CHRISTIAN HISTORY

1001-1100 C.E.

May 27, 2026

Key Dates:
1049-1054 — Pope Leo IX promotes reforms
1054 — The Great Schism separates the Eastern and Western Church
1073-1085 — Pope Gregory VII promotes reforms
1096-1099 — The First Crusade

SUMMARY OF THIS CENTURY

General Development: The church in the West experiences great corruption and great efforts at reform. The West and the East officially split apart. Emperors and kings attempt to rule the church, and the church attempts to rule the emperors and kings.

Key Questions: Who is in charge: spiritual leaders (pope, etc.) or political leaders (emperors, kings, etc.)? Will feudalism break or strengthen the church? Can the Western and Eastern parts of the church get along? Can the Western church defeat the Muslims and save the Holy Land?

Key Places: France, home of major reform movements • **Rome**, location of many disputes over who will be pope • **Jerusalem**, target of the First Crusade

Key People: Pope Leo IX, Hildebrand/Pope Gregory VII, Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV, Pope Urban II

Church Leadership: still held by the pope, but the popes are chosen with much conflict between emperors, church officials, and powerful families in Rome; the Eastern and Western church split apart, with each under its own leader (Patriarch of Constantinople in the East, though often actually the Byzantine emperor; the pope in the West)

1) SPREAD & DECLINE OF CHRISTIANITY

CHINA: Christianity had taken root in China in earlier centuries, but now pretty much disappeared.

DENMARK: Canute, king of England (from 1016) & Denmark (from 1018) was a devout Christian and promoted Christianity eagerly.

SWEDEN: Christianity spread into Sweden beginning in the 900s, but especially in the 1000s, especially as Sweden's rulers began to convert to the faith.

SPAIN: Much of Spain was recaptured by Christians in the late 1000s (the reconquest would continue until the 1200s). As Spain was recaptured, the popes sent representatives to press the churches there to come under his authority, which they did. Hundreds of churches and monasteries were built, and large plots of land were donated for them. Many Muslims continued to live in Spain, of course.

BYZANTINE EMPIRE: The empire diminished in the 1000s. Anarchy damaged the empire at times. The Seljuk Turks took a chunk of the eastern part of the empire, including Antioch.

2) QUEST FOR CONFORMITY

FEUDALISM INCREASES CHURCH AUTHORITY: By the mid-1000s in the East as in the West, feudalism was beginning to replace large, centralized government. The rulers of the Byzantine Empire were rather inept starting around the middle of the century.

• In times of political weakness in the West, with so many lords, nobles, and kings vying for power, the people turned to the popes for leadership. — "Emperors were almost popes in the East, and in the West popes were almost emperors. This gave the two churches an entirely different outlook concerning

temporal [worldly] power." Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*, page 196

- Beginning in the 400s but really accelerating in the 1000s, the church (especially in the West, where the government did not have vast control over church law and life) assembled codes of canon law based on past councils' decisions, creeds, and papal decrees. The goal was to standardize church practices and Christian conduct, though much variety remained, even in the codes themselves. One major book of canon law, Gratian's *Decretum*, produced around 1140, contained almost 4,000 ancient church decisions, decrees of councils, and papal pronouncements.

THE CHURCH'S POWER IN EUROPE AT THIS TIME

- The church baptized all children, punished nonconformity & violations of the church's teachings, protected the clergy by law, collected dues/tithes, and was the center of local life everywhere.
- In the 1000s-1100s, clergy were almost the only educated people in society. Bishops & abbots were at the level of nobility, and most of them came from noble families. Even lay aristocrats were mostly illiterate. The average person heard few sermons that instructed them in Christian teaching.

> *Early in the eleventh century the church was able to get the feudal lords to accept the Peace of God and the Truce of God. The Peace of God was an agreement to ban private quarrels, to attack no unarmed persons, to permit no robbery or violence, and to pillage no sacred place. This agreement was needed because the feudal lord felt no obligation not to fight his feudal neighbor. The Truce of God bound the feudal class not to fight from sunset on Wednesday to sunrise on Monday of each week and not to fight on the day of church festivals. This left less than one hundred days in the year open to feudal fighting. It also provided that churches, cemeteries, monasteries, and convents should be sanctuaries where refugees could find a safe asylum in time of trouble. Women, peasants, and clergy were not to be harmed. These agreements did much to lessen the brutalities of feudal warfare in the Middle Ages.* Cairns 187

BREAKAWAY GROUP—THE CATHARI/ALBIGENSES: The Cathari ("the pure")—also called the Albigenses because they were numerous in Albi, a town in south France—believed in two gods: a good God who had created people's souls and an evil god who had been cast out of heaven and had created the material world. They taught that there is a wicked church and a righteous church (theirs), that the pope is the antichrist, that the Old Testament is from the devil, that Christ was not fully human, and that there is no bodily resurrection. They rejected the Lord's Supper (because material things like bread, wine, bodies, and blood are evil), renounced marriage and reproduction, forbade killing of animals including birds and insects, and prohibited the eating of milk, meat, cheese, and eggs. They rejected taking oaths, priestly vestments, altars, crosses, purgatory, indulgences, and war. They were around in Italy & southern France by 1000 and grew quickly during the 1100s.

3) 1001-1049 — CORRUPTION & INTERVENTION

- Sylvester II, appointed pope by Emperor Otto III in 999, was pope until he died in 1003.
- The family of Crescentius (the family of Theophylact, Theodora, and Marozia in the 900s) once again gained control of the papacy 1003-1012.
- In 1012, local nobles named Benedict VIII pope (1012-1024). They later appointed John XIX (1024-1032) and then John's nephew, Benedict IX (his father bought the papacy for him). Benedict IX was fifteen years old when he became pope. In 1044, he was forced out of Rome because of extreme corruption, and Sylvester III took his place. But Benedict returned a few months later and forced Sylvester out of Rome. In 1045, Benedict decided he wanted to marry his cousin, so he sold the papacy to his godfather, John Gratian, for a large sum and abdicated his position. John became the next pope, Gregory VI. He tried to reform the church, but then Benedict IX, rejected by his cousin, withdrew his abdication.

Suddenly there were three competing popes: Benedict IX, his godfather Gregory VI, and Crescentius' family's choice, Sylvester III, who was still around.

- Henry III, emperor of Germany (the Holy Roman Empire; ca. 1017-1056), intervened. He assembled a council that deposed all three popes and named Clement II (1046-1047). That council also outlawed simony (the buying and selling of church positions).
- Clement II died not long after taking office. In 1048, emperor Henry III decided to offer the papacy to his cousin, Bruno, bishop of Toul, a well-known reformer. Bruno, though, refused to accept the papacy because it was being given to him by the emperor, not the church. He declined to take it unless he was elected to it unanimously by the people of Rome.

4) 1049-1054 — POPE LEO IX: REFORM & SCHISM

LEO'S PAPACY — Bruno, cousin of emperor Henry III, traveled to Rome barefooted like a pilgrim to demonstrate humility before God. Impressed, the people along the way lined the roads and cheered for him. Upon his arrival in Rome, Bruno was elected pope and took the name Leo IX (1049-1054).

- Leo quickly surrounded himself with other reformers. Their main targets for reform were elimination of simony and promotion of the celibacy of clergy. Part of the thinking behind the ban on clergy marriage was that high church officials who were married might try to pass their positions along to their children, and the church would end up controlled by and pursuing the interests of only the rich and powerful. So this reform movement was very popular, with the people supporting the idea of taking control of the church out of the hands of the powerful.
- Leo IX went to Germany and to France and instituted major reforms in both lands. He spent most of his time as pope traveling, working to institute reforms in various lands.
- 3 primary problems at this time:

  - Nicolaitanism (named for the Nicolaitans in Revelation 2:6 & 2:15, though no one knows who they were), which at this time involved sexual immorality among the clergy (marital unfaithfulness, taking concubines, etc.). Celibacy had been expected of the clergy since the 300s or so, though many in the clergy did marry. *Leo IX prohibited married clergy from divorcing their wives to escape the cost of maintaining them. He also pushed priests to live in communal (not private) houses and forbade married priests from having sexual relations with their wives.*

  - Simony (named for Simon the Sorcerer, who in Acts 8:18-19 attempted to buy spiritual power from Peter and John) is the buying and selling of church offices. In the 900s-1000s, rulers and lay persons often granted honors and estates to church officials only after receiving large payments from them. *Leo IX outlawed simony and deposed clergy who had bought their positions or, in some cases, required them to do penance in order to keep their offices.*

  - Lay Investiture, which is the practice of lay persons (kings, nobles, powerful families, etc.) appointing church officials and granting the official emblems (staff, ring, etc.) thereof. This practice increased with the spread of feudalism, essentially giving control over the local church to local powers. Local rulers desired the power to select church officials so that the objectives of the church would align with those of the state. To church leaders, though, it constricted the church's freedom to do God's will. Peter Damian (1007-1072), a Benedictine hermit and later cardinal bishop of Ostia, argued for a separation of the powers of church and state. *Leo IX held a synod at Rheims in 1049 that ruled that bishops and abbots must be elected by clergy and the people and that no lay person (untrained for religious work) could take a church office.*

- Other reforms under Leo IX:

  - He organized a papal senate, which later became the papal/Roman curia (the administrative body in Rome that helps the pope administer the global Catholic Church).
  - He prohibited monks and clergy from serving in the military.

- The Synod of Rheims also outlawed the collection of taxes or tithes in a church's forecourt except by the bishop and his deputy and the demanding of fees for burials, baptisms, communion, or visiting the sick. It forbade church members and clergy to demand interest on loans (usury) and prohibited monks and clergy from resigning their positions. It prohibited ill treatment of wandering clergy, oppression of the poor by robbery or imprisonment, permitting marriages of blood relatives, and abandoning a legal wife to marry another.

• Leo made 2 major mistakes as pope: (1) Ignoring his own order against clergy serving in the military, in 1053 he led hired German troops in battle against the Norsemen who had taken over Sicily and southern Italy. He was captured in battle and was held prisoner until shortly before he died a few months later. (2) He sent as his representative to Constantinople Humbert, who handled the dispute with the Eastern church poorly, leading to the schism of 1054.

THE GREAT SCHISM — Several points of disagreement had been increasing tensions between the church in the East and the church in the West:

- the popes' claim to rule over the entire church everywhere
- the Western church's belief that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, not only the Father (the *filioque* controversy)
- the Western church's use of unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper
- repeated conflicts between the popes and the patriarchs of Constantinople
- the increasingly different styles and character of the Eastern and Western churches

• In 1054, the patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius (1043-1058), condemned the Western church for, among other things, using unleavened bread in the Eucharist (an increasingly common practice in the West since the 800s). Pope Leo IX sent three representatives to the East to discuss the matter, but the disagreement worsened. On July 16, 1054, three months after Leo IX had died, the Roman delegates placed a decree of excommunication on the high altar of the church of Saint Sophia, excommunicating the patriarch of Constantinople and all his followers. Four days later, the patriarch in turn excommunicated the pope and his followers. The Eastern & Western churches thus divided. The mutual excommunication was not removed until December 7, 1965.

> *Separation shut the church in the East off from many of the vitalizing influences that strengthened the church in the West. The rise of towns, nations, and the middle class; the cultural movements of the Renaissance; and the Reformation passed by the church in the East; but the Roman Catholic church in the West was subjected to their influence and made stronger, either by assimilation of helpful features or by reaction against what appeared to Rome to be harmful… The shock of the rise of Islam in the seventh century and the loss of people and land to the Muslims, coupled with the two centuries of unrest concerning the use of images, left Christianity in the East to decline. Little change in ritual, polity, or theology has appeared in that church until the present time. Consequently it has not had the influence on the world that Christianity in the West has had, though in the ancient period of church history it had led in the formulation of theology.* Cairns 198, 201

5) 1054-1085 — HILDEBRAND / GREGORY VII

• Hildebrand (ca. 1020-1085) was a monk, educated in Rome, who spent several years at Cluny and became a diligent reformer. He was a small man with a weak voice but full of zeal. Bruno (Leo IX), before becoming pope, had asked him to be one of his close advisors.

• After Leo IX died in 1054, the church faced a dilemma as to how to choose the next pope. They didn't want the emperor to retake control of the church by selecting the pope. Neither did the church want the Romans to choose, lest the papacy again fall into the hands of power-hungry Roman families. So

they let the Romans choose, but required that Rome choose a German (to please the emperor). Victor II (1055-1057) was chosen, and he continued to promote reforms.

- In Rome in 1059, under Pope Nicholas II (1059-1061), the Second Lateran Council redesigned the process for the selection of popes. Elections were to be held by cardinals who were also bishops; before this the pope had been elected by the people of Rome. The pope would come from Rome unless no Roman clergyman was worthy.
- In 1054-1073, several popes served, and Hildebrand served as an advisor to them all, promoting various reforms. He was "the power behind the popes" for over 20 years, under five popes, before he became pope himself.
- Hildebrand was made Pope Gregory VII in 1073, by popular demand (and served until he died in 1085).
- Hildebrand/Gregory VII felt strongly that the authority of the church and of the pope was higher than that of the state and its rulers. In his writing *Dictatus Papae* (a document found among his letters after his death) in 1075, he declared that the pope alone is universal, may depose emperors, may be judged by no one, and that only his feet should be kissed by all princes. He also wrote that the Roman Church has never erred, and Scripture declares that it never shall err to all eternity.

GREGORY VS. HENRY IV

Gregory's reforming zeal soon clashed with the interests of Emperor Henry IV [Germany/Holy Roman Empire, 1054-1105]… Henry felt that the power of bishops and other prelates was such that, for the political survival of the empire, the emperor must be free to appoint those who would support him. [When a religious riot broke out in Milan,] Henry deposed the bishop and appointed another in his place. Gregory responded by ordering Henry to appear at Rome by a certain date, and declaring that if he failed to do so he would be deposed and his soul condemned to hell. The emperor, who had recently had significant success and was therefore at the height of his power, responded by calling a council that gathered a few days before the deadline set by the pope, and declared that Gregory was deposed on grounds of tyranny, adultery, and the practice of magic…

Gregory gathered a synod of his supporters, who advised stern measures against the emperor. On the next day, precisely the date for which he had summoned Henry to Rome, Gregory issued his sentence: "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, by the power and authority of Saint Peter, and for the defense and honor of the church, I place King Henry…under interdict, forbidding him to rule in any of the kingdoms of Germany or Italy. I also free from their oaths any who have sworn or would swear loyalty to him. And I forbid that he be obeyed as king."

At first, Henry was resolved to continue in the course he had set. But his support began eroding. Many who had other reasons to disobey him now had the pope's sentence as an excuse. The more superstitious began spreading the word that to be near him was to call a curse on oneself. This was given credence when one of his staunchest supporters died unexpectedly. Finally, Henry felt that his only recourse was to appeal to Gregory's mercy. [He traveled to meet Gregory in Italy. Gregory was afraid that Henry might come with an armed force to fight.]…

The two finally met at Canossa, where the pope had taken residence because the city was well fortified… Henry [standing barefoot and bareheaded in the snow, accompanied by his wife and their infant son,] had to beg admission to Canossa, as a penitent, for three days before he was admitted to Gregory's presence. Finally, since it was impossible for one who claimed to be the leader of Christ's disciples to do otherwise, Gregory granted the pardon that Henry begged, and withdrew his sentence against the emperor.

Henry then returned hastily to Germany, where his enemies, encouraged by his difficulties with Gregory, had rebelled… [The rebels chose a rival emperor. Civil war ensued. Gregory supported the rebels' emperor. The pope's enemies responded by electing a rival pope, Clement III. The rebels' emperor was killed, and Henry again ruled alone.]

[I]n the spring of 1081, Henry marched on Rome. [Gregory appealed to the Normans (Vikings) who ruled southern Italy and to the Byzantine emperor for help, but no help came. The Romans tried to defend their city, but eventually opened the city gates to Henry.] …Gregory had to flee to one of his castles. Henry entered in triumph, and Clement III took possession of the city and excommunicated Gregory. Then the Normans intervened [and plundered Rome. Gregory died in exile in 1085. Henry's son Conrad rebelled against him, but was defeated. Henry IV died in 1106 while preparing to war against his son Henry, who had also rebelled.] Justo L. González, The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Present Day, pages 286-288

6) MONASTIC REFORM MOVEMENTS — CLUNY & THE CISTERCIANS

- From the 900s, the Cluny reform movement that began at the monastery in Cluny, France, had promoted reforms throughout Europe, especially to stop simony, lay investiture, and clergy marriage. (Prior to this time, many clergy had been celibate, but celibacy had been required only of nuns and monks; now it began to be required of all clergy.)
- Monks were typically expected to own nothing and to lead a simple life. But monasteries could hold land and property. The monasteries' accumulation of lands and wealth through gifts of admirers or of those seeking to gain God's favor made it difficult for monks to maintain a simple way of life. Accumulation of wealth became a barrier to Cluniac reforms, because leaders still had access to vast resources, and monks could forego physical labor (which they could pay to have done by others) and spend all their time in prayer and Scripture.
- One of the greatest obstacles to the reform movements of the 1000s was the church's wealth, which made it hard for the church to prioritize the poor and the oppressed instead of the desires of the powerful.
- Other reform movements arose and displaced the Cluniac movement. The next great movement of monastic reform was started in the late 1000s by Robert of Molosme, who founded a monastery at Citeaux. The reform movement there was called the Cistercian movement (from the Latin name for Citeaux). (More about the Cistercians in the 1100s.)
- Philip, King of France (1060-1108), resisted church reforms, openly accepted bribes for church appointments, and sometimes seized church funds. In 1092, Pope Urban II (1088-1099) excommunicated him for abducting Bertrada, wife of the count of Anjou, and taking her as his second wife. But Philip's bishops supported Philip because they preferred a stable monarchy over feudal anarchy.

7) THE FIRST CRUSADE

WHAT SPARKED EUROPE TO EMBARK ON THE CRUSADES? — *E. Glenn Hinson, The Church Triumphant: A History of Christianity up to 1300*, pages 386-387

1 - Christians imitated Muslims, who had conquered most of the Mediterranean ring via Jihad (holy war). Christians also found support for holy war in the Old Testament.

2 - The popes fervently desired to gain control of the Holy Land, defeat unbelievers, spread the faith, etc.

3 - The Byzantine Empire was in decay, leaving the West open to attack from Muslim forces in the East.

4 - The Seljuk Turks were rising in power in the East. [They were much more brutal than those who ruled the region before them.]

5 - Sentiment in Europe was great for the Holy Land and holy locations, and many desired to make pilgrimages to them. When Muslim forces [especially Seljuk Turks] made pilgrimages difficult, the West pushed back.

6 - Europeans were beginning to feel spiritually united. They started to point their energies at outsiders instead of at each other.

7 - Many crusaders were promised forgiveness of sins, which made fighting worthwhile whether they lived or died.

8 - Crusaders sometimes desired booty and plunder (especially in the 4th Crusade), and kings and merchants benefited from new opportunities for trade opened by conquest of new territory.

9 - Love of war and the militant spirit of the age were aroused by stories of Muslim desecration of the Holy Land. The "righteous" had to overcome the "demonic".

GOALS OF THE CRUSADES — *González 292*

- defeat the Muslims who threatened Constantinople (the Seljuk Turks)
- save the Byzantine Empire
- unite the Western and Eastern branches of the church
- reconquer the Holy Land
- in doing all this, win heaven

• All these goals (except the last, which God alone can determine) were achieved—but only temporarily. At first, the Muslims were defeated because they were divided among themselves. But they eventually united against their common enemy from the West and expelled the crusaders. The crusaders would control the Holy Land for about a century before Muslims retook it.

THE FIRST CRUSADE (1096-1099)

• In 1095, Pope Urban II, encouraged by the ambassador from Byzantine Emperor Alexius, urged the Western church to save Constantinople, the Eastern churches, and the Holy City from the ravages of the barbarians there.

> *I say it to those who are present. I command that it be said to those who are absent. Christ commands it. All who go thither and lose their lives, be it on the road or on the sea, or in the fight against the pagans, will be granted immediate forgiveness for their sins. This I grant to all who will march, by virtue of the great gift which God has given me.* Pope Urban II, quoted in González 292

• In 1096, two fanatic but poorly armed and very disorganized mobs of crusaders led by Walter the Penniless and Peter the Hermit set out for Constantinople, moving through Germany, Hungary, and the Balkans. They fed off the land like locusts and fought other Christians who were defending their own land and crops along the way. Some in their groups looted the Hungarians along their path and were slaughtered. Others attacked Jews in every town they passed through. Some began to plunder the suburbs of Constantinople when they arrived and were sent on into Asia Minor. They marched east and were routed by the Turks on October 21, 1096; nearly all were massacred or enslaved.

• A second and more substantial wave, much more professional and led by various nobles and royal family members, won major victories at Nicaea in June 1097, besieged Antioch and captured it in 1097-1098, and then continued on to Jerusalem and took control of it on July 15, 1099. The crusaders slaughtered many people in Jerusalem—all of its defenders—regardless of race or religion, raped women, and killed infants. They set fire to Jerusalem's synagogue and killed many of the city's Jews, who were sheltering inside. One eyewitness said that at the Porch of Solomon (once a part of God's temple), horses waded in blood. Celebration ensued in the West, but the conquerors competed for control of the areas they had conquered.

• Small bands of reinforcements were sent constantly from Europe over the years to serve in defense of the Holy Land. Crusade fervor swept the West. People who had visions of God sending them collected a following and marched toward Jerusalem. Some have estimated that nearly a million people took part in various activities associated with the First Crusade.

8) ODDS & ENDS

EAST VERSUS WEST — In the East, all clergy below the bishops could marry; in the West, clergy were not allowed to marry (though many did anyway). Clergy in the East (but not the West) were required to have beards.

THE SITUATION OF WOMEN

> Women in this era found themselves featured between extremes. On the one hand, they were portrayed as the instrument of the Devil, inferior to men and evil, the source of the world's sin, the supreme temptress and the most dangerous obstacle to salvation. On the other hand, they could be put on a pedestal, treated with reverence, showered with favors, honored for purity. Both church and society accepted the subjection and the superiority of women at one and the same time. Particularly important for the growth of the latter understanding was the development of the cult of the Virgin Mary. The perfect knight revered the lady. Worship of the lady stood next to the worship of God among the chivalrous aristocracy. Hinson 401

- During this time aristocratic women sometimes held positions of high authority. Abbesses, for example, could control large territories and wealth and have authority similar to that of a queen. The crusades opened many positions of responsibility to women, and once the women had them they did not let them go easily. In the 1100s Eleanor of Aquitaine led England while her son Richard the Lionhearted was away fighting in the Crusades. Many wives of nobles ran the manor while their husbands were fighting in war, going on pilgrimage, or involved in other business. They also secured ransom money when their husbands were taken captive.
- Often women chose roles in the church because there they could exercise greater freedom and authority than in a marriage and raising a family. Many women complained of loveless marriages (the ideal of romantic love in marriage was pretty new in Europe at this time), and childbearing was risky.

ANSELM (1033-1109), THEOLOGIAN — Anselm viewed faith as the foundation and beginning point for knowledge. To him, the purpose of reason is to verify faith. He presented apologetic arguments for the existence of God. He also developed a theory of the Atonement that moved the church from seeing it as a ransom paid to Satan to seeing it as payment of a debt incurred by sin—paying that debt to God through the death of Christ the God-man on the cross.