



Challenges to the Church

Avignon Papacy

(also called the Babylonian Captivity)

In 1301, the King of France levied a tax on all French clergy. Pope Boniface VIII threatened the king with excommunication. Philip IV sent his troops to capture the Pope and bring him to France to stand trial.

He was released after three days, but died within the month.

The next pope moved the headquarters of the Church to Avignon, France.

Seven popes resided in Avignon, from 1305-1378.



Rome

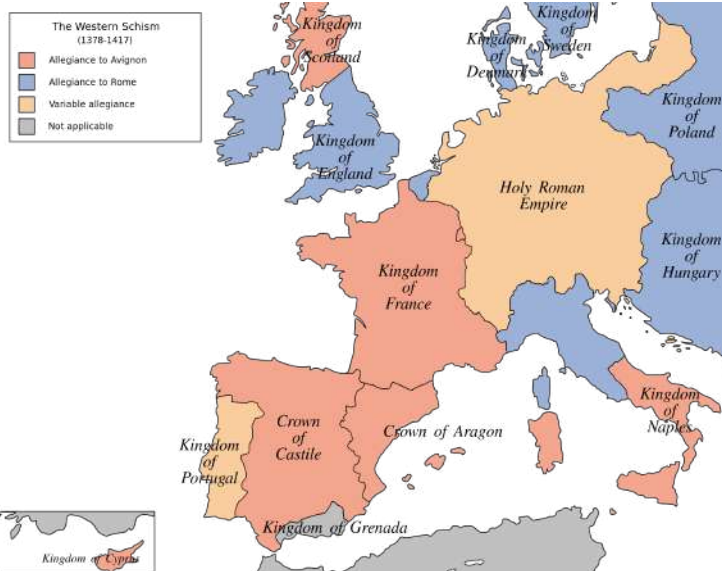


Avignon

Challenges to the Church

Western/Second Great Schism

The seat of the Church was moved back to Rome in 1378, but many continued to honor the bishop in Avignon as the head of the church.



The Italian cardinals insisted on an Italian Pope.

French cardinals elected their own pope, Clement VII.

There were now TWO popes!

A Church council was called at Pisa to attempt to elect a new Pope - then there were THREE popes!

In 1414 the Council of Constance dismantled the Avignon Papacy.

Two popes were deposed, the third resigned, and a new pope was elected.

Early Critics of the Church



John Wycliffe
(1328-1384)

English priest and early critic of the Catholic Church

wrote the first English translation of the Bible
supported a return to simplicity and poverty
his followers were called Lollards
was convicted of heresy 75 years later by the Council of Constance



Lorenzo Valla
(1407-1457)

Italian priest
proved the Donation of Constantine was a fake

Roman decree that gave the Pope authority over Rome
convicted as a heretic and burned at the stake



Jan Hus
(1369-1415)

Czech priest, philosopher, and reformer
criticized the Church for its corruption
led a unsuccessful nationalist movement
convicted as a heretic and burned at the stake

Corruption in the Catholic Church



Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503) had numerous affairs and children out of wedlock

20% of all priests in the diocese of Trent kept concubines during the early 16th century



absenteeism



clerical ignorance



pluralism



Sales of Indulgences

people paid the Catholic Church to absolve their sins or sins of their loved ones



the extra good deeds saints had done were stored in heaven

Pope Leo X (1513-21) authorized the sale of these extra deeds as certificates of indulgence



Martin Luther



Martin Luther was born in Germany in 1483.

On July 2, 1505 while a law student at the University of Erfurt, Luther was caught in a terrible thunderstorm. Lightning struck near him and he was thrown to the ground. At this moment he called to Saint Anne: "I will become a monk!"

To his father's disgust and anger, Luther honored his solemn promise; he entered a monastery to become a monk. After receiving his doctorate in Theology in 1512, Luther took a position as Theology Professor at the Wittenberg University. It was during this time that Luther grappled with religious understanding. During his intensive study of the Letter to the Romans he came to the realization that people receive justice through the grace of God, not through good works:

"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'The one who is righteous will live by faith.' (Romans 1:17)

Martin Luther

From 1514 Luther was both theology professor at Wittenberg University and the priest at the City Church in Wittenberg, responsible for the salvation of his parish. Luther observed that many people in Wittenberg were not coming to him for confession any more. Instead, they were going to towns to buy Indulgences.

The practice of buying indulgences was completely repulsive to Luther. He strongly believed that one lived a life of humility in order to receive God's grace. The Dominican monk Johann Tetzel sold indulgences in the region around Wittenberg in a very ostentatious manner. Tetzel was reported as preaching things such as, "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs."

Luther preached against the indulgence trade and wrote a letter to his church superiors hoping to get rid of this abuse. In this letter he included 95 Theses which were to be used as the basis for a discussion on the topic. By the end of 1517 copies of the 95 Theses had been printed throughout Germany. Some humanists and princes passionately approved of the theses, but parts of the Roman Church completely rejected them. At first the bishops reacted mildly, informing the Pope of the 'rebel within the ranks' and instructed Luther's direct superior to take a moderate roll in calming him.

Legend says that Luther hammered his theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg - this is still to be proven.

Because of increasing pressure, Luther found it necessary to explain and clarify his theses in writing. In 1518, Luther himself said that he only wanted to take care of an abuse (indulgence) and was not striving to unhinge the papacy with his theses. The Papal Court reacted drastically to the alleged heretic and in 1518 an inquisition was begun in Rome.

Martin Luther

The peak of the inquisition came on June 15, 1520, with the Papal Bull of excommunication in which Luther was ordered to recant his teachings. Luther reacted in protest, burning the Papal Bull along with the book of church law. This behavior caused an irrevocable break with Rome.

On January 3, 1521 the Pope excommunicated Luther. Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, however, felt forced to accept Luther because of the pro-Luther mood in the empire. Luther's powerful sovereign Elector Friedrich the Wise of Saxon demanded that Luther not be outlawed and imprisoned without a hearing. Pressured by other princes who were hoping to weaken the Pope's political influence in Germany, the Emperor guaranteed Luther safe escort to the Imperial Diet of Worms.

Luther's journey to Worms was more like a victory march; he was welcomed enthusiastically in all of the towns he went through and was cheered and welcomed by the people when he arrived in Worms.

Luther's appearance at the Imperial Diet was described as objective, clever and well thought out. He had to appear before the Emperor twice; each time he was clearly told to take back his teachings. Luther didn't see any proof against his theses or views which would move him to recant:

"Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen."