

# ***The Development of the Papacy***

## *Sources*

G. R. Evans, *The Church in the Early Middle Ages* (2007)

R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and His World* (1997)

William Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History* (1997)

Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 4

## I. Overview

- A. Where did the Roman Catholic Church come from?
  - 1. Slow growth of superstition
  - 2. Syncretism with pagan religions
    - a. Spur: Inclusion of Roman populace in the church
    - b. Result: Blending of pagan ideas w/ Christian
  - 3. Church-state union
  - 4. Power-seeking popes
  - 5. Full fruition → Council of Trent?
  - 6. A *gradual* development
- B. Where did the papacy come from?
  - 1. Development of office of bishop
    - a. Marked a difference w/ lower clergy & laity
    - b. Example: “pope” as a title for several leading bishops
  - 2. Elevation of the Bishop of Rome
    - a. Centrality of Rome
      - 1) Political & cultural center
      - 2) Only patriarchal center in the west
    - b. Gained “primacy of honor” among bishops
  - 3. Petrine Theory (Matt. 16:18): Peter as “the rock”
    - a. Christ chose Peter as the pope
    - b. Peter became bishop of Rome
    - c. Peter passed on authority to successors

## II. Historical Progress of the Papacy

- A. Clement of Rome (c. 90-100)
  - 1. Earliest known bishop of Rome
  - 2. No evidence of “papal” authority
- B. Sylvester (314-35)
  - 1. Bishop of Rome under Constantine
  - 2. Mostly known through legendary sources
  - 3. Story: Donation of Constantine (forged document)
    - a. Sylvester healed Constantine of leprosy
    - b. Constantine gave popes authority over Rome & the western empire
    - c. Forgery revealed in Renaissance
  - 4. Provided a *theory* for papal supremacy
- C. Leo I, the Great (440-61)
  - 1. One of first to assert the Petrine Theory
  - 2. Leadership in Christological Controversy
    - a. Wrote “Tome” defending orthodox view of Christ

- b. Exercised authority in eastern empire
- 3. Negotiated w/ Attila the Hun
- 4. Provided a *claim* to papal power
- D. Gregory I, the Great (590-604)
  - 1. Historical Setting
    - a. Fall of western Roman Empire (476)
    - b. Rule by Arian barbarians (e.g., Ostrogoths)
    - c. Circumstances created opportunity for papal leadership
  - 2. Gregory's Background
    - a. From aristocratic Roman family
    - b. Served in city govt. & as diplomat
    - c. Became monk & chosen as bishop
  - 3. Filled political vacuum in Rome → ruler by default
  - 4. Role in the Church
    - a. Organized church liturgy & worship (“Gregorian chant”)
    - b. Cautious about claiming universal authority
  - 5. Promoted mission to England
  - 6. Doctrinal Innovations
    - a. Purgatory (building on speculation by Augustine)
    - b. Defining penance
    - c. Viewing mass as a sacrifice
  - 7. *Exercise* of papal power → Perhaps most influential pope in history
- E. Boniface III (607)
  - 1. Claimed papal preeminence
    - a. Won decree from Byzantine emperor Phocas
    - b. Some *recognition* as head of all churches & universal bishop
  - 2. Cited by Luther as the first pope
- F. Donation of Pepin (756)
  - 1. Part of dealings between papacy & Carolingian dynasty of Franks
    - a. Pope helped recognize Pepin as king of the Franks
    - b. Pepin provided military support to popes
    - c. Pepin gave pope title to lands in central Italy
  - 2. Papacy gains power as a *secular* ruler