

TWENTY CENTURIES

A Survey of Church History



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- “The last century of the first millennium, in which the church was called to minister in an age of darkness, of immorality, of barbarian invasion, when civilization was in twilight.” Iain Campbell.
- The Reform of Cluny Abbey
- Conversion of the Norsemen
- The German Empire & Feudal Control of the Church

The Reform of Cluny



● Papal Problems

- In the 9th century, the papacy was threatened by barbarian attacks (the Lombards) and dependent on the Frankish kings to provide it security.
- The popes were drawn more and more into political matters and were unfit for spiritual leadership of the church.
- The first half of the 10th century saw 17 different men serve as Pope.
- After the empire of Charlemagne waned, the papacy turned to the German empire of Otto the Great. The pope crowned him emperor in 962.
- The first cardinals appeared in the 10th century as the pope's staff officers.

The Reform of Cluny



- **The rise of Abbey Cluny**
 - As the church secularized, the task of reform fell to the monasteries.
 - Chief among these was the new abbey of Cluny, founded in 910 in France.
 - Cluny was organized to be self-sufficient and free from church or state interference.
 - Cluny followed the Benedictine Rule strictly.
 - Under her able abbots, Cluny became a model for the reform of other monasteries.
 - Cluny ultimately became head of something like a denomination.

The Reform of Cluny



- Cluny's Influence on Western Europe
 - As the empire broke down, nobles began fighting. Cluny brokered the "Truce of God."
 - Cluny stood for the moral reform of priests, celibacy of the priests, and an end to simony (see 1 Cor. 9:5 on celibacy).
 - The new monasteries also were evangelistic. They employed the example of moral power to serve the cause of spreading the gospel.



The Reform of Cluny



- **Spread of Reform to Britain**
 - Influenced by Cluny, Archbishop Dunstan and Bishop Ethelwold drew up new regulations for British monasteries.
 - Liturgy was developed around chant; first organs installed at Abingdon and Winchester.
 - Emphasis on morality, celibacy, sobriety, and literacy of the clergy.



Conversion of the Norsemen



- Alfred the Great of Wessex
 - In the 9th and 10th centuries, the Danish invasions almost destroyed Christianity in Western Europe and especially Britain. “The Norse warriors showed no respect for religion – burning churches and monasteries, slaughtering priests and monks, raping nuns. To their victims, it seemed impossible that these savage killers could ever embrace the Christian faith” (Nick Needham).
 - However, as the Danes settled in eastern England, they began to assimilate with the Christian Saxons.



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Conversion of the Norsemen



Conversion of the Norsemen



- Alfred the Great, cont.
 - Only Alfred of Wessex (849-99) successfully opposed the Danes. He decisively defeated the Danes at Edington in 878. Alfred the Great forced a division of the land and insisted that the Danish king Guthrum be baptized together with his court.
 - Alfred's grandson Aethelstan (925-39) overcame the Danes and subdued them as part of a unified Christian England.
 - Alfred's impeccable moral integrity set an example for nobles and priests in England. He gave half of his wealth to establishing churches and schools, and personally translated theological works by Augustine and Gregory into English. Alfred knew many psalms by heart and practiced daily worship. Alfred was the true founder of the English nation.

Conversion of the Norsemen



- **Conversion of Normandy**

- In the 9th century, Norsemen captured the northern French coast. In 911, the French king Charles the Simple made a treaty establishing the duchy of Normandy. One stipulation was the embrace of Christianity.
- The Normans would go on to conquer Sicily and, in 1066, England.
- With the conversion of the Norse of Normandy, the gospel spread to Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Finland.
- The revival of Germany as a great power intimidated the Norse into embracing Christianity. The King of Denmark, Harald Bluetooth, was baptized in 972 and Christianity became the official religion. The King of Norway, Olaf, was converted in 995 and Norway became a Christian nation. Sweden was converted in 1024.

The German Empire & Feudal Control of the Church



- **The First German Empire: Henry I and Otto the Great**
 - By 900, Charlemagne's empire had fragmented into six tribal states: Saxony, Thuringia, Franconia, Lorraine, Swabia, and Bavaria.
 - The invasion of the Magyars forced the unification of the Germans under Henry I (919-366). Henry decisively defeated the Magyars in 933.
 - Henry's son, Otto the Great (936-73), revived the ideal of Charlemagne's empire. His successful wars made Germany a great power. Like Charlemagne, Otto protected the papacy from Lombard aggression. Otto was crowned emperor in Rome in 962.

The German Empire & Feudal Control of the Church



- **Feudal Control of the Church**
 - Charlemagne had strengthened culture through the church. This cultural influence remained strong after the fall of the empire. It was harnessed by Otto to bring culture to the German empire.
 - Otto considered himself the political and spiritual head of the empire, used many bishops in his government. Two reasons: bishops were literate and they had no legitimate children.
 - Through Otto, the empire gained control over the church.
 - Feudalism (with vassalage) became the formal social structure of Europe. Part of the purpose was to support the knighthood.
 - ✦ The practice of praying with bowed head and clasped hands comes from the feudal oath of loyalty.
 - Since the land-owner built the local church, the land and building belonged to him not the church. Naturally, he picked the priest and bishop. “The feudal system therefore swept away the ancient tradition of the clergy being elected by the votes of the church members, and bishops being elected by clergy and people together” (Needham).

Lessons



- The desire for an authentic Christian lifestyle is felt in all generations. True Christians resist nominalism and corruption. The answers are found in the Bible.
- Unbelief is conquered through godly lives and an unyielding gospel witness.
- The Church must beware that for all the benefits of a supportive secular regime, the independence of the Church under the sole rule of Jesus Christ (via Scripture and the Holy Spirit) is essential to its identity and mission.