian leadership – from 476 onward, the Western part of Europe had no centralized leadership; barbarian chieftains exercised limited authority in small areas; leaders moved

often, with no well-built towns or fortifications; little trade or commerce between towns, which were all self-sufficient

Clovis (d. 511) and the Franks – most barbarian tribes were Arian Christians, but the Franks in northern Europe were pagan; led by their king, Clovis, a fierce warrior, many Frankish tribes united in the 490s; Clovis married a Catholic princess, Clothilda; found on the losing side of a battle, Clovis prayed to God, and he won the battle; Clovis was baptized in 496 along with more than 3,000 of his soldiers; as he continued to conquer central Europe, especially Gaul, he was welcomed by local bishops and convinced more tribes to become Catholic Christians; Clovis died in 511 and his descendents, the Merovingian kings, continued his legacy

Pepin the Short (d. 768) and the Donation – in evangelizing northern Europe, St. Boniface worked closely with the Franks and their leaders, crowning Pepin as King of the Franks in 751, the beginning of the tangled tension between church and state; lacking a unified government, the Popes turned to the Franks asking for protection from invasion; Pope Stephen II traveled across the Alps in 753 to meet with Pepin, asking him for protection, which he pledged; in return for the papal support of his rule, Pepin issued what is called the Donation of Pepin in 756, a decree granting the land of central Italy to the papacy to govern; the Papal States endured until 1870; Pope Stephen named Pepin and his two sons, Carloman and Charles, “Patricians of the Romans”

Charlemagne

Biography – Charles, the second son of Pepin the Short; given half of the Kingdom of the Franks upon his father’s death in 768; his brother Carloman died in 771, leaving Charles the entire kingdom; expanded his father’s kingdom through military campaigns, bringing Christianity to the peoples he conquered; organized the Kingdom of the Franks as a unified empire, from the Atlantic to southern Italy and from the Pyrenees to the Elbe – virtually all of the former Western Roman Empire; given the French name Charles the Great, *Charlemagne*

Coronation as Emperor – continued to protect Rome and the Pope and to spread Christianity; while in Rome in 800, Leo III unexpectedly crowned Charlemagne on Christmas Day in St. Peter’s Basilica: “Hail to Charles the Augustus, crowned of God, the great and peace-bringing Emperor of the Romans”

The Holy Roman Empire – lasted in some form from Charlemagne to Francis II in 1806; boundaries fluctuated, but centered on modern-day Germany; historically seen as not holy, Roman, or an empire, but claimed these titles:

Holy: title of emperor given by God through the Pope, emperor was military protector of the papacy

Roman: empire covered much of the area of the historic Western Roman Empire, emperor crowned in Rome, wanted to replicate the unity and success of the Roman Empire

Empire: controlled a large number of kingdoms, each with their own languages, history, and customs

The Ideal of Christendom – a united Europe with a common Christian faith, a single society and government in which the Pope and the Emperor worked together; conflict: who was the ultimate authority – Pope or Emperor? Settled as the Pope with the reforms of Pope Gregory VII

Influence on the Church – Charlemagne founded schools to educate the men of power in Europe, using monks as teachers; encouraged the building of monasteries and promoted the use of the Rule of St. Benedict; attempted to educate and reform corrupt clergy; promoted uniformity of worship throughout his Empire, enforcing the use of Latin in the Mass and commissioning uniform liturgical books

The Breakdown of the Empire – Louis the Pious succeeded his father, Charlemagne, as Emperor, until his death in 840; the empire was divided among his three sons: Charles the Bald (France), Lewis the German (Germany), and Lothar (The Middle Kingdom and Lombardy), who were constantly quarrelling and divided; the empire crumbled completely under Viking and Magyar invasions in the 880s and 890s, ushering in the era of feudalism with no universal government or authority; the easternmost part of the Empire, modern day Germany, was revived under Otto the Great (d. 973) who was crowned by Pope John XII in 962 (the first of Germany's three reichs), who with his successors exercised great control over the Popes, including reserving the right to approve their election; St. Henry II (973-1024), became Holy Roman Emperor in 995 and was crowned by the Pope in 1014; friends with St. Odilo, Abbot of Cluny, and helped spread reforms in the Church and empire; married to St. Cunegunda (978-1033),

who was crowned with him by the Pope; childless; entered a Benedictine convent after Henry's death

The Edges of Europe and Royal Saints

The Magyars – a nomadic people from the borders of Asia who migrated to an unpopulated area in Eastern Europe; lived by pillaging and plundering farms, monasteries, and villages, but never fortified cities; were so ferocious in their attacks that they were called cannibals or vampires; defeated by Emperor Henry I in 933

St. Stephen of Hungary (975-1038) – king of Hungary, married to the sister of St. Henry II, the Holy Roman Emperor; worked to spread Christianity by appealing to the fact that the Pope had given him the title of king and his crown, which still survives; established church order and structure through dioceses and monasteries (including the Archabbey of Pannonhalma); united the Magyars into a single kingdom with Christianity as its religion, using the force of the state to spread the faith

The Slavs – the peoples of Eastern Europe, the ancestors of the Czechs, Croatians, Slovaks, Serbians, Bulgarians, Poles, and Russians; some were connected to the Eastern Church, some to the Western Church (first missionaries were German, most successful missionaries were Greek); most Slavs were Christian by 1000; Prince Mieszko (d. 990), unified Poland and presented his kingdom as a vassal state to the Pope, thus becoming connected with Western Christianity; the first ruler of a unified Russia, Vladimir (d. 1015), allied himself with the Byzantine Church and became connected with Eastern Christianity

Ss. Cyril (826-869) and Methodius (815-885) – sent by the Byzantine emperor from Greece to evangelize the Slavic people; developed an alphabet for their language, which at that time had no written form (called the *Cyrillic* alphabet, still used today); translated the Gospels into Slavic and converted many people; named co-patrons of Europe by Pope John Paul II

St. Wenceslaus (907-929) – duke of Bohemia, generous ruler who worked for the religious and educational improvement of his people; killed by his brother, Boleslav's, followers for recognizing the leadership of the Holy Roman Emperor; the events of the Christmas carol are not known to have a basis in fact

The Vikings – men from the north, “Norsemen,” who came in the 800s in boats first looking and leaving, later settling in northern France (Normandy), England, Ireland, and Eastern Europe; brought pagan religion and customs, but quickly intermarried with Christians after settling in mainland Europe; at the same time, Christian missionaries

traveled to the land of the Vikings and converted their leaders, who brought the entire region to Christianity

St. Olaf (995-1030) – king of Norway; became Christian while fighting in Normandy; brought peace and security to Norway; converted Norway to Christianity, sometimes using force and persuasion; killed in battle after being deposed by the king of England and Denmark; patron of Norway

St. Eric (d. 1160) – king of Sweden; showed great favor to the Church, helping to consolidate Christianity in Sweden and evangelize Finland; established monasteries; codified laws; insisted that tithes be paid to the Church, for which he was murdered by soldiers hired by unhappy Swedes; patron of Sweden

The Challenges of the High Middle Ages – 800-1216

Uneducated population and clergy

Feudal society without cities

Tension between the Church and the Empire

Lay Investiture

Corruption of Popes and Bishops

Lack of centralization and communication in the Church

Spiritual mediocrity

And the response ...

Papal reform under Gregory VII (d. 1085)

Scholastic Theology

Mendicant Religious Orders – Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites, Augustinians

Monastic reforms of Cluny and St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Universities and Cathedral Schools

Resurgence of monasteries and cathedrals as the centers of life and culture

The building of cathedrals