CHRISTIAN HISTORY

1101-1200 C.E.

June 3, 2026

Key Dates:
1118 — The Knights Templar are founded
1145-1149 — Second Crusade
1147-1185 — Wendish Crusade
1170 — Thomas Beckett murdered in England
1187-1192 — Third Crusade
1200 — Pope Innocent III humbles French King Philip II

SUMMARY OF THIS CENTURY

General Development: By the end of the 1100s, the pope is the overlord ruling over the kings of Europe. Occasional crusades are launched, but do little good and a lot of harm. Reform movements appear one after another, each aiming to improve something about the church or Christian life: turning away from the allure of wealth, permitting lay persons to preach the gospel, returning to the teachings of the New Testament, etc.

Key Questions: Will the church be able to gain full independence from political rulers? Will the church be able to *command* political rulers? Will the church be able to hold together, with new reform movements and breakaway groups appearing frequently?

Key Places: Jerusalem, still a center of Roman Catholic attention and concern; **France, England, and the Holy Roman Empire (Germany)**, the major forces behind, and often in tension with, the papacy; **Canterbury**, center of Christianity in England

Key People: Emperor Henry V (Germany), Bernard of Clairvaux, Abelard, Thomas Becket, Pope Innocent III

Church Leadership: At the beginning of the century, rulers and powerful Roman families still attempt to control the appointment of the popes. By the end of the century, the popes have grown powerful enough to, in the case of Innocent III, effectively rule most of Europe. Yet splinter groups appear frequently, trying to enact reforms and sometimes pulling away from Roman Catholic rule altogether.

1) SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY

- SCANDINAVIA — King Eric of Sweden conquered Finland in the mid-1100s, and many Finns became Christians. Throughout Scandinavia, the church and the state generally worked together well. The church helped the monarchies establish law and promote peace.
- SERBIA — Prince Stefan Nemanja (died in 1200) made his nation an Orthodox Christian nation in the 1100s. His son, Rastko Nemanjić (ca.1175-1236), became Archbishop of Serbia and is considered the founder of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

2) POSITIVE ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD (604 to about 1150)

from Glenn E. Hinson, <u>The Church Triumphant: A History of Christianity up to 1300</u>, pages 338-340

1) The Dark Ages were not caused by Christianity, but by the barbarian invasions as mass movements of peoples disrupted society and societal institutions in the lands they invaded.

2) Christianity not only survived the invasions—it brought many invaders and much of Europe to Christ.

3) Christians since the first century had never lost their evangelistic zeal. They continued to spread the gospel—though sometimes that spread was sponsored by rulers aiming to expand their territories. The French/German rulers (the Merovingians, then the Carolingians) envisioned the creation of a Christian

empire like that of Constantine in the 300s, and like the Byzantine Empire. Charlemagne succeed at this vision better than anyone else, but his empire did not last.

4) Christianity thrived across a wide range of cultures: Jewish, Greek, Roman, Persian, North African, English, Byzantine, French, Norse/Viking, etc. In the West the papacy was greatly flawed, and in the East the church was ruled by the emperors—yet even so, Christianity made inroads in people's hearts. Over time, such Christian values as caring for the poor, helping the sick, providing education for all (including the poor), and kinder treatment of slaves (or elimination of slavery) came to be assumed to be normal.

3) REFORMS, BREAKAWAYS, POWER, AND CRUSADES — PART 1 (ca. 1101-1125)

MILITARY MONASTIC ORDERS — Following the First Crusade (1096-1099), some monastic orders were formed to serve the church and the population through armed force, if necessary. The Knights of Saint John (also called the Knights Hospitallers) were founded in the early 1100s to defend pilgrims and care for the sick, like a sort of Medieval Red Cross. They later became strictly military to defend the Holy Land. The Knights Templar were founded around 1118 and headquartered near the temple grounds in Jerusalem; their duties were to defend the Holy Land from the Muslims and to protect pilgrims traveling in the Holy Land. They were dissolved in 1312 because they were growing too involved in French politics. Teutonic Knights were founded after the Third Crusade (1187-1192), moved to Prussia to save it from the Slavs, and became ancestors of Prussian noble families.

BREAKAWAY GROUP — A movement of New Testament-based Christianity spread in the region of the Balkans (near where Bulgaria, northeastern Greece, and western Turkey meet today) in the early 1100s. By 1115 they were known in Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Dalmatia (basically the whole region directly north of Greece), and they spread into northern Italy. Records from Catholic inquisitors report that by 1200, some 70 percent of the population of Bosnia (where this movement appears to have been most successful) claimed to belong to this group of Christians. The Catholic bishop Daniel of Poili was baptized by this group in the Bosna River. Many church buildings of both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches went unused because so many people had joined this group. In 1118, Gregory Grimm was tortured & killed in Ensisheim in Alsace in northeastern France. His crime? He had been baptized by his grandfather, who himself had been baptized by immersion for the forgiveness of sins in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by a traveling merchant from Venetia (Venice).

POPES VERSUS EMPERORS

- Under Henry V (emperor of Germany/The Holy Roman Empire, 1111-1125), serious disputes—sometimes violent—arose between the emperor and church leadership, including the popes, over the problem of bishops, cardinals, abbots, and other church officials having so much land and power that they were a threat to the emperor. If he did not have the power to name them to office, he could not control them. Reforms promoted by the popes since the 900s had essentially succeeded: in the West, all clergy were required to be celibate and simony was greatly reduced. But the popes, while they pushed for celibacy, did not push for the ideal of poverty. The church had become so rich and powerful that bishops could afford rich courts and even armies; an unfriendly bishop could be a powerful foe. For this reason, rulers had to make sure church leaders were loyal to them. The popes, on the other hand, believed that the church's possessions belonged to Christ and the poor. The civil authorities had no authority to take them. In reality, though, the church's possessions were often used to supply church officials with a lavish lifestyle or profit, or to achieve church officials' ambitions. They were to act as guardians of the church's possessions, but often acted more like owners.
- At one point, the pope offered to give up much of the church's property (though not his own property), but the bishops in Germany rebelled against the emperor lest they lose their wealth and power. Empire and Church became enemies. The emperor chased two successive popes out of Rome by force. The popes began looking to France for support against Germans to the north and Normans to the south.

• In 1122, Emperor Henry V and Pope Calixtus II (1119-1124), who were relatives, agreed that only the pope could appoint church officers, but the emperor could have some input. Elections of church officers were to be held in the king's/emperor's presence. Only the pope or his agent had the right to grant the ring and staff, symbols of spiritual power, to a new bishop or church official. The new church official was to take an oath of loyalty to the political ruler who was his feudal overlord.

REFORMS, BREAKAWAYS, POWER, AND CRUSADES — PART 2 (ca. 1126-1159)

BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX (1090-1153) was one of the most important monks of this era. He led monastic reforms and helped start many new monasteries. He was known as a preacher, miracle worker, and theologian. He was the son of devout Christian parents; his father was a knight.

• Bernard joined the monastery at Citeaux in 1112 or 1113 at age 23. He determined from the story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42) that the study of God's Word was better than a life of labor, so he aimed to spend all his time meditating on God's love, especially as revealed in Christ. He ended up having to labor, too, though. He preached, was called to arbitrate in many political and church disputes, and had a personality that dominated the church at large.

• The influence of the Cluny reform movement waned in the early 1100s due to poor leadership and was succeeded by the influence of the Cistercians (named for the monastery at Citeaux). Bernard led the Cistercian movement from his position as Abbot of Clairvaux (1115-1153). By 1200 there were 288 Cistercian monasteries; by the 1500s there would be 738.

FRIARS appeared around this time. Like monks, they took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Unlike monks they lived among the people in the cities and preached in the languages of the people. Friars were supported by whatever the people gave them.

BREAKAWAY GROUPS:

• PETROBRUSIANS (followed Peter de Bruys; died ca. 1140) — rejected infant baptism, the Mass, church buildings, prayers for the dead, veneration of the Cross, some parts of Scripture, and the authority of the Roman Catholic Church

• HENRICIANS (followed Henry of Lausanne; died after 1145) — denounced the worldliness of the clergy and insisted on the ideal of poverty

• ARNOLDISTS (named for Arnold of Brescia; died 1155) —argued for the church to give up all worldly possessions and for priests to live off of donations only; wanted to end the papacy

EDUCATION

• Monasteries were the centers of learning and preservation of knowledge. Every monk had to be able to read and write. Monasteries collected libraries of hundreds (not thousands) of books. Monks recopied Scripture, classics, and some modern texts. Books were very costly, hand-copied, and carefully guarded. A large library of a few hundred books then was worth far more than a library of thousands today.

• Monastic schools gradually led to cathedral schools, which, in larger cities, gradually grew into Europe's first universities. These universities specialized in the development of theology. Especially important in this period was investigation of the tension between reason and faith as ways of learning and knowing.

• The first universities appeared in Italy around the 1100s. The University of Paris began around 1134 as a cathedral school and became something more like a modern university around the end of the 1100s. Oxford University began in the late 1100s (exact date uncertain).

• ABELARD (1079-1142), like Anselm (1033/34-1109), dealt with the tension between faith and reason. He believed doubt leads to inquiry and inquiry leads to truth. In regard to the Atonement, he believed Christ's death was not meant for satisfying a debt to God, but to impress human beings with God's love so people would surrender themselves to God.

POPES AND EMPERORS

- In the early/mid-1100s, a republican spirit swept through central Germany and Italy. The popes encouraged republican efforts against the emperor, and the emperor encouraged republican efforts in Rome, against the pope. In northern Italy (controlled by the Holy Roman Empire), the Lombard League, a group of rebellious cities, defeated Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (1152-1190).

THE SECOND CRUSADE (1145-1149)

- In 1144, Zengi, a Muslim emir, captured the Christian city of Edessa (northeast of Antioch; "Urfa" today, in southeastern Turkey) and threatened the northeastern flank of the kingdom of Jerusalem. He died soon thereafter, but his son continued to battle the crusaders stationed in the Holy Land.
- Louis VII of France (1137-1180) began planning a French campaign to free Edessa and end the Muslim threat. Bernard of Clairvaux preached long and hard for months in 1145 to persuade the pope and the people to organize a new crusade (though he also warned the people not to persecute the Jews this time). He emphasized the suffering of pilgrims traveling to Palestine and Muslim profanation of holy places. Emperor Conrad III (Germany/Holy Roman Empire, 1138-1152) joined in, and together with Louis they led almost 200,000 troops in the hope of freeing the Holy Land again.
- The crusade launched in 1147. It was a terrible mess. The army traveled first to Constantinople, where German troops behaved badly and alienated the Byzantine emperor. In October 1147, the Germans went ahead of the French and were defeated by the Seljuk Turks. Neither the French nor the Germans got along well with the Byzantines, nor with each other. Both groups made it to the Holy Land but did not stay long. The Germans returned home in 1148, the French in 1149, having accomplished almost nothing. Bernard apologized for the failure of the crusade, blaming it on man's sin and God's judgment.

THE WENDISH CRUSADE (1147-1185)

- During the Second Crusade, Saxon nobles sought papal permission to fight the pagan Slavs on their eastern border. The pope gave them the same blessing as he gave to the Crusaders. Bernard of Clairvaux "urged them to fight the heathen 'until such time as, by God's help, they shall either be converted or wiped out.' The alternatives were baptism or death" *(Hinson 435, quoting Bernard)*. Danes and Poles fought alongside Saxons. The Saxons sought tribute and land; the Danes wanted revenge against pirates and slave traders; the Poles wanted to intimidate the Prussians. Many bishops marched in their support. They were successful militarily, but did not convert many people in Slavic lands.
- After 1147, wars against the Slavs continued. The Saxons and Danes often fought each other, but also often joined forces to fight the Slavs. In 1171 or 1172 Pope Alexander III declared that anyone who fought against the pagan Estonians or Finns would receive full forgiveness of sins if they died. Fighting continued until 1185, and the Danes in particular had significant success.

REFORMS, BREAKAWAYS, POWER, AND CRUSADES — PART 3 (ca. 1160-1200)

BREAKAWAY GROUP: THE CATHARI/ALBIGENSES — This group first appeared in the 1000s and grew tremendously in the 1100s. They may have had 4 million adherents by 1200. "Cathari" means "the pure"; "Albigenses" comes from the town of Albi in southern France, which held a large population of the Cathari. This group sought to return to the purer form of Christianity they saw in the New Testament; they were forerunners of the Protestant Reformation. They believed in a dualism: a good God who made people's souls, and an evil god who was cast out of heaven and made the material world. They believed matter is evil. Therefore, they opposed human reproduction, the sacraments (especially Communion, because of its emphasis on the physical body and blood of Christ), the doctrines of hell and purgatory, and the doctrine of physical resurrection. To be saved, they repented, then went through a ceremony of laying on of hands and the laying of the Gospel of John on one's head or chest. They avoided marriage, oaths, war, milk, meat, cheese, and eggs. By their appeal to the New Testament they challenged the pope's position as the church's final authority.

CONFUSION OF NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANS WITH THE ALBIGENSES — By 1162, there were so many small, New Testament churches in Flanders (northern Belgium) that the believers petitioned for and received permission from local nobles to preach publicly. Catholic powers lumped these Christians together with the Albigenses, though they did not share Albigenses' beliefs, but held more genuinely to the New Testament. To the Catholics they were all one, all heretics, all deniers of the Roman Catholic faith. Local nobles held these New Testament believers in high regard and tried to protect them.

BREAKAWAY GROUP: THE WALDENSIANS

> *In the mid-1170s Peter Waldo, a rich merchant of Lyons, read a translation of the New Testament and was so impressed with the claims of Christ that he gave up all his property except enough to feed his family. He then organized a band known as the "Poor Men." They wished to preach as laymen, but they were forbidden to do so by the pope. In 1184 they were excommunicated for their refusal to stop preaching. As is so often the case, a minority desiring reform were forced out of the organized church by a loveless majority who lost the values that such a zealous group might have supplied.*
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> *The Waldensians believed that everyone should have the Bible in his own tongue and that it should be the final authority for faith and life. Following the example of Christ, they went out by twos, laymen dressed in simple clothes, to preach to the poor in the vernacular. They accepted the standard ecumenical confessions, the Lord's Supper and baptism, and lay ordination to preach and administer the sacraments. Their society had its own clergy, with bishops, priests, and deacons. Waldo was the head of the society up to the time of his death in 1217. Others, known as friends, were secret associates of the Waldensian groups, but they were permitted to remain within the Roman church. The Waldensians anticipated in many respects the ideas of the Protestants of the Reformation. They still exist as an earnest band of about thirty-five thousand believers in northern Italy."* Earle E. Cairns, Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church, page 222

- The Waldensians did not hold unorthodox views, but mostly got into trouble for lay preaching. They said they had to obey God over human beings, and Catholic leaders interpreted that as a refusal to obey the pope. They grew rapidly, especially among the lower classes.

BREAKAWAY GROUP: THE JOACHIMITES — A Cistercian monk named Joachim (ca. 1132-1202) believed the age of the Father was the Old Testament period, the age of the Son was the New Testament era until 1260, and, after the Antichrist came briefly, a new age of love in the era of the Holy Spirit would begin.

THOMAS BECKET, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY (in England; 1161-1170)

- Becket had been King Henry II's (1154-1189) Chancellor of the Exchequer and had done so well that the king considered him the ideal choice for Archbishop of Canterbury. In his position as chancellor, Becket had favored Henry's policies over the church.
- Once elected archbishop, though—with the king's support—he warned the king that he had lost a friend and gained an enemy. He devoted himself to the church, lived humbly, stood against the king's policies on taxation, and in 1163 angered the king by rejecting the king's ruling that trials of clergy accused of crimes must be brought before secular courts. Henry required Thomas to pay a large sum of money for his opposition, but Thomas refused. The king assembled a council to convict Thomas, but Thomas escaped to France and stayed in monasteries there.
- Becket still had influence over the church in England, and the king finally gave in and made peace with him. Becket returned to Canterbury on December 1, 1170. But Henry complained about him in exasperation in the presence of four warlike knights who then rode to Canterbury and murdered Becket while he was performing Mass on December 29, 1170.
- Becket's martyrdom infuriated the people, and they excommunicated the king. He had to work hard to gain reconciliation with the church: he lost the right to try clergy accused of crimes, restored all rights over the church to the archbishop of Canterbury, went on a three-year crusade at the pope's request, and had to support 200 knights in the Holy Land. Even his own wife & son rebelled against him. Becket's martyrdom shifted the power balance between church and state in England in favor of the church.

MORE REFORMS — In 1179, the Third Lateran Council ruled that popes must be elected by a two-thirds majority of the College of Cardinals. Also, bishops had to be at least thirty years old, clergy had to dismiss their concubines, and preparations were made for a crusade against heretics in France.

THE THIRD CRUSADE (1187-1192)

- Saladin, a Muslim leader from modern-day Iraq, was a military genius and effective political leader. He united the fragmented Muslim states from Syria to Egypt, won a surprising victory over Christian forces at Hattin (west of the Sea of Galilee) in 1187, and recaptured Jerusalem the same year.
- Saladin's success stirred up Western passion for another Crusade. Pope Urban III died when he heard the news of the Christian defeat at Hattin, and the next pope, Gregory VIII, who served only 2 months in 1187 before he died, began preparations for another crusade.
- Richard the Lionheart, prince of England and ruler of part of France (territory inherited from him mother), signed on to go to war before even getting the approval of his father, King Henry II. In 1189, Frederick Barbarossa, emperor of Germany/The Holy Roman Empire (1152-1190), joined the crusade and led his own army, the largest crusading army ever.
- The German force started out in 1190 with some victories, but then Frederick Barbarossa drowned while crossing a river on June 10 that year. German forces fell apart, and most sailed for home.
- English and French forces were delayed by a war between their two kingdoms (1188-1189), including Richard's rebellion against his father. Henry II died in 1189, and Richard became king of England. In July 1190, he restored peace with France. He and French King Philip II Augustus (1180-1223) launched their crusade, but they bickered constantly. They won some victories and weakened Saladin a bit, but were not able to reach Jerusalem. They settled for a treaty with Saladin that let Saladin keep Jerusalem but secured safe passage for Christian pilgrims to visit Jerusalem in peace.
- For all its fervor, the Third Crusade accomplished little. French King Philip returned home hoping to take some of England for himself, and English King Richard, on his way home, was captured by the German emperor and held for a huge ransom.

INNOCENT III (1161-1216, pope 1198-1216)

- Innocent was the son of a Roman noble, educated in theology at Paris and in law at Bologna. He was known for his humility, piety, vigor, and common sense, and for a sense of the moral authority of the papacy. As pope, he believed he was the "vicar of Christ", the supreme authority on earth even over kings, standing below God and above man. This mindset behind the supreme authority of the pope was inherited from old Roman law and its centralization of power.
- Innocent expanded papal power to probably its greatest extent in history, even to today. He challenged the rulers of the new nations of England and France and even of the Holy Roman Empire.
- In France, King Philip II Augustus "had married Ingeborg of Denmark after the death of his first wife in 1193. When his bride came to France, he took a dislike to her and claimed that he had been bewitched. He forced the French bishops to annul the marriage and he took Agnes into his home as his wife. Ingeborg appealed to the pope for redress. Innocent thereupon ordered Philip to put away Agnes and to restore Ingeborg to her place as his lawful wife. When Philip refused to do so, Innocent placed France under an interdict in 1200. The interdict, which affected everyone in the nation, closed all churches, except for the baptism of infants and the granting of extreme unction to the dying; forbade the celebration of the mass, except for those who were sick or dying; and banned burial in consecrated ground. The priest was not allowed to preach except in the open air. The uproar that the interdict created all over France forced Philip to submit to the pope, and with bad grace he sent Agnes away and brought Ingeborg back into the palace as his wife. Ingeborg's life was still not happy, but Innocent, by the use of spiritual weapons had forced the ruler of one of the great new nation-states to obey the moral law." *Cairns 206-207*

ODDS AND ENDS

GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE appeared around this time. It featured a new twist on the old Romanesque arches and tall structures: pointed arches and impressive spires that inspired a sense of connecting earth and heaven. New engineering techniques allowed for thinner walls, which in turn permitted builders to install more windows, allowing more light into the interior and providing greater space for stained glass windows, which had been used since the 900s but now could be used extensively. Stained glass windows and other artwork inside Gothic churches told the stories of biblical figures and saints and heroes of the faith to parishioners who usually could not read.

RELATIONS BETWEEN EASTERN & WESTERN CHURCHES

- The official separation of the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches in 1054 was never really that absolute a separation. The two groups continued to engage in dialogue and negotiation and sometimes reached out for the other's support against an enemy.
- In the early 1100s, there were Latin (Catholic) churches in Constantinople and Greek (Orthodox) churches in southern Italy, and both were permitted by the other, more locally-dominant church.
- What really devastated relations between the two branches of Christendom were the Crusades, which inflicted tremendous destruction on Constantinople and its people at times, increased military tensions between East and West as Crusaders pursued their own ends far from their homelands and nearer to the Byzantines, and, in the 1200s, ended up collapsing the Byzantine Empire.