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The Conciliar Movement - Part I

Lead: To a Europe beset by plague, war and economic depression, the Church offered precious little help.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: In the late 1300s Europe was in trouble. The Black Death was the in process of reducing the population by as much as a third. The Hundred Years' War between France and England was tearing up the French countryside and both countries' economies. To make matters worse, the continent's one unifying

institution was itself in disarray. For seventy years Popes of the Roman Catholic Church lived in Avignon in southern France. Suspicious that the Church was then a pawn of the French king, English and German Catholics increasingly looked elsewhere for spiritual guidance.

When the Pope moved back to Rome in 1377 a dispute broke out among the leaders of the church over the extreme reform policies and prickly personality of Pope Urban VI and a group of renegade cardinals fled to Avignon and elected a second Pope. The period known as the Great Schism had begun. It was clear something had to be done or Church would continue to suffer losses in prestige and revenue.

French Cardinal Pierre D'Ailly, a theologian and amateur scientist offered a solution. He advocated conciliarism, under this system the Pope was to be subordinated to a Church Council. General Councils had been around a long time. In the Bible, the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Acts describes Peter and Paul attending a Council at Antioch in present day Syria. Over the years, Councils had met to decide important matters of doctrine but they had fallen into disuse as the church regarded the Pope as the church's ultimate authority.

D'Ailly and others began to clamor for a General Council to bring order

out of the chaos that had produced two rival popes. Both pontiffs claimed to be willing to attend a Council but were reluctant to submit to a group that might limit their power. At the Council of Pisa in 1409 Cardinals from both sides met, deposed both popes, and elected another. Then there were three. Next time: The pirate pope.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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