Lesson 3 (1978-1979)


Hymn: 431 Lead Kindly Light
Prayer
Scripture: Isaiah 40:12-17; 21-23

INTRODUCTION: The first stage of the church-state or Investiture controversy began when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire on Christmas Day, A.D. 800. It reached its climax in the battle between Pope Gregory VII and Emperor Henry V in the Concordat of Worms in 1122 A.D.

The second stage of the controversy between church and state was marked by the clash between the secular lawyers of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and the canon lawyers of Pope Alexander III. Church and papacy reached their highest power under Pope Innocent III who issues "The Moon-Sun Bull" and humbled kings of Spain, France and England. At the death of the Emperor Henry VI, his wife, the Empress Constanza, put their son, Frederick, under the guardianship of Pope Innocent III. Philip of Swabia, the brother of Henry VI, and Otto IV of Swabia both claimed the throne. Otto IV offered Pope Innocent III declared Otto IV deposed and excommunicated and made Frederick II king and emperor. Frederick renewed to the pope all the broken promises of Otto. While Innocent lived, Frederick appeared as his loyal servant.

FREDERICK II'S CLASH WITH THE CHURCH:

After the death of Pope Innocent III Frederick II became the chief opponent of the political pretensions of the papacy. From his father's side he had inherited Germany and Northern Italy with claims on Southern Italy. On his mother's side he inherited Sicily and strong claims to Southern Italy. He had been reared and educated in Southern Italy and Sicily as the neglected ward of Pope Innocent III. Very early he had to learn to shift for himself. He received one of the remarkable educations of the Middle Ages. Sicily was the most cultured place in Europe. There the culture of Greece, Rome, Judaism and Arabia met and survived along side of Christianity. Frederick was well educated in science, literature and the arts. He mastered five or six languages. He was worldly and irreligious. He made severe laws against heresies. But he boastfully tried every sin at least once. He greatly encouraged his secular university at Naples, allowing Jews, Moslems and even heretics to teach. From the first he clashed with Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) who organized the Inquisition. Pope Gregory IX raised up rivals against Frederick in Germany and tried to undermine him. Pope Gregory IX began to publicly criticize his personal conduct and to question his personal beliefs. Frederick had many wives, carried on many affairs and had many illegitimate children. Pope Gregory IX threatened Frederick with excommunication and ordered him to go on a crusade against the infidels in the Holy Land. Frederick faced such opposition for his throne that he promised to go on the crusade. When Frederick failed to go on the crusade as he had promised the Pope excommunicated him. The excommunication strengthened and encouraged Frederick's enemies that he went on the crusade but did not bother to get the Pope's ban lifted. The pope was infuriated and executed the man who was under sentence of excommunication would go on a Holy crusade. He excommunicated Frederick again. Instead of fighting the Sultan, Frederick II arranged a peace treaty with him that allowed Christian pilgrims a corridor to the Holy places of Jerusalem and Bethlehem and the right to visit them. Pope Gregory IX excommunicated Frederick again for making peace with the infidel Sultan instead of fighting him. Over worked, excommunication was losing its effect.

When Pope Gregory IX died Frederick was able to keep the papacy vacant for two years. He refused to allow German bishops to attend a council in Rome. As
soon as Pope Innocent IV was elected he clashed with Frederick over Sicily. In 1245, Frederick marched on Rome but Innocent escaped in disguise and excommunicated Frederick.

When Frederick died his son, Conrad IV (1250-1254) was made king of the Germans and Holy Roman Emperor but it had become clear to the papacy that papal victory could only be guaranteed by the destruction of the Hohenstaufen line. Pope Innocent IV declared that he was conferring Conrad's inheritance of Southern Italy and Sicily to Edmund of England, son of King Henry III. To strengthen his position the pope aligned himself with France. The papacy became so dependent on French help and counsel that at the death of Innocent IV a Frenchman was chosen as Pope Urban IV (1261-1264). Urban followed a policy of appointing French cardinals.

In 1263, Pope Urban IV gave southern Italy and Sicily to Charles of Anjou, the brother of King Louis IX of France (1226-1270). The papacy had become completely dependent on the French.

Upon the death of Urban a Frenchman was chosen as Pope Clement IV (1265-1268). When Conradin, young son of Conrad IV asserted his hereditary claims to Southern Italy and Sicily by force of arms he was excommunicated by Pope Clement IV. Charles of Anjou defeated and captured Conradin. When he ordered him beheaded in Naples in 1268 the pope did nothing so save the young king. The papacy had accomplished its goal of ending the Hohenstaufen line. There followed in Germany the Great Interregnum (1254-1273). The Holy Roman Empire was little more than a name.

The papacy did not realize that it was also greatly enfeebled. Criticisms were mounting from many quarters. A new force had arisen that neither Church nor Empire had justly estimated—a new sense of nationalism—Frenchmen for France, Englishmen for England, Spanish for Spain. The new nations did not want interference or meddling on part of Pope nor emperor. The rise of nationalism was accompanied with a rise in education, wealth and political influence. Wealthy cities were restive under ecclesiastical domination. New legal scholars as laymen questioned the legal basis of the claims of both pope and emperor.

When the church awakened to the threat of dominance by the French, Pope Gregory X (1271-1276) ordered the Germans to chose a new king to be crowned emperor by the pope. Should the German electors fail to choose a king the pope threatened to appoint one himself. In 1273, Rudolf I of Hapsburg was chosen and made to the pope the large concessions and promises made by Otto IV and Frederick II. But the Germans could no longer furnish the Pope a balance of power against the French.

THE FRENCH PHASE OF THE CHURCH-STATE OR INVESTITURE CONTROVERSY:

The clash between Pope Boniface VIII and King Philip IV (The Fair) of France opened a new chapter in clash between Church and State. The controversy arose from the attempt of the State to tax the Church. Both Edward I of England (1272-1307) and Philip IV (1285-1314) needed money for their wars and saw in the lands and other wealth of the Church the most promising new source of additional revenue. Both kings found some support for the idea of taxing church and clergy in their universities—Combridge, Oxford, and Paris. King Edward attempted to rally the support of his subjects by inviting representatives of the Commons to take a place in Parliament in 1295—from this time they would share in English national councils.

Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) was a man of lofty aspirations to world-rule. The claims he put forth for papal power represented the high water mark of papal pretentions, but he lacked the power of Innocent III to make the claims good. King Philip IV was unscrupulous, obstinate, and had a high conception of royal authority. Because of the large number of French Cardinals and because of the closeness of France to Italy, the French king seemed the greater threat to the papacy. When both kings levied taxes on church and clergy, the clergy in 1296 appealed to Pope Boniface. In 1296 Pope Boniface VIII issued his famous bull, "Clericis laicos," in which he pronounced eternal damnation on those attempting
to tax the church, and on clerics who paid taxes to the secular powers.

King Philip IV responded with a prohibition against the export of any money from France to Rome. He hit both pope and Italian bankers in the pocket book. France had been one of the largest sources of papal revenues. Boniface so modified his decree that the clergy could make voluntary contributions to the secular power. He even granted that in great emergencies the king could tax the religious. It was a royal victory and brought peace between king and pope for a few years.

In 1301 Philip had Bernard Saissel, bishop of Pamiers and papal nunco, arrested and charged with treason. He was accused of agitating against the king and stirring up both clergy and laity against their king. Pope Boniface VIII ordered the immediate release of his legate and ordered the French king and the high clergy who were backing the king to come to Rome for trial. Philip responded by calling the first French States-General in which clergy, nobles and commoners were represented. In 1302 the French loyalty backed their king against the pope.

Pope Boniface replied in 1302 with his bull, "Unam sanctam"—the high water mark of papal pretension. The pope claimed supreme power on earth and that the pope could be judged by God alone. He declared that for eternal salvation it was necessary to be subject to the Roman pontiff.

King Philip IV answered by calling a new assembly of the States-General in which he charged the pope with an absurd series of crimes, involving heresy and moral depravity. He appealed for a general council to try the pope. Philip was not bluffing. He moved quickly before Boniface excommunicated him. He sent the able French jurist and vice chancellor, William Nogaret, and Sciarra Colonna, noted member of an ancient family long hostile to the pope, to arrest Boniface in Anagni (1303) and to hold him for trial.

Boniface was courageous and would make no concessions. The papal banner was replaced with the French fleur-de-lis. Only two cardinals stood by Boniface—one later became Pope Benedict XI. Some of Boniface's friends rescued him by night but he died a month later. Philip IV had dealt the temporal claims of the papacy a staggering blow and in many quarters the king's move found popular support. This rising national sentiment was a greater threat to papal claims than the king himself. It was also a threat to the Holy Roman Empire.

THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY OF THE CHURCH--THE AVIGNON PAPACY

Events worsened for the new pope, Benedict XI (1303-1304). He was forced to flee from Rome to Perugia. Three months later a young man disguised as a woman brought the pope a gift of poisoned ripe figs. The pope died on July 7, 1304.

The Cardinals chose a Frenchman, Bertrand de Goutte as pope Clement V. He had been archbishop of Bordeaux but was a man of weak character and grave moral faults. King Philip forced him to hold a posthumous trial of Pope Boniface VIII that further damaged the papacy. Pope Clement V declared the king innocent in his attack of the pope and cancelled all the interdicts and excommunications of Pope Boniface. Clement was forced to modify the bull, "unam sanctam," to please the king. Then on April 13, 1304 King Philip moved the papacy from Rome to Avignon—evidence to the rest of the world of complete French domination of the papacy. The papacy would remain in Avignon until January 17, 1377—a period known as the Babylonian Captivity of the Church. Philip forced Clement to join him in condemning the Knights Templars and in the cruel, brutal destruction of the order with the king appropriating their wealth for his own treasury. This completed Clement's humiliation. Clement spent his papacy in the safe project of collecting canon law.

The Avignon popes scandalized the world with their attempts to be second only to the French king in luxury and splendor and their Avignon palace is still a tourist attraction. To carry out their ambitions they laid heavy taxes on the people, further alienating peoples of other nations. Criticisms of the church mounted, hastening the break-up of the Middle Ages.