

The Artios Home Companion Series

Unit 4: Popes Rise to Power

Teacher Overview

THE PAPACY HELPED to shape the Medieval and modern eras. The popes didn't have power over states and kingdoms from the beginning, though. The rise of the papacy came out of the lack of unified control that followed the fall of the Roman Empire. In this unit we will study the rise of the papacy, its power over kingdoms, and one of its best-known popes, Gregory the Great.



12th century illustration from
Bibliothèque municipale de Douai
of Pope Gregory I, by an anonymous artist

Reading and Suggested Assignments

In this unit, students will:

- Complete two lessons in which they will learn about the growth of the papacy and Gregory the Great, journaling and answering discussion questions as they read.
- Watch the videos found on their [HCS Class pages](#) for this unit.
- Define vocabulary words.
- Visit their [HCS Class pages](#) to check for additional resources.

Key People, Places, and Events

Innocent I	Augustine of Hippo
Leo I	Gregory I
Jerome	Bertha
Ambrose	Aethelbert

Vocabulary

Lesson 1:	Lesson 2:
vulnerable	<i>none</i>
ascetic	

Leading Ideas

People's character will be reflected in their words and actions.

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.

– Proverbs 23:7 (KJV)

There is power in the spoken word to do evil or to do good.

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

– Matthew 12:34

The rise and fall of nations and leaders is determined by God.

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.

– Proverbs 21:1



Painting by Niccolò Antonio Colantonio, showing Saint Jerome's removal of a thorn from a lion's paw

Lesson One

History Overview and Assignments The Growth of the Papacy

“Before the close of the first century A.D., Christian churches were scattered over the entire known world. These were at first essentially Greek in their language, Scriptures, and forms of worship. But since Rome was considered the center of the civilized world, Christian communities everywhere began naturally to look to the Roman bishop as a leader in the Church.”

– from the adapted article below



Coat of Arms of the Bishop of Rome

Key People, Places, and Events

Innocent I
Leo I
Jerome
Ambrose
Augustine of Hippo
Gregory I

Vocabulary

vulnerable
ascetic

Reading and Suggested Assignments

- Review the discussion questions and vocabulary, then read the article: *The Growth of the Papacy*.
- Narrate about today's reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Watch the videos found on your **HCS Class pages** for this lesson.
- Define the vocabulary words in the context of the reading. Write the words and their definitions in the vocabulary section of your history notebook.
- Be sure to visit your **HCS Class pages** to check for additional resources.

Discussion Questions

1. How did the Roman bishop come to be considered the head of the Christian Church in Western Europe?
2. Describe the disagreement between Pelagius and Augustine of Hippo.
3. What were Leo I, Jerome, and Ambrose each best known for?
4. How did Gregory I expand the Church?

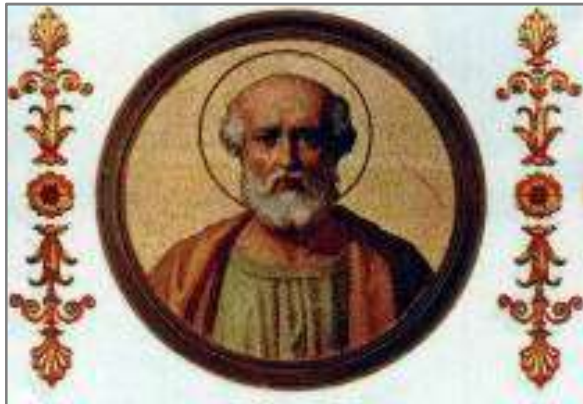
Adapted for Middle School from the book:

The Great Events of History

by William Francis Collier

The Growth of the Papacy

The period we call Medieval is considered by most to have begun with the fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 and lasted for a thousand years, extending roughly to the year 1500. One of the early marks of the Medieval period was the growth of the *papacy*, or the authority of the Bishop of Rome.



Pope Innocent I, artist unknown (5th century)

Our knowledge of the papacy in its earliest days is very dim and uncertain. Peter, the fisherman of Galilee, is claimed by many to have been the first Bishop of Rome. No doubt for many a day the bishops of Rome were humble dwellers in a lowly suburb, persecuted by the priests of Jupiter and Apollo as the apostles of some wild Eastern heresy, and when they did gain a place in the public eye, it was as noble witnesses for the truth, sealing their faith with their blood. Out of thirty Roman bishops of the first three centuries, nineteen suffered martyrdom. Thus cradled in darkness and baptized in blood, the great power of the *Papal*

See, or the office of the Pope, struggled through the years of its infancy.

At first the history of the Roman Church is identical with the history of Christian truth. But unhappily there came a time when streams of poison began to flow from the once pure fountain.

Before the close of the first century A.D., Christian churches were scattered over the entire known world. These were at first essentially Greek in their language, Scriptures, and forms of worship. But since Rome was considered the center of the civilized world, Christian communities everywhere began naturally to look to the Roman bishop as a leader in the Church.

Pontificate of Innocent I

Innocent I, Leo I, and Gregory I (“the Great”) were the three great “founders” of the papacy. While the weak-willed Honorius was disgracing the title of emperor with cowardice, **Innocent I** began his *pontificate* (his administration as head bishop). It was soon clear from his letters to the bishops in the West that he was determined to claim headship over them in all matters pertaining to the Church.

In the midst of his efforts to secure

this end, a terrible event occurred which had the effect of investing him with grandeur unknown to his predecessors: Alaric and his Goths besieged Rome in the year 410.

Deserted by Emperor Honorius, Rome centered all hope in her bishop. A ransom bought off the enemy for a while. But afterward, when the great disaster of wreck and pillage fell upon the city, Innocent was in Ravenna, striving to stir the coward emperor to some show of manliness. He returned to build from the black ashes of pagan Rome the temples of a Christian city. Thenceforward the Pope was the greatest man in Rome.



Pope Leo I,
by Francisco Herrera the Younger (17th century)

Fathers of the Latin Church

In the latter days of Innocent I, the great heresy of Pelagianism began to agitate the West. A monk named Pelagius passed through Rome, Africa, and Palestine preaching that there was no original sin; that men, having perfect free will, could keep all Divine commands by the power of nature, unaided by grace. These doctrines were combated by Bishop Augustine of Hippo in Africa, one of the great Fathers of the Church, whose opinions were soon adopted throughout the Western Church. Pope Innocent, leaning toward Augustine, declared Pelagius a heretic. Pelagius was banished by the next pope, and of his end nothing is known.

Leo I, a Roman by birth, was unanimously raised to the papal throne in 440. Distinguished

for his stern dealings with heretics and his energetic efforts to extend the spiritual dominion of Rome, he owes his great place in history to the brave front he twice showed to the barbarians menacing Rome. The savage Attila turned away at his request; and, although his intercession three years later with Genseric the Vandal had less success, it did break the force of the blow that fell upon the **vulnerable** city.

While the papacy was thus laying the deep foundations of its authority, a host of active church leaders was busy molding its doctrines and discipline into shape. Chief among these were Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine.



Saint Jerome in His Study, by Antonio da Fabriano II (1451) shows writing implements, scrolls, and manuscripts testifying to Jerome's scholarly pursuits.

Jerome, the secretary of Pope Damasus, and afterward a monk of Bethlehem and a great Christian scholar, adopted an **ascetic** lifestyle that influenced the development of the monastic system which has been so powerful an agent in spreading the doctrines of popery. He is best known for his translation of the Bible into Latin.

Ambrose, Archbishop of Milan, claimed the authority of the priesthood even over emperors and kings by condemning Theodosius I to a long and weary penance after the massacre he ordered in Thessalonica.

Augustine of Hippo, already mentioned, is justly called the Father of the Latin Theology. Augustine as a young man rejected the claims of Christianity, but was converted after attending sermons by Ambrose in order to study the great bishop's public speaking style. Augustine's writings have had greater influence on Christendom than those of any other theologian, and his autobiography, called simply *Confessions*, is regarded as a masterwork of helpful Christian literature.

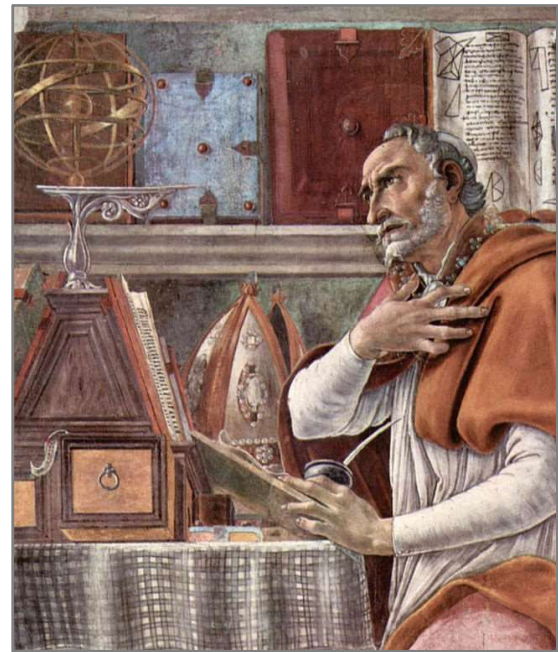
It must not be forgotten that the barbarians who overthrew the Roman Empire had already, with few exceptions, been converted to Christianity. The Goths were the first to receive the gospel; other tribes followed in quick succession. And when the barbaric flood had swept away every vestige of Roman temporal power, the papacy continued to grow, gathering every year new strength and life—a new Rome that rose from the ashes of the old, far mightier than the vanquished empire, for it claimed dominion over the spirits of men.

Gregory the Great

In **Gregory I**, who became pope in 590, we behold the third great founder of the papacy. He it was who, while yet a humble monk of St. Andrew, being struck with the pleasing appearance of some English boys in the Roman slave market, formed the design of sending a

mission to Britain and some years afterwards dispatched a Benedictine monk named Augustine (who became the first Archbishop of Canterbury, not to be confused with Augustine of Hippo) to those shores.

The entire West felt Gregory's energy. Spain, Africa, and Britain were brought into the Church, while Jews and heretics were treated with mild toleration.



Augustine of Hippo, by Sandro Botticelli (c.1490)

War with the Lombards filled Gregory's hands with troubles; but soon these fierce warriors felt a power, against which their swords were worthless, casting its spells over them. In the days of Gregory they were converted from being heathens to orthodox Christianity. He died in 604, leaving a name, as priest, ruler, and writer, second to none in the long roll of popes.

Lesson Two

History Overview and Assignments Gregory the Great

“The Pope of Rome was bishop of the greatest city in the world. The Vandals had ruined Carthage; Constantinople and Alexandria were far away. Rome had no rival. It is true that the emperor had ceased to live there; but his departure had increased the importance of the bishop, for he was now the leading citizen. He was the most prominent and influential Christian in the Western Church.”

– from the adapted article below



Jerome and Gregory, by Antonio Vivarini (15th century)

Reading and Suggested Assignments

- Review the discussion questions, then read the article: *Gregory the Great*.
- Narrate about today's reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Watch the videos found on your **HCS Class pages** for this lesson.
- Be sure to visit your **HCS Class pages** to check for additional resources.

Key People, Places, and Events

Gregory I

Augustine of Canterbury

Bertha

Aethelbert

Saints and Heroes to the End of the Middle Ages

by George Hodges

Gregory the Great

A Roman senator, rich and of an ancient family, was so attracted by the Order of St. Benedict that he built six monasteries in Rome; and then a seventh, in which he went to live himself and became its abbot. His name was Gregory.

One day as the abbot walked about the streets, he saw that there were slaves for sale.

There were always slaves for sale in Rome. Some were men who had gotten so deep in debt that they could not get out, and, having sold all else which they possessed, at last sold themselves. But most of the slaves were captives from the wars. All the borders of the Roman Empire blazed with war. Even after the barbarians came and destroyed the old empire, still they fought among themselves. And after every battle, the victors, whether they were Romans or Goths or Franks, gathered up a great company of prisoners and sold them in the nearest market. It was more humane than the former custom of putting them all to death. And it was better sometimes than the later custom of putting them in military jails without sufficient food or shelter.

The consequence was that the slave trade was a flourishing business in Rome, and Gregory, kind-hearted and large-minded though he was, never thought of trying to stop it.

A new lot of captives had come that day, sent down from Britain. They were of the race called Angles, from whom England got its first name of Angle-land. They came from the western part of Yorkshire which was then called Deira. Their yellow hair and fair skin pleased the eyes of Gregory, and he stopped to question them.

“Where do you come from?” he said.

“We are Angles,” they replied, “from the kingdom of Deira.”

“God be gracious to you, my children,” said the abbot. “You are Angles? You are as fair as angels. You should be Christians. I will go myself to your land of Deira, and save your people *de ira*—from the ire, from the wrath—of God.”

Gregory did not go to England as he hoped, because he was detained in Rome. The Pope died, and all the people demanded Gregory for the next pope, just as the Christians of Carthage had called for Cyprian, and the Christians of Milan for Ambrose. The desire was unanimous. The people wanted him, the clergy wanted him, and the senate wanted him. He wrote a letter to the Emperor begging him to forbid the election, but somebody took the letter away and never sent it. There was no escape. So Gregory became **Gregory I**, the Pope of Rome.

One time there were two men, each of whom greatly desired to be bishop, and their followers had such a battle in the Church of St. Maria Maggiore that, when it was over, a hundred and thirty-seven dead bodies lay upon the floor. It shows not only what a fierce and disorderly time it was, but how much men prized the office. Gregory, indeed, did not desire it, but that was because he did not care for wealth or power.

Gregory the Great

The Pope of Rome was bishop of the greatest city in the world. The Vandals had ruined Carthage, and Constantinople and Alexandria were far away. Rome had no rival. It is true that the Emperor had ceased to live there, but his departure had increased the importance of the bishop, for

he was now the leading citizen. He was the most prominent and influential Christian in the Western Church. The invading barbarians cared little for the old empire, but they had some respect for the Christian religion. Gradually, by the good services of missionaries, many of them from the monasteries of St. Benedict, it became their religion. Whatever of ancient custom and culture and learning had remained was in the Church. The Church was the sole representative in all Europe of that departed civilization which had built the great cities, made the enduring roads, carved the statues, and written the books. And the leader and spokesman of the Church was the Bishop of Rome. This was the office which prevented Gregory from going to England.

A great slab of stone in the Forum at Rome still shows the carved picture of Emperor Trajan distributing food to widows and orphans. One day, as Pope Gregory passed that way, he stopped in front of the stone picture and looked at it with great appreciation. It seemed to him a pleasant memorial of ancient times and of a good and friendly man. That day at prayer, he ventured to pray for Trajan, that he might be pardoned for his paganism and admitted into the Christian heaven. This reveals the fellowship of Gregory with anybody who had tried to help his neighbors.

Gregory's ministry was spent in good deeds. He took a great and useful part in all the life about him: he dealt with Arians, who were still troubling Italy, and with Donatists, who were still troubling Africa; disciplined idle and unworthy monks and ministers; attended to the needs of the poor and the sick; and gave his farmer careful directions about the working of his farm. He interested himself in the music of the Church, and introduced a way of chanting which bears his name and is still in general use. He added a prayer to that Communion Service which is called the Mass, and thereby completed it in the form in which it

is still often said today. The Latin of that service, as was used in every Roman Catholic Church until 1962, was substantially the same as when it came from the hands of Gregory.



Gregory I became pope in 590 and effected great changes in the Roman Catholic Church. He used the office to govern and provide pastoral care to a large area during a time of little civil administration. He also reformed church liturgy, introducing Gregorian chant.

Gregory's writings about saints, including Saint Benedict, helped the growth of Benedictine monasteries in the Middle Ages.

The Church in England

Nothing, however, that Gregory did was of so much importance to us as his sending of a board of missionaries to convert the English.

The Christian Church had been planted in Britain so early in history that nobody knows for certain when or by whom: probably by Christian soldiers in Roman legions. There it was, however, in that land which the Romans had conquered, and to

which many wealthy Romans loved to go in the cool summer. Constantine had started from York in Britain on that eventful march which made him the first Christian emperor. And when, later, he called a conference of bishops to consider the case of the Donatists, three of the bishops came from Britain.

Then the Angles and Saxons invaded Britain. The Roman legions had been called home to defend Rome, and the Britons, who had depended on the Romans for security, were without defense. They were driven out of their fair country, from their pleasant cities and their churches, into the mountains of Wales. The pagan invaders changed Britain into England. Between the Christian Britons and their Christian brethren on the continent of Europe was thrust this wedge of English heathenism.

Gregory remembered the Angle slaves. Out of one of the Benedictine monasteries which he had built, he chose a monk who later became known as **Augustine of Canterbury** (note: this was *not* Augustine of Hippo), and sent him with a band of forty monks to England. The missionaries to the English pagans went up through France, and whenever they stopped to spend the night such terrifying tales were told them of the fierce ways of the barbarous English that they stopped and sent a letter back to Gregory, asking to be relieved from such a dangerous mission. But Gregory urged them on.

Thus in 597 A.D.—a date to be remembered—they crossed the English Channel and set their feet upon the soil of heathen England. But there were friends to meet them. **Bertha**, the wife of King **Aethelbert** of Kent, was already a Christian, being a daughter of the King of the Franks, who had his throne at Paris. She had kept her religion in the midst of the paganism of the new country, and had caused to be rebuilt, near Canterbury where she lived, a little ruined church. This she dedicated to the brave memory of St.

Martin, who had contended so faithfully with the pagans of his neighborhood, and out to little St. Martin's she often went to say her Christian prayers.



Stained-glass window of Aethelbert from the chapel of All Souls College, Oxford

Aethelbert, accordingly, knew who the Christians were; though he knew so little about them that he preferred to meet the missionaries in the open air, lest they should bewitch him with some spell. He sat, therefore, under a tree and watched Augustine and his men as they approached, the forty of them in procession, carrying a banner and singing a litany to the music which they had been taught by Gregory. The King listened gravely as Augustine preached the religion of Christ, and he promised to consider the matter carefully. Meanwhile the missionaries were given freedom to teach, and houses in Canterbury in which to live, and pretty soon St. Martin's Church in which to worship God.

The fact that the missionaries came from Rome, that distant and renowned capital of the world, emphasized their message; and it

was further confirmed by their holy living. Thus one heathen Englishman after another was converted; presently, the King himself; and after the King, following his good example ten thousand of his subjects in one day.



St. Augustine's Abbey, which forms part of the city's UNESCO World Heritage Site, was where Christianity was brought to England. (CC BY-SA 3.0 by Ealdgyth <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Staugustinescanterburyrotundanaveandcathedral.jpg>)

Then Augustine was made a bishop—the first bishop of the English. Aethelbert gave him his own palace; and a ruined British church beside it became the beginning of the Cathedral of Canterbury. The Christian religion was thus introduced among the English.

Gregory sent to Augustine a letter of advice. Do not destroy the temples of the English gods, he said; change them into Christian churches. Do not forbid the harmless customs which have been associated with the old religion; consecrate them, like the churches, to Christian uses. Let them revere the saints where they have worshiped idols. Thus, he said, “having some outward joys continued to them, they may more easily accept the true inward joys. For assuredly it is impossible to cut away all things at once from minds hardened by evil

custom; just as the man who strives to reach the summit of perfection climbs by steps and paces, not by leaps and bounds.”

It was in accordance with this advice that the missionaries called the festival of Christ's resurrection “Easter,” from *Eostre*, the English goddess of the spring. The Christmas season they called “Yule-tide,” from an English god of the winter; and they still brought in the yule log from the woods and hung the mistletoe upon the walls, as the ancestors of the English had done in the long-gone days before ever an Englishman had heard of Christ or had set his foot in England.

Thus Tuesday kept the old name of *Tuesco*, the god of war;

and Wednesday, of *Woden*, the father of the gods;

and Thursday, of *Thor*, the god of thunder;

and Friday, of *Frigg*, the goddess of love; by the advice of Gregory the Great.



Queen Bertha The statue in Lady Wootton's Gardens is of the Queen of Kent. She was Princess of the Franks and the Christian daughter of Charibert King of Paris.

The sculpture by Stephen Melton in 2004, unveiled 2006, source: King Ethelbert and Queen Bertha (CC BY-SA

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https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Queen_Bertha_-_geograph.org.uk_-_1450143.jpg