Chapter 8

Collapse, Corruption, and Reform in Europe and the Church

1. Charlemagne died in 814 and was succeeded by his son Louis the Pious.
2. Louis made what many see as a great mistake: he divided the Holy Roman Empire among his three sons, Lothair, Charles, and Louis the German.
3. They jockeyed for power until the Treaty of Verdun (843), which divided the kingdom into three parts, western, middle, and eastern.
4. Amidst this division came new invaders: the Saracens (Muslims) from the south, the Vikings from the north, and the Slavs and Magyars from the east.

Introduction

1. With the division of the Holy Roman Empire a power vacuum existed which created great amounts of political intrigue and jealous greed, not only in the great kingdoms, but also in local cities and even within the Church.

The Corruption of the Papal Office

1. Aside from Pope St. Nicholas I (858-867), most popes of this time were either too weak to resist the emperor and Roman nobility or too corrupt to even try.
3. Pope John XII
   a) one of the worst popes in history;
   b) elected at eighteen; “boy pope”
   c) used his great temporal power (he crowned Otto I as Holy Roman Emperor) to cultivate his vices.

4. Many heroic monks and priests suffered terribly for their attempt at reform.

B. Feudalism & the Church

1. Feudalism
   a) As Charlemagne’s Empire collapsed, a new system of organization emerged throughout western society where governance was localized around towns or monasteries, under the leadership of one lord.
   b) contractual agreements between a king and his vassals (wealthy landowning lords) and the remainder of the population.

2. The Church was a great landowner and became deeply enmeshed in feudalism.
   a) Kings and great lords who had given land to the Church now demanded that in exchange the Church give military aid in time of war.
   b) To ensure that bishops and abbots would be cooperative, kings and nobles began insisting their own men be installed as heads of dioceses and monasteries.
   c) Since these men were often chosen with little regard for their knowledge of Christianity, the Church began to deteriorate drastically and soon corruption became the norm.

3. Feudalism Nearly Destroys the Church
   i. Because of a breakdown in central authority in Europe, feudalism became the way of life in Europe.

4. Interference by the kings and lords in church matters led to three terrible abuses:
   a) nepotism - the appointment of family members to important positions of authority within the Church.
Feudalism & the Church
b) simony - the selling of church offices (positions) by either secular or spiritual rulers.
c) Lay Investiture – high ranking lay person could appoint abbots or bishops, “investing” them with power and requiring their loyalty.

The Viking Invasions
1. The Vikings, or Norsemen, would start their invasions of Europe coming from Scandinavia beginning in the late eighth century.
2. Because of the division of Europe after the death of Charlemagne, Europeans were poorly equipped to deal with these invaders.
3. They were known for their plunder and slaughter
   a) targeted the monasteries as they were known to be the refuge of the old Empire’s wealth
4. Because of this, some of the great monasteries of Europe were completely destroyed by the Vikings, particularly in Ireland, England, and Germany, and would lead to the decline in influence of the monasteries until the reforms of Cluny.
Part II

Cluny & Monastic Reform

A. The Foundation

1. 909-910 - The Duke of Aquitaine, William the Pious, a strong supporter of reform. He donated land to St. Berno and twelve companions, who were dedicated to reinvigorating the Rule of St. Benedict, wishing to live it without outside influences.

2. Rule of Cluny
   a) Monks would vote for their abbot, unlike most monasteries of the time, where the local rulers appointed the abbot.

3. This led to saintly men being elected abbots, so that soon the Cluny monasteries became known as places of holiness.

4. St. Odo, successor to St. Berno, greatly expanded the influence of Cluny beyond France into Italy.

5. Pope Blessed Urban II, a former monk of Cluny, and one of the best popes of the time, along with Pope Innocent II, greatly supported the Cluniac monasteries.

6. In 1016 by papal decree, Cluny was to be absolutely free from ALL secular authority.

B. Cluniaec Spirituality

1. The monks of Cluny reinstated a strict adherence to Benedictine Rule.

2. Greater emphasis upon the spiritual life of the individual monk with the idea of a community of holy men based upon the holiness of each member.
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Cluniac Spirituality

3. To accomplish this they increased time saying the Divine Office and decreased time in manual labor, leading to more time for spiritual reflection and active continuous prayer.

4. They were able to accomplish this because of the lack of interference from secular rulers in the running of the monastery.

C. Influence

1. By 1100, 1,450 monasteries with over 10,000 monks were under the rule of Cluny.

2. Gradually, more and more of the Church’s leaders were taken from the ranks of the monks of Cluny, which would lead to reform throughout the Church.

A. The Gregorian Revolution

1. In 1059, a church council in Rome declared secular leaders would play no part in the election of popes and created the College of Cardinals.

2. Pope St. Gregory VII (Hildebrand), a monk of the Cluny reform, was an important member of the College of Cardinals, and carried out important tasks for his predecessors.

3. When Pope Alexander II died in 1073, the crowds enthusiastically cried out for Hildebrand to be the next pope.

The Gregorian Revolution

4. Pope Gregory VII
   a) used the papal office for reform in the church & centralizing the papal office.

   b) Issued Dictatus Papae.
      i. the pope possessed specific power bestowed by God that rested on him alone (see p. 317); particularly forbidding the ritual of lay investiture.

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   c) Levied stiff penalties for the practice of simony as well as the violation of priestly celibacy.

   d) Codified the law of the Church (Canon Law) as an effective measure to curb future abuse.
The Gregorian Revolution

5. Holy Roman Emperor, Henry IV
   a) Defied Gregory’s decree, appointing the bishop of Milan. Gregory asked him to stop the appointment but Henry refused.
   a) released his subjects from his rule
   b) Henry, not having popular support at home, had to ask the pope for forgiveness.

7. Henry traveled to Canossa in Tuscany, Italy, waiting in the snow for three days, dressed in peasant clothing, for a hearing from Gregory.
8. Gregory, skeptical of Henry’s sincerity, finally absolved Henry and lifted the excommunication. This was a great victory for Gregory, but short-lived, for a year later, Henry rejected Gregory’s authority, installing the anti-pope, Clement III.

10. Gregory had to flee Henry’s army and died in exile in southern Italy.
11. Concordat of Worms
   a) Gregory’s efforts eventually paid off with great reforms being initiated, resulting in the Concordat of Worms (1122), which recognized the rights of the Church in its appointments.

B. Investiture and England

1. Constitutions of Clarendon (1164)
   a) Henry II, king of England, asserted his royal authority seeking complete control over the Church.

2. St. Thomas Becket
   a) a great friend of the king
   b) chancellor of England.
3. Henry arranged for him to be appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in order for the king to control the Church through him.

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**Part IV**

**The Cistercians and Carthusians**

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**The Cistercians**

2. St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153)
   a) joined the Cistercians bringing with him 30 others
   b) refused all promotions to become a bishop or even to the papacy
   c) wrote extensively, counseling kings and popes
   d) founded a Cistercian monastery in Clairvaux, making the Cistercian order important during the Middle Ages.

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**The Cistercians**

3. These monks lived very differently than many monasteries of the time where wealth had softened their lives: the Cistercians ate little, worked the land during the day, and slept on planks of wood.

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**C. Innocent III**

(1160-1216)

1. Pope Innocent III
   a) continued the Gregorian reforms
   b) centralized the papacy
   c) saw himself as arbitrator in Europe to maintain the balance of power
   d) intervened in all types of issues with the kings.

2. This involvement would help maintain the freedom of the Church from kings, but would also increase tensions between the Church and state as Europe became nationalistic.

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**A. The Cistercians**

1. St. Robert of Molesmes
   1. Founded by a monk of Cluny in 1098
   2. Believed monasticism needed to return to more simplicity, through a poorer lifestyle and self-sufficiency through monastic farming, rather than serfs working the farms for the monks.

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Investiture and England

4. After the Constitutions of Clarendon, Becket broke with the king, opposing him on these rulings, and as a result was murdered in the cathedral by a band of Henry’s knights in 1170.

5. Becket was canonized two years later as a martyr of the Gregorian reforms; Henry II, disgraced, gave up his plans for church control.

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B. The Carthusians

1. St. Bruno
   a) originally a brilliant scholar, educating many future leaders and popes, he would refuse the position of bishop of Rheims, France, instead choosing in 1080 to leave with 2 friends to live as hermits in the French Alps.

2. Others gradually came to join him, forming a unique monastery where each monk had his own cell or hermitage attached to a cloister, bringing together the life of the hermit with community life.

3. The life of the Carthusians became an example to the medieval church of the importance of simplicity and prayer in following Jesus Christ.

4. The Carthusians still follow this style of life today.