

Church History, Early 15th Century

Historical Theology

Date: September 4, 2022

Author: W Scott Negley

INTRODUCTION: ATTEMPTS AT UNIFICATION.

Both within the Western Church and between the Western and Eastern Churches.

Though not intentional they became interrelated.

I. THE CONCILIAR MOVEMENT

A. BEGAN WELL BEFORE 15TH CENTURY

1. Had its roots in history and theology

a. Most of the important decisions of the Catholic Church have been made through conciliar means.

b. Some believed in corporate theories regarding the church which maintained that the head should be restrained and judged by the members if his actions were not in the interest of the well being of the ecclesial body.

2. While others believed the pope to be the successor of Peter and thus should have supreme power.

B. THE "BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY" AND THE GREAT WESTERN SCHISM CAST DOUBT ON PAPAL SUPREMACY

1. Which Pope was supreme since there were two sitting

2. A Council was called to resolve the issue as well as address needed reforms within the church.

a. Who had the authority to call the council.

b. The Popes were not going to risk a council deposing them.

c. Cardinals of both parties agreed to call the council to convene at Pisa in 1409.

d. Both Popes attempted to counter this council by calling their own but both failed.

3. The council sought not to determine which was the rightful Pope, rather deposed both.

a. Sought to address simony and other evils in the church.

b. Elected Alexander V as pope.

c. The two rivals continued to enjoy some support.

d. Alexander died after a year as pope.

e. The Council elected John XXIII to replace him.

4. Emperor Sigismund decided it was time to call another council to resolve the papal issue.

a. John XXIII had taken refuge in Germany.

b. He agreed to the new council to convene at Constance believing it would support him as pope.

c. He however was condemned and imprisoned for the remainder of his life.

d. Gregory XII the Roman pope resigned as part of an agreement that his rivals would resign.

e. Council elected Martin V.

f. Benedict XII the last pope in Avignon took refuge in a fortress and although he claimed to be the rightful pope was basically ignored until his death

5. The council at Constance had hoped to resolve the schism and rid the church of heresy and corruption.

a. Found itself powerless to reform the church with regard to simony and absenteeism.

b. Sought to make councils a regular occurrence to continue to pursue reform.

c. The next council was to be held at Pavia 1423 but was moved to Siena because of the plague and was not well attended.

d. The next council was reluctantly called by Martin V in 1430 to convene at Basil.

e. Martin V died shortly after the council convened.

f. His successor Eugen IV declared it dissolve but later withdrew the dissolution.

g. The council at this point seemed to be gaining supremacy.

C. THE ULTIMATE DEMISE AND FAILURE OF THE COUNCIL

1. The appeal for help came from the Byzantine emperor and the patriarch of Constantinople.

a. They were being threatened by the Turks.

b. Agreed to participate in the council if it were convened closer to Constantinople.

c. Eugen IV transferred it to Ferrar from Basil.

d. Most of the council refused to obey but some hoping to end the schism between east and west joined the council in Ferrar.

e. Now there was one pope and two councils, in a schism of its own.

f. The emperor and the patriarch agreed to terms of the reunion which included the supremacy of the pope.

g. The council at Basil became more radical and lost many attendees eventually deposing Eugen IV and electing Felix V.

h. Now there were two popes again and two councils.

i. Felix and his council had little impact on the life of the church, and he gave up his claim to the papacy in 1449 and that council disbanded.

II. EASTERN CHURCH SEEKS REUNION

A. BEING PRESSED BY THE OTTOMAN TURKS EMPEROR JOHN VII PALAEOLOGUS SEEKS HELP FROM THE WEST

1. Sends representatives to the council at Ferrar.

a. They agree to accept the doctrines of Filioque, Purgatory and Papal Supremacy.

b. Signed on June 6, 1439.

c. Upon returning home found their agreement with the west broadly rejected by the general populace and civil authorities.

d. The agreement was never accepted by the Eastern Churches.

2. The fall of Constantinople

a. Some believe it was God's punishment because of conceding to doctrines of the west by the emperor and clergy.

b. The West did not fulfill its obligation to send military support.

B. THE EASTERN CHURCH UNDER OTTOMAN RULE

1. Continued to have some autonomy but the patriarch was appointed by the Muslims.

a. Some Eastern churches remained outside the domain of the Ottomans.

b. Those within Ottoman control were isolated from the rest.

c. As a result the later reformation had little impact

2. Religious rights in the Ottoman Empire.

a. Severe penalties often included deaths for non-Muslims.

b. Since Jesus was considered a great prophet Christians were called another People of the book.

c. Even though they were granted freedom of worship in principle, rarely was that a reality and depended on the whim of the Sultan.

d. Viewed as second class citizens.

e. Missionary activity was strictly prohibited.

f. Conversion to Islam was allowed but converting back to Christianity meant death.

g. No new churches were built in fact some were converted to mosques.

h. Because of Turkish corruption the patriarchal throne was frequently sold to the highest bidder, and few died of natural causes.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_the_15th_century#:~:text=and%20of%20princes,-,Spread%20of%20Christianity,lands%20to%20Spain%20and%20Portugal.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conciliarism>

