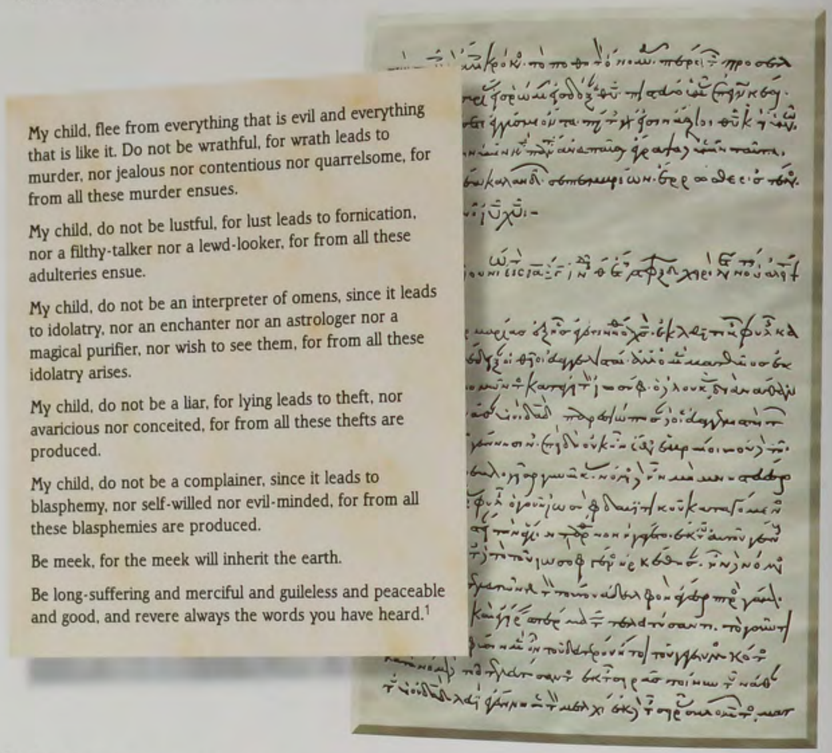
# The Didache

[DID-uh-kay]

The *Didache* is the first known Christian catechesis. Written in the first century, the *Didache* is the earliest known Christian writing outside of Scripture. The name of the work, "*Didache*," is indeed appropriate for such a catechesis because it comes from the Greek word for "teaching," and indicates that this writing contains the teaching of the Apostles.

The *Didache* is a catechetical summary of Christian sacraments, practices, and morality. Though written in the first century, its teaching is timeless. The *Didache* was probably written by the disciples of the Twelve Apostles, and it presents the Apostolic Faith as taught by those closest to Jesus Christ. This series of books takes the name of this early catechesis because it shares in the Church's mission of passing on that same Faith, in its rich entirety, to new generations.

Below is an excerpt from the *Didache* in which we see a clear example of its lasting message, a message that speaks to Christians of today as much as it did to the first generations of the Church. The world is different, but the struggle for holiness is the same. In the *Didache*, we are instructed to embrace virtue, to avoid sin, and to live the Beatitudes of our Lord.



My child, flee from everything that is evil and everything that is like it. Do not be wrathful, for wrath leads to murder, nor jealous nor contentious nor quarrelsome, for from all these murder ensues.

My child, do not be lustful, for lust leads to fornication, nor a filthy-talker nor a lewd-looker, for from all these adulteries ensue.

My child, do not be an interpreter of omens, since it leads to idolatry, nor an enchanter nor an astrologer nor a magical purifier, nor wish to see them, for from all these idolatry arises.

My child, do not be a liar, for lying leads to theft, nor avaricious nor conceited, for from all these thefts are produced.

My child, do not be a complainer, since it leads to blasphemy, nor self-willed nor evil-minded, for from all these blasphemies are produced.

Be meek, for the meek will inherit the earth.

Be long-suffering and merciful and guileless and peaceable and good, and revere always the words you have heard.[1]

The *Didache* is the teaching of the Apostles and, as such, it is the teaching of the Church. Accordingly, this book series makes extensive use of the most recent comprehensive catechesis provided to us, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The *Didache* series also relies heavily on Sacred Scripture, the lives of the saints, the Fathers of the Church, and the teaching of Vatican II as witnessed by the pontificate of John Paul II.

1. Swett, Ben H. "The Didache (The Teaching)." © January 30, 1998. http://bswett.com/1998-01Didache.html



# The History of The Church

## A Complete Course



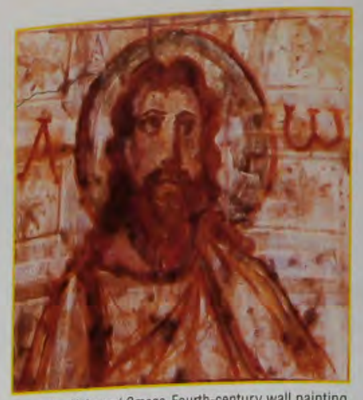
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*Jesus the Alpha and Omega.* Fourth-century wall painting from the Catacombs of Commodilla, Rome, Italy.

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## ABBREVIATIONS USED FOR THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

### Old Testament

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Genesis | Gen | Tobit | Tb | Hosea | Hos |
| Exodus | Ex | Judith | Jdt | Joel | Jl |
| Leviticus | Lv | Esther | Est | Amos | Am |
| Numbers | Nm | Job | Jb | Obadiah | Ob |
| Deuteronomy | Dt | Psalms | Ps(s) | Jonah | Jon |
| Joshua | Jos | Proverbs | Prv | Micah | Mi |
| Judges | Jgs | Ecclesiastes | Eccl | Nahum | Na |
| Ruth | Ru | Song of Songs | Sg | Habakkuk | Hab |
| 1 Samuel | 1 Sm | Wisdom | Wis | Zephaniah | Zep |
| 2 Samuel | 2 Sm | Sirach | Sir | Haggai | Hg |
| 1 Kings | 1 Kgs | Isaiah | Is | Zechariah | Zec |
| 2 Kings | 2 Kgs | Jeremiah | Jer | Malachi | Mal |
| 1 Chronicles | 1 Chr | Lamentations | Lam | 1 Maccabees | 1 Mc |
| 2 Chronicles | 2 Chr | Baruch | Bar | 2 Maccabees | 2 Mc |
| Ezra | Ezr | Ezekiel | Ez | | |
| Nehemiah | Neh | Daniel | Dn | | |

### New Testament

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Matthew | Mt | Ephesians | Eph | Hebrews | Heb |
| Mark | Mk | Philippians | Phil | James | Jas |
| Luke | Lk | Colossians | Col | 1 Peter | 1 Pt |
| John | Jn | 1 Thessalonians | 1 Thes | 2 Peter | 2 Pt |
| Acts of the Apostles | Acts | 2 Thessalonians | 2 Thes | 1 John | 1 Jn |
| Romans | Rom | 1 Timothy | 1 Tm | 2 John | 2 Jn |
| 1 Corinthians | 1 Cor | 2 Timothy | 2 Tm | 3 John | 3 Jn |
| 2 Corinthians | 2 Cor | Titus | Ti | Jude | Jud |
| Galatians | Gal | Philemon | Phlm | Revelation | Rv |

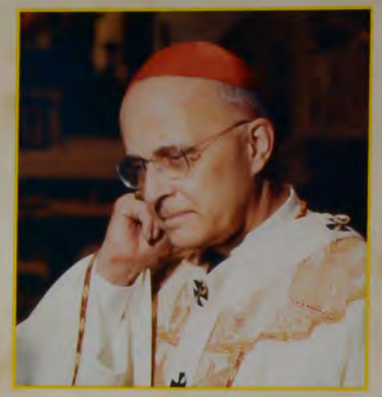
## ABBREVIATIONS USED FOR DOCUMENTS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

| | |
|---|---|
| *AA* | *Apostolicam actuositatem* |
| *AAS* | *Acta Apostolica Sedis* |
| *AG* | *Ad gentes* |
| *CA* | *Centesimus annus* |
| CCC | *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* |
| CCEO | Corpus Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium |
| CDF | Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith |
| CHCW | Charter for Health Care Workers |
| CIC | Codex Iuris Canonici (The Code of Canon Law) |
| *CL* | Christifidelis laici |
| *CPG* | *Solemn Profession of Faith:* Credo of the People of God |
| *DD* | *Dies Domini* |
| *DRF* | *Declaration on Religious Freedom* |
| *DH* | *Dignitatis humanæ* |
| DIM | Decree *Inter mirifici* |
| *DoV* | *Donum vitæ* |
| DPA | Declaration on Procured Abortion |
| DS | Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (1965) |
| *DV* | *Dei verbum* |
| *EN* | *Evangeli nuntiadi* |
| *EV* | *Evangelium vitæ* |
| *FC* | *Familiaris consortio* |
| *GCD* | *General Catechetical Directory* |
| *GS* | *Gaudium et spes* |
| *HV* | *Humanae vitæ* |
| IOE | Instruction on Euthanasia |
| *LE* | *Laborem exercens* |
| *LG* | *Lumen gentium* |
| *LH* | *Liturgy of the Hours* |
| *MF* | *Mysterium fidei* |
| *MM* | *Mater et magistra* |
| ND | Neuner-Dupuis, *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* |
| *OC* | *Ordo confirmationis* |
| *OCM* | *Ordo celebrandi Matrimonium* |
| *OP* | *Ordo paenitentiæ* |
| PG | J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Græca* (Paris, 1857-1866) |
| *PH* | *Persona humanæ* |
| PL | J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Latina* (Paris, 1841-1855) |
| *PP* | *Populorum progressio* |
| *PT* | *Pacem in terris* |
| *RH* | *Redemptor hominis* |
| *RP* | *Reconciliatio et pænitentia* |
| *SC* | *Sacrosanctum concilium* |
| *SD* | *Salvifici doloris* |
| *SRS* | *Solicitudo rei socialis* |
| *STh* | *Summa Theologiæ* |
| *VS* | *Veritatis splendor* |



# FOREWORD

## *"Jesus Christ is the key."*



It has been said that to try to do without history is to cease to be Catholic. Faith in Jesus Christ is based on events that have happened and have been witnessed in written records. The truth embodied in the Christian faith came to us from outside ourselves as a revelation. Much more than a reflection or personal experience, the truths of our faith are objective and are reliably handed on.

Much of this Christian story is therefore found in written documents—the Bible, the writings of the Church Fathers, the decisions of early Church councils. Christian history comes down to us in Tradition—in the oral teaching, especially that of the Apostles and their successors, in the liturgy, in spirituality, in culture.

Christian history is the record of God's intervention in the human situation, an account of God's love for his human creatures. Its focus is the Son of God taking on human nature in the Incarnation. Not only are the effects of that divine event traceable in cultures and civilizations, the events that make it up and surround it are documented.

Because Jesus was truly God as well as truly man, human history can take us only so far; faith goes beyond that point to tell us the meaning of the Christ event. The Christ of history is the ground for the Christ of faith; the Christ of faith brings ultimate meaning to the Christ of history. There is only one Christ of God. "Jesus Christ is the key, the center and the purpose of the whole of human history" (Vatican II: Gaudium et spes 10), because in him the boundless mystery of God is manifested in the world.

The Incarnation happened in history as a divine-human event and it continues and is extended in the form of the Church, in her sacraments, in the Eucharist, in her mission. It is a deeply human story of the best and the worst in the human situation; in the end, it is always the story of the victory of grace and of the destiny of humanity.

*The Didache Series* is remarkably complete and, with this volume, it integrates divine revelation and the story of the Church in light of sound human scholarship. I recommend it warmly for use in the high schools and colleges of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

✠Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Chicago

## INTRODUCTION

### *"Be not afraid!"*



The world is waiting for a new era of holiness among the laity. When John Paul II came on to the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and spoke about his acceptance of a heavy burden, he declared that no one should be afraid to open the doors of our hearts to the Redeemer. These words became a rallying cry throughout his pontificate. In the midst of an all-pervading moral relativism and dissent within the Church, expressed in a culture of death, the Holy Spirit, through his pope, has tapped into hidden desires for holiness and spiritual renewal especially among the laity.

The twenty-first century is calling for a type of Christianity that was practiced during the first few centuries of the Church's history. This means that the signs of the times call for new age of holiness and martyrdom. In a sense the Holy Spirit is moving the laity to put on a repeat performance of what the earliest Christians accomplished almost seventeen centuries ago when they brought the pagan Roman world literally to its knees.

In order to properly understand the fundamental nature of this new evangelization, however, one must be firmly grounded in the history of the Church. For example, if the people of God are being called to a new age of holiness and martyrdom closer to that of the early Church, one must understand what the early Church was. *The History of The Church* is an account of Christian History based solidly on historical fact viewed through the eyes of Faith, by which students will see both her visible and spiritual reality as bearer of divine life. The book delves deeply into the heroic lives of the saints and the tremendous achievements of the Church, and will bring those who read it to a deeper understanding of Christ and his calling for a new evangelization.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus invited a handful of followers to bring the Gospel message to a world diametrically opposed to everything it stood for. Reading the first chapter of St. Paul's letter of the Romans gives an idea of the challenges faced by the early Christians. The task would seem impossible, if not sheer madness, given the moral corruption, the dislike for matters spiritual and the deification of the emperor and the state if it were not for Christ's assurance of victory. They indeed believed in Jesus' word and accomplished a feat that defies any possible human explanation.

We are now in a new springtime of Christianity, perhaps the same springtime experienced by our first brothers and sisters in the Faith, who generously laid down their lives for Christ. As Pope John Paul II habitually recommended, let us resolve to go to the Mother of God so that we all meet the challenge of extending Christ's kingdom and shoulder the burden of the Church's mission to bring salvation to all.

BACKGROUND TO CHURCH HISTORY

# The Roman World

*The Roman Empire, with the unifying forces of its laws and organization, would greatly facilitate the actual spread of the Gospel.*



BACKGROUND TO CHURCH HISTORY

# The Roman World

Christ was born into a Roman World.



*Alexander the Great in the Temple of Jerusalem* depicts an event as told by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus in his *Jewish Antiquities*, written in A.D. 93. "And when he [Alexander] went up into the temple, he offered sacrifice to God, according to the high-priest's direction, . . . And when the Book of Daniel was showed him wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended." (translation by William Whiston)

Since the first century B.C., Rome had occupied Palestine, and like most provinces in the Roman Empire, Palestine featured its own local customs together with an international flavor brought on by many centuries of foreign rule. Jesus was born into a vibrant mix of cultures and languages. Jesus would most likely have spoken Aramaic and Hebrew, but not the two classical languages that dominated the world around him: Latin and Greek. Latin was the language of the Roman Empire, but Greek, the written word of the New Testament, was the language of learning, culture, and commerce in the eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, in many ways, the world at the time of Jesus was still largely Hellenistic. This was due to the lingering legacy left by the great empire built by the Macedonian king Alexander the Great.



Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.)





PART I

# The Hellenistic Worldview

After the death of his father Philip II of Macedon in 336 B.C., Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.) set out to build a huge empire. He conquered lands along the shores of the eastern Mediterranean Sea, defeating the Persians and establishing control over Palestine, Egypt, and the Middle East by 332 B.C. In 326 B.C., he led his army further into India, establishing the frontiers of his empire, and finally settling in the city of Babylon, located about fifty-five miles south of modern day Baghdad, Iraq. By the age of thirty, Alexander's empire covered almost the entire known world. Only three years later, Alexander suddenly died of a fever in 323 B.C.

Alexander had hoped to build a truly united empire, despite the multiplicity of peoples he conquered. He and his military officers married Persian wives, and Alexander founded many new cities with native Greeks in an effort to introduce Greek language, dress, and learning into his empire. Through this network of cities, Greek ideas, culture, philosophy, and religion all made themselves present in the East. This began the process called Hellenization by which Greek cultural attributes were transplanted to the East.

Strictly speaking, Hellenism was not a purely Greek culture. Alexander himself was a Macedonian, and the culture he brought to his empire was a mixture of Greek and other cultural influences. It was Greek-based culture ripe for absorption into local histories and customs. Alexander's conquered cities would share a strong Greek presence with a native identity. Greek, although the dominant language of communication, was used alongside other native tongues. Put simply, Hellenism was the common thread that held diverse cultures together. This could be compared with the way American language and customs are widely known throughout the world in the commercial sphere today. Rather than an imposition, this coexistence led to an intermingling of cultures and ideas.



Among the most profound and lasting effects of Hellenization was the effect it had on religion. Greek religion was seen widely as simplistic compared to the sophisticated theologies of the Persians and Jews. At the same time, Greek thought supplied these Eastern theologies with new language and philosophies that helped further their development. Hellenism occasioned religious debates over the connection between religion and morality and the existence of a life after death. The introduction of Aristotle into Palestine established a tradition of Jewish commentaries on Aristotle's texts that would help preserve the philosopher's ideas after they were eventually lost in the West.

*Plato and Aristotle.* A detail from Raphael's *School of Athens*. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) was born in Macedon and studied in Athens under Plato. Aristotle was summoned back to his homeland by King Philip II of Macedon to become the tutor of his son Alexander, who was then 13. Plutarch wrote that Aristotle imparted to Alexander a knowledge of ethics, politics and the most profound secrets of philosophy.

In many ways the proliferation of Greek thought laid a foundation for the introduction of Christianity in the world. Greek language and philosophy were a very suitable medium through which the teachings of Christ could be transmitted. Most notably, St. Paul's letters and St. John's Gospel show how the richness of the Greek language allowed for the articulation of the intricacies of the Christian religion. Later on, the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle would provide invaluable ideas for the development of Catholic theology and magisterial pronouncements.

## ALEXANDER'S EMPIRE







A page from St. Thomas Aquinas' *Commentary on the Ethics of Aristotle.*

St. Thomas, along with St. Augustine, held that whatever there was of truth in the writings of pagan philosophers should be taken from them, as from "unjust possessors," and adapted to the teaching of the true religion (*Summa* I:84:5). In the *Summa* he quotes from the writings of forty-six philosophers and poets, his favorite authors were Aristotle, Plato, and Boethius. From Aristotle he learned love of order and accuracy of expression. From Boethius, a Christian writer, he learned that Aristotle's works could be used without detriment to Christianity.

Aristotle's works were held in such esteem that he was known as *The Philosopher.* Dante calls Aristotle the "master knower" and places him in Limbo with the "Good Pagans" such as Socrates and Plato in the *Divine Comedy* (Canto IV).





# PART II
# The Romans

The founding of Rome is surrounded by myths, many of dubious reliability. The most popular myth claims that a she-wolf in the Tiber River found Romulus and Remus, two abandoned sons of the Alba Longa kings. Nursed by the wolf, the foundlings were eventually taken in by a shepherd. The two boys lived with the shepherd and his wife (whom some legends attribute to the nursing of the boys rather than the she wolf), and once they were grown, they established a city on top of one of the seven hills overlooking the section of the Tiber where they were found. During a petty argument, Romulus killed his brother Remus and set himself up as king of the city, naming it Rome, after himself. According to legend this happened on April 21, 753 B.C., which is considered the date of Rome's founding. During the first centuries, the city was ruled as a monarchy.

By 509 B.C., after a string of bad monarchs, the Romans replaced the monarchy with a Republic. The Republic divided the power formerly held by the single king among the Senate, two consuls, and a group of Assemblies. During an emergency, the Romans could appoint someone "dictator" who could rule the city absolutely. His power was, however, limited to six months.



Romulus and Remus nursed by the she-wolf. According to legend, on April 21, 753 B.C., after killing his brother Remus, Romulus set himself up as king of the city and named it after himself. That date is considered the date of Rome's founding.



**THE EMPIRE'S FIRST 100 YEARS**

**Augustus**
27 BC–AD 14

**Tiberius**
AD 14–37

**Gaius (Caligula)**
AD 37–41

**Claudius**
AD 41–54

**Nero**
AD 54–68

**Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian**
AD 68–69

**Vespasian**
AD 69–79

**Titus**
AD 79–81

**Domitian**
AD 81–96

**Nerva**
AD 96–98

**Trajan**
AD 98–117

**Hadrian**
AD 117–138





# THE ROMAN EMPIRE
## A.D. 14 - 116

BRITANNIA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
GERMANIA INFERIOR
Rhine
BELGICA
LUGDUNENSIS
GERMANIA SUPERIOR
RAETIA
Danube
AQUITANIA
NARBONENSIS
ALPES POENINAE
ALPES MARITIMAE
ALPES COTTIAE
LUSITANIA
TARRACONENSIS
BAETICA
CORSICA
SARDINIA
Rome
MAURETANIA
Carthage
AFRICA
SICILIA
Syracuse
PANNONIA
DACIA
DALMATIA
Salonae
MOESIA
THRACIA
MACEDONIA
Thessalonica
EPIRUS
ACHAEA
Corinth
Athens
CRETE
ASIA
Ephesus
BITHYNIA AND PONTUS
Nicomedia
GALATIA
CAPPADOCIA
LYCIA AND PAMPHYLIA
CILICIA
Antioch
SYRIA
CYPRUS
BLACK SEA
CASPIAN SEA
ARMENIA
ASSYRIA
Tigris
MESOPOTAMIA
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
JUDAEA
Jerusalem
Cyrene
CYRENAICA
Alexandria
AEGYPTUS
Nile
ARABIA/ NABATAEA
RED SEA

Roman Empire in A.D. 14
Client State
Boundary of Province
Roman Empire at its greatest extent in A.D. 116
Roman road

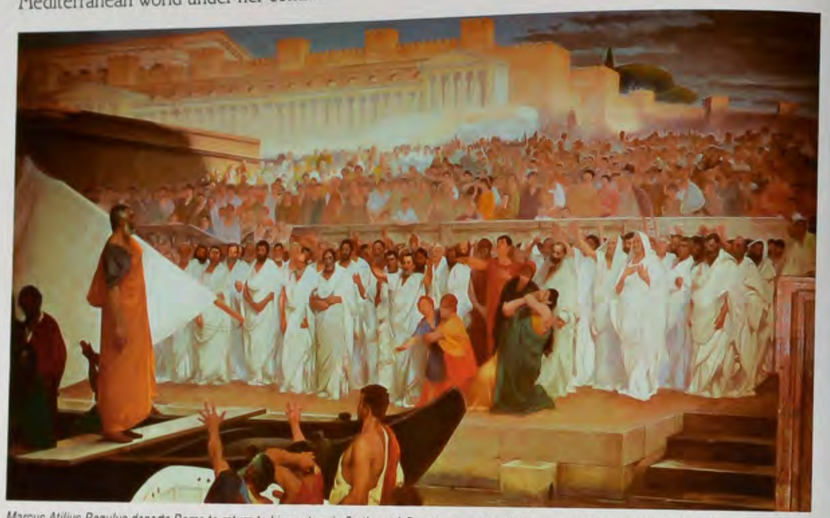
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## ROMAN EXPANSION AND THE RISE OF THE EMPIRE

As Rome grew in size, the city took advantage of quarrels it had with neighboring cities and provinces using "defensive" attacks to spread the city's influence and control throughout the Italian peninsula. By 264 BC, Rome controlled the whole of Italy and began to challenge the other great Mediterranean power at the time: Carthage. After three wars, known as the Punic Wars, with the northern African city, the Romans acquired Sicily, Spain and North Africa. Frontier wars with hostile neighbors soon brought Greece, Macedon, and other lands to the East under Rome's control. Eventually, through these opportunistic military ventures, Rome brought much of the Mediterranean world under her control.



*Marcus Atilius Regulus departs Rome to return to his captors in Carthage.* A Roman general in the First Punic War (264-241 BC), Regulus had been taken prisoner in 255 BC by the Spartan mercenary general Xanthippus along with 500 of his men. In 250 BC, he was sent to Rome on parole to negotiate a peace and exchange of prisoners. On his arrival he strongly urged the Roman Senate to refuse both proposals, but honored his parole by returning to Carthage where he was tortured to death. This legend of courage gave Regulus heroic stature to later Romans.

By 133 BC, Rome was outgrowing her ability to be organized as an effective republic. A long series of civil wars broke out between Republicans (Senate, Optimate) and Democrats (Populares). Three people—the First Triumvirate—finally agreed to share power. One of these men, Julius Caesar, tried to increase his popularity by becoming an ambitious general; he conquered Gaul in 58-51 BC and then invaded Italy itself in 49 BC. Julius soon consolidated his power, overstepping his limits as a consul and pressuring the senate to elect him dictator. The senate obliged, and in 44 BC, Julius Caesar pushed things even further by naming himself dictator for life.

This bold move angered many of the Senate leaders and led to his assassination by a group of conspirators. Marcus Antonius (Marc Antony), a follower of Julius Caesar, succeeded the former dictator as consul. The Senate still feared the consolidation of power around Antony, and they sent Julius' nineteen-year-old stepson to put down Antony. Much to the Senate's surprise, Julius' stepson, Octavian, allied himself with Antony and set up the Second Triumvirate of Roman rulers composed of Octavian, Antony, and a third man by the name of Marcus Lepidus. Immediately after coming to power in 43 BC, Antony ordered the execution of the Senate leader and statesman, Cicero. These three shared dictatorship for ten years (43-33 BC), ruthlessly eliminating their political opponents.





## SPARTACUS, LEADER OF A SLAVE REVOLT

Spartacus was a Thracian (from the city Thrace on the southeast portion of the Balkan Peninsula). He was born a freeman, but after serving in the Roman army, he was sold into slavery and trained to become a gladiator. Some accounts claim that Spartacus deserted the army and was enslaved as punishment.

In 73 B.C., at Capua in southern Italy, Spartacus instigated a slave revolt along with one hundred other gladiators. Spartacus, quickly proving himself to be a brave and competent military leader, led an army composed of from seventy thousand to one hundred twenty thousand slaves and impoverished working-class freemen. Harnessing a popular dissatisfaction among these lower-class citizens, Spartacus led the army against the Roman forces, defeating the professional soldiers repeatedly. They fought their way to northern Italy where Spartacus hoped to lead his followers across the Alps to freedom and new lives outside of Italy. His army, however, abandoned their leader's utopian dream, instead continuing to wander Italy waging war.

With the army, Spartacus made his way back to southern Italy where he planned to invade Sicily. There they were betrayed by the pirates they hired to cross to the island. The Roman army attacked and defeated the revolt in 71 B.C. In order to create an example of the revolutionaries and incite fear in any slaves who sought to rebel as well, the Roman leader Crassus ordered the crucifixion of six thousand members of Spartacus' army. These men, hung along the Appian Way from Capua to Rome, were left on the crosses until they rotted away—a powerful warning about the consequences of challenging Roman power.



After crushing Spartacus, Marcus Licinius Crassus soon ruled the Empire with Pompey and Julius Caesar as the first Triumvirate of Rome.



A Roman amphitheater in Pompeii. After their escape from Capua, Spartacus and his followers hid from the Roman Legions on Mt. Vesuvius which overlooks the city of Pompeii. Before Vesuvius became an active volcano, it was covered with forests and vegetation.

After ten years, Lepidus retired, leaving Octavian and Antony with power over two halves of the Roman Empire. Antony concentrated on the East where he lived and made an alliance with his lover, Cleopatra of Egypt. Octavian ruled the West and wisely remained in the city of Rome. Naturally, these two leaders began to contest each other's growing influence. In Rome, Octavian was able to ally himself with the Senate by strengthening dissent against Antony and Cleopatra.

In 31 B.C., Octavian sent his loyal and brilliant naval general Marcus Agrippa against Antony's forces at Actium in Greece and overran Antony's armies. Demoralized by the defeat and accepting the inevitability of Octavian's total victory, Antony and Cleopatra both committed suicide. With the second member of the triumvirate out of the way, Octavian was left singularly in power—completing the transformation of the Roman Republic into the Roman Empire.

## THE ROMAN EMPIRE: THE REIGN OF AUGUSTUS

Octavian never formally declared an end to the Roman Republic. Rather, he skillfully maintained the appearance of republican institutions, while he amassed power from the Senate. In 27 B.C. Octavian received the imperial title "Augustus" from the Senate, marking the founding of the Empire of Rome. Octavian also convinced the Senate to give him exclusive control over Spain, Gaul, and Syria, the provinces that held most of the Roman legions. With the army in his full command, Octavian ruled Egypt as his own private possession.

Throughout his reign, Augustus took many other titles of authority. As his empire grew to include other provinces beyond Spain, Gaul, and Syria, he took on the power of a tribune. A title that dated from the early days of the Republic, the tribune was meant to represent the plebeian class (the commoners) in the government. Although Augustus, as a patrician, was technically ineligible to be a tribune, this title helped consolidate the majority of the population under his control, giving him legitimacy on behalf of the common people in Rome. Augustus was also called *princeps*, "first citizen," and finally took the title and office of *Pontifex Maximus* or "high priest" of the pagan religion. Together, all of these titles, names, and offices established Augustus as the preeminent authority in the Roman Empire.

After the long years of civil war, the reign of Augustus brought much appreciated peace and prosperity to the Roman world. Augustus centralized the bureaucratic republican administration, dramatically improving communication in the empire. This reign of peace and prosperity was known as the *Pax Romana*, "the Roman peace." During the *Pax Romana*, the empire enjoyed two hundred years of peace, and Roman civilization flourished. The *Pax Romana* made safe and efficient travel and communication over vast distances possible, and the spread of Christianity was facilitated in no small measure by these peaceful conditions.



*The Ara Pacis Augustae* (Altar to the Peace of Augustus) was an altar dedicated to "Peace" by the Roman Emperor Augustus Caesar in A.D. 8. This altar sought to portray the peace and prosperity enjoyed as a result of the *Pax Romana* ("the Roman peace") brought about by the military supremacy of the Roman empire. It is elaborately and finely sculpted, depicting scenes of traditional Roman piety. Various figures bring forth cattle to be sacrificed to the gods. Some have their togas drawn over their heads, like a hood, a traditional gesture of respect for the gods before an animal sacrifice. Others wear laurel crowns, traditional symbols of victory.





## ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME



The first section of the Appian Way ("*Via Appia*" in Latin) between Rome and Capua was built by Appius Claudius Caecus (ca. 340-273 B.C.) during his term as censor. He also built the first aqueduct in Rome, the *Aqua Appia*.

As Rome expanded, the empire began to absorb many diverse peoples. Providing for unity and administrative control was difficult, to say the least. In order to establish an effective means of communication between all these various regions, Romans developed a massive system of roads. These roads allowed for people and information to travel to the farthest reaches of the empire in a matter of days.

Public highways radiated from the Roman Forum across Italy and as far away as Britain and Africa (including Egypt). These roads, paved with stone and cement, were marked with mile-stones and ran in a direct line from one city to the next. They crossed every kind of rough terrain from mountains to rivers, enabling soldiers to travel far distances at quick speeds. In addition, every fifty or sixty miles there was a house where a stable of horses and public attendants were stationed to help relay information and decrees. With the help of these relays, it was possible to travel a hundred miles in a day along the Roman roads. The most distant provinces could share information that was only a few days old, a service which aided both public officials and private citizens.

In addition to the Roman roads, effective sea travel aided the free flow of information, and the Mediterranean Sea became a major trade and travel route. From Ostia, an artificial port situated at the mouth of the Tiber River, ships could sail from Rome to Alexandria in only nine or ten days.

## CULTURAL IMPACT OF THE ROMANS

Whereas the ancient Greeks excelled in literary expressions of the human spirit—particularly in the areas of philosophy and the arts—the Romans flourished in more practical disciplines like organization, administration, government, and law. The Romans were warriors, builders, and administrators. Never before had such a vast empire been guarded and protected by meticulously organized legions of warriors. The success of Roman unity and organization was achieved not just through the skill of the emperor, but also by the great body of Roman law. Through this sophisticated understanding of jurisprudence, the Roman Empire became the *orbis terrarum*, the "circle of lands" comprising the entire known world in the West in which justice emanated outward from the city of Rome. Within its borders lay stability and the possibility of advancement; beyond its borders, chaos and darkness.

The impact Roman civilization had on the lands it ruled differed slightly between the East and West. Latin culture deeply influenced the western portion of the empire, particularly North Africa, England, Gaul, Iberia, Helvetia (Switzerland) and lands occupied by Germanic tribes. Latin was the root language of the lands of the western provinces. Latin was also the main language of North Africa before Arabic, following the rise of Islam, supplanted it. Latin also heavily influenced the Germanic languages including English.

The eastern portion of the Roman Empire was older and its traditions more deeply rooted. The lands continued to be politically subservient to Rome, and both Greek and Latin were linguistic necessities. Although administrative and civil laws were respected, other cultural attributes of Roman life did not hold fast in the East.



Federico Barrocci's *Aeneas' Flight from Troy*. A scene from Virgil's *Aeneid* depicts the hero Aeneas, ancestor of Romulus and Remus, fleeing from the burning city of Troy. He carries his infirm father, Anchises. At his side are his son Ascanius (covering his ears from the roar of the fire) and his wife Creusa (who would be lost). The *Aeneid* is an epic poem of twelve books. The poetry is polished and complex. Legend has it that Virgil wrote only a single line of the poem each day. The *Aeneid* is one of a small group of writings from Latin literature that traditionally has been required for students of Latin. After reading the works of Julius Caesar, Cicero, Ovid and Catullus, students would then read the *Aeneid*.





Although Roman morality would infamously disintegrate throughout the history of the empire, during the reign of Augustus, legislation did support public moral conduct. For example, Augustus passed legislation that supported the family. In order to increase the population of Italy after the devastating civil wars, laws were made to restrict the rights of both men and women who did not marry, as well as those couples that remained childless. Besides supporting a practical means for population growth, Augustus' laws demonstrated that for the Romans the family was the place to effectively cultivate moral values.

Roman culture was heavily influenced by the Hellenistic world that flourished before Rome became a great city. In fact, Roman understanding of virtue developed out of the Hellenist tradition. This heritage is especially apparent in the Roman literature produced during the Golden Age (30 B.C.-A.D. 18) of Augustus' reign. The greatest writers of that era such as Virgil, Horace, and Livy forged in their works both mythic and historical roots for the empire. Virgil's patriotic epic, the *Aeneid*, related the journey of Aeneas from Troy to Italy, where, according to legend, his descendants eventually founded Rome. In his *Odes, Epodes, and Satires*, the satirist Horace examined the emotions of everyday life. Livy's *Roman History* reaches back to the Republic's conquest of the Mediterranean. All three of these authors worked during the transformation of the Republic into the Empire under Augustus.

During the Silver Age (A.D. 14-96), authors like Tacitus continued the development of Rome's most important literary form: satire. His *Histories* critiques the Empire's governing class from A.D. 69-96, and his *Annals* offers a similar moral judgment on the emperors from Tiberius through Nero. Tacitus' writings detail the first century's desire to return to the moral uprightness of the early Republic.

## RELIGION IN THE ROMAN REPUBLIC AND ROMAN EMPIRE

Much of Rome's pagan religion was directly imported from Greece. Indeed many of the myths, stories, and names of their gods were inherited. As the Romans were a practical people, religion also took on a practical end. By the time of Augustus, Roman pagan beliefs were widely enforced to ensure political unity throughout the empire. Romans were generally tolerant of local customs and beliefs, and would even sacrifice to local gods, just as long as they also offered homage to the gods of Rome. There were few exceptions made for the duty to sacrifice to the Roman gods. One exception was made in regards to Judaism. The Jews' monotheistic beliefs forbade them to worship any other gods beside the God of Abraham, and they refused to show deference to Roman paganism. Eventually the Romans exempted the Jews from pagan worship, but not without reservation.

As Rome became more culturally developed, the gods were increasingly seen merely as literary inventions that expressed certain aspects of human behavior. The worship of pagan gods served as a practical means to bring ideological unity to a vast empire. Roman pagan cult worship was much less a personal belief as it was a collective ritual act committed at various times of the year.

The early cults were meant to placate the gods through sacrifice as a means to protect the Roman state. This kind of worship was called *pietas*. The chief manifestations of these rituals were public festivals, offerings of food and wine, and animal sacrifices. Pagan temples housed statues of the gods and provided materials needed for the annual observance of the festivals connected to the deity. Unlike modern churches, they did not hold communal worship activities inside, as sacrifices were usually held outside the temple.

The chief Roman god was the sky-god Jupiter Optimus Maximus (literally "the Best and Greatest"). This cult developed very early in the Republic, and the temple dedicated to Jupiter





The Jupiter Temple located in Baalbek, Lebanon is one of the world's best preserved Roman sites. The monumental temple was started by Augustus (ca. 15 B.C.), and work continued on the complex for a century and a half. The city was known in Hellenistic and Roman times as Heliopolis, the city of the sun. It was one of the largest sanctuaries in the Roman Empire with temples for the gods Jupiter, Venus and Bacchus. Today, only six of the fifty-four giant Corinthian columns that surrounded the sanctuary remain standing. Eight were disassembled and shipped to Constantinople under Justinian's orders for his basilica of Hagia Sophia. The Jupiter Temple was the largest religious building in the entire Roman empire and was shown on many Roman coins. The Roman coin shown here was minted in A.D. 244-249 by Emperor Philip I and shows the Jupiter Temple in Heliopolis with its fifty-four columns.

on the Capitoline Hill was built by 509 B.C. Juno and Minerva were associated with Jupiter's temple, and many cities throughout the empire erected temples dedicated to this Capitoline Triad.

As the emperor rose in prominence, he associated himself more and more with Jupiter, placing himself at the center of the pagan cult. This practice gave a semi-divine stature to the living emperor and insured that he be worshiped after death as a god. Local peoples from around the empire offered sacrifices to the emperor, showing their allegiance.

## FOREIGN CULTS

A number of foreign cults also crept into practice. These were brought back primarily by soldiers who had served in various corners of the empire. Unlike the public Roman cults, these foreign cults usually invited the individual to personal religious belief. One prominent example of these cults was the worship of the eastern god Mithras. The Mithraic cult was a fraternal organization open only to men that cultivated virtues important in the life of a soldier. Incidentally, some of their ritual practices were similar to Christianity. They shared a communal meal in which they ate flesh that symbolized their god and believed in personal salvation. Mithraism became firmly established in the Roman Empire. Although a significant body of archeological evidence exists regarding Mithraic structures, very few records of the actual beliefs have survived.





## STOICISM

Stoicism was a very influential philosophical school in both Greece and Rome, and over time it became one of the dominant moral philosophies among the intellectuals in Rome. Borrowing much from the Greek philosophers, especially the Athenian Zeno of Citium (335-263 B.C.), stoicism appealed to the Roman sense of law, order, and virtue. Stoics honored the natural law and one's duty to it, as well as encouraging the practice of controlling the passions as a pathway to true freedom. Pain, grief, and joy were not permitted to affect the outward or inward state of the balanced Stoic, who should always be guided by reason alone. Stoics held that the highest good that man can accomplish is to live a life of virtue in accordance with right reason.

Several influential thinkers and emperors in Roman society adhered to Stoicism during the first centuries of the Church's history. Even some of the ancient Christian writers like Tertullian were influenced by this philosophical tradition.

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION OF ROMAN SOCIETY

By the time the republic transitioned into an empire, the population had become increasingly stratified. The governing class enjoyed the wealth of the Empire, and a large class of slaves comprised the majority of the workforce at the bottom of the social ladder. The dwelling masses and the poor freemen of the countryside found themselves significantly below the wealthy clan but at a level above the slaves.

Free people of the countryside faced difficult circumstances including an ever-increasing tax burden. After the rise of the great agricultural estates where slaves provided the labor, many people were forced into the cities. The free people in the city faced economic uncertainty as money and employment were scarce. When conditions grew more severe in the later empire, the emperors began providing food and entertainment to placate their people—hence, the popular phrase "bread and circuses." This free distribution of food was a financial drain, and it would eventually hurt the empire significantly.

In general, women had little opportunity, if any, to rise above their lot of second-class citizens. In many instances they were seen as nothing more than a mere commodity to be bought and sold. Although during the era of the Roman Republic the role of the woman as wife and mother was respected, during the era of the empire, many women were bought and sold to serve as concubines. The relatively stable family structure of the Republic and early empire crumbled during Rome's later imperial era as concubinage became a substitute for marriage on a grand scale.

## SLAVERY

As in most societies of antiquity, slavery was an institution vital to the economic structure of both the Roman Republic and Roman Empire. Slaves worked as farm hands, manual laborers, and domestic servants, as well as teachers and tutors for the aristocracy. They formed the backbone of the Roman workforce and were called upon to perform any job, except that of public office. There were even instances where slaves and freemen worked side by side.

Prisoners of war provided the largest source of slaves for the empire. One military campaign alone could result in the capturing and enslaving up to as many as one hundred fifty thousand people. As the empire expanded, the number of slaves grew immensely. It has been estimated that two million people were enslaved at the close of the Roman Republic (roughly one in four people), and that number grew during the time of the empire.

The Romans, like the Greeks, viewed their slaves as "chattel," meaning that the master held power of life and death over the slave. It would therefore follow that this supreme authority over the life of a slave included the possibility for slaves to be set free by their owners. Sometimes it was even possible for the slave to pay his master for his own freedom. Once freed, former slaves could even receive citizenship in Roman society.

The advent of Christianity did not initially affect the institution of slavery, although it found many converts among the Roman slaves. Christianity was perhaps more appealing to slaves because it recognized their individual dignity and encouraged them to share in the cross of Christ through their own suffering. In Ephesians 6: 5-9, St. Paul asks slaves to give good service to their masters by placing the rewards of heaven before them, and he instructed masters to disavow violence toward slaves and to recognize Jesus Christ as the universal master. Indeed many of the early leaders of the Church, including popes, were former slaves.

## CATEGORIES OF ROMAN SLAVES



Titus Maccius Plautus was a comic playwright of the Roman Republic. The years of his life are uncertain, but his plays were produced between ca. 205 and 184 B.C. Twenty-one plays survive.

Plautus' comedies, which are the earliest surviving intact works in Latin literature, are all adaptations of Greek models for a Roman audience. His most typical character is the clever slave who manipulates his master.

As portrayed by Plautus in his comedies, the categories of Roman slaves included:

*agaso* - groom
*atriensis* - steward
*auceps* - fowler
*auri custos* - jewelry attendant
*bubulcus* - plowman
*calator* - footman
*cantrix* - singer
*cellarius* - storekeeper
*cistellatrix* - wardrobe keeper
*coquus* - cook
*cursor* - messenger
*factor* - poultry and game fattener
*genus ferratile* - chain gang
*holitor* - market gardener
*ianitrix* - doorkeeper
*messor* - reaper
*nuntius renuntius* - messengers
*nutrix* - nurse
*obstetrix* - obstetrician
*opilio* - head shepherd
*paedogogus* - children's chaperon
*pastores* - shepherds
*pedisequa* - attendant
*salutigeruli pueri* - pages
*sartor* - hoer
*sator* - planter
*tonstrix* - hairdresser
*unctor* - masseur
*vestiplica* - clothing folder





# PART III

# The Jews

The history of the Jewish people is particular to the ancient world. Besides being monotheistic, the Jewish people believed that they had a special role in God's providential plans to serve as his chosen people. One of the unique characteristics of the chosen people was their realization of a personal God. A long history of suffering and oppression molded a people whose faith stimulated their expectation for a messiah. Being cognizant of their obligation to worship the one true God and keep his commandments, they shunned the religions and immoral ways of the Gentiles, typified especially by the Greeks and Romans.

The Jewish world of Jesus was a crossroads of cultures, under Hellenist, Latin, and traditional Jewish influences. This Jewish culture was different than the one depicted in the Old Testament. Influenced by Greek thought and ideas, many new groups of scholars, priests, and ascetics developed schools of Jewish theology. Roman, not Mosaic Law governed society, and despite some special concessions for worship, Jews were held as second class to the Roman citizens. Palestine during the life of Christ was rife with tension and expectations as many Jewish groups were looking for the messiah to free Israel from the Roman yoke. In A.D. 70, the temple would be destroyed and the Jews would be cast out of Jerusalem.




A page from *The Sarajevo Haggadah* (fourteenth century) illustrates the Jewish Passover Seder, a ritual which reenacts and celebrates the Jewish Exodus from Egypt. The guiding text for this ritual, the *Haggadah*, has directed Jews through the Passover ritual from the tenth century to the present day.

## A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF JEWISH HISTORY

This history of the Jews began with the covenant God made with Abraham. The descendants of Abraham began to worship the one true God in obedience to the covenant made with Abraham. After being enslaved during their exile in Egypt, a new prophet, Moses, led the Jews out of captivity. Through Moses, the whole Jewish community became more united through the gift of God's Law given to Moses on Mount Sinai. This Law transmitted God's explicit will to the chosen people. The central practice of the Jewish faith rested on fidelity to this Law. Reading the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament), sacrificial worship conducted at the Temple, and, later on, rabbi-led worship at the synagogue, became staples of Jewish life.

Led back into Palestine by Moses' successor Joshua, the Jews eventually established a kingdom. Under kings David and Solomon, the Jewish kingdom reached its zenith and saw the completion of the First Temple during Solomon's reign. A feat of supreme architectural mastery, the Temple was massive and ornate, and its inner sanctum contained the tablets upon which God gave the Law to Moses. After Solomon's death, the kingdom was divided into two parts: Israel and Judah. Eventually, both these Jewish kingdoms were conquered, culminating in the utter desolation and destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians and the exile of the Jews to Babylon. After this second captivity, the Jews were permitted to return to Jerusalem in 458 B.C. Upon their return, they reconstructed the Temple. This Second Temple was very modest in comparison to the grandeur of the first one, but the Jews nonetheless enjoyed the recovery of their freedom to worship in their "new" temple. This freedom would soon be dashed with the arrival of the Romans in 63 B.C. In just over a hundred years, in A.D. 70, the Temple would again be destroyed.

## THE SADDUCEES AND THE PHARISEES

There were two main groups of Jewish religious leaders during the time of Jesus. The Sadducees were comprised of many wealthy elite, especially in Jerusalem. Although they were never large in number, they did exercise considerable religious and political influence, dominating the Sanhedrin (a ruling body among the Jews) at the time of Christ. Furthermore, the Sadducees were Hellenized to a greater extent than other Jews, which helped them act as mediators with the Romans in difficult situations. They were generally on good terms with the Romans, which made them very unpopular with the Jewish people.

Unfortunately, no literature has survived from the Sadducees themselves. They are mentioned by Josephus (ca. A.D. 37- ca. 100), a Jewish historian, but his accounts fail to paint a complete picture. The Sadducees considered only the Pentateuch a legitimate authority on the Jewish faith, and they interpreted these first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures along literalist lines. They rejected the idea that there was an afterlife, as well as the belief that there was an individual judgment after death. These beliefs brought them into contention not only with the teachings of Jesus, but also with some of the ideas of the Pharisees.

In contrast to the politically and religiously conservative Sadducees, the Pharisees were a progressive reforming group. The name Pharisee comes from the Aramaic *perishaya*, which means "the separated (ones)." Unlike the Sadducees, the Pharisees were not a group of priests, but rather lay scholars. As scholars, the Pharisees tried to interpret the Law and make it applicable to everyday life.

The New Testament relates how Jesus reprimanded the Pharisees for keeping the letter of the Law to the detriment of its spirit. Christ chastised them, as he did the Sadducees, for their legalism as well as their self-righteousness (cf. Lk 18:9-14). However, at the Lord's Passion and death, the





## THE SEPTUAGINT

Hellenistic culture had a tremendous influence on almost every culture it encountered. Many of the Diaspora Jews, for example, spoke Greek, and as a result, the Hebrew Scriptures were translated from Hebrew into Greek at Alexandria, a major center of Diaspora Jews. This Greek translation of the Old Testament is called the Septuagint because, tradition holds, seventy-two scholars were said to have worked on the project. It is now believed that more than seventy-two scholars worked on the translation and that at least some of the work was completed outside Alexandria.

The Greek translation of the Old Testament took decades to complete. Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.), the king of Egypt, requested a translation of the Pentateuch for his renowned Library of Alexandria. The process began around the year 250 B.C., and by 132 B.C., the entire Hebrew Scriptures were translated.

The Greek translation of the Scriptures would be tremendously influential. The authors of the New Testament, also writing in Greek, used the Septuagint for quotations from the Old Testament. The translation also allowed for non-Jews to read and become acquainted with the Old Testament. As Christianity spread in the first centuries A.D., this Greek translation would become very important to Gentile converts who otherwise would not have been able to read the Hebrew text.





Above: A papyrus fragment with Daniel 1:1-8 from the Greek *Septuagint*.

Left: A reconstruction of the Museum of Alexandria, with doors leading to the rooms of the Library.

Pharisees faded into the background and the religiously and politically established Sadducees took the leading role in putting Christ to death.

Even though the Pharisees were depicted as the main opponents of Jesus, they shared a number of beliefs with him. These included the resurrection of the body, divine punishment and reward in the afterlife, angels, and human freedom.

The Sadducees more or less disappeared after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70. The Pharisees, on the other hand, had some influence in training rabbis for the synagogue, and this, together with their *Mishnah* writings, assured the Pharisees a place of importance in Judaism. After the fall of the Holy City, a strong Pharisaical presence was developed at Yavneh (Jamnia) in Palestine where an academy was established for the training of rabbis.

## THE ESSENES

The Essenes were a group of Jews that withdrew from the world into the desert in order to live a life of prayer and asceticism. Their name means either "the pious ones" or "the healers," and it has been suggested that the Essenes incorporated a form of baptism and a communal meal into their community. There is some speculation that John the Baptist may have had some connection with the Essenes, but there is no conclusive evidence. Today, the Essenes are best known for their relationship to the Dead Sea scrolls discovered in 1947.



Pages from the *Beatus Apocalypses* (10th Century).









The Arch of Titus in Rome depicts Roman soldiers carrying away looted treasures from the Temple in Jerusalem.

## THE DIASPORA

The word "Diaspora" is Greek for "dispersion," and it refers to the emigration of the Jews into areas outside the boundaries of Palestine. Though the term Diaspora has been used many times throughout Jewish history, it began with the Assyrian exile (ca. 721 B.C.), followed by the Babylonian exile (ca. 587 B.C.).

During the time of Christ, the Jews were spread throughout the Roman Empire, and the population of the Diaspora was greater than the Jewish population in Palestine. Alexandria in Egypt, for example, became the most important center of learning for the Jews of the Diaspora. Some records list a population of one million Jews in Alexandria alone.

Throughout the Roman Empire, the Jews enjoyed special concessions and exemptions. In general, Jews of the Diaspora were also exempted from emperor worship and enjoyed special privileges in conjunction with the Sabbath and religious feasts. These same Jews also paid the Temple tax faithfully before its destruction in the first century.

There was a considerable increase in emigration after the revolts against the Romans in 63 B.C., and from A.D. 115-117. After the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews were forbidden to enter Jerusalem except for only one day each year, the Day of Atonement, in order to weep before the ruins of the Temple. With their temple destroyed and city visitation forbidden, Jews spread to many parts of Europe and North Africa.

## CONCLUSION

This background to the history of the Church shows how God through his Providence set the stage for the advancement of his kingdom of truth and justice. Hellenism provided a cultural *milieu* that fostered a disposition to the acceptance of Christianity especially through Greek Philosophy. The Roman Empire, with the unifying forces of its laws and organization, together with the *Pax Romana*, would greatly facilitate the actual spread of the Gospel. God's chosen people would prepare the way for history's protagonist of salvation, Jesus Christ, the Lord of History.

## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

**Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book 1, 1.359-401**
**Virgil Links Aeneas with Julius Caesar**

And, ripe for heav'n, when fate Aeneas calls,
Then shalt thou bear him up, sublime, to me:
No councils have revers'd my firm decree.
And, lest new fears disturb thy happy state,
Know, I have search'd the mystic rolls of Fate:
Thy son (nor is th' appointed season far)
In Italy shall wage successful war,
Shall tame fierce nations in the bloody field,
And sov'reign laws impose, and cities build,
Till, after ev'ry foe subdued, the sun
Thrice thro' the signs his annual race shall run:
This is his time prefix'd. Ascanius then,
Now call'd Iulus, shall begin his reign.
He thirty rolling years the crown shall wear,
Then from Lavinium shall the seat transfer,
And, with hard labor, Alba Longa build.
The throne with his succession shall be fill'd
Three hundred circuits more: then shall be seen
Ilia the fair, a priestess and a queen,
Who, full of Mars, in time, with kindly throes,
Shall at a birth two goodly boys disclose.
The royal babes a tawny wolf shall drain:
Then Romulus his grandsire's throne shall gain,
Of martial tow'rs the founder shall become,
The people Romans call, the city Rome.
To them no bounds of empire I assign,
Nor term of years to their immortal line.
Ev'n haughty Juno, who, with endless broils,
Earth, seas, and heav'n, and Jove himself turmoils;
At length aton'd, her friendly pow'r shall join,
To cherish and advance the Trojan line.
The subject world shall Rome's dominion own,
And, prostrate, shall adore the nation of the gown.An age is ripening in revolving fate
When Troy shall overturn the Grecian state,
And sweet revenge her conqu'ring sons shall call,
To crush the people that conspir'd her fall.
Then Caesar from the Julian stock shall rise,
Whose empire ocean, and whose fame the skies
Alone shall bound; whom, fraught with
eastern spoils,
Our heav'n, the just reward of human toils,
Securely shall repay with rites divine;
And incense shall ascend before his sacred shrine.

**Tacitus, *The Annals*, beginning of Book I: Rome becomes an Empire**

Rome at the beginning was ruled by kings. Freedom and the consulship were established by Lucius Brutus. Dictatorships were held for a temporary crisis.... the rule of Pompeius and of Crassus soon yielded before Caesar; the arms of Lepidus and Antonius before Augustus; who, when the world was wearied by civil strife, subjected it to empire under the title of "Prince."...

When after the destruction of Brutus and Cassius there was no longer any army of the Commonwealth, when Pompeius was crushed in Sicily, and when, with Lepidus pushed aside and Antonius slain, even the Julian faction had only Caesar left to lead it, then, dropping the title of triumvir, and giving out that he was a Consul, and was satisfied with a tribune's authority for the protection of the people, Augustus won over the soldiers with gifts, the populace with cheap corn, and all men with the sweets of repose, and so grew greater by degrees, while he concentrated in himself the functions of the Senate, the magistrates, and the laws. He was wholly unopposed, for the boldest spirits had fallen in battle, or in the proscription, while the remaining nobles, the readier they were to be slaves, were raised the higher by wealth and promotion, so that, aggrandized by revolution, they preferred the safety of the present to the dangerous past. Nor did the provinces dislike that condition of affairs, for they distrusted the government of the Senate and the people, because of the rivalries between the leading men and the rapacity of the officials, while the protection of the laws was unavailing, as they were continually deranged by violence, intrigue, and finally by corruption.

Thus the State had been revolutionized, and there was not a vestige left of the old sound morality. Stript of equality, all looked up to the commands of a sovereign....





## VOCABULARY

**AUGUSTUS**
Imperial title given to Octavian from the Senate marking the founding of the Empire of Rome.

**CHATTEL**
Form of slavery in which the master holds power of life and death over the slave.

**DIASPORA**
Greek for "dispersion," it refers to the emigration of the Jews into areas outside the geophysical boundaries of Palestine.

**ESSENES**
A group of Jews that withdrew from the world into the desert in order to live a life of prayer and asceticism. Their name means "the pious ones" or "the healers."

**HELLENIZATION**
Process by which Greek cultural attributes were transplanted to the East.

**MITHRAICISM**
A pagan cult that was a fraternal organization open only to men that cultivated virtues important to the life of a soldier. Some of their ritual practices, such as the idea of personal salvation and a communal meal in which flesh that symbolized their god was consumed, were similar to Christianity.

***PAX ROMANA***
Literally "the Roman peace," it refers to the period of peace and prosperity during which the empire enjoyed two hundred years of peace and Roman civilization flourished.

**PHARISEES**
A progressive, reforming group of Jewish lay scholars. Their name comes from the Aramaic *perishaya*, which means "the separated ones."

***PIETAS***
Practice of pagan worship which sought the placation of the gods through sacrifice in an effort to secure protection for the Roman state.

**PONTIFEX MAXIMUS**
Title meaning "high priest" of the Roman pagan religion that was taken by Emperor Augustus.

**PUNIC WARS**
Three wars fought by Rome against Carthage, after which the Romans vastly expanded their empire, acquiring Sicily, Spain, and North Africa.

**SADDUCEES**
Comprised of many wealthy elite, especially in Jerusalem, they exercised considerable religious and political influence among Jews at the time of Christ.

**SANHEDRIN**
A ruling body among the Jews dominated by the Sadducees.

**STOICISM**
Borrowing much from the Greek philosophers, this ethical code appealed to the Roman sense of law, order, and virtue. Stoics honored the natural law and one's duty to it, as well as encouraging the practical by perfecting moderation of the passions as a pathway to true freedom.



Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.), king of Egypt is credited with having the Old Testament translated into Greek, which allowed non-Jews to study the Old Testament scriptures.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who helped expand Hellenism to the East?
2. According to legend, who founded Rome?
3. When was Rome founded?
4. How did Rome benefit from the Punic Wars?
5. How did Julius Caesar become dictator for life?
6. Who was "Augustus"? How did he receive that title?
7. How did Augustus retain the appearances of a Republic?
8. In what different areas did Greek and Roman civilizations excel?
9. How did early cults placate their gods and secure protection for their state?
10. How did the fundamentals of Stoicism appeal to the Romans?
11. How did the change from republic to empire hurt the Romans?
12. Who led the Jews from captivity?
13. Who were the Sadducees?
14. Who were the Pharisees?
15. What happened to the Jews in A.D. 70?
16. What term describes Jews who do not live in the Holy Land?

## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. Both Hellenism and the Roman Empire provided cultural and political unity in the world at the time of Christ. How might this have helped the spread of Christianity? Can you identify any attributes of Hellenism or the Roman Empire that are still reflected in Christianity today?

2. How was Jewish culture at the time of Christ different from that described in the Old Testament? How was it the same? The Sadducees and Pharisees played a major role in condemning Christ. Why do you think Jesus frightened them? What do the Sadducees and Pharisees demonstrate about tradition and authority?

3. The history of the Jewish people is filled with incidents concerning God's promises and providence, sometimes unfolding in an unexpected way. How would a Jew explain the fall of Jerusalem and the Great Diaspora? How would a Christian explain these events?



Ruins of the Roman Forum. The Forum was the center of politics and commerce for the Empire.





## FROM THE CATECHISM

**63** Israel is the priestly people of God, "called by the name of the LORD," and "the first to hear the word of God" (Dt 28:10; *Roman Missal*, Good Friday, General Intercessions VI; see also Ex 19:6), the people of "elder brethren" in the faith of Abraham.

**285** Since the beginning the Christian faith has been challenged by responses to the question of origins that differ from its own. Ancient religions and cultures produced many myths concerning origins. Some philosophers have said that everything is God, that the world is God, or that the development of the world is the development of God (Pantheism). Others have said that the world is a necessary emanation arising from God and returning to him. Still others have affirmed the existence of two eternal principles, Good and Evil, Light and Darkness, locked, in permanent conflict (Dualism, Manichaeism). According to some of these conceptions, the world (at least the physical world) is evil, the product of a fall, and is thus to be rejected or left behind (Gnosticism). Some admit that the world was made by God, but as by a watchmaker who, once he has made a watch, abandons it to itself (Deism). Finally, others reject any transcendent origin for the world, but see it as merely the interplay of matter that has always existed (Materialism). All these attempts bear witness to the permanence and universality of the question of origins. This inquiry is distinctively human.

**402** All men are implicated in Adam's sin, as St. Paul affirms: "By one man's disobedience many [that is, all men] were made sinners": "sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned" (Rom 5:12, 19). The Apostle contrasts the universality of sin and death with the universality of salvation in Christ. "Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men" (Rom 5:18).

**436** The word "Christ" comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Messiah*, which means "anointed." It became the name proper to Jesus only because he accomplished perfectly the divine mission that "Christ" signifies. In effect, in Israel those consecrated to God for a mission that he gave were anointed in his name. This was the case for kings, for priests and, in rare instances, for prophets (cf. Ex 29:7; Lv 8:12; 1 Sm 9:16; 10:1; 16:1, 12-13; 1 Kgs 1:39; 19:16). This had to be the case all the more so for the Messiah whom God would send to inaugurate his kingdom definitively (cf. Ps 2:2; Acts 4:26-27). It was necessary that the Messiah be anointed by the Spirit of the Lord at once as king and priest, and also as prophet (cf. Is 11:2; 61:1; Zech 4:14; 6:13; Lk 4:16-21). Jesus fulfilled the messianic hope of Israel in his threefold office of priest, prophet, and king.

**579** This principle of integral observance of the Law not only in letter but in spirit was dear to the Pharisees. By giving Israel this principle they had led many Jews of Jesus' time to an extreme religious zeal (cf. Rom 10:2). This zeal, were it not to lapse into "hypocritical" casuistry (cf. Mt 15:3-7; Lk 11:39-54), could only prepare the People for the unprecedented intervention of God through the perfect fulfillment of the Law by the only Righteous One in place of all sinners (cf. Is 53:11; Heb 9:15).

**781** "At all times and in every race, anyone who fears God and does what is right has been acceptable to him. He has, however, willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness. He therefore chose the Israelite race to be his own people and established a covenant with it. He gradually instructed this people.... All these things, however, happened as a preparation for and figure of that new and perfect covenant which was to be ratified in Christ... the New Covenant in his blood; he

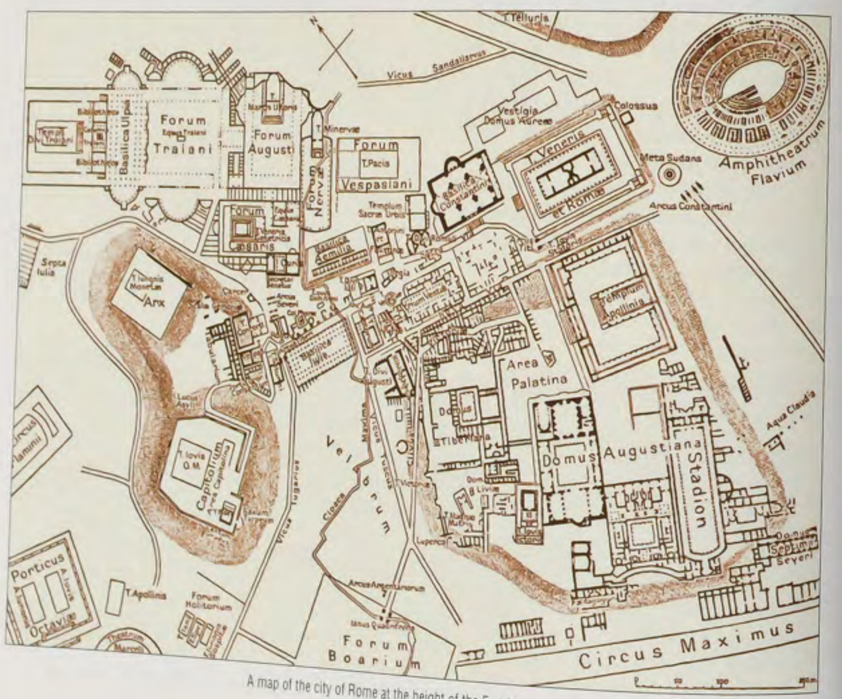
## FROM THE CATECHISM Continued

called together a race made up of Jews and Gentiles which would be one, not according to the flesh, but in the Spirit" (LG 9; cf. Acts 10: 35; 1 Cor 11: 25).

**839** "Those who have not yet received the Gospel are related to the People of God in various ways" (LG 16).

*The relationship of the Church with the Jewish People.* When she delves into her own mystery, the Church, the People of God in the New Covenant, discovers her link with the Jewish People (cf. NA 4), "the first to hear the Word of God" (*Roman Missal*, Good Friday 13; General Intercessions, VI). The Jewish faith, unlike other non-Christian religions, is already a response to God's revelation in the Old Covenant. To the Jews "belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ" (Rom 9: 4-5), "for the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11: 29).

**1537** The word *order* in Roman antiquity designated an established civil body, especially a governing body. *Ordinatio* means incorporation into an *ordo*. In the Church there are established bodies which Tradition, not without a basis in Sacred Scripture (cf. Heb 5: 6; 7: 11; Ps 110: 4), has since ancient times called *taxeis* (Greek) or *ordines*. And so the liturgy speaks of the *ordo episcoporum*, the *ordo presbyterorum*, the *ordo diaconorum*. Other groups also receive this name of *ordo*: catechumens, virgins, spouses, widows, ...




A map of the city of Rome at the height of the Empire.



CHAPTER 1

# Jesus Christ And The Founding Of The Church

*"Christ is the Spouse and Savior of the Church... The more we come to know and love the Church, the nearer we shall be to Christ."*



CHAPTER 1

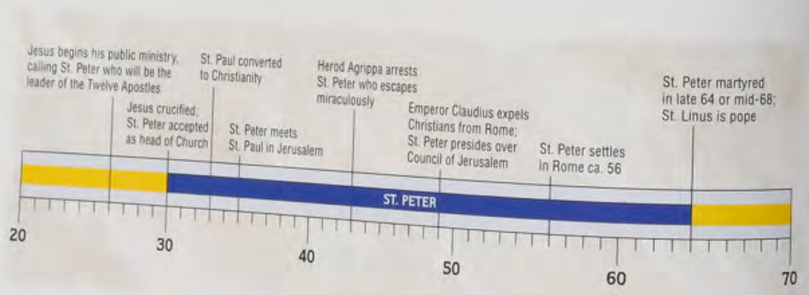
# Jesus Christ And The Founding Of The Church

Loving Christ means loving the Church. The Church exists for Christ,
so as to continue his presence and witness in the world.
Christ is the Spouse and Savior of the Church. He is her Founder and her Head.
The more we come to know and love the Church,
the nearer we shall be to Christ.

—John Paul II, Homily, Brisbane, Australia, November 25, 1986

In the days directly following the crucifixion of Jesus, his disciples were afraid. The Sanhedrin had condemned their Master to death, and the disciples believed that they would be the next targets of persecution. They feared for their safety and were uncertain of the future, being for the first time without their leader. At first the Resurrection appearances only increased doubt and fear among the disciples. Though their Master had returned to them, He remained among them for only a short time. After the Ascension, the Apostles, Mary, and other followers of Jesus were again suddenly alone.

But God did not leave His infant Church alone and unguided. Before departing, Christ declared to his disciples that they would soon receive the Holy Spirit. Ten days later, on the Jewish feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples, and subsequently resolved all their doubts, fears, and worries. The Apostles, through the power of the Holy Spirit, were certain that the Church of Christ would stand throughout all time as a living sacrament of His love, truth, and power. Christ is the cornerstone of His Church, and St. Peter is "the rock," Christ's vicar, upon whom the Church would be built. In the years following the Resurrection, the Apostles, filled with










Christ is the cornerstone of His Church, and St. Peter is "the rock," Christ's vicar, upon whom the Church would be built.

the grace of the Holy Spirit, boldly set about the great task of building the Church. They proclaimed the Good News that the long-awaited messiah had come and that he had paid in full the terrible price required for the redemption of all mankind. Christianity began to spread quickly through the ardent and intrepid preaching of the disciples. They carried the message of salvation proclaimed by Jesus all over the known world. Thus began the history of Christianity—a unique history that, simply stated, reflects Christ's constant presence in the Church that at all times interfaces with human history. The history of the Church is a record of the life and actions of men and women under the guiding light of the Holy Spirit acting in the Church. This narrative about the development of Christ's kingdom on earth is forged as the Church interacts and responds to every culture and historical situation.

This chapter will explore the saving work of Christ, the meaning and significance of Pentecost, the nature of the Church, and the unique status and missionary lives of the Apostles.

PART I

# The Life of Jesus Christ

If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (Mt 16: 24)

Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem in Judea around the year 4 B.C. In the humblest of surroundings, the Word of God became Incarnate; love and mercy found perfect expression, and the vessel of God's salvation was born into human history. The foundational principles of Christianity were present there in the quiet little stable in Bethlehem with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Peace, simplicity, material poverty, spiritual abundance, God's love, and sacrifice are the chief message of Christ's birth.

The Bible only records a few key events concerning Jesus' childhood. One of them is the Presentation in the Temple. After the birth of Christ, in accordance with the Jewish Law, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the Temple in Jerusalem to be consecrated to God. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, an old man named Simeon, to whom it had been revealed that he should not die until he had seen the messiah, recognized the Infant, blessed His parents, and spoke of Jesus' destiny. Anna, an elderly prophetess, was also present and, recognizing the messiah, began to speak about the child to all who were waiting for Him (Lk 2: 22-39).

Shortly after the birth of Jesus, Joseph was warned in a dream by an angel that Herod, the King of Judea, had learned of the birth of the messiah and planned to murder the baby. The angel instructed Joseph to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus immediately, so that the Holy Child would escape Herod's wrath. When Herod failed to discover the precise location of Jesus, he sent his soldiers to kill every male child in Bethlehem aged two and under. Known as the "Slaughter of the Innocents," this dreadful massacre was the first shedding of blood among countless unnamed martyrs for the Christian Faith (Mt 2: 16-18). After some time in Egypt, an angel appeared to Joseph in a second dream, telling him that it was safe for the Holy Family to return to Israel. Ever obedient, Joseph began the journey back to Israel with Jesus and Mary. Upon hearing that Herod's son Archelaus was now king of Judea, Joseph did not return there, but went to Galilee instead, and settled his family in Nazareth (Mt 2: 19-23).

After the Holy Family returned to Nazareth, the Gospels record very little of their lives. One can assume that their lives were very ordinary, consisting of work, observance of the Jewish Law, finding joy in the company of one another and of their friends. Joseph was a carpenter, and Jesus most likely trained in the trade of his father, learning to work with wood and build with his hands. Until the beginning of His public ministry, the only event the Gospels describe is the finding of the twelve-year-old Jesus speaking with the elders in the Temple in Jerusalem. The Holy Family traveled to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover, and when they set out to return home, Jesus was lost for three days. After frantically looking for their son, his parents finally discovered the child Jesus in the temple, which the boy called his "Father's house." The young Jesus was confidently conversing with the elders, whom he astounded with his wisdom and understanding (Lk 2: 41-52).







## PALESTINE IN THE TIME OF CHRIST






The Jordan River entering the Sea of Galilee



Jesus' New Law taught his followers to love their enemies and to avoid violence.

Following this event, there is a period of eighteen years before the inaugural event of his public ministry: Jesus' Baptism at the hands of St. John the Baptist. During this time it is recorded that Jesus spent time in the desert fasting, praying, and preparing for his public ministry.

Jesus' teaching constitutes part of the Deposit of Faith, that is the heritage of Faith contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, handed down by the Church from the time of the Apostles (cf. CCC 84, 1202). The most succinct and direct collection of Jesus' teaching is given at the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7). Fulfilling the traditional Law found in the Ten Commandments, Jesus taught the Beatitudes and the Lord's Prayer. He transformed the Old Testament notion of justice, fulfilling and perfecting it with the call to charity, which includes compassion and mercy. In contrast to the Old Law, expressed by the rule of "an eye for an eye," Jesus' New Law taught his followers to love their enemies and to avoid all forms of violence, drowning evil in an abundance of good. The institution of mercy to the point of loving one's enemies was radically new. Jesus redirected the spirit of worship, instructing his followers to serve the Father and each other in "spirit and in truth," thereby rejecting a legalistic interpretation of the Law. The New Covenant founded by Christ would perfect the Old Law through the New Law based on love and grace. His teaching and his many miracles—from the wedding feast at Cana to the raising of Lazarus—laid the groundwork for the contents of the Catholic Faith that would develop in response to the circumstances of every time period.

Jesus' teachings were brought to their fulfillment through the example of Christ's suffering, death, and Resurrection. Around the year A.D. 33, Jesus and his followers went to Jerusalem to participate in the celebration of the Jewish Passover. Despite his initial warm welcome on Palm Sunday, the Jewish leaders mounted a major opposition against Jesus. They charged him with heresy and blasphemy, but finally they accused Jesus of being insubordinate to caesar to lay the burden of execution on the civil authorities. Under tremendous pressure and risk of widespread civil descent (not to mention his own blindness to the truth of Christ; cf. Jn 18:38), Pontius Pilate condemned Jesus to death by crucifixion. Jesus, according to the plan of the Father, willingly submitted himself to his passion and death on the cross, the perfect sacrifice for the salvation of all mankind. By his Resurrection three days later, he showed his victory over death, thereby calling every person to repentance and the fullness of filiation with the Father.





## THE FOUR GOSPELS

Most of what is known about Christ's life comes from the four canonical gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The word "gospel," which means "good news," is applied to these four books that describe the life and teachings of Jesus.

Although all four gospels share the same subject, each has its own point of view and emphasis, depending on the source of the account and the audience for whom it was written. Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the "synoptic" gospels (from Greek words meaning "seeing together") because their accounts are so similar. The gospel of St. John stands apart because of its more abstract, theological scope.

Both Sts. John and Matthew were themselves Apostles. Both gospels seem to be directed toward a Jewish Christian audience. St. John's was the last gospel to be written. St. Mark's is thought to be the first gospel written. St. Mark, though not an Apostle, traveled with St. Peter, who is very likely the primary source for this gospel intended for the Christians of Rome. St. Luke, who accompanied St. Paul, wrote mainly for gentile Christians and his main source is thought to be Mary the mother of Christ because this gospel includes stories about Christ's origins and early life.

The four authors, known as the Evangelists, are often identified with four symbols. St. Matthew's symbol is a man because his gospel emphasizes Christ's humanity and opens with his genealogy. St. Mark's symbol is a lion because it opens with the command "Prepare the way of the Lord." St. Luke's symbol is a bull because early on it speaks of priestly duties and temple sacrifices. St. John's gospel is symbolized by an eagle because of the lofty language of its opening verses.

These four gospels have always been held as authentic and canonical (officially declared as such at a synod in Rome in A.D. 382) by the Sacred Tradition of the Church, though there exist several "unofficial" gospels, known as the apocryphal gospels, which appeared in the first centuries of the Church. These gospels were discredited early in the Church's history because of their dubious origins and because many are tainted by errant beliefs.



**The Book of Kells**

*"The work not of men but of angels..."*
(Giraldus Cambrensis, ca. A.D.1150)

One of the most famous books in the history of the world completed in A.D. 800 contains the Four Gospels. It was created by Columban monks who lived on the remote island of Iona, off the west coast of Scotland. The Book is on display at the Trinity College Library in Dublin.

PART II

# Pentecost, the Birth of the Church

> When the day of Pentecost had come, they [the Apostles and Mary] were all together in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4)

On the Jewish feast of Pentecost, fifty days after the Resurrection of Christ, Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims from nearly every nation—from Persia, Rome, Arabia, North Africa, and all around the Mediterranean. The Apostles were all gathered in one place, most likely still fearing persecution. Just as Christ promised before he ascended to Heaven, the Holy Spirit descended upon them, anointing the Church for her mission of evangelization of the world.

On Pentecost, the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, to complete and perfect that which Jesus Christ had begun:

> By his coming, which never ceases, the Holy Spirit causes the world to enter into the "last days," the time of the Church, the Kingdom already inherited though not yet consummated. (CCC 732)

Immediately following the Holy Spirit's descent, the Apostles began to preach the crucified and risen Christ with great power and authority (Acts 2:5-47). They were given the gift of tongues and found themselves miraculously speaking to the multitude, each hearing in his own tongue from among the languages spoken by the many pilgrims present in Jerusalem for Pentecost (Acts 2:8-11). St. Peter, responding to skepticism that the disciples were "filled with new wine" (Acts 2:13), addressed all who were present. He proclaimed the special calling of the Jews in God's plan of salvation for the world, used the Old Testament writings as proof of Christ's fulfillment of the prophets and the Law, and, like St. John the Baptist, called his hearers to repentance. St. Peter invited Jesus' new followers to be forgiven of their sins through the reception of Baptism.

> Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38)

Many converts came to the Faith through this first proclamation at Pentecost:

> So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (Acts 2:41-42)

The annual celebration of this feast is an opportunity to recall all that took place at the first Pentecost, whereby the Apostles were empowered with the strength of the Holy Spirit to preach Christ in word and in the heroic witness of martyrdom. Pentecost marks the enduring presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church that enables Christians to announce the truth of Christ's Gospel. It also shows that Christ will live in his Church throughout all ages.







Pentecost marks the enduring presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

## THE EARLY SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY






The Plain of Sharon



First century pavement in Antipatris



Roman aqueduct in Caesarea





# PART III

# The Church



The Church forms the Mystical Body of Christ.

What is the Church exactly? The Scriptures teach that the Church is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph 1:22-23). The English word "church" etymologically comes from a Greek word meaning "thing belonging to the Lord," which applied originally to the church building. The Latin word *ecclesia* derives from another Greek word that means "assembly" or "congregation" The origins of these two words help to illustrate the many meanings the word "church" evokes for followers of Christ. This section will briefly look at the meaning of the Church, her aim, nature, names that have been employed to better understand her, and, finally, her four marks.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that, "The Church is both the means and the goal of God's plan: prefigured in creation, prepared for in the Old Covenant, founded by the words and actions of Jesus Christ, fulfilled by his redeeming cross and his Resurrection, the Church has been manifested as the mystery of salvation by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. She will be perfected in the glory of heaven as the assembly of all the redeemed of the earth (cf. Rv 14:4)" (CCC 778).

Willed by the Father, the Church founded by Jesus Christ enjoys the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is through the Church that God carries out his plan of salvation for all people. The teaching authority and sanctifying power of the Church serve as a means to bring all men and women to greater union with God, and with each other as well.

The groundwork for the Church was already being laid down when God made a covenant with the Jewish people. After this time of preparation in the Old Testament was completed, Jesus instituted the Church. The Church's foundation, goal, and fulfillment is in Jesus Christ. Through the Church, Jesus Christ unites himself with all men and women.

The Church has two dimensions: visible and spiritual. The Church is a visible, hierarchical society that is present in the world, just like any other organization or society. Unlike other societies, the Church has a spiritual dimension. The governing and teaching authority of the Church enjoys perennial guidance from the Holy Spirit. Moreover, she is the Mystical Body of Christ, a spiritual community, imbued with the healing and sanctifying power of God's grace.

The Church is made up of God's people, a people "born" into his family through faith in Christ and Baptism. The term "People of God" is taken from the Old Testament, in which God chose Israel to be his chosen people. Christ instituted the new and eternal covenant by which a new priestly, prophetic, and royal People of God, the Church, participates in the mission and service of Christ (cf. CCC 761, 783 at the end of this chapter). The Head of this people is Jesus Christ, and they enjoy the dignity and freedom of being sons and daughters of God, who dwells within their hearts. This people is governed by the Christ's new commandment: to love each other as Christ loves them. By living this commandment, the People of God bring the hope of salvation to the world until the Kingdom of God is fully established and perfected at the end of time.



The Church is built upon the foundation of the Apostles. The hierarchy of the Church can be traced back to the Apostles.





The Founder of the Church spoke of an intimate communion between himself and his people: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (Jn 6: 56). The Church, through the work of the Holy Spirit, forms the Mystical Body of Christ. This phrase likens the Church to the human body. The Church is united to Christ as a body is attached to a head. Analogous to a spousal relationship, the people of God are joined to Christ as a bride to her spouse.

The human soul is that which animates the human body; indeed, it is what makes it a living body and not a corpse. In a similar way, the Holy Spirit gives life to the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. Thus the Holy Spirit, as the soul of the Church, is its source of unity and life.

The Church reflects both a human and divine reality. As Christ's Spouse, she enjoys a divine component in her teaching and sanctifying power. Further expressions of her divine aspect are the Church's charism of infallibility and her durability until the end of time. Nothing will prevail over the divinely instituted Church. At the same time, her members are in constant need of purification in order to achieve holiness.

The Nicene Creed includes four marks that correspond to the Catholic Church founded by Christ. Throughout the course of history, these four marks have always served as the litmus test for the authenticity of the one, true Church.

## THE CHURCH IS ONE

The Church acknowledges one God in Whom she professes one Faith. All Catholics adhere to the same teachings regarding the creed, sacraments, and morals. Lastly, they all recognize the authority of the pope as Supreme Pastor of the universal Church.

## THE CHURCH IS HOLY

The Founder is holy, the means to salvation is holy, and the aim of the Church's teaching and sacraments is the holiness of its members. Those who live by the Church's teachings in their entirety become holy. Heroic sanctity even to the point of martyrdom has marked the life of some of the faithful throughout the centuries.

## THE CHURCH IS CATHOLIC

The word "catholic" means "universal." The universality of the Church includes all ages, all races and nationalities, and every time period. Moreover, all the good traits of every culture are reflected in the teachings of the Catholic Church.

## THE CHURCH IS APOSTOLIC

The Church is built upon the foundation of the Apostles. The hierarchy of the Church can be traced back to the Apostles. For this reason, the bishops are known as the successors of the Apostles, and the teaching of the Church finds its source in the very teachings of the Twelve Apostles governed by St. Peter.

PART IV

# The Apostles

The word "apostle" comes from the Greek *apostolos*, a form of *apostellein*, meaning "to send away." Thus, an apostle is literally "one who is sent." The designation traditionally refers to the twelve men chosen by Jesus during the course of his public ministry to be his closest followers. They were the pillars of his Church and were to be sent to preach the Good News to all the nations. Matthias, the Apostle chosen after the Resurrection to replace Judas Iscariot, as well as Sts. Paul of Tarsus and Barnabas, also enjoyed the status of Apostles, even though they did not hold that title during Christ's public ministry.

## THE CALL OF THE TWELVE

The Twelve Apostles included fishermen, a tax collector, and friends and relatives of Jesus. Upon hearing Christ's call, these men left their former lives and dedicated themselves to following him. Matthew's Gospel relates the story of the call of the first four Apostles:

> As he [Jesus] walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. (Mt 4:18-22)

St. Luke's Gospel relates that Jesus selected the Twelve from among his disciples after a whole night of prayer during his public ministry:

> In these days he [Jesus] went out into the hills to pray; and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples, and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles; Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. (Lk 6:12-16)

Mark 3:13-19 and Matthew 10:1-4 also contain similar passages. It is worth noting that all three accounts begin by naming St. Peter as the first Apostle, and they end by identifying Judas Iscariot as the traitor. The selection of the Twelve Apostles coincides with the twelve tribes of Israel, over which they would sit in judgment (cf. Mt 19:28; Lk 22:30).

Besides being the first ones sent directly by Christ to all the world, the Apostles were characterized by another singular quality. They were the first witnesses of Christ's life, message, and Resurrection. Before Pentecost, the Apostles wished to restore their number to twelve, because Judas Iscariot had committed suicide. In the book of Acts, St. Peter says:

> So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—*one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.* (Acts 1:21-22) [emphasis added]







"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Mt 4: 19)

The mission of the Apostles therefore consisted in introducing to the world Jesus' message of salvation through their teaching and witness of Christ's love. It was through the profound influence of the Holy Spirit that the Apostles could build and extend Christ's Church throughout the world.

## THE APOSTOLIC TRADITION AND THE OFFICE OF BISHOP

The title "Apostle" is preeminent among all others because the Apostles, with St. Peter as their head, received teachings and instructions directly from Christ. They were personally chosen by Christ during his earthly life and empowered by the Holy Spirit to launch the first evangelization with faith and courage.

> "In order that the full and living Gospel might always be preserved in the Church the apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them 'their own position of teaching authority'" (DV 7 § 2; St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 3, 1: PG 7, 848; Harvey, 2, 9). Indeed, "the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time" (DV 8 § 1). (CCC 77)

The Apostles continued Christ's ministry of preaching, healing, and exorcising demons. After his Resurrection, Jesus commanded the Apostles to spread the Gospel to every corner of the world (cf. Mt 28:16-20). They had received instruction with respect to the meaning of the Scriptures directly from Jesus and were the ultimate authority on the meaning of Christ's message. Upon the completion of their own earthly journeys, they passed on their priestly powers and mission to their successors through the office of bishop. A bishop is a successor of the Apostles who has received the fullness of Christ's priesthood. The Church has successfully transmitted the Apostolic Tradition down through the line of bishops, and she will continue to do so until Christ returns.



The killing of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, marked the beginning of a severe persecution of the early Church in Jerusalem.





## ST. STEPHEN: THE FIRST MARTYR FOR CHRIST

> Now when they [certain Jews in Jerusalem] heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him. But he [St. Stephen], full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul was consenting to his death.
>
> And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the region of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him. But Saul laid waste the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. **(Acts 7: 54 - 8: 3)**

The early Church grew rapidly, and it soon became clear that certain organizational steps had to be taken in order to better care for the material needs of its members. The Twelve were specifically called to attend to the ministry of the Word, so they asked the community to choose seven holy men from among them to attend to its material needs (cf. Acts 6: 2-4). St. Stephen and six others were chosen by the people, blessed, and commissioned by the Apostles. These seven men were called deacons, or ministers of the Church's pastoral mission.

As recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles,* St. Stephen began then to work among the people, evangelizing and working "great wonders and signs" (Acts 6: 8). Soon, however, an angry mob seized St. Stephen, dragged him before the Sanhedrin, and accused him of "speak[ing] words

### THE SANHEDRIN

The Sanhedrin was the highest judicial court and the primary legislative body of the Jews during the Roman occupation. The word Sanhedrin comes from the Greek word *sunedrion* meaning council. It was made up of seventy-one members, one of whom was president and governed over the council. The Sanhedrin was made up of chief priests, scribes, and elders. The members would sit in a semicircle and preside over all religious matters as well as any civil matters that did not fall under Roman jurisdiction.

They traced their origins to the council of seventy elders that God instructed Moses to institute in order to "bear the burden of the people" with him (cf. Nm 11: 17).

In order to be a member of the Sanhedrin, a person was required to receive *semicha,* which was a type of laying on of hands that effected the transmission of rabbinic authority in the Law. According to Jewish tradition, *semicha* had been passed on in unbroken succession since the time of Moses.

The Sanhedrin was entrusted with the authority to judge the Jewish kings and high priests, as well as to set the boundaries of the temple. They also reserved the right to preside over cases of blasphemy, a charge punishable by death. Blasphemy was the charge leveled against Jesus Christ as well as St. Stephen the martyr.

against this holy place and the law" (Acts 6:13). St. Stephen responded to the accusations with a long discourse recounting the history of Israel and God's continuous mercy despite generations of ingratitude. The people and members of the Sanhedrin were enraged, and "they cast him out of the city and stoned him" (Acts 7:58). With his last words, he petitioned the Lord to show mercy to his executioners.

The execution of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, marked the beginning of a severe persecution of the early Church in Jerusalem causing many of its members to flee throughout Judea and Samaria. Others remained and faced the constant threat of imprisonment or death. St. Stephen, who loved Christ even unto death and who forgave his attackers, provided an example for all Christians during that perilous time. It is an example that has endured throughout history and has no less relevance today. As the Catechism says:

> *Martyrdom* is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witnesses even unto death. The martyr bears witnesses to Christ who died and rose, to whom he is united by charity. He bears witness to the truth of the faith and of Christian doctrine. He endures death through an act of fortitude. "Let me become the food of the beasts, through whom it will be given me to reach God" (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Rom.* 4, 1: SCh 10, 110). (CCC 2473)

St. Stephen's example quickly seized the imagination of the early Church as a most admirable way to imitate Christ. St. Stephen's feast day is celebrated on December 26, the day after Christmas, highlighting how highly the Church regards St. Stephen's heroic witness.

## ST. PAUL

The account of the stoning of St. Stephen includes a few lines about a young man named Saul who consented to the execution and at whose feet the executioners laid down their cloaks. Soon after St. Stephen's death, Saul "laid waste the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison" (Acts 8:3).

Saul was a pious Jew, well educated in the Law under the tutelage of a Pharisee and renowned doctor of the Law by the name of Gamaliel. Saul firmly believed, as a righteous and devout Jew, that the Law was the sacred covenant between God and his people and that the early Church posed an acute threat to that covenant. The idea that Jesus Christ was the messiah professed by the early Church deviated from what was so long expected in Jewish tradition. Therefore, Saul would certainly see the early Church as dangerous to the integrity of the Jewish faith. He dutifully set out to persecute this Way.

## THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL

After threatening the early Church throughout Jerusalem, Saul set out on a journey to Damascus to continue suppressing the Church. The Acts of the Apostles tells in detail what happened to Saul during his journey:

> Now as he journeyed he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting; but rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul arose from the ground; and when his eyes were opened, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. (Acts 9:3-9)







St. Paul's conversion, one of the Church's great ironies, shows how Christ even calls sinners to lead his Church.

As he waited in Damascus, blind and troubled by the event that had befallen him, Saul was visited by a disciple of Christ named Ananias, who, through a vision, was instructed by the Lord to seek out Saul and restore his sight. The Lord told Ananias that this man, who had done great evils to the early Church, "is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Ananias listened to the Lord, sought out Saul, and laid his hands on him and spoke: "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17). Immediately Saul miraculously recovered his sight and was baptized. Filled with the Holy Spirit, "in the synagogues immediately he proclaimed Jesus, saying, 'He is the Son of God'" (Acts 9:20). St. Paul's conversion, one of the Church's great ironies, shows how Christ even calls sinners to lead his Church. St. Paul (his Roman name, as he was known soon after his conversion) became one of Christianity's greatest evangelizers, traveling and spreading the Gospel throughout the Roman world. The Feast of the Converstion of St. Paul is commemorated January 25.

## AN INTERLUDE: THE CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS AND THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MISSION TO THE GENTILES

The early Jewish Christians, though persecuted by the Jewish community, still considered Christianity a part of the Jewish tradition. They still followed Jewish laws and customs, though they had begun to incorporate many of Christ's teachings into their religious worship and practice. Acceptance of Christ as the awaited messiah did not, in their minds, sever them from their Jewish heritage. One particular Jewish law created a major problem in the formation of the early Church.

Jewish Law forbade Jews "to associate with or to visit [Gentiles]" (Acts 10:28). However, the Apostles remembered how Christ reached out to all people during his life. They understood that Christ's message and salvation are universal. How, if bound by Jewish laws, were the members of the early Church to spread the Word of God to non-Jews? How could a Gentile be baptized into a Church whose traditional law forbids any interaction with people foreign to that tradition?

The Acts of the Apostles relates the story of the Roman centurion Cornelius, a "devout and God-fearing" Gentile in Caesarea. An angel of God came to him in a vision and told him to send for Simon Peter in Joppa. St. Peter at this time also had a vision:

> he saw the heaven opened, and something descending, like a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth. In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "No, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has cleansed, you must not call common." This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven. (Acts 10:11-16)

As the vision faded, the men sent by Cornelius arrived to where St. Peter was staying. The meaning of the vision was clear to St. Peter: he must open the Church to the Gentiles, who were, by Jewish standards, considered unclean. He accepted the emissaries, and the next day traveled with them to Caesarea to visit Cornelius.

Upon meeting St. Peter, Cornelius explained to him that he had been told in a vision to send for him, and he told St. Peter that he would listen to all that the Lord had commanded him. Guided by the Holy Spirit, St. Peter took up the task of bringing the Gentiles into the Church. He said to Cornelius:

> Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the word which he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all).... He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. (Acts 10:34-36, 42-43)

Then St. Peter and the Jewish Christians with him witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and those Gentiles with him. They were amazed to see the Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit as they had, and St. Peter agreed to have them baptized. Recognizing the severe implications of the event, St. Peter went to Jerusalem to explain to the Jewish Christians this recent episode. At first, they were outraged and objected to such dealings with the Gentiles. However, when they had heard the full story, including the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles, "they were silenced. And they glorified God, saying, 'Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life'" (Acts 11:18). Through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church was now ready to include the entire world in her mission.







## ST. PAUL, "APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES"

Unlike most of the other Apostles, St. Paul was well educated in the Jewish Law, and enjoyed an intelligent command of Sacred Scripture. His unique gifts and background were well suited to God's plan for his role as the "Apostle of the Gentiles."

St. Paul was a brilliant writer and theologian. Scripture contains thirteen of his epistles (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Ephesians, and Philemon). In his writings, St. Paul refers to his missionary work, mostly in the cities of Asia Minor, and lays out the first written and highly developed theology of the Church. Most of his letters are believed to have been written in the 50s, prior to the writing of the earliest Gospel. They are thus the oldest writings in the New Testament.

St. Paul's profound writings would become central in the development of the Church's teaching up to this very day as he formed a theology out of the Gospel message. St. Paul particularly delved into the doctrines of the Cross, the Mystical Body of Christ, the power of grace, and the value of charity. The letters to the Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians are central texts that especially reveal St. Paul's theological thought. His writings serve not only as sound theological sources, but also as invaluable historical references to the early Church. Reading his epistles, one cannot help but marvel at St. Paul's profound insights into Christ's Gospel and his indomitable determination to spread that Gospel to others.

# THE TRAVELS OF ST. PAUL

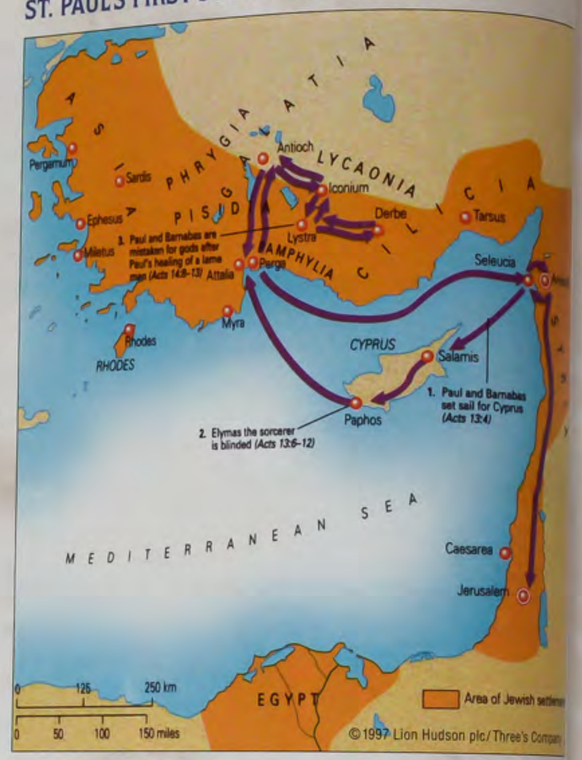
St. Paul's tireless and intrepid missionary work spread the Christian Faith far beyond the borders of Palestine and across most of the Roman Empire, founding some of the earliest and most prominent early Christian communities along the way. By some estimates, St. Paul's travels totaled well over 10,000 miles and brought him to Jerusalem, to every corner of Asia Minor, into Arabia, across Macedonia and Greece, to Eastern Europe, Rome, and many scholars believe he may have traveled as far as Spain.

Along the way, he found many eager disciples, but he also found many enemies among both the Jews and Gentiles. He endured many dangers and sufferings along the course of his travels. He describes some of his experiences in 2 Corinthians 11:24-25: "Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I have been beaten with rods: once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea." St. Paul was driven out of many cities by mobs. He narrowly escaped death several times, as when he sneaked out of Damascus in a basket to avoid the guards at the gate (cf. Acts 9:23-25). Other times, he did not escape, as in Lystra where a mob caught him, stoned him until they thought he was dead and dragged him out of the city (cf. Acts 14:19).

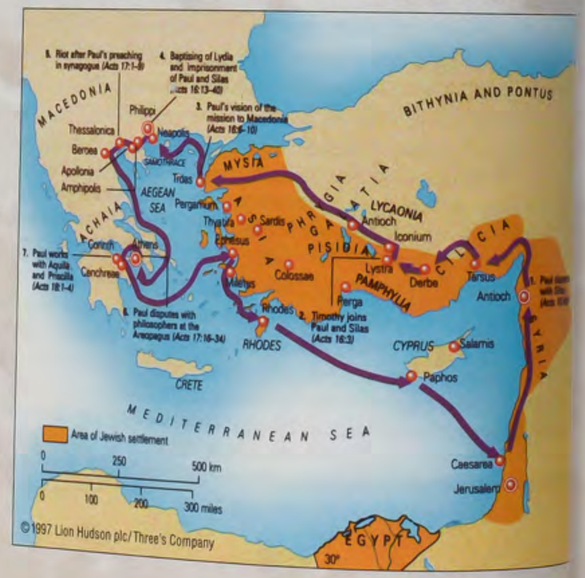
St. Paul was fearless in his apostolate despite his physical shortcomings. There are several accounts of what St. Paul looked like. Even in his own words, he writes that his "bodily presence is weak" (2 Cor 10:10). Other early Christian accounts coincide in saying that he was short, broad-shouldered, bow-legged, and balding. He also had big eyes, a rather long nose, a thick, grayish beard and closely-knit eyebrows.

St. Paul also spent a good deal of time in prison. He was arrested in Philippi, and again later in Jerusalem, after which he spent a two-year stint in Caesarea, and two more years on house arrest in Rome. He was finally martyred in Rome around the year A.D. 64 by beheading. Tradition holds that when he was beheaded, his head bounced three times, and each time it hit the ground a fountain miraculously sprang up.

## ST. PAUL'S FIRST JOURNEY, ca. A.D. 46-48



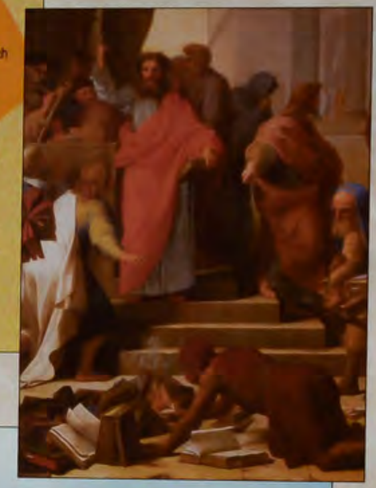

## ST. PAUL'S SECOND JOURNEY, ca. A.D. 49-52




## ST. PAUL'S THIRD JOURNEY, ca. A.D. 53-57




In Ephesus, St. Paul performed miracle after miracle, and conversions were many. The new converts brought their books of magic and burned them in public. (Acts 19:1-20)



## ST. PAUL'S VOYAGE TO ROME, ca. A.D. 61-62



## THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM (A.D. 49/50)

St. Peter's experience with Cornelius unfortunately did not completely resolve all the issues involved in extending the apostolic mission to the Gentiles. Questions remained whether the Gentiles who converted to Christianity also had to observe the Mosaic Law, including dietary laws and the law requiring circumcision. Jewish Christians understood that Christ was the fulfillment of the Jewish law and therefore wanted to recognize both traditions.

St. Paul had established Christian communities in Asia Minor on the premise that faith in Jesus Christ implied freedom from the Jewish Law. In his epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul defended the New Law of grace against other early Christians who advocated the necessity of observing the Old Law. St. Paul knew that the authority of the Church lay in Jerusalem, and so St. Paul and his pupil Barnabas journeyed back to the holy city to reconcile the matter with the other Apostles and Church leaders.

In Jerusalem, some Pharisees who had converted argued that Gentiles must observe the Mosaic Law. There was much debate, and finally St. Peter addressed the council:

> You know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will. (Acts 15: 7-11)

St. Peter, speaking with his authority as head of the Church—supported by St. James, the leader of the Church in Jerusalem—made the definitive statement on this issue. The Gentiles were to adhere to the following guidelines: to avoid eating the meat and blood of animals sacrificed to idols or from animals that had been strangled, and to refrain from unlawful marriage (cf. Acts 15: 29). The dietary laws, circumcision, and other aspects of the Law would not be imposed upon the Gentiles.

The Council of Jerusalem, the first council among many more in the Church's long history, settled the question between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile converts regarding the observance of the Law. Councils would become an important means in understanding the position of the Church. A council is an authorized gathering of bishops, guided by the Holy Spirit, to discuss ecclesiastical matters with the aim of passing decrees on the themes under discussion. In Jerusalem, St. Paul sought and won permission to preach Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected without forcing circumcision and the formal observance of the Law on the new Gentile converts. St. Paul's teachings on the New Law and Faith, coupled with the conclusions of the Council of Jerusalem, further distanced the early Church from its Jewish foundations.



At the first Council of Jerusalem, St. Peter made the definitive statement on the issue of whether Gentiles must observe Mosaic Laws.







The martrydom of St. Peter

## MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES OF THE APOSTLES

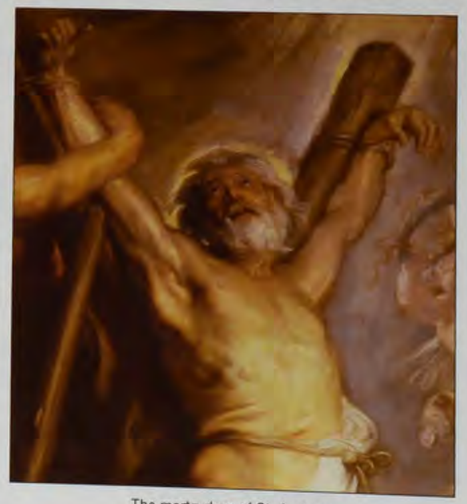
The Apostles were witnesses to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and sent by him to preach the Gospel to all the world. These Jewish men, most of them uneducated—St. Paul being the notable exception—soon came to be regarded by the Roman authorities as a menace to the state.

According to tradition, all the Apostles except St. John, who was miraculously spared, died as martyrs for the Faith. Around the year 64, **St. Peter** was crucified in Rome, upside down at his request, saying that he was not worthy to die right side up as Jesus did. The details of St. Peter's death in Rome have long been attributed to the "*Quo vadis?*" tradition. During persecutions, all groups seek to protect their leadership. As St. Peter was leaving Rome during Nero's persecution in A.D. 64, he is said to have met Christ along the road, asking Him: "*Domine quo vadis?*" ("Where are you going, Lord?") Christ replied, "I am coming to be crucified again." By this St. Peter understood that he should return to the city and suffer martyrdom.

**St. Paul** also spent his last days in Rome. After working for many years in Palestine and Asia Minor, St. Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and eventually sent to the imperial city for trial. It is unclear whether his dream of evangelizing Spain was ever realized. It is believed that St. Paul, like St. Peter, died in Rome between the years A.D. 62-65. Crucifixion, the cruelest form of execution, was reserved only for non-citizens and criminals; St. Paul, who was a Roman citizen, was beheaded outside the walls of Rome. Sts. Peter and Paul, the two Apostolic cornerstones of the Church—the first pope and the Church's greatest missionary—share June 29 as their feast day.

**St. Andrew**, the brother of St. Peter, is mentioned twice in the Gospels (cf. Mt 4: 18-20; Jn 1: 35-42), and the bishop and Church historian Eusebius (A.D. 260-340) recorded that Andrew's missionary activities took him to Scythia (modern day Ukraine and Russia). His last journeys took him through Byzantium and Greece to Patros, where the governor of Patros crucified Andrew on an X-shaped cross. According to tradition, his last words were, "Accept me, O Christ Jesus, whom I saw, whom I love, and in whom I am; accept my spirit in peace in your eternal realm." His feast is celebrated November 30, and he is the patron of Scotland, Greece, and Russia.

**Sts. James** and **John**, the sons of Zebedee, were, like Sts. Peter and Andrew, simple fishermen. Jesus exhorted them to place the highest impor-



The martrydom of St. Andrew


St. James "the Greater"

tance in serving others, as they both sought to rank first in his kingdom (cf. Mt 20: 20-28; Mk 10: 35-45). St. James "the Greater," along with Sts. Peter and John, formed the inner circle among the Twelve, and they witnessed the raising of the daughter of Jairus (cf. Mk 5: 35-43; Lk 8: 41-56), the Transfiguration (cf. Mt 17: 1-13; Mk 9: 2-13; Lk 9: 28-36), and the agony in the garden of Gethsemane (cf. Mt 26: 36-46; Mk 14: 32-42). Herod Agrippa had St. James beheaded in A.D. 44, and he thereby became the first of the Twelve to give his life for the Master (cf. Acts 12: 2). St. James' feast day is celebrated on July 25.

**St. John**, according to tradition, authored the fourth Gospel, the Book of Revelation, and three of the Catholic Epistles. He is mentioned numerous times in the New Testament: willing to drink with Christ and his brother St. James the cup of suffering (cf. Mt 20: 20-28), imprisoned with St. Peter and summoned before the Sanhedrin (cf. Acts 3: 1, 11, and 4: 1-21), and going with St. Peter to Samaria (cf. 8: 14-25). St. John appears numerous times in the fourth Gospel under the title of the "Beloved Disciple," which tradition supports (cf. Jn 1: 35-40, 13: 23, 19: 26, 20: 2-8, and 21: 7). During the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian, St. John was exiled to the island of Patmos off the Turkish coast, where he wrote the book of Revelation. A Latin legend held that Domitian attempted to kill St. John by placing him in a cauldron of boiling oil *ante portam Latinam* ("before the Latin Gate") leading out of Rome to the Roman province of Latium. St. John walked away unharmed. His feast day is celebrated on December 27.


The martrydom of St. Bartholomew

**St. Bartholomew** is mentioned only in the Synoptic Gospels (cf. Mk 3: 18, Lk 6: 14, and Mt 10: 3) and in Acts 1: 13. Some have suggested that Bartholomew may have been Nathanael, the one whom St. Philip brought to Jesus (cf. Jn 1: 43-51). The name "Bartholomew" means simply "son of Tomai," and it is quite possible that this Apostle had another, personal name. St. Bartholomew made the journey to preach the Gospel in and around Persia—an arduous expedition from Palestine in the first century A.D. According to tradition, St. Bartholomew was martyred in Armenia where he was flayed alive. His feast day is on August 24.

According to ancient tradition, **St. Matthew**, one of the Twelve, is also the author of the Gospel with the same name. According to the early Church historian Eusebius, St. Matthew's apostolic mission was directed to the Jews. His Gospel is the only one written in Aramaic, and tradition holds that it was written thus in order to accommodate the Jewish people. It is interesting to note that he corroborates many details of Christ's life and words with Old Testament quotations. Before Christ called him to be his Apostle, St. Matthew was a tax collector who, according to the Gospels of Sts. Mark and Luke, went by the name of Levi. Jesus told St. Matthew to follow him, and then sat and ate with St. Matthew and other tax collectors and sinners that St. Matthew had invited. Some Pharisees criticized Jesus for his association such people, and Christ responded, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire






St. Thomas is also known as "Doubting Thomas."

mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mt 9: 12-13). The same story appears in Sts. Mark and Luke. St. Matthew's name, *Mattai*, means "gift of God" in Aramaic. The feast day for St. Matthew is celebrated on September 21.

**St. Thomas**, also known as "Doubting Thomas," is listed as one of the Twelve in all four of the Gospels. He also appears in three prominent places in St. John's Gospel. A doubtful but zealous man, St. Thomas urged the other disciples to follow Jesus and die with him upon hearing that he was going to visit the dead Lazarus (cf. Jn 11: 16). An eager but apprehensive St. Thomas asked Jesus how the disciples should know the way to the Father's kingdom, to which Jesus replied, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (Jn 14: 6); and, finally, a doubtful St. Thomas appears in the account of Christ's Resurrection appearances to the disciples in the locked room (cf. Jn 20: 19-28). Sources such as Eusebius (cf. *Church History* 3.1) claim that St. Thomas evangelized the Parthians in present day Iran and Turkmenistan, while others, derived from the apocryphal, Gnostic book, *Acts of Thomas*, suggest that he established the Church in India and was martyred there. The Malabar Christians of India claim St. Thomas as their evangelizer. When the Portuguese explorers arrived in India in the fifteenth century they found, to their amazement, a very old Christian community, traditionally tracing its founding back to St. Thomas. His feast day is on July 3.

Very little is known about **St. James**, the son of Alphaeus, often referred to as "James the Less" in order to distinguish him from St. James, the son of Zebedee. After Pentecost, St. James became the head of the Church in Jerusalem and presided over the Council of Jerusalem. He shares his feast day with St. Philip on May 3. **St. Philip** is listed in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles, but only the Gospel of St. John provides any details. Christ called St. Philip, who in turn brought Nathanael to Christ (cf. Jn 1: 43-51). St. Philip was present at the miracle of the multiplication of the bread and fish (cf. Jn 6: 5-7), and he presented a group of Greeks to Jesus in John 12: 20-26. Finally, St. Philip also asked Jesus to show the Father to the Twelve (cf. Jn 14: 8-11).


St. Judas Thaddeus

**St. Judas**, brother of "James the Less," is listed as an Apostle in Lk 6: 16 and Acts 1: 13; he is referred to as "Judas (not Iscariot)" in Jn 14: 22. St. Judas is also referred to as Thaddeus in Mk 3: 18 and Mt 10: 3, and it is believed that this was meant to further distinguish him from Judas Iscariot. He is sometimes called Judas Thaddeus, and in English speaking countries, St. Judas is typically known by the name of Jude. St. Judas is the patron of lost causes, and he authored the Epistle of St. Jude. St. Simon the Cananean, also known as "the Less" and "the Zealot," shares a feast day with St. Judas on October 28. An apocryphal source, *The Passion of Simon and Jude*, describes the martyrdom of both of these men in Persia.

## MAGICIANS AND IMPOSTER APOSTLES

The Apostles left quite an impression wherever they went as they traversed the countryside preaching, baptizing, and performing miracles. They healed the sick and crippled, escaped miraculously from jails, and on one occasion, they even raised a woman from the dead.

All this especially caught the attention of local magicians, sorcerers, and healers who envied what they thought was the Apostles' "magical powers."

The book of Acts recounts that in Samaria, there was a man named Simon Magus, who was a local magician who had been using sorcery to amaze the people of Samaria into believing he had great powers. When the Apostles Sts. Peter and John came to town, Simon saw that people received the power of the Holy Spirit when the Apostles laid their hands on them. Simon wanted a share in this "magic" and offered them silver so that he too might have the power to impart the Holy Spirit magic. Outraged, St. Peter rebuked him saying, "Your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!" (Acts 8: 20). Upon hearing this, Simon repented and asked them to pray for him.

On another occasion, when St. Paul paid a visit to the proconsul of the island of Paphos, the court magician, a sorcerer named Bar-Jesus, or El'ymas, confronted him. El'ymas withstood the Apostles and tried to turn the proconsul away from the Faith. St. Paul responded by calling him a "son of the devil" and the "enemy of all righteousness" (Acts 13: 10) then announced that by the power of God the magician would be struck blind. Sure enough, Bar-Jesus was blinded and stumbled off to find someone to help him. When the proconsul saw this, he believed.

Later, in Ephesus, some imposters were going around trying to exorcise evil spirits by using Jesus' name. Seven sons of the Jewish high priest Sceva were going around doing this until on one occasion an evil spirit lashed out at them saying, "Jesus I know and Paul I know; but who are you?"(Acts 19: 15). Suddenly, the man in whom the evil spirit resided attacked them and overwhelmed them. The seven sons of Sceva were seen running out of the house naked and wounded. The whole town heard about this and believed.

Even in modern times, the New Age cult relies heavily on ascribing supernatural powers to material objects.

**Judas Iscariot** betrayed Christ to the Jewish authorities as recorded in Mk 14: 10-11 and 14: 43-44. His motive is unclear; financial gain may have played a role, as it did when Judas criticized the woman who anointed Jesus with ointment (cf. Mt 26: 6-13). Jesus spoke harshly of the man who betrayed him: "Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born" (cf. Mt 26: 24). Judas' fall serves as a warning that even the graces given to Christ's Apostles—and the familiar friendship of Jesus himself—may be of no avail if one is unfaithful and does not believe.

## CONCLUSION

St. John was the last of the Apostles to die, and with his death public revelation ended. Since Christ is the culmination of God's direct revelation to his people, possession of the Deposit of Faith and its interpretation corresponds to the Apostles who were the Lord's closest followers and witnesses to his life. The teachings of the Apostles initiated the body of living truths called the Tradition of the Church, which began with their preaching and instruction. During their lifetimes, the Apostles transmitted their episcopal power and authority to their first successors. The generation succeeding that of Jesus Christ's contemporaries already had a keen notion of this Tradition and of its bishops' direct link to the Apostles. From the earliest times, the successors of the Apostles have been given the duty to protect and transmit Christ's teaching as it was taught and interpreted by the first Apostles.





## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

**Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.3.3**

Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.

**John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 24.1-2**

The mission of the Church, like that of Jesus, is God's work, or, as Luke often puts it, the work of the Spirit. After the Resurrection and the Ascension of Jesus, the apostles have a powerful experience which completely transforms them: the experience of Pentecost. The coming of the Holy Spirit makes them *witnesses* and *prophets* (cf. Acts 1: 8, 2: 17-18). It fills them with a serene courage which impels them to pass on to others their experience of Jesus and the hope which motivates them. The Spirit gives them the ability to bear witness to Jesus with "boldness."

When the first evangelizers go down from Jerusalem, the Spirit becomes more of a "guide," helping them to choose both those to whom they are to go and the places to which their missionary journey is to take them. The working of the Spirit is manifested particularly in the impetus given to the mission which, in accordance with Christ's words, spreads out from Jerusalem to all of Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest ends of the world.

**The Navarre Bible, *Gospels and Acts*, Acts 9: 6**

The calling of Saul was exceptional as regards the manner in which God called him; but the effect it had on him was the same as what happens when God gives a specific calling to the apostolate to certain individual Christians, inviting them to follow him more closely. Paul's immediate response is a model of how those who receive these specific callings should act (all Christians, of course, have a common calling to holiness and apostolate that comes with Baptism).

Paul VI describes in this way the effects of this specific kind of vocation in a person's soul: "The apostolate is... an inner voice... It speaks prophetically and almost in a tone of victory, which eventually dispels all uncertainty, all timidity and all fear, and which facilitates—making it easy, desirable and pleasant—the response of our whole personality, when we pronounce that word which reveals the supreme secret of love: Yes, Yes Lord, tell me what I must do and I will try to do it, I will do it. Like St. Paul, thrown to the ground at the gates of Damascus: What would you have me do?"



## VOCABULARY

**APOSTLE**
The word "apostle" comes from the Greek *apostolos*, a form of *apostellein*, meaning "to send away." An apostle is literally "one who is sent." Refers to the twelve men chosen by Jesus during the course of his public ministry to be his closest followers, as well as Sts. Matthias, Paul of Tarsus, and Barnabas, who were chosen after Jesus' Resurrection.

**BISHOP**
A bishop is a successor of the Apostles who has received the fullness of Christ's priesthood.

**CHURCH**
In the Scriptures, the Church is described as the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph 1: 22-23). The English word "church" etymologically comes from a Greek word meaning "thing belonging to the Lord," which was applied originally to the church building. The Latin word *ecclesia* derives from another Greek word that means "assembly" or "congregation." Willed by the Father, the Church was founded by Jesus Christ and enjoys the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is through the Church that God carries out his plan of salvation for all people. The teaching authority and sanctifying power of the Church serve as a means to bring all men and women to greater union with God and with each other as well.

**CHURCH HISTORY**
The history of the Church is the record of the life of Jesus, the actions of men, and the guiding light of the Holy Spirit acting in the Church. This history began with the initial evangelization of the Apostles, and the narrative about Christ's kingdom on earth is forged as the Church interacts and responds to every culture and historical situation.

**COUNCIL**
An authorized gathering of bishops, guided in a unique way by the Holy Spirit, to discuss ecclesiastical matters with the aim of passing decrees on the themes under discussion.

**DEPOSIT OF FAITH**
Deposit of Faith, that is the heritage of Faith contained in Sacred Scripture and Tradition, handed on in the Church from the time of the Apostles.

**MARTYRDOM**
The supreme witness given to the truth of the Faith by bearing witness even unto death.

**PENTECOST**
Pentecost celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Mary and the Apostles fifty days after the Resurrection.

**PEOPLE OF GOD**
Those "born" into the Church through faith in Christ and Baptism. The term "People of God" is taken from the Old Testament in which God chose Israel to be his chosen people. Christ instituted the new and eternal covenant by which a new priestly, prophetic, and royal People of God, the Church, participates in the mission and service of Christ.



The Roman grain ship that St. Paul traveled on carried 276 men. Midships was a high mast, usually of cedar wood, and near the prow was a smaller one for hoisting a small sail. Two large oars were used to steer. On the deck was a wooden hut for the helmsman which was also used as a temple of worship containing an idol.





## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. When did Jesus send the Holy Spirit to guide the Church?
2. Who is the cornerstone of the Church?
3. Who is Christ's vicar on earth?
4. What is Church history?
5. What are two basic components of the history of the Church?
6. Who were Simeon and Anna?
7. What was the "Slaughter of the Innocents"?
8. What is the inaugural event of Jesus' public ministry?
9. What was the teaching of the New Law?
10. What effects did the Holy Spirit have upon the Apostles at Pentecost?
11. What laid the groundwork for the Church?
12. What are the four marks of the Church?
13. What sets the Apostles apart from other early members of the Church?
14. What does the Greek root of the word "apostle" mean?
15. Who are the successors to the Apostles?
16. How was St. Stephen killed?
17. What was the role of the first deacons?
18. What occurred after St. Stephen's martyrdom?
19. Who was the famous Jewish teacher under whom St. Paul studied?
20. To which city was Saul going when he met Jesus Christ?
21. How was Saul physically impaired after his encounter with Jesus?
22. Who healed Saul?
23. What is the significance of Cornelius' conversion?
24. Why was it important that St. Peter received this message from God first?
25. Who was the author of the oldest texts in the New Testament and when were they written?
26. Why did Jewish Christians criticize St. Peter?
27. When and why was the Council of Jerusalem called?
28. What was the outcome of the Council of Jerusalem?
29. Why was St. Paul beheaded instead of being crucified like Sts. Peter and Andrew?
30. Which Apostle was exiled to the island of Patmos after allegedly having survived being put into a vat of boiling oil?
31. Who was St. Jude?

## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. How was Jesus' life authentically human? How was it divine? Cite specific examples from the Gospel.
2. Why is Pentecost one of the most important feast days in the liturgical year? What does it mean that the Holy Spirit "dwells" in the Church?
3. The Gospel is an account of Jesus' calling of the Apostles. How did Jesus convince these total strangers to give up everything and go follow him after meeting him only for the first time? In small groups, write a brief skit in which you try to use Jesus' words to convince someone in today's society to come and follow him.
4. What kind of men were the Apostles? What does their social status, education, and personality demonstrate about how Jesus calls people to live a Christian life?

## FROM THE CATECHISM

**750** To believe that the Church is "holy" and "catholic," and that she is "one" and "apostolic" (as the Nicene Creed adds), is inseparable from belief in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the Apostles' Creed we profess "one Holy Church" (*"Credo…Ecclesiam"*), and not to believe in the Church, so as not to confuse God with his works and to attribute clearly to God's goodness *all* the gifts he has bestowed on his Church (*Roman Catechism* I, 10, 22).

**761** The gathering together of the People of God began at the moment when sin destroyed the communion of men with God, and that of men among themselves. The gathering together of the Church is, as it were, God's reaction to the chaos provoked by sin. This reunification is achieved secretly in the heart of all peoples: "In every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable" to God (Acts 10:35; cf. *LG* 9; 13; 16).

**763** It was the Son's task to accomplish the Father's plan of salvation in the fullness of time. Its accomplishment was the reason for his being sent (cf. *LG* 3; *AG* 3). "The Lord Jesus inaugurated his Church by preaching the Good News, that is, the coming of the Reign of God, promised over the ages in the scriptures" (*LG* 5). To fulfill the Father's will, Christ ushered in the Kingdom of heaven on earth. The Church "is the Reign of Christ already present in mystery" (*LG* 3).

**766** The Church is born primarily of Christ's total self-giving for our salvation, anticipated in the institution of the Eucharist and fulfilled on the cross. "The origin and growth of the Church are symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of the crucified Jesus" (*LG* 3; cf. Jn 19:34). "For it was from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth the 'wondrous sacrament of the whole Church'" (*SC* 5). As Eve was formed from the sleeping Adam's side, so the Church was born from the pierced heart of Christ hanging dead on the cross (cf. St. Ambrose, *In Luc.* 2, 85-89; PL 15, 1666-1668).

**783** Jesus Christ is the one whom the Father anointed with the Holy Spirit and established as priest, prophet, and king. The whole People of God participates in these three offices of Christ and bears the responsibilities for mission and service that flow from them (cf. John Paul II, *RH* 1821).

**889** In order to preserve the Church in the purity of the faith handed on by the apostles, Christ who is the Truth willed to confer on her a share in his own infallibility. By a "supernatural sense of faith" the People of God, under the guidance of the Church's living Magisterium, "unfailingly adheres to this faith" (*LG* 12; cf. *DV* 10).

**890** The mission of the Magisterium is linked to the definitive nature of the covenant established by God with his people in Christ. It is this Magisterium's task to preserve God's people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error. Thus, the pastoral duty of the Magisterium is aimed at seeing to it that the People of God abides in the truth that liberates. To fulfill this service, Christ endowed the Church's shepherds with the charism of infallibility in matters of faith and morals. The exercise of this charism takes several forms:

**891** "The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful—who confirms his brethren in the faith—he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals….The infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, together with Peter's successor, they exercise the supreme Magisterium," above all in an Ecumenical Council (*LG* 25; cf. Vatican Council I: DS 3074). When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine "for belief as being divinely revealed" (*DV* 10 § 2), and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions "must be adhered to with the obedience of faith" (*LG* 25 § 2). This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself (cf. *LG* 25).



CHAPTER 2

# The Early Christians

*The early Christians, by their tremendous faith in Jesus and imitation of his life, transformed the Roman world and its values.*



CHAPTER 2

# The Early Christians

From the Eucharist we all receive the grace and strength for everyday life, for living a truly Christian existence, in the joy of knowing that God loves us, that Christ has died for us and that the Holy Spirit lives in us.

— John Paul II, Homily, Dublin, September 29, 1979



"Christians are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality, language or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life. Their teaching is not based upon reveries inspired by the curiosity of men. Unlike some other people, they champion no purely human doctrine....

"And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labor under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country. Like others, they marry and have children, but they do not expose them. They share their meals, but not their wives. They live in the flesh, but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizens of heaven. Obedient to the laws, they yet live on a level that transcends the law....

"To speak in general terms, we may say that the Christian is to the world what the soul is to the body....The body hates the soul and wars against it, not because of any injury the soul has done it, but because of the restriction the soul places on its pleasures. Similarly, the world hates the Christians, not because they have done it any wrong, but because they are opposed to its enjoyments.

"Christians love those who hate them just as the soul loves the body and all its members despite the body's hatred. It is by the soul, enclosed within the body, that the body is held together, and similarly, it is by the Christians, detained in the world as in a prison, that the world is held together. The soul, though immortal, has a mortal dwelling place; and Christians also live for a time amidst perishable things, while awaiting the freedom from change and decay that will be theirs in heaven. As the soul benefits from the deprivation of food and drink, so Christians flourish under persecution" (from *Epistle to Diognetus*).







The early Christians enjoyed the special circumstance of historical proximity to Jesus and the Apostles.

The preceding eloquent descriptions of what it means to live one's life as a follower of Christ might have very well been written about the Christians of the third millennium. The source of these excerpts, however, is the *Epistle to Diognetus*, a letter composed by an unknown apologist sometime in the second century. Like that of the author, the identity of the recipient, Diognetus, also remains concealed within the depths of history. Still, its words endure through the centuries for anyone who wishes to understand who the early Christian was. Both the Christian of the second century and the Christian of today should fit the description given by that ancient, unknown author.

The early Christians enjoyed the special circumstance of historical proximity to Jesus and the Apostles. Some of the harshest conditions that the followers of Christ have ever endured came at the beginning, yet these Christians persisted in their faith. They offered their suffering in union with Christ's at those first celebrations of the Mass in their homes and in the catacombs, shared material aid in times of need with neighbors and strangers alike, strove to live morally upright lives amid an often depraved society. They set about the great task of building a new civilization of love in this first period of evangelization. The lives of the early followers of Christ were assuredly far from easy. Some Christians abandoned the Faith when the challenges became overwhelming, while some others openly apostatized. However, there were many faithful Christians in the Church, fortified and guided by the Holy Spirit, who endured and provided spiritual shelter and strength for all who would believe.

Without the strengthening graces of God, these early Christians would have found their many trials insurmountable. They had been born from an ancient and holy, but often persecuted tradition, from which they made an essential departure into a world dominated by pagan cultures. In the face of a hostile world, Christianity proposed a radically new vision of human life. Its morality demanded that the believer make difficult choices both concerning his witness to Jesus Christ and on vital issues that affected daily life—marriage and family, public life, work, and relation to both one's neighbors and all the peoples of the world. Guiding them at all times were the words and life of Christ, transmitted by his Apostles.

It is worth noting that many efforts at reform throughout the history of the Church have looked back to this first period as a model for holiness, simplicity, and fraternity. The Second Vatican Council enacted various reforms to bring modern Christians closer to the spirit of the early Christians.

This chapter will explore the life of the early Christians, their beliefs, practices, traditions, and values. It will also investigate the development of the Church as an institution, especially the development of the hierarchy and the sacraments. Finally, it will chronicle the early theological developments of the Apostolic Fathers and Apologists before briefly looking at a final and often too common aspect of early Christian life, martyrdom.

## PART I

# Beliefs and Practices: The Spiritual Life of the Early Christians



The beliefs and practices of the early community of Christians took some time to develop—Christ did not leave his Church with a fully developed theology and disciplinary practice. Rather, these emerged through centuries of theological, philosophical, cultural, and historical development under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in and through the institution of the Church. From the Church's inception, the eternal truths present in Christ's teaching were passed on and unfolded within a living and changing body of practicing believers. As the early Christians reflected on the Gospel message and integrated it into their daily lives, the early tradition of Church teaching began to take shape and express itself especially in the liturgy.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, during the earliest years, Christians remained closely associated with the Jewish faith, the tradition from which many early Christians converted. They retained many traditional Jewish practices in the same way that Christ and the Apostles had. This changed, however, after the Council of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple—events that brought a huge influx of Gentiles to Christianity and altered the ethnic make-up of the Christian community.







In the first years after the Resurrection, adults who wanted to convert to the Faith were baptized freely.

## BAPTISM

**Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Mt 28:19)**

**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (Jn 3:5)**

Jesus was baptized by St. John the Baptist with a baptism of repentance (cf. Mt 3:13-17). But it was Jesus who instituted the Sacrament of Baptism in the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 3:22; Mk 1:8), instructing his disciples to do the same (cf. Jn 4:2; Mt 28:19). By this sacrament, a believer is forgiven of original and personal sin, begins a new life in Christ and the Holy Spirit, and is incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ (CCC 977, 1213).

In the first years after the Resurrection, adults who wanted to convert to the Faith were baptized freely. As Christianity grew, a more structured program of instruction preceding Baptism evolved. Catechumens ("the instructed," from the Greek *katēkhein*, "to instruct"), those adults seeking admission to the Church, met over a long period of time, normally two to three years, for instruction before being baptized. The lengthy process provided time for the catechumen to learn the message of the Gospels and to develop a strong foundation in the faith. Though one might imagine that there existed a high level of enthusiasm and zeal among prospective believers at a time so soon after Christ had walked the earth, one must keep in mind that these were often times of great persecution, which could easily overwhelm a believer with a burgeoning but poorly grounded faith. The catechumens waited to be baptized at the Easter Vigil on the night of Holy Saturday or on the Saturday before Pentecost.

During the Medieval period, the catechumenate fell into disuse. Adult converts normally received ten weeks of instruction from a priest and then received Baptism during various times of the

liturgical year. In 1965, the Second Vatican Council reinstituted the catechumenate to bring back the beautiful custom of preparation for solemn reception into the Church that had been practiced by the early Christians. As in the earliest times, adult converts once again study and pray together for a time before being admitted to the Church at Easter.

The practice of baptizing infants became more common during the third century, and by the early Medieval period, the practice of infant Baptism was universal. There is also evidence that it may have started prior to the third century, in the time of the Apostolic Fathers. St. Justin Martyr refers to Christians who had "from childhood been made disciples" (cf. *Apologies* 1.15). In the third century document written by Hippolytus (A.D. 170-236), *Apostolic Tradition* (21), the Baptism of children is discussed. Tertullian (A.D. 160-225) disagreed with the practice of infant Baptism (though he did not deny its validity). In order to avoid the danger of anyone profaning his Baptism during his youth, Tertullian argued that the baptized ought to be old enough to understand the sacrament. Origen (A.D. 185-254) claimed that the practice of infant Baptism was clearly recommended, and supported it since original sin ought to be wiped away as soon as possible. St. Augustine, son of a pagan father and a Christian mother, in his *Confessions* gives an argument along similar lines, based very much on his own experience:



I ask you, O my God—for I would very much like to know, if it is your will—to what purpose my baptism was postponed at that time? Was it indeed for my good that I was given more free reign to sin? Or, was I not given more free reign? How is it that even now one hears it said of one person or another, "Let him alone, let him do as he pleases, for he is not yet baptized?" In the matter of bodily health, no one says, "Let him alone; let him have a few more wounds; for he is not yet cured!" How much better, then, would it have been for me to have been cured at once—and if thereafter, through the diligent care of friends and myself, my soul's restored health had been kept safe in thy keeping, who gave it in the first place! This would have been far better, in truth. But how many and great the waves of temptation which appeared to hang over me as I grew out of childhood! These were foreseen by my mother, and she preferred that the unformed clay should be risked to them rather than the clay molded after Christ's image. (St. Augustine, *Confessions* I.XI)

The beauty and value of baptizing infants is that original sin is forgiven and the child is incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ. Baptismal character imprinted on the soul renders the infant a child of God who now shares in the priesthood of Christ called the common priesthood. Lastly, this sacrament confers upon the child a special grace through which he may grow more fully in Christ. Prior to the twentieth century, even in the industrialized nations, many babies and women died during childbirth, and many children died afterwards from diseases that had no known cure. Infant Baptism secures the great gift of forgiveness and salvation from God and commits the family to raising the child in a Christian way.

Baptism has always been administered immediately when the recipient is in danger of death. In such a case, any baptized or non-baptized person can administer the sacrament. During the persecutions there were cases of non-believers administering Baptism to converts as they made





their way to the place of torture and execution. These baptisms were valid because they utilized the Trinitarian formula and intended to follow the mind of the Church. There were also cases of catechumens who were martyred before receiving the Sacrament of Baptism. From the earliest times, the Church taught that those who died for the Faith received the graces of Baptism through their martyrdom, which is called Baptism of Blood.

> The Church has always held the firm conviction that those who suffer death for the sake of the faith without having received Baptism are baptized by their death for and with Christ. This *Baptism of blood*, like the *desire for Baptism*, brings about the fruits of Baptism without being a sacrament. (CCC 1258)

Though infants were baptized, it was common for adult converts in the early days of the Church to wait until they were on their deathbeds before they received Baptism. Since Baptism remits all traces of sin, it was believed that waiting until the very last moment would allow a person to commit as many sins as he pleased and then bypass Hell and Purgatory by dying immediately after receiving the sacrament. Not only does this contradict the spirit of Christianity, but also it is very dangerous, and could possibly doom a person in the case of sudden death. It also severely limits the ability of people who could be fully immersed in God's love through the sacraments and his graces to help others and themselves. This practice continued into the fourth or fifth century, when infant Baptism was commonly established, and was taken up again for a while during the Middle Ages.

## *AGAPE* AND THE EUCHARIST

> I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Cor 11: 23-26)

The *Agape* ("love" in Greek) refers to an early Christian religious meal that was at first closely related to the celebration of the Eucharist and often preceded this celebration. The close connection did not last long, however, because of the Eucharistic abuses that arose from its proximity to the *Agape*. St. Paul criticizes these abuses in his first letter to the Corinthians:

> When you meet together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? (1 Cor 11: 20-22)

In order to avoid impiety and denigration of the Eucharistic celebration, the *Agape* was soon celebrated in the evenings. Records of the *Agape*, however, are few, and the practice generally did not last long, except in some smaller and more isolated churches.

The ritual of the Mass developed gradually over time. The beginning of the ceremony included readings from the Bible, singing of the psalms and hymns, common prayers, and a collection for the poor. (Keep in mind, though, that even if the official Canon of Sacred Scripture was not set until the fourth century, many, including Tertullian, St. Irenaeus, and St. Clement of Alexandria held the four Gospels as inspired.) Finally came the Liturgy of the Eucharist, which formed the high point of the liturgical celebration. In the earliest years, fixed prayers did not exist. Rather, the celebrant gave thanks in his own words before praying the Institution Narrative and Consecration. The Consecration, which comprises the actual words of Christ, was already written down in the earliest letters of St. Paul (cf. 1 Cor 11: 23-26) in the A.D. 50s.



The Eucharist, literally meaning "thanksgiving," was, and is, the central act of Christian worship, and it consisted in consuming the Sacrament of Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Christ. All of the early documents from this period indicate that the early Christians considered Christ truly present in the Eucharist under the appearance of bread and wine, attested by many of the Fathers of the Church, including Sts. Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria, Ambrose, Augustine, Justin Martyr, and John of Damascus. This corresponds to the teaching of the Church based on the New Testament accounts. For instance, St. John Chrysostom teaches, "It is not man that causes the things offered to become the Body and Blood of Christ, but he who was crucified for us, Christ himself. The priest, in the role of Christ, pronounces these words, but their power and grace are God's. This is my body, he says. This word transforms the thing offered" (*Prod. Jud.* 1: 6: PG 49, 380). Likewise St. Ambrose says, "Be convinced that this is not what nature has formed, but what the blessing has consecrated. The power of the blessing prevails over that of nature, because by the blessing nature itself is changed....Could not Christ's word, which can make from nothing what did not exist, change existing things into what they were not before? It is no less a feat to give things their original nature than to change their nature" (*De myst.* 9, 50; 52: PL 16, 405-407).

## CHURCHES

For the earliest celebrations of the Mass, people gathered together in private homes and in the catacombs, especially during periods of persecution. Some of the Roman emperors permitted Christians to build churches, especially at the beginning of the second century. Renewed persecutions, however, left most of these structures destroyed. It was not until the Edict of Milan (A.D. 313), when Emperor Constantine began a building program favorable to the Christians, that Roman architectural designs like the basilica were transformed into Christian churches.



Basilica of St. Nereus, Domitilla Catacombs, Rome, Italy





## THE CATACOMBS

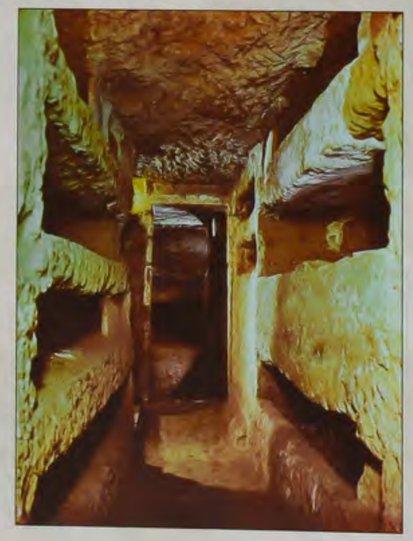
Catacombs were an important gathering place for early Christians in certain areas. A catacomb is an underground series of tunnels, chambers, and tombs that were dug by Christians and served as burial places, shrines, and places of worship during the first few centuries after Christ. The most famous Christian catacombs are those found outside of Rome, but catacombs have also been discovered throughout Italy, France, and Northern Africa.

There are over sixty different catacombs scattered along the outskirts of Rome, and together they account for hundreds of miles of underground tunnels, and they are estimated to have held almost two million graves. The catacombs of St. Callixtus are among the most impressive. These catacombs are four stories deep, include about 12 miles of tunnels and galleries, and in them were buried 16 popes and dozens of martyrs!

The catacombs are made up of long narrow tunnels with several rows of rectangular niches on each side, called "*loculi*." Corpses would usually be wrapped in a shroud and laid in the *loculi*. Then, the *loculi* would be sealed with a marble slab or with tiles. The tombs would often be adorned with inscriptions of the person's name or a short prayer, as well as religious symbols. There were also small rooms called *cubicula* that served as family tombs, and larger rooms called crypts where the tombs of prominent figures, such as popes or martyrs, were converted into small churches.

Most of the catacombs were begun in the second century and initially were merely burial places. Christians shunned the Roman practice of cremation and preferred burial because of their belief in the resurrection of the body. This desire to be buried together showed the strong sense of community in the early Church. Although they were never actually used as hiding places during times of persecution, the catacombs did serve as places of refuge for baptisms and the celebration of the Eucharist. In the privacy of the catacombs, Christians could worship openly, and express themselves in prayer and religious art.

As the persecutions continued, martyrs were given places of honor in the catacombs. The tombs of the martyrs became popular places of prayer where Christians would ask for the martyrs' intercession. The catacombs were continually expanded and used for burial through the fifth century A.D. Eventually, they were abandoned and forgotten, only to be rediscovered in the sixteenth century. Ever since that time, they have remained popular pilgrimage sites for Christians to find inspiration and learn about the early Church.



# THE EARLY GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY

## CHRISTIAN CHURCHES IN ASIA MINOR




## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES BY A.D. 100








## CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES BY A.D. 300




With its large population of Hellenized Jews, Asia Minor became the first area of growth for the Church. Many Jews converted to Christianity through the works of Paul and the Apostles. St. John received his apocalyptic visions on the island of Patmos off the west coast of Asia Minor. In his "revelations," seven Asia Minor churches received messages of encouragement and condemnation (Rev 1-3).

By the end of the first century, Christianity was still confined to the Eastern Roman Empire. except for communities in Rome, Puteoli and around the Bay of Naples. Edessa was the only possible church known outside the empire.

By the end of the third century, the Christian world had changed drastically. Christianity and Judaism had gone their separate ways, and Christianity had become largely a religion of the Gentiles. Its informal center had shifted from Jerusalem to Rome. The scene was set for the epiphany of Emperor Constantine in A.D. 312 and the world-changing embrace of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire.



St. Peter's Grotto, first century church in Antioch on the Orontes.

## HOLY DAYS

For the early Christians, Wednesdays and Fridays were days of fasting and penance. Though Friday was chosen because it was the day that Christ suffered and accomplished his redemptive sacrifice, it is not clear why Wednesday was also reserved for fasting and penance. Some traditions hold that this was the day that Judas conspired with the chief priests to betray Jesus.

The Jewish Sabbath lasted from sundown on Friday until sundown on Saturday. Christians at first kept the Jewish Sabbath (day of rest), but Sunday quickly replaced Saturday as the holiest day of the week because it represented both the day on which Jesus rose from the dead and the day on which Pentecost occurred. Sunday was reputed to be the first day of creation and it followed that the first day of "re-creation" would be recognized as well. Celebrating the Lord's Day on Sunday also provided convenient cover for Christians during the persecutions because it was observed by pagans as their holy day as well. By the end of the first three centuries, the practice of celebrating Mass on Sundays had taken root.

Feast days also developed throughout the years. The Feast of Epiphany, for example, was celebrated in many separate places in the West before the fourth century. St. John Chrysostom introduced this feast in the East.

### CHRISTIAN SYMBOLS

The cross was the most widespread and enduring of all Christian symbols, since it expresses the entirety of the Christian Faith. By the early third century, the practice of making the Sign of the Cross was deeply rooted in the Christian world; Tertullian refers to Christians as "devotees of the cross." The Sign of the Cross took various forms over the centuries, from tracing the cross over the forehead, mouth, and heart to the common sign used to today. In the Eastern Church, people touch their first three fingers together while blessing themselves to symbolize the Trinity.

Another widespread and ancient Christian symbol is the fish. Among the earliest Christians, the fish for a time may have held even greater significance than the cross. It is an ancient symbol, long predating Christianity, and it became a universal Christian symbol for Christ. It recalls the multiplication of loaves and fishes, as well as Christ's appearance to the seven disciples after the Resurrection at the end of St. John's Gospel. The principal reason for its widespread popularity was that the Greek for fish, *ichthys*, can also be an acrostic for the Greek phrase, *Iesous CHristos THeou Yios Soter*, which, as a declaration of the central tenet of the Christian Faith means, "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior."

Often appearing with the fish was the symbol of the anchor. Like the fish, it is an ancient symbol of pre-Christian origins, and it long symbolized safety. The early Christians adopted the anchor and developed its significance from safety to hope. It was often paired with the ship—as a ship is kept from drifting by its anchor, so is faith kept from drifting by hope. The anchor also served the role of an esoteric depiction of the cross—easily recognized by Christians, but not by non-believers.



A carving on a tombstone in the early fourth century catacomb of St. Domatilla depicts the fish symbol combined with the cross-like anchor symbol.





## THE PAPACY



Pope Benedict XVI was elected the 265th "Vicar of Christ" on April 19, 2005.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Christ made St. Peter the head of his Church (cf. Mt 16:13-23, Jn 21:15-17), the first pope, the Vicar of Christ, conferring upon him the responsibility and supreme authority of guiding the Church after Christ's departure. There are clear historical sources that indicate that the authority of the Bishop of Rome was recognized and regarded as the supreme authority in all Church matters from the very beginning. The *First Epistle* of Pope St. Clement I (A.D. 88-97) demonstrates the recognized authority of the papacy as he settled controversies that were disrupting the Church in Corinth. The *Epistle to the Romans* written by St. Ignatius of Antioch (ca. A.D. 35-ca. 107), who was appointed Bishop of Antioch by St. Peter himself, affirms the deferential obedience to the authority of the Bishop of Rome. Similarly, St. Irenaeus' writings stressed the importance of the traditional structures in the Church, such as the papacy.

Two popes during the first five centuries of Christendom were especially instrumental in the development of the papacy's ecclesiastical and jurisdictional powers. Pope St. Leo I (d. A.D. 461) explicitly tried to centralize Church governance based on the Bishop of Rome's preeminence. The city of Rome at the time of Pope St. Leo I was dwindling in size and importance. Political power had shifted east to Byzantium. But even as Rome's political significance and temporal power diminished and nearly vanished while at the same time the patriarchs of Constantinople and Alexandria were growing in political importance, the Church Councils still deferred to the pope in Rome before acting on a decision.

Pope St. Gelasius I (d. 496) also actively asserted the primacy of the Roman pontiff and seems to have been the first to have used the title "Vicar of Christ" to denote his divine authority, especially as he battled against a number of heresies in the East. From the eighth century, the title "Vicar of Christ" began to be employed by the popes in addition to being used by bishops, kings, judges, and priests. Many of the early popes used the title "Vicar of St. Peter"; nevertheless, at the time of Pope Innocent III in the thirteenth century, "Vicar of Christ" became used by the pope exclusively.



The Gospel reading at the Inauguration Mass for Pope Benedict XVI on April 25, 2005 was John 21:15-19. "...'Simon [Peter], son of John, do you love me?'...'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep.'... And after this he said to him, 'Follow me.'"



"Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude also be;..."

## THE EPISCOPACY

As with the papacy, from the beginning the Church held the office of bishop to be of great importance. The bishops, as successors to the Apostles, were responsible for shepherding and guiding the flock in the various—and often dangerous—cities and situations in which Christians found themselves. The bishops baptized, offered up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, celebrated weddings, ordained priests, and engaged themselves in all of the sacramental work of the Church.

St. Ignatius of Antioch, of whom more will be said in the following chapter, wrote in his *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* the following with regard to the importance of the bishop: "Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the multitude [of the people] also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church" (*Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, VIII). St. Ignatius was the first to use the term "Catholic Church."

## PRIESTHOOD

The word "priest" is a contraction of the Greek word *presbyteros* that is normally translated as "presbyter." In the early Church, the presbyters were the church elders. The full understanding of the priesthood, as minister of Divine worship and of the Eucharistic sacrifice subordinate to the bishop to whom he has sworn canonical allegiance, developed over the centuries. However, there is evidence that as early as the second century there were already many priests being ordained to offer up the Sacrifice of the Mass.

The earliest extant ordination rites come from St. Hippolytus' (ca. A.D. 170 - ca. 236) *Apostolic Tradition*, as well as the fourth century *Apostolic Constitutions*.





## MONOTHEISM

Christians believe that there is only one God (monotheism) and cannot compromise this belief in any way. Christianity, like Judaism had since its inception, found itself surrounded by polytheistic, pagan worship. Even if these pagan beliefs and the Roman cult of worship of the emperor did not amount to much of a personal faith, the early Christians rejected all acts of sacrifice and public ritual that acknowledged pagan belief. They also often had to make great changes in their daily lives. For example, sculptors and painters who became Christian could no longer work in pagan temples. Teachers could not teach Roman mythology, nor could they serve as judges or magistrates (because they would be forced, by laws such as the Edict of Nero, to condemn anyone discovered to be a Christian). Many Christians were killed as martyrs for Christ during the persecutions because they refused to adore the images of the emperors, who proclaimed themselves gods.



At the Council of Trent in 1546 the Church made its final definitive statement concerning the Canon of Scripture.

## THE SCRIPTURES

During the earliest centuries of the Church, the Canon of the Bible was certainly not intact as one integral whole as it is in its present form. Many of the books that would later come to comprise much of the Canon of the Old Testament, such as the five books of the Pentateuch, were long held to be canonical by the Jewish tradition. Other books, such as Tobit and Wisdom, would be accepted through the course of the formation of the Catholic Canon. Many books of the New Testament, such as St. Matthew's gospel and most of St. Paul's epistles, were from the earliest times universally accepted; others, such as Revelation, required more time.

By the early third century, the universally accepted books of the New Testament canon were the following: the four Gospels, thirteen of St. Paul's Epistles, Acts, Revelation, 1 and 2 Peter, and 1, 2, and 3 John. After much discussion among various Church authorities including Origen, Eusebius, St. Athanasius, and St. Jerome, a definitive Canon was declared at a large synod in A.D. 382 in Rome. Though it took a few more years for churches in Africa and Gaul to accept the canon, by

the end of the first decade of the fifth century, the Western Church possessed the complete Canon of the New Testament. The Church in the East, though it had not made nor recognized any formal statement concerning the Canon of the New Testament, generally accepted what the West had affirmed, except for some lingering disputes over the legitimacy of the book of Revelation. The Canon of the Old Testament took longer to be officially determined, though for many centuries St. Jerome's Vulgate was taken as standard for ecclesiastical usage. Finally, in 1546 at the Council of Trent, the Church made its final definitive statement concerning the Canon of Scripture.

The issue of the Scriptures and the establishment of the Canon are very important. In contrast to what the Reformation would falsely teach, the early Church never considered the Scriptures as authoritative apart from their interpretation by the Church through her hierarchy. Indeed, without this perennial guidance by the Holy Spirit, the Church's leadership would not have the wisdom to judge whether a particular book was divinely inspired or apocryphal (a work of literature with scriptural pretensions that is not divinely inspired), there would be no Bible as it exists. The Church, under the guiding grace of the Holy Spirit, over many centuries of careful deliberation and prayer, authoritatively determined those inspired texts that would form the Bible.

A quick example will illuminate this point. *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas* is an apocryphal book that was claimed to be divinely inspired. Though it was never widely recognized, the Church had declared that book lacked divine inspiration. Perhaps one reason for the Church's decision concerns one of the stories contained in this work. The story relates that the Child Jesus, at about eight years of age, became angry with a playmate and turned him into a frog. In her wisdom, the Church declined to add this book to the Canon. Many other books like this one, riddled with various heresies, were rejected.



The Old Testament writings played a significant role in the early Christian community. Though the Church lifted the burden of the Old Law's requirements, the books of the Old Testament were understood to be still authoritative. Christ fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies regarding the messiah. The Old Testament told the important story of how God established his covenant with the chosen people. The early Christians often sang the Psalms, especially in the liturgy and when they were being led to martyrdom.

The Scriptures, though obviously very important, were never seen as a record and interpretation of everything that Jesus and the Apostles did. It is the Tradition of the Church expressed in early Christian literature, liturgical practices, and statements of the Church that clarify and interpret Scripture. Sacred Scripture is a vital and central part of a broader tradition.







## SLAVERY AND CHRISTIANITY

**There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave or free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3: 28)**

The institution of slavery was, at the time of the birth of Christianity, an ancient and widespread institution. Roman slaves were multitudinous—indeed, no earlier civilization had yet employed slave labor so extensively. By the time of Augustus' death, it is estimated that two million of the seven and a half million inhabitants of the Italian peninsula were slaves. Though slaves in the cities often had a better life than those enslaved for agricultural work, the cruelties and hardships Roman slaves often endured are well known. Dread of punishment drove the slave through his miserable life. Slavery also existed in the Jewish culture, but it existed in a much different form. Mosaic Law demanded a merciful relationship between the master and slave that recognized the dignity of both labor and the laborer, and slaves often gained their freedom after a comparatively short period of service (cf. Ex 21:1-11, Dt 15:12-18).

Jesus never spoke directly concerning the topic of slavery, but it is clear that the Gospel implicitly condemns slavery as a grave offense against humanity and Christ's call to love as he loved. Slavery undermines the essential dignity of the human person, reducing the human being to the status of a machine that can be bought, sold, and exploited until it breaks down. Such treatment of other human beings is entirely inconsistent with Christ's teachings and the two greatest commandments (cf. Lk 10: 25-28). Slaves in the early Christian community were welcomed, not as slaves, not as inferior beings, but as equally dignified members of the Christian community in Christ.

It was not early Christianity's place to bring about a sudden and sweeping revolution or emancipation. Indeed, the Mosaic Law itself permitted slavery. Christianity at this time did not have the moral authority capable of social reform on a grand scale. Rather, through the spread of Christianity from individual to individual and the growth of the Church, the institution of slavery was slowly undermined. Christ made clear the essential dignity of every human being and each person's unique call to a holy life.

St. Paul provides an excellent example of the manner in which the early Church dealt with slavery and writes concerning the topic in several letters (cf. the brief letter to Philemon, Col 3:11 and 3: 22-25, 1 Cor 12:13, and in Eph 6: 5-9). St. Paul sought to bring the spirit of charity and of dignified labor to the master-slave relationship. St. Paul writes:

> **Slaves, be obedient to those who are your earthly masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as to Christ; not in the way of eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not men, knowing that whatever good any one does, he will receive the same again from the lord, whether he is a slave or free. Masters, do the same to them, and forbear threatening, knowing that he is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him. (Eph. 6: 5-9)**

Labor and the laborer were not things to be scorned—Christ himself was a carpenter. Nor were service and the servant—Christ came to serve (cf. Lk 22:27). Nor were obedience and the obedient—Christ was obedient to the Father even unto death. The only slavery ever encouraged by St. Paul was slavery to Christ: freely serving him as a beloved master, working not out of fear or to gain favor, but "from the heart," out of love, for the greater glory of God.

Slaves were accepted into the Church as equals and even rose to the highest position of governance in the Church. Two former slaves immediately succeeded St. Peter as pope, Popes Sts. Linus and Anacletus. Pope St. Clement I, the fourth pope, was also a former slave. St. Felicity was the slave of St. Perpetua in Carthage before they both died as martyrs.

Beginning with the Emperor Constantine, the state instituted various reforms of slavery to improve the situation of society, as did Emperor Justinian. By the time Northern and Eastern Europe were converted to Christianity during the early Medieval period, slavery had ended as an institution.

## NON-VIOLENCE

> You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you.
>
> You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (Mt 5:38-44; cf. Lk 6:27-31)

Non-violence naturally flows from Jesus Christ's command to love everyone unconditionally. Jesus taught non-violence and prayer in the face of persecution. A heavy burden of responsibility lies upon those who undertake the use of weapons and who can wage war.

At the same time, the ethic of Jesus represents a worthy goal that is not yet realized here on earth where secular powers reign. Some early Christian documents seem to forbid participation in the army (cf. Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition* 17-19 and Canon 12 from the Council of Nicaea), while some early Christian writers outright rejected service in the Roman legions (cf. Tertullian's *De Corona Militis* and Lactantius' *Div. Inst.* 6.20.16). Tertullian emphasized clear separation from the pagan Roman society of his day in order to remain faithful to Christ's teaching in such works as *De spectaculis, De corona militis, De idololatria,* and *De paenitentia.* Tertullian taught that martyrdom was preferable to compromising the Faith.

On the other hand, Christians did serve in the Roman army beginning in the second century. The Theban Legion was a Christian legion in the Roman army martyred under Emperor Maximian at St. Maurice-en-Valais. A soldier, St. Maurice, was the leader of this legion. According to legend (chronicled by Krusch, de Montmélian, Besson, Dupraz, *et al.*), when the Christians refused to sacrifice to a pagan god, the entire legion (almost 6,000 men) was murdered. St. Maurice's feast day is on September 22.

Over the course of time, the Church has developed a just war theory. St. Augustine, one of the earliest writers on the topic, permitted war in the case of self-defense. St. Thomas Aquinas refined the guiding principles for a just war almost a thousand years later: war must be initiated on the authority of the sovereign (*auctoritas principis*); the cause must be just (*justa causa*); and those waging the war must have good and right intentions, meaning that the war will not bring about more harm than that perpetrated by the enemy (*recta intentio*). In addition to Aquinas' guidelines, the Spaniard Francisco de Vitoria (1483-1546) added that war must be waged by the proper means (*debito modo*), which finds special pertinence in contemporary warfare.







St. Thomas Aquinas refined the guiding principles for a just war almost a thousand years ago. "... those waging the war must have good and right intentions, ..."

## THE STATE

> Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. (Mt 22:21)

The Roman state demanded that its people participate in pagan cults, worship the emperor, serve in the legions, and give Rome undivided loyalty. Polytheism and emperor worship were certainly inconsistent with the Gospels. On the issue of absolute loyalty to the state, the Christians would not compromise in what would go against their commitments to Christ. The Romans found commitment to Christianity somewhat incompatible with loyalty to the state, though they had experienced a similar situation with the Jews. The Christians did not fulfill the laws against the teachings of the Church; nevertheless, they obeyed all the just laws issued by the Romans.

## MONEY MATTERS

> Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common…There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need. (Acts 4: 32; 34)

As early as apostolic times, there was a clear imperative to tend to the material needs of the whole Christian community. The early Church engaged in education, medical care, and the distribution of alms to the poor. She expected her members to engage in honest commerce, and not to practice usury, which was explicitly condemned by Church councils in the fourth century.

## SEXUAL ETHICS: ABORTION AND CONTRACEPTION

The Church Fathers and early Christian thinkers universally rejected the practices of abortion and infanticide, which were both prevalent in Roman society. They also rejected the use of contraception. Such writers and thinkers included the author of the *Didache*, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, St. Ambrose, St. John Chrysostom, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine.

Abortion and infanticide violently reject the dignity of the human person and violate the fifth commandment: "You shall not kill" (Ex 20:13). The Church has always held this to be the case. Jesus never spoke directly about either of these topics, but Jewish law and Jesus' teaching concerning the sacredness of human life and the love of neighbor led the early Church to embrace this teaching. Christ "gives [his Apostles and their successors] a share in his own mission. From him they receive the power to act in his person" (CCC 935).

The Church Fathers taught that procreation within Matrimony is good and blessed, and that it is one of the intrinsic purposes of sexual intercourse. Artificial prevention of this possibility denigrates both the act and the subjects of the act. Even ancient Greek philosophy saw contraception as an unnatural violation since it destroys the possibility of one of the natural ends of sexual relations.



Abortion and infanticide violently reject the dignity of the human person.





## PURE STRENGTH: WOMEN IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Women in the early Church faced persecution not only for their faith but also for their purity, and many showed heroic bravery in defending both with their lives. They understood the spiritual value of holy purity, and they were willing to give their lives rather than face defilement. Their unflinching heroism and both inner and outer beauty fueled innumerable conversions throughout the persecuted Church.

One such woman was St. Seraphia. She was born to Christian parents in Antioch early in the second century. Her family later fled to Italy to escape persecution. Seraphia led a holy life and consecrated her virginity to Christ. When her parents died, though, many men tried to pressure her into marriage. Young Seraphia chose instead to give her possessions to the poor and sell herself into slavery rather than to submit. She became the slave of a wealthy Roman widow named Sabina, and over time, Seraphia's Christian example convinced Sabina to convert to Christianity. Seraphia was eventually condemned to death for being a Christian; she was to be burned alive, but when the flames did not burn her, the prefect ordered her head cut off. Sabina buried Seraphia in her family's tomb, and later she too was martyred for the Faith.

Another example is St. Cecilia, who lived in the late second century. According to legend, she was the beautiful daughter of a noble Roman family and she too offered her virginity to God, praying always that he help her to remain pure, but her family forced her to marry a rich pagan young man named Valerian. On their wedding night, she told him in secret that there was an angel who guarded her body's purity. When he asked to see it, she responded that first he must be purified through Baptism. He was baptized, and upon returning, he saw St. Cecilia in prayer accompanied by an angel. The angel held two crowns, one of lilies and one of roses; he crowned them and asked them to keep the crowns undefiled, then rewarded Valerian's faith by offering him one favor. Valerian asked that his brother Tiburtius be converted. When Tiburtius visited them, he was overwhelmed by the smell of flowers that he could not see. St. Cecilia and Valerian told him about Christ, and Tiburtius too was baptized. The two brothers dedicated themselves to burying martyred Christians until they were captured and killed. St. Cecilia gathered their bodies and buried them, but later she too was arrested and condemned to be suffocated in a heated bath. When she was miraculously unharmed, a soldier was sent in to behead her. Three times he tried to do so but could not, and fled. St. Cecilia survived for three days before dying from her wounds.

The many women martyrs of the early Church portray well the role that women played in fortifying the early Church as examples of purity, bravery, and heroic fidelity, an example that is no less relevant today.



This sculpture of St. Cecilia makes us all eternal witnesses to her faith and martyrdom. It was commissioned by Cardinal Sfondrato, who had opened her tomb in 1599. Tradition holds that this incredible figure represents the position in which St. Cecilia's body was found. On her neck can be seen the three marks of the axe blows that ended her life in the name of Christ.



St. Monica with her son, St. Augustine. As a young man, Augustine was an intellectual and a professor of rhetoric in Milan. He regarded Christianity as a simple faith for good, uneducated people such as his beloved mother Monica. He was called by God and compelled to read St. Paul's *Epistles*. He soon became one of the most influential theological philosophers and writers in Church history. He was considered to be sympathetic to women, especially mothers. One of his most famous sayings is, "Love the sinner, hate the sin!"

## WOMEN

While the role of women in early Christianity is a topic of much debate, several points are clear. First, the Roman and Greek cultures regarded women as inferior to men in all areas: physically, mentally, and spiritually. Second, Christianity, by its teachings of equality and charity, greatly improved the position of women, both individually and as a group in society. As with the issue of slavery, Christianity could not effect an immediate or radical alteration of the general position on the rights of women. It did, however, change the perception of women by recognizing and honoring women's spiritual equality and importance. Indeed, after Jesus Christ, the most revered and honored person is a woman, the Queen of All Saints, the Blessed Virgin Mary who was the only human person so privileged and honored by God as to be born into the world free from the stain of original sin. It is through a woman that the Savior of the human race entered the world.

Many women converted to Christianity, and they played an important role in the early Church's evangelization and, as will be seen in later chapters, in the conversion of the European continent. Women spread the Gospel by ordinary and sometimes extraordinary means, through their roles as wives, mothers, and workers. Mothers, such as St. Helena (mother of Constantine the Great) and St. Monica (mother of St. Augustine), played vital roles in the conversions of some of the most influential figures in the history of the Church. Just as women found an equal position in the Christian community, they suffered equally severe persecutions in the first centuries after Christ. St. Perpetua, St. Felicity, and St. Agnes are just a few of the renowned female martyrs, of whom more will be told in the following chapter.

## FAMILY LIFE

Christianity raised the status of the family to a "domestic church." It was in and through the family that the ideal of Christian charity found its roots, and it was through the family that the dignity of every person was recognized. Love and service became the hallmark of the Christian family. There is no doubt that Christianity's expectations regarding the family at times clashed with the pagan family structure, which could be brutal to women and children. Christianity imbued an ethic of charity into all human societal relationships, with the family as the model.





## CHURCH FATHERS ON CONTRACEPTION

Because the immorality of contraception is such a hotly debated issue, it may seem surprising that this moral question was just as relevant in the times of the Church fathers. The truth is, most major forms of contraception were around in Roman times and the Church fathers were able to see with amazing clarity the moral implications and social ramifications of this practice. St. Epiphanius (ca. 315-403) criticized the Gnostics saying: "They exercise genital acts, yet prevent the conceiving of children. Not in order to produce offspring, but to satisfy lust, are they eager for corruption" (St. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 26.5.2 [GCS 25: 281]). Later, St. Jerome wrote:

> Others drink for sterility and commit murder on the human not yet sown. Some when they sense that they have conceived by sin, consider the poisons for abortion, and frequently die themselves along with it, and go to hell guilty of three crimes: murdering themselves, committing adultery against Christ, and murder against their unborn child. (St. Jerome, *Epistle* 22.13: PL 22.401)

Perhaps the most complete treatment on the matter is St. John Chrysostom's letter to the Romans in the fourth century:

> Why do you sow where the field is eager to destroy the fruit? Where there are medicines of sterility? Where there is murder before birth? You do not even let a harlot remain a harlot, but you make her a murderess as well. Do you see that from drunkenness comes fornication, from fornication adultery, from adultery murder? Indeed, it is something worse than murder and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation. What then? Do you condemn the gift of God, and fight with His laws? What is a curse, do you seek as though it were a blessing? Do you make the anteroom of birth the anteroom of slaughter? Do you teach the woman who is given to you for the procreation of offspring to perpetrate killing? That she may always be beautiful and lovable to her lovers, and that she may rake in more money, she does not refuse to do this, heaping fire on your head; and even if the crime is hers, you are the cause. Hence also arise idolatries. To look pretty many of these women use incantations, libations, philtres, potions, and innumerable other things. Yet after such turpitude, after murder, after idolatry, the matter still seems indifferent to many men—even to many men having wives. In this indifference of the married men there is greater evil filth; for then poisons are prepared, not against the womb of a prostitute, but against your injured wife. Against her are these innumerable tricks, invocations of demons, incantations of the dead, daily wars, ceaseless battles, and unremitting contentions. (St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 24 on the Epistle to the Romans*: PG 60: 626-27)

The issues of the modern day were not only relevant, but also gravely important for the early Christians. The Church Fathers argued against contraceptives for the very same reasons the Church continues to condemn them today.



A mosaic of St. John Chrysostom in the magnificent Byzantine church Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey.

PART II

# Important Writings of the Early Christian Period

## "THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS"

"The Apostolic Fathers" is a term given to a number of the earliest Christian writers, some of whom have been mentioned. These men came immediately after the Apostles, and some had direct links to the Apostles or to the communities established by them. They wrote about religious and moral themes, mainly through epistles addressed to individuals or small communities, rather than to the whole Church. Although they do not, for the most part, contain any systematic doctrinal exposition, these writings do record some of the most beautiful and passionate accounts of Christian doctrine and spirituality ever written. These saintly writers of the early Church are recognized by the Church as special witnesses of Faith.

The Apostolic Fathers, of whom more will be told in the following chapter, include among others, St. Clement of Rome, St. Ignatius of Antioch, Herman, St. Polycarp of Smyrna, and St. Papias, as well as the unknown authors of the *Epistle of Barnabas* and the *Epistle to Diogentus*.

## APOLOGISTS

**Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you. (1 Pt 3:15)**

Apologetics (from the Greek *apologia*, meaning "defense") is a branch of theology that purports to defend and explain the Christian religion. The history of apologetics is as old as the history of the Church and can be divided into four historical periods, each with its particular struggle. The first, which concerns this section, dates from the dawn of Christianity to the collapse of the Roman Empire in A.D. 476. The three great opponents facing Christianity at this time were Judaism, Gnostic heresies, and the various pagan religions throughout the Roman Empire.

Though the title "apologist" refers to anyone who writes an apologetic work, there was a group of early Church Fathers collectively known as Apologists. Writing mainly during the second and third centuries, these men composed some of the greatest Christian literature. The Apologists include St. Aristides, St. Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras, St. Theophilus, Minucius Felix, and Tertullian. Due in significant part to their work, Christianity had begun to gain more converts from among the educated and elite classes. Most of the writers were not trained theologians, but rather writers with an audience consisting of the public and the emperor with his immediate subordinates.

As previously mentioned, early Christianity found itself attacked by both the Jewish and pagan traditions. For the majority of the Jews at this time, the burgeoning Christian religion, which claimed its roots in the ancient and holy tradition of Israel, denigrated and desecrated Judaism, the Law, and the God of Abraham. In claiming fulfillment of the Mosaic Law, Christianity rejected the need for circumcision and other practices. Christ, the poor, common, humble teacher who was brutally executed beside two thieves, was far from the concept of a messiah so long expected by the Jews. The apologetic writings to the Jews focused on these issues. St. Justin Martyr's "Dialogue with Trypho" is perhaps the most important of these writings. The following excerpt, words spoken by Trypho, a Jew, summarize Judaism's critique of the early Christians:







Christ, the poor, common, humble teacher who was brutally executed beside two thieves, was far from the concept of a messiah so long expected by the Jews.

**But this is what we are most at a loss about: that you, professing to be pious, and supposing yourselves better than others, are not in any particular separated from them, and do not alter your mode of living from the nations, in that you observe no festivals or sabbaths, and do not have the rite of circumcision; and further, resting your hopes on a man that was crucified, you yet expect to obtain some good thing from God, while you do not obey His commandments. (*Dialogue with Trypho, X*)**

St. Justin's response includes a defense of the Christian teaching about Christ and his laws as the fulfillment of the Jewish Law and the prophets. The apology also incorporates a condemnation of the Jewish failure to understand and accept Christ as the messiah, the Son of God who came to redeem all sinners and fulfill the Mosaic Law.

The most important aim of apologetic work at this time was to address the pagan culture of the Roman Empire. Roman culture—from its literature and philosophy to its commercial and agricultural activities, from the political sphere to mundane, everyday habits—was imbued with

paganism. Pomp, power, and glory of the Empire and its gods dominated the popular mind, and Christianity did not at all fit into this framework. The Christians worshiped in secret, rejected the gods of the land, and refused to follow imperial mandates concerning required sacrifices and venerations. Christians were met first with suspicion and superstition, which soon degenerated into fear and mistrust. The *Agape* and the celebration of the Eucharist soon were rumored to be orgies and obscure cannibalistic rites, and the Christians became known as enemies of the state. Thus, there was a great need for apologetic writings that explained the practices and beliefs of Christianity to the Roman pagan culture, as well as writings that made a case for the benign and even benevolent presence of Christians in the Empire. Particular attention was given to how Christianity forms exemplary citizens, and how it was a bulwark of the state rather than a cancerous tumor of disloyalty. Even as these writings addressed those issues, they also made clear and persuasive arguments concerning both the spiritual dearth of paganism and the promise of eternal life and happiness in Christ.

## THE *DIDACHE*

The *Didache* (Greek meaning "teaching"), variously known as *The Doctrine of the Twelve Apostles* and *The Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations*, is a short exposition concerning Christian morals, doctrine, and customs that was most likely composed in the first century. Its sixteen chapters cover Christian moral life, Baptism, fasting, prayer, the Eucharist, and the developing Church hierarchy.

The author, exact date, and location are unknown, but many of the early Church Fathers, such as St. Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, and St. Athanasius, used this text as a reference, and some even sought its admittance to the Canon of Scripture. Lost to scholars for centuries, it was finally rediscovered in 1873 by Philotheos Bryennios, a Greek Orthodox bishop.

## TERTULLIAN

Tertullian (ca. A.D. 160 - ca. 225) was born in Carthage around A.D. 160. He was the son of a Roman centurion and received a sound education through his studies of Roman law. He eventually wrote numerous works, mostly apologetic, in both Latin and Greek (though the Greek works have been lost). He converted from Roman paganism to Christianity sometime in the middle of his life, and from that point on, Tertullian worked to demonstrate with compelling argumentation and rhetoric that the Christians posed no threat to the Roman Empire, but rather were a great asset to it. His writings were highly polemical and brilliantly witty—he did not take any pains to avoid vexing his Roman audience in his defense of the Faith. Tertullian's versatility in explaining and defending the Catholic Faith won for him the title "Father of Latin Theology."

At the beginning of the third century, Tertullian joined the heretical Montanist sect and definitively broke from the Church a few years later. Although his writing then turned against certain doctrines of the Church, he was never a consistent Montanist. The sect supported a rigorous form of Christianity that refused forgiveness for certain "irremissible" sins, especially those of a sexual nature. This particular sect also believed in periodic overwhelming outpourings of the Holy Spirit through Montanist prophets and prophetesses. Tertullian, picking and choosing which tenets of Montanism he thought important, eventually formed his own small following before he died.







Folio 201 from Tertullian's *Apologeticum*



The Eucharistic Prayer found in *The Apostolic Tradition* became the basis for the second Eucharistic Prayer in the 1970 Roman Missal, which was published as part of the intended reforms for the Second Vatican Council, 1962-1965.

## ST. HIPPOLYTUS AND *THE APOSTOLIC TRADITION*

St. Hippolytus (ca. A.D. 170 - ca. 236) was an important writer and Father of the Church of the late second and early third centuries. Even though he was probably the most important theologian in the Roman Church during the third century, his importance was forgotten in the West for some time, perhaps because of his extensive use of Greek.

Hippolytus wrote and spoke against many heresies, but he himself, perhaps because of his vigorous opposition to certain Christological heresies like Modalism, soon began promoting his own extreme position on the nature of the relationship between the Father and Son. He quarreled with Pope St. Zephyrinus (A.D. 198-217), and when Pope St. Callistus I (A.D. 217-222) was elected, St. Hippolytus broke from the Church, and his small group of followers elected him antipope. He persisted in this schism until the persecution under Emperor Maximin (A.D. 235-238), when he and Pope St. Pontian (A.D. 230-235) were exiled together in Sardinia, most likely to a grueling life in the mines. Before dying a martyr's death, St. Hippolytus was reconciled with Pope St. Pontian and the Church.

Though most of Hippolytus' voluminous corpus has been lost, his two most important works, *The Refutation of all Heresies* and *The Apostolic Tradition*, have survived, in part. The latter work describes the passing down of the Faith of the Apostles from generation to generation and provides insight into the rites of ordination, Baptism, and the Eucharist during the third century. The Eucharistic Prayer found in *The Apostolic Tradition* became the basis for the second Eucharistic Prayer in the 1970 Roman Missal, which was published as part of the intended reforms of the Second Vatican Council.





# PART III
# Martyrdom as the Greatest Testimony to Christianity

**Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. (Mt 10:16)**

From as early as the first century, Christians, in the face of both Jewish and Roman opposition, found that they had to be prepared to die for Christ. Those who did actually lose their lives quickly became the most venerated of all saints. An entire theology developed around the martyrs that recognized their importance in the history of the Church.

The vast majority of martyrs were average, everyday people who naturally worried about the pain and suffering that they would endure; this worry was often mitigated by the solidarity of fellow Christians. Before being martyred the early Christians would exchange the kiss of peace, and were often described as dying with a tremendous bearing of peace and joy.

The word "martyr" comes from the Greek word *martyros*, meaning "witness." A martyr bears witness to Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In the early Church, as today, the actions and words of the martyrs strengthened and edified other Christians. Even in the last moments of their lives, in which the crowds often took sadistic pleasure, martyrs often led the assembled crowds along the path of conversion by giving the supreme witness of loving fidelity to Christ. The serenity, joy, and faithfulness with which the martyrs accepted their deaths deeply affected some of the people, such as the magistrates and the executioners, who witnessed their deaths.



Christians understood martyrdom as an honor and a privilege since it was a direct participation in the sufferings of Christ. The victims were sustained by Christ in their dreadful suffering and they saw martyrdom as the surest means to sanctity and entrance into Heaven. The entire Christian community viewed martyrdom as a grace and a gift, though Christians were not supposed to seek out martyrdom because of the obligation to practice and preserve one's life. Through martyrdom the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity would reach unparalleled dimensions. The next chapter will explore many of the early persecutions and their causes, as well as the stories of some of the most renowned martyrs.

## CONCLUSION

The early Christians, by their tremendous faith in Jesus and imitation of his life, transformed the Roman world and its values. The decadent Roman culture, with its basis in the law of power, was supplanted by a culture based on Christ's new commandment: "Love one another; even as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34). Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church grew as an institution and a community of believers united as the Mystical Body of Christ. Ordinary people from all walks of life carried out a peaceful revolution that spread from person to person through the simple living witness to the richness of Christ's kingdom, even in the face of terrible persecution and horrific death.



*The Martyrdom of St. Catherine* depicts the awesome power of divine intervention which smashed the torture wheel St. Catherine was about to endure. She was ultimately beheaded. St. Catherine was a fourth century scholar who converted many pagans and was one of the voices heard by St. Joan of Arc along with St. Barbara and St. Margaret of Antioch. She is listed as one of the fourteen most helpful saints. One of several legends about her is that angels carried her body to Mt. Sinai, where Emperor Justinian established Saint Catherine's Monastery in A.D. 548-565, which has survived to this day.





## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

**Tertullian, *To His Wife* II, 8, 6-8**

Where can I find words to describe adequately the happiness of that marriage which the church cements, which the oblation confirms and the blessing seals? The angels proclaim it and the heavenly father ratifies it....What kind of yoke is that of two Christians, united in one hope, one desire, one discipline and one service? Both are children of the same father, servants of the same master; nothing separates them, either in spirit or in the flesh; on the contrary, they are truly two in one flesh. Where the flesh is one, so is the spirit. Together they pray, together they prostrate themselves, together they observe the fasts; they teach each other, exhort each other, encourage each other. They are both equal in the church of God, equal at the banquet of God, equal in trials, persecution, consolations....

***The Didache*, Ch. 1**
**The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations**

The Two Ways and the First Commandment. There are two ways, one of life and one of death, but a great difference between the two ways. The way of life, then, is this: First, you shall love God who made you; second, love your neighbor as yourself, and do not do to another what you would not want done to you. And of these sayings the teaching is this: Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for those who persecute you. For what reward is there for loving those who love you? Do not the Gentiles do the same? But love those who hate you, and you shall not have an enemy.

Abstain from fleshly and worldly lusts.
If someone strikes your right cheek, turn to him the other also, and you shall be perfect. If someone impresses you for one mile, go with him two. If someone takes your cloak, give him also your coat. If someone takes from you what is yours, ask it not back, for indeed you are not able. Give to every one who asks you, and ask it not back; for the Father wills that to all should be given of our own blessings (free gifts).

Happy is he who gives according to the commandment, for he is guiltless. Woe to him who receives; for if one receives who has need, he is guiltless; but he who receives not having need shall pay the penalty, why he received and for what. And coming into confinement, he shall be examined concerning the things which he has done, and he shall not escape from there until he pays back the last penny. And also concerning this, it has been said, Let your alms sweat in your hands, until you know to whom you should give.

**John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, p. 129-30**

The Church itself is first and foremost a "movement," a mission. It is the mission that begins in God the Father and that, through the Son in the Holy Spirit, continually reaches humanity and shapes it in a new way.
Yes, Christianity is a great action of God. The action of the word becomes the action of the sacraments. What else are the sacraments (all of them!), if not the action of Christ in the Holy Spirit?

When the Church baptizes, it is Christ who baptizes; when the Church absolves, it is Christ who absolves; when the Church celebrates the Eucharist, it is Christ who celebrates it: "This is my body."

## VOCABULARY

**AGAPE**
Literally "love." The *Agape* was an early Christian religious meal that was at first closely related to the celebration of the Eucharist and often preceded this celebration.

**APOCRYPHAL**
A work of literature with scriptural or quasi-scriptural pretensions which is not genuine, canonical, or inspired by God.

**APOLOGIST**
Generally, one who writes a work in order to defend and explain the Christian religion. The title also refers specifically to a group of Church Fathers who wrote during the second and third centuries in the Roman Empire.

**APOSTOLIC FATHER**
Saintly writers of the early Church whom the Church recognizes as her special witnesses of Faith.

**APOSTOLIC TRADITION**
Refers to the passing of the Faith of the Apostles from generation to generation. Hippolytus' work of the same name illustrated the principle by preserving the rites of ordination, Baptism, and the Eucharist used during the third century. The Eucharistic Prayer found in *The Apostolic Tradition* became the basis for the second Eucharistic Prayer in the 1970 Roman Missal, which was published as part of the intended reforms for the Second Vatican Council.

**BAPTISM**
This first Sacrament of Initiation, instituted by Jesus, unites the believer to Christ. In this sacrament, a believer is forgiven of original and personal sin, and thus begins a new life in Christ and the Holy Spirit, and is incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ (cf. CCC 977, 1213).

**CATECHUMENS**
Literally "the instructed." Those adults seeking admission to the Church after having met over a long period of time for instruction before being baptized.

**THE *DIDACHE***
From the Greek meaning "teaching," a first century treatise concerning Christian morals, practices, and ministry. Its sixteen chapters cover Baptism, fasting, prayers, the Eucharist, and the developing Church hierarchy among the early Christians.

**EUCHARIST**
Literally meaning "thanksgiving," was, and is, the central act of Christian worship. It consists in consuming the Sacrament of Holy Communion, the Body and Blood of Christ.

**ICHTHYS**
An acrostic for the Greek phrase *Iesous Christos Theou Yios Soter*, which is a declaration of the central tenet of the Christian Faith meaning "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior." The acrostic itself spells the word "fish" in Greek.

**INFANT BAPTISM**
The practice of baptizing infants that became more common during the third century and became universal by the early Medieval period. It remained the common practice for all western Christians until the Reformation in the sixteenth century.

**MARTYRDOM**
Being killed for one's Faith. Christians understand martyrdom as an honor and a privilege since it is a direct participation in the sufferings of Christ.

**MONOTHEISM**
The belief there is only one true God.

**PAPACY**
The Vicar of Christ as instituted by Jesus who holds the responsibility and supreme authority for guiding the Church.

**PRESBYTER**
From the Greek word *presbyteros* for "priest," which is a contraction of the Greek. In the early Church, the presbyters were the church elders.

**SIGN OF THE CROSS**
The act of tracing the cross down from the forehead with the finger to the breast and then from left to right across the breast. By the early third century, the practice of making the Sign of the Cross was deeply rooted in the Christian world.

**SYNOD**
An assembly of ecclesiastics gathered together under Church authority to discuss and decide on matters pertaining to doctrine, liturgy, or discipline.





## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the advantages of infant Baptism?
2. Where were the earliest Masses celebrated?
3. Which two days of the week did the earliest Christians keep holy as days of fasting and penance? (Hint: It was not Sunday.)
4. Why did Christians come to observe Sunday as the holiest day of the week?
5. What does the term "Vicar of Christ" mean?
6. What is the value of the episcopacy?
7. From what word does the word "priest" derive?
8. How did Christianity, as a monotheistic religion, cause tension in Roman society?
9. When was the canon of the New Testament declared in the West?
10. Who is the authentic interpreter of Sacred Scripture?
11. What did Popes Sts. Linus and Anacletus have in common?
12. What was the Theban Legion?
13. What is the just war theory?
14. How was money held in the early Christian community?
15. What did the early Christians think about abortion and infanticide?
16. What kind of quality did Christianity initially introduce into the gender relations of the Greco-Roman world?
17. What is so special about the historical position of the "Apostolic Fathers"?
18. What was the goal of the Apologists?
19. How has St. Hippolytus influenced the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council?
20. The word "martyr" means "witness." To whom do martyrs bear witness?

## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. Protestants accept the principle of *sola scriptura*, Scripture alone, as the primary basis for authority. The Catholic position is that the Church alone interprets the Scriptures. Discuss why the Catholic position makes more sense historically.

2. Slavery has existed in almost all places and times throughout history. There have been many Christian defenders of slavery, claiming God supported slavery using such Scriptural passages as Exodus 21:1-11, Leviticus 25:44-55, and Ephesians 6:5-9. After reading these passages, how would you argue against a Christian who supports slavery?

3. Jesus taught, "turn the other cheek," and yet many Christian thinkers developed theories for the just waging of war. Are these two ideas compatible? With both Jesus' words and the writings of St. Augustine in mind, describe Christian justice, both on a personal and political scale.

## FROM THE CATECHISM

**1231** Where infant Baptism has become the form in which this sacrament is usually celebrated, it has become a single act encapsulating the preparatory stages of Christian initiation in a very abridged way. By its very nature infant Baptism requires a *post-baptismal catechumenate*. Not only is there a need for instruction after Baptism, but also for the necessary flowering of baptismal grace in personal growth. The *Catechism* has its proper place here.

**1233** Today in all the rites, Latin and Eastern, the Christian initiation of adults begins with their entry into the catechumenate and reaches its culmination in a single celebration of the three sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist (cf. *AG* 14; CIC, cann. 851; 865; 866). In the Eastern rites the Christian initiation of infants also begins with Baptism followed immediately by Confirmation and the Eucharist, while in the Roman rite it is followed by years of catechesis before being completed later by Confirmation and the Eucharist, the summit of their Christian initiation (cf. CIC, cann. 851, 2°; 868).

**1324** The Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life" (*LG* 11). "The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch" (*PO* 5).

**1327** In brief, the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: "Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking" (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 4, 18, 5: PG 7/1, 1028).

**2270** Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person—among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life (cf. CDF, *Donum vitæ* I, 1).

> Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you (Jer 1:5; cf. Job 10:8-12; Ps 22:10-11).
>
> My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth (Ps 139:15).

**2271** Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law:

> You shall not kill the embryo by abortion and shall not cause the newborn to perish (*Didache* 2, 2: SCh 248, 148; cf. *Ep. Barnabae* 19, 5: PG 2, 777; *Ad Diognetum* 5, 6: PG 2, 1173; Tertullian, *Apol.* 9: PL 1, 319-320).
>
> God, the Lord of life, has entrusted to men the noble mission of safeguarding life, and men must carry it out in a manner worthy of themselves. Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes (*GS* 51 § 3).

**2334** "In creating men 'male and female,' God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity" (*FC* 22; cf. *GS* 49 § 2). "Man is a person, man and woman equally so, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God" (*MD* 6).



CHAPTER 3

# Persecution Of "The Way"

*The complex and often troubling relationship between the Church and the state is one that began in the Roman Empire, and still remains with us today.*



CHAPTER 3

# Persecution Of "The Way"

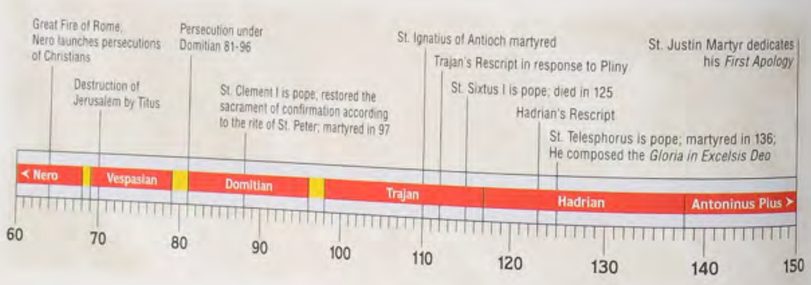
We Christians... being instructed in the Faith, know that suffering can be transformed— if we offer it to God—into an instrument of salvation, and into a sacred way which helps us get to heaven. For a Christian, pain is no reason for gloominess but for joy: the joy of knowing that on the Cross of Christ all suffering has a redemptive value.

— John Paul II, Address to the Sick, Cordoba Cathedral, April 8, 1987

In the times of the early Church, the Romans carried fear and mistrust of Christianity to an extreme. In the first three centuries, rulers and mobs alike delighted in finding new and creative ways to torture and kill the followers of Christ in public spectacles. Christians who refused to renounce their Faith were martyred in many different places, including the Circus of Hadrian, the Circus Flaminius, and Nero's Circus. Because some of the circuses in Rome had been the site of so many martyrs' deaths, they were held as sacred by the early Church. When these circuses were dismantled, their material was used in the construction of churches. The Coliseum, also known as Flavian's amphitheater, which is the last and greatest of these arenas still standing, has become associated with the many cruelties and injustices endured by the early martyrs of the Faith, even though it is unclear how many were martyred within its walls.

In the earliest years, the Christians referred to the Faith as "the Way" (cf. Acts 9: 2 and 19: 9). Living the Way required a life of integrity according to the commandments and counsels of the Gospels and a strong commitment to become a disciple of Christ. Although living the Way is always difficult and requires much sacrifice, the early Christians especially suffered in the pursuit of its ideals.

Many thousands of early Christians lost their lives during three hundred years of persecutions in the Roman Empire. There are numerous accounts of martyrs from this period, many of whom were priests and bishops of the early Church. Scores of lay men and women from all walks of life comprised the majority of the martyrs. When reading the accounts of the martyrs, it is hard not to





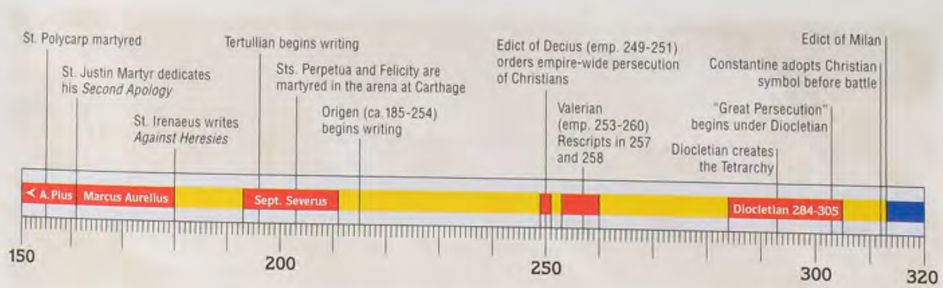





*Last Prayers of the Christian Martyrs* by Jean-Léon Gérôme

be shaken by the brutality with which they were killed. It is important, however, to understand the reasons behind their persecution and to focus upon the courage shown by so many otherwise ordinary men and women. These martyrs lived with their families, had normal occupations in life, and were simply devoted to Christ. Despite the tremendous pressure put on them by the emperors to renounce their Faith, the early Christians remained faithful to the teachings of Jesus.

Christianity is a religion born in the suffering and death of its founder, Jesus Christ. In like manner, many of his first followers also suffered and died for their belief in him. The Acts of the Apostles describe a number of localized attacks on the Apostles and disciples in Palestine. But the greatest persecutions began under the watchful eye of Rome. Beginning with limited persecution under the Emperor Nero in A.D. 64, the intensity of the persecutions in Rome increased until they reached their climax under the Emperor Diocletian in A.D. 303. For the first three centuries of the Church's existence, Christians were a minority and were considered criminals in the eyes of the state. In short, becoming a Christian meant putting one's life at high risk. In spite of harsh persecution, however, the Church continued to spread the teaching of Jesus at any cost.



PART I

# The First Roman Persecutions

The earliest Christians had suffered persecution at the hands of the Jews, but the Roman Empire for a time did not trouble itself with what appeared to be merely a small group of schismatic Jews. As the early Church grew and distanced itself from the Jewish tradition, the Roman Empire began to view these early Christians as enemies of the empire who, through their disregard for some imperial institutions and traditions, were seen as a breeding ground for corruption and discord within the empire. Soon, periodic imperial persecutions, many of which were incredibly brutal, became a normal part of the life of an early Christian.

## THE FIRST PERSECUTION UNDER EMPEROR NERO (A.D. 64)

The Emperor Nero (A.D. 37-68, emperor A.D. 54-68) was a figure of immense cruelty, psychological sickness, and paranoia. Even the Roman historical tradition portrays him as a tyrant. The stepson of Emperor Claudius and the nephew of Emperor Caligula (infamous for his depravity and psychosis), Nero was the last of the Augustinian line. His rule began in A.D. 54 at the age of seventeen, and for a time, things ran smoothly. The noble Stoic Seneca was an advisor to Nero and had been his tutor when Nero was young. By the year A.D. 59, however, Nero's evil character had clearly emerged. He murdered his mother, and then renounced and slandered his own wife, Octavia, before having her beheaded. In A.D. 65, Nero forced Seneca to commit suicide.



Emperor Nero with his noble advisor, Seneca.

Early on the night of July 19, A.D. 64, fire broke out near the Circus Maximus and engulfed the city of Rome for nine straight days. The city was divided into fourteen administrative districts. Of these, four districts were reduced to rubble, six were heavily damaged, and only four escaped unharmed. The absence of a modern fire department made it virtually impossible to stop urban fires once they had begun. Rome was a dense, compact city of people and buildings, which only increased the damage caused by the fire.

The middle and lower classes were packed into tenements, known as *insulæ*. These buildings had wooden walls, which were filled with a wide variety of rubble for insulation, hence their name. Even prior to the great fire, many died in these poorly constructed buildings due to structural collapses. The homes of the wealthy and members of the upper class, such as the senators and the *equites* ("horsemen/knights"), were filled with combustible wood furnishings and many textiles. Lush gardens filled with trees, arbors, and wooden seating helped feed the fire among these residences. The fire raged throughout the city, and consumed the lives and the property of members of every Roman class.







The fire raged throughout the city, and consumed the lives and the property of members of every Roman class.

Immediately, the rumor began to circulate that Nero had started the fire. The reason behind this rumor was Nero's announced intention to seize private property in the center of Rome in order to build an expansive new palace, later called the *Domus Aurea* (House of Gold). The rumor told of Nero taking delight in watching Rome burn while he read his own poetry. The famous saying, "Nero fiddled while Rome burned," originates from this rumor.

Nero provided emergency shelter to victims, and quickly sought to remove suspicion from himself by falsely accusing the Christians of starting the fire. He tortured several Christians, elicited from them forced confessions, and then ordered large numbers of other Christians to be arrested. The Roman historian Tacitus writes that when it became clear to everyone that Nero's accusations against the Christians were wildly implausible, he charged them with "hating the human race" (*Annals*, XV, 44).

Although Nero's first persecution of Christians was limited to the city of Rome proper, its egregious brutality remains unquestioned. St. Clement of Rome, the third pope, relates that Christians were first taken across the Tiber to an arena on Vatican hill called Nero's Circus, where St. Peter's Basilica now stands. They were then sewn into animal skins and distributed throughout the gardens. Next Nero released hungry mastiff dogs into the gardens, which hunted down and ate the trapped Christians. Other Christians were martyred in an assortment of awful ways in the Circus Maximus. Finally, in perhaps the greatest example of the emperor's cruelty, Nero coated hundreds of live Christians with pitch and resin and then set them on fire to provide light for him as he passed through his gardens and along the city streets at night.

## MAD CALIGULA

Despite the grandeur of their office and domain, many of Rome's emperors were insatiable egomaniacs with no regard for human life. This was often seasoned with authentic, clinical insanity. An infamously insane emperor was Caligula, the nephew of Emperor Tiberius, who rose to the throne at the age of twenty-five.



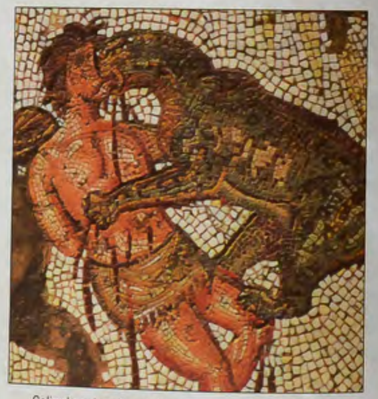
After Tiberius became ill and fell into a coma in A.D. 37, Caligula succeeded him. Some say Tiberius actually emerged from the coma, and Caligula ordered the emperor smothered to death. This sort of violence was commonplace within the imperial family. When Caligula was still in his teens, his mother, along with all of his brothers, were arrested and butchered. Caligula himself committed incest with three of his sisters. When one of them conceived a child, the emperor was so eager to see how their god-like child would turn out that he had the baby prematurely cut out of her womb.

Caligula considered himself a god, but reveled in perversity and depravity. He abused men, women, children, and babies indiscriminately. He would force himself upon married women in public. Once he attended a wedding and ran off with the bride. He even opened a brothel in a wing of the imperial palace.

Caligula particularly enjoyed watching torture and executions. He condemned people to death for no reason and then made sure their deaths were as long and painful as possible. Once when he was watching executions in the arena and the criminals had all been killed, he ordered people from the audience be thrown to the beasts.

Caligula's cruelty was matched only by his deranged imagination. On one occasion, the emperor had a pontoon bridge built across the bay of Naples, and he charged back and forth on it for two days straight for no apparent reason. Afterwards, he had his army celebrate what he called "his victory over the sea" by collecting shells on the beach. Caligula especially loved his horse, Incitatus, and he would send out dinner invitations to people from Incitatus and make the horse the guest of honor. He even wanted to appoint the horse consul of Rome.

Caligula's eccentricities made him unstable and unpopular, to say the least. After thwarting several attempts on his life, he was finally stabbed to death in A.D. 41 by two of his guards who then stormed the palace and brutally exterminated the rest of his family.



Caligula enjoyed watching torture and executions.







Nero's principle of *Christiani non sint!*

Nero was the first to declare Christianity unlawful, and sought to punish all believers with death under his principle *Christiani non sint* (Let the Christians be exterminated).

According to the Roman historian Tacitus, the Church historian Eusebius, and other early Christian writers, Nero's persecution of the early Christians, which included the martyrdom of the first pope, St. Peter himself, helped set the Roman Empire along a path of increased, though irregular, persecution in the coming decades.

Because of his petulance, however, Nero had alienated the established aristocracy. His murder of his mother and wife horrified the elite, and his suspected burning of the city along with his seizure of land essentially sealed his fate. In A.D. 66, Judea revolted against his rule, and by A.D. 68 there were further revolts in Gaul, Africa, and Spain. The army turned against him in A.D. 68 and Nero committed suicide. Before doing so he is said to have lamented, "What an artist dies with me!" (Suetonius, *Nero*, 48-9).

## PERSECUTION UNDER EMPEROR DOMITIAN, "LORD AND GOD"

Domitian (A.D. 51-96) served as emperor beginning in A.D. 81. An effective and hard-working ruler, Domitian took particular interest in directing military campaigns and securing the patronage of the army. He had good cause to curry the favor of the army, for his relationship with the Roman Senate was less than ideal. He is reported to have opened his letters to the Senate with the words, "Our lord god orders that this be done." He also habitually referred to himself in the third person as *Dominus et Deus* ("Lord and God"). As the years passed, Domitian became pathologically suspicious of conspirators and once quipped, "No one believes in a conspiracy against an emperor until it has succeeded."

Domitian was particularly intent on stopping the spread of Christianity from the lower classes to the aristocracy, which included members of his own family. When the Emperor murdered his cousin, an office-holding Christian, he set in motion a conspiracy against him (his wife Domitia possibly being one of the conspirators) that culminated in his assassination.

Despite the fact that growing numbers of patricians began to convert to Christianity, all believers remained subject to heavy impositions placed upon them by the empire. Domitian levied a special tax only on Christians and Jews to pay for a new temple dedicated to Jupiter, and Pope St. Clement I speaks of "misfortunes and catastrophes" in the Roman community because of persecution.

## THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE (*Vox populi*)

As Christianity expanded, the greatest threat to Christians often came not from the Roman emperors themselves but from the empire's local populations. The people's misunderstanding of Christian doctrine and practice often evolved into violent hatred and fear. Sometimes Christians were denounced as atheists for refusing to believe in the Roman gods. In addition to such misunderstandings of actual Christian worship, the people falsely accused Christians of engaging in truly outrageous practices, such as sacrificing babies and drinking their blood, and casting evil spells. Hence, the Roman historian Tacitus could write that the Christians held to "pernicious superstition," even though it is evident that such practices were largely a fig-ment of the people's imagination. (cf. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1997, p. 1574)

The people also blamed Christians for causing natural calamities such as floods, earthquakes, and famines. Tertullian wrote: "If the Tiber floods the city or the Nile does not inundate the fields, if there is an eclipse, or earthquake, or famine, or plague, men cry, 'Christians to the lions'" (*Apologeticum*, 40).

Angry crowds often looted and destroyed churches, Christian cemeteries, and the homes of those they believed to be Christians. Christians served as scapegoats for the Roman community, and were collectively tortured and killed to provide an outlet for the people's anger.



Death by wild beasts in the Amphitheater is shown in this mosaic from a villa near Leptis Magna, North Africa. The crowd would roar *"Salvum lotum"* (well washed) at the blood-bath.





# PART II

# "The Five Good Emperors"

## (A.D. 96-180)

The five emperors that followed Domitian have been called "The Five Good Emperors" because of their skill in leading the Empire. They are Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius. These emperors generally enjoyed the support of the army, senate, and the people, and were certainly much more stable than either Caligula or Nero. They worked to secure the existing borders of the Roman Empire and even expanded them.

While these five emperors were good for the Empire's interests, they were not necessarily supportive of Christianity. Although the first four of these emperors were more moderate than Nero, they by no means halted the persecution of Christians.

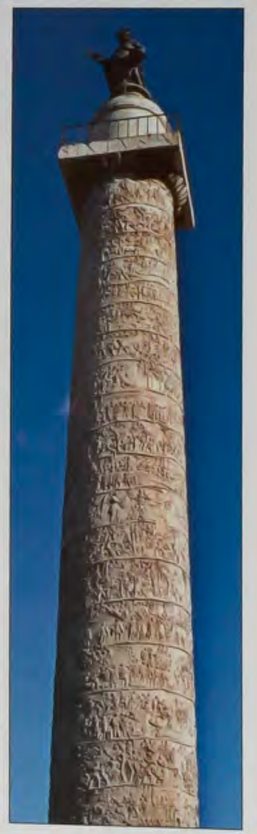
## TRAJAN'S RESCRIPT (A.D. 112)

Trajan (ca. A.D. 53-117) began to rule in A.D. 98. His nearly twenty year reign is considered to be one of the most excellent in the empire's history, both because of his humane treatment of abandoned children and the poor, and for his military conquests in Dacia (modern Romania) and Parthia (much of modern Iraq). Trajan, who took for himself the title Optimus (Best), was an able military leader who actively sought military glory for himself and Rome. The Roman Senate used the ritual acclamation, "May you be even luckier than Augustus and even better than Trajan."

The Dacians proved worthy opponents of Rome, but they were defeated nonetheless. The great treasure of the Dacian ruler Decebalus financed many of Trajan's public works. With some of the booty, Trajan's Column (A.D. 113) was constructed to commemorate his great victory and serve as his mausoleum. In defeating the Parthians, Trajan extended the Empire to the Persian Gulf, but this gain in territory was short-lived. Trajan's health failed and he died while leading his army against a Jewish revolt in A.D. 117.

Trajan's Eastern expedition was the last major conquest of the Roman Empire. After A.D. 117 the borders of the Empire remained stable and secure for one hundred fifty years. Only a campaign led by Emperor Septimus Severus from A.D. 195-198 brought a small, northern portion of Mesopotamia into Roman hands.

With respect to Christianity, Trajan took what he deemed to be an enlightened and balanced approach. A letter from one of his governors, Pliny the Younger (ca. A.D. 61 - ca. 112), asked for Trajan's advice con-



Trajan's Column is made from a series of 18 colossal Luna marble drums, each weighing about 40 tons, and is exactly 100 Roman feet (30 meters) high. The frieze winds around the shaft 23 times and contains over 2,500 figures. Inside the column, a spiral staircase of 185 stairs provides access to a viewing platform at the top. Originally, a gilded bronze statue of Trajan crowned the top of the column. In 1588, Pope Sixtus V replaced it with a statue of St. Peter.

cerning the persecution and punishment of Christians. According to both Nero and Domitian, Christians were to be summarily executed, and Pliny had executed Christians out of a sense of responsibility. Pliny made it clear to Trajan that Christians by this time existed across all strata of society, and lived in rural as well as urban areas. Pliny posed four questions to Trajan: whether anonymous denunciations of Christians were to be pursued; whether the age of Christians should be taken into consideration in determining their punishment; whether Christians who denied their faith publicly should be allowed to live; and whether the profession of Christianity itself, apart from the crimes associated with the practice of the Faith, was sufficient to warrant execution.

Trajan's response to Pliny offered a nuanced, though definite, policy for handling Christianity. Trajan decreed that if Christians renounced their faith and offered sacrifice to the Roman gods, they would be allowed to live in spite of their past Christian life. Furthermore, Trajan declared that anonymous denunciations were not to be pursued. Nevertheless, anyone denounced openly who admitted his status as a Christian was to suffer death. Trajan's decision thus confirmed that the profession of Christianity was itself a crime, but clarified under what conditions it could be prosecuted.

Trajan's Rescript still left Christians with an awful choice: death or apostasy. While Trajan did seek to remedy the gross abuses of the legal system that were often used in the persecution of Christians, in the end, he upheld the principle first attributed to Nero: *Christiani non sint*.

## ST. IGNATIUS, BISHOP OF ANTIOCH

St. Ignatius (ca. A.D. 50-ca. 107) was likely the third Bishop of Antioch, after Sts. Peter and Evodius, and he is thought to have listened at the feet of St. John the Evangelist. Because of his close association with Sts. Peter and John, St. Ignatius is an Apostolic Father, i.e., one of those saintly figures who had direct contact with the Apostles, and consequently his writings are considered especially authoritative. In fact, St. Ignatius' letters are considered the most important documents which link the Twelve Apostles with the early Church.



Little is known of St. Ignatius' life up to his arrest during the reign of Trajan for being a renowned Christian bishop. Under a guard of ten soldiers, he traveled to Rome to meet a martyr's death. Along the way he was happily received by the Christian communities of the day, and it was during this time that St. Ignatius carried on a correspondence with the various churches of Asia Minor and the bishop of Smyrna, St. Polycarp.

In these letters, known as the Seven Epistles, St. Ignatius makes clear his ardent desire for martyrdom, going so far as to ask the Christians not to intervene with the pagan officials to save his life. Instead, he wrote, "I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found Christ's pure bread" (*Epistle to the Romans*, IV.1).

St. Ignatius denounced all heresy and schism, and he singled out the episcopacy in the Church as a bulwark against false belief and





## THE COLISEUM



The Coliseum's "Door of Death" and the skeleton of cages and cells which were located under the stadium floor.

The Coliseum of Rome remains both a tribute to the brilliant engineering of the ancient Romans and a witness of their gruesome entertainments and disregard for human life. The construction began around A.D. 72 under Emperor Vespasian and was completed by the Emperor Domitian. The Coliseum was originally known as the Flavian Amphitheater.

In its heyday, the building boasted a number of technological wonders. It featured a cooling system made from a large canopy suspended by ropes over the audience that provided shade and created a breeze. Underneath the stadium floor, there were cells to house wild beasts, condemned criminals, and trained gladiators. These "entertainers" could enter the arena through dozens of elevators or trap doors.

Although the standard forms of entertainment were executions, fights between various animals, between men and animals, and, of course, the famous gladiatorial combats fascinated the Romans. During the emperor Titus' hundred-day festival celebrating the Coliseum's inauguration, contests pitted bears, buffalo, elephants, rhinoceri, lions and other wild animals against each other and against armed or unarmed men.

It is possible that some Christians were condemned *ad bestias* in the Coliseum, but it is more likely that they were killed in the circus Flaminius, the Gaianum, the Circus of Hadrian, the *Amphitheatrum Castrense*, or the Stadium of Domitian.

Gladiatorial combats were finally outlawed in 404, largely due to the influence of Christianity, and the Coliseum quickly became a site of pilgrimage. Indeed, it remains standing today, preserved as a testament to those great sacrifices made by Christians during the dark days of persecution.

as a means of unity with Christ. Without bishops, St. Ignatius asserted, neither Matrimony nor celebration of the Eucharist were possible. Indeed, St. Ignatius counseled the early Christians to remain "aloof" from the heretics who "confess not the Eucharist to be the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father, of His goodness, raised up again" (*Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, VII). The Eucharist, St. Ignatius wrote, is "the bread that is the flesh of Jesus Christ, this flesh which has suffered for our sins." St. Ignatius elaborated on the Incarnation, Passion, death, and Resurrection of Christ.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, St. Ignatius was also the first person to use the term "Catholic Church," which he again linked to the episcopacy. Finally, St. Ignatius supported the primacy of the papacy, and advocated deference to the Bishop of Rome.

Upon his arrival in Rome, St. Ignatius was martyred in the Coliseum. St. Ignatius was led out in front of a great crowd and was fed to lions. His feast day is celebrated on October 17.

## HADRIAN'S RESCRIPT (A.D. 123/124)

The Emperor Hadrian succeeded Trajan in A.D. 117 and served until his death in A.D. 138. When Hadrian's biological father died, Trajan, who was his second cousin, adopted him. Hadrian later married a great-niece of Trajan. He traveled extensively and strengthened the frontiers of the empire, building many defensive lines such as Hadrian's Wall in England.




Hadrian was an ardent advocate of Hellenism. He was interested in science, art, and philosophy and enjoyed debating the sophists. It was said that Favorinus, a philosopher, yielded the debate to Hadrian saying, "Who could contradict the Lord of Thirty Legions?"

In religion, Hadrian promoted the cult of the gods and designed a special temple built for Venus and Roma in the Roman Forum. Hadrian banned circumcision among the Jews, and planned to turn Jerusalem into a Roman colony called *Aelia Capitolina*. The Jews responded by revolting under their leader Bar Kokhba in A.D. 132. After this revolt was suppressed in A.D. 135, the Jews were forbidden to enter Jerusalem.

In A.D. 123/124 Hadrian answered the request of Serenus Granianus, Proconsul of the Province of Asia, who wanted the emperor's advice on how to handle the often violent crowds intent on murdering Christians and inquired whether they should be prosecuted for simply being Christian.

In his official response, or rescript, Hadrian emphasized the primacy of the rule of law over mob action. Furthermore, he ordered that Christians could only be prosecuted for actual violations of the common law, not just for professing Christian belief. If an accuser made false accusations, then the accuser himself was to be punished. Accordingly, under Hadrian, Christians enjoyed a relative amount of toleration, although there was no official codification of such toleration.



The Hadrian Arch in Athens was built by Hadrian in A.D. 131 as part of a wall separating the old and new cities. On the side facing the Acropolis is the inscription, "This is Athens the former city of Theseus." The side facing the new city reads, "This is the city of Hadrian and not of Theseus."





## ST. POLYCARP, BISHOP OF SMYRNA

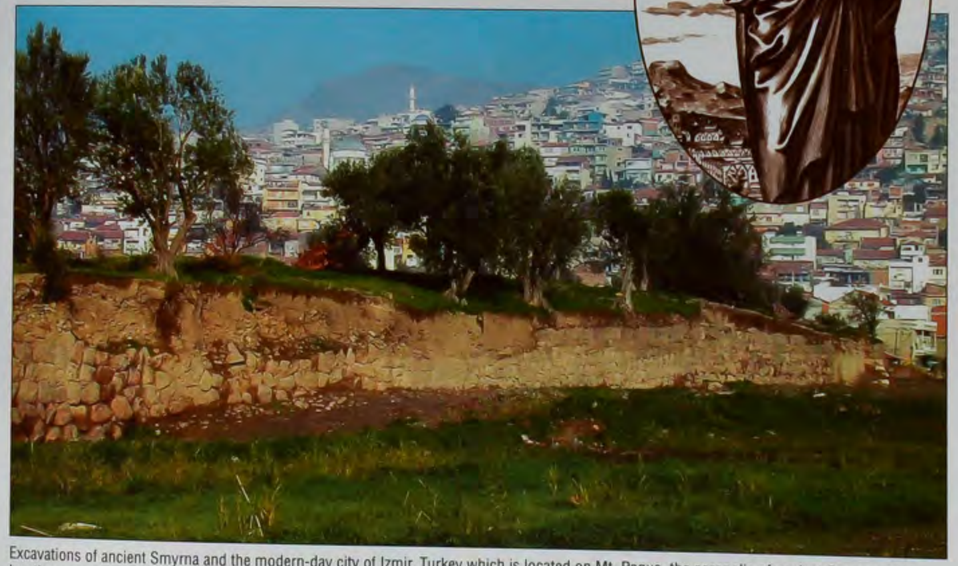
**Lord, I bless you for judging me worthy on this day, this hour, so that in the company of the martyrs I may share the cup of Christ. (St. Polycarp, as quoted in *Martyrium Polycarpi*)**

St. Polycarp (ca. A.D. 69 - ca. 155) suffered martyrdom during the long and peaceful reign of Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius (A.D. 86-161, emperor A.D. 138-161). St. Polycarp spent much of his life defending orthodox Catholic belief against various heresies. He is an important link to the Apostles and a great number of Christian writers who lived toward the end of the second century. Along with St. Ignatius and Pope St. Clement I, St. Polycarp is one of the most important Apostolic Fathers. He was a friend and correspondent of St. Ignatius. Only one of St. Ignatius' letters to St. Polycarp has survived.

After traveling to Rome to discuss the date of Easter with Pope St. Anacletus, St. Polycarp returned to Smyrna (modern Izmir, Turkey). Shortly thereafter he was arrested during a pagan festival and charged with being a Christian. The letter "*Martyrium Polycarpi*" (The Martyrdom of Polycarp) was written by someone of the church in Smyrna to the church in Philomelium, and relates the details of St. Polycarp's martyrdom.

The governor wished to save St. Polycarp, and asked him to curse Christ in public so that his life could be spared. St. Polycarp refused to renounce Christ and was sentenced to be burned alive. The executioners, impressed by St. Polycarp's courage, honored his request to be tied to the stake, rather than fastened with spikes. Once the fire began, St. Polycarp remained unharmed from the flames. Finally, an executioner killed St. Polycarp with a sword. The Church celebrates his feast day on February 23.





Excavations of ancient Smyrna and the modern-day city of Izmir, Turkey which is located on Mt. Pagus, the acropolis of ancient Smyrna. This location was selected by Alexander the Great in 334 B.C. Smyrna, whose name is derived from "myrrh," a small tree which grows abundantly in the area, is by far the oldest city on the Aegean coast. The earliest levels date to 3000 B.C. After coming under the rule of Rome, Smyrna never wavered in its loyalty to the Empire. It became a center for the cult of emperor worship.

## EMPEROR MARCUS AURELIUS, THE PHILOSOPHER-KING



A page from Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*

Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 121-180) was a favorite adopted son of Emperor Hadrian. Upon the death of Emperor Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius ascended the throne in A.D. 161. Marcus Aurelius was an ardent Stoic, and philosophy was the central focus of his life. When he died, Marcus Aurelius' book *Meditations* was found on his person. Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* is a thoughtful and moving work that reflects the profound discipline of a Stoic's life. He exemplified Stoicism's ideal of living free from passion, unmoved by joy or grief, and submitting without complaint to unavoidable fate.

Marcus Aurelius adhered to Trajan's Rescript, outlawing Christianity and persecuting the Christians. He reinstituted the practice of anonymous denouncements, and did not hesitate to kill Christians when it served the empire's interests. Many of the persecutions undertaken during Marcus Aurelius' reign, however, originated not directly from the emperor, but from angry provincial mobs and the governors who were meant to hold them in check. Allowing mobs to kill Christians was an effective way of diffusing their anger, which otherwise might turn against the empire itself. Marcus Aurelius' attitude towards any new religion was generally disdainful. If the new sect excited the people, the emperor was willing to respond with strong punishments.



Emperor Marcus Aurelius

Marcus Aurelius was the first emperor who had to deal aggressively with the *Volkerwanderung* ("people wanderings"), the Germanic invasions on the Empire's northern borders. Emperor Marcus Aurelius was successful in his campaigns, but ultimately these migrations and attacks would overcome the empire in later centuries.

## ST. JUSTIN MARTYR

St. Justin Martyr (ca. A.D. 100 - ca. 165) was one of the most famous martyrs to die under the persecution of Marcus Aurelius. Born of pagan parents in Shechem in Samaria in Palestine, Justin studied philosophy from his early youth, and converted to Christianity in his thirtieth year. Tradition has it that Justin was walking along the sea one day and met a mysterious old man whom he had never seen before. The old man began talking to Justin and convinced him that true knowledge of God could not come only from philosophy, but must be supplemented by reading the revealed word of the prophets. After his conversion, Justin continued studying philosophy and became an excellent apologist for the Faith.

Justin worked tirelessly during the Roman persecutions to defend the Church against those pagans who falsely accused her. Justin respected philosophy, but saw that its truths were mere shadows compared to Christ's teachings.





In his *First Apology*, which he addressed to Emperor Antoninus Pius and his two adopted sons, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, Justin provides important descriptions of the rituals for the celebration of Baptism and the Eucharist. The *Second Apology* was addressed to the Roman Senate just after Marcus Aurelius became emperor in A.D. 161. Shortly thereafter Justin and six others were denounced as Christians. When they refused to sacrifice to the gods, they were beheaded. The official account of their martyrdom is worth quoting in full:

> The Prefect Rusticus says: Approach and sacrifice, all of you, to the gods. Justin says: No one in his right mind gives up piety for impiety. The Prefect Rusticus says: If you do not obey, you will be tortured without mercy. Justin replies: That is our desire, to be tortured for Our Lord, Jesus Christ, and so to be saved, for that will give us salvation and firm confidence at the more terrible universal tribunal of Our Lord and Saviour. And all the martyrs said: Do as you wish; for we are Christians, and we do not sacrifice to idols. The Prefect Rusticus read the sentence: Those who do not wish to sacrifice to the gods and to obey the emperor will be scourged and beheaded according to the laws. The holy martyrs glorifying God betook themselves to the customary place, where they were beheaded and consummated their martyrdom confessing their Savior. (*The Martyrdom of the Holy Martyrs Justin, Chariton, Charites, Pæon, and Liberianus, Who Suffered at Rome*, IV-V)

St. Justin Martyr's feast day is celebrated on June 1.

### *AD METALLA*

During the Roman persecutions, one of the most dreadful sentences a Christian prisoner could receive was *"Ad metalla"* (to the metal mines). Being sentenced to work in a mine meant facing unsanitary and extremely dangerous conditions, inadequate and contaminated food, brutal guards, lack of air, and overcrowded living quarters.

A sentence to the mines meant eventual death. Free men and women, slaves, and criminals were mixed in with one another and led to the mines in long processions after having been branded on the face with red-hot irons. They were chained in twos and were never able to stand erect in the tight confines of the mining shafts. Eventually, prisoners died of exhaustion, prison labor, or the conditions of their captivity.



A stairway down into the bowels of the Rosia Montana Gold Mine in Romania's Apuseni mountains. The mountain is honeycombed with Roman mine-galleries from the first and second centuries.The town was then known as Alburnus Major. Trajan's conquest of Dacia (Romania) brought to Rome the great treasure from these mines.

PART III

# Later Persecutions and the Edict of Milan

The reign of Emperor Septimus Severus (emperor A.D. 193-211) was characterized by warfare in Britain and Mesopotamia. By this time the military played an ever-increasing role in the selection of the emperor and the elimination of his enemies. Severus issued a decree in A.D. 202 declaring that circumcision and Baptism were to be forbidden. This threatened not only Christians, but Jews as well. Another round of persecutions followed, which were concentrated mainly in Syria and Africa.



## STS. PERPETUA AND FELICITY

**Stand firm in faith, love one another and do not be tempted to do anything wrong because of our sufferings. (St. Perpetua to her brother during her death at the games, quoted in *Account of the Martyrdom of the Holy Martyrs of Carthage*, ch. 18.)**

Two victims of the harsh persecutions of Septimus Severus were Sts. Perpetua and Felicity. St. Perpetua was a noblewoman who sought instruction in Christianity for herself and her household, and St. Felicity was a slave in that household. When these two women and their fellow catechumens were discovered by Roman officials, both women were jailed and forced to raise their children in prison. St. Perpetua's family, especially her father, a governor in Carthage, begged her to reject Christianity for her own sake and for that of her family, but she refused.

While in prison, St. Felicity gave birth, and as she cried out because of her labor pains, the guards mocked her and told her that she would soon undergo something much more painful. In a great spirit of faith, St. Felicity responded to her tormentors that at the present moment she was bearing her discomfort on her own, but Christ would bear her suffering during her execution.

Above: Her elaborate headdress and gown reveal St. Perpetua as a wealthy noblewoman in this mosaic from Ravenna, Italy.







Emperor Septimus Severus

In A.D. 203, Sts. Perpetua and Felicity were martyred together with the catechumens in the main arena at Carthage. Sts. Perpetua and Felicity suffered a particularly gruesome martyrdom. St. Perpetua's entire household was first scourged, and then attacked by various wild animals including leopards, bears, and wild boars. Finally, some of the Christians, including St. Perpetua, had to be stabbed to death because they were not yet dead. Both Sts. Perpetua and Felicity are honored in the Roman canon; their feast day is celebrated on March 7.

## ST. IRENAEUS, BISHOP OF LYONS

St. Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 130 - ca. 200) was a disciple of St. Polycarp, and is believed to have come from Smyrna. Although a native of Asia Minor, St. Irenaeus served as Bishop of Lyons, and is regarded as the preeminent figure of the early Church in Gaul. Irenaeus devoted much of his energy to combating heresies, especially Gnosticism. In his defense of orthodoxy, St. Irenaeus emphasized key elements of the Church: the episcopacy, Sacred Scripture, and Tradition. He spoke explicitly of the importance of recourse to the Church's tradition, even though Christianity was still very much in its infancy. He argued, "If the revelation of God through creation gives life to all who live upon the earth, much more does the manifestation of the Father through the Word give life to those who see God" (St. Irenaeus, *Adversus hæreses*, IV.20.7).

St. Irenaeus' writings are of special interest given the way they systematically describe the origin and history of each heresy before contrasting its false claims with Catholic teaching. St. Irenaeus' work is still necessary and helpful to scholars seeking an in-depth look at early theological disputes. The most famous of these works is the *Adversus haereses*, also known as the Refutation of Gnosticism.

St. Irenaeus subsequently became the Bishop of Lyons in 178, and held the office for approximately twenty-five years. According to tradition, St. Irenaeus was martyred during the reign of Emperor Septimus Severus. His feast day is celebrated on June 28.

## THE EDICT OF DECIUS (A.D. 250)

After the reign of Septimus Severus, Christians enjoyed relative peace for about fifty years. Emperor Alexander Severus (emperor A.D. 222-235) even permitted Christians to own property and build churches. However, in the second half of the third century the empire entered into a troubling political period. In a short span of just forty-six years (A.D. 238-284), there were eighteen legitimate emperors, and many others who sought illegitimate ascendance. Most of these emperors ruled for a brief time before meeting with a violent end.

Emperor Decius (emperor A.D. 249-251) reigned for only three years, but he inaugurated the first empire-wide persecution of Christians. Other emperors had limited their directives, horrible as they may have been, to the city of Rome or to specific provincial communities. Decius, however, who believed that the survival of the empire depended upon the restoration of the old pagan cults, sought to extirpate Christianity from the empire.

Decius assumed control of the Roman Empire at a precarious point in its history. The empire was threatened both by the army, which essentially controlled the emperor, and by external enemies, specifically Germanic hordes who constantly attacked along the eastern frontier. Faced with such

a bleak political situation, Decius sought to reinvigorate the empire's strength and unity through a return to the ancient religious practices of the state.

Since Christianity called for ultimate allegiance to Christ and not to the state, Decius saw this as incompatible with his plan. In his view, Christianity, which by that time was the religion of roughly one-third of the Roman Empire, was in part the cause of the divided empire.

Emperor Decius promulgated an edict of extermination against the Christians. Anyone suspected of being Christian had to present him or herself before the local magistrate and offer a simple sacrifice to prove he or she had given up the Faith. Those Christians who offered sacrifice to the pagan gods were known as *sacrificanti;* those who burned incense to the pagan gods were called *thurificati.* Certificates, purchased at a price from officials, stating that the bearer had already offered sacrifice to the gods were also available. Christians who purchased these certificates were called *libellatici.*

Decius ordered the arrest of all known Christians who failed to appear before the magistrate or who could not produce a certificate. Christians who refused to renounce their faith were sent into exile or put to death, and all of their property was confiscated.

The Church's loss was two-fold in these times: she lost those faithful Christians who were martyred during the persecutions, and she lost those unfaithful Christians who committed apostasy. Apostasy is the willful denunciation of the Faith in its entirety.

> Apostasy denotes a backsliding from God. This may happen in various ways according to the different kinds of union between man and God. For, in the first place, man is united to God by faith; secondly, by having his will duly submissive in obeying His commandments; thirdly, by certain special things pertaining to supererogation such as the religious life, the clerical state, or the opulence Holy Orders. Now if that which follows be removed, that which precedes, remains, but the converse does not hold. Accordingly a man may apostatize from God, by withdrawing from the religious life to which he was bound by profession, or from the Holy Order which he had received: and this is called "apostasy from religious life" or "Orders." A man may also apostatize from God, by rebelling in his mind against the Divine commandments: and though man may apostatize in both the above ways, he may still remain united to God by faith.
>
> But if he gives up the Faith, then he seems to turn away from God altogether: and consequently, apostasy simply and absolutely is that whereby a man withdraws from the Faith, and is called "apostasy of perfidy." On this way apostasy, simply so called, pertains to unbelief. (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* II-II, Q. xii a. 1)



## CERTIFICATE OF SACRIFICE TO THE OLD GODS

This certificate of sacrifice reads:

*"It has never been my practice to sacrifice to the gods; now in your presence, in accordance with the Command, I have sacrificed, poured libation, and tasted the offering.*

*"I beg you to certify my statement...*

*"I Aurelia Demos have presented this declaration. I Aurelius Ireneus (her husband) wrote for her as she is illiterate. I Aurelius Sabinus the commissioner saw you sacrificing."*







Emperor Decius

Thus, of the three types of apostasy mentioned, the third, "apostasy of perfidy," which is the general understanding of someone accused of apostasy, is the most grave, and it is a sin that incurs excommunication. Note, however, that the apostate and the heretic differ—the heretic denies one or more doctrines of the Faith; the apostate denies the Faith altogether.

The persecutions of Decius unfortunately resulted in many apostates, and the leaders of the Church at this time had difficult decisions to make regarding the status of apostates and their possible re-entry into the community of believers. The most rigorous factions of the Church denied that the *lapsi*—Christians who formally renounced their faith, offering sacrifices to pagan gods—could be readmitted. The popes decided that with long penances, the *lapsi* would be allowed to return. The controversy surrounding these *lapsi* gave rise to the Novatianist schism. The Roman presbyter Novatian led a "rigorist" faction, declaring that those who had renounced the Faith (the *lapsi*) could never be re-admitted into the Church.

Decius was afraid of the Christians because of their fidelity to Christ and his Church. He felt that the practice of Christianity would detract from allegiance to the state. This bias has reappeared in different forms throughout the history of the Church. It first appeared among the Romans, but has been used as a pretext for persecution and discrimination against Catholics in Elizabethan England, Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* in Germany in the nineteenth century, and in many places today.

## ORIGEN: THEOLOGIAN AND BIBLICAL EXEGETE

Origen (ca. A.D. 185-ca. 254) was the most prolific writer and important theologian and biblical exegete in the eastern part of the Empire. Origen was an Egyptian who spent much of his life working and teaching in Alexandria. His father was martyred during a persecution in A.D. 202, and Origen later became the head of the first Catechetical School in Alexandria. This institution combined instruction in Catholic doctrine with an investigation into the sciences and philosophy, and in some ways might be considered the first Catholic university.

Origen came into conflict with his bishop in Alexandria after he visited Palestine at the invitation of the bishops of Caesarea and Aelia. On his first visit to Palestine in A.D. 215, the two bishops there invited him to preach, breaking the ecclesiastical practice of allowing only priests and bishops to give the homily. During a second visit to Palestine in A.D. 230, again at the invitation of the bishops, Origen was ordained to the priesthood. Origen's bishop in Alexandria then stripped him of his

teaching position, as well as his faculties for the exercise of his priesthood, claiming that his ordination was not valid. Because of these actions, Origen moved permanently to Caesarea in A.D. 231, where he founded a new school, similar to the one in Alexandria.

During the persecution of the Emperor Decius, Origen was taken into custody in A.D. 250. For approximately two years, he was brutally tortured. Origen, however, held fast to his faith, inspiring many with his zeal. He was eventually released and lived for several more years, but his broken body quickly gave out.

It is estimated that Origen wrote between two and five thousand different tracts, nearly all of which are lost. However, one of his chief works, "*De principiis*," survives. In addition to his many scholarly writings, Origen is considered to have initiated the concept of the homily.

Origen always professed allegiance to the Church in his writings. Nevertheless, his writings on the Trinity in which he tended to subordinate the Son to the Father and his ideas on final salvation of the damned prompted Church officials to reject some of Origen's teachings. In spite of some of his erroneous ideas, he is rightly regarded as one of the greatest and most brilliant theologians of the early Church.



Pope St. Sixtus II ordains St. Lawrence

## POPE ST. SIXTUS II AND DEACON ST. LAWRENCE

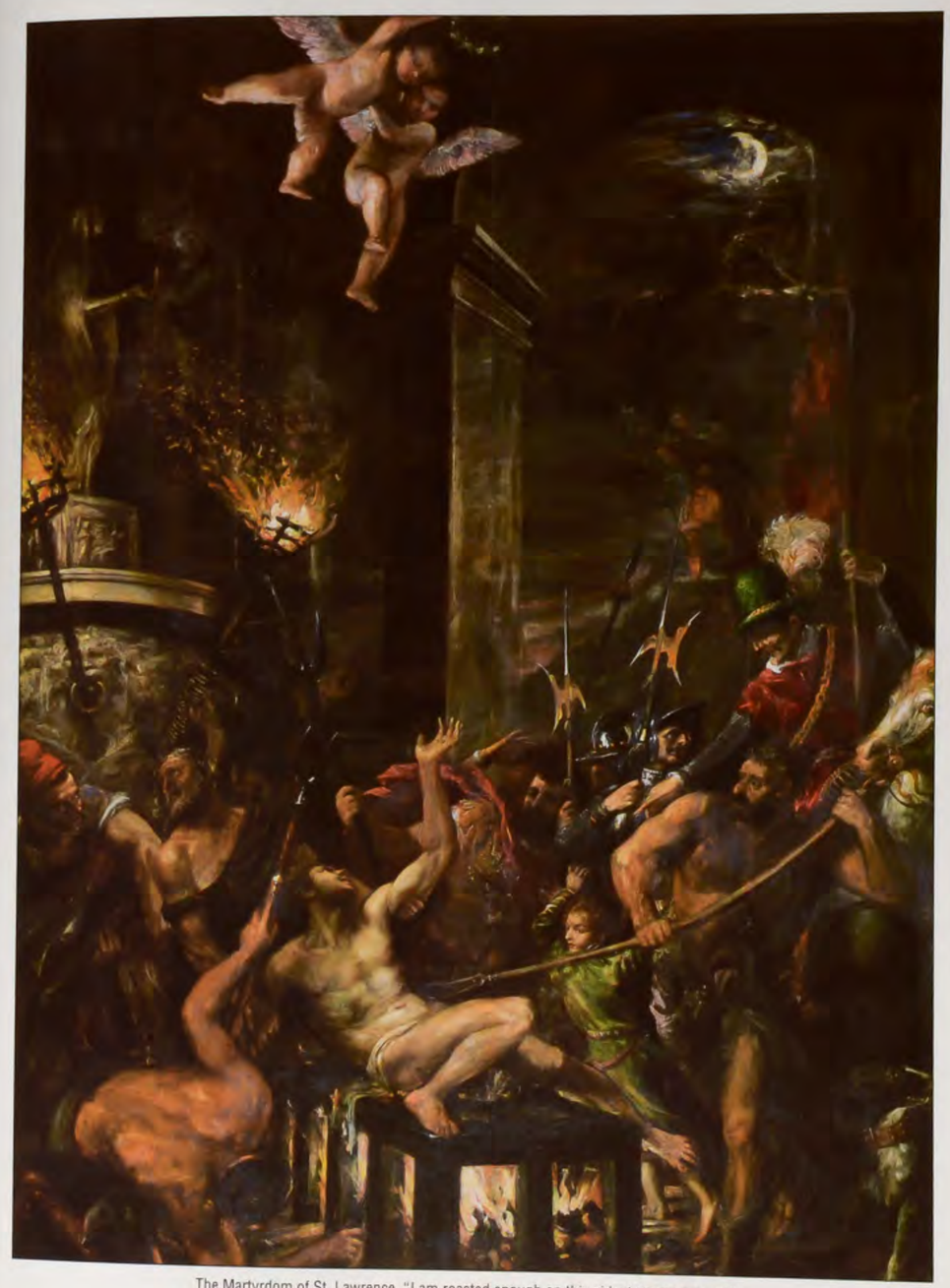
Emperor Valerian ruled from A.D. 253 to 260, and during this time issued two rescripts, one in A.D. 257 and one in A.D. 258. The rescript of A.D. 257 forbade Christians from meeting in public places and from celebrating the Eucharist in the catacombs. The rescript of A.D. 258, however, was harsher. Under this rescript, issued because of political pressure, bishops, priests, and deacons were immediately executed, and Christians of rank were removed from their offices and often sold into slavery.

Valerian's persecutions subsided toward the end of his reign, largely because the Gothic invasions and the rise of Persia demanded greater imperial attention. Eventually the Persian leader Sapor I captured Valerian and held him as a prisoner of war for five years. Humiliated and tortured, Valerian nonetheless showed courage before dying in captivity. Valerian was the first Roman emperor to be captured by a foreign enemy. After his death, the Persians stuffed Valerian's body and hung it inside a temple.

In the days of Valerian's second rescript, Pope St. Sixtus II was apprehended while celebrating Mass with seven deacons, one of whom was St. Lawrence. Pope St. Sixtus and six of the deacons







The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence. "I am roasted enough on this side; turn me around."

were beheaded on the spot, but Lawrence was spared for the time. The authorities demanded that he bring the Church's treasure to them, and sent him to get it. When he returned a short time later Lawrence brought with him a group of poor people—the Church's treasure. In response, the Roman authorities sentenced Lawrence to be roasted alive on a gridiron. Tradition holds that as he burned, Lawrence told the judge, "I am roasted enough on this side; turn me around."

## PERSECUTIONS UNDER DIOCLETIAN

Born in Dalmatia (modern-day Croatia), Diocletian rose through the ranks of the Roman army to serve with the emperor's guards during the Persian campaign. When Numerian was murdered in A.D. 284 the army made Diocletian the new emperor. Like his predecessors Decius and Valerian, Diocletian desired to unify the empire. He used his organizational prowess to this end, eventually crushing the Persian Empire and ending the crisis of the third century.

Diocletian spent much of his first ten years as emperor battling the barbarians on the German and Persian frontiers. This diversion initially inclined the early Church historian Eusebius to praise Diocletian's clemency toward Christians. But in A.D. 303, with the barbarians defeated, Diocletian turned his attention to the Church. On February 23 a new edict was issued at Nicomedia and The Great Persecution began. Christian Churches were destroyed; books were burned. The palace at Nicomedia was set ablaze prompting additional edicts. For the next ten years, until Constantine's defeat of Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge on A.D. October 28, 312, and the "Edict of Milan" in 313, the Christians throughout the Empire were imprisoned, tortured, forced to offer sacrifices to pagan gods, and martyerd according to the changing fortunes of the Imperial rulers.

## THE TETRARCHY (A.D. 293)

Due to the enormous size of the Roman Empire, Diocletian decided to divide it into four administrative districts, each with its own Caesar, or regional ruler. Diocletian himself ruled Thrace, Egypt and Asia Minor; Maximian ruled Italy and Africa; Constantius presided over Gaul, Spain, and Britain; and Galerius ruled along the Danube River. Diocletian himself retained full leadership over the entire empire, but found it expedient to grant his appointed Caesars considerable governing power within their separate spheres. Diocletian effectively split the empire in two; he and Galerius ruled the eastern half, and Maximian and Constantius governed the western half.

Not one of the Tetrarchs lived in Rome, causing this great imperial city to begin to lose its preeminent status as the capital of the empire. (Diocletian visited it only once during his reign.) Diocletian further weakened the senate by removing its effective political influence. He wanted to make the lines of succession clearer, and thus avoid needless conflict; and second, he hoped to fortify the borders of the empire, which in the past decades had been under aggressive foreign attack. Later,



Diocletian and Maximian, senior members of the Tetrarchy.







Diocletian's reforms resulted in some of the most heinous persecutions of Christians during the first centuries of the early Church.

divided the provinces into even smaller units called "dioceses" in an attempt to achieve a higher degree of administrative efficiency.

Military reforms increased the size of the Roman army, and Diocletian developed a set of defensive works along the empire's borders. The cost of the new administration and increasing the army placed a heavy burden on the treasury, but secured for the Roman people almost twenty years of peaceful prosperity.

During Diocletian's reign, his reforms helped spare the empire the crisis of succession that it had known all too well during the previous half-century. However, after Diocletian's abdication in A.D. 305, the tetrarchy failed to function effectively. The four positions of power competed with one another for absolute supremacy.

## FOUR EDICTS

Though he was superstitious, Diocletian was initially tolerant of Christianity, and even admired some of its adherents. Maximian and Galerius, on the other hand, were wary of the religion and pressed Diocletian to eradicate it for the good of the empire. At their request, Diocletian issued four edicts. These edicts resulted in the worst of all the persecutions the Christians suffered under the Romans. Diocletian's first edict commanded the destruction of churches and the burning of the Scriptures, as well as banning all Christian gatherings. Those who opposed this law faced execution or enslavement.

The succeeding edicts were applied only in the east by Galerius and Diocletian. The second edict sanctioned the imprisonment of the clergy. The third edict demanded pagan sacrifice from the clergy. Finally, the fourth edict demanded sacrifice from every Christian, not just the clergy. This last edict resulted in the deaths of many thousands of Christians who refused to offer pagan sacrifice. Constantine the Great later commented that if the Romans had slain as many barbarians as they had slaughtered Christians during the reign of Diocletian, there would be no barbarians left to threaten the safety of the Empire.

# DIOCLETIAN'S TETRARCHY ca. A.D. 295



## THE EMPIRE RULED BY FOUR

**Constantius** ruled the Prefecture of Gaul.

**Maximian** ruled the Prefecture of Italia.

**Galerius** ruled the Prefecture of Illyricum.

**Diocletian** ruled the Prefecture of the East and retained full leadership over the entire empire as "lord and god."



This gold coin, minted in Antioch in A.D. 293-295 shows the laureate head of Constantius I as Caesar. CONSTANTIVS NOB CAES (Constantine is Caesar for us)



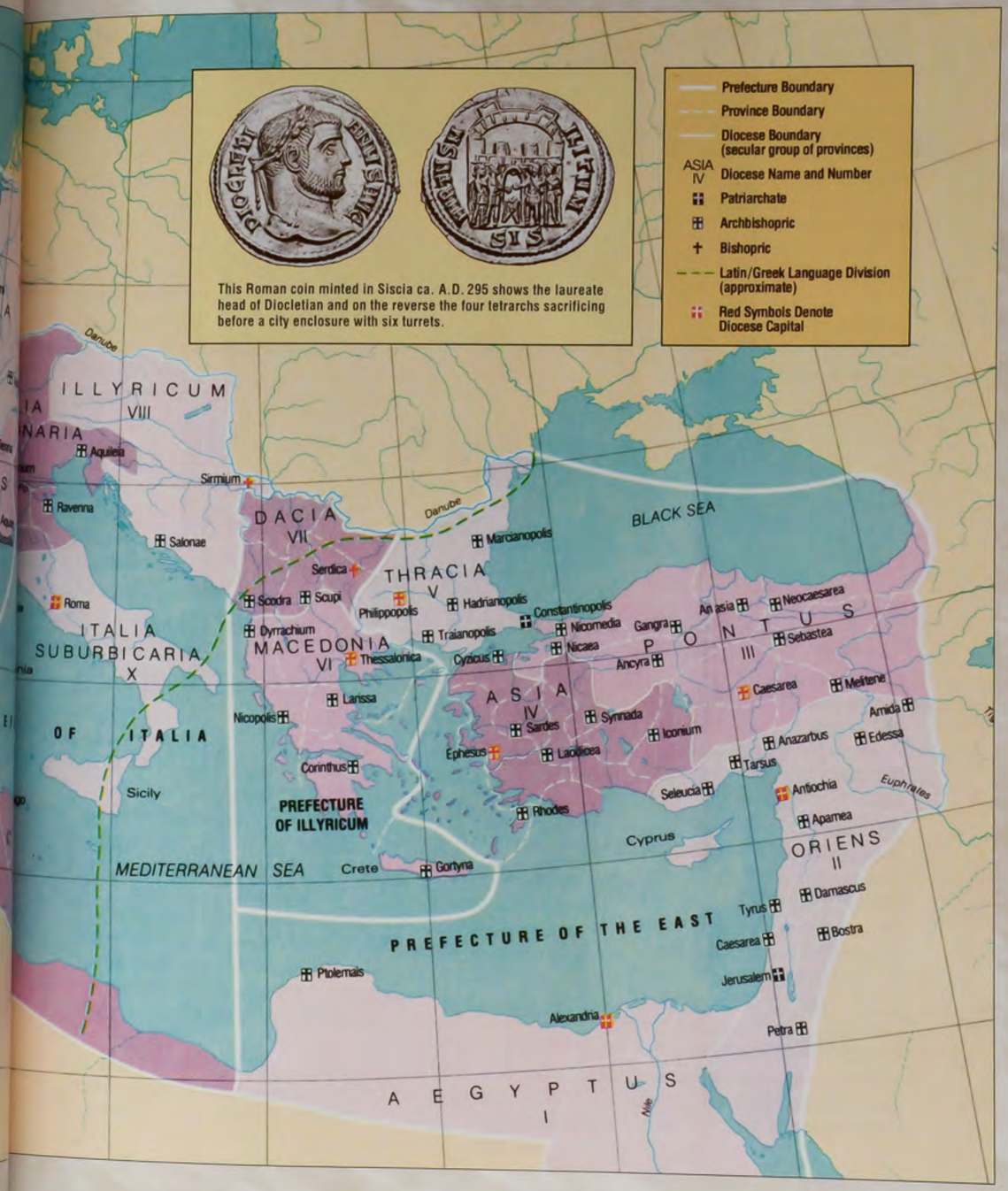







This Roman coin minted in Siscia ca. A.D. 295 shows the laureate head of Diocletian and on the reverse the four tetrarchs sacrificing before a city enclosure with six turrets.

Prefecture Boundary
Province Boundary
Diocese Boundary (secular group of provinces)
ASIA IV Diocese Name and Number
Patriarchate
Archbishopric
Bishopric
Latin/Greek Language Division (approximate)
Red Symbols Denote Diocese Capital





## ST. AGNES: A CHILD MARTYR FOR CHRIST

**A new kind of martyrdom! Too young to be punished, yet old enough for a martyr's crown. (St. Ambrose on the martyrdom of St. Agnes, *On Virgins*, I.8)**

St. Agnes is one of the most highly revered of the virgin martyrs. She is believed to have died during Diocletian's persecution sometime during the fourth century, possibly in A.D. 304 or A.D. 305, when she was only twelve or thirteen years old. St. Ambrose, Pope St. Damasus I, and Prudentius, an early Christian poet, all sing her praises, although it is difficult to pin down a single picture of her from their different accounts. Her story existed as an oral tradition before it was set down in writing.

This oral tradition states that St. Agnes was a beautiful young woman, and that many of the leading young men of Rome desired her hand in marriage. However, she decided at a young age to consecrate herself to Christ and to live as a virgin. Her purity so enraged the young men that they denounced her before the magistrate as a Christian.

When taken before the magistrate, St. Agnes refused to renounce her faith in and commitment to Christ. She confessed her faith even while being tortured by fire. Her courage so angered the judge that he sentenced her to forced prostitution at the public brothel. St. Agnes however remained firm in her loyalty to Christ, believing that her purity would be protected even at the brothel. As the story goes, the first young man who looked at her with eyes of lust was immediately struck blind. Amazed and scared, the crowd backed away from her.

The judge, hearing of this, sentenced St. Agnes to be beheaded. When the feast of St. Agnes is celebrated on January 21, the Church also remembers the many women who suffered similar violence during the persecutions under Diocletian.





## THE CHURCH TRIUMPHS

Due to his failing health, Diocletian abdicated on May 1, A.D. 305, and he convinced Maximian to step down as well. Galerius remained in power in the East, and Constantius took over control of the West. Constantius was succeeded by his son Constantine in A.D. 307.

Constantine was friendly with the Christians, although he was not one himself, but Galerius continued the persecution in the East until just before his death. In A.D. 311, however, Galerius was stricken with an eastern form of leprosy that left his body crippled and decrepit. He confessed and whimpered in utter terror that his sickness was the divine retribution of the Christian God. On April 30, A.D. 311, Galerius issued an edict admitting the failure of his policy with regard to the Christians. He then instituted the free exercise of the Christian religion as long as Christians obeyed the law and promised to pray for the emperor and the empire. Galerius' edict was also adopted in the West. Thus the last and greatest persecution begun under Diocletian gave way to a tentative peace.

Upon the death of Galerius, a complex struggle for power ensued. Maxentius, who was Maximian's son and who now controlled Italy, sought to defeat the army of Constantine and gain control of the Western empire. Constantine, who was well aware of Maxentius' intentions, decided to attack Rome. At the Milvian Bridge, just outside the city, the two armies met.



Before engaging in battle, Constantine claimed that he had looked above the sun and saw the symbol of the cross inscribed with the words *in hoc signo vinces* ("in this sign you will conquer"). After this vision, Constantine instructed his soldiers to put this sign on their shields. With crosses etched into Roman shields, Constantine's army met Maxentius in battle. Though Maxentius' forces were said to have been four times greater, Constantine won the Battle of Saxa Rubra, securing his rule over the West. Maxentius drowned near the Milvian Bridge.

After his victory against Maxentius, Constantine declared that the Christian God had favored him, and that he intended to stay in this God's good graces. He immediately restored the property of the Church, and began aiding in the construction of churches. In Rome the Arch of Constantine commemorated his victory, and his statue was placed in the city. In one hand the statue held the *Labarum*, the standard of the cross, with the inscription, "Through this saving sign have I freed your city from the tyrant's yoke."



Constantine sought unity in his empire, and he saw that Christianity was a religion likely to provide such unity.

## THE EDICT OF MILAN (A.D. 313)

Constantine met with the only other living caesar, Licinius, in Milan in A.D. 313. Together they issued the Edict of Milan. This edict restored all property taken from the Church by the empire, and it granted Christians the freedom to practice their religion. The Edict of Milan represented a milestone for the early Christians and the Catholic Faith. It legitimized a religion that had been outlawed since Nero's decree in A.D. 64, and solidified the presence of Christianity in the public square.

It would be remiss not to mention the clear political motives that were at least partly responsible for the Edict of Milan. Like many Roman rulers before him, Constantine sought unity in his empire, and he saw that Christianity was a religion likely to provide such unity. In this, Constantine followed the regular practice of using religion to support political ends. However, it would be ridiculous to suppose that for Constantine, Christianity was nothing but a tool for the state. He is known to have prayed daily, and to have received instruction in the Faith until he was formally received into the Church, penitent and hopeful, receiving the Sacrament of Baptism on his deathbed.



*The Baptism of Constantine*
by Giovan Francesco Penni

Constantine received instruction in the faith and was formally received into the Church.





## ST. HELEN IN JERUSALEM

St. Helen played an essential role in turning the Roman Empire toward Christianity. Born in Asia Minor and from humble beginnings (some accounts say she was the daughter of an innkeeper), she married the Roman General Constantius Chlorus around A.D. 270. Four years later she gave birth to Constantine, the future emperor of Rome.

Although she converted to Christianity late in life (most likely in her sixties), St. Helen was deeply devout and inspired many Romans by her fervent faith and piety. After her son became emperor in A.D. 324, St. Helen made a pilgrimage to the holy land at the age of 80. She traveled throughout Palestine, following in Christ's footsteps, and making great contributions to the poor along the way. She also had two famous churches constructed on the sites of Jesus' Nativity and Ascension.

By the time of St. Helen's visit, most of old Jerusalem had been destroyed and built over by the Romans. Nonetheless, St. Helen was determined to find artifacts from Jesus' life, so with the help of Macarius, the bishop of Jerusalem, she consulted with local inhabitants regarding legends and traditions concerning sites relating to Christ. Excavations began, and hidden near a Roman temple to Venus she uncovered Mount Calvary and Jesus' sepulcher. Nearby she found three wooden crosses as well as a sign that read "King of the Jews."

They knew they had made a major discovery, but they were unable to determine which of the three crosses had been Christ's. Then, Macarius had an idea. They brought the three crosses to a woman who had been very sick and asked her to touch each cross. When she touched the third one, she was miraculously cured.

Helen wished to share this grace with other Christians throughout the empire, so she sent a piece of the cross to Constantinople and brought a piece of it back to Rome with her where it became the source of renewed zeal for the Christian faith among the Romans. St. Helen died around the year 328 with her son, the emperor Constantine, at her side.





*The Titulus Crucis*, a piece of ancient walnut wood, is thought by some believers to be part of the headboard which was nailed to Christ's cross. It has been kept for centuries in Santa Croce in Gerusalemme near Rome. St. Helen is said to have brought the Titulus to Rome, leaving another fragment (which has disappeared) in Jerusalem.



In Rome, the Arch of Constantine commemorated his victory over Maxentius. His statue was placed in the city. In one hand, his statue held the Labarum, the standard of the cross, with the inscription, "Through this saving sign have I freed your city from the tyrant's yoke."

## CONCLUSION

The early Church was often perceived as a small segment of Judaism, beginning after the Resurrection of Jesus. She then suffered through a long period of intermittent, though intense, persecution, and, finally (and quite remarkably), she emerged as an imperially sanctioned religion in A.D. 313. The first three hundred years of the Church's history were tumultuous, although they contain many lessons that remain perennially applicable. The martyrs of the early Church are emulated today by many Christians who live in cultures that are as hostile to Christianity now as was Rome two-thousand years ago. The lives of martyrs such as Sts. Ignatius of Antioch and Agnes remain quite relevant to Christians then as well as today, who share in the communion of saints. The complex and often troubling relationship between the Church and the state is one that began in the Roman Empire, and still remains today. Lastly, the structure of the episcopacy and the importance of Tradition for resolving theological disputes both found expression in the many writings of Apostolic Fathers like Sts. Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus. An understanding of the early Church is therefore essential for an adequately informed conception of the origins of both the structure and the doctrines of Christianity.





## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

**Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, 92**

Martyrdom…*is a violation of man's "humanity,"* in the one perpetrating it even before the one enduring it. Hence martyrdom is also the exaltation of a person's perfect "humanity" and of true "life," as is attested by St. Ignatius of Antioch, addressing the Christians of Rome, the place of his own martyrdom: "Have mercy on me, brethren: do not hold me back from living; do not wish that I die.…Let me arrive at the pure light; once there *I will be truly a man.* Let me imitate the passion of my God."

**Justin Martyr, *The First Apology*, Ch. 66**

And this food is called among us *Eukaristia* [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.

For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, "This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;" and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, "This is My blood;" and gave it to them alone. Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of one who is being initiated, you either know or can learn.

**Constantine Augustus and Licinius Augustus, "The Edict of Milan"**

When I, Constantine Augustus, as well as I, Licinius Augustus, fortunately met near Mediolanum (Milan), and were considering everything that pertained to the public welfare and security, we thought, among other things which we saw would be for the good of many, those regulations pertaining to the reverence of the Divinity ought certainly to be made first, so that we might grant to the Christians and others full authority to observe that religion which each preferred; whence any Divinity whatsoever in the seat of the heavens may be propitious and kindly disposed to us and all who are placed under our rule. And thus by this wholesome counsel and most upright provision we thought to arrange that no one whatsoever should be denied the opportunity to give his heart to the observance of the Christian religion, of that religion which he should think best for himself, so that the Supreme Deity, to whose worship we freely yield our hearts may show in all things His usual favor and benevolence.



Constantine Augustus: "…no one whatsoever should be denied the opportunity to give his heart to the observance of the Christian religion,…"

## VOCABULARY

**AD METALLA**
Literally means "to the mines." It refers to the punishment and death given to many Christians during the Roman persecutions.

**APOSTASY**
Apostasy is the willful renunciation of the Faith in its entirety.

**APOSTATE**
A person who denies the Faith altogether.

**DOMUS AUREA**
Latin for "House of Gold." It refers to the palace that was built at the center of Rome after the fire during Nero's reign. Some have suggested the desire to build this palace was Nero's reason for starting the fire.

**HERETIC**
A person who denies one or more doctrines of the Faith.

**INSULÆ**
Tenements for middle and lower class Romans constructed of wood and rubble

**TETRARCHY**
Emperor Diocletian's division of the Roman Empire into four separate administrative districts, each with its own Caesar.

**TRAJAN'S RESCRIPT**
Policy for handling Christians in the Roman Empire which stated that Christians who renounced their faith and offered sacrifice would be allowed to live. Those who did not renounce their faith would suffer death.

**VOX POPULI**
Latin for "voice of the people." The early Church was often more threatened by the unconverted commoners in any given area than by the Roman state.



This model depicts Rome in the era of Emperor Diocletian. It shows the size comparison of Circus Maximus (the long oval arena on the left) and the Coliseum (the circular stadium in the upper right). Most Christian executions were held in the Circus Maximus because it held more spectators. Julius Caesar expanded the Circus around 50 B.C., after which the track measured approximately 600 meters in length, 225 meters in width and could accommodate an estimated 150,000 seated spectators. Trajan later added 5,000 more seats and expanded the emperor's viewing section.





## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Where in the Bible is Christianity referred to as "the Way"?
2. If it is true that Nero set the fire in Rome on July 19, what was his ultimate motivation? How did the Christians prove to be expedient political tools?
3. What were some of the accusations against Christians during the first persecutions?
4. Summarize Trajan's Rescript. How does it differ from the previous law of Nero?
5. What does St. Ignatius have to say about the importance of the episcopacy?
6. How did Hadrian's Rescript (A.D. 123/124) improve the situation for Christians?
7. How did the Roman emperor Septimus Severus threaten both Judaism and Christianity?
8. What do the words *ad metalla* mean?
9. Who are probably the two most famous women victims of Septimus Severus' persecution?
10. St. Irenaeus was an important leader in which region of the empire? (This is of particular interest because he came from the Greek-speaking east.)
11. How did the Emperor Decius' systematic persecution of Christianity involve the bureaucracy of the state?
12. What was the name and significance of the institution that Origen led in Alexandria?
13. Emperor Valerian was no friend to Christians. What was his fate at the hands of the Persians?
14. What was Emperor Diocletian's background and how did his Tetrarchy only lead to a weakened Roman state?
15. Summarize Diocletian's Four Edicts.
16. What attempted violence against St. Agnes was the fate of many young women who refused to renounce their faith during Diocletian's persecution?
17. What is the famous story about how Constantine won the Battle at Saxa Rubra?
18. Discuss the importance of the Edict of Milan (A.D. 313).

## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. During the Columbine school massacre in 1999, one of the shooters asked a young female student if she was a Christian. When she answered "Yes, I believe in God," he executed her. Can you imagine a situation where your faith could be so dramatically tested?
2. Many of the greatest persecutors of the Church in the Roman Empire were educated, intelligent people. How does this demonstrate the nature of evil?
3. How do the presence of martyrs in a culture lead to conversions to the Faith? Which of the early Christian values listed as headings in Chapter 2 do you think were most important for the early Christian martyrs to emulate?
4. How could effective apologists like St. Justin Martyr be of great help to the Catholic Church today? What issues would a modern apologist tackle? To whom would the defense be addressed?

## FROM THE CATECHISM

**975** "We believe that the Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven to exercise her maternal role on behalf of the members of Christ" (Paul VI, *CPG* § 15).

**1173** When the Church keeps the memorials of martyrs and other saints during the annual cycle, she proclaims the Paschal mystery in those "who have suffered and have been glorified with Christ. She proposes them to the faithful as examples who draw all men to the Father through Christ, and through their merits she begs for God's favors" (*SC* 104; cf. *SC* 108, 111).

**2113** Idolatry not only refers to false pagan worship. It remains a constant temptation to faith. Idolatry consists in divinizing what is not God. Man commits idolatry whenever he honors and reveres a creature in place of God, whether this be gods or demons (for example, satanism), power, pleasure, race, ancestors, the state, money, etc. Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and mammon" (Mt 6:24). Many martyrs died for not adoring "the Beast" (cf. Rev 13-14) refusing even to simulate such worship. Idolatry rejects the unique Lordship of God; it is therefore incompatible with communion with God (cf. Gal 5:20; Eph 5:5).

**2473** *Martyrdom* is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith; it means bearing witness even unto death. The martyr bears witness to Christ who died and rose, to whom he is united by charity. He bears witness to the truth of the faith and of Christian doctrine. He endures death through an act of fortitude. "Let me become the food of the beasts, through whom it will be given me to reach God" (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Rom.* 4, 1: SCh 10, 110).

**2474** The Church has painstakingly collected the records of those who persevered to the end in witnessing to their faith. These are the acts of the Martyrs. They form the archives of truth written in letters of blood:

> Neither the pleasures of the world nor the kingdoms of this age will be of any use to me. It is better for me to die [in order to unite myself] to Christ Jesus than to reign over the ends of the earth. I seek him who died for us; I desire him who rose for us. My birth is approaching... (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Rom.* 6, 1-2: SCh 10, 114).

> I bless you for having judged me worthy from this day and this hour to be counted among your martyrs....You have kept your promise, God of faithfulness and truth. For this reason and for everything, I praise you, I bless you, I glorify you through the eternal and heavenly High Priest, Jesus Christ, your beloved Son. Through him, who is with you and the Holy Spirit, may glory be given to you, now and in the ages to come. Amen (*Martyrium Polycarpi* 14, 2-3: PG 5, 1040; SCh 10, 228).



Through their supreme witness to the truths of the Faith, St. Catherine and St. Agnes stand forever victorious over their Roman persecutors.



CHAPTER 4

# The Church Fathers And Heresies

*The popes, the Church Fathers, and the ecumenical councils, lead by the Holy Spirit, guided the Church through the treacherous waters of heresy.*



## CHAPTER 4

# The Church Fathers And Heresies

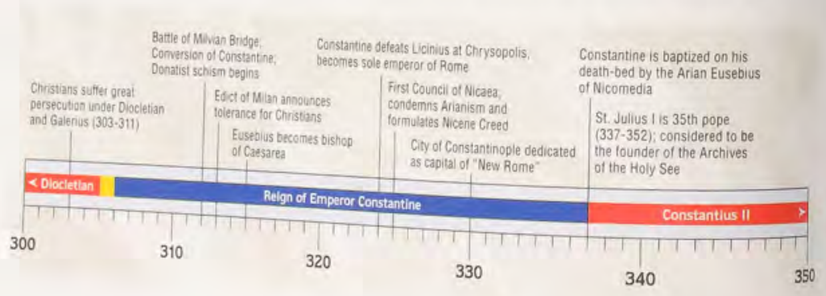
Dear young people, let us seek the truth about Christ and about his Church!
But we must be consistent: let us love the Truth, live in the Truth, proclaim the Truth!
O Christ, show us the Truth. Be the only Truth for us!

— John Paul II, Address to Young People, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, August 19, 1989

The persecution of Christians in the fourth and fifth centuries was followed by a series of heresies that rocked the emerging Church down to her foundations. Given the gravity and widespread effect of these early heresies, it would seem that nothing less than divine intervention guided the growing Church through these trials, along her road of survival and growth. This segment from the Athanasian Creed, though it now reads in such a sober and clear manner, conceals four centuries charged with painful theological deliberations and debates.

> Whoever wishes to be saved must, / above all, keep the Catholic faith. / For unless a person keeps this faith whole and entire, / he will undoubtedly be lost forever. / *This is what the Catholic faith teaches: we worship one God in the Trinity / and the Trinity in unity.* / We distinguish among the Persons, / but we do not divide the substance. / For the Father is a distinct Person: the Son is a distinct Person; / and the Holy Spirit is a distinct Person. / Still, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit / have one divinity, / equal glory, and coeternal majesty. (Introductory lines of the Athanasian Creed) [emphasis added]

The Athanasian Creed, often known by the name of the opening Latin words *Quicumque vult* ("Whoever wishes [to be saved]"), is an excellent example of what was at stake during the time of the great heresies during the third, fourth, and fifth centuries. Like the two other creeds, the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed, the Athanasian Creed is a profession of Faith that the Church still strongly affirms. Though attributed to the Greek Church Father, St. Athanasius of Alexandria, the authorship of this creed is not certain. It was written in the fourth or fifth century (probably 381-ca.428) to combat heresies present at the time in both the East and the West.








The Athanasian Creed principally expresses faith in the three Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation of God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity. This creed carefully emphasizes the equality of the three different Persons of the Trinity and their exact relationship with each another. The other remarkable aspect of the creed, which sets it apart from the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds, are the *anathemas* at the beginning and the end. (An *anathema* is a condemnation solemnly pronounced by ecclesiastical authority and at times accompanied by excommunication.) Every sentence, every word of this creed was carefully selected in order to express adequately the Catholic position, as well as to bring back into the fold those who had fallen into heresy. Although words like "substance," "Person," and "nature" may often appear at first glance to have little meaning in the twenty-first century, members of the Church in the third and fourth centuries suffered torture, exile, and even death in order to preserve and transmit the unadulterated Deposit of Faith, with a very precise theological and philosophical vocabulary, to articulate Catholic belief with total accuracy.

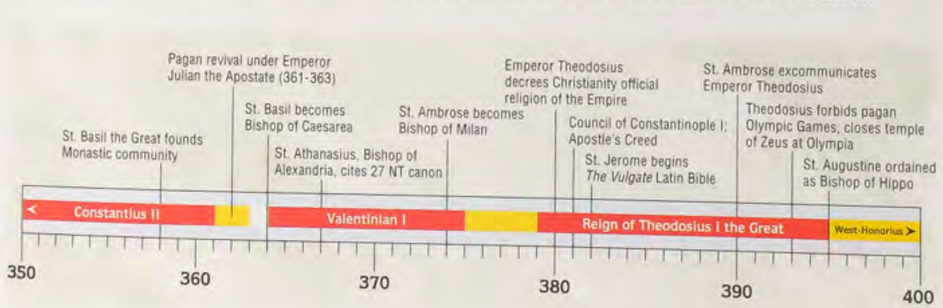


Almost from the beginning, Christian thinkers used the tools of Greek philosophy to help explain Christian truths.

From almost the very beginning, many Christian thinkers welcomed the Greek philosophical tradition, and used the tools of Greek philosophy to help explain Christian truths. St. Paul preached at the Areopagus in Athens—though with limited success—and the Apologists utilized philosophy in explaining Christianity to intellectuals and the ruling classes of the Empire.

A dizzying array of heresies and schismatic leaders confronted the Church following the Edict of Milan (313). Over the course of the third to fifth centuries, popes and bishops led the Church through a number of ecumenical councils, addressing each new controversy, and consequently developing a rich theological tradition. This would become the greatest age of heresy until the advent of Protestantism in the sixteenth century, and these heresies were not restricted to a circle of academics but rather affected the entire populace. The random observer may see here confusion and arbitrary decisions; the believer sees the Holy Spirit guiding and directing the Church to protect, define, and promulgate the truths about the Person of Jesus Christ and God's plan for the Church.

This chapter will explore the issues surrounding the various heresies, the ecumenical councils, and the Church Fathers, who rose to the occasion to teach, explain, and herald Catholic beliefs.



# PART I

# Early Heresies

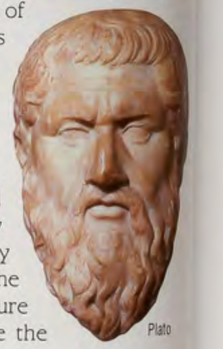
What exactly is heresy? St. Thomas Aquinas defined heresy as "a species of unbelief, belonging to those who profess the Christian faith, but corrupt its dogmas" (STh II-II, 11, 1, r.). Heresy must be distinguished from other forms of unbelief, namely, the unbelief of other religious traditions such as Judaism or any of the various pagan religions. Orthodox (meaning "right teaching" in Greek) Catholicism derives from the Deposit of Faith (the sum of all truths revealed in Scripture and through Tradition, and entrusted to the care of the Church). Heresy, on the other hand, derives from this same source, i.e., from belief, but denies or alters some part or parts of the Deposit of Faith.

One may enter into heresy in one of two ways:

1. Material heresy. It is possible to enter into heresy through ignorance of the truth, misunderstanding, or non-comprehension of particular aspects of the Faith, erroneous judgment, or the like. This type of heresy is not willed by the subject, and thus, lacking one of the necessary conditions of sin (that the action has to be freely willed). This species of heresy is merely a mistake, albeit a grave mistake that needs correction.

2. Formal heresy. It is also possible to freely choose, with full understanding of the teaching of the Church, to hold to tenets or doctrines that are clearly contradictory to those of the Church and even doctrines that have been condemned by the Church as false. This species of heresy, depending on all the mitigating circumstances, carries with it a degree of culpability.

The first heresies that afflicted the early Church were especially dangerous since they struck at the heart of Christianity: the figure of Christ. As mentioned above, Greek philosophy, especially Platonic and neo-Platonic thought, was welcomed by early Christian thinkers who found surprising insights and similarities to Christianity. Neo-Platonic thought discusses a Supreme Being, the One, who creates through an emanation of lesser beings, one of which is the *logos*. (*Logos* is a truly ambiguous Greek word with a multitude of meanings including word, account, meaning, reason, argument, saying, speech, and story.) Today, as was the case during the time of the early heresies, the word *logos* is most familiar to Christians since it is recorded in the opening lines of the Gospel of St. John. He uses *logos* to refer to God the Son: in Christian teaching, God the Son, the *Logos*, is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, equal to God the Father. However, in neo-Platonic thought the *logos*, albeit an elevated being, is created by and inferior to a Supreme Being, and thus is a separate being. Early heresies, connecting the *Logos* from the Gospel of St. John with the philosophical *logos* of the Greeks, often denied the true divinity of Christ. Instead, they held that He was a most exalted creature of the Father who only enjoyed by analogy the title "the Son of God." Neo-Platonic thought was so ingrained in the minds of the early eastern Christian thinkers that even someone of the stature of the illustrious third century theologian, Origen, tended to subordinate the Divine *Logos* to the Father.



Plato

Platonic philosophies also viewed the material world as inferior to the world of ideas. Material entitied were thought to be merely images of the world of ideas. Matter was viewed as an obstacle to contemplation and personal perfection. Thus, besides denying Christ's true divinity, many of the early heresies greatly de-emphasized—if not completely denied—Christ's humanity.







Striking at the heart of Christianity, early heresies made Jesus Christ inferior to the Father. In Christian teaching, God the Son, the Logos, is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, a person in the Divine Nature, and therefore equal to God the Father.

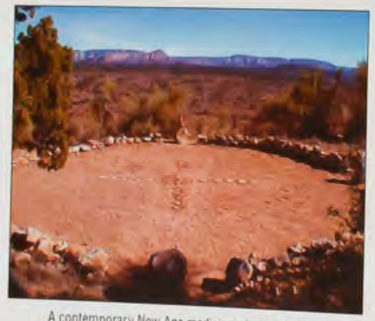
These early heresies that make Jesus Christ inferior to the Father and, at the same time, deny his divinity, set the stage for the advent of the Arian heresy, which occasioned one of the worst crises the Church would ever face. In fact, a few difficult centuries of painful struggle would have to pass before the Church could put these early heresies behind her.

## GNOSTICISM

The word "Gnosticism" is derived from the Greek word *gnosis* (knowledge). The name refers to one of the principle tenets of this multifaceted heresy, namely, that salvation may be achieved through knowledge. There were many forms of Gnosticism (many whose origins predate Christianity), and therefore it is difficult (if not impossible) to encapsulate them into one coherent system. In the second century, Gnosticism, which had eastern origins and influences from Persia and India, very successfully perverted the meaning of Christianity and its symbols. Gnosticism co-opted the Old and New Testaments for some of the contents of the Gnostic religions and to give some particular Gnostic teachings a certain authority.

As mentioned above, Gnosticism is a blanket term for a very broad and complex group of beliefs. Despite these complexities, it is possible to delineate some of Gnosticism's fundamental points. Gnostic beliefs held that a secret knowledge regarding God and the origin and destiny of man had been given to a select few. Its cosmology pitted the Demiurge, the creator god of the material and visible world, against the remote and unknowable Divine Being. The Demiurge was of lesser stature than the Divine Being, from whom the Demiurge had originated through a series of emanations. The Gnostics claimed that the Demiurge was the author and ruler of the created world. Being material and imperfect, the created world would naturally have an antagonistic and inferior relationship to the spiritual, perfect world of the Divine Being. Thus, the spiritual Divine Being is the agent of goodness, and the Demiurge, the author of the material world, propagates evil in the world.

A divine spark, belonging to the Divine Being, could, however, be found among some people in the created order. The redeemer, sent from the Divine Being, came in order to release the sparks trapped in the bodies so they might return to the Divine Being. This was only possible if the individuals understood the secret knowledge of the redeemer's teaching and practiced the appropriate Gnostic rituals.



A contemporary New Age medicine wheel in Arizona.

The principle involved here of finding the light within oneself through a pagan ceremony is the essence of the New Age movement in contemporary times. As will be seen in this chapter, the Church has witnessed a staggering range of heresies and schisms in her two-thousand year history. Many of the false teachings that appeared in the Medieval period, during the Reformation, and even in the contemporary world are not new, but, rather, the reemergence of ancient heresies under fresh guises.

Gnostics divided people mainly into two classes. Those who understood this cosmic struggle between the material and the spiritual were known by the Greek word *pneumatikoi* ("spiritual"). Most of the unfortunate masses fell into the *sarkikou* ("material" group), unaware of the great struggle going on around them. Some branches of Gnosticism incorporated a third group, known as the *psychikoi*, in between these two.





In Gnosticism's view, Judaism was a false religion that worshiped the wrong god, the Demiurge, who is evil. Instead of trying to free the divine spark from its evil material confines, Judaism mistakenly affirmed the material world as good.



A Coptic image of Pisces.

Gnosticism rejected the Church's teaching regarding both Christ's human and divine nature. According to Gnostic thought, Jesus did not have a human nature; for a human nature, being materially bound, is naturally evil. Instead, he was a good divine being whose purpose, as the Gnostic redeemer, was to bring the secret knowledge (*gnosis*) and make it known to man. They believed that Jesus came as the representative of the supreme Divine Being. This Jesus did not inhabit a human body, nor did he die on the cross. Instead, the spirit of the divine being was present in Jesus temporarily, Jesus' body was only an apparition, and his spirit left his "body" before he was put to death on Calvary. In Gnosticism's cosmological view, a divine being could never have suffered the humiliation of death, let alone death on a cross.

Gnosticism existed prior to Christianity in pagan religions, and there is evidence of the existence of early Gnostic Jewish sects. A number of early Christian thinkers and apologists combated Gnostic

### ROOTS OF GNOSTICISM

The early Christians considered Simon Magus (Acts 8: 9-24) the founder of Gnosticism. Magus claimed to have secret knowledge of the mysteries of God and hoped to gain magical powers through his conversion to Christianity. Despite the similarities between Magus' claims and Gnostic beliefs, the origin of Gnosticism has long been a matter of controversy and is still the subject of much scholarly research.

Recent scholarship has attempted to show that traces of Gnostic beliefs can be found in religions that existed before the coming of Christ. Some scholars, for example, have tried to establish links between Gnosticism and the Babylonian religion that arose after the conquest of Cyrus. Other scholars have noted similarities between Gnosticism and Greek thought. Attempts have even been made to associate Gnosticism with certain schools of pre-Christian Judaism, but this theory has not met with widespread acceptance.

The seeming appearance of Gnostic thought in many ancient religious systems owes to philosophical and religious pessimism, which is both a central feature of Gnosticism and a common perversion of intemperate religious fervor. While the precise emergence of Gnosticism is difficult to pinpoint, magical powers, secret knowledge of the divine, and the belief that present existence is essentially evil are misconceptions that have long corrupted religious belief.



Gnostic systems combined magic and astrology with the Bible. The Hebrew name of God, IAO, fascinated sorcerers. IAO was often represented as a demon spirit with a cock's head.

influences in Christianity. Chief among them were St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, and St. Hippolytus. In their arguments they emphasized the goodness of the created world, the supremacy of the Christian God, the clear meaning of the Scriptures, and Christ's human experiences—especially his passion and death.

Many of the later heresies are derivatives of Gnosticism. Generally, a Gnostic religion holds the following beliefs:

1. Matter is a corruption of spirit, and thus the world is corrupt;
2. Man must seek through knowledge to overcome this fallen state and return to God; and
3. God has made this possible by sending a savior (usually held to be Jesus).

## MARCIONISM (144 - 400s)



Marcion recognized only St. Paul (above) as a legitimate Christian authority.

Marcion (d. ca. A.D. 160) founded his heretical movement very early in the life of the Church, and it lingered well into the fifth century in the West and for centuries longer in the East. Marcion came from the Black Sea port of Sinope in the Roman province of Pontus (what is today Turkey), where he was most likely involved in shipping. He was the son of a bishop, and as the story goes, his father excommunicated him on the grounds of immorality. He went to Rome ca. 140. He started his own community and was formally excommunicated in 144. It was not long before his heresy grew into the one of the greatest threats to orthodox belief in the second half of the second century.

Marcion adapted important ideas from Gnostic beliefs to form his own theology. From Gnosticism he took the idea of the Demiurge, whom he identified as the jealous, revengeful God of the Old Testament. The Jewish God, the Demiurge, is the God of the Law. In opposition to this cruel God of the Law, Marcion heralded the God of Jesus Christ, the true God, sent to bring about the demise of the Demiurge. The God of Jesus Christ is the God of Love who has no connection with the Law. Jesus' teaching was taken from the true God. His Passion and death came about through the machinations of the evil Creator God of the Old Testament. This dualism of Law and Love is the main thesis of Marcion's system.

Marcion recognized only St. Paul as a legitimate Christian authority because of his teaching regarding freedom from the Law. The Apostles, in Marcion's view, did not fully understand the mission of Christ being blinded by Judaism and its Creator God. Therefore, only ten of St. Paul's Epistles and a modified version of the Gospel of St. Luke (any Jewish influence was removed) were given canonical status in Marcionism. Marcion was either not aware of the Pastorals—other epistles of the New Testament—or rejected them outright. This canon reflected Marcion's attempt to free the New Testament from Jewish influence.

Unwittingly, Marcion helped the development of the Catholic Church's canon of Sacred Scripture. Partially in reaction to Marcion's flawed and incomplete group of inspired texts, the Church gradually determined the canon: the official, inspired writings of the New Testament.





Marcion had established his own church before being excommunicated in 144. He admitted people from all backgrounds, just as the Church did, but by the third century, most of Marcion's followers were incorporated into Manichæism. His followers had to practice a most rigorous asceticism, fasts were multiplied, and eating meat was forbidden. Many orthodox writers of the period fought Marcionism, including St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, St. Hippolytus, Pope St. Clement I, and Origen.

Marcion was not the only person to reject Judaism and the Old Testament as incompatible with Christianity. Down through the ages other groups have done the same. The Lutheran theologian Alfred von Harnack (1851-1930) similarly proposed a canon free of Jewish influence early in the twentieth century. Later, National Socialism (Nazism) in Germany proposed "German Christianity," a Christianity cut off from its Jewish roots. Christianity cannot exist without its Jewish heritage, and hence Pope John Paul II continually singled out the Jews as "the elder brothers in faith."

## MANICHÆISM (250s -1000s)

Manichæism was probably the most elaborate and polished branch of Gnosticism. Its founder, Mani (ca. 216-276), was born in Persia. He developed this particular brand of Gnosticism in Persia and India during the third century until he was eventually condemned to death by the Persian emperor Bahram I. Accounts of his death conflict—some report that he died in prison, others that he was crucified, flayed, and his skin stuffed with straw and hung upon the gates of the city. Despite his condemnation, by the fourth century Manichæism had spread to Rome and was already deeply rooted in North Africa.

Manichæism continued the age-old dualist cosmology involving the conflict between darkness and light. This heresy stated that Satan had managed to steal light particles and place them in the brains of humans. The goal of Manichæism was to share the secret knowledge which liberates this light so it could return to its original source. Mani understood himself as just another spiritual leader in a long line of leaders that included the Jewish prophets, Jesus, and Buddha, all of whom showed the path to true freedom. The ritual acts of Manichæism also incorporated the movements of the cosmic bodies—the Sun, the Moon, and stars—also points of light. The "hearers" and the "elect" comprised the two groups in the sect. The latter group was comprised of the authentic followers of Mani.

Manichæism borrowed heavily from the Scriptures, especially from the writings of St. Paul. Mani incorporated many of St. Paul's arguments and imagery to support his own teaching concerning the struggle between darkness and light.

Followers of Manichæism adhered to a strict form of asceticism, and it is here that one understands part of the appeal of Gnostic and other heretical teachings. In the Roman world of lax morals, Christianity required faithfulness to a demanding moral life as inspired by Jesus. Manichæism and other movements attempted to out-perform Christianity in terms of their moral rigor. If Christianity required fasting, Gnostic groups would require tougher and longer fasts. Manichæism also drew adherents by its intellectual appeal. St. Augustine, for instance, drawn by the philosophical bases of the heresy, was a fervent adherent of Manichæism for nine years.

Teachings similar to Manichæism reappeared in the Medieval Albigensians of the twelfth through fourteenth centuries, who are also known by the name "Cathars." Though unlikely to have a direct, historical link to Manichæism, the Albigensians used much of the same imagery and beliefs. Manichæism periodically re-emerged in isolated areas for many centuries and did not completely die out until sometime during the beginning of the second millennium.

## MONTANISM (156 - 200s)

Montanism was an apocalyptic movement founded by Montanus in Phrygia (Asia Minor, modern day Turkey) following what he said were private revelations made to him. Montanus worked closely with two female prophets, Prisca and Maximilla. Montanus' central principle was that the new, heavenly kingdom was about to begin in Pepuza, a small town in Phrygia (the exact location of this town is lost to history); he knew this because of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon him. Montanism also held that Christians who had fallen from grace could never be redeemed. Because Montanus and his followers believed they were directly inspired by the Holy Spirit, they rejected the authority of the Church.

The movement also appeared in North Africa, where its most famous adherent was the Christian thinker Tertullian, who rejected Catholic Christianity after having been one of its greatest apologists for many years. In its African form, Montanism placed a high value on the ascetical life. It forbade second marriages, enacted stricter fasting disciplines than the Church, and rejected flight from persecutions.

Montanism is rightly understood as one of the first apocalyptic movements in Christianity that claimed to supersede the Church because of its direct inspiration by the Holy Spirit. Its expectation of the New Jerusalem on earth in Pepuza is also unique.



Montanists believed that the "New Jerusalem" foretold by St. John in Revelations would descend to earth on a hill in Pepuza, Phrygia. The Montanist prophets required everyone to acknowledge their utterances as the true work of the Holy Spirit.

## DOCETISM (30s - 100s)



Docetism, yet another Gnostic heresy rising from the presupposition of the corrupt nature of matter, maintained that Jesus was not truly human and did not actually suffer the pain of crucifixion and death. The name of the heresy derives from the Greek word *dokesis*, meaning appearance or semblance. It often taught that someone else (e.g., Judas Iscariot or Simon of Cyrene) miraculously switched places with Christ just before the crucifixion and suffered death in Christ's place. Many of the Apologists, including St. Ignatius of Antioch, wrote at length against this belief.

Docetism held that the human form of Jesus as well as his crucifixion was an illusion.







First Vatican Council 1869-1870

## PART II

# The Ecumenical Councils

In order to meet the challenges posed by the various heresies, the Church convened several ecumenical councils, the first being the First Council of Nicaea, in 325. Altogether, there have been twenty-one ecumenical councils throughout the history of the Church (the Second Vatican Council, 1962-1965, being the most recent). The first six councils addressed the various Christological heresies that have been examined in this chapter in an effort to provide a true theological answer to the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" The word "ecumenical" comes from the Greek word *oikoumene*, meaning "the whole inhabited world." Ecumenical councils bring bishops under the leadership of the pope together from all over the world to discuss central issues of the Church.

Current canon law in the Church grants the power to convene a council only to the papacy. The pope governs the council and he alone has the power to accept or reject the decrees passed by it. If the pope should die during a council, as happened during the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, the council is halted until the election of a new pope, who then decides whether to continue the council as well as the selection of the topics it considers.

Besides ecumenical councils, members of the Church hold a number of other types of councils. A **diocesan council** is often called a synod, and it is a meeting of a bishop, representatives of the clergy, religious and laity in which matters of diocesan Church discipline and procedure are discussed. A **provincial council** is an assembly of the metropolitan archbishop with his suffragan bishops, while a **plenary council** summons all the bishops of a nation. What distinguishes an ecumenical council is that it convenes all the bishops of the world, and its teachings are regarded as having the highest authority. An ecumenical council's definitions regarding tenets of faith and morals are held to be infallible, if infallible pronouncements are the intentions of the pope and the bishops. Furthermore, the resolutions and conclusions of an ecumenical council must always be approved by the Supreme Pontiff.

The first seven councils are recognized by both East and West. However, Eastern Orthodox Christians do not recognize the ecumenical nature of any of the councils held in the West after 787 because they did not participate. At the time of the Reformation, the mainline Protestant bodies recognized at least the special status of those first seven councils, though later Protestant churches often gave no special recognition to them.

## ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

| COUNCIL NAME | YEAR | CONCERN OF COUNCIL |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Nicaea | 325 | Arianism and the Nicene Creed |
| 2 Constantinople I | 381 | Divinity of the Holy Spirit |
| 3 Ephesus | 431 | Nestorianism and Mary as Mother of God |
| 4 Chalcedon | 451 | Monophysitism (specifically the Eutychian form) |
| 5 Constantinople II | 553 | The Three Chapters Controversy: Nestorianism, Monophysitism, and imperial-papal relations |
| 6 Constantinople III | 680-681 | Monothelitism; admonished Pope Honorius I |
| 7 Nicaea II | 787 | Iconoclasm |
| 8 Constantinople IV | 869-870 | Photian Controversy: potential East-West schism; deposed Patriarch Photius |
| 9 Lateran I | 1123 | Investiture Controversy; simony; clerical celibacy |
| 10 Lateran II | 1139 | Arnold of Brescia's (twelfth century heretic who condemned all clerical material possession) teaching and criticism of the Church; put an end to papal schism |
| 11 Lateran III | 1179 | Process for papal elections (only cardinals); condemned Albigensianism and Waldensianism |
| 12 Lateran IV | 1215 | Transubstantiation of the Eucharist; annual Penance; suppression of Albigenses; crusades |
| 13 Lyons I | 1245 | Deposition and excommunication of Emperor Frederick II; crusades |
| 14 Lyons II | 1274 | Healing of the Great Schism with Constantinople |
| 15 Vienne | 1311-1312 | Suppression of the Knights Templar |
| 16 Constance | 1414-1418 | Great Schism of the papacy; condemnation of Jan Hus |
| 17 Basel-Ferrara-Florence | 1431-1445 | Reform and union with the East |
| 18 Lateran V | 1512-1517 | Reform of the Church, especially discipline (failed) |
| 19 Trent | 1545-1563 | Protestantism and reform |
| 20 Vatican I | 1869-1870 | Papal infallibility; condemnation of various errors |
| 21 Vatican II | 1962-1965 | Renewal of the Church in the modern world |

There were other councils convened in Rome, Carthage, Alexandria, and other cities. These councils were of a local, governing nature only. Their decisions did not carry the same weight as ecumenical councils and therefore are not included as solemnly defined tenets of faith.





# PART III
# The Church Fathers

A number of great and holy leaders arose to lead the Church, explain the Faith, and meet the unique challenges posed by the different heresies. They are known as the Church Fathers. This title and some of their names have already appeared in previous chapters. This chapter will focus on several of them. The Church Fathers shared the following characteristics: orthodoxy in doctrine, holiness, notoriety, and antiquity. The title "Church Father" is not conferred by the Church; it is simply a traditionally held title. While no definitive list exists, the Church Fathers are typically divided into two groups: Latin (West) and Greek (East) Fathers. The Golden Age of the Church Fathers was from 320 to 461. St. Isidore of Seville (ca. 560-636) in the West and St. John of Damascus (ca. 655-ca. 750) in the East are generally regarded as the last significant Church Fathers.

The study of the Church Fathers and their many writings is known as patristics. The writings of the Fathers provide a unique opportunity to learn and appreciate the wealth of the earliest Christian tradition. Because of their proximity to the teachings of the Apostles, the Fathers' clarification and interpretation on Scripture will always serve as a standard reference point for Church teaching.

The following is a list of ten important Church Fathers:

| CHURCH FATHERS | |
|---|---|
| LATIN | GREEK |
| St. Ambrose of Milan* | St. Athanasius* |
| St. Augustine of Hippo* | ST. BASIL THE GREAT* |
| Pope St. Gregory the Great* | ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA |
| St. Jerome* | ST. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS* |
| St. Hilary of Poitiers* | St. John Chrysostom* |



The study of the Church Fathers and their many writings is known as "patristics."

*Denotes a Doctor of the Church
(Names in all capitals indicate the Three Cappadocian Fathers.)

A Doctor of the Church (*Doctor Ecclesiæ*) is a specific title granted by the pope to those whose development of theology and personal sanctity are exemplary. This tradition began in the Medieval period and continues into the present. Currently, there are over thirty Doctors of the Church. The last three Doctors proclaimed in the twentieth century were St. Teresa of Avila and St. Catherine of Siena by Pope Paul VI in 1970, and St. Thérèse of Lisieux by Pope John Paul II in 1997. A complete list of Doctors may be found on page 789.

# THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE CHURCH FATHERS
# FOURTH TO FIFTH CENTURIES
















St. Athanasius (ca. 296-375)



## ST. AMBROSE OF MILAN

Although the elements of this world constantly beat upon the Church with crashing sounds, the Church possesses the safest harbor of salvation for all in distress. (from a letter by St. Ambrose, "Ambrose of Milan")

St. Ambrose of Milan (ca. 339-97) was born in Trier, Germany, close to the frontier with the barbarians. He was the son of the Praetorian Prefect for Gaul. St. Ambrose studied law, became a lawyer, and eventually governor, based in Milan. Upon the death of Milan's Arian bishop around 373, the people clamored for St. Ambrose to succeed him. Though from a Christian family, St. Ambrose was only a catechumen, and he initially resisted accepting the office. Eventually, he acceded and was soon baptized, ordained, and installed as bishop.

St. Ambrose was a zealous defender of the Church's independence from the state. He both counseled and, at times, condemned decisions of the emperors. St. Ambrose supported Emperor Gratian's decision to remove the Altar of Victory, a powerful symbol of pagan influence on the Republic and Empire, from the Senate house in Rome. Later, he threatened Emperor Valentinian II with ecclesiastical sanction if he restored it. In 388 St. Ambrose forbade Theodosius from rebuilding a synagogue that had been destroyed in a riot in Callinicum.

St. Ambrose took a courageous stand against Emperor Theodosius in 390, excommunicating and forcing him the emperor to make public penance for slaughtering 700 village people in Thessalonika that year. (The people of Thessalonika had assassinated one of Theodosius' generals after he imprisoned their favorite charioteer.) Having been barred from even entering the Church by St. Ambrose, let alone receiving Holy Communion, the emperor prostrated himself in the form of a cross in normal clothes in the vestibule just like any other penitent of the time. After eight months of penance and public prayer, St. Ambrose finally pardoned the emperor.

As Bishop of Milan, St. Ambrose became an ardent opponent of the Arian heresy, as well as a renowned preacher. St. Ambrose encouraged monasticism, facilitated theological exchanges with the East due to his knowledge of Greek, and incorporated hymns into the liturgy, a number of which he composed in Latin. His feast day is celebrated on December 7.





## THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, / creator of heaven and earth. / I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord. / He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit / and born of the Virgin Mary. / He suffered under Pontius Pilate, / was crucified, died and was buried. / He descended into hell. / On the third day he rose again. / He ascended into heaven, / and is seated at the right hand of the Father. / He will come again to judge the living and the dead. / I believe in the Holy Spirit, / the holy Catholic Church, / the communion of saints, / the forgiveness of sins, / the resurrection of the body, / and the life everlasting. Amen.

Though bearing their name, the creed was not written by the Apostles. However, the contents of the creed are based upon the New Testament and may be rightly judged as a profession of faith in the Apostles' teaching. Exact authorship and date do not exist, but its first reference comes from St. Ambrose around 390. The Apostles' Creed was only recognized in the West, where it has been traditionally associated with the baptismal rite. It is also sometimes used at Sunday Masses for children.

The Apostles' Creed is based upon a baptismal creed used especially in Rome, known as the Old Roman Creed. Thus, the Apostles' Creed has a particular association with the Church of Rome, which facilitated its adoption in the West. It follows the baptismal command of Jesus in Matthew 28:19 ("baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"). This is why the creed is divided into three sections: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Besides the Roman Catholic Church, many of the Reformation era churches also accept the Apostles' Creed as a profession of faith.

## ST. JEROME

For if, as Paul says, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God, and if the man who does not know Scripture does not know the power and wisdom of God, then *ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ*. (St. Jerome, from the Prologue to *Commentary on Isaiah*) [emphasis added]

St. Jerome (ca. 345-420) led a very interesting life. Born in Strido in Dalmatia, near Aquileia, St. Jerome traveled and lived throughout Italy, Gaul, northern Africa, the Holy Land, and Constantinople. His two enduring passions were the ascetical life and scholarship.

St. Jerome spent four to five years in the Syrian desert leading an ascetical life with companions, and while there he learned Hebrew, which would prove vital for his future work of translating Scripture into Latin. St. Jerome never stopped advocating or living a penitential life even when he lived in cities. From 382 to 385 St. Jerome served as a secretary to Pope St. Damasus I. After 386 he spent the last years of his long life in Bethlehem as the head of a new monastery where he continued his scholarship.

Being of a cantankerous and passionate character, St. Jerome, with righteous indignation, was known to insert himself and his sharp pen into the important issues and heresies of his day. Nevertheless, his most important work was undoubtedly the translation of the Bible from the original sources into Latin, known as the Vulgate, which is still the normative text in the Church today. With the Vulgate, the Scriptures were for the first time brought into a uniform translation for the people of the Western Empire. The name Vulgate comes from the Latin *vulgus*, "common," as it was written in the common language of the people of the day. St. Jerome translated the Old Testament from Hebrew, the Psalms from the Greek Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament). He translated the New Testament from Greek and revised what had been already translated into Latin. His feast day is celebrated on September 30.



With St. Jerome's Vulgate, the Scriptures were for the first time brought into a uniform translation for the people of the Western Empire.

## TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

It is widely believed that St. Jerome's Vulgate translation is most faithful because he had access to manuscripts of the original languages that no longer exist. The Douay-Rheims (1582-1609) translation into English was based upon the Vulgate.

The issues involved in translating are manifold, and deeply affect the text that is produced. A high school student who reaches a certain proficiency in a foreign language understands that the different ways ideas and issues are understood in one language are not necessarily the same as in another. Obviously, the process becomes even more crucial in translating a text, such as the Bible, on which people will ground their religious faith. The Church teaches that the books of the Bible are divinely inspired, and that even those books written in different ages by different authors in several languages enjoy the status of God's Word. This issue would become particularly important at the time of the Reformation, but St. Jerome had already set the standard for translation of the Bible with his Vulgate.

Other approved Catholic translations into English use the original sources, including the Jerusalem Bible and the New American Bible (NAB), the latter of which has become the standard translation for American liturgies today, except for the Gospels.

The Revised Standard Version (RSV) translation, which was compiled from 1946-1952, is based upon the King James Bible, otherwise known as the Authorized Version (1611). Though based on the Protestant King James Bible, the RSV was given Church approval when it also included the deuterocanonical texts, those books of the Old Testament that the Orthodox and Catholic





Churches recognize, but which the Protestants do not. (Protestants refer to these books as the Apocrypha.) The RSV was the first ecumenical Bible produced with Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, and Jewish scholars. The RSV has been lauded for the beauty of its English usage and idiom, and has been used as the source for biblical quotations in this text. There is a Catholic edition with all the deuterocanonical books as well.

The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) appeared in 1989. Though remarkable because it translates all the poetry of the original texts into English poetry as well, it was not approved for Church liturgy. This translation uses gender neutral language as often as possible in the text (some scholars have argued perhaps more often than appropriate), and it also updated the language of the RSV by eliminating archaic forms ("Thee," "Thou" and verb forms like "wast"). This translation, as well as the RSV, NAB, and the Jerusalem Bibles, bears the *Imprimatur*, Latin for "let it be printed." The *Imprimatur* is granted by a Catholic bishop to assure the reader that nothing therein is contrary to Catholic Faith or morals.

## THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

The word "canon" comes from the Greek *kanon*, which means "reed" or "measuring rod." As it applies to the Scriptures, the canon is the authoritative list of writings included in the Bible and proclaimed by the Church to be divinely inspired. During the first few centuries of the Church's existence, all the books of the Bible were not universally accepted as being divinely inspired.

The Church knew that an authoritative canon of Scripture would have to be established, and so she convened a series of synods and councils in the latter part of the fourth century in order to settle the issue. The Synod of Rome in 382 collected twenty-seven books into the New Testament and forty-six into the Old Testament.

However, after the Synod of Rome, the Scriptural character of the Old Testament deuterocanonical texts (from Greek *deuteros* meaning "second") was still contested. These consist of seven books: Tobias, Judith, Baruch, Sirach, Wisdom, and 1 and 2 Maccabees, as well as certain parts of Esther and Daniel. Three later councils, at Hippo (393) and Carthage (397 and 419), established finally that the deutero-canonical texts were divinely inspired writings and were to be included in the Old Testament.

While the councils listed above were not ecumenical councils, the Second Council of Nicaea (787), itself an ecumenical council, formally ratified the same canon of Scripture established at Rome, Hippo and Carthage. This canon, which consisted of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament and forty-six books of the Old Testament, was reaffirmed again at the Council of Florence (1335) and the Council of Trent (1545). Protestants, however, do not currently recognize the "deuterocanonical" books of the Old Testament as being part of Scripture.



Pope St. Damasus I (37th Pope; 366-384). In 377, St. Jerome became Pope St. Damasus' secretary. St. Damasus ordered St. Jerome to correct and translate into Latin the Septuagint (a Greek version of the Old Testament) and the New Testament, thus providing the Western Church with its authoritative edition of the Scriptures, the Vulgate. This event also helped to establish Latin as the principal liturgical language at Rome.

## ST. PAULA



St. Jerome with St. Paula and her daughter St. Eustochium

St. Paula, the patroness of widows, was born in Rome to a noble family in 347. At the age of thirty-two she lost her husband, Toxotius, and shortly thereafter the eldest of her five children. She suffered greatly from these losses, and was led to consecrate herself entirely to God. After meeting St. Jerome in 382, who had come to Rome along with St. Epiphanius and St. Paulinus of Antioch, she became inspired by the desire to leave Rome and live a monastic life in the East.

Three years later, St. Paula divided her fortune among her family and in September 385 left for the East along with St. Eustochium, one of her daughters. She met up with St. Jerome in Antioch, and the hermit began to offer St. Paula spiritual guidance. Leaving Antioch, they crossed Syria and remained a while in Palestine. St. Paula visited all of the famous places in the Holy Land, and even spent time with the Anchorites in Egypt. Finally settling in Bethlehem, near the birthplace of Christ, she helped found two monasteries, one for men and one for women.

St. Paula passed the last twenty years of her life in Bethlehem, continuing and developing the intellectual and spiritual discourse she began in Rome with St. Jerome. She studied Scripture, worked with her hands, gave alms, and practiced the most severe austerities, going to church six times a day, singing the psalms she taught her nuns to memorize. St. Jerome, who remained St. Paula's mentor throughout her life, best explained the monastic life the two saints led: "[A]ll is simple and rustic: and except for the chanting of psalms there is complete silence. Wherever one turns the laborer at his plow sings alleluia, the toiling mower cheers himself with psalms, and the vine-dresser while he prunes his vine sings one of the lays of David."





## ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, THE GOLDEN MOUTHED

**What are we to fear? Death? Life to me means Christ and death is gain.…The confiscation of our goods? We brought nothing into this world, and we shall surely take nothing from it. (St. John Chrysostom, *Ante exsilium*, nn. 1-3: PG 52, 427-430)**



St. John Chrysostom (ca. 347-407) was an outstanding preacher and commentator on the Bible. He studied law in Antioch, as well as theology under Diodorus, the future bishop of Tarsus. Thus, Chrysostom studied in the influential Antiochene school and became well versed in Greek scholarship and classical culture.

St. John Chrysostom decided to become a monk, and, following the Pachomian Rule (the first cenobitical monastic rule, founded by St. Pachomius—see Chapter 5) for around eight years from ca. 373-ca. 381. The last two years of his monastic life were spent as an anchorite. (An anchorite, from the Greek *anachôrein*, "to withdraw," is sometimes called a hermit.) Severe fasting and other forms of self-denial during those two years greatly damaged his health and forced him to return to Antioch to recuperate.

In 386 he was ordained a priest in Antioch, where he became such a renowned preacher that he earned the name "Chrysostom," meaning "golden-mouthed." His many sermons capture the deep spiritual meaning of biblical texts, without excluding their literal sense. In addition, St. John Chrysostom combined this biblical meaning with a real-world, practical application to the Christian life. He also wrote the celebrated treatise *On the Priesthood*, a work that discusses the importance and duties of a priest.

Against his wishes, the emperor named him Patriarch of Constantinople in 398. St. John Chrysostom recognized the overwhelming task of leading the imperial city's faithful along paths of virtue and holiness. St. John Chrysostom criticized the prevailing moral laxity in Constantinople, including that of the imperial family. Very forthright and direct in his declaration of the truth, he repeatedly clashed with the Empress Euodoxia, who twice had St. John Chrysostom removed from his position as patriarch and banished. He quickly returned from his first period of exile, and the Empress feared some great punishment from Heaven. Shortly thereafter, in 404, even though he enjoyed the firm support of the people of Constantinople, Pope St. Innocent I, and the western Church, St. John Chrysostom was banished again by Euodoxia. This time, he was exiled to the area around Antioch, and then the Roman province of Pontus. While there, he was forced into a death march despite his already failing health, and died in 407. His feast day is celebrated on September 13.

## PART IV

# Heresies of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries

The fourth and fifth centuries saw a golden age in the history of the Church. Persecutions had ceased, and it was during this time that there emerged some of the greatest leaders the Church had ever seen. The newfound freedom from the fear of persecution allowed for a greater outward expression of ideas in the Church. This not only paved the way for great theological and doctrinal developments, but it also opened the door for new heresies and for one of the most serious crises in the history of the Church. Moreover, this same freedom of Christian expression and practice made it possible for the entire hierarchy of the universal Church to meet in ecumenical councils in response to these heresies. The pronouncements of these councils over the course of the fourth and fifth centuries comprised the Church's teaching on Trinitarian and Christological belief. These first councils owe their success in significant part to many of the Church Fathers, who displayed an imposing intellectual acumen, exceptional leadership qualities, and extraordinary sanctity.

This section will examine some of the heresies faced by the early Church and how they were addressed and resolved by the Church. The roles played by various Church Fathers in resolving these heresies will also be discussed. The statements and teachings of these Fathers of the Church would strongly contribute to the first dogmatic pronouncements of the early Church.

Among the many causes of these heresies, inaccurate interpretations of the Gospels coupled with imprecise philosophical explanations played a significant role. The intervention of the Church led to the development of a theology that was firmly rooted in the true meaning of the Gospel. The principle Christian teaching about the Incarnation—the belief that God the Son became man—raised essential questions regarding the Person of Christ. The Church Fathers made an effort to explain the mysteries of Faith with an accurate terminology. After the Church gave an authoritative answer, those groups who nevertheless adhered to false teaching were known definitively as heretics. A heretic is a baptized person who deliberately and obstinately disavows a revealed truth of established Church dogma.

During this time, two competing cities, Alexandria and Antioch, were the sites of theological study and debate. The prestige, honor, history, and orthodoxy of these centers of learning were on the line. Both cities appealed to their apostolic founding and traditions in their attempts to delineate the theology of the Incarnation and the Trinity. The Alexandrian school was based in Alexandria, Egypt. Hellenistic Alexandria was the second largest city in the Empire, and had the largest Jewish population. In terms of its educational opportunities, it was the best. The Alexandrian school was committed to allegorical exegesis of the Scriptures, and produced luminaries of the likes of Origen and St. Cyril of Alexandria. Employing the language of St. Cyril, this school gave special status to the divinity of Christ and the unity of his person. This did not, however, keep some members of the Alexandrian school from sliding into the heresies of Monophysitism and Monothelitism, which compromised Christ's human nature. On the other hand, in defense of Christ's human nature, Nestorianism appeared in the Antiochene School. This heresy disrupted the unity of Christ's divine and human natures in the one Divine Person of the Son.

The Antiochene School was based in Antioch, Syria, and it was in this city that Jesus' followers were first called "Christians." St. Peter was its first bishop before moving on to Rome. Though still spiritual in its exposition of Scripture, this school tended to focus more on the literal and historical








St. Cyril of Alexandria. Employing the language of Cyril, the Alexandrian school gave special status to the divinity of Christ and the unity of his person.

meanings of the Scriptures. In its theological language and discipline, some people within the Antiochene School tended to isolate Christ's human and divine natures to the detriment of the unity of the two natures in the Person of Christ. St. John Chrysostom and Nestorius are the most famous figures of this school, the former being one of the great Church Fathers; the latter, a condemned heretic.

The following pages will examine a number of Christological heresies, as well as dogmatic and sacramental heresies, and the Church's response to these troubles. The first of these heresies is the most pervasive and perhaps most infamous: Arianism.

## CHRISTOLOGICAL HERESIES

### ARIANISM (Fourth Century)

The whole world groaned and marveled to find itself Arian. (St. Jerome, *The Dialogue Against the Luciferians*, quoted in "A meditation for Pentecost," *America*, vol. 186 no. 16, May 13, 2002)

Arius (ca. 250-336) was a priest in Alexandria who studied in Antioch. He was an extremely charismatic individual and attracted huge crowds of listeners and devotees on account of his intellectual and rhetorical gifts. He was ordained a priest in 310 and became a pastor of a parish in Alexandria. His study of Origen and Neo-Platonism together with his familiarity with Gnosticism prepared the way for his erroneous interpretation of Christ's relation to the Father.

Using Neo-Platonism and scriptural passages, Arius claimed that Jesus Christ is neither God nor equal to the Father. For example, certain passages of the Gospel of St. John clearly maintain that Christ was sent by the Father and only did the will of the Father. Arius erroneously interpreted passages such as these to mean that Christ was not equal to the Father.

Nevertheless, Arius argued that Christ was an exceptional creature and was raised to the level of "Son of God" because of his heroic fidelity to the Father's will and his sublime holiness. Neo-Platonic thought held that God is a radically transcendent supreme "being" whose nature is incommunicable. This belief is certainly consistent with Christianity. However, the neo-Platonic God was absolutely One, and neo-Platonists could not conceive that anything emanating from the One could be equal to the One. This is at the root of the Arian heresy and its denial of Christ's divinity. This issue of the relationship between God the Father and God the Son was resolved by the Church, as is well addressed in the Athanasian Creed: "He is equal to the Father in his divinity / but inferior to the Father in his humanity" (n. 31). Christ, according to his divine nature, is equal to the Father, and, according to his human nature, he is inferior to the father. It would take a few centuries to surmount all the theological difficulties connected to Arianism.

Arius reduced Jesus Christ to the status of a creature of the Father, although above every creature in dignity and perfection. The Son of God, the *logos*, was created before the world began and served as a vehicle to bring the rest of creation into existence. This heresy was an extremely serious threat to Christianity because the rejection of Christ's divinity invariably leads to a rejection of virtually all of the Church's central tenets, especially her doctrine on the Trinity and the Redemption. For this reason, Arius was responsible for ushering in the greatest doctrinal crisis that the Church would experience until the sixteenth century.

As Arius' theology stirred up the suspicions of certain Catholic faithful, the bishop of Alexandria—along with one hundred other North African bishops—asked for a detailed explanation of his thoughts on Christ's divinity. A synod of African bishops condemned Arianism in the year 320 and urged Arius to recant his teachings, but he refused, leaving Egypt to settle in Caesarea. Eventually his ideas spread throughout the East to such an extent that the Church's unity was in great peril. It





was vital for the Church to give clarity on the issue of Christ's divinity since the whole deposit of Faith depended on Christ being divine.

After a long career advocating the heresy identified with him, Arius died suddenly in 336 in the streets of Constantinople, just before being named the city's new patriarch and taking possession of that see. As will be seen throughout the Church's history, disobedience to the teaching authority of the Church will often mushroom into a crisis for the entire Church. Had Arius remained obedient to his bishop in 320, one of the worst theological firestorms in history could have been avoided.

The Church as a whole was to become intimately involved in the matter. Arianism found a wide following, and eventually spread to the entire Eastern Church, part of the Western church, and the Germanic tribes. Its impact was large and lasting.

## THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

The whole world has gone Arian; then it is Athanasius against the world.
(St. Athanasius on the pervasiveness of the Arian heresy)



St. Athanasius marshaled the necessary orthodox forces to defeat the Arian heresy in the Church.

St. Athanasius (ca. 296-373) marshaled the necessary orthodox forces to defeat the Arian heresy in the Church. His task was not easy, but St. Athanasius was a persistent and fearless man who would not be silenced. When almost the entire Eastern Church had fallen to the Arians, St. Athanasius still raised his voice to testify to the truth. Even after at least five forced exiles, he was not deterred. The process by which the Church determined her own teaching regarding the divinity of Christ took time, and it was a road with many twists and turns. This was not just an academic dispute. Rather, it was a fight for the heart and soul of Christianity. The Arians used all the tools at their disposal—threats, beatings, exile, even murder—to gain the upper hand.

The Emperor Constantine pushed for a General Council at Nicaea in 325. He was anxious to promote unity in the Empire through a general adherence to Christianity, which was then divided over Arianism. Constantine even paid for the traveling expenses of the western Bishops to secure their involvement and resolve the problem promptly. At the Council of Nicaea, Constantine opened the first session and played the important role of peacemaker between the two factions, Arian and Catholic, though it is doubtful that he understood all the subtleties involved in the discussions on the divinity of Christ.

This was the first of the great ecumenical councils that would be convened over the next few centuries to deliberate, pray, and make pronouncements about the beliefs of the Church in light of contemporary heresies. The ecumenical councils of the first eight centuries are held in the greatest esteem because they brought together bishops from the entire Christian world, East and West. The Council of Nicaea opened with 250 bishops present and ended with 318.

This First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325) was especially meaningful since only twelve years prior, the Roman Empire had granted toleration to Christianity after nearly 300 years of persecutions. There were many bishops in attendance who bore physical scars that they had suffered for their Faith during the persecutions under Diocletian, the worst of all the persecutions.



All but two Bishops signed the Nicene Creed, and these two were exiled by the emperor.

The discussions and proceedings at Nicaea were held primarily in Greek, as Nicaea was just outside Constantinople in the East, and the Greek language was considered the language of learning of that period. It was also the language of the New Testament.

At the beginning of the council, the pope led and guided the councils in their deliberations through his legates. In the case of the Council of Nicaea, Pope St. Sylvester I was too old and infirm to travel. Bishop Hosius of Cordova, Spain, represented Pope St. Sylvester I, who happened to be a close friend of the emperor.

St. Athanasius proposed a statement of Catholic belief regarding the divinity of Christ that included the Greek term *homoousios* (Latin, *consubstantialis*), which means "of the same essence or substance." The outcome was the Nicene Creed, the first solemn declaration of Catholic teaching which proclaimed more fully the central truths of Christianity.

The Church utilized Greek philosophy as a tool to better explain the mystery of Jesus Christ and his mission in the world. Specific Greek terms carried very important meanings in terms of explaining Christian belief. For example, Greek thought supplied valuable terms for "person," *hypostasis* (literally "responds to whom") and "substance," *ousia* ("responds to what"). These philosophical words provided a language that distinguished substance from person and nature





from person. Although a philosophical analysis of person and substance is beyond the scope of this book, suffice it to say that a person responds to the individuality (the "who") of a natural being, whereas substance and nature define essentially what the being is. For example, what am I? I am a man (my nature and substance). Who am I? I am Joe (my person).

The Church, through her teaching and interpretative role under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the final arbiter of all such matters regarding the terminology used for her statements. Two camps emerged from the Council of Nicaea: the *homoousians* (meaning "identical *ousia*" and representing the orthodox position), and the *homoiousians* (meaning "similar *ousia*" and representing the Arian position). Though the council concluded with the Nicene Creed, Arianism still lingered in various forms of Semi-Arianism, and later on re-emerged.

All but two Bishops signed the Nicene Creed, and these two were exiled by the emperor, who supported the creed. The Arian camp included Eusebius of Nicomedia (not to be confused with the Eusebius of Caesarea who wrote the first history of the Church, *Ecclesiastical History*), an important bishop who was favored by Constantine's sister Constantia. Though Eusebius of Nicomedia signed the Nicene Creed, he had only signed under pressure from the emperor, and he was exiled within months for giving aid and support to the Arians.

Emperor Constantine, however, reversed course in 328 and permitted Eusebius of Nicomedia and Arius to return. Leaders of the Nicene party who supported the orthodox position were then forced into exile. This included St. Athanasius, who fled in 336 from his diocese in Alexandria to Trier. In 336 the emperor decided that Arius would be recognized as the bearer of the orthodox position, when Arius suddenly died in Constantinople.

A dizzying array of councils was convened in the East and West over the next twenty-five years. When the councils functioned freely, they chose the Nicene Creed. However, when they operated under duress (the bishops were at times threatened with exile or torture), the bishops—even Bishop Hosius, and St. Hilary of Poitiers—sometimes signed Arian statements (Hosius was beaten and whipped when he was one hundred years old, and Pope Liberius, also in old age, was forced into exile). When these bishops returned to their dioceses from the forced councils, they would renounce the heresy and profess the Nicene Creed.

When Emperor Constantine died in 337, the Arian Eusebius of Nicomedia, who had become the patriarch of Constantinople, baptized him on his deathbed. Of Constantine's three sons, one was Arian and the other two were orthodox Catholic.



The image of the Arian Emperor Constantius II is shown on this gold coin minted in Nicomedia in 337-361.

The East succumbed to Arianism under Constantius, and after Constans I, who controlled the West, was murdered in 350, Constantius eventually became the sole emperor. The West soon also fell into heresy. Many forms of Arianism were found around this time including: (1) an extreme party called the Anomoeans (from the Greek *anhomoios*, meaning "dissimilar") who stressed the essential difference between the Father and the Son; (2) a Scriptural purist party known as the Homoeans (Greek *homoios*, meaning "similar") who rejected any use of the word *homoousius* because it does not appear in the Bible; and, (3) a variety of Semi-Arian groups who stressed the differences and similarities between the Father and the Son with the Greek term *homoiousios* ("similar substance").

Joint synods, one in the West and one in the East, were convoked in 359 at Seleucia and Ariminum under the emperor's influence, and they approved an Arian statement. It was at this time that St. Jerome made his famous statement at the apparent triumph of Arianism: "The whole world groaned and marveled to find itself Arian."

This heretical triumph was short-lived. Emperor Constantius died in 361, and the Council of Paris affirmed the Nicene Creed. The Semi-Arians returned to the Catholic fold after seeing the threat that Arianism posed. After a short term of exile imposed upon him by Emperor Julian the Apostate, St. Athanasius returned to Alexandria, where he labored for the remaining six years of his life among his people. During his lifetime St. Athanasius wrote many books and tracts in defense of the Nicene Creed and against Arianism. The Council of Constantinople (381) reaffirmed the Nicene Creed, which was St. Athanasius' life-long work. His feast day is celebrated on May 2.

## THE NICENE-CONSTANTINOPOLITAN CREED

I believe in one God, / the Father, the Almighty, / maker of heaven and earth, / of all that is seen and unseen. / I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, / the only Son of God, / eternally begotten of the Father, / God from God, Light from Light, / true God from true God, / begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father. / Through him all things were made. / For us men and for our salvation / he came down from heaven: / by the power of the Holy Spirit / he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man. / For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; / he suffered, died, and was buried. / On the third day he rose again / in fulfillment of the Scriptures; / he ascended into heaven / and is seated at the right hand of the Father. / He will come again in glory / to judge the living and the dead, / and his kingdom will have no end. / I believe in the Holy Spirit, / the Lord, the giver of life, / who proceeds from the Father and the Son. / With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. / He has spoken through the Prophets. / I believe in one, holy, catholic, / and apostolic Church. / I acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. / I look for the resurrection of the dead, / and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed has its origins in the similar, though shorter, Nicene Creed which was the decisive document of the first ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325) in support of the orthodox Faith of the Church against Arianism. This longer form of the Nicene Creed came out of the Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381). Though the creed was probably not written at the council, it gained support in opposition to heresy. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed appears to have been the baptismal creed in use in Constantinople at the time.

The chief differences between the Nicene and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creeds are that the latter is longer in three distinct places: (1) the second section concerning the Son; (2) the third section concerning the Holy Spirit; and (3) the last section, regarding the Church, Baptism, the forgiveness of sins, and the Resurrection. Also, the phrase from the Nicene Creed "from the substance of the Father," a key part of the discussion regarding the *homoousios*, is absent in the later creed.

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is recited as the Profession of Faith on most Sundays immediately following the homily in the Mass. Bear in mind that the exact wording of the creed is important because of its theological complexity, opposition to heresy, historical continuity, and the unity that it provides throughout the Church.

The Nicene and Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creeds represent an area of agreement and unity for both East and West as the summation of the work of the first two ecumenical councils. A number of the Reformation era churches also recognize its authority, particularly the Lutheran and Anglican churches.





## ST. HILARY OF POITIERS: "THE ATHANASIUS OF THE WEST"

**Impart to us, then, the meaning of the words of Scripture and the light to understand it, with reverence for the doctrine and confidence in its truth. . . . May we have the grace, in the face of heretics who deny you, to honor you as God, who is not alone, and to proclaim this as truth. (St. Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate*, Lib. 1, 37-38: PL 10, 48-49)**

St. Hilary of Poitiers (d. ca. 375-367/8) was a Latin Church Father during the period of the Arian heresy, and the leading Latin theologian of his day. St. Hilary ardently defended orthodox teaching against the Arians, and for this he is often called the "Athanasius of the West." Rather than merely condemning all heretics without exception, St. Hilary tried to explain to some (especially many of the Semi-Arians who were moving toward reconciliation with the Catholic Church) that often many of their disagreements were merely semantic and that the ideas were actually the same. The author of many brilliant theological texts, St. Hilary was named a Doctor of the Church by Pope Bl. Pius IX in 1851; his feast day is celebrated on January 13.

## THE THREE CAPPADOCIANS

The following three Greek Fathers were central figures in the defeat of Arianism in the East: St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, and St. Gregory of Nyssa. Cappadocia lies on the Anatolian Plateau on the eastern edge of Asia Minor. Today most of Cappadocia is part of Turkey.

St. Basil became Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, and his brother St. Gregory became Bishop of Nyssa. (A sister was also a saint, St. Macrina, and another brother became a bishop.) St. Gregory of Nazianzus was the son of a bishop. The fruit of their life-long work against Arianism came at the Council of Constantinople (381) where it was decisively defeated. All three appear to have been uniquely influenced by Origen, and all of them focused their studies and reflections on the Holy Spirit.

## ST. BASIL THE GREAT



St. Basil the Great (ca. 330-379) looms over Eastern Christianity as St. Augustine does in the West. St. Basil was one of ten children whose parents had suffered under the persecutions of Galerius. He received an excellent education, which he put into the service of the Church. St. Basil is marked by his strong intellect combined with a deep personal holiness and keen administrative abilities.

He settled at Neocaesarea in 358, where he lived as a hermit while working with St. Gregory of Nazianzus in spreading the Faith. St. Basil's ascetical life set the example for the structure and spirit of Eastern monasticism. Unlike in the West, monasticism in the East never fractured into new orders and rules but has remained together as an organic whole under St. Basil's Rule.

As the Bishop of Caesarea, St. Basil encountered opposition from the emperors and other churchmen regarding Arianism. He remained a staunch defender of orthodoxy against the heresies of his time. His work as Bishop of Caesarea extended beyond the intellectual realm of theological debate. St. Basil worked tirelessly for clerical rights, and he saw to it that his priests were rigorously and properly trained. As leader of a great diocese, he strove to

care for the material and spiritual needs of the Christian laity. In one of his most important acts as Bishop, a system of hospitals and social service institutions was built up to serve the poor.

Finally, the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil was authored by him. It was the chief liturgy of the Eastern Churches, though in successive centuries the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom became more widely celebrated outside Lent. The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil has also greatly influenced the composition of Eucharistic Prayer IV as in use in the Roman Missal of the Catholic Church. His feast day is celebrated on January 2.

## ST. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, "THE THEOLOGIAN"

> Different men have different names, which they owe to their parents or to themselves, that is, to their own pursuits and achievements. But our [Sts. Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus] great pursuit, the great name we wanted, was to be Christian, to be called Christians. (St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 43, *in laudem Basilii Magni*)

St. Gregory of Nazianzus (329/30-389/90), like St. Basil, enjoyed the benefits of a philosophical education at Athens. He has often been given the title "The Theologian" because of his writings and teachings. Like St. Basil, he led a rigorous ascetical life and was elevated to the episcopacy at Sasima around 372.

Also like St. Basil, St. Gregory devoted much of his theological writing to the topic of the Holy Spirit. His Five Theological Orations expound upon the third Person of the Trinity.

St. Gregory played an important role at the Council of Constantinople in 381. Through his preaching in the city, he helped to bring the Arians back to the Nicene Faith. The emperor even appointed him Patriarch of Constantinople, but St. Gregory served less than a year before returning to his native Cappadocia. He shares his feast day with his life-long friend St. Basil on January 2.

## ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA

St. Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 330 - ca. 395), the younger brother of St. Basil, planned an ecclesiastical career after a short time as a rhetorician. Deeply opposed to the Arian beliefs, St. Gregory was forced into exile by the Arian Emperor Valens, a fate common to many of his brother bishops who espoused the Nicene Creed.

St. Gregory utilized neo-Platonic philosophy in his theological work, which served as an important tool for his teaching. He also defended the popular title *Theotokos* for Mary. *Theotokos* is Greek for "Mother of God" (literally, "the one who gave birth to God"). His feast day is celebrated on March 9.

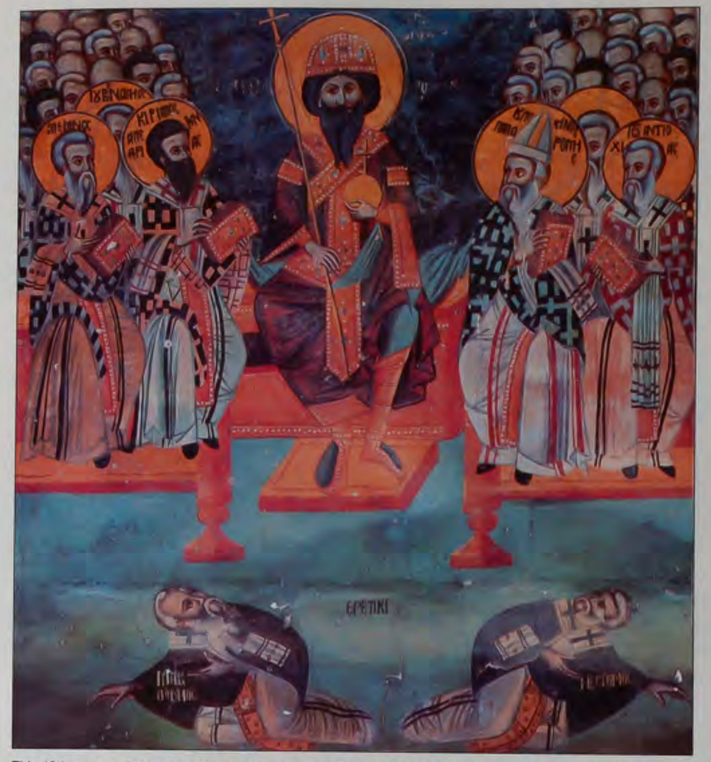
## APOLLINARIANISM (ca. 360-381)

Apollinaris (ca. 310-390) is an example of how even a thoughtful and conscientious Christian thinker, loyal to the Church, could easily develop an erroneous theology by refusing to accept the Church's authority. Apollinaris ardently supported orthodox positions, especially against the Arians, but his unguided fervor led him into heresy. Originally from Beirut and raised to the episcopacy around 360, he was a close friend of St. Athanasius.

Though he affirmed that Christ had a human body, Apollinaris denied the existence of a human mind and will in Christ as a misguided defensive measure against Arianism. Therefore, it would follow that Christ did not live a complete human life as a man. This is incompatible with the Church's teaching that Christ is true God and true man. Beginning with councils in Rome from 374-380, Apollinarianism was declared erroneous. The Second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (381) specifically condemned this heresy, and the state prohibited adherence to it as well.







This 16th century fresco in a Cyprus church shows Emperor Theodosius II exiling Nestorius and another heretic during the Third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus in 431.

## NESTORIANISM (ca. 351 - ca. 451)

Nestorius became the Patriarch of Constantinople through the intervention of Emperor Theodosius II in 428. In an attempt to escape Apollinarianism, Nestorius maintained that Christ was the unity of a divine Person and a human person in an effort to emphasize his full divinity and full humanity. He attempted to eliminate the title *Theotokos* (bearer of God) to avoid falling into Apollinarianism. The term *Theotokos* had always before been used in orthodox circles, and it was gaining acceptance in popular culture as a devotion to Mary. (In 1969 Pope Paul VI declared the feast of *Theotokos* (*Mary, Mother of God*) to be observed in the West on January 1, a holy day of obligation.) Nestorius professed that though Mary was the Mother of Christ, she was not the Mother of God. Nestorius defended his rejection of this Marian title by his doctrine that Jesus Christ is the result of the union of two separate persons, one man and one God.

The orthodox position taught that Jesus Christ is one Person with two natures, human and divine. St. Cyril of Alexandria described the relationship of the two natures as the Hypostatic Union, a

doctrine that was formally accepted by the Church at the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451). The Definition of Chalcedon was a declaration of Catholic teaching that reaffirmed the Nicene and Nicene-Constantinople Creeds and rejected Nestorianism.

St. Cyril and Pope St. Celestine rejected as heretical the teachings of Nestorius in August 430 at a council in Rome. Pope St. Celestine also charged St. Cyril with the task of dealing with the Nestorian heresy. Legates delivered to Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, a set of twelve anathemas on December 7, 430. Nestorius was asked to repudiate his teachings within ten days.

Since Nestorius did not recant, Emperor Theodosius II called the Third Ecumenical Council at Ephesus (431) the following summer, where the council condemned Nestorius' teachings and declared Mary as the true Mother of God (*Theotokos*). The emperor accepted its decision, and Nestorius was removed as patriarch and sent to a monastery. So overjoyed were the people over this pronouncement that they carried the council fathers on their shoulders in great jubilation. In 435, the emperor ordered Nestorius' books to be burned, and in 436 Nestorius was banished to Egypt where he died.

## MONOPHYSITISM (400s-600s)

Monophysitism claimed that there is only one nature in Christ, and not two, as the definition of the Council of Chalcedon (451) would state. The name is derived from the Greek *monos* (alone, single) and *physis* (nature) that together mean "only one nature." This concept was developed in the Alexandrian school, and may be understood in part to be a reaction to Nestorianism. It was a way of preserving the theological teaching of Christ's Divinity—the human nature of Christ would be "incorporated" into the Divine Nature. This particular heresy took on a various number of forms and attracted those who rejected the two-nature definition given at Chalcedon.

One of these erroneous doctrines was Eutychianism, initiated by Eutyches. Eutyches (ca. 378-454) was the head of an important monastery in Constantinople. He held that there was only one nature in Christ after the Incarnation, and he denied that Christ's humanity was identical with that of a man. For Eutyches, Christ's nature had the unique quality of being joined to the Divine Nature. He claimed that the human nature of Christ was, as it were, absorbed into the Divine Nature as a drop of water is absorbed into an ocean. His friendship with the influential eunuch Chrysaphius at the court of the emperor seems to have offered him some protection, as well as a hearing before Pope St. Leo the Great, before his teaching was finally condemned at the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451).

Pope St. Leo was steeped in the heretical challenges threatening the Church. His support was sought by all sides involved in the Monophysite controversy. At the Council of Chalcedon (451), whose primary task was handling Monophysitism, St. Leo's legates spoke first, and his *Tome* (449) was accepted as the orthodox position by the ecumenical council. It declared that Jesus Christ was the God-man, one Person with two natures. Thereafter it was said, "Peter has spoken through Leo."

The cumulative effect of Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, and Monophysitism was a tremendous weakening of the unity of the Empire in the East. Many Christians resented the power of the emperor and his attempts to force theological unity. A number of Christians broke away from the Church and became known as members of the Oriental Orthodox Church. For centuries several groups adhered to the one nature heresy of Monophysitism: the Coptic/Egyptian Orthodox, the Abyssinians (Ethiopian Orthodox), and the Syrian Orthodox. Recent officially approved common declarations of faith between the Roman Catholic Church and these churches have concluded that they no longer hold to the Monophysite heresy.

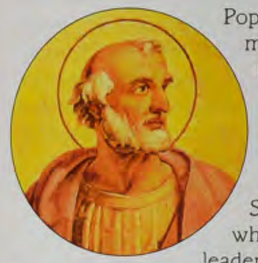




## GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR: "APOSTLE OF ARMENIA"

Most of the faithful of the Church in Armenia also broke away over this issue of Monophysitism, but it is not in full communion with the other Oriental Orthodox churches. (There is, however, a segment of Armenians that is still in communion with Rome with its own eastern Catholic rite of the Chaldean tradition.) Armenia has the distinction of being the first nation to officially become Christian in 314. Bishop Gregory the Illuminator (ca. 257-337) brought Christianity to the Armenian king Tiridates III (king 228?-330), which initiated the Christianization of the Armenian people. This model of baptizing the king followed by the general population was a model often emulated in the decades and centuries following.

## POPE ST. LEO THE GREAT



Pope St. Leo I (d. 461) consolidated papal power through a variety of means based upon Jesus Christ's strong endorsement of the papacy transmitted through the New Testament. (Mt 16:18: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.") With the firm conviction of God's will and authority behind the Chair of St. Peter, he secured a rescript from Emperor Valentinian III that acknowledged papal jurisdiction in the West.

St. Leo also took very bold positions *vis-à-vis* the barbarian invaders, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. His leadership regarding the heresies of the time and dealings with the barbarians, as well as his administration in the Church earned St. Leo the title "the Great." His pontificate gave great moral authority and prestige to the papacy.

St. Leo's writings in Latin have been lauded for their clarity and precision, particularly at a time when the response to heresies required the use of precise language. St. Leo did not speak Greek and had to rely on translations to communicate with the East. This absence of a common language contributed to a strained relationship between the West and the East. In addition to being considered a Father of the Church, St. Leo has also been given the title Doctor of the Church, and his feast day is celebrated on November 10.

## MONOTHELITISM (600s)

Monothelitism is the doctrine that professes the existence of only one will in Christ but still maintains that he has two natures. The name is derived from the Greek *monos* (alone, single) and *thelos* (one who wills). This heresy originated not with a churchman, but with the emperor. The tenets of Monothelitism were proposed in 624 as part of a conciliatory document to reconcile the Monophysites with the Church. Emperor Heraclius supported the document. Heraclius' predecessor, Emperor Justinian I, had deeply wounded the unity of the Empire by persecuting the Monophysites, and Heraclius sought to repair that damage. At that time the Empire was facing a growing Persian threat, and Heraclius wanted the Empire to be united religiously to face the Persians. Asia Minor and Palestine, which bordered Persia, were at odds with each other because of these religious controversies, and the emperor needed to know that the entire Empire would work together to defeat the Persians. He thought that Monothelitism would help to maintain unity.

Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople approved the formula, though Sophronius (ca. 560-638), the Patriarch of Jerusalem, opposed it. Patriarch Sergius then wrote to Pope Honorius to clarify the

matter. The pope approved of Sergius' handling of the matter and used the term "one will" in his reply, which the patriarch and emperor then quoted in the official document of Monothelitism known as the *Ecthesis* in 638. Two subsequent councils at Constantinople in 638 and 639, though not ecumenical, accepted the *Ecthesis* for the Eastern Church. The local councils confirmed that Patriarch Sergius had successfully won over a number of the Monophysites.

However, the next three papal successors to Honorious—Severinus, John IV, and Theodore I—all condemned Monothelitism and the *Ecthesis*. The Sixth Ecumenical Council of the Church (680-681)—the third at Constantinople—condemned the heresy and even anathematized Pope Honorius.

Pope Honorius' use of the term "one will" in an unguarded letter has often been cited as an example of papal fallibility. However, his private reply to a concern of only the Eastern Church does not meet the conditions for infallibility. In this case the pope did not define a doctrine for the entire, universal Church, nor was it the pope's intention to descend into theological details on the "wills" in Christ. He could very well have meant simply that Christ's will was in faithful conformity with the will of His Father. The incident does indicate, once again, that the other churches, even the patriarch in Constantinople, would appeal to the papacy to settle theological questions.

In essence, Monothelitism appealed to the Monophysites because it substituted the word "will" for "nature." The Church developed precise terminology when referring to will and nature made clear by Greek philosophical language. The official teaching stood with Jesus being a divine Person but with a human and divine nature, as well as having two wills—one divine and the other human. As was the case in the previous Christological heresies, Christ's humanity, as well as his divinity, was theologically called into question.

## DOGMATIC AND SACRAMENTAL HERESIES

### DONATISM (311-411)

Donatism rejected the validity of sacraments celebrated by priests and bishops who had formerly betrayed their faith. This schism in the Church in Africa began around 311 when Bishop Caecilian of Carthage was ordained by Bishop Felix of Aptunga, who had been a *traditor* during Diocletian's persecution. (A *traditor* was any early Christian who renounced the Christian Faith during the Roman persecutions.) The Donatists rejected the validity of Bishop Caecilian's ordination because of the sin of being a *traditor*. The heresy gets its name from Donatus, who was a bishop elected in opposition to the legitimate one.

Moreover, the Donatists claimed that the Church of the saints must remain holy and free from sin and even from those who have sinned. Sinful priests and bishops, the Donatists maintained, were incapable of validly celebrating the Sacraments. Indeed, the Donatists re-baptized persons who joined them because they did not consider the Sacrament valid except in their own circle. The Donatists went so far as to identify the true Church with only themselves.

St. Augustine was their chief opponent. He developed the Catholic position that Christ is the true minister of every Sacrament, even if the person celebrating the Sacrament is in a state of sin. St. Augustine separated the issue of worthiness on the part of the priest from the validity and efficacy of the Sacrament.

The Donatists were finally suppressed by the state in 411, though they were never fully defeated until Islam destroyed the Church in Africa in the seventh and eighth centuries.





### PELAGIANISM (late 300s-431)

Pelagianism advocated a theological position in which man can be redeemed and sanctified without grace. Specifically, it denied the existence of original sin as well as its transmission into the human family. According to this opinion, the sacraments are superfluous since salvation and holiness could be solely achieved through mere human endeavor.

This heresy was started by Pelagius, an English monk, who attracted several other defenders of these positions. They included Celestius and Julian of Eclanum; the latter engaged St. Augustine in a bitter and protracted debate that ended only with the death of St. Augustine in 430.

Pelagius and Celestius were repeatedly condemned at two councils in Carthage and Milevis in 416, and they were eventually excommunicated by Pope St. Innocent I (410-17). The Council of Carthage of May 1, 418 issued a teaching that adopted St. Augustine's positions on the Fall and original sin, which subsequently became the teaching of the Church. Emperor Honorius denounced the Pelagians on April 30, 418.

Nothing is known of what became of Pelagius, but Celestius appealed to Nestorius for support in 429 with the hope of gaining favor with Pope St. Celestine I. The Council of Ephesus (431) condemned Pelagianism yet again. Though this heresy still had some following in Britain, it eventually died out. However, the issues surrounding the Fall, original sin, and grace reappeared during the Middle Ages and again at the time of the Reformation (sixteenth century).

### ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

**I sought a way to gain the strength which I needed to enjoy you [God]. But I did not find it until I embraced the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who is above all, God blessed for ever. (St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book VII)**



St. Augustine (354-430) was perhaps the greatest Father of the Church. He fulfilled many roles: pastor, penitent, monk, preacher, bishop, teacher, and theologian. He is one of the greatest theologians of the Catholic Church. For almost a thousand years, he was the dominant figure in Catholic thought. No other theologian rivaled St. Augustine's importance until the thirteenth century when St. Thomas Aquinas would make his mark.

Born in Thagaste in Northern Africa (modern Souk-Ahras, Algeria) to a pagan father and a Christian mother, St. Monica, St. Augustine lived a dissolute life for many years before coming to the Faith. St. Augustine received a good education in the Latin classics and in rhetoric, though his Northern African accent was often mocked in Rome.

The intense attractions of both lust and heresy proved to be very powerful for St. Augustine. For this reason, even after more than a thousand years, his conversion story has not lost its appeal. He once prayed, "Lord, give me chastity and continence, but not yet" (*Confessions*, Book VIII.VIII). At 17 he cohabitated with a woman, and they later had a son, Adeodatus, who died in 389. Around the age of 20, St. Augustine also became deeply involved with the heresy of Manichæism.

## ST. AUGUSTINE AND THE PEAR TREE



St. Augustine sought to understand the reason he committed this sin, having "no inducement to evil but the evil itself."

One reason that St. Augustine's work *Confessions* is such an engaging and insightful book is the way he weaves events from his life together with reflections on human nature. One such incident comes from a retelling of a childhood event. St. Augustine recalls how as a child he and a group of friends, hanging out in the street late one night, decided to steal the fruit of a neighbor's pear tree. St. Augustine remembers that he did not steal the fruit because he was hungry, but because "it was not permitted." The satisfaction of stealing the fruit, the "theft and sin itself," was what he and his friends really desired, and so, after barely tasting the stolen fruit themselves, he and his friends threw the remaining pears to some hogs.

St. Augustine sought to understand the reason he committed this sin, having "no inducement to evil but the evil itself." In this incident, he recognizes something fundamentally wrong with the deep impulses of human nature: "It was foul, and I loved it. I loved to perish. I loved my own error—not that for which I erred, but the error itself."

The event shows that any act of sin, no matter how small, reflects a person's rebellious nature against God, turning away from Him. Because of fallen human nature, St. Augustine concluded, people are naturally inclined to sin and are all in need of the grace of Christ in order to overcome this weakness and turn ourselves back towards God.





Around the year 375, St. Augustine taught rhetoric in Thagaste. In 383 he moved to Rome and eventually Milan, where he continued his teaching career. St. Augustine was under tremendous stress not long after arriving in Italy: he lost his belief in Manichæism, and he separated from his mistress after many years of being together. It was at this same time, however, that he found great intellectual stimulation through a deeper introduction to neo-Platonic philosophy and the moving and edifying preaching of St. Ambrose.

In July 386, St. Augustine had a conversion experience while in a garden in Milan. He heard a voice from a young boy singing, "*Tolle et lege*," ("Take and read"). St. Augustine obeyed, picked up the Scriptures, and turned to a passage without looking. In Romans 13:13 he found in St. Paul's words comfort and direction for his life: "Let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy." St. Augustine resolved at this time to convert to the Catholic Faith and to abandon his sinful life and embark upon the road to holiness. From this point on, St. Augustine lived a life that is summarized by his constant affirmation: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee, O Lord" (*Confessions*, Book I.1).

At the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday of 387, St. Augustine and his son Adeodatus were baptized by St. Ambrose, but misfortune followed swiftly. In 388 his mother St. Monica, who had prayed for her son's conversion her entire life, died, and Adeodatus died the next year.

Then St. Augustine returned to Thagaste, where he established a monastic community dedicated to prayer and penance. In 391 he was seized by the people on a visit to Hippo Regius and ordained a priest by Bishop Valerius. By 395 he had been ordained to the episcopacy and became coadjutor for Valerius, and subsequently succeeded Valerius as Bishop of Hippo. St. Augustine's ordination and elevation to the office of bishop were very controversial, especially in view of his former life.



St. Augustine's ordination and elevation to the office of bishop were very controversial.

St. Augustine's writings are voluminous. They include a wide range of themes that delve into almost every conceivable issue of the time. Not only does he address the heresies of his day—the Manicheans, Donatists, Pelagians, and Arians—he also defends Christianity from pagan attackers who blamed the religion for Rome's enfeeblement and collapse. St. Augustine's two most important works are the *Confessions* and *City of God*, the latter of which was his answer to the pagan charges and the barbarian invasions. *Confessions* is St. Augustine's autobiography of his life and conversion.

In *City of God* St. Augustine identifies two cities, one earthly and the other heavenly. The earthly city reflects the world, and St. Augustine focuses on the failures of the old Republic before turning to the Empire's situation under a Christian emperor. St. Augustine bemoans the violence and evils present in the world. The Church, though made up of sinful members, represents the forgiveness and hope that the heavenly city offers. Much of this text, in addition to St. Augustine's other contributions, helped to usher in the Medieval spirit toward religion, the world, and the Church.

St. Augustine's theology included works that dealt with the Trinity, grace, the Fall and original sin, repentance, the sacraments, predestination, and atonement. St. Augustine's theology and writings came to be adopted as the official teaching of the Church. For instance, his discussion on the relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit laid the essential groundwork for the addition of



While in a garden in Milan, St. Augustine heard a voice from a young boy singing, "*Tolle et lege*," ("Take and read"). In St. Paul's words he found comfort and direction for his life.

the *Filioque* clause expressing the double procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son (cf. Chapter 7) to the Nicene Creed during the Medieval period.

St. Augustine's spirit for the ascetical life is found throughout his rule. A number of monastic orders adopted his rule beginning in the eleventh century. They include the Augustinian Canons, the Augustinian Hermits and Friars, the Dominicans, and the Servites, as well as the Visitation and Ursuline nuns.

Though St. Augustine was born shortly after the Edict of Milan (313), he lived in a tumultuous age for the Church and for Roman society. Intransigent heresies tore at the unity of the Church, and the Empire was well along the path to oblivion in the temporal order. As St. Augustine lay dying in Hippo, the Vandals were destroying the city, and other Germanic tribes were invading throughout the Roman Empire. The entire temporal, social, and economic order that St. Augustine knew was abruptly ending. St. Augustine set the theological tone in the West, and his philosophy and theology dominated Christian thought for some eight hundred years, until the thirteenth century, when Scholasticism and St. Thomas Aquinas would emerge, enriching the philosophy and theology of St. Augustine. St. Augustine's feast day is celebrated on August 28.





## PART V

# Christianity: Official Religion of the Roman Empire

The purpose of this section is not to discuss the reign of the Roman emperors, but rather to understand the ways in which the Church-State relationship developed and shaped the Church. The dominant theme in this relationship is the union of the throne of the Empire and the altar of the Church. For political reasons, the State wanted religious unity and uniformity. The Church in the East, influenced by the growing power of the patriarch of Constantinople under the strong influence of the emperor, tended to accept a role for the Church which was subservient to the interests of the State. This dual role of head of State and leader of the Church on the part of the emperor was called caesaropapism. The emperor played a major role in selecting the patriarch of Constantinople, who in turn was beholden to the emperor.

The papacy wanted a good, working relationship with the State, as it asserted its divine jurisdiction over spiritual matters. As St. Ambrose demonstrated, the Church in the West did not allow anyone, not even emperors, to be above the Law of Christ.

Yet Constantine's abandonment of Rome left the papacy with temporal power in the West. If the papacy had not taken up the reigns of temporal power in Rome and in the West, the barbarians would have found absolutely no one to stop their attacks. When the State collapsed in the West, the papacy was there to defend and preserve the Faith and culture of the people.



The Christogram symbol (Chi-Rho), which Constantine carried into his battle with Maxentius, appeared on Roman coins after the Edict of Milan (313).

## CONSTANTINE'S ASCENDANCY

Constantine and Licinius ruled the Empire after the Edict of Milan (313), though Licinius was not faithful to his promised religious toleration. Around 321 Licinius began a persecution directed at the bishops and clergy, and in 324 he openly declared war against Constantine. Licinius was defeated, thus making possible religious toleration throughout the Empire.

Constantine increasingly supported Christianity as the years passed. Through law and his own actions, he set the tone: priests and churches were freed from taxation, individual churches were permitted to receive donations, work on Sunday was forbidden, and crucifixion as a state form of execution was ended. Constantine himself withdrew from participation in the pagan rites and ceremonies to which the emperors had always been connected.

Constantine's other great influence was to found the city of Constantinople on the site of the Greek city of Byzantium in 330. On May 11, 330 the city was officially dedicated under Christian and pagan rites. Constantinople was dedicated to the protection of Mary under the title of *Theotokos*. The city's natural defenses protected it for over a thousand years until it fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453.

After Constantine moved the capital of the Empire to Byzantium along the Bosporus Straits in 330, economic, cultural, and linguistic power shifted. The ruling city of the Roman Empire did not speak Latin but Greek. Byzantium, as the new Eastern Empire came to be known, was wealthier and more heavily populated and looked upon Italy and the West as backward and poor. During that period, knowledge of the Greek language was becoming less common in the West, adding to the cultural breach between East and West. Not until the Renaissance did the West take a renewed interest in Greek and the access to the great body of ancient knowledge it provided.

On his deathbed on May 22, 337, Constantine was baptized by an Arian bishop. The Church in the East proclaimed him a saint; the Church in the West had not concurred. Constantine did not embody the totality of the Christian principles necessary for such an important position as emperor, though Constantine does carry the title "the Great" in the West. Constantine convicted and executed his oldest son and probably also his wife after she, having been influenced by another woman, had made false charges against the eldest son. Despite his negative aspects, Constantine freed the Church from the persecutions she had known for three hundred years through his persuasive enactment of the Edict of Milan in 313.



Constantine was proclaimed a saint by the Eastern Church, and is known as "the Great" in the Western Church.





## JULIAN THE APOSTATE

Julian (332-363, emperor 361-363) was the nephew of Constantine the Great and the cousin of Constantius II (emperor 337-361). When Julian was only five years old, his father, brothers (except for his half-brother Gallus), and male cousins were all executed as the Flavian dynastic line of Constantine the Great was purged. Julian was subsequently entrusted to the pagan eunuch Mardonius and Eusebius of Nicomedia, the Arian bishop who baptized Constantine the Great. As Julian increased in years, he became attached to the pagan school in Athens, the city where he and St. Gregory of Nazianzus were classmates.

Julian became a Caesar in 355. In 361 he came into conflict with Emperor Constantius II when Julian's army refused to join the emperor for the Persian campaign. Civil war was averted only because Constantius died of natural causes. Julian was then immediately promoted by the military to the imperial throne.

The title "Apostate" (one who willingly renounces his faith) has been given to Julian because, though he was baptized a Christian, as emperor he tried to de-emphasize Christianity. Julian did not persecute the Christians, but he sought to re-establish paganism on equal footing with Christianity and to strip Christianity of the special benefits that Constantine the Great and his successor had granted.

Julian took several steps to achieve these ends. He pushed to re-establish pagan worship throughout the Empire, and this included the development of an elaborate pagan liturgy and organized his pagan religion in imitation of the Church's ecclesiastical and sacramental structures. Julian himself lived a very ethical life, to which he was committed in order to raise the moral tone of pagans in the Empire. The curriculum in the Empire's schools was paganized (there was probably no system of general education for the society; these schools were for a select few of the privileged classes for the perpetuation of the bureaucracy). Julian revoked the financial exemption and benefits that had been given to the Church by his predecessors. He wrote many tracts in support of paganism and in opposition to Christianity and imposed harsh sentences on his subjects because of their faith. Finally, Julian generated great confusion in the Church when he permitted exiled heretical bishops to return.



The Altar of Victory, a replica of the Greek "Winged Victory of Samothrace," was the ultimate symbol of Roman supremacy. The Altar was a "majestic female standing on a globe, with expanded wings, and a crown of laurel in her outstretched hand."

Julian also had to deal with the Persian threat. On June 26, 363, he was struck by an arrow while on a campaign in Mesopotamia, and he died the same day. A story has it that Julian's last words were "*Vincisti Galilæe*" ("Thou hast conquered, Galilean!" referring to Jesus Christ, who was from Galilee). But this story has been discredited as fiction written by Theodoret, the Bishop of Cyrrhus (ca. 393 - ca. 457).

Julian had been viewed in a negative way in much of the Empire, especially in the East where the largest numbers of Christians dwelt. Succeeding emperors moved to progressively reduce paganism to oblivion, and to re-grant the special status of Christianity. Jovian (emperor 363-364), the immediate successor to Julian, returned to Christianity the rights Julian had stripped from it. Gratian (Western emperor 375-383) gave up the insignia of the Pontifex Maximus because it was pagan and he considered it unbecoming for a Christian ruler. (The title was later Christianized in the fifteenth century and taken over by the papacy as a title of honor.) He also removed the Altar of Victory from the Senate house, and stripped the pagan priests and the Vestal Virgins of their property.



The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) set aside the union of throne and altar.

## THEODOSIUS I THE GREAT (379-395)

Theodosius I cemented the union between the Church and State with his 391 decree declaring Christianity the official religion of the Empire. Heresy became a legal offense before the state, pagan sacrifice was outlawed, and, essentially, all other forms of paganism as well. Clearly, this was a watershed moment in the history of the Church. Within eighty years Christianity emerged from the worst persecution it had ever known to official toleration under the Edict of Milan and finally to the status of official religion of the Empire.

While this was a moment of triumph for the Church, it has also been a topic greatly contested by scholars. The phrase "union of throne and altar" refers to everyone within a given state (usually a monarchy)—even the rulers—having the same religion. This union of throne and altar became the standard relationship between the Church and State until it was officially set aside at the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The union of throne and altar posed many challenges and occasioned many crises for the Church over the centuries.

Being a persecuted minority forced Christians to rely authentically on their faith and to forge deep bonds of solidarity. Now these same values of sacrifice and love were officially being taken up by the State. If carried out correctly, the situation provided the Church with an extraordinary possibility to evangelize the Empire and others outside of it. However, an established religion can also find its voice and values co-opted. In any case, given the historical circumstances of that era, it seems that a close connection between Church and State was necessary.





## THRONE AND ALTAR

It seems worthwhile to frame the discussion of throne and altar in order to see the ways in which the emperors made use of their power to influence the Church. The involvement of the temporal power in spiritual matters of the Church was a defining aspect of Byzantium, and the tug of war between kings and popes in the West especially during the Medieval period.

Constantine and his three sons, as well as subsequent emperors, set a pattern of imperial intrusion into the affairs of the Church. The Eastern emperors carried the greatest power even when they did not rule the entire Empire, for it was divided permanently between East and West after Emperor Jovian's death in 364.

In this chapter alone, there have been many examples of the emperor interacting with and directing the Church:

1. Constantine the Great took an interest in and influenced the convening of the Council of Nicaea (325) and the suppression of dissident bishops;
2. Julian the Apostate (emperor 361-363) reasserted paganism and suppressed the Church;
3. The Western Emperor Honorius suppressed the Pelagians in 418;
4. Theodosius II called for the Council of Ephesus (431); and
5. Heraclius (emperor 610/611-641) instigated Monothelitism and authorized the *Ecthesis* in 624.

## CONCLUSION



Emperor Theodosius I the Great declared Christianity the official religion of the Empire in 391. *Above:* The image of Theodosius I the Great embossed on a 4th century silver plate.

The Church experienced a moment of freedom and hope with the Edict of Milan in 313, but this by no means meant that the situation in the Church was relaxed over the next two centuries. The Church was convulsed by one theological controversy after another, any number of which threatened to destroy the Faith. Only the providential leadership of the popes, the Church Fathers, and the ecumenical councils under the influence of the Holy Spirit guided the Church through the treacherous waters of heresy that threatened to sink her at any time. The proclamation of Christianity as the official religion of the Empire in 391 by Theodosius I the Great inaugurated a new era in Christianity, one filled with the promise of evangelization, as well as with the dangers of temporal meddling in the affairs of the Church.

## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

**St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Letters on the Appolinarian Controversy***

Do not let the men deceive themselves and others with the assertion that the "Man of the Lord" as they [Appolinarians] call him, who is rather, Lord and God, is without human mind. For we do not sever the man from the Godhead, but we lay down as a dogma the unity and identity [of persons], who of old was not man but God, and the only Son before all ages, unmingled with body or anything corporeal; but who in these last days has assumed manhood also for our salvation; passable in his flesh, impassible in his Godhead; circumscript in his body, uncircumscript in the Spirit; at once earthly and heavenly, tangible and intangible, comprehensible and incomprehensible; that by one and the same [Person], who was perfect man and also God, the entire humanity fallen through sin might be created anew.

If anyone does not believe that holy Mary is the Mother of God, he is severed from the Godhead. If anyone should assert that he passed through the Virgin as through a channel, and was not at once divinely and humanly formed in her (divinely, because without the intervention of man; humanly, because in accordance with the laws of gestation), he is in like manner godless. If any assert that the manhood was formed and afterwards was clothed with the Godhead, he too is to be condemned.

**The Council of Ephesus, *The Formula of Union*, 431**

We will state briefly what we are convinced of and profess about the God-bearing virgin and the manner of the incarnation of the only begotten Son of God—not by way of addition but in the manner of a full statement, even as we have received and possess it from the holy scriptures and the tradition of the holy fathers, adding nothing at all to the creed put forward by the holy fathers at Nicaea. For, as we have just said, that creed is sufficient both for the knowledge of godliness and for the repudiation of all heretical false teaching. We shall speak not presuming to approach the unapproachable; but we confess our own weakness and so shut out those who would reproach us for investigating things beyond the human mind.

We confess then, then, our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, perfect God and perfect man of a rational soul and body, begotten before all ages from the Father in his Godhead, the same in the last days, for us and for our salvation, born of Mary the virgin, according to his humanity, one and the same consubstantial with the Father in godhead and consubstantial with us in humanity, for a union of two natures took place. Therefore we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord. According to this understanding of of the unconfused union, we confess the Holy Virgin to be the mother of God because God the Word took flesh and became man and from his very conception united to himself the temple he took from her.

**John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*, 42.2-3**

Mary believed in the fulfillment of what had been said to her by the Lord. As Virgin, she believed that she would conceive and bear a son: the "Holy One," who bears the name of "Son of God," the name "Jesus" ("God who saves"). As handmaid of the lord, she remained in perfect fidelity to the person and mission of this Son. As Mother, "*believing and obeying…*" she brought forth on earth the *Father's Son*. This she did, knowing not man but overshadowed by the Holy Spirit.

For these reasons Mary is honored in the Church "with special reverence. Indeed, from most ancient times the Blessed Virgin Mary has been venerated under the title of 'God-Bearer.' In all perils and needs the faithful have fled to her protection."





## VOCABULARY

**ANATHEMA**
A ban solemnly pronounced by ecclesiastical authority and accompanied by excommunication

**ANOMOEANS**
From the Greek *anhomoios*, meaning "dissimilar," this sect of Arianism stressed an essential difference between the Father and Son in the Trinity.

**APOCRYPHA**
Old Testament books recognized by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, but not by Protestants.

**APOLLINARIANISM**
Founded by Apollinarius in the fourth century, this heresy denied the existence of a human mind and will in Christ.

**APOSTLES' CREED**
A statement of belief of the Apostles based upon the New Testament. It is derived from a baptismal creed used especially in Rome known as the Old Roman, and it is therefore associated particularly with the Church of Rome.

**ARIANISM**
Third and fourth century heresy founded by the Alexandrian priest Arius. It denied Jesus' divinity, claiming that Jesus is neither God nor equal to the Father, but rather an exceptional creature raised to the level of "Son of God" because of his heroic fidelity to the Father's will and his sublime holiness.

**ATHANASIAN CREED**
A statement of Faith that the Church still affirms whose author is not known.

**CAESAROPAPISM**
Refers to the dual role of head of State and leader of the Church in which the temporal ruler extends his own powers to ecclesiastical and theological matters. The Church in the East, influenced by the growing power of the patriarch of Constantinople at the hands of the emperor, tended to accept a role for the Church in which it was subservient to the interests of the State.

**CHRYSOSTOM**
Moniker of St. John Chrysostom meaning "golden mouthed," it refers to the saint's extraordinary preaching skills.

**CHURCH FATHERS**
Great, holy leaders who have come forward to lead the Church, explain the Faith, and meet the unique challenges posed by different heresies.

**DEMIURGE**
Gnostic creator god of the material world.

**DOCETISM**
Derived from the Greek word *dokesis*, meaning appearance, this Gnostic heresy maintained that Jesus did not die on the cross but was spared by someone else who took his place.

**DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH**
*Doctores Ecclesiae*, a specific title given by the pope to those whose development of theology and personal sanctity are exemplary.

**DONATISM**
Heresy that rejected the sacraments celebrated by clergy who had formerly betrayed their faith.

***DOKESIS***
Greek word for appearance. Referred to heresy which claimed Jesus only appeared to die on the Cross.

## VOCABULARY Continued

**ECUMENICAL COUNCIL**
Derived from the Greek word *oikoumene*, meaning "the whole inhabited world." Ecumenical councils bring bishops and others entitled to vote from all over the world to discuss central issues of the Church. They are presided over by the pope and issues decrees which, with the approval of the pope, bind all Christians.

***FILIOQUE***
Latin word meaning "and the Son," it is used to express the double procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. St. Augustine's discussion on the relationship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit laid the essential groundwork for the addition of the *Filioque* clause to the Nicene Creed in the Medieval period.

**GNOSTICISM**
Derived from the Greek word *gnosis* ("knowledge"), the name refers to one of the principle tenets of this multifaceted heresy, namely, that salvation may be achieved through knowledge. In the second century, Gnosticism, which had eastern origins and influences from Persia and India, very successfully perverted the meaning of Christianity and its symbols. To prove its authenticity, Gnosticism co-opted the Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, and erected an entirely new cosmological structure that challenged the intent of Christianity.

**HERESY**
The refusal to accept one or more truths of the Faith which are required for Catholic belief. It is a species of unbelief belonging to those who profess the Christian Faith, but corrupt its dogmas.

**HOMOEANS (SABELLIANS)**
From Greek *homoios*, meaning "similar," this Scriptural purist party rejected the use of the word *homoousios* at the Council of Nicaea because it was not used in the Bible.

***HOMOOUSIOS***
Greek word meaning "of the same substance."

**INFALLIBLE**
Free from error. Ecumenical councils' definitions on Faith and morals are considered free from error, or infallible, if that is the intention of the pope and bishops in union.

***LOGOS***
An ambiguous Greek word with a multitude of meanings that include: word, account, meaning, reason, argument, saying, speech, story and many more. The Gospel of St. John utilizes the word's complex meaning, referring to the Person of Jesus, the Son of God and a member of the Blessed Trinity, as the *logos*.

**MANICHÆISM**
Heresy founded by Mani in the 3rd century. An elaborate form of Gnosticism, it involved the relationship between light and darkness, believing that through rituals and sharing their knowledge believers could regain the light stolen by Satan and hidden in the brains of men, thus freeing the light to return to its original source. Manichæism heavily borrowed from the Scriptures, especially from the writings of St. Paul. Mani incorporated many of St. Paul's arguments and imagery to support his own teaching concerning the struggle between darkness and light.

**MARCIONISM**
Founded by Marcion in the second century, he borrowed the Gnostic idea of a Demiurge, calling this force the jealous and vengeful God of Law. According to Marcionism, the God of Jesus Christ, the true God, has no law and is sent to bring about the demise of the Demiurge. He renounced all Jewish influence on the Church, believing that the God of the Old Testament was the evil Demiurge.





## VOCABULARY Continued

**MONTANISM**
Founded by Montanus in the second century, he believed that due to an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon him, he knew that a new, heavenly kingdom was imminent. One of the first apocalyptic heresies, his followers lived a very austere life rejecting second marriages and flight from persecution.

**MONOPHYSITISM**
From the Greek *monos*, meaning "alone," and *physis*, meaning "nature," this heresy claimed that there is only one nature in Christ and that His human nature is "incorporated" into the Divine Nature.

**MONOTHELITISM**
Heresy claiming that Christ has two natures but only one will.

**NEO-PLATONISM**
School of philosophy which held that the *logos* was a created being, not the Supreme Being. Platonic philosophies, in general, viewed the material world as less perfect than the world of ideas. Thus, besides denying Christ's true divinity, many early Platonic heresies greatly deemphasized Christ's humanity, if not openly denying it.

**NESTORIANISM**
Founded in the fourth century by Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, this heresy maintained that Christ was both human and divine but was not himself fully human or fully divine. Instead, he believed that Christ was a union of two men, one human the other divine.

**PELAGIANISM**
Heresy denying original sin and the need for grace in man's salvation. According to this heresy, the sacraments are superfluous since salvation and holiness can only be achieved through human endeavor.

***QUICUMQUE VULT***
"Whoever wishes [to be saved]," opening of the Athanasian Creed.

***THEOTOKOS***
Literally "bearer of God," often translated "mother of God." Used since the early centuries of the Church, this title of Mary was defended by the Council of Ephesus in 431.

**VULGATE**
First translation of the Bible from its original languages into Latin by St. Jerome.



St. Jerome never stopped advocating or living a penitential life.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. A creed is an official statement of belief. What two points of belief does the Athanasian Creed emphasize?
2. What were the guiding premises of Gnosticism?
3. What role did asceticism play in Manichaeism and other Gnostic heresies?
4. Who has the power to start, change, and end an ecumenical council?
5. Who is a "Church Father" and what are the five characteristics of a Church Father?
6. How and why did St. Ambrose stand up to the very powerful emperor Theodosius in 390?
7. List two translations of the Bible discussed in this chapter and specific information about them.
8. For what is St. John Chrysostom best known?
9. What was Arianism, and why was Arianism such a threat to Christianity?
10. Who convened the Council of Nicaea in 325 and what was the council's outcome?
11. What is the Hypostatic Union and when was it adopted?
12. Under what circumstances was it said of Pope St. Leo I that "Peter has spoken through Leo"? What does this statement really mean?
13. Which regional churches form the Oriental Orthodox Church, and why did they separate from the Catholic Church?
14. How did Pope St. Leo I increase papal power?
15. What is dogma?
16. How did St. Augustine answer the challenges posed by Donatism?
17. Describe St. Augustine's background. Why would his ordination as bishop have been particularly controversial with the Donatists?
18. What do the words "*tolle et lege*" mean, and what is their significance in St. Augustine's life?
19. What topics did St. Augustine address in two of his best-known works, *Confessions* and *City of God*?
20. When and by whom was Christianity declared the official religion of the empire?



St. Augustine is one of the greatest theologians of the Catholic Church. For almost a thousand years, he was the dominant figure in Catholic philosophical and theological thought.





## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. Check out a local bookstore's religion and philosophy sections. How many books on "finding the light inside yourself" or other New Age movement texts did you find? Why do you think so many people have turned to the New Age movement? What is the difference between these "self-help" solutions and the way of life offered in the example of Christ?
2. Conduct research on one of the over thirty Doctors of the Church, and prepare a three minute oral report after conducting the research.
3. What might be some reasons why the pope has authority over the ecumenical councils? If another ecumenical council were called today, what do you think would be the topics for discussion?
4. Think of reasons and examples of how the union of the throne and altar might cause conflict between the Church and the state.

## FROM THE CATECHISM

**465** The first heresies denied not so much Christ's divinity as his true humanity (Gnostic Docetism). From apostolic times the Christian faith has insisted on the true incarnation of God's Son "come in the flesh" (cf. 1 Jn 4: 2-3; 2 Jn 7). But already in the third century, the Church in a council at Antioch had to affirm against Paul of Samosata that Jesus Christ is Son of God by nature and not by adoption. The first ecumenical council of Nicaea in 325 confessed in its Creed that the Son of God is "begotten, not made, of the same substance (*homoousios*) as the Father", and condemned Arius, who had affirmed that the Son of God "came to be from things that were not" and that he was "from another substance" than that of the Father (Council of Nicaea I (325): DS 130, 126).

**688** The Church, a communion living in the faith of the apostles which she transmits, is the place where we know the Holy Spirit:

— in the Scriptures he inspired;
— in the Tradition, to which the Church Fathers are always timely witnesses;
— in the Church's Magisterium, which he assists;
— in the sacramental liturgy, through its words and symbols, in which the Holy Spirit puts us into communion with Christ;
— in prayer, wherein he intercedes for us;
— in the charisms and ministries by which the Church is built up;
— in the signs of apostolic and missionary life;
— in the witness of saints through whom he manifests his holiness and continues the work of salvation.

## FROM THE CATECHISM Continued

**817** In fact, "in this one and only Church of God from its very beginnings there arose certain rifts, which the Apostle strongly censures as damnable. But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions appeared and large communities became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church—for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame" (*UR* 3 § 1). The ruptures that wound the unity of Christ's Body—here we must distinguish heresy, apostasy, and schism (cf. CIC, can. 751)—do not occur without human sin:

> Where there are sins, there are also divisions, schisms, heresies, and disputes. Where there is virtue, however, there also are harmony and unity, from which arise the one heart and one soul of all believers (Origen, *Hom. in Ezech.* 9,1: PG 13,732).

**2089** *Incredulity* is the neglect of revealed truth or the willful refusal to assent to it. "*Heresy* is the obstinate post-baptismal denial of some truth which must be believed with divine and catholic faith, or it is likewise an obstinate doubt concerning the same; *apostasy* is the total repudiation of the Christian faith; *schism* is the refusal of submission to the Roman Pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to him" (CIC, can. 751; emphasis added).

**2419** "Christian revelation . . . promotes deeper understanding of the laws of social living" (*GS* 23 § 1).The Church receives from the Gospel the full revelation of the truth about man. When she fulfills her mission of proclaiming the Gospel, she bears witness to man, in the name of Christ, to his dignity and his vocation to the communion of persons. She teaches him the demands of justice and peace in conformity with divine wisdom.

**2420** The Church makes a moral judgment about economic and social matters, "when the fundamental rights of the person or the salvation of souls requires it" (*GS* 76 § 5). In the moral order she bears a mission distinct from that of political authorities: the Church is concerned with the temporal aspects of the common good because they are ordered to the sovereign Good, our ultimate end. She strives to inspire right attitudes with respect to earthly goods and in socio-economic relationships.



"The glorious city of God is my theme in this work, which you, my dearest son Marcellinus, suggested, and which is due to you by my promise. I have undertaken its defense against those who prefer their own gods to the Founder of this city—a city surpassingly glorious, whether we view it as it still lives by faith in this fleeting course of time, and sojourns as a stranger in the midst of the ungodly, or as it shall dwell in the fixed stability of its eternal seat, which it now with patience waits for, expecting until 'righteousness shall return unto judgment,' and it obtain, by virtue of its excellence, final victory and perfect peace."

Opening text from *City of God*, Book I by St. Augustine. (In Latin *De Civitate Dei*).



CHAPTER 5

# Light In The Dark Ages

*Throughout all of the insecurity, one institution remained firm: the Church. Amid the darkness, the Church held up the powerful light of Christ.*



CHAPTER 5

# Light In The Dark Ages

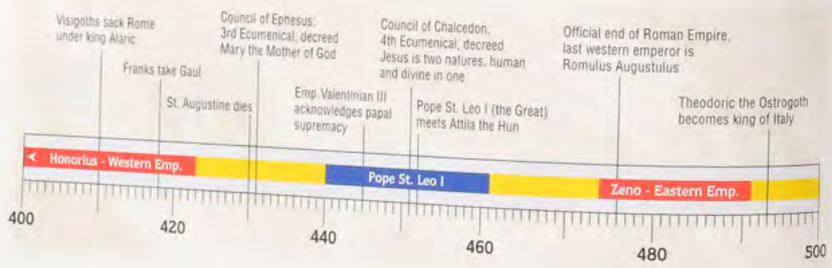
To the Church and the human race of every age, the Divine Master has left his everlasting testament of love: "Love one another as I have loved you!" A sense of great sadness invades the mind at the thought of God's infinite goodness on the one hand and on the other hand, human indifference, hatred and wars that obscure Divine Providence's plan on earth. You, with your prayers and your testimony of goodness, can offer a daily contribution to the cause of pacifying hearts and establishing peace on earth.

— John Paul II, Meeting with handicapped children, Assisi, Italy, January 9, 1993



As St. Augustine waited for death in Hippo, Vandals beset the city. The collapse of the Roman Empire during the fifth century inaugurated a period of decline in the West as the old world passed away, and confusion reigned as the basis for a new order had yet to coalesce. Throughout all of the insecurity, one institution remained firm: the Church. She continued to spread the Gospel message while providing continuity in an uncertain time. Regardless of the transitoriness of any age, the Church proclaims a message of trust in the life and light of Christ amid trials and tribulations and promises eternal life after death. Amid the darkness, the Church holds up the powerful light of Christ.

This chapter will look at the repercussions of the fall of Rome, the rise and importance of monasticism, and the rise of Islam.








## PART I

# The Collapse of the Roman Empire

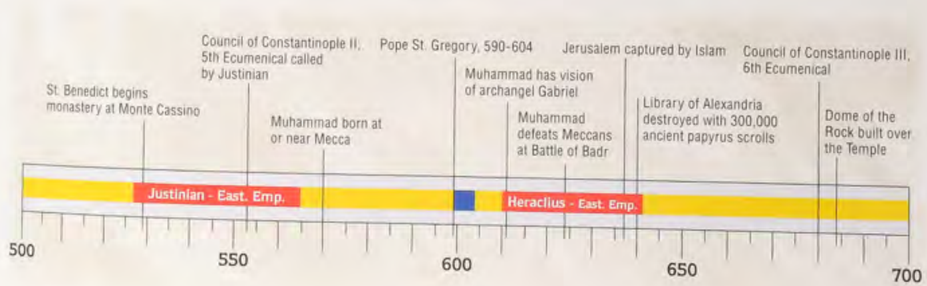
The collapse of the Roman Empire resulted in a crisis that took the early Church by surprise. The Church now had to dissociate herself from the fallen Empire, which was assumed would last forever. Throughout the decline of the Roman Empire and the rise of monasticism, the Holy Spirit inspired and strengthened the Church for the next great wave of evangelizing activity among the German tribes. By the time the different groups in Europe had converted in the eleventh century, Christianity had spread to virtually the entire European continent.

## THE FALL OF ROME (476)

The City which had taken the whole world was itself taken!
(St. Jerome on the Fall of Rome, *Letter CXXVII [To Principia]*, no. 12)

Historians do not have an official date for the fall of Rome, but sometime during the fifth century, the West collapsed. In 410, Alaric, king of the Visigoths, sacked Rome. Odoacer (sometimes Odovacar), chieftain of the Heruli, who served as a mercenary in Rome, led a revolt and overthrew the last western emperor in 476. Soon after, the Ostrogoths, united under Theodoric, invaded Italy in 489 and overthrew Odoacer by 493. The last ten western emperors rarely sat for more than a few years on the throne before they were deposed by invading barbarians.

The moral situation from the fifth through eighth centuries was grim as the former Roman order crumbled. The Roman Empire was not yet completely Christianized when the barbarian invasions injected a foreign and often violent character into the culture. The concept of human rights was unfamiliar to many Romans as well as to the invading barbarian tribes. The brutality of the Romans has already been discussed. The barbarians brought their own variations of tribal law with them—law that was based on very primitive understandings of justice. For instance, in some tribes, in order to determine guilt or innocence, the accused would be forced to immerse his hand in a pot of boiling hot water. If the burned hand healed, then the accused was understood to be innocent. Two people who sought justice would fight to the death to determine who was right. Adulterous wives were handed over to their husbands, who punished them by whatever means they deemed fit. Barbarian kings had harems, and it was common for a teenage king to have many children with his servants. Their religious practices were both primitive and brutal. The Franks, for example, sacrificed women and children to placate battle spirits.



The absence of academic pursuits among the Germanic Franks quickly undermined the great Greco-Roman tradition of learning and culture. Thus, the fall of Rome brought about a dramatic and immediate collapse in intellectual activity throughout the former empire of the West. Classical literature was lost, Latin deteriorated, and illiteracy became the norm. The loss of literacy particularly affected the Church because most people could no longer read the Scriptures. The Church remained the only locus of intellectual activity. Academic training was limited to priests and religious studying the Scriptures and theology. The long GrecoRoman tradition of philosophical inquiry came to a halt.

In addition to the collapse of education, the vibrant economy of the empire entered a period of decline as well. Roads became unsafe. People lived in fear and distress, and crime increased. As production and commercial activity declined, the cities and towns began to shrink. Consequentially, the former empire dissipated into a rural society of isolated towns and villages.

The influence of the Church was not yet sufficiently profound to impact on the daily life of the whole population. Some Christians acted like pagans: they participated in eating and drinking orgies, often on a saint's feast day. If games were held on Sundays, the churches would be empty. Idol worship was still found among Christians, as well as among the invading tribes.

With the disappearance of the Roman Empire, the Church had the important task to adapt herself to a deamatic cultural change. The Church's organization reflected the ways and customs of the Empire. The governing structure of the Church was modeled after the rule and territorial division of the Empire. Christians had assumed, as had the Roman emperors, that the destiny of Christianity was permanently intertwined with the Empire, especially after Theodosius I made Christianity the official religion in 379. The Barbarian invasions helped the Church realize that she was not wedded to the Roman Empire and had to adapt to a significant cultural shift.



Historians do not have an official date for the fall of Rome, but sometime during the fifth century, the West collapsed.







The baptism of the leader of the Franks, Clovis. Under his leadership, the Franks were the first Germanic tribe to convert to Christianity.

## THE GERMANIC TRIBES

The mission of the Church is to bring the Good News to all peoples. This effort invariably involves Christianizing cultures and at the same time adapting insofar as possible to these cultures. With the advent of the barbarian invasions, the Church was now called to extend her messages to the Germanic tribes who were different in many ways from the citizens of the previous Roman civilization.

The Germanic tribes began pressing on the Roman frontier in the early fourth century as the Huns steadily pushed west from Mongolia and China (China had built its Great Wall to keep the Huns out). The Germanic tribes came from the area around the Vistula River in Poland down to the Black Sea, and may have originally come from Scandinavia. The culture of the Germanic tribes is complicated and multi-faceted, by no means unified, although they shared the same family of languages. They were the second largest Northern European group after the Celts, who had been such powerful warriors that they had settled as far south as Austria and even managed to sack Rome in 390. After settling down, they developed into a peaceful people engaged in agrarian life. By the time of the Germanic invasions, the Celts had been long conquered by the Romans or were being taken over by the advancing Germanic tribes.

Ever occupied with the difficult task of defending the vast borders of the Empire, the Roman legions had battled the barbarians for some time but were never able to conquer them in their own territory. For three centuries the barbarians pushed to enter into the Empire, but the Romans used whatever advantage they could to stop them. They did, however, invite many of the tribes to settle along the frontier in Roman territory. The Romans intermittently battled the barbarians to keep them out and settled them along the frontier in exchange for conscripts for the Roman legions. The peaceful settlement of some tribes also helped to bolster the Empire's lagging population.

Over time, the Roman legions were Germanized to such an extent that the army remained Roman in name only. This influx of Germanic soldiers afforded a great opportunity given the obvious vulnerability of the Roman Empire. That the Roman army no longer consisted primarily of Romans—as the Germanic tribes eagerly desired the conquest of new territory—partially explains the fall of Rome.



German Barbarian Chief

It was only a matter of time before the Germanic barbarians would score a number of military victories against the Romans which would lead to their ultimate defeat. It was common for the tribes to arrive in waves, only to be supplanted by succeeding tribes. In 378, the Visigoths defeated the Byzantine army at the Battle of Adrianople, and by December 406, many tribes had crossed the Rhine to settle in Gaul. With the border of the Empire penetrated, Gaul soon fell to the Visigoths, led by Alaric. Soon thereafter Rome fell on August 24, 410, and was pillaged for four days.

Of the different tribes that merit mention here, the two branches of Goths—Visigoths and Ostrogoths—were first to invade the empire. Alaric, as mentioned above, was the Visigoth leader who led the invasion of the Italian Peninsula. Later, the Visigoths were pushed into the Iberian Peninsula by the Franks, where they remained until Spain fell to the Muslims in the eighth century. Theodoric led the Ostrogoths who occupied the Italian Peninsula, replacing the Visigoths. Ostrogoth rule would end with their defeat in 536 by Byzantine forces.

The Franks—a name meaning "fierce" or "bold"—were a Germanic people who settled in Gaul late in the third century. They are the ancestors of modern France and, under the leadership of the great chieftain Clovis, were the first Germanic tribe to convert to Christianity (497). A more detailed account of the conversion of the Franks appears in the following chapter.

The Alemanni (meaning "All Men") were another Germanic people. They settled south of the Main River in central Germany around 260 before moving later to Alsace and Switzerland.

The Burgundians arrived on the Main River around 250. They established a capital at Worms before being defeated by the Romans in 436.

The Lombards lived along the Elbe and began advancing toward the Danube by the middle of the second century. Eventually they settled in the Roman province of Pannonia (eastern Austria and western Hungary, bounded on the north and east by the Danube River) before finally migrating to Italy in the sixth century.

The Vandals were the most ruthless of the Germanic tribes. Beginning in 406 they attacked Gaul before moving to Spain and then to North Africa. The Vandals were so fierce and committed such atrocities that the word "vandal" is still used in English today. They were also relentless persecutors of the Church.

## ULPHILAS: APOSTLE OF THE GOTHS

Ulphilas (ca. 311-388) was born in Cappadocia but was captured by the Goths. Under the influence of the Arian bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia, Ulphilas translated the Bible into Gothic, and he was made a bishop around 341. His translation is the oldest Germanic document. Because of Ulphilas' missionary efforts, the Goths, Burgundians, Lombards, and Vandals were converted to Arian Christianity.





## THE BARBARIAN INVASIONS, 4TH AND 5TH CENTURIES




The Germanic tribes began pressing on the Roman frontier in the early fourth century as the Huns steadily pushed west from Mongolia and China.

It is reported that the Huns' imposing physical appearance shocked the people of the Roman Empire.

With relentless swiftness, Attila's Huns devastated Gaul, and Attila continually augmented his army by assimilating conquered Germanic tribes.



## THE HUNS

As the Empire was struggling to control the invading Germanic tribes, a new unforeseen threat to both the Romans and the barbarians emerged from the Far East in the first half of the fifth century. The Huns, a powerful nomadic people of unknown ethnic origins, swept west from northern China and had crossed into the Volga valley by the end of the fourth century. They were ferocious and ruthless fighters, and by 432 they had established themselves in the Eastern Empire, forcing tribute from Emperor Theodosius II. By 451, the Huns had invaded Gaul and threatened the heart of the Western Empire.

These were a people foreign to the West. Many of the ancient reports were no doubt exaggerated, but through their embellishment they present a picture of the meeting of two alien cultures. It is reported that the Huns' imposing physical appearance shocked the people of the Roman Empire. Their physical attributes were distinctive: squat bodies with enormous arms and shoulders and huge heads covered with thick facial scarring. Many of the Huns slashed their own faces so much that they became disfigured. Roman reports relate that many Romans were not sure if the Huns were people or beasts. It was believed that they always remained on horseback, whether at meetings or while selling and buying goods—even when they ate and slept. Women and children lived in wagons; the Huns did not settle down to live in homes on farms as other groups did. The Huns rarely, if ever, cooked. Instead, they ate raw meat, which they kept with themselves, and as a consequence, was usually rotten and rancid. During battle the stench coming from the Huns was said to be so powerful that the Roman soldiers could not bear to get close to them. Though these reports cannot be taken as one hundred percent accurate, it is clear that these were a powerful and frightening people who devastated much of the Empire.

## ATTILA THE HUN MEETS POPE ST. LEO THE GREAT (452)

Attila (d. 453), "the Scourge of God," succeeded to joint kingship over the Huns with his brother in 433. Not long after, his brother died (perhaps murdered by Attila), and Attila for the first time successfully united the Hunnish hordes under one rule. He was a tremendously brave warrior, a skilled diplomat, and a keen military strategist. He was also ruthless—if he discovered that a Hun had served the Romans as a mercenary soldier, he ordered his crucifixion. Earlier in his life, he had been held as a hostage in Rome where he learned Latin and discovered Rome's weaknesses. His ambition was to establish an Asiatic empire with himself as emperor. He did succeed, but the empire collapsed after his death.

After having successfully united the hordes, Attila moved west, began engaging the Romans in the 440s, and invaded Gaul. With relentless swiftness, Attila's Huns devastated Gaul and continually augmented their army with each military victory. Finally, in 451, an allied army of Romans and Visigoths defeated Attila on the Plains of Chalons, forcing Attila back across the Rhine.

Defeated in Gaul, Attila turned his sights south to Italy. Beginning in 452, his Huns ravaged northern Italian cities and towns. As they drew closer to Rome, Pope St. Leo the Great went to meet him. In one of the great mysteries of history, it remains unknown exactly what words Pope St. Leo used to dissuade Attila from attacking Rome. Attila is said to have come upon a procession of priests, deacons, and acolytes singing hymns and psalms. At the end of the procession there was an old man sitting on a horse praying intensely. Attila asked him, "What is your name?" The old man replied, "Leo the Pope." In an unprecedented move, Attila did not attack Rome, and he withdrew entirely from Italy. Attila died shortly thereafter, and his empire, divided among his sons, soon disintegrated. This confrontation with Pope St. Leo in a certain sense changed the course of







In one of the great mysteries of history, it remains unknown exactly what words Pope St. Leo used to dissuade Attila from attacking Rome.

history. The pope was able to repeat the same success in 455 when he convinced the leader of the Vandals, Genseric, not to burn Rome, and spare the lives of the people.

## HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE GERMANIC INVASIONS

It took some time for the Church to digest the historical significance of the Germanic invasions, and what they meant for her mission of evangelization. Over time, several concrete ideas emerged.

Primarily, the Church recognized that Christianity was universal. The Faith needed to be communicated as much to the Germanic tribes as it was in previous centuries to the Greco-Roman world. Christianity was meant to incorporate everyone, and this would be emphatically reinforced in the future when the Church was presented with opportunities to evangelize the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Australia.

Though the Church was identified with the Roman Empire for four centuries and adopted its governmental structures (dioceses), customs, language, and laws, the Church now began a monumental shift, civilizing and evangelizing the Germanic peoples.

The effort to reach out to the Germanic tribes was no small task. The German character was very different from the Greco-Roman one: the Germans were less philosophically and theologically inclined, placed less emphasis on order, culture, organization, and law. In effect, most of what the Church learned and developed within the context of Roman culture had to be radically altered in order to work with the Germanic populace without changing the essential doctrines of the Catholic

Faith. Through monasticism the Church found access to these people. Monasticism had established itself firmly by the end of the fifth century, by which time the Roman Empire had been reduced to a mosaic of kingdoms ruled by Germanic chieftains.

## THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD THE INVASIONS

Initially Christians experienced profound discouragement as the Greco-Roman world passed away. Many thought the disintegration of the Roman Empire meant that the Second Coming of Christ was at hand. Indeed, the predictions, signs, and lessons from the parables in the Gospels in significant part seemed to have been fulfilled by the state of the world of that time.

Some Christians also understood the fall of the Roman Empire as the just punishment for the sins of the Romans and of all humanity. Leading politicians, philosophers, and cultural thinkers pointed to the moral degradation of the Roman Empire—not to mention the infidelity of some Christians—as a sign of impending doom for their civilization.

The moral deterioration of the cities, coupled with the desire to pursue a heroic imitation of Jesus Christ, prompted some men and women to depart from the hustle and bustle of the world in order to dedicate themselves to a demanding life of asceticism, expressed in a faithful commitment to the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. This radical separation from the world for the sake of Christ's kingdom through prayer, penance, and the evangelical counsels characterized monasticism. Monasticism offered a path for some Christians to make reparation for the sins of the world in general, and of the Roman world in particular.

### ATTILA'S LOVE: WHY HE INVADED THE WEST

The events that led to Attila the Hun's great defeat on the Plains of Chalon began by a very strange request. Valentinian III was the emperor of the Western Roman Empire during the time Attila the Hun was attacking Europe. His sister, Honoria, had been sent into exile after having a scandalous affair. In an attempt to escape, Honoria purportedly sent Attila the Hun a ring along with a letter asking him to rescue her from exile. The Hun, however, treated the letter and ring as a marriage proposal, which he accepted. He then felt justified in asking Valentinian III for half of the Western Empire as a dowry. Naturally, Valentinian III refused, but when Attila the Hun finally crossed the Rhine and invaded the West, he felt that he was merely taking by force what he was rightfully owed.







# PART II
# The Rise of Monasticism

## THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF MONASTICISM

Monasticism is a way of life characterized by prayer and self-denial lived in seclusion from the world and under a fixed rule with professed vows. Monastic communities withdraw from the affairs of the world in order to seek God through asceticism and silence. Though monasticism is common to many of the world's religions, Christian monasticism is unique. Men and women who enter the monastic life seek to model themselves on Christ by dedicating themselves to a life of prayer and penance. Once the call from God has been recognized, the person makes a life-long commitment to the monastic life.

There are two types of monastic life. The eremitical, or hermit life, involves individuals withdrawing into loosely organized groups to live an isolated ascetical life. The word hermit comes from Greek word *erēmia*, meaning "desert," which comes from *erēmos*, "lonely." The second, and more common form, is known as the cenobitical, or common life. Cenobitical monastic life is lived in community.

Monasticism started very early with St. Paul of Thebes (d. ca. 340) and St. Anthony (251?-356), both of whom lived eremitical lives of prayer and seclusion in Egypt. St. Paul of Thebes is held by tradition to be the first hermit; he had fled a persecution under the Roman Emperor Decius (A.D. 249-51). St. Anthony indirectly influenced Western monasticism through his impact on St. Athanasius, who, during one of his exiles, wrote a celebrated biography of St. Anthony. St. Athanasius brought this book to Rome, and it would later serve as a handbook for Western monasticism. In the beginning, hermits like St. Paul and St. Anthony generally withdrew to desert areas in order to lead a contemplative life. Though hermits in principle do not follow a rule by which they organize themselves, two monastic orders have taken much inspiration from the eremitical life: the Carthusians and Carmelites. In the West the eremitical life almost died out after the Catholic Reformation, possibly because those attracted to such a life joined the Carthusians and Carmelites.





Monasticism started very early with St. Paul of Thebes and St. Anthony, both of whom lived eremitical lives of prayer and seclusion in Egypt.

St. Pachomius (ca. 290-346) founded cenobitical monasticism in Egypt. Born to pagan parents in Egypt, he converted and was baptized after serving in the army until 313. Pachomius found himself in a situation similar to many of the holy men and women in Egypt. He desired to withdraw from the world in order to be more united with God, but as word of his holiness grew, ordinary people sought him out in the desert to ask for intercessory prayers and guidance. His eremitical solitude disrupted, Pachomius instead allowed many to join him in his way of life, and he wrote an early form of monastic rule for his followers. His *Rule* influenced St. Basil the Great, St. John Cassian, and St. Benedict in their establishment of monastic orders. At the time of his death, St. Pachomius ruled over nine monasteries and convents in Egypt. His feast day is celebrated on May 9.





## THE FIRST MONKS, 4TH TO 8TH CENTURIES






After the barbarian invasions, academic matters fell into neglect except among the monks who copied and retained literary works. Monks meticulously copied manuscripts of texts in an age when it took months and years to copy a book by hand. Benedictine monasteries quickly established *scriptoria* (singular, *scriptorium*), large rooms in the monasteries set aside for the purpose of copying and maintaining texts.

## MONASTICISM AND THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW CHRISTIAN CULTURE

The rise of monasticism in the early Church proved vital for the spread of Christianity, the preservation of Greco-Roman writings, and the formation of a new Christian culture. For the Church, monasteries served a triple purpose: (1) they were a source of great spiritual strength; (2) they served as seminaries for priests and bishops; and (3) they functioned as centers of evangelization of the barbarian tribes through various forms of education.

The monasteries also had three major effects on Europe. The first effect was the recovery and evangelization of rural society. Up until the barbarian domination, a significant part of the population was concentrated in cities. However, as the cities began to depopulate and disintegrate, people scattered and clustered around landowners. As the former empire became more rural, forming pockets of isolated agricultural towns and villages, a new evangelizing force was called into play. Communities of monks and nuns spread into these farming areas to meet the spiritual needs of the people. This movement had a powerful impact on European agriculture, which was suffering due to the slow depopulation of the Roman Empire and attacks of the barbarians. The invasions caused so much havoc that many farmlands had reverted into forests. The monks established monasteries deep in the woods, in rugged mountains, and in swampy areas, which were drained, and in the process established new farmlands and farming communities.



The second great effect of the monasteries on Europe was intellectual. Monasteries became the chief centers of learning until the rise of the great universities beginning in the thirteenth century. The barbarian invasions had dismantled the empire and with it intellectual and cultural centers of learning. Academic matters fell into neglect except among the monks who copied and retained the literary works of the Greco-Roman civilization. Monks meticulously copied manuscripts of texts in an age when it took months and years to copy a book by hand. Benedictine monasteries quickly established *scriptoria* (singular, *scriptorium*), large rooms in the monasteries set aside for the purpose of copying and maintaining texts. It could be said that the monasteries single-handedly saved Western culture during this dangerous period. If monasteries had not been established and become depositories for the great patrimony of Greek and Roman learning, it would have been lost. The oldest manuscripts of ancient Greece and Rome owe their survival to the Benedictine *scriptoria*.

The third effect was one of civilization. As a consequence of their work of evangelization, the monasteries had a great civilizing effect on these Germanic peoples. Attracted by the holiness and goodness of the monks and nuns, the tribes proved to be willing pupils in many practical disciplines. Through their agricultural work, the monks taught the barbarians, who were nomads, how to farm. Monks trained them in the skilled trades of carpentry, stone masonry, and ironwork as the monasteries were being erected. The monks infused a spiritual meaning into the act of work itself and thus taught the dignity of work as a form of adoration and emulation of Jesus Christ, who was also a worker.





Through its educational work, the monastery also taught the surrounding population how to read and write. The monks elevated them intellectually, which facilitated the development of a new culture expressed in a fusion of the old Greco-Roman tradition and a Germanic culture. Once a student at the monastery learned Latin, he was taught Sacred Scriptures, the writings of the Church Fathers, geometry, and music for the singing of the Divine Office. This emphasis on the Bible and the Church Fathers would plant deep Christian roots into this new people.

## ST. BENEDICT: THE "PATRIARCH OF WESTERN MONASTICISM"

*Ora et labora.* (motto of the Benedictines, "Pray and work.")

Little is known about the early life of St. Benedict (ca. 480 - ca. 547). He was born at Nursia, Italy, and educated in Rome, but eventually the moral decay of the city impelled him to withdraw to a cave in Subiaco to live the life of a hermit. As time passed, others joined him, and his reputation for sanctity spread. At one point, the abbot of a local monastery died, and the monks invited St. Benedict to join them. He at first refused, seeing that discipline and life at the monastery was different from what he wanted, but eventually, in the face of their constant supplications, he agreed. As he had expected, the other monks disagreed with his brand of monasticism to such an extent that some tried to poison him. He blessed the pitcher of poisoned wine, and it broke into pieces. Thereafter, he left the undisciplined monks.



St. Benedict intended that the monastery would be a family and a self-sustaining community.

A short time later, St. Benedict gained a reputation as a miracle worker, which led people to seek him out for guidance. Finally, he founded twelve monasteries and placed a superior to head each one. He then began a thirteenth monastery at Monte Cassino around 529. It was there that he died some years later, and was buried in the same grave as his sister St. Scholastica. St. Benedict's feast day is celebrated on July 11 (formerly March 21), and St. Scholastica's feast day is celebrated on February 10.

St. Benedict composed his *Rule* at Monte Cassino, which, though destroyed during World War II, was subsequently rebuilt. The *Rule of St. Benedict* was adopted by virtually all monastic communities throughout the Medieval period. The *Rule* has been lauded for its spirit of peace and love, as well as its moderation in the ascetical life. For example, monks were to sleep between six to eight hours a night (with a siesta in the summer following lunch) and were to have a bed, pillow, and sufficient food. This was in stark contrast to the austerity of the Egyptian hermits, who prided themselves on a strict ascetical life that included sleep deprivation and little food as a means of furthering the quality of their spirituality.

The *Rule* essentially divides the schedule of the monk into four parts: chanting the Psalms and reciting prayers in community (four hours), private prayer and Scriptural reading (four hours), physical labor (six hours), and meals and sleep (ten hours).

According to the Benedictine model, the monastic life is lived in common. No one is allowed to own personal property, though the monastery itself may. The *Rule* made provision for an abbot, who holds virtually all power to govern the monastery. St. Benedict intended that the monastery would be a family and a self-sustaining community. Different monks had different tasks and functions, which were organized and distributed in such a way as to ensure self-sufficiency. Not all monks were literate or expected to study theology diligently; not all monks were expected to work in the garden; not all monks were expected to be able to rebuild damaged monastery walls. Working together for the good of the whole and the glory of God, the monastery was a place

## MONTE CASSINO: CAUGHT IN THE STORMS OF HISTORY



The strategic position of Monte Cassino made it the repeated scene of battles and sieges. In World War II, the Battle of Monte Cassino (also known as the Battle for Rome) was a costly series of four battles fought by the Allies from January 4 - May 19, 1944 with the intention of breaking through the Nazi Gustav Line. The Allies won the fourth battle. The four battles cost 54,000 Allied lives and 20,000 Nazi lives.



*Above:* The pulverized skeleton of St. Benedict's Monte Cassino on May 19, 1944. Its irreplaceable library had been removed for safekeeping to Rome and survived the war. *Right:* The rebuilt Monte Cassino today.





where the noble man and commoner labored, each in his own and separate way, but always for the common good.

The *Rule* divides the day into two parts: prayer and work, in that order. The chief aim of the monk or nun following the Benedictine *Rule* is to give praise and glory to God. The habitual prayer in common is called the *opus Dei* ("work of God") or *laus Dei* ("praise of God"). Prayer in common was divided among eight periods of the day: *Vigils/Matins* (12 midnight), *Lauds* (6 a.m.), *Prime* (7 a.m.), *Terce* (9 a.m.), *Sext* (12 noon), *None* (3 p.m.), *Vespers* (6 p.m.), and *Compline* (9 p.m.). As explained by St. Benedict in Chapter 16 of his *Rule*, this division of the hours has its root in Scripture: "At midnight I rise to praise thee," and "Seven times a day I praise thee" (Ps 119 [118]: 62, 164). This practice would comprise what is now called the Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours. The continual focus on God throughout the day and the use of the Scriptures, especially the Psalms of the Divine Office, brings the monastic community into contact with God as the members habitually contemplate the life of Christ. The *Rule* instructs, "let nothing be preferred" to the Divine Office (chapter xliii). Reading and meditating on Scripture, called *lectio divina*, forms an important facet of monastic life.

St. Benedict did not specify a particular area or type of work for those adhering to the *Rule*, thus many types of labor were permitted. However, the first monasteries focused on the manual labor associated with agriculture and, later, education of the young was entrusted to the care of the Benedictines. Work was given spiritual meaning by the monks, and it became for them a form of prayer and penance offered for the praise and glory of God.

Even in the earliest years, Benedictine monks made vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience after undergoing a year-long novitiate. These vows are binding for life. A vow is a solemn promise made voluntarily by a person of reason, to practice a virtue or perform some specific good deed in order to accomplish a future good, viz., the individual's growth in the spiritual life.

## ST. SCHOLASTICA

St. Scholastica (ca. 480 - ca. 543) was St. Benedict's twin sister. Most of what is known of her is told in the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory the Great. St. Scholastica, as St. Gregory reports, was consecrated to God from her infancy, and after St. Benedict founded the monastery at Monte Cassino, she established and governed a convent at Plombariola, only five miles from her brother. The nuns at Plombariola followed the Benedictine *Rule*. Although these siblings were very close, they were not allowed to visit each other at their respective homes. Once a year, however, St. Benedict and St. Scholastica would meet for the day in another house, some distance from Plombariola and Monte Cassino. There they would spend the day discussing spiritual issues and praying.

St. Gregory tells the story of the last of these annual visits. They spent the day as usual, but as night approached, St. Scholastica, having had a presentiment that this would be the last time they would see each other in this life, entreated her brother to stay the night. Not wishing to break his own *Rule* by spending the night outside his monastery, St. Benedict refused. St. Scholastica, desperate to spend a little more time with her brother, decided to petition God that her brother might stay. She bowed her head in concentrated prayer, and immediately, the skies opened in a tremendous storm. St. Benedict was unable to return to Monte Cassino, and the two spent the rest of the night in deep spiritual discussion. St. Benedict returned home the next morning, and three days later beheld a vision of St. Scholastica's soul in the form of a dove rising to Heaven. He sent for her corpse, and St. Benedict buried his sister's body in the grave he had prepared for himself. Some years after, St. Benedict's soul joined his beloved sister in Heaven, and their bodies were reunited in the same grave.

# POPE ST. GREGORY THE GREAT

> I am forced to consider the affairs of the Church and of the monasteries. I must weigh the lives and acts of individuals. I am responsible for the concerns of our citizens. I must worry about the invasions of roving bands of barbarians, and beware of the wolves who lie in wait for my flock. I must become an administrator lest the religious go in want. I must put up with certain robbers without losing patience and at times I must deal with them in all charity. (St. Gregory the Great, from a homily on Ezekiel, *Lib.* 1, 11, 4-6; CCL 142, 170-172)

St. Gregory (ca. 540-604) became pope in 590. A Church Father, he is considered the last of the traditional Latin Doctors. St. Gregory's papacy is often used as a marker for the beginning of the Medieval age, and certainly his papacy illustrates the noblest ideals of Medieval Christianity, as well as some of the tensions of his day.

St. Gregory was the son of a senator, a nobleman, and he played an important role in the civic affairs of the city of Rome. In 573 he became prefect for the police and a judge for criminal cases. After the death of his father (his mother Silvia and two aunts Tarsilla and Æmiliana were eventually canonized as saints), St. Gregory sold his properties and gave away his wealth in order to found seven monasteries and alleviate the plight of the poor. This was a common cultural phenomenon of the time among some of the nobility, a practice that was subsequently extolled as model Christian behavior in the Medieval Church. One of the monasteries was in Rome. Here St. Gregory became a regular monk, and he placed an abbot in charge, to whom he pledged obedience.

After several years of living the holy, austere life of a monk, the pope made St. Gregory one of the seven deacons of Rome. Around 579 Pope Pelagius II appointed him as the *nuncio*, the pope's personal ambassador, to the court in Constantinople. Though St. Gregory preferred to remain a simple monk, he deferred to the pope and went to Byzantium. Later St. Gregory returned to Rome and worked directly for Pelagius II, who died in 590.

Upon Pelagius' death, the Roman populace universally acclaimed St. Gregory as the new pope. Initially St. Gregory fled the city to avoid taking the office of St. Peter, but after intense soul searching, he relented to God's will.

Given the precarious situation of Italy, a man of his talents and gifts for leadership was greatly needed. Violent Lombard invaders pillaged towns and cities. The population of the cities decreased, the roads became extremely dangerous, and prisoners were reduced to slavery. Rome's population, for example, was reduced by seventy-five percent, and the entire area surrounding Rome was racked by famine, plagues, and floods.

Though in weak health from the physical austerities he had imposed on himself as a monk, St. Gregory was a tireless worker, and he enjoyed the support of the people. He wrote many treatises and commentaries on Sacred Scripture, many of which have survived, as have over eight hundred of his letters. St. Gregory's greatest strength was his combination of humility and skillful administrative ability. He took the title *Servus servorum Dei* ("Servant of the servants of God"), which highlights the humble view of his position. He also helped to establish plainsong chant in the liturgical life of the Church, more commonly known as Gregorian Chant.

St. Gregory was also very active in the temporal sphere. Papal relations with Byzantium and with the Eastern Church were not very good. St. Gregory adamantly refused to acknowledge the title "Ecumenical Patriarch," which the Patriarch of Constantinople adopted by canon 28 at the First Council of Constantinople (381). The council was not recognized at first as ecumenical because it was not convened under the pope's authority, and no western bishops were present. By the sixth century, however, it was recognized as an ecumenical council. However, as for the legitimacy of the







St. Gregory's missionary success, along with his continual support of the poor through the administration of the Church's estates, won for St. Gregory the title "the Great."

title of "Ecumenical Patriarch," St. Gregory had recognized it for what it was: an attempt to usurp the Petrine primacy.

The Lombards began threatening Rome shortly after St. Gregory became pope. The Eastern emperor's *exarch* (an imperial representative) displayed no intention of preventing or averting a Lombard invasion; he simply remained idle in Ravenna. When St. Gregory received a threatening letter from the Lombard king Agiluf and then found him just outside the walls of Rome, he took action himself—without the consent or counsel of the exarch or emperor—and succeeded in achieving a separate peace in 592-593. This only lasted a short time, however, due to hostile actions of the hitherto idle exarch. Again working without the consent of exarch or emperor, St. Gregory finally made peace with the Lombards in 599. This peace was short-lived, but the brief warring eventually gave way to a peace that lasted throughout the remainder of St. Gregory's life. St. Gregory's actions demonstrate the growing temporal power of the popes and their care for Rome. It also marked the beginning of a rejection of the Eastern emperor's political power in the West. This instance only highlighted the fact that the Eastern emperors and the popes increasingly viewed each other as competitors.

St. Gregory's missionary initiatives included some of his most successful endeavors, more of which will be covered in the following chapter. For now, it is sufficient to recall the account of the conversion of St. Ethelbert and the Saxons in England. St. Gregory also influenced the Lombard princess Theodelinda, a Catholic, to marry the Lombard king Agiluf. Their children were raised Catholic and Theodelinda worked to build many churches. By the seventh century, the Lombards had converted to Christianity. St. Gregory's missionary success, along with his continual support of the poor through the administration of the Church's estates, won for St. Gregory the title "the Great." His feast day is celebrated on September 3.

## GREGORIAN CHANT: THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSICAL NOTATION

Monasticism in the Middle Ages played a pivotal role in developing Western music, especially with regard to musical notation. Gregorian Chant, attributed to Pope St. Gregory the Great, was a Roman form of plainchant sung without harmony that was eventually embellished by the Carolingians living north of the Alps. It was used extensively for the Mass and the Divine Office throughout Europe and the Middle East. Although St. Gregory the Great probably did not write any of the melodies, he did encourage the orderly use of music in church, which led to the eventual cataloging of the melodies in an early form of musical notation.

Gregorian Chant was written, preserved, and distributed to numerous lands by writing down its melodies in a series of marks and dashes. The signs–*neumes*–used in the earliest type of notation are small marks placed above each syllable in order to indicate how high or low it be sung. The shape of a *neume* reminds the chanter how the pitch varies up or down within a syllable. *Neumes* also indicate the grouping of pitches within a melody. They did not, however, indicate a precise relation of pitches within a syllable or from one syllable to the next.



During the tenth and eleventh centuries, marks arranged above and below a fixed-pitch line–*heightened neumes*–were used to make the intervals of a melody more discernible. In the first half of the eleventh century, an Italian Benedictine monk, Guido d'Arezzo, developed the system of four-line staff notation in which Gregorian Chant is still notated today. The modern five line staff is developed from this system of notation.

Gregorian Chant had fallen out of use, especially at the Mass, to more fashionable forms of music by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, some groups of Benedictine monks began to revive the use of Gregorian Chant, making it available worldwide for use at the Mass. The revival became popular, prompting Pope St. Pius X in 1903 to declare Gregorian Chant "proper to the Roman Church." He added, "[Holiness and universality] are to be found, in the highest degree, in Gregorian Chant." The fathers of the Second Vatican Council reiterated these statements: "Gregorian chant [is] specially suited to the Roman liturgy: therefore . . . it should be given pride of place in liturgical services" (*Sacrosanctum concilium* [Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy], no. 116).





# PART III

# The Rise of Islam

**There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.**
**(The *Shahada*, the creedal belief statement of Islam)**

The rise of Islam is important for a number of reasons. It joined Judaism and Christianity as the third great monotheistic religion. Its history is intimately linked to the Arab peoples and, later, the peoples conquered by Islamic invaders in Asia, Africa, and Europe. Islam grew rapidly, and became a threat to the existence of Christianity. This particular religion relates to the history of the Church insofar as wars between Christians and Muslims have unfortunately persisted throughout the centuries. These religious wars have had a profound impact on Christian history.

## ARABIA

The Arabian Peninsula is mostly barren desert and in the sixth century was sparsely populated by Bedouin tribes. These nomadic tribes controlled the few caravan trade routes that crossed the peninsula. A strong and proud people, the Arabs were also fierce warriors. The time at which Islam appeared was a tenuous period in the history of the peninsula: the various tribes were in a state of constant warfare with one another and the economic situation was dire.

The Arabs were pagans who worshiped various local objects of nature. One object in particular commanded a striking following, the *Kaaba*, a large black stone, in Mecca. Folklore dates the *Kaaba* to the time of Abraham, and is supposed to occupy the spot where he worshiped the one true God. The *Kaaba* is an *axus mundi* (turning-point of the world), a connection between Heaven and earth; hence, it is the focal point of prayers in the individual Muslim's life. Christianity and Judaism both had a very small presence among the Arabs. The Arabs were searching for a religion that would give them certainty about this life and the next. In the person of Muhammad, the Jewish, Christian, and pagan traditions were woven into a uniquely new Arabic religious tradition called Islam.

## MUHAMMAD (ca. 570-632) AND THE *KORAN*

**In the Name of God, The Compassionate, the Merciful / All praise belongs to God, /**
**Lord of all worlds, / the Compassionate, the Merciful, / Ruler of Judgment Day.**
**(*Koran*, opening lines of *The Essential Koran*, 1)**

Muhammad was born near Mecca around 570. By the age of six he was an orphan, and an uncle took over his upbringing. He worked as a camel driver until he married a wealthy, widowed woman, Khadeejah, when he was twenty-five years old. He had six children, all of whom died except his daughter Fatima. Shortly thereafter, Muhammad decided to withdraw from the world to pursue a life of mystical prayer.

By the age of 30, Muhammad had become despondent. Pagan worship gave him no spiritual peace. He retired to a cave and around the year 612, he announced to his acquaintances that he had had a vision of the archangel Gabriel that called him to be the herald of Allah, the Jewish God. He said that over a period of time he wrote exactly the words that Gabriel told him, resulting in the *Koran*. Thus, Muslims believe that the *Koran* (Arabic for "recitation") is not Muhammad's work but God's. The *Koran* is comprised of 114 chapters of sayings that Muhammad recorded.

## THE EXTENT OF ISLAM BY A.D. 661



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*Above:* Muslims worship in a mosque.

*Left:* Muslim pilgrims making their way to Mecca.





Muhammad continued to suffer a great deal of spiritual anxiety throughout his life. He questioned, at times, whether he was being divinely inspired or if he was suffering delusions. His wife and his cousin gave him constant encouragement, the latter saying that the revelations of the *Koran* were part of the truths of Judaism and Christianity.

The *Koran's* language and revelation have special status in Islam. Because Arabic was the language of revelation, it is considered the only true language in which to read the *Koran*. Though translations are made, Muslims are encouraged to learn Arabic in order to grasp the full nature and power of the *Koran's* revelation. The *Koran* is also written in the form of poetry, and is meant to be read aloud, which aids the goal of memorization. Finally, the *Koran* is considered technically to be "God's Word," perfect and eternal.



*Ishmael and his father Abraham pray after building the Kaaba*

Ishmael and his mother Hagar moved to Mecca where Ishmael and his father Abraham established the sanctuary and rebuilt the Kaaba. After this, God sent Ishmael as a prophet to the Amalekites and the tribes of Yemen. When the time of Ishmael's death was at hand, he bequeathed to his brother Isaac that he should marry his daughter to Esau, son of Isaac. Ishmael lived for 137 years and was buried in al-Hijr in the tomb of his mother Hagar.

*–The Teaching of Islam*

## ISLAM'S BIBLICAL REINTERPRETATION

> So she [Sarah] said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son."... And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the lad and because of your slave woman.... I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring." So Abraham rose the early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. (Gen 21: 10-14)

Islam reinterpreted the Jewish and Christian narratives for its own purposes. Islam traces itself back to Abraham, Hagar, and Ishmael in the story from Genesis quoted above. Ishmael is the father of the Arabic people, and Islam became the means for transforming them into a great nation.

Muhammad eventually proclaimed his worship of the one true God a national religion. Islam (Arabic for "submission") borrows from Judaism and Christianity in that it recognizes the Jewish prophets and Christian writings, but it contends that both Jews and Christians have misunderstood the intentions of God. Jesus and Mary are both respected in Islam, but only as a prophet and his holy mother. Islam holds that God's revelation culminated not in the birth, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, but in Muhammad's visions recorded in the *Koran*. Muhammad was God's last prophet who brought to the world the perfect religion.

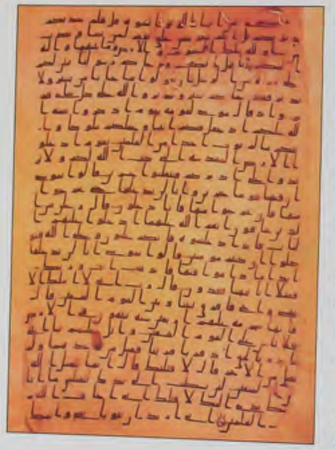
## "PEOPLE OF THE BOOK"

> Be they Muslims, Jews, / Christians, or Sabians, / those who believe in God and the Last Day / and who do good / have their reward with their Lord. / They have nothing to fear, / and they will not sorrow. (*Koran*, verse 62).

The *Koran* teaches that Jews and Christians are "People of the Book," that is, they share with Muslims the great monotheistic tradition and a common religious history. The *Koran* recognizes Jesus saying that Allah "strengthened him with the holy spirit" (*Koran*, verse 87), but Jesus to the *Koran* was only a prophet. According to Muhammad, Christianity failed as a religion by misinterpreting God's intentions as they were communicated through Jesus. Most of the unique mysteries of Faith in Christianity are denied by Islam: the Incarnation, redemption and atonement of the cross, the Resurrection, and the Trinity.

At first Christians were generally tolerated by Muslims. But as the religion became increasingly militant and nationalized in the seventh and eighth centuries, tensions dramatically mounted. Jews and Christians were forced to pay a special tax called the *jizya* in order to retain the right to practice their own religion. This financial burden and the difficulties of trying to live in a Muslim state eventually coerced many Jews and Christians to convert to Islam.

## MUHAMMAD'S PREACHING



Dated to the seventh century A.D., this *Koran* manuscript is thought to be the earliest style of *Koran* writing. It is located in the Tareq Rajab Museum in Kuwait.

Muhammad preached monotheism, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, justice to the poor, and a sensual paradise in the next life. When he began his preaching, his critique of the pagan religion in Mecca and call for moral reform among the ruling elite upset many in the city, and Muhammad was forced to flee for his life to Medina (which means "the city of the prophet" in Arabic) with his followers on Friday, July 16, 622. This emigration is known as the *hejira* (Arabic for "flight" or "emigration"), and it marks the year 1 in the Islamic calendar. In the West, the Muslim year is represented by the abbreviation "A.H.," which stands for the Latin *anno hegiræ* ("in the year of the *hejira*"). Thus, the Jubilee Year 2000 was the year 1478 A.H. in the Muslim world.

## IN MEDINA ISLAM MATURES

In Medina, Muhammad was hailed as a religious leader. The leaders of the city invited Muhammad to be the new ruler as a means to avoid further bloodshed among contending parties. Muhammad immediately set about the task of building up Islam. From the beginning of Islam, there was never any separation between the civil powers and religious authority. Islam functions in unity between the temporal and spiritual powers in one organic whole. With Islam rooted in Medina, Muhammad also became the head of the military force, which was used to expand Islam.

There was also a small Jewish population in Medina that numbered at least five hundred men. Upon his arrival Muhammad demanded that this community recognize him as a prophet in line







Muslims circle the Kaaba in Mecca.

with the Old Testament prophets Moses, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah. The Jews refused because they held that the prophetic line had ended over a thousand years before. During a later confrontation with Mecca, the Jewish community appeared to have supported the Meccans against Muhammad, who in turn slaughtered the Jewish men and sold the women and children into slavery.

The year 624 proved to be a key turning point in the development of Islam. After a new inspiration, Muhammad changed the direction of Muslim prayer (*qibla*) one hundred eighty degrees from Jerusalem to Mecca. In 624 Muhammad also led his forces in a *jihad* (holy war) against the Meccans, and he defeated them at Badr. With only three hundred men, Muhammad was able to defeat a much larger Meccan force of about 900, as well as capture an entire caravan as booty. The Battle of Badr (624) has often been interpreted by Muslims as their Exodus story.

This paved the way for Muhammad to take control of Mecca as well, which he purged of all the pagan religions. The *Kaaba* (Arabic for "square building") alone was spared destruction, though its meaning was transformed. Under Islam, the *Kaaba* became the focus of pilgrimage, which every Muslim is required to visit at least once in his lifetime, means permitting. The *Kaaba* itself is housed inside a square building that Muslims believe Abraham built. Only Muslims are permitted to see the *Kaaba*, and shoes are removed before entering.

## THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

The Five Pillars of Islam are the requirements of all Muslims. They are the following:

- **The *Shahada:* the creedal statement of Islam**
- **Prayer**
- **The *Hajj:* pilgrimage to Mecca**
- ***Ramadan:* the holy month (ninth month of the Islamic calendar)**
- ***Zakah:* (alms) for purification**

Prayer is required five times daily in the direction of the *Kaaba* in Mecca, and includes a ritualistic format of prayers and prostration. (Hotel rooms in the Muslim world normally have a marker in the corner that points toward Mecca.) In Muslim lands, the *muezzin*, a man who calls the community to prayer, stands atop a minaret and calls Muslims to pray with the sound of the human voice. The holy day for Muslims is Friday, taken from the Jewish Sabbath, which begins at sundown on Friday. Typically, the Muslim community gathers for prayers on Friday at the *mosque* (Arabic for "place of prostration") where the Muslim cleric will also speak.

The *Hajj* is the pilgrimage to Mecca. It is required at least once in the adult life of every Muslim if the monetary means exist. It normally takes place on the eighth through twelfth days of the last month of the lunar year, which places it after the holy month of *Ramadan*. Through a number of ritualistic ceremonies and prayers that include three laps on foot around the *Kaaba*, Muslims share

in the history of the *Kaaba* and the *heijra*, and express unity with all Muslims. Through the ritualistic re-enactment around the *Kaaba*, Muslims symbolically share in Muhammad's flight to Medina from Mecca. The entire Hajj is a profound expression of unity with Muslims throughout the world.

The *Shahada* contains the beliefs of Islam. In order for one to be a Muslim, the following statement must be made in freedom and with belief: "There is no god but God ('*Allah*' in Arabic), and Muhammad is his prophet." There are no sacraments.

*Ramadan* is the holy month, celebrated during the ninth lunar month. A strict fast from sunrise to sunset is enforced that encompasses eating, drinking, smoking, and sexual relations. This challenging fast increases one's spiritual dependence on God and openness to the material plight of the poor, who normally go without food. In the evenings families and friends come together for a meal. *Ramadan* is a sacred, joyful time that carries a great deal of historical significance: the *Koran* was given during this time to Muhammad, the Battle of Badr took place in this month, Khadeejah died on the tenth, Mecca was occupied on the nineteenth, and Ali, the grandson of Muhammad who is especially important to Shiite Muslims, died on the twenty-first.

In support of the poor, Muslims are also asked to give alms in the form of a special tax, given yearly based on a percentage of one's wealth. In some countries the government collects the alms; in others, individuals freely give it. This is separate from charitable giving, which Muslims are also encouraged to do on a regular basis.

## THE MORAL CODE OF ISLAM

In addition to the Five Pillars (requirements), Islam also holds its followers to a strict moral code. From Judaism, Islam borrowed dietary prohibitions including pork, and it accepts the Jewish practice of kosher in the preparation of meat products. Thus, in many places Jews and Muslims share butchers and stores in order to meet the obligations of their religions. For example, in order for meat to be properly prepared for human consumption, all the blood must first be drained from the animal.

Idolatry is strictly forbidden. Islamic art does not depict the image of Allah or the human person because it is considered a form of idolatry. Rather, Islamic art has developed complex and beautiful geometric shapes and architecture as the central focus of artistic output. It is also quite likely that Islam's strict prohibition against depictions of the divine affected Christianity during the iconoclastic controversy, about which more will be said in Chapter 7.

Apostasy and adultery are also strictly forbidden. Polygamy was permitted, though with strict conditions: a man may have no more than four wives, and he must treat them with perfect equality, financial support, and equal love. Otherwise, he must remain monogamous. Hence, though polygamy is technically permitted by the *Koran*, it is generally impossible to show complete impartiality and meet the necessary conditions for the maintenance of multiple wives. Thus polygamy has been generally outlawed.

## *JIHAD*

*Jihad* is a Muslim holy war waged in the name of religion against "infidels." Those who die fighting in a *jihad*—according to Muslim belief—go straight to Heaven where swords provide shade and the man is met with a limitless number of virgins.

The use of religious feeling to promote war has prompted the labeling of *jihad* as the "sixth pillar" of Islam because it was so intricately linked to Muhammad and Islam's expansion. When Muhammad died in 632, he had already expertly utilized *jihad* to defeat his foes in Mecca. In 634 his suc-





## THE SPLIT IN ISLAM: SUNNI VERSUS SHIITE

After Muhammad's death in 632, his followers disagreed over questions of succession and political leadership in the Muslim community. These disagreements led to the early split of Islam into two factions, Sunni and Shiite.

Shiite (or Shi'a) is short for "Shi'at Ali"—Arabic for "the party of Ali," and constitutes Islam's largest non-Sunni sect. Shiites claimed that Ali, the son-in-law and cousin of Muhammad, was the only rightful successor. This claim was based on Muhammad's alleged designation of Ali as his successor and the tribal custom of preserving leadership through bloodline. The community leaders, however, did not agree, and instead chose a close companion of Muhammad, Abu Bakr, to become the first Caliph (Arabic for "successor"). After the third Caliph, Uthman, was murdered in 656, Ali was named the fourth Caliph. Ali himself was assassinated in 661. Today, Shiites constitute ten to fifteen percent of all followers of Islam.

Unlike the followers of Ali, the Sunni Muslims accept the order of succession of the first four Caliphs (including Ali as the fourth Caliph) and oppose political succession based on bloodline. "Sunni" comes from the Arabic "Sunna" meaning "tradition." Sunni Muslims adhere to doctrines and practices based on the traditions of Muhammad as understood and interpreted by Muslim scholars all through history. Because the Sunnis have no centralized authority, the tradition is better understood as a general identity that includes many smaller, local offshoots. Today Sunni Muslims constitute almost eighty-five percent of the world's Muslim population.

Many differences in emphasis and style may be found between Shiites and Sunnis. While the Sunnis emphasize following Muhammad's Sunna (traditions) and recognize the authority of religious scholars, Shiites believe that the Imam, the successor of Ali, is a spiritual and temporal leader–a descendant of Muhammad divinely appointed to guide humans. The spirituality of Shiites is also very mystical. Shiites emphasize suffering, martyrdom, veneration of Ali, and praying at the tombs of Muslim prophets and saints. The rivalry between these two sects is evident even today throughout the Muslim world.



*The Prayer at the Tomb* in the Blue Mosque in Cairo.

cessors began to wage *jihad* along the caravan trade routes. Syria and Mesopotamia quickly fell, and soon it became clear that Christian lands were the main target. The use of war also served to unite the Arabs, which had been nearly impossible to do before Islam's rise.

## THE SPREAD OF ISLAM

Islam's success in spreading and establishing a strong and long-lasting empire remains one of the most remarkable stories in history. Beginning in 634, the Muslims remained unstoppable for the next one hundred years. Within eighty years of Muhammad's death, Muslim territory already spread from the Indus River in India to parts of North Africa and southern Spain. Asia Minor and Europe, for the most part, were as yet unthreatened by Muslim expansion.

The spread of Islamic territory and faith went hand in hand. Believers were obligated by their religion to seek converts and wage a holy war to destroy unbelievers. With an excellent cavalry and light archery (learned from the Persians and Byzantines), the Muslim army became the best in the world. As the army expanded, Islam did as well.

Muslim forces began by defeating the Persians and sacking Jerusalem in 638. The fall of the city sent a shockwave throughout the East and West and would eventually prompt Christians to launch a counterattack to try to retake the Holy Land during the Crusades. Having taken Jerusalem, Muslims spread westwards sacking Christian Alexandria, also a great repository of one thousand years of Greek culture, in 643. With Alexandria taken, Muslims quickly spread throughout North Africa. Nestorians and Monophysites in North Africa for the most part welcomed the Muslim invaders since they were at odds with the Byzantine emperor. By 698, all of North Africa was under Muslim rule. Six hundred years of North African Christianity, with its apologists, early Doctors of the Church, and martyrs, were destroyed. The Old Roman (Byzantine) Empire was reduced to an area not much larger than Greece.



In 684 the Dome of the Rock was erected on the site of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem as a Muslim shrine to commemorate "the Night Journey" of Muhammad.





In 711, Spain fell to the Muslims as well. The Muslims then crossed the Pyrenees and entered France where they were met in 732 by the Frankish chieftain Charles Martel, known as Charles "the Hammer." The subsequent battle, the Battle of Tours, marked the high water mark of the Muslim expansion into Europe. The Franks dressed in armor and stood firm before the hail of arrows. When the Muslims charged, their general was killed and the defeated army slinked back towards Spain. After their retreat to Spain, the Muslims never attempted any further advance into Europe through Spain. But the Muslims did remain in Spain for over 700 years, and it would not be until the *Reconquista* under the reign of Queen Isabella in 1492 that Spain would be completely liberated from Muslim domination.

In 717, the Muslim army laid siege to Christian Constantinople, but Emperor Leo III defeated them. The Muslims would attempt to breach the city again in 740 but would suffer a second defeat against Leo III. The emperor's successful defense against the Muslim forces established Byzantium's position as an eastern bulwark to the Muslim empire.

## JERUSALEM, THE HOLY CITY

The capture of Jerusalem in 638 by the Muslims has had historical consequences felt even today. The Muslim caliph Umar cleared the Temple Mount, the site of the two Jewish temples, and built a temporary mosque. In 684 the Dome of the Rock was erected, on the site of the former Temple, as a Muslim shrine to commemorate "the Night Journey" of Muhammad. The Dome of the Rock was intended to surpass the beauty and size of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the church built on the site where Jesus was buried.

According to Muslim beliefs, while sleeping one night near the Kaaba, Muhammad was taken by the angel Gabriel to Jerusalem, where he met the other prophets Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, among others, before ascending through seven heavens before he stood in the presence of God. After this direct experience of God, Gabriel returned Muhammad to Mecca. Whether Muhammad's experience was an actual event, a dream, or a result of a hallucination is not clear, but the seventeenth verse of the *Koran* describes Muhammad's "Night Journey." For this reason, Jerusalem is reckoned as the third holiest city in Islam after Mecca and Medina.

The "temporary" mosque was eventually replaced by the magnificent Al-Aqsa Mosque (Arabic for "farthest mosque," a reference to the *Koran*) also on the Temple Mount. It was completed around 710, and quickly became an important center of learning. At Friday prayers, the mosque and the area surrounding it often hold four to five thousand people.

The appropriation of the site of the former Temple by the Muslims has caused great tensions through the centuries. Jews were not able to rebuild a third Temple because of the Diaspora after 70, and they have today only the Wailing Wall, an outer wall of the Temple Mount, remaining from the Temple.



*Prophet Muhammad returns from his Night Journey and Ascension*

The Prophet Muhammad is the seal of the prophets, sent to all humanity. He was born in Mecca and sent first to the Arabs to revive the religion of Abraham. Early in his mission he is taken on a special Night Journey to the ends of the Earth, and to visit locations of former prophetic activity such as Mount Sinai, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem. From Jerusalem, the Prophet Muhammad ascends into the seven heavens where he meets the prophets who came before him, and eventually comes into the presence of God.–*The Teaching of Islam*

## A PAPAL PERSPECTIVE ON ISLAM

Despite aggressive and expansionistic tendencies, westerners have since learned to see some of the positive characteristics of the Islamic religion. Pope John Paul II in particular said much regarding Islam and had hoped to enter into positive dialogue with members of that religion. In his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Pope John Paul II wrote the following about the nature of Islam as a religion:

> Some of the most beautiful names in the human language are given to the God of the *Koran*, but He is ultimately a God outside of the world, a God who is *only Majesty, never Emmanuel*, God-with us. *Islam is not a religion of redemption.* There is no room for the Cross and the Resurrection. Jesus is mentioned, but only as a prophet who prepares for the last prophet, Muhammad. There is also mention of Mary, His Virgin Mother, but the tragedy of redemption is completely absent. For this reason not only the theology but also the anthropology of Islam is very distant from Christianity. Nevertheless, *the religiosity of Muslims deserves respect.*



## CONCLUSION

In this tumultuous period, the Church made the transition from existing within the Roman Empire to surviving amidst the Germanic invasions. However, the Church did not merely survive. Rather, she set about a proactive mission of the evangelization of Germanic tribes, facilitated largely by the rise of monasticism. The next chapter relates the stories of the men and women who brought the Gospel message to all corners of Europe. Though beset by great challenges, the steadfast labors of these holy monks, nuns, kings, queens, and soldiers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit brought a new unity to the West after the fall of the Empire. The rising specter of Islam, however, would soon pose a severe challenge of its own to the entire Christian world.





## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

**St. Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict*, Ch. 33, "Whether Monks Ought to Have Anything of Their Own"**

The vice of private ownership is above all to be cut off from the monastery by the roots. Let none presume to give or receive anything without leave of the Abbot, nor to keep anything as their own, either book, or writing tablet, or pen, or anything whatsoever; since they are permitted to have neither body nor will in their power. But all that is necessary they may hope to receive from the father of the monastery; nor are they allowed to keep anything which the Abbot has not given, or at least permitted them to have. Let all things be in common to all, as it is written: "Neither did anyone say that aught which he possessed was his own." But if anyone shall be found to indulge in this most baneful vice, and after one or two admonitions does not amend, let him be subject to correction.

**John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, On the Question: "Muhammad?"**

Whoever knows and reads the Old and New Testaments, and then reads the *Koran*, clearly sees the *process by which it completely reduces Divine Revelation.* It is impossible not to note the movement away from what God said about himself, first in the Old testament though the prophets, and then finally in the new Testament through his Son. In Islam all the richness of God's self-revelation, which constitutes the heritage of the Old and New Testaments, has definitely been set aside.

**Josef Cardinal Ratzinger (future Pope Benedict XVI), quoted in "Ratzinger on Europe," *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, January 2005.**

The rebirth of Islam is not only bound up with the new material riches of the Muslim lands, but also it is fed by the knowledge that Islam is in a position to offer a spiritual base that is valid for the life of a people. The traditional Christian basis that made Europe seems to be fleeing from the land of the old Europe, which, notwithstanding the perdurance of its political and spiritual power, has come to be seen ever more as condemned to decline and crumble.

**St. Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, I.VI To John, Bishop of the city of Ravenna**

That those who fly from the burden of rule through humility are then truly humble when they resist not the Divine decrees. There are some also who fly by reason only of their humility, lest they should be preferred to others to whom they esteem themselves unequal. And theirs, indeed, if it be surrounded by other virtues, is then true humility before the eyes of God, when it is not pertinacious in rejecting what it is enjoined to undertake with profit. For neither is he truly humble, who understands how the good pleasure of the Supernal Will ought to bear sway, and yet contemns its sway. But, submitting himself to the divine disposals, and averse from the vice of obstinacy, it be be already prevented with gifts whereby he may profit others also, he ought, when enjoined to undertake supreme rule, in his heart to flee from it, but against his will to obey.



St. Benedict's Rule has been lauded for its spirit of peace and love, as well as its moderation in the ascetical life.

## VOCABULARY

**ALLAH**
Arabic word for God.

**CENOBITICAL LIFE**
More common form of monasticism, called the common life, that is monastic life lived in community.

**DIOCESE**
A territorial division of the Church, adapted from the Roman Empire.

**ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH**
Title adopted by the Patriarch of Constantinople.

**THE *HAJJ***
The pilgrimage to Mecca required of all Muslim faithful once during their lifetime.

**THE *HEJIRA***
Arabic for "flight." The flight of Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina on Friday, July 16, 622. Marks year 1 in the Islamic (A.H.) calendar.

**HERMIT**
One who, for religious motives, has retired into solitary life, especially one of the early Christian recluses. Derived from the Greek word *erēmia*, meaning "desert," it is also known as eremitical life.

**HUNS**
A powerful nomadic people of unknown ethnic origin who invaded Europe ca. 375.

**ISLAM**
Arabic for "submission," the faith of the prophet Muhammad, it traces its roots back to Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael.

***JIHAD***
Holy war waged by Muslims in the name of religion. Muslim men who die in a jihad are believed to go straight to Heaven.

***JIZYA***
Tax placed upon Jews and Christians under Muslim rule. It allowed them to keep their religious laws, and retain the right to practice their own religion.

***KAABA***
Arabic for "square building," this large black stone is the main focus of the pilgrimage to Mecca, which every Muslim is required to take at least once in his lifetime. Housed inside a square building that Muslims believe Abraham built, Muslims gather around the stone to re-enact Muhammad's flight to Medina from Mecca.

***KORAN***
Arabic for "recitation," this is the holy book of the Muslim faith, written by Muhammad, and containing all of the writings that Muhammad claimed he was told by the archangel Gabriel under God's direction.

***LAUS DEI***
Latin for "praise of God," in Benedictince life it referred to the four hours of the day spent in communal prayer. Alternatively called *opus Dei* (work of God).

***LECTIO DIVINA***
Reading and meditation on Scripture.

**MONASTICISM**
A way of life characterized by asceticism and self-denial lived more or less in seclusion from the world and under fixed rule and vows. Monastic communities withdraw from the affairs of the world in order to seek God through asceticism and prayer.

***NUNCIO***
Personal ambassador of the pope.

***OPUS DEI***
See *laus Dei*.

***ORA ET LABORA***
Benedictine motto meaning "pray and work."





## VOCABULARY Continued

***RAMADAN***
The holy month of Islam believed to be the time when the *Koran* was given to Muhammad. Celebrated in the ninth lunar month of each year, a strict fast is observed from sunrise to sunset.

***SCRIPTORIUM***
Large room in a monastery dedicated to the copying and maintaining of texts.

***SERVUS SERVORUM DEI***
Latin for "servant of the servants of God," this title was adopted by Pope St. Gregory the Great.

**THE *SHAHADA***
The first pillar and creedal statement of Islam: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet."

**VOW**
A solemn promise made voluntarily by a person of reason, to practice a virtue or perform a specific good deed in order to accomplish a future good which is better than its contrary.



Once a student at the monastery learned Latin, he was taught Sacred Scriptures, the writings of the Church Fathers, geometry, and music for the singing of the Divine Office.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Describe conditions in the Roman Empire during the fifth century when the empire collapsed.
2. How did Ulphilas influence the Germanic tribes and Christianity?
3. What was the key for the Church in converting the Germanic tribes?
4. How did the Germanic invasions change the Christian attitude in the fifth century?
5. How is Christian monasticism unique?
6. How is the eremitical life structured, and which two orders have taken much of their inspiration from eremitical monasticism?
7. What was a common problem of the early hermits in Egypt?
8. What were the three major effects of the monasteries on Europe?
9. What are the chief qualities that lend the *Rule of St. Benedict* to harmonious religious life?
10. What three vows were accepted by the Benedictines?
11. Who was St. Scholastica, and what was her chief accomplishment?
12. In what ways was Pope St. Gregory I (the Great) an historical marker?
13. What was Pope St. Gregory I's background?
14. What title did Pope St. Gregory I use during his papacy, and what title did he reject for the Patriarch of Constantinople. What did these titles imply?
15. What is unique about the use of Arabic as the original language in the *Koran*?
16. Who is the common ancestor for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. To whom do Muslims trace the origin of their people?
17. What does the *Koran* have to say about Mary and Jesus?
18. List the Five Pillars of Islam, and give a brief description of each.
19. Islam's expansion came at whose expense?
20. At the famous Battle of Tours in France in 732, who defeated the Muslim forces from Spain?
21. What religious significance does Jerusalem hold in Islam?
22. How did Pope John Paul II analyze Islam?



St. Paul of Thebes is held by tradition to be the first hermit. He had fled a persecution under the Roman Emperor Decius.





## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. Why is it easy to understand why many Christians thought that the Second Coming was close at hand when the Roman Empire collapsed? Can you think of other times in history when conditions also seemed to be right for the Second Coming?
2. The "Dome of the Rock" was built in 684 over the site of the former Jewish temple in Jerusalem. What psychological impact might this have had upon Jews?
3. What arguments would you use to try and convince a Muslim that the Christian teaching on the Trinity does not violate monotheism nor commit idolatry?
4. What did Pope John Paul II mean when he stated that Islam is not a religion of redemption? How does Christianity differ?
5. The largest mosque in Europe was built in 1995 in Rome. What reasons might there be for choosing Rome for this mosque?
6. The *Rule of St. Benedict*, written in the sixth century, is still used by Benedictines and a number of other monastic communities today. Its focus on a simple life of prayer and work and its adaptability to different circumstances have been credited with the *Rule's* enduring to the present day. Find a copy of the *Rule* and comment on any two of its chapters. What is contained within each of your two chosen chapters? Why are these topics important to cenobitical life? How might following these chapters of the *Rule* help a monk get to Heaven?



*Jesus speaks immediately after his birth*

God revealed to the Jesus' mother Mary to set out with him for Syria. She did what she was commanded. The revelation came to him when he was thirty years old. His prophethood lasted three years, then God raised him up to heaven. Some of the early Muslims said that Jesus used to wear hair and ate the leaves of trees. He had no house, no family, and no property. Jesus is the seal of the Israelite prophets. After his rejection by the Israelites, Jerusalem was destroyed.

*–The Teaching of Islam*

## FROM THE CATECHISM

**916** The state of consecrated life is thus one way of experiencing a "more intimate" consecration, rooted in Baptism and dedicated totally to God (cf. *PC* 5). In the consecrated life, Christ's faithful, moved by the Holy Spirit, propose to follow Christ more nearly, to give themselves to God who is loved above all and, pursuing the perfection of charity in the service of the Kingdom, to signify and proclaim in the Church the glory of the world to come (cf. CIC, can. 573).

**922** From apostolic times Christian virgins (cf. 1 Cor 7:34-36) and widows (cf. John Paul II, *Vita consecrata* 7), called by the Lord to cling only to him with greater freedom of heart, body, and spirit, have decided with the Church's approval to live in the respective status of virginity or perpetual chastity "for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven" (Mt 19:12).

**923** "Virgins who, committed to the holy plan of following Christ more closely, are consecrated to God by the diocesan bishop according to the approved liturgical rite, are betrothed mystically to Christ, the Son of God, and are dedicated to the service of the Church" (CIC, can. 604 § 1). By this solemn rite (*Consecratio virginum*), the virgin is "constituted…a sacred person, a transcendent sign of the Church's love for Christ, and an eschatological image of this heavenly Bride of Christ and of the life to come" (*Ordo Consecrationis Virginum, Praenotanda* 1).

**924** "As with other forms of consecrated life," the order of virgins establishes the woman living in the world (or the nun) in prayer, penance, service of her brethren, and apostolic activity, according to the state of life and spiritual gifts given to her (cf. CIC, can. 604 § 1; *OCV Praenotanda* 2). Consecrated virgins can form themselves into associations to observe their commitment more faithfully (cf. CIC, can. 604 § 2).

**925** Religious life was born in the East during the first centuries of Christianity. Lived within institutes canonically erected by the Church, it is distinguished from other forms of consecrated life by its liturgical character, public profession of the evangelical counsels, fraternal life led in common, and witness given to the union of Christ with the Church (cf. CIC, cann. 607; 573; *UR* 15).

**926** Religious life derives from the mystery of the Church. It is a gift she has received from her Lord, a gift she offers as a stable way of life to the faithful called by God to profess the counsels. Thus, the Church can both show forth Christ and acknowledge herself to be the Savior's bride. Religious life in its various forms is called to signify the very charity of God in the language of our time.



St. Gregory took the title "servus servorum Dei"…the servant of the servants of God.



CHAPTER 6

# The Conversion Of The Barbarian Tribes

*The great evangelizers of this period were fervent in their faith in Jesus and his Church and hoped for everyone to share in the spiritual and moral treasure of Christianity.*



## CHAPTER 6

# The Conversion Of The Barbarian Tribes

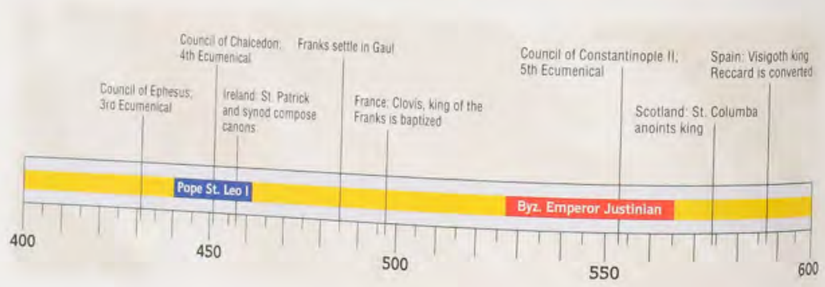
God desires the salvation of everyone. In a mysterious but real way, he is present in all. Humanity forms one single family, since all human beings have been created by God in his own image. All have a common destiny, since they are called to find fullness of life in God.

— John Paul II, Homily, Parakou, Benin, February 4, 1993

The invasion and conquest of the Roman Empire opened a new chapter in both the history of the Church and Western civilization. The Church, recognizing her mission to spread the Gospel to all people, set about the task of converting both the Germanic invaders and the different tribes populating the surrounding areas of the former Roman frontier. The process was long and arduous with many advances and setbacks—a period of evangelization that stretched from the first Germanic invasions in the fourth century through the eleventh century, when the last European peoples, the Slavs, converted.

In today's cultural climate it is often heard that Christian missionaries have no business in trying to convert those peoples following pagan religions or other religious traditions, a charge that itself often belies an anti-Christian prejudice. According to this logic, Christianity is no better or worse than any other religion or philosophy. To deny Christians the right to evangelize would strip them of their right to express their religious beliefs freely, and it would deprive unbelievers of the freedom to embrace the liberating and saving Truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

> The missionary task implies a *respectful dialogue* with those who do not yet accept the Gospel (cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio* 55). Believers can profit from this dialogue by learning to appreciate better "those elements of truth and grace which are found among peoples, and which are, as it were, a secret presence of God" (*Ad gentes* 9). They proclaim the Good News to those who do not know it, in order to consolidate, complete, and raise








> up the truth and the goodness that God has distributed among men and nations, and to purify them from error and evil "for the glory of God, the confusion of the demon, and the happiness of man" (*Ad gentes* 9). (CCC 856)

The great evangelizers of this period were fervent in their faith in Jesus and his Church, and hoped for everyone, including the different pagan peoples, to share in this spiritual and moral treasure of Christianity. These heralds of Christ not only wanted to prepare their people for everlasting life, but also wanted to spread the benefits of a more civilized society and higher human culture.

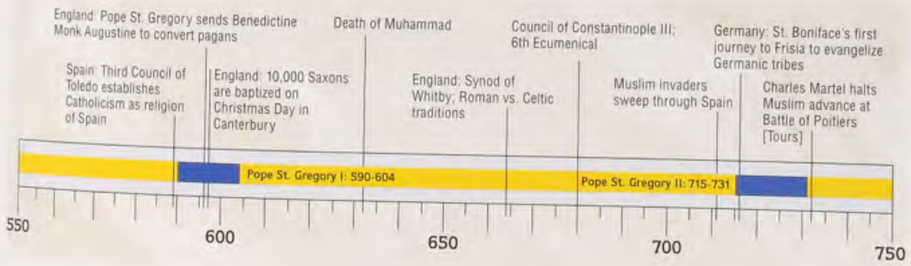
In exploring the issue of converting the barbarians, this chapter will highlight a number of the men and women who brought the Gospel to these pagan tribes. This section will also examine the unique role monasticism played in creating a Christian culture through their witness and teachings. Lastly, this chapter will explore the crucial work of the papacy in promoting and supporting evangelization.

## The Church's Work of Conversion

Most of the German tribes were Arians. Though these Arian tribes did not understand the subtleties of theology, they were fanatical promoters of that heresy. Many, in fact, attempted to destroy Catholicism.

The work of conversion and assimilation into a Christian mindset would take many generations since the barbarians were generally uncivilized, bellicose peoples with little developed culture. Over the succeeding centuries, the Germanic tribes mixed with the Romans and adopted some aspects of the Greco-Roman culture. The great work of conversion and evangelization was the fruit of patient and dedicated labor of the monks.

During the fifth century, the bishops were gifted leaders who guided and educated their people not only with good preaching, but also through their pastoral example. The bishops exhibited many roles, such as that of father, teacher, preacher, leader, administrator, liturgist, and sometimes even military leader. Because of the chaos of the age, the bishops took on leadership positions, and they worked to preserve the safety of the people, whom they often protected through their dialogue with the invaders. This dialogue with the Germanic tribes, who formed a minority of the population and were the occupying military power, also paved the way for their conversion. Due primarily to the power vacuum created by the fall of the Roman Empire, these bishops gained influence in the political as well as in the spiritual sector.



The task before the Church was truly immense. The monks and bishops not only had to build the churches, monasteries, and institutions of the Church from scratch, but also had to raise the moral and cultural level of the tribes so they could be fully disposed to internalize the Gospel.

As previously mentioned, the Germanic tribes were exceedingly violent and terribly cruel even within their own families. For example, St. Clotilda's daughter was punished by her Alemanni husband for trying to attend Mass. One of Clovis' sons murdered a nephew with his bare hands in a rage. In Spain, the Visigoth prince St. Hermengild converted under the influence of his wife Ingund. Ingund's mother-in-law punished her in response, and eventually St. Hermengild's entire family betrayed him and had him beheaded. St. Hermengild's brother Recared's conversion initiated the conversion of Spain. Through their conversions, these peoples began to rise to a humanity purified and elevated by grace.

There were two forces at work during this period. First, missionaries emerged from those lands that were most recently evangelized—especially Ireland, England, and Germany. Secondly, Christian queens influenced their pagan husbands to convert to Christianity. The general population usually soon followed the conversion of their king.



St. Benedict blesses one of his pupils, St. Maurus, before the monk leaves on a mission to teach in France. In the background is an event from St. Maurus' life when he saved a drowning boy named Placid by walking on the water.





## PART I

# Conversion of France, the "Church's Eldest Daughter"

Over time the Franks would become the Church's greatest defender. In fact, this special relationship between the papacy and the Franks would result in the formation of the Papal States. The conversion of the Franks was a huge victory in the Church's effort to bring the message of the Gospels to the Germanic tribes, as the Franks were the first of the Germanic tribes to convert to the Faith.

## CONVERSION OF THE FRANKS

The Franks, unlike most of the other invaders, were not Christians (Arian, orthodox, or otherwise) when they settled Gaul (modern-day France) in 485. A bishop introduced the beautiful Burgundian princess St. Clotilda, a Christian, to the Frankish chief Clovis. Since Clovis was a pagan, St. Clotilda worked ceaselessly to obtain his conversion. Yet, the death of their first child and the near death of their second child strengthened Clovis' view that the Christian God was ineffective. Over the course of 496 and 497, Clovis and his troops battled the barbarian Alemanni. With defeat staring him in the face, Clovis promised the Christian God that if he won he would convert and be baptized. At Tolbiac the Franks were triumphant, and in 497, Clovis was faithful to his promise.



After his baptism, Clovis united Gaul.

Clovis presented himself to the church in Rheims to be baptized with three thousand of his troops. They were dressed in fur coats, wore long hair, and held their battle-axes in hand. Clovis disrobed and entered a pond, followed by his soldiers. Bishop Remigius pronounced the words of Baptism. By this act of Baptism, the Franks were the first of the Germanic tribes to embrace the Catholic Faith, thereby making France "the Church's eldest daughter."

After his Baptism, Clovis united Gaul by conquering neighboring Germanic tribes. Burgundy, an eastern province of France, was annexed. Part of this unity involved a fusion of the Greco-Roman culture with the German warrior culture. The descendants of Clovis were known as the Merovingian Dynasty, named after Meroveus, an ancestor of Clovis.

By the middle of the sixth century, all of Gaul—from the English Channel to the Pyrenees—was Christianized. Other than Gaul, only Italy, Ireland, and a small part of England made up the Church's faithful in the West. The rest of central and northern Europe remained to be evangelized.

## ST. GREGORY OF TOURS

St. Gregory of Tours (ca. 538-ca. 594) was elected Bishop of Tours in France in 573. Born of a Gallo-Roman senatorial family with relational ties to most of the aristocratic houses in Gaul, St. Gregory became one of the leading churchmen in the period following the collapse of the Roman Empire. He also wrote the *Historia Francorum* (History of the Franks). Beginning with creation in the Bible, St. Gregory told the history of the Franks through the year 591. Any study of this period of French history would be virtually impossible without referring to St. Gregory's work.

# PART II

# Spain

Christianity arrived in Spain while still part of the Roman Empire. According to tradition, Spain received Christianity directly from the Apostles St. James the Greater and St. Paul, and from that time until the eighth century, Christianity flourished, despite much suffering under Roman persecution. By the middle of the fourth century, Spain enjoyed a stable hierarchy of bishops who periodically held councils to combat the heresies of that time.

With the invasion of the Visigoths, the Church in Spain suffered greatly until 589. Spain collapsed with the invasion of the Visigoths who conquered most of the Iberian Peninsula. Though nominally Arian, the Visigoths demonstrated great intolerance toward the Church in Spain. In the middle of



According to tradition, Spain received Christianity directly from the Apostles St. James the Greater and St. Paul.







The Council of Toledo in 589 condemned Arianism and established Catholicism as the religion of Spain.

the sixth century, however, St. Hermengild, son of the Visigoth king Leovigild, married the Catholic Merovingian princess, Ingund. Leovigild sent his son to rule in Seville, and there Ingund and Leander, the Bishop of Seville, worked together for the conversion of the future St. Hermengild.

With St. Hermengild's conversion came a very tense and fragile standoff between himself and his Arian father, each one hoping that the other would relent peacefully. The situation escalated into civil war in 582, and Leovigild finally captured his son in 584. St. Hermengild spent a year in captivity before being killed in 585. His wife died at around the same time en route to Constantinople. Leovigild died soon after, and his other son, Reccard, ascended the throne. After executing his brother's murderer, Reccard converted to Catholicism in 587. In 589, the Third Council of Toledo condemned Arianism, and Catholicism thus became the religion of Spain. But this political and religious unity, achieved after so much hardship, would not last long. Subsequent monarchies gradually weakened, and the former unity began to dissolve—thus opening the door for the Muslim invasion at the beginning of the eighth century.

In 711, the Muslim invaders began to sweep through Spain. Within three years, they had conquered the entire Iberian peninsula—a task which had taken the Roman legions nearly a century to accomplish. The Spanish peoples chose either to live under Muslim rule or to retreat to the most northerly provinces of Spain, mainly in Asturias, protected by the *Picos de Europa*, a mountain range in northern Spain. Those who chose to live under Muslim rule called themselves Mozarabs. Mozarabic Christians did not fare poorly at first; but, in the early ninth century, persecutions began. Years of struggle and slow re-conquest followed. Not until 1492, when the *Reconquista* (Spanish for "re-conquest") was complete, did Christians again rule all of Spain.

# BRITISH AND IRISH/CELTIC MISSIONS TO EUROPE
## 6TH TO 8TH CENTURIES








# CHRISTIANITY IN RUSSIA
## 10TH TO 11TH CENTURIES



# PART III
# The Conversion of the Celts

Christianity in Ireland adapted itself to the Celtic culture, given its geographic distance from the Roman provinces. By the fifth century, Christianity had reached the island, though Druidic paganism was by far the dominant religion. Through extraordinary efforts inspired by the faith of ordinary individuals, Christianity spread quickly throughout the island. Ireland soon developed a strong monastic tradition that would serve the Church as a source of great missionaries.

## ST. PATRICK: THE "APOSTLE OF IRELAND"

> **I came to the Irish peoples to preach the Gospel and endure the taunts of unbelievers, putting up with reproaches about my earthly pilgrimage, suffering many persecutions, even bondage, and losing my birthright of freedom for the benefit of others. (St. Patrick, *Confessions*, Cap. 14-16: PL 53, 808-809)**

A boy named Patricius (d. 493) was born sometime around the end of the fourth century. He was a Roman Briton and the son of a former Roman city official who had become a deacon in order to avoid taxation. When he was about sixteen, Irish pirates kidnapped him off the southwest coast of Britain and took him to the northwest of Ireland. There he lived the life of a slave in that foreign land, working as a herdsman. Prayer gave him strength (St. Patrick wrote that he prayed one hundred prayers in a given day), and after six years, St. Patrick escaped back to Britain and his family. Soon after his return, he wrote of a vision which called him back to Ireland to walk among its people again. This supernatural experience prompted him to begin his studies for the priesthood.



Sometime in the early 430s, St. Patrick, now a priest, was on the road back to Ireland with several clerics. He had been commissioned by Pope St. Celestine I to aid the Bishop of Ireland, Palladius; but somewhere on the road in Gaul they received the news of Palladius' death. As a consequence St. Patrick was consecrated as the new bishop immediately, and sailed to the north of Ireland. He was familiar with this area, which had not yet been evangelized by Palladius, who had confined his work to the southern regions. Within fifteen years, despite resistance from many of the Druid chieftains, the entire northern half of the island heard the Word of God, thousands were baptized, and consecrated religious communities were started. St. Patrick governed this new Christian community from his episcopal headquarters in Ultster. Humility, eloquence, and many miracles were St. Patrick's tools. He began working with bishops who arrived in the south in 439; and in 457, they met in a synod to establish laws and directives for the newborn Church in Ireland.





Within a generation of St. Patrick's work, the island had converted to the Faith. St. Patrick, being such a strong advocate of monasticism, promoted the foundation of many monasteries in Ireland. St. Patrick's most important written work is his *Confessions*, which he wrote in Latin in the period around 461 and 462. In it, he humbly describes his spiritual journey of conversion and faith. St. Patrick lived to an old age, and was fortunate enough to see the fruits of his labor. His feast day is celebrated on March 17.

## IRISH MONKS: PROTECTORS AND PROMOTERS OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

Irish monasticism was inspired not by the Rule of St. Benedict, but by the austere Eastern monastic tradition. It is not certain, but it is believed that the Eastern form of monasticism was brought to Ireland through commercial contacts with the East during the earliest days of Christianity's presence in Ireland.

Following the Eastern spirit, Irish monks slept on cold flagstones, prayed in icy water, and slept in wet blankets. Anything that could be done to deny the body comfort was employed as a means to bring the soul closer to God. It is, therefore, easy to understand why St. Benedict's Italian model, which took into consideration the health and needs of the body, lasted and became the norm in the West.

During the sixth and seventh centuries, the Irish monks enjoyed the height of their influence on Christian culture and the work of evangelization. In the early sixth century, the Irish monasteries were the most important centers of learning in all of Europe. The scriptoria and libraries in the Irish monasteries saved a great deal of the Greco-Roman literary tradition, even though Ireland was never colonized by the Romans. Through trade and the influx of some Greek monks, the Irish even gained a certain proficiency in the Greek language, which had virtually disappeared in the West.

Christianity among the Celtic peoples, which had developed separately from Roman Christianity, also had some unique features. For example, in Ireland there were no diocesan priests, but the only priests were from the ranks of the monks. In addition, the abbots exercised most of the governing power in the church in Ireland.

By the 800s, the importance of the Irish church on the growing European culture rapidly declined. Due to tensions with the Church in mainland Europe, the Irish monks played less a role in evangelizing England and the continent overall. Another cause of decline was a series of attacks by the Vikings on Irish monasteries. Around the ninth century, the evangelizing mission was firmly being led by the papacy, as Christian roots deepened among the Germanic peoples and would soon extend to Slavic populations.

## ST. COLUMBA: THE "APOSTLE OF SCOTLAND"

> **Alone with none but Thee, my God, / I journey on my way; / What need I fear when Thou are near, / Oh King of night and day? / More safe am I within Thy hand / Than if a host did round me stand. (A prayer attributed to St. Columba)**

St. Columba (521-597) was an important evangelizer of northern Britain and Scotland, as well as the founder of a number of important monasteries in the Irish tradition. Of royal lineage from the O'Donnells and the O'Neills, his name *Columba* is Latin for "dove." To the Irish he is best known as Columcille, the "Dove of the Churches."

St. Columba had been preparing for the monastic life from an early age, and even before he left Ireland he is reputed to have founded monasteries in Durrow and Derry. St. Columba was a fervent

Christian all his life, even to the point of quarrel with High King Diarmait. To cite some examples, Diarmait would not allow St. Columba to grant sanctuary to a murderer and severely criticized St. Columba for copying parts of St. Finian's Vulgate without permission. A small war, at St. Columba's prompting, exploded between Diarmait's forces and the combined forces of the O'Neills and the O'Donnells. During the fighting, St. Columba would be seen praying for the O'Neills and O'Donnells, and St. Finian could be seen praying for Diarmait's men. Diarmait was defeated, but scandal followed. There are conflicting accounts of what happened next. Some say St. Columba was briefly excommunicated for starting a war, and that the excommunication was lifted on condition of a lifetime of penance in missionary exile. Other accounts mention nothing of excommunication and report that this penance was given to St. Columba by his confessor. By either account, St. Columba left Ireland and went to Scotland in 563.



St. Columba

On the isle of Iona, St. Columba built a monastery and set about evangelizing the Picts, a Celtic tribe with deep pagan roots. Successful in this, he continued his work throughout Scotland. A man of constant study and prayer, St. Columba is said to have written some 300 books, only two of which have survived. The Latin poem "*Altus Prosator,*" a description of the Last Judgment in all its fury, is believed to have been written by him. In 574, St. Columba anointed the new Scottish king, which led to the eventual conversion of the Scottish population. His feast day is celebrated on June 9.

## ST. COLUMBANUS AND THE IRISH ON THE CONTINENT

> Let us not imprint on ourselves the image of a despot, but let Christ paint his image in us with his words: My peace I give you, my peace I leave with you. But the knowledge that peace is good is of no benefit to us if we do not practice it. (St. Columbanus, *Instr.* 11, 1-2, quoted in *Opera*, 1957, pp. 106-107)

St. Columbanus (d. 615) is the most famous among a band of Irish monks who helped to evangelize the northern coast of France as well as Switzerland. He helped renew the spiritual life and discipline in areas where Christian practice was waning. He was a huge man, capable of killing a bear with his own bare hands. When leaving by boat for his missionary undertaking, he would just travel wherever the boat took him. In his last years, Columbanus worked in Switzerland and founded a monastery in the Italian Alps in a small town called Bobbio, near Genoa, in 612. In later years Bobbio became an important center of learning. He died there in 615. St. Columbanus' feast day is celebrated on November 23.

The Celtic spirituality that St. Columbanus helped to spread around Europe bore many lasting fruits. One such fruit of this spirituality was promotion of frequent sacramental Penance, which has become one of its greatest contributions to the Christian Faith. The practice of frequent Penance—at first limited to the Irish monks and those under their care—quickly became incorporated into the universal Church.

In the Roman tradition by the third century, a system of austere public penance had developed. Under it, the penitent was enrolled publicly with other penitents, with whom he committed himself to a rigorous and lengthy period (the length varied depending on the seriousness of the sin) of prayer, almsgiving, and severe fasting. Besides the strict spiritual regimen, there were two other





## ST. PATRICK ON THE HILL OF TARA

From ancient times until the sixth century, the Hill of Tara was known as the seat of the high kings of Ireland, and it may have been used in prehistoric religious ceremonies. In the time of St. Patrick, Christianity had not yet gained complete acceptance in Ireland, and Easter was not yet celebrated. Every spring, the Druids marked the Beltaine festival by lighting a great bonfire on the Hill of Tara. Adding to the significance of the bonfire, no other fires in the vicinity were to be lit during the festival. This rule was not to be taken lightly; those who lit another fire in violation of Beltaine rules could be punished by death.

Because he wanted to celebrate Easter, however, St. Patrick and his followers went to the nearby Slane Hill and boldly lit a small Paschal Fire. Seeing the fire from the Hill of Tara, the King ordered that St. Patrick and his followers be taken before him to answer for their crime. Using his deep knowledge of Irish custom and language, St. Patrick preached to the King about Christianity. St. Patrick used the clover, an ancient symbol in Ireland, to explain the Holy Trinity.

St. Patrick's boldness in lighting the Paschal Fire brought him attention and respect from the Irish King and he was given the freedom to preach Christianity across the country. Thus, the small, but defiant act of lighting a fire proved central in the conversion of the Irish people. If you were to visit the Hill of Tara today, you would find a great statue of St. Patrick, which marks the location of the Lia Fail, the Coronation Stone of the ancient high kings.


St. Patrick keeps vigil at his church on the Hill of Tara.

unique aspects of this system that eventually led to this system's decline. The public penitential practice was understood as a second Baptism, and Baptism can be received only once. In addition, the individual was bound to life-long continence. For these reasons, many people delayed Penance until the approach of death given the obvious challenges connected to this sacrament during those first centuries.

For the Irish, Penance remained lengthy, severe, and public, but penitents were not officially enrolled with others, nor was reception of the sacrament limited to a single time, as with Baptism. Thus the promise of lifelong continence—a difficult task, even for the saints—was no longer a necessity. Hence, the nearly exclusively "deathbed" recourse to the Sacrament of Penance fell into decline. Eventually, absolution, which had previously been withheld until the completion of the public penance, was granted upon confession of sins, and Penance became a matter of private responsibility. To determine specific penances, the Irish monks made use of Penitential Books, books that listed various sins with the corresponding penance.

The Irish had a tremendous influence in bringing about the custom of frequent Penance. Not until 1215, at the Fourth Lateran Council, did the Church officially teach that every individual Christian was bound to make at least one private Penance each year if one were conscious of having committed mortal sin.

# PART IV
# The Conversion of England

It is not known exactly how the Celts in England were first evangelized during the era of the Roman Empire, but English bishops were already present at the Council of Arles (314) in France. The spread of Christianity suffered a tremendous setback as invading Angles, Jutes, and Saxons pushed the burgeoning Christian communities to the farthest western reaches of England. It was into this situation that St. Augustine of Canterbury and his brother monks were thrown in the late sixth century.

## ST. AUGUSTINE OF CANTERBURY: THE "APOSTLE OF ENGLAND"

> **Who, dear brother, is capable of describing the great joy of believers when they have learned what the grace of Almighty God and your own cooperation achieved among the Angles? They abandoned the errors of darkness and were bathed with the light of holy faith. With full awareness they trampled on the idols which they had previously adored with savage fear. (Pope St. Gregory the Great to the missionaries of England, *Lib.* 9; 36; MGH *Epistolæ*, 2, 305-306)**

St. Augustine of Canterbury (d. ca. 604-609) is often overshadowed by another saint bearing the same name, the great St. Augustine of Hippo. St. Augustine of Canterbury, a giant in the Church's history of evangelization, brought the Catholic Faith to the pagan and violent Anglo-Saxons. The date of his birth and details of his early life are unknown. St. Augustine was a Benedictine monk and prior of St. Andrew's monastery in Rome, one of the monasteries founded by Pope St. Gregory the Great, when he was asked by Pope St. Gregory himself to bring the Gospel message to England.

Perhaps the most salient aspect of Pope St. Gregory the Great's pontificate was his strong support for the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons, especially in England. During his service to his monastery







Perhaps the most salient aspect of Pope St. Gregory the Great's pontificate was his support for the conversion of the barbarians, especially of the mission to England.

as abbot in 585, before becoming pope, St. Gregory saw a group of blond, blue-eyed foreigners in the streets of Rome. He asked who they were, and an assistant told St. Gregory that the men were slaves, Angles from England. St. Gregory replied, "*Non Angli, sed angeli*" ("Not Angles, but angels"). St. Gregory never forgot the Angles, and he selected St. Augustine as his personal emissary and missionary to England when he became pope.

Christianity had already made its way to England by this time, but only to certain limited areas. The Celts in Britain had already converted due to the efforts of the Irish monks. St. Columba had already visited the Picts in Scotland. However, the invading Saxons, Angles, and Jutes nearly annihilated the Celts in Britain—and with them, the Christian Faith. Even though the Celts had attempted to convert the new tribes to the Faith, they failed. Outside help was needed, and it came from Rome.

In 596 Pope St. Gregory sent St. Augustine with a group of forty other monks to travel by land through Italy and France to reach England. In France the band of monks halted, and St. Augustine wrote a frantic letter to Pope St. Gregory that the monks were frightened by the frontier and heard appalling stories of the brutality of the barbarians in England. St. Augustine asked for permission to return to Rome, but Pope St. Gregory declined the request, and told the group to continue its mission. Before departing from France, St. Augustine was made abbot of the missionaries. Upon arriving in England, they had discovered that the rumors were most likely exaggerated.

Learning from historically tested experiences, St. Augustine tried to gain the favor of a king with a Christian wife. Ethelbert, the king of Kent had married Bertha, a Frankish princess, and the great-granddaughter of King Clovis. Bertha had remained Christian after her marriage to Ethelbert, but she had not attempted to influence her husband in the manner that her ancestors St. Clotilda and Ingund had influenced theirs. When St. Augustine and his monks arrived, Ethelbert, though he had heard of Christianity, was still pagan. He received the monks quite openly, but he did not convert immediately. He gave them freedom to preach the Catholic Faith and to win over as many willing converts as possible. Ethelbert also gave them a dwelling in Canterbury, his capital. Nevertheless, Ethelbert for some time remained set in his ways.

On Christmas Day in 597, more than ten thousand Saxons were baptized in Canterbury. Accounts conflict on precisely when Ethelbert was baptized—some say before that Christmas, some say four years later. Soon Christianity was rapidly spreading throughout England. St. Augustine was presented with a palace in Canterbury, which became the most important episcopal see in England. Monasteries quickly spread over the land, and St. Augustine ordered that all pagan temples be converted into Christian churches. Though the Celts and the Saxons now shared the same religion, their mutual antagonism unfortunately persisted.

Pope St. Gregory named St. Augustine the Primate Bishop of England in 601 and sent him the pallium, a sign of authority and papal favor. In its current form the pallium is a circular band of white woolen material with two hanging strips and six black crosses, and is worn around the neck on the shoulders. The wool for the pallium comes from wool blessed by the pope on the feast of St. Agnes in Rome. Before it is placed on an archbishop on the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, the pallium rests for one night on the tomb of St. Peter in St. Peter's Basilica.

St. Augustine consecrated others to the episcopacy and sent them to other centers in England, including Rochester and London. Upon his death in the first decade of the seventh century, St. Augustine had secured such a strong foundation of Christianity that England would serve as a venue for a Christian renaissance in the early middle ages. His feast day is celebrated on May 27.

## THE MISSION IN ENGLAND CONTINUES

An unrivaled string of missionaries and scholars emerged from England because of the vision, faith, and dedicated labor of Pope St. Gregory the Great and St. Augustine of Canterbury.

After many trials and setbacks, Christianity eventually spread to the rest of the six other kingdoms in England. Paganism would not disappear so easily. Even if one king did convert, his successor could, and sometimes did, revert to paganism. By 633 there had been a steady regression to old pagan ways, except in Kent. At this critical juncture, the Irish supplemented a deeper and more widespread work of evangelization among the English.



St. Augustine wearing his pallium.

Through the missionary work of the Irish over the next several decades, the Catholic Faith became firmly established in England by 655, the year that the first native Englishman became Archbishop of Canterbury, St. Deusdedit.

South of the Thames River, Christianity of a more Roman tradition predominated due to the mission of St. Augustine. However, the Roman and Celtic traditions clashed, especially over the question of when to celebrate Easter. The Synod of Whitby (664), held in the kingdom of Northumbria in England, sought to reconcile the two divergent traditions. At the synod, St. Wilfrid (634-709), later Bishop of York, led the party that was pushing in favor of the Roman tradition. With this finally accomplished, the English accepted the Roman tradition's practice of the observance of Easter and the Benedictine form of monasticism. The Irish monks eventually withdrew to a Celtic monastery on the island of Iona and to other monasteries in Ireland proper.





Over time, the Church in England became especially united to the papacy. Of all the areas of Europe that had so far converted, England identified most closely with the Church of Rome. This set the stage for English missionary activity in Germany and the Low Countries, as well as for the development of scholarship in England through the emergence of many Benedictine monasteries. England became the strongest supporter of Benedictine monasticism.

## ST. BEDE: THE "FATHER OF ENGLISH HISTORY"

> They [St. Willibrord and his companions] arrived there, twelve in number, and turning aside to Pepin, duke of the Franks, were graciously received by him; and as he had lately subdued the Hither Frisland, and expelled King Rathbed, he sent them thither to preach, supporting them at the same time with his authority, that none might molest them in their preaching, and bestowing many favors on those who consented to embrace the faith. Thus it came to pass, that with the assistance of the Divine grace, they in a short time converted many from idolatry to the faith of Christ. (St. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, V.X)

St. Bede (ca. 673-735) was the most important Anglo-Saxon scholar of his time, and much of his scholarly work became standard subject matter in the Medieval curriculum. St. Bede represents the finest example of the role played by the English monasteries as centers of learning in the seventh and eighth centuries. This is especially remarkable when one considers that in 590, upon the ascension of Pope St. Gregory the Great to the throne of St. Peter, England was a pagan and unconverted land.

Little is known of the life of St. Bede other than what he records at the end of his great *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. He writes:

> Thus much of the Ecclesiastical History of Britain, and more especially of the English nation, as far as I could learn either from the writings of the ancients, or the tradition of our ancestors, or of my own knowledge, has, with the help of God, been digested by me, Bede, the servant of God, and priest of the monastery of the blessed apostles, Peter and Paul, which is at Wearmouth and Jarrow; who being born in the territory of that same monastery, was given, at seven years of age, to be educated by the most reverend Abbot Benedict, and afterwards by Ceolfrid; and spending all the remaining time of my life in that monastery, I wholly applied myself to the study of Scripture, and amidst the observance of regular discipline, and the daily care of singing in the church, I always took delight in learning, teaching, and writing. In the nineteenth year of my age, I received deacon's orders; in the thirtieth, those of the priesthood, both of them by the ministry of the most reverend Bishop John, and by the order of the Abbot Ceolfrid. From which time, till the fifty-ninth year of my age, I have made it my business, for the use of me and mine, to compile out of the works of the venerable Fathers, and to interpret and explain according to their meaning these following pieces. (*Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, V.XXIV)

Following the last lines of this excerpt is an extensive list of works covering a wide variety of topics. St. Bede was a dedicated and prolific scholar. St. Bede's guiding principle for all his scholarly works is expressed in the perennial question: How can one clearly communicate a particular body of knowledge to students? His works covered topics that included Latin grammar and poetry, astronomy and the tides, chronology, a biography of St. Cuthbert, commentaries on many books of the Bible, and history. His *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* places the Roman Catholic Church at the foundation of the development of English culture.





St. Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* places the Roman Catholic Church at the foundation of the development of English culture. The manuscript shown above is the front cover of this masterpiece completed in 731 which is the primary source of historical reference for this period.

In his commentaries on the Bible, St. Bede preferred clear exposition and found no use for philosophical speculation. He based his spirituality and scholarship on the biblical-patristic tradition. Through the Scythian monk Dionysius Exiguus (fifth-sixth centuries), St. Bede did the mathematical computations for the B.C./A.D. distinction, and his work utilized the Christian measurement of time and made it popular throughout Europe.

Within a century of his death, St. Bede was given the title "Venerable," and in 1899 Pope Leo XIII declared him a "Doctor of the Church." The title "Venerable" generally denotes a particular stage in the canonization process, but it can also simply refer to a person's holy life, as was the case with St. Bede. His feast day is celebrated on May 25.

Unfortunately, one of St. Bede's fears that he recorded at the end of his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* came to pass. After 800 the Church in England suffered a great decline. Again, the Vikings were a factor—they destroyed the important monastery at Jarrow at the end of the eighth century. In addition, the English kings failed to achieve a strong unity among their people. Finally, England contributed some of its greatest evangelizers, like St. Boniface, for the evangelization of the Germanic peoples of Freisland. Despite such a flourishing of sanctity and Christian culture in the seventh and eighth centuries, England would suffer great spiritual decline during the years from 800 to 1000. By 1000 England was considered backward, thereby losing her momentum in deepening and spreading Catholic culture.





## PART V

# The Conversion of Germany and the Low Countries

The conversion of the lands that have become Germany was a long and arduous task. Some of the small Roman cities, such as Cologne, were evangelized during the time of the Roman Empire. Beginning in the seventh century, English missionaries played a pivotal role in carrying on missionary activities, especially in northwest and central Germany, north of the Mainz River. Groups of Germanic tribes were still being converted along the Baltic Sea long after the beginning of the second millennium, even as the German church focused much of its energies on converting the Slavs.

## ST. WILLIBRORD: THE "APOSTLE OF FRISIA"

St. Willibrord (658-739) was one of the earliest Anglo-Saxon missionaries to evangelize in the Germanic lands. His work is notable for two reasons. First, he was successful in converting the peoples of western Frisia (the northwest corner of Germany along the North Sea and part of the Netherlands). Secondly, he secured papal approval and support for his mission, demonstrating the important connection between the expansion of Christianity and the papacy.

St. Willibrord successfully converted many of the Frisians; but in 714, his entire evangelizing project was compromised when the Carolingian (modern-day French) emperor Pepin died and a pagan Frisian king reconquered the territory. St. Willibrord and his companions then fled to a secure monastery in Luxemburg. St. Willibrord then continued his work in Denmark, Heligoland (an island in the North Sea), and Thuringia (central Germany). In 693, St. Willibrord made his first visit to Rome, where he obtained papal support for his mission. During a second trip to Rome in 695, Pope St. Sergius I made him Archbishop of the Frisians. His feast day is celebrated on November 7.

## ST. BONIFACE: THE "APOSTLE OF GERMANY"

**In her voyage across the ocean of this world, the Church is like a great ship being pounded by the waves of life's different stresses. Our duty is not to abandon ship but to keep her on her course. (St. Boniface, *Ep.* 78: MGH, *Epistolæ*, 3, 352. 354)**

St. Boniface (ca. 675-754) set the stage for a radical reshaping of the heart of Europe. Before his arrival on the continent, conversion efforts among the Germans had failed. Not only did St. Boniface succeed in converting the Germans, he also laid the foundation of a church based on a monastic model that would continue to flower for the next three centuries. He also revitalized the deteriorating practice of the Faith among the Franks.

St. Boniface was born with the name Winfrid, most likely somewhere in Wessex, England. Like St. Bede, he also entered a Benedictine monastery at the age of seven. By temperament he was unsteady, timid, and tended to discouragement and despair. However, St. Boniface matured into a brilliant pupil and eventually became a teacher and the head of the monastic school.

St. Boniface loved his homeland tremendously, but he discerned a call from God to leave England and evangelize the German people. Therefore, in 716 he left for Frisia to begin his work of evangelizing the Germanic tribes. Since the Frisians had received Catholic teachings of St. Willibrord with mixed results, St. Boniface hoped to bring the Frisians fully into the Church.

St. Boniface's tendency to discouragement seemed to have reappeared when he met formidable obstacles in Frisia over the next couple years. He researched the lives of the early Christians to see if any of the saints were exempt from suffering, and to his dismay he found no exceptions. St. Boniface struggled to be courageous and thus looked upon the most ferocious barbarians as his brothers.

His temptations towards despair were so great that St. Boniface felt compelled to consult with the reigning pope, St. Gregory II (715-32). St. Boniface believed that he had failed in his missionary efforts in Frisia, and he sought the pope's counsel: Should he return to England or persevere in Frisia? Pope St. Gregory II was so impressed with Winfrid's sanctity that he gave Winfrid a new Latin name, Boniface—from the Latin words *Bona Facere*, meaning "doer of good"—which symbolized his favor with the pope. By this action Pope St. Gregory II also made St. Boniface his personal papal legate to Germany.



The pagan god Thor

Upon his return to Germany, St. Boniface turned his attention south of Frisia to Hesse and the conversion of the Hessians. On a second trip to Rome in 722, the pope consecrated St. Boniface to the episcopacy. Around 732 Pope St. Gregory III (731-741) sent the pallium to St. Boniface.

After he felled the Oak of Thor (Wata), the sacred tree of the pagans of Hesse, St. Boniface gained so much moral authority that he enjoyed a new-found freedom to establish a string of monasteries. Cutting down the tree brought many converts into the Church when the pagan people saw that Thor did not strike St. Boniface down with a thunderbolt. Out of the wood of the tree St. Boniface made a small chapel dedicated to St. Peter.

Much of St. Boniface's work was accomplished during the reign of Charles Martel, whose renown blossomed after he defeated the Muslims at Tours in 732. In a letter, St. Boniface wrote about his special relationship with the temporal ruler who proved so vital and necessary for his missionary work:

> **Without the protection of the prince of the Franks [Charles Martel], I can neither rule the people of the church nor defend the priests and clerks, monks and nuns; nor can I prevent the practice of pagan rites and sacrilegious worship of idols without his mandate and awe inspired by his name.**

During a third trip to Rome in 736, St. Boniface was made Archbishop of Mainz. When he returned to Germany, St. Boniface founded many more monasteries, the most important of which was located in the city of Fulda (744). St. Boniface planned that the monastery at Fulda would serve as a center for conversion and spiritual renewal and a training facility for priests and missionaries.

At this time, St. Boniface spent much energy building the ecclesiastical structure of the Church in Germany by establishing dioceses in a number of cities. Moreover, he initiated an extensive reform in those lands ruled by the Franks. The practice of the Faith had weakened there, and the clergy and bishops had become notoriously corrupt. In cooperation with the sovereign, Karlmann, the successor to Charles Martel in Austrasia (the eastern portion of the kingdom of the Franks), St. Boniface convened a German synod in 742 which resulted in an effective plan for the reform of the Frankish church.

It was St. Boniface's great dream to return to the mission land of his youth, Frisia. Though seventy-six years old, he set out from Mainz with fifty other monks and sailed down the Rhine to Frisia.





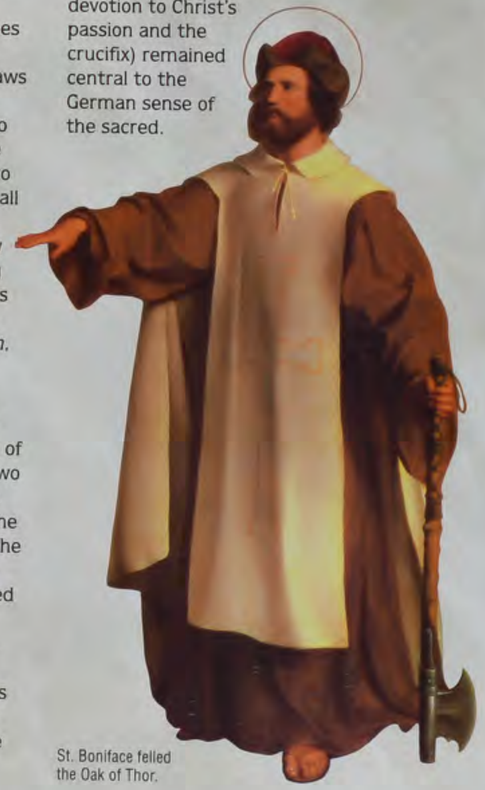
## TREES IN GERMAN MYTHOLOGY

After St. Boniface felled the Oak of Thor, he was respected everywhere among the German peoples, and his new authority allowed him the freedom to begin the work of the Church in the region that had previously seemed so difficult to Christianize. Why was this simple act—chopping down a tree—such a monumental event in the conversion of the Germans?

For the Germans, some of the oldest sanctuaries were the natural woods. These sacred spaces were places for tree-worship, and as Sir James George Frazer says in his study in mythology: "How serious that worship was in former times may be gathered from the ferocious penalty appointed by the old German laws for such as dared to peel the bark of a standing tree. The culprit's navel was to be cut out and nailed to the part of the tree which he had peeled, and he was to be driven round and round the tree till all his guts were wound about the trunk. The intention of the punishment clearly was to replace the dead bark by a living substitute taken from the culprit; it was a life for a life, the life of a man for the life of a tree." (Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 1922, Ch. 9, Section 1, Paragraph 2)

The severity of this punishment seems ridiculous, but for German pagans, the tree was central to their understanding of mankind. According to some legends, two gods, one from the land of ice and mist and one from the land of fire, created the first man and woman from two trees. The universe was also supported by a great tree, whose roots and branches extended into the heavens, the earth, and the underworld. Near the roots of this tree, a fountain produced sacred waters to which all the wisdom of the world was attributed. Fate lived near another root and was associated with the importance of the tree. Fate was a very important concept in Germanic religion because both gods and humans were subject to it.

The tree was the center of the Germanic pagan world. When St. Boniface chopped down the tree and survived, he seemed to possess a power greater than that of the German gods. When the saint preached about Christ, who was both true God and true man, and who died for the remission of sins by being nailed to a tree, many Germans began to believe. Despite converting from paganism to Christianity, the tree (in the form of a devotion to Christ's passion and the crucifix) remained central to the German sense of the sacred.



St. Boniface felled the Oak of Thor.

There at Dorkum he and his comrades were martyred by the pagans. His body was returned to Fulda for burial.

St. Boniface converted German pagans, founded monasteries, established the ecclesiastical structure of the Church in Germany, and reformed the Church in the lands under Frankish rule. The religious fervor of the German monasteries that he founded in the eighth century was still robust in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Like their Irish and English counterparts before them, the German monasteries became important centers of learning with their libraries and scriptoria. They were aided, in part, by the *privilegium* that St. Boniface won for them from the papacy. With this papal privilege (*privilegium*) the monasteries were exempted from local diocesan control and answered directly to the papacy. In succeeding decades, Benedictine monasteries took an active part in imbuing the Carolingian dynasty with a strong Catholic culture that reached a high point under Charlemagne. St. Boniface's feast day is celebrated on June 5.



*The Battle of Poitiers.* Charles Martel (Martel means "the Hammer") is best remembered for winning the Battle of Poitiers (also known as the Battle of Tours) in 732, has been characterized as the salvation of Europe, stopping the spread of the Arab (Islam) empire further than the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal). Martel's Frankish army defeated a skilled Arab army, which had swept through southern Asia and North Africa, before conquering most of the Iberian Peninsula and much of southern France. It was this battle that earned Charles the surname "Martel" for the harsh way he conquered his enemy. Most historians believe that had he failed at Tours, Islam would probably have overrun Europe. Although it took another two generations for the Franks to drive all the Arab garrisons out of what is now France and across the Pyrenees, Charles Martel's halt of the invasion of French soil turned the tide of Islamic advance, and unified the Frankish kingdom under Charles Martel. His son Pepin the Short, and his grandson Charlemagne also fought to prevent the Muslim kingdom from expanding over the Pyrenees to the rest of Europe.





# PART VI

# Conversion of Scandinavia

Just as England supplied the missionaries for the conversion of German peoples, they in turn provided missionaries for the evangelization of Scandinavia and the Slavs—though Anglo-Saxon missionaries were also active in Scandinavia for some time.

## ST. ANSGAR: THE "APOSTLE OF THE NORTH"

**Every disciple of Christ is responsible in his own measure for the spread of the faith, but Christ the Lord is always calling from among his followers those whom he will, so that they may be with him and be sent by him to preach to the nations. (St. Ansgar, *Ad gentes*, IV.23)**

St. Ansgar (801-865) was born in the part of the Carolingian empire that would include modern France. When he was of age, he became a monk and spent time in northwest Germany before moving on to his missionary work in Denmark and Sweden, where he built the first Christian church.

Pope Gregory IV made St. Ansgar Bishop of Hamburg, and later he was named the Archbishop of Bremen. In 854 he successfully converted Erik, king of Jutland. He worked with Erik to improve the conditions of the slave trade. Unfortunately, upon his death, all of his work crumbled as the converted Scandinavians returned to paganism. St. Ansgar's feast day is celebrated on February 3, and he is amicably known among the Scandinavians as St. Oscar.

## DENMARK

St. Ansgar was invited to Denmark by a defeated Danish chieftain, Harold. Harold sought the aid of Louis the Pious, the son of Charlemagne, in order to regain his position in Denmark. Louis the Pious agreed, on condition that Harold be baptized and start to promote Christianity. Harold complied, was baptized, and set off for Denmark with St. Ansgar to recover it by force. Harold was decisively defeated, and St. Ansgar moved on to other missionary fields.

A century after St. Ansgar's death, another Danish king, Harold Bluetooth accepted Baptism in 965, upon the influence of his wife Gunheld. A short time later the Danish ruler Cnut the Great (1014-1035) declared Christianity the established religion in Denmark.

## SWEDEN

Christianity's progress in Sweden was difficult at first, as it had been in Denmark. St. Ansgar's initial efforts failed, as did later attempts until the English Bishop Siegfried baptized King Olaf III around the year 1000. In 1078, the pagan temple at Uppsala was destroyed after the Christian chieftain Inge defeated the pagan chieftain Svend. Not until the early twelfth century was the Christianization of Sweden completed.

## ST. OLAF: PATRON SAINT OF NORWAY

The evangelization of Norway began around the middle of the tenth century. In those years, a series of kings favorable to Christianity and hard-working Anglo-Saxon monks brought Christianity to Norway.

The first of those Christian kings, Haakan the Good (938-961), received his education in England before ascending the throne. At his request, English monks went to Norway to teach the Catholic Faith to the population. Pagan successors to Haakan, however, left the emerging Norwegian Christianity vulnerable. During the brief reign of St. Olaf Tryggvason (995-999), the establishment of the Church seemed to have solidified. Unfortunately, Tryggvason purportedly employed a variety of grossly inhumane methods of coercion in establishing Christianity as the official religion of Norway.

The reign of St. Olaf (995?-1030, king 1016-1028), who was baptized in Rouen, France, marks the end of pagan opposition in Norway. In sharp contrast to Tryggvason's barbaric enforcement of Christianity, St. Olaf ruled his people and spread Christianity with a civil but stern hand. He invited English and German missionaries to come during his reign, and he destroyed many of the old pagan temples and erected churches over their sites. Together with pagan beliefs, traditional political institutions and practices began to disappear. Consequently, the old clans began losing power as St. Olaf guided Norway away from a conglomeration of independent clans toward a more unified kingdom. The growing resentment of the clans exploded in 1028, and St. Olaf was deposed and exiled. When he attempted to regain his throne in 1030, nobles from various clans aligned themselves with Canute the Great of Denmark. St. Olaf perished in the battle, and within a year he was proclaimed a saint. His shrine at Trondheim was a significant pilgrimage site during the Medieval period. St. Olaf's feast day is celebrated on July 29.

## ICELAND

Missionaries reached Iceland from Norway around 980. Twenty years later the ruling tribal council, known as the Althing (the Icelanders lived in a kingless society), accepted Christianity. Christianity was not foreign to them when the missionaries arrived since Irish Christian slaves had been brought to the island, and some of the native aristocracy had already converted to Christianity. The missionary work proceeded slowly at first until 996, when Stefnir Thorgilsson, a missionary commissioned by St. Olaf Tryggvason, arrived on the island. Though they were deeply troubled by the high-handed measures that St. Olaf Tryggvason had imposed on the independent farmers in the Trondelag, many of the Icelanders soon converted.

In the year 1000, the Althing authorized the Law Speaker, Thorgeir of Ljosvatn, to decide for the island whether it would become Christian. After an entire night spent in prayer, Thorgeir, who was a pagan, declared himself for Christ. Thus, Iceland maintained its unity by becoming Christian. Paganism was suppressed, and over the next fifty years, through much labor and teaching, Christianity spread throughout the island. In 1056, Iceland received its own bishop.

## FINLAND AND ST. HENRY OF UPPSALA

The origin of Christianity in Finland is not as clear as in the other Scandinavian countries. It appears to have arrived later than in other Scandinavian countries—probably in the twelfth century. Again, the English missionaries led the way.

St. Henry of Uppsala, a bishop and Englishman, was a major evangelizer of Finland. By 1220 the Church was established under the guidance of Bishop Thomas, probably another Englishman. Finland, unlike Frisia in Germany or Denmark, is a considerable distance from the British Isles. The presence of English missionaries in Finland attests to their continuing, deep religious convictions, courage, and missionary zeal. St. Henry is the patron saint of Finland.





# PART VII
# The Conversion of the Slavs

Central and Eastern Europe were the scenes of competing missionary tensions and interests. German missionaries converted the rest of Germany and Poland, while Greek missionaries evangelized much of Eastern Europe. The conversion of the Bohemians (Czechs), Moravians (Slovaks), Slovenes, Croats, and Poles was directed from Rome; the Serbs, Bulgarians, Ruthenians (Ukrainians), and Russians received Christianity from Constantinople.

## STS. CYRIL AND METHODIUS: THE "APOSTLES OF THE SLAVS"

**Inspire the hearts of your people with your word and your teaching. You called us to preach the Gospel of your Christ and to encourage them to lives and works pleasing to you. (A prayer of St. Cyril, just before his death, Cap. 18: *Denkschriften der kaiserl. Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 19 [*Wien* 1870], p. 246)**



Two brothers, Sts. Cyril (827-869) and Methodius (826-885), were the first missionaries among the Slavs. They were from a senatorial Greek family in Thessalonica. Rather than continuing with their family's secular activities, St. Cyril (who originally bore the name Constantine) and St. Methodius entered the priesthood. St. Cyril, a man of great intellectual ability, joined the philosophy faculty at the university in Constantinople. St. Cyril then gave up a promising career in scholarship, and undertook a mission to the Khazars in south Russia. Then, in 863, Emperor Michael III commissioned the brothers as missionaries to Moravia (Slovakia).

The brothers knew the difficult Slavic language quite well—Thessalonica was surrounded by Slavic settlements and was itself populated by a fair number of Slavs. Before their departure, St. Cyril developed the Glagolithic script for use with the Slavs. (The Cyrillic alphabet, which bears St. Cyril's name, is a later development of his original Glagolithic alphabet. Both alphabets are rooted in Greek.) Use of the Glagolithic script ceased and gave way to Cyrillic after the 1100s, except in Croatia, where it was used until around 1900.

During their missionary work, Sts. Cyril and Methodius used the vernacular Slavonic language for the celebration of the liturgy and translated the Bible into Slavonic, using the new Glagolithic alphabet. Though their innovative use of the vernacular proved a vital tool in reaching many people with Christ's message, German missionaries were offended by Sts. Cyril and Methodius' use of Slavonic instead of Latin in the liturgy, and denounced them to the pope as heretics.

In order to clarify the situation, Sts. Cyril and Methodius went to Rome for guidance from Pope St. Nicholas I (858-867). St. Nicholas died before their arrival, but Pope Adrian II (867-872), his successor, received them warmly in 868 and granted them permission to use Slavonic in the liturgy. St. Cyril made his final vows as a monk, but died in Rome before being able to return to Moravia. Pope Adrian II made St. Methodius Bishop of the Moravians, and St. Methodius continued his evangelizing mission.

| The Glagolithic Alphabet | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a | b | v | g | d | ɛ | ž | dz |
| z | i | i | ǵ | k | l | m | n |
| ɔ | p | r | s | t | u | f | x (kh) |
| ɔ | ts | č | š | št | w/ə | ı | y |
| æ/e | yu | ẽ | yẽ | ɔ̃ | yɔ̃ | f | i/v |

In spite of papal support, St. Methodius was arrested by German missionaries and held in captivity for three years upon his return to Moravia. The Germans, who were harsh and forceful with the Slavs, scourged and denounced St. Methodius yet again. Pope John VIII eventually secured St. Methodius' release. The Holy Father reaffirmed the use of the Slavonic language, though he later distanced himself from St. Methodius' work, as did later popes because of miscommunication and political intrigue. Because later popes refused to recognize the use of Slavonic, many Slavs turned away from Rome to Constantinople.

By the time St. Methodius died in 885, all of Moravia was converted. In 1980 Pope John Paul II named the brothers "Patrons of Europe." The feast day of Sts. Cyril and Methodius is February 14.

## STS. LUDMILLA AND WENCESLAUS: PATRON SAINTS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

St. Methodius' work extended indirectly to Bohemia. In 871, St. Methodius baptized St. Ludmilla (d. 927) and her husband, Duke Borzwoi (who thus became the first Christian duke of Bohemia). The holy St. Ludmilla worked to spread the Faith among the Bohemian people. Borzwoi soon passed his power on to his son Wratislaw, who had married a pagan woman named Drahomira who had feigned conversion. Drahomira bore twin sons, Wenceslaus and Boleslaus. St. Wenceslaus lived with his grandmother St. Ludmilla, and when his father passed away, the duchy passed to him. Drahomira, jealous and frightened of her Christian mother-in-law's influence over her son, had St. Ludmilla murdered by two noblemen. Before her murder, St. Ludmilla had replicated a model often used in the conversion of the different ethnic groups of Europe: conversion of the ruling family through the influence of a Christian woman, and the subsequent conversion of the subjects. St. Ludmilla's feast day is celebrated on September 16.

Drahomira took control of the duchy and attempted a reversion to paganism. The people of Bohemia opposed Drahomira's violence and her attempted revival of paganism, and they managed





## THE CHURCH OF SAN CLEMENTE IN ROME



When St. Cyril died in Rome, he was buried in the Basilica of San Clemente, and his tomb became a place of pilgrimage for many Slavic Catholics. In additional to being buried there, St. Cyril made another great contribution to San Clemente during his life. Around 861 the Emperor Michael III sent both Sts. Cyril and Methodius to work with the Khazars northeast of the Black Sea into an area now a part of Russia. While there, they are believed to have found the relics of St. Clement I, the fourth pope, in the Crimean Sea. St. Cyril brought these remains back to Rome to be interred in San Clemente, the Church bearing his name.

The present San Clemente was built in the twelfth century upon the remains of a similar basilica erected in the fourth century and is one of only a handful of Medieval Churches remaining in Rome. Besides some exceptional mosaics which have been recently restored, San Clemente also contains a fresco depicting both St. Cyril and his brother St. Methodius. Both Sts. Cyril and Methodius are buried in San Clemente.

to have her overthrown. St. Wenceslaus, though only about fourteen years old at the time, became duke. The young duke moved quickly to suppress the near feudal anarchy that plagued Bohemia. He turned to Germany for protection, and both political and religious support. The lingering pagan populace and many of the Bohemians in general resented this relationship with Germany and movements toward internal unification. These tensions and the insidious promptings of his deposed mother inspired his brother Boleslaus to commit fratricide in 935, killing St. Wenceslaus on his way to Mass. Boleslaus later repented and converted to Christianity, and he transferred the relics of his brother St. Wenceslaus to Prague. Quickly, the Bohemians recognized the sanctity of St. Wenceslaus, and throughout Bohemia he became an object of veneration and popular piety. Otto the Great of the Holy Roman Empire compelled Boleslaus to reinstate Christianity, and Boleslaus' son, Boleslaus II made Christianity the religion of the Bohemians. The feast day of St. Wenceslaus is celebrated on September 28.

## ST. ADALBERT OF PRAGUE: THE "APOSTLE OF THE PRUSSIANS"



St. Adalbert (939-997), born Vojtiekh, is another key figure in the conversion of the Slavs. He worked among the Bohemians, the Hungarians, and the Poles, and faced difficult opposition from pagans and even from members of the Church. He was born of a noble Bohemian family and studied in Magdeburg under a German archbishop of the same name. Eventually he was named Bishop of Prague. (The German city Magdeburg was given the status of an archdiocese specifically for missionary activity among the Slavs.)

Twice St. Adalbert fled Prague because of the hostility he engendered on account of his clerical reforms. In both instances, St. Adalbert went to Rome to seek counsel from the pope. It was during his time away from Prague (ca. 996) that St. Adalbert became the confessor of the teenage Holy Roman Emperor Otto III. St. Adalbert made a deep impact on the young Otto III through his Christian example and teaching.

After he fled a second time from Prague, St. Adalbert went to Hungary as a missionary, where he most likely baptized the Hungarian leader Geysa and his son, Stephen. Subsequent missionary journeys took him to Poland and to Prussia. The pagan Prussians martyred him in 997. Boeleslav I (the Brave) of Poland, who had worked with St. Adalbert during his missionary work, had such high regard for St. Adalbert that it has been said that he purchased St. Adalbert's remains for an equivalent weight of gold. Later, when Otto III visited St. Adalbert's grave at Gniezno, he granted ecclesiastical independence to the Polish church from the Germans. The Holy See also recognized this independence. St. Adalbert's feast day is celebrated on April 23. He is revered by the Slavs and the Germans.

## POLAND

Christianity most likely arrived in Poland in the tenth century through Moravian refugees who fled north to Poland during the Hungarian invasion. German monks were also intent on converting Poland. Though there was no organized Church, the presence of Christianity among the pagan







*Otto III Enthroned.* St. Adalbert became the confessor of the teenage Holy Roman Emperor Otto III. St. Adalbert made a deep impact on the young Otto III through his Christian example and teaching.

Poles made the official transition smooth and peaceful. A Polish noble, Duke Mieszko (962-992) was the first Polish ruler to encourage his subjects to become Christian. He had married St. Dubravka, the daughter of Boleslaus I of Bohemia, and, consistent with the familiar model, it was under her Christian influence that Mieszko converted.

In 973 Duke Mieszko and St. Dubravka placed their seven-year-old son, Boleslav Chrobry the Brave, in the care of Otto II for his education. Duke Mieszko sent a locket of his son's hair to the pope to show that he considered his son to be under the special protection of the papacy. In 992 Mieszko placed all of Poland at the service of the Holy See, thus making Poland a vassal land of the popes. Thus began a unique relationship between the Polish people and the papacy—one that proved essential for the survival of the Polish people in the many difficult centuries ahead.

## ST. STEPHEN THE GREAT, KING OF HUNGARY

> Be merciful to all who are suffering violence, keeping always in your heart the example of the Lord who said: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. Be patient with everyone, not only with the powerful but also with the weak. (St. Stephen to his son, St. Emeric, on the exercise of royal power, Cap. 1. 2. 10: PL 151, 1236-1237, 1242-1244)

The Hungarians were an Asian nomadic tribe who were decisively defeated by Otto I (the Great) in 995 at the Battle of Lech. Afterwards they were a sedentary and peasant people who became open to the Gospel. Hungarian prisoners in Germany drew the interest and attention of German

missionaries, who succeeded in obtaining permission to evangelize Hungary. St. Adalbert of Prague was instrumental in leading Hungary along the path of conversion.

St. Stephen (975-1038) became the ruler of Hungary in 997, and later its first king. In 985 he had become a Christian with his father, Duke Geza, when they had been baptized by St. Adalbert of Prague. Geza's wife, Sarolta, was already a Christian of the Byzantine rite, though she pointedly welcomed Latin rite missionaries into Hungary.

St. Stephen faced a difficult revolt from pagan opposition within one year of ascending to the throne. He successfully put down the rebellion, and immediately set about building up the Church in Hungary, establishing dioceses and monasteries. Like Duke Mieszko, St. Stephen placed Hungary into the hands of the papacy. In 1001 he received a royal crown from the pope, which was also recognized by the Holy Roman Emperor, Otto III. St. Stephen's feast day is celebrated on August 16.

## ST. VLADIMIR: THE "APOSTLE OF THE RUSSIANS AND UKRAINIANS"

Russia's introduction to Christianity begins with St. Olga (ca. 980-969), the wife of the pagan Prince Igor of Russia. She had embraced Christianity in Constantinople in 945. However, there were many obstacles for missionaries in Russia, a land dominated by ancient Viking traditions and practices. Paganism was widespread, and many of the practices included polygamy and human sacrifice (e.g., slave girls were brutally murdered so as to join their dead masters during the pagan funeral rites).

The story of the conversion of Russia is inseparable from the story of St. Vladimir (d. 1015). The life of the man responsible for the Christianization of Russia itself parallels the country's miraculous movement from barbaric paganism to Christianity. St. Vladimir was the grandson of St. Olga, but her Christianity had not passed down to her descendants. She had been unable to convert her son Sviatoslav (St. Vladimir's father), and Sviatoslav raised his son St. Vladimir to be a pagan chieftain in the tradition of the Viking culture from which Sviatoslav was descended. St. Vladimir had two brothers, Yaropolk and Oleg, who, upon their father's death, controlled Kiev and Drevlani, respectively, and St. Vladimir was the leader of Novgorod. Yaropolk turned on Oleg and defeated him, seizing control of most of Russia. He then marched on Novgorod and St. Vladimir, who fled to Scandinavia. For a short while, Yaropolk controlled all of Russia. St. Vladimir soon returned with a great force and not only retook Novgorod, but also pushed all the way to Kiev, where he defeated and killed his brother. St. Vladimir then ruled all Russia (980) and lived a very typical pagan life—he had five wives and twelve children, he erected many idols and shrines to pagan gods, and he was a ruthless ruler.

He eventually set his sights on the Greco-Roman empire, and as he was planning his campaign, he began to take a slight interest in Christianity. St. Vladimir never stopped looking for ways to strengthen his rule, so much so that he even began to survey, compare, and contrast Islam, Judaism, and both Latin and Byzantine Christianity to see if any of these foreign religions would solidify his rule. St. Vladimir sent emissaries to investigate the three monotheistic faiths. The emissaries are said to have found both Islam and Judaism rather unedifying, though the Latin rite they thought suitable. During the Byzantine Divine Liturgy at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, the emissaries "knew not whether they were in Heaven or on earth." They reported their findings to St. Vladimir, who was aware that his grandmother Olga had accepted this same Byzantine Christianity. Christianity had faintly entered his mind, though for purely utilitarian purposes.

The Byzantine emperor, Basil II, found himself in need of aid in the late 980s. He faced two internal rebellions, and St. Vladimir had suddenly appeared, dangerously close to Constantinople. The







*Vladimir and Rogneda* by Anton Losenko. As a pagan chieftain, Vladimir took the royal Norsewoman Rogneda by force to be his wife after he learned she was betrothed to his brother Yaropolk. To eliminate witnesses, he had her parents and brothers killed. She bore Vladimir several children.

emperor finally made a military deal with St. Vladimir (St. Vladimir proposed the terms): the Russian would take Basil's sister Anna in marriage (or else he would march on Constantinople), and in return St. Vladimir would provide the hard-pressed emperor with 6,000 Viking warriors to put down the rebellions. The Byzantines were shocked that a pagan and virtual barbarian would dare to ask for the hand of a Byzantine princess in marriage. Basil had very few other options, and therefore agreed, but only on the condition that his sister would be marrying a Christian. As St. Vladimir was familiar with Christianity and had been considering Baptism, this condition proved to be no problem. Around 989 St. Vladimir was baptized, and he and Anna were married.

The conditions under which St. Vladimir came to be baptized and the situation of his entire life prior to that point certainly suggest that he merely assented to Basil's request, treating Baptism as a formality rather than as the sacrament of Faith. But the radical changes that followed upon St. Vladimir's Baptism instead suggest the powerful work of Grace moving in a man who truly understood Baptism and desired faith. No influential priest aided in his conversion, and his new bride was yet terrified of her new Viking husband, his lands, and his people. With the same deliberate and pragmatic will that had been previously aimed at building up a pagan kingdom, St. Vladimir then focused on living as a serious follower of Christ. He dismissed his five wives for Anna. He tore down the same idols and shrines he himself had erected years before, and he built churches in their places. He also established a number of monasteries and Christian schools. Zealously wishing to follow the examples in the Gospels, he threw huge banquets for the poor and even sent wagonloads of food to the sick who could not get to the banquets. St. Vladimir focused relentlessly on converting his people. The Christian Viking was still a Viking, and he made Baptism compulsory—though many were quite willing to be baptized. By the time of his death in 1015, St. Vladimir had firmly established the Christian Faith throughout Russia. His feast day is celebrated on July 15.

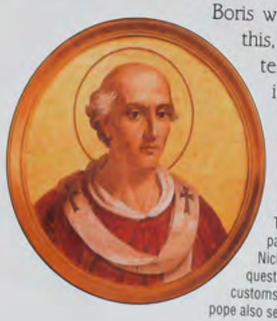
## BULGARIA: A DIFFERENT PATH

Christianity developed differently and separately in Bulgaria. The Faith reached the Bulgarians when King Boris was baptized in 864/5; he had feared that Bulgaria would be the last pagan land. At this time the Bulgarians also ruled what is today Romania. Boris was at first oriented toward Constantinople, but it is clear that he feared political and religious domination from the Byzantine emperors. For some time Byzantine and German missionaries worked among the people of Bulgaria.



The baptism of King Boris of Bulgaria.

In 866 Boris turned to Rome. He wrote Pope St. Nicholas I a letter containing 106 questions about how to handle Bulgaria's transition from paganism to Christianity. Pope St. Nicholas I answered all of the questions, clearly delineating those pagan customs that conflicted with Christianity. Pagan traditions that contradicted doctrinal and moral teaching of the Church would be abolished. Pagan practices that did not endanger or contradict the Catholic Faith would be kept as part of the Bulgarian culture. Along with these directives, the pope also sent a bishop to Boris. In the end, Boris wanted a separate patriarchate, but the pope would not grant him this, and Bulgaria thus turned to Constantinople. This proved to be a tenuous relationship, and in subsequent centuries, Bulgaria asserted its own religious and political independence from Constantinople. This independence was finally recognized by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the twentieth century.



Pope St. Nicholas I (858-867)
To help Bulgaria's transition from paganism to Christianity, Pope Nicholas answered all of King Boris' 106 questions, clearly delineating those pagan customs that conflicted with Christianity. The pope also sent a bishop to Boris.







St. Benedict and his monks. Benedict's "Holy Rule" has been the fundamental monastic code in Europe and was a potent factor in the development of Western civilization.

## CONCLUSION

At the core of her mission in the world, the preaching and spreading of the Gospel is one of the Church's chief responsibilities. Through the many challenges that this period of evangelization posed, the Church remained focused on expanding the message of Christ to all who would listen. Not until the Spaniards and the Portuguese arrived in the Americas late in the fifteenth century would Christianity again experience such growth among new peoples. At the same time that the West was the beneficiary of this great work of evangelization, tensions began to mount between Christianity in the West and Christianity in the East. Seemingly irreconcilable differences drove the two traditions farther apart, despite great efforts to improve the situation. The next chapter will look at these differences and their sources, which would unfortunately lead to the Great Schism.

## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

**St. Patrick, *Confessions*, Ch. 1**

I am Patrick, a sinner, most unlearned, the least of all the faithful, and utterly despised by many. My father was Calpornius, a deacon, son of Potitus, a priest, of the village Bannavem Taburniæ; he had a country seat nearby, and there I was taken captive.

I was then about sixteen years of age. I did not know the true God. I was taken into captivity to Ireland with many thousands of people and deservedly so, because we turned away from God, and did not keep His commandments, and did not obey our priests, who used to remind us of our salvation. And the Lord brought over us the wrath of his anger and scattered us among many nations, even unto the utmost part of the earth, where now my littleness is placed among strangers.

And there the Lord opened the sense of my unbelief that I might at last remember my sins and be converted with all my heart to the Lord my God, who had regard for my abjection, and mercy on my youth and ignorance, and watched over me before I knew Him, and before I was able to distinguish between good and evil, and guarded me, and comforted me as would a father his son.

Hence I cannot be silent, nor, indeed, is it expedient—about the great benefits and the great grace which the lord has deigned to bestow upon me in the land of my captivity; for this we can give to God in return after having been chastened by Him, to exalt and praise His wonders before every nation that is anywhere under the heaven.

**St. Bede, *Conversion of England*, "The Arrival in Kent of the missionaries sent by St. Gregory the Great"**

In this island [England] landed the servant of our Lord, Augustine, and his companions, being, as is reported, nearly forty men. They had, by order of the blessed Pope Gregory, brought interpreters of the nation of the Franks, and sending to Ethelbert, signified that they were come from Rome, and brought a joyful message, which most undoubtedly assured to all that took advantage of it everlasting joys in heaven, and a kingdom that would never end with the living and true God....

...As soon as they entered the dwelling place assigned them, they began to imitate the course of life practiced in the primitive church: applying themselves to frequent prayer, watching, and fasting; preaching the word of life to as many as they could; despising all worldly things, as not belonging to them; receiving only their necessary food from those they taught; living in all respects conformably to what they prescribed to others, and being always disposed to suffer any adversity, and even to die for that truth which they preached. In short, several believed and were baptized, admiring the simplicity of their innocent life and the sweetness of their heavenly doctrine....

...In this they first began to meet, to sing, to pray, to say Mass, to preach and to baptize, till the king, being converted to the faith, allowed them to preach openly and to build or repair churches in all places.





## SUPPLEMENTARY READING Continued

**John Paul II, *Slavorum Apostoli*, (Apostles of the Slavs), 14, 1-2**

It seems in no way anachronistic to see Sts. Cyril and Methodius as the authentic precursors of ecumenism, in as much as they wished to eliminate effectively or to reduce any divisions, real or only apparent, between the individual communities belonging to the same Church, (but) provides a stumbling block to the world, and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the gospel to every creature.

The fervent solicitude shown by both brothers and especially by Methodius by reason of his Episcopal responsibility, to preserve unity of faith and love between the Churches of which they were members, namely, between the Church of Constantinople and the Church of Rome on the one hand, and the Churches which arose in the land of the Slavs on the other, was and always will remain their great merit. This merit was all the greater if one takes into account the fact that their mission was exercised in the years 863-885, thus in the critical years when there emerged a more serious and fatal discord and bitter controversy between the Churches of the East and West.

## VOCABULARY

**BONIFACE (*BONA FACERE*)**
Latin for "doer of good" and the name given to St. Boniface, the missionary to Germany who set the stage for a radical reshaping of the heart of Europe.

**CANTERBURY**
The most important episcopal see in England in the sixth century and the site of St. Augustine's mission to England.

**GLAGOLITHIC SCRIPT**
Based on the Greek alphabet, it was developed by St. Cyril to aid his mission to the Slavic peoples.

***MOZÁRABES***
Spanish people who chose to live under Arab rule after the Muslim invasion of Spain in 711.

**PALLIUM**
A sacred vestment symbolic of the fullness of Episcopal authority, worn by popes and archbishops. It is circular, one inch in width with six small crosses.

**PATRONS OF EUROPE**
Title given by Pope John Paul II in 1980 to Sts. Cyril and Methodius were responsible for the conversions of all of Moravia and other Slavic territories. They used Slavic in the liturgy and translated the Bible into Slavic to reach more people.

**VENERABLE**
This title refers either to a particular state in the process of canonization or to a person's holy life, as in the case of St. Bede.

**WATA**
"Oak of Thor," the sacred tree of the pagans of Hesse cut down by St. Boniface.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the role of the bishop in the work of conversion in Europe.
2. Why is France known as the "Church's eldest daughter"?
3. Who is known as the "Apostle of Ireland," and what is his background?
4. How did Irish monasteries protect and promote Western civilization?
5. Why did Celtic Christianity enter into a period of decline by the 800s?
6. Who was the "Apostle of Scotland"?
7. What are two ways in which Celtic Christianity differed from Roman Christianity?
8. When did the Church finally implement the Sacrament of Penance in the form recognized today? How often are Catholics required to go to Penance?
9. How is it known that English Christianity existed at least before 314?
10. Who was the "Apostle of England"?
11. What was the most important episcopal see in England?
12. What is the significance of the Synod of Whitby (664)?
13. Who is the "Father of English History" and what important contribution did he make with regard to the calendar?
14. What precipitated the decline of the Church in England from 800-1000?
15. Who is the "Apostle of Frisia"?
16. Who is the "Apostle of Germany," and how did he shape the heart of Europe?
17. The monastery of which city became the most important in all of Germany?
18. From where did the missionaries for Scandinavia come?
19. Who is the "Apostle of the North"?
20. Which saintly king's grave was a major pilgrimage site of Northern Europe until the Reformation?
21. How was Christianity's acceptance in Iceland different from the usual model of the king converting first?
22. What does the presence of English churchmen like Bishop Henry of Uppsala in Finland demonstrate about the English church?
23. How did the conversion of the Slavs cause tension?
24. Who were the "Apostles of the Slavs," and what were their backgrounds?
25. Why did many Slavs later turn against the Catholic Church in favor of Constantinople?
26. What title did Pope John Paul II give Sts. Cyril and Methodius in 1980?
27. What do the martyr deaths of St. Ludmilla and St. Wenceslaus indicate about the role of martyrs?
28. What German city was made an archdiocese specifically for the formation of missionaries for the Slavs?
29. Which Polish ruler made Poland a vassal land of the popes, thus beginning a long and important relationship between Poland and the papacy?
30. Much of Russia was inhabited by the descendants of what tribe?





## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. The introduction mentions bias against missionaries. Respond to someone who said the following: "Missionaries cause destruction. They find native peoples, and then force western conceptions of God on them. Christian missionaries destroy the families and culture of natives, who have been living just fine without Christianity."
2. What are three ways that every Christian today can evangelize?
3. Discuss Sts. Cyril and Methodius and the trials which they faced. How did their methods exemplify the Church's respect for different cultures?
4. By the end of the twentieth century, practically every nation discussed in this chapter has suffered in its practice of Christianity after the effects of materialism, communism, and war. For example, in the states within the former East Germany, more than seventy percent of the people are not baptized. What do you think might be the effects of the loss of faith in these European cultures? How might things be changed?

## FROM THE CATECHISM

**830** The word "catholic" means "universal," in the sense of "according to the totality" or "in keeping with the whole." The Church is catholic in a double sense:

First, the Church is catholic because Christ is present in her. "Where there is Christ Jesus, there is the Catholic Church" (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Smyrn.* 8,2: *Apostolic Fathers*, II/2, 311). In her subsists the fullness of Christ's body united with its head; this implies that she receives from him "the fullness of the means of salvation" (*UR* 3; *AG* 6; Eph 1:22-23) which he has willed: correct and complete confession of faith, full sacramental life, and ordained ministry in apostolic succession. The Church was, in this fundamental sense, catholic on the day of Pentecost (cf. *AG* 4) and will always be so until the day of the Parousia.

**831** Secondly, the Church is catholic because she has been sent out by Christ on a mission to the whole of the human race (cf. Mt 28:19).

All men are called to belong to the new People of God. This People, therefore, while remaining one and only one, is to be spread throughout the whole world and to all ages in order that the design of God's will may be fulfilled: he made human nature one in the beginning and has decreed that all his children who were scattered should be finally gathered together as one.... The character of universality which adorns the People of God is a gift from the Lord himself whereby the Catholic Church ceaselessly and efficaciously seeks for the return of all humanity and all its goods, under Christ the Head in the unity of his Spirit (*LG* 13 § 1-2; cf. Jn 11:52).

**832** "The Church of Christ is really present in all legitimately organized local groups of the faithful, which, in so far as they are united to their pastors, are also quite appropriately called Churches in the New Testament.... In them the faithful are gathered together through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, and the mystery of the Lord's Supper is celebrated.... In these communities, though they may often be small and poor, or existing in the diaspora, Christ is present, through whose power and influence the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church is constituted" (*LG* 26).

## FROM THE CATECHISM Continued

**833** The phrase "particular Church," which is first of all the diocese (or eparchy), refers to a community of the Christian faithful in communion of faith and sacraments with their bishop ordained in apostolic succession (cf. *CD* 11; CIC, cann. 368-369; CCEO, cann. 171,1; 178; 311,1; 312). These particular Churches "are constituted after the model of the universal Church; it is in these and formed out of them that the one and unique Catholic Church exists" (*LG* 23).

**834** Particular Churches are fully catholic through their communion with one of them, the Church of Rome "which presides in charity" (St. Ignatius Of Antioch, *Ad Rom.* 1, 1: *Apostolic Fathers*, II/2, 192; cf. LG 13). "For with this church, by reason of its pre-eminence, the whole Church, that is the faithful everywhere, must necessarily be in accord" (St. Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 3, 2: PG 7/1, 849; cf. Vatican Council I: DS 3057). Indeed, "from the incarnate Word's descent to us, all Christian churches everywhere have held and hold the great Church that is here [at Rome] to be their only basis and foundation since, according to the Savior's promise, the gates of hell have never prevailed against her" (St. Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theo.*: PG 91: 137-140).

**849** *The missionary mandate.* "Having been divinely sent to the nations that she might be 'the universal sacrament of salvation,' the Church, in obedience to the command of her founder and because it is demanded by her own essential universality, strives to preach the Gospel to all men" (*AG* 1; cf. Mt 16:15): "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and Lo, I am with you always, until the close of the age" (Mt 28:19-20).

**850** *The origin and purpose of mission.* The Lord's missionary mandate is ultimately grounded in the eternal love of the Most Holy Trinity: "The Church on earth is by her nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, she has as her origin the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit" (*AG* 2). The ultimate purpose of mission is none other than to make men share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love (cf. John Paul II, *RMiss* 23).

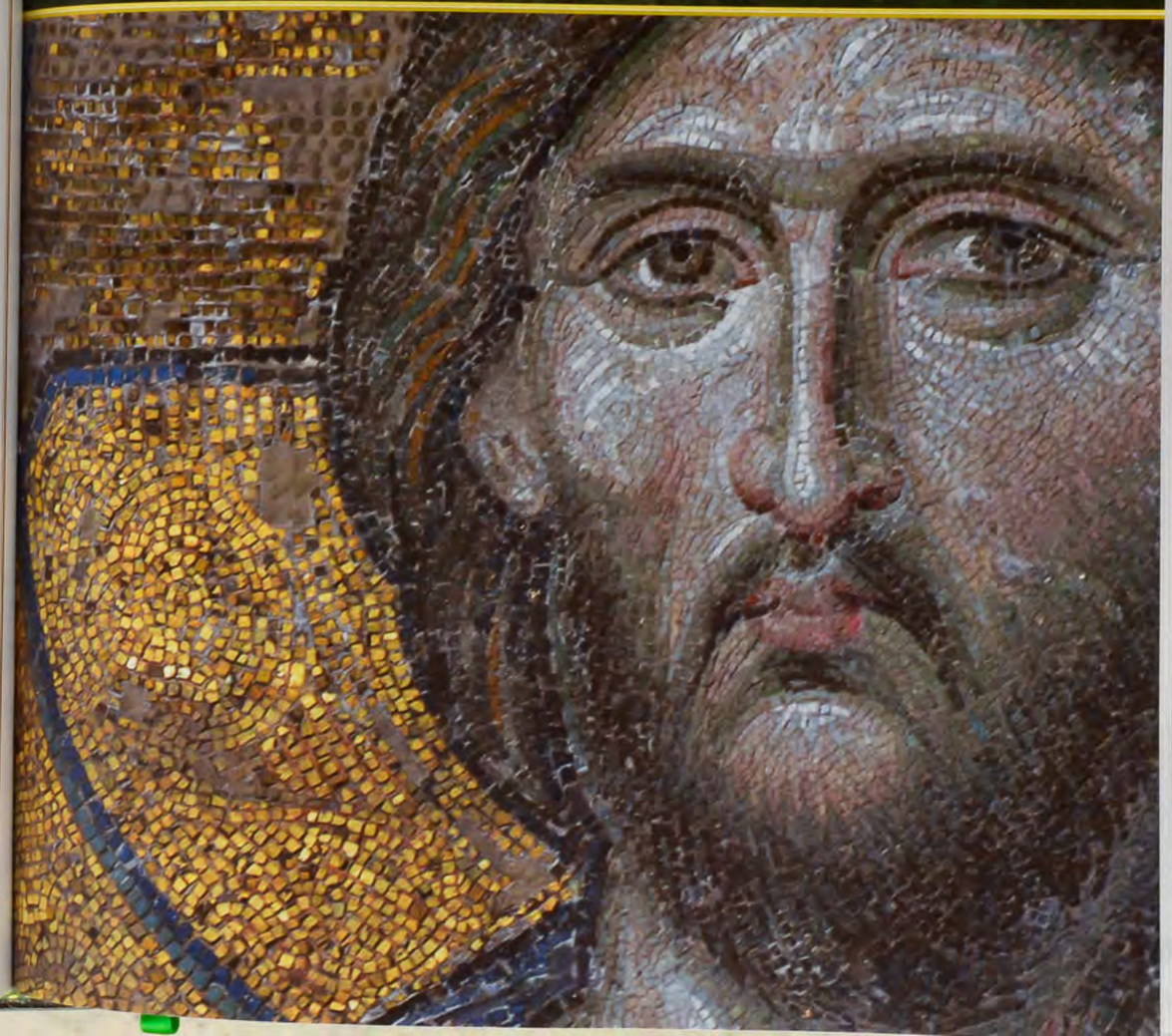
**851** *Missionary motivation.* It is from God's love for all men that the Church in every age receives both the obligation and the vigor of her missionary dynamism, "for the love of Christ urges us on" (2 Cor 5:14; cf. *AA* 6; *RMiss* 11). Indeed, God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tm 2:4); that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the prompting of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. But the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth. Because she believes in God's universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary.



CHAPTER 7

# Iconoclasm, The Carolingian Renaissance, And The Great Schism

*The communion between East and West was shattered in the Great Schism that separated two traditions with the same sacraments.*



CHAPTER 7

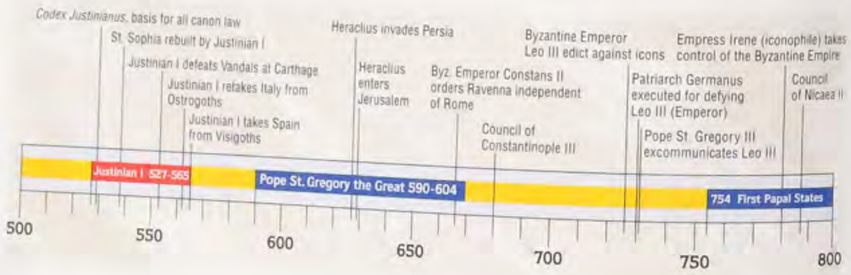
# Iconoclasm, The Carolingian Renaissance, And The Great Schism

As I celebrate among you and wish you the Eucharist of our Lord Jesus Christ, I wish us to find in it peace with our fellow man. Peace: the fruit of justice. Peace: the fruit of love. How easily this peace is broken! How often people are divided among themselves, even though they are physically close, even in the same family! May Christ give us the ability to remain at peace with others. May there be realized in us the words of His Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the peacemakers."

— John Paul II, Prayer during his Pastoral visit to the Roman parish of St. Giovanni Battista dei Fiorentini (March 8, 1981)

From the fourth century into the eleventh century, the Church channeled her energies into the conversion of peoples on the European continent. However, this was only one aspect of the many challenges facing the Church. In the eighth and ninth centuries, a number of political and religious factors coalesced that proved to have important ramifications for Christianity. During these two centuries, the deep-rooted, growing divergence between East and West began to surface clearly as the different languages, cultures, geography, and conceptions of political and religious power that had long divided the East and West became more acute. These two diverse cultures, born from the same sources but now separated by deep cultural heterogeneity, were yet united by the same sacramental Christianity. It proved, however, a fragile unity. The rise of the patriarchs and the question of papal supremacy, liturgical and disciplinal differences, the Iconoclastic Controversy, and other disagreements all pushed East and West towards a final confrontation.

This chapter will explore the development of Christianity in the Byzantine Empire, with special emphasis on the religious and political questions raised in Byzantium over the issues of papal supremacy and icons. The chapter will also look at the concurrent development of the Church in the West, specifically focusing on the relationship of the Church and the Carolingian kings.








PART I

# Byzantium

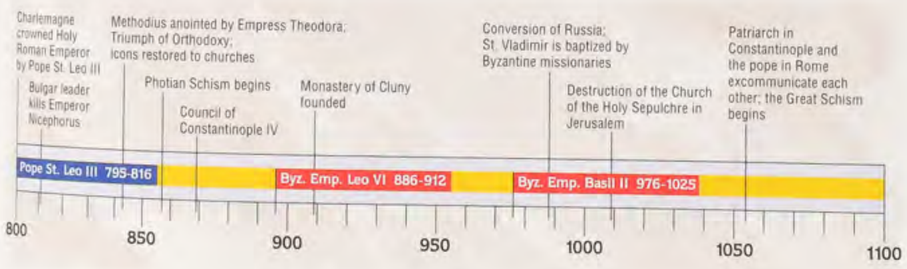
## BYZANTIUM: THE LONG VIEW

Byzantium was at one time the most important center of political, religious, cultural, and economic activity in the world of the former Roman Empire. During the periods of its greatest geographical breadth, the Byzantine Empire encompassed the entire Mediterranean world: North Africa, Palestine, the Anatolian Plateau, Greece, the Balkans, and Italy. Much of the Black Sea was controlled by Byzantium, which extended as far east as modern Syria and Iraq. Byzantium was a mighty maritime power and a key trading center for commerce with East Asia.

Constantine the Great founded the Byzantine Empire when he moved his capital to Byzantium, renaming it Constantinople and formally dedicating it on May 11, 330. The Empire lasted until May 29, 1453, when it fell to the Ottoman Turks. Byzantium lasted for more than eleven hundred years—longer than the combined duration of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire which together lasted some nine hundred eighty-five years (taking 509 B.C. as the beginning of the Republic and A.D. 476 as the collapse of the Empire). Unlike the Republic and the Empire, Byzantium enjoyed the blessing of a wholly Christian orientation and development from its inception. Even though the capital was dedicated under both pagan and Christian rites, Constantine always heavily favored the Church, and, as mentioned previously, Emperor Theodosius I made Christianity the official religion of Byzantium in 379. The intricate theological disputes of the fourth and fifth centuries demonstrated a deeply Christian culture that marked the Empire even until its decline and fall.

The rise of Islam, however, proved to be a mortal enemy to the Eastern Empire. As Islamic expansion constantly loomed on the horizon in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia Minor as a powerful threat to the Empire's territorial integrity. Certain tenets of the Muslim faith prompted the Arabic people to raise a strong military force that had already conquered Byzantine lands by the seventh century, including three of the four great Eastern Christian patriarchates (Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria). Islam remained a constant threat to the empire until finally, in the fifteenth century, Constantinople, and with it the remnants of the decaying Byzantine Empire, fell to the Muslim Ottoman Turks on May 29, 1453.

Constantinople was located on the tip of the Balkan Peninsula just across from Asia Minor along the narrow Bosporus Strait, which connects the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. The city was built



## CHAPTER 7

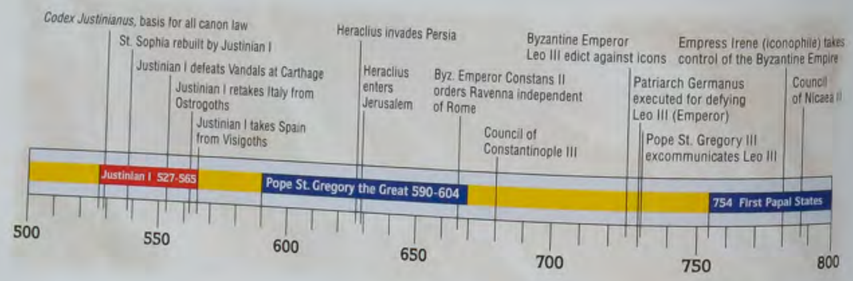
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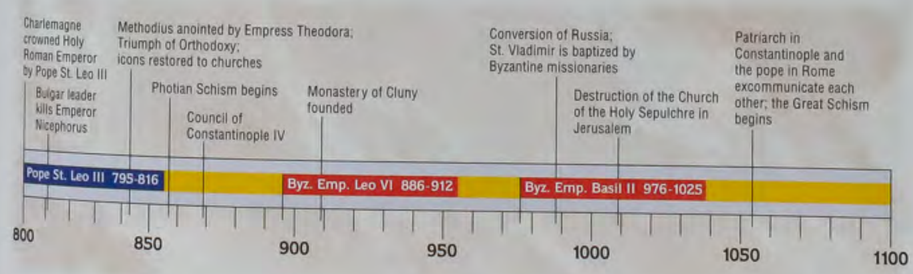
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The Bosporus is a strait that separates the European part of Turkey from the Asian part and connects the Sea of Marmara with the Black Sea. Two bridges cross the Bosporus Strait. Due to the importance of the strait for the defense of Istanbul, the Ottoman sultans constructed a fortification on each side, the Anadoluhisari (1393) and the Rumelihisari (1451) shown above.

on this triangular rocky promontory, surrounded by the sea on the northern, southern, and eastern borders. Emperor Constantine, Emperor Theodosius II, and later Emperor Anastasius I soon erected a series of formidable walls (Anastasius' walls were some forty miles long) along its western edge to complete the boundaries of the triangular city—an impressively secure military site that British warships were not capable of taking during the First World War, even with heavy bombardment.

The Byzantines were Roman in their laws, Greek in their culture, and oriental in their habits. All of these traditions came together in Constantinople, which rose as a center of learning, art, and architecture. Hagia (or Saint) Sophia (the Church of "Holy Wisdom," dedicated to Christ), the cathedral of the patriarch of Constantinople, is still regarded as a wonder of Byzantine art and architecture. The riches of Byzantium likewise converged in Constantinople. The docks were crowded with exotic goods from all over the world—wood, grains, silks from Asia, spices, luxuriant clothing, and precious jewelry filled the markets.

## BYZANTINE CHRISTIANITY

The numbers of Christians in Byzantium far exceeded those in Rome and the West. It must be remembered that all of the areas to which Christianity first took hold, such as Palestine and the cities of Asia Minor, were located within the boundaries of the Byzantine Empire; and Greek, the language of the East, was the original language of almost the entire New Testament.

Although Rome remained the location of St. Peter's successors, it no longer enjoyed the influence that it once had during the era of the Roman Empire. The pope continued to serve as the ultimate authority in the Church, but the intimate relationship between the emperor and the patriarchs of Constantinople would come to overshadow the authority of the papacy. Furthermore, the Church in the East developed along very different lines than the Church in the West. In the West, as the political structures of the Empire collapsed and missionary activity surged across Europe, the notion of the Church as universal began to take an even stronger form. This universal conception





of the Church took root in the absence of any strong political communities to which Christians could attach themselves. Hence the Church came to be viewed as something that transcended all national boundaries or allegiances.

In the East, however, missionary activity, though equally successful, regularly culminated in the creation of national churches attached to specific political communities. Hence various eastern churches arose in partial concert and conflict with the imperial church of the Byzantine Empire. The burgeoning nationalism of some of these minor churches was strong enough to cause several schisms within the Eastern Church. The Eastern Church soon found itself ministering solely to its Greek subjects.

The political environment of the Eastern Empire also gave rise to a manner of rule called caesaropapism, in which the sovereign temporal ruler extends his authority to ecclesiastical and theological matters. To be sure, strains of caesaropapism could be detected as early as Constantine the Great, but the emperors who succeeded him only intensified their desire to have a hand in the governance of the Church. Such emperors appointed bishops and the Eastern Patriarch, directed the development of liturgical practices, and even aided in the recruitment of monks. In time, the increasing power of Eastern emperors put them into direct conflict with the authority of the papacy, paving the way for many contentious disputes and schisms.

## EMPEROR JUSTINIAN I

The eastern Emperor Justinian I (ca. 482-565, emperor 527) may be considered the last, great ruler in the Roman tradition before the political transformation that shook Byzantium in the eighth century. Justinian I succeeded in resurrecting the glory of imperial Rome in the Eastern Empire, and is responsible for many advances in architecture, the fine arts, and civil law. Justinian I's view of himself as head of both the state and the Church, however, led him into conflict with the papacy over the question of the heresy of Monophysitism.




In a mosaic panel in the Church of San Vitale, Ravenna, northeast of Florence, Italy, ca. 540, Emperor Justinian I holds the paten for the bread of the Eucharist. Bishop Maximian holds a cross. Others hold the Gospel book and incense. The group is walking in a procession as part of the ceremony of the Little Entrance, when the congregation entered the church following the Gospel book.

## MILITARY CAMPAIGNS

In 553/4 Justinian I led a campaign against the Vandals in northern Africa. The Vandals were disorganized and ill-equipped, but had, during the collapse of the West, overrun the northern shores of Africa. In addition to his desire to restore the empire, Justinian I was moved by the African bishops' pleas for help, as the Vandals were particularly harsh on Christians. Justinian I sailed five hundred ships carrying ten thousand infantry and five thousand cavalry against the Vandals and marched on Carthage, the Vandal stronghold. Justinian I took Carthage and captured the Vandal king Gelimer, bringing him as a prisoner to Constantinople, thus temporarily resuscitating the empire's presence in Africa.

Apart from his African campaign, Justinian I retook Italy (562) from the Ostrogoths after a long and expensive war, and secured most of Spain (555), capturing this land from the Visigoths. In all, by the time of Justinian I's death he had reconquered half of Europe as well as northern Africa. His campaigns toward the west and the south came at a price. The Persians, who had threatened the empire from the beginning of Justinian I's reign, never ceased harassing the eastern frontiers. Furthermore, the Bulgars and Slavs threatened the empire in the Balkans and even Constantinople itself.

Justinian I's rekindling of the empire, however brilliant and amazing, was also brief. Italy fell into the hands of the Lombards just three years after his death in 565, and was never recovered. Northern Africa was lost within a century thereafter to the Muslims.



*The Barberini Ivory* from the early sixth century, Constantinople, portrays a triumphant Christian emperor.

Although he resembles Constantine, historians date the style of the ivory to the reign of Justinian I. One interpretation is that the ivory celebrates Justinian I's victory over the Persians.

## *CODEX JUSTINIANUS* (529)

As part of his ambitious quest to restore the empire, Justinian I undertook the collection and systemization of all Roman law as it had developed from his earliest predecessors. Justinian I wanted to ensure a uniform rule of law throughout his growing empire, and sought to provide an ultimate reference for any legal question that might arise. The result, the *Codex Justinianus*, represents the highest achievement in classical legal scholarship. Justinian I's Codex is an important basis for the development of Canon Law—the law of the Church—as well as for civil law in all the countries of Europe.







Hagia Sophia. The minarets belong to the Ottoman conversion of the church into a mosque. Hagia Sophia remains one of the great achievements of world architecture. In it, every Byzantine saw the perfect church. "The church is an earthly heaven in which the super-celestial God dwells and walks about." Germanos, Patriarch of Constantinople (715-730).

## HAGIA SOPHIA (538)

As wondrous and long-lasting as Justinian I's advancements in the arena of legal scholarship proved to be, his innovations in architecture were perhaps even more impressive. From Justinian I's patronage grew a unique style of architectural design, which is now called "Byzantine," and virtually all building in the West and East owes much to his influence. The most famous work built under his reign, the magnificent church of Hagia Sophia (Holy Wisdom) at Constantinople, is widely thought to be one of the most perfect buildings in the world.

## MONOPHYSITISM AND JUSTINIAN I

Monophysitism, or the belief that Christ possesses only one nature and that his human nature is "incorporated" into the divine nature, remained a prevalent and troubling heresy in Justinian I's time. His own wife, Theodora, had definite Monophysite sympathies, and her influence over Justinian I was not always for the best. Theodora had been a popular actress known for both her beauty and antics, many of which fell well short of propriety. At some time in her adult life, however, she converted to Christianity, and by the time Justinian I married her she was living a respectable and reformed life in relative seclusion.

Theodora's conversion was probably aided by many of the East's famous spiritual athletes, monks who were known for their asceticism and zeal. Unfortunately, many of these same monks, if they were not Monophysites, were very close to being so. The notion of Christ's two natures present in one Divine Person was supposedly resolved at the Council of Chalcedon (451). There, it was to have been shown that the West—in the person of Pope St. Leo I—and the East—in the person of St. Cyril—were united in their understanding of Christ's Person. Unfortunately, controversy still remained. Many Eastern Christians felt that St. Leo's formulation of Christ's two natures did not truly square with St. Cyril's teaching on the same subject matter and represented a kind of creeping Nestorianism. This was the first council not recognized by any of the Churches of the Eastern Christian tradition (called "Old Oriental Churches").

# JUSTINIAN'S EMPIRE ca. 560





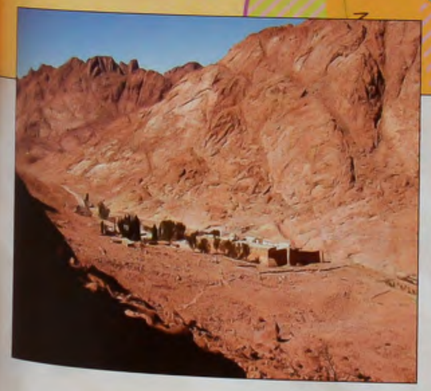


A satellite image above the Balkan Peninsula showing the Bosporus Strait connecting the Black Sea to the north and the Sea of Marmara to the south. The city of Istanbul (Constantinople) with a population of 11 million straddles both sides of the Strait.







St. Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai in Egypt was developed by Justinian I between 527 and 565 to enclose the Chapel of the Burning Bush built by St. Helen, the mother of Constantine I, at the site where Moses is believed to have seen the burning bush. The bush is considered to still be alive and is the most venerated area on the grounds. The monastery also comprises the entire Orthodox Church of Mount Sinai, an autonomous (as distinct from autocephalous) Orthodox Christian church headed by an archbishop.

Justinian I's desire was to reconcile the remaining Monophysites in the East with the Church. This in itself was laudable. Often, however, Justinian I's desire for such reconciliation, combined with his great love for his wife—who privately held Monophysite tendencies—proved disastrous for the Church. The case of Pope St. Silverius provides an apt example.

Pope St. Silverius was elected in 536 to succeed Pope St. Agapitus. However, Theodora wished that Vigilius, a Monophysite who had risen to great power in the Church, be made pope instead. Theodora and Vigilius conspired against Pope St. Silverius and forged documents proving his betrayal of the empire. Pope St. Silverius was deposed and sent into exile. Justinian I, largely because of his wife's influence, was unable to investigate fully the accusations leveled against St. Silverius. Hence the emperor's deference to his wife in this instance led to St. Silverius' continued exile and eventual death.

Justinian I's activity in ecclesiastical activities led to other abuses in the same vein, and constitutes the main flaw of his otherwise admirable reign.



At the Battle of Nineveh in 627, Byzantine forces led by Flavius Heraclius Augustus, Byzantine emperor from 610 to 641, defeated the Persian forces of King Chosroe. Heraclius took for himself the title of *Basileus*, the Greek word for "emperor," and that title was used by the eastern Roman emperors for the next 800 years. Heraclius also discontinued the use of Latin as the empire's official language, replacing it with Greek. Although the empire called itself Roman throughout the rest of its history, it was in reality a Hellenic empire from Heraclius onward.

## EMPEROR HERACLIUS: A PILGRIM IN JERUSALEM

After Justinian I's death in 565, the empire fell into disarray. The lands he had reclaimed were soon lost again, and none of his immediate successors approached his level of charisma or focus. Further, Justinian I's many civic projects had drained the empire's treasury, and there was little wealth coming into Constantinople because of the raids abroad. The overextension of the empire, the lack of any singular leader, and even diminishing revenues crippled a once-magnificent empire.

At the same time, the Persians were garnering strength. The Persians had first warred against the old Roman Empire under Valerius, and had even taken this emperor prisoner. Ever since then, they had continually raided the eastern-most stretches of Byzantium, but were unable to make any substantive incursions for a very long while. After Justinian I's death, however, the Persian King Chosroes prepared to realize the Persians' long-awaited hopes.

In 611, King Chosroes, after a series of lesser engagements, marched against Byzantium with the largest invading force yet mustered in Christian times. In 614 his son-in-law Shaharbarz took





Jerusalem. He held the city siege for twenty days, and finally overran it with the help of 26,000 Jews who were eager to destroy Christian sovereignty in their city. Historians estimate that in the plundering of Jerusalem between sixty and one-hundred thousand Christians lost their lives. Churches, Christian shrines, and monasteries were destroyed, and the True Cross was carted off as a trophy of war. Jews, as a reward for their help, were allowed to retain the city.

By this point in time, Emperor Heraclius had acceded to rule the Byzantine Empire. When the Persians invaded Jerusalem, Heraclius had neither the men nor the funds to resist them. His existing forces were occupied elsewhere, warring against the Slavs, and his economic reforms had not yet generated enough revenue to equip another army. After much negotiation, Heraclius worked out an agreement with the Patriarch of Constantinople in order to fund his campaign against the Persians. He would be allotted all the wealth of the churches so long as he would repay these loans after defeating the Persians and liberating Jerusalem. His funding secure, Heraclius built up his army for two more years and in 622 began a counter-offensive against the Persians.

Heraclius' campaign, sometimes called the Byzantine Crusade, culminated in his invasion of Persia in 627. King Chosroes fled, and in 629 Heraclius, victorious, entered Jerusalem to venerate the relic of the True Cross, which had been restored to the holy city.

# PART II

# The Iconoclastic Controversy
## (ca. 725-843)

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.
(Ex 20: 2-6; Dt 5: 6-10)

The first section of this chapter set the stage for the Iconoclastic Controversy. The Iconoclastic Controversy and its attendant heresy, iconoclasm, served as the breaking point between the Eastern emperors and the popes. Though religious communion was maintained between the Eastern and Western Church for several centuries more, the emperors and popes assumed permanent, adversarial positions regarding the status and use of icons. This impasse eventually led the papacy to seek the protection of the Western Franks to protect against the sometimes oppressive measures of dissenting emperors.

The Iconoclastic Controversy may be broken down into several periods:

- First Iconoclasm under the reigns of Emperors Leo III and Constantine V, ca. 725-775;
- Iconophile recovery under the Empress-regent Irene, the mother of Constantine VI, and the Seventh Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (787), 775-815;
- Second Iconoclasm under the reigns of Emperors Leo V, Michael II, and Theophilus, 815-842;
- Triumph of Iconophiles, celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent as the "Feast of Orthodoxy," 843.

## ICONS

An icon is a flat, two-dimensional picture of Christ, the Virgin Mary, or one of the saints. Icons became numerous in the East beginning in the fifth century, and were used as aids for Christian acts of piety. Highly ritualized prayer before icons involving bowing and the lighting of incense became the norm among the Christian faithful. These practices, to a greater or lesser extent, remain in both the Western and Eastern Rites of the Church today. The general artistic style of icons reflects a certain mystical beauty of Christ the Savior and the saints. When rightly understood, the icon, by virtue of what is represented, is seen as an invitation to prayer and not as an object to be worshiped.

There are various explanations as to the rise of iconoclasm. The word "iconoclast" is the translation of the Greek word *eikonoklastēs*, which, as the compound of *eikôn* (image) and *klan* (to break), literally means "image breaker." Some scholars point to the influence of Judaism and Islam, which both proscribed the use of images in worship, to explain the rise of iconoclasm. Others argue that from the beginning of the Church, a latent strain of iconoclasm lay hidden below the surface, clouded over for a time by other, more pressing theological disputes.

In any case, many scholars agree that by the beginning of the eighth century, abuses of icons had sprung up among the faithful. Many people came to believe that icons held special powers. This devolved quickly into a kind of superstition, and worshipers often fixed their attention on the icon itself, rather than at the spiritual mysteries the icon was intended to represent. A kind of idolatry, forbidden by the First Commandment, emerged from this incorrect use of the icons. As a guard against such idolatry, the iconoclasts sought to destroy the icons, and, in their view, purify the practice of the Christian religion.



*Our Lady of Vladimir* (also known as *Eleousa*, Greek meaning "Mother of tenderness") is one of the most venerated Orthodox icons. Regarded as the holy protectress of Russia, the icon is displayed in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Patriarch Luke Chrysoberges of Constantinople sent the newly written icon as a gift to Grand Duke Yury Dolgoruky of Kiev ca. 1131. The beautiful image was loved by Yury's son, Andrei the Pious, who brought it to his favorite city Vladimir in 1155.

When the horses that transported the icon stopped near Vladimir and refused to go further, it was interpreted as a sign that the Blessed Virgin wanted to stay in Vladimir. To house the icon, the great Assumption Cathedral was built there, followed by other churches dedicated to the Virgin throughout northwestern Russia.

One of the most exquisite icons ever written, Our Lady of Vladimir is imbued with universal feelings of motherly love and anxiety for her child known as the *Eleousa* type. By the 16th century the Vladimirskaya (as the Russians call it) was a thing of legend. One legend is that the image was painted by St. Luke on the table of the Last Supper.

The venerated image was considered to be miraculous and used in coronations of czars, elections of patriarchs, and other important ceremonies of state.





## THEOPHANES THE GREEK—A WRITER OF ICONS



*The Transfiguration* by Theophanes the Greek, early 15th century, from the Cathedral of Transfiguration of the Savior in Pereslavl. Now it hangs in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow

An *iconographer* (literally "icon-writer") is a writer—called a "writer" because he paints a story—in icons. Theophanes the Greek is considered one of the greatest iconographers of all time. He was born in Crete around 1330 and moved to Novgorod, Russia, in 1378. Theophanes went to Russia with a deep knowledge of religious literature and art. While in Novgorod he wrote many famous icons in churches across the city.

Theophanes moved to Moscow in 1395, where he worked on the *Book of Gospels* of Boyar Koshka. In 1405 he wrote icons for the Deesis tier in Moscow's Cathedral of the Annunciation, inviting Andrei Rublev to help him on this project. In doing so, he helped develop the artistic talents of Rublev, who went on to become one of the greatest Russian iconographers of all time.

In all, Theophanes the Greek wrote icons for over forty churches in Russia and Constantinople. Unlike most iconographers of his time, he never used models when making his icons. He was also instrumental in developing the iconostasis (the screen of icons dividing the sanctuary from the nave) as it is still used today in an Eastern Church.

# FIRST ICONOCLASM

## EMPEROR LEO III, THE ISAURIAN (717-741)

Leo III's distrust of icons must be viewed in the context of the preceding centuries. Two or three centuries earlier, the Monophysite heresy had minimized or denied the humanity of Christ, and Manicheanism denied that Christ possessed corporeality. Although both heresies had already been condemned by the Church, remnants of heterodox belief had survived here and there. These specific heresies were aided by Islamic and Jewish influences upon Christian thought. In these other monotheistic religions, representations of God are definitively forbidden. The icons, which were representations of Christ in his full corporeality, thus came under fire from both sides. The Monophysites objected to the icons' portrayals of Christ as human; and those Christians allied with Muslims and Jews objected to the representation of any Person of the Godhead.



Aside from these theological pressures, political ones played a role as well. Leo III, like his Roman predecessors, desired a unified state, and one way of obtaining such unification was to secure a unity of religious belief. Hence it was in Leo's interest to persuade Muslims and Jews to convert to Christianity. He soon became convinced, however, that the chief impediment to their conversion was the Christian use of icons in liturgical practice. By discouraging the use of icons, Leo III thought to appease certain influential factions of Christians (those tending toward Monophysitism) and at the same time win over countless Jews and Muslims, thus consolidating his state.

Leo III's desire to placate the Muslims was somewhat understandable. Byzantium at the beginning of the eighth century was teetering on collapse. Between 634 and 644, the Muslims had captured the entire Holy Land, and had continued their march into the Anatolian Plateau. The Muslims laid siege to Constantinople for five years from 673 to 678, and again in 717. Were it not for the city's walled defenses, Byzantium would have fallen in the eighth century instead of the fifteenth. Upon his accession, Emperor Leo III managed to end the siege of 717, but he remained all too aware of the dangers his empire still faced.

Thus, in 726 Leo issued an edict declaring that all icons were occasions for idolatry and ordered their destruction. Pope St. Gregory II, Patriarch St. Germanus I of Constantinople, most bishops, and nearly all monks, immediately condemned Leo's edict. Leo wasted no time in combating his opponents, and forcibly deposed Patriarch St. Germanus I. Meanwhile, Pope St. Gregory II, after corresponding with Leo III regarding the icons, suddenly died in 731. Consequently, Leo's proscription of iconography remained in force, and when the Eastern monks refused to surrender their icons to the emperor, he unleashed a brutal persecution upon them. Many of the oldest Byzantine icons were destroyed, and hundreds of monks and nuns lost their lives in the icons' defense. Finally, Pope St. Gregory III, who succeeded Pope St. Gregory II, convened two councils in Rome in 731 that condemned Leo's actions, and then excommunicated him.

Nevertheless, Leo III remained obstinate. At his death in 741, iconoclasm was still in force in the East, and the Eastern Church was no longer in communion with Rome regarding this matter.

Above: Emperor Leo III on a gold coin from the Constantinople mint, 720-725





## ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS



Greek icon of St. John of Damascus, early 14th century

A great defender of icons and their veneration was St. John of Damascus (ca. 655-ca. 750), also known as St. John Damascene. At a young age, St. John renounced his family wealth and became a monk near Jerusalem. During the years 726 to 730, St. John wrote the iconophile works in defense of Pope St. Gregory II against Leo III. (*Iconophile*—Greek for "lover of icons"—refers to support of the proper use of icons in Christian worship.) Aside from criticizing iconoclasm itself, St. John also decried imperial interference in ecclesiastical matters.

St. John's crowning work is the *Fount of Wisdom*, especially the section titled "*De Fide Orthodoxa*." In it, St. John explicates the teaching of the Greek Fathers on all the important doctrines of Christianity. Here St. John defends the use of icons by reference to the mystery of the Incarnation. In coming to the world as the God-man, Jesus Christ, God gave implicit permission for the depiction of Christ's human form in art. It would therefore follow that dignified and respectful representations of God would be praiseworthy.

Considered the last of the Eastern Church Fathers, St. John of Damascus was made a Doctor of the Church by Pope Leo XIII in 1890. He enjoys the same feast day in both the East and West, celebrated on December 4.

## CONSTANTINE V (741-775)

When Constantine V succeeded Leo III as emperor he moved to strengthen the theological basis against the icons by gaining the support of the Greek church. To this end he convened the Council of Hiereia (754), a non-ecumenical council which was a carefully orchestrated to deliver the results Constantine V sought. Not only did Constantine V exclude Rome and the rest of the West from the council, he did not even invite the ancient patriarchies of Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria. The bishops of all these patriarchies, obviously, were iconophiles.

Constantine V encountered an unexpected and powerful adversary: the monks. These same monks had opposed Leo III, and their continued opposition to Constantine V's policy earned them several hardships: exile, imprisonment, and death. One of these monks who died under Constantine V's persecutions was St. Stephen the Younger (d. 765). A street mob, incited by iconoclasts, stoned him to death. Three hundred additional monks were put to death for the Faith.

## ICONOPHILE RECOVERY: THE SEVENTH ECUMENICAL COUNCIL: THE SECOND COUNCIL OF NICAEA (787)

Constantine V was succeeded in 775 by his son, Leo IV. Leo IV eased the persecutions of the monks, and did not enforce, though he did not repeal, his predecessors' iconoclast measures. Leo IV ruled only for a short while, and died in 780. Upon Leo IV's death, his wife, the Empress Irene, who was mother to the child heir, Constantine VI, took control of the empire. The Empress Irene had Catholic sympathies, and was secretly an iconophile. In a move to restore the icons, she persuaded Pope Adrian I to convene the Seventh Ecumenical Council, the second council at

Nicaea (787). The chosen location was no accident. Empress Irene and the iconophiles hoped that those in attendance would be reminded of the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea called by Constantine the Great, and would restore orthodoxy in the East.

Pope Adrian I was represented by two legates who arrived with written condemnations of the Council of Hiereia, which, because it was convened in opposition to the papacy, could not be valid. The important patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem were not permitted to attend the council by their Muslim ruler, the caliph. Instead, each sent two monks. In all, more than three hundred bishops attended the Seventh Ecumenical Council, Nicaea II. The Eastern Churches celebrate the feast of the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council every October.



The Council, just one month after convening, declared its acceptance of the veneration of icons in line with the papal position regarding their legitimacy. It then went on to distinguish between two types of adoration. An icon may be venerated through acts of respect and honor (Greek, *dulia*), since bowing, lighting lamps, or burning incense before the picture of a saint is honor paid for the person it represents, and not for the image itself. God alone is worthy of absolute adoration (Greek, *latria*). The Scholastic tradition in the West later solidified this distinction when it used the terms *dulia* to indicate the reverence due to creatures such as saints, and the term *latria* to indicate the absolute adoration due to God alone.

## SECOND ICONOCLASM (815-843)

Although the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea officially denounced iconoclasm as a heresy and restored communion between East and West, a political crisis inaugurated by events in the Balkans led to a second period of iconoclasm beginning in 815.

The Bulgar Slavs had proved resistant to Christianity and had constantly pressed upon Byzantium for some time. Finally, in 811 the Bulgar leader Khan Krum (ruled 811-814) killed the Byzantine emperor Nicephorus. Not since the Roman emperor Valens was slain in 378 at Adrianople by a Germanic tribe had such a thing happened. In a gesture of contempt for weakening Byzantium, Krum drank wine from Nicephorus' skull.

Two years later, the Byzantine military staged a successful coup against the defunct Byzantine leadership under Michael I. The new emperor Leo V (775-820) sought to rehabilitate iconoclasm in Byzantium as a way of strengthening the influence and power of the military. For even though the recent Second Council of Nicaea had officially ended iconoclasm's status as a viable theological view, the heresy retained many adherents in the military and upper echelons of Byzantine society. Leo V, in propagating iconoclasm, hoped to solidify this base. As a result, both he and his two successors Michael II (emperor 820-829) and Theophilus (emperor 829-842) continued the iconoclast policy.

Leo V deposed the Patriarch of Constantinople, who clung to orthodoxy despite the emperor's threats, and in his stead appointed Theophilus, a patriarch friendly to him. This patriarch soon called a council with the aim of returning to the Council of Hiereia's (753) conclusions. When in the course of the council Leo V encountered a surprisingly strong resistance from the episcopacy, he revived the persecutions, which continued unabated until Theophilus' death in 842.

Above: Empress Irene on a gold coin from the Constantinople mint, 797-802.





## ICON: MICROCOSM OF CREATION

Icons are stylistic paintings on wood that are both symbolic of the spiritual world and "written" in accordance with sacred rules. One such rule requires that an icon uses elements from all of creation: vegetable, animal, mineral, and human.

**Vegetable.** An icon is written on wood, often birch or linden. (Usually a recessed area is carved from the face of the wood to represent the separation of the earthly and spiritual worlds.) Linseed oil protects the surface of the icon after painting; it also brightens the color, making the icon appear more transparent.

**Animal.** Egg yolk is mixed with vinegar and water; this is then mixed with dry colors to make egg tempera, the paint used for icons. Gelatin, dissolved into water, is heated and applied to the raw wood to seal it. Rabbit skin or fish glue binds powdered stone to form *gesso*. Brushes of animal fur apply the egg tempera.

**Mineral.** Gold leaf is used for halos and thin rays on clothing. Marble or chalk is crushed to powder, mixed with glue (*gesso*), and heated; this forms a base for the painting. Colors are added to the egg solution to create egg tempera. Clay is used as a base for gold leaf.

**Human.** The iconographer writes an icon (see *Theophanes the Greek* on page 263). He prepares the other elements from creation in an ordered way to produce an icon. He utilizes his status as created in the image of God to re-form creation into new elements for the worship of God and honor of the saints.

### Writing an icon











*Icon of the Triumph of Orthodoxy*, Constantinople, late 14th century. This icon depicts those who fought for Orthodoxy during the period of iconoclasm.

In the top row, Empress Theodora and her son Michael III stand on the left and Patriarch Methodius on the right. In the center is the *Hodigitria* icon, attributed to St. Luke. (*Hodigitria* means "She who shows the way.")

Two icons of Christ are held by iconophiles in the bottom row.

## THE FEAST OF THE TRIUMPH OF ORTHODOXY (843)

It required another empress and regent, Empress Theodora, to reverse the new wave of iconoclasm and restore orthodoxy in the East. Theodora deposed the iconoclast Patriarch Theophilus of Constantinople, and in 843, put in his place Bl. Methodius, who had been tortured and imprisoned by Theophilus. Under Bl. Methodius, iconoclast bishops were deposed and replaced by orthodox iconophiles, and the first Sunday of Lent was named the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy in order to celebrate the triumph of the icons. The Eastern Churches still celebrate this feast today.

Hence, in 843—after more than one hundred years of controversy and schism—the barren walls of churches were again decorated with beautiful icons, and the orthodox practice of venerating icons was finally secure.





# PART III

# The Rise of the Carolingians and an Independent Papacy

During the iconoclast controversies, the popes had regularly turned to the Western Franks for protection against the Byzantine emperors. The Franks' conversion and rise to power came to provide the West with a semblance of political unity and a relatively stable support for the Church. This alliance between the papacy and the Franks would culminate in the crowning of Charlemagne as Emperor in 800. To understand the alliance and its importance it is necessary to look back some sixty years earlier, to the transfer of power from the Merovingian line of Frankish inheritance to the Carolingian one.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE CAROLINGIAN LINE

Dating back to Clovis, the Merovingian Dynasty (named for Meroveus, an ancestor of Clovis) ruled the Franks. Due to the corruption and incompetence of the Merovingian kings and nobles, they had only nominal control over their kingdom. Since the end of the seventh century, the real power over the Franks had been in the hands of the Carolingians (named for Charles Martel, who established the dynasty), whose official title was "Mayors of the Palace."

Pepin the Short (741-767) was a Carolingian and the son of the famed Charles Martel, who had defeated the Muslims at Tours in 732. Pepin appeared to be a brute in his physical characteristics: short, broad-shouldered, and strong. However, he also had a keen intelligence and understanding of others. He combined these qualities with an extraordinary ambition for power.

Pepin solidified his position as the only heir to the Carolingian dynasty when his other brother became a monk. Pepin wrote to Pope St. Zachary requesting that he and his progeny be given kingship over the Franks, since it was they who retained actual power among the Franks. St. Boniface, who was the papal legate in the Germanic territories, successfully acquired Pope St. Zachary's permission to recognize the new Carolingian dynasty as the rightful rulers in central Europe, officially transferring power from the Merovingian Dynasty.

St. Boniface anointed Pepin king in 751, marking the beginning of a long and complicated allegiance between the Carolingians and the papacy in the West.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PAPAL STATES

Pope Stephen II (752-757), who succeeded St. Zachary, expected protection from Pepin the Short in exchange for the official papal support of the Carolingians. To reiterate the papacy's expectations, Pope Stephen traveled across the Alps into France to meet with Pepin. The Lombards were presently threatening Rome, and the Byzantines did not intend to protect Italy. Pope Stephen, aware that the Byzantines would not hesitate to abandon the papacy, sought to recruit Pepin's aid in the defense of Rome. On July 28, 754, the pope publicly anointed Pepin and his two sons—repeating with more pomp the consecration already performed by St. Boniface—and threatened to condemn anyone who disobeyed them. This consecration was designed to show that the Church could bestow secular authority to kings. Pepin in turn agreed to intervene on behalf of the pope before the Lombard ruler.

Later that same year, Pepin and his army marched into northern Italy and asked the Lombard leader Aistulf to refrain from taking Rome. As a show of force, Pepin laid siege to an outlying Lombard stronghold just over the Alps. Aistulf initially accepted Pepin's conditions, but when Pepin withdrew back across the Alps, Aistulf reneged on the agreement and marched on Rome. Consequently, Pepin again moved his troops over the Alps and launched an attack on the Lombards, soundly defeating them. This time, Pepin left behind a contingent of his army to ensure that Aistulf followed through on the terms of peace.

In the end, Pepin won Rome for the papacy, as well as securing Ravenna and Perugia. These lands would become known as the Papal States. For the first time in the history of the Church, the pope, who had always been a spiritual leader, became a sovereign one as well. This direct administration of temporal lands by the papacy would last until 1870, when Italy would unify itself as a nation-state.

The direct involvement of the papacy in the administration of a state was both advantageous and troublesome for the Church. On the one hand, it ensured that the papacy would enjoy independence from Byzantine emperors who wished to exert influence over the Church's ecclesiastical affairs. Hence, it made the ongoing missionary work and ecclesiastical organization more manageable for the Church hierarchy. Furthermore, the defined territory of the Papal States would also serve as a means of protection against the Lombards and other bellicose peoples. On the other hand, the kinds of temptations that always beset those in political power became suddenly relevant for those in authority. Because of this, some abuses arose in the Church which otherwise might have been avoided. It is pointless to deny that there were such abuses—they are well documented—but it is also wrongheaded to place an undue importance upon them. The ministers of the Church, who are human, are as capable of sin and error as any secular leader. This is evidenced in St. Peter's early denial of Jesus. But the Church herself, insofar as she is the spiritual Bride of Christ, continued (and continues) to teach the truth and sanctify her people despite human failings. It bears repeating that it is the Holy Spirit who holds in existence and guides the Catholic Church.

## CHARLEMAGNE (REIGNED 769-814)



Charlemagne's simple throne in the Palace Chapel in the Aachen Cathedral chapel.

Charles, the son of Pepin, became after the death of his brother Carolman the inheritor of his father's kingdom. Charles ruled for a long period, many years of which were devoted to securing and expanding his kingdom. Although economically draining, his frantic military activity—he led at least fifty military campaigns—was not in vain. By the time of his death in 814, Charles had unified most of Western Europe under one Christian ruler.

Charles, known as "the Great" (in English, the French title "Charlemagne" is used; in Latin, *Carolus Magnus*), was the most powerful and charismatic ruler to emerge in the West since the days of the great Caesars. He was a powerful and ruthless warrior, as was his grandfather; but unlike his grandfather, he combined his military excellence with extraordinary political ability. No common warlord, Charlemagne knew both Latin and Greek, and had committed large parts of St. Augustine's *City of God* to memory. His interest in ecclesiastical and civil reforms did much for the growth of European culture. Centuries after his death European leaders and kings sought to emulate his reign.

Charlemagne's public policy was explicitly Christian. He drew from the laws of the Church (Canon Law) for his own civic legislation, and he considered the decrees of synods and councils to be





lawfully binding for his subjects. Moreover, officials of the Church also served in Charlemagne's civil posts, and often acted as his diplomats. Charlemagne himself, in an effort to model his rule on the Person of Christ, built himself a throne without precious stones to signify the simplicity of Christ's Incarnation.

Providentially, Charlemagne acted in the best interests of the Church. He tried to reform the clergy, established new dioceses, and raised the necessary funds to support worship and the priests. In order to maintain control over his empire, Charlemagne appointed *missi dominici*, civil servants who were investigators. Their responsibility was to enter all the different parts of the empire and provide reports on the civil and religious life of particular areas.

A devout Catholic, Charlemagne rigorously observed his times for prayer and fasting, and attended many liturgical ceremonies. In addition, he sang in the choir and read the Bible daily.

Despite Charlemagne's sincere religiosity, it would be wrong to idealize him excessively. He was all too willing to interfere in ecclesiastical governance—for instance, he appointed his own bishops—and treated cruelly the people of Saxony. Nonetheless, his very real faults were often the result of a misapplied or ill-informed zeal, rather than manifestations of any truly evil intent, and he died in the arms of the Church, which he loved so much and defended so often.




This portrait of Emperor Charlemagne by Albrecht Dürer portrays him with a divine, iconic countenance. He is shown with the robe, crown, sword and orb used in the actual coronation, which were sketched from the originals by Dürer.

## CHARLEMAGNE'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE PAPACY

The Lombards, who had been defeated under Pepin, again threatened Rome in July of 773. Pope Adrian I (772-795) sought Charlemagne's aid, and in response Charlemagne and his troops routed the invading Lombards. As Charlemagne marched into Rome on Easter the following year, he received a hero's welcome. Three doors of St. Peter's were opened wide to receive Charlemagne, and upon entering, he prostrated himself before the pope. Adrian granted the title "Patrician of Rome" to Charlemagne and renewed the papacy's alliance with the Franks. Charlemagne subsequently made himself king of the Lombards, and thus became the first ruler to unite all the Germanic kingdoms.

Charlemagne marched into Rome again in 800, this time to investigate charges of corruption that had been brought against Pope St. Leo III, Adrian's successor. The Roman nobility, who for at least a hundred years had been a source of pain for the Church, had accused St. Leo III of conspiracy and corruption and locked him in a monastery to await trial. Pope St. Leo III escaped his imprisonment and begged Charlemagne to restore him to power. Charlemagne wept over the injustices committed against the successor to St. Peter and made plans to rectify the situation.

Under oath and before Charlemagne, Pope St. Leo III swore that he was innocent of the crimes charged him. Fortunately, with the help of Charlemagne, St. Leo III was able to escape the Romans' machinations.

## CHARLEMAGNE CROWNED EMPEROR (800)



Only a couple days after the completion of his trial, Pope St. Leo III crowned Charlemagne emperor during the Christmas day Mass at St. Peter's Basilica in 800. This crowning, which sources say took Charlemagne by surprise, was not just a reaffirmation of Charlemagne's title as "King of the Franks and Lombards" which he had held for some years, it now made him a Roman Emperor. The new imperial title given by the pope placed Charlemagne's Carolingian empire in a direct line of descent from the old Roman Empire. Charlemagne's crowning by the pope meant that the Germans were finally incorporated into Roman civilization.

The actions of Pope St. Leo III and Charlemagne infuriated the Byzantine emperors. Since the Byzantine emperors still considered themselves the rightful imperial rulers of Western Europe, they viewed the papacy's actions with contempt. In place of Byzantine rule, which they traced to Constantine the Great, the West was now ruled by a person whom they considered a barbarian. At first Byzantium refused to recognize the legitimacy of this newly formed empire, but because of Charlemagne's power and influence, they eventually recognized him, referring to him as the *Basileus* (king) of the West.

## CHARLEMAGNE AND THE SAXONS

The Saxons were a band of pagan tribes that lived along the northeastern frontiers of Germany. Charlemagne engaged in war against them over the course of a number of years, 772 to 803. The Saxons were well known for their resistance to the Christian Faith. They would initially convert and be subdued, only to rebel and kill Christians. Therefore, Charlemagne believed that he had no other choice than to force their conversion by the sword. To this end, he treated them with excessive harshness, at one point ordering the beheading of four thousand of them.

The Saxons perhaps best exemplify Charlemagne's weaknesses as a ruler, but the wrath that led to their ill-treatment found other expressions as well. Charlemagne sometimes forced the conversion of peoples through terror. He also made liberal use of capital punishment. Under Charlemagne's law, any of the following merited the supreme penalty: killing a priest, belonging to a heathen group that resisted Christianity, stealing, eating meat on Friday, refusing to fast, refusing Baptism, or cremating a body. Charlemagne considered infractions against Christ's teachings as crimes, without recognizing that his disproportionate punishments egregiously contradicted the true message of the Gospel.

## THE CAROLINGIAN RENAISSANCE

The years before Charlemagne's rule had decidedly been years of decline in the West. Political instability and corruption led quickly to an intellectual collapse, and when Charlemagne assumed office, the study of theology and literature—so rich in the East—was absent in large part in the continental West. Further, Latin had so deteriorated that it was rendered almost unintelligible to a listener from Classical Rome. One of Charlemagne's most enduring legacies was to combat this cultural decay by emphasizing the importance of education and artistic excellence in his political vision. He commanded that every monastery and parish had to have a school.







Charlemagne receives the scholar Alcuin at his palace in Aachen, Germany.

Because of Charlemagne's insistence, the clergy of the Church were better instructed in classical and biblical texts than they had been for several hundred years. This improved literacy led to a renewed enthusiasm for the Catholic Faith and the rich, profound literature connected with it, thus paving the way for a new wave of missionary activity.

## ALCUIN, CAROLINGIAN SCHOLAR

Alcuin (ca. 740-804) was the best and most influential scholar of the Carolingian Renaissance. Born an Englishman in Northumberland and educated at York, Alcuin had spent some time in Italy before being asked to join Charlemagne's court at Aachen in 782 and to participate in the new spirit of learning along with other scholars of the Carolingian Renaissance. He retired in France as the abbot of St. Martin's monastery in Tours.

Alcuin's scholarly output included a wide variety of texts covering the Bible and the theological tradition, as well as a Latin grammar and several mathematical tracts. During his time in France, he oversaw the production of a new edition of the Tours Bible (four were prepared by him). Alcuin also took a keen interest in the liturgy of the Church; he revised the Roman Lectionary and the Gregorian Sacramentary.

# THE EMPIRE OF CHARLEMAGNE, 768-814






*Above right:* The Imperial Crown of the Holy Roman Empire, the "Crown of Charlemagne," is crafted of gold, cloisonné enamel, precious stones, and pearls. Eight hinged plates form the octagonal body of the imperial crown. Four plates bear pictorial representations from the Old Testament in cloisonné enamel, and four plates have precious stones and pearls. The twelve precious stones on the brow plate correspond to the number of the Apostles. The twelve stones on the neck plate refer to the breast-plate of the Jewish high priest and are engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.





# THE GREAT SCHISM, 1054



# PART IV
# The Great Schism

The final shattering of communion between East and West in 1054 is one of the saddest chapters in the history of the Church. Though the seed of division had already been planted with the founding of Constantinople in the fourth century, alienation intensified during the ninth century because of both the Iconoclast controversy and Charlemagne's rise in power. By the eleventh century, the East and West were held together by only the most tenuous of relationships, and the slightest event was likely to separate them.

## THE EMERGENCE OF DIFFERENCES

Aside from the subtleties of theological disputes and the many misunderstandings that arose, the growing distance between East and West also owed much to their different conceptions of Church government and hierarchy. It may be helpful to present a brief account of this difference.



The Bishop of Rome, the pope, had a dual jurisdiction in the Church: the Latin West, centered in Rome, as well as the universal Church. As Constantinople grew in power over successive centuries, it tightened its grip around the other ancient eastern centers of Christianity at Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem. After the doctrinal statements at the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451, these were recognized along with Rome as especially ancient and important centers of Christianity.

For both political and theological reasons, however, the Christians of the East tended to minimize the pope's status as chief shepherd of the Church. Eastern Christians seldom referred to him except in extreme cases, often during a difficult dispute in the Church, at which point he was often sought out to settle the dispute. From very early on—for varying reasons covered in this chapter—Eastern believers allied themselves more closely with their own national patriarchs than with the successor of St. Peter.

In addition to this, caesaropapism, expressed in the symbiotic relationship between the patriarch of Constantinople and the eastern emperor, was also a cause of tension. The patriarch crowned the emperor, and in turn the emperor made an oath to protect the Church and preserve the Faith. Thus, the patriarch of Constantinople often acted as a very important government official in the bureaucracy of imperial administration in the East, and the emperor, in turn, often acted as a very high-ranking member of the Church's body.

It will be noted that this was similar to the relationship the popes later sought with the Carolingians. However, as has already been seen, the eastern emperors were often at the heart of heresy in the East, which was not the case with Charlemagne, and they played a major role in each of the five schisms that occurred between 325 and 825.

Finally, the relationship of the religious to the laity in the East was very different from that in the West. In the West the monasteries and convents worked together with the surrounding pop-

Above: An artist's concept of Justinian I's Church of Holy Wisdom in ca. 538.





## LITURGICAL PRACTICES OF THE EASTERN CHURCHES

There are two basic kinds of Eastern Churches: Orthodox and Catholic. Whereas the Eastern Orthodox Churches are not in communion with Rome, a number of Orthodox Churches have reunited with Rome at various times during the last millennium. These are called Eastern Uniate (from *union*) Churches or Eastern Catholic Churches. Though some theological differences divide them, the Orthodox and Uniate Churches share the same liturgical and devotional practices.



His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and Russia celebrating the Divine Liturgy, 2003.

The liturgy practiced in both the Eastern and Western (Roman) Churches is ultimately based on the liturgical practices of the Apostles and Fathers of the Church. Because Greek was the common language and culture of the Roman Empire in the first century, it was no surprise that liturgical practices in the early Church were essentially Greek. The liturgy of the Eastern Churches has always been conducted in the vernacular; a good example of this may be found in the story of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, who translated the Bible and liturgical texts into the native language of the Slavs (see chapter 6). Over time, however, the liturgy of the West incorporated more Latin (Roman) customs, whereas in the lands east of the Mediterranean Sea, the liturgy remained Greek.

Music in the Eastern Churches is divided into two main traditions: Byzantine and Russian. Byzantine music—generally sung *a cappella*—is based on modes developed by the Greeks before the time of Christ. Mixed with elements of Jewish chant and psalmody, this music sounds foreign and unfamiliar to westerners. Russian music is based on Byzantine but developed in the seventeenth century under Polish influence. Most Russian liturgical music employs western scales, making it incorporable with German, French and Italian musical traditions.

One of the basic differences between West and East is the sign of the cross. In the Eastern Churches, the tradition is retained of bringing together the thumb, forefinger, and middle finger whereas the other two are pressed against the palm. This is a symbolic reminder of the three Persons of the Triune God and the two natures of Christ. In addition, the horizontal "beam" of the cross is traced from right to left. For blessing, a bishop or priest joins his thumb, ring, and little fingers while forming a cross with the other two.






His All-Holiness Bartholomew I, Patriarch of Constantinople, blessing the congregation.

In the Eastern Church's blessing the fingers form the shape of the Greek letters "IC XC," the abbreviation in Greek for Jesus Christ.

ulations to teach them the rudiments of agrarian life along with the fundamentals of Christianity. In the East the monks were more secluded, if not more learned, and had little contact with the outside world whatsoever, thus limiting their influence.

## THE *FILIOQUE* CONTROVERSY

Beginning at a local council, the Third Council of Toledo in 589, the words "and the Son" (Latin, *Filioque*) were added to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. By 800 this formulation of the creed was standard throughout the Frankish empire of Charlemagne.

This addition was meant to clarify a theological point. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed could be read to attribute the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father but only through the Son, though this was not what that creed intended. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed was developed in opposition to those who denied that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, then, did not deny that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Son as well as the Father; it just failed to mention it explicitly. So the new Toledo creed merely clarified what was already an ancient belief in both East and West, namely, that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son.

The Patriarch of Constantinople steadfastly refused the addition to the creed, even though historical evidence suggests that most of the Greek Fathers believed in the Holy Spirit's double-procession from the Father and the Son. Eastern scholars argue that the Catholic Church violated the Council of Chalcedon's (449) injunction not to change the creed, but it is accepted all around that the addition of *Filioque* amounts to a clarification rather than an alteration intended to improve or change belief. Nonetheless, the Greeks did not accept *Filioque* even when it was imposed upon them during two councils aimed at healing the Great Schism (Councils of Lyons [1274] and of Florence [1439]), and have not accepted it to this day.

## THE PHOTIAN SCHISM (857-867)

In 857, Patriarch Ignatius of Constantinople refused a high government official, by the name of Bardas, Holy Communion on the Feast of the Epiphany because of rumors regarding an adulterous affair. Bardas' reaction, and Ignatius' determination interpreted as insolence, convinced emperor Michael III to depose Ignatius in 858.

In Ignatius' place, Emperor Michael III elevated Photius (ca. 810-895) to Patriarch of Constantinople. Photius, though a layman, was a brilliant and ambitious scholar. He was quickly ordained and ushered into the patriarchate.

When Ignatius refused to step aside, Michael III and Photius wrote obsequious letters to the pope, requesting that he send legates to Constantinople to handle the situation. Pope St. Nicholas I (858-867) sent two legates who were promptly bought off by Michael and Photius. The legates settled the dispute in favor of Photius and returned to Rome with the intention of convincing the pope of their decision. When the pope discovered their treachery, he excommunicated them. He, then in 862, wrote letters to both the emperor and Photius claiming that his legates had exceeded their authority and that Ignatius was to be reinvested as Patriarch. In 863 another council in Rome voided the settlement in Constantinople. Photius and all his appointments in the Church were denied recognition.

This infuriated the emperor. He wrote the pope demanding that the matter be reexamined. The pope agreed in 865 to look at the case again. During this time Photius remained silent, but carried out the duties of his office. In 867, however, Photius rejected the presence of Latin missionaries in Bulgaria, which he considered the missionary territory of Constantinople. In addition, Photius

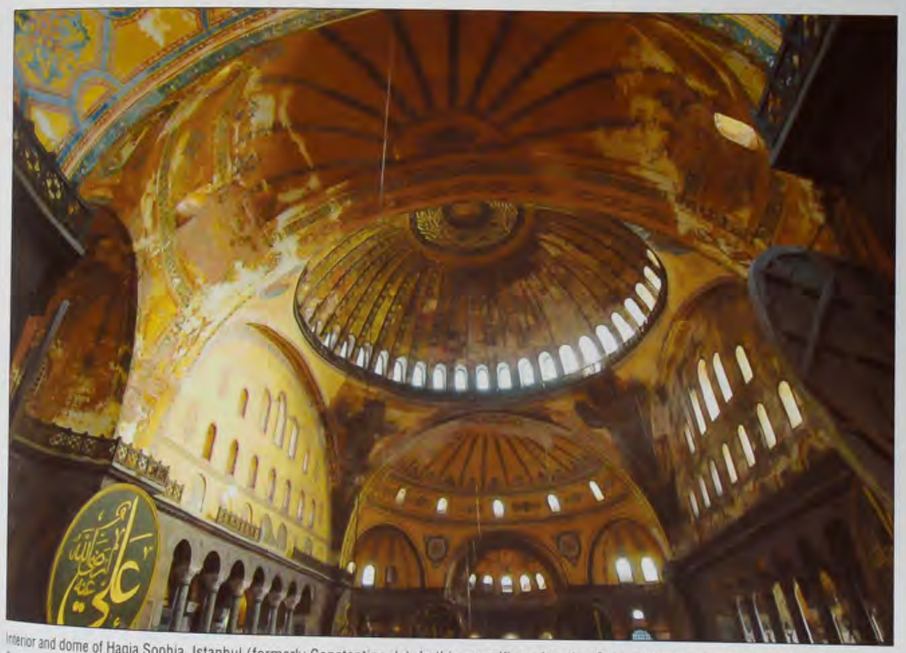




charged the papacy with tampering with the Nicene Creed through its use of the *Filioque* clause, and tried to stir a popular uprising against Rome.

The year 867 marked a turning point in the dispute. Pope St. Nicholas I died, and Michael III and Bardas were assassinated during a revolution in Constantinople. The new emperor Basil I desired reconciliation with the new pope, Adrian II, and at the Eighth Ecumenical Council, Constantinople IV (869-870), Photius was removed. Ignatius was reinstated but continuing tension over Bulgaria and the *Filioque* kept hard feelings of the schism alive. When Pope Adrian II denied the institution of a patriarchate in Bulgaria, King Boris of Bulgaria chose Constantinople as the spiritual center for his people. In 870 Ignatius began consecrating bishops for Bulgaria in disobedience to the pope, and this renewed hostilities between Rome and the East.

Ignatius died in 877, and Photius, who had spent the intervening years building a strong base of support, once again became patriarch. The Holy See could not but recognize his appointment, for even though he was an unqualified candidate for the patriarchy, the position was, this time, legitimately open. Once reinstated, Photius renewed his campaign against Rome, excommunicating the entire Latin Church for their liturgical irregularities and their alteration of the creed of 451. Although many Eastern bishops realized the error of Photius' ways, he possessed so much power among the people, whom he had turned against Rome, that it was impossible to resist him. Photius finally was forced into a second, and final, resignation upon the ascension of the new emperor Leo VI in 886. The East remained in communion with Rome for the next two hundred years, but Photius' dissension had struck deep roots among the Greek people and would resurface later, during the Great Schism.



Interior and dome of Hagia Sophia, Istanbul (formerly Constantinople). In this magnificent location Cardinal Humbert, on July 16, 1054, laid down upon its altar a bull of excommunication from Pope Leo IX, which would have a negative impact on the Christian world that has lasted for centuries.

# THE GREAT SCHISM (1054)

The final split between the eastern and western Churches came in the year 1054. In the Great Schism all of the tension that had developed over the previous centuries came to a head. The doctrinal dispute over the *Filioque*, the crowning of Charlemagne as emperor of the West in 800, the issues of authority raised in the Photian schism, and the reforming tendencies under the leadership of the papacy in the West all came into focus. In addition, Byzantium had increased its military strength, and wanted to achieve a greater degree of independence from the West. These circumstances combined to shatter the thousand-year communion between East and West.

## PATRIARCH MICHAEL CERULARIUS

Before being appointed patriarch, Michael Cerularius (1043-1058) had lived in seclusion in a monastery in the East. Many, though not all, Eastern monasteries had been decidedly influenced by Photius' dissent. When Cerularius became patriarch, his anti-Latin sentiments came out into the open, and the target of his attack was the papacy, which he regarded with disgust.

Patriarch Michael Cerularius objected to many Western practices that differed from the East. In particular he objected to a celibate priesthood, the Saturday fast, the use of unleavened bread in the Mass, beardless priests, eating meat with blood, and omitting the alleluia during Lent.

The patriarch was so disenchanted with the West that he closed Latin parishes in Constantinople. When consecrated hosts from Latin churches were trampled upon, Cardinal Humbert in the West translated this as a Greek attack on the Latin Church and Pope Leo IX (1049-1054). Cardinal Humbert was entrusted with the papal reply that would prove disastrous.

Cardinal Humbert made it plain to the patriarch that it is impossible to excommunicate the pope, and that the pope holds primacy in the Church, even over patriarchs. Patriarch Cerularius is said to have replied: "If you venerate my name in a single church in Rome, I will venerate your name in all the churches in the East." The papal response came in the form of an ultimatum: "Either be in communion with Peter or become a synagogue of Satan." Henceforth the patriarch deleted the pope's name from all liturgies.

Two papal legates, Cardinal Humbert and Frederick of Lorraine, the latter of whom would later become pope, were sent to Constantinople. Neither possessed much diplomatic skill, and because of their arrogance, Patriarch Cerularius was able to turn the population of Constantinople against them.





Pope Stephen X (IX) was pope for only eight months, 1057-1058. His original name was Frederick of Lorraine, one of the two papal legates sent to Constantinople by Pope Leo IX to confront Patriarch Cerularius. The results from that journey in 1054 precipitated the final split between the eastern and western churches. He continued his position as abbot of Monte Cassino during his short reign as pope. An ardent reformer, he was advised by Peter (St.) Damian, Cardinal Humbert and Hildebrand who would become Pope St. Gregory VII.





## CONTEMPORARY EFFORTS TO HEAL THE SCHISM

While schisms are easily made, they can be very difficult to heal. Unfortunately, misunderstandings and disputes have caused seemingly permanent damage and weakened the Church to this very day. Pope John Paul II realized this, and made great efforts to reach out to the Eastern Orthodox Church by opening dialogue that may, someday, ultimately heal this ancient schism. In an unprecedented visit to Greece in May 2001, the pope addressed the Orthodox Archbishop and Holy Synod in Athens. An excerpt of the pope's address sheds light on his mission and goal to heal the Schism:

"Finally, Your Beatitude, I wish to express the hope that we may walk together in the ways of the kingdom of God. In 1965, the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI by a mutual act removed and cancelled from the Church's memory and life the sentence of excommunication between Rome and Constantinople. This historic gesture stands as *a summons for us to work ever more fervently for the unity which is Christ's will.* Division between Christians is a sin before God and a scandal before the world. It is a hindrance to the spread of the Gospel, because it makes our proclamation less credible. The Catholic Church is convinced that she must do all in her power to 'prepare the way of the Lord' and to 'make straight his paths' (Mt 3: 3); and she understands that this must be done in company with other Christians—in fraternal dialogue, in cooperation, and in prayer. If certain models of reunion of the past no longer correspond to the impulse towards unity which the Holy Spirit has awakened in Christians everywhere in recent times, we must be all the more open and attentive to what the Spirit is now saying to the Churches (cf. Rv 2: 11)"

(John Paul II, "Holy Father Asks Pardon for Past Sins," *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English, no.19, May 9, 2001, p. 5).



Pope John Paul II in Athens in 2001.



Pope John Paul II in Syria in 2001.



Patriarch of Constantinople Athenagoras meets with Pope Paul VI in 1964.

## THE ACTUAL SCHISM

On July 16, 1054, Cardinal Humbert attended the Divine Liturgy at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. There he denounced the patriarch for refusing papal authority. Upon the high altar in Hagia Sophia, Cardinal Humbert laid a document excommunicating Patriarch Cerularius. Humbert and Frederick then left the cathedral and shook the dust from their shoes outside.

Technically, however, the two legates did not have the authority to excommunicate in the pope's name because Pope Leo IX had just died.

The Eastern Emperor Constantine IX wanted to heal the rift, especially since he needed military help from the West against the Normans. In response to his call for reconciliation the patriarch incited riots; the emperor, not wanting to face a civil war, backed down from his position. The documents of excommunication were burned by the patriarch, and a council in Constantinople declared on July 24, 1054 that the Latins had perverted the Faith. Patriarch Michael Cerularius had returned excommunication for excommunication.

Since that time, the Patriarch of Constantinople has been known as the "Ecumenical Patriarch" of the East, and in Eastern tradition is regarded as the "first among equals" among the eastern patriarchs. On December 7, 1965, before the closing Mass of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople participated in a show of reconciliation. In a joint declaration they expressed regret over the mutual excommunication of Patriarch Cerularius and the papal legate Cardinal Humbert in 1054.

## CONCLUSION

During this period two distinct forms of Christianity came into being. While the East turned violently onto itself in the Iconoclastic Controversy, the West developed its first unity under the leadership of the Franks and the popes. However, the communion between East and West was shattered in the Great Schism that has separated, to this day, the two traditions with the same sacraments. From the perspective of the Catholic Church, the major difference between Eastern and Western Christianity primarily involves the teaching authority and jurisdiction of the papacy established by Christ through his Apostle St. Peter.



Mosaic in the apse of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (Constantinople), dedicated by Photius on March 29, 867 as the first new mosaic after the period of iconoclasm.

Photius' celebratory oration, Homily XVII, is one of the key documents in Byzantine art history.

"For though the time is short since the pride of the iconoclastic heresy has been reduced to ashes, and true religion has spread its lights to the ends of the world, ...this too is our ornament."





## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

***Codex Justinianus*, II, 1-2, 9, 11**

Natural, Common, and Civil Law. The law of nature is that law which nature teaches to all animals. For this law does not belong exclusively to the human race, but belongs to all animals, whether of the earth, the air, or the water. Hence comes the union of the male and female, which we term matrimony; hence the procreation and bringing up of children. We see, indeed, that all the other animals besides men are considered as having knowledge of this law.

1. Civil law is thus distinguished from the law of nations. Every community governed by laws and customs uses partly its own law, partly laws common to all mankind. The law which a people makes for its own government belongs exclusively to that state and is called the civil law, as being the law of the particular state.

2. Civil law takes its name from the state which it governs, as, for instance, from Athens.... But whenever we speak of civil law, without adding the name of any state, we mean our own law.

9. The unwritten law is that which usage has established; for ancient customs, being sanctioned by the consent of those who adopt them, are like laws.

11. The laws of nature, which all nations observe alike, being established by a divine providence, remain ever fixed and immutable.

**Joint Declaration made by Pope Paul VI and the Patriarch Athenagoras, December 7, 1965**

Among the obstacles in the way of the development of these brotherly relationships of trust and esteem (between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church) is the memory of painful decisions, acts and incidents which in 1054 came to a climax with the sentence of excommunication pronounced against the Patriarch Michael Cerularius and two other figures by the legates of the Holy See, led by cardinal Humbert, legates who were themselves then the object of a similar sentence passed by the Patriarch and Synod of Constantinople....

...Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I, in this synod, confident of expressing the common desire for justice and the unanimous feeling of love among their faithful, and recalling the precept of the Lord, "When you present your offerings at the altar..." Mt 5: 23-24, declare with one accord that they:

a) Regret the offensive words, the unfounded accusations and the despicable act which, form one side or the other, marked or accompanied the sad events of this period;

b) Equally regret and blot out from memory and form the realm of the church the sentences of excommunication which ensued, the memory of which, even on our day acts as an obstacle to reconciliation in love, and consign them to oblivion;

c) Finally, deplore the disturbing precedents and the subsequent events which, under the influence of various factors, including a failure to understand and a mutual distrust, finally led to the effective schism in communion.

**John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, 54.2, 55.1**

The Church must breathe with her two lungs! In the first millennium of the history of Christianity, this expression refers primarily of the relationship between Byzantium and Rome. From the time of the Baptism of Rus' it comes to have an even wider application: evangelization spread to a much vaster area, so that it now includes the entire Church....

In its historical survey the Council decree *Unitatis redintegratio* has in mind the unity which, in spite of everything, was experienced in the first millennium and in a certain sense now serves as a kind of model....The Church's journey began in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and its original expansion in the *oikoumene* of that time was centered around Peter and the Eleven. The structures of the Church in the East and in the West evolved in reference to that apostolic heritage.

## VOCABULARY

**CAESAROPAPISM**
System in which the temporal ruler extends his own powers to ecclesiastical and theological matters. Such emperors appointed bishops and the Eastern Patriarch, directed the development of liturgical practices, and even aided the recruitment of monks.

***CODEX JUSTINIANUS***
Compiled under Emperor Justinian I, the codex was the collection and systemization of all Roman law as it had developed from his predecessors put together for the purpose of legal uniformity throughout the empire. It is the basis for canon law as well as the civil law throughout Europe.

**COUNCIL OF HIEREIA**
A local (non-ecumenical) council convened by Constantine V to condemn the use of icons.

***DULIA* AND *LATRIA***
Two types of adoration whose distinction was drawn at the seventh Council of Nicaea. An icon may be venerated through acts of respect an honor, called *dulia*, but God alone is worth of absolute adoration, known in Greek as *latria*.

***FILIOQUE***
Latin meaning "and the Son," this was first added at the Third Council of Toledo (589) to the Nicene-Constatinopolitan Creed to clarify that the Holy Spirit proceeded from both the Father and the Son. Later, the Patriarch of Constantinople and the bishops of the East refused the addition, thus contributing to the Great Schism.

**GREAT SCHISM**
The final split between the eastern and western Churches in the year 1054.

**HAGIA SOPHIA**
Most famous example of Byzantine architecture, it was built under Justinian I and is considered one of the most perfect buildings in the world.

**ICON**
A flat, two-dimensional picture of Christ, the Virgin Mary, or one of the saints which is used as an aid for Christian acts of piety. The general artistic style of icons reflects a certain mystical beauty of Christ the Savior and the saints. When rightly understood, the icon, by virtue of what is represented, is seen as an invitation to prayer.

**ICONOCLASM**
Thoughts or deeds of an iconoclast. Refers to periods in history when a large number of iconoclasts were present.

**ICONOCLAST**
From the Greek word *eikonoklastēs* meaning "image breaker," iconoclasts saw icons as occasions of idolatry and sought to destroy them and purify the practice of the Christian religion. They were condemned at the second council of Nicaea in 787.

**ICONOPHILE**
Greek for "lover of icons," this term refers to those who defend and promote the proper use of icons in Christian worship.

***LATRIA***
See *dulia*.

**MONOPHYSITISM**
Heresy claiming that there is only one nature in Christ and that His human nature is "incorporated" into the Divine Nature.

**PAPAL STATES**
Lands around Rome, Italy, won by Pepin on behalf and given to the papacy, making the pope a sovereign as well as spiritual leader. The Papal States were ruled by the pope from 754 to 1870.





## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Describe the geography of the location for Constantinople.
2. What was Emperor Justinian I's great ambition?
3. How did monophysitism cause problems for Justinian I?
4. How is an icon not a violation of the first commandment?
5. What were the results of Emperor Leo III's forbiddance of icons?
6. Why did the Council of Hiereia not meet the conditions for an ecumenical council?
7. What was St. John of Damascus' basic argument in support of icons?
8. What happened to Emperor Nicephorus, and how did this help to inaugurate the Second Iconoclasm?
9. What role did the papacy and St. Boniface play in raising the Carolingian line to that of king of the Franks and deposing the Merovingians?
10. What was the significance of the relationship between the papacy and the Frankish king?
11. How did the Papal States come into existence?
12. Who was Charlemagne, and how did he help the Church?
13. When was Charlemagne crowned emperor by Pope St. Leo III?
14. Define the Carolingian Renaissance.
15. How does Alcuin symbolize the unity of western Europe in general and of Charlemagne's empire in particular?
16. What was the Photian Schism?
17. What were some practices that Cerularius disliked in the Latin Church?
18. What did the Eastern emperor think about the schism?

## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. Bible churches and even some of the Reformation era churches claim that by the presence of statues and icons, the Catholic Church violates the First Commandment. What arguments would you give, for example, that veneration of a statue of Mary is not idol worship?
2. What would you say to someone who said that creeds and arguments over creeds are irrelevant because all that one needs is faith in Jesus? "Creeds are not in the Bible, so they don't count," someone might say. Are the creeds important?
3. Describe the situation between the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Churches. Why is unity desirable? How is unity among the bishops of the Church invaluable? Why should bishops be men of great conviction, humility, and understanding?

## FROM THE CATECHISM

**817** In fact, "in this one and only Church of God from its very beginnings there arose certain rifts, which the Apostle strongly censures as damnable. But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions appeared and large communities became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church—for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame" (*UR* 3 § 1). The ruptures that wound the unity of Christ's Body—here we must distinguish heresy, apostasy, and schism (cf. CIC, can. 751)—do not occur without human sin:

> Where there are sins, there are also divisions, schisms, heresies, and disputes. Where there is virtue, however, there also are harmony and unity, from which arise the one heart and one soul of all believers (Origen, *Hom. in Ezech.* 9, 1: PG 13, 732).

**818** "However, one cannot charge with the sin of the separation those who at present are born into these communities [that resulted from such separation] and in them are brought up in the faith of Christ, and the Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brothers.... All who have been justified by faith in Baptism are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers in the Lord by the children of the Catholic Church" (*UR* 3 § 1).

**819** "Furthermore, many elements of sanctification and of truth" (*LG* 8 § 2) are found outside the visible confines of the Catholic Church: "the written Word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope, and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as visible elements" (*UR* 3 § 2; cf. *LG* 15). Christ's Spirit uses these Churches and ecclesial communities as means of salvation, whose power derives from the fullness of grace and truth that Christ has entrusted to the Catholic Church. All these blessings come from Christ and lead to him (cf. *UR* 3), and are in themselves calls to "Catholic unity" (cf. *LG* 8).

**2502** *Sacred art* is true and beautiful when its form corresponds to its particular vocation: evoking and glorifying, in faith and adoration, the transcendent mystery of God—the surpassing invisible beauty of truth and love visible in Christ, who "reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature," in whom "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Heb 1:3; Col 2:9). This spiritual beauty of God is reflected in the most holy Virgin Mother of God, the angels, and saints. Genuine sacred art draws man to adoration, to prayer, and to the love of God, Creator and Savior, the Holy One and Sanctifier.

**2503** For this reason bishops, personally or through delegates, should see to the promotion of sacred art, old and new, in all its forms and, with the same religious care, remove from the liturgy and from places of worship everything which is not in conformity with the truth of faith and the authentic beauty of *sacred* art (cf. *SC* 122-127).

**2513** The fine arts, but above all sacred art, "of their nature are directed toward expressing in some way the infinite beauty of God in works made by human hands. Their dedication to the increase of God's praise and of his glory is more complete, the more exclusively they are devoted to turning men's minds devoutly toward God" (*SC* 122).



CHAPTER 8

# Collapse, Corruption, And Reform In Europe And The Church

*This period contained some of the worst scandals in the history of the Church. In response, saintly priests, monks and nuns brought about some of the most important reforms in Christian history.*



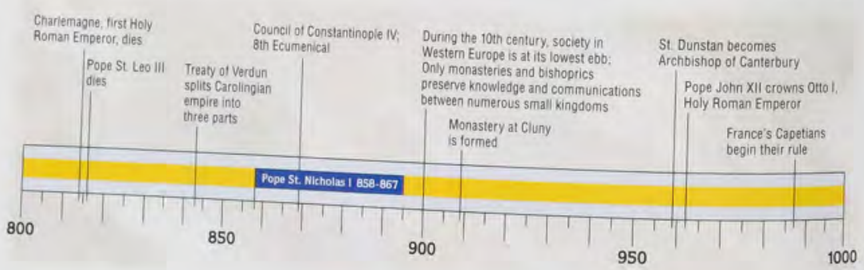
## CHAPTER 8

# Collapse, Corruption, And Reform In Europe And The Church

The face and function of the Church cannot be understood unless we go right to the depths of her nature: in conferring Baptism on us, she is our Mother, she gives us life in Christ, she makes us holy and transmits the gift of the Holy Spirit to us. In the Eucharist, a thank-offering to the Father and a bond of fellowship among us, we are privileged to share in Christ's redemptive sacrifice. Outside of this sacramental dimension, we cannot but have a superficial and totally perverted vision of the Church.

— John Paul II, To the Bishops of the Apostolic Region, Provence Mediterranée, France, December 22, 1992

The end of Charlemagne's reign in 814 marked the end of a tenuous, but nonetheless satisfactory, balance of power in Western Europe between the Papal States on the one hand and their Frankish protectors on the other. Although Charlemagne involved himself excessively in ecclesiastical affairs, he never lost his respect for the proper autonomy of the Church, and even when he interfered, he retained a pious and respectful attitude toward her spiritual mission. Further, Charlemagne's steel will and heavy hand proved more than a match for the Roman nobility who, well before the emperor's reign, had pestered the Church with intrigue and conspiracies. But upon Charlemagne's death these different Roman factions returned more powerfully than ever. The papacy was, by this time, a very lucrative and strategic state office to hold. Sadly, the Holy See was often viewed as a political pawn to be seized and used by anyone with the power to do so. Thus three parties, as it were, struggled for the control of the papacy: leaders within the Church herself, the Roman nobles, and the Holy Roman Emperors (successors of Charlemagne). This period, lasting roughly from 814 to 1046, contains some of the worst scandals that have ever visited the Church. At the same time, this period also contains the most important ecclesiastical reformations since the earliest days of Christianity. These reforms were launched and implemented by many saintly priests, monks, and nuns. Where sin and corruption abounded among corrupt bishops and abbots, grace abounded all the more in such saints as Pope Nicholas I, Cyril and Methodius (cf. chapter 6), Pope Gregory VII, and the many anonymous holy monks of Cluny, France.








## PART I

# The Carolingian World Collapses

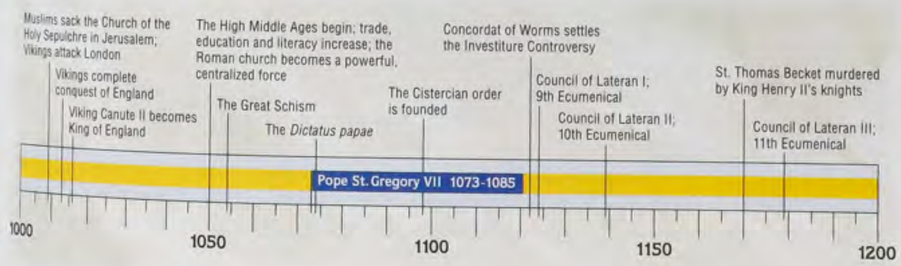
Charlemagne died in 814 and was succeeded by his son, Louis the Pious (814-830). Louis, though well-intentioned, lacked the political talent and strength of his father. Upon his death, he would make one of his worst mistakes by dividing the kingdom among his three sons: Lothar, who would become emperor, Charles, and Louis the German.

For a time, his sons jockeyed for power before signing the Treaty of Verdun in 843. This treaty divided the Carolingian empire into a western kingdom including France (Charles), a middle kingdom that stretched from the Low Countries to northern Italy (Lothar), and an eastern kingdom comprised of Germany (Louis). The middle kingdom, lacking true geographical or ethnic borders, collapsed immediately. Parts of it were brought into the German kingdom later in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Other parts, such as Alsace-Lorraine, became the objects of centuries-long conflict between France and Germany.




The Treaty of Verdun in 843 divided the Carolingian empire among Charlemagne's three grandsons: Charles, Lothar, and Louis.

Simultaneous with the destruction of Carolingian unity was the influx of a new breed of invaders. Christian Europe, which under Charlemagne had defended and expanded its existing borders, came under attack from three different fronts after his death. The Saracens (Muslims) pressed from the south and advanced as far as Rome, the Vikings pressed from the north, attacking Paris, and the Slavs and Magyars advanced from the east.



## CORRUPTION OF THE PAPAL OFFICE

**From the death of Stephen IV in 817 to the accession of Hildebrand as Pope Gregory VII in 1073, the course of the papacy ran a long and tortuous route, some of whose details, according to one historian, "are so grotesque that they lose all relation to reality." (Hughes, *A History of the Church to the Eve of the Reformation*, 1976, p. 192)**

Nearly all the difficulties and corruption that the papacy faced in this period were due to the unhappy combination of domestic strife—due to political intrigue and jealous greed among the emperors, popes, and Roman nobility—and foreign invasions, especially of the Saracens in the south. While all three factions vied for power at home, all three were equally fearful of defeat from abroad. This combination of stresses cast the political world into chaos and the religious one into a litany of ecclesiastical abuse.

Aside from Pope St. Nicholas I, who served from 858 to 867, the popes of this period were either too weak to resist the emperor and Roman nobility or too corrupt even to try. This led to a convoluted series of short papacies, punctuated by occasional murders. John VIII, who was poisoned and then beaten in 882, was the first pope to suffer this end, but several of his successors soon followed suit. Many of these popes—in bizarre imitation of late Roman emperors—served for only a handful of days or months before being assassinated, usually by rival factions seeking control of the papacy.

Although a creeping mediocre corruption was the norm in this period, a few excessive abuses stand before the rest. For example, after Pope Formosus (891-896) died, his successor Pope Stephen VI exhumed his corpse and placed it on trial. A terrorized priest was forced to testify against the corpse. After a verdict of guilty, Stephen VI cut the three fingers used in blessing from his corpse, stripped it of papal garb, and threw the naked body to the mob, who, in a frenzy, tossed it into the Tiber River. Immediately after, Rome was hit by an earthquake that wrecked the Lateran Basilica. Many Romans understood this as a sign from God.

Pope John XII (955-964) was elected pope at the age of eighteen. Moreover, Pope John was already in a position of great temporal power in Rome. Having crowned Otto I as Roman emperor, Pope John's papacy was unimpeded by any imperial restraint. Unfortunately, the young pope used this freedom to cultivate his vices, and his papacy was marked by "hunting and banqueting." To pay for his wantonness, Pope John engaged in blatant simony, i.e., the selling of spiritual benefits, granting dispensations and ecclesiastical positions for temporal gain. Under Pope John XII's direction, boys were consecrated bishops as favors to their wealthy fathers, dissenting clergy were tortured or exiled, and the treasury of the Church was pilfered by the pope and his entourage. Emperor Otto I deposed Pope John XII in 963, replacing him with a layman, who would become Pope Leo VIII.

As lurid as the details are of many of the popes of this period, it would be wrong to think that the office of the papacy itself, or the Church, had completely disintegrated. Already mentioned is Pope St. Nicholas I, who in his all too brief reign of nine years, beat back imperial meddling, squelched ecclesiastical disobedience, and developed a reputation of strength and holiness that even his most depraved contemporaries respected and feared. Other popes of this period no doubt had holy intentions, but lacked the means to see them through. Apart from the popes, there remained heroic monks and priests who fought and suffered for attempted reform. A case in point is Erluin, a Benedictine monk in Belgium, who for the sake of monastic reform suffered beatings and bodily mutilation. In short, although in this dark moment in the life of the Church when there was real abuse at the highest levels, the Church provided her own best remedy through the spiritual strength of her sons and daughters.





## INVASIONS OF EUROPE, 7TH TO 10TH CENTURIES




## THE RISE OF FEUDALISM

As the Carolingian authority collapsed, a new system of organization emerged throughout western society. First, the Carolingian empire broke down into about fifty duchies, which spread across France and Italy and throughout Germany. Because few of these duchies were strong enough to protect all those living under their domain, eventually even smaller communities formed themselves around towns or monasteries. These communities built castles or fortifications and usually allied themselves around one lord.

This emergent system, known as feudalism, is most simply understood as a contractual system between the king and his vassals (wealthy, landowning lords) and the remainder of the population, which included common villagers, farm-workers, and even religious. Though a relatively simple arrangement, feudalism came to organize the politics, economy, and social life throughout Medieval Europe. Ownership of land accorded one rights, but it also accorded one duties, and this held both

for secular and religious landholders. Therefore, in return for the lord's military protection against foreign or domestic foes, his vassals (those who were under his rule) would pay him in labor or services. Some of his vassals would have to serve in his army. There were, of course, different levels of vassals. Some were landowners themselves, who chose to ally themselves around a more powerful lord. Others, by far the majority, were serfs, who barely enjoyed any freedom since they were completely tied to the land and lord they were serving. A feudal kingdom was a vast pyramid of such arrangements, with many levels of lord and vassals at the apex of which stood the king and his attendant dukes.

## FEUDALISM AND THE CHURCH

During the period of civil unrest following the collapse of the Carolingians, many of the Church's lands and possessions were confiscated. Paradoxically, the Church retained its status as a major landowner in most parts of Europe. Even though in theory the Church lost much of its land after the Carolingian demise, much of it remained, either because the Church was able to muster the money and resources to defend it, or because the lord or duke in the area happened to be on friendly terms with the episcopacy. In any event, feudalism increased the interaction between ecclesiastical and secular leaders in rural parts of Europe. As this close interaction between rulers of the Church and rulers of the realm increased, so grew instances of abuse on the part of secular authorities toward the Church.

In exchange for protecting the Church, some secular rulers demanded control over episcopal appointments. This was nothing new. Both Charlemagne and the Eastern emperors claimed the right to appoint bishops, but this right was always held in check by a strong, central Church. Now, with the papacy under the thumb of the emperor and Roman nobility, and the precarious political situation of the region, some of these rulers took it upon themselves to become the ultimate authorities of the Church. This exaggerated secular interference in ecclesiastical affairs spawned two terrible abuses in the Church: nepotism and simony. Nepotism is the appointment of family members to important positions of authority; and simony, in this context, is the selling of ecclesiastical offices by either secular or spiritual rulers. Many lords believed they could distribute ecclesiastical offices just as they would secular ones. For instance, it was not uncommon for a powerful lord either to sell a bishopric to the highest bidder or to install his own son as bishop.



A feudal kingdom had many levels of vassals serving under a lord. Some feudal lords believed they could distribute ecclesiastical offices.

On the ecclesiastical side, bishops and abbots often received extra income from royal benefices that was distinct from the income of their community. Even more scandalously, several bishops and abbots were known to have married and had children. Many of these bishops and abbots then bequeathed to their eldest son their own ecclesiastical title! These abuses were more destructive to the work of the Church than the violence hurled at the people of God during the time of the Roman persecutions. Hence, when reform came to the Church (as it soon would), monastic and episcopal abuse, in the form of nepotism and simony, was one of the first issues to be addressed.







## THE VIKING INVASIONS

Besides the internal decay of monastic life in these centuries, a very real external threat helped thwart for some time any effective monastic reform. This threat materialized in the figures of the Norsemen, or Vikings, who originated in Scandinavia and, beginning in the late eighth century, wreaked havoc on Europe for nearly three hundred years. The Vikings were not a centrally governed empire, like Persia or Byzantium; rather, they were small bands organized and led by local chieftains. The Norsemen, originating in Norway, concentrated their attacks upon England, Ireland, and Scotland. Those from present day Denmark hit nearly every major European city.

Carolingian Europe was poorly equipped to handle the Viking invasions. The factions that took hold after the death of Charlemagne were too busy fighting among themselves to mount a reliable defense against these foreign invaders. The Vikings instilled overwhelming dread in the Christians of Medieval Europe as they were warriors of unparalleled skill on both sea and land, and they were guilty of unimagined cruelty and mercilessness in their plunder and slaughter.

With their great mobility and swift ships, it did not take long for the Norsemen to discover that the monasteries, particularly of Ireland, England, and along the major rivers in Germany and France, were the repository of Carolingian society's wealth. The Vikings began to occupy the mouth of major rivers in northern Europe as bases from which they might raid every Church and monastery they could find. Because of the Vikings, many of the most important Irish and Anglo-Saxon monasteries involved in the conversion of England and Germany—including Jarrow, the monastery where St. Bede died in 735—were destroyed in this period.

The combination of the Norse threat and internal decay of monastic life led to a weakening of monasteries' civilizing influence upon society. Much of their learning, both secular and religious, was forgotten, their discipline fell by the wayside, and some abbots were no better than brigands, who, in order to protect their own monasteries from the Vikings, would lead raids upon other monasteries for food and money.

## A VIKING INVASION

*"From the fury of the Northmen deliver us, O Lord"*

This prayer was purportedly said by the ninth-century Europeans living in dread of Viking attacks. For nearly three hundred years, coastal towns and monasteries were at the mercy of the feared Norsemen, who attacked and plundered at will. Typical Viking raids used the element of surprise. Approaching in ships, Vikings would appear suddenly, attack and plunder, abduct people and disappear before any defense could be made.

One of the first recorded attacks took place in 793 when the monastery on Lindisfarne, an island off the east coast of England, was raided. Simeon of Durham later wrote about this terrible event:

> In the same year the pagans from the northern regions came with a naval force to Britain like stinging hornets and spread on all sides like fearful wolves, robbed, tore and slaughtered not only beasts of burden, sheep and oxen, but even priests and deacons, and companies of monks and nuns. And they came to the church of Lindisfarne, laid everything waste with grievous plundering, trampled the holy places with polluted steps, dug up the altars and seized all the treasures of the holy church. They killed some of the brothers, took some away with them in fetters, many they drove out, naked and loaded with insults, some they drowned in the sea. (*Historia Regum*, Sken, i. 303)

Another account of the Viking raids was written by the Anglo-Saxon monk Alcuin of York in a letter to Ethelred, king of Northumbria around the year 800, and it too captures the fear and terror felt by the people of Europe.

> Never before has such terror appeared in Britain as we have now suffered from a pagan race, nor was it thought that such an inroad from the sea could be made. Behold the church of St. Cuthbert, spattered with blood of the priests of God, despoiled of all its ornaments; a place more venerable than all in Britain is given as prey to pagan peoples. (quoted in Loyn, *The Vikings in Britain*, 1977, pp. 55-56)



After years of raids, monks learned how to frustrate the Vikings by building tall stone towers known as Round Towers. The door was placed one floor up, accessible only by a ladder. Inside the tower, each floor was accessed by further ladders. If Vikings were sighted, the monks would grab as much food and valuables as they could carry, climb into the tower and pull up the ladder. The Vikings would then raid the empty monastery while the monks watched from the safety of the tower. Even if the Vikings did get into the tower, the monks retreated further up the tower by pulling up more ladders. Such a strategy did not save the monastery itself, but did save the monk's lives and some of their belongings.

Another feature to appear at this time was the High Cross. It was customary for monasteries to display a wooden cross, but from the 700's, it became common to carve them from stone. Some scholars have theorized that they were made so large and heavy to prevent the Vikings from carrying them away.





# PART II

# Cluny and Monastic Reform

In this sea of corrupt churchmen and invading Norsemen, of simony and war, of debauchery and religious collapse, there suddenly sprung up in the Church a reform movement, led by saintly men and women of great courage, which would not only stem the decay in the Church, but also prompt regeneration. The monastic reform begun in Cluny emphasized both the ideal of a universal Church within a political framework and the inherent dignity of the human person. Both ideals had fallen into shambles, with nobles vying for increasing ecclesiastical power, and with corrupt monks and popes often indulging in cruelty and sensuality. Though these abuses were widespread, more widespread still was the desire for real reform in the hearts and minds of the majority of the laity and those clergy who had remained faithful to the Gospel. Cluny gave voice to this majority, and the reform began.

## THE FOUNDING

In 909/10 William the Pious, Duke of Aquitaine and a strong supporter of reform, generously and without thought of recompense, donated land in the little town of Cluny in Burgundy, France for the founding of a new monastery.

St. Berno, the first abbot (909/10-927) of the monastery, settled at Cluny with twelve companions. Together they instituted a renewed commitment to the rule of St. Benedict. The monks imposed demanding austerities on themselves, and put all of their energies into giving glory to God. Soon St. Berno's reputation grew, and Cluny began to be recognized as a center of saintliness in troubled times. The trend would continue. Before Berno's death, the Cluniac model was adopted by five or six neighboring monasteries for the purpose of reform; and, even more impressively, over the next two centuries four saints assumed the abbotship of Cluny.



Pope Bl. Urban II consecrated the high altar of the Cluny Church in 1095.

Berno's first successor, St. Odo (927-942), greatly extended the influence of Cluny. Many monasteries in southern France and even some in Italy reformed themselves using the renewed Benedictine rule. One important difference between Cluny and other monastic communities was the role played by the abbot. The Cluny monks—in all their various incorporated monasteries—had only one abbot, that of Cluny. Other monasteries followed the tradition of placing an abbot over each individual monastery. Hence the abbot of Cluny was responsible not only for his own monastery at Cluny, but also for all those monasteries that had joined his rule. This helped curb abuse, since it kept wayward abbots from assuming control of monasteries for their own advantage.

The prestige of the monastery spread, and in 1088 Cluny built a new church. Pope Bl. Urban II, a Cluniac monk and one of the period's most upright popes, consecrated the high altar in 1095, and Pope Innocent II consecrated the entire church upon its completion in 1132. At its time of construction the church at Cluny was Europe's largest at 555 feet long.

## CLUNIAC SPIRITUALITY

How did the Cluniac monks live out their vocation differently from the regular Benedictine monks? First, as has been noted, the monks at Cluny reinstituted a strict adherence to Benedictine rule. Second, they placed greater emphasis upon the spiritual life of the individual monk. The idea was that a community of holy men was built on the holiness of each member. To this end they reinstated the divine office, which in some monasteries had fallen out of fashion, and decreased manual labor so as to allot more time for spiritual reflection. As an aid to this spiritual reflection, Cluny also lengthened the divine office and the liturgy. The goal was active, continuous, prayer, whether liturgical or meditative, and a close emulation of the life of Christ.

Many anonymous treatises were written at Cluny on the spiritual life. These spiritual tracts were a vital help in removing obstacles to the development and perfection of the interior life. A renewed commitment to chastity and celibacy served as an indespensible means to habitual contemplation. It was precisely this burgeoning monastic mysticism that would deliver the Church from the dangers confronting her.

Cluniac spirituality brought forward the old idea that the monk's role in the world was to keep fresh the mystery of Pentecost by living in silence and peace. This tranquil lifestyle was meant to present a foretaste of the eternal peace of God's reign, and ultimately the beatific vision.

Through asceticism the monk aimed to dwell in the depths of the heart of Christ. Through mastering the body the monks were not only able to free their hearts to love Christ, they were also better equipped to unite themselves to his cross. Through their hidden lives dedicated to prayer and penance, the monks would obtain the grace of conversion of so many individuals alienated from God and the grace to live their faith as well. It was precisely the prayer and self-denial of these monks that revitalized and energized the Church. Such is the efficacy of a life of contemplation, that it bears its fruits across all time and space.

The rise of a powerful monastic spirituality was vital for the reform of the Church at this time in history. However, this emphasis on the monastic life as a powerful means to holiness was a shift from the implicit awareness of the universal call to holiness among the early Christian communities. This was now the era of monasticism, which associated the call to holiness primarily with a departure from the world. During that period, ordinary people usually assumed no more than a passive role of being guided and spiritually nourished by the monks. This was a necessary development in the face of the historical circumstances of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries; the recognition of the lay person's call to sanctity and evangelization would have to wait for another thousand years.

## THE INFLUENCE OF THE CLUNIAC MONKS

Within just one hundred years, the monks of Cluny were a force to be reckoned with in the Church. As more and more monasteries signed on to the Cluniac reform, their ranks swelled, and by the year 1100, one thousand four hundred fifty houses inhabited by over ten thousand monks were all under the rule of Cluny.

Neither was Cluny's success confined to monastic communities. As word of the sanctity of Cluny spread, more and more bishops and secular rulers supported their reforms. In 1016 Pope Benedict VIII granted a special *privilegium* to Cluny: the monastery was to be absolutely free from the authority of kings, bishops, and nobles. Cluny answered directly to the papacy as its final authority. This freed Cluny from the troublesome accompaniments of feudalism already discussed, such as nepotism and simony.





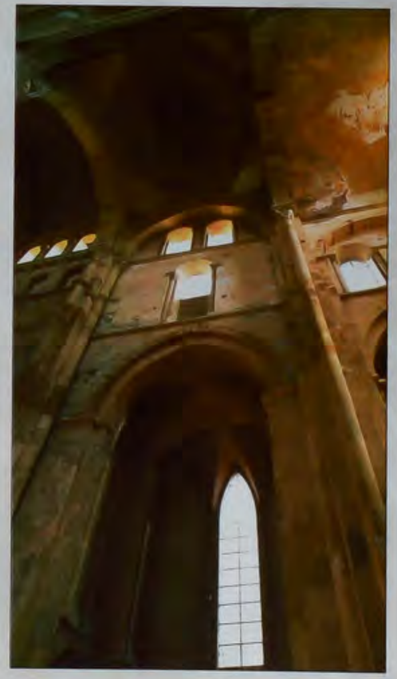
## LIFE AS A MONK AT CLUNY

The daily schedule by which monks at Cluny lived their lives stood in sharp contrast to some other monasteries of the time. The *horarium* (daily schedule) followed by the monks of Cluny allocated a great portion of time to religious ceremony, and often the observances of Mass and other rites would require that the monks spend almost the entire day in prayer. Psalms and votive offerings were added to the Divine Office, and following the custom introduced into monasteries in France by St. Benedict of Aniane, other devotional exercises were added as well, increasing the hours of the Divine Office. Apart from the increase in the hours of the Divine Office, however, Cluniac observances were similar to that of the Benedictines.

When possible, Cluniac monks would perform as little manual labor as possible to dedicate more time to prayer. Thus, most tasks were delegated to lay servants. In the poorer monasteries further removed from Cluny, however, the monks would have to perform more work in order to survive. While this situation may not have been ideal, it should be noted that every monk was required to spend some years at Cluny itself.

The monks at Cluny placed much emphasis on the observance of the rule of silence in their houses. Conversation was only allowed at certain times and in certain areas. Whenever communication became absolutely necessary, hand gesturing was used. These gestures may have become quite sophisticated over time.





The third church (above) built at the Benedictine Abbey of Cluny was, at the time, the largest church in Christendom. It was designed by the monk Gunzo. Begun in 1088 and consecrated by Pope Innocent II in 1132, the "great church" or Cluny III was a structure of overwhelming magnificence. The five-aisled nave echoed that of Old St. Peter's in Rome, and unusual for the architectural period, Cluny III had two sets of transepts (the shorter length of the "crossing" of a cruciform church). Only one transept with a bell tower survives today (shown at right). By the time of the French Revolution in 1790 the monks were persecuted by the "enlightened" leaders of the Revolution. As a result, they were suppressed in France, and the Abbey at Cluny was almost completely demolished.

# CLUNIAC AND CISTERCIAN MONASTIC REFORMS








# CHURCH AND STATE IN THE MIDDLE AGES




The map above shows the degree to which political and ecclesiastical jurisdiction coincided in the Middle Ages. These ecclesiastical "provinces" differ from political ones in area chiefly where disputes had moved political boundaries significantly: Burgundy, Serbo-Croatia, for example. Christian bishoprics persisted under Muslim domination in the south of Spain.
*Right:* The Cistercian abbey of Zwettl, Austria, founded in 1137.



Several of Cluny's monks became the leading churchmen of their day. Abbot Hugh the Great (1049-1109) was the most important churchman of his time and played a pivotal role in the lay investiture controversy. Cardinal Humbert and Frederick of Lorraine, the papal legates to Constantinople, excommunicated the patriarch of Constantinople as part of the Great Schism of 1054. Otto of Lagery became Pope Bl. Urban II, the first pope to preach the Crusades. St. Peter Damian (1007-1072) became the most respected contemporary theologian in Europe.

Cluny exercised considerable influence well into the twelfth century. In the thirteenth century, it reformed itself under the Cistercian model, which by this time had surpassed Cluny in influence and prestige. The later Medieval period saw a precipitous decline in Cluny's influence, which ended in its physical destruction during the French Revolution in 1790.

# PART III

# The New Temporal Orders

## THE OTTONIAN EMPIRE (HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE)

Though in steady decline from the death of Charlemagne onwards, the Carolingian line officially ended in the East in 911 when Conrad I was chosen as king. No real central authority existed until Otto I (936-973, emperor 962), the Saxon ruler who formed the Holy Roman Empire. The Ottonian line came to fill the role that the Carolingian line had provided in the previous century: offering the Church temporal protection in exchange for its support and recognition of its emperors. Not surprisingly, the protection came at a price, for the Ottonian line became entangled with the Church in what came to be known as the lay investiture controversy.

## OTTO I, THE GREAT (936-973)

Otto's intention was to secure his own royal power through a mutually beneficial alliance with the Church. Thus, his crowning in Aachen (Germany) by the archbishop of Mainz served the double purpose of invoking the memory of Charlemagne's authority and wedding the Church to the Ottonian dynasty.

The Ottonian line exercised its influence over the Church in Germany in three different ways: first, through lay investiture, i.e., the appointment of bishops and abbots by secular rulers; second, through the assertion of royal power over proprietary churches, which gave the landowner on which a church stood power to make ecclesiastical appointments; and third, through appropriation of ecclesiastical funds for the royal coffers. In addition, many German ecclesiastical office-holders were vested with secular powers by the royal house in exchange for their allegiance.

By 950 the wealth and power of Germany was unrivaled. And in 955 Otto I decisively defeated the Magyars at the Battle of Lechfeld, winning the support of Western Europe. In 962 Otto I traveled to Rome, where Pope John XII crowned him emperor.

There were a number or reasons why Otto desired the imperial title. Primarily, it raised him to the level of Charlemagne, whom he wished to emulate. Second, the pope's allegiance was a powerful support against Otto's rivals in France. Finally, the imperial title provided the Ottonian dynasty with the legal basis for attempts to bring part of the old middle kingdom, specifically Lorraine and parts of Italy, into the empire.

Otto the Great's son, Otto II, squandered his time and energy trying to bring southern Italy under his firm control. In the meantime, the still barbaric Slavs destroyed German settlements east of the Elbe River (central Europe, in the modern-day Czech Republic).







**OTTO I, THE GREAT**

In 962 Otto the Great traveled to Rome, where Pope John XII crowned him Holy Roman Emperor. The Ottonian Empire provided the Church with the temporal protection that the Carolingian Empire had provided in the previous century, but the Ottonian line ultimately entangled the Church in the lay investiture controversy and similar abuses of authority.

## OTTO III AND POPE SYLVESTER II

It was Otto III's Byzantine mother and his grandmother who ruled during his regency. Otto III (983-1002) spent the majority of his reign in Rome with Gerbert of Aurillac, the greatest Latin scholar of his day. Gerbert had studied in Spain under the Muslims, and this gave him the opportunity to study philosophy and mathematics at Cordoba in an age when the Muslim thinkers were making remarkable headway in both subjects. (Not only had the Muslims preserved ancient Greek writings by conquering Hellenistic cultures, but also they were the sole possessors of most of Aristotle's works.)

Through his power over ecclesiastical affairs, Otto III raised Gerbert to the See of St. Peter as Pope Sylvester II. Together Otto and Sylvester II hoped to build a new empire based in Rome that would incorporate all of Europe. Otto III helped to bring the Poles into the empire in the hopes that a German-Slav contest for eastern hegemony could be averted. Finally, Sylvester II thought that an empire under Otto would eventually secure a lasting peace, which would assist the Church in concentrating on her spiritual mission.

Though Otto III died prematurely in 1002 and Pope Sylvester the following year, their cooperation caused serious difficulties for the Church. Their joint efforts accentuated the problem of temporal interference with ecclesiastical affairs, which gave rise to the lay investiture crisis.

## ST. DUNSTAN AND SCOTTISH MONASTICISM

St. Dunstan was born to an upper-class family near Glastonbury in the early part of the tenth century. Viking raids had a devastating affect on monasteries, and by the time St. Dunstan was born, English monasticism had been virtually destroyed.

When St. Dunstan was a child, his father committed him to the care of the Irish monastic scholars who frequented the abandoned and desolate monastery at Glastonbury. St. Dunstan was an exceptional student and he soon received minor orders (the first preparations for ordination) before being summoned to Canterbury at the request of his uncle Athelm, the Archbishop of Canterbury. At Canterbury, St. Dunstan was respected for his scholarly intellect and soon became a favorite of King Aethelstan. However, after some time, those envious of St. Dunstan's success convinced the King to force him to leave the court.

Returning to Glastonbury, St. Dunstan became a monk, built a tiny cell close to the ruins of the old monastery, and lived as a hermit. He devoted himself to study, music (he played the harp), and metalworkings (in particular casting church bells). Upon the death of King Aethelstan in 940, the new King Eadmund asked St. Dunstan to return to his court and serve him. Just as before, members of the court became jealous and convinced the new King to send him away. King Eadmund soon regretted exiling



St. Dunstan of Canterbury



The ruins of Glastonbury Abbey

St. Dunstan, and to show his gratitude for the monk's service, the king commissioned St. Dunstan to reestablish the monastery at Glastonbury.

St. Dunstan set about this task with exceptional success. Not having personal contact with the new monasteries being founded on the continent (Cluny, for example), St. Dunstan strictly followed Benedictine rule, and under his guidance, Glastonbury again became a center for study and the monastic life. His success was recognized by the king who appointed St. Dunstan as the Archbishop of Canterbury in 960. St. Dunstan used his influential position to further the monastic revival in Britain and reestablished monasteries at Malmesbury, Westminister, Bath, Exeter, and other places. In 970, St. Dunstan convened a monastic conference for the entire British Isles. The conference drafted a national code for monastic observance, called the "*Regularis concordia*," helping to establish and regulate monastic revival in Britain. After these successes as Archbishop, St. Dunstan spent the last years of his life running the Canterbury Cathedral School for boys and died in 988.





## SAINTLY RULERS: EMPEROR ST. HENRY II AND QUEEN ST. CUNEGOND

St. Henry II (1002-1024), who was cousin to Otto III, succeeded him as emperor. St. Henry II abandoned Otto's grandiose plans of reinstituting a Holy Roman Empire, and was content to maintain his rule over the Italian peninsula. Though a weak and sickly man, St. Henry II traveled throughout his kingdom to maintain peace and ensure that justice was being served.

He was an ardent Catholic and a true reformer and did much to support the Cluny monks. He did, however, involve himself excessively in ecclesiastical governance—and this was true of virtually all leaders of his day—but he did so with grace and humility.

Emperor St. Henry II and Queen St. Cunegond lived a blessed married life. Rumors of their virgin marriage are apocryphal and should not be taken seriously. After their deaths, they were both canonized by the Church. Both Sts. Henry II and Cunegond are buried in the cathedral at Bamberg, Germany. In fact, one can view their heads encased in glass with golden crowns.

Moreover, Henry III in 1046 greatly influenced the Synod of Sutri (a small town near Rome) by resolving the crisis involving the three claimants to the papacy. During that synod and with the full authority of the synod fathers, Henry chose Suidger, bishop of Bamburg and a man of spotless character, to be the next pope, Clement II.

## CAPETIAN FRANCE

In the west, the Carolingian line ended in 987, whereupon Hugh Capet, with the blessing of the Church, became the king of France. The Capetian line would rule France for many centuries, but initially lacked the power to rule the entire area under one centralized government.

## NORMANDY: THE VIKINGS, WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR, AND LANFRANC

One part of France that resisted Capetian rule was Normandy. Normandy first took shape as a duchy in 911 under a band of Norsemen led by the warrior-king Rollo. Rollo planned to establish Normandy as a viable kingdom, and by 980—chiefly through intermarriage and adaptation—Rollo's band of Vikings transformed this once-backward part of Europe into a formidable power.

The Normans imposed the status of vassalage upon the existing nobility and developed allegiances with the monasteries in the area. Monks, besides providing some amount of credibility to Norman rule, helped raise the cultural bar through their education and writings.

The French Capetian king, Henry I, made the final attempt to bring the Norman duke, William the Conqueror (reigned 1035-1087), under his control in the 1040s. William I had the effective support of the nobility and the local church, and Normandy maintained its autonomy in feudal France. Later, in 1066, William headed the last successful invasion of England.

## LANFRANC, THE NORMAN ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

The most important monk brought to Normandy by the Viking dukes was Lanfranc (ca. 1010-1089). He entered the chief monastery founded by the Normans at Bec, located between Rouen and Lisieux, France. At Bec he was a famed educator and prior (his most famous student was St. Anselm) and under William the Conqueror, Lanfranc became the first Archbishop of Canterbury.

Lanfranc was a strong administrator who transformed Bec from an impoverished monastery into one of the leading centers of learning of its day. Equally impressive, he managed to negotiate his allegiance to Church and State in a truly remarkable way. He served at first as counselor to King William I, and later even served as a skilled regent during the king's travels to the continent. But his chief allegiance as Archbishop of Canterbury was to Rome, and though his dual responsibilities seemed at times to be a source of conflict, Lanfranc adroitly walked through the two worlds. Lanfranc supported the reforms of his day, specifically those enforcing clerical celibacy and curbing simony. On the issue of lay investiture, however, he tended to side with secular rulers against the Church. Nonetheless, Lanfranc continually supported the popes even at their weakest moments. Although he supported the secular lords, he refused to recognize any of their anti-popes, even going so far as to send financial aid to the legitimate popes in need.

William I of England likewise remained on good terms with the pope even though he continued to appoint bishops. Because William appointed such good and holy men to these offices, he avoided any direct conflict with Rome.

William I (ca. 1027- September 9, 1087), was King of England from 1066 to 1087. William was the only son of Robert the Magnificent, Duke of Normandy, and Herleva, the daughter of a tanner. Born in Falaise, Normandy, now in France, William succeeded to the throne of England by right of conquest by winning the Battle of Hastings in October of 1066 in what has become known as the Norman Conquest.

William was crowned King of England on December 25, 1066 in Westminster Abbey.



Below: The Bayeux Tapestry, (embroidery on wool), dates from 1077. It was created in England, after the Norman Conquest of 1066, and commemorates the victory at the Battle of Hastings.The tapestry is almost 230 feet long and only 18 inches wide. It has 58 scenes. The scene in this section depicts the death of King Harold II who had been crowned King of England on January of 1066 by an assembly of England's leading nobles known as the Witenagemot.







## PART IV

# The Lay Investiture Controversies

On the surface, the issue of the lay investiture conflict was relatively clear and could be formulated in a simple question: Who should appoint bishops, secular or religious leaders? But in reality, the depths of this controversy were far more complex. Due to the lack of any clear delineation between the powers of Church and State, those who hoped to rule the State in more than a nominal sense were almost forced to have a hand in ecclesiastical affairs as well. It was common at that time that bishops and abbots of powerful dioceses and monasteries wield considerable political influence. While in principle it was wrong for secular leaders to have any hand in Church matters, given the current state of affairs, it was quite difficult to avoid this secular interference. The crisscrossing of secular and religious authority left little room on either side of the dispute. Moreover, it needs to be pointed out that lay investiture had been going on since the reign of Charlemagne, and in certain cases it worked to the Church's advantage. However, in many instances it proved disastrous. Due to the negative effect lay investiture had on the Church, the reforming popes realized that they needed to retain control over appointments of bishops, thereby reducing the chance of out-and-out political corruption in the episcopacy.

## THE GREGORIAN REVOLUTION



The lay investiture controversy reached its height during the latter part of the eleventh century. As the controversy had reached such a universal scale by this time, a series of reforms, which were outgrowths of the Cluniac Reforms, was instituted by the papacy itself. The pope at the center of the reform addressing this problem head-on was Pope St. Gregory VII, born Hildebrand. Pope St. Gregory was aided by several remarkable men under the guiding light of Cluny, among them Humbert of Moyenmoutier of Cluny; St. Peter Damian; Duke Frederick of Lorraine; and Otto of Lagery, the future Pope Bl. Urban II.

## POPE ST. GREGORY VII

Hildebrand, a Cluniac monk and native Roman, became Pope St. Gregory VII in 1073 and served until 1085. Hildebrand entered the Church as a young man, and was for some time an influential leader in the College of Cardinals. In addition, he carried out important tasks for his papal predecessors, particularly for Pope Alexander II (1061-1073). At Alexander II's funeral, the crowd is said to have shouted enthusiastically for Hildebrand as pope. He initially resisted, but understood their call to reflect God's will. And so at fifty-three years of age, Hildebrand took the name Gregory VII. Hildebrand was blessed with a penetrating mind, an iron will, much energy, and relentless perseverance in the face of adversity.

## THE *DICTATUS PAPÆ*

Pope St. Gregory VII wasted little time in making his intentions of reform known. Within a year of becoming pope, he issued a decree called *Dictatus papæ*. Pope St. Gregory asserted in his decree that the pope possessed specific powers bestowed by God that rested on him alone. These powers most notably included the power to convene and ratify a council, to define tenets of the faith, and to appoint, transfer, and remove bishops from office. But St. Gregory went further with this, and claimed that the papacy had the power to depose temporal rulers. Furthermore, subjects of any temporal ruler had the right to appeal to the papacy in order to bring charges against their sovereign.

Pope St. Gregory levied stiff penalties for the practice of simony. Anyone who obtained ordination or spiritual benefice through the practice of simony was excluded from the Church hierarchy and lost his authority of governance. In addition, any priest guilty of fornication was barred from saying the Mass, which in effect stripped the priest of his most important function in the Church and the means for his financial support. All church clerics were to avoid and shun any cleric who failed to abide by the pope's decrees.

In addition to Pope St. Gregory's punitive measures, he sought to codify the law of the Church, called canon law, as an effective measure to avoid future abuse. While this project was not completed in his lifetime, he is considered to be the "father of canon law."

There was little, if anything, new in Pope St. Gregory VII's decrees. Much of what he laid out had already been stated earlier by other popes or was theologically based in the Scriptures. But St. Gregory's re-formulation of and intent to enforce these measures greatly angered the Holy Roman Emperor and the nobility. Not surprisingly, the temporal powers—most notably Emperor Henry IV—angrily rebelled against these papal directives.

## "TO GO TO CANOSSA": THE HUMILIATION OF EMPEROR HENRY IV

Pope St. Gregory VII had taken advantage of the papacy's practice of crowning the emperor in order to claim that the papacy held final say on matters of temporal rule. This perceived usurpation of temporal rule placed the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry IV, on a collision course with the pope.

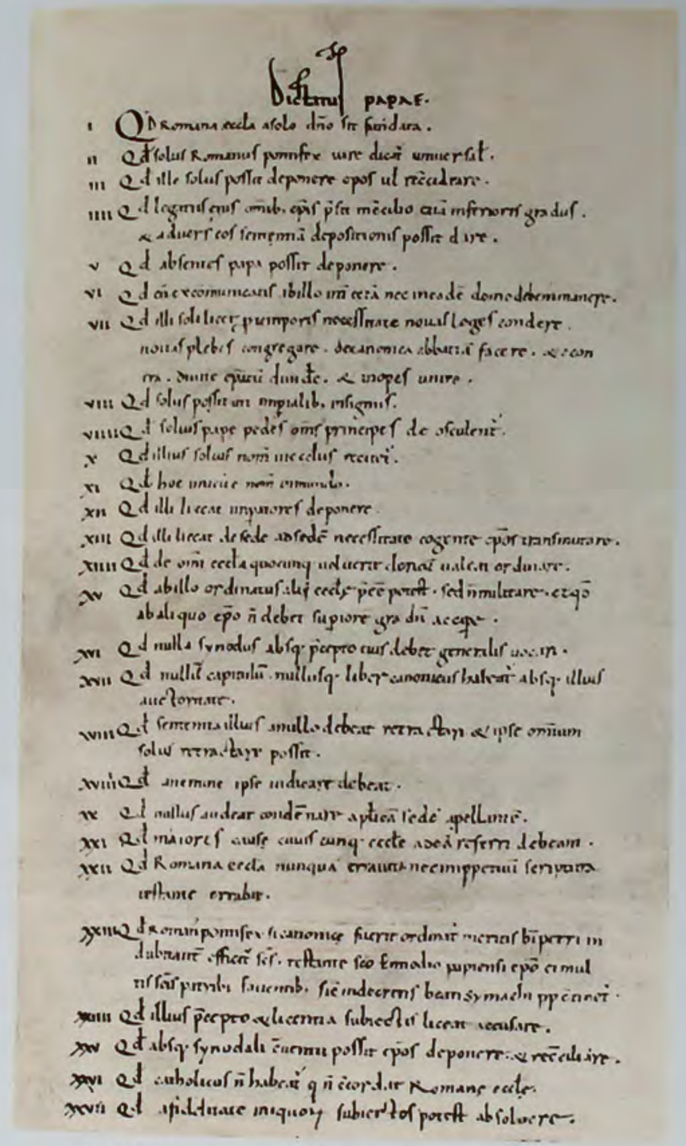
In defiance of the papal decree, Henry on his own appointed the bishop of Milan. Pope St. Gregory VII asked Henry to refrain from carrying out the appointment. Henry declined the pope's request. St. Gregory acted quickly and severely in response, declaring Henry deposed as emperor, and releasing his subjects from his rule. This proved decisive since Henry did not enjoy popular support at home and many of his subjects were opposed to his strong, autocratic rule.

Pope St. Gregory VII not only deposed Henry IV, but he also excommunicated him. (Excommunication is a censure from a bishop stating a person is cut off from communion with the Church because he is in a persistent state of mortal sin.) The act of excommunication had rarely been used, and caused many of the bishops and important abbots in Germany who had previously supported Henry's cause to withdraw. Since two-thirds of Germany was under the immediate authority of bishops who owned most of the land, it followed that two-thirds of Henry's potential and taxing military power disappeared overnight.

Henry for a time was thus strategically outflanked by the pope. His only recourse was to obtain the pope's forgiveness, thereby being accepted back into the Church, and regaining his office—all before the pope could appoint a new emperor to take his place.







Dictatus papae.

i Quod Romana ecclia a solo dño fit fundata.
ii Quod solus Romanus pontifex iure dicat universalis.
iii Quod ille solus possit deponere epos ut recolaret.
iiii Quod legatus suus omnib. epis p̃sit in concilio etiã inferioris gradus.
& quod sententiã depositionis possit dare.
v Quod absentes papa possit deponere.
vi Quod cũ excommunicatis illo usq; ad eius necis nec mensã domo debeamus.
vii Quod illi soli licet pro tempore necessitatis nouas leges condere.
nouas plebes congregare. de canonica abbatiã facere. & econtra. diuite epũm dimidiã. & inopes unire.
viii Quod solus possit uti insignib. imperialib.
viiii Quod solius pape pedes oms principes deosculent.
x Quod illius soli nom in ecclis recitet.
xi Quod hoc unicũ sit nom in mundo.
xii Quod illi liceat imperatores deponere.
xiii Quod illi liceat de sede ad sedẽ necessitate cogente epos transmutare.
xiiii Quod de oĩi ecclia quocunq; uoluerit clericũ ualeat ordinare.
xv Quod ab illo ordinatus aliis ecclis pcẽ prodesse. sed nõ militare. & ab aliquo epo nõ debet superiore gradu accipere.
xvi Quod nulla synodus absq; precepto eius debeat generalis uocari.
xvii Quod nullius capitulũ nullusq; liber canonicus habeat absq; illius auctoritate.
xviii Quod sententia illius a nullo debeat retractari & ipse omnium solus retractare possit.
xviiii Quod a nemine ipse iudicari debeat.
xx Quod nullus audeat condẽnare apostolicã sedẽ apellantẽ.
xxi Quod maiores cause cuiuscunq; ecclie ad eã referri debeant.
xxii Quod Romana ecclia nunquã erraurit nec imperpetuũ scripturã testante errabit.
xxiii Quod Romanus pontifex si canonice fuerit ordinatus meritis bi petri indubitanter efficit̃ sc̃s. testante sco Ennodio papiensi epo & multis sanctis patribus faciente. sic in decretis eius gestis pape continet.
xxiiii Quod illius precepto & licentia subiectis licitum accusare.
xxv Quod absq; synodali conuentu possit epos deponere & reconciliare.
xxvi Quod catholicos nõ habeat̃ q̃ nõ concordat Romane ecclie.
xxvii Quod apostolicus ab iniquis subiectis eos possit absolutos dare.

Pope St. Gregory's decree known as *Dictatus Papæ* (Dictate of the Pope), 1075



After observing Henry IV's contrition for three days, Pope St. Gregory VII heard Henry's confession, granted him absolution, and restored his royal status.

On January 25, 1077, Henry IV set out for Canossa, Italy, with a small party. Pope St. Gregory VII and his entourage were staying there with the Countess Mathilda of Tuscany. Mathilda, who happened to be a relative of Henry, was the first of a group of influential Medieval women who demonstrated great influence at key political and spiritual moments on account of their holiness and wisdom.

Henry arrived at Canossa and stood barefoot in the snow outside the gates of Mathilda's villa for three days. He was dressed in sackcloth. Still, the pope refused to meet with him. St. Gregory doubted Henry's true contrition, and rightfully so. By repenting of his crime, Henry would be reinstituted in the Church and would thereby gain the military support of the bishops he had lost. For some time St. Gregory held back.

Hugh of Cluny, the revered abbot of the famed monastery, appeared on the scene. More than anyone else, he forced St. Gregory's hand. According to long-standing tradition and the rules of the Church, a penitent who requests forgiveness cannot be turned away. St. Gregory knew that he could not dismiss the advice of Hugh, who was the most respected churchman of the day.

Thus after three days St. Gregory relented and agreed to meet with Henry. Pope St. Gregory heard the emperor's confession, granted him absolution, restored his royal status, and admonished him to observe all of the papal decrees.

For a time it appeared that St. Gregory had achieved a tremendous victory: the most important temporal ruler in Christendom had bent to the pope's will. This victory did not last long. Within a year Henry had again rejected St. Gregory's authority and installed Clement III as anti-pope, (i.e., someone who is not—but claims to be—the legitimate successor of St. Peter). St. Gregory and his successors turned to the Normans for protection.

In the end, St. Gregory fled from Henry's army to southern Italy where he died in exile. Henry IV's fate was not much better since he had to fight the nobility and his own son to maintain power.





## CONCORDAT OF WORMS

Canossa did not end the struggle between the papacy and the Holy Roman Emperors. Similar, though less dramatic, struggles took place in England and France. After many such battles, the Concordat of Worms (1122) officially ended the investiture matter with a new understanding between the Church and the Holy Roman Empire.

The Concordat of Worms had two parts. First, it left spiritual investiture to the Church alone, and temporal investiture to civil authorities. The emperor renounced all claims to invest churchmen with ring and crosier—symbols of spiritual authority—and had to permit the free election of bishops. The practice of simony was again condemned. The emperor, however, retained veto power over the electoral process since he had the right to invest churchmen with signs of temporal authority. Thus, if an emperor did not like a candidate for the episcopacy, he could withhold the temporal power accompanying the post, and indirectly force the Church to pick another candidate.

## INVESTITURE CONFLICT AND THE ENGLISH CHURCH (1154-1189)



Henry II was the most powerful of all Medieval English monarchs. The Church in England had developed its own set of courts and laws independent of the secular administration, but Henry II desired to consolidate the legal structures of England and to place all authority under the crown. Moreover, the English Church, it seemed to him, was growing too powerful and independent. To accomplish this task he chose as Archbishop of Canterbury his trusted friend and advisor St. Thomas à Becket.

St. Thomas à Becket had been Henry II's Chancellor and had worked with him to strengthen the powers of the state. Aware of Henry II's designs for changes within the governance of the English Church—changes that, as archbishop, St. Thomas à Becket knew he could not support or allow—he warned Henry II not to make him archbishop. Henry II and Cardinal Henry of Posa pressured St. Thomas à Becket to accept the position, and he ultimately accepted. With his elevation, he resigned his position as Chancellor and undertook a life of prayer and penance. He resisted the king's effort to overstep his boundaries in violating canon law.

## CONSTITUTIONS OF CLARENDON

Henry II asserted his royal authority in the Constitutions of Clarendon in 1164. The king attempted to gain control over the revenues of episcopal sees and abbeys and sought to control the election of all abbots and bishops. All clerics were to be tried in civil courts. Any appeal to Rome first required the consent of the king. The king's court was to be the last resort for ecclesiastical appeals.

St. Thomas à Becket stood almost alone in England in his absolute opposition to the Constitutions of Clarendon, but Pope Alexander III also refused to recognize them. St. Thomas à Becket was forced to flee to France to escape the king's wrath, and he spent time with some Cistercians before Henry II threatened the entire order if they did not give him up. At the same time,



The murder of St. Thomas à Becket would haunt Henry II for the rest of his life.

fearing excommunication, Henry II feigned reconciliation with St. Thomas à Becket. He returned to England and continued to fight against the king's programs. Out of desperation, Henry II asked if anyone could rid him of this priest. St. Thomas à Becket was murdered in the cathedral by a band of knights in 1170. To what extent Henry II was involved with the murder is unknown. St. Thomas à Becket's martyrdom sparked an almost immediate devotion all across Europe, and it would be the undoing of many of Henry II's programs.

For the remaining 19 years of his rule, Henry II was a haunted man. Betrayed by his wife and children, guilt-ridden by the death of his friend, perhaps a result of a moment of anger, Henry did public penance for his crime—he was violently scourged at the tomb of his old friend, who was canonized only two years after his martyrdom. Disgraced, the king gave up his program of control over the Church.

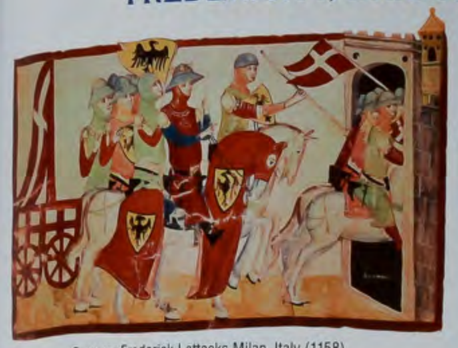
## THE CHURCH AND THE EMPIRE (1152-1254)

During the late twelfth century through the thirteenth century, the Church produced some of keenest legal minds of Europe. These men led the Church to some of its greatest achievements during the Medieval period. At this time, the German Hohenstaufen emperors desired to reclaim the glory of the Carolingian era by expanding their control from Germany to the Italian Peninsula. The Church feared that if such unification occurred, she would lose her independent status and would become a pawn of the German Emperors. Thus emerged the greatest struggle of the investiture conflict to date.





## FREDERICK I, BARBAROSSA (1152-90)



Emperor Frederick I attacks Milan, Italy (1158).

Frederick I, Barbarossa, was the ablest and most powerful ruler of the Holy Roman Empire. He thought his vocation as emperor was to revive the Roman Empire. He believed that absolute power was bestowed upon him directly from God and therefore this power extended over the Church. Since Rome was the first city of the ancient empire, Frederick I believed he should have the authority to appoint the Bishop of Rome.

Pope Adrian IV saw immediately that Frederick I was overstepping his boundaries and threatened him with excommunication if he continued to infringe on the rights of the Church. The Italian city-states also greatly resented the interference of the German emperor. Frederick I, however, continued to appoint bishops in violation of the 1122 Concordat of Worms, and he imprisoned the papal legate sent to stop him.

Frederick I attempted to conquer Italy with five military expeditions into the peninsula. During one of his invasions of Rome, plague claimed 25,000 of his soldiers and he had to retreat. Eventually, the fierce resistance of the Italian city-states, the loyalty of many German princes and bishops to the Church, and the steadfastness of popes Adrian IV and Alexander III (who at one point was driven into exile) thwarted Frederick I, Barbarossa's exploits. Frederick I would reconcile with the Church before departing for the Crusade that would end his life.

## INNOCENT III (ca. 1160-1216) AND FREDERICK II (1194-1250)

At age 37, Lothar Segni Conti became Pope Innocent III. His pontificate brought the Church to the height of its power during the Middle Ages. Historians have often disputed whether the papacy of Innocent III was that of a pious man or virtual tyrant. Nevertheless, Innocent III had a very specific understanding of the papacy. Rather than choosing the title Vicar of St. Peter, as previous popes had done, Innocent III immediately showed his intentions and his understanding of the role of the pope by naming himself the Vicar of Christ.

> [T]he Pope was the judge of the world, set in the midst between God and man, below God and above Man; he is the representative of Him to whom the earth belongs with all that it contains and all its inhabitants; he is a priest after the order of Melchizedek; at once priest and king who unites in his person the fullness of all power and authority. (Dawson, *Medieval Essays*, p. 85)

Innocent III used the metaphor that the pope was like the sun and the king like the moon. As the moon derives its light from the sun, so the king derives his power from the Vicar of Christ. Nevertheless, in all matters in which he intervened, he never declared supreme right over temporal affairs, but he did exercise absolute authority over spiritual matters

Innocent III's primary interest throughout his pontificate was to maintain a balance of power throughout Europe with himself as arbitrator. To achieve this, he found it necessary to keep European sovereigns from assuming independent power. He intervened in the affairs of all the



Innocent III and his successors of the thirteenth century saw the papacy as the guardian of Christendom.

feudal kingdoms of Europe and took to task any king who had fallen from the state of grace. Philip II of France had divorced his wife and then attempted to marry another; subsequently, Innocent III placed the entire kingdom of France under interdict until Philip returned to his lawful wife. King John of England tried to control the election of the Archbishop of Canterbury and refused to accept the pope's choice of Stephen Langdon. John was excommunicated and England was placed under interdict (denial of liturgy, the sacraments, and even Christian burial). Innocent III then called upon Philip II of France to invade England in a crusade if John did not capitulate. John eventually was forced to make England a vassal of Innocent III in order to avoid punishment. Eventually King John's poor conduct led him to sign the *Magna Charta* in 1215.

Conflict soon had erupted over the successor to Frederick I, Barbarossa, after his death. For fourteen years Germany was in a state of civil turmoil. Innocent III was made the guardian of the young Frederick II of Germany, who was only three years old when his father died. Innocent III used his influence to gain the acceptance of the German princes for Frederick II's rule. Frederick II, now 17, promised to respect the sovereignty of the Papal States and not to attempt a unification of Germany and Italy. He also assured the pope that he would lead a crusade.



Frederick II meets with Muslim leaders in Jerusalem (1229).

Frederick II, however, would renege on his promise and attempt to crush the Papal States after the death of Innocent III. Because of his evil ways, his agnosticism and cruelty, Frederick II was viewed by many as "the antichrist." He became friendly with the Muslims and even maintained a harem. Frederick II broke his oath ten times and delayed going on a crusade for ten years. He invaded Italy and drove Pope Gregory IX from Rome. Gregory excommunicated the emperor and declared that Frederick II's subjects no longer owed him obedience. Frederick II began to execute clergy and desecrate churches until the new pope, Innocent IV, declared Frederick II deposed. He imposed excommunication on anyone who recognized him as emperor





and he anathematized the entire Hohenstaufen family. Frederick II was finally forced to capitulate. Abandoned by his nobles, Frederick II repented and went to Penance. He died clothed in a Cistercian habit.

Innocent III and his successors of the thirteenth century saw the papacy as the guardian of Christendom. They treated the kings as vassals and penalized monarchs for violations of chastity and matrimonial fidelity. They provided strong leadership to the Church and brought Medieval society to its greatest heights. This leadership unfortunately immersed the Church in secular affairs, which would especially exacerbate tensions between Church and state with the advent of nationalism.

## PART V

# The Cistercians and Carthusians

## THE CISTERCIANS

In addition to Cluny, two other monastic reform movements began later in the eleventh century, the Cistercians and the Carthusians.

The Cistercians, or the White Monks, were first founded by St. Robert of Molesme, a Cluniac monk, in 1098. Like Cluny, the Cistercians used the Benedictine rule, though with a special emphasis on austerities, farming, and simplicity of lifestyle. The white habits of the Cistercians were meant to imply their poverty and simplicity; most other monks wore black habits at the time.

The Cistercians were particularly important in the conversion of the Slavic tribes of Poland, Bohemia, and eastern Germany.

## ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

St. Bernard of Fontaine (1091-1153) joined the Cistercians in 1113 at Citeaux. Known as St. Bernard of Clairvaux, he is often considered the second founder of the order. It was under his leadership that the Cistercians grew dramatically and their influence spread. When he entered the monastery, he brought along thirty friends, four of whom were his brothers. St. Bernard became the first abbot of the new monastery founded at Clairvaux. At Clairvaux the monastery was austere: the walls were barren with small windows, and beds consisting of planks of wood. The monks ate nothing but bread and boiled leaves and roots with some salt and oil.

St. Bernard came from a noble background, as did practically all of the founders of orders in the Medieval period. He enjoyed the benefits of a classical education, and was a model student, though he was reserved.



## ST. BERNARD: THE POWER OF A SINGLE MONK

The life of St. Bernard of Clairvaux is filled with countless fascinating stories. Despite longing to simply remain in his monastery in prayer, St. Bernard healed schisms, advised popes, led councils, wrote many influential books, and helped launch a crusade.

When Pope Hororius II died in 1130, a schism broke out in the Church over the alleged election of two popes: Innocent II and Anacletus II. A national council of the French bishops was called at Etampes, and St. Bernard, summoned there by consent of the bishops, was asked to judge between the two rival popes. He chose Innocent II, and by this act all the great Catholic powers of the time recognized Innocent II as the true pope. St. Bernard then accompanied Innocent II back to Italy and calmed the troubles brewing in that country.

A few years later, in 1134, St. Bernard was called to Aquitaine to help persuade William, the Duke of Aquitaine (who had lapsed into schism), to stop persecuting the supporters of Pope Innocent II.

William, a prince of great wealth and stature, was invited to attend a Mass celebrated by St. Bernard. During the Mass, however, William and those loyal to him stood at a door of the Church. After the consecration and before distributing communion, St. Bernard placed the Host on the paten and approached William holding the Host over his head. St. Bernard implored the duke to end the schism:

> "Into His hands your obstinate soul will one day fall. Will you despise Him? Will you scorn Him as you have done His servants?" ("Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, Abbot, Doctor of the Church," taken from Crawley, *Lives of the Saints*, 1954).

William immediately abandoned his schism and restored the bishops he had expelled. The duke afterwards founded a new Cistercian monastery and went on pilgrimage to Compostella, Spain, along the course of which he died.



St. Bernard displayed a nobility of nature, a wise charity and tenderness in his dealings with others, and a genuine humility, that made him one of the most perfect exponents of the Christian life.





When he became a monk, St. Bernard focused his studies on the Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church. Profoundly humble, St. Bernard refused all promotions, including the episcopacy and papacy. A major part of his service to the Church was his extraordinary writing to encourage and strengthen others in the Faith. His central theme, in conjunction with extensive quotation of Scriptures, was the divine life communicated to the world in the Person of Jesus Christ.

The middle of the twelfth century was called the "Age of St. Bernard." St. Bernard counseled rulers, bishops, and popes, including Pope Bl. Eugene III, the first pope who was a Cistercian. He carried out a legendary debate with Peter Abelard, the most renowned thinker of the time other than St. Bernard. Abelard had advocated certain theological errors, but St. Bernard, so logically forceful and clear in his condemnation of Abelard's teachings, left the master logician with no response but silence.



With the desire to live a simple and disciplined life, St. Bruno declined the office of bishop of Rheims.

## THE CARTHUSIANS

The Carthusians were founded by St. Bruno at Chartreuse, near Grenoble in France. Like many churchmen of the day, St. Bruno also served the civil state in France. He was a brilliant scholar and he counted among his pupils Eudes of Châtillon, who would become Pope Bl. Urban II. Despite his prestigious position as chancellor at Rheims, St. Bruno remained a model priest, resisting political pressures. When offered the chance in 1080 to become the bishop of Rheims, he declined.

Instead, inspired by a burning love for God and a desire to live a more spiritually disciplined and simple life, St. Bruno left his position and went off with two friends to live as hermits in the mountains. Like the Egyptian monks centuries before, St. Bruno and his companions lived in isolation, practiced severe mortifications, and observed perpetual silence.

St. Bruno and his two friends settled at Chartreuse in the French Alps where they established a unique monastery for their day. The monks at Chartreuse did not live together like other monks; instead, each had his own cell around the cloister. St. Bruno wanted to bring the ascetic life of the



The Carthusians were founded by St. Bruno at Chartreuse, near Grenoble in France.

desert hermit into the context of the monastery, establishing an oasis of peace and prayer outside the busy developing cities of the Medieval world.

The Carthusians did not become as numerous as some of the other monastic orders of the day, but their positive example had its own influence. Rumors of their ascetic life spread throughout important centers in Europe, helping to revive Christian devotion to simplicity and prayer.

## CONCLUSION

The period from Charlemagne's death in the ninth century to the Concordat of Worms in the early twelfth century represents an unstable time in the history of the Church and Europe. The splintering of European political order, external threats of invasion, and conflicts between civil and spiritual authority challenged not only the Church's stability, but its identity as a temporal institution. Regrettably, monastic and diocesan landholdings tied the Church to the developing feudal world in a way that made corruption almost inevitable. Abuses such as simony and nepotism, as well as the weakening of fidelity, celibacy, and piety among the clergy posed a strong threat to the Church. Ironically, at a time when segments of the Church seemed to drift further from the example of the early church, monastic reformers and popes like St. Gregory VII and Innocent III helped transform this period into a time of renewed piety and spiritual devotion. These reformers would begin a rehabilitation that would eventually develop into the golden age of the High Middle Ages.





## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

**St. Gregory VII, *Dictatus papæ***
**(The Dictate of the Pope)**

1. That the Roman church was founded by God alone.

2. That the Roman pontiff alone can with right be called universal.

3. That he alone can depose or reinstate bishops.

4. That, in a council his legate, even if a lower grade, is above all bishops, and can pass sentence of deposition against them.

5. That the pope may depose the absent.

6. That, among other things, we ought not to remain in the same house with those excommunicated by him.

7. That for him alone is it lawful, according to the needs of the time, to make new laws, to assemble together new congregations, to make an abbey of a canonry; and, on the other hand, to divide a rich bishopric and unite the poor ones.

8. That he alone may use the imperial insignia.

9. That of the pope alone all princes shall kiss the feet.

10. That his name alone shall be spoken in the churches.

11. That this is the only name in the world.

12. That it may be permitted to him to depose emperors.

13. That he may be permitted to transfer bishops if need be.

14. That he has power to ordain a clerk of any church he may wish.

15. That he who is ordained by him may preside over another church, but may not hold a subordinate position; and that such a one may not receive a higher grade from any bishop.

16. That no synod shall be called a general one without his order.

17. That no chapter and no book shall be considered canonical without his authority.

18. That a sentence passed by him may be retracted by no one; and that he himself, alone of all, may retract it.

19. That he himself may be judged by no one.

20. That no one shall dare to condemn one who appeals to the apostolic chair.

21. That to the latter should be referred the more important cases of every church.

22. That the Roman church has never erred; nor will it err to all eternity, the Scripture bearing witness.

23. That the Roman pontiff, if he have been canonically ordained, is undoubtedly made a saint by the merits of St. Peter; St. Ennodius, bishop of Pavia, bearing witness, and many holy fathers agreeing with him. As is contained in the decrees of St. Symmachus the pope.

24. That, by his command and consent, it may be lawful for subordinates to bring accusations.

25. That he may depose and reinstate bishops without assembling a synod.

26. That he who is not at peace with the Roman church shall not be considered catholic.

27. That he may absolve subjects from their fealty to wicked men.

## SUPPLEMENTARY READING Continued

**St. Bernard of Clairvaux,**
***On Loving God*, Ch. 5**

Admit that God deserves to be loved very much, yea, boundlessly, because He loved us first, He infinite and we nothing, loved us, miserable sinners, with a love so great and so free. This is why I said at the beginning that the measure of our love to God is to love immeasurably. For since our love is toward God, who is infinite and immeasurable, how can we bound or limit the love we owe Him? Besides, our love is not a gift but a debt.

And since it is the Godhead who loves us, Himself boundless, eternal, supreme love, of whose greatness there is no end, yea, and His wisdom is infinite, whose peace passeth all understanding; since it is He who loves us, I say, can we think of repaying Him grudgingly? "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust" (Ps 18:1 ff.). He is all that I need, all that I long for.

My God and my help, I will love Thee for Thy great goodness; not so much as I might, surely, but as much as I can. I cannot love Thee as Thou deservest to be loved, for I cannot love Thee more than my own feebleness permits. I will love Thee more when Thou deemest me worthy to receive greater capacity for loving; yet never so perfectly as Thou hast deserved of me. "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written" (Ps 139:16). Yet Thou recordest in that book all who do what they can, even though they cannot do what they ought. Surely I have said enough to show how God should be loved and why. But who has felt, who can know, who express, how much we should love him.



"For since our love is toward God, who is infinite and immeasurable, how can we bound or limit the love we owe Him?"
– St. Bernard of Clairvaux





## VOCABULARY

**AGE OF ST. BERNARD**
Refers to the middle of the twelfth century during which St. Bernard of Clairvaux exhibited enormous influence through his counseling of rulers, bishops and popes.

**CAROLINGIAN**
The French dynasty of rulers descended from Charlemagne.

**CISTERCIANS**
So called "White Monks," after the color of their habits, this order was founded by the Cluniac monk St. Robert of Molesme in 1098. They adopted the Benedictine rule and placed a special emphasis on austerities, farming, simplicity, and strictness in daily life.

**CLUNY**
City in east-central France which gave birth to monastic reform in 910. The first abbey began with twelve monks committed to renewing the rule of St. Benedict.

***DICTATUS PAPÆ***
Decree given by Pope St. Gregory VII asserting that the pope possesses specific powers given by God that rested on him alone. These powers included the power to convene and ratify a council, to propound doctrine, and to appoint, transfer, and remove bishops from office. He also claimed that the papacy had the power to depose temporal rulers and subjects of any temporal ruler had the right to appeal to the papacy in order to bring charges against their sovereign.

**FEUDALISM**
System that came to organize the politics, economy, and social life of Medieval Europe after the split of the Carolingian empire. Based on the relationship between wealthy, landowning lords and the common villagers, farm-workers, it was a relatively simple arrangement in which the commoners would pay the landowner in labor or services in return for the lord's military protection against foreign or domestic foes.

**LAY INVESTITURE**
The appointment of bishops and abbots by secular rulers, often in exchange for temporal protection.

**NEPOTISM**
From the Italian *nepote*, "nephew" and Latin *nepos*, "grandson." The appointment of family members to important positions of authority.

**SERF**
The majority of people within feudalism. They barely enjoyed any freedom since they were completely tied to the land and lord they were serving.

**SIMONY**
The selling of ecclesiastical offices, pardons, or emoluments by either secular or spiritual leaders.

**TREATY OF VERDUN**
Signed in 843, the treaty divided the Carolingian empire into three sections, which led to the eventual destruction of Charlemagne's empire.

**VASSAL**
In feudalism, those under the rule of the lord who paid him in labor or services.

**VICAR OF CHRIST**
Title used by Pope Innocent III rather than the earlier title, Vicar of St. Peter. "Vicar of Christ" emphasized Innocent III's understanding of the pope as a representative of Christ himself.



The magnificent church of Cluny.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What three groups coming from which three directions threatened western Europe during the ninth century?
2. Why were monasteries often the targets of the Viking invasions?
3. When and by whom was Cluny founded?
4. What did the monastic reform at Cluny emphasize?
5. What were two things that separated Cluniac monks from other monks?
6. What did Pope Benedict VIII grant to Cluny in 1016? How did this help Cluny not to become involved in the problems of feudalism?
7. Name at least four important Cluniac monks who rose to positions of importance.
8. Otto I's (the Great) coronation at Aachen as Holy Roman emperor served what two purposes?
9. List the three ways in which the Ottonian line exercised influence over the Church.
10. How did Lanfranc negotiate his responsibilities to the Church and his relationship to the state?
11. Why did the Church want to regain control over the ecclesiastical appointments?
12. What act by Henry IV initiated his struggle with Pope St. Gregory VII?
13. What does excommunication mean? Why would Henry IV not ignore the act of excommunication?
14. What was the Concordat of Worms (1122)?
15. What were King Henry II's aims with the Constitutions of Clarendon?
16. How did the contest between St. Thomas à Becket and King Henry II end?
17. What was Pope Innocent III's goal during his papacy?
18. How did Pope Innocent III and his immediate successors view kings? For what kinds of behavior were kings penalized?
19. Which rule do the Cistercians follow and what do they emphasize along with it?
20. What did the color white signify for the Cistercian habit, and what color did most religious orders wear?
21. What were the two areas of focus for St. Bernard's studies, and what was the central theme of his spirituality?
22. Who founded the Carthusians, and how did he live with the earliest Carthusians?
23. What kind of spirituality did the Carthusians create in their order?





## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. Cluny monks lived in isolation. Explain how their isolation did not hinder the beneficial role they served in western European society.
2. One of the criticisms of the Catholic Church is that it was too often involved in a struggle with secular rulers during the Medieval period, and that this involvement led to such corruptions as simony and lay investiture. Is this a fair charge, historically speaking? In what way did the political organization of this era help to ensure justice and moral righteousness on the part of the sovereign? How did it fail to achieve those ends?
3. Explain why the pope was both a temporal ruler and a spiritual ruler. To which aspect of the papacy does infallibility apply? How is the papacy different today than it was in the Middle Ages? How is it the same?
4. What are your thoughts on Pope Innocent III's letter to the prefect Acerbius that opened this chapter? How do you think people would view Pope Innocent III's ideas about the relationship of the state to the Church today?



Feudalism was a relatively simple arrangement in which the commoners would pay the landowner in labor or services in return for the lord's military protection against foreign or domestic foes.

## FROM THE CATECHISM

**889** In order to preserve the Church in the purity of the faith handed on by the apostles, Christ who is the Truth willed to confer on her a share in his own infallibility. By a "supernatural sense of faith" the People of God, under the guidance of the Church's living Magisterium, "unfailingly adheres to this faith" (*LG* 12; cf. *DV* 10).

**890** The mission of the Magisterium is linked to the definitive nature of the covenant established by God with his people in Christ. It is this Magisterium's task to preserve God's people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error. Thus, the pastoral duty of the Magisterium is aimed at seeing to it that the People of God abides in the truth that liberates. To fulfill this service, Christ endowed the Church's shepherds with the charism of infallibility in matters of faith and morals. The exercise of this charism takes several forms:

**891** "The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful—who confirms his brethren in the faith—he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals....The infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, together with Peter's successor, they exercise the supreme Magisterium," above all in an Ecumenical Council (*LG* 25; cf. Vatican Council I: DS 3074). When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine "for belief as being divinely revealed" (*DV* 10 § 2), and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions "must be adhered to with the obedience of faith" (*LG* 25 § 2). This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself (cf. *LG* 25).

**2051** The infallibility of the Magisterium of the Pastors extends to all the elements of doctrine, including moral doctrine, without which the saving truths of the faith cannot be preserved, expounded, or observed.



In order to pursue his claim to the throne of England, William of Normandy obtained the Pope's support for his cause. He assembled an invasion fleet of 600 ships and an army of 7,000 men. He landed at Pevensey in Sussex on September 28, 1066 and assembled a prefabricated wooden castle near Hastings as a base.



CHAPTER 9

# The Crusades, Military Orders, And The Inquisition

*By 1071, Muslims had conquered two-thirds of the Christian world. Christian Europe was on the brink of annihilation. Church unity was also threatened by growing heretical groups.*



## CHAPTER 9

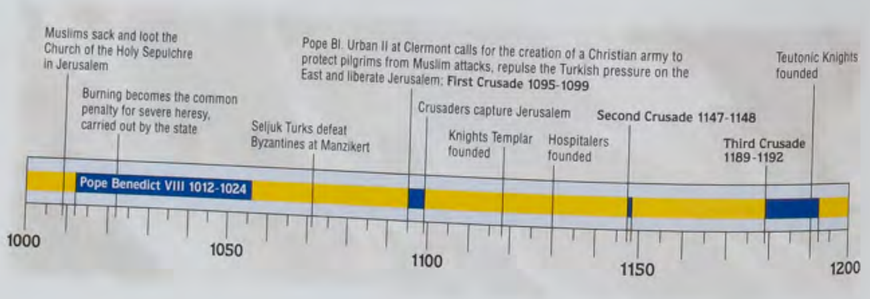
# The Crusades, Military Orders, And The Inquisition

**In no way is the Church to be confused with the political community...and it would be deplorable if individuals and institutions...were tempted to make use of her for their own particular advantage....But, this said, we should not conclude that the message of salvation entrusted to the Church has nothing to say to the body politic in order to enlighten it with the Gospel....It is not a question of undue interference in a field to which she is a stranger, but of a service offered, for love of Jesus Christ, to the whole community, and prompted by a desire to contribute to the common good, encouraged by the Lord's words: "The truth will make you free" (John 8:32).**

— John Paul II, *Address to the Bishops*, Santiago, Chile, April 2, 1987

After Charlemagne's death, the Carolingian empire fragmented into thousands of principalities, counties, and fiefs (landed estates), and an economic system called feudalism arose. Broadly speaking, because of this economic organization all of Europe's population fell into three class distinctions: clergy, nobility, and peasantry. Every member of society was beholden to someone else: serfs served small landholders, small landholders served lords, and lords served kings.

At first, this system was very effective for the prosperity of the continent, and the population expanded. As the population grew, those class distinctions widened and land became scarce. Landholders competed for land, superiority, and lordship. Many landholders at the time believed that they had no other means of deciding who would be lord over the other except by going to war.








The feudal wars of the tenth and eleventh centuries were characterized by ferocity, cruelty, and injustice. The Church understood that in order to maintain peace in the Christian lands and thereby create a Christian culture, this violence would have to be reduced. The Church also saw that a warrior class imbued with Christian principles would not only put the breaks on such incessant feuds but also provide protection for the feudal kingdoms.

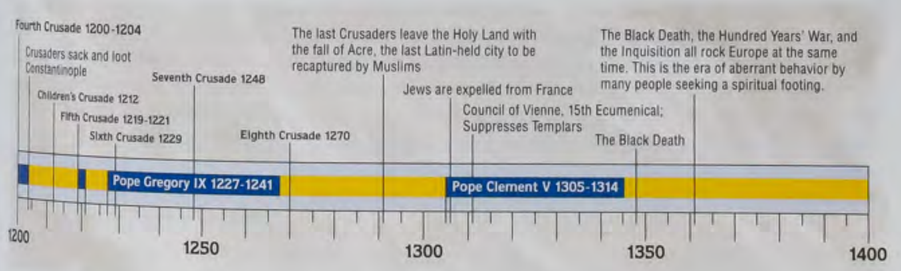
The rise of the Seljuk Turks during the eleventh century resumed expansion of Islamic forces in the East. At first, this caused Christian pilgrims to be persecuted in the Holy Land, but with the defeat of the Byzantine army at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, it became clear that the Turks could launch full-scale expansion of Islam into the remainder of the Christian world. Christian Europe was on the brink of possible annihilation.

This chapter covering the Crusades, Military Orders, and the Inquisition shows the different ways that the Church sought to unify the Christian world and defend it against internal and external threats. Some of these methods may seem cruel and uncompromising today, and indeed there were many abuses. Nonetheless, the problems these Medieval people were responding to were real and dangerous. Any infighting, whether civil or theological, threatened to split the Christian world and possibly destroy both Medieval society and Christ's Church. It bears mentioning that heresy in the Medieval mindset was ranked as a crime worse than murder since heresy risks the death of the soul and eternal damnation. The gross excesses of the era and the way in which some of these matters were mishandled reflect the severity of the dangers confronting the Church at that time, as well as the failure of some members of Christ's Church to live up to the full message of the Gospel.

Toward the end of his pontificate, Pope John Paul II addressed some of the sins and excesses made during this period. During the Jubilee Year, he presided over what he called a "Service Requesting Pardon." Cardinal Ratzinger—the future Pope Benedict XVI—invited everyone to pray with the pope:

> **Let us pray that each one of us, looking to the Lord Jesus, meek and humble of heart, will recognize that even men of the Church, in the name of faith and morals, have sometimes used methods not in keeping with the Gospel in the solemn duty of defending the truth. ("Confession of Sins Committed in the Service of Truth," March 12, 2000)**

There were some atrocities committed by Christians in the name of Christ. These methods of protection correspond to an eleventh-century worldview that differs greatly from the present day, but it must be remembered that the end never justifies the means in any age.



# PART I
# The Crusades

Modern literature has applied the word *crusade* to all wars of a religious character. However, in the Middle Ages, the word *crusade* referred specifically to a series of eight expansive military expeditions that the Christian people undertook roughly between the years of 1096 and 1270 as a action in the Holy Land and against continued Muslim expansion. These efforts were not only directed against the Turks in the Holy Land and the Muslims in Spain, but also against heretics, like the Albigensians, whose teachings violated the most fundamental principles of Christianity. The word *crusade* itself may be traced to the cross, or *crux*, made of cloth and worn as a badge on the crusading knight's outer garments. After pronouncing a solemn vow, each warrior received a cross from the hands of the pope or his legates. He was thenceforth considered a soldier of the Church.

Uniting themselves under the popes and the Christian rulers, the Crusaders fought these wars against Muslim expansion, which in part avoided infighting among European rulers, and offered a chance to embark upon an authentic religious pilgrimage.

## THE FALL OF THE HOLY LAND

Within one hundred years of the death of Muhammad, Islam spread throughout much of the Christian world. As discussed previously, this had as much to do with the success of militant Muslim expansion as it did with authentic religious conversion. Quickly after the birth of the religion, Islamic forces seized most of the Christian world. Palestine, the Holy Land and home of Jesus; Egypt, the birthplace of monasticism; Asia Minor, where St. Paul preached and planted the seeds of early Christian communities; and North Africa had all fallen to Muslim forces. Muslim expansion was finally brought to a halt by Charles Martel's defense of Western Europe in France and the Byzantine Empire's defense in the East. With these new borders established, Muslim and Christian lands remained more or less stable.



Christians being executed by their Muslim captors. At some point, Christianity would have to defend itself or be taken over by Islam.

After a long period of tolerance, the rise of the Fatimite Muslims in Egypt during the first decades of the eleventh century led to a renewed Christian persecution. In the second half of the century, a new militant Islamic nation, the Seljuk Turks, persecuted Christians, especially in Palestine and Syria, and expanded westwards into lands previously protected by Byzantium. In 1071, in the Battle of Manzikert, the Turks annihilated the Byzantine army and were on the verge of taking Constantinople. By this time, two-thirds of the Christian world had been taken by Muslim forces, and now the last vestiges of the Roman Empire were threatened. The Eastern emperor looked West for assistance, in desperation, asking them to aid their brothers and sisters in the East.

The Western Christians were concerned with their Eastern brethren. Despite the schism of 1054, many (including both Pope Bl. Urban II and the Eastern emperor) hoped that the split could be







In the summer of 1095, Pope Bl. Urban II preached a momentous sermon in Clermont, France that would launch the First Crusade. "A great commotion arose through all the regions of France, so that if anyone earnestly wished to follow God with pure heart and mind, and wanted to bear the cross faithfully after him, he would hasten to take the road to the Holy Sepulchre" (extract from the *Gesta Francorum*).

healed. In 1095, Bl. Urban II held a council in Clermont in central France to try to rouse support from Westerners to aid the Eastern Christians. At Clermont, Bl. Urban II appealed for help:

> For your brethren who live in the east are in urgent need of your help, and you must hasten to give them the aid which has often been promised them. For, as most of you have heard, the Turks and Arabs have attacked them and conquered the territory of Romania [the Greek empire] as far west as the shore of the Mediterranean and the Hellespont. They have occupied more and more lands of those Christians and have overcome them in seven battles.... On this account I, or rather the Lord, beseech you as Christ's heralds to publish this everywhere and to persuade all people of whatever rank, foot-soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to those Christians. (quoted in Thatcher and McNeal, *A Source Book for Medieval History*, 1905, p. 514)

Pope Bl. Urban II began the crusades by proclaiming an organized assault in defense of Christian Europe. Rather than a Christian offensive, the crusades were a desperate attempt to fend off Islamic expansion. Islam was the strongest power of the Medieval world, and it now threatened to overrun the entire West. At some point, Christianity had to defend itself or be taken over by Islam. Islam was born in war and grew the same way. Muslim thought at this time divided the world into two spheres: the abode of Islam and the abode of war. Christianity or any other non-Muslim

religion has no abode. Pope Bl. Urban II's crusade was the first of a series of military expeditions meant to ward off the very probable fall of the Christian world to the Muslims.

For Christians, the Muslim threat was no better realized than through the plight of pilgrims in the Holy Land. Pilgrims faced an increasingly hard journey to the Holy Land. They were often robbed, beaten, or killed. Pope St. Gregory VII (1073-1085) was ready to invade the Holy Land with 50,000 crusaders nearly two decades before Bl. Urban II's call to arms, but the lay investiture controversy made his crusade impossible. By 1095 Muslim expansion meant, above all, the hostile occupation of the Holy Land, the very ground upon which Jesus walked. As Crusaders set out to the east, they had two objectives: to fend off Turkish (Muslim) expansion into Byzantium and to free the Holy Land for safe pilgrimage and worship of sacred sites. Both objectives had as an end the avoidance of the further killing of Christians.



Pope Bl. Urban II toured France and Italy with his public appeal for Christian warriors to take back Jerusalem from the Muslims. "For Pope Bl. Urban II began to deliver eloquent sermons and to preach, saying that if anyone wished to save his soul, he should not hesitate to undertake with humble spirit the way of the Lord, . . . For the lord pope said, 'Brothers, you must suffer many things in the name of Christ, wretchedness, poverty, nakedness, persecution, need, sickness, hunger, thirst and other things of this kind, just as the Lord says to his disciples: "You must suffer many things in my name" ' " (extract from the *Gesta Francorum*, an anonymous Crusader's chronicle).

## MOTIVATION FOR THE CRUSADERS

There is no doubt that religion was a major motivation for soldiers who went on a crusade. The crusades combined the concept of a defensive war with religious pilgrimage and were primarily viewed as acts of religious devotion by the Christians who participated in them. Even before the First Crusade, the concept was understood in the West that God would reward those who fought for the good cause of defending Christendom. In addition, many of the popes, clerics, and bishops who preached the crusades offered religious indulgences to the soldiers. An indulgence is a remission before God of temporal punishment due to sins, the guilt of which has already been forgiven through the sacrament of Penance. Volunteering for a crusade became a way of earning an indulgence and a prolonged time of penance to make reparation for personal sins.

In addition to spiritual motivations, the Church offered other incentives including the reduction of taxes, dissolving of debt payments, and the protection of the crusaders' families. Crusaders took the vow of the Cross, expressing sentiments of piety, self-sacrifice, and love for God. The Christian world was a prime target for the earliest caliphs, and it would remain so for Muslim leaders for the next thousand years.





## THE UNKNOWN'S MANUSCRIPT



Although many of the soldiers who marched on the Crusades were illiterate, there was one soldier in the army of Bohemund of Antioch who did keep a journal of the harsh life crusaders experienced on the road to Jerusalem. This writer never mentions his name in the journal, and so he has been dubbed by historians as "the Unknown." Without his narrative, the *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolymytanorum* (The Deeds of the Franks and the Other Pilgrims to Jerusalem), knowledge of many of the details, events, and battles of the First Crusade would have been lost.

The Unknown's manuscript provides a candid view into the fear and excitement of the Crusades. An excerpt from his account of the battle of Dorylaeum captures the mood of the front lines:

> Turks made a violent assault on Bohemund and his companions. The Turks began unceasingly to shout, babble, and cry in a loud voice, making some devilish sound, I know not how, in their own tongue. . . . By the time all this had been done, the Turks had already surrounded us on all sides. They attacked us, slashing, hurling, and shooting arrows far and wide, in a manner strange to behold. Although we could scarcely hold them back or even bear up under the weight of such a host, nevertheless we all managed to hold our ranks.

Elsewhere, the Unknown talks about the fall of Antioch, another city taken back by the crusaders on the march to Jerusalem:

> Moreover, when at earliest dawn those in the tents outside heard the most violent outcry sounding through the city, they rushed out hurriedly and saw the standard of Bohemund up on the mount, and with rapid pace all ran hastily and entered the city. They killed the Turks and Saracens whom they found there, except those who had fled into the citadel. Others of the Turks went out through the gates, and by fleeing escaped alive.

## PREACHING THE CRUSADES

Pope Bl. Urban II's call to arms found enormous appeal among the lower classes. The pope specifically appealed to sinners to join the crusade as a means of reconciliation with God:

> You, oppressors of orphans and widows; you, murderers and violators of churches; you, robbers of the property of others; you, who, like vultures are drawn to the scent of the battlefield, hasten, as you love your souls, under your Captain Christ to the rescue of Jerusalem. All you who are guilty of such sins as exclude you from the kingdom of God, ransom yourselves at this price, for such is the will of God. (quoted in Laux, *Church History: A Complete History of the Catholic Church to the Present Day*, 1992, p. 314)

Although the popes were primarily instrumental in unifying the armies bound for the Holy Land, other clerics preached the Crusades as well.



The spellbinding preaching of St. Bernard of Clairvaux inspired thousands to join the Second Crusade.

Bl. Peter the Hermit of Amiens traveled from city to city preaching for a crusade. According to the chronicler Alber of Aix-la-Chapelle, Bl. Peter led the rigorous life of a hermit for a number of years before undertaking a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. During his journey, the hermit was harassed and beaten by the Turks. One day when he was asleep in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, Jesus appeared to him and ordered him to go to Europe proclaiming the miseries that had befallen the Christians in Palestine. Though many scholars now discount the magnitude of the effect Bl. Peter the Hermit's experience had on inciting the First Crusade, his story is typical of the dangers that befell pilgrims of that time.

The spellbinding preaching of St. Bernard of Clairvaux inspired thousands to join the Second Crusade in the twelfth century. St. Bernard traveled all across Europe, sometimes convincing entire parishes to set out to the east the next day. St. Bernard later frankly affirmed that all but a few of the knights on the crusades were "criminals and sinners, ravishers and the sacrilegious, murderers, perjures, and adulterers" (quoted in Chambers, *et al., The Western Experience*, 2002, p. 267). St. Bernard observed the double benefit of having the crusaders out of Europe: "Their departure makes their own people happy, and their arrival cheers those whom they are hastening to help. They aid both groups, not only by protecting the one but also by not oppressing the other." The crusades were, in one respect, an effective means of draining so much of the violence from Medieval life. In reality, the ranks of Muslim soldiers were filled with the same sorts of individuals from their society (conscripts).

Kings in Western Europe often participated in leading the Crusades or offering financial support at the request of the papacy. Most famously, Richard the Lionheart of England led an army to Jerusalem along with Philip II of France in the Third Crusade.







*The Taking of Jerusalem by the Crusaders*, July 15, 1099

## THE FIRST CRUSADE (1095-1099)

The First Crusade was a popular movement that took place without any direct support or leadership from the kings of Europe, since many of the rulers were either excommunicated or in opposition to the papacy at the time. In northern France and the Rhineland, a number of preachers took Pope Bl. Urban II's message to the people, motivating and organizing armies to set out for the Holy Land. The message was met with enthusiasm throughout all of Europe, and armies from every corner of the continent set out on various routes towards the east. Regretfully with the occasion of the crusades, some crusaders attacked Jewish communities on their way to the Holy Land.

The First Crusade was considered the best organized. The armies were divided into four groups all set to meet in Constantinople. Godfrey of Bouillon, Duke of Lower Lorraine, led the people of Lorraine, the Germans, and the northern French. They followed the valley of the Danube, crossed Hungary, and arrived in Constantinople in late 1096. Hugh of Vermandois, brother of King Philip I of France and Robert Courte-Heuse, the Duke of Normandy and the son of William the Conqueror, led bands of French and Normans across the Alps and set sail from Apulia, on the boot heel of Italy, to Dyrrachium, which is in modern day Albania. From there the army continued overland to Constantinople where they arrived in May of 1097.

The southern French, under the lead of Raymond of Saint-Filles and the bishop of Puy, Adhemar of Moneil, set out overland through the eastern Alps where they met tough resistance from the Slavs, delaying their arrival in Constantinople until the end of April 1097. The fourth army consisted of Normans from Southern Italy led by Bohemund and Tancred, who were both related to the founder of Norman Sicily, Robert Guiscard. On their way across Italy and on through the Byzantine

Empire, the army picked up many enthusiastic bands of local crusaders, who joined ranks, and eventually arrived in Constantinople with the Normans in April of 1097. The crusaders came from every corner of Europe, and when they arrived in Constantinople they were a mismatched group and everything but a unified army.

In the spring of 1097 the campaign began, and the four armies proved very successful. First, they staged a successful siege of Nicaea, and after that, moved on to Antioch, which they took in 1098. Jerusalem fell in 1099. Pope Bl. Urban II, whose dream was to recover the Holy Land, died before receiving news of the sacking of Jerusalem. The reconquest of Jerusalem unfortunately resulted in a brutal massacre of the mostly Muslim population.

The First Crusade came at a time when Muslims were politically divided. Seljuk Turks had recently risen to power in the Holy Land and they did not yet have firm control over the area. The crusaders took advantage of their disunity and established authority over Palestine. After the reconquest of Jerusalem, the crusaders organized the lands into a number of counties, fiefs, and principalities based on the Medieval feudal system to build a Christian state in Palestine.

As is still evident today, the organization of a government for a population which included Muslims, Jews, Eastern and Western Christians was no easy task. The job fell to Godfrey of Bouillon, and after his death in 1100, his younger brother Baldwin. Baldwin kept direct control of Jerusalem and its surrounding areas. To the north, three fiefs—the County of Tripoli, the Principality of Antioch, and the County of Edessa were established. Muslims who lived in crusader-won territories were generally allowed to retain their property and livelihood and, as always, their religion.

However, the kingdom of Jerusalem was difficult to maintain, as it shrunk continuously until 1291 when the last acres were overrun. A big problem was that not many Europeans stayed in the Holy Land as settlers, and despite a steady influx of traveling pilgrims and soldiers, the kings found themselves trying to maintain control over a people of largely different faiths, cultures, and sympathies. It is indeed remarkable they were able to maintain control for nearly 200 years.

## SUCCESSIVE CRUSADES

The popularity and success of the First Crusade inspired a string of crusades that lasted for nearly five centuries. None of these crusades was ever as well organized or effective as the first. In fact, the wars more often resembled a steady stream of people heading east rather than an organized military campaign.



Shortly after the end of the First Crusade, the Christian kingdom in Palestine was under attack. In 1144, the Turks recaptured the city of Edessa in the north. King Louis VII of France and Emperor Conrad II of Germany set out to capture the city of Damascus and establish a defensive front for the Kingdom of Jerusalem. They failed and were forced to retreat. Convinced that God was punishing the West for its sins, lay piety movements arose throughout Europe to purify Christian society in order to be worthy of future victory in the East.

The Third Crusade (1189-1192) is perhaps the most famous due to its role in providing the background of the Robin Hood stories. Richard the Lionheart of England set out with Emperor Frederick I, Barbarossa and King Philip of France to defend the Christian kingdoms against the Turks, who had now unified under their great military leader Saladin. Saladin, the great unifier, had forged the Muslim Near East into a single entity while preaching *jihad* against the Christians. In 1187 at the Battle of Hattin, his forces wiped out the combined armies of the Christian kingdom of Jerusalem, and they captured the relic of the True Cross. The response was the Third Crusade.

On July 22, 1099, Godfrey of Bouillon was chosen as ruler of Jerusalem with the title "Advocate of the Holy Sepulchre." It was agreed to by the leaders that no one should be called "king" and wear a crown in the land where Christ had worn the crown of thorns. After the majority of pilgrims returned home, Godfrey had only 300 knights and 2,000 foot-soldiers to protect Jerusalem. His one year reign was a struggle to ensure the survival of the infant Christian state.









Legendary military rivals of the Third Crusade. *Above:* A monumental statue of Saladin stands in Damascus, the capital of Syria and the site of Saladin's tomb. *Left:* A statue of Richard the Lionheart in London. King Richard was a natural leader with great skill as a military strategist and an ability to inspire his warriors to follow him into battle. His Muslim contemporaries considered him their greatest enemy.

Later crusades failed, abounding with mistakes and accidents. The Fourth Crusade (1201-1204) resulted in the sack of Constantinople, the great Christian city, in 1203. Various conditions led the crusaders to sack the city. The crusaders were significantly in debt to the city of Venice, so they favored a Byzantine emperor who would repay the debt for them. The preachers of the crusade thought the Constantinopolitans had sided with Saladin and the Muslims during the Third Crusade and had not assisted in the Second.

In 1212, children, caught up in the popular crusader movements, set off to mount a "Children's Crusade" against the Turks. Before they even arrived in the Holy Land, many of the children either starved to death or were killed by disease during the perilously rugged journey east. Those who did not die along the way were captured and sold into slavery.

These two Crusades, as well as a number of unofficial expeditions, diminished enthusiasm and religious fervor for the Holy Wars. Eventually Christians lost possession of the Holy Land when the last of the Latin Kingdoms fell in 1291. Muslim forces succeeded in killing or ejecting the last of the crusaders, thus erasing the crusader kingdoms from the map. Christian forces were unable to gain another foothold in the region until the nineteenth century.



This late medieval illustration depicts Richard the Lionheart and Saladin in a symbolic joust. In a real battle, the crusaders fought with heavy horses and swords wielded with two hands. The Saracens had smaller, quick horses and short, curved scimitars which were slashed at the crusaders from horseback at a full gallop.

## THE FIRST CRUSADE, 1095-1099






Krak des Chevaliers was the headquarters of the Knights Hospitaler in Syria during the Crusades. It was the largest Crusader fortress in the Holy Land. The castle is located east of Tripoli atop a high cliff along the only route from Antioch to Beirut and the Mediterranean Sea. The original fortress had been built in 1031 for the emir of Aleppo. It was captured by Raymond IV of Toulouse early in 1099, during the First Crusade. The Hospitalers expanded it in 1144. It fell to Sultan Baybars in 1271. The fortress is one of the few sites where Crusader frescoes have been preserved.







## THE CRUSADER STATES, 1081-1375





On April 12, 1204 the men of the Fourth Crusade spent three days sacking and looting Constantinople, a city so filled with treasures and holy relics that it was one of the most destructive and profitable conquests in history. Many of the looted treasures remain in Venice including the Four Golden Horses of San Marco and a piece of the True Cross. The feelings of betrayal would create a great rift between the Western and Eastern Churches which still exists today.

## BYZANTIUM'S RESPONSE

At first, many westerners (especially Pope Innocent III) were optimistic about the positive effect the Crusades might have on the relationship between the western and eastern churches. Politically speaking, the Byzantines needed the help of the western Crusaders to contain the Turks and protect the Byzantine Empire. In addition, the Crusades also allowed for a positive exchange of ideas and culture between the more educated Byzantines and the Western Christians. Many hoped that the constant communication between the west and east would help heal the Great Schism of 1054.

The Eastern Empire, for its part, feared the Crusaders and saw the western armies as a threat against their own territory. Emperor Alexius usually tried to transport the Crusaders as quickly as possible across the Bosporus Straits and out of Byzantine territory given the high intensity of suspicion and hostility many Eastern Christians had for the Latin Church. After the sacking of Constantinople during the fourth Crusade, the relationship between the east and west was ruined.

The Byzantines regained control over their own capital in 1261, but would be eventually defeated by the Turks in 1453. The Crusades became a turning point in the life of the eastern empire, and the rift created between the Eastern and Western Churches was so great that after eight centuries it still remains open.





## CRITICISM

After these initial expeditions, soldiers and princes alike lost the religious passion that fueled the excitement and desires of the First Crusade. As St. Bernard of Clairvaux said, many of the soldiers were far from pious and from having sensitive consciences. During this time, regretfully, Jews and Muslims living in Europe also became the subjects of increased violence. Religious men of the Church soon turned their backs on the idea of the Crusade and looked for other ways to secure safety and holiness in the Holy Land.



St. Francis of Assisi met with Sultan Malik-al-Kamil and impressed him by agreeing to walk barefoot through fire to prove the strength of his faith and the power of his God.

In 1219, a young St. Francis of Assisi asked the cardinal overseeing the Fifth Crusade for permission to travel to Palestine and meet with the Muslim leader Sultan Malik-al-Kamil in order to convert him. The Cardinal refused at first, but eventually gave in to St. Francis' persistence. When he arrived in the Holy Land with his friend, Brother Illuminato, the two were captured, beaten, and tortured. Their appearance—unarmed, unafraid, and dressed in beggar's robes—piqued the sultan's curiosity. St. Francis met with the sultan daily for a month discussing religion. Though the sultan never converted, the two became friends, and the sultan granted St. Francis safe travel to and from the Holy Land. St. Francis' example suggested that there were peaceful and more effective means of establishing safety and friendly dialogue in the Holy Land.

## OUTCOME OF THE CRUSADES

The main objectives of the Crusades—the deliverance of the Holy Land and the rescue of the Christians in the East—were ultimately frustrated. Nonetheless, the sacrifice of so many lives was not entirely in vain. The Crusades held back Turkish expansion into Europe for four hundred years and gave Christians a more acute consciousness of their Christian unity, which transcended nationality and race. Contact with Eastern Christian culture through the exchange of people, goods, and ideas had an enormous influence on the intellectual life of Europe. The Crusades made pilgrimages to the Holy Land easier, and the Muslims eventually entrusted Christian Holy Places in Palestine to the Franciscans due to St. Francis of Assisi's friendship with Muslim leaders.

The Crusades also had a powerful influence on military technology. After initial invasions, Crusaders largely waged a defensive war, becoming skilled in constructing castles. Along with castles, there were improvements in siege engines to break down walls and gates including battering rams, towers, and catapults.

The Crusades encouraged travel and fostered a new curiosity for foreign culture among the Latin Christians. Missionaries and merchants set out deep into central Asia, and by the thirteenth century had reached China. The reports from those expeditions (from explorers such as Marco Polo) gave Western Europe abundant information about Asia and fed the desire to explore and evangelize new territories. As a result, the world in many ways became more open for Westerners, and consequently the technological and academic achievements of the Arabic world and the Greek writings on medicine and mathematics facilitated a flowering of Western culture.

## PART II

# The Military Orders: The Knights Templar, the Hospitalers, and the Teutonic Knights

With the recovery of the Holy Places in Palestine during the Crusades, Military Orders sprang up out of the necessity to defend the holy sites as well as the pilgrims who traveled there. These orders combined both military and religious life, emphasizing dedication, discipline, and monastic organization. These soldier-monks were bound by vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and were devoted to the care and defense of pilgrims. Although historians of the military orders have enumerated as many as a hundred different types of orders (stressing the eagerness with which the Middle Ages welcomed an institution so thoroughly corresponding to the two occupations of that period, war and religion), the three oldest and most respected were the Knights Templar, the Knights Hospitalers, and the Teutonic Knights.

The kings and the nobility availed themselves of military orders to strengthen their own position and to protect their kingdoms and fiefdoms. Since this mode of protection, self-defense through warfare, squared so well with Medieval culture, virtually every king and prince had a military order at his disposal.



## THE KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

In 1118, a group of nine French knights founded the oldest of these three orders, the Knights Templar, specifically to protect pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem. The order derived their name, "The Poor Brothers of the Temple of Jerusalem," or Templars, from the Palace of King Baldwin of Jerusalem, which was built on the site of the ancient Temple of Solomon.

The Pope approved the order at the Council of Troyes in 1128, and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, who was present at the council, wrote a rule for them based on the Cistercian Rule. In his treatise *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, St. Bernard wrote:

> In this Order, knighthood blossomed forth into new life: warriors, whose sole aim in life it once was to rob, to plunder, and to kill, have now bound themselves by solemn vow to defend the poor of the Church.





## WARRIOR MONKS



St. Bernard of Clairvaux

The monastic rule drafted by St. Bernard of Clairvaux and followed by the Knights Templar established a strict ascetic way of life that fostered their dedication to physical warfare. According to the rule, the Templars had to wear white monastic garments, distinguishing them on the battlefield where their fierce reputation preceded them. However, off the battlefield the Templars lived the quiet lives of pious monks, exemplifying a seemingly paradoxical existence of war and peace. Their lives of prayer, however, sustained them in war. The prospect of death in battle did not frighten the Templars; they had already given up all worldly pleasures. Never numerous, at their height there were only four hundred knights in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, these dedicated warrior monks inspired other Christian forces. Never fearing death, if the knights were captured in battle they could not offer a ransom. In addition, those captured would always refuse their freedom if it meant denying their faith. At the siege of Safed in 1264, for example, eighty Templars were taken prisoner. After refusing to yield to their captor's wishes to deny Christ, they all were martyred. Over the course of the first two centuries of their existence, it is estimated that almost twenty thousand Knights Templars were killed.

St. Bernard saw the military order as an effective way of tempering the knights' bad habits and explicitly tying the mission of the crusading armies to the mission of Christ's Church. These monks made the three traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and lived lives of monastic warriors.

The Knights Templar were organized in a three rank division with aristocratic soldiers, clergy, and lay brothers from the lower ranks of society who acted as helpers of the aristocratic soldiers. They assumed a major role in the maintenance of safe routes between Europe and the crusader states and the defense of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. This often included safeguarding western money that was flowing to the east in support of the western kingdoms there. As a result, the Templars became one of the most important banking institutions of the age.

After the Holy Land fell again to Muslim forces, the Templars returned to their landholdings in Europe, becoming even wealthier and expanding their banking organization even more. Now based out of Paris, the Templars were excellent transferors and loaners of capital. Their clients included the popes and the French kings.

Feeling threatened by their wealth and influence, the French king Philip the Fair maliciously sought to destroy the order. He falsely charged the Templars with heresy and pressured Pope Clement V to suppress it in 1312. These charges, along with other trumped-up accusations of sacrilege, sodomy, and idolatry, made the order increasingly unpopular in France. The French King extracted "confessions" from the members of the Templars through torture, suppressed the order, and seized most of its property. The Templar Grand Master Jacques de Molay was burned at the stake in 1314. He died courageously, publicly condemning the actions of Philip.





"On Friday 13 October 1307, at precisely the same time, the first glimmer of dawn, all the Templars throughout the kingdom of France were arrested and delivered to various prisons at the command of the king, Philip IV. Among those detained was the master of the whole Order, Jacques of Molay, who was seized at the Templar's Paris house." (from the chronicle of William of Nangis)

Jacques of Molay was burnt at the stake on the Ile-des-Javiaux, an island in the Seine in the center of Paris, on March 18, 1314. He was said to have cursed Philip and Pope Clement V, calling them to join him before God's tribunal. They both died soon after.





## THE KNIGHTS HOSPITALERS

Never as numerous or as wealthy as the Templars, The Knights of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, or Hospitalers, founded in about 1130, grew out of an already existing work of charity consisting of the care of sick pilgrims. The knights, typically dressed in a black cloak adorned with a white cloak, made a major contribution in the defense of Jerusalem, and served as a medical corps to the Crusaders. After the fall of the last Christian stronghold in Palestine in 1291, the Hospitalers retreated to the island of Rhodes.

They held Rhodes for two centuries against the Turks. After the capture of Rhodes in 1523 by the Turks, Emperor Charles V bestowed upon them the island of Malta. Although they were expelled from the island in 1798 by Napoleon, the order still exists today. Known as the Knights of Malta, the order has long since put down the sword and exists only as a philanthropic confraternity.



The Hospitalers held Rhodes for two centuries.

## THE TEUTONIC KNIGHTS

Around 1190, a number of crusaders from Bremen and Lübeck in Germany joined with the members of the German Hospital in Jerusalem to form the Order of the Teutonic Knights. Officially known as the Brothers of the Hospital of Saint Mary of Jerusalem, the Teutonic Knights were modeled largely after the Hospitalers and maintained a headquarters in Jerusalem. As early as 1226 they turned their attention away from the Holy Land. The King of Prussia and the Bishop Primate of Prussia invited the Teutonic Knights to aid in battles against the heathen Slavs and Tartars. In 1229 the Knights moved their headquarters to Prussia and helped aid the German expansion eastward, conquering lands along the Baltic Sea. The Teutonic Knights took Prussia and other lands of Estonia, Lithuania, and Russia until it finally stopped advancing around 1400. The knights remained a cohesive and efficient group until the sixteenth century, when then grand master, Albert of Hohenzollern, abandoned Catholicism (1525) and became a Lutheran Grand Duke of secularized Prussia.

## LEGACY OF THE MILITARY ORDERS

Besides these three orders, there were a great number of lesser military orders. The culture of the Middle Ages offered the right setting for military orders. After the Crusades stopped in the thirteenth century, most of the military orders died out, but their effects on the development of Europe were long lasting.

The Templars were important forerunners in banking, developing an early system of capitalism in Europe. Their immediate successors were the Fugger and Medici families that played important banking roles in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Teutonic Knights were key in making possible the great German expansion into the East known as the *Drang nach Osten* (Urge to the East).

Royalty afterwards utilized the model of military orders to form a legion of knights who were ceremoniously invested into the order of knighthood. Some countries today, most notably England, still bestow these titles as a sign of honor or gratitude.

# PART III
# The Inquisition



In 1231, Pope Gregory IX established the Inquisition as a means of finding and judging heretics.

The first Christian emperors believed that one of the chief duties of an imperial ruler was to use his political and military power to protect the orthodoxy of the Church. The titles they used, like "Pontifex Maximus" and "Bishop of the Exterior," implied their understanding of their office as a divinely appointed agent of Heaven, a civil authority whose duty was bound up with their service of the Church.

Nevertheless, for centuries, Church leaders were reticent to embrace this explicit connection between the interests of the Church and civil society. The Catholic hierarchy was not in favor of stern measures against heresy, which they deemed inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity.

In the Middle Ages, as the Catholic Faith became dominant in Europe, the Church became tied socially, politically, and economically to European life. Christianity provided the moral foundation for law and civil authority. As a major landholder, the Church's well-being had a major economic influence on Europe. Civil authorities, despite their impiety or any dishonest intention, regarded themselves as the political arm of the Church, divinely appointed to assist and preserve the Christian world.

King Peter of Aragon emphasized the connection between the safety of Europe and of the Church when he said: "The enemies of the Cross of Christ and violators of the Christian law are likewise our enemies and the enemies of our kingdom, and ought therefore to be dealt with as such" (quoted in Blötzer, "Inquisition," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. VIII, 1910).

Catholic doctrine and practice was no longer a matter of private belief. Its stability and validity allowed for and protected the stability of Europe. Heretical attacks on the Church were treated as serious threats against the Christian world, and in the thirteenth century, some of these heresies became increasingly more violent.

## THE ORIGINS OF THE INQUISITION

The Inquisition began largely in reaction to the Albigensian heresy, which was growing strong and fast during the early part of the thirteenth century in Southern France. Like the Manichean heresy during the time of St. Augustine, Albigensianism appealed to a misunderstood sense of Christian piety and self-sacrifice, as it saw the soul as good and the body evil. Many were attracted to its emphasis on its ostensible fidelity to the Gospel, expressed in austerity regarding poverty and fasting. Their radical asceticism was driven by their belief in the evil of war, physical pleasure, and even matter itself.

The teachings of Albigensianism posed a dangerous threat to the Christian world since their teachings struck at the core of the Catholic Faith. A form of Gnosticism, Albigensianism believed in two gods that governed the universe: one spiritual and good, the other physical and evil. As a result, all things of the temporal world were considered evil and dangerous. The Albigensians





were hostile to Christianity, and rejected the Mass, the sacraments, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy and organization. In addition to hating anything that had to do with the world, Albigensians rejected feudal government and refused to abide by oaths or allegiances. They were unaccountable to any authority, religious or civil. Often leaders instructed them to burn down churches and destroy their property. They also forbade marriage and the propagation of the human race, and thus they allowed for homosexual relations as an alternative to heterosexual relations, since producing offspring was considered evil. The Albigensians preached suicide as a way to obtain spiritual purity. By shedding themselves of their bodies through suicide, Albigensians believed they would be pure enough to obtain eternal life.

Both civil and religious authorities in Europe saw this heresy as more than a theological disagreement, but as a destructive illness that would have devastating effects on both the Church and Christian societies.

In 1208, an Albigensian follower killed the Papal Legate Pierre de Castelnau, and Pope Innocent III reacted by calling a crusade to suppress the Albigensians in France and rid the heresy from Christendom. He justified his actions by saying:

> **If a crusade were holy which aimed at delivering the Lord's Sepulcher from the infidels, was it not as holy when it took up arms in defense of the priesthood, Sacraments, the Commandments themselves, and the social order?**

The purging dragged on for more than twenty years, and although thousands died and Albigensian lands in southern France were seized, many adherents to the heresy were still scattered throughout Europe.



The Spanish friar and papal Inquisitor Dominic Guzman believed in peaceful methods of persuasion such as debating the Albigensians in public.

French kings Louis VIII and Louis IX, as well as Emperor Frederick II, took strong measures against the Albigensians by applying capital punishment. Consequently, burning heretics at the stake became a common practice. Civil rulers were becoming increasingly more involved with the prosecution and punishment of heretics to maintain civil order.

Pope Gregory IX became anxious over this extension of civil authority into matters of Faith and doctrine. He wanted to protect the ecclesiastical authority of the Church from being usurped by the secular rulers. Although the pope sought to reserve authority over faith, he also wanted to remain on good terms with the emperor and kings.

In 1231, Pope Gregory IX established the Inquisition as a means of detection and purgation of heresy. He appointed a number of Papal Inquisitors, mostly Dominicans and Franciscans, who could serve as independent judges free from any secular interest and influence.

## THE INQUISITORS

The pope did not establish the Inquisition as a distinct tribunal. Rather, he appointed special judges who examined and judged the doctrinal opinions and moral conduct of suspicious individuals. They often worked within the context of the civil system, but with papal authority. The judge, or Inquisitor, had to adhere to the established rules of canonical procedure. Gregory IX also provided

that the inquisitional tribunal could only work with the diocesan bishop's co-operation.

The Dominicans and Franciscans were two new orders that enjoyed rigorous and solid theological training and spiritual formation. This education prompted the hierarchy to employ them as inquisitors. Given their spirituality and lifestyle, the Dominicans and Franciscans would be less likely to be swayed by worldly motives or pressure from the secular authorities. It was safe to assume that they were not merely endowed with the requisite knowledge, but that they would also, quite unselfishly fulfill their duty for the good of the Church. In addition, there was reason to hope that, because of their great popularity and moral authority, they would not encounter too much opposition.



This painting depicts an event that occurred in 1207, in Albi, France, when St. Dominic proved to the Albigensians that their books containing heretic ideas burn in the fire while the Catholic books fly up away from the fire undamaged.

It was a heavy burden of responsibility that fell upon the shoulders of an inquisitor, who was obliged, at least indirectly, to decide between life and death. The Church insisted that he possess the qualities of a good judge expressed in an ardent zeal for protecting and promoting the Faith, the salvation of souls, and the extirpation of heresy. Amid all difficulties, pressures, and dangers of the task, he should never yield to anger or passion. Nevertheless, he should meet hostility fearlessly, but should not encourage it. He should yield to no inducement or threat and yet not be heartless. When circumstances permitted, he should observe mercy in allotting penalties. Finally, he should listen to the counsel of others, and not trust too much in his own opinion or first impressions.

Inquisitors tried to answer to this ideal. Far from being inhuman, the Church tried to find men with spotless character, and sometimes they were of truly admirable sanctity. A number of them have even been canonized by the Church.

## PROCESS FOR INQUISITION

The procedure for inquisition began with a month long "term of grace" proclaimed by the inquisitor when he came into a heresy-ridden district, which allowed the inhabitants to appear before the inquisitor, confess their sins, and perform penance. Of those who confessed heresy of their own accord, a suitable penance (such as a pilgrimage, fasting, or wearing crosses on their clothes) was imposed, but never a severe punishment like incarceration or surrender to the civil power.

If the accused did not confess, the trial began. The accused would be asked to swear his innocence on the four Gospels. If he or she still claimed innocence, there were a number of methods used to extract a confession. First judges would remind the accused the punishment that awaited if he or she were convicted without a confession, hoping that the fear of punishment may convince a guilty man to admit to the truth, in hopes of a more lenient sentence. If the accused still did not confess, he or she was subject to close confinement (possibly emphasized by curtailment of food).





visits of an already tried man (who would attempt to induce free confession through friendly persuasion), and confinement to an inquisition prison for serious offenders. When no voluntary admission was made, evidence was still necessary for conviction. Legally, there had to be at least two witnesses, and conscientious judges often required even more witnesses to convict someone of heresy.

Witnesses for the defense hardly ever appeared, as they would almost inevitably be suspected of being heretics or at least favorable to heresy. For the same reason those impeached rarely secured legal advisers, and therefore made a personal response to the main points of a charge. False witnesses were punished without mercy. If caught, they risked life imprisonment or worse punishment. It must be noted that secret examination of witnesses during the Inquisition was not a peculiarity of the time. This procedure was common to all civil courts as well throughout Europe.

The accused was not given the right to know the names of his accusers. However, the accused was given the right to submit a list of names of his alleged enemies, which often facilitated a just verdict. Furthermore, the accused could appeal to higher authority, including the pope (cf. Shannon, *Medieval Inquisition*, 1983, pp. 139-140).

In addition to the inquisitor, *boni viri* (good men) were frequently called upon. Thirty, fifty, eighty, or more persons—laymen and priests; secular and regular—would be summoned, all highly respected and independent men, and sworn to give verdict on the cases before them to the best of their knowledge and belief. They were always called upon to decide two questions: culpability (and the reason for it) and the punishment to be imparted. Although the *boni viri* were entitled only to an advisory vote, the final ruling was usually in accordance with their views.

The judges were also assisted by a *concilium permanens*, or standing council, composed of other sworn judges.

## SIMON DE MONTFORT AND THE BATTLE OF MURET

One of the most important battles against the Albigensians took place at Muret, a small town south of Toulouse in southern France, on September 12, 1213. With the support of Pope Innocent III, Simon de Montfort led a small army of Catholics against the Albigensians, led by Count Raymond VI and Peter II of Aragon. The Albigensian army was far larger than that of Simon de Montfort, and so the Catholic general waited for reinforcements to arrive from the North. Help never came.

With about eight hundred cavalry, Simon was facing a heavily reinforced enemy of over two thousand cavalry and fifteen thousand infantry. This massive force marched towards the Catholic position at Muret from Toulouse, intent on crushing the small Catholic resistance. Faced with a seemingly helpless situation, Simon and his army turned to St. Dominic (the founder of Mendicant order that will be studied in the next chapter) for spiritual guidance. At his suggestion the Catholic forces began praying the Rosary, and the night before battle, Simon heard Mass at midnight, and prayed to God for a victory. His enemy Peter II spent the night with his mistress and could barely stand straight the next morning.

That morning Simon's tiny army charged across a mile of open country and attacked the stunned Raymond and Peter. During the course of the battle, St. Dominic knelt before the altar of Saint-Jacque in Muret asking God for a miraculous victory. God answered his prayers, and in a surprisingly short time Peter II was killed and the heretics were defeated. It is believed that Simon erected a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary in thanks to St. Dominic and his prayers.

## THE FINAL VERDICT IN THE INQUISITION

The ultimate decision was usually pronounced with a solemn ceremony. One or two days prior to this ceremony, everyone concerned had the charges read to him again, briefly. The ceremony began very early in the morning. Secular officials were sworn in and made to vow obedience to the inquisitor in all things pertaining to the suppression of heresy. Then the offenses were announced and punishments were assigned to the guilty party. This announcement began with the minor punishments, and went on to the most severe, such as perpetual imprisonment or death. Those found guilty were then turned over to the civil power, whose duty it was to carry out the punishments.

Most of the punishments that were inflicted were largely humane. Most frequently, certain good works were ordered like the building of a church, the visitation to a church, a pilgrimage, the offering of a candle or a chalice, or participation in a crusade. Other stiffer penalties included fines, whose proceeds were devoted to such public purposes as church-building or road-making; whipping with rods during religious service; the pillory; or wearing colored crosses (Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1997, p. 836).



Our twenty-first century minds consider Medieval punishments abhorrent and barbaric, but the punishments inflicted in those times were normal for Medieval cultures.

The hardest penalties were imprisonment and various degrees of exclusion from the communion of the Church, as well as consequent surrender to the civil power for harsher sentencing.

Imprisonment was not always seen as punishment in the proper sense: it was rather looked on as an opportunity for repentance, a preventive measure against backsliding or infecting others. It was known as *immuration* (from the Latin *murus*, a wall), or incarceration, and was inflicted for a definite time or for life. *Immuration* for life was the lot of those who had perhaps recanted only from fear of death or had once before abjured heresy.

Although it is hard to know exactly how many victims were handed over to civil power, there are some historical approximations. At the height of the Inquisition in southern France in the thirteenth century, three people were burned for heresy per year (Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1997, p. 836).

A more terrible fate awaited the heretic when judged by a secular court. In 1249 Count Raymond VII of Toulouse ordered many confessed heretics to be burned in his presence without permitting them to recant. It is impossible to imagine any such procedures before the Inquisition courts.

The punishments inflicted were considered, at the time, the normal expression not only of the legislative power, but also of the popular hatred for heresy in an age that dealt both vigorously and roughly with criminals of every type. Civil authorities dealt much more severely with heretics than did the papal inquisitors, and in many ways the Inquisition helped curtail what could have become a brutal and widespread popular reaction to Medieval heresy. The heretic, in a word, was an outlaw whose offense, in the popular mind, deserved severe punishment. But this does not excuse the abuses of those who failed to witness Christ's mercy and forgiveness when acting as a representative of Christ's Church. Even if the Inquisition helped lessen an evil of the time, it still







The greatest battle of the Reconquista was fought on July 12, 1212 at Las Navas de Tolosa in southern Spain, when the Muslim forces were defeated by a great Christian army which included kings of Aragon, Castile, Navarre, the military orders and 70,000 French crusaders. This battle was decisive, pushing Muslims back to Granada in the far south.

allowed for a certain amount of injustice to remain. Nonetheless, every historic age must be evaluated in light of its own value system, not ours. Incidents taken out of context can lead to misunderstanding. To Christians during the Inquisition, threats to one's immortal soul (eternal damnation) were much more feared than most people can appreciate today.

## THE INQUISITION IN SPAIN

Religious conditions similar to those in Southern France led to the establishment of the Inquisition in Spain, where it lasted until the eighteenth century. However, motives for the Inquisition developed differently in Spain. The Spanish Inquisition coincided with the *Reconquista*, the reconquering of Spain by the Christians against the Muslims and the Jews. National unification was not completed until 1492, and before and after that date, the Inquisition was used to promote and retain Spanish unity under a common Christian religion.

The Spanish Inquisition formally began after the establishment of the Papal Inquisition around the time of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. Beginning in 1480, Spanish civil authorities took over the Inquisition in Spain.

Though the Spanish Inquisition developed into mostly a civil tribunal, theologians never questioned its ecclesiastical nature. The Holy See sanctioned the Spanish Inquisition and granted to the grand inquisitor judicial authority concerning matters of Faith. The grand inquisitor—technically appointed by the pope, though the Spanish Inquisition operated quite independently of the Holy See—could also pass down jurisdiction to subsidiary tribunals under his control. An understanding of Spanish history—uniquely its own—reveals both the perceived and actual threats from Muslim and Jewish militancy against Spain.

The Spanish Inquisition was significantly crueler than the earlier papal inquisition against the Albigensians. Certainly, many reports of the atrocities committed have been the product of fable. Especially with today's much more refined appreciation of human dignity, it is especially clear that many of the methods employed by the Inquisition flagrantly violated the dignity of the person. Nevertheless, disedifying practices of the Medieval churchmen, by modern standards, intended to preserve the purity of Church teaching and protect her children from the corrupting effects of heresy as displayed by the Albigensians. Although some of the disedifying practices of individuals and groups within the Medieval Church have no justification, it is always important to view them in their proper historical context. It bears repeating that heresy was viewed as a serious crime during the Middle Ages, and the usual punishment was excommunication.



A Spanish Court of Inquisition in Madrid in 1680. It is especially clear to Christians today that many of the methods employed by the Inquisitions throughout medieval Europe flagrantly contradict Christ's message of compassion and mercy. The methods, however, must be viewed in context with the cultural norms of medieval times and real threats to the survival of the Church.

## CONCLUSION

Like virtually all the periods of the Church's history, the era of the Crusades shows both lights and shadows. Although the guiding light of Divine Providence continually helps the people of God to push the kingdom of God forward, amid the Church's efforts to spread and protect the Faith, sins and shortcomings of her children will always be present. However, without compromising objective moral truth, judgment must take into careful consideration the zeal and uncompromising faith in Christ's Church exemplified by the era of the Crusades. Muslim expansionism "by the sword" posed serious threats to Christian Europe and engulfed and eradicated all the major Christian cities and shrines of the East. Hence, the rigorous response of a people with defects and weaknesses who at the same time see the Catholic tradition as a treasure of inestimable value.





## THE SPANISH INQUISITION (1480-1834)

King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, Crown Heads of Aragon and Castille, instituted the Spanish Inquisition in 1480 to investigate Jewish and Muslim converts (*conversos*) to Christianity suspected of secretly practicing their former religions. These rulers believed their authority was derived from God and that lasting civil unity would be achieved through a united national faith. They feared that Jewish and Islamic elements might seep into the national religion, as they had in art, architecture, and language, and cause religious confusion and possibly lead to civil unrest.

Pope Sixtus IV believed that the situation in Spain posed a legitimate threat to Catholicism and issued a papal bull in November of 1478 approving the Inquisition. Sixtus IV mandated that judges of the Inquisition be at least forty years old, of excellent reputation, renowned for their virtue and wisdom, and that they possess specific degrees in theology and canon law. The Inquisition had authority over baptized Christians only. Civil authorities were responsible for the persecution of non-Christian Jews and Muslims.

In 1480 Ferdinand and Isabella appointed two Dominicans, Miguel Morillo and Juan de San Martin, as the first inquisitors in Seville. By 1482 Sixtus IV received reports of torture, unjustifiable imprisonment, and seizure of executed prisoners' property. He censured the inquisitors and would have deposed them, but Ferdinand and Isabella intervened.

In 1487 Fray Tomas Torquemada was named Grand Inquisitor. He developed the Inquisition as it lasted until its abolition in1834. Courts of the Inquisition were commissioned throughout Spain and centralized under the *Consejo Supremo* (High Council). Local courts required the approval of the *Consejo Supremo* prior to actions like imprisoning accused priests.

According to procedure, an accused person had forty days to renounce the accusation against him. This period was often extended. False accusers could be punished severely or executed. Lawyers defended the accused, who could be imprisoned if the accusation against them was proven or if the court unanimously deemed it necessary. Accused persons denying proven accusations could be tortured. Those charged with heresy were offered a public reconciliation called an *auto de fe* (act of faith), which gradually evolved to include Mass, reconciliation of the accused, and in some cases the pronouncement of punishment. Those professing heretical beliefs who did not recant were burned at the stake. Contrary to misleading reports, executions did not take place at the *auto de fe* ceremony.

After the Jews and Moors were expelled from Spain in 1492, the Inquisition focused on Protestant heresies. Although it was active until 1820 and abolished 14 years later, discussions of the Inquisition typically reference the time before 1700.

Historical accounts of the Spanish Inquisition are often naively defensive or wildly exaggerated. Some ignore the Inquisition's blatant disregard for human dignity; others use it as a vehicle for contemporary anti-Catholic sentiments. Many accounts originated from the "Black Legend," an anti-Spanish smear campaign conducted by enemies of the Spanish crown. No one knows how many people were executed during the Inquisition, but recent studies of court records suggest that less than two percent of those accused of heresy were condemned to death. This rate of execution was far less than that of the European civil courts of that time.

## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

**From Bl. Humbert of Romans' preaching in defense of the Crusades, ca. 1272**

Some of these critics say it is not in accordance with the Christian religion to shed blood in this way, even that of wicked infidels. For Christ did not act thus; rather, "When he suffered, he threatened not, but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly," as Peter says. The saints of old did not teach this either. One should conclude, therefore, that the Christian religion, which ought to adhere to the example and teaching of Christ and the saints, ought not to initiate wars of any kind whatsoever.

[But] Who is so stupid as to dare say that, were infidels or evil men to desire to kill every Christian and to wipe out the worship of Christ from the world, one ought not to resist them? It is clear in the teaching of Christ himself, who says, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his coat and buy a sword." What the Lord said to Peter, "Put up again thy sword," etc., applied to Peter on that particular occasion. It must be held without doubt that it is not inconsistent with the Christian religion to wage war according to circumstances against Saracens, extremely wicked men and particular enemies of Christendom.



A battle-weary Teutonic knight heads his horse toward home.

**Pope Innocent III, On the Jews**
***Decree of 1199***

We decree that no Christian shall use violence to compel the Jews to accept baptism. But if a Jew, of his own accord, because of a change in his faith, shall have taken refuge with Christians, after his wish has been made known, he may be made a Christian without any opposition. For anyone who has not of his own will sought Christian baptism cannot have the true Christian faith. No Christian shall do the Jews any personal injury, except in executing the judgements of a judge, or deprive them of their possessions, or change the rights and privileges which they have been accustomed to have. During the celebration of their festivals, no one shall disturb them by beating them with clubs or by throwing stones at them. No one shall compel them to render any services except those which they have been accustomed to render. And to prevent the baseness and avarice of wicked men we forbid anyone to deface or damage their cemeteries or to extort money from them by threatening to exhume the bodies of their dead....

**John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation**
***Ecclesia in Asia***

Because Jesus was born, lived, died and rose from the dead in the Holy Land, that small portion of Western Asia became a land of promise and hope for all mankind. Jesus knew and loved this land. He made his own the history, the sufferings and the hopes of its people. He loved its people and embraced their Jewish traditions and heritage. God in fact had long before chosen this people and revealed himself to them in preparation for the Savior's coming. And from this land, through the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church went forth to make "disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19).





## VOCABULARY

***BONI VIRI***
Latin meaning "good men," these groups of thirty or more highly respected and independent men, both laymen and priests, were summoned during the Inquisition to give verdict on cases and decide punishment.

***CONCILIUM PERMANENS***
Standing council of sworn judges who assisted the judge during an inquisition.

**CRUSADE**
From the Latin word *crux* (cross) it refers to wars of a religious character, or specifically to a series of eight defensive military expeditions between 1096 and 1270 undertaken by Christians to liberate the Holy Land and stop the expansion of Islam.

***DRANG NACH OSTEN* (URGE TO THE EAST)**
German expansion into the East.

***IMMURATION***
Imprisonment for those who recanted their heresy because of fear of punishment or death.

**INDULGENCE**
A remission before God of temporal punishment due to sins, the guilt of which has already been forgiven through the sacrament of Penance.

**INQUISITOR**
Special judges appointed by the pope during the Inquisition who examined and judged the doctrinal opinions and moral conduct of suspicious individuals.

**MILITARY ORDER**
Arising out of the necessity of defending the Holy Places in Palestine as well as the pilgrims who traveled there, these orders combined both military and religious life, emphasizing dedication, discipline and monastic organization.

***RECONQUISTA***
The Christian reconquering of part of the Iberian Peninsula (modern-day Spain) following 700 years of Muslim and Jewish control.

**TERM OF GRACE**
The procedure for inquisition began with this month long period which allowed for the inhabitants of a heresy-ridden district to appear before the inquisitor, confess their sins, and perform penance.



*Discovery of the Holy Lance at Antioch during the First Crusade.*

During the hardships of the siege of Antioch in 1097-98, the Crusaders were encouraged by miraculous visions which assured them of their continued support from God. One such vision came to a priest named Peter Bartholomew who was repeatedly urged by St. Andrew to dig up the Lance which had pierced Christ's side on the cross. Peter's subsequent unearthing of the Lance was hailed as a miracle by the battered troops.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What were the crusades?
2. What new Muslim people appeared on the scene in the Middle East as a new threat to Byzantium?
3. When and where did Pope Bl. Urban II preach the First Crusade and why?
4. What were the temporal and spiritual motivations for participation in the Crusades?
5. When was the First Crusade?
6. How was the timing of the First Crusade particularly fortuitous with regard to the Seljuk Turks and other Muslims?
7. How long did the Europeans control Jerusalem?
8. What Seljuk Turkish leader was an excellent military commander and essentially forced the Europeans into a retreat?
9. What was the result of the "Children's Crusade"?
10. How did the Byzantines view the crusaders?
11. What minority groups within Europe sometimes became victims of violence and murder during the crusades?
12. Describe the relationship between St. Francis of Assisi and Sultan Malik-al-Kamil.
13. What were some of the effects of the crusades?
14. What was a military order?
15. What was the Knights Templar's specific mission?
16. Who wrote the rule for the Knights Templar?
17. How were the Knights Templar organized?
18. How did the Knights Templar become wealthy?
19. When were the Knights Hospitalers founded and what was their vocation?
20. Where did the Knights Hospitalers go after the fall of Palestine?
21. What other island were the Knights Hospitalers given in 1523 by Holy Roman emperor Charles V?
22. The Teutonic Knights did not keep Jerusalem and hospitals for very long before turning their attention to which lands?
23. Who secularized the Teutonic Knights?
24. What was the Inquisition?
25. What two orders were placed in charge of the Inquisition?
26. What group was the initial target of the Inquisition?
27. What were the five methods of extracting a confession from an accused person?
28. Who actually carried out the sentences of the guilty?
29. How was the Spanish Inquisition different from Inquisitions in other parts of Europe?





## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. Many people believe that the Crusades were aggressive excursions with only negative outcomes. Is this true? Cite reasons for your answers.
2. Is there a conflict of interest with the papacy preaching a crusade in a religion that professes peace? Do you think the papacy would call for a crusade today? Do you think the papacy would call for the establishment of a military order today?
3. Why was the Inquisition instituted? What modern ideas make the Inquisition seem absurd by today's standards?

## FROM THE CATECHISM

**841** *The Church's relationship with the Muslims.* "The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims; these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day" (*LG* 16; cf. *NA* 3).

**2244** Every institution is inspired, at least implicitly, by a vision of man and his destiny, from which it derives the point of reference for its judgment, its hierarchy of values, its line of conduct. Most societies have formed their institutions in the recognition of a certain preeminence of man over things. Only the divinely revealed religion has clearly recognized man's origin and destiny in God, the Creator and Redeemer. The Church invites political authorities to measure their judgments and decisions against this inspired truth about God and man:

> Societies not recognizing this vision or rejecting it in the name of their independence from God are brought to seek their criteria and goal in themselves or to borrow them from some ideology. Since they do not admit that one can defend an objective criterion of good and evil, they arrogate to themselves an explicit or implicit totalitarian power over man and his destiny, as history shows (cf. *CA* 45; 46).

**2245** The Church, because of her commission and competence, is not to be confused in any way with the political community. She is both the sign and the safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person. "The Church respects and encourages the political freedom and responsibility of the citizen" (*GS* 76 § 3).

**2266** The efforts of the state to curb the spread of behavior harmful to people's rights and to the basic rules of civil society correspond to the requirement of safeguarding the common good. Legitimate public authority has the right and the duty to inflict punishment proportionate to the gravity of the offense. Punishment has the primary aim of redressing the disorder introduced by the offense. When it is willingly accepted by the guilty party, it assumes the value of expiation. Punishment then, in addition to defending public order and protecting people's safety, has a medicinal purpose: as far as possible, it must contribute to the correction of the guilty party (cf. Lk 23: 4-43).

## FROM THE CATECHISM Continued

**2297** *Kidnapping* and *hostage taking* bring on a reign of terror; by means of threats they subject their victims to intolerable pressures. They are morally wrong. *Terrorism* threatens, wounds, and kills indiscriminately is gravely against justice and charity. *Torture* which uses physical or moral violence to extract confessions, punish the guilty, frighten opponents, or satisfy hatred is contrary to respect for the person and for human dignity. Except when performed for strictly therapeutic medical reasons, directly intended *amputations, mutilations,* and *sterilizations* performed on innocent persons are against the moral law (cf. DS 3722).

**2298** In times past, cruel practices were commonly used by legitimate governments to maintain law and order, often without protest from the Pastors of the Church, who themselves adopted in their own tribunals the prescriptions of Roman law concerning torture. Regrettable as these facts are, the Church always taught the duty of clemency and mercy. She forbade clerics to shed blood. In recent times it has become evident that these cruel practices were neither necessary for public order, nor in conformity with the legitimate rights of the human person. On the contrary, these practices led to ones even more degrading. It is necessary to work for their abolition. We must pray for the victims and their tormentors.

**2309** The strict conditions for *legitimate defense by military force* require rigorous consideration. The gravity of such a decision makes it subject to rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy. At one and the same time:

—the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain;

—all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective;

—there must be serious prospects of success;

—the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition.

These are the traditional elements enumerated in what is called the "just war" doctrine.

The evaluation of these conditions for moral legitimacy belongs to the prudential judgment of those who have responsibility for the common good.

**2312** The Church and human reason both assert the permanent *validity of the moral law during armed conflict.* "The mere fact that war has regrettably broken out does not mean that everything becomes licit between the warring parties" (*GS* 79 § 4).

**2328** The Church and human reason assert the permanent validity of the moral law during armed conflicts. Practices deliberately contrary to the law of nations and to its universal principles are crimes.



CHAPTER 10

# The High Middle Ages: Scholastic Development And The Flowering Of Culture

*Christian philosophy, piety, and art boldly ventured into new depths, and the saints of the period showed how sanctity can pervade all of our human endeavors.*



## CHAPTER 10

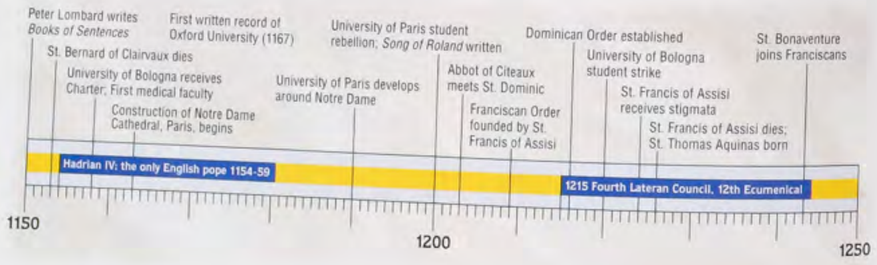
# The High Middle Ages: Scholastic Development And The Flowering Of Culture

Training and spiritual life! These two things are inseparable for anyone who aspires to lead a Christian life which is truly committed to forming and building a more just and more brotherly society. If you wish to be faithful in your daily lives to the demands of God and to the expectations of humanity and history, you must constantly nourish yourselves on the word of God and the sacraments, "so that Christ's word may dwell in you abundantly" (Col 3:16).

— John Paul II, *Homily*, Viedma, Argentina, April 6, 1987

Before the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, most educational activity in Europe took place in monasteries and cathedral schools. Over time, as the demand for education among monks and nobles increased, these schools began to develop expanded areas of study for their student bodies. The schools added philosophy, astronomy, civil and canon law, and medicine to their curricula and reorganized to meet administrative demands. Modeling themselves after feudal trade guilds, schools began to develop into university systems that provided the proper environment for unprecedented educational and intellectual advancement.

One result of the Medieval university system was Scholasticism. Led by thinkers like St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, and the English Franciscan Bl. John Duns Scotus, Scholasticism grew out of the style of Medieval teaching, combining theological and philosophical methods in their efforts to understand the highest truths of philosophy and theology and man's relationship to God and his Church. These Scholastics produced some of the most lasting and valuable works in the Western Tradition.



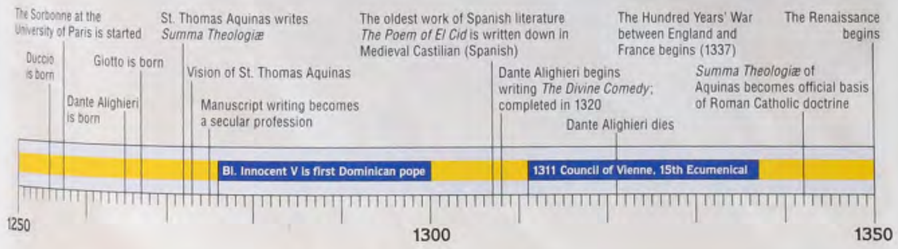







It is training and spiritual life, faith and love of God that leads us closer to knowing Christ.

In the midst of this flourishing of Medieval thought there came another movement led by two extraordinary saints. St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic founded the first two mendicant orders whose devotion to simple piety and poverty helped rejuvenate religious zeal in the late Medieval age. These orders remained a constant reminder that, despite the potential glory of the human capacity to understand, ultimately, as John Paul II reminded, it is "training and spiritual life," faith and love of God that leads to greater knowledge and understanding of Christ.



# PART I

# The Universities

Beginning in the mid-eleventh century, the demand for education among both clergy and nobles increased dramatically. More and more students flocked to schools, and as the student bodies began to outgrow the cathedral and monastic schools, teachers and students alike recognized the need to reorganize the established educational systems. Following Feudal organizations, schools began to restructure into guilds. Rather than training as a knight or a craftsman, many people began to study at the universities, apprenticing to expert teachers and eventually mastering their disciplines. Degrees awarded to students reflected the same type of recognition bestowed upon members of other trades.

In the North, masters united to form a *universitas*, a type of corporation that protected the educational and administrative interests of its members. In Southern Europe, students formed similar organizations that helped ensure their safety and the quality of their education. As it were, the students at those universities held authority over their teachers, hiring and firing them as they saw fit. In the North, teachers determined the curriculum and the nature of the student body.

## ORIGIN OF UNIVERSITIES

The development of the University of Paris in 1175 typified the growth of most northern universities. In Paris, there existed three cathedral schools that became especially famous during the early part of the Medieval period: the Palatine or palace school, the school of Notre-Dame, and Sainte-Geneviève. Over time these schools began producing renowned professors, and as their reputations grew, more pupils enrolled in schools where these celebrated lecturers taught. As schools expanded, more lodging was provided, and the numbers of courses increased. Eventually the three schools formed a corporation that protected the professors and combined each individual school's discipline. Although each school continued to teach its specialty, students could now receive a broader education from the unified schools that made up the University of Paris.

In the South, the Italian city of Bologna succeeded Ravenna as the home of jurisprudence in Europe. As the Lombard cities grew together with the demand for legal instruction, the school at Bologna in 1088 became a center for legal study. The University of Bologna began teaching the *Dictamen*, or Art of Composition, which included rules for drawing up briefs and other legal documents. This specialized training attracted many students, and there soon developed another intense program specializing in grammar and rhetoric, which were both closely connected with the study of law. As the number of disciplines increased, students organized to help ensure their educational security. Bologna became the undisputed center of legal training in Europe, and almost all of the important scholars of canon and Roman law studied, at least for some time, at that school.

The school at Salerno had more singular origins. The Benedictine monastery of Salerno, established in 794, devoted much of its work to the study of ancient works on botanical and medical sciences. The fame of the monastery's expertise in these areas grew after Constantino Africano, a Christian who studied in the Arabic schools in Babylon, Baghdad, and in Egypt, took up residence at the monastery around the year 1070. Under the influence of Africano, the monastery school added philosophical and Arabic works to the medical studies, helping the school advance its reputation as an institution with a superior understanding of medicine. As the school grew, it became the first university in Europe to offer degrees and licenses for its studies.





## STUDENT REBELLION IN EARLY UNIVERSITIES

The formation of the university was often not a peaceful or pleasant process. Many universities emerged following violent student rebellions.

In Paris, France, in 1200, for example, a collective of students demanded legal and economic concessions from the city. Their demands were a result of a recent altercation between local townspeople and students at the university. A student insulted a local tavern's wine and was thrown out of the tavern. In response, a number of students stormed the tavern and attacked the owner and some of the patrons. Locals retaliated further. They tracked down the students and beat them severely, killing a number of the students. Afterwards, students protested and demanded justice. As a result, the city government freed the students from local taxes and prosecution.

A similar altercation led to the solidifying of student independence at the University of Bologna, Italy, in 1220. Protesting the city's economic practices, students withdrew from Bologna and refused to return until the city made concessions. Officials granted students special privileges and agreed to prosecute teachers who skipped or were late for classes. Thus, by rebelling, the students achieved some level of power over their teachers and independence from local jurisdiction.



*Left:* University of Paris in Medieval school days
*Below:* University of Paris today

The university is often referred to as the Sorbonne which was originally created for the use of 20 theology students in 1257 as Collège de Sorbonne by Robert de Sorbon (1201-1274), a chaplain and confessor to King St. Louis IX of France. However, the university itself was started years earlier.



The Sorbonne (now organized as University of Paris I-XIII) remains one of the most famous and prestigious universities in the world, having produced Nobel Prize winners from its faculty and student body, as well as a number of the greatest intellectuals, political theorists, scientists, engineers, doctors, theologians, and artists of the Western tradition and canon.

Because of their gradual and undocumented origins, myths concerning their true beginnings surrounded all of the Medieval universities. The University of Oxford claimed the most extraordinary beginnings. Fanciful popular myths allege that its foundation dates as far back to when Samuel was judge over Judea or by the Trojans having escaped from their conquered city. The most popular myth attributed Oxford to the patronage of the Saxon King Alfred the Great (849-899), who was known as a supporter of education. Like the other universities, the exact date of the establishment of Oxford is hard to pinpoint since it grew gradually out of schools which in Saxon times were grouped around the monastic foundation of St. Frideswide (eighth century). Over time, well-known scholars lecturing on theology and canon law attracted students from all of Europe to Oxford.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE UNIVERSITY

Although the organization of Northern and Southern European universities differed, normally both were collections of different schools that taught their respective disciplines. It was not until 1230 that several branches of learning were taught at one university.

At Bologna, Italy, which became the template for most of the Southern European universities, students from all over Europe came to the city to study. For protection and housing, foreign students formed groups called "nations." They elected a rector who led the nation and helped administer the affairs of the university.

Paris is the center that typified the structure of the northern European universities; the chancellor had full authority over issuing licenses to teach and awarding degrees. Naturally, this led to friction between teachers and the chancellor. To protect their own interests and authority, teachers bound together to form a guild, or *universitates*. The students also organized into nations, but they never had the same authority as those in Southern Europe. By the middle of the thirteenth century, the teachers' guilds had separated into faculties according to the corresponding discipline that was being taught. A dean headed each faculty, and those same deans voted for a rector who was the head of all the faculties and the university (similar to the modern-day president).



This Medieval illustration depicts a professor and students at the University of Paris.

The guild organizations allowed these universities to remain independent, and they were theoretically exempt from arrest or punishment by the secular authorities. Each university eventually secured independence from both lay and local ecclesiastical authorities. This fostered an environment of free inquiry and unobstructed explorations into all aspects of learning.

## ACADEMIC COURSEWORK

By unifying various schools and disciplines, the universities were able to offer a program called *studium generale*, which included the study of theology (including philosophy), law (both civil and canon law), medicine, which was called physics, and the arts. The arts were also divided into two main sections: the *trivium* (Latin for "three ways"), in which Latin grammar, rhetoric, and logic were studied, and the *quadrivium* (four ways), which included arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music.





## THE CHURCH AND LEARNING, 1100-1700



A student needed to be able to read and write in Latin before being admitted into the university. Once admitted, he began his studies with the *trivium*, mastering writing and reading and studying Classical and Christian works on the subjects. The teacher, or master, would read the text of a work on a topic along with his predecessors' comments on the text before adding his own ideas. This method of teaching was called "hearing" a book, i.e., lecture (from the Latin *lectio*, the act of reading). After completing the *trivium*, the student became a "bachelor of arts," and was considered qualified to instruct others in those subjects. He then moved on to study the *quadrivium*, during which he spent five or six years studying before earning a "master of arts" degree. All students who finished university studies received both degrees, and they could then leave the school or continue on to study more intensively for a doctorate degree in law, medicine, or theology. To earn these higher degrees, students not only "heard" books, but also debated their professors on the subjects and prepared formal responses to tough questions posed by their superiors.



A student needed to be able to read and write in Latin before being admitted into the university.

## THE EFFECTS OF THE UNIVERSITY

The cultural exchange brought about by the Crusades ushered in a flood of previously unknown books and ideas into Western Europe. The universities were able to maintain significant academic liveliness through the continued introduction of these new books to their curriculum. As works in mathematics, philosophy, and theology were discovered or written, they would be adopted into various university studies. Legal studies at Bologna advanced the understanding of canon law and produced skilled and scholarly clergy who became experts in both Roman and Church law. These hubs of expert academic learning helped lead Europe into a period of exceptional intellectual growth.

The universities grew immensely, and many of the foremost rulers and church leaders passed through their doors. The University of Paris, for example, educated the most distinguished youths of the kingdom, and the courses at Paris were considered so necessary that many foreigners flocked to them. Popes Celestine II, Innocent III, and Adrian IV studied at Paris, and Pope Alexander II sent his nephews there. St. Thomas of Canterbury; St. Stanislaus, the Archbishop of Krakow; and St. Bernard of Clairvaux all studied in Paris. At one time there were as many students in the city of Paris as residents. Bologna's student body also expanded, and at one time it numbered as many as ten thousand students. Oxford is said to have had even more. Art, philosophy, and science all flourished because of these universities, and the work of many of the academics would shed new light on the many mysteries of the Faith.





# PART II
# Scholasticism

New philosophical texts entered into Europe as the crusaders returned, and scholars set about the task of reconciling these "new" ideas with over a thousand years of Christian belief and doctrine. Previously, European scholars only had access to neo-Platonic philosophy and Aristotle's logic to use as a tool for their theology. Until the latter part of the twelfth century and the beginning of the thirteenth, most of Aristotle's words were unknown in the West. By contrast, in the East there existed both Arab and Jewish commentaries on Aristotle's works, espeially his *Metaphysics*. This new discovery of Aristotle's thought would revolutionize theology and subsequently elicit debate and controversy.

With access to Aristotle's works, universities fostered a new style of inquiry in philosophy, known as Scholasticism, or "science of the schools." This method led to a rebirth of interest in Classical philosophy and the relationship between Faith and reason.

## METHODS AND MYSTERY

The methods of Scholasticism came largely out of a teaching technique that developed in the universities. When a scholar read an ancient or authoritative text, he drew up lists of contradictory statements. Then, by means of logical reasoning, the scholar tried to reveal the underlying agreement between these points of contradiction, hoping to attain the central and underlying truths of the work. Over time this system of philosophical and theological inquiry developed in the Medieval schools of Christian Europe, creating its own technical language and methodology. This method became known as Scholasticism.



A 13th century manuscript of Peter Lombard's *Books of Sentences*, IV. Written ca.1150, this work became a standard university textbook.

Anselm of Laon was a student of St. Anselm, who is known as the "father of Scholasticism" because he first studied and analyzed the beliefs of Christian Faith resorting to logic and discursive reasoning while lecturing on Scripture at Paris. He achieved it mainly by following the methods of Boethius, Charlemagne, and Alcuin that were available to him. Anselm collected authoritative statements from the Church Fathers and attached them to matching texts in the Bible. When two Fathers differed in their interpretation, their contradictory statements were compared in Anselm's classroom. Students would argue, debate, and hope to find the underlying truths behind the contradictions.

Peter Lombard further refined this method of questioning. He set forth two requirements for the Scholastic method. First he proposed that questioning is the key to perceiving truth.

Scholasticism, in this way, did not grow as an independent school of thought, but rather out of a continual questioning of the contradictions that arose in already formulated schools of thought. Secondly, he proposed that the differences that will arise in questioning could usually be resolved by determining the meaning of terms used by different authors in varying ways. Thus, out of comparatively studying the works and the language of the great thinkers, truth and clarity can be drawn between them. In his four *Books of Sentences*, Peter Lombard collected and discussed the opinions of the Church Fathers and earlier theologians on all questions pertaining to Revelation. His thorough and comprehensive work on the rational understanding of God's revealed truth; this opus became the handbook of theologians and part of every professor's curriculum.

## ST. THOMAS AQUINAS



Utilizing Aristotle's philosophy, St. Thomas Aquinas was able to discuss in a cogent way Christ's dual nature as God and man and his presence in the Eucharist.

Many insightful commentaries came out of this approach to learning, but perhaps none can match the work of the Dominican friar St. Thomas Aquinas during the thirteenth century. St. Thomas Aquinas studied theology at the University of Paris and then returned to hold a chair of theology at the university. St. Thomas systematically approached virtually all the questions that confronted Christianity, eventually creating his encyclopedic work, the *Summa Theologiæ*. The *Summa* sets about understanding the most fundamental tenets of Christianity, including, among other things, the existence of God, the divinity of Christ, and Christian morality.

Much of St. Thomas' work was directed toward rectifying a philosophical problem that arose from the rediscovery of the Greek philosopher Aristotle. Many feared that Aristotle's works would undermine the truth of Christianity. St. Thomas showed by his integration of Aristotelian philosophy with Christian belief that Aristotle's thought was an added tool for Catholic theology.

During the Middle Ages, some of Aristotle's work was known in the West through Boethius, but many of Aristotle's books, most notably the *Metaphysics*, were not. In the East, both Muslims and Jews had a tradition of thought included Aristotelian philosophy. During the time of the Crusades, both Aristotle's works and the commentaries began circulating in Europe.

Until Aristotle's works were made known again to the West, most Christian thinkers since the time of the Church Fathers looked to Plato and Plotinus for a philosophical tool to explain the theological truths of Christianity. Neo-Platonism appeared as the ideal philosophy for a deeper understanding of Christian teaching. Plato's ideas about God and contemplation appeared to reinforce Christian teaching. Plato deduced a world of ideas, or "forms" emanating from the highest form, called the *Logos*. Some Christian thinkers equated the *Logos* with the Second Person of the Trinity. Aristotle broke ranks with his former teacher and contended that the universe was infinite and that the individual soul was mortal. This directly contradicted Christian teachings of creation and the immortality of the soul. Aristotle and Plato disagreed with each other concerning the reality of material existence. Whereas Plato held that matter was a pale shadow of the eternal form (idea) of a material object, Aristotle argued that the reality of each material being pertains to both its form and its material component. For example, all trees are not simply shadows of a greater perfect form of a tree, the philosopher would contend. Rather, each tree is a unity of form and matter, which makes it an individual tree.







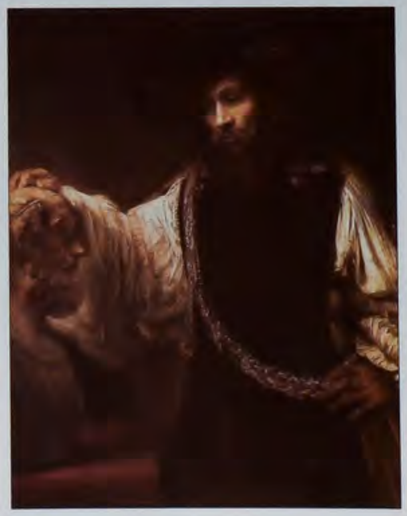
Averroes (1126-1198) was an Andalusian philosopher and physician. Born in Cordoba, Spain, he was a master of philosophy and Islamic law, mathematics and medicine. It was through the Latin translations of Averroes' work beginning in the 12th century that the legacy of Aristotle was recovered in the West.

Aristotle's works were first introduced into Spain through Arab thinkers, the most familiar being Averroes and Avicenna. The form in which Aristotle was initially introduced to the West would be a source of consternation and confusion. Not only did Aristotelian philosophy pose a problem to traditional Christian theology, but the interpretations and commentaries of the Arab philosophers disturbed Franciscans Scholastics who espoused a more Augustinian and therefore Neo-Platonic approach to theology. The most problematic position, held by Averroes, was the double truth theory.

The double truth theory compares the value of theological tenets against philosophical truths. Averroes claimed that philosophical truth was superior to theological truth since philosophical conclusions are drawn through demonstration whereas theology is formed by opinion. He goes on to say that an individual can accept two contradictory truths, one coming from theology and the other philosophy. In short, Averroes stated that a philosophical truth can be at odds with theological truth, but ultimately philosophical conclusions will enjoy pride of place over theological statements.

St. Thomas confronted this apparent problem and intellectual dichotomy by first saying that theology is superior to philosophy because of the absolute veracity of divine revelation. Philosophy is the servant (*ancilla*) of theology if it is purified from falsehood. The role of theology is to guide, correct, and modify philosophical principles so that they reflect eternal truths. If there is ever a contradiction between a theological position based on divine revelation and philosophical speculations, philosophy must submit to the guiding light of theology. According to St. Thomas, there is never a real dichotomy between philosophy and theology because truth is one and absolute.

In addition to the double truth theory, the consequences of Aristotle's thinking for traditional Christian thinkers were drastic since they implied a materialistic view of the world with little emphasis on the divine or transcendent. Aristotle reasoned that there was a "prime mover" that was the initial and perfect cause of all being, and played a small role, if any, in maintaining the world in existence. While most Christians held to the Platonic camp, St. Thomas Aquinas was convinced of Aristotle's superior logic and sought to reconcile the compatibility between reason and revelation. He set out to systematically employ the philosophy of Aristotle to expound on the Christian Faith. Rather than dismiss the problems that arose between Aristotle's logic and Christian doctrine, the dutiful



Rembrandt's portrait of Aristotle. St. Thomas Aquinas was convinced of Aristotle's superior logic and sought to reconcile Aristotelian logic and Christian Faith.

Scholastic thinker set out to ask questions and arrive at a fundamental conclusion in their mutual applicability. Faith and reason, St. Thomas contended, did not need to be opposed to one another.

St. Thomas Aquinas was able to use this reasoned approach with respect to Faith and reason in updating Catholic theology. For instance, utilizing Aristotle's philosophy, he was able to discuss in a cogent way Christ's dual nature as God and man and his presence in the Eucharist. St. Thomas used philosophy to shed light on the mysteries of Christian doctrine, explaining theology in a philosophical context. The saint never subjugated reason to revelation. He said that even some truths that are available to man through reason would be very hard, if not nearly impossible to understand were it not for God's revelation. This wise thinker, together with his brilliant mind, retained a childlike faith throughout his life. Towards the end of his life, he had a mystical vision while offering Mass in Naples in 1273. After that vision, he stopped his philosophical work, saying that "Everything I have written seems like straw by comparison to what I have seen and what has been revealed to me" (quoted in Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 1997, pp. 1614-15.). Despite his incredible philosophical output, the Angelic Doctor saw himself as a teacher of theology in service of the Church. St. Thomas Aquinas' books and treatises remain unsurpassed in offering a comprehensive and thorough theological and philosophical understanding of God, his works, and his laws.

## EARLY CHALLENGES TO THOMISTIC THOUGHT

The work of St. Thomas Aquinas was not immediately accepted as orthodox and reliable Christian theology since various thinkers were apprehensive concerning his use of Aristotle. The Franciscan Bl. John Duns Scotus tried to find a medium between the thought of St. Thomas and the neo-Platonic Christians of the Augustinian school. He argued that there are limits to reason and logic when it came to understanding the nature of God. Bl. John Duns Scotus held that St. Thomas was relying too much on Aristotle's conception that intellectual ideals are strictly dependent on sensible experience and data. Like the Augustinians, Bl. John Duns Scotus argued that there could be intuitive knowledge of things independent of the external senses. He also rejected a leading Augustinian idea that certitude can only come from divine illumination. He found a middle ground by showing how far reason can take human understanding, while respecting its limitations and the necessity of Faith.



The Franciscan Order erected this memorial to Bl. John Duns Scotus in Duns, Scotland in 1966, the 700th anniversary of his birth.

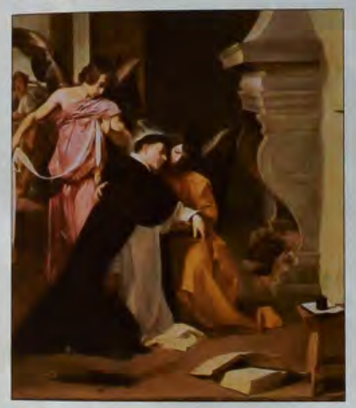
Bl. John Duns Scotus, like Scholasticism in general, would become an object of derision as the humanism of the Renaissance shifted the focus from God to man and his gifts. Students today who joke about the dunce cap do not realize their jokes are at the expense of this progressive Franciscan thinker. However, Bl. John Duns Scotus and his school of thought did not die out without first leaving behind priceless contributions to the areas of theology and philosophy. For example, the theological reasoning behind the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is due in significant part to Bl. John Duns Scotus' theology. Both St. Thomas and Bl. John Duns Scotus, despite their differences, furthered the development of philosophy in the West, and their contributions to Christian thought remain one of the Church's great intellectual treasures. In 1993, Pope John Paul II recognized the importance of these philosophic contributions when he beatified John Duns Scotus. More importantly, the beatification honors a man, who like many of his Scholastic counterparts, lived and studied the Catholic Faith with a devotion and love that facilitate a deeper understanding of the Gospel and Church teaching down through the ages.





## THE DUMB OX

While the importance of St. Thomas Aquinas' philosophical and theological works cannot be overstated, much can also be learned from his deep humility and saintly life. Born to a noble family in Belcastro, Italy, in 1226, he was placed under the care of the Benedictines of Monte Cassino at the age of five. While there he exhibited signs of great brilliance and holiness, and at the age of ten was sent to study at the University of Naples. It is said that after a lesson St. Thomas would repeat what he just learned with more depth and clarity than could his teachers. In spite of his worldly surroundings at the university, St. Thomas grew in humility and holiness.



Despite vehement opposition from his family, by the time St. Thomas reached the age of seventeen he had resolved to become a Dominican. In an effort to stop St. Thomas from answering his vocation, his two brothers locked him in castle for over a year. While St. Thomas was locked in the castle, his brothers sent a woman into his room to try to seduce him. St. Thomas responded by snatching a firebrand from the fireplace and driving her away. He finally escaped imprisonment with the aid of his sisters, who helped lower him over the castle walls in a basket.

After escaping, St. Thomas began to study under St. Albert the Great, a brilliant Dominican father who taught in Cologne, Germany. At first, St. Thomas' quiet nature and extreme humility prevented him from speaking up during class or participating in debates. Because of this, many of St. Thomas' fellow students at Cologne thought the young scholar simple-minded. These false impressions, combined with St. Thomas' hefty size, prompted a number of these students to nickname St. Thomas the "Dumb Ox." St. Albert the Great, who already recognized St. Thomas' incredible intellect, responded to these students by saying "you call him the Dumb Ox; I tell you this Dumb Ox shall bellow so loud that his bellowings will fill the world." These words proved prophetic.



**"I tell you this Dumb Ox shall bellow so loud that his bellowings will fill the world."**

## PART III

# The Mendicant Orders

Both St. Thomas Aquinas and Bl. John Duns Scotus belonged to a new type of religious order: the Mendicant Friars. The name mendicant, which is taken from the Latin word *mendicare* meaning to beg, describes the strict life of poverty lived by the mendicant orders. Unlike the monks of prior generations, this new form of religious life did not include a cloistered existence of prayer and work. These Mendicant Friars were forbidden to own property; they lived off alms. Through their public witness of poverty, chastity and obedience, and preaching, they brought the Gospel message into towns and cities. Although other orders were added to the list of Mendicant Friars as time went on, the original two were the Franciscans and the Dominicans. Both were started by great saints, and each order took to the cities with its own particular spirituality and charism. Following the example of their great founder, St. Francis of Assisi, the Franciscans were dedicated to preaching to the poor and lived lives of radical poverty as a way of reflecting more faithfully the love of Christ. Based upon their founder, St. Dominic, the Dominicans focused on teaching and education and eventually produced some of the greatest intellectuals in Europe, among them St. Thomas Aquinas. Together, these orders would initiate a powerful Christian renewal among the Catholic population of Europe. At the same time scores of people joined these orders making their presence felt throughout the Christian world.

## ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

On a small hilltop town in the Italian region of Umbria, a wealthy merchant returning from France found that his wife had given birth to a son. He named his son John, but inspired by his love for the country he had just visited, he changed his son's name to Francesco or "the Frenchman." From birth this boy was marked as a stranger in his own land, and he would eventually lead the life of a stranger throughout the entire world. The Church's history has seen very few men and women who can rival St. Francis of Assisi in his display of the heart of Christ.

As a youth, St. Francis was no different from most boys in the town of Assisi. He reveled in good times and jubilant festivals. He loved to feast and enjoy the finer things in life. Although it is said that he always had sympathy for the poor, as a young man St. Francis' heart lay more with the romantic dream of a crusader than as a servant to the poor. When he was sixteen, St. Francis got his chance to live out his dream, and he participated in one of the frequent skirmishes his townsmen waged against the Perugians who held the castle at Assisi. In the battle St. Francis was wounded and captured. During his many long months in captivity, St. Francis was stricken with a lingering illness.

This experience proved traumatic to the young St. Francis, and after his brush with death, he began to turn his thoughts towards more serious matters. St. Francis began to pray and meditate on the life of Christ. His companions continued with their celebratory lives, but St. Francis became increasingly distant and detached. As the years went on St. Francis grew more and more diligent in prayer. He began to lose interest in the pastimes of his friends and started to despise the things of this world.

St. Francis claimed that his conversion did not occur until he was twenty-two. He underwent a spiritual crisis at twenty-two that led him to devote himself entirely to prayer and penitential practices. During these intense sessions of prayer, St. Francis had a mystical experience. While praying in the little church of St. Damian, St. Francis heard a voice saying, "Francis, go and build up







my house again!" The young and eager St. Francis took the message literally and immediately set out to renovate the church. He took his father's horse and an armful of linens and cloth and sold them at the market. He brought the money to the poor priest at the church who refused the gift. Finding no need of wealth for himself and frustrated with this obstacle to God's command, St. Francis flung the money aside.

St. Francis' father was a practical and economical man who did not appreciate the generosity of St. Francis' actions, to say the least. He was infuriated when he heard what his son had done and beat St. Francis. St. Francis ran away and hid in a cave for a month, and when he emerged, he was emaciated and sickly. The people of the town tormented him, threw stones, and called him a madman. His father grew more unhappy with his son. Not only did he disown St. Francis from his inheritance (which St. Francis gladly accepted), he also wanted his son to suffer further civil punishment. When the young St. Francis heard of his father's desire, he claimed that he was on a mission from God and was outside civil jurisdiction. This of course only further aggravated his father who then dragged his son to the city center in order to have the bishop resolve the matter. There, in front of the bishop and the gathered villagers of Assisi, St. Francis stripped nearly naked and professed "Hitherto I have called you my father, henceforth I desire to say only 'Our Father who art in Heaven.'" (quoted in Robinson, "St. Francis of Assisi," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. VI, 1909). The bishop, moved by this straggly man's conviction to serve God, covered St. Francis in his ecclesiastical robes and accepted him as a servant of God.

Under the protection of the bishop, St. Francis retreated to the hills surrounding Assisi and began fasting and praying. He composed songs to God and professed his marriage to "Lady Poverty." St. Francis would climb down into the valley only to camp out next to the Church and attend Mass. One day, while attending Mass, St. Francis heard the gospel reading in which Christ instructs his Apostles to go and preach taking no shoes, cloak, staff, or money. When St. Francis heard these words, he knew that it was to be his vocation. He wrapped himself in a brown peasant's tunic and began walking the Spoleto Valley, preaching to and begging with the poor.

## ST. FRANCIS AND THE WOLF

There are many stories and legends about St. Francis' love for nature and his ability to communicate with animals. In one famous story, first recorded by Thomas of Celano in the thirteenth century, a ravenous wolf had been eating animals and people near the town of Gubbio. The beast's ferocious teeth caught every villager brave enough to face it, and so the entire village was too afraid to venture outside the city walls. Hearing about the terror brought about by the wolf, St. Francis, who was staying in Gubbio at the time, decided simply to find the wolf and ask it to stop attacking the poor villagers. Accompanied by a friar and some local peasants, St. Francis left the city to seek out the dreaded creature. Outside the city walls, the villagers quickly became afraid and returned to Gubbio. St. Francis and his friar went on.

While they were passing the woods rumored to be the home of the wolf, the animal appeared and charged the two friars. Standing his ground, St. Francis made the Sign of the Cross toward the wolf. The wolf immediately slowed down and closed its mouth. St. Francis spoke to the creature, calling it "brother wolf," and ordering it in the name of Christ to stop attacking the villagers. The wolf put its head down and meekly approached St. Francis, who explained to it that humans are made in the image of God and should not be harmed. He asked the wolf to promise not to eat any more villagers, and said he would make sure that the villagers in turn did not kill him. The wolf indicated its assent by moving its body and nodding in agreement, and St. Francis and the wolf returned together to the village.

When they arrived, St. Francis astonished the crowd of villagers by walking straight to the town square with the wolf and giving a sermon, asking them to repent from their sins. After St. Francis explained the agreement he had made with the wolf, the villagers agreed to feed the wolf and let it live in peace. After that, the wolf became a village pet, and when it finally died years later, everyone in the town mourned.



*THE PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS*

*Lord, make me an instrument*
*of Thy peace;*
*where there is hatred,*
*let me sow love;*
*where there is injury, pardon;*
*where there is doubt, faith;*
*where there is despair, hope;*
*where there is darkness, light;*
*and where there is sadness, joy.*
*O Divine Master,*
*grant that I may not so much*
*seek to be consoled as to console;*
*to be understood, as to understand;*
*to be loved, as to love;*
*for it is in giving that we receive,*
*it is in pardoning that we are*
*pardoned,*
*and it is in dying that we are born*
*to eternal life.*
*Amen.*







"'My brothers, you have a great obligation to praise your Creator. He clothed you with feathers and gave you wings to fly, appointing the clear air as your home, and he looks after you without any effort on your part.'. . . the birds showed their pleasure in a wonderful fashion; they stretched out their necks and flapped their wings, gazing at him with their beaks open."
–Bonaventure, *Major Life*

St. Francis became known in the surrounding countryside, and in 1209 two men were inspired by his example and joined the saint in his travels. Their arrival marks the founding of the Franciscan Order. More and more men began flocking to St. Francis, and when his following grew to eleven, he decided to make a rule. Rather than carefully noting the rules for day-to-day life in a monastic community, St. Francis simply told his followers to live like Christ. For his rule, St. Francis listed the passages in the gospels where Jesus asks his followers to give away all they own and live a life of poverty, and his followers obliged.

In 1210, St. Francis went to Rome with a few companions to obtain approval from the pope for his pastoral work. Although the cardinals were initially suspect of this wayward beggar knocking on their door, Pope Innocent III saw differently. The pope had a dream of a poor and despised man holding up St. John Lateran, the cathedral of Rome. The next day St. Francis came before the pope, and Innocent was amazed that the man from his dream now stood before him. The pope verbally approved St. Francis' mission. Some years later, St. Francis would compose a more detailed rule that would be formally accepted by Pope Honorius III in 1223.

St. Francis and his followers set out to the principal centers of Europe. Preach peace to all, St. Francis told his followers, but have it in your hearts still more than on your lips. St. Francis dedicated his life especially to the Eucharist and drew strength from Jesus' presence in Holy Communion. He begged the clergy to show more reverence and respect to everything concerning the Sacrifice of the Mass and even swept out and cleaned chapels and churches. St. Francis asked bishops to provide even the most rural of chapels with beautiful sacred vessels for the Blessed Sacrament. The traveling saint also baked bread for the Eucharist, which he gave the Churches.



In 1219, St. Francis traveled to Syria during the Fifth Crusade. When St. Francis arrived in the Holy Land, he had no weapons or armor and was quickly seized and beaten by Muslim troops. The Sultan was so impressed by St. Francis' poverty and humility that he took in the saint and the two became friends. Through their friendship, St. Francis secured future safe passage for himself and his followers, and he ensured that Franciscans be the caretakers for the shrines of the Holy Land, a duty they perform to this day.

Humility was St. Francis' driving virtue. He was never ordained a priest because he felt himself unworthy of the honor, and stepped down as head of the order before his death.

By the end of his life, St. Francis' order had already grown to nearly five thousand friars. After his resignation from the headship of the order, he lived in retreat on Mount Alverna. During his last years on the mountain, St. Francis prayed to participate more fully in the Passion of Christ, and on September 14, 1224, on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, St. Francis received the mark of the stigmata. The stigmata is a phenomenon in which a person bears all or some of the wounds of Christ's Passion on his or her own body. Two years later, on October 4, 1226, St. Francis died at Assisi. He was canonized in 1228 by Pope Gregory IX. His feast day is celebrated on October 4.



St. Bonaventure wrote the definitive biography of St. Francis.

## ST. BONAVENTURE AND THE GROWTH OF THE FRANCISCANS

Inspired by their founder's example, the Franciscans grew rapidly. They strove to live lives like St. Francis, but as the order grew, things became more difficult. One difficulty was that St. Francis prohibited anyone in his order to own property. When the order included only St. Francis and a few followers, this never proved a problem. As they traveled throughout their home country, the poor preachers found shelter in the barns and houses of their neighboring countrymen. By now there were many Franciscans living as strangers in all of the major European cities. The friars had to find a practical means of surviving, while keeping up with the spirit of St. Francis.





St. Bonaventure (1221-1274), the great organizer of the order, is often called its second founder. St. Bonaventure joined the Franciscans in 1243, and was Minister-General of the order for 17 years. St. Bonaventure was an important churchman of the day. He was a gifted theologian and spiritual writer who, among his many philosophical works, wrote the definitive biography of St. Francis. He was also instrumental in helping elect Pope Bl. Gregory X. As minister general, St. Bonaventure was confronted with a difficult problem that threatened to destroy the order: How could St. Bonaventure keep the order poor, yet also provide for its existence?

St. Bonaventure made a new provision that allowed individual Franciscans to receive donations meant for the well-being of the order. The money would not be held by the Franciscans in common, as it was with other monastic orders—keeping the individual poor but the order sustainable. Rather, St. Bonaventure made it so that everything received by the Franciscans would be given to the Holy See, which would then see to the preservation of the order according to its own good will. The Pope would own houses and permit the Franciscans to stay in them. Thanks to St. Bonaventure's system, the friars never handled nor decided how to use any money. There were no abbots charged with the administration of funds or securing a financially sound future. As every friar relied on the good will of the pope to sustain the order, there was no financial temptation for the friars, who were free to travel between the papal safe houses. St. Bonaventure's rule allowed the friars to prosper in numbers and vocations, while retaining the poverty so loved and cherished by the order's founder.



The meeting of St. Francis and St. Dominic at the Fourth Lateran Council in Rome in 1215 may be a legend. However the images painted of this meeting, symbolically represent the shared piety, beauty, and simplicity of the orders founded by these two mendicant friars.

## ST. DOMINIC

As discussed in the previous chapter, southern France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was struggling with the proliferation of heresy, most notably, Albigensianism. One reason that the Albigensian heresy appealed so widely was that it preached extreme poverty that seemed to honor more faithfully the example of Christ. For the common people of the Middle Ages, this heresy seemed preferable to the lax moral behavior exhibited by wayward clergymen. The Albigensians were essentially Gnostics, and their understanding of God and the world were not merely false, but detrimental to the human person. The goodness of life in this temporary world was not only denied, it was considered evil. Suicide as a form of purification proliferated, and physical attacks against those who did not abide to their extreme self-mortification were common. Since marital union and conception were seen as sinful, they encouraged abortion and allowed for immoral activities as an alternative to marriage. In addition to practices that were egregiously injurious to the individual and in flagrant violation of human dignity, they rejected the priesthood and the entire sacramental system of the Catholic Church.

Nonetheless, many Catholic preachers found it difficult, if not impossible, to win back these wayward heretics to the Church. In 1203, the Abbot of Citeaux in southern France was lamenting

## THE SPREAD OF FRANCISCAN MONASTERIES BY 1300





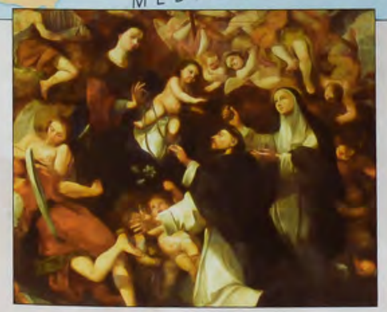

The two mendicant orders, Franciscans and Dominicans, helped rejuvenate the spiritual life of the Church by combining a simple Christian life with strong devotion to the Eucharist and education.





## THE SPREAD OF DOMINICAN MONASTERIES BY 1300



In a vision, Mary, the Mother of God, appeared to St. Dominic. She urged St. Dominic to pray the Rosary for his work of evangelization. This miraculous Marian intervention served as a springboard in popularizing the devotion of the Rosary.

his difficulties with these heretics to two Spaniards who were passing through on their way back from Rome. These two men, the Spanish bishop Diego of Osma and his canon Domingo de Guzman, reminded the Abbot that the Lord's disciples were sent to preach barefoot, without a staff and with no money. That example, they said, was just as important for spreading the Faith as the words used to preach.

They stayed in the region for two years in order to help the Abbot in his efforts. Both were well trained and educated in the Spanish Universities, and they found winning public discussions with the heretics to be easy. However, they still did not succeed in converting them. After some time, Diego was obliged to return to his diocese, but Domingo (St. Dominic) stayed on. He lived in a monastery with a few other zealous priests and took on the Rule of St. Augustine. St. Dominic set out to follow more closely his own words addressed to the Abbot of Citeaux and began to live a life of poverty. He wore a simple white habit and scapular covered by a black mantel. He heard about the preacher St. Francis and began to follow in his footsteps of absolute poverty. Furthermore, St. Dominic saw that sound intellectual training was necessary in dialoguing effectively with the Albigensians. St. Dominic began sending his followers to the University of Paris, and those who had training, he sent out in pairs throughout the region to live and preach like Christ's Apostles. Hence, they are called the Order of Preachers (O.P.).



St. Dominic died on his way to preach to the pagans of Hungary. By then, the Dominicans were nicknamed *Domini canes* or "hounds of the Lord."

Eventually St. Dominic's efforts in living an ascetical life modeled after the life of Christ, coupled with his powerful preaching, began to pay off. Nonetheless, it would be a serious oversight to leave out the recitation and promotion of the Rosary as a ritual means of converting the Albigensians. Tradition has it that Mary, the Mother of God, appeared to St. Dominic who was crushed with disappointment and discouragement for his failure in converting them back to the Catholic Faith. She urged St. Dominic to be hopeful and optimistic and pray the Rosary for his work of evangelization as he entrusted his work to Mary and promoted the Faith. This miraculous Marian intervention served as a springboard in popularizing the devotion of the Rosary.

St. Dominic's order did not enjoy the same popularity as that of St. Francis. At the time of St. Dominic's death in 1221, the order numbered sixty. Eventually the Dominicans spread far and wide and became famous for their preaching and intellectual expertise. Over time, the University of Paris became filled with these simple and humble teachers who became their strongest professors. The Dominicans traveled all over Europe as far East as Poland, Greece, and into the Holy Land, preaching, founding schools, and bringing many to the Catholic Faith.





## THE LEGACY OF THE MENDICANT FRIARS

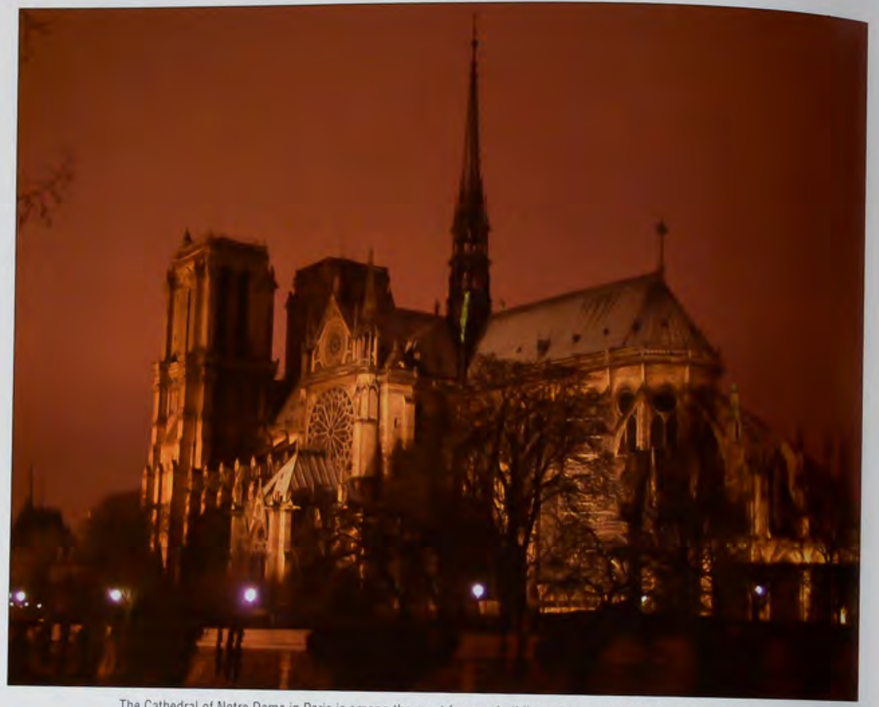
Around the time that the Franciscan and Dominican orders began, many priests were distracted by worldly affairs, and some were even losing their moral and spiritual fervor. Heresies like Albigensianism became popular because of people's desire for a more complete and wholehearted dedication to Christ, even if their teaching was erroneous in some aspects. The two mendicant orders appealed to that popular desire and helped rejuvenate the spiritual life of the Church by combining a simple Christian life with strong devotion to the Eucharist and serious education. Spiritually and intellectually prepared, many Franciscans and Dominicans rose to positions of prominence in the Church. Priests, Bishops, and eventually popes came from these two orders, helping to keep the Church connected with its founding principles and purpose. It is no coincidence that the proliferation of the mendicant friars underscored the flourishing of Medieval culture in the arts and in learning. This period illustrated that the strengths of the Church still lay in holiness, expressed in her piety, beauty, and simplicity.

# PART IV
# The Flowering of Culture

It is often the case that when one mentions the Middle Ages, images spring to mind of knights in armor, spired castles, and tall, ominous gothic steeples hovering over poor towns riddled with plague. It is a picture of a hard life filled with contraries: rich and poor, holy and barbaric. It is a picture that is not entirely true. Certainly the Medieval period was characterized by a hard existence where disease and injustice proliferated. Punishments were more brutal and religious conviction, in the case of the Albigensians, more extreme. Nevertheless, it is useful to look more closely at the Medieval culture to appreciate and discover its mindset and spirit. Along with these grim images, there is also the radiant beauty of stain glass, the brilliant intricacy of learning and philosophy, the humor and joyous insight of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and the majestic beauty of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The period's saints were also not dark, foreboding characters. St. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote endlessly on love and Solomon's *Song of Songs*, and St. Francis' joy and charisma, his humble spirit as much as his poor life, inspired popular devotion. Troubadour minstrels traveled the countryside singing the first romantic poems, and love of life and as romantic themes blossomed in art as well as literature. Indeed, the Medieval period saw a moment in which all aspects of life and culture were identified with Faith. The Christian spirit of that period permeated every facet of human life from trade guilds to universities and ultimately to religious art and architecture, and every phase of human existence, from infancy, childhood, youth, middle and old age. The individual was in harmony with the world, the Faith, and God in the journey through life.

## MEDIEVAL ARCHITECTURE

There is no doubt that of all the artistic and cultural advances of the Medieval period, architecture was among the most extraordinary and long-lasting. From the time of Constantine, Christian architecture centered around the form of the Roman Basilica. Modeled after the large meeting halls in the Roman forum, basilicas were heavy structures that combined a long nave with a perpendicular transept that divided the Church in a way that resembled a cross. The wooden roof was raised above the aisles on two interior walls running the whole length of the building. The walls were supported by round arches joining columns that ran down each side of the nave. Side aisles had small windows cut in order to let in light.



The Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris is among the most famous buildings designed with flying buttresses.

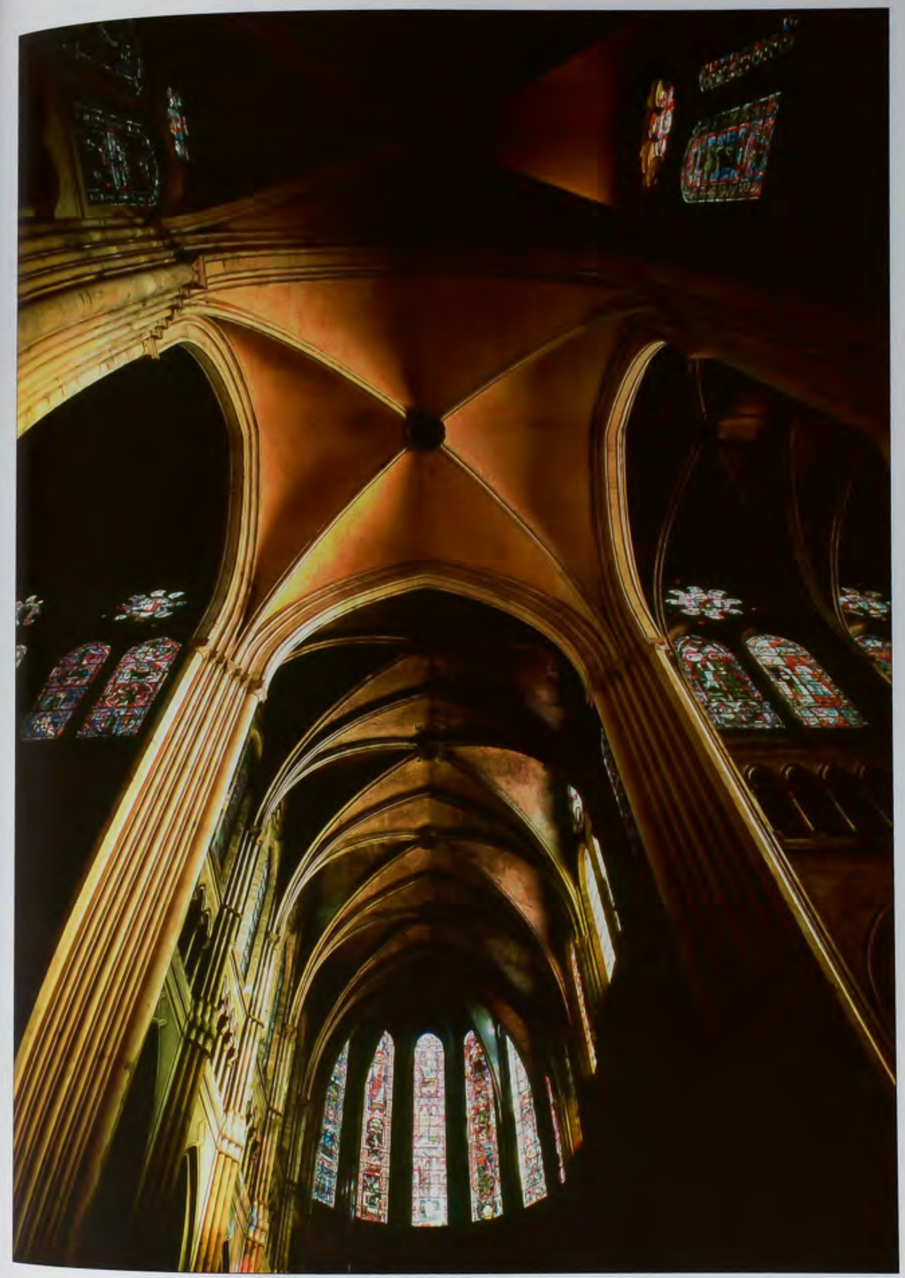
The Romanesque style, which succeeded the basilica, resembled the ancient basilicas in their basic shape, but rather than a flat roof, Romanesque churches added round stone vaults. A more permanent structure, the heavy stone Romanesque churches were durable and resistant to fire. The buildings also provided a space that alluded to the eternal God, a permanent structure heavy with a sense of the power and infinitude of God. Various types of vaulting were developed to support these heavy structures as architects grew in their understanding of the displacement of weight in the buildings.

As the Medieval period began, the Christian liturgy, complete with developments in liturgical song, began to take new shape. Polyphonic musical styles layered, blended, and harmonized complex and intricate melodies in extraordinary unity. The Church year became centered around the idea of Christ as the "light" coming into the world at Christmas, and this offered a new look into the mysteries of the Faith. With the emphasis on Christ, the Light of the World, Christians began to look for a new style of architecture that could provide a space that held light, music, and air in a suitable way. These Medieval architects built Churches according to a gothic structure that would clearly reflect God's transcendence, power, and beauty. Medieval architects began building stone vaulted churches that were higher than ever before, at the same time creating larger transepts and rounded apses. Medieval architects sought to build still higher, allow more light into the building, and provide as much space for music to echo throughout as possible.

Architects developed ribbed vaulting and the pointed arch, which crisscrossed arches and allowed them to displace the weight of the roof more effectively. Roofs resembled a series of triangles that





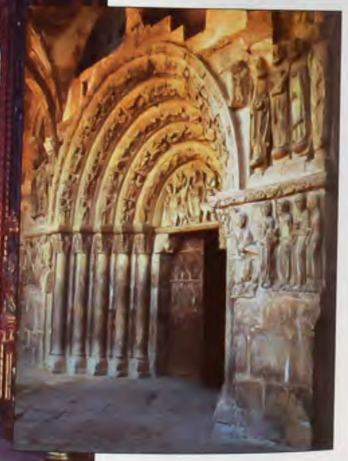


The Chartres Cathedral

held light slabs of stone effortlessly, a welcome change from the heavy Romanesque masonry. The arches were also more vertical and could be raised higher and rested on lighter pillars. Pointed arches displaced all of the weight onto the pillars instead of the walls. Flying buttresses, external supports that arched towards the roof added extra support, and this new building technique was held together by a series of columns and vaults that made walls virtually unnecessary for structural support. This allowed architects to install huge stained glass windows that stretched nearly from floor to ceiling, allowing in light and creating a huge and open internal space.

This style of building became known as gothic architecture, and the most important innovation was the freedom it gave masons, artists, and architects to dress the building with works of art. The new windows were filled with stained glass depicting scenes and stories from the Bible and the lives of saints. Statues were carved into the structures of the doorway and pillars. Arches and columns were decorated with ornate carvings and designs. As the style progressed, cathedrals like those of Paris, Rheims, Cologne, and Chartres gave the visual impression of soaring grace, delicate poise, and perfect balance flooded with light and seemingly held up by the figures carved into the stone. Gothic architecture developed a space for the liturgy brimming with warmth and joy.





Gothic architecture (shown left) allows non-loadbearing areas for stained glass and carvings. Gothic cathedrals are celebrations of light and color compared to heavy Romanesque architecture (shown below).







*Allegory of The Divine Comedy* by Domenico Michelino. Dante is shown holding a copy of *The Divine Comedy*, on the left, the entrance to Hell. Behind Dante is Mount Purgatory with seven terraces leading to Paradise with Adam and Eve at the summit. Dante's city of Florence is on the right. In *The Divine Comedy*, Dante recounts his travels through the three realms of the dead during Holy Week in the spring of 1300. His guide through Hell and Purgatory is the Latin poet Virgil, author of *The Aeneid*. His guide through Paradise is Beatrice, Dante's ideal of a perfect woman. Originally titled *Comedia*, it was later christened *Divina* by Giovanni Boccaccio. Poems in Medieval times were classified as High (Tragic) or Low (Comedy). Low poems had happy endings and were stories of everyday subjects and common people.

## THE BIRTH OF VERNACULAR LITERATURE

Despite the increased importance that universities placed on Classical texts, the Medieval Period saw for the first time the composition of vernacular literature. Vernacular literature in Europe grew largely out of folk stories handed down orally for generations. The earliest example of these recorded stories is *Beowulf*. Written in Old English about A.D. 1100, *Beowulf* is about a Scandinavian warrior of the sixth century A.D. This story had been transcribed by monks for generations, taking on distinctively Christian elements from its adaptation from the original Anglo-Saxon tale. Other early manuscripts of Germanic lore began to appear in the eleventh-century. These works mixed heroism and magic, a special brew that became an important part of Western Europe's literary heritage.

In France, towards the end of the eleventh century, poetry became popular due in part to the influence of Arab love poetry, flooding in from Muslim Spain. These works helped form a long tradition of vernacular French love poetry. Duke William of Aquitaine was won over by this new style, and he began writing his own work as well as patronizing other poets. His support helped influence the emergence of troubadour poets, traveling minstrel lyricists who sang of love and romance. Love took on new meanings in the Medieval world. Poets sang of romantic love and

composed stories about knights courting women. The French writer Chrétien de Troyes utilized some of the English tales of King Arthur and his knights and wrote works that foreshadowed the emergence of the literary device known as the novel. These poetic serenades enhanced a greater appreciation of the dignity of women through an exaltation of their virtue and feminine qualities.

In Italy, the impact that this poetic genre had on the local dialect can be seen in St. Francis of Assisi's *Canticle of the Sun*. Troubadours traveled throughout Italy and their ideas of love influenced, among others, a Florentine named Dante Alighieri. One warm summer day, Dante (1265-1321) was crossing a bridge over the river Arno in Florence. He passed a young girl, Beatrice, and fell completely in love with her. Although they both married other people (Dante scarcely ever said a single word to her), Beatrice would become the love and inspiration that fueled all of Dante's writings. She was to him the end of all desire and the inspiration of love through which he learned to love God. In his writings, romantic and divine love became intertwining images.

Written in the last years of his life, the *Divine Comedy* recounts how the poet, guided by his love of Beatrice, travels through the entire Christian universe, from Hell to Heaven, blending theology, philosophy, and literature into a complex and beautiful poem. Dante draws together Classical and Christian elements and produces an unparalleled work that extracts virtue and vice from the complexity of human action and approaches the deepest, most profound mysteries of Christianity. Certainly some of his characters are the most memorable in literature, both for their poignant humanity and their depiction through the eyes of moral clarity. His work reveals a synergy between all the elements of Medieval life: philosophy, poetry, beauty, love, and God and is one of the most wonderful pieces of literature ever written.



Yet in th' abyss,
That Lucifer with Judas low ingulfs,
Lightly he plac'd us; . . .

Left: *Descent To The Last Circle* by Gustave Dore. The giant Antæus lowers Dante and Virgil into the abyss. *The Inferno*, Canto 31



Above: Illustration from a Medieval manuscript of *The Divine Comedy* in the Madrid National Library collection.





## THE VERNACULAR IN POETRY



Geoffrey Chaucer as a Canterbury pilgrim in a page from the Ellesmere manuscript, an early copy of *The Canterbury Tales*. Written in Middle English, this work popularized the literary use of vernacular English.

The High Middle Ages saw a great flowering of works of literature written in the vernacular throughout Europe. In England, for example, Geoffrey Chaucer wrote the *Canterbury Tales* during the thirteenth century, a massive poem of over seventeen thousand lines that follows a group of pilgrims who, traveling from London to Canterbury, pass the time telling stories to each other. A masterful exposition of human character and motive as well as a candid look into Medieval life, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is often credited as one of the first works to prove the artistic legitimacy of the English language.

*El Cid* (also known as *El Cid Campeador* or "My Lord, the Champion"), is a twelfth century epic poem written by an anonymous author. The poetry of *El Cid* is written in the language of the day, a version of Spanish that was slowly developing out of Latin, and is thus considered the oldest work of Spanish literature. Though based on historical facts, the poem tells the legendary story of the adventurous Castilian knight Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, called Cid, and the mythical marriage of his two daughters to the Counts of Carrion.

The oldest surviving French poem, *The Song of Roland*, was also written around the year 1200 somewhere in the north of France. *The Song* is based on the Battle of Roncevaux Pass in which Roland fought for the Franks against the Basques. While the poem takes many historical liberties, such as changing the Basques to Muslims, it is regarded as a classic illustration of the value of chivalry.



A detail from *The Lamentation Over The Dead Christ* by Giotto (1267-1337) from the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, Italy painted in 1303-1305. This detail illustrates the concentrated dramatic force of Giotto's frescoes and the influence he would have on Renaissance painters like Michelangelo who studied this cycle of 100 scenes when planning his Sistine Chapel. The chapel recently went through major restoration and repair after a severe earthquake in 1997 literally brought the ceiling down, and Giotto's brushstrokes became a jigsaw puzzle. Centuries of damage from neglect, air pollution and water damage were also repaired. The restored chapel was reopened in the year 2000.

## PAINTING AND THE FINE ARTS

Medieval painting usually holds a lower place of counterpoint to the developments of the Renaissance. Compared with the works of Michelangelo and Raphael, Medieval paintings usually seem oversimplified and one dimensional—lacking in any real human emotion. However, this subtle art, one that is indeed as imitative as it is symbolic, requires a careful eye to appreciate its rare beauty.

The paintings of the Middle Ages often come from altarpieces that were set behind the tabernacle in the sanctuary of the church. They were largely meant as objects of devotion and reflection. Figures set on a flat golden background represented scenes from the life of Christ, the saints, and Mary (often depicted holding the Christ child). Painters focused primarily on two aspects of the painting. First, they were concerned with the symbolic relationship between the elements of the painting. Juxtaposition of figures, angels, or saints, as well as Mary and the Christ child related Christian truths, ideas about God and the Trinity, and conveyed stories from the Gospels. Besides this symbolic meaning in the work, artists paid particular attention to the facial expressions of the subjects, trying to reveal the inner souls of the saints through subtle artistic representation. The faces of Mary and others reflect the agony and ecstasy of the Christian religious experience.





Giotto di Bondone, a Florentine painter, is known for his series of 38 frescoes in the Arena Chapel in Padua and *The Scenes from the Life of Saint Francis* in the Upper Basilica in Assisi. His paintings embody sweetness and an ordinary eloquence that typified Medieval art. The simplicity of his forms combined with a subtle complexity of emotional content was widely imitated, and Giotto is considered the founder of the Italian school of painting in Italy. This painter was a friend of Dante (whom he painted often), and these two artists shared ideas and inspirations. Though his work was a bridge between the Medieval and renaissance periods of art, from his content, style, and purpose, it is clear that this Italian painter represents the pinnacle of the Medieval style.



*The Maestà* by Duccio di Buoninsegna (1255-1319) was painted for the High Altar of the Siena Cathedral. This two-sided masterpiece was carried through the streets of Siena on June 9, 1311 in a great procession from Duccio's studio to the Cathedral. In its original form, the huge altarpiece measured over 16 feet high and 16 feet long. When installed behind the altar, the *Enthroned Madonna and Child surrounded by Saints* faced the congregation, and the back of the panel with twenty-six scenes from *The Passion* faced the sanctuary for scripture study. Sadly, this magnificent piece was sawn into pieces in 1771. Several pieces were sold to foreign museums and private collectors. The restoration seen here was completed in 1956 and is in the Cathedral's museum.



Santa María de León Cathedral, also called "The House of Light," is located in the city of León, Spain. Designed by the master architect Enrique in the thirteenth century, the León Cathedral is considered a masterpiece of the gothic style.

## CONCLUSION

The High Middle Ages saw a significant flourishing in Christ's Church, and in many ways, this period of time was a golden age in the history of the Church. Christian philosophy, piety, and art boldly ventured into new heights, and the saints of the period showed how holiness redounds to the benefit of all of society. This does not mean, of course, that the Medieval period was bereft of dark shadows in its reflection of Christ's Gospel. Nonetheless, Medieval culture, expressed in its breakthroughs in philosophy, theology, architecture, art, and literature, offers a glimmer of the magnificent ramifications of the Christian ideal.





## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

**St. Francis of Assisi, *Canticle of Brother Sun***

Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,
All praise is Yours, all glory, all honour and all blessings.
To you alone, Most High, do they belong,
  and no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your Name.
Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures,
  especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,
Of You Most High, he bears the likeness.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
In the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
And fair and stormy, all weather's moods,
  by which You cherish all that You have made.
Praised be You my Lord through Sister Water,
So useful, humble, precious and pure.
Praised be You my Lord through Brother Fire,
  through whom You light the night
  and he is beautiful and playful and
  robust and strong.
Praised be You my Lord through our Sister,
Mother Earth who sustains and governs us,
  producing varied fruits with coloured
  flowers and herbs.
Praise be You my Lord through those
  who grant pardon
  for love of You and bear sickness and trial.
Blessed are those who endure in peace,
By You Most High, they will be crowned.
Praised be You, my Lord through Sister Death,
  from whom no-one living can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin!
Blessed are they She finds doing Your Will.
No second death can do them harm.
Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks,
And serve Him with great humility.



St. Francis' Mystical Marriage with Poverty

## SUPPLEMENTARY READING Continued

**St. Thomas Aquinas,**
***Summa Theologiæ*, I. 2. 3**

**Whether God exists?**

**Objection 1.** It seems that God does not exist; because if one of two contraries be infinite, the other would be altogether destroyed. But the word "God" means that He is infinite goodness. If, therefore, God existed, there would be no evil discoverable; but there is evil in the world. Therefore God does not exist.

**Objection 2.** Further, it is superfluous to suppose that what can be accounted for by a few principles has been produced by many. But it seems that everything we see in the world can be accounted for by other principles, supposing God did not exist. For all natural things can be reduced to one principle which is nature; and all voluntary things can be reduced to one principle which is human reason, or will. Therefore there is no need to suppose God's existence....

**Reply to Objection 1.** As Augustine says (*Enchiridion*, XI): "Since God is the highest good, He would not allow any evil to exist in His works, unless His omnipotence and goodness were such as to bring good even out of evil." This is part of the infinite goodness of God, that He should allow evil to exist, and out of it produce good.

**Reply to Objection 2.** Since nature works for a determinate end under the direction of a higher agent, whatever is done by nature must needs be traced back to God, as to its first cause. So also whatever is done voluntarily must also be traced back to some higher cause other than human reason or will, since these can change or fail; for all things that are changeable and capable of defect must be traced back to an immovable and self-necessary first principle, as was shown in the body of the Article.

**John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, 85**

I believe that those philosophers who wish to respond today to the demands which the word of God makes on human thinking should develop their thought on the basis of these postulates and in organic continuity with the great tradition which, beginning with the ancients, passes through the Fathers of the Church and the masters of Scholasticism and includes the fundamental achievements of modern and contemporary thought. If philosophers can take their place within this tradition and draw their inspiration from it, they will certainly not fail to respect philosophy's demand for autonomy.

In the present situation, therefore, it is most significant that some philosophers are promoting a recovery of the determining role of this tradition for a right approach to knowledge. The appeal to tradition is not a mere remembrance of the past; it involves rather the recognition of a cultural heritage which belongs to all of humanity.



From the commentaries of St. Thomas Aquinas.





## VOCABULARY

***DICTAMEN***
The "Art of Composition" taught at Bologna, which included rules for drawing up briefs and other legal documents. This training attracted many students and soon developed into another intense program specializing in grammar and rhetoric.

**DOUBLE TRUTH THEORY**
Compares the value of theological tenets against philosophical truths. According to the Muslim philosopher Averroes, one can hold contradictory truths coming from theological and philosophical speculation, but ideas gathered from philosophical thought are superior to theological tenets.

**GOTHIC**
Style of Medieval building that flourished from 1200-1500. By using pointed arches, ribbed vaulting and flying buttresses, this style created an airy and well-lit space and gave masons, artists, and architects the freedom to adorn buildings with works of art.

**"HEARING A BOOK"**
Method of teaching in the university. A teacher would read the text of a book along with his predecessors' comments on the text before adding his own commentary to the lecture.

**MENDICANT FRIARS**
From the Latin word *mendicare*, meaning "to beg," this new type of religious order was not bound to a place or community and subsisted entirely on alms. The Franciscans and Dominicans are the largest orders of mendicant friars.

**PLATONIC FORMS**
Philosophical construct developed by the fifth century Greek philosopher Plato that held that all things that exist emanate from the primal unity of the unseen idea, at the very core of which is the Form of the Good.

***QUADRIVIUM***
Latin for "four ways." More advanced program in the Medieval liberal arts program, it included the study of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music.

**SCHOLASTICISM**
The system of philosophical and theological inquiry first developed in the Medieval schools of Christian Europe, creating its own technical language and methodology.

**STIGMATA**
Phenomenon in which a person bears all or some of the wounds of Christ in his or her own body.

***STUDIUM GENERALE***
Unified program of study offered by Medieval universities which included theology, law, medicine and the arts.

***TRIVIUM***
Latin for "three ways," this was one of two sections into which the arts were divided in Medieval universities. It referred to the three primary branches of Medieval education: grammar, rhetoric and dialectic.

**TROUBADOUR**
Traveling minstrel lyricists who sang of love and romance, assisting the development of the European vernacular literatures.

***UNIVERSITAS***
A type of corporation that protected the educational and administrative needs of masters and students in schools of the mid-eleventh century.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is Scholasticism?
2. Which university became the most famous during the Medieval period because of the talent that it attracted?
3. Which university became known for its study of jurisprudence?
4. Which university became an important center for the sciences and later added philosophy and Arabic related texts to its curriculum?
5. What did the guild system and the independence from lay and ecclesiastical authorities create on the university campus that is still highly regarded on today's college campus?
6. What was the *studium generale* at the universities?
7. What was St. Thomas Aquinas' largest work, and what are two of the topics that this work addresses?
8. Until St. Thomas Aquinas, what ancient Greek philosopher had given the philosophical framework within which Christianity usually operated?
9. Why did Aristotle need to be "re-discovered"?
10. What was the main task of St. Thomas Aquinas?
11. Who were the two best known philosophers in the Muslim world?
12. In Aristotle's philosophical system, who created everything?
13. What is St. Thomas Aquinas reported to have said after his mystical experience in Naples?
14. Why is St. Thomas' work so valuable to the Christian tradition?
15. How did Bl. John Duns Scotus negotiate St. Augustine's neo-Platonism and St. Thomas Aquinas' Scholasticism?
16. What are the two mendicant orders and who founded them?
17. How were the mendicants different than the monks of previous centuries?
18. What was St. Francis' dream as a young man? How did he live?
19. How did St. Francis organize the common life of his followers?
20. Pope Innocent III and the Vatican were initially suspect of St. Francis. What reportedly happened that changed Pope Innocent's mind?
21. What order oversees many of the holy shrines in the Holy Land?
22. Who is often called the "second founder" of the Franciscans, and when did he live?
23. How did St. Bonaventure negotiate the problem of keeping the Franciscans faithful to their vow of poverty while at the same time providing for the order's needs?
24. What rule of life did St. Dominic take for his order?
25. What color habit did the Dominicans take?
26. What heresy did the Dominicans set out to correct?
27. What devotion did the Dominicans advocate as a means of evangelization?
28. What was the legacy of the mendicant friars?
29. What architectural innovations were developed for gothic churches?
30. What contribution to literature first appeared in the Medieval period?
31. What was Dante's major work?
32. What was the purpose of Medieval Church art?





## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. The Scholastic method answered questions by first stating objections to a statement, then giving an answer, and finally offering replies to each of the initial objections. Following the method of inquiry used in St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiæ*, answer the following questions by using the Scholastic method:

**a)** Is the Scholastic method an effective way of reaching philosophic conclusions?

**b)** Were the Mendicant Orders really following the words of Christ?

**c)** Did the High Middle Ages experience a true flowering of culture?

## FROM THE CATECHISM

**35** Man's faculties make him capable of coming to a knowledge of the existence of a personal God. But for man to be able to enter into real intimacy with him, God willed both to reveal himself to man, and to give him the grace of being able to welcome this revelation in faith. The proofs of God's existence, however, can predispose one to faith and help one to see that faith is not opposed to reason.

**36** "Our holy mother, the Church, holds and teaches that God, the first principle and last end of all things, can be known with certainty from the created world by the natural light of human reason" (Vatican Council I, *Dei Filius* 2: DS 3004 cf. 3026; Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum* 6). Without this capacity, man would not be able to welcome God's revelation. Man has this capacity because he is created "in the image of God" (cf. Gen 1: 27).

**159** *Faith and science:* "Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth" (*Dei Filius* 4: DS 3017). "Consequently, methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God. The humble and persevering investigator of the secrets of nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of himself, for it is God, the conserver of all things, who made them what they are" (*GS* 36 § 1).

**2293** Basic scientific research, as well as applied research, is a significant expression of man's dominion over creation. Science and technology are precious resources when placed at the service of man and promote his integral development for the benefit of all. By themselves however they cannot disclose the meaning of existence and of human progress. Science and technology are ordered to man, from whom they take their origin and development; hence they find in the person and in his moral values both evidence of their purpose and awareness of their limits.

**2462** Giving alms to the poor is a witness to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God.

**2463** How can we not recognize Lazarus, the hungry beggar in the parable (cf. Lk 17: 19-31), in the multitude of human beings without bread, a roof or a place to stay? How can we fail to hear Jesus: "As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me" (Mt 25: 45)?

## FROM THE CATECHISM Continued

**2500** The practice of goodness is accompanied by spontaneous spiritual joy and moral beauty. Likewise, truth carries with it the joy and splendor of spiritual beauty. Truth is beautiful in itself. Truth in words, the rational expression of the knowledge of created and uncreated reality, is necessary to man, who is endowed with intellect. But truth can also find other complementary forms of human expression, above all when it is a matter of evoking what is beyond words: the depths of the human heart, the exaltations of the soul, the mystery of God. Even before revealing himself to man in words of truth, God reveals himself to him through the universal language of creation, the work of his Word, of his wisdom: the order and harmony of the cosmos—which both the child and the scientist discover—"from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator," "for the author of beauty created them" (Wis 13:3, 5).

> [Wisdom] is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; therefore nothing defiled gains entrance into her. For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness (Wis 7:25-26). For [wisdom] is more beautiful than the sun, and excels every constellation of the stars. Compared with the light she is found to be superior, for it is succeeded by the night, but against wisdom evil does not prevail (Wis 7:29-30). I became enamored of her beauty (Wis 8:2).

**2502** *Sacred art* is true and beautiful when its form corresponds to its particular vocation: evoking and glorifying, in faith and adoration, the transcendent mystery of God—the surpassing invisible beauty of truth and love visible in Christ, who "reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature," in whom "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Heb 1:3; Col 2:9).This spiritual beauty of God is reflected in the most holy Virgin Mother of God, the angels, and saints. Genuine sacred art draws man to adoration, to prayer, and to the love of God, Creator and Savior, the Holy One and *Sanctifier*.

**2544** Jesus enjoins his disciples to prefer him to everything and everyone, and bids them "renounce all that [they have]" for his sake and that of the Gospel (Lk 14:33; cf. Mk 8:35). Shortly before his passion he gave them the example of the poor widow of Jerusalem who, out of her poverty, gave all that she had to live on (cf. Lk 21:4). The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven.



St. Francis simply told his followers to live like Christ. For his rule, St. Francis listed the passages in the gospels where Jesus asks his followers to give away all they own and live the life of poverty dedicated to God. His followers obliged.



CHAPTER 11

# A Century Of Suffering: Plague, War, And Schism

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## CHAPTER 11

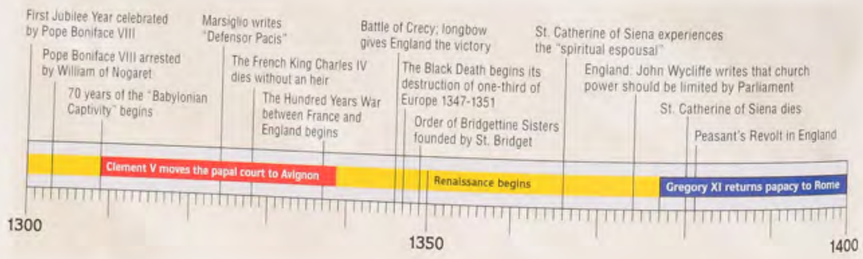
# A Century Of Suffering: Plague, War, And Schism

The first thing I want to offer you is an invitation to optimism, hope and trust. Certainly, the human race is going through a difficult patch, and we often have a painful impression that the forces of evil... have got the upper hand.... And yet, we are called to overcome the world by our faith, since we belong to him who by his death and resurrection obtained for every one of us the victory over sin and death, and so has made us able to affirm humbly, serenely but certainly, that good will triumph over evil.

— John Paul II, *Address to Salesian Youth*, Rome, May 5, 1979

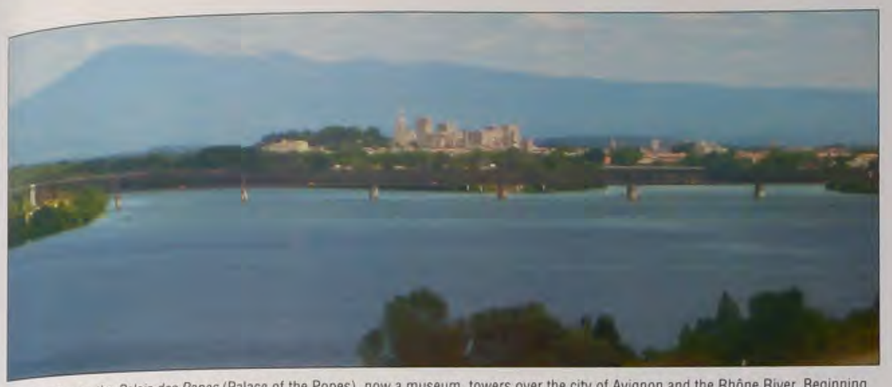
With the pontificates of Innocent III, Gregory IX, and Boniface VIII, Church authority together with a united Western Christendom reached its zenith. During the thirteenth century, the Church established the legal foundation of the Medieval state, combated heresy and contested with emperors and kings for its legitimate role in regulating society. During this period, the Church finally achieved a balance between its temporal responsibilities and its spiritual authority.

The fourteenth century, however, would witness a dramatic change sweep across the face of Europe, and the accomplishments of the thirteenth century would begin to unravel. The rising kingdoms of France, Germany, and England would no longer be willing to submit themselves to the leadership of the pope. Furthermore Church authority would be almost fatally eroded by its long tenure under the influence of the French Kings at Avignon and by forty years of schism. The survival of Europe would be threatened by both internal and external forces. Plague and famine would shake Medieval society to its very foundations; war within Christendom (between England and France) would destroy the flower of feudal aristocracy; and the Turks would ravage Constantinople and threaten further expansion into Christendom. Indeed, it was a dark time, but as John Paul II's encouraging words reminded, like Christians throughout history, "we are called to overcome the world by our faith."







In southern France, the *Palais des Papes* (Palace of the Popes), now a museum, towers over the city of Avignon and the Rhône River. Beginning with Clement V, seven popes resided in Avignon from 1309-1377. It remained a papal possession until the French Revolution incorporated Avignon into France in 1791. Avignon is 400 miles southeast of Paris.

## PART I

# The Road to Avignon

### POPE ST. CELESTINE V

After Pope Nicolas IV died in 1294, the papal throne remained vacant for more than two years while rival Italian parties vied for their own papal candidate. In order to break the deadlock, three cardinals sought a compromise candidate. In the hills of Abruzzi there lived an 80-year-old saintly hermit by the name of Peter Murrone. He spent much of his life in a small cave, living a rigorously ascetic existence of prayer, labor, and fasting. In 1294, the three dignitaries, accompanied by a huge gathering of monks, priests, and laymen, begged Peter to accept the papacy. Though he did not wish to leave his simple life of prayer and solitude, Peter accepted, choosing the name Celestine V. As pope, this simple, holy, old man was beloved by the people, but before the year was out, the immense task of shepherding the Church proved too much for him. Without training or experience, especially in dealing with the various political machinations of certain cardinals, nobles,



and emperors, the task of directing all of Christendom was humanly overwhelming and certainly beyond this hermit's abilities. After making many imprudent and ill-informed political decisions, he, without precedent and in the face of much opposition, chose to resign his office and return to his private life of prayer and penance. Most of his decisions and official acts not affecting Faith and morals were annulled by the succeeding pope, Boniface VIII (Benedetto Gaetani). While pope, St. Celestine split the College of Cardinals, appointing twelve new cardinals in his short, five month pontificate—seven of them French, the rest, Neapolitan.

Free of the burden of the papacy, St. Celestine sought to return to his beloved eremitic life. Boniface VIII feared that the previous pope might be used by certain oppositional groups who wished to advance schism in the Church. The new pope attempted to apprehend St. Celestine in order to keep him in confinement. St. Celestine avoided capture for some time, but was eventually imprisoned quite uncomfortably for the remaining ten months of his life. While prudence dictated to Boniface VIII to protect St. Celestine, and with him the integrity of the Church, the unfortunate treatment of this simple, saintly man remains a regrettable chapter in Boniface's pontificate.

## BONIFACE VIII AND PHILIP IV



Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) was in certain ways like a Renaissance pope. He was a patron of artists, Giotto in particular, and of sculptors; he founded the University of Rome; he reorganized the Vatican archives and had the Vatican library catalogued.

Though a courageous man of action, with political experience and knowledge of the current situation of the Church, Boniface VIII also lacked the necessary diplomacy required to deal with the difficult and changing political landscape. Before Pope St. Celestine V, his predecessors had used the office of the papacy to direct the actions of kings and emperors, bending them to the will of the Church. In the same way, Pope Boniface tried to force the lords and princes of the Christian kingdoms to accept his temporal authority. He issued a number of decrees and attempted to over-awe the princes of Europe with excessive displays of pomp and pageantry—always with little success. When Pope Boniface instituted the first jubilee year for the forgiveness of sins in 1300, he marched in the opening procession holding two swords: one representing his spiritual authority, the other his temporal authority. Tension would soon mount between pope and king over the temporal authority of the Church, and Pope Boniface VIII found that wielding these two swords would be nearly impossible in the changing European political climate.

The grandson of the late King St. Louis IX of France shared none of his predecessor's saintly admiration for the Church. Philip, called the Fair, assumed the throne in 1285, and, intent on extending the boundaries of France, he undertook a series of wars, particularly against England. These wars depleted Philip's funds, and he turned to Church lands to supplement his royal treasury. Except in times of a crusade, the Church had always been exempt from the taxation policies of the royal government, but the king ignored this precedent, collecting revenue from Church estates and confiscating properties to suit his desires.

In 1296, to chastise Philip, Boniface wrote *Clericis laicos* in which he asserted that kings did not have the right to tax clergy without the permission of the pope. Philip responded by cutting off all French shipments of gold, silver, and jewels to Italy. The loss of Church revenue from this action forced Boniface to compromise on this issue.







Philip the Fair was King of France from 1285 until his death in 1314.

In 1301, a more serious dispute broke out between Philip and Pope Boniface. Philip, in order to assert his authority over the Church in France, arrested Pope Boniface's papal legate on a series of secular charges. Pope Boniface condemned Philip's actions and ordered the prelate released. In the letter *Unam Sanctam*, Boniface declared that in order to save his or her soul, every human being—including the king—must be subject to the pope. Philip responded by calling his own national council, the Estates General, to condemn and depose the pope. Boniface was falsely charged with a ridiculous list of crimes ranging from idolatry and magic, to the death of Pope St. Celestine V and the loss of the Holy Land. In 1303 with some six hundred men, William of Nogaret, advisor to King Philip, and Sciarra Colonna, head of a powerful Roman family, marched through Italy to the small town of Anagni. There they stormed the papal palace to find Boniface dressed in full papal regalia, waiting calmly and righteously, resolute in the authority and integrity of his exalted position as the Vicar of Christ. He was captured, slapped, and held prisoner at Anagni for three days. Though he was soon released, the affair and the abuse he suffered during his short captivity ruined his health. He soon died of a raging fever.

## THE AVIGNON PAPACY

In the aftermath of the death of Pope Boniface VIII, Italy fell into a state of turmoil. Rome was subjected to the semi-anarchy of the masses and powerful Italian families, and the Italian peninsula began breaking up into a series of independent city-states. Pope Boniface VIII was succeeded by Pope Bl. Benedict XI, who attempted to work out some sort of peace with King Philip. The king clamored for the formal condemnation of Boniface VIII, but Pope Bl. Benedict XI resisted, taking steps to redress the scandalous events surrounding the last days of Boniface's pontificate by excommunicating William of Nogaret, Sciarra Colonna, and their accomplices. The pope's bold move was not met lightly, and within eight months of ascending the papal throne, Pope Bl. Benedict XI was found dead. Though the cause of his death is listed as acute dysentery, many suspect the cause of his death to be a fatal combination of an angry William of Nogaret and poison.

For nearly a year, the chair of St. Peter remained vacant. Under pressure from King Philip IV, the eleven-month conclave finally appointed Bertrand de Got, the Archbishop of Bordeaux and personal friend of the French king, who took the name Clement V. In order to avoid the political chaos of Rome, Clement chose to establish his papal court elsewhere, eventually settling in the town of Avignon (at that time beholden to Naples), near the French border. In Avignon, the pope surrounded himself with French cardinals, a move that exposed Pope Clement, and the Church, to the pressures and whims of the French crown. A far cry from Pope Boniface VIII's exposé of symbolic temporal power, Pope Clement V never left French soil, and for the next 70 years (1305-1377), the popes (all French) would reside in Avignon under the watchful eye of the French king in what would be called "The Babylonian Captivity."

Pope Clement and King Philip were boyhood friends. The king hoped that this new pope would vindicate his recent actions by declaring Pope Boniface VIII a heretic and revoking all of Boniface's anti-regal acts. Pope Clement V refused to give in to this demand. Wishing to placate the powerful French king, nonetheless, Pope Clement allowed the inquisition in France to investigate the military order of the Knights Templar; this affair would end in a terrible disaster. The inquisition spun away

from papal control as Clement was too weak and indecisive to keep it under his charge. Though accused of heresy and worldliness, the Templars' real "crime" was possessing property and wealth coveted by the king. Those knights captured by King Philip were brutally tortured until they admitted to all of the various crimes with which they were falsely charged. Many knights were eventually burned as heretics, and when the order was permanently dissolved, King Philip seized half of their possessions.

The Church at Avignon tried to stem the threats posed by the rising tide of secular governments by strengthening its own administrative system. Though not completely under the influence of the French king, the papacy at Avignon seemed to have lost its independent position in Christendom. The Medieval popes had fought German Imperial designs on Italy to secure the independence of the Church, but by staying at Avignon, they lost this same independence to the French King. The growth of nationalism at this time made it imperative that the pope remain above particular national interests. Since this was not the case with the Avignon popes, the prestige and authority of the papacy quickly declined. England and Germany began to view the pope more as a puppet of the French king than the supreme pastor of the universal Church.



King Philip IV and his children. Three of Philip's sons became kings of France: Louis X, Philip V and Charles IV. His daughter Isabella became Queen Consort of England.

To make matters more difficult for the popes, the idea that the kings' power extended into ecclesiastical affairs favored the nationalization of the Church in each European kingdom. This phenomenon became especially more widespread as the papacy took up residence at Avignon. Gallicanism (the idea that the French Roman Catholic clergy favored the restriction of papal control and the achievement by each nation of individual autonomy) has its origins in this period of history, emerging in France when King Philip IV called for his Estates General to move against Pope Boniface VIII. English laws of 1351-1393 helped to establish the foundations for an Anglican Church years before the Reformation and King Henry VIII. The German Emperor Louis IV of Bavaria, fearing French influence over the pope at Avignon, harbored a large number of anti-papal agitators at his court, including the Englishman William of Ockham who strongly supported the democratization of Church government. Pope Clement V only exacerbated the situation when, in order to please King Philip IV, he retracted Pope Boniface VIII's *Clericis laicos* and reinterpreted *Unam Sanctam*, stripping the document of any claims to temporal authority.

In 1324, the most damaging attack from the proponents of Gallicanism came from a former rector of the University of Paris by the name of Marsiglio of Padua. In the book *Defensor Pacis* (Defender of Peace), Marsiglio made the first clear assertion of the supremacy of secular rulers over the Church. He declared that the faithful were the true authority of the Church. This book held that the pope derived his authority not from Christ, but from the General Council, a body made up of clergymen and laymen and directed by the state. It further maintained that the emperor, as the representative of the people, had the right to depose and punish Church officials and dispose of ecclesiastical property as he saw fit.

As long as the pope remained in Avignon, the independence of the papacy was severely compromised. Writers such as William of Ockham and Marsiglio of Padua paved the way for anti-clerical attacks on the authority of the pope and sowed the seeds of religious rebellion. As if the situation was not grim enough, in the midst of these troubles came a series of events that would by themselves shake the very foundation of Medieval society.





# PART II
# The Black Plague

The thirteenth century brought Medieval society to its peak of prosperity. The structures of feudalism had produced a growing population and strong economic expansion. In principle, the lord held his property from the king; the knight held his manor from his lord; the small landlord from the knight, and the local peasant from the small landlord. It could be said that everything ultimately belonged to someone else. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, cracks in this system were becoming evident. As prosperity brought in surplus goods, money began to replace the service of labor. An agricultural boom brought a higher standard of living and a greater life expectancy, and maintenance of the large, growing population required continued good harvests. However, with no other source of food, harvest failures would result in widespread starvation and susceptibility to contagious diseases.

## FAMINE AND BLACK DEATH

From 1315-1317, large-scale famines struck Europe for the first time in two hundred years. By 1300, the population had grown so quickly that only the cultivation of marginal lands could feed the ever-growing populace. A series of bad harvests and cool, wet weather made lands virtually unusable and widespread famine broke out. Peasants resorted to eating their seed grain to feed their families, trade declined, business fell, and there was widespread economic depression. The Hundred Years War greatly contributed to this economic and social dislocation, forcing peasants from the countryside into the perceived safety of overcrowded and unsanitary walled cities. By the middle of the fourteenth century, large sectors of the population had grown very susceptible to contagious disease.



The Black Death tore into the weakened population of Europe from 1347-1351. (Subsequent epidemics would occur regularly every ten years until the eighteenth century.) The Black Death would be the greatest demographic catastrophe to hit Western Europe. Since immunity could not be transmitted from one generation to the next, the plague acted as a continuous check on population growth. It is estimated that during these years, approximately twenty-five million people—a third of the population of Europe—perished.

The Black Death first broke out in the small, Genoese Black Sea trading post of Kaffa on the Crimean Peninsula. Tartar invaders, attacking the Genoese settlement, brought the disease from Asia. It is reported that the Tartars helped spread the disease by casting plague-ridden corpses into the Genoese settlement after they were forced to abandon the siege. Genoese sailors, returning from their settlements, brought the plague with them back to Italy.



The Black Death, also known as the bubonic plague, actually took three different forms. Bubonic plague is characterized by a swellings of the lymph glands to nearly the size of eggs in the groin, neck, and armpit areas. Black patches would appear all over the body as blood pooled below the surface of the skin, thus the name "Black Death." The common carrier of plague bacteria was small black rats, which were quite common throughout Europe, infesting unsanitary villages and towns. Plague was passed from rat to rat by fleas. The rats carried the fleas throughout Europe, and the fleas eventually spread the plague to humans. Bubonic plague was extremely lethal with a death rate of over fifty percent. Still, this was not the most common, nor the deadliest form of the plague, which became pandemic when it took on its pneumonic form. Even more deadly (a ninety-five percent mortality rate), the pneumonic form of plague spread directly from person to person without blood transmission through flea bites. Coughs, sneezes, and the sputum of the plague victim spread the bacilli far and wide to any bystander who inhaled them. This form of plague spread rapidly in the overcrowded cities of Medieval Europe. The third, least common form, septicemic, infected the blood. With a more than ninety-five percent mortality rate, this form of plague killed its victims rapidly, before any evident symptoms could develop. Whatever its form, the Black Death killed more people than any war had ever done. The highest percentage of the population was struck with plague between 1347 and 1351, and recurrent waves of plague would continue to decimate those who survived the first spate.

It is not hard to understand the devastating impact that such a pandemic can have on a society. Since the cause of the plague was unknown at the time, proper treatment and prevention was unavailable. Remote regions remained untouched while huge segments of concentrated, urban population were being decimated. The plague knew no cultural, social, racial, or political boundaries—rich and poor, learned and common, priest and layman, everyone was vulnerable to the plague.

The plague laid waste to the political, intellectual, and economic leadership of Europe. Sometimes entire towns or monasteries would be destroyed by plague. Interpersonal relationships were tested—mothers would flee from their children and husbands from their wives to avoid contamination. Priests and bishops, who aided plague victims, died in great numbers. The situation became so bad that many people could not receive the last rites because there was no priest to administer them. The huge numbers of infected corpses also posed a huge sanitation problem. At one point, the pope consecrated the river Rhone at Avignon, so that corpses flung into the river might be considered to have received Christian burial.

Besides suffering the plague along with every one else, Jews were accused of poisoning wells and causing the plague. Popular outrage against Jews became so fierce that Pope Clement VI issued two Bulls declaring Jews innocent in order to stem mob violence.

Petrarch, an author and historian living in Avignon during the outbreak of the plague, wrote vivid descriptions of what occurred. He wrote that future generations would be incredulous and be unable to imagine the empty houses and the abandoned towns. They would not believe the fields littered with dead and the dreadful silence that hung over the entire world (cf. *Epistolo Metrica I*, 14). Indeed, the sights and sounds of Europe were as bleak and black as the disease that caused them.





## BOCCACCIO AND THE PLAGUE

Giovanni Boccaccio (cf. chapter twelve) was a fourteenth century poet who survived the plague and lived to write about it. Boccaccio's vivid descriptions provide a deep appreciation of the horror and devastation experienced by Europe.



It was the common practice of most of the neighbors, moved no less by fear of contamination by the putrefying bodies than by charity towards the deceased, to drag the corpses out of the houses with their own hands, aided, perhaps, by a porter, if a porter was to be had, and to lay them in front of the doors, where any one who made the round might have seen, especially in the morning, more of them than he could count; afterwards they would have biers brought up or in default, planks, whereon they laid them. Nor was it once or twice only that one and the same bier carried two or three corpses at once; but quite a considerable number of such cases occurred, one bier sufficing for husband and wife, two or three brothers, father and son, and so forth. And times without number it happened, that as two priests, bearing the cross, were on their way to perform the last office for some one, three or four biers were brought up by the porters in rear of them, so that, whereas the priests supposed that they had but one corpse to bury, they discovered that there were six or eight, or sometimes more. Nor, for all their number, were their obsequies honored by either tears or lights or crowds of mourners rather, it was come to this, that a dead man was then of no more account than a dead goat would be to-day. (Rigg, trans., *The Decameron*, 1921, vol. 1, p. 11)



Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) was an Italian author and poet. He was the greatest of Petrarch's disciples and an important Renaissance humanist. Boccaccio authored a number of notable works including *On Famous Women* and *The Decameron*.

# THE SPREAD OF THE BLACK DEATH IN EUROPE, 1347-1352






Petrarch wrote that future generations would be incredulous at the toll taken by the Black Death and be unable to imagine the empty houses and the abandoned towns.





# THE WESTERN CHURCH SCHISM, 1309-1417







An antique map of Avignon shows the *Palais des Papes*, the Rhone river and the Saint Bénezet bridge (with its original 22 arches of which only 4 remain) and the surrounding city.

The lofty gothic palace, walls 17-18 feet thick, was a cross between a monastery and a fortress. It was built on a natural spur of rock by Pope Benedict XII and enlarged by Clement VI to match the grandeur and opulence of the French court.



## PART III

# The Hundred Years War (1337-1453)

Another major crisis struck Medieval Europe while the popes took up residence in Avignon. For much of the Middle Ages, the Church had managed to prevent and avoid major confrontations between the various kings of Christendom through what was known as the Peace and Truce of God. According to this principle, European kings recognized a common unity of Faith, keeping peace between European peoples who otherwise did not share nationality or custom. Those religious bonds were no longer held sacred, and the problems of inheritance and conflicting economic interest that arose out of the feudal system put many kings at odds against each other. Ultimately, the conflict that arose between England and France during the fourteenth century would change the nature of knightly warfare and transform not only the kingdoms of England and France, but also the entire political makeup of Europe. Out of the ashes of more than one hundred years of warring rose a new sense of national identity—the first steps towards the formation of the European nation-states.





## THE ENGLISH IN FRANCE

Since the time of William the Conqueror in the eleventh century, the English and French thrones were linked through a number of matrimonial alliances. Through those marriages, England had inherited large portions of French land. The largest portion came from Henry II's marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine, through which the king acquired the huge Duchy of Aquitaine in south-western France. Although officially Henry held this land as a vassal of the French king, the English kings never really considered their possessions subject to the foreign ruler. Hostile to the foreign occupiers, the French kings long aspired to drive the English from their feudal estates in France.

Relations between England and France were further agitated by France's continued support of the rebellious nobles of Scotland and encouragement of piracy on the English Channel, England's chief trade route with Europe. On the continent, disputes over the Flanders region (modern day Belgium) also put the two countries at odds. The feudal lords of Flanders had been French vassals, and France had long sought to regain control of this region, which was a very wealthy and important trading center for both France and England. King Edward III of England enraged the French monarchy when, in the interest of retaining trade between England and Flemish textile manufacturers, he proclaimed Flanders under the protection of the English crown. English wool was vital to the Flemish textile trade, and Edward used this economic necessity to sway Flemish loyalty away from the French.

All these hostilities exploded when the French king Charles IV (Charles the Fair), the last son of the French king Philip IV, died without an heir in 1328. The Capetian line was broken and no one was left with a clear claim on the throne of France. Both King Philip IV's nephew (the grandson of King Philip III) and King Edward II of England (whose mother was the sister of King Charles IV of France) claimed the right of succession. This dispute began the long series of armed conflicts between England and France, known as the Hundred Years War.

### THE BATTLE OF CASTILLON

The Hundred Years War was significant in military history because of its technological and tactical advancements. Most notably, during the closing years of the war, gunpowder weaponry was used effectively for the first time in European warfare. By the final conflict of the war, the Battle of Castillon in 1453, gunpowder had offered a deadly advantage.

At the Battle of Castillon, the French army laid siege to the small town located east of Bordeaux. The English force, commanded by John Talbot, marched from Bordeaux to meet the French and fight off the siege. The English first engaged an outpost of French archers encamped some distance from the main French camp, and then rested for the night. The next morning, Talbot led his army against the main French camp. Ignorant of what he was marching into, Talbot led the English directly into a line of French gunners. The French, possessing more muskets and canons than was expected at that time, tore apart the English army, killing Talbot and soundly defeating the English.

## THE HUNDRED YEARS WAR

The Hundred Years War was in fact a series of short battles interrupted by long periods of relative peace. The English gained the upper hand early in the conflict. Though outnumbered, English forces destroyed the French knights at Crecy in 1346, thanks in part to the introduction of the long bow. This new weapon could shoot a yard-long arrow as far as 400 yards at the rate of five to six arrows a minute. It was one of the many deadly military innovations that would change the style of combat during the Hundred Years War.



The English defeated the French at Crecy in 1346 with the help of the deadly long bow which could shoot an arrow 400 yards.

Shortly after Crecy, plague broke out in France. Ten years of war forced many peasants into the safe confines of walled cities where the plague spread rapidly. Conditions in France were dreadful, and the coming years saw no changes.

In 1356, King Edward III's eldest son Edward (the Black Prince) led an English offensive at Poitiers. Both sides exhausted each other through a long battle of attrition, and eventually a truce was signed. However, peace lasted only four years before war broke out again in 1360. Learning from Crecy and Poitiers, the French knights avoided meeting the English in full-scale battles; instead, they skirmished with the English, scattering the troops. This style of warfare proved slow and deadly, never allowing either side to gain a clear upper hand. Twenty years of grueling fighting passed.

By 1380 both King Edward III and the Black Prince were dead, and England held only the coastal towns of Bordeaux, Bayonne, and Calais. England was on her heels, and an end to the war was in sight. But a civil war between the major noble houses of France broke out, helping to prolong the military conflict. The new French king, Charles VI, took the throne at the age of twelve, and besides being too young to rule in his own right, he was exceedingly mad. (Among his many fits and eccentricities, he believed himself to be made of glass and about to break.) The Dukes of Burgundy and Orléans took advantage of Charles' handicap and fought for control of France. The infighting left France vulnerable to an invasion, and England's King Henry V did not miss his opportunity.

King Henry V destroyed the elite of the French aristocracy and overwhelmed the king of France at Agincourt in 1415. The aftermath of Henry's victory at Agincourt demonstrated the failing legacy of the Medieval feudal system. French cavalry butchered young pages waiting at the wagons off the field of battle and French prisoners were executed rather than ransomed, as was the custom. Henry V claimed the throne of France and married the French king's daughter, Catherine. Henry only ruled for two years before his death, after which he left his infant son Henry VI on the throne.

A succession of young, incompetent, and partially mad kings left France demoralized and subject to the English crown. As the Hundred Years War dragged on, the future of France looked bleak. The ominous fate of the kingdom was radically changed by the appearance of a young peasant girl named Joan.





## ST. JOAN OF ARC



St. Joan was born at Domremy in Champagne, probably on January 6, 1412. At the age of 13, she began to hear voices and had a vision of light in which St. Michael the Archangel, St. Margaret, and St. Catherine of Alexandria appeared to her. These guiding councilors elected her as liberator of France and, in particular, the city of Orléans. St. Joan was instructed by the saints to inform Charles VII that she would make possible his coronation.

Dressed in men's clothes, St. Joan succeeded in convincing the king of the sincerity of her mission, and in May 1429, she led a small army against the captured city of Orléans. Under her leadership, French soldiers overwhelmed English fortifications and drove them from the city, liberating the regions of Loire, Troyes, and Châlons. During the battle, St. Joan was wounded by an arrow, but desired to move on to Rheims. Rheims was finally captured in July 1429, and there Charles was formally crowned king Charles VII.

With the crowning of King Charles VII, St. Joan's principal aim was complete, and after a failed attack on Paris, she did not lead any assaults until the following year. During the winter, Charles and his advisors grew increasingly apathetic to her mission. The following May, St. Joan led a small army of five hundred soldiers against a far stronger force. During the attack she was captured by the English.

Charles did not attempt to bargain for St. Joan's life, and with no support from the French, St. Joan was put on trial for heresy and witchcraft by Pierre Cauchon, the Bishop of Beauvais. The Bishop was an unscrupulous, ambitious man and a puppet of the English rulers in Burgundy. St. Joan was convicted of heresy, largely because she was allowed no defense of her supernatural premonitions. Before leading her first strike with French forces, King Charles had St. Joan examined by a number of doctors and bishops. They found nothing sick or heretical in St. Joan's message, but neither those officials nor their documents proving St. Joan's innocence were allowed to be used in St. Joan's defense during her English trial. St. Joan was burned at the stake on May 30, 1431.

Twenty-five years later, in 1456, the sentence was lifted after a re-examination by Pope Callistus III. St. Joan was eventually beatified in 1909 and canonized by Pope Benedict XV in 1920.

Through the services of St. Joan of Arc, the tide of battle turned against the English. Although St. Joan was captured and killed, her efforts enabled the French army to begin a coun[illegible]sive against the English. Now fighting a divided enemy, the French retook Paris in 14[illegible]; English posts fell rapidly, and by 1453 the English only controlled Calais. The mem[illegible] was vindicated, and popular devotion to her grew. The people of France ral[illegible]d ar[illegible] Arc, and by the end of the Hundred Years War, St. Joan became a s[illegible] national spirit.

## ST. JOAN OF ARC'S IMPOSSIBLE MISSION



This tapestry depicts the meeting of St. Joan of Arc and King Charles VII at Chinon in March 1429.

God made it clear to St. Joan that she was to lead an army against the English. Despite the certainty of God's will for her life, her mission was no easy task. Nevertheless, through St. Joan's strong faith and committed persistence, God enabled her to carry out this nearly impossible mission.

The first obstacle to St. Joan's mission was the king. Securing an audience with the French monarch was difficult enough, let alone persuading him to let a poor peasant girl lead one of the French armies in battle. Initially, she could not get into the king's court. St. Joan continued to hear mystical voices that instructed her on how to proceed. In May 1428, these voices told her to seek out Robert Baudricourt, a commander of the king's army in the nearby town of Vaucouleurs.

Accompanied by her cousin, St. Joan traveled to Vaucouleurs and spoke with Baudricourt about her instructions to lead an army. The commander remained skeptical, to the say the least, and rather then helping St. Joan, he told St. Joan's cousin to bring the girl home and have her whipped. Despite Baudricourt's indignation, the voices persisted in urging St. Joan to seek the commander's help. St. Joan returned to Vaucouleurs, this time with a prophetic message. Although it was too soon for anyone in Vaucouleurs to have known about a recent French defeat at the Battle of Herrings, she told Baudricourt about the details of the battle. Baudricourt, struck by St. Joan's prophetic insight, sent the young girl to see the king at Chinon in March 1429.

St. Joan finally had her chance to speak with the king, but convincing the king to allow her to lead an army still did not seem likely. St. Joan would be aided, ironically, by the king's own trickery. Seeking to test her, the king disguised an aid as king. Upon entering the court, however, St. Joan saluted the real king, who disguised himself as a simple attendant. She then revealed to the king a secret sign that the Lord disclosed to St. Joan before her arrival. While no one knows what the secret was, many believe it had to do with the king's doubts about the legitimacy of his birth. After these revelations, the king was convinced and proceeded to help St. Joan carry out her mission.





# PART IV

# Return to Rome and Schism

Plague and war had devastating effects on the institutions and leadership of Medieval Europe, and the continuing presence of the popes at Avignon undermined the ability of the Holy See to reform itself and restore order to Christendom. The long-awaited return of the pope to Rome finally came in 1378 during the pontificate of Gregory XI. Avignon itself was no longer safe as French and English armies fought for domination of the French mainland. Ongoing civil war in Italy, including war between Florence and the papacy (1375), made it clear to Pope Gregory XI that the Holy See needed to return to the City of St. Peter in order to recover its absent leadership. Gregory hesitated to take the fateful step. Nevertheless, the pope would receive the strength and confidence to return to Rome through the work of another extraordinary woman of the fourteenth century, the Dominican Tertiary mystic St. Catherine of Siena.

## ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

St. Catherine (1347-1380) was the youngest of twenty-five children. As a young girl, St. Catherine had a precocious understanding of her own vocation and by age seven had consecrated her virginity to Christ. St. Catherine began to receive visions and wasted no time in committing herself to God's mission for her. At sixteen years of age, she joined the Dominican Tertiaries.



St. Catherine underwent a mystical experience common to many saints known as the "spiritual espousal."

For a time she lived a secluded and demanding ascetical life during which she had visions and strong mystical experiences, including conversations with Christ. In 1366, St. Catherine underwent a mystical experience common to a number of saints known as a "spiritual espousal." In this "mystical marriage," Christ tells a soul that he takes it for his bride. The apparition is accompanied by a ceremony in which the Blessed Virgin, saints, and angels are present, after which the soul receives a sudden surge of charity and an increased familiarity with God.

After her spiritual espousal and years of seclusion, St. Catherine returned to the world to dedicate herself to the service of the poor and the sick—especially those suffering from the plague.

St. Catherine lived extreme poverty amongst the sick and constantly suffered physical pain. She went for long periods with practically no food, save Holy Communion. Despite these physical deprivations, she was radiantly happy and full of practical wisdom and spiritual insight. Even members of her own order who saw her extraordinary personal charm, despite her physical sufferings, teased and tormented her. Nonetheless, her spiritual purity and charisma drew followers, both men and women, who flocked to her, united by the bonds of mystical love. She continued to experience all types of visions, including a series of special manifestations of the Divine mysteries and a prolonged ecstasy in which she had a vision of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. During that vision,

St. Catherine heard God ask her to enter public life and help "heal the wounds of the Church."

St. Catherine began to send letters to men and women of every walk of life. She entered into correspondence with many princes and leaders of Italy and began imploring Pope Gregory XI to return to Rome. Upon meeting with Pope Gregory, God miraculously revealed to St. Catherine Gregory's secret desire to return the papacy to Rome, a personal vow he had never disclosed to any human being. "Fulfill what you have promised," she told him, and the pope knew that she was indeed sent from God (quoted in "Saint Catherine of Siena, Virgin," taken from Crawley, *Lives of the Saints*, 1954).



Upon meeting with Pope Gregory XI, St. Catherine reminded him of a personal vow he had made to himself.

Amid storms and frightening intrigues, Pope Gregory XI returned to Rome on January 17, 1377, with the hope of bringing reform and peace to the Church in Italy. He sent St. Catherine to Florence hoping that she could negotiate peace between some of the Italian princes, but her efforts proved fruitless against the chaotic politics of the Italian city-states. She narrowly escaped an attempt on her life. St. Catherine went from Florence to Siena where she rested for some time and dictated her *Dialogue*, the book containing her meditations and revelations.

In November 1378, St. Catherine was summoned back to Rome by Pope Urban VI. In her absence, the Great Western Schism had broken out, and the pope sought St. Catherine's help. In Rome, she spent the remainder of her life working to reform the Church, serving the destitute and afflicted, and writing eloquent letters in support of Pope Urban's legitimacy. She continued to suffer immense physical pain, and in her prayers, asked Christ to allow her to bear the punishment for all the sins of the world and to sacrifice her body for the unity of the Church. She received the stigmata, but prayed that it would not show on the surface of her skin. The marks only became visible after her death.



In her prayers, St. Catherine asked Christ to allow her to bear the punishment for all the sins of the world and to sacrifice her body for the unity of the Church. During her intense ecstasies, St. Catherine received the wounds of Christ, the stigmata.

After a prolonged and mysterious agony, which she bore with happiness for three months, St. Catherine of Siena died on the Sunday before the Ascension in 1380 at the age of thirty-three. The Stigmata was revealed, and in 1430 her body was discovered incorruptible. St. Catherine was canonized in 1461, and her relics are the object of pilgrimages and venerated to this day. Her feast day is celebrated on April 29. She is a Doctor of the Church.





## ST. BRIDGET OF SWEDEN

Before St. Catherine of Siena, another mystic visionary, St. Bridget of Sweden played an important role in urging the pope to return to Rome. St. Bridget was born in 1303, and after her husband's death, she founded the Order of the Most Holy Savior, also called the Brigettines. In 1349 she traveled from her home in Sweden to Rome where she founded hospices for the poor and needy.

While St. Bridget was in Rome, Pope Bl. Urban V returned to the city from Avignon, and many hoped his stay would be permanent. However, in 1370, he returned to Avignon in order to help intervene in the ongoing negotiations that sought an end to the Hundred Years War. After the pope's departure from Rome, St. Bridget received a message from Mary. Unless the pope returned to Rome, she said, "he will be struck such a blow. . . that his teeth will shake in his mouth. His sight will be darkened and all his limbs will tremble." St. Bridget sent word to Bl. Urban, warning him of the message and telling him to return to Rome. The pope, however, did not comply. When Pope Bl. Urban reached Avignon, he was stricken with an illness and died within the year. The prophecy was fulfilled.

Soon after Gregory XI was elected the next pope, St. Bridget received another vision. This time Mary clearly told her that "it is the will of God that [the pope] humbly bring back the Chair of St. Peter to Rome." St. Bridget told the pope of this command, but he remained hesitant to return. Finally, in 1373, St. Bridget sent her last letter to Gregory XI in which she warned him sternly. "You must go to Rome as quickly as you can," she wrote, "the sooner you come the more will the virtues and gifts of the Holy Spirit inflame your soul." St. Bridget died that same year, but St. Catherine continued her efforts to bring the pope back to the Eternal City, and in 1377, Pope Gregory XI finally left Avignon and restored the papacy to Rome.



This miniature depicts St. Bridget witnessing the Transubstantiation of the Eucharist bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. The saint is seated at her writing desk. In front of her the Eucharist is being celebrated. Her head is lit by a divine ray which descends from an open heaven in which the angels and saints have gathered. The Virgin and Christ impart the rays which reveal the miracle of the Eucharist. Only Bridget is able to see the body of Christ rising from the wafer.

## THE WESTERN SCHISM

The jubilation over the pope's return to Rome did not last after the death of Pope Gregory XI. After seventy years of French domination, the people of Italy desired an Italian pope. A mob of Romans, tired of the Avignon papacy, had invaded the conclave, violently demanding an Italian pope. The cardinals elected the Italian archbishop of Bari, Bartolomeo Prignano, who chose the name Urban VI. After the crowd had calmed, these same cardinals confirmed their choice, gave a sign of obedience to Urban, sent letters throughout Christendom announcing the election of the new pope. They reported to their colleagues at Avignon that they had voted "freely and unanimously."

The Avignon cardinals had thought they had found a docile and malleable candidate for the papacy, but Urban VI turned out to be an inflexible and aggressive reformer. Urban clearly stated that there would be no return to Avignon; he declared war on every moral abuse, harshly criticizing the materialistic lifestyle of the worldly cardinals. His overzealous and violent character soured the previously favorable opinions of many of his electors. Even St. Catherine, who supported the new pope for the remainder of her life, attempted to intervene. She pleaded with Urban: "For the love of Christ, moderate a little the violent actions to which your nature drives you!" (St. Catherine, *Letter to Urban VI*, January 29, 1380). Six months after his election, the French cardinals returned to Avignon and declared that they had invalidly elected Urban out of fear and under duress. The French Cardinals then voted for the antipope Clement VII in place of Urban VI. The Western Schism, which would open gaping wounds in the Church, had begun.

Each country of Europe rallied around its own choice for pope. Western Christendom was split into two camps. Even many saints were confused as to who was the real pope. At a time when the Church needed to bring together the faithful, division and chaos became the order of the day. Bishops and abbots contested for the same benefices and monasteries. Church authorities conceded large control of ecclesiastical affairs to secular rulers to gain political support. The absence of strong papal leadership allowed new antipapal heresies, which especially included Conciliarism, Gallicanism, Wycliffeism and Hussitism (the last two of which will be discussed near the end of this chapter), to gain followers. This schism, which lasted for forty years, would result in untold confusion and a weaker Church and would pave the way for mass defections in the sixteenth century.

## RESOLUTION OF THE SCHISM: COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE

By 1400, the situation of the Church seemed hopeless. The schism had lasted twenty-two years and no end was in sight; efforts to resolve the schism had failed. Many within the Church began to believe that only a general church council could solve the dilemma. This belief resulted in the Conciliar Movement and its attendant heresy, Conciliarism. Taking its authority from such works as *Defensor Pacis*, the Conciliarists tried to maintain that a Council could depose the rival claimants to the papacy and choose a compromise candidate. The first attempt to end the schism in this way occurred at Pisa, Italy, in 1409. However, neither Gregory XII, the legitimate pope, nor Benedict XIII, the antipope, would abdicate, so the Pisan Council deposed them both and chose a second antipope, Alexander V, to replace both of them. The authority of Pisa was rejected by Gregory, Benedict, and key European kings, and rather than having solved the problem, the predicament was merely compounded. There were now three claimants to the papacy.

It would take another five years to find a more lasting solution. The Holy Roman emperor Sigismund, then in the imperial city of Constance, dedicated great efforts to achieve Church unity. He forced the Pisan antipope John XXIII to call a council at Constance and to resign his position. Peace between France and England as well as the protection of Sigismund were key to the success of the Council of Constance. Pope Gregory XII sent a representative to the Council of Constance







The Council of Constance was the sixteenth Ecumenical Council. Called by Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund, the council was held from November 1414 to April 1418 in the Cathedral of Constance. Its main purpose was to end the papal schism. Antipopes John XXIII and Benedict XIII were deposed, the resignation of Pope Gregory XII was accepted, and Pope Martin V was elected in 1417. Martin V remained pope until his death in 1431. He resided in Mantua and Florence before entering Rome in 1420.

The Council also dealt with the heresies of John Wycliffe and Jan Hus.



Sigismund was Holy Roman Emperor from 1433 to 1437. He was the third and last German emperor.

(1414-1418) with the offer that he would recognize the authority of Constance and would abdicate if the Council would recognize him as pope. Benedict XIII refused to cooperate with the council, and as a result, he lost most of his support. Gregory's abdication cleared the way for the election of Pope Martin V and an end to the Western Schism.

Conciliarism would continue in the aftermath of Constance, and regular councils were held to direct the leadership of the Church. The Council of Constance had only succeeded due to the support of Pope Gregory XII, and many of the later councils failed through lack of participation or quarrels between rival groups. Finally, in 1439 at Ferrara-Florence, the pope's superiority over a general council was established. It was decided that three essential characteristics must be maintained for a council to be valid. First, it must be called by the pope; second, it must be presided over by the pope or his legate; finally, its dogmatic decrees are considered valid only if they are accepted and approved by the pope.

The authority of the papacy was shaken by its long tenure at Avignon, further still, with more than forty years of schism. The unity of Christendom had been broken, and secular rulers continued to dominate the Church within thier borders. Though the pope had weathered a great wave of Conciliarism, the heresy continued to plague much of Europe. At the same time, new threat to the security of Europe had arrived: the Turks. The Turkish advance in the East would do much to change the relations of Church and State in the fifteenth century.

PART V

# Decline of Scholastic Philosophy and Theology and the Rise of Heresy

As the disasters of the fourteenth century unfolded, the social stability of the Medieval Period began to break down. Plague, war, and Church divisions created a moral instability that affected all elements of society. There were major swings between religious idealism and brutal, skeptical realism.

Many who were disenchanted with the Church hierarchy became more introverted in their faith and increasingly anti-clerical. Some swung to religious extremes, joining groups such as the Flagellants, who thought they could escape divine punishment by scourging themselves. Others sought support through superstition and personal mystical experiences. Still others lost their faith completely and turned to Satanic cults and witchcraft, or to orgies of gluttonous sensuality.

Economic breakdown followed war and pestilence. The Black Death helped destroy the traditional relationship between lord and peasant. The century following 1350 was a time of extraordinary mobility. Peasants could leave their manor seeking out better land and better opportunity, and laborers could demand higher wages in a labor-strapped market. In 1351, the English aristocracy attempted to freeze wages and limit peasant mobility by passing the *Statute of Laborers*. In 1381, to recover their loss of revenue, the English nobility passed a head tax which resulted in the Watt Tyler rebellion. In France, during the Hundred Years War, French peasants rebelled against a tax they had to pay their lords. This rebellion, called *the Jacquerie* (Jacques being a common name of a French peasant), ravaged the countryside with war as peasants attacked castles and towns out of desperation.

## WILLIAM OF OCKHAM

Intellectual life of the fourteenth century was undergoing subtle changes. Scholastic theology and its handmaiden, philosophy, which had reached their pinnacle in the works of St. Thomas Aquinas and Bl. John Duns Scotus, were now in decline. Scholasticism became increasingly technical, to the point of quibbling over insignificancies, and it had lost the rich content and understanding of purpose it once held. Challenges to Scholastic thought arose, and a new debate began over the relationship of reason to revelation. The Franciscan friar William of Ockham was one of the early critics of the old Scholastic tradition. He attempted to "simplify" the excessive formalism of the Scholastic method by separating what he claimed could truly be known by reason and what must be accepted only on faith. Ockham was an intensely religious individual, but he made the mistake of confusing philosophy and theology. His guiding philosophical principle was a theological tenet: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty."

With this statement of faith as his philosophical foundation, Ockham concluded that God, if he is almighty, must be the only and direct reason why things are true or false. Ockham's "nominalism" taught that the human mind can only know individual, sensible objects, such as "this textbook right here." Universal concepts (such as "what it means to be a textbook in general") are not concepts





but merely general names—in Latin, *nomina*. Only God guarantees that knowledge of particular things consistently correspond to the *nomina*, which people have falsely assumed to be self-generated concepts. From this way of thinking, it follows that moral and religious truths are inaccessible through mere human reason, and can only be known through revelation. This is problematic since actions can no longer be said to be good or bad by nature. Instead, it is only because God determines an action to be good or bad that it is morally right or wrong. Religion, he argued, is a mystery of faith with no room for philosophical discourse. Ockham's philosophy is one of the roots of the skeptical crisis in metaphysics that finally erupted in the seventeenth century with Renē Descartes and has continued for hundreds of years in modern philosophy.

Ockham was an early critic of Church authority and, with his companion Marsiglio of Padua, advocated the supreme authority of the state. Since the Church deals with mysteries of Faith and the state works with empirical and therefore sure facts, according to Ockham, the Church should be subordinate to the authority of the state. As the unity of Christendom faded and nationalistic movements spread, similar heretical ideas began to appear throughout Europe. Writers such as the Englishman John Wycliffe and the Bohemian Jan Hus began to attack the authority of the Holy See and traditional beliefs of the Catholic Church.

## JOHN WYCLIFFE



John Wycliffe's popularity in England arose in conjunction with some of the difficulties posed by the Hundred Years War. The Avignon popes were seen as allies of the enemies of England, and the need for new revenues directed the English crown's attention to the wealth of Church lands. John Wycliffe, a professor at the University of Oxford, had long been a critic of the temporal practices and material possessions of the Church. He had advocated that the Church should rid itself of all political power and practice strict poverty. "Dominion is founded in grace" he claimed, believing that no monks or clergy, not even the righteous, could hold temporal possessions without sin. Through this principle he advocated that it was lawful for the king to seize Church lands.

Wycliffe was one of the first pre-Protestant thinkers. In addition to attacking the authority of the pope, he rejected Scholastic theology and claimed that religious knowledge was derived from the Bible only, and not from Tradition. He advocated predestination and concluded that the Church did not need the clergy or the Sacraments. Together with the renunciation of the priesthood, he attacked the validity of indulgences, and denied man's free will, claiming that man was completely subjected to the will of God. Like many critics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Wycliffe began with an attack on clerical wealth; but he then went on to dispute the authority of the Church and, finally, he attacked its sacramental system.

Popular support among the upper classes for Wycliffe's ideas began to wane after the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. Many nobles feared that Wycliffe's attack on the authority of the Church would find a parallel in the relationship between the peasants and the aristocracy or king. The Lollards, those who embraced Wycliffe's ideas in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, helped pave the way for Protestantism in England during the sixteenth century.

## JAN HUS

Wycliffe's ideas had even more popularity in the kingdom of Bohemia. The Czechs were dominated by the Holy Roman Empire, and they found in Wycliffe's anti-clerical principles a vehicle through which to separate themselves from their German overlords. As nationalism grew in Bohemia, the population tended towards heresy. Jan Hus, rector of the University of Prague, adopted many of Wycliffe's ideas in his attempts to reform the Church in Bohemia. The ecclesiastical authorities of Bohemia owned about half the land, and the peasantry resented the heavy tax burden and corruption among the established clergy. At first, Hus was supported by the king and the clergy as a reformer, but he lost that support as he moved from reform into heresy.



This monument to Jan Hus stands in the city of Prague, Czechoslovakia.

Like Wycliffe, Hus attacked the abuses of the clergy and the authority of the Church. He proclaimed the supremacy of private judgment over Church pronouncements and advocated the free interpretation of the Bible. He denied the authority of tradition, attacked the veneration of relics and rejected the existence of Purgatory. While rejecting many of the Sacraments, he advocated Communion under both species, but denied Transubstantiation. He was the spiritual precursor to Martin Luther, arguing that Faith alone, apart from good works, is the means of salvation.

Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund had pushed the Council of Constance to resolve the crisis of the Western Schism. Hus, being excommunicated, was granted a pass of safe conduct by Sigismund to plead his case in Constance. There Hus was imprisoned and brought to trial for heresy. The council was not anxious to execute Hus, and they encouraged him to admit his errors and recant. With full knowledge of the consequences, Hus refused to accept the judgment of the Council and was tragically burned at the stake on July 6, 1415. National strife continued in Bohemia after the death of Hus, who came to be revered as a martyr for the Czech national cause. Churches were burned and priests killed during the Husite wars, and the conflict would not be resolved until the Thirty Years War of the seventeenth century.

## CONCLUSION

The tragedies of the fourteenth century make a powerful case for the need of an authentic papacy as an indispensable means of unity and spiritual and moral health in the Church. Without the clear supernatural leadership of the pope, the people of God become like sheep without a shepherd. A firmly established papacy devoid of temporal concerns would likely have effected a different outcome of this sad chapter in the history of the Church's history. The ultimate consequence to this papal crisis was the defection of millions to the Protestant cause in the sixteenth century. Still, as the fourteenth century—along with the Middle Ages—ended, the fifteenth century ushered a new era into the Western world. The Church and Europe were in the midst of great transition with the emergence of new ideas, the growth of powerful new nation-states, and the discovery of a new world. It was an explosive time of great intellectual, scientific, and artistic achievement. The new learning and intellectual framework confronted the Church with new challenges, but it also opened the door for wonderful, much needed growth. It was the time of the Renaissance.





## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

**From a letter by Petrarch to his brother about the Plague**

Alas! My beloved brother, what shall I say? How shall I begin? Whither shall I turn? On all sides is sorrow, everywhere is fear. Would, my brother, that I had never been born, or, at least, had died before these times. How will posterity believe that there has been a time when, without the lightnings of heaven or the fires of earth, without wars or other visible slaughter, not this or that part of the earth, but well nigh the whole globe, has remained without inhabitants.

When has any such thing ever been heard or seen? In what annals has it ever been read that houses were left vacant, cities deserted, the countryside neglected, the fields too small for the dead, and a fearful and universal solitude spread over the whole earth? Consult your historians, they are silent; question your doctors, they are dumb; seek an answer from your philosophers, they shrug their shoulders and frown, and with their fingers on their lips bid you to be silent.

Will posterity ever believe these things when we, who see, can scarcely credit them? We should think we were dreaming if we did not see with our eyes, when walking abroad, the city in mourning with funerals, and returning to our home, find it empty, and thus know that what we lament is real.

Oh, happy people of the future, who have not known these miseries and perchance will class our testimony with the fables. We have, indeed, deserved these and even greater punishments; but our forefathers also have deserved them, and may our posterity also not merit the same.

**Boniface VIII, *Unam Sanctam*, November 18, 1302, "The Doctrine of the Two Swords"**

There being one faith and one Baptism, and the Church constituting but one body, there can necessarily be but one head. The invisible head is Jesus Christ; the visible head, His representatives, the successors of St. Peter. Christ has established two swords or powers in the Church—the one temporal the other spiritual. The latter he has committed to the priesthood, the former to the kings; and both being in the Church, have the same end. The temporal power, being inferior, is subject to the spiritual, which is the higher and more noble, and governs the former as the soul does the body. Should the temporal power turn away from its prescribed course, it becomes the duty of the spiritual to recall it to its true duty. It is of faith that all men, even kings, are subject to the pope; for if kings were not subject to the censures of the Church whenever they sin in the exercise of the power committed to them, they would, as a consequence, be out of the Church, and the two powers would be essentially distinct, having, in that case, their origins in two different and opposite principles—an error not far removed from the heresy of the Manicheans.

**John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, 6**

The unity of all divided humanity is the will of God. For this reason he sent his Son, so that by dying and rising for us he might bestow on us the Spirit of love. On the eve of his sacrifice on the Cross, Jesus himself prayed to the Father for his disciples and for all those who believe in him, that they *might be one*, a living communion. This is the basis not only of the duty, but also the responsibility before God and his plan, which falls to those, who through Baptism become members of the Body of Christ, a body in which the fullness of reconciliation and communion must be made present.

## VOCABULARY

**BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY**
The seventy years (1305-1377) the papacy spent in Avignon under the watchful eye of the French kings.

**BLACK PLAGUE**
Known commonly as "The Black Death," this deadly epidemic broke out in Europe around the year 1347, decimating the population. The disease took on three forms: The bubonic plague, carried by fleas which had bitten infested rats, was characterized by swelling lymph glands and black patches on the skin; the pneumonic plague spread quickly through coughing and sneezing and was more deadly than the bubonic; the septicemic plague was the deadliest form, infecting the blood stream and killing its victims the most quickly.

***CLERICIS LAICOS***
Written by Pope Boniface VIII to King Philip the Fair in 1296, this letter asserted that kings did not have the right to tax clergy without permission from the pope. Philip responded by cutting off all French shipments of gold, silver, and jewels to Italy. The loss of Church revenues from this action forced Boniface to back down.

**CONCILIARISM**
Movement which supported the power of a council to appoint a candidate for the papacy, thus placing a council's authority over that of the pope.

***DEFENSOR PACIS* (DEFENDER OF PEACE)**
Written by Marsiglio of Padua, a former rector of the University of Paris, this book made the first clear assertion of the supremacy of secular powers over the Church. He declared that the faithful were the true authority of the Church.

**GALLICANISM**
The idea that the French Roman Catholic clergy favored the restriction of papal control and the achievement by each nation of individual administrative autonomy.

**HUSITISM**
Movement started by Jan Hus which denied the authority of tradition, the existence of Purgatory, transubstantiation, and the necessity of good works in salvation. It was especially popular in Bohemia.

***JACQUERIE***
Rebellion of French peasants who opposed the taxes forced upon them during the Hundred Years War. The name comes from the traditional name of a French peasant.

**NOMINALISM**
Put forth by William of Ockham, this theory taught that the human mind can only know individual, sensible objects, and that universal ideas, like truth, goodness, and humanity are only names—*nomina*. Only God guarantees that individual experiences properly and consistently correspond to the *nomina*, which people have falsely assumed to be self-generated concepts. From this way of thinking it follows that moral and religious truths are inaccessible through mere human reason, and can only be known through revelation.

**PEACE AND TRUCE OF GOD**
Principle which, for much of the Middle Ages, kept European kings at peace by recognizing a common unity in Faith between European peoples who otherwise did not share common nationalities or customs.

**SPIRITUAL ESPOUSAL**
These "Mystical Marriages" were experienced by a number of great saints, most notably St. Catherine of Siena. They occur when Christ takes a soul as his bride, leading it to an increase of charity and familiarity with Christ.

***UNAM SANCTAM***
Letter written by Pope Boniface claiming that in order to save his or her soul, every human being—including the king—must be subject to the pope. King Philip responded by calling his own national council, the Estates General, to condemn and depose the pope.

**WYCLIFFEISM**
Heretical movement founded by John Wycliffe which held that authority to rule depends on moral virtue; the Bible alone contains all divine revelation, preaching is more important than the sacraments or the Mass, and the pope has no primacy of jurisdiction.





## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How did Pope St. Celestine V contribute to the problems of the Avignon papacy and the Western Schism?
2. Pope Boniface VIII declared the first Jubilee Year in 1300. At the procession he carried two swords. What did they represent?
3. What did Philip the Fair want that instigated a struggle with the papacy?
4. What did *Clericis laicos* by Pope Boniface VIII state?
5. What did Pope Boniface assert in *Unam Sanctam?*
6. How did the Babylonian Captivity compromise the papacy and the Church?
7. Define Gallicanism.
8. What changed the demographic and economic outlook of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries?
9. How many people died in Europe from the Black Death?
10. How did the Black Death affect society?
11. How did the Black Plague affect anti-Semitism?
12. How did the English king come to govern a large section of western France?
13. How did the English convince Flanders (modern day Belgium) to align itself with England and not France?
14. What were the three main battles of the Hundred Years War?
15. How did St. Joan of Arc give new hope to the French?
16. Describe St. Catherine's spirituality.
17. What is the Western Schism?
18. How did the co-existence of three "popes" prove to be a scandal to the faithful?
19. How did the Council of Constance handle the situation of three popes?
20. When was conciliarism definitively defeated?
21. Who were the Flagellants, and how did people respond to them?
22. What did the *Statute of Laborers* do?
23. What was the Watt Tyler rebellion?
24. Of what was William of Ockham critical?
25. What was John Wycliffe's profession?
26. What did Wycliffe criticize?
27. What English movement used Wycliffe as a basis for their criticism of the Church?
28. In what empire did John Hus live?
29. What did Hus criticize?

## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

**1.** St. Joan of Arc and St. Catherine of Siena are too very different saints. Explain how the lives of these two great women reflect the multifaceted role of women in fourteenth century society. What were each saints' great accomplishments? How did they serve God? How did they serve society?

**2.** The Black Plague killed nearly a third of the population of Europe. In your town or city, how would life change if a third of its citizens, from every section of society, disappeared tomorrow? In a few paragraphs, describe a day in which, upon waking, a third of your town or city vanished.

**3.** How did both the Avignon papacy and the Hundred Years War reflect a changing sense of social identity in western Europeans?

**4.** Throughout the history of the Church, many heresies have threatened the Faith. Why were the writings of the three heretics described in this chapter so influential?

## FROM THE CATECHISM

**815** What are these bonds of unity? Above all, charity "binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col 3:14). But the unity of the pilgrim Church is also assured by visible bonds of communion:

—profession of one faith received from the Apostles;

—common celebration of divine worship, especially of the sacraments;

—apostolic succession through the sacrament of Holy Orders, maintaining the fraternal concord of God's family (cf. *UR* 2; *LG* 14; CIC, can. 205).

**817** In fact, "in this one and only Church of God from its very beginnings there arose certain rifts, which the Apostle strongly censures as damnable. But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions appeared and large communities became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church—for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame" (*UR* 3 § 1). The ruptures that wound the unity of Christ's Body—here we must distinguish heresy, apostasy, and schism (cf. CIC, can. 751)—do not occur without human sin:

Where there are sins, there are also divisions, schisms, heresies, and disputes. Where there is virtue, however, there also are harmony and unity, from which arise the one heart and one soul of all believers (Origen, *Hom. in Ezech.* 9, 1: PG 13, 732).

**820** "Christ bestowed unity on his Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time" (*UR* 4 § 3). Christ always gives his Church the gift of unity, but the Church must always pray and work to maintain, reinforce, and perfect the unity that Christ wills for her. This is why Jesus himself prayed at the hour of his Passion, and does not cease praying to his Father, for the unity of his disciples: "That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us,... so that the world may know that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21; cf. Heb 7:25). The desire to recover the unity of all Christians is a gift of Christ and a call of the Holy Spirit (cf. *UR* 1).





## FROM THE CATECHISM Continued

**821** Certain things are required in order to respond adequately to this call:

—a permanent *renewal* of the Church in greater fidelity to her vocation; such renewal is the driving-force of the movement toward unity (cf. *UR* 6);

—*conversion of heart* as the faithful "try to live holier lives according to the Gospel" (*UR* 7 § 3); for it is the unfaithfulness of the members to Christ's gift which causes divisions;

—*prayer in common*, because "change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name 'spiritual ecumenism'" (*UR* 8 § 1);

—*fraternal knowledge of each other* (cf. *UR* 9);

—*ecumenical formation* of the faithful and especially of priests (cf. *UR* 10);

—*dialogue* among theologians and meetings among Christians of the different churches and communities (cf. *UR* 4; 9; 11);

—*collaboration* among Christians in various areas of service to mankind (cf. *UR* 12). "Human service" is the idiomatic phrase.

**822** Concern for achieving unity "involves the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike" (*UR* 5). But we must realize "that this holy objective—the reconciliation of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ—transcends human powers and gifts." That is why we place all our hope "in the prayer of Christ for the Church, in the love of the Father for us, and in the power of the Holy Spirit" (*UR* 24 § 2).

**1900** The duty of obedience requires all to give due honor to authority and to treat those who are charged to exercise it with respect, and, insofar as it is deserved, with gratitude and good-will.

> **Pope St. Clement of Rome provides the Church's most ancient prayer for political authorities (cf. as early as 1 Tm 2:1-2): "Grant to them, Lord, health, peace, concord, and stability, so that they may exercise without offense the sovereignty that you have given them. Master, heavenly King of the ages, you give glory, honor, and power over the things of earth to the sons of men. Direct, Lord, their counsel, following what is pleasing and acceptable in your sight, so that by exercising with devotion and in peace and gentleness the power that you have given to them, they may find favor with you" (St. Clement of Rome, *Ad Cor.* 61: SCh 167, 198-200).**

**2089** *Incredulity* is the neglect of revealed truth or the willful refusal to assent to it. "*Heresy* is the obstinate post-baptismal denial of some truth which must be believed with divine and catholic faith, or it is likewise an obstinate doubt concerning the same; *apostasy* is the total repudiation of the Christian faith; *schism* is the refusal of submission to the Roman Pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to him" (CIC, can. 751: emphasis added).

**2238** Those subject to authority should regard those in authority as representatives of God, who has made them stewards of his gifts (cf. Rom 13:1-2): "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution.... Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God" (1 Pt 2:13, 16). Their loyal collaboration includes the right, and at times the duty, to voice their just criticisms of that which seems harmful to the dignity of persons and to the good of the community.

## FROM THE CATECHISM Continued

**2244** Every institution is inspired, at least implicitly, by a vision of man and his destiny, from which it derives the point of reference for its judgment, its hierarchy of values, its line of conduct. Most societies have formed their institutions in the recognition of a certain preeminence of man over things. Only the divinely revealed religion has clearly recognized man's origin and destiny in God, the Creator and Redeemer. The Church invites political authorities to measure their judgments and decisions against this inspired truth about God and man:

> Societies not recognizing this vision or rejecting it in the name of their independence from God are brought to seek their criteria and goal in themselves or to borrow them from some ideology. Since they do not admit that one can defend an objective criterion of good and evil, they arrogate to themselves an explicit or implicit totalitarian power over man and his destiny, as history shows (cf. *CA* 45; 46).

**2245** The Church, because of her commission and competence, is not to be confused in any way with the political community. She is both the sign and the safeguard of the transcendent character of the human person. "The Church respects and encourages the political freedom and responsibility of the citizen" (*GS* 76 § 3).



A teenage girl, St. Joan of Arc, witnesses the coronation of Charles VII as King of France. She had fulfilled the command of her voices.



CHAPTER 12

# The Renaissance

*This movement of intellectual "re-birth" created new challenges for the Church. It also initiated needed growth and reform "imbued with Jesus' strength."*

