

Church History Sr. 8

he had a supreme authority over the higher officials in the church in their areas. At any rate these were a very extensive series of forgeries which Nicolas I declared to be genuine and supported and utilized. He was an able man and he used them very effectively. They were the foundation of the power of the papacy during the middle ages. The rest of the alleged authority of these false decretals and then at the beginning of the reformation they were proven false but they had already done their work. The organization was established. I mentioned to you two and a half years ago the life of Formosus, Bishop of Rome 891-896, and how after his death his body was dug up and was put in a chair in the papal throne with all the papal ornaments and then Pope Stephen VI said, "How did you dare, Formosus, being Bishop of to covet the authority of being Bishop of Rome when you already were bishop of another area?" And then they accused him of all sorts of things and they went through the form of a trial and condemned him, tore off his garments, cut off the three fingers with which he blessed the people, threw his mutilated body into the Tiber and Stephen VI himself, **THE CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA** says, died of strangulation shortly afterward. explains that the populace rose up against him and seized him and treated him cruelly and strangled him to death. It is simply an example of the extreme degradation of the papacy during the period from about 870, during the period, from that time most of the time until about 1040. We have a period of a century and a half of extreme degradation. If one wishes to know the depths to which it fell one has only to read in here the account of the popes during this period, to see how man after man was a low individual enjoying nothing but debauchery and wickedness put into position by the power of the various nobles of Rome who were always fighting among themselves, and the papacy had sunk at this period into such a degradation that it would seem that it would have eventually disappeared from having any claims to having any authority over the rest of the world whatever, if it were not for two things. One of these two forces which intervened was the power of the emperor. That is the outward one. That is the one without which the papacy would probably have disappeared and ceased