

S T U D Y G U I D E

# A Survey of Church History

Part 2, AD 500–1500

W. Robert Godfrey



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# Introduction to the Middle Ages

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Our word “medieval” comes from the Latin terms *medium* and *aevum*, which mean “middle age.” Neglected by some and romanticized by others, the period of the Middle Ages is important for understanding the triumphs and struggles of Christians in Europe and the Mediterranean world during the thousand-year period between the decline of the Roman Empire and the emergence of modern Europe. In this lecture, Dr. Robert Godfrey will offer insight into the historical complexities of the Middle Ages and will explain the approach that this series will take as we explore this important era in church history.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

John 17:1-26; Romans 12:3-5; Ephesians 2:11-21

## TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To explain the complexities of studying the Middle Ages.
2. To introduce the medieval period as a one thousand year experiment in Christian civilization.
3. To describe the three phases within the Middle Ages that will be discussed in this series.
4. To present the importance of examining both theological developments and human experience in the study of church history.

## QUOTATIONS

*Not to know what has been transacted in former times is to be always a child. If no use is made of the labors of past ages, the world must remain always in the infancy of knowledge.*

–Cicero

*To study the past does indeed liberate us from the present, from the idols of our own market-place. But I think it liberates us from the past too. I think no class of men are less enslaved to the past than historians. The unhistorical are usually, without knowing it, enslaved to a fairly recent past.*

–C.S. Lewis

*The central current and ultimate aim of universal history is the Kingdom of God established by Jesus Christ. This is the grandest and most comprehensive institution in the world, as vast as humanity and as enduring as eternity.*

–Philip Schaff

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*

–Hebrews 12:1

## LECTURE OUTLINE

### I. Defining the Middle Ages

#### A. When did the Middle Ages occur?

- i. One historian dates the beginning of the Middle Ages at AD 300, while another historian dates it at AD 1100.
- ii. Most historians place the beginning of the Middle Ages around AD 500 or 600, when significant shifts were taking place between the world, culture, and thought forms of the ancient period and those of the medieval period.

#### B. Where did the Middle Ages occur?

- i. While most courses and books on medieval history focus on Western Europe, this approach can be misleading.
- ii. The thought world of the early Middle Ages, even in the western Mediterranean, was still very much oriented toward the East.

#### C. What were the Middle Ages?

- i. The Dark Age?
  1. Many Protestants have tended to view this era as a “Dark Age,” during which few significant developments took place.
  2. Despite such claims, the medieval era was characterized by many important cultural, intellectual, and ecclesiastical accomplishments.
- ii. The Age of Faith?
  1. Some Roman Catholics have argued that the medieval era was an age of profound piety, when Christianity enjoyed its golden age at the center of Western civilization and life.
  2. Although the church held tremendous influence during this period, the truths of Christianity had not penetrated the hearts and minds of the common people any more than they have at other times in history.

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- iii. An Age of Change
    - 1. The phrase “Middle Ages” itself implies that this is a period of transition between the ancient period and the modern period.
    - 2. The terms “ancient,” “medieval,” and “modern” delineate three distinct periods with different characteristics and emphases.
    - 3. The Middle Ages produced profound thought, significant institutions, and remarkable political events.
    - 4. The developments of the Middle Ages laid the foundations for the modern era and continue to shape the world of today.
- II. An Experiment in Christian Civilization
- A. The governing ideal of the Middle Ages was the effort to create a society in which Christianity would be the dominant influence.
    - i. Not every person shared this ideal, and those who held it did not always carry it out consistently.
    - ii. Yet, the quest of establishing a stable and secure Christian civilization was the overriding mentality that drove most of the thought and actions during this time.
  - B. As we study the ways in which people sought to work out that ideal, live with it, and shape it according to their interests, we can gain insight into our interaction with the culture around us today.
- III. Overview of This Series
- A. This series will examine the Middle Ages in three phases
    - i. Early Middle Ages (500 – 1100)
      - 1. These lectures will look at the period when the Middle Ages were “warming up.”
      - 2. During these centuries, various forces and elements inherited from the ancient world were reshaped into what became the characteristic form of medieval life and culture.
    - ii. High Middle Ages (1100 – 1200)
      - 1. These lectures will focus on the high point of the medieval era.
      - 2. The “wondrous century” from just before 1100 until just after 1200 contained several significant figures and events.
    - iii. Late Middle Ages (1200-1500)
      - 1. These lectures will examine the implications and aftermath of the wondrous century.
      - 2. The accomplishments of the wondrous century were worked out over the next three hundred years, preparing the way for the modern era.
  - B. This series will explore two underlying themes throughout the Middle Ages.
    - i. Church and Society
      - 1. These areas of study will emphasize politics, institutions, and the experiences of medieval Christians.

2. When studying the history of the church, it is crucial to place theological developments within their historical context.
- ii. Paths to God
  1. These areas of study will trace the contours of theology within the Middle Ages.
  2. It is important to understand how people in the past have thought about their relationship to God and to understand how people, institutions, and theology have influenced one another.

#### IV. Warming Up: The Legacy of Rome

- A. When did the Roman Empire end?
  - i. The traditional date attributed to the fall of the Roman Empire is AD 476.
  - ii. Although it is easy to state that the Roman Empire began with the reign of Caesar Augustus, it is more difficult to say when it came to an end.
- B. Over the centuries, many political entities have perceived themselves as the continuation of the Roman Empire.
  - i. After the collapse of the western portion of the Roman Empire, the eastern portion survived as the Byzantine Empire until it was overrun by the Ottoman Turks in 1453.
  - ii. When Charlemagne was crowned as the emperor of the Franks in 800, his kingdom was considered a revival of the Roman Empire.
  - iii. Portions of Charlemagne's empire were later restructured as the Holy Roman Empire, which endured in Central Europe until 1806.
  - iv. After the fall of Constantinople, the Russian Czars saw themselves as the heirs of the Byzantine emperor and therefore of a "third Rome."
  - v. In the 1930s and 1940s, Nazi Germany attempted to depict itself as a new Roman Empire.
- C. Long after the decline of Rome's imperial rule, Rome remained a symbol of power, order, and civilizing ingenuity that captured the imaginations and aspirations of medieval Christians.

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Most historians agree that the Middle Ages began around January 477.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. Which period in medieval history does Dr. Godfrey call "the wondrous century?"
  - a. 500-600, which celebrated the end of Roman rule
  - b. 800-900, during the time of Charlemagne and his sons
  - c. 1100-1200, which marked a high point in the Middle Ages
  - d. 1400-1500, which ended with the discovery of the Americas

3. According to Dr. Godfrey, it is most accurate to think of the medieval era as \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. A dark age
  - b. An age of change
  - c. The age of faith
  - d. The age of reason
  
4. Most of the thought and actions of the Middle Ages were driven by \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. The pursuit of economic gain
  - b. A man-centered worldview
  - c. The pursuit of a stable and secure Christian civilization
  - d. The desire to break away from the traditions of the past
  
5. The Holy Roman Empire was considered to be a “third Rome” until its dissolution in 1806.
  - a. True
  - b. False

#### BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What would you like to learn as you study the history of the medieval church? Why does this period in history interest you?
  
2. How might a person’s theological viewpoint influence that person’s attitude toward the Middle Ages? What does Dr. Godfrey say about common Catholic and Protestant views of this period in history? Why is this period in history so complex?
  
3. Dr. Godfrey reminds us that in the study of church history, theology is important, but it is not everything. What other aspects of the past are important for understanding the story of the church? How can Christians benefit from studying these aspects of church history?
  
4. Dr. Godfrey points out that, at any point in history, there can be a divide between good theology and the actual beliefs and lives of the ordinary people in the church. What are some contemporary examples of this type of divide?

## 2

# Justinian & Gregory

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Emperor Justinian I and Pope Gregory I stand out as two of the most significant figures in the centuries of transition that marked the early Middle Ages. As the vestiges of Roman culture and institutions continued to fade or be reinvented, the inhabitants of the Mediterranean world looked for leaders who could offer them a sense of continuity with the past and direction for the future. In the midst of this uncertain climate, Justinian and Gregory contributed to the development of the state and the church in ways that would influence medieval life and culture for generations to come.

### SCRIPTURE READINGS

Romans 1:16-17; Galatians 2:20-21; Galatians 3:1-14

### TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To explain the ways that Justinian's reign shaped the development of the Byzantine Empire.
2. To discuss the role of Gregory I in the expansion of the papal office.
3. To describe and evaluate the theological patterns which began to influence the Roman church around the time of Gregory I.

### QUOTATIONS

*In the time of Gregory, that ancient rule was greatly changed. For when the empire was convulsed and torn, when France and Spain were suffering from the many disasters which they ever and anon received, when Illyricum was laid waste, Italy harassed, and Africa almost destroyed by uninterrupted calamities, in order that, during these civil convulsions, the integrity of the faith might remain, or at least not entirely perish, the bishops in all quarters attached themselves more to the Roman Pontiff. In this way, not only the dignity, but also the power of the see, exceedingly increased.*

–John Calvin



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## LECTURE OUTLINE

### I. Justinian

- A. Justinian reigned over the eastern half of the Roman Empire from 527 to 565.
- B. Justinian's long and influential reign marked the transitional period in the East between the Roman era and the Byzantine era.
- C. As a Christian emperor, Justinian was determined to enforce the orthodoxy and uniformity of the churches throughout his empire.
  - i. He sought to stamp out the Monophysite heresy, which claimed that Christ had one unified nature instead of both a distinct Divine nature and a distinct human nature.
  - ii. He launched a massive church building program that built the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, the Basilica of Saint John in Ephesus, and many other magnificent places of worship.
  - iii. He reduced the influence of paganism by closing the Platonic Academy in Athens in 529.
- D. Justinian's legal reforms codified Roman law and established the foundation of medieval legal theory.
- E. Justinian sponsored several military campaigns with the intention of restoring the empire to its ancient boundaries.
  - i. He successfully waged war against the Sassanids in Persia, the Vandals in northern Africa, and the Goths in Italy.
  - ii. In the Roman territories that he recaptured, Justinian was seen more as a foreign invader than as a returning liberator.
- F. Justinian's reign revealed a growing separation between the eastern and western inhabitants of the former Roman Empire.

### II. Gregory I

- A. The Papal reign of Gregory I, or Gregory the Great, marks the time when the papacy began to emerge as an independent and influential authority in Western Europe.
  - i. As the imperial government and structures faded in the West, many people turned to the Bishop of Rome for leadership and stability.
  - ii. The papacy represented an important point of continuity between the Roman past and the uncertain future.
  - iii. During this time of transition, Gregory significantly increased the authority and influence of the papal office.
- B. Gregory was born around 540 to an ancient and affluent Roman family.
- C. Drawn to the monastic lifestyle, Gregory gave away his wealth and converted his ancestral home into a monastery.
- D. Between 579-585, Gregory served as a papal representative in the imperial court in Constantinople.
- E. Gregory was chosen to ascend to the papacy in 590, and he served in this role until his death in 604.

- i. Although he longed for a life of private prayer and study, he reluctantly agreed to become the bishop of Rome.
- ii. During his fourteen-year reign as Pope, he profoundly shaped the theology, institutions, and life of the church.
- F. Gregory is remembered as one of the four great doctors of the Western church.
  - i. The other three were Jerome, Augustine, and Ambrose.
  - ii. While Gregory did not possess the same theological prowess of the other three, he stood out as an administrator, organizer, and spokesman of the emerging mind of the medieval church.
- G. Gregory was an early harbinger of the medieval church's departure from Augustine's understanding of grace.
  - i. While the medieval church had greatly profited from the theology of Augustine, the medieval clergy did not always follow his teachings on the finer points of theology.
    - ii. Although Augustine had emphasized salvation by grace alone, many of the later medieval Augustinians embraced a view of salvation by grace alone mostly.
      - 1. This viewpoint affirms with Augustine that it is only by grace that a person can be saved.
      - 2. This view differs from Augustine on how a person receives and retains grace.
      - 3. This view places a responsibility on the individual to make appropriate use of the grace that God gives.
      - 4. A person receives grace in baptism and, through constant use of confession and the sacraments, progresses through the Christian life.
    - iii. The theology of Gregory and his successors envisioned all of the Christian life as a fearful struggle to hold on to grace and seek God's forgiveness for the sins one continues to commit.
      - 1. Uncertainty over one's own salvation motivated a person to keep struggling and laboring in search of more grace.
      - 2. Because God's grace was believed to be attained through a measure of cooperation, it was never a grace that was stable or secure.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In order to protect the purity and uniformity of Christianity, Justinian tried to stamp out the \_\_\_\_\_ heresy.
  - a. Pelagian
  - b. Monophysite
  - c. Arian
  - d. Nestorian

2. Justinian's accomplishments as emperor included all of the following except:
  - a. The expansion of the empire's borders through military conquest
  - b. The construction of the Hagia Sophia and other churches
  - c. The reunification of the eastern and western Roman Empires
  - d. The codification of Roman laws into a unified legal system
  
3. As the imperial government and structures faded, many people in the West began looking to \_\_\_\_\_ for leadership and stability.
  - a. Augustine
  - b. Justinian
  - c. The barbarian tribes
  - d. The bishop of Rome
  
4. Out of the four doctors of the early medieval church, Gregory the Great possessed the greatest theological prowess.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
5. Although Gregory the Great was not familiar with Augustine's writings, his understanding of salvation by faith alone was virtually identical to Augustine's understanding.
  - a. True
  - b. False

#### BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did the reign of Justinian affect the relationship between the eastern and western portions of the Roman Empire?
  
2. Where does the title "Pope" come from? How has this title been used in the history of the church?
  
3. What were the similarities and differences between the Augustinian view of salvation by faith and the Gregorian view of salvation by faith? Why is this significant?
  
4. Gregory the Great wrote that it is good for Christians to doubt their salvation so that they will be diligent instead of presumptuous in their relationship with God. What do you think Gregory was trying to guard against? What was the actual result of this doctrine?

## 3

# Gregory, Missions, & Islam

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Around 600, as Gregory I labored in Rome for the growth and development of Christianity in Western Europe, an Arabian trader named Muhammad began to wrestle with religious questions and arrive at answers that were very different from the teachings of the Christian church. Though neither knew it, each man's influence would extend far beyond his lifetime: Gregory's, through the missionary efforts that would bring all of Europe under Christian influence; and Muhammad's, through the zeal of his followers who would establish Islam as a major religion. As the sixth century transitioned into the seventh, events were being set in motion that would profoundly influence the political, cultural, and religious landscape of Europe and the Mediterranean world.

### SCRIPTURE READINGS

Matthew 28:18-20; John 14:6

### TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To describe some of the positive contributions made by Gregory I, particularly in the areas of preaching and missions.
2. To indicate ways in which the medieval church both followed and departed from the legacy of Gregory I.
3. To describe the origins and rapid spread of Islam.
4. To explain some of the most important beliefs and practices in Islam.

### QUOTATIONS

*Almighty God places good men in authority that He may impart through them the gifts of His mercy to their subjects. And this we find to be the case with the British over whom*

*you have been appointed to rule, that through the blessings bestowed on you the blessings of heaven might be bestowed on your people.*

–Pope Gregory I to the king of England

*There is but one God, and Muhammad is his prophet.*

–Islam’s central confession

*For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ.*

–1 Timothy 2:5

## LECTURE OUTLINE

### I. Gregory I and Intellectual Precursors to Purgatory

- A. Repentance was central to Gregory’s understanding of the Christian life.
  - i. Christians ought always to recognize their own sinfulness and seek God’s grace.
  - ii. Human sin is so pervasive that it may not be completely defeated in this life.
- B. Gregory’s doctrine of ongoing repentance suggested the possibility of finally conquering sin through suffering beyond this present life.
  - i. Gregory admitted the possibility of purification by fire after death and before the final judgment.
  - ii. However, he did not actually formulate a doctrine of purgatory or envision a formal intermediate state of fiery cleansing where believers would go after death.
  - iii. Gregory’s writings contain certain strands of thought which would be included in the Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory centuries later.

### II. Gregory I and the Centrality of Preaching

- A. In his work entitled *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, he identified preaching as a primary responsibility of the clergy.
- B. Gregory held this focus on preaching in common with John Chrysostom and other leading pastors in the early church.
- C. After the time of Gregory, the medieval church would progressively reduce its emphasis upon preaching.
  - i. Because of the declining level of education among the clergy as a whole, the Middle Ages became a period of decline in preaching also.
  - ii. Because uneducated parish clergy could still memorize liturgy and administer the mass, the sacraments came to occupy the central position in medieval worship.
- D. The medieval decline in preaching occurred in spite of, not because of, Gregory’s influence.

### III. Gregory I and Christian Missions

- A. Of all the church leaders of the post-apostolic and medieval eras, Gregory was one of the most active sponsors of missionary activity.
- B. Gregory was aware that significant portions of Northwestern Europe had not yet been successfully evangelized.
- C. As pope, Gregory launched missionary efforts in England under the leadership of Augustine of Kent.
  - i. Because Canterbury was the center of Augustine's missionary work, the archbishop of England became known as the Archbishop of Canterbury.
  - ii. As a result of Gregory's initiative, England gained a lasting Christian heritage and became a base for sending out missionaries to other parts of northern Europe.
- D. Throughout the Middle Ages, there was a sense of urgency for the church to respond to the challenges posed by other religious groups.
  - i. Many areas in Europe remained under pagan influence during the early Middle Ages.
  - ii. Although Arianism had been officially condemned by the church, the heretical Arian movement was still popular among many people groups.
  - iii. The birth of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century ushered in new challenges for Christian leadership.

### IV. The Rise of Islam

- A. Muhammad was born in Mecca around 570.
- B. In the early 600s, he claimed to have received divine inspiration and began to speak publicly against the predominant paganism of his day.
- C. Muhammad taught a strict adherence to monotheism.
  - i. He rejected the pagan belief in many deities and the Christian doctrine that God is three in one.
  - ii. He taught that God, "Allah" in Arabic, is exclusively one.
- D. Though he had gained some followers, he was forced to flee from Mecca to Medina in 622.
- E. After his movement had gathered strength in Medina, he returned to Mecca victoriously around 630.
- F. After Muhammad's death in 632, the movement spread quickly throughout Arabia and beyond.

### V. The Spread of Islam

- A. Within 21 years of Muhammad's death, his movement covered as much territory as the Roman Empire had once ruled.
- B. After expanding to include what is now the Middle East, Islam spread south and west along North Africa.
- C. During the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Islam advanced into Western Europe before being gradually driven back.

- i. Muslim forces crossed into the Iberian peninsula in 711, established Islamic rule in modern Spain and Portugal, and began campaigns to expand into France.
  - ii. The Muslim invasion of France ended in 732 with the Frankish victory at the Battle of Tours.
  - iii. Over the next several centuries, Christian forces in Spain gradually advanced until they succeeded in recapturing the last Muslim outpost in 1492.
- D. During the 9<sup>th</sup> century, Islam spread east into Persia, Pakistan, and India.
- E. Europe lived in fear of Islam entering from the East until the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- i. After centuries of conflict with the Turks, the Byzantine Empire was defeated at the capture of Constantinople in 1453.
  - ii. Turkish forces advanced into Southeastern Europe and attempted to invade Central Europe several times.
  - iii. After the defeat of the Turks near Vienna in 1683, Muslim influence in Eastern Europe began to recede.

## VI. The Teachings of Islam

- A. Islam's central confession is "There is but one God, and Muhammad is his prophet."
- i. In Muslim thought, the belief that Jesus is divine is tinged with polytheism.
  - ii. According to Islam, Jesus was a prophet of God who has been superseded by the greatest and final prophet, Muhammad.
  - iii. The Allah of Islam is primarily conceived in terms of power, transcendence, and greatness, rather than in terms of goodness, love, encouragement, or support.
  - iv. The essence of Islam is service and submission to this high and exalted deity.
- B. The holy book of Islam is the Qur'an.
- i. The Qur'an is believed to contain the revelation that Muhammad received, recorded in 114 chapters, or soros.
  - ii. The Qur'an is basically poetic in character and is written as a collection of instructions or precepts, rather than a narrative or treatise with a clear, logical development.
- C. Islam means "submission," and its main moral requirements are to abide by its five pillars.
- i. Confession that Allah is the only God and that Muhammad is his prophet
  - ii. Prayer five times each day
  - iii. Giving alms to the poor
  - iv. Fasting during the month of Ramadan
  - v. If possible, making a pilgrimage to Mecca
- D. Islam is both a religion and a culture.

- i. Many Muslims are resistant to cultural changes because such changes could be seen as challenges to Islam's religious claims.
- ii. Wherever Islam spreads, it brings its set of laws and cultural values.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The theology and practices endorsed by Pope Gregory I contributed to the decline in preaching that took place during the Middle Ages.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
2. Gregory I is remembered in part for sponsoring some of the church's earliest missionary efforts in \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. England
  - b. China
  - c. The Middle East
  - d. Spain
  
3. After Muhammad and his followers were forced to flee to Mecca, they returned victoriously to Medina in 630.
  - c. True
  - d. False
  
4. In addition to Columbus' voyage, what else took place in 1492?
  - a. Muslim forces unsuccessfully attacked Vienna.
  - b. Muslims recaptured Jerusalem, and the Crusades ended.
  - c. The Byzantine city of Constantinople was captured by the Turks.
  - d. The last Muslim stronghold in Spain returned to Christian rule.
  
5. The word "Islam" means \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Allah is great
  - b. True righteousness
  - c. Submission
  - d. Allah is one

### BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the decline in preaching that occurred in the Middle Ages. What factors contributed to this decline?
  
2. What factors placed pressure on Christian leaders to sustain and spread the Christian faith during the early Middle Ages?



3. You are meeting a friend for lunch, and the topic of Islam comes up. Your friend tells you that there are no significant differences between Islam and Christianity. What would you say in response?
  
4. Dr. Godfrey observed that Islam is both a religion and a culture. Do you think it is accurate to say that Christianity is both a religion and a culture? Why or why not?

## 4

# Paths to God: Theologies

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The early centuries of church history stand out as a time of striking unity. It is unrealistic to look upon this time as a golden age of Christianity due to the many challenges it faced from both within and without. Yet, for several hundred years the church in the Roman world managed to maintain a united stance and respond to challenges with one voice. As time passed, certain cultural, theological, and organizational differences began to test the bonds between east and west. Torn apart by the effects of new controversies and old rivalries, the medieval church eventually found itself to be irrevocably divided.

### SCRIPTURE READINGS

John 17:22-23; Philippians 2:1-11; Exodus 20:4-6

### TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To survey several theological issues which may seem minor, but which were important for shaping the mind of the church and affecting its unity.
2. To examine the historical discussion on Monothelitism and its implications for contemporary Roman Catholicism.
3. To describe the “filioque” controversy and identify the power struggle that was taking place between eastern and western churches.
4. To explain the origins, events, and outcome of the iconoclast movement and its relevance to similar movements in church history.

### QUOTATIONS

*The Greek and Latin churches were never organically united under one government, but differed considerably from the beginning in nationality, language, and various*

*ceremonies. These differences, however, did not interfere with the general harmony of faith and Christian life, nor prevent cooperation against common foes. As long and as far as the genuine spirit of Christianity directed them, the diversity was an element of strength to the common cause...When once the two churches were alienated in spirit and engaged in an unchristian race for supremacy, all the little doctrinal and ritualistic differences which had existed long before, assumed an undue weight, and were branded as heresies and crimes.*

–Philip Schaff

## LECTURE OUTLINE

### I. Monothelitism

- A. This controversy settled the last remaining issue in the question of how Jesus Christ’s human and divine natures related to one another.
  - i. At the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the church had reached a unified understanding that Jesus was one person who united both a complete divine nature and a complete human nature.
  - ii. In the aftermath of Chalcedon, some Christians feared that claiming that Christ had two distinct natures came dangerously close to dividing Him into two separate persons.
  - iii. Monothelitism was an attempt to resolve this unsettled tension by explaining how two distinct natures can be united.
- B. Monothelitism claimed that Jesus had one will that united His two natures into one person.
- C. Dyothelitism, on the other hand, responded by stating that Jesus had a distinct divine will and a distinct human will.
- D. At the Third Council of Constantinople in 681, the church declared Monothelitism to be a heresy.
  - i. The church concluded that the will is an essential part of a person’s nature.
  - ii. To be both fully divine and fully human, therefore, Jesus must have had both a divine will and a human will.
- E. This controversy is problematic for the Roman Catholic doctrine of papal infallibility.
  - i. Prior to the Third Council of Constantinople, Pope Honorius I openly endorsed Monothelitism as the official doctrine of the church.
  - ii. Because of his belief in Monothelitism, the Third Council of Constantinople actually condemned Honorius I for heresy.
  - iii. This instance of a pope openly embracing heresy poses a direct challenge to the doctrine of papal infallibility that was adopted by the First Vatican Council in the late nineteenth century.
- F. Because both the eastern and western churches rejected Monothelitism, this controversy temporarily united them.

## II. The Filioque Controversy

- A. This debate was sparked by the issue of which form of the Nicene Creed the church should use.
  - i. At the First Council of Nicea in 325, the church had responded to the Arian challenge by affirming that Jesus was the true and eternal God who had come in the flesh.
  - ii. The Nicene Creed originally ended with the statement “And we believe in the Holy Spirit.”
  - iii. As a result of the First Council of Constantinople, the Creed was updated as the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed.
    - 1. The new statement on the Holy Spirit was “And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.”
    - 2. The revised statement affirmed the divinity of the Father, Son, and the Spirit and described the relationship among them.
  - iv. In order to emphasize the full divinity of Jesus Christ, western church leaders added the Latin word “filioque,” which changed the wording of the creed to “...who proceeds from the Father *and from the Son...*”
- B. The underlying issue in this debate was who had the authority to establish the text of a creed.
  - i. Eastern churchmen objected that the western leaders had acted improperly by attempting to change an ecumenical creed without calling an ecumenical council.
  - ii. Westerners responded by stating that their version of the creed was most faithful to Scripture and was most honoring to Christ.
  - iii. Because not much was at stake theologically, the true reason for the elevated tension was most likely that each side claimed that its leader had the right to make an authoritative decision.
- C. This controversy contributed to the rivalry that was developing between the pope in Rome and the patriarch of Constantinople.
  - i. Eventually, each of these officials would excommunicate the other.
  - ii. The Great Schism of 1054 separated the eastern and western churches, which have operated independently of one another ever since.

## III. Iconoclasm

- A. This debate focused on the legitimacy of using icons, or images, in the church.
- B. Though there is no evidence that the earliest Christians used religious images, icons became increasingly prominent in eastern churches.
  - i. Until the fifth century, theologians taught that images should not be used to stimulate Christian worship.
  - ii. Increasingly, common people came to find images to be helpful and encouraging in their private devotion.

- iii. Eventually, the private use of icons contributed to their corporate use in many churches.
  - iv. Those who supported the veneration of icons were called iconodules or iconophiles, while those who sought to remove the icons were called iconoclasts.
- C. During the eighth and ninth centuries, official policies shifted between favoring the iconoclasts and favoring the iconodules and iconophiles.
- i. In the eighth century, certain Byzantine emperors, such as Leo III and Constantine V, tried to combat the practice of venerating icons.
  - ii. After the death of Leo IV, his widow called the Second Council of Nicea, which in 817 approved the use of images for both corporate and private use.
  - iii. Following a period of icon use, Leo V reinstated iconoclasm.
  - iv. Imperial policies shifted for the final time under Theodora, who restored the practice of icon veneration in 843.
- D. The western churches did not accept the use of icons, and this issue became an additional wedge of separation between east and west.
- E. Ironically, the western church eventually adopted the veneration of images.
- i. The western church went as far as to use statues, while the eastern church only used flat images.
  - ii. The western church, however, did not insist on the necessity of images with the same ferocity as the eastern church.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Those who embraced Monothelitism argued that Jesus Christ had \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. One will and two natures
  - b. One will and one nature
  - c. One nature and two wills
  - d. One nature in two persons
2. To the chagrin of those who defend the doctrine of papal infallibility, \_\_\_\_\_ openly taught Monothelitism before it was condemned as a heretical view.
  - a. Emperor Constantine
  - b. Honorius I
  - c. Gregory I
  - d. The Apostle Peter
3. Eastern church leaders objected to the West's addition to the Nicene Creed by insisting that an ecumenical creed should never be changed.
  - a. True
  - b. False

4. Church leaders in the West saw the iconoclastic movement as a threat to their own veneration of images.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
5. All of the following factors except \_\_\_\_\_ contributed to the alienation that took place between eastern and western churches.
  - a. The ongoing power struggle between the bishop of Rome and the patriarch of Constantinople
  - b. The addition of the phrase “filioque” to the Nicene Creed in the West
  - c. The issue of the veneration of icons
  - d. The debate over Monothelitism

#### BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between saying that Jesus has one will and saying that Jesus has two wills? Why is this important?
  
2. What was really at stake in the “filioque” controversy? How did this episode in history affect the relationship between churches in the East and in the West?
  
3. How does the iconoclast controversy demonstrate the power of popular piety movements? In what ways have churches around you been driven by popular piety instead of formal theology?
  
4. What do you think about religious artwork? What does the Bible say about the kind of art that can and cannot be made? What does the Bible say about how artwork is to be used? How do these principles apply to the church’s worship?

# Church Power and Dissent

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

As the Middle Ages progressed, the Roman Catholic Church became one of the most powerful institutions in Western Europe. People responded to the church's growing influence in a number of ways. Many supported the church, considering it to be God's ordained means of governing medieval society. Certain political figures voiced opposition to the church's influence, contending that the Pope's authority was over spiritual matters and that he had no right to interfere in politics and other societal affairs. Others, especially the common people, expressed their concern over corrupt practices and mistaken beliefs that were becoming increasingly common within certain sectors of the church. While the twelfth century represented the height of the church's power, it also foreshadowed dramatic changes that would take place centuries later.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Matthew 22:15-22; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:12-17

## TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To describe the delicate interplay between church and state in medieval society.
2. To examine instances of conflict between monarchs and church officials and explain the outcomes of these clashes.
3. To discuss several movements in which common people dissented from the established practices and teachings of the church.
4. To encourage reflection about the role of the church within the surrounding culture.

## QUOTATIONS

*Thou, therefore, damned by this curse and by the judgment of all our bishops and by our own, descend and relinquish the apostolic chair which thou hast usurped. Let another ascend the throne of St. Peter, who shall not practise violence under the cloak of religion, but shall teach the sound doctrine of St. Peter. I Henry, king by the grace of God, do say unto thee, together with all our bishops: Descend, descend, to be damned throughout the ages.*

–Emperor Henry IV to Pope Gregory VII,  
In response to Gregory’s attempt to excommunicate  
him and depose him from the throne

*There are two principles by which the world is ruled: the authority of priests and the royal power. The authority of priests is the greater because God will demand an accounting of them even in regard to kings.*

–Archbishop Thomas Becket to Henry II,  
In response to Henry’s efforts to  
exercise control over the church

## LECTURE OUTLINE

- I. The *Donation of Constantine* and its Legacy
  - A. This document was believed to have been authored in the fourth century by Constantine.
  - B. According to this document, Constantine had handed over rule of the western half of his empire to the Bishop of Rome.
  - C. As a result of this document, the church claimed that Western Europe ought to be governed by the papacy.
  - D. In the fifteenth century, church officials determined that this document was in fact a fraud that was forged in the mid eighth century, perhaps to support the Pope in his negotiations with the early Frankish monarchs.
  - E. For several centuries, however, the *Donation of Constantine* was cited repeatedly in support of papal involvement in Europe’s political affairs.
- II. Charlemagne of the Frankish Empire
  - A. The newly “discovered” *Donation of Constantine* legitimated Pope Leo III’s act of crowning Charlemagne in 800.
  - B. Pleased to be recognized as the rightful successor to the Roman emperors, Charlemagne was less enthused about the notion that his own right to rule came from the church instead of from his ancestry and military accomplishments.
- III. Otto I of the Holy Roman Empire
  - A. Otto the Great became Holy Roman Emperor in 962 and claimed that his own authority surpassed that of the pope.



- B. Otto intervened directly in church affairs, on multiple occasions replacing popes who did not support his policies with new popes of his choosing.
- C. Otto favored the system of caesaropapism that existed in the Byzantine Empire, and he sought to employ the same principles to his situation.
  - i. In the East, the emperor occupied the dominant position in the political, social, and religious hierarchy.
  - ii. The Byzantine emperor exercised pope-like authority by calling church councils and appointing and removing church officials.

#### IV. Henry IV of the Holy Roman Empire

- A. The events of Henry's reign marked a dramatic chapter in what came to be known as the Investiture Controversy.
- B. Henry IV ruled when Gregory VII was Pope.
  - i. During his papal reign (1073-1085), Gregory dedicated himself to reform in the church.
    - 1. He supported the power of the papacy.
    - 2. He fought against corruption in the church.
    - 3. He advocated more rigorous standards of conduct and lifestyle for church officials.
    - 4. He desired to protect the clergy from lay interference.
  - ii. Particularly, Gregory VII resisted lay involvement in the selection and investiture of church officials.
    - 1. Investiture was the formal act of giving a new official a ring and staff as the symbols of office.
    - 2. Gregory believed that, since all positions were ultimately given by God, clergy should be invested with authority by the church and not by the secular rulers.
    - 3. Gregory's stance on this issue led him to clash with powerful monarchs such as William of England, Philip I of France, and Emperor Henry IV.
- C. In 1076 and 1077, Henry and Gregory became openly hostile toward one another.
  - i. When Pope Gregory appointed a new bishop to serve within the Holy Roman Empire, Henry ignored the pope's decision and appointed his own bishop.
  - ii. Gregory responded to Henry's defiance by excommunicating him from the church.
  - iii. Henry, in turn, gathered a synod of German bishops and deposed Gregory as pope.
- D. Taking advantage of Henry's disfavor with the pope, several German nobles attempted to replace Henry as emperor.
- E. Henry, sensing he was politically vulnerable, travelled to Gregory's residence in Canossa to make amends.
  - i. In an act of penitence, Henry waited barefoot in the snow for three days in order to ask for Gregory's forgiveness.

- ii. Since Gregory was required to absolve anyone who asked for forgiveness, he reluctantly forgave and restored Henry.
  - iii. While Henry's contrition may have appeared as a symbolic victory for the papacy, his restoration enabled him to consolidate his power to use against Gregory later.
- F. After quelling the rebellious nobles, Henry marched on Rome in 1081, forcibly deposed Gregory, and appointed a new pope.
- G. Gregory died in exile in 1085.

#### V. Henry II of England

- A. When the archbishop of Canterbury died in 1162, Henry appointed his friend Thomas Becket to be the new archbishop.
- i. Henry selected Becket because he wanted the new archbishop to support his royal policies and back them with the authority of the church.
  - ii. Although Becket was not a priest, Henry had him rapidly ordained as a priest, bishop, and archbishop.
- B. As time passed, Henry and Becket came to oppose one another.
- i. Becket sought to protect the church from the king's interference.
  - ii. Becket began to excommunicate church officials who supported Henry's policies.
- C. Thomas Becket was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170.
- i. Enraged by Becket's defiance, Henry uttered an angry comment against the archbishop.
  - ii. Interpreting this comment as an order to execute Becket, some of the king's knights rode to Canterbury and killed the archbishop.
- D. In the resulting scandal, Henry II consented to do penance by being publicly beaten.
- E. Shortly after his death, Becket was canonized St. Thomas á Becket.
- i. A shrine was erected in Canterbury Cathedral in his honor.
  - ii. This shrine was a major destination for pilgrims for several centuries before its destruction by Henry VIII.

#### VI. Dissenting Viewpoints

- A. This competition between church and state for primacy in medieval society fostered protest from many people who objected to the church's quest for power and influence.
- B. Monasticism offered a different vision for the church.
- i. Monastic communities emphasized leaving behind one's family, property, and worldly values in order to focus exclusively on God.
  - ii. Eventually, many monastic orders were given so much wealth that their focus on simple living was exchanged for luxury, sloth and laxity.
  - iii. New voices would call for reform and for a return to the monastic ideals of poverty, moral rigor, and spiritual discipline.

- iv. However, most monastic reform focused more on behavior than belief, offering moral answers to doctrinal problems.
- C. The Cathari, or Albigensians, were one of the first groups to protest against the church's doctrine.
  - i. They rejected the use of sacraments.
  - ii. They embraced a dualistic doctrine that led to radical asceticism.
  - iii. Due to its heretical views, this movement was eventually stamped out.
- D. The followers of Peter Waldo, or Waldensians, also became a widespread movement.
  - i. This group emphasized study of the Bible, personal discipleship, and a simple lifestyle.
  - ii. Though not heretical, the Waldensians were seen as dangerous to the power and authority of the Roman Catholic Church.
  - iii. In the sixteenth century, the remaining communities of Waldensians eventually joined the Reformation churches.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Charlemagne referred to the *Donation of Constantine* in order to support his claim to rule as the rightful successor to the Roman emperors.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. In the Eastern system of caesaropapism, \_\_\_\_\_ occupied the dominant position in the social and religious hierarchies.
  - a. The Byzantine emperor
  - b. The pope
  - c. The patriarch of Constantinople
  - d. The council of bishops
3. In his desire to protect the church from the influence of laymen and the secular authorities, Pope Gregory VII clashed with all of the following rulers except \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. William of England
  - b. Henry II of England
  - c. Henry IV of the Holy Roman Empire
  - d. Philip I of France
4. After his death, the shrine of Thomas á Becket in Canterbury became a major destination for medieval pilgrims.
  - a. True
  - b. False

5. The \_\_\_\_\_ reform movement focused primarily on reforming the church from a moral standpoint.
  - a. Albigensian
  - b. Caesaropapist
  - c. Monastic
  - d. Waldensian

#### BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the key issues that marked the wondrous century? Why were these issues important? What do they indicate about this time period?
2. What was the significance of Henry IV's act of penance at Canossa? How did the conflict between Henry and the Pope end?
3. What do you think about the church's quest for power and influence during the wondrous century? What was admirable about the church's role in society? What was problematic? How can this period in history inform the way we live today?
4. Which movement(s) saw the church's need for reform as a doctrinal need, and which movement(s) saw it as a moral need? Why are both of these areas important?

## 6

# The Crusades

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Few incidents in the history of the church are as controversial as the Crusades. The tragic loss of life that resulted from this movement has, sadly, discredited the Christian faith in the eyes of many. Today, Christians are sometimes uncertain about how they should view or react to this chapter in history. In this lecture, Dr. Godfrey will offer valuable insight about how Christians can best understand and learn from this dramatic period in the church's past.

### SCRIPTURE READINGS

Matthew 5:2-16; Ephesians 6:10-18

### TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss some of the factors that led to the Crusades.
2. To describe the role that faith played in the crusading mindset.
3. To outline many of the most important people, events, and places in the history of the Crusades.
4. To offer a balanced and realistic look at the era of the Crusades, avoiding the tendencies to romanticize, villainize, or ignore what took place.

### QUOTATIONS

*Let this then be your war-cry in combat, because this word is given to you by God. When an armed attack is made upon the enemy, let this one cry be raised by all the soldiers of God: It is the will of God! It is the will of God!*

–Pope Urban II

*Indeed, if you had been there you would have seen our feet colored to our ankles with the blood of the slain. But what more shall I relate? None of them were left alive; neither women nor children were spared.*

–Fulcher of Chartres,  
describing the capture of Jerusalem by the crusaders in 1099

## LECTURE OUTLINE

### I. Understanding the Crusades

- A. The Crusades represent a radical break with previous Christian history.
  - i. In medieval Europe, Christians typically went to war for secular reasons.
  - ii. Although some Christians might have perceived military service as a means of serving God, they fought for the state, not the church.
  - iii. With the coming of the crusading ideal, Christians accepted the idea of using force to advance the church and the cause of Christ.
- B. The Crusades had a deeply religious and apocalyptic character.
  - i. The motivation for Crusades is often described in terms of political ambition, economic greed, pursuit of absolution from purgatory, violent warmongering, and a desire to avenge the loss of Christian territory.
  - ii. While many of these elements were factors in the crusading movement, genuine piety also played a significant role.
- C. Historian Jay Rubenstein argues that at the deepest level the Crusades were driven by an apocalyptic expectation.
  - i. It was widely taught that the events surrounding the end of time would take place in Jerusalem.
  - ii. By rallying around the cause of liberating Jerusalem, Christians could perhaps hasten the coming of Christ.
  - iii. The crusading ideal emerged around 1100, a millennium after the time of Christ.
  - iv. The medieval appreciation for Jesus' birth as the central point in history contributed to the anticipation of His triumphant return at the end of the millennium.
- D. Many supported the Crusades out of a desire to keep Jerusalem available to Christian pilgrims.
  - i. For centuries, the practice of religious pilgrimage had been a common way of expressing piety.
  - ii. One way to grow in personal holiness was through visiting holy sites.
  - iii. Jerusalem was a particularly special destination for pilgrims due to its significance in ancient Israel; the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus; and the birth of the Christian church.
    - 1. Since the time of Constantine, Christians had regularly made pilgrimages to Jerusalem, even after Muslims captured the city in the seventh century.
    - 2. In the eleventh century, reports began to circulate in Europe that the

Muslims were hindering Christian pilgrims in their efforts to visit the holy sites.

- iv. There was a growing eschatological conviction that Christians ought to go and win back the Holy City for Christ.
- E. In 1095, these growing factors released a burst of energy and passion directed toward the recapture of Jerusalem.
  - i. The Byzantine emperor had written to the pope requesting military aid against the Turks.
  - ii. At the Council of Clermont, Pope Urban II responded by calling Western Europe to action against the Turkish threat in the Holy Land.
  - iii. Thousands of Christians from all walks of life responded by embarking upon a military expedition to Palestine, later called a “crusade,” meaning “way of the Cross.”

## II. The First Crusade

- A. In response to Urban II’s passionate appeal, armies from several Western European countries began the march toward Palestine in 1096.
- B. Due to internal strife among the Muslim leaders, the crusaders met with extraordinary success.
  - i. The crusading armies captured Antioch on June 3, 1098, and Jerusalem on July 15, 1099.
  - ii. The violent slaughter of the inhabitants of Jerusalem greatly damaged the relationship between Christians and Muslims.
- C. When the crusaders consolidated their territorial gains into four states, Godfrey de Bouillon became king of the newly established Kingdom of Jerusalem.

## III. The Second Crusade

- A. Muslim forces captured the crusader city of Edessa in 1144.
- B. Pope Eugene III called for a new wave of crusaders to strengthen the Christian presence in the Holy Land.
- C. The crusaders, led by the French king and the Holy Roman Emperor, were poorly coordinated and were attacked and defeated by Muslim forces before they could achieve any significant victory.
- D. When a desperate attempt to capture Damascus ended in failure, the crusading army returned home in humiliation.

## IV. The Third Crusade

- A. By the late twelfth century, the Muslims had recovered from their initial defeats and had united under the leadership of Saladin.
- B. Saladin’s army recaptured Jerusalem and many surrounding cities from Christian forces in 1187.
- C. In 1189, a new European army marched toward Jerusalem with the intent of retaking the city.

- D. This crusade is perhaps the most famous, led by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, King Philip Augustus of France, and Richard Lionheart of England.
- E. Although the Third Crusade failed to recapture Jerusalem, the crusaders recaptured some territory from Saladin and negotiated a treaty that would protect Christian pilgrims.

#### V. The Fourth Crusade

- A. Around 1200, another crusade was launched with the goal of retaking Jerusalem by an attack from the sea.
- B. The crusaders had contracted with Venice to provide a fleet for their army, but were unable to pay the entire fee.
- C. In order to cover their losses, the Venetians sought to benefit financially from the political turmoil in Constantinople.
  - i. At that time, the Byzantine court was divided by a dispute over who was the rightful heir to the throne.
  - ii. The Venetians agreed to sell their military power to one of the rivals to the throne.
- D. When this plan did not work, the crusaders attacked and plundered Constantinople.
- E. Rather than advance the crusading cause, this crusade permanently weakened the Byzantine Empire.

#### VI. Subsequent Crusades

- A. In 1229, Emperor Frederick II achieved temporary Christian rule of Jerusalem by negotiating with the sultan of Egypt.
- B. The final recapture of Jerusalem by Muslim forces in 1244 marked the beginning of the end for the Crusades.
- C. Europeans continued to launch crusading efforts until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, but with little success.

#### VII. The Aftermath of the Crusades

- A. The crusades stand out as a curious and tragic development in the history of Western Christendom.
  - i. They represent an unprecedented level of collaboration among the many monarchs who united in a common cause.
  - ii. The ill-founded belief that Christians had the right to advance the cause of Christ by the sword led to bitter and bloody consequences.
- B. The violent legacy of the Crusades has placed a stain upon Christianity in the eyes of many, especially Muslims.
- C. The Crusades both illustrate and contribute to problems and challenges that face the church today.



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## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. According to Dr. Godfrey, the Crusades were motivated by primarily \_\_\_\_\_ concerns.
  - a. Colonializing
  - b. Apocalyptic
  - c. Economic
  - d. Political
2. During the centuries before the Crusades, the Muslims had not allowed any Christian pilgrims to enter Jerusalem.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. At the Council of Clermont in 1095, Pope \_\_\_\_\_ urged Christians to liberate Jerusalem from Muslim rule.
  - a. Leo X
  - b. Gregory VII
  - c. Innocent III
  - d. Urban II
4. Which of the following crusades succeeded in capturing Jerusalem?
  - a. The First Crusade
  - b. The Second Crusade
  - c. The Third Crusade
  - d. The Fourth Crusade
5. Although the Crusades failed to keep Jerusalem in Christian hands, they succeeded in strengthening the Byzantine Empire against the Turkish threat.
  - a. True
  - b. False

## BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the factors that contributed to the Crusades? According to Dr. Godfrey, which factor is most important? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
2. Church history contains numerous instances when Christians believed that the end of the world was about to take place during their lifetimes. What were some of the reasons that medieval Christians thought the world might end around 1000? How were apocalyptic expectations then similar to apocalyptic expectations today? How were they different?

3. Like Christians today, medieval Christians prized the opportunity to travel to Jerusalem and other historic sites of the faith. What are some of the benefits of traveling to places like these? How might we sometimes set unrealistic expectations for these types of experiences?
4. What were the immediate results of the Crusades? In what ways is the impact of the Crusades still felt today?

# 7

## Innocent III

### MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

So far we have studied several notable events and movements that took place in the high Middle Ages. In addition to being an era of significant social, political, and cultural developments, this era also marked an important chapter in the theology, practices, and influence of the church. In this lecture, Dr. Godfrey will examine the life and time of Pope Innocent III as a case study in what the medieval church believed and how it functioned during the wondrous twelfth century.

### SCRIPTURE READINGS

Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-23; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

### TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the ways in which art and architecture communicate theology.
2. To introduce the figure of Pope Innocent III as an illustration of the power of the papacy at its zenith.
3. To discuss the historical background and subsequent influence of the Magna Carta.
4. To survey major steps in the development of the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation.

### QUOTATIONS

*John, the king of England, our dearest and illustrious son in Christ, has greatly offended God and church, and we have excommunicated him and placed his kingdom under ecclesiastical interdict. Under the inspiration of Him who does not wish the death of a sinner but a conversion that the sinner may live, he has now had a change of heart. He has humbly rendered satisfaction to God and the Church.*

–Pope Innocent III,  
In response to King John's submission to papal authority

*There is indeed one universal church of the faithful, outside of which nobody at all is saved, in which Jesus Christ is both priest and sacrifice. His body and blood are truly contained in the sacrament of the altar under the forms of bread and wine, the bread and wine having been changed in substance, by God's power, into his body and blood, so that in order to achieve this mystery of unity we receive from God what he received from us.*

–Fourth Lateran Council,  
excerpt from Canon 1

## LECTURE OUTLINE

### I. The Apex of the Church's Power

- A. The twelfth century represented a time of significant accomplishments, when the authority and influence of the church reached its highest point.
- B. The architecture of the 1100s illustrates the developments that were taking place in the church.
  - i. In the early Middle Ages, most cathedrals had been constructed in the Romanesque style.
    1. Romanesque church buildings featured thick walls and low arches.
    2. Because walls were thick and windows were few, church interiors tended to be dark.
    3. The mood within these places of worship tended to be weighty, solemn, and mysterious.
  - ii. During the high Middle Ages, Europe's great cathedrals were built in the Gothic style.
    1. Architectural innovations enabled church buildings to reach new heights with columns, buttresses, and pointed arches.
    2. Exterior flying buttresses enabled thinner walls with an abundance of stained glass windows.
    3. Worship spaces were filled with light and seemed to extend upward into the heavens.
    4. The mood within the cathedral became one of beauty, reverence, and awe.
    5. In both cities and villages, the cathedral's towering spire became the dominant structure, reminding the community of God's majesty and might.
  - iii. Architecture, therefore, became a powerful expression of the church's theology during the wondrous century and beyond.
- C. During this age of grandeur, the papacy also reached the height of its influence and authority.

### II. Pope Innocent III

- A. He reigned as pope from 1198 to 1216 and referred to himself as "the Vicar of God."
- B. At this time, the papacy was at the peak of its influence, and he was considered by the church to be "the father of princes and kings and the ruler of the world" on Christ's behalf.

- i. He insisted that, as pope, he was infallible in his leadership of the church.
  - ii. He was actively involved in Western Europe's political affairs.
- C. During his years in office, Innocent III demonstrated his aptitude for international politics and his zeal for the power of the church.

### III. John of England and the Magna Carta

- A. After the death of his brother Richard the Lionheart in 1199, John ascended to the throne of England.
- B. Although he was a competent administrator, he alienated his subjects through his cruel and inflexible policies.
- C. After the death of the archbishop of Canterbury, John clashed with Pope Innocent III during the selection of the new archbishop.
  - i. Innocent rejected John's candidate and appointed a clergyman of whom John did not approve.
  - ii. Angered by what he perceived as an attack on his authority, John responded by seizing church lands in England.
- D. As a result of John's defiance, Innocent III placed England under interdict.
  - i. When a land was under interdict, no church services could be held and no sacraments could be administered.
  - ii. In effect, the entire nation was excommunicated from the church.
  - iii. When a kingdom was under interdict, the souls of its people were considered to be in jeopardy.
- E. In addition to the interdict, Innocent personally anathematized John and declared him to be deposed from the throne.
- F. Although Innocent could not physically remove John from office, his disciplinary actions toward the king placed John in a precarious political position.
  - i. Many of the English barons were opposed to John's policies.
  - ii. The pope's pronouncements could easily be used by John's political opponents to prompt armed resistance to his rule.
- G. John recognized his peril and capitulated to the pope by declaring himself and England to be under the pope's rule.
- H. Still unsatisfied, the English Barons compelled John to sign the Magna Carta on June 15, 1215.
  - i. The Magna Carta, or "Great Charter," is considered to be foundational to the legal rights and liberties enjoyed in the English-speaking world.
  - ii. The provisions in the Magna Carta limited the power of the king to tax and granted his subjects the right of trial by jury.
  - iii. Historians cite the Magna Carta as a significant step in the development of the English government.

### IV. The Fourth Lateran Council and Transubstantiation

- A. Innocent III called a church council that met at the Lateran Palace in Rome in 1215.

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- B. The Fourth Lateran Council addressed key doctrinal topics and issues of reform.
  - C. One significant result of the council was the church's act of defining and adopting the doctrine of transubstantiation, the belief that the communion elements are changed into the actual body and blood of Jesus.
  - D. The question of transubstantiation had been a topic of debate in the church for centuries.
    - i. There was uncertainty over what happened to the bread and wine in the moment when the priest pronounces the words "This is my body."
    - ii. In the ninth century, Ratramnus and Radbertus had debated the significance of the communion elements.
      - 1. Ratramnus argued that the bread and wine were the body and blood of Jesus in a spiritual sense.
      - 2. Radbertus argued that the bread and wine became the literal, physical body and blood of Jesus.
      - 3. Ratramnus rooted his view in the writings of St. Augustine, but Augustine's teachings on the Eucharist did not settle the question.
    - iii. During much of the Middle Ages, therefore, both Ratramnus' and Radbertus' views were accepted within the church.
  - E. However, Innocent III wanted the church to adopt a final and official position on this issue.
    - i. The council's formulation of the doctrine of transubstantiation was rooted heavily in Aristotelian philosophy.
      - 1. Aristotle distinguished between an object's outward or material appearance and its inner form or substance.
      - 2. In the emerging Roman Catholic consensus, the outward appearance of the bread and wine remained unchanged, while the inner substance of the bread and wine was changed, or transubstantiated, into Christ's body and blood.
      - 3. Therefore, when the priest announces "This is my body, broken for you," Jesus is physically present.
    - ii. This doctrine, adopted in 1215, marks a key moment in the development of the Roman Catholic Church.
      - 1. Catholic apologists argue that Roman Catholicism began in the book of Acts.
      - 2. A case can be made, however, that Roman Catholicism did not emerge in its final state until the Council of Trent in the mid-sixteenth century.
      - 3. Many of the doctrines that are considered essential to Roman Catholic belief were adopted by Catholic leaders in response to Protestant doctrinal statements.
      - 4. In this sense, Roman Catholicism is a younger movement than Protestantism is.

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## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The emerging \_\_\_\_\_ architectural style of twelfth-century cathedrals was intended to evoke a sense of transcendence, reverence, and awe.
  - a. Romanesque
  - b. Neoclassical
  - c. Italianesque
  - d. Gothic
  
2. Which of the following statements best describes John's reign over England?
  - a. John was known as a philanthropic king who departed from Richard I's military legacy in order to sponsor art and learning.
  - b. John's harsh policies alienated him from the English people even though he was a skilled administrator.
  - c. John launched a series of legal reforms with the intention of establishing England's first parliamentary system.
  - d. Because John recognized the pope as a crucial ally, he sought to expand the church's influence in English government and society.
  
3. When a pope placed a nation under interdict, he had the ability to remove its king and other officials from office.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
4. In the ninth century, \_\_\_\_\_ had argued that Christ was present in the Eucharist in a spiritual sense, rather than a literal sense.
  - a. Hincmar
  - b. Radbertus
  - c. Augustine
  - d. Ratramnus
  
5. Although the doctrine of transubstantiation was believed and taught by many medieval Catholics, the Catholic Church did not adopt it as official doctrine until 1215.
  - a. True
  - b. False

## BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What changes took place in church architecture around the twelfth century? How did these new buildings communicate theology through architecture? Think about some modern church buildings that you have seen. What kind of theology do they communicate?

2. What was the Magna Carta? Why is this document significant?
3. What biblical and philosophical arguments might a person cite for claiming that Christ is literally, physically present in the Lord's Supper? Why is this view problematic?
4. In what ways did the western church of the twelfth century resemble the Roman Catholic Church today? How did the medieval church differ from contemporary Roman Catholicism?



# Monasticism & Scholasticism

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

For nearly two millennia, many Christians have chosen to express their piety through ascetic living. Though the roots of monasticism existed long before, the sixth-century monk Benedict of Nursia is considered to be the founding father of the medieval monastic movements. Benedict's charter, known as the Benedictine Rule, outlined key principles of holiness and self-denial for communities of monks and nuns who were committed to the values of poverty, chastity, and obedience to God. However, later generations did not always show the same degree of commitment and devotion as their predecessors. In response, certain influential leaders responded to corruption and decline by calling for a return to Benedict's rigid standards. While returning to the rigor of the past, these leaders also envisioned new ways for monks to carry out their mission within a changing world.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Micah 6:6-8; Matthew 5:13-16; Luke 9:23-25

## TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the influence of the Fourth Lateran Council upon several areas of the life of the church.
2. To survey several developments and changes within medieval monasticism.
3. To examine the lives of certain influential monks and their impact upon various monastic movements.
4. To evaluate the contributions and limitations of medieval Scholasticism.

## QUOTATIONS

*But the believing soul longs and faints for God; she rests sweetly in the contemplation of Him. She glories in the reproach of the Cross, until the glory of His face shall be revealed.*

*Like the Bride, the dove of Christ, that is covered with silver wings, white with innocence and purity, she reposes in the thought of Thine abundant kindness, Lord Jesus.*

–Bernard of Clairvaux

*Most high, omnipotent, merciful Lord, Thine is all praise, the honor, and the glory and every benediction. To Thee alone are they confined, and no man is worthy to speak Thy Name.*

–Francis of Assisi

## LECTURE OUTLINE

### I. The Aftermath of the Fourth Lateran Council

- A. The council formally defined and adopted the doctrine of transubstantiation.
- B. The council established the inquisition as an agency of the church.
  - i. The inquisition was established in order to protect the doctrinal purity of the church and suppress heresy.
  - ii. Eventually, the inquisition became an instrument that certain leaders used to torture and execute people who were considered to be dangerous by the religious and political authorities.
- C. The council required Christians to partake of the Eucharist during the Easter season.
  - i. Because the common people perceived the sacrament as being so powerful and mysterious, they feared participating in communion and chose to observe the mass instead of sharing in it.
  - ii. In response, the church began requiring the people to partake of the sacrament at least one time each year.
- D. The council took steps to regulate the proliferation of monastic orders and communities that had been emerging.

### II. Monastic Reform Movements

- A. During the high Middle Ages, many voices began calling for a return to the monastic ideal.
  - i. Monastic communities had originally been established as places of separation, withdrawal from the world, and complete focus on one's spiritual condition.
  - ii. The principles of poverty, chastity, and obedience were to govern monastic lifestyle.
  - iii. However, corruption gradually began to enter some monastic communities.
  - iv. Certain monastic communities accumulated considerable wealth and became places of luxury instead of houses of prayer.
  - v. Throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries, new monastic orders such as the Cluniacs and the Cistercians emerged with a renewed emphasis on traditional monastic principles.

- B. Bernard of Clairvaux, a passionate Cistercian abbot, became the symbol of the ideal monk.
  - i. Bernard lived from 1090 until 1153.
  - ii. A wise and learned monk, Bernard served as an advisor to popes and other powerful officials.
  - iii. Bernard zealously advocated personal holiness and a disciplined, self-denying Christian life.
  - iv. Bernard cultivated a great knowledge of God and of the human soul.
  - v. In Dante's *Paradiso*, Bernard serves as the guide who leads the pilgrim through heaven and toward God.
- C. As the twelfth century drew to an end, monasticism was beginning to find new expressions in the mendicant orders.
  - i. While most monks had withdrawn into monastic communities, the friars of the mendicant orders spent their time among the common people.
  - ii. These new orders combined a lifestyle of self-denial with an active preaching ministry.
  - iii. The most influential figures among these new mendicant orders were Francis of Assisi and Dominic of Osma.

### III. Francis of Assisi

- A. Francis was an Italian friar who lived from 1182 until 1226.
- B. Disappointed by the corruption and materialism that he saw around him, he embraced a life of poverty and of detachment from worldly concerns.
  - i. He emphasized prayer and personal devotion over study and intellectual rigor.
  - ii. For Francis, the essence of godly living was found in self-denial, prayer, and service to God and to fellow men.
- C. A charismatic leader, Francis attracted numerous followers who shared his vision and formed a new monastic order.
- D. He was canonized Saint Francis in 1228, just two years after his death.
- E. Francis was the first saint considered to have received the *stigmata*.
  - i. Reports spread that the wounds of Christ had appeared on Francis' body near the end of his life.
  - ii. The appearance of these wounds, or *stigmata*, was believed to be a miraculous indication of a close connection with Christ.

### IV. Dominic of Osma

- A. Dominic was a Spanish friar who lived from 1170 until 1221.
- B. A contemporary of Francis, Dominic's personality and emphases were distinct from those of Francis.
  - i. Dominic was committed to careful study and to the intellectual defense of the faith.
  - ii. For Dominic, poverty was not an end in itself, but rather a means of ridding one's self from distractions for the sake of study.

- C. With his decidedly intellectual character, Dominic was interested in combatting heresy and false doctrine.
  - i. Dominic sought to raise up an order of educated defenders of the faith who would be preachers and teachers for the common people.
  - ii. He established the *Ordo Praedicatorum*, also known as the Order of Preachers or the Dominican Order.
  - iii. This order was fueled by the conviction that Christianity was worthy of intellectual defense and in need of capable defenders.
- D. Dominic was canonized in 1234, and his order continued to develop into one of the most influential groups within the medieval church.
- E. After his death, he was credited with receiving the idea of the rosary from the virgin Mary.

## V. Monastic Growth and Scholasticism

- A. As the number and size of monastic orders increased, their administrative structure shifted.
  - i. In the ancient church, most monks were not ordained.
    - 1. Monks were laypeople who were committed to the ascetic ideal.
    - 2. These communities were dependent upon outside clergy to administer the sacraments.
  - ii. By the High Middle Ages, most monks were clergy who had been ordained by the church.
    - 1. Monks were no longer dependent upon outside clergy.
    - 2. Monastic communities developed a sacramental power that was distinct from the ordinary clergy.
  - iii. Eventually, a rivalry developed between the monks and the parish clergy.
    - 1. The parish clergy lived out in the world (*seculum*) and were therefore known as “secular” clergy.
    - 2. The monks lived under a monastic rule (*regula*) and were therefore known as “regular” clergy.
    - 3. These groups often competed for the attention of church leaders and for the loyalty and gifts of the laity.
  - iv. While the secular clergy acknowledged the authority of the pope, they were not willing to ascribe absolute control to the papacy.
  - v. On the other hand, the monks were more dependent upon the pope to authorize their orders and grant them permission to travel on their mission projects.
  - vi. Because the monks tended to be loyal to the pope, they became an avenue for increasing and consolidating papal authority.
- B. As monasteries grew, they took on an increasingly important educational function.
  - i. Monasteries became known as centers of learning.
  - ii. Many of the greatest literary and theological works of the Middle Ages were written and preserved in monasteries.

- C. The growing focus on education contributed to the movement known as Scholasticism.
- i. Scholasticism derives its name from *schola*, which means “school.”
  - ii. Scholasticism refers to a technical theology that is studied, practiced, and formally developed in schools.
  - iii. The scholastic movement involved expressing theology using a more standardized, tactical vocabulary so that theologians could communicate with one another more quickly and simply.
    1. Like most professions, theology developed its own technical vocabulary.
    2. The rising prominence of Aristotelian philosophy lent a detailed philosophical vocabulary to the scholastic movement.
  - iv. Although many of the questions and ideas of Scholasticism may sound pedantic and absurd, they often raise meaningful issues.
    1. A common example is the question of how many angels can dance on the head of a pin.
    2. While this question may seem pointless, it actually deals with the topic of whether angels possess physicality, or whether they are purely spiritual beings.

#### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following was not accomplished at the Fourth Lateran Council?
  - a. Christians were required to take communion at Christmas.
  - b. Monastic orders and communities were regulated more strictly.
  - c. The inquisition was established as an agency of the church.
  - d. The doctrine of transubstantiation was defined and adopted.
2. In Dante’s *Paradiso*, Bernard of Clairvaux serves as the pilgrim’s guide through heaven.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. According to tradition, Francis of Assisi was the first person to use rosary beads as an aid to prayer.
  - a. True
  - b. False
4. One of the chief priorities of the Dominican order was \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Placing prayer back in the center of monastic life
  - b. Promoting participation in the Lord’s Supper among the laity
  - c. Providing a learned intellectual defense of Christianity
  - d. Purging all signs of wealth and luxury from the monasteries

5. The rise of medieval Scholasticism was aided by \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. The Franciscan order
  - b. Generous funding from the Holy Roman Emperor
  - c. Aristotelian philosophy
  - d. The rediscovery of Plato's writings

#### BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who were the three monastic leaders that Dr. Godfrey mentioned in this lecture? What did each of these men contribute to the church's quest for piety?
2. The monastic ideal was a life of withdrawal from the world for the purpose of cultivating a more intimate relationship with God and greater personal holiness. What is admirable or praiseworthy about this kind of lifestyle? What is problematic?
3. How did the emerging mendicant orders, such as the Franciscans and the Dominicans, depart from traditional monasticism? In what ways did these new orders remain consistent with the monastic ideal?
4. Were all the monastic orders equally interested in learning and education? Explain. How did monastic communities contribute to the rise of medieval Scholasticism?

# Theologians

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Medieval Scholasticism is often seen today as being speculative and of little practical value. In some cases, this critique may be warranted. However, this movement nevertheless helped to create an environment of thoughtful reflection and study that nurtured some of the greatest thinkers of the Middle Ages. As we turn our attention to a few of the most prominent philosophers and theologians of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, we will begin to see the familiar contours of questions, answers, and ideas that are still influential in our day.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 3:13-18; Romans 11:33-36

## TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To present some of the positive contributions of the medieval scholastics and theologians.
2. To examine the lives and writings of three of the most influential scholars of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.
3. To interact with doctrines and ideas from this period that continue to shape theological discussions today.

## QUOTATIONS

*I am not trying, O Lord, to penetrate Thy loftiness, for I cannot begin to match my understanding with it, but I desire in some measure to understand Thy truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand in order to believe, but I believe in order to understand.*

–Anselm of Canterbury

*Our redemption through Christ's suffering is that deeper affection in us which not only frees us from slavery to sin, but also wins for us the true liberty of sons of God, so that we do all things out of love rather than fear.*

–Peter Abelard

## LECTURE OUTLINE

### I. Anselm of Canterbury

- A. Anselm lived from 1033 until 1109 and is considered to be one of the greatest theologians of the Middle Ages.
- B. A distinguished churchman and able administrator, Anselm served for a time as archbishop of Canterbury.
- C. Anselm carefully reflected on theological topics and wrote influential doctrinal works.
- D. His *Proslogion* dealt with the issue of proving God's existence.
  - i. This work is famous for Anselm's presentation of the *a priori* ontological argument.
    1. God, if He exists, is the being than which nothing greater can be conceived.
    2. By nature of this definition, God possesses the highest degree of all virtues and positive attributes.
    3. If people, who exist, can conceive of a being that is unsurpassed in greatness, that being must exist.
    4. If such a being did not exist, then He would not truly be unsurpassed in greatness, because existence is greater than non-existence.
  - ii. This argument has intrigued philosophers and theologians ever since.
    1. Some have found it to be persuasive.
    2. Others consider it to be a deceptive mind game.
- E. His work *Cur Deus Homo* dealt with the relationship between Christ's incarnation and His atoning work on the cross.
  - i. For centuries, the church had taught that Jesus Christ was fully God and also became fully man.
  - ii. In this treatise, Anselm addressed the issue of why it was necessary for Jesus to be both fully human and fully divine.
  - iii. Anselm's conclusion centered on sin as a moral debt that must be dealt with.
    1. Man owed a debt to God but could not pay it.
    2. God could pay the debt but did not owe it.
    3. Only the God-man could both owe the debt and pay it.
- F. Anselm's persistent reflection on the work of Christ surpassed even Augustine's understanding of the importance and meaning of the atonement.



## II. Peter Abelard

- A. Abelard lived from 1079 until 1142.
- B. A controversial figure, he was known both for his tragic forbidden romance with Heloise and for his provocative intellectual brilliance.
- C. His influential work *Sic et Non* challenged contemporary assumptions about the authority and accuracy of the church's theological traditions.
  - i. He surveyed and summarized the teachings of many great theologians on many different topics.
  - ii. He concluded that within church history there were many instances of "yes and no," when theologians would contradict one another or arrive at different conclusions.
  - iii. He showed that theologians have always held a variety of viewpoints on certain issues.
  - iv. Tradition, therefore, is not infallible and does not speak with one voice.
- D. Abelard presented a theory of the atonement that was very different from Anselm's view.
  - i. Abelard argued, contra Anselm, that there was not a moral debt that needed to be paid.
  - ii. According to Abelard, to say that God required payment for a debt would be to undermine the very love of God.
  - iii. Therefore, the death of Christ on the cross was primarily a manifestation and example of God's love for humanity.
    - 1. Bernard of Clairvaux objected that it would not be loving for God to crucify His Son simply to demonstrate the extent of His love.
    - 2. As Anselm argued, the crucifixion is an act of love because God has paid the debt that humanity owed.

## III. Peter Lombard

- A. Lombard lived from about 1096 until 1164.
- B. While Lombard was not a creative theologian like Anselm or a speculative theologian like Abelard, he nevertheless possessed a great systematic mind and was skilled at compiling knowledge.
- C. Lombard's great work was *Libri Quatuor Sententiarum*, which means "four books of sentences."
  - i. This book synthesized the teachings of Augustine, the church fathers, and other great theologians in order to show the consensus of Christian thought.
  - ii. This book became one of the leading systematic theology textbooks of the Middle Ages.
  - iii. Other scholars continued to interact with Lombard's work up until the time of the Reformation.

- D. As a student of Augustine's writings, Lombard held a largely Augustinian view of predestination.
  - i. At the time, this topic was still widely debated among scholars.
  - ii. Lombard was one of the first theologians to express the formula that Christ died sufficiently for the whole world but that He died efficiently for the elect only.
- E. Lombard helped to establish a firm theological foundation for others to build upon after him.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* is famous for its presentation of the *a priori* ontological argument for the existence of God.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. Anselm argued that it was necessary for Jesus to be fully God and fully man because \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Becoming human demonstrated God's love for people
  - b. Only a God-man could both owe the debt of sin and pay it
  - c. That was the only way for Old Testament prophecies to be fulfilled
  - d. Jesus could not have risen from the dead without a real human body
3. Abelard's *Sic et Non* demonstrated that the church had not always spoken with one voice on doctrinal matters.
  - a. True
  - b. False
4. According to Abelard, the purpose of Christ's crucifixion was \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. To show the destructive consequences of sin
  - b. To show the extent of God's love for humanity
  - c. To ransom captured human souls from the Devil's power
  - d. To pay a spiritual debt that man owed but could not pay
5. Peter Lombard's great theological work, \_\_\_\_\_, was used by the church as a doctrinal textbook for centuries.
  - a. *Sic et Non*
  - b. *Proslogion*
  - c. *Libri Quatuor Sententiarum*
  - d. *Summa Theologica*

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## BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize Anselm's ontological argument. Do you find it to be persuasive? Why or why not?
2. Dr. Godfrey observed that the Eastern church tended to focus on the Trinity and Christology, while the Western church focused on the meaning of salvation. How did Anselm's theory of the atonement bring these themes together?
3. How did Abelard's position on the crucifixion of Christ and atonement differ from Anselm's position? In what ways is Abelard's view still influential today?
4. Peter Abelard emphasized the contradictions between different figures in church history, while Peter Lombard focused more on what they had in common. In our own study of theology, what are the benefits of learning from the teachers and traditions of the past? What are some possible dangers of relying upon tradition? How can knowledge of church history help us to understand and articulate biblical teaching in our day?

# Popes & Councils

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

As the Middle Ages progressed, certain issues remained unresolved. Second to none in terms of its importance to the medieval church was the question of the pope's authority. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the papal office faced unique challenges from secular authorities, from rival popes, and from clergy who sought to consolidate the church's power within ecumenical councils. As different popes succumbed to and overcame these challenges, the papacy found itself sometimes losing ground, sometimes gaining ground, and always adapting to new realities within the church and society.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Luke 22:24-27; John 13:1-16; 1 Timothy 3:1-16

## TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the different views of papal authority that were circulating in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
2. To describe several events that influenced the attitudes of late medieval Christians toward the papacy.
3. To explain the historical background of the conciliar movement, its temporary achievements, and its long-term effects.
4. To promote a greater understanding of how papal authority developed within the Roman Catholic Church, with the papacy gradually becoming the institution that it is today.

## QUOTATIONS

*Furthermore, we declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff.*

–Pope Boniface VIII

*If, therefore, the status of the Supreme Pontiff is the holiest and most spiritual of all, and if such spirituality consists in eminence of power, then it is well said that the Supreme Pontiff, being the most spiritual man according to status and according to eminence of power, judges all things, that is, lord of all things, and will himself be subject to the judgment of no one: that is, no one will be able to be his lord or even his equal.*

–Giles of Rome, archbishop of Bourges

*This same council, legitimately assembled in the Holy Ghost, forming a general council and representing the Catholic Church militant, has its power immediately from Christ, and every one, whatever his state or position, even if it be the Papal dignity itself, is bound to obey it in all those things which pertain to the faith and the healing of the said schism, and to the general reformation of the Church of God.*

–Decree Sacrosancta  
of the Council of Constance

*A frequent celebration of general councils is an especial means for cultivating the field of the Lord and effecting the destruction of briars, thorns, and thistles, to wit, heresies, errors, and schism, and of bringing forth a most abundant harvest. The neglect to summon councils fosters and develops all these evils, as may be plainly seen from a recollection of the past and a consideration of existing conditions.*

–Decree Frequens  
of the Council of Constance

## LECTURE OUTLINE

### I. The Nature of Papal Authority

- A. Although many popes had made bold claims about the extent of their authority, it remained to be seen how these claims would play out in the life of the church.
- B. Pope Boniface VIII represents the high water mark of papal claims.
  - i. Boniface VIII was pope from 1284 until 1303.
  - ii. Although he did not wield the same degree of influence as Innocent III, he strongly articulated ideas of papal authority that had been developing for centuries.
  - iii. In 1302, after a series of conflicts with Philip IV of France, Boniface issued the papal bull known as *Unam Sanctam*.
    1. He claimed that, as the head of the church, he was to govern all earthly affairs on behalf of Christ.
    2. Kings and rulers, then, were to submit to the Pope's authority in all matters.
  - iv. In 1303, Philip travelled to Italy with an armed force, captured Boniface, and forcibly removed him from office.
  - v. Though Boniface had dramatically asserted papal authority, he did not have the ability to back up his claims.

- C. At this time, experts in canon law were trying to define the exact character of papal power.
  - i. Some advocated absolute papal monarchy, saying that only God can criticize, judge, or remove a pope.
  - ii. Others advocated limited papal monarchy, which envisioned a papacy that was held accountable to other institutions.
  - iii. Canon lawyers also thought about what should be done when there were multiple claimants for the papal throne, and whether a pope could be removed if he abused his powers or espoused heresy.

## II. The Avignon Papacy and the Western Schism

- A. In 1309 Pope Clement V, who was French by birth, decided to relocate the papal court to Avignon, France.
  - i. Because a pope had never lived outside of Rome, this was a disconcerting development for many Christians.
  - ii. The Pope's seventy-year absence from Rome came to be known as the "Babylonian captivity of the church."
  - iii. During this time, there were many complaints of papal corruption and fears that the French were exercising a disproportionate influence on ecclesiastical affairs.
- B. In 1377, due to the constant appeals to return to Rome, Pope Gregory XI moved the papal court from Avignon back to Rome.
- C. Upon Gregory's death the next year, the French and Italian cardinals were divided on their choice of a new pope.
  - i. When an Italian was elected, the French cardinals withdrew and elected a Frenchman as their own pope.
  - ii. The resulting condition was one church with two popes.
- D. In the resulting schism, each nation had to decide whether it would side with the Italian pope in Rome or the French pope in Avignon.
  - i. Because each pope excommunicated those who opposed him, virtually all of Europe found itself excommunicated by one pope or the other.
  - ii. This situation created a sense of uneasiness about whether one was in fellowship with the true pope and partaking of the true sacraments, or whether one was actually part of a false church.
- E. In 1409, after thirty years of schism, the Council of Pisa resolved that both rival popes should resign so that a new pope could preside over a united church.
  - i. This approach is described as *via consessionis*, "the way of resignation."
  - ii. However, neither of the rival popes was willing to step down.
  - iii. As a result, the church now had three popes.

## III. The Council of Constance and the Rise of Conciliarism

- A. Eventually, the church resolved this crisis when it met at the Council of Constance from 1414 until 1418.

- i. The approach taken at Constance is described as the *via conciliae*, “the way of the council,” or conciliarism.
  - ii. Among other things, the council determined that the institution of the papacy was not adequate in itself to serve as the church’s ultimate authority.
- B. The decree *Haec Sancta*, also known as *Sacrosancta*, declared that ecumenical councils were to be supreme in the life of the church.
  - i. The authority of the council was derived, not from the pope, but directly from Christ.
  - ii. Consequently, the pope’s authority came, not directly from Christ, but from the council.
- C. The decree *Frequens* mandated that a council was to be called frequently by the pope to help with the governance of the church.
- D. As a movement, conciliarism ushered in a radical new paradigm that might have profoundly changed the character of the Catholic Church.
- E. The council, evoking its authority over the papacy, deposed all three rival popes and elected a new pope.
  - i. Remarkably, this strategy succeeded.
  - ii. Europe, weary of the threefold schism, accepted this new pope.
  - iii. Eventually, realizing their loss of support, the rival popes withdrew their claims.

#### IV. The Council of Basel and the Decline of Conciliarism

- A. The Council of Basel convened in Basel, Switzerland, from 1431 until 1449.
  - i. In obedience to *Frequens*, Pope Martin V called a council to convene in 1431.
  - ii. As the council began to assert its rights more radically, hostilities began to develop between the council and Martin’s successor, Pope Eugene IV.
  - iii. In an effort to exercise more control over the council, Eugene ordered the council to reconvene in Italy.
  - iv. Some council members obeyed the papal order and reconvened as the Council of Florence.
  - v. Those who remained at Basel became increasingly radical, eventually attempting to depose Eugene and appoint a new pope.
- B. Tired of seeing popes deposed and replaced at whim, Catholics began to grow disillusioned with the Council of Basel and with conciliarism as a movement.
  - i. Though the Council of Basel continued to meet until 1449, it became increasingly irrelevant to the life of the church.
  - ii. This mis-step by the council gave the pope an opportunity to reassert his power.
- C. The Council of Florence, under the direction of Eugene IV, exercised considerable influence.
  - i. The council entered into negotiations with Constantinople to reunite the Eastern and Western churches, an attempt which nearly succeeded.

- ii. The council officially declared that the church had seven sacraments.
  - 1. The belief in seven sacraments was not new, as it extended to the time of Peter Lombard and earlier.
  - 2. However, this belief had not been universally accepted by the church until the Council of Florence endorsed it.
- D. As conciliarism lost its momentum, the papacy made it clear that church councils would remain subject to the pope in the future.
  - i. Councils could only be called by the pope.
  - ii. Councils would be under the pope's direct jurisdiction.
  - iii. The decrees of councils would only be binding if they received the pope's approval.
- E. The conciliar movement, an attempt to define and limit the pope's authority, ended with the pope establishing himself more firmly as an absolute monarch over ecclesiastical affairs.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What claim did Boniface VIII make in his decree *Unam Sanctam*?
  - a. The pope was required by canon law to submit to a church council.
  - b. Only a pope should be able to choose who the next pope would be.
  - c. A council's decrees were only valid if the pope gave his approval.
  - d. The pope had the right to govern all earthly affairs on behalf of Christ.
2. The phrase "Babylonian captivity of the church" refers to the era when the church was divided between rival popes.
  - a. True
  - b. False
3. In 1409, \_\_\_\_\_ attempted to resolve the schism between two popes, but instead resulted in a third pope competing with the other two.
  - a. The Council of Basel
  - b. The Council of Florence
  - c. The Council of Pisa
  - d. The Council of Constance
4. The Council of Constance established all of the following decrees except \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. The pope must call a council on a regular basis.
  - b. A council could convene without being called by the pope.
  - c. The pope was not adequate to serve as the church's supreme authority.
  - d. The pope received his authority from the council and was accountable to it.



5. The conciliar movement ended with the pope being firmly established as an absolute monarch over the church.
  - a. True
  - b. False

#### BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did the papacy relocate to France in the fourteenth century? How did this change affect the church?
2. How did politics and national interests contribute to the Western Schism? How was this schism finally resolved, and what were the results?
3. What was promising about the conciliar movement? How do you think the church might be different today if this movement had succeeded?
4. Late medieval perspectives on ecclesiastical authority usually considered the church's supreme authority to be the papacy, the church council, or a combination of the two. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these two institutions? What is missing from this equation?

# Great Scholastics

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries represented an era of significant change in the Medieval world. In the East, these centuries witnessed the final decline and collapse of the Byzantine Empire. Meanwhile, institutions in the West continued to develop and flourish. While European monarchs labored to build up their power and prestige, the pope continued to increase his authority over the church. At the same time, an influx of new ideas had ushered in a season of considerable academic achievement. As Europe began to establish its first universities, talented Scholastics appeared who dramatically shaped the trajectory of Christian thought.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Psalm 19:1-14; Psalm 24:1-2; Romans 1:18-20

## TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To describe the depth and detail of philosophy and theology in the late medieval period.
2. To introduce key Christian thinkers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and explain some of their most important ideas.
3. To discuss theological themes of the Middle Ages that are still significant for the church today.

## QUOTATIONS

*Some truths about God exceed all the ability of the human reason. Such is the truth that God is triune. But there are some truths which the natural reason also is able to reach. Such are that God exists, that He is one, and the like.*

–Thomas Aquinas

*O Lord our God! Thou art one in nature. Thou art one in number. Thou hast said truly that outside of Thee there is no God. For although there are many gods in name or in opinion, however, Thou art the only one by nature.*

—John Duns Scotus

*God exists in such a manner that He cannot not exist; in fact, He exists necessarily; and He is not from something else.*

—William of Ockham

## LECTURE OUTLINE

### I. The Rediscovery of Aristotle

- A. Throughout the early Middle Ages, Aristotle's works had not been widely circulated in Europe.
- B. As Europeans came into contact with Muslim scholars who had access to Aristotle's writings, new translations of works by Aristotle became available in the West.
- C. Aristotle's ideas greatly stimulated intellectual developments in Europe, contributed to theological reflection, and in part helped to bring about centers of learning such as universities.
- D. Aristotle's writings opened up new topics of discussion, such as the relationship between reason, revelation, and faith.
  - i. Some thinkers claimed that revelation was no longer necessary.
  - ii. Others suggested that revelation teaches one truth and reason teaches another.
  - iii. However, theologians such as Thomas Aquinas made an effort to show how reason and philosophy could serve Christian faith and theology.
  - iv. Aristotle, therefore, became an important tool among later medieval Scholastics as they wrestled with complex theological issues.
- E. An important issue raised by Aristotelian philosophy was the relationship between the Creator and the creation.
  - i. Among certain Christians, there was a definite otherworldly focus.
  - ii. In their zeal for the realities of heaven and salvation, they would essentially ignore earthly matters.
  - iii. Although Thomas Aquinas was drawn to an ascetic life, he realized that many Christians were in danger of denying the reality and value of this world.
  - iv. In his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Thomas reflected on the importance of creation and concluded that an undervaluing of the created order can lead to an undervaluing of God Himself.
  - v. Therefore, the approach taken by Thomas and other later Scholastics was to unite reason and revelation in an effort to integrate grace, nature, and the Christian life.

## II. The Life and Thought of Thomas Aquinas

- A. Thomas Aquinas was born in Italy in 1225 and lived until 1274.
- B. He was born into a wealthy and influential family and received an excellent education.
- C. As a young man, he joined the Dominican order, a decision that displeased his family.
- D. He became known as the “angelic doctor” because of his intellectual talents and his writings on the subject of angels.
- E. Some who knew him referred to him as a “dumb ox,” owing to his large stature and quiet, studious disposition.
- F. As a theologian, Thomas emphasized the reasonableness of Christianity.
  - i. The mind of God was reflected in creation and in salvation.
  - ii. By studying God’s revelation, humans can better understand God by “thinking God’s thoughts after Him.”
- G. Thomas’ summary of theology, *Summa Theologica*, is still considered one of the greatest works of the Middle Ages.
- H. Interestingly, Thomas’ work only became popular after his death.
  - i. He attracted relatively few followers when he was alive.
  - ii. Around the end of Thomas’ lifetime, theology began to move in different directions.
  - iii. In the sixteenth century, a revival of Thomistic theology took place within the Roman Catholic Church as it began to see Thomas’ writings as a useful resource for resisting Protestant teachings.
  - iv. Other revivals of Thomism occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
  - v. Today, he is regarded as a towering figure within medieval thought.
- I. Thomas had been profoundly influenced by the writings of Augustine.
  - i. While most medieval theologians valued and respected Augustine, Thomas understood him on a deeper and more comprehensive level.
  - ii. However, Thomas’ Augustinianism sometimes manifested itself in surprising ways.
  - iii. On the issue of election, Thomas was a consistently Augustinian predestinarian.
  - iv. In spite of his Augustinian tendencies, Thomas and other medievals cautioned that a person cannot know whether he is elect or not.
  - v. An Augustinian view of election, then, was paired with a proto-Arminian view of assurance.
- J. Believing that a person is justified by faith formed by love, Thomas emphasized a rigorous pursuit of holiness.
  - i. Faith was often thought of as knowledge that is received as true.
  - ii. However, faith was of no avail unless it had been enlivened by love.
  - iii. Love, in late medieval belief, gave life and substance to faith.
  - iv. Receiving the sacraments, then, became a valued means of building up love and therefore building up faith.

### III. Nominalism

- A. Thomas' philosophy came to be called "Realism."
- B. Shortly after Thomas' death, the movement known as "Nominalism" began to emerge.
  - i. A leading predecessor of this movement was the Scottish philosopher John Duns Scotus.
  - ii. Nominalism came to a more full expression in the work of William of Ockham.
- C. Nominalism emphasized God's freedom and His ability to act according to His wishes.
  - i. This movement raised questions about whether God could have accomplished redemption in different ways.
  - ii. Proponents of this thought were uneasy with trying to reason from nature to theology because God transcends nature and exerts absolute power over it.
- D. Interestingly, Nominalist theology tended to gravitate in both Augustinian and Pelagian directions.
  - i. Some Nominalists emphasized God's sovereignty over human affairs, including salvation.
  - ii. Other Nominalists, including William of Ockham, argued that the aim of God's freedom is to give freedom to humans, allowing for greater human autonomy in salvation.
  - iii. More and more, the focus tended to drift toward human freedom and responsibility in matters of faith.
- E. Sadly, scholars of both Augustinian and Pelagian leanings increasingly misunderstood biblical teachings on faith.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The rediscovery of Aristotle's writings raised new intellectual questions and prompted the establishment of new centers of learning.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. How did Thomas Aquinas understand the relationship between faith and reason?
  - a. He championed faith and therefore saw little use for reason.
  - b. He believed that reason served and supported the Christian faith.
  - c. He used reason as a test to decide which articles of faith to believe.
  - d. He held that reason and revelation taught different truths and did not have a bearing on one another.
3. Thomas gained a large following after the release of his great theological work, *Summa Theologica*.
  - a. True
  - b. False

4. According to Thomas, faith in Christ meant little unless it was enlivened by \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Knowledge of Scripture.
  - b. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
  - c. Works of penance.
  - d. Love.
  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ was a central theme in Nominalist theology.
  - a. The absolute freedom of God
  - b. The interplay between faith and reason
  - c. The necessity of holy living
  - d. The nature of the sacraments

#### BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were some of the ways that late medieval thinkers responded to the growing sense of tension between revelation, reason, and faith? Do you think there is tension between them? Briefly describe the relationship between revelation, reason, and faith in your own words.
  
2. Thomas Aquinas encountered many Christians who were so focused on spiritual matters that they dismissed earthly matters as being of little importance. In what ways does this tendency still exist today? What is a more biblical view of nature and the created world?
  
3. Describe Thomas Aquinas' view of faith. What dangerous extremes do you think he was trying to avoid? What is problematic about his understanding of the role of faith in salvation?
  
4. In what ways did medieval Nominalism adopt the ideas of Augustine? How did certain Nominalist theologians depart from Augustine's teachings?

# Mysticism & the Renaissance

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

As the Middle Ages continued to wind down in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a diverse array of movements continued to exercise influence inside and outside the church. Amidst the backdrop of great Scholastic thinkers, other leaders appeared, advocating a vision of the Christian life that was driven more by the heart than by the head. Others responded to Scholasticism by looking to the ancient writings of Greece and Rome for inspiration. As Western scholars became increasingly proficient in classical languages and ancient texts, Christians inherited a variety of tools and resources to help them better understand the church, the world around them, and the words of Scripture.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Mark 12:28-34; 2 Timothy 3:14-16

## TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To describe the development of medieval mysticism.
2. To discuss mysticism's contributions and potential dangers.
3. To introduce the goals, interests, and legacy of the Renaissance.
4. To explain the ways that the Renaissance shaped late medieval perceptions of church, society, the written word, and the Word of God.

## QUOTATIONS

*Now God is not good, for He cannot become better. And if He cannot become better, He cannot become best, for these three things, good, better, and best, are far from God, since He is above all.*

–Meister Eckhart

*Away then with trepidation, let fears far remove, let doubts pass away. With a brave soul, with utter fidelity, with good hope, the cause of truth must be defended, the cause of justice, the cause of God.*

–Lorenzo Valla,

In his treatise discrediting the *Donation of Constantine*

*I pondered on the fact that those who profess themselves pastors and doctors for the most part misuse these titles, which belong to Christ, for their own advantage; to say nothing of the moment of those whose fiat, yes or no, keeps all human affairs in perpetual flux, and at whose faults, however obvious, it is scarcely permitted to let fall a sigh. When all is dark, when the world is in tumult and men's opinions differ so widely, where can we take refuge, if not upon the sheet-anchor of the Gospel teaching?*

–Desiderius Erasmus

## LECTURE OUTLINE

### I. The Path of Mysticism

- A. In the late Middle Ages, theology was a significant pathway to God, but it was not the only pathway.
  - i. Theological study was not an easy path, and it was not accessible to all Christians.
  - ii. Many sought to connect with God through a direct, mystical experience that transcended the mind.
- B. Interestingly, the great scholar Thomas Aquinas reported a mystical encounter with God near the end of his life.
  - i. He unexpectedly had a mystical experience while he was celebrating mass.
  - ii. As a result of this experience, he stopped writing and declared that all his previous writings seemed to be as worthless as straw.
- C. Mysticism pursued an interaction with God that was rooted in the center of a person's being.
  - i. A person's five senses were believed to be peripheral, enabling a person to interact with the physical world.
  - ii. On a deeper level, the intellect enabled a person to reason, will, and interact with the world of ideas, such as theology and philosophy.
  - iii. Deeper still, the core of a person's soul was capable of connecting directly with God, unmediated by the senses or intellect.
  - iv. Mystics sought to cultivate this type of experience through a careful emptying of one's self.
- D. Pseudo-Dionysius
  - i. Dionysius the Aeropagite is mentioned in Acts 17:34 as one of the apostle Paul's converts during his time in Athens.
  - ii. Around the sixth century, a collection of writings appeared that was attributed to Dionysius.



- iii. Though later proved to be a forgery, this collection of documents wielded tremendous influence in the Middle Ages because it was believed to have come from a friend of Paul.
  - iv. These writings outlined a process of gradually purging away bodily sensations and mental faculties in order to allow the divine light to illumine the Christian's soul like a spark.
- E. Meister Eckhart
- i. Meister Eckhart was a German mystic who lived in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.
  - ii. Eckhart's writings expressed his desire to become lost in the divine.
  - iii. Eckhart implied that he, as a human, was part of a larger divine reality.
  - iv. This view illustrates a Pantheistic tendency that exists in some forms of mysticism.
  - v. While mysticism made some important contributions to medieval piety, most theologians regarded this movement with considerable caution.

## II. The Renaissance

- A. The Renaissance movement of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries opened new educational opportunities and reawakened European interest in the classical era.
- B. Renaissance thinkers desired to recover ancient thought and culture, which they believed had been lost or distorted by the Middle Ages.
  - i. One of the recurring slogans of the Renaissance was *ad fontes*, which means "to the fountains" or "to the sources."
  - ii. The western culture of the classical period was seen as being superior to that of the medieval period.
  - iii. In the minds of Renaissance scholars, the mechanical and wooden Latin of Thomas Aquinas compared unfavorably to the beautiful and eloquent Latin writing of Cicero.
- C. The revival of interest in ancient Latin works also stimulated interest in other ancient languages such as Greek and Hebrew.
  - i. Despite the growing interest in ancient Greek culture, knowledge of the Greek language had nearly been lost in the West.
  - ii. However, when Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453, many Greek scholars fled to Western Europe with ancient Greek texts.
  - iii. Equipped with a newfound knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, Western scholars began to examine Scripture in the original languages for the first time in centuries.
- D. The invention of the movable type printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in the mid 1400s significantly aided the rapid distribution of Bibles and other ancient texts.
  - i. Scholars, clergy, and laypeople now had access to unprecedented educational opportunities.
  - ii. After reading ancient writings, many people became aware of differences between the ancient church and the Roman Catholic Church of their day.

- E. Certain scholars, equipped with this new knowledge, brought clarity and scrutiny to some of the church's claims.
  - i. After studying the *Donation of Constantine*, Lorenzo Valla proved that it could not have been written during Constantine's lifetime and was, therefore, a forgery.
  - ii. This discovery, in effect, undermined the pope's claim to political authority over Western Europe.
  - iii. Desiderius Erasmus provided a new Latin translation of the Bible, providing clarity in certain places where the Vulgate's wording had been vague or misleading.
  - iv. Because the language of this translation was more vivid and more accessible, many people who read it gained a greater understanding of Scripture.
- F. Although the Renaissance sometimes fostered an unnecessarily negative view of the medieval past, it nevertheless helped to lay the foundations for a Christian rediscovery of God's Word.
- G. For the first time in centuries, Christians were equipped to see past centuries of traditions and assumptions in order to access Scripture and the earliest Christian writings.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. After a mystical experience near the end of his life, \_\_\_\_\_ reportedly compared his written works to straw.
  - a. Francis of Assisi
  - b. Meister Eckhart
  - c. Desiderius Erasmus
  - d. Thomas Aquinas
2. Dionysius the Aeropagite was \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. One of the founders of Christian mysticism
  - b. The author of an influential collection of mystic writings
  - c. One of the apostle Paul's converts in the city of Athens
  - d. All of the above
3. Shortly after his death, Meister Eckhart was canonized by the Catholic Church in recognition of his contributions to medieval piety.
  - a. True
  - b. False

4. At its root, the Renaissance represented a movement away from medieval traditions, institutions, and culture toward \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Human reason, liberated from the traditions of the past
  - b. The ancient ideas, art, and culture of Greece and Rome
  - c. A religious ideal that was based on Scripture alone
  - d. The establishment of free societies with limited monarchies
  
5. After reading the biblical texts and other ancient writings, many Christians began to sense a degree of separation between the ancient church and the Roman Catholic Church of their day.
  - a. True
  - b. False

#### BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the strengths of medieval mysticism? What are some of mysticism's potential dangers? At a time when the church focused so extensively on theology, why was it beneficial for the voice of mysticism to be heard?
  
2. At particular times and in particular places, communities of Christians have a tendency to emphasize one part of the Christian life—such as theology, personal devotion, and good works—over the others. In light of this tendency, how are Jesus' words in Mark 12:30-31 helpful ?
  
3. Briefly describe some of the major changes that took place during the Renaissance. How did these changes promote a greater understanding of the Bible? How did some of these changes contribute to a more secular society?
  
4. What factors contributed to the availability of the New Testament in Greek? How did this development change the way that medieval Christians interacted with the Bible?

# Forerunners of the Reformation

## MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

As the church continued to consolidate its power and define its beliefs, it did not always act and speak with one voice. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, certain churchmen began to speak out against the corrupt practices and unbiblical doctrines that had become increasingly common within the medieval church. Emphasizing the authority of the Bible and a life of genuine piety, these leaders quickly gained a large following among the spiritually hungry common people. Though these reform movements were fiercely opposed by the church, they helped to lay the groundwork for profound spiritual changes that would come in later centuries.

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

1 Kings 19:9-18; Matthew 16:18

## TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the idea of a forerunner and the significance of historic forerunners to the reformation.
2. To describe the lives and ideas of church leaders during the late medieval period who critiqued problems within the church.
3. To identify biblical concerns and biblical truths within the church's dissenting voices.
4. To affirm that Christ was preserving and protecting His church during the Middle Ages, despite the problems and errors that emerged during this time.

## QUOTATIONS

*But these and all others must know that, as there is no counsel against the Lord, so there is no keeping down of verity, but it will spring up and come out of dust and ashes, as appeared right well in this man; for though they dug up his body, burned his bones, and drowned his ashes, yet the Word of God and the truth of his doctrine, with the fruit and success thereof, they could not burn.*

–John Foxe

Describing the legacy of John Wycliffe  
in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*

*Mine enemies in the Council, more numerous than were Christ's, are found amongst the bishops, and doctors, and also amongst the princes of this age, and the Pharisees. But I confide myself entirely to Almighty God my Savior; I hope, therefore, he will grant my ardent prayer, and put prudence and wisdom in my mouth, that I may be able to resist them; that he may bestow on me his Holy Spirit to fortify me in the truth; so that the gates of hell shall not be able to lead me from it, and that I may face, with an intrepid heart, temptation, imprisonment, and the sufferings of a cruel death.*

–John Huss,

Before his arrival at the Council of Constance

## LECTURE OUTLINE

### I. The Disputed Concept of Forerunners

- A. The idea that there were medieval forerunners to the Protestant Reformation is a controversial one.
  - i. There were not any theologians in the Middle Ages who completely shared the Reformation point of view.
  - ii. Although many medieval leaders called for reform within the church, it is not certain that they all would have supported the Reformation if it had come during their lifetimes.
  - iii. To speak of forerunners to a movement can sometimes imply that the movement was inevitable from a human point of view, which is a very bold claim.
  - iv. Is it truthful, then, to associate these men with events that took place long after their deaths?
- B. While this may be a controversial concept, it is nevertheless a useful one.
  - i. As Protestants, we do not claim that the church died out during the Middle Ages and had to be resurrected at the time of the Reformation.
  - ii. Instead, Christ has always fulfilled His promise that He would build His church and that the gates of hell would not prevail against it.
  - iii. Though the gospel was at times misunderstood and clouded over, it was not stamped out during the Middle Ages.

- iv. Throughout the Middle Ages, there were many staunch defenders of a biblical, Augustinian, grace-oriented understanding of the gospel.
- v. Among these defenders of the gospel, several spoke out prophetically as critics of the growing problems within the church.

## II. John Wycliffe

- A. John Wycliffe was born in the 1320s and lived until 1384.
- B. He was educated at Oxford and was recognized for his intellectual talents.
- C. Eventually, he became a respected lecturer at Oxford.
- D. As he continued his studies of the Bible, Wycliffe became increasingly critical of certain tendencies within the church.
  - i. Although the pope claimed to be the head of the church on earth, Wycliffe openly taught that Christ was the only head of the church.
  - ii. Wycliffe argued against the pope's claim to political authority, a stance which pleased the king of England.
  - iii. Against the notion that the church encompassed all of Christendom, Wycliffe emphasized the invisible church as the elect of God.
- E. As Wycliffe's views became known, church leaders became increasingly critical of Wycliffe, which, in turn prompted Wycliffe to become even more radical in his views.
  - i. Wycliffe eventually equated the pope with the spirit of antichrist.
    - 1. In response, the church condemned Wycliffe's teachings.
    - 2. Interestingly, Wycliffe's colleagues at Oxford defended his theology as orthodox.
  - ii. Wycliffe critiqued the perpetually binding monastic vow and the practice of clerical celibacy, which he claimed were not biblically warranted and were out of step with the freedom and mercies of Christ.
  - iii. Wycliffe rejected the necessity of oral confession to a priest, thereby denying the sacrament of penance.
- F. Wycliffe eventually went so far as to challenge the doctrine of transubstantiation.
  - i. This defied the ruling of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.
  - ii. This defied the church's belief that Christ was physically present in the bread and wine during the Lord's Supper.
  - iii. This defied the medieval principle *ex opera operato*, the belief that the sacraments were efficacious by nature of the mere fact that they had been carried out.
  - iv. Wycliffe expressed the need for a translation of the Bible in English so that the people could understand it, and he began producing his own English translation of Scripture.
  - v. Wycliffe died in prison in 1384, and his remains were later burned and scattered.
  - vi. Wycliffe attracted thousands of followers, who became known as *Lollards* and who carried his teachings throughout England and the rest of Europe.

### III. John Huss

- A. John Huss was born in Bohemia around 1369 and lived until 1415.
- B. As a priest, Huss had been influenced by Wycliffe's writings and agreed with Wycliffe's critiques of the church.
- C. In the early 1400s, Huss began to preach publicly against abuses and immorality within the church.
- D. Like Wycliffe, Huss' critiques of transubstantiation and the papacy both drew many followers and aroused the anger of church leaders.
- E. Huss was summoned to appear before the Council of Constance in order for his views to be examined.
  - i. When he and his supporters hesitated, the council promised him safe conduct to and from Constance.
  - ii. After Huss arrived at Constance, he was put on trial and condemned of heresy.
  - iii. In spite of the promise of safe passage, Huss was burned at the stake.

### IV. Johann von Staupitz

- A. Johann von Staupitz was an Augustinian monk who had been a teacher and superior to Martin Luther.
- B. Although Staupitz never left the Roman Catholic Church, his life and thought marked a break with Roman Catholic theology.
  - i. In a treatise on predestination, Staupitz wrote that grace makes sinners acceptable to God.
  - ii. In the thinking of Staupitz, grace is needed to alert sinners to the danger of their spiritual condition and draw them to God.
  - iii. This belief marks a significant step toward a biblical, Augustinian understanding of grace.
- C. Staupitz's perspective on grace helped shape Luther's understanding of grace.
- D. Staupitz is a reminder that, though the church had become corrupt and mistaken in many ways, there were many defenders of Augustinian teaching who helped to prepare the way for the rediscovery of biblical truth.

### STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Biblical Christianity had essentially died out during the Middle Ages and therefore needed to be resurrected at the time of the Protestant Reformation.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. John Wycliffe taught that the church \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Included everyone who lived in Christendom
  - b. Was limited to those who had been baptized
  - c. Ought to be the most powerful political force in Europe
  - d. Consisted of the elect of God

3. John Wycliffe criticized all of the following except \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. The practice of clerical celibacy
  - b. The church's understanding of grace
  - c. The doctrine of transubstantiation
  - d. The sacrament of penance
  
4. John Huss was condemned as a heretic and executed by which council?
  - a. The Council of Trent
  - b. The Council of Basel
  - c. The Fourth Lateran Council
  - d. The Council of Constance
  
5. At one point, Johann von Staupitz had been a friend and superior to Martin Luther.
  - a. True
  - b. False

#### BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you think that it is helpful to think of John Wycliffe, John Huss, and Johann von Staupitz as forerunners to the Reformation? Why or why not? Can you think of others that you would describe as forerunners to the Reformation?
  
2. Why did men like John Wycliffe and John Huss attract so many followers? What does this say about the hunger of the people for the Word of God, both then and today?
  
3. How do Christ's words "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18) inform our perspective on the medieval church?
  
4. How has your understanding of church history changed as a result of these lectures on the medieval church? What insights have you gained that you would like to share with others? What else would you like to learn about this period in history?



## Appendix

# Resources for Further Study

Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*

Anselm of Canterbury, *Cur Deus Homo*

Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God*

Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care*

Kuiper, B.K., *The Church in History*

Lawson, Steven, *Pillars of Grace*

Rubenstein, Jay, *Armies of Heaven: The First Crusade and the Quest for Apocalypse*

Schaff, Philip, *History of the Christian Church*, volumes 4-6

Sproul, R.C. *Are We Together?: A Protestant Analyzes Roman Catholicism*

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*

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