

# ***Height of the Medieval Church***

## *Sources*

R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (1970)

Walter Ullmann, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages* (1972)

Thomas F. Madden, *The Concise History of the Crusades* (2013)

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Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 5

## I. The High Middle Ages (1050-1300)

### A. Church: Height of Power

1. Era of resurgence for the church
  - a. Gain in moral stature
  - b. Gain in political influence
  - c. Gain in intellectual achievement
2. After 1300 a disastrous freefall in influence and prestige

### B. Church and Empire

1. Imperial idea still strong
  - a. Originated w/ Constantine and Rome
  - b. Continued (for a time) with the Byzantine Empire
  - c. Brought to Western Europe w/ Charlemagne
  - d. Transformed into “Holy Roman Empire”
2. Theory of “Christendom”
  - a. Christendom = The Christian kingdoms
  - b. Division of power
    - 1) Pope = spiritual head
    - 2) Emperor = temporal head

### C. Church center of cultural/educational life

## II. Power of the Papacy

### A. Gregory VII (1073-85)

1. Established College of Cardinals—removal from mob election & political chicanery
2. Clash at Canossa with Emperor Henry IV (1077)
  - a. Fight over appointing clergy
  - b. Emperor (temporarily) forced to repent
3. *Dictatus Papae* (“Sayings of the pope”) asserts supremacy of the pope

### B. Innocent III (1198-1216)

1. Perhaps most powerful pope in history → “vicar of Christ” more than “vicar of Peter”
2. Involved in politics
  - a. Likened himself to the sun and emperor to the moon
  - b. Won clash w/ Philip II of France (over a divorce)
  - c. Won clash w/ John of England (over archbishopric of Canterbury)
  - d. Intervened in Holy Roman imperial elections
3. Called Lateran IV Council
  - a. Mandated transubstantiation
  - b. Required annual confession of everyone

## III. The Crusades (1096-1270)

### A. Strengthened the Church ... temporarily

1. Called by a pope (Urban II)
  2. Roused popular devotion
  3. Popularized indulgences—source of devotion and income
  - B. Nature
    1. Response to Islamic conquests
    2. Eight campaigns of mixed success
    3. Ultimately a failure
  - C. Sparked the Renaissance?
    1. Brought back Eastern learning
    2. Brought back goods from Eastern trade
    3. Failure led to questioning & discrediting of the church
  - D. Other “Crusades”
    1. Against the Albigensians in southern France
    2. Reconquista: Recapture of Spanish peninsula from Muslims
- IV. Theology of the Church
- A. Disciplinary Power of the Church
    1. Theological basis for the political power of papacy
    2. Means
      - a. Excommunication—removal from communion; ultimate damnation
      - b. Interdict—suspending of sacraments in a locale
      - c. Inquisition (church courts)
  - B. Scholasticism
    1. “Reconcile faith and reason”
      - a. Use Aristotelian method to pose and resolve questions
      - b. Reconcile all contradictions → Come to a unified system of truth
    2. “Theological cathedrals”: Large, impressive, laborious, buttressed
    3. Sources: Scripture, tradition, reason
    4. Leaders
      - a. Anselm
        - 1) “I believe that I may understand”
        - 2) *Why God Became Man?* → Satisfaction theory of the atonement
      - b. Peter Abelard
        - 1) “I understand that I may believe”
        - 2) *Yes and No* → Contrasting views of the Fathers on different issues
      - c. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74)
        - 1) Greatest Scholastic
        - 2) *Summa Theologica*: Exhaustive systematic theology
        - 3) Father of Thomistic philosophy
  - C. Sacramental System
    1. Church the conduit of grace through the seven sacraments
    2. Centrality of the Mass: Re-offering of Christ’s sacrifice (the church the custodian of Christ)
    3. “Outside of the church there is no salvation”