

I. Medieval Papacy

A. Antecedents to the rising power of the Roman bishop

1. Biblical basis for authority of the pope – Mt. 16:19
2. Term “papa” not limited to bishop of Rome until 6th c.
3. Pope Leo I (440-461) – first exercised temporal power with Attila the Hun.
4. Gregory the Great (590s) – first monk to be made pope. He rejected claims of universal authority for himself or for the Bishop of Constantinople, but he did act as the civil authority in Rome when the city collapsed in late 6th c.

B. The Rising Power of the Medieval Popes

1. The pope as kingmaker –
 - a. Leo III crowned Charlemagne the first Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas 800 AD
 - b. Rivals for imperial crown sought support from Pope Nicholas I (858-67). He set pattern for future popes suggesting papal supremacy.
2. Progressive configurations of papal power
 - a. *Donation of Constantine* – forged document attributed to Pope Silvester I in 315 which said that Constantine bequeathed imperial power over Rome and Western Europe to future popes (actually dated c. 8th c.)
 - b. *Vicar of St. Peter* – according to an earlier tradition in Irenaeus (170 CE), Peter was bishop in Antioch in 34 CE, and later moved to Rome c. 40 CE. Pope Gregory VII used this title to establish himself as the successor to Peter’s authority over the spiritual realm on earth (c. 1073). Gregory also claimed authority to depose emperors. (HRE Henry IV forced to repent in snow outside Gregory VII’s castle after he was excommunicated in January 1077).
 - c. *Vicar of Christ* – 12th c. popes used term to claim universal sovereignty. No longer trustees of St. Peter, but now deputies

of Christ with authority over temporal as well as spiritual realms (Innocent III).

- d. *Investiture conflict* – struggle between papacy and secular rulers over the right to appoint bishops. Gregory VII said any cleric who was appointed by secular ruler would be excommunicated (1078).
 - e. *Height of papal supremacy* – 1050-1300 from Pope Leo IX (1048-1054) to the papacy of Boniface VIII (1294-1303) before the Babylonian Captivity of Clement V.
3. The Selection of Popes:
- a. Originally chosen by the Roman people, but Second Lateran Council of 1059 led by Pope Nicholas II established college of cardinals made of 7 bishops to choose pope to stop secular attempts to control appointment of pope.
 - b. Third Lateran Council of 1179 – established 2/3 majority for electoral college for pope with all cardinals having equal vote.
 - c. Rival factions elected popes – Caetani and Colonna families in late 13th c., Medici and Borgia families in the late 15th c.
 - d. *Babylonian Captivity* – due to rivalries, Clement V moved seat of papacy to Avignon, France (1309-1377).
 - e. *Great Schism* (1378-1417) – councils elected rival popes.
4. Events which demonstrated the political power of medieval popes
- a. *Inquisitions*- Lateran Council of 1059 established guidelines of inquisitions, using secular authority to enforce spiritual guidelines.
 - b. *Crusades* – crusades heightened papal authority, especially seen in power of Innocent III and the Fourth Crusade which resulted in the western church's dominance over Constantinople.
 - c. *Investitures* – appointing of bishops with lands and political power in individual kingdoms.

Further Reading:

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- Barracough, Geoffrey. *The Medieval Papacy*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1968.
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- Morris, Colin. *The Papal Monarchy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1989, 1991.
- Southern, R.W. *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970.
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