The High Middle Ages

Otto I and the Revival of the Empire

In 918 the duke of Saxony, Henry I “the Fowler” founded the Saxon dynasty

The first non-Frankish monarchy in Germany

Henry reversed the political fragmentation that had occurred with the decline of the Carolingian Empire

He consolidated the duchies of Swabia, Bavaria, Saxony, Franconia, and Lotharingia

He checked the invasions of the Hungarians and the Danes

This state was bequeathed to Henry’s son Otto I “the Great” in 936 and it was the strongest kingdom at the time

In 951 Otto invaded Italy and proclaimed himself as its king

His defeat of the Hungarians in 955 helped secure the German border against barbarian attack and it established the frontiers of western Europe

Otto had consolidated his authority over the throne (Gk origins: high seat, inheritance?) by refusing to allow Germany’s dukes to turn their duchies into hereditary properties

He also diminished the power of the lords by appointing bishops and abbots of monasteries to administer his lands and be his agents

The benefit of this is that officials of the church could not marry or have children that they could pass their offices to

The church eagerly embraced the power and wealth conferred by these offices

When Otto rescued Pope John XII from a conflict with the Italian nobility, the pope awarded Otto the imperial title that had lapsed under the Carolingians

Otto’s intervention in Italian politics increased his power over the church and he declared himself as the protector of the Papal States

When Pope John realized that Otto had usurped his own power, he became involved in a plot against Otto

Otto was informed of the plot and ordered an ecclesiastical synod to remove John and to decree that no pope was to take office without swearing allegiance to the emperor

Otto’s successors Otto II and Otto III concerned themselves mostly with Italian issues

As a result, they were distracted from events in Germany and they allowed their German base to disintegrate

By the first quarter of the 11th century Otto’s empire crumbled, and the church seized the opportunity to reassert its independence and power

The Reviving Catholic Church

In 910 William the Pious, the duke of Aquitaine, founded a new monastery at Cluny in east central France

The monastery was pledged to maintain the strictest observance of the Benedictine Rule and to restore the purest liturgical practices

The Cluniac reformers claimed that the church could not reach its full spiritual potential as long as laymen had the power to appoint and dominate clerics

The Cluniac ideals spread from the monastery to the parishes

Regular clergy (those living by *regula* or “rules”)

Secular clergy (those serving the *saeculum* or “the world”)

They also insisted that bishops be freed from the authority of feudal governments and made accountable only to an independent papacy

Monks trained at Cluny formed other monasteries throughout France and Italy

In the late 9th and early 10th centuries the reform at Cluny inspired the “Peace of God” movement

It sought to ease the suffering of the endemic warfare that plagued medieval society by excommunicating all soldiers who attacked noncombartants

A “Truce of God” was also proclaimed prohibiting combat from Wednesday night to Monday morning and in all holy seasons

During the reign of Emperor Henry III (1039-1056) Cluniac reformers served in high offices of the church where they encouraged the pope to suppress simony (the selling of church offices) and to enforce celibacy

Pope Leo IX had been appointed by Henry III

However, when Henry II died, he left the throne to an underage son

The weakness of the throne allowed the church to assert its independence

Pope Stephen IX (1057-1058) reigned without imperial confirmation of his title

Pope Nicholas II (1059-1061) decreed that high church officials in the College of Cardinals would choose the pope

These procedures, which are still followed, were designed to prevent Italian nobles and German kings from interfering in papal elections

These reforms made the papacy an independent, self-perpetuating ecclesiastical monarchy

Pope Gregory VII condemned the appointment of clergy to a church office by a layman or a secular non-official of the church

The pope was proclaiming the spiritual nature of the episcopacy as primary

This position attacked and threatened the foundations of imperial government as it had been established by Otto I

Henry IV opposed Gregory’s position since it violated the traditional way the empire had been governed

Unfortunately for Henry, the German nobles were interested in undercutting the king and asserting their independence and they allied with the pope

When Henry assembled loyal bishops at a meeting in Worms to repudiate the pope, he was excommunicated, and his bishops were removed from their government positions

This inspired the German nobles to rebel against Henry and forced him to seek absolution from Gregory

After standing barefoot in the snow for three days at Gregory’s castle, the pope absolved him

The absolution of Henry deprived the German nobles of their excuse of continuing their rebellion

Henry regrouped and defeated the nobles and reestablished his power

Henry was excommunicated again in 1080 but the nobles were defeated and refused to rise against him

Ultimately, Henry drove Gregory from the papacy and installed Clement III in 1084

The struggle over the investiture ended in 1122 with a compromise spelled out in the Concordat of Worms

Henry V agreed to stop investing or appointing bishops

Pope Calixtus II recognized the emperor’s right to be present at episcopal consecrations and preside at the ceremonies that bestowed fiefs on bishops

Ultimately, this agreement helped the church look more like an independent institution

The Crusades

Late in the 11th century the emperor of Constantinople appealed to the Christian West for help against the Turks

At the council of Clermont in 1095, Pope Urban II answered the appeal by proclaiming the First Crusade

By proclaiming the Crusade, the pope could show that he was the West’s spiritual leader

And he could use the Crusade to gain leverage over the Eastern church

Also, the departure of large numbers of warring nobles could have the effect of contributing to stability throughout Europe

This could also inspire greater unity and cooperation among Europeans

The call for the Crusade was popular among Europeans for various reasons

Crusaders were recruited by the promises of indulgences where they were relieved from spiritual punishment

There was a passion for Holy War to liberate the Christian shrines

Also, the desire to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land encouraged

Europeans to take up arms

Three great armies were organized in France, Germany, and Italy

100,000 men

In 1097 they arrived in Constantinople and immediately began to be successful against the Muslim Turks

By 1099 they captured Jerusalem

The Crusaders were successful due to superior military technology and the inability of the Muslim states to cooperate

Europeans set up governments (colonies) in Jerusalem, Antioch, and Edessa

The Muslims eventually rallied and took the offensive against the Crusaders grinding their resistance down over the course of 40 years

The fall of Edessa in 1144 led to a call for a second crusade

It was a dismal failure

When Saladin, the king of Egypt and Syria, conquered Jerusalem, there was a call for a third crusade

The most powerful western rulers participated in the 3rd Crusade

Emperor Frederick Barbarossa

Drown while crossing a stream in Asia Minor

Richard the Lion-Hearted of England

Philip Augustus of France

Richard and Philip reached Jerusalem, but their intense rivalry doomed the campaign

When Richard returned home, he was captured by Emperor Henry VI and held for ransom

The Crusades ultimately failed to achieve its spiritual and political objectives

However, they stimulated trade between east and west

Merchants from Venice, Genoa, and Pisa established themselves as mediators of this trade

They also swept the Mediterranean form Islamic competition

The Pontificate of Innocent III (1198-1216)

Under Innocent III the papacy became a great secular power with a treasury and bureaucracy equal to any king

An ecclesiastical tax know as Peter’s pence was imposed on all

The pope reserved the right to grant absolution for sins and religious crimes

Penalties in the form of monetary payments were also imposed

Protests broke out as the church increasingly became secular and materialistic

The church responded to these issues with charges of heresy

In 1209 Innocent launched a Crusade to exterminate heretics in southern France called Albigensians ( from the French town of Albi) or Cathars (meaning “pure ones”)

The Cathars rejected the sinful material world and denied the God of the Old Testament, the humanity of Jesus, and the material worldly institution of the church

More radical Cathars recommended celibacy, contraception, and abortion to prevent more souls from being imprisoned in sinful material existence

French knights were eager to join the campaign in order to acquire lands

King Louis VIII also headed a campaign to root out the heretics

Later Pope Gregory IX sent the Inquisition into the region to take care of any heretics that remained

Since the mid-twelfth century bishops had used inquisitions in the dioceses to detect and punish heresy

Innocent III created a centralized court of inquisition that dispatched papal representatives to preside at trials and executions throughout Europe

Innocent III also called the fourth Crusade (1202-1204)

The crusaders gathered at Venice awaiting passage to Egypt

Since many of the crusaders were poor, they were convinced by the Venetians to pay for their transport by helping Venice to conquer a rival city, Zara on the opposite side of the Adriatic

The crusaders also allowed the Venetians to talk them into attacking Constantinople, which fell to the attackers in 1204

Although and embarrassment to the pope, he came to terms with the Venetians and he appointed a patriarch of Constantinople to bring the eastern church in line with that of the west

Westerners retained control of Constantinople until 1261 when Genoese helped the eastern patriarch return from exile

Innocent III defined crucial disciplines and doctrines at the Fourth Lateran Council which met in 1215 (met at Lateran Palace in Rome)

The most substantial doctrine that emerged from the council was the doctrine of transubstantiation or the miracle of the transformation of bread and wine into body and blood

This doctrine was in line with the popular piety of the 12th century

It also helped enhance the power or influence of the clergy over the laity since the clergy alone had the ability to perform this miracle

The council also formalized the sacrament of penance and the order for all Christians to confess and take communion once a year (usually at Easter)

Religious devotion surged in the 12th century and that lent itself to the criticism of the church for its worldliness

In response Innocent III licensed two new religious orders, the Franciscans and the Dominicans

Unlike regular monks these orders of friars (brothers) were beggars

They received no land or endowments

They preached to and cared for the poor and supported themselves by begging

This saintly behavior did much to fight back the notion that unworldliness was incompatible with obedience to a worldly church

The Franciscans were established by Francis of Asisi a layman, and the Dominicans were established by Dominic a well-educated Spanish cleric

Both orders reported directly to the pope

Pope Gregory IX reformed the Franciscans from their extreme unworldliness since it bordered on heresy

The Dominicans were dedicated to combatting heresy by staffing the Inquisition and teaching at universities

England and France (1066-1214)

When the English king Edward the Confessor died without an heir in 1066, it led to a three-way rivalry for the throne

Edward was the son of the English king Aethelred and his wife Emma of Normandy who was the sister of the Duke of Normandy, Richard II

Thus, this was the basis of William the Duke of Normandy’s claim to the throne

The immediate claimant of the throne was Harold Godwinson, Earl of Wessex, who was selected by the Witenagemot (council of wise men) to succeed Edward

However, King Harald III (Hardrada) of Norway also claimed the throne based on the claim that there was an agreement between his and Edward’s successors that if either died without an heir the other would inherit the other’s throne

William is victorious over Harold at Hastings in 1066, and William consolidating his power in England by decimating the English nobility and replacing them with his own nobility

They had no following among their new subjects and thus they realized that they needed to rely on strong leadership to maintain their positions

That established strong loyalty to the king

The Norman kings honored English traditions by holding conferences with people that had vested interests in royal policy

And they consulted with their nobles on affairs of state

There were a series or rebellions, but the Normans were unified and able to put them down

When William’s son Henry I died without a male heir in 1135 there was a civil war

However, a compromise was worked out and it was agreed that the son of Henry’s daughter and the duke of Anjou would become the king, Henry II

Henry II established the Plantagenet or Angevin dynasty (Angevin meaning from Anjou)

This dynasty ruled England until Richard III in 1485

Henry II, due to his inheritance and that of his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine controlled more of France than did the king of France

Eleanor had been married to the French King Louis VII before she married Henry II

She accompanied Louis on the Second Crusade

And she caused so much trouble for Henry II that he kept he under house arrest until his death in 1189

She broke from tradition and was a patron of musicians and poets that influenced the development of a less restrained “court culture” and concepts of “courtly love” contrasting physical passion with a spiritual “courteous” passion

Henry II also conquered part of Ireland and made the king of Scotland take an oath of homage to him

Henry II insisted that the church submit to the state and he codified this submission in the Constitutions of Clarendon

The Constitutions limited the right to appeal cases from England to the papal court

Subjected the clergy to the king’s court

And gave the king control over the election of the bishops

The archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas a Becket, fled England rather than submit to the Constitutions

When He returned in 1170, he continued to oppose Henry’s authority and was assassinated

Becket was canonized in 1172 as a martyr to the struggle of the church against state control

Henry II was succeeded by his sons Richard the Lion-Hearted, and John

Richard imposed high taxes to support his role in the Third Crusades

He died fighting in France in 1199 trying to recover land he lost to the French while he was away on the Crusade

John found himself excommunicated over a dispute involving the appointment of an archbishop

John eventually surrendered to the pope and declared his kingdom a papal fief

John tried to restore his father’s Angevin empire in France but was defeated in 1214

In 1215 England’s disillusioned barons rebelled and forced John to accept limitations on royal authority

The document known as the Magna Carta spelled out the terms of the limitations

The king promised not to arrest and hold people without reason given

He acknowledged consulting with representatives of the propertied population before imposing new taxes

In France, the monarchy was relative weak in relation to the nobility

When the Carolingian line came to an end, the French nobles chose Hugh Capet, count of Paris, to become king

Although the Capetian dynasty was established and ruled for two hundred years, the feudal princes of France had most of the real power

By the late 11th and early 12th century the Capetians had solidified their rights to the crown and began to expand their power beyond their base in Paris

The Norman conquest of England helped the Capetians unify France

As the Plantagenets expanded their power in France, the Capetians were able to enlist French nobles who saw the growth of Plantagenet power as a threat

Since the king of England was also the Duke of Normandy, he had inherited the status as vassal to the king of France

The French king Philip II Augustus was able to exploit this relationship

By accusing the English king of violating his duties of vassalage he could enlist other vassals to repossess the English king’s French fiefs

During the reign of English kings Richard and John the French seized all the English French territories with the exception of part of Aquitaine

The French defeated the Plantagenets in 1214 helped the French king unite his people under his authority

Louis IX

The grandson of Philip II Augustus

In 1259 Louis negotiated a generous compromise with England and allowed the Plantagenets to keep control of their lands in France

Louis’ greatest achievement was to improve the government of France

He used the bureaucracy to provide more order and justice for the French people

He abolished private warfare among the nobles and serfdom on royal lands

He gave his subjects the right to appeal to higher courts

He made the tax system more equitable

These reforms generated support for the king and helped establish a sentiment of nationalism

It was during the time of Louis that the University of Paris became the intellectual center of Europe

Thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas and the Franciscan scholar Bonaventure taught at the university

France had also become the center of monastic reform, notions of chivalry, and Gothic style art and architecture

France was setting the cultural standard for Europe

Louis was very religious

He was a supporter of the Inquisition

He led the last two Crusades

And when he died as a result of a fever, he acquired on his second Crusade, his reputation as a saintly king was enhanced

His religiosity and success as king caused his successors to point to him to support their claim that God had bestowed a divine right to rule on the Capetians

The Hohenstaufen Empire

While England and France were being formed in the 12th and 13th centuries, disunity and feuding in the Holy Roman Empire created a legacy of political fragmentation that lasted into modern times

The Investiture Controversy where the pope had challenged the emperors the right to appoint higher clergy weakened the German kings

As a result, the German aristocracy was strengthened in relation to the kings

Thus, the church was unable to prevent the German princes from making episcopal appointments and taking over their rich endowments

Imperial authority, however, was revived with the ascension of Frederick I Barbarossa, the founder of the Hohenstaufen dynasty

Disaffection with the squabbling of the feudal princes was widespread, and there was growing resentment of the growing pretensions of the papacy

Scholars also were reviving the study of Roman law (Justinian’s Code) and Frederick found it useful since Roman law promoted the centralization of states and a secular foundation of imperial power at the expense of the pope

From his base in Switzerland, Frederick conducted a campaign to win over the German nobility

Italy proved to be the obstacle that Frederick faced in his quest to consolidate power over the Holy Roman Empire

After Frederick helped the pope regain control of Rome in 1155, the pope crowned him emperor

He believed that this coronation gave him title to Italy

However, the Italian people and especially those of Lombardy in northern Italy refused to accept Frederick’s authority and the governors he appointed there

Just as this challenge developed Alexander III was elected pope and Frederick found himself at war with the new pope, the city of Milan, and the Kingdom of Sicily

In 1167, Frederick was driven from northern Italy, and in 1176 he was soundly defeated and forced to accept the Lombard claims to self-rule

At the end of his rule after being forced from Italy and weakened in Germany, Frederick found a new opportunity for his dynasty in Sicily when the Norman King William II asked Frederick for help in conquering Constantinople

An alliance was sealed by marriage between Frederick’s son Henry VI and Constance, the heiress to Sicily

This was a fateful development for the Hohenstaufens since it tempted them to give up territories in Germany in an attempt to make gains in Italy

However, this development stirred up greater resistance to them in Italy as well

When Rome became encircled by Hohenstaufen claims, the church became dedicated to the empire’s destruction

When Henry VI came to the throne in 1190, he faced numerous enemies

The papacy

Independent German princes

And English King Richard the Lionhearted who was encouraged to plot against Henry by Henry the Lion, the Duke of Saxony who was in exile in Normandy

When Constance gave birth to a son and potential successor, Henry VI campaigned for his son’s hereditary right to the throne

The German princes refused to give up their custom of electing emperors, and the pope was opposed to the inheritance

Constance’s son (Frederick II) was arranged to be a ward of the papcy

When Henry VI died in 1197, Constance tried to protect her son’s legacy, but Henry’s brother, Philip of Swabia, and the uncle of the boy (Frederick II) claimed the throne

A rival family, the Welfs, backed Otto of Brunswick, the son of Henry the Lion

Richard the Lionhearted of England supported the Welfs

The French supported the Hohenstaufens

The papacy switched its allegiance back and forth to prevent the circling of Rome

All of this resulted in chaos and civil war

Otto outlasted Philip and won recognition as emperor by the German princes and Pope Innocent III in 1209

When Otto attacked Sicily and was seen by the pope as a threat to Rome, he was excommunicated

The pope then invested Innocent’s ward, Frederick II with the throne

In 1212, the pope, Phillip Augustus, and allied German nobility arranged for Frederick II to be crowned King of the Romans

When Philip Augustus defeated the armies of Otto and King John of England at the Battle of Bouvines in France in 1214, Frederick assumed the throne in Aachen in 1215

Frederick II, who had grown up in Sicily disliked Germany only wanted the imperial title for himself and his sons

To secure that title, Frederick II was willing to grant Germany feudal nobility absolute authority over their domains

This development halted the development of a unified nation in Germany and led to 6 centuries of disunity

Frederick II’s policy towards the papacy was also disastrous

The pope excommunicated Frederick II 4 times, and the papacy came to view him as the Antichrist when he attempted to win control over Lombardy, unite it with his Sicilian kingdom in order to encircle Rome

The popes’ fight with the Hohenstaufens immersed the church more deeply in European politics and brought about criticism from religious reformers and nationalist nobility

When Frederick II died in 1250, the German monarchy died with him

The German nobility denounced the idea of hereditary succession to the throne, and in 1257 the barons formed an electoral college to bestow the title “king of the Romans”

This ensured that they would create the kings and they would serve the nobility

The Hohenstaufen legacy was destroyed in 1286 by the brother of St. Louis IX, Charles of Anjou

The map of modern Europe began to take shape during the High Middle Ages

England and France built centralized monarchies that began to unify them as modern nation states

Germany and Italy, however remained fragmented feudal territories

The desire to create a Holy Roman Empire brought German rulers into Italy, where they made enemies of the popes and the rising commercial cities in the north

The resulting competition between church and state contributed to the growth of a powerful papal monarchy which alienated kings, and increased the church’s vulnerability to attack on the grounds of its increasing secularism and faltering spirituality