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How Rome Became Papal



Church History - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg delves into the history of how Rome became the papal church. He discusses the early days of Christianity when Christians met at homes and the concept of church as the body of Christ. He goes on to explore the influence of early church leaders such as Peter and Paul, as well as political power struggles within the Roman Empire. Additionally, Gregg discusses the establishment of the papacy and the cultural and political influence it held over the church throughout history.

Transcript

Tonight, we're going to be talking about how the church became the papal church. And by papal, of course, we're using a word that's derived from the word Pope. Pope is a derivation of the word Papa, which means father.

It's Italian. And so, the papal church, the papa church, is the church as it came to be dominated by the institution of the papacy, the popes. And that is what we'll be looking at tonight.

It's clear that when Jesus left the earth under the leadership of the twelve apostles, there were no popes among them. Although, in the thinking of the traditional Roman Catholic, there was a pope among them, and that was Simon Peter. It is believed by the Roman Catholic Church that Jesus assigned Peter a special place above the other apostles.

And this is found in Matthew chapter 16 and verse 18. When Peter at Caesarea Philippi, in answer to Jesus' question, who do you say that I am? Peter, answering for the apostles, said, You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Jesus said, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this unto you, but my Father which is in heaven.

And I say to you, You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Now, when he said, You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. Of course, the word Peter is the Greek word Petros, which means rock.

And he said, You are rock, and upon this rock I will build my church. And there have been from early times in the second and third century some leaders in the early church who believed that this means that the church is built upon the man, Simon Peter, and the office which he held, which according to the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church was the bishopric over Rome. According to Roman Catholic tradition, Peter was the first bishop of Rome, the founder of the church in Rome, and that he held the position of bishop of Rome until his martyrdom.

And prior to his martyrdom, he appointed a successor to himself. And when that successor had served as bishop of Rome for the rest of his lifetime, he appointed a successor. Who, before the end of his life, appointed a successor so that in every generation there has been a successor to the bishop of Rome, which can trace his lineage, not his genealogical lineage or his biological lineage, but his spiritual or ecclesiastical or political lineage back to Peter.

According to the Roman Catholic tradition, Peter held an office which has priority over all other offices in the church, and whoever has held that same office, namely bishop of Rome, ever since Peter's time, has had the same priority over the entire church of the whole world that they presume Peter had. Now, of course, this interpretation of things has never really been accepted by Protestants, and it was not always accepted by people before the Reformation either. In fact, in the early church there were people who rejected this argument, but the ones who believed it came to prevail.

And therefore, for many centuries the church has had, the church in Rome has had, a leading bishop, the bishop of Rome, who is usually called the Pope, and the powers and authorities that have been assigned to this office have increased over the centuries as various councils of the church have decided to increase the status and the prestige of that office. If we want to know how this began and how such an influence came to really arise in a church that had none of it in the days of Christ and the apostles, we can see some of the beginnings in some of the parts of church history that we've already studied. For example, Ignatius was a bishop who executed by the Romans.

He was one of the martyrs in the early second century. In the year 110, approximately, he was martyred, and he wrote letters to several churches on his way to being martyred in Rome and sent those letters. Some of those letters have survived.

And in those letters we find several things that, well, not several things, but one principal thing that is sort of a foundation for the thinking of the papacy later on. Ignatius wrote that all members of every church should be in submission to the bishop of the church. Now, this does not in any sense say that all churches have to be in submission to the bishop of the Roman church, as if the bishop of the Church of Rome had authority over all the churches.

That was a later development in Catholic theology. But Ignatius did teach that the bishop

had authority in the church at a level that we never find taught in Scripture. The bishop in the early church was simply an elder, an overseer, a person who taught, a person who served, a person who provided leadership of some sort.

But he was not a boss. He did not hold, as near as we can tell from Scripture, a political kind of authority that was imposed on the church. But Ignatius taught that it would be wrong to have any baptisms, or the Eucharist, which is the Lord's Supper, or a marriage without the bishop present, so that the bishop became a necessary person to be present when the major functions of the church were conducted.

Now, of course, in the early church, Christians met in homes, and there's no reason to believe that every home had a bishop present. And they took the Lord's Supper, apparently daily sometimes, in Jerusalem, and weekly in other churches. And there's no indicator in the Bible that a bishop had to be present for the church to convene.

In fact, Jesus said, where two or more are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst. And if you've got Jesus, what do you need a bishop for? Jesus is the highest-ranking authority in the church. He's the head.

And if he is present in the meeting, there is no indication in Scripture that you must have a bishop, or an elder, or anyone else present to officiate. Therefore, throughout history, there have always been some Christians, even during the medieval time, during the Middle Ages, they were persecuted by the Catholic Church. But there have always been some people who believed that the church is a spiritual communion of true believers and followers of Christ, and that Christ is present wherever they gather, with or without any ecclesiastical or official church leaders present.

But Ignatius was the one who began, as far as we know, as far as the record shows, to introduce the idea of a political power and the essential presence of a bishop of the church. Now, already, he was beginning to talk about bishop differently than the Bible does, because the Bible speaks of the bishops, plural. There are the elders of the churches, are the bishops.

And there were more than one in each church. But in Ignatius' day, apparently the church had developed to the point where we have what we call a monarchical bishop, a bishop that was a singular leader over a church in an area. Now, it's hard to know for sure exactly how much of this teaching really came from Ignatius, because many scholars looking at the writings of Ignatius feel that there have been interpolations, which are sections added by later writers, later Roman Catholic writers in particular.

It's not certain which sections were interpolated like this or whether there really were some, but the possibility that there were some makes it questionable how many of the things in his writings really were written by his pen. And it's possible that he didn't take quite as strong a stand as the present state of his letters would indicate, but we can't be

sure. One thing is evident, though.

He does not, in his letter, ever suggest that bishops are above presbyters or that the presbyters should submit to the bishops. This was a later development in Roman Catholic development. It's also the case that Ignatius commanded not only submission to the bishop, but also to the presbyters and to the deacons, which shows that it's not so much that he was establishing the bishop as some kind of a high ranking office, but all the church leaders of any church office were to be honored and submitted to, and the reason, of course, that Ignatius said that this had to be done was for the sake of the unity of the church.

He wrote at a time where there were schisms, there were divisions forming in the church, and he thought the easiest way to remedy that situation would be to have everybody submit to the leaders that were there in the church, and if everyone submitted to the leaders, they'd all be basically in unity or at least functioning in unity, and that was his motivation. He did not, in his letters, indicate that the bishop had to be there for some, you know, mystical reason or for some reason that lies in the secret councils of God as he organized the church, that the bishop has to be there in order for rituals and sacraments to be performed and to be valid. None of that is in Ignatius.

There's only a stress on the need to submit to the church leaders in Ignatius. Then, of course, later on in the second century, near the end of the second century, Irenaeus taught the doctrine of apostolic succession, which is that doctrine that the bishop of Rome in every generation is the apostolic successor of Peter, and that the other bishops of the other churches are the successors of the other apostles. Now, of course, there were 12 apostles and there were more than 12 bishops, but the teaching of apostolic succession is that the college of bishops, or the complete number of bishops taken collectively, has apostolic authority like the group of apostles taken collectively, and that the one bishop of Rome had special authority, although Irenaeus did not place the bishop of Rome above the other bishops.

He just believed that there was apostolic succession, namely that the present, in his day, at the end of the second century, the present leadership of the church could trace a succession back to the apostles and had in the churches an authority like the apostles. And so that, of course, tended to give strength to the Roman Catholic doctrine on the subject. He did believe that the Roman Catholic Church had a primacy over the other churches, but that did not mean that the bishop of that church had supremacy over the other bishops.

It just meant that the Roman Church was the most important church. It was the biggest church from the time of about 100 AD on, the church in Rome was the largest church, and it had a lot of things about it that made it special. Both Peter and Paul had died there, although there's no reason to believe either of them planted the church there.

Paul certainly didn't, and Peter probably didn't, contrary to Roman Catholic theology or tradition, but it is probable that the traditions are true, that both those apostles died there. And Paul wrote, of course, his most lengthy and possibly his most important epistle to that church. Plus, of course, Rome was the capital of the Empire, which made it the most important city in the secular sense as well.

And so you had the largest church there, you had a church that where Peter and Paul had died, you had the most important church in the Empire, and it was not unnatural, and Paul had written to that church a very important epistle. It was not unnatural for people to begin to look at the Roman church as sort of a mother church, although it didn't have a clearly defined authoritarian role over the other churches at that early point. Later in the middle of the third century, Cyprian, and we've studied these men already before, this man taught several things that contributed to Roman Catholic theology.

He taught that there's no salvation outside the church, and that the church that you had to be in to be saved was the church ruled by bishops holding office by apostolic succession. Now, what this means, of course, is that the institutional church that had a man leading it, who was approved by, you know, whoever the official leaders were of the church, that that church alone was the church in your town. If you lived in Alexandria, you had to go to the institutional church in Alexandria and submit to the bishop of that.

And if you didn't, or if you fell out of favor with him, you could be excommunicated and you would not be saved because you're outside the church. Now, of course, the Bible doesn't teach anything like that, because the Bible teaches that the church is the body of Christ, and people are placed in the body of Christ by a sovereign act of the Holy Spirit upon regeneration. And each person is given a gift and a position in the body of Christ at the moment of conversion by the Holy Spirit.

It is not the place of man, a bishop, or any other man, to put you in or out of the church. Christ may do so, and the church is, even in Scripture, not only permitted but commanded to put certain people out of the church, out of the visible church, because of a need to discipline them. But the Scripture does not indicate, although some may infer from it, that it certainly does not state that those who are thus put out of the church are not saved.

They might not be, or they might be, but the Bible doesn't say. The Bible does not, in other words, teach affirmatively that you must be in the visible church in order to be saved. The man who started the church in Ethiopia was probably the Ethiopian eunuch that Philip met out in the wilderness as he was on his way home from Jerusalem.

In all probability, that man, when he got back to Ethiopia, didn't have any fellowship to be a part of. He was the only convert from the country, as far as we know, at that point in time. Yet he was saved.

Was he in the church? Well, I mean, he was in the body of Christ, but he wasn't a part of an institutional church unless he started one, which he may have. But was he not saved until that church got started and had a bishop in it? Obviously, that's an absurd suggestion. Salvation is through faith and through regeneration, through the Holy Spirit, and not through membership in an institution called a church.

But Cyprian taught otherwise. He also taught that Peter was the chief of the apostles and that Peter founded the Roman church, and that gave it preeminence. In that respect, Cyprian simply developed a little more on the sentiments of earlier thinkers.

Also, in Cyprian, in his writings, the leaders of the church were given a priestly function. Now, I've mentioned this in previous talks, that Jesus never appointed any priests in his church. A priest, by definition, is one who officiates at an altar and offers a sacrifice.

Well, in the New Testament, there aren't any sacrifices to be offered by a priest. Jesus is the final blood sacrifice, the final physical offering. We do offer up spiritual sacrifices to God, the fruit of our lips, the Bible says, and we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice.

But neither of these are done at a church meeting, per se, or through the officiation of some human priest. We are all priests, and we all offer our own bodies up, and we offer up our own sacrifice of praise. It is a priesthood of believers.

And therefore, there are no church officers in the Bible called priests, nor were there in the early church for a couple of centuries. But in the mid-third century, Cyprian began to suggest that the leaders of the church actually are priests, and that they do offer a sacrifice. Yes.

That's a good question. Why did Cyprian do that? Right. Although I've read many books about Cyprian, none of them have given me the background information to answer that question.

I don't know exactly what earlier threads he may have woven together into that fabric of that teaching. There may have been some threads presented to him from earlier writers. The problem is we have such a dearth of writings, really.

I mean, even though we have volumes of church fathers' writings, it's still a very, very small amount of what probably was written in those centuries. And so if the answer to your question is known to scholars of the church fathers, they would have to know more than I do, and that's very probable that many people do. But I'm not sure that that information has come down to us.

It may well have, but I'm simply not well-read enough in the fathers to know the answer to your question. Why did Cyprian do that? Where did he find a basis for that teaching? You know, I'll venture a guess, though, and this is an educated guess, because very early in church history, they began to view the Lord's Supper as a sacramental thing where

they actually ate the body and blood of Jesus. And, of course, this they got from, in my opinion, a misunderstanding of what Jesus was talking about in John chapter 6, where he said, unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you.

And I think they grossly misunderstood what he was getting at there, but they took it quite literally that you have to eat his flesh and drink his blood, and this is done at the Eucharist or the communion meal. Those ideas about the Eucharist or about the Lord's Supper were present in the church in the second century. We don't have any evidence that they were present in the first century, but they were clearly there among some in the second century.

That's very early on, and you can see how that concept might evolve into the idea that, well, if we are eating his flesh and drinking his blood, it's a little bit like in the Old Testament, the sacrifice was offered on the altar and the worshipper and the priest would eat the flesh of the sacrifice. They wouldn't drink the blood, but, I mean, they'd eat the sacrifice. And if we're eating Jesus and he's our sacrifice, then somehow this probably evolved into the concept that someone needs to officiate at this sacrifice.

Somebody needs to offer it, and so the sacrifice of the Mass came to be the official doctrine as time went by. You know, I don't know how many of you have Roman Catholic background. Those of you who do would know what I'm about to say very well.

I don't have a Roman Catholic background, and I was an adult for years, even with Roman Catholic friends, before I fully understood. I still probably don't fully understand what the Roman Catholic understanding of this is, but the wafer, the host, actually becomes the body of Christ when blessed by a priest, and he's actually offering the sacrifice of the Mass each Sunday, or each day, actually, because you can take a Mass every day in the Catholic Church. So that Christ is offered again and again, and the officiating officer of the Church, obviously, if he's offering a sacrifice, he's a priest.

Now, I'm not sure that I've correctly represented the train of development of the rationale for calling the Church leaders priests, but I would imagine that that would be a very good guess at how that came about. Oh, yeah. Yeah, I'm sure that if Ignatius were to be exposed to modern Roman Catholic theology about the bishops and things like that, he probably would turn over in his grave, because there's no reason to believe that he held this highly developed hierarchical system that it came to be.

These men, who we can look at as the founders of some of these ideas, probably were much more right on than the suggestions I've made about them would indicate. I'm not presenting to you all the right things they did. I'm just trying to point out what contributions each of these men made to the development of a system that isn't very right on, and I'm sure that they were much innocent or much more pure in their doctrine, even on these subjects, than later Catholic theologians were who developed them and made them into something much more grotesque, really.

We already last time talked about Augustine of Hippo. Around the year 400, he did more than anybody to establish the basic Roman Catholic traditions. Last time I mentioned that even Augustine, about 325, when the Nicene Council met, there were already firmly established in the Church the concepts of clergy as priests, because of Cyprian, of ruling bishops, because of earlier writers, of apostolic succession, Irenaeus taught that, and of the Roman bishop as first among equals.

Now, at the Council of Nicaea in 325, there was a general feeling that the Roman bishop, though he didn't have supremacy over the other bishops, he was the first among equals, which I've never understood how a person could be first among equals and still be equal, but that was nonetheless the way they spoke of it. So it sort of did confer to the Roman bishop something of a higher status without giving him any actual practical higher status, just sort of in terms of respect and nothing more. But when Augustine came along, his writings, of course, influenced the Church more than those of any other writer in Church history, and he taught that the Church is not a spiritual communion of believers, but it's the visible ecclesiastical organization of Catholicism, outside of which none could be saved regardless of how great their faith or their righteousness.

If they're outside the Church, they're not saved. Augustine also taught that it was all right to use force, military force, to compel conversion to those who would not convert voluntarily. Of course, that gave a rationale and justification to many atrocities that were later done by the Roman Catholic Church, and some have been done by Protestants, who followed the same ethic of Augustine.

Also, of course, Augustine taught the Catholic beliefs in the authority of tradition as equal to the authority of scripture. He taught the doctrine of purgatory and the efficacy of the sacraments and the use of relics as conferring some kind of grace or benefit to the spiritual life. So Augustine also, in around 400, contributed a lot to some of these issues that developed into the Roman Catholic dogma.

Now, there are additional factors in the early Church in the first few centuries that contributed to the rise of the prominence of Rome over the other churches, and this is how the papacy arose to become the thing that it became. First of all, as I mentioned earlier, the city of Rome and the Church in Rome claimed a patron from Peter, foundation. Once again, there's nothing in scripture that would support the notion that Peter founded the Church in Rome, but the Catholics have asserted it nonetheless.

There's neither scripture nor history to prove this, and we know there was a Church in Rome as early as 49 or 50 AD, if not sooner. Peter was in the Council of Jerusalem in 50 AD, according to Acts 15. Now, we have external evidence from the Roman writers that there were Christians in Rome in the time of Claudius Caesar, 49 or 50 AD, and yet Peter was still in Jerusalem at that time, so it doesn't seem very likely that Peter had founded the Church in Rome, but somehow the Catholic Church has pressed that claim.

We know that Peter was there later in his life, and Paul too, and therefore we know that Peter and Paul had at least an influence in that Church in the early days. If they didn't found it, they at least were there providing some kind of leadership in all likelihood, and therefore that gave Rome a special status among most of the Christians. Also, the Bishop of Rome was able to rise to power more quickly than some of the other bishops because the other bishops that would be rivals to this claim were all in the Eastern Roman Empire, and Rome alone was in the Western Empires as a major city.

Initially, there were four churches at the Council of Nicaea. In 325, there were four churches whose bishops were considered to be leading bishops, like the most important bishops, the Bishop of Rome, the Bishop of Constantinople, the Bishop of Antioch, and the Bishop of Alexandria. Now, apart from Rome, all those other cities were in the East, in the Eastern Roman Empire, and eventually all of them were contending with each other for primacy.

They got to be very unchristian, and they got to be very political, and there were power struggles, and each of those bishops hoped to become the most powerful bishop over all the churches. Well, the thing is that in the Eastern Roman Empire, Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople, those bishops had each other as rivals to tear each other down and their authority down and to press claims against each other. In the Western Empire, there was only Rome, so the Roman bishop could come to power in the West without the rivalry that existed among the other three in the Eastern Empire.

A third factor was the decline of state power in Rome after Constantine moved the capital of the empire from Rome to Constantinople in 330 AD. Five years after the Nicene Council, Constantine renamed Byzantium, which is in modern Turkey, he named it after himself, Constantinople, after Constantine. And he moved his capital there, and when the emperor moved out of Rome to Constantinople, there was no one left in Rome who had a power equal to that of the bishop there, because remember, the whole empire had converted, or at least the emperor had, and most of the leaders had, and so you've got an essentially Christian city, and you've got a Christian emperor there in Rome until he moves.

And after the emperor moves, the other major leader of the people is the Christian leader there, the bishop of Rome. And so the bishop of Rome, after the center of power, of political power, moved to Constantinople, he was left without even political rivalry against him in Rome. So he was able to rise and fill more and more of a political status, as we'll see some specific cases in a moment.

And a fourth factor that contributed to the rise of the prominence of Rome over the other churches was that in the first three centuries after Christ, a large number of theological controversies arose, with Arianism and Pelagianism and Manicheanism and a whole bunch of other heresies that we've discussed in previous lectures. And the Eastern

churches were kind of torn up by these controversies, because a lot of those leaders of those controversies arose in the eastern part of the Empire, and got a foothold for their teachings in these eastern churches. A lot of those eastern churches were Arian, for example, followers of Arius for centuries.

Whereas the church in Rome was almost entirely, from the beginning to the end, Orthodox. And when the heretical sects were condemned by ecumenical church councils, the positions that were upheld by those councils were the positions the Church of Rome had always held, or Rome was always on the right side of these controversies. So that it got a reputation for being stable and Orthodox, and these other churches got a reputation for being susceptible to heresies.

And then it became customary, when disputes between churches arose, to go and ask the bishop at Rome about it, because he was heading up the church that never really got off the track, supposedly. Unfortunately, those ecumenical councils didn't address all the issues that could have been addressed, in which case the Church of Rome might have been found in error if some other issues had been discussed. But in terms of the major Christological heresies, and the decisions of the council about them, the Church of Rome was always on the right side of the decisions of those councils, and therefore had a reputation for stability, and generally was looked at as the church that really was solidly on a rock, on Peter, you know, and wasn't going to be moved, and therefore it became customary, almost instinctive, for problems in other churches to appeal to the Church in Rome for a decision, or at least for counsel.

And so that's how Rome tended to rise. Now there were several individuals and factors in between the year 400 and the year 600 that led to the firm establishment of the papacy as it came to be known in the medieval period. One was a man named Bishop Leo I. Now he was not the first bishop of Rome by any means.

I think there were 15 bishops before him, if I remember correctly, or maybe there were 15 between the time of Christ and the time of Gregory, I forget. But there were quite a few bishops before Leo in Rome. But Bishop Leo I, sometimes called Leo the Great, was the bishop of Rome from 440 to 461.

And there's several things that helped him establish the authority of the bishop at Rome above that which previous bishops have been able to establish. First of all, in the early 400s, just before he came to office, Rome was ripped up by invasions from barbarians. The Vandals and some other barbarian tribes plundered Rome in 410 and in the years that followed.

And because of that, the political authority in Rome was in disarray. In fact, there was no strong political authority in Rome except for the bishop of Rome. And the bishop Leo took advantage of this disorder.

And not only that, the Vandals also conquered Africa. And the African churches then began to need some help and some counsel. And they began to look to the Pope in Rome.

And that sort of set a precedent for him overseeing the affairs of a church outside of Rome in Africa. He also interfered with the churches in Gaul, which is France today. And he also asserted his papal authority over the churches of Spain and Illyricum.

Illyricum later was known as Yugoslavia. So these various regions, Spain, France, North Africa, and Yugoslavia, came to be under the official authority of Pope Leo because there was disarray in the empire. And these churches looked to him voluntarily and gave authority to him to speak into their situation.

He also added to the prestige of his office by saving Rome twice. When Attila the Hun came to sack Rome in 452, Pope Leo negotiated with him, and by statesmanship, managed to prevent Rome from being sacked by Attila. And later on, when Genseric, who was the Vandal king, who came and did sack Rome in 455, came along, Genseric was going to massacre the whole Roman population.

But again, by good statesmanship, Pope Leo was able to talk him out of it and get concessions from him. So that he basically saved the Roman populace twice, from the Huns and from the Vandals. And that, of course, conferred a greater prestige upon him, even in the eyes of the emperor.

In fact, Emperor Valentinian III, out of appreciation for the prestige of Pope Leo's office and his contributions he made to the security of the empire, he declared that the bishops of Gaul and other western provinces were subservient to the Bishop of Rome, and that provincial governors were to compel bishops to go to Rome when they were summoned by the Pope. In other words, if the Pope in Rome was displeased with some bishop in Gaul or some other western territory, he could summon that bishop to come to him to face him for the purpose of censure or discipline or whatever. And the bishop, prior to this time, could just say, sorry, I'm not going.

I don't recognize your authority. But the emperor actually made a decree that the governors, that is the political governors of those lands, had to compel the bishops of those lands to go and present themselves to the Bishop of Rome if they were summoned by him. Now, the very act of going would diminish their authority in the sight of their parishioners.

You know, I mean, if a bishop in Gaul was called on the carpet by the Pope in Rome and he just said, well, I'm sorry, I'm not going to pay attention to that man, he would retain power in his church, as it were, prestige as the leader of the church. But if he had to kowtow to the Bishop in Rome and say, okay, I'm coming, I'm coming, you know, even if the bishop at Rome couldn't do much to him, if he just scolded him, the fact that he had

to go and submit to that scolding would, of course, diminish the authority of the local bishop in the eyes of his church and increase the authority of the Roman bishop in the eyes of the same. Ninety-six of Pope Leo's sermons have survived the present, and he was clearly very strong against all heresies, as, of course, those heresies were defined by the councils.

And he wrote the definitive work to settle the Nestorian conflict about the two natures of Christ, and he wrote something called the Tome of Leo, which he wrote to the Bishop of Constantinople in 449, where his tome that he wrote was about the two natures of Christ, and his position that he presented there defined the Orthodox view from that time on till the present. So he was very influential, and, you know, his own writing settled a question that was disputed in the Eastern Empire, which was not his domain. So you can see that he began to have some influence, considerable influence, supported by the emperor even, on churches that were not in Rome, and that tended to get set precedents that were easy to build upon.

By the way, in his favor, his sermons that he wrote actually do show genuine concern for the spiritual well-being of his flock. We shouldn't think that just because the institution that he helped to further along became a monstrosity that he was a wicked man himself, necessarily. You may have strong feelings against the papacy, as I personally do myself, but that doesn't mean that every pope has been himself a wicked man, and especially some of these early guys, they could not necessarily anticipate this thing that they were doing, how it would snowball, and what it would become, but they probably did whatever they did out of what they considered to be the good of the church, and the good of the congregations.

And, you know, when there was, you know, negotiating with the vandals and the Huns to keep this population from being slaughtered, you know, that's not a very mean thing to do, that's a good thing for a man to do, but it gave him prestige, and it tended to add to his political power over the other churches and things like that, too. So these things kind of developed, frankly, I think the devil developed the papacy, and I think some of the players that he used were more or less innocent, more or less not aware of how they were contributing to this thing, they couldn't see in the future what precedent they were setting and how that would be abused in the future. Another bishop of Rome who furthered the office of the papacy considerably was Bishop I don't know if it's Gelasius or Galatius, probably Galatius, he was the Bishop of Rome from 492 to 496, brings us almost to the beginning of the 6th century.

He claimed that the Pope has moral superintendence over the political rulers, and this decision of his influenced the official political doctrine of Europe pretty much through the whole medieval period. What he taught was that there are two spheres of authority, the civil and the ecclesiastical, ecclesiastical means of the church, and he said that God had appointed the civil rulers to have authority over civil matters, and of course the bishops

to have authority over the churches. He said, however, that the bishops must give account to God for the conduct of the rulers, therefore the rulers are under the authority of the bishops in matters pertaining to the church.

But he did teach that the bishops are under the authority of the rulers in matters pertaining to the state, but it still set a precedent that the bishops had to submit to the Popes. There was at a much later period a German king who displeased the Pope and was disfellowshipped, it was excommunicated by the Pope, and in order to be restored, the king thought he could defy the Pope and still win, but his Catholic subjects favored the Pope more than they favored the king, and they rejected his authority, so he had to go barefoot in the snow and stand outside the Pope's residence for three days to show penance for having offended the Pope, and the Pope then came out and blessed him and gave him back his kingdom, and he was able to then reign again. So I mean, in time, the Popes could just control kings by simply excommunicating them from the church, and it was Bishop Galatius who first came up with that doctrine, that the kings are subject to the bishops, especially the Pope, in matters of ecclesiology, and of course salvation is an issue that motivates all people who are religious, including kings and others, and so the Popes eventually, at the risk of depriving a man of his salvation by kicking him out of the church, could blackmail kings, and often did, to get them to do what they wanted.

Of course, in time, they didn't even have to blackmail kings, they just became the kings, as we shall see. They became the de facto rulers of Europe, the Popes did, but not as early as the time of Galatius. Two other important things happened to give the Pope of Rome authority over the churches of other parts of Europe.

One was the conversion of a Frankish chieftain, or prince, whose name was Clovis. In 496, Clovis converted to Orthodox Roman Catholicism, and 3,000 of his troops converted and were baptized at the same time. And this, of course, really pleased the Roman Catholic Church, because he became the first prince in the Western... he was actually not the first, but he was the only Orthodox prince in the Western Roman Empire.

All the others were Arians. Arianism was very influential for that period of time, and almost all the princes in the Empire were Arians. But Clovis became Orthodox, which means he sided with the Roman Catholic Church against the Arian churches, and so the Emperor was glad of that, and the Pope was glad of that, because that gave more clout to the Roman Orthodoxy, because now this chief of the Franks and his armies had become Christians of their brand.

And so the Frankish kings after that offered protection and aid to various Popes, and eventually established the Orthodox position over the Arian position in the West. Another guy, I don't know how to pronounce his name, Ricarid, I guess, was a Visigothic king of Spain. That is, his ethnicity was Visigoth.

His domain was in what we call Spain. And he was an Arian leader, but he converted to

Orthodox Roman Catholicism in 586, and this gave him favor with the Pope, and the Pope favor with him, and so Spain, under his rule, came under the Pope as France did under Clovis. So we see that we have these, what would have historically been Roman Catholic states, Roman Catholic nations, came under the Roman bishop at these times, because they were in conflict with Arianism, and the Roman Church alone was standing for Orthodoxy, and so when these men became Orthodox, they became clearly under the leadership of the Roman bishop.

And whereas Italy, of course, had been under the Roman control, now France and Spain were. And throughout most of history, France and Spain have been firmly Roman Catholic states, until the French Revolution, at least, when France threw off the authority of the Pope. But that was in ultra-modern history.

Through most of the Middle Ages, or through the entire Middle Ages, I should say, France and Spain and Italy were leading powers in Europe, and obviously being fully Roman Catholic, they influenced Europe that way. And they conquered other lands around them and made them Roman Catholic as well. So all the things we've talked about so far resulted in the following results.

Roman Catholicism, by these means, became the uncontested faith of the Western Empire, through Gaul and Spain, coming over to the Italian side of things. And the Roman way also eventually penetrated other regions, of course, South America and the Philippines, and certain parts of Africa became Roman Catholic through the efforts of Jesuits and other Roman Catholic missionaries. And so those parts of the world became firmly established under the Pope, and have remained, for the most part, under the spiritual leadership of the Pope to this day.

Western Europe, as a result of these developments, was organized into dioceses and parishes ruled by the Pope and by the bishops. So that the entire populace of Western Europe, influenced into the Roman Catholic Church. They married in the Roman Catholic Church.

They lived under the ordinances of the Roman Catholic Church. And they were buried by the Roman Catholic Church. I mean, Europe just became Roman Catholic.

No one knew any other way. I shouldn't say no one knew any other way, because there were some rebel movements that arose, which if we could know more about them, we'd probably have to say we agree with them more than we do with the Roman Catholic establishment at that time. But they were stamped out as mercilessly as the Roman and Spanish Inquisitions could possibly stamp them out.

For the most part, the mainstream of society just took the Pope's authority for granted. But the real medieval form of papacy was established by one man. And although historians cannot agree among themselves as to who really should be called the first

Pope, some would say Pope Leo was really the first Pope, and others would name others.

Everyone agrees that the papacy, as it came to be understood throughout the whole medieval period, was established by Gregory the Great. And Gregory the Great was really a great man in many respects. He was the greatest Pope there ever was.

In terms of his influence, probably both for good and for ill, he is the one that all historians agree was responsible for the formation of the papacy that was organized under his rule and continued in that same form through the whole medieval period. He was the Pope from 540 to 604. So the reign of Gregory brings us on into the beginning of the 7th century.

And Gregory was responsible for many of the things that we now think of in terms of what the papacy became, its political authority, and many of the abuses that were later done, although I'm not saying that Gregory himself abused it. I don't believe that Gregory was an abuser of his authority. Unfortunately, his influence, though, gave grounds for later Popes to abuse authority.

He was himself born to a noble, wealthy family. They were devout Roman Catholics, of course. And in his youth, he had political aspirations, not ecclesiastical aspirations.

He held the office of prefect of Rome, which was the highest civil administrator in the city. He liked the mayor, I guess, of a modern city. And he didn't like public life.

And he had more of an attraction to monasticism. He became a monk. He took his family fortune, which he inherited, and he used the entire fortune to establish seven monasteries, and he gave the rest to the poor.

And he lived as a monk for years. However, eventually, Pope Pelagius II, who is not, of course, the same Pelagius who is associated with the Pelagian heresy, but Pope Pelagius II called him back into public life. And he served as the bishop representing Rome's interests at Constantinople.

So he was sort of like an ambassador from the Church of Rome who was stationed in Constantinople, essentially a rival church. But he was there as the ambassador to represent the interests of Rome's at the court there in Constantinople. And he served in that role from 579 to 586.

And then in 590, Gregory was elected to be the Bishop of Rome or the Pope. Now, he didn't want the position. He objected to it, and he strongly resisted it.

But eventually, he came to terms with this being his call from God, and so he accepted the office. He actually preferred monastic lifestyle to the luxurious lifestyle of the Popes, and that's why he didn't want to be the Pope. But he felt that God had called him, and therefore, he took it on and became the Bishop of Rome in 590.

Now, at that time, the power of the emperors in Rome was extremely weak. There was a series of very weak emperors. They had been, of course, pillaged by Goths and vandals.

And they were actually, before Gregory became Pope, there was an attack by the Lombards against Rome, and they were wreaking havoc on the empire. And the imperial power was just really weak and effeminate and couldn't do anything to defend him. And so when Gregory became Pope, he found himself sort of in the position to fill a vacuum.

The political leaders were not doing what they could or what they should to defend the city, and so Gregory himself began to raise an army to fight the Lombards. And he was the one who appointed the commanders and gave them strategy and gave orders to generals on the field, and he directed the war effort. He himself organized the care of thousands of refugees from the war, and he also was directly involved in negotiating peace, the peace arrangement with the Lombards in 592 and 593.

So here he began to do the kinds of things an emperor does, the kind of things a political leader does, raising an army, training the army, giving the orders to the army, negotiating the peace settlement. Now, bishops of Rome never did that kind of thing. Church bishops just didn't do that kind of thing prior to his time.

But it was largely because of the time he lived in and the vacuum caused by the almost absent power of the emperor at that time that he just kind of filled the void in a time of crisis when Rome was in danger and managed to save Rome. After the war, he did a great number of things to help the poor in Rome and elsewhere. He was a man who was not like some of the later popes who was into pomp and luxury.

He had a heart for the poor. Remember, he himself had been a monastic, and he never lost the heart of a monastic. In the final years of the sixth century, Gregory became the ruler of Rome and the virtual ruler of all Italy because he had shown himself more capable than the actual political rulers.

He basically just was given the leadership of the city. And that, of course, set a precedent that was not going to be good in later years. Some of the more important contributions to this whole development of the papacy and to the church in general that are associated with Gregory's rule are listed here in your notes.

For one thing, he organized and transformed the papal government into an elaborate, smoothly functioning system which endured through the Middle Ages. And he did this partly by standardizing and introducing changes in the liturgy so that all the churches throughout the West would follow the same liturgy. He also encouraged the use of Gregorian chants, which are named after him, Pope Gregory.

But he didn't write them. He didn't invent the Gregorian chant. They're just named after him because he promoted them, the use of them in worship in the churches throughout

the empire.

And he established schools to train singers to sing the Gregorian chants. And so he had a sort of a cultural influence on the church as well as a political influence. He also incorporated and synthesized the elements of the popular piety that was among the people of his day.

Most of the Catholic dogmas that he taught were not original with him. He didn't really come up with original doctrines of Catholicism. What he did is he took some of the popular dogmas that were floating around for a few centuries before him and he made them official, made them official doctrine of the church.

And that includes the idea that tradition of the church is equal in authority to Scripture, which became official with him. The teaching that absolution of original sin comes through infant baptism. The idea is that Augustine taught that babies are born guilty of Adam's sin.

And Gregory agreed with that, but he believed that baptism of infants actually acquired the forgiveness of original sin. So that if you would baptize your infant and he would die, he'd be saved. But if you did not baptize your infant and he died, he would not be saved because he had original sin and was not absolved from it by baptism.

Also, he taught a system of penance for sins that were committed after baptism. He taught and approved of the use of relics and amulets and a prayer to the saints and the martyrs, which of course we know are things that are pretty much parts of the Roman Catholic way of thinking now. He made that official.

He also formulated more the doctrine of purgatory. It was around in German form before, but he worked it out and made it more official church dogma. And it was he that transformed the Eucharist from a mere sacrament to a sacrifice for the redemption of the living and the dead.

You can take a mass for the dead as well as a mass for yourself. And it was through the teaching of Gregory that the Eucharist came to be seen as an actual offering of a sacrifice for redemption and effective for living people or for dead people if you did on their behalf. He wrote a great deal.

And along with three other men, he is considered one of the four great Latin doctors of the church, one of the great theologians of the Roman church. The other three we have already been introduced to before, they were Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome. We haven't said much about Jerome, but he was the translator of the Bible into Latin from Hebrew and Greek.

We did talk about Jerome some in an earlier time, but Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Gregory are considered to be the four great doctors of the church, of the early Western

church. And he wrote an important work called Pastoral Rule, which became the official manual of conduct for the bishops throughout the empire. So obviously he regulated the behavior of the bishops very exactly through his writings and his authority.

He also wrote a book called Dialogues, which is about the lives and the alleged miracles occurring in the lives of the pious Italian fathers. He also wrote a book called Moralia, which is a commentary on Job. It's not really a very exegetical commentary, such as we would think of a commentary.

It took more of the allegorical approach that was fairly common in the Alexandrian school at an earlier date. And those are some of his main writings. Also, because he was the first monk to become pope, he tended to be more monkish than most popes.

He promoted asceticism and monasticism. And it was he who enforced the idea that the clergy had to be celibate. That is, if you're going to go into the priesthood, you had to not marry.

You had to remain celibate. That was, of course, coming from the idea that in those days, and even before his time, it was taught that there were certain states of life that were superior to others. Martyrdom was one of them.

Celibacy was another. Being a virgin all your life was considered to be a higher state of grace. And now he made it official that the priests had to follow a celibate life.

Now, that is rather ironic, because Peter, who is believed to have been the first pope, was not celibate. He was a married man. In all likelihood, he had children.

And we know he had a wife. Twice in Scripture, it mentions he had a wife. One time is when Jesus first came to Capernaum.

After casting a demon out of a man in the synagogue there, Jesus was invited home with Peter. And there, Peter's wife's mother, his mother-in-law, was sick, and Jesus healed her. So we know Peter had a mother-in-law, and you can't have a mother-in-law without a wife.

A lot of people would like to have a wife without a mother-in-law, but very few people have ever dreamed of having a mother-in-law without a wife. And Peter was no exception. Also, it says in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 that Peter and other apostles took a sister as a wife around with them as they taught and as they ministered on a circuit.

So there's no question from Scripture that Peter was a married man. But Pope Gregory said that all the clergy of the Roman Church have to be celibate, unmarried. And that would include the pope, because the pope was a bishop, and the priests and the bishops all had to be celibate according to him.

And that has remained true to the present time in the Roman Catholic Church. He also had a zeal for missions. Before he was the pope, when he was still a monk, he once saw some beautiful children on the slave market in Rome.

And he found out that they were Anglicans, which means English, Anglo children. And he found out that they were pagans. And his heart went out to them, and he determined that someday he would go as a missionary to the Anglicans in England, in Britain.

He never ended up going there, but once he became pope, he sent 40 monks to England to evangelize. And they were under the leadership of a man named Augustine, but not the same Augustine that's more famous, the Augustine of Hippo, had died in the year 430. It was actually in 596 that Gregory sent 40 monks under the leadership of Augustine.

Augustine was actually the prior of the monastery in Rome, one of the seven monasteries that Gregory had established. And these 40 monks went to England, and they converted thousands of people, including a king named Ethelbert. And Ethelbert, one of the kings of one of the people groups in Britain at that time, gave up his palace to Augustine, the missionary, who was made the archbishop of that area.

That area is known as Canterbury, and Canterbury became the religious center of England. And even to this day, the archbishop of the Church of England is at Canterbury, the archbishop of Canterbury. The Church of England, by the way, we'll study that later on, how that came to be, but originally England was, I mean, from the time of Gregory on, England was essentially Roman Catholic.

Now there were competing movements in England at this time. There were the Roman Catholics that were the result of Gregory and Augustine's and the 40 monks' efforts. But there had earlier, from the second or third century, been a Celtic church in the British Isles that no one knows exactly how it started.

Some tradition says that the Apostle Paul himself went to Britain and started the Celtic churches, but most historians do not credit that tradition with validity. We do know that at an earlier date than this, Patrick had gone to Ireland and had converted many of the Irish, and he had had some confrontations with the whatever Roman Christians there were over there. They were basically the Romans who lived over in the British Isles that he had conflict with.

But a successor to Patrick in Ireland, a guy named Columba, some decades later, led a missionary movement from Ireland, and he actually was a monastic kind of a missionary movement, and he started a school for missionaries, sort of like an ancient YWAM base or something, you know. And Columba had a tremendous impact converting people to the Celtic, of the Celtic peoples, to Christianity out of their paganism. Now when Augustine and the 40 monks who were sent by Gregory came to Britain, there was a

conflict between the Celtic churches and the Roman Catholic Church, because the Celts didn't accept the Roman Catholic dogmas and the authority of the Pope.

But about a century later, through various means, just the Roman Church's persistence eroded the resistance of the Celtic Church, and there was a merger of the two, so that Great Britain became Roman Catholic also, and remained Roman Catholic for the most part, most of the time, until Henry VIII. Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic Church, we'll talk about that at a time. He did that because he wanted to divorce his wife, who was infertile, or she could bear children, but they kept dying at birth, and he had no male heir, and it was important to him to pass his throne on to a son.

His wife was unable to give him a son that would survive birth, and so he had a mistress who was actually already pregnant with his child, while he was still married to his wife, and he tried to get a divorce from his wife, but the Pope wouldn't allow it, and so King Henry just decided that the Church in England doesn't have to enter the Pope. It's under the headship of the King of England, and that was the beginning of the Anglican Church. We could really call it Anglo-Catholic, because almost everything about the Anglican Church is the same as the Roman Catholic, the only thing we don't have is Rome.

They have almost all the same Roman traditions, the difference is that the Church of England, which is also called the Episcopal Church or the Anglican Church, recognizes the King or Queen of England as the head of the Church. I've never quite understood how... I mean, I know some good Anglican Christians, there's some very good Anglican Christian writers, but I never have been able to understand how an evangelical can see any validity in a church that began that way. Not that I think they should have stayed under the Pope, but when a church came into existence, its authority structure came into existence from a king who wanted to have an adulterous marriage, and the Pope wouldn't let him, so he just divorced himself from the Pope, and then divorced his wife.

That's a very checkered past that that denomination has. Anyway, we are getting ahead of ourselves. It was in the time of Gregory that missionary efforts of the Roman Catholic Church were made big-time to England, and eventually resulted in the conversion of the British Isles to Roman Catholicism as well.

I've put a chart on the bottom of your notes here that you might find interesting, or you might not, but the Roman Catholic political structure of the church was set up pretty much along the lines of the Roman provincial government or civil government structure. The smallest political unit in the Roman Empire was a city, and the Roman civil ruler of the city was called a prefect, and in the church, the ruler of a church in the city was called a bishop, and a bishop therefore was sort of the ecclesiastical counterpart. A counterpart is probably expressing my real feelings about it, but it was the ecclesiastical counterpart of the city prefect, which is like the mayor.

The next larger political unit in the Roman Empire was the province. Of course, there

were many cities in a province, and the civil ruler of a province was called the provincial governor. The church leader that corresponded in authority to that would be an archbishop, and he would have oversight over many bishops in a province, and then the next largest political unit would be different groupings of provinces, multiple provinces that would have some kind of political definition to them, and the civil ruler over that unit would be called an imperial governor.

The Roman church called the church official that was over that size of a group the cardinal, and then, of course, over the entire empire was the emperor, but in the church it was the pope. So there was this hierarchy in the Roman Empire based on geographical units, and the church under Gregory was organized along a similar pattern, so that going into the 7th century and into the Middle Ages, really, the medieval period, the church was organized like the Roman Empire politically as a hierarchy. There was very little left of the pristine, simple, spiritual character of the church at this time in terms of the definition of what the church was.

There were still spiritual people in the church. There were still true Christians in the established Roman Catholic Church, people who loved the Lord, and there were a growing number of people as the Middle Ages went by who left the Roman Catholic Church and had secret meetings in homes and in the woods and places where they could get away with it, and we'll talk about some of those groups either next time or the time after next. We do need to talk about the period of the popes and some of the things that went on during the Middle Ages.

I'm not going to take as much time on the Middle Ages per century as we've taken per century in the first part, because there were several centuries in a row, about seven or so, where everything is so depressing, it'd be nice to cover it all in a single session. There were some very corrupt popes and some very corrupt things done. You have the Inquisitions, and you've got the Crusades, and you've got the reign of the harlots, where the popes themselves were some of the most immoral citizens, had secret concubines and things like that.

That period of time we'll try to cover in a single session, probably our next session, and then after that I want to talk to you about some of the movements that God raised up that were persecuted by the popes during that period of time, that in all likelihood if we had all the information on them we'd probably recognize them as the groups we would have been in if we'd lived then. Unfortunately most of those groups are known to us only from the writings against them by the official church, but even from these we can discern that the groups often had more that was right on about them than the popes had, and there might have even been more things said against them than were true in the writings. It's hard to be sure about the details.

Well, I don't want to go any further with this. This basically surveys the development of

the institution of the papacy that dominated the institutional church for the next several hundred years, and until the Reformation really, and even after the Reformation in the 16th century, the papacy still dominates the Roman Catholic Church. And so what Gregory established was really just a formalization and making official of a trend and of ideas and popular thinking that was around before his time, but he set it in stone so much so that much of it exists to this day.

There have been some modifications in modern history, but through the whole medieval period his model of the papacy remained. Now Gregory is probably a wonderful man. He's probably not one of those that we would list with the wicked popes, but probably unbeknownst to him, just doing what it came natural to do and what seemed necessary to do to save the Empire from the Lombards and to save the church from splitting up and so forth.

I mean, these things just kind of probably evolved and happened in response to situations as seemed necessary, but eventually the sum total of all the little changes created something that was a monstrosity, and we'll talk about that monstrosity next time.