

## The Papacy

In 1929 Pope Pius XI signed the Lateran Agreement, which provided independent status for the State of Vatican City. It made Roman Catholicism the official religion of Italy, and provided a financial payment to the Vatican for expropriation of the former papal states.

British author H. V. Morton attended the Pontifical High Mass in St. Peter's in celebration of the signing of the treaty. He watched with a feeling of enchantment as he saw the Pope borne in a portable state chair into the church, while trumpets sounded, peacock fans waved, and the packed church shouting in welcome. The Danish pastor and playwright Kaj Munk visited St. Peter's in 1933. When he saw the Pope with his elaborate and costly garments sitting in the state chair and carried into the Church by splendidly dressed men as if they were holy angels, surrounded by his Swiss military guard in sixteenth century uniforms, while the crowd clapped and shouted "Papa! Papa!" he was grieved. He felt that all the pomp and show was out of harmony with the person and manner of Christ, Who had no place to lay His head while on earth. Why this adulation for one of the world's oldest institutional office? Because the Roman Catholic Church teaches that the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, is the apostle Peter's successor, the Vicar of Christ, and pastor of the entire Church. He has "as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, no 882*).

In 1870 First Vatican Council formulated the doctrine of infallibility. "The Roman Pontiff," says the Catechism, "enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful...he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals" (no.891). When the Council debated the proposed dogma of infallibility, opponents brought up Honorius I (d. 638) to counter the claim of papal infallibility. He is chiefly remembered for his apparent support of the Monothelite (Christ has only one will) heresy. In 689 a council at Constantinople condemned Honorius as "a favorer of heretics", a condemnation endorsed by Pope Leo II in 682. The infallibility debate was rancorous. A small number of dissidents joined the Old Catholic church. August Bernard Hasler, German Roman Catholic theologian, calls this doctrine one of the most difficult problems in church and society. It forms not only one of the greatest obstacles on the way to Christian unity; it also blocks renewal of the church within. In *A History of the Popes, 1830-1914*, Owen Chadwick points out that the decision of the First Vatican Council must be seen in the context of church and state relations. He observed that because the Pope's authority was derived from Christ rather than from a council or ecclesiastical plebiscite, the Pope possessed an episcopal authority and jurisdiction over the whole Church. Consequently, the Council denied the states any foothold in governance of the Church.

The history of the papacy is a tale of goodness and wickedness, justice and injustice, ecclesiastical interference in affairs of state and political interference in internal Church affairs.

In the early Middle Ages kings appointed bishops and ruled on religious and liturgical matters. They treated the bishops as helpers. Christopher Dawson, the medieval historian, once remarked that the king of the Franks and Holy Roman emperor (742-814) Charlemagne viewed the Pope as his private chaplain. It was the king's business to govern, said Charlemagne, that of the pope to pray.

In January 1077, in dead of winter, the famous confrontation between Pope Gregory VII and King Henry IV took place at Conassa. While waiting for Gregory's response to his plea for forgiveness the king was left standing in the courtyard of the castle barefoot in the snow for three days. Pope Innocent III (d. 1216) excommunicated King John and placed England under an edict. In later history the Popes lost their political clout. Joseph II, Holy Roman emperor from 1765 to 1790, issued more than six thousand religious edicts, closed four hundred monasteries, reorganized seminaries, while Pope Pius VI was powerless to prevent these actions. As late as the papal conclave of 1903, three states asserted the right to veto papal elections. Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria, via Cardinal Puzyna, Bishop of Krakow, exercised the veto to prevent the election of Cardinal Rampolla. These are only a few of the scenarios in the world of the papacy.

Comment: In the New Testament there is no primacy of Peter or of anyone else. At the council at Jerusalem "the apostles and elders, with the whole church" made a decision to send some of their own men with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 15:22). The authority of Scripture is not dependent on the judgment of the Pope. The Pope is neither infallible nor the final arbiter of truth, but the Scriptures alone are.

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