

## History is His Story

By the end of the Middle Ages many people had concluded the church needed reform. What had caused this and where did the church lose it?

The Germanic Lombards invaded northern Italy in the 500s and began overrunning small Italian principalities down the peninsula which had been formerly retaken by the Eastern Roman Emperor, Justinian. By 750, Lombards had conquered almost all of Italy (including Ravenna, the new Provincial capital and seat of the Papacy) except the Duchy of Rome. The Pope had one ally, the Frankish kings. King Charles Martel had driven back the Muslims at the Battle of Tours in 732, saving Christendom. His son, Pepin III then defeated the Lombards and took over central Italy. He made the Lombards sign a peace and gave the Italian territories to the Pope in 756. Suddenly Popes had land and politics to deal with, as if they were kings. For 800 years barbarians overran Europe. Worst were the last two, Magyars (Hungarians) and Vikings in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. But then suddenly Stephen of the Magyars and Canute of the Danes converted to Christianity. Europeans were stunned to find there were no more barbarians. All of Christendom believed they had been saved by God—much more so than by their own feckless kings. As a result, the Papacy rose in admiration throughout the West. The Pope in 999 was Sylvester II who was also the First French Pope. He was a wonderful church father as well as a scholar who had assembled learning from the East. Use of the abacus in math, celestial globes of the heavens, Euclidean geometry, the astrolabe for ship navigation, Roman surveying and music theory were some of his accomplishments.

This gave the popes a wedge to open the door to further power. Pope Gregory, in the mid 1000s, advocated reform for the clergy. Priests and Bishops should be celibate, could not pay for their offices, and bishops were to be chosen by the pope (rather than popular election or kingly appointment). This was controversial. But by 1198 when Innocent III became pope, the ideas had become accepted. He demanded that the **papacy be superior** to all kings as well as all Christendom. And since **church councils** were blessed by the Pope, they were declared to be correct in all judgments. If a country chose its king by their own succession, not consulting the Pope, he used **the Interdict**—all people of the realm were excommunicated until they relented. The Fourth Lateran Council was called and declared the **clergy were to be celibate and a higher form** of human than the laity. **Jews were declared blasphemers** of Christ and pogroms began. Innocent started **the 4<sup>th</sup> Crusade** against the Muslims in the Holy Land. It didn't end well, when the Crusaders lost. On the way home they sacked Constantinople, a Christian ally, and put a Latin ruler in place. Another papal crusade against the (South France) **Albigensian heresy** ended in genocide. Innocent established **two mendicant orders** to do his missions and politics, the **Franciscans and Dominicans**. Franciscans ran elementary schools and Dominicans ran the colleges and had a monopoly on all teaching. This was strongly challenged by the Reformation. Dominicans held that **reason could deduce more teaching** than the Bible contained. After Innocent died in 1216, St. Lutgarda had a dream in which he cried out for help to her to get him out of **purgatory** (He had refused to bow his head during the Nicene Creed). She prayed him out and thus the notion of purgatory went from theory to accepted fact. One of Innocent's loyal Franciscans, Peter Olivi, advanced the idea of **papal infallibility**, (when the Pope speaks doctrinally, *ex cathedra*, his word is held infallible). This idea too, was controversial. It had advocates and detractors at the time of Luther. Cajetan was a strong advocate who used it to condemn Luther. Papal Infallibility was not formalized by the Catholic Church until 1870.

Innocent III, it would seem, was anything but innocent. Disagreement with many of the assertions of the 13<sup>th</sup> century surrounding his papacy formed the heart of the Reformation. It should be noted that while Protestants had a Reformation, Catholics who stayed loyal also had a Reformation in the Council of Trent 1563, and continue to reform in Vatican II and III into the present day. Thus many modern Catholics are critical of Popes on social matters and quite a few, like those who headed an internal investigation of the priest sex scandals, are advocates of abolishment of celibacy.