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Birdsall S. Viault

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MODERN EUROPEAN HISTORY

Birdsall S. Viault, Ph.D.
Winthrop College

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For those who guided me in the study of European history:

Robert Ernst, Chester L. Barrows, Hans Rothfels, John S. Curtiss,
E. Malcolm Carroll, Harold T. Parker

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Modern European History

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Preface

This volume reviews the history of Europe since the Late Middle Ages, focusing on the great movements, ideas, events, and personalities that shaped Europe's development. It is designed to be used in two ways: as a textbook in its own right and as a review book in conjunction with any of the standard college texts.

Whether students use this book for initial study or later review, they should find their understanding and appreciation of the subject enhanced by the chapter introductions and summaries, the detailed time lines preceding each chapter, the generous, interlocking subheads, and the clear, concise text. Dates of birth and death are given for most individuals cited. For monarchs and popes, the dates refer to their reigns and are indicated as "r."

No attempt has been made to cover the major interpretive or historical debates relating to the history of modern Europe. Rather the reader is encouraged to consult the "Recommended Reading" sections that appear at the end of each chapter. Here the reader will find detailed studies of subjects considered in the chapter. In selecting books to be included, emphasis has been placed on recent scholarship and classic works.

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Birdsall S. Viault
Rock Hill, SC
September 1989

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CHAPTER 1

The Emergence of Modern Europe

Time Line

1302	Pope Boniface VIII issues the bull <i>Unam Sanctam</i>
1305–1378	The popes reside in Avignon during the Babylonian Captivity of the Papacy
1347	The Black Death sweeps through Italy
1356	The Golden Bull establishes a system for the election of the Holy Roman emperor
1378–1417	During the Great Schism, there are two, and even three, rival claimants to the papacy

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1415	John Hus is burned at the stake
1417	The election of Pope Martin V ends the Great Schism
1453	The Hundred Years' War ends
1455–1485	England is torn by the Wars of the Roses
1461	Louis XI becomes king of France
1469	Ferdinand of Aragon marries Isabella of Castile
1485	Henry Tudor becomes King Henry VII of England
1492	The Spanish government orders the country's Jews either to convert to Christianity or leave The Spanish reconquer Granada from the Moors
1519	Charles V becomes Holy Roman emperor
1556	Charles V begins the process of abdication

During the fourteenth century, a series of crises undermined the civilization of medieval Western Europe, the civilization that had developed and matured following the collapse of the Roman Empire during the fifth century A.D. The Babylonian Captivity of the Papacy and the Great Schism weakened the prestige and authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Great Britain and France became embroiled in the Hundred Years' War, which threatened the authority of the monarchy in both countries. In Central Europe, the Holy Roman Empire was disintegrating into an array of virtually independent princely states. To compound Europe's problems, the Black Death suddenly swept out of the East, claiming the lives of a quarter to a third of Europe's population.

Signs of improvement appeared during the fifteenth century, however. The Great Schism ended, although the Roman Catholic Church continued to face serious problems. While the decline of the Holy Roman Empire continued, in England, France, and Spain, strong na-

tional monarchies emerged. The civilization of modern Europe was taking shape.

The Decline of the Roman Catholic Church

Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII

The declining power and prestige of the papacy signified momentous change in Europe during the Late Middle Ages.

Clericos Laicos

During the late thirteenth century, there were already some signs of an erosion of papal authority. Then, as the century drew to a close, a bitter conflict erupted between King Philip IV (r. 1285–1314) of France, known as Philip the Fair, and Pope Boniface VIII (r. 1294–1303). In need of money to finance his war against England, Philip demanded, in 1296, that the French clergy pay taxes. Boniface responded with the bull *Clericos Laicos* (1296), prohibiting the taxation of the clergy without papal approval.

Unam Sanctam

Both the king and the pope refused to give way, and the conflict intensified. In the bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302), Boniface VIII stated his claim to papal supremacy in uncompromising terms, insisting that resistance to the will of the pope was resistance to the will of God. Enraged, Philip the Fair sent agents to Italy in search of the pope. In September 1303, the French found Boniface at his summer home in Anagni and took him prisoner, although he was soon set free. Not long after this “Crime of Anagni,” as it became known, Boniface died. The new pope, Benedict XI (r. 1303–1304), carefully avoided further conflict with Philip.

The Babylonian Captivity of the Papacy

Following the death of Benedict XI, Bertrand de Got, the bishop of Bordeaux in France, was elected pope, becoming Pope Clement V (r. 1305–1314). In order to avoid the anarchy then prevalent in Rome, Clement took up residence in Avignon, a papal possession in southern

France. A succession of French popes resided in Avignon for almost seventy years. During this period, known as the Babylonian Captivity of the Papacy (1305–1378), the popes were subject to a substantial degree of control by the French monarchy. While not noted for the quality of its spiritual leadership, the Avignon papacy was marked by considerable administrative and financial efficiency.

The Great Schism

In 1377, Pope Gregory XI (r. 1370–1378) decided to move back to Rome. Following Gregory's death in 1378, the cardinals, who feared the Roman mob, elected an Italian pope, Urban VI (r. 1378–1389). A group of French cardinals then declared that Urban's election had taken place under duress and was thus invalid. They elected a Frenchman as pope, who became Clement VII (r. 1378–1394). Clement took up residence in Avignon.

The election of Clement VII began the Great Schism. For the next four decades, from 1378 to 1417, there were two popes, one at Rome and the other at Avignon, each claiming to be the true vicar of Christ on earth.

France and its allies, including Scotland and the Spanish kingdoms of Castile, Navarre, and Aragon, supported the Avignon papacy. France's enemy, England, as well as the Holy Roman Empire, Portugal, and Italy, backed the Roman pontiff.

The Council of Pisa

The Great Schism had a negative impact on the religious life of Catholic Europe. In an effort to end the split, a council of some five hundred bishops and other churchmen met in Pisa in 1409. The council deposed both Gregory XII (Rome) and Benedict XIII (Avignon) and elected a new pope, Alexander V. But neither Gregory nor Benedict would give way, so now there were three popes.

The Council of Constance

The Council of Constance, which met from 1414 to 1418, ended the Great Schism. In 1417, the council elected Pope Martin V (r. 1417–1431), who won recognition from all factions. Martin V took up residence in Rome.

During the fifteenth century, the popes became actively involved

in the political and cultural life of Renaissance Italy (see Chapter 2) and did little to deal with the much-needed reform of the Roman Catholic Church. This failure contributed to the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.

Heresy

The problems of the church in the Late Middle Ages were compounded by the emergence of heresies. A heresy, by definition, is a teaching contrary to the accepted orthodox doctrine.

Wycliffe

In England, John Wycliffe (c. 1328–1384), a scholar who taught at Oxford University, insisted that the Bible was the only source of Christian doctrine. To make the Bible more accessible to literate Englishmen, he translated it into English. Wycliffe rejected the authority of the papacy and the hierarchy of the church, regarding them as both unscriptural and unnecessary, and he denounced the wealth and corruption of the clergy. He also rejected the Roman Catholic doctrine regarding the Eucharist, which taught that the consecrated bread and wine were miraculously transformed into the body and blood of Christ.

Wycliffe won a number of followers, known as Lollards, especially among the lower classes. The church, with the support of the English government, suppressed the movement.

Hus

In Bohemia, John Hus (c. 1369–1415), a teacher at the university in Prague, embraced Wycliffe's ideas. Hus and his followers, the Hussites, represented both a religious and national revolt, winning support among the Czechs of Bohemia, who objected to German domination of their homeland. Hus appeared before the Council of Constance to respond to charges of heresy. Although he had been promised safe conduct, he was tried, condemned by the council as a heretic, and burned at the stake in 1415. Despite Hus's death, the Hussite Wars between his followers and the papal forces continued in Bohemia for several years.

The thought of Wycliffe and Hus foreshadowed the ideas of the Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century.