Overview of AD 1300-1500

Papal Decline

History of the Church
Grace Bible Church
Randy Broberg
2003
Review:
Reasons to Study Church History

- Know God better through observance of His providence over time.
- Best way to study theology because all the issues are raised and argued. You get to see all sides and evaluate who’s right.
- Makes you more open minded, understanding that your views are not necessarily the only views held by Christians who study their Bible.
- Understand contemporary issues.
- Understand that doctrines have consequences.
- Understand your roots, as an individual and a believer.
- Discover you have things in common with those you didn’t know.
- Better able to evaluate critically false teachers and false prophets.
- Better able to defend your faith—apologetics.
- Better understand the Gospel and how to share it.
- Personal edification.
## Review: The Church’s First 450 Years

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## Review: The Church at 1300

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Reformation Quiz: True or False?

- Before the Reformation split the Church, there was just one single church, the Roman Catholic Church.
- Martin Luther didn’t intend to break away from the Roman Catholic Church.
- The Protestant Reformation ushered in an era of individual religious liberty and democracy.
- John Calvin formulated the doctrine of predestination.
- John Calvin was intolerant and persecuted heretics, but Martin Luther allowed believers to follow their own consciences.
- Henry VIII’s split from the Pope was more about politics than religion.
- Puritans didn’t smoke or drink.
- The Reformers tossed out Roman Catholic sacramentalist views about baptism and the Lord’s Supper.
- King James, of the King James Bible, hated Puritans and published the “Authorized Version” to stamp out the Calvinist oriented Geneva Bible then widely used.
Europe at 1300
Rise of Ottoman Empire: 1300-1517

- Ottoman troops first invaded Europe in 1345, sweeping through the Balkans.
Some Abuses in the Church, 1300 AD

- Indulgences
- Nepotism
- Simony
- Pluralism, the holding of more than one church office
- Absenteeism, whereby the clergy who were practicing pluralism would show up infrequently or not at all to his parish
- Concubinage, whereby a priest who was sworn to celibacy would take a mistress on the side, and instead of being removed from his office, the Church would simply fine him.
- Greed and extravagance
- Blatant Immorality

- A mocking hymn of the time:
  - “To God in heaven we complain,
  - *Kyrie eleison,*
  - that the priests cannot be slain,
  - *Kyrie eleison.*
Wealthy Italian Families Make Papacy Their Personal Possession

- The Italian families of Borgia and de Medici became influential in the election of Popes and in some cases became the Popes.

“The Lord desires not the death of the sinner, but that he may live ... and pay”
13th Cen. Rediscovery of Roman Law Enhances Separation of Church & State

- Development of universities and contact with Byzantine Empire and Arabs led to rediscovery of Roman Law
- Roman Law clearly defined role of Emperor as outside of and superior to Church
- The discovery of Roman law would give kings a new weapon to use in the ongoing debate with the Papacy over the relationship between king and Pope.
Pope Boniface VIII, 1294-1303

- Member of Roman nobility.
- Legalistic approach to power & privileges
- 1301 Ascolta, fili: ‘Listen, son,’ Boniface argued that no layman can try a cleric
- Boniface was one of the Popes put in Hell by Dante, who wrote the *Inferno* only a few years after Boniface's death.
1302--Papal bull "Unam sanctum"

- *Unam Sanctam*, ‘One Holy,’
- Most powerful statement of powers of imperial Papacy
  - The two swords: (Luke 22:38)
  - Both temporal and spiritual power are under control over the Pope
  - necessary for salvation that every human being be subject to the Roman Pope.
- Failed in its essential purpose

Boniface VIII
King Philip II of France (r. 1180-1223) vs. Boniface

- 1301 Philip claimed right to try clergy in royal courts.
- Boniface VII thought he still had the power of Gregory VII and Innocent III.
- Boniface retaliated by forbidding taxes for church, war.
- 1302 *Unum Sanctum*
- Edward collected taxes anyway, Philip stopped sending Pope taxes.
- Boniface issued bull of excommunication and interdict.
- Phillip imprisoned Boniface and beat him to near death.
- Boniface died in prison 1303.
- After the death of Boniface, it was clear that the governments of Europe had no intention of recognizing papal authority as absolute.
The Babylonian Captivity (1309-1377)

- 1305 Clement V elected Pope through the efforts of Philip IV of France
- He was archbishop of Bordeaux when elected, and he had never been to Rome
- 1309 Clement V moved the Papal capital to Avignon where the Papacy fell under French control
- 7 successive Popes were French and didn’t return to Rome
- Papacy remained in Avignon for 70 years, hence the “Babylonian Captivity.”
Babylonian Captivity: Effects

- The city of Rome deteriorated
- The name of Avignon was a synonym for corruption and bad morals.
- Weakness of Papacy
- Papacy Dominated by French, decreasing Papal prestige
- Immorality and avarice in Papacy Criticism of Papacy increased
- Cardinals began to play a stronger role in church government.

Petrarch: “Avignon was a sewer where all the filth of the universe gathered, a place where no pity dwells, no charity, no faith, where whoever is the worse is promoted, God is despised, money worshipped, the laws trodden underfoot and good men ridiculed.”
Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) was a major player in returning the Papacy from Avignon to Rome, urging the Pope to take this step. She was an advisor to the next Pope, Urban VI. She left several writings, including the *Dialogue*.

Responding to great public pressure, Gregory XI returned to Rome in 1377.

Died in Rome.
England v. France
The Hundred Years War
(1337-1453)

Richard II (1377-1399); Henry IV (1399-1413); Henry V (1413-1422)
The Great Schism (1378-1417)

- After Gregory died, the cardinals in Rome elected an Italian Pope: Pope Urban VI (r. 1378-1389)
- The French cardinals responded by electing a French Pope: Clement VII (r. 1378-1394)
- From 1378 to 1409 there were two Popes at all times.
- Expenses of 2 Popes led to greater need for money
- The two popes at once excommunicated each other and put the rival supporters and entire countries under interdicts.
The Religious split resembled the political divisions in Europe at the time:

- France and its allies supported Clement, VII who resided in Avignon.
- The English, together with most Italian governments, the Holy Roman, etc. supported Urban VI, the Pope in Rome.
Conciliar Movement (1409-49)

- Because of the Great Schism, a movement arose emphasizing the authority of church councils over the Papacy.
- Councils of
  - Pisa 1409
  - Constance 1414
  - Basel, 1431
  - Ferrara, 1438
  - Florence, 1438
  - Rome, 1445

“The holy Council of Constance holds its power direct from Christ; everyone, no matter what his rank or office, even if it be Papal, is bound to obey it.”
Council of Pisa (1409)

- The Council of Pisa (1409) - It was convened to put an end to the Great Schism of the Papacy.
- It had also hoped to curb the power of the Pope and bring authority more under the College of Cardinals.
- The council of Pisa convened in 1409 after many efforts to end the schism.
- It said Council was superior to Pope, deposed both Popes and elected a new one, Alexander V.
- From 1409 to 1417 there were three Popes instead of two.

- People began to joke, “I believe in three holy Catholic churches”
- Benefictus was called “good fake” and Gregorius was called “Errorious.”
1414 -1417 - The Council of Constance

- Deposed all three Popes and, in 1417, elected a Roman nobleman as Martin V (r.1417-1431).
- This same council burns Czech priest John Hus as a heretic and condemns John Wycliffe posthumously.
- The Pope was accused of “piracy, murder, rape sodomy and incest.” The Pope’s seals of office were smashed, he was declared “nonpope” and jailed for three years.
Council of Basel (1431-1449)

- Affirmed Constance – authority in church council, not Pope
- Spiritual authority of Papacy decreased as each claimant hurled abuse at the other
- Royal power increased as spiritual authority of Pope decreased
- Popes needed royal support and could not stand up to kings
- Pope Eugenius IV (1431-1447) Dissolved the Council of Basel and ignored it.
“Donatio Constantini” was a document that discusses the supposed grant by Constantine to Pope Sylvester I (314–335) and his successors of spiritual supremacy over the other patriarchates and over all matters of faith and worship, as well as of temporal dominion over Rome and the entire Western Empire.

It was regarded as genuine by both friends and enemies of the papal claims to power throughout the Middle Ages.

The earliest certain appeal to it by a pope was made in 1054 by Leo IX in a letter to Michael Cerularius, the patriarch of Constantinople.

In 1440 Lorenzo Valla, Renaissance scholar, proved that it was false using *textual criticism*.
Union of Florence 1438-9
Unsuccessful Papal Attempt to Dominate Eastern Church

- A second reunion council between Greek East and Latin West was held at Florence in 1438-9.
- This time Emperor John VIII (reigned 1425-48) attended, together with the patriarch of Constantinople and a large delegation from a number of Orthodox churches.
- Constantinople surrounded by Turks
- The Greeks knew their political situation had become desperate. The only hope of defeating the Turks lay in help from the West. Eventually an agreement was drawn up, which was signed by nearly all the Orthodox present.
The Florentine Union sought unanimity in doctrine but allowed different rituals and practices in each church.

Thus the Orthodox accepted
- the papal claims (though the wording was ambiguous)
- The *filioque* (though they weren't required to insert the phrase into their reciting of the Creed), and
- the doctrine of purgatory (a relatively new point of contention).

Greeks were allowed to use leavened bread, while Latins were to continue to employ unleavened.
Mixed Reactions to Union of Florence

- The Union of Florence was celebrated throughout western Europe; bells were rung in all the parish churches of England.
- John VIII and his successor, Constantine XI (the last emperor of Byzantium), were powerless to enforce it on their subjects. They did not even dare to proclaim it publicly at Constantinople for 13 years.
- Many Orthodox who signed at Florence revoked their signatures when they reached home.
- The council's decrees were never accepted by more than a tiny fraction of Orthodox clergy and people and was immediately posed by all Patriarchs outside of Constantinople.
- The Grand Duke Lucas Notaras, echoing the words of the emperor's sister after Lyons, remarked, "I would rather see the Muslim turban in the midst of the city than the Latin miter."
“An effort at "reunion" was really an attempt to enslave the Eastern Church at the Pseudo-Synod of Florence (1438) where the representatives of the Eastern Church, by force, signed a statement of reunion. Although it was proclaimed on July 6, 1439, it was never approved by the Church as a whole and was later denounced by a synod in Constantinople in 1451. Orthodoxy has suffered more from the Christian West than from the Moslem East. The downfall of Constantinople in 1453 put a tragic end to any effort at reunion. “
The Turks capture Constantinople and turn St. Sophia Basilica into a mosque.

Constantine XI’s army outnumbered 20 to 1, but battle still lasts 7 weeks.
The many scholars fleeing west encourage a revival of classical learning - the Renaissance.
Pope Pius II Calls for Crusade Against Turks, He is Ignored (1459)

- “The Turks do not hesitate to die for their most vile faith, but we cannot incur the least expense nor endure the smallest hardship for the sake of Christ's gospel. If we continue thus, it will be all over with us. We shall soon perish unless we can summon up a different spirit. Therefore we urge you, who are holy men, to pray God without ceasing that he may change the temper of the Christian kings, rouse the spirit of His people, and kindle the hearts of the faithful, so that now at least we may take arms and avenge the wrongs which the Turks day after day are inflicting on our religion. Up, brethren! Up, sons!“

- Unlike Pope Urban, Pope Pius was ignored.
Continued Expansion of Ottoman Empire

- (1467-1520) Ottoman empire became the largest in the world, taking control of Persia, Arabia, Hungary, and the Balkans.
- 1517 Ottomans defeated the Mamluks in Syria and Egypt; and their navy soon seized control of much of the Barbary Coast.
- Ottoman sultans also held the title of caliph, the spiritual head of Islam.
Last Three Popes before 1500

- **Sixtus IV** (1471-1484)
  - Pursued of personal wealth and power
  - Built Sistine Chapel with brothel licenses
  - Nepotism
  - He set up the infamous Spanish Inquisition
  - Engaged in war to expand papal territories.
  - Left the Papacy much in debt.

- **Innocent VIII** (1484-1492)
  - Weak and dominated by Cardinals
  - Inexperienced, loose-living and left the Papacy in financial and political chaos

- **Alexander VI** (1492-1503)
  - Gained Papacy through bribery
  - Fathered 8 children with 3 women
  - "Flee, we are in the hands of a wolf!"
  - Divided the world between Spain and Portugal.
  - Opposed Savonarola

Pope Alexander VI
1500 AD, Turks at the Gaits of Vienna!
Questions to Consider

- Pope John Paul II recently met with the Iraqi foreign minister and clasped his hand saying, “God Bless Iraq” in an effort to prevent the U.S. from attacking Iraq. Which historical pope did he most resemble in doing so?
- Should the church be governed by councils?
- Can any council ever again be “ecumenical” (universal)?
- What authority over Protestant faith and practice have been held by confessions of faith adopted at councils?
- To what extent should we put aside doctrinal differences for the sake of unity? Are some doctrines more suitable to be put aside than others?
- Can we identify good that came out of the pre-Reformation papacy?