The Catholic Church in Crisis:
from the Avignonese Captivity to the Hussites

2000 Years of Christ’s Power: Volume 2: The Middle Ages: Ch.10
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Extracts
1. The Avignonese captivity of the papacy (1309-77)

- King Philip the Fair v Pope Boniface VIII
- Babylonian captivity of the papacy – by the French monarchy and its policies
- Critics of the papacy
  - William of Ockham
  - Marsilius of Padua, Italy – *Defensor Pacis* (Defender of Peace) 1324
    - Authority lay with the people
    - Supreme legislative power in the Church – ecumenical Council
    - Scripture alone is the source of Christian teaching
    - Distinguished between Catholic and Apostolic Church
    - Pope is not leader by divine right
    - Clergy re subject to the state in secular matters
    - Priests only had power to teach, warn, persuade, rebuke

p.403-07
2. The Great Schism (1378-1417)

- 1377 papacy returned to Rome with Pope Gregory XI
- 1378 Italian pope Urban VI elected under mob violence
- 1378 French pope Clement VII elected, returned court to Avignon
  - Each rival pope excommunicated the other
  - Urban – supported by N&C Italy, England, Scandinavian countries, most of Germany
  - Clement – supported by France, Spain, S Italy, Scotland, parts of Germany
  - Both papal lines continued = ‘the Great Schism’ - visible unity broken
- Pushback from Catholic nations against papal authority, e.g. Gallicanism

p.407-09
3. The conciliar movement

- Attempt to place papacy under the authority of an ecumenical Council
- Led by Peter d’Ailly (1350-1420), John Gerson (1363-1429), Nicholas of Cusa (1401-64)
  - The Catholic Church is superior to the Roman Church
  - Infallibility belongs to the Church as a whole
  - Authority rests in the entire body of believers
  - Roman church authority rests with both pope and cardinals together

- 1409 Council of Pisa – cardinals deposed 2 popes and elected Alexander V - 3 rival popes
- 1414-18 Council of Constance – cardinals deposed again, elected Colonna to be pope
- 1439 Council of Basil – deposed pope Eugenius, elected Felix V
  - Overstepped itself, lost support, movement greatly weakened, papacy strengthened again

p.409-12
1302: Pope Boniface VII issues UNAM SANCTAM, which declares that there is no salvation outside of the Catholic church.

The French respond by capturing Boniface VII and taking him prisoner. He apparently dies of natural causes just after being released.

The French then elect a Clement VI as pope and move him to Avignon in the South of France. The French control of the Papacy is called the Babylonian Captivity.

At the same time, Pope Urban VI is elected in Rome. This created a divide between the East and the West called the Great Schism (pron. skizm).

1409: Council of Pisa called by Cardinals. Council declares resignation of both Popes, yet neither resign.

The council appoints another Pope to replace both, but since neither resign, there are now three.

1414: Council of Constance called. End Triple Papacy, elect Martin V as only Pope, also reform the church and declare the COUNCIL as the main church body.

1431: At Council of Basel, try to assert conciliar supremacy, fail at 5th Lateran Council in 1512, Popes remain dominant.

1438: French issue Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges. State that Gallican (French Catholic Church) independent from Rome, councils will reign over popes in their church.
4. Heresy: John Wyclif and the Lollards

- John Wyclif (1330-84) – ‘the morning star of the Reformation’
  - Challenged claim of papacy to England – ‘dominion’ / ‘lordship’
  - 1378 published *The Truth of Holy Scripture* – the Scripture test – translations needed
  - 1378 published *On the Church* – the whole body of the elect, those predestined to salvation
  - 1379 – wrote *The Power of the Pope* – human origin, no secular power, later – all anti-Christs
  - 1380 – wrote *On the Eucharist* – rejected transubstantiation, use of Eastern Church
  - 1384, 1396 - English Bible translations – ‘Lollards’
  - 1384 died, buried in Lutterworth
  - 1418 exhumed, burned, ashes scattered in the Swift
  - 1395 Lollards publish *The Twelve Conclusions* – protests English church’s bondage to papacy
  - 1399 – Lancastrian King Henry IV – burning of heretics made legal
  - Lord Cobham (Oldcastle) v Henry V – support for Lollardy from upper classes lost
5. Revolution: John Huss and the Hussites

- King Richard II of England married Anne of Luxembourg, sister of King of Bohemia
- Oxford students visit Prague University – spread Wyclif’s views
- John Huss 1372-1415, Bethlehem Chapel, Prague, rector of Prague University
- Support from Slavic nationalism
- 1411 – Huss attacked indulgences, Pope John XXIII attacked Huss
- Split support: arguments focused on the Church, clergy, place of preaching
- 1414 – summoned to Council of Constance, imprisoned
- 1415 – tried for heresy, humiliated, burned at stake on 6th July
- 1416 Jerome of Prague, Huss’s key learned layman also burned
- 1419 war against German crusading armies - Emperor Sigismund v Utraquists + Taborites
- 1434 Utraquist + Catholic army defeat Taborites
6. The 14th century Catholic mystics

- Thirst for personal direct experience of God
- Leaders:
  - Germany - Eckhart von Hochheim, Johann Tauler (influenced Luther), Heinrich Suso
  - Netherlands – Jan van Ruysbroeck
  - Italy – Catherine of Siena
  - England – Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich, Margery Kemp
- Shared distinctives: language of the people, centrality of preaching, Christ-centered
- Similar movement - Devotio moderna – ‘the modern way of serving God’
  - Gerard Groote 1340-84 – Christian communities and learning centers
  - Thomas a Kempis 1380-1471 – most influential writer - The Imitation of Christ
7. The Christian Poet: Dante

- Dante Alighieri 1265-1321
- Born in Florence (then a ‘Guelf’ – pro-papal city), cf. p.66 fn.17
- A ‘White Guelf,’ was exiled from Florence by ‘Black Guelfs’ – died 13th Sept, Ravenna
- Treatise: De Monarchia – papacy and Empire have sphere sovereignty – books burned!
- Divine Comedy: Inferno, Purgatory, and Paradise
  - Virgil – Beatrice – Bernard of Clairvaux – Mary – the Trinity
  - Devout medieval Catholic in outlook
  - Depiction of salvation and papal corruption still receives wide approval

p.430-32
Extracts

- Council of Constance 1415, Decree of Sacrosancta: Conciliarism
- Marsilius of Padua, Defensor Pacis, prologue: the papacy and the state
- William Langland, Piers the Plowman, prologue: English Church life in the 14th century
- Wyclif’s New Testament
- Eckhart von Hochheim, Talks of Instruction 6: letter of John Hus
- Heinrich Suso, poems
- Johann Tauler, Sermon for the Sunday After Ascension
- Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love: God’s love is greater than our sins
- Thomas a Kempis, The Imitation of Christ: Close friendship with Jesus