

Church History

Lesson 19 - Major Forces In the West - Monasticism and the Papacy

1. Introduction - A Crumbling Empire

- 1.1. In the last session we looked at the situation in the Western half of the empire after the fall of Rome.
- 1.2. As we saw, the situation badly deteriorated in the West as the Western half of the former Roman Empire was overrun by successive waves of barbarian tribes. This created massive religious, political, economic and cultural upheaval.
- 1.3. Furthermore, as we saw last time, the formerly united lands of the West were broken into several competing kingdoms. These different kingdoms had distinct politics and cultures. However, over time they all came to embrace the orthodox Christian faith (whether by converting from paganism or Arianism). This meant that the main unifying factor in the West was the Christian faith.
 - 1.3.1. In all these fields, it was the church that provided continuity with the past. She became the guardian of civilization and of order. In many ways, she filled the power vacuum left by the demise of the Empire. - Gonzales, location 4330
- 1.4. Today we will take a brief look at two particular aspects of the church that came to dominate the religious landscape in the West, and through that to have great impact on the overall politics and cultural life of Western Europe as well. These two aspects are monasticism and the papacy.
 - 1.4.1. The fall of the western Roman Empire created a number of independent kingdoms, each of which was of great significance for the later history of the church in its territory. It also gave new functions and power to two institutions that had begun to develop earlier: monasticism and the papacy. - Gonzales, location 4668
 - 1.4.2. In summary, from the fifth to the eighth century western Europe was swept by a series of invasions that brought chaos to the land, and destroyed a great deal of the learning of antiquity. The invaders brought with them two religious challenges that until then could have seemed to be a matter of the past: paganism and Arianism. Eventually, both pagans and Arians were converted to the faith of those whom they had conquered. This was the Nicene faith, also called "orthodox" or "catholic." In the process of that conversion, and also in the effort to preserve the wisdom of ancient times, two institutions played a central role, and thus were strengthened. These two institutions, to which we now turn, were monasticism and the papacy. - Gonzales, location 4805
 - 1.4.3. The principal factors that produced a new situation, from a church history standpoint, for the western Middle Ages have already been examined in previous chapters: 1. Constantine—the state-church that emerged in the fourth century, an alliance of the government with Christianity, and the consequent large-scale conversion of half-instructed people. 2. Augustine—the theological reconstruction of Augustine that gave a new pattern of thinking for Western Christians. **3. Monks and popes—the development of monasticism and the papacy as the dominant religious and social institutions.** To these factors another may be added: 4. Missions—the conversion of Germanic peoples to a form of Christianity. - Ferguson, location 5565

2. Rise of Monasticism in the West

2.1. Introduction to Monasticism

- 2.1.1.** Although we have not specifically looked at monasticism in detail, we have already encountered it a number of times in our earlier studies of church history. It had been a major force, particularly in the East, from at least around 300AD, and then began to grow in the West as well. The spread and importance of monasticism only increased after the fall of Rome.
- 2.1.2.** Monasticism had begun to develop in the East - specifically in Egypt - as a way for believers to separate themselves from the world to seek God. They often became modern heroes - especially after martyrdom was not a present threat.
- 2.1.2.1.** The model Christian was no longer the courageous bishop dragged before wild beasts in a Roman arena. He was now a lonely hermit in the forsaken Egyptian desert defying the devil. - Shelley, location 2211
- 2.1.3.** Monasticism often included two main ideas/practices. The first of these was isolation. Many of these monks fled to the desert and spent years in reflection, wrestling with Satan and their own sin. Furthermore, they often fled into isolation not so much to escape the world as to escape what they perceived to be an increasingly worldly church.
- 2.1.3.1.** The first form of monasticism was the lonely hermit. The word hermit comes from the Greek word for "desert" and is a reminder that the monastic flight from the world began in Egypt, where a short journey either east or west from the narrow ribbon of Nile fertility would put the monk in a rigorous desert. - Shelley, location 2239
- 2.1.3.2.** The hermit often fled, then, not so much from the world as from the world in the church. His protest of a corrupt institution led him into the dangers of a pronounced individualism. - Shelley, location 2252
- 2.1.4.** The second main idea/practice in early monasticism was asceticism. Monks often endured extreme fasts and other harsh treatments of the body. This was done to help them overcome their sinful tendencies, beating their flesh so that the sin that was ever present with them would be brought into submission. Furthermore, they thought such rigorous discipline of their flesh would free their soul to commune with God more deeply.
- 2.1.4.1.** Everyone agrees that the monks were ascetics. They renounced the comforts of society and sought the spiritual rewards of self-discipline. Their theory held that renunciation of the body frees the soul to commune with God. The key question is, how does renunciation relate to the gospel? - Shelley, location 2224
- 2.1.4.2.** Temptations of the outer world were replaced by temptations of the inner world: pride, rivalry, and eccentricity. Many of the monks in Egypt and in Syria went to extremes in enduring hardships. - Shelley, location 2255
- 2.1.5.** As one can imagine, these tendencies - and the monks assessment of the church - often produced conflict between the desert monks and the leadership of the church, which was increasingly wed to the Empire, and which also increasingly enjoyed the material fruits of such favor.

2.1.6. Eventually, monasticism in the East did begin to develop the idea of monastic communities. These communities began to develop rules covering the life and conduct of the monks, including proper dress, times and habits of prayer, and regular practices for the monks. Important people in the development of these monastic communities and their rules included Pachomius and the Cappadocian father Basil.

2.1.6.1. While the hermit's popularity continued in Egypt, the monastic movement took a significant step forward when, around the year 320, a former soldier named Pachomius instituted the first Christian monastery. Instead of permitting the monks to live singly or in groups of hermits, each a law to himself, Pachomius established a regulated common life, in which the monks ate, labored, and worshiped. His plan called for fixed hours, manual work, dress in uniform garb, and strict discipline. It is called coenobitic monasticism from the Greek terms for "common life"—*koinos bios*. - Shelley, location 2261

2.1.6.2. From these beginnings in Egypt the ascetic movement spread to Syria, to Asia Minor, and eventually throughout Western Europe. Asia Minor was won to the monastic ideal especially through the influence of Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa, the champions of the Nicene faith in the generation that succeeded Athanasius. - Shelley, location 2269

2.1.6.3. Basil, who died in 379, was especially important as the designer of the Rule of Discipline under which the monasticism of Greek Orthodoxy is organized to this day. - Shelley, location 2271

2.2. Early Monasticism in the West

2.2.1. From these early beginning in Egypt, monasticism eventually spread to the West. However, monasticism in the West, while heavily influenced by its beginnings in Egypt and the East, did have several important distinctions. In general, monasticism in the West was less ascetic, less individualistic, and did not exist in tension with the hierarchy of the church. Thus, while in the East the norm was monks living highly ascetic lives in solitude (and thus often in conflict with the church hierarchy), in the West monks typically lived in communities, were devoted to more practical concerns and thus were not ascetic merely for the sake of punishing the body, and were in close relationship with the church hierarchy rather than in conflict with it.

2.2.1.1. This western monasticism, however, tended to differ from its eastern counterpart on three points. First, western monasticism tended to be more practical. It did not punish the body for the sole purpose of renunciation, but also to train it, as well as the soul, for a mission in the world. - Gonzales, location 4815

2.2.1.2. Secondly, western monasticism did not place the premium on solitude that was typical in the East. - Gonzales, location 4817

2.2.1.3. Finally, western monasticism did not live in the constant tension with the hierarchy of the church that was typical of eastern monasticism. - Gonzales, location 4818

2.2.2. The influence of Jerome

2.2.2.1. Jerome was an important figure in the development of monasticism, especially in the West, because of his devotion to scholarly pursuits.

2.2.2.1.1. The pioneer in monastic scholarship was Jerome (340–420), who began his career as a hermit in the Syrian desert but found that he could exorcise his sexual temptations only by occupying his mind with a tough intellectual discipline. He took up the study of Hebrew and found it so effective that he could even venture to return to the world. - Shelley, location 2283

2.2.2.2. Jerome laid down a pattern that was often followed as monks became the scholars of the church, copying Scripture and other ancient documents, preserving them for posterity. In fact, without these scholar monks, it is likely that the West would have lost most of the writings of antiquity.

2.3. Benedict

2.3.1. Without question, the most important figure in the development of monasticism in the West through the early middle ages was Benedict of Nursia.

2.3.2. Benedict was born around 480 in Nursia, a small Italian town about eighty five miles northeast of Rome, which was ruled at that time by the Ostrogoth empire.

2.3.3. Around 500, Benedict abandoned his course of studies and resolved to become a hermit monk, after the fashion of the Egyptian desert monks. For a period of time he lived as a solitary hermit in a cave near Rome, studying the Scriptures and living an ascetic life of self-denial. However, after three years his fame grew and a group of disciples began to gather around him.

2.3.3.1. When he was about twenty years old, he resolved to become a hermit, and went off to live in a cave. Then followed a period of extreme asceticism, as he sought to overcome the temptations of the flesh. Eventually his fame grew and, as had happened earlier in Egypt with other admired monks, there gathered around him a group of disciples. - Gonzales, location 4824

2.3.3.2. Benedict (c. 480–540), after his education in Rome, retired to Subiaco to live as a hermit in a cave. When confronted with a temptation, he would throw himself on the bramble bushes, sure to get his mind on something else. - Ferguson, location 6131

2.3.3.3. Benedict was born in Nursia, about eighty-five miles northeast of Rome, late in the fifth century. His education in Rome was still in its early stages when he adopted the most extreme form of asceticism and lived as a hermit high in a lonely cave in wild country south of Rome. He spent three years there in the study of the Scriptures and in severe self-denial, until “the monks of a neighboring monastery chose him for their abbot,” the fatherly spiritual leader of a monastic group. - Shelley, location 2296

2.3.4. Around 529 Benedict moved to Monte Cassino, established a monastery there, and established his Rule. The monastery at Monte Cassino became the most famous monastery in all of Europe and his Rule became the basis of life for the entire Benedictine order of monks. Over time, Benedict's fame continued to grow, and he took on legendary proportions in the eyes of his contemporaries. (His sister Scholastica also founded a nearby convent for women that became the basis for Benedictine houses for women.)

2.3.4.1. In 529, on the heights of Monte Cassino, eighty-five miles southeast of Rome, he laid the foundations of what became the most famous monastery in Europe, the motherhouse of the Benedictine order. For this monastery he wrote his famous Rule. - Shelley, location 2301

2.3.4.2. In 529 Benedict moved to Monte Cassino, where he established his famous monastery. Benedict seemed to contemporary believers to have powers not given to ordinary people and extraordinary miracles were attributed to him. - Ferguson, location 6134

2.3.4.3. His sister, Scholastica, formed a convent for women nearby that became the basis for Benedictine houses for women. - Ferguson, location 6137

2.4. Benedict's rule

2.4.1. Benedict's most lasting influence came through his Rule, which was a set of principles that would guide the life of the monks within the Benedictine order. This Rule, instead of stressing solitude and asceticism, sought to order the life of a group of monks with the discipline necessary for a group living a common life, but without undue harshness. In general it stressed the traditional Roman virtues of gravity, stability, authority, and moderation.

2.4.1.1. Benedict's greatest significance, however, was in the Rule that he gave to his community. Although fairly brief, this document would determine the shape of monasticism for centuries. Rather than extreme asceticism, what the Rule seeks is a wise ordering of the monastic life, with strict discipline, but without undue harshness. - Gonzales, location 4831

2.4.1.2. Benedict brought the traditional Roman virtues of gravity, stability, authority, and moderation to the monastic life. His rule for his monks is notable for its qualities: - Ferguson, location 6138

2.4.2. Everett Ferguson describes the natures of the Rules using the terms exact and comprehensive (specific rules for almost every area of life), moderation (as opposed to the asceticism of Pachomius and Cassian), and stability (monks were no longer roving bands following their own individual rules).

2.4.2.1. 1. Exactness and comprehensiveness In contrast to Basil's rules, which were primarily moral, Benedict's rule provides not just maxims, but detailed instructions about what to do when. - Ferguson, location 6139

2.4.2.2. 2. Moderation It was severe enough to overcome human inclinations, but was not concerned to torment the body as Pachomius and Cassian did and so did not discourage its followers. - Ferguson, location 6141

- 2.4.2.3.** 3. Order It introduced stability into monastic life in contrast to wandering monks or the small groups that had no discipline. The life of Benedictine monks was to be a balanced regimen of divine praise (opus Dei, the “work of God”), spiritual reading (lectio divina, “divine reading”), and physical work (labor manuum, “work with hands”). - Ferguson, location 6143
- 2.4.3.** Under the Benedictine rule, monks were to live a common life in a monastery under the guidance and rule of a senior monk called an abbot. The two key elements of the rule may be summarized as permanence and obedience. That is monks were to remain within a single monastery for the rest of their life once they had taken their monastic vows, and they were to obey both the Benedictine rule and their own abbot. These rules were very important for they provided some permanence and structure in what was an increasingly chaotic and often lawless culture.
- 2.4.3.1.** There are, however, two elements of the monastic life that are crucial for Benedict. These are permanence and obedience. The first means that monks are not free to go from one monastery to another as they please. Each monk must remain for the rest of his life in the monastery that he has initially joined, unless ordered to go to another place. The commitment to permanence on the part of Benedictine monks proved one of the sources of the institution’s great stability in a time of chaos. - Gonzales, location 4837
- 2.4.3.2.** Secondly, the Rule insists on obedience. First of all, this means obedience to the Rule itself. But the abbot is also to be obeyed “without delay. - Gonzales, location 4840
- 2.4.3.3.** Benedictine monasteries became a symbol of stability in a world of flux. They were important in the transmission of culture and in the conversion of peoples north of the Alps. An irony of the early Middle Ages is that at the end of ancient civilization, it was those who withdrew from society who built the new order. - Ferguson, 6162
- 2.4.3.4.** The monastery was to be organized under an abbot, who held the powers of a Roman householder as the pater familias of the monastery. - Ferguson, location 6148
- 2.4.4.** The abbots exercised great authority under this system, but it was mitigated by three factors. First, the abbots were themselves subject to the Rule, which already governed much of life. Second, the abbot’s were elected by the monks at large. Finally, any major matters were only to be decided by the abbot after calling for the judgement of the whole body of monks.
- 2.4.4.1.** The abbot, however, must not be a tyrant, but is himself subject to God and to the Rule, The word “abbot” means “father,” and as such should the abbot behave. - Gonzales, location 4844
- 2.4.4.2.** The government of the monastery was vested in an abbot; and nowhere does Benedict’s wisdom more vividly appear than in his provision for the exercise of authority. While each monk vowed absolute obedience to the abbot’s commands, even if they seemed to him impossible to fulfill, the abbot was chosen by the monks themselves, and he could decide major matters only after calling for the judgment of the whole body. - Shelley, location 2314

- 2.4.5.** The Benedictine rule stressed the virtues of obedience, silence, humility, and physical labor, which was to be shared equally by all. All of this was meant to form a close bond between the monks, welding them to the community. Even poverty, which was part of a monks vows and life, was not for its own sake but rather to unite the monk to the community since the needs of the individual could only be met through the labors of the community as a whole, and each individuals labors served not only themselves but the community at large.
- 2.4.5.1.** The Rule also insists on physical labor, which is to be shared by all. Except in exceptional cases of illness or of unique gifts, all will take turns in every task. - Gonzales, location 4854
- 2.4.5.2.** Thus, whereas poverty for earlier monasticism was a form of private renunciation, Benedict sought to achieve through it the creation of a new order within the community. A monk's poverty welds him to the community, in which all are of equal poverty, and on which all must depend for all their needs. - Gonzales, location 4859
- 2.4.5.3.** chapters 5–7 discuss the virtues of obedience, silence, and humility —with much attention to the last. The twelve steps of humility became the basis of Benedictine spirituality. - Ferguson, location 6152
- 2.4.6.** Benedictine spirituality was centered on prayer, especially the praying of the Psalms and other portions of Scripture. The monks gathered eight times a day for prayer, reading and meditation, totaling about 10 hours each day. The entire book of Psalms was to be prayed through each week.
- 2.4.6.1.** The core of the monastic life as Benedict conceived it was prayer. - Gonzales, location 4862
- 2.4.6.2.** devotions took place in the chapel. There the monks were to gather eight times a day, seven during daytime, and once in the middle of the night, for the Psalmist says: “seven times a day I praise thee” (Ps. 119:164) and “at midnight I rise to praise thee” (Ps. 119:62). - Gonzales, location 4863
- 2.4.6.3.** Most of the time at each of these gatherings was devoted to reciting the Psalms and to readings of other portions of Scripture. The Psalms were distributed so that all would be recited in the course of a week. - Gonzales, location 4867
- 2.4.6.4.** In the rule, ten hours out of a day were to be spent in worship and meditation. On the basis of Psalms 119, verses 62 and 164, eight times of prayer were appointed: the night office or vigils (2:00 A.M. in winter), lauds (at daybreak), prime, terce, sext, and none (the four little offices, which were field hours), vespers (a half-hour before sunset), and compline (before retiring). Beginning with the night office each Sunday, the whole psalter was sung every week. - Ferguson, location 6155
- 2.4.6.5.** On the supposed authority of Scripture, Benedict required not only seven services in the twenty-four hours, but made a special obligation for two o'clock in the morning... - Shelley, location 2322

- 2.4.7.** Because of the need for books to govern life and prayer, the monks soon spent large periods of time copying and studying Scripture and other books. As noted above, without these labors it is likely that much of the treasures of antiquity would have been lost to the West.
- 2.4.7.1.** Although Benedict himself had little to say about study, soon this was one of the main occupations of Benedictine monks. In order to celebrate the Divine Office, books were needed. Monks became adept at copying both the Bible and other books, and thus preserved them for later generations. - Gonzales, location 4872
- 2.4.7.2.** A Benedictine monastery that was true to the purposes of the founder was, therefore, “a little world in itself, in which the monks lived a strenuous but not overburdened life, involving worship, vigorous labor in the shop and fields, and serious reading.” Every Benedictine monastery, therefore, included a library; and, though Benedict himself says nothing about classical learning, Benedictine monks soon copied and read the great literary works of Latin antiquity. We are indebted to them for preserving the writings of the Latin Church Fathers and the masterpieces of Roman literature. - Shelley, location 2330
- 2.4.7.3.** It is almost impossible to exaggerate the service these monks rendered in the period after the ruin of the old Roman civilization and the growth in its place of the new nations of German conquerors. The Middle Ages preserved so much of the best in Christianity and the ancient world because Benedictine monasteries filled the European countrysides. - Shelley, loc 2336
- 2.4.8.** Benedictine monks lived a rigorous life of prayer, study, and physical labor. This was important because idleness was hostile to spiritual growth and a breeding ground for sin. But the result of this was they provided a place of stability in a chaotic world, and they prospered greatly.
- 2.4.8.1.** “Idleness,” he said in the Rule, “is hostile to the soul, and therefore the brethren should be occupied at fixed times in manual labor, and at definite hours in religious reading. - Shelley, location 2326
- 2.4.8.2.** Eventually, monasteries also had a profound economic impact, for many were established on marginal lands that were brought into production by the labor of the monks. Thus, countless acres were added to the agricultural land of Europe. - Gonzales, location 4876
- 2.4.9.** In a sense, the Benedictine order came to view the monastery as a spiritual fortress against the world. The monks retreated from the world of chaos and sin into a world of order and spirituality. Even the physical labor required was at least in part so that the monks would be self-sufficient and would not need to venture into the world at large to obtain the physical necessities for life.
- 2.4.9.1.** The saint apparently thought of the monastic life as a kind of spiritual garrison for Christ in a hostile world. As such, its discipline was a necessary part of its life. None should enter its service until he had tried the life fully for at least a year. During this time the novitiate was free to leave. After this time of testing, the would-be monk took the threefold vows that forever cut him off from the world and bound him to permanent life in the monastery: poverty, chastity,

and obedience to the Rule and the monastery's leaders. - Shelley, location 2310

2.4.9.2. As Walker explains, to maintain this spiritual fortress apart from the world, "Benedict prescribed that each monastery, wherever feasible, should be equipped to furnish all the necessities of life." Monks wove their own cloth, made their own wine, and were their own carpenters and masons. Benedict considered wandering outside the walls a great spiritual danger for a monk. - Shelley, location 2318

2.5. The spread of the Benedictine order

2.5.1. In 589 the monastery at Monte Cassino was looted and burned by the Lombards. Most of the monks fled to Rome, taking with them their Rule and way of life. It soon spread throughout much of Rome. At this time a young man named Gregory, who would become the most influential Pope of the early church, came into contact with them. As Pope, he would spread their ideal, including through the missionary Augustine (not Augustine of Hippo) they spread to England and Ireland.

2.5.1.1. In 589, the monastery that Benedict had founded at Monte Cassino was looted and burned by the Lombards. Most of the monks fled to Rome, taking their Rule with them. It was there that Gregory, who would later become pope, came to know them. Soon their Rule was followed by many in the city of Rome. Augustine, the missionary to England, took the Rule with him to the British Isles. - Gonzales, location 4881

2.5.1.2. The Benedictine Rule came to supplant all other rules so that Western monasticism in the eighth to twelfth centuries was Benedictine. - Ferguson, location 6161

2.6. Assessing the monastic ideal

2.6.1. The good (important for us to note as those who often malign this entire idea)

2.6.1.1. Benedictine monasteries provided a place of stability in a very chaotic world. They were one of the few stable institutions that survived the collapse of the Western Empire.

2.6.1.2. Benedictine monasteries kept literacy and scholarship alive in the chaotic age following the collapse of the empire in the West. Without monks, it is likely that much of the writings - including Scripture - of antiquity would have been lost to the West (until the Renaissance and the fall of Constantinople in 1453).

2.6.1.3. The Benedictine Rule understood the importance of the body in spirituality. It is not insignificant that both the Puritans and the Benedictine monks understood that idleness is dangerous to the soul as well as the body.

2.6.1.4. Monks often developed a deep spirituality that has been preserved in some of their writings, which can help us in our personal walks.

2.6.1.5. Many monks provided great leadership and service to the church and the wider world.

2.6.1.6. The Benedictine monasteries - when they truly followed the Rule - were places of fraternity, hard work, deep spirituality, and mutual concern.

- 2.6.2.** The bad - and the downright unbiblical
 - 2.6.2.1.** There is no biblical warrant for living in monasteries! While it may be possible for some to voluntarily choose such a lifestyle, to make this the height of spirituality to which others should aspire is simply unbiblical.
 - 2.6.2.2.** The idea of separation from the world runs contrary to command of Jesus to go into the world, and to be in the world but not of the world. To resolve the tension of being in the world but not of it - admittedly a very difficult task - the monks simply cut the knot and retreated from the world as much as possible.
 - 2.6.2.3.** The Benedictine view of spirituality was impossible for “normal” Christians fulfilling a vocation in the world to follow. There is no way to have a job or a family and to spend 10 hours a day in prayer and meditation.
 - 2.6.2.4.** The entire system is built on a faulty view of our callings and vocations in this world. When one is fulfilling their vocation they are being spiritual in that very fulfillment. The key to spirituality is not reducing our efforts in “unspiritual” areas such as jobs and family so that hours can be spent in meditation, study and prayer. Such a view massively misses God’s calling for Christians in this age.
 - 2.6.2.5.** The system often degraded into a works based view of the Christian life. Over time this also degraded into a works based view of salvation. It was just such a view the Martin Luther rightly protested against.
 - 2.6.2.6.** Despite their best efforts, the Benedictine order degraded from its lofty ideals. Although individual monks took vows of poverty, monasteries became wealthy. Corruption returned again and again. This is why the middle ages are littered with attempts to reform the entire system.

3. The Rise of the Papacy

- 3.1.** An introduction to the papacy
 - 3.1.1.** The word Pope simply means “father.” The word is used by churches other than the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), but it has come to be specifically related to the RCC to refer to the head of that church.
 - 3.1.1.1.** The second institution which, jointly with monasticism, gave unity and continuity to the Middle Ages was the papacy. The word “pope” simply means “father,” and in early times was used to refer to any important and respected bishop. - Gonzales, location 4887
 - 3.1.1.2.** Whereas in the West it eventually was reserved for the bishop of Rome, in the East it continued to be used with more liberality. - Gonzales, location 4890
 - 3.1.1.3.** The term pope itself is not crucial in the emergence of the doctrine of papal primacy. The title “papa” originally expressed the fatherly care of any and every bishop of his flock. It only began to be reserved for the bishop of Rome in the sixth century, long after the claim of primacy. - Shelley, location 2552

- 3.1.1.4.** The word pope is from the child's word for "father" in Greek (pappas or papas). It was used in Latin for the bishop of Carthage by the beginning of the third century. "Pope" was the common word for the bishop of Alexandria by the mid-third century and is still the title of the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria. The first known use of the word at Rome for its bishop is in an inscription of 303 for Marcellinus, but the word became common at Rome in the fourth century. It was used almost exclusively in the West for the Roman bishop from the sixth century. - Ferguson, location 5830
- 3.1.2.** The RCC claims that the Papacy was founded by Christ Himself, when He declared "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church." They claim that there has been an unbroken line of Popes, who were the head of the universal church, from Peter to the present day.
- 3.1.3.** The RCC claims that Peter established Rome as the seat of his continuing apostolic office, and that this universal authority over the rest of the church was initially recognized by all, but later was rejected by schismatics in the East in 1054, and then by Protestants beginning in 1517.
- 3.1.4.** The RCC claims that to be in the true and proper church, one must be submitted to the Pope as the one who sits in Peter's chair and is thus the vicar of Christ.
- 3.1.5.** The papacy is one of the major identifiers of the RCC, and is also one of the major sources of disagreement between the RCC, the churches of Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestants.
- 3.1.5.1.** According to the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, defined at the First Vatican Council (1870), Jesus Christ established the papacy with the apostle Peter; and the Bishop of Rome as Peter's successor bears the supreme authority (primacy) over the whole church. Both Eastern Orthodox churches and Protestant denominations deny both of these claims. - Shelley, location 2544
- 3.2.** The historical rise of the papacy in the early church
- 3.2.1.** As we have seen in earlier lessons, the early church had a group of leaders known as elders or presbyters. This group of men jointly cared for and led each local church. However, over time, the practice shifted to having a single leader over the other elders. This individual became known as the "bishop" (from the Greek word "episkopos", which is used in the NT of elders, and is interchangeable with other Greek words such as "presbuteros").
- 3.2.2.** Interestingly, it appears that this new structure of a single bishop was later in being adopted in Rome than in other early churches! This appears from the fact that Ignatius wrote to individual bishops in a number of cities, but not in Rome.
- 3.2.3.** Eventually, however, a single bishop became the pattern in Rome as well. The origins of episcopacy in Rome are not altogether clear. Most scholars agree that Peter did visit Rome, and that there is at least a very high probability that he died there. But the various lists of the early bishops of Rome, mostly dating from late in the second century, do not agree among themselves. - Gonzales, location 4893

- 3.2.4.** However, it is equally clear that the center of the church in the early years was in the Greek speaking East and in North Africa, both in terms of numbers and the leaders in theological thought.
- 3.2.4.1.** it is clear that during the early centuries the numerical strength of Christianity was in the Greek-speaking East, and that churches such as Antioch and Alexandria were much more important than the one in Rome. - Gonzales, location 4897
- 3.2.4.2.** Even in the West, the theological leadership of the church was in North Africa, which produced such figures as Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine. - Gonzales, location 4899
- 3.2.5.** Because of the importance of Rome (it was the capital of the Empire, the largest city in the world, and contained one of the largest and most influential churches) the bishop of Rome became recognized as one of the most important leaders in the early church.
- 3.2.5.1.** We must also separate the honor of the church of Rome from the authority of its head. The early centuries of Christian history offer abundant evidence of Rome's prominence among the churches of the western regions of the empire. - Shelley, location 2554
- 3.2.5.2.** Honor surrounded her name for several reasons. First, Rome was the imperial capital, the Eternal City; and the church of Rome was the largest and wealthiest church, with a reputation for orthodoxy and charity. It stood without a rival in the West. - Shelley, location 2556
- 3.2.5.3.** Second, despite persecutions of all kinds, the Roman congregation quickly grew in numbers and significance. - Shelley, location 2558
- 3.2.5.4.** Third, several early Christian writers, beginning with Irenaeus in the second century, referred to Peter and Paul as founders of the church in Rome and to subsequent bishops as successors of the apostles. - Shelley, location 2560
- 3.2.5.5.** This respect for Rome's traditions, however, did not prohibit able men like Irenaeus and Cyprian from disagreeing with Rome when they felt the church or her bishop was in error. - Shelley, location 2564
- 3.2.6.** In general, the bishops of Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and later Constantinople, were recognized as the pre-eminent leaders of the church. However, none of the were recognized as having authority over the other bishops, and they often fought among themselves, with different one winning on different occasions. However, since the only one of these bishops in the West was Rome, it claimed great authority and prestige in the West.
- 3.3.** The rise of the papacy after 450 AD
- 3.3.1.** Although the bishop of Rome certainly enjoyed a place of prestige prior to 450, it is from that time on that the rise of of the papacy as we know it really began. Although there are really many reasons for this, we will briefly look at the the main ones: the situation resulting from the barbarian invasions; Leo; and Gregory the Great.

- 3.3.2.** The situation in the West after the barbarian invasions
- 3.3.2.1.** As we have seen previously, the situation in the West after the sack of Rome in 410, and especially after the final removal of the last emperor in 476, was chaotic. Successive waves of barbarians, most of whom were either pagan or Arian, swept into the Western part of the Empire. This created both theological and practical problems, and both of these contributed to the rise of the papacy.
- 3.3.2.1.1.** It was the barbarian invasions that brought about the great upsurge in the pope's authority. - Gonzales, location 4900
- 3.3.2.2.** The theological problem
- 3.3.2.2.1.** The barbarian invaders presented a real theological problem for the people of the West, most of whom were Christian. The invaders were either pagans or Arians. In either event, strong spiritual leadership was necessary to help orthodox Christians survive this new situation. It was often the bishops of Rome that provided this theological support.
- 3.3.2.2.2.** To this was added the idea that in all of the early struggles of the church, the bishops of Rome had not succumbed to heresy. While this was not completely true (there had been a Sabellian pope for example), it was generally true and gave an aura of prestige to the Roman bishop.
- 3.3.2.3.** The practical problem
- 3.3.2.3.1.** In the wake of the collapse of the Western empire in the 5th century, it was the church, headed by the bishop of Rome, that filled the gap. Often it was the church who not only cared for the people spiritually, but also increasingly oversaw education and civil administration as well.
- 3.3.2.3.1.1.** With the decline in central government in the West, the church took over many public services, for example education, that retained their traditional basis in the East. In the West, churches and monasteries were bound to the agricultural economy and profited by the prominence of local powers. - Ferguson, location 5770
- 3.3.2.3.2.** In the East, the government continued to operate as before, but in the West there was no rival to the bishop of Rome. In essence he ruled both the spiritual and political life of the people in his region.
- 3.3.2.3.2.1.** No secular authority in the West was able to control the church as an organ of state to the same extent as the eastern emperors. - Ferguson, location 5774

3.3.2.3.3. Over time, this could not help but add to the prestige, prominence, and power of the bishop of Rome, the Pope.

3.3.2.3.3.1. As the empire crumpled, the church almost alone of the old institutions survived, and to it Christians looked for support and continuity. The bishops often mediated with the invaders and the new kings. - Ferguson, location 5778

3.3.2.3.4. This process culminated when Attila the Hun approached Rome around 450 AD, and was met by Leo. Attila, the “scourge of God” acquiesced to Leo’s pleas, and retired from Rome, leaving the city untouched. This greatly increased Leo’s personal acclaim, and it is to him we must now turn.

3.4. Leo - “the first Pope”

3.4.1. The historical situation

3.4.1.1. As noted above, Leo was the bishop of Rome as Attila approached the city in the early 450’s. When Attila met with Leo and seemed to miraculously decide to not invade the city, Leo’s popularity, prestige, and power soared. (In fairness it should be noted that while Leo was effective in these negotiations, it appears that Attila had other reasons, including lack of food and growing sickness, to decide to leave Rome.)

3.4.1.1.1. Leo was commissioned to negotiate with one of the mighty men of the panic-stricken world, in the hope of avoiding chaos. He must save what there was to save. The Roman Emperor was doing nothing to preserve the ancient capital of the empire and its surrounding territories from devastation. So Peter’s deputy, now acting in the name of the emperor, sat facing Attila alone. - Shelley, location 2529

3.4.1.1.2. Long before the arrival of the embassy from Rome, Attila had probably made up his mind about further military thrusts. Epidemics in his army added to widespread famine were forcing him to break off the advance. But nobody knew it. So he willingly granted an interview to the imperial envoy, and in the course of it he granted the pope’s plea that the capital should be spared. He even promised to withdraw from Italy, and he kept his word. The Bishop of Rome had assumed a new role and staked a fresh claim on the future. - Shelley, location 2534

3.4.1.2. At the same time, the great ecumenical council was meeting at Chalcedon. As we noted in a previous session, this council was bitterly divided initially. However, when a letter from Leo was read, giving his position of a proper Christology, some people began to

chant “Peter speaks through Leo!” Once again, this could only help to increase Leo’s position within the church, especially in the West.

3.4.1.3.

When Rome was sacked by the Vandals in 455, Leo was unable to prevent them from attacking and pillaging the city. However, once again it was he who led the negotiations rather than the civil authority (the emperor had been killed while trying to flee the city to save himself), and he was able to get the Vandal leader to agree to not burn the city. Thus, once again, Leo’s popularity and prestige grew.

3.4.1.3.1. Needless to say, these episodes—and others like it—gave Leo great authority in the city of Rome. - Gonzales, location 4915

3.4.2. Leo’s theological argument for the Pope

3.4.2.1. By the time of Leo, the old arguments for the primacy of the bishop of Rome had begun to crumble. Although Rome was still the largest city in the world, it was no longer the capital of the Empire (Constantinople was), and in fact was no longer even the capital city of the Italian region (that honor belonged to Milan and then Ravenna). Furthermore, several councils, beginning with Nicea, had said Rome had the position of pre-eminence, but they did not give it authority. Some bishops of Rome had protested this, but to no avail.

3.4.2.2. On the day he became bishop, Leo preached a sermon on the importance of “the blessed Apostle Peter” and spoke of Peter’s chair through which “his power lives on and his authority shines forth.” Leo was beginning the process of a theological argument for the Papal office.

3.4.2.2.1. In the sermon Leo preached on the day of his entrance into office he extolled the “glory of the blessed Apostle Peter . . . in whose chair his power lives on and his authority shines forth. - Shelley, location 2623

3.4.2.3. Over time, Leo mustered a number of theological arguments for the Papacy and its position as head of the church. He appealed to the threefold Gospel account of Peter’s confession of Christ and the statement of the rock on which the church is built (Matt. 16:13 –19; Luke 22:31, 32; and John 21:15–17). Leo argued that the apostolic authority of Peter was not shared by all bishops, but rather by the bishop of Rome alone (in contrast to Cyprian). Consequently, he asserted that the bishop of Rome was the vicar of Peter and the primate of all bishops, and that he had authority and care for all of Christ’s flock, and that all other bishops did nothing other than exercise the care of the flock as part of the care of the Roman bishop.

- 3.4.2.3.1. Appealing to the threefold Gospel testimony (Matt. 16:13 –19; Luke 22:31, 32; and John 21:15–17) the new pope laid the theoretical foundation for papal primacy: Christ promised to build his church on Peter, the rock for all ages, and the bishops of Rome are his successors in that authority. - Shelley, location 2626
- 3.4.2.3.2. Canceling out the position of Cyprian that all bishops share Peter’s authority by faith, which did not pass exclusively to Rome, Leo held that in John 21 Jesus Christ extended to all bishops their authority through Peter and his successors. - Ferguson, location 5858
- 3.4.2.3.3. Therefore, the perpetual authority of Peter is found in the Roman bishop, “the vicar of Peter” and “primate of all bishops. - Ferguson, location 5855
- 3.4.2.3.4. To us [bishop of Rome], however, is committed the common care of all; and no single bishop’s administration is other than a part of our task” (Sermon 5.2). - Ferguson, location 5861
- 3.4.2.4. At the same time as Leo was developing these arguments, his positions held great sway and seemed to carry the day at the council of Chalcedon. This only seemed to affirm the theology that Leo was asserting regarding the position of the Pope.
 - 3.4.2.4.1. Even though the emperor had called the council to Chalcedon and visited it personally, the spirit of Pope Leo was dominant. His letters, decisions, and actions were quoted so frequently that sometimes a mere reference to him sufficed for the majority of the bishops to shout jubilantly: “That was the faith of the Fathers, that was the faith of the Apostles. . . . Peter has spoken through Leo. - Shelley, location 2649
- 3.4.2.5. It is important to note, however, that the very same council of Chalcedon denied the universal authority of the bishop of Rome. It stated that Constantinople had authority equal to that of Rome (Canon 28). Rome protested this, and never accepted that canon, but it shows that the claims of Leo were not accepted by the church universal.
 - 3.4.2.5.1. In the historic session on 30 October 451, however, the same council gave the bishop of Constantinople, as bishop of New Rome, authority equal to Leo’s. Constantinople became for the East what Rome was for the West. - Shelley, location 2652
 - 3.4.2.5.2. Leo’s representative to the council immediately protested, but the council fathers would not alter their decision. It was an obvious reversal for Leo. Christianity acquired not one but two heads: the Roman Church of the Western Empire, and the Greek Church of the Eastern Empire. - Shelley, location 2655

- 3.4.2.5.3.** When Leo's Tome was read at Chalcedon, the bishops echoed his claim with the acclamation that Peter was speaking through Leo. Chalcedon gave an assent to Rome's teaching authority previously unknown and later seldom acknowledged in the East, but Rome's competence in discipline and jurisdiction was endangered. The primacy of Rome was well established in the West, but the story was different in the East, as shown by canon 28's ranking of Constantinople next to Rome. Rome never accepted that canon (chapter 13). - Ferguson, location 5863
- 3.4.3.** The further ideas and actions of Leo
- 3.4.3.1.** Leo also taught other things that furthered the development of the papacy into its modern position. For example, he drew a comparison between the two natures of Jesus and the two parts of human empire - the spiritual (priesthood) and the physical (kingship). Of course, since in the West there was really only one bishop of consequence but many many civil leaders, the effect of this idea was to give ultimate authority to the bishop of Rome.
- 3.4.3.1.1.** In his political theory, Leo drew a comparison between the two natures of Jesus Christ and the two parts of the empire, the priesthood (sacerdotium) and the kingship (regnum). - Ferguson, location 5873
- 3.4.3.2.** Leo also took a number of titles from ancient Rome, thus uniting the civil and political authority, as well as the historical and current, in his own office. For example, he took the title of "consul of God" (the old Roman leaders had been known as consuls), and more importantly the title of "pontifex maximus" (this had been the title of the head pagan priest in the Roman empire). These titles were clear claims to the singular authority of the bishop of Rome.
- 3.4.3.2.1.** them. They called him the consul dei (the consul of God). Leo negotiated with the Huns under Attila to get them to turn back from Rome. He claimed the title of the pagan chief priest of Rome, "pontifex maximus," for himself, and he was the first Roman bishop to be buried in St. Peter - Ferguson, location 5876
- 3.4.3.2.2.** Though he had saved Rome for a second time, Leo made no reference to himself. It wasn't really necessary. He had assumed the old heathen title, Pontifex Maximus, the high priest of religion throughout the empire, and everyone understood. Leo, not the emperor, had shouldered responsibility for the Eternal City. Peter had come to power. - Shelley, location 2687

3.4.4. The legacy of Leo

3.4.4.1. In sum, the powers and prerogatives of the future papacy are outlined in Leo's methods, policy, and ideals: acting as head of the city government, checking the advance of the barbarians, enforcing his authority on distant bishops, preaching on doctrine, and intervening successfully at Chalcedon. Augustine provided the intellectual substance for the medieval Western church, and Leo outlined its institutional form. - Ferguson, location 5879

3.5. Gregory the Great

3.5.1. The other great figure in the development of the papacy is Gregory the Great. Between the papacy of Leo (440-461) and the ascension of Gregory to the office of pope (590), much had taken place. Of particular importance is the fact that when the Eastern Empire had invaded the West under Justinian, the bishops of Rome had come under the authority of the Eastern Emperor, and those who tried to chart their own course came under the ire of the Emperor and Empress in the East. However, the Eastern Empire eventually faded and the position of the Pope and his authority even in civil affairs once again came to the fore.

3.5.1.1. For the emperor and his functionaries tried to impose there a situation similar to that which existed in the eastern Empire, where the church was almost completely subject to the state. The next few popes, for as long as Byzantium held sway, were mere puppets of Justinian and of his empress, Theodora. Those who dared follow an independent policy soon felt the consequences of imperial wrath. - Gonzales, location 4930

3.5.1.2. After Justinian's death in 565, Byzantine power began to wane, and Constantinople could no longer maintain a strong army in Italy. - Gonzales, location 4936

3.5.1.3. In Rome, the popes became responsible for the preservation of the city against the Lombard threat. When Benedict I died in 579, the Lombards were besieging the city. His successor, Pelagius II, saved it by buying the Lombards off. - Gonzales, location 4938

3.5.2. Gregory, who was born in 540 to a family of the old aristocracy, was educated and prepared for government service. He was appointed as a Prefect (mayor) of Rome - the highest civil position in the city. This was critical, for the city was in great disarray. Gregory worked tirelessly on these problems, developing great skills in civil administration.

3.5.2.1. Suddenly, at the age of 33, Gregory found that the emperor Justin had appointed him Prefect (or mayor) of Rome, the highest civil position in the city and its surrounding territory. The whole economy of Rome—the grain supplies, the welfare program for the poor, the construction of buildings, baths, sewers, and riverbanks—rested on Gregory's shoulders. To make the burden even heavier his appointment in 573 came just as both the pope and Narses died. - Shelley, location 3106

- 3.5.2.2.** After years of neglect and repeated sieges, the city was in a grave state of chaos and mismanagement. Many of her ancient monuments and buildings had been destroyed in order to provide stones for repairing the walls. The aqueducts and the system of drainage had fallen into disrepair, and disease was rife. - Gonzales, location 4948
- 3.5.2.3.** Born into an aristocratic Roman family and well educated for his time, Gregory became prefect of Rome in 573, learning every detail of the municipal administration. - Ferguson, location 6170
- 3.5.3.** Gregory, who wanted a simple life as a monk, stepped down from public office to retire to live as a monk. He lived a very strict, ascetic life, and his health suffered for it - yet Gregory was never happier than during these years.
- 3.5.3.1.** Shortly afterwards, he retired from public life to become a monk, establishing seven monasteries on the pattern of Monte Cassino, - Ferguson, location 6171
- 3.5.3.2.** Gregory was never comfortable with worldly power, however. He preferred the solitude of a monastic cell. Within a few years he stepped down from public office and broke with the world. - Shelley, location 3110
- 3.5.3.3.** He exchanged the purple toga for the coarse robe of a monk and began to live with extraordinary asceticism, eating only raw fruit and vegetables, praying most of the night, wearing a hairshirt, throwing himself into the many duties of a Benedictine. - Shelley, location 3113
- 3.5.3.4.** He had never been strong, and now unceasing fasting ruined his digestion and played havoc with his heart. Yet Gregory looked upon these years as the happiest of his life. - Shelley, location 3115
- 3.5.4.** Gregory was made a deacon in the church by Pope Pelagius II, and then he was sent as an ambassador to the court in Constantinople. Gregory spent six years in Constantinople, involved in the great theological and political controversies that seemed to constantly embroil the capital.
- 3.5.4.1.** Pope Benedict made him a deacon—that is, a member of his administrative council. The next pope, Pelagius II, appointed Gregory his ambassador before the court at Constantinople. There Gregory spent six years, and was often involved in the theological controversies and political intrigues that were constantly boiling in the great city. - Gonzales, location 4952
- 3.5.4.2.** Gregory's gifts, however, could not remain hidden. In 579 Pope Pelagius II made him one of the seven deacons of the Roman church, and sent him as ambassador to the imperial court in Constantinople. - Shelley, location 3116
- 3.5.5.** When Gregory was able to return from Constantinople he became the abbot of a monastery. However, the situation in Rome was incredibly dire. The Lombards threatened the city, and then an epidemic broke out. Eventually Pope Pelagius II became sick and died.
- 3.5.5.1.** Finally, in 586, Pelagius sent another ambassador, and Gregory was able to return to his monastery in Rome, where he was made abbot. - Gonzales, location 4954

- 3.5.5.2.** At that time the situation in Rome was serious. The Lombards had finally united, and intended to conquer the whole of Italy.... To make matters worse, an epidemic broke out in Rome. Shortly before, floods had destroyed much of the store of food. - Gonzales, location 4961
- 3.5.5.3.** Then Pope Pelagius, who with the help of Gregory and other monks had organized the sanitation of the city, the burial of the dead, and the feeding of the hungry, himself became ill and died. - Gonzales, location 4963
- 3.5.6.** At this time, Gregory was elected Pope by popular acclaim. He had no desire to be Pope, and even tried to send a letter to the Emperor requesting him to not confirm Gregory's election as Pope (at that time the Emperor had to confirm all elections of bishops of Rome - a point which would undermine the claims of the Papacy in its modern sense!), but the letter was intercepted. Eventually, Gregory became Pope against his own wishes.
- 3.5.6.1.** Gregory himself had no wish to become pope, but the clergy and the people elected him. He sought to have his election annulled by writing to the emperor and asking that his appointment not be confirmed—at that time it was customary to request the approval of Constantinople before consecrating the bishop of an important see. But his letter was intercepted. Eventually, although reluctantly, he was made bishop of Rome. - Gonzales, location 4965
- 3.5.7.** Gregory's actions as Pope
- 3.5.7.1.** As noted above, the situation in Rome was dire. Fortunately, Gregory had great skills and experience as a civil administrator, and as Pope he took over these duties. Under his leadership aqueducts were repaired, grain shipments guaranteed, troops drilled and trained, and the defenses of the city prepared for inevitable attack. Gregory then negotiated with the Lombards and secured peace. In essence, the Pope had become the Emperor of Rome as well.
- 3.5.7.1.1.** He then set about his new tasks with unbounded zeal. Since there was nobody else to do it, he organized the distribution of food among the needy in Rome, and he also took measures to guarantee the continuing shipments of wheat from Sicily. Likewise, he supervised the rebuilding of the aqueducts and of the defenses of the city, and the garrison was drilled until morale was restored. Since there was little help to be expected from Constantinople, he then opened direct negotiations with the Lombards, with whom he secured peace. Thus, by default, the Pope was acting as ruler of Rome and the surrounding area, which soon came to be known as "Saint Peter's Patrimony. - Gonzales, location 4968
- 3.5.7.1.2.** All of Western Europe was in chaos. Serious men, and Gregory was among them, thought that the end of the world was at hand. - Shelley, location 3125

- 3.5.7.1.3.** The church of Rome survived these attacks, almost the only vestige of organized civilization in the West that did so. While Gregory regarded his elevation to the papacy as a punishment, he immediately threw himself into the struggle for order in the midst of chaos. - Shelley, location 3131
- 3.5.7.1.4.** Gregory laid the basis for the temporal power of the papacy. In the vacuum of power he took over certain functions of civil government, not from ambition but from necessity. - Ferguson, location 6188
- 3.5.7.1.5.** he administered the landed properties that over the years had been bequeathed to the Roman church. These estates (latifundia) were scattered throughout Italy, Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, and North Africa. Known as “the patrimony of Peter,” they furnished food and finances for Rome. - Ferguson, location 6190
- 3.5.7.1.6.** His labors are all the more astonishing when we consider that he was in poor health and often confined to bed. “For a long time,” he wrote to a friend in 601, “I have been unable to rise from my bed. I am tormented by the pains of gout; a kind of fire seems to pervade my whole body: to live is pain; and I look forward to death as the only remedy.” In another letter he says: “I am daily dying, but never die. - Shelley, location 3140
- 3.5.7.1.7.** The prestige of the papacy in the Middle Ages rests in large part on the practical government maintained by Gregory through these troubled times. - Shelley, location 3138
- 3.5.7.1.8.** This participation in the political fortunes of Italy became a significant element for the papal office in the centuries that followed. After Gregory, the pope was no longer only a Christian leader; he was also an important political figure in European politics—God’s Consul. - Shelley, location 3150
- 3.5.7.2.** Gregory also gave himself to the spiritual care of his flock in Rome. He preached tirelessly, and wrote a classic work on Pastoral care. He brought the ideals of Benedictine monasticism to bear on the life of the papacy and the church in Rome.

3.5.7.2.1. But Gregory considered himself above all a religious leader. He preached constantly in the various churches in Rome, calling the faithful to renewed commitment. He also took measures to promote clerical celibacy, which was slowly becoming the norm throughout Italy, and which many claimed to follow but did not. Also, as bishop of Rome, Gregory saw himself as patriarch of the West. He did not claim for himself universal authority, as Leo had done earlier. But he took more practical steps, which did in fact increase his authority in the West. - Gonzales, location 4975

3.5.8. Gregory's thought and practice

3.5.8.1. Gregory was not an original thinker. In fact, he prided himself on this point. However, his writings became very influential in the Middle Ages and earned him the title "the Great" and his place as one of the four doctors of the church in the West (along with Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine).

3.5.8.2. Gregory was a devout follower of Augustine and he tried to follow his thought. However, Gregory did not possess the intellect of Augustine and he also had a tendency to fuse speculations of Augustine with current practices and to harden them into certainties. For example, Augustine has mused that perhaps there might be a place of purgation for those dying in a state of sin, but this became established fact under Gregory. Thus the doctrine of purgatory was born. And Gregory did not follow Augustines thoughts on election and salvation, but instead charted a path of "semi-Augustinianism/semi-Pelagianism" that was to characterize the church of the middle ages.

3.5.8.2.1. However, it is not only for these reasons that Gregory is called "the Great." He was also a prolific writer whose works were very influential throughout the Middle Ages. In these writings, he did not seek to be original or creative. On the contrary, his greatest pride was not to say anything that had not been held by the great teachers of earlier centuries, particularly Saint Augustine. - Gonzales, location 4983

3.5.8.2.2. By making Augustine an infallible teacher, he contradicted the spirit of that teacher, whose genius was, at least in part, in his inquiring spirit and venturesome mind. What for Augustine was conjecture, in Gregory became certainty. - Gonzales, location 4988

- 3.5.8.2.3. Thus, for instance, the theologian of Hippo had suggested the possibility that there was a place of purification for those who died in sin, where they would spend some time before going to heaven. On the basis of these speculations of Augustine, Gregory affirmed the existence of such a place, and thus gave impetus to the development of the doctrine of purgatory. - Gonzales, location 4989
- 3.5.8.2.4. In theological matters Gregory transmitted to the Middle Ages the Semiaugustinianism represented by the Council of Orange (529). - Ferguson, location 6209
- 3.5.8.2.5. In his doctrine of man Gregory stressed that Adam's fall affected all his descendants, weakening but not destroying their freedom of will. Thus, once man has been moved by grace, he may cooperate with it and win merit for himself by his good works, which are the joint product of divine grace and human will. - Shelley, location 3197
- 3.5.8.3. Gregory - On Pastoral Care
 - 3.5.8.3.1. Gregory's work on Pastoral care became the standard on the subject for the next 500 years or more in the West. It had the same place for priests that Benedict's Rule had for monks in the West.
 - 3.5.8.3.1.1. The Pastoral Rule, written on his accession to the papal throne, remains Gregory's most influential work, through its incorporation in the breviary for daily reading by Roman priests. The Pastoral Rule had a comparable influence on Western clergy as Benedict's rule had on Western monks. - Ferguson, location 6202
 - 3.5.8.3.2. This book called for great humility (note the Benedictine influence), and for the pastor to personally embody what is taught.
 - 3.5.8.3.2.1. The Pastoral Rule may be characterized as an essay on humility as the key to the unity of the church. The pastor should be greater than the people, as a shepherd goes before his flock. He should be pure and a leader. A preacher must reach all types of people; he must be loved in order to be heeded. Moreover, he must be careful of extremes. - Ferguson, location 6205

- 3.5.8.3.2.2.** And he set forth the principles for Christian ministry in his Pastoral Rule: “He who, by the necessity of his position, is required to speak the highest things, is compelled by the same necessity to exemplify the highest. - Shelley, location 3136
- 3.5.8.4.** Gregory had a strong moralistic bent. This is seen in his exposition of the book of Job - which was called the Moralia - and his interest in the “moral” sense of Scripture more than the literal sense of what the text was teaching. This spirit is found in his homilies (teachings), and also in his interest in the seven capital vices (more below). As a result, he also strengthened ideas of how one must remove the stain of sin - through penance, confession, and even punishment. All of these ideas were to be further developed through the Middle Ages by the church in the West.
- 3.5.8.4.1.** While in Constantinople, Gregory began writing his Moralia, an exposition of Job, which he finished while pope. As the title indicates, Gregory was especially interested in the moral sense of Scripture, more than the literal or the mystical sense, and this holds for his homilies as well. - Ferguson, location 6193
- 3.5.8.4.2.** The Augustinian doctrines of predestination and irresistible grace were set aside by Gregory, who was more concerned with the question of how we are to offer satisfaction to God for sins committed. This is done through penance, which consists of contrition, confession, and the actual punishment or satisfaction. To these must be added priestly absolution, which confirms the forgiveness granted by God. - Gonzales, location 4993
- 3.5.8.5.** Gregory and the “seven deadly sins”
- 3.5.8.5.1.** The desert monks had done much thinking a discussion regarding major sins which affected the spiritual life. There had been some distinction in these lists, but these sins were thought to be the fountainhead from which other sins flowed.
- 3.5.8.5.2.** Gregory modified the list developed by Cassian (who had brought the work of the desert fathers to the West). Gregory’s list became the dominant thought in the West on the “seven deadly sins” - with pride as the root sin of all.

- 3.5.8.5.2.1.** Gregory modified John Cassian's and Evagrius's lists of eight principal sins, and his list was then transmitted, with some variation, to medieval moral teaching as the "seven deadly sins": pride (or vainglory), covetousness (or avarice), lust, envy, gluttony, anger, and sloth (or acedia—weariness of heart, apathy, or depression). - Ferguson, location 6196
- 3.5.8.5.3.** For Gregory pride was a particular concern. This was both because of his training as a Benedictine monk (which stressed humility), and because of his own personal struggles. In many ways, for Gregory pride was the root vice from which all others flowed.
- 3.5.8.5.3.1.** To Gregory pride was a vicious hound that dogged him relentlessly. He speaks of it so often that he was clearly obsessed with it. He sees pride in all its moods. - Shelley, location 3166
- 3.5.8.5.3.2.** "Pride, which we have called the root of vices, far from being satisfied with the extinction of one virtue, raises itself up against all the members of the soul, and as a universal and deadly disease corrupts the whole body." - Shelley, location 3168
- 3.5.8.6.** Gregory also took many popular practices and ideas and made them part of the church's worship and practice, and he further solidified other church ideas and practices. This included things like the in the mass Christ was sacrificed anew, purgatory, and a strong emphasis on penance. All of this led to the Catholic Church and its practices that existed at the time of the Reformation.
- 3.5.8.6.1.** But, while earlier Christian teachers had sought to preserve Christian faith free of popular superstition, Gregory readily accepted the stories circulating at his time as if they were simple and direct confirmation of Christian faith. - Gonzales, location 5003
- 3.5.8.6.2.** Those who die in the faith and communion of the church, but without having offered satisfaction for all their sins, will go to purgatory before they attain their final salvation. The living can help the dead out of purgatory by offering masses in their favor. - Gonzales, location 4996
- 3.5.8.6.3.** Gregory believed that in the mass or communion Christ was sacrificed anew (and there is a legend that the Crucified appeared to him while celebrating mass). - Gonzales, location 4998

- 3.5.8.6.4.** This faith embraced not merely the official pronouncements of the councils and the teachings of the Fathers, but also the notions of the illiterate populace often crude and superstitious, at times even pagan. To this mass of material he lent the weight of his authority and as a consequence it became an integral part of the faith of the Western Church, of theologians and bishops as well as of monks and laymen. - Shelley, location 3194
- 3.5.8.7.** Practices coming to the forefront under Gregory
- 3.5.8.7.1.** Under Gregory many practices and beliefs that had been growing in popularity became standard practice and belief for the RCC. These included purgatory, reverence for the saints, the sacrifice of the mass, penance for sins, meritorious works, the importance of relics, and great numbers of miracles.
- 3.5.8.7.1.1.** He supported the reverence for saints and relics and the idea of purgatory, teaching that the sacrifice of the mass helps souls there. - Ferguson, location 6210
- 3.5.8.7.1.2.** In baptism, God grants forgiving grace freely without any merit on man's part, but for sins committed after baptism man must make atonement by penance, which is simply a form of punishment inflicted by the man himself instead of by God. "For either man himself by penance punishes sin in himself, or God taking vengeance on him smites it." Penance involves repentance, which must be sincere and of the heart, and also confession and meritorious works. - Shelley, location 3200
- 3.5.8.7.1.3.** The meritorious works, without which penance is not complete, are deeds involving sacrifice or suffering, such as almsgiving, ascetic practices, and prayers at all hours of the day. The greater our sins the more we must do to make up for them, and the more careful we must be to avoid them in the future. Whether we have done enough to atone for them we cannot know until after death. - Shelley, location 3203

3.5.8.7.1.4. Fortunately, sinners have the help of the saints. The belief in the intercession of the saints and the custom of appealing to them to use their influence with Christ did not originate with Gregory; both the belief and the custom were much older than he. But he emphasized them and made them central for Christian piety. - Shelley, location 3206

3.5.8.7.1.5. Another aid to devotion was the holy relics. Gregory encouraged the collection and veneration of holy remains of the saints and martyrs—locks of hair, fingernails, toes, pieces of clothing. Gregory taught—and most of his contemporaries believed—that these items possessed great powers, including that of self-defense. - Shelley, location 3212

3.6. Evaluating the papacy

3.6.1. The good (and yes there is some good!)

3.6.1.1. The papacy provided a measure of unity as the West was fragmenting

3.6.1.2. A number of the Popes - including Leo and Gregory - were able and good leaders who deeply cared for the people under their care.

3.6.1.3. The Popes cared for the people not only spiritually but also materially/practically - and if they did not do so the people often suffered immensely.

3.6.2. The bad and downright ugly

3.6.2.1. The idea of a single bishop exercising control over other elders is in itself unbiblical.

3.6.2.2. The Papacy is built on a false historical foundation. It was not accepted by the early church as the RCC claims - it has always been rejected by most of the church.

3.6.2.3. Put simply, the Papacy is an unbiblical institution. Jesus did not promise such a thing (the rock on which the church is built is the confession of Peter that Jesus is the Christ - not Peter himself).

3.6.2.4. The idea of uniting civil and ecclesiastical authority has always proved disastrous, especially for the church.

3.6.2.5. The seeds sown during this time would only continue to grow, resulting in the huge problems with the papacy we will study in the future - some of which are some of the darkest, most unedifying chapters in the history of the church.

- 3.6.2.6.** Many of the beliefs and practices taking root and flourishing in this period were unbiblical and severely weakened and compromised the church and her hold on the Gospel. Ultimately, God would have to raise up the Reformers to bring the needed correction, but, sadly, by that time they would be so rooted that it would lead to further schisms as the church was unwilling to repent of her errors.

Next Class: Christianity Comes to the British Isles

Date: Saturday, May 21 or may 28 (Memorial Day Weekend)

Reading: Chapter 26 - The New Order (Part of Section 1)