



MEMORIAS DE LEONARD LIGGIO CON MOTIVO DE LA RENUNCIA DE S.S. BENEDICTO XVI¹

Pope Benedict XVI's resignation has led to noting the earlier papal resignation in 1415. However, that event had its origins in an earlier and even more significant resignation. The 1290s were a crucial period in European history –the rise of the Nation State. The traditional medieval limited government was being replaced with powerful monarchies. It was triggered by the end of the dynasty which ruled the county of Flanders– which was part of the Holy Roman Empire but had territories under French jurisdiction. Edward I in England supported one candidate while Philip IV in France supported another. Philip IV inherited the county of Champagne from his mother who was heiress of the family which had ruled Champagne and had permitted the growth of the great international market, the Fairs of Champagne. Philip IV began to tax and regulate the Fairs, leading the Italian merchants to go by sea in the Atlantic to the English Channel to buy wool and cloth from England and Flanders. Edward I and Philip IV quickly exhausted their personal incomes in the fighting in Flanders. Their heirs conflicts continued over so many decades that it was called the Hundred Years' War. These kings began by repudiating their debts to the Italian bankers, then to confiscate the property of Jews and expel them to Germany, the Order of the Knights Templar was accused of heresy and the kings confiscated their rich properties, and finally to tax the properties of the bishops and monasteries. Even that was exhausted and Edward I and Philip IV developed parliamentary government – have delegates of the taxpayer authorize annual taxes to support the kings' wars. In England the House of Lords Spiritual (bishops) and Temporal (barons) was matched with a new House of Commons drawn from two knights from each county and two burgesses from each town (of which there were a large number). Commons agreed to tariffs on imports for the war expenses and measures to limit the competition of Italian merchants. In France, the Estates General was created with three chambers: first Estate of the clergy, second Estate of the nobility, and the third Estate of the towns' people.

The taxation of the clergy lead to opposition from the pope, Boniface VIII. His predecessor, Celestine V was elected pope on July 5, 1294 after a twenty-seven months' vacancy due to an equal division of the twelve cardinals. **The deadlock was broken when it was announced that a famous hermit had a vision that failure to elect a pope would bring disasters. The cardinals elected the eighty-five year old hermit as pope. He was challenged by the administrative duties.** He favored the Spiritual Franciscans who opposed property held by the main Franciscans (Murray Rothbard has written about this dispute).

In December, 1294 Celestine resigned and a new pope was elected, Boniface VIII, a cardinal and canon lawyer. Boniface opposed the kings' taxing church properties. In 1303 French mercenaries captured Boniface, and although the populace freed him, he soon died as a consequence. In the ensuing period of confusion, the French cardinals elected a French bishop as pope. Since the people of Rome were angered by the treatment of Boniface, the French pope and his several French successors decided to live in Avignon, a papal territory on the Rhone River surrounded by French territory.

Pope Gregory XI returned to Rome in January, 1377. After his death the cardinal who was elected as pope was rejected by the French cardinals who elected a French cardinal as anti-pope. This created the Great Western Schism (1378-1417) (the Great Eastern Schism between Rome and Constantinople of 1054 really only occurred after the Ottoman capture of Constantinople in 1453). Rival states supported rival popes, for example, France and Scotland supported one line, England supported another. Gregory XII and other papal claimants resigned during the Council of Constance and a single pope was elected in 1417, Martin V.

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