

**History of
Christianity 2.
The Middle Ages
700 to 1500**

History of Christianity: the Middle Ages 700 to 1500

1. Christianity in the East

1.1. Emperor and Patriarch

1.2. Bishops and Priests

1.3. Doctrines, Heresies and Schisms

1.4. Leading Theologians

1.5. Fall of Constantinople

2. Christianity in the West

2.1. Popes vs Kings and Emperors

2.2. Monks and Friars

2.3. Theologians and Reformers

2.4. Cathedrals and Gothic Architecture

Christianity in the East

Five Patriarchates in the 5th Century

East:

1. Constantinople
2. Alexandria (Egypt)
3. Antioch (Syria)
4. Jerusalem

West:

5. Rome

Eastern Roman Empire = Byzantine Empire

capital Constantinople, the “New Rome” from
May 11, 330 through May 29, 1453 (except
from 1204 to 1261: occupied by crusaders)

The Relationship Between Emperor and Patriarch

church and state one

“as in heaven, so on earth”

emperor living icon of Christ.

- Terrestrial rule of the emperor reproduces God's rule in heaven
- God regulates the cosmic order; the emperor the social order
- general “defender” of the church; but not “head” of the church

emperor and patriarch: emperor appointed Patriarch from list of 3 names

emperor and church councils:

- summoned councils
- presided over councils
- confirmed decisions and proclaimed them as imperial law

The Patriarch

from 595 known as “ecumenical patriarch” =
patriarch of the whole inhabited earth
looked upon pope as his senior, but did not ascribe
him any jurisdiction in the East
recognized autonomy of the other eastern
patriarchs
worked in close cooperation with Holy Synod =
hierarchs with sees in immediate vicinity of city

Ecumenical Councils

7 councils from 325 to 787 recognized by

Byzantine church

the Eucharist and Ecumenical Council are the
supreme visible expression of God's continuing
presence in the church on earth

- conciliar church

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Bishops and Priests

bishops from 6th or 7th century required to be celibate (in moderns times limited to monks also)

parish priests usually married, worked at other jobs could not be in commerce, bankers, inn-keepers, brothel-owners or Civil service

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Doctrine, Heresies and Schisms

West: often viewed Eastern Christianity as hotbed and source of heresies (Eastern Christianity viewed West as uneducated illiterates ruled by barbarians)

Fourth Century: focus on Trinity

431-681: focus on person of Jesus (Christology)

8th and 9th century: controversy about icons

Heresies and Schisms: Nestorius

orthodoxy:

Jesus: one person, two independent natures
therefore Mary *theotokos* = “God bearer”

Nestorius: Mary only mother of Jesus the man, not
Jesus as God. Accused of saying Jesus two
persons

Led to schism of Christians East Syria and
Mesopotamia, forming Nestorian Church, =
Church of the East 5th and 6th centuries

Heresies and Schisms: Monophysites

orthodoxy:

Jesus: one person, two independent natures
(dyophysitism)

monophysitism = one nature (a combined human
and divine nature)

Led to schism of churches in Egypt, Syria,
Armenia (Coptic Orthodox Church, Syrian
Orthodox Church, Church of Armenia)

Heresies and Schisms: Iconoclast Controversy

Icons

not worship, but veneration (“relative honor”)
“opened books to remind us of God.” Icons are
to the unlettered what written words are to
the literate
reveal the spirit-bearing potentialities of
material things
treated with full liturgical honor in service
confers grace and has sacramental value

Iconoclasts:

icons covered by ban in Exodus against idols

Iconoclast Controversy

Emperor Leo III **717-741** sided with iconoclasts, and in **726** ordered

- smashed great icon of Christ over gates of Constantinople
- destruction of all images of Christ and the saints in churches

787: Council of Nicea restored use

813: emperor again ordered destruction

843: Empress Theodora II convened Council of Orthodoxy; veneration of icons restored.
- celebrated as “Triumph of Orthodoxy”

Break with the Western Church

863-7: “Photius Schism”

858: Ignatius, patriarch deposed; had fought against iconoclasts and refused to re-admit clergy who had been iconoclasts. New patriarch Photius appointed

Ignatius appealed to the pope, who supported him

867: Photius called synod in Constantinople and persuaded them to excommunicate the pope

10 years later Ignatius died; relations re-established

Break with Western Church

Break of 1054

Sicily under jurisdiction of patriarch of Constantinople

Normans invaded; Byzantine emperor wanted Western help but Pope refused, wanting jurisdiction in Sicily

Leo appointed his own Archbishop in Sicily, called synod to reform Sicilian church

Michael Cerularius, patriarch Constantinople, closed Western Churches in Constantinople

Cardinal Humbert de Silva Candida came to Constantinople, **July 16, 1054** and presented decree of excommunication

Michael Cerularius responded in kind

Legacy of Fourth Crusade

1204: Fourth Crusade, meant to free Jerusalem, sidetracked and sacked Constantinople, setting up crusader government for some 50 years

Latins thereafter seen as enemies of their church and state

1274: Emperor Michael VIII agreed on reunion of church in hope of military support against Ottoman Turks. Rejected by populace, bishops

1438: Emperor John VIII led delegation to Italy, appealing for help and signed agreement to unite church. Treaty against rejected by populace, other Eastern patriarchs

1452: Emperor Constantine XI, allowed Roman Mass to be celebrated at Saint Sophia

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Leading Theologians

St. Symeon The New Theologian

late 10th century

nearness yet otherness of the eternal

every baptized Christian can obtain conscious
experience of the Holy Spirit

through the Spirit, can come face to face with
Christ in a vision of “divine light”

Leading Theologians

St. Gregory of Palamas

archbishop of Thessalonica

defender of the *hesychast* tradition of prayer

hesychia = inner stillness or silence of the heart,

particularly through the “Jesus Prayer”

allows possibility of vision of divine light and so union
with God

distinguished between essence of God (unknowable in
this life) and energies of God.

divine light was the uncreated energies of God = light
of the Transfiguration on Mt Tabor.

God transcendent and yet immanent, utterly beyond
our understanding and yet directly united to us in
his love

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Fall of Constantinople

April 7, 1453: Mohammed II laid siege with artillery (built by Christian engineers)

May 28, 1453: solemn service at Saint Sophia

May 29, 1453: city fell, Emperor Constantine XI died in battle

City sacked 3 days and 3 nights, as the sultan had promised his troops

Saint Sophia became mosque

The Third Rome

10th Century: Vladimir, emperor of the Kiev, sent ambassadors to find “purest” form of Christianity

at St. Sophia’s: “we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendour or such beauty and we are at a loss to describe it”

Vladimir chose Orthodox Christianity for his country

also married the daughter of the Eastern Emperor following year

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Popes vs. Kings and Emperors

Pope Stephen II **752-57** enlisted aid of Pepin, King of the Franks to help defend Rome against the Lombards.

768: Charles, son of Pepin, becomes king.
in series of military conquests, extended kingdom beyond borders of the old Western Empire, converted the pagan Saxons

800: Pope Leo III (**795-816**) crowned Charles (Charlemagne) Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire

Carolingian Renaissance

Chaos after Charlemagne

empire disintegrated within decades

Western Europe repeatedly attacked by Muslims,
Slavs, Magyars, Vikings

- “dark century of lead and iron”

Viking particularly brutal; horrific tales of violent
murder and pillaging

papacy corrupt, a prize of influential Roman
families. Several assassinated, poisoned,
deposed, died of starvation in dungeons. At
times, 2 or 3 claimed papacy

Gregorian Reformers

Emperor Henry III intervened in **1046**: deposed all three rival popes in Rome and installed a saintly German bishop as Pope Leo IX (**1049-54**)

He and his successors pursued ambitious agenda for reform

- end buying / selling of church offices
- bishops / abbots elected by clergy or monks
- clergy outside secular courts
- enforce widely flouted clerical celibacy

Pope Gregory VII

said popes could depose emperors, and no power on earth had jurisdiction over papacy

1073: Emperor Henry IV deposed archbishop of Milan and invested his own candidate; Gregory excommunicated him. Henry IV's barons rebelled against him

January 1077: Henry IV went to Canossa in Apennines and knelt in snow for four days before Gregory pardoned him

Henry IV later captured Rome, installed his own antipope; Pope Gregory VII died in exile in **1085**

Concordat of Worms **1122:** bishops elected by clergy but in emperor's presence

Pope Innocent III (1198-1216)

supported new orders of friars to teach and care for the poor

rebuked emperors when they tried to interfere with clergy elections of bishops

call Council of 400 bishops, 800 abbots to Rome in **1215**

- good preachers (Word of God necessary for salvation)
- good teachers in cathedral schools
- no selling or profiteering from relics
- vigilance against heresy

The French or “Babylonian” Captivity of the Church

Late 13th, early 14th century the new rival nation states of England and France become problem
King Philip the Fair of France disagreed with Pope Boniface VIII over taxation of French clergy
Cardinals tried to patch up French relations by choosing archbishop of Bordeaux, friend of the king, as the next pope: Clement V.

At Philip’s suggested, Clement V settled in Avignon, France

Next six popes all French, all stayed in Avignon, vassals of the French king

Gregory XI (1371-78) returned to Rome at urging of Italian mystic St. Catherine of Siena

The Great Schism of the West

After Gregory XI, Italian pope elected, Urban VI (1378-89).

- autocratic manner (tortured cardinals who disagreed)

cardinals left Rome, elected new pope, Clement VII, took up residence in Avignon

Urban VI died; succeeded by Boniface IX; Clement VII also died; succeeded by Benedict XIII

1409: Council of Pisa elected Greek cardinal Alexander V

Boniface IX and Clement refused to resign; Alexander died, replaced by antipope John XXIII (1410-15), a former pirate

1414-18: Council of Constance called on all popes to resign for sake of unity; Pope Martin V elected

The Conciliar Movement

scholars and leaders who wished to transfer
supreme authority in the church from the
papacy to general councils

Council of Basel: met intermittently between
1431-1449

pope thwarted movement by playing the rivalries
of the various nations represented against each
other

The Renaissance Popes

a series of Popes beginning with Nicholas V (**1447-55**)
at best promoted the Renaissance and the arts and
literature, but did little to reform the church

Pope Innocent VIII (**1484-1492**)

- shameless selling of indulgences

Pope Alexander VI (**1492-1503**)

- bought election from cardinals
- father of 10 illegitimate children
- had concubines and publicly acknowledged children with them
- negotiated with the Ottoman sultan to pay him to prevent possibility of crusade to free Constantinople

The Renaissance Popes

Pope Julius II (1503-1513)

- model was Julius Caesar
- favorite pastime was war; led army of papal guard to unify Italy

Pope Leo X (1513-1521)

- passion for the arts
- great dream was to complete St. Peter's, financed with indulgences

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Monks and Friars

The Abbey of Cluny

909: William, Duke of Aquitaine, founded monastery for 12 monks at Cluny, N. France under the direct control of the papacy (thus free from local secular authorities and bishops)

931: Cluny given right to form confederation, accept any religious house

by **1000:** more than 1000 such monasteries ruled by a succession of long-lived, wise, holy abbots

Monks and Friars

Cistercians

1097: founded by Citeaux, offshoot of a Benedictine house

rules emphasized:

- manual labor vs. scholarship (“to work is to pray”)
- private vs. corporate prayer

constructed houses in most desolate places

very strict:

- 7 hrs sleep in winter; 6 hrs. in summer
- vegetables, fish & cheese once a day summer; twice in winter
- fire once a year Christmas Day

end of 12th century: hundreds of Cistercian Houses

Monks and Friars

Cistercians

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)

- founded 65 new monasteries
- so persuasive in convincing men to enter, mothers hid their sons, wives their husbands
- Christian life an experience of progress in love

end of 12th century:

- had growth wealthy and lax
- as famous for agricultural skills as for spiritual life

Monks and Friars

St. Dominic Guzman (1170-1221)

Spanish born

1215: felt uneducated clergy left their flock open to heresy; founded Order of Preachers = Dominicans to go out and teach, preach

1220: new order recognized

- white habit and black cloak, “Black Friars”
- “watchdogs of the Lord” (pun on Latin *dominicanus = domini canis*)

Monks and Friars

St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226)

only child of rich merchant in Tuscany Italy
rejected family inheritance, dedicated himself to
service of poor

attracted band of followers

could possess nothings; begged for their food
nursed the sick, especially lepers

slept in open or rough shelters; went barefoot

“God’s jesters:” so joyful and cheerful

1209: new order approved by Pope Innocent III

- “Minor Friars,” “Grey Friars”

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Theologians and Early Reformers

Scholasticism

all education in hands of church

great thinkers of time all monks and clergy

movement 9th through 14th century

attempt to reconcile religion and the bible with

philosophy and science in a logical system

Aristotle's philosophy rediscovered through

Muslims and Jews in Spain and South Italy

- shock of these new ideas was immense: a

complete explanation of reality without

reference to a personal God

Theologians and Early Reformers

Anselm (1033-1109)

one of the great archbishops of Canterbury
part of the Norman conquest of England
reformer; encouraged regular church synods,
enforced clerical celibacy, suppressed slave
trade

faith must lead to right use of reason: “I believe, in
order that I may understand”

“ontological argument” for existence of God. God
is “that than which no greater can be
conceived”

greatest work “Why God became Man” Christ’s
death satisfied God’s offended majesty”

Theologians and Early Reformers

Peter Abelard

1079: born in Britany

brilliant lecturer and slashing debater, became
Paris' brightest intellectual star

1115: love affair with teenage niece of canon of
Notre Dame Cathedral who he was tutoring:
Heloise

- agreed to marry her secretly to placate uncle
- ugly rumors spread; Heloise retired to local
convent; band of thugs castrated Abelard

became Benedictine

1121: views on Trinity condemned; moved place
to place for 20 yrs

1136: returned to Paris: renewed popularity

Theologians and Early Reformers

Thomas Aquinas (1225-74)

greatest scholastic theologian of Middle Ages
fat, slow, pious boy, from wealthy noble family in
Italy

at 14 studied at University of Naples; wanted to
become a Dominican. Family tried to dissuade
him

went to Paris, center of theological learning
nickname: “Dumb Ox”

prolific writer; filled 18 volumes

- commentaries on bible books, Aristotle
- rigorous, systematic, encyclopedic summary
of Christian thought: Summa Theologicae,
Summa Contra Gentiles

humans beings made for happiness with God

- in sinfulness, we retain our appetite for happiness but seek it in the wrong places
- “No one can live without delight, and that is why a man deprived of spiritual joy goes over to fleshly pleasures”
- We need God “moving us inwardly through grace,” to rescue us from our sins

“Real Presence” transubstantiation using Aristotle’s philosophy of “universals”

“official” theologian Roman Catholic Church
(Thomism “eternally valid” **1879**)

mystical experience before death: “All I have written is a straw beside the things that have been revealed to me”

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Cathedrals and Gothic Architecture

1140: unknown master mason developed external flying buttresses to carry building's weight

- fewer internal pillars
- windows much larger
- building that soared to heaven, filled with light and peace

12th through 15th century: 500 cathedrals built
cathedral or church dominant building in medieval cities and town