Lesson 6 (1978-1979)

ADVOCATES OF REFORM

Prayer
Scripture: Zechariah 3:3-5
Hymn: 360 "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind"

A fourteenth century defender of the Papacy: "Whenever I entered the chambers of the ecclesiastics of the Papal Court, I found brokers and clergy engaged in weighing and reckoning the money which lay in heaps before them."

Petrarch on Avignon: "...the fountain of anguish, the dwelling-place of wrath, the school of errors, the temple of heresy, once Rome, now the false guilt-laden Babylon, the forge of lies, the horrible prison, the hell on earth."

The English Parliament: "the sinful city of Avignon."

The Protest of the Clergy of Cologne: "In consequence of the exactions with which the Papal Court burdens the clergy, the Apostolic See has fallen into such contempt, that the Catholic faith in these parts seems to be seriously imperilled. The laity speaks slightingly of the Church, because, departing from the customs of former days, she hardly ever sends forth preachers or reformers, but rather ostentatious men, cunning, selfish and greedy. Things have come to such a pass, that few are Christian more than in name."

RISING FLOOD OF CRITICISM: The Papacy's maneuvering to destroy the Hohenstaufen line and to weaken the Empire, the clash of King Philip IV of France and Pope Boniface VIII, the Avignon Papacy and the Great Schism brought a growing stream of pamphlets expressing the growing anger of the laity against the extravagant claims and exorbitant costs of the priesthood and the growing self-assertion of the secular powers. Both Church and State had attackers and defenders.

Thomas Aquinas had advocated a limited monarchy to secure unity, peace and good government. But with salvation as the end of human life, the sacerdotium was on a higher plane. Secular rulers should be subject to the Pope. Ptolemy of Lucania, an Aristotelian and continuator of Aquinas, identified the Empire as the fifth monarchy, the Church, under the Pope. Secular rulers were merely his delegates, selected in the manner that seemed expedient to the Pope. Both swords were in the power of the Papacy. Aegidius Romanus in his De ecclesiastica potestate (1301-2) gave a feudal turn to Boniface VIII's Unam Sanctam, maintaining that the secular rulers were vassals of God and could have no just dominion unless they were dutiful and obedient servants of the Church, whose powers were summed up in the Pope, the Vicar of God. Under Pope John XXII he expressed the exaltation of the Papacy with even greater enthusiasm.

Pierre Dubois in his De recuperatione Terrae Sanctae (c. 1300) proposed to secure peace in Europe by domination by the King of France. The Pope was too weak to exercise the temporal power over the West given by the Donation of Constantine. The French were qualified by natural wisdom to take control and the French King should establish peace in Europe by compelling submission by arms or by treaty. The Pope's claims to temporal power had been the source of grave evils. John of Paris in his Royal and Papal Power insisted that the temporal possessions of the Church came from lay grants and not from a divine plan. The King possessed full powers over his realm, including
legislative power. The growth of the civil power was the product of a natural instinct implanted in man by the Creator. Church and State had independent functions but in temporal matters the State was over the Church.

A German writer, Jordan of Osnabrück, attempted to prove the right of the German Kings to the title of Roman Emperor and their independence from the Pope.

THE GREAT MEDIEVAL THEORISTS: The most important writers on Church and State were Dante (1265-1321), Marsilius of Padua (1275-1322) and William of Occam (1300-1349). They were not so much interested in advancing the claims of the Empire as in reforming the Church. They were abstract theorists and idealists somewhat aloof from the immediacy of the practical situation. They appealed to Aristotle, to the Civil Law of Justinian and to the Law of Nature as contemporary authorities in full force. They shocked their day and angered and alarmed Popes. Popes and secular rulers were well enough entrenched that they could go on with their exploitations but the challenges of these thinkers would work like leaven in the minds of the thinkers who followed them with a growing demand for reform.

DANTE: As a Catholic of impeccable orthodoxy and the greatest literary figure of the fourteenth century, he launched a literary attack on the papacy and defended the State. In a Latin treatise, On Monarchy (1311-13), he set forth peace as the ideal condition of mankind, resulting in the greatest happiness. Happiness on earth is attained by virtue and wisdom under the guidance of the Emperor. Happiness in heaven is attained by faith and love under the guidance of the Pope. Both Pope and Emperor come from God. The power of the Emperor is as truly and as directly from God as the power of the Pope is from God. Neither has the right to interfere in the province of the other. Dante did not question the Pope's authority over the Church since he accepted the idea that the Pope was the successor of St. Peter who was given the power of the keys. But Dante exposed the fallacy of proofs for the supremacy of the Pope over the Emperor drawn from the papal interpretation of Biblical texts and such historical incidents as the Donation of Constantine, the sun and moon of Innocent III and the two swords of Boniface VIII. Dante defended the independence of the temporal sword in the hands of the Holy Roman Emperor as the rightful lord of Christendom and mankind. As a Ghibelline, Dante felt the major ills of the time were the result of encroachments of the papacy. Some of Dante's most shocking and effective damage to the prestige of the Papacy came from his great vernacular poem, The Divine Comedy, in which he pictured Popes in hell. Pope Celestine V who was elected in 1294 and who resigned the Papacy, was pictured in the vestibule of hell—a place of blood, worms, maggots—a place for those ever shifting for their own advantage. Pope Nicholas III as a notorious simoniac was pictured in holes of fire that resembled baptismal fonts, head downward with feet sticking out and on fire. He was awaiting and expecting the coming of Pope Boniface VIII and Pope Clement V, also simoniacs. Several times Dante takes cuts at Pope Boniface VIII and in one says, "May he rot in hell."

MARSILIUS (MARSIGLIO) OF PADUA: His Defensor Pacis (1324) was one of the most important examinations of the principle of sovereignty of Church and State of the Middle Ages. Marsilius was learned in medicine and well versed in Aristotle. He spent some time in the Lombard courts, gaining some first hand knowledge of government. He became such an eminent teacher in the University of Paris that he was made Rector of the university in 1312. Moved by the controversy between Emperor Louis of Bavaria and Pope John XXII and further aroused by Pope John XXII's inquisition against the Spiritual Franciscans after condemning them as heretics for asserting the
absolute poverty of Christ and the Apostles, and aided by another
teacher in the University of Paris, John of Jandun, an eminent
Aristotelian and Averroist, he wrote the Defensor Pacis. When the
authorship was discovered in 1326 both authors had to flee to the
court of Louis the Bavarian. Pope John XXII declared the authors
"pupils of damnation" and their work "full of heresies" and
excommunicated them and called for them to be burned. The Emperor
did not surrender them to the Inquisition and allowed them to continue
their attacks on the Papacy. Marsilius supplemented the earlier work
with his Defensor Minor. In the year of Marsilius' death, 1343,
Pope Clement VI declared that he had never read a worse heretical
book than the Defensor Pacis.

Marsilius taught that both state and church exist for the good
of the people. All power comes from the people. Ultimate authority
resides in the whole body of the people. The power of the State comes
from the whole body of citizens. The power of the Church comes from
the whole body of Christian believers. The people are the legislative
power. The ideal form of government is an elective monarchy which
constitutes the executive. The people choose the ruler and he acts
as their representative, appointing civil officials to look after the
temporal well-being and clergy to look after their religious interests.
The ruler appoints both higher and lower clergy. The Emperor and the
Pope are not two independent equal powers. The Pope is subject to
the Emperor. The clergy have no rights over the prince and no voice
in his selection. If the prince is tyrannical he may be deposed by the
people as a whole, but not by the Pope. An appeal from decisions
rendered by bishop or priest may always be carried to the people. The
people, or the prince who rules by their authority, have sole right
to call an ecclesiastical council, general or local. No one may be
compelled to obey decrees of a council convoked in any other fashion.
The prince alone acting for the people can condemn heretics and inflict
punishment on them but should do so only when the welfare of the State
is threatened. The executive officer is always responsible to the
people. The Christian State and the Christian Church are coterminous
with the executive of the state as the representative of the body of
believers, calling the councils, appointing the bishops, and controlling
church property.

The New Testament is the only final authority in the Church. Just
as laws can only be made by the legislative body of all the church, the
whole body of believers represented in a general council, so also the
general council is the supreme authority in the church for interpreting
Scripture. The executive as the representative of the legislative
power may call the general council. No bishop or pope has authority
to define Christian truth as contained in the New Testament or to make
binding laws. The priesthood consists of priests and deacons. Bishops
are merely priests entrusted with duties of supervision. The appoint-
ment of some clergy to be superintendents is a matter of human
constitution and gives no superior spiritual power. No bishop has
superior spiritual authority over another bishop. The pope has no
authority over bishops. Peter had no higher rank than the other
Apostles. Marsilius asserted that there was no New Testament evidence
that Peter was ever in Rome. All bishops derive authority directly
from Christ and none of them is superior to any other. The Bishop of
Rome has no more right to excommunicate or control other bishops than the
have to excommunicate or control him. The Pope is the first and
supreme officer of the Church as a result of tradition and prestige
and not from divine plan. The Pope is a fallible human being
responsible to the whole church and according to the Bible can be
judged by a general council to which the church delegates her power.
Since the Universal Church transcends boundaries of states, its proper authority is a general council consisting of both priests and laymen. The Empire should take the first steps in calling a general council but in so doing it acts only as the representative of the people. The Bishop of Rome may preside and exercise secretarial functions but from no inherent right deriving from a vicariate of Christ conferred on Peter. It is merely fitting because of his prestige. Decretals of Popes and canons of synods have no coercive authority in themselves. Canon Law is valid only if endorsed by the legislator. Marsilius by elaborate chronological investigation of the documents concluded that the whole fabric of papal domination and Canon Law was a gradual perversion of the true principles of Christianity and a subversion of the rights of the legislator, the people. The people are bound by divine law to support the clergy but are not required to pay tithes or taxes beyond what is needed to supply them with the necessities of life. The New Testament gives no countenance to the possession of earthly lordships and estates owned by clergymen. Priests are not to own property. They are bound to apostolic poverty. Donations are to be administered by the legislators or the donors. The priesthood is completely subject to the legislator and its deputy, the executive. Priests have no power of physical force to compel people to obey the New Testament. It is the duty of the priest to teach, warn, reprove, to celebrate the Eucharist, hear confessions and perhaps pronounce non-valid absolutions for sin. In the New Testament bishops and priests are equivalent designations. They have no coercive powers such as excommunication and interdiction.

Marsilius was most revolutionary in negating the "plenitude of power" vested in the pope and in advocating the natural State formed by man for temporal happiness. He foreshadowed modern political theory with the secular State. In his radicalism he cut the roots of the existing constitution of the Church and conceptions of law and government. He was too radical and too far ahead of his own day but his work bore fruit in the Protestant Reformation and French Revolution. After the Great Schism his ideas took root and gave encouragement to those calling for reforming councils.

WILLIAM OF OCRAM (OCKHAM): Occam, an English Franciscan and pupil of Duns Scotus, the critic of Thomas Aquinas. He studied and taught at Oxford but did not become a "magister", remaining an "inceptor". The chancellor of the university, John Lutterell, accused him of dangerous doctrines. Occam moved to Paris and taught in the university. He was a vigorous and independent thinker and became the leading representative of Nominalism. He attacked "realism" fiercely. One of his main principles, the famous "Occam's razor", asserted that beings should not be multiplied without necessity. He denied reality to all universals. They were merely concepts in the mind of the thinker. Only individuals existed. He denied the possibility of proving the existence and attributes of God. The Divine Will was the cause of all things. God did not will things because they were good, but they were good because He willed them. No theological doctrines are philosophically provable. They must be accepted on the authority of the Church. Authority in the Church rests not in a derelict Sapacy but in Scripture. Scripture and not decisions of councils and Popes is along binding on the Christian. The individual Christian is more important than the artificial and unreal idea of Christendom. Both councils and Popes might err. Truth is found only in Scripture and not in an abstraction called the Church. Translated into politics his emphasis on the will meant that action rather than reflection and success rather than abstract justice were to be honored. He denied
the possibility of discovering religious truth through the use of human reason.

Oc cam was suspected of heresy in Paris and was summoned to Avignon to give an account of his teachings. There he sided with the Spiritual Franciscans who were declared heretics by Pope John XXII for declaring the absolute poverty of Christ and the Apostles. In 1328 Oc cam and the revolting Franciscan General, Michael of Cesena, fled to Louis of Bavaria. They were declared heretics and excommunicated by Pope John XXII. Oc cam continued to violently attack the Pope on the question of poverty, asserting that apostolic poverty was still binding on Pope and clergy. The Pope in 1331 sentenced him to expulsion from his order and ordered perpetual imprisonment. Under the protection of Louis he was able to continue his attack on the Pope. In his Power and Authority of the Pope and his Dignity of Pope and King he opposed the claims of the papacy in the name of reason and Scripture. Reason and the Bible are fully harmonious but the Papacy is contrary to both. He defended the independence of State from ecclesiastical authority. The Church and the State are both in reality the whole body of citizens viewed from different aspects. They exist side by side and independently of each other. Each has its own separate and peculiar sphere. The Pope is supreme in spiritual affairs and the emperor is supreme in temporal affairs. Neither should interfere with the other except in extra-ordinary circumstances. If the Pope is a heretic the Emperor must depose him. If the Emperor is a tyrant the Pope should depose him. Both Pope and Empire were founded were founded by God and neither is superior to the other. The New Testament is the final authority for the Church. Pope, cardinals, bishops and general councils may err; only the entire community of believers whose head is Christ cannot err. The Scriptures are the final court of appeal in all disputed questions. Scriptures are interpreted not by pope or clergy but by the Christian people as a whole in a general council under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. To be universal a council must include women. Oc cam attacked the spiritual power of the Pope, substituting his democratic idea of the Church. The seat of authority is in the Christian people as a whole. The Pope is merely their representative and not their ruler. He derives his power from the people who put him in office and may remove him. The people and not the Pope determine what the faith is. The people are not dependent on the Pope for salvation. The sacraments may be administered without his authorization or permission.

Oc cam's method was to explore the whole field with every argument and with subtle distinctions and counter-distinctions, refraining from any final decision of his own. Human institutions are liable to change and the boundary between the temporal and spiritual functions may be crossed in case of necessity or expediency from either side. He had no clear-cut scheme like Marsilius. His inquiring relativity was just as fatal to the dogmatic papal theory. Oc cam's Nominalism exposed the bankruptcy of Scholasticism and destroyed interest in its great speculative systems. He was one great force turning men to Mysticism and to a return to Augustine. The men who called for the reforming councils of the fifteenth century drew encouragement from him. Luther called Oc cam his "Dear Master."

THE CIVIL LAWYERS: Fourteenth century civil lawyers were more concerned to apply Aristotle, Justinian, and the Law of Nature to the situation of their own day. They tried to apply the Law of Nature to their problems. Bartolus and Baldus pointed to existing sovereign states. Law came from the ruler. A French layman in Somnium Viridarii gave all legislative authority to the royal power. It had the power of confiscation for the good of the State. All
rights of groups or corporations were revocable concessions of the sovereign. The Neapolitan Lucas de Penna, steeped in the Byzantine traditions of Roger the Great and Frederick II, championed the sovereign State whose authority and power are unlimited and unquestionable. Such men foreshadowed the French political philosopher Jean Bodin, of the sixteenth century, who championed the all-powerful State.

DEFENSE OF PAPAL CLAIMS: Augustinus Triumplus (1213-1328), an Augustinian monk was the most celebrated of the defenders of papal power. In his Summa de potestate ecclesiastica (1322) he declared that all princes are subject to the pope who can remove them at his pleasure. No civil law is binding if disapproved by the Pope. The Pope can be judged by no one. There is no appeal from the Pope even to God since the decision of the court of God and the Pope are one. In his On the Power of the Pope he claimed that the Pope is God's vicegerent with full powers. He is entitled to absolute obedience without any appeal. All secular governments exist by his permission. The Pope is universal proprietor and legislator. In this same vein a Spaniard, Alverius Pelagius, in 1474 wrote his De planctu ecclesiae.

It remained for the reforming councils of the fifteenth century to attempt to resolve the differences.

THE STORY OF POPE JOAN