

EPIC Wk 11 Weak Leaders and Schism Part I (1300 – 1499)

Renaissance Popes: Weak leadership at crucial moment in the history of the church; participated in abuses; cannot understand how the Protestant Revolution came into effect unless we understand this period of weak leaders and Schism. All of this influences next time period and the Church today (over 55,000 Christian groups in world) – not what Jesus wanted for His Church

Latter 13th and 14th Century: Papacy under attack; popes preoccupied with *temporal* exercise of power; saw themselves as *secular princes* than the *universal shepherds* of the Church; used powerful *spiritual weapon* of *excommunication* often affecting entire city or region in attempt to pressure local secular leaders to reunite with Rome.

Papal Finance: Popes levied taxes against Church property (secular rulers not agree; they cannot control area revenues); Popes increased tax; many lived well beyond their means and that of Vatican treasury. Borrowed heavily to finance wars and other *temporal* activity; leading the Church not high priority

Loss of Respect: Due to the bad decisions and weak leadership, respect and belief in papacy erodes; pope no longer viewed as *great unifier* and *rock* of the Church.

Period of Instability: 21 popes, 11 anti-popes; long conclaves of cardinals to elect successors; cardinals begin to group by nations as a *voting bloc* = taking too long to elect a pope; causes great instability, creates *anarchy* in Rome

Peter Maroney: 80 yr. old hermit sends letter of disappointment w/conclave taking so long to elect Pope (3+ yrs.); their duty was to set aside differences. (has been 3 yrs. since last pope had died). Cardinals climb mountain to Peter's hermitage to ask him to be pope; he resisted but did for sake of Church-**Pope Celestine V (1294)**; He lived 5 months in Naples then resigned and returned to his quiet hermitage.

Pope St. Boniface XIII: Tried to do what was good; lead Church in right direction to maintain independency but he lacked *charity*; upsets major rulers by accusing them of keeping the taxes meant for the Church; writes *Unum Sanctum*¹

Major Rulers:

- King of Holy Roman Empire
- King of France: crowned at 17 yrs. old, wanted absolute power in France -pope called him a *body without a soul who cares nothing about anyone else's rights but only sought wealth*; prohibits clergy from paying taxes to the king until Pope approves; arrests papal legate and charges with *treason*; Pope threatened *excommunication* of king; king burns letter, declares pope illegal and deposes him; tries to kidnap pope and force him to accept the king's law; pope will to be martyred to uphold independence of Church from state; freed by townspeople but died of injuries and stress one month later
- King of England: Imperialistic King; conquers Wales, tries to conquer Scotland (Mel Gibson movie re William Wallace)

This begins a trend for monarchs not listening to the pope and moving in their own direction

St Benedict XI: Only pope for 1 year before death

Clement V: Not a strong leader; King Phillip of France wants **1)** Pope Clement to put Pope Boniface on trial (started but never concluded), **2)** Condemn *Knights Templar Order*² (very powerful, influential and wealthy group; suppressed at *Council of Vienne*: Oct 1311-May 1312); main purpose was to protect pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem, **3)** Papacy to move to Avignon, France (closer to him)- done in 1309 (Papacy remains in France for next 70 yrs. but not governed by King of France); weakened role of papacy in peoples minds especially those in Germany, England and Italy

Bishop of Rome: Although Pope is not physically in Rome, he remains Bishop of Rome and primacy of Peter with universal shepherd with jurisdiction across the Church; lost much respect during this time

Bubonic Plague: The Black Death-over 50% die, in colder climates called ***Pneumonic Plague*** – over 95% die: was carried by fleas on rats who jump to humans; began in China, then to Italy then to rest of Europe; ½ of College of Cardinals die, 31% of Catholic Europe die; people blamed the Jews; Pope Clement threatened excommunication for any who abused the Jews; Church lost many good clergy –

cream of the crop who visited the sick; remainder not so good – over time, clergy abuse reenters the Church

St Catherine of Sienna: Mystic, received *stigmata*³: 25th child of a wool dyer; lay woman associated with Dominicans; had intense relationship with Christ; only ate Blessed Sacrament for long periods; wrote frequent letters to Pope to return to Rome; she was successful

The Great Western Schism of 1378 (SG pg. 212, HO #41): Period from 1378 to 1417 when there were two and later three rival popes, each w/his own following, sacred College of Cardinals and administrative offices

1378: Pope Gregory XI dies; multiple people claiming to be pope at the same time; College of Cardinals stacked with French, Italians want Italian pope – Italians mob conclave; elect Urban VI (Italian)- *quick tempered*, ruled with *iron fists*, wanted to ensure discipline among all Cardinals; sometimes verbally and physically abuse – not set well with Cardinals. Mostly French cardinals meet in secret to depose Urban VI and elect another pope, Robert of Geneva (anti-pope, Clement VII). Different nations backing different popes⁴. Urban VI excommunicates Clements and entire **College of Cardinals**; appears to others as *warring princes* not *shepherds of universal Church*. Clement dies, French back newly elected (Spaniard Prignano), Benedict VIII.

1406: University in Paris faculty calls for end of schism; French and Italian cardinals meet; two popes (Pope Gregory XII and anti-pope Benedict XIII) attend; both refused decision of **council?** (Attendees-not official council) and are excommunicated; cardinals elect Alexander V (dies w/in 11 months); **council ?** elects John XXIII

1414: Council of Constance: John XXIII flees, Gregory XII (true pope) abdicated; Benedict XIII refuses to step down, **Council** deposes him

1417: Council elects Martin V as Pope.

Council of Constance met in the city of Constance between Switzerland and Germany. Called by Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund⁶. many people came to this council because it was such a nice time in the history of the church to finally solve once and for all, this one will schism. We know that five patriarchs, 29 cardinals, more than 500 bishops, 300 theologians, 18,000 priests, Indian secular rulers, Knights, commoners; approximately 100,000 People were present in the small imperial city of Constance to witness this great Ecumenical Council to finally end the Great Western Schism. There was much rejoicing as a result, unfortunately, though, the church and the papacy as a whole suffered greatly.

<https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04288a.htm>

¹Unam Sanctum: Edict issued by **Pope Boniface VIII** (1302) gave extreme authority to the papal office (Called a papal bull); declared supremacy of Pope, asserted the necessity for absolute obedience to papal decrees as requirement for salvation, called for unity within Catholic Church; stated emphatically that salvation apart from the Roman Catholic Church is not possible and that all life must submit to the spiritual head, which is the **Pope**. **To resist papal authority is to be in defiance of God.** Growing conflict between Pope Boniface VIII, King Philip of France, King Edward I of England who refused to allow Church as much political power as demanded; did not want Church interfering in legal and civic matters (most Catholic clergy supported this). Pope Boniface angry; King Philip imprisoned French bishop for treason. Pope feared his power diminishing, wrote *Unam Sanctum* in an effort to regain his position; too extreme. King Philip responded by accusing Boniface of heresy, blasphemy, and sodomy; arrested Boniface but he died shortly after release. *Unam Sanctum* (founded on *doctrine of apostolic succession*. incorporated into Catholic law; became part of Martin Luther's to cry for reform in the early 1500s. **Popes believed they alone can speak for God; therefore, to resist their words is to resist God.** Nowhere in Scripture are we told that the apostles transferred their authority to others; Scripture is clear the apostles had certain qualifications: they had seen the resurrected Christ (1 Corinthians 9:1), were explicitly chosen by the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:15), and had the ability to perform signs and wonders (Acts 2:43; 2 Corinthians 12:12). No Pope has ever fit all three of those qualifications. *Unam Sanctum is yet another example of what happens when we depart from the written Word of God as our only authority.* When we add to or take away from that which God has already stated, we quickly fall into error. Scripture teaches that no one can be saved through church membership, baptism, or the blessing given from another fallible human being. We are saved through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who paid the debt we owe God for our rebellion against Him (Ephesians 2:8–9; Titus 3:5; John 3:16–18; Acts 16:31; John 14:6). The dying thief on the cross next to Jesus knew nothing of *Unam Sanctum*, yet he was

saved because he trusted in Christ ([Luke 23:41–43](#)). Jesus will do the same for anyone—Catholic, Protestant, or atheist—who calls upon His name ([Acts 2:21](#); [Romans 10:9–10](#)).
<https://www.catholic.com/qa/what-is-the-biblical-support-for-apostolic-succession> We cling tightly to this tradition because it's true, for starters, and because all Christians are commanded to do so by Paul in **1 Corinthians 11:2 and 2 Thessalonians 2:15**. For biblical corroboration look at **Acts 1:21–26**, where you'll see the apostles, immediately after Jesus' Ascension, acting swiftly to replace the position left vacant by Judas's suicide. They prayed for guidance, asking God to show them which candidate was "chosen to take the place in this apostolic ministry from which Judas turned away." After choosing Matthias they laid hands on him to confer apostolic authority. Look at **1 Timothy 1:6 and 4:14**, where Paul reminds Timothy that the office of bishop had been conferred on him through the laying on of hands. Notice in **1 Timothy 5:22** that Paul advises Timothy not to be hasty in handing on this authority to others. In Titus, Paul describes the apostolic authority Titus had received and urges him to act decisively in this leadership role. Lastly, please do better homework on early Christian writings. The testimony of the early Church is deafening in its unanimous (yes, unanimous) assertion of *apostolic succession*. Far from being discussed by only a few scattered writers, the belief that the apostles handed on their authority to others was one of the most frequently and vociferously defended doctrines in the first centuries of Christianity.

Infallibility: The exercise of infallibility takes several forms (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 890–891, citing *Lumen Gentium*, 25). One form is exercised by the Pope when speaking *ex cathedra* (literally, "from the chair" of St. Peter, in his authority as pope) on matters of faith or morals, even if he does so without the support of the bishops. This is an exercise of the Extraordinary Magisterium of the Church. While the pope has always held the power to exercise the Extraordinary Magisterium by speaking *ex cathedra*, the actual occurrence of an *ex cathedra* statement is quite rare. It is generally understood to have only occurred twice: Pope Pius IX's definition of the dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception in 1854 and Pope Pius XII's definition of the dogma of Mary's Assumption in 1950. In both of these cases, the Pope was not teaching something new. Rather, he was confirming and clarifying something that the Church had already believed as part of God's revelation. Pronouncements of Ecumenical councils are also considered exercises of the Extraordinary Magisterium. The Church can also teach infallibly through the Ordinary Magisterium. (see Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 25). The Ordinary Magisterium is just that — the ordinary way in which the Church teaches truth. The Ordinary Magisterium is an extension of the collegial unity of the college of bishops. An example of central truths taught in this way would be the Church's prohibition against murder in any form, including euthanasia and abortion. As Pope John Paul II explains in *The Gospel of Life (Evangelium Vitae)*, the Church throughout the ages and throughout the world has consistently and definitively condemned such attacks on human life. While a Pope has not proclaimed these truths *ex cathedra*, we certainly believe that the Church teaches them infallibly!

² **Knights Templar (1119 AD):** An order of Christian knights formed following the First Crusade; responsibility was to protect Christian pilgrims who were traveling to Jerusalem; Temple Mount in Jerusalem was headquarters.

³ **Stigmata:** People who have stigmata exhibit wounds that duplicate or represent those that Jesus is said to have endured during his crucifixion. The wounds typically appear on the stigmatic's hands and feet (as from crucifixion spikes) and also sometimes on the side (as from a spear) and hairline (as from a crown of thorns). Along with [possession and exorcism](#), stigmata often appears in horror films, and it's not difficult to see why: bloody wounds that mysteriously and spontaneously open up are terrifying. However, stigmatics, who are typically devout Roman Catholics, do not see their affliction as a terrifying menace but instead as a miraculous blessing — a sign that they have been specially chosen by God to suffer the same wounds his son did. Curiously, **there are no known cases of stigmata for the first 1,200 years after Jesus died**. The first person said to suffer from stigmata was St. Francis of Assisi (1182–1226), and there have been about three dozen others throughout history, most of them women.

⁵ **Conciliarism:** Attempt of College of Cardinals to have oversight and authority over the pope.

⁶ **Emperor Sigismund:** Two reasons he wanted the schism finished. 1) Not good to have Christendom disunited, needed one man to be source and unity of all of Christendom. 2) The Ottoman Turks were threatening Eastern Europe and they would be a bigger threat to all including the Church. He wanted all to be united in order to address this greater danger to Europe. He works tirelessly to get all three claimants to be deposed in order to have the council elect one Pope.