



**WATERMARK**

# THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH (30 AD – 1500 AD)

Sunday Equipping Courses – Fall 2024

Garrett Wikle

# QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- What drew you to take this course on the history of the church?
- What is your background with learning church history? Are you more of a novice or an expert?
- How would you answer the question: “What is the church?”
- What do you hope to get out of this class?
- Is there anything we can speak to in particular as we go along in the course?

# WHY DO WE STUDY CHURCH HISTORY?

“And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, 28 saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him. 33 “When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them.”

— Acts 5:27-33

# WHY DO WE STUDY CHURCH HISTORY?

“34 But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. 35 And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. 36 For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. 37 After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. 38 So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; 39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” So they took his advice, 40 and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. 42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.”

# WHY DO WE STUDY CHURCH HISTORY?

*“For we possess a vast multitude of brothers and sisters in Christ from whose lives we can learn, through whose stories we can be challenged and encouraged, by whose writings we can be instructed, and by whose hymns we can be inspired to worship and live with greater devotion to our Lord.” – Sinclair Ferguson*

# WHY DO WE STUDY CHURCH HISTORY?

- To know the brothers and sisters in Christ before us
- To be challenged
- To be encouraged
- To be instructed
- To be inspired to worship and live with greater **devotion**

# WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

“The church is the **new covenant people** of God, brought about by the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, consists of **local gatherings** of **baptized believers**, and is **indwelt and gifted by the Holy Spirit** to know, serve and glorify her Triune God. Her ministries include proclaiming the whole gospel of the blessed God, administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and exercising church discipline. Her **purpose** is worship, discipleship, and missions as she makes the gospel visible and proclaims the glorious gospel to the nations for the glory of God and exaltation of Christ. Her biblical **offices** are elders/pastors (biblically-qualified men) and deacons (biblically qualified men and women). The pastor-teachers equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. The locus of authority rests in each local congregation.”



# WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

- One – gathered around unity in Christ (John 17)
- Holy – positionally holy, or *set apart*, as a body in Christ
- Universal ( “little c” *catholic*) – all Christians across space and time; past, present, and future
- Apostolic – created by the gospel and handed down by the authorized and commissioned apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ

# THE PERIODS OF CHURCH HISTORY

- The Early Church (34 AD – 313 AD)
- The Imperial Church (313 AD – 590 AD)
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# THE “EARLIEST” CHURCH – THE BOOK OF ACTS

- “The Acts of the Apostles” are the *continued* story of God’s saving narrative through the work of Jesus Christ, by His Spirit
  - Grounds the founding of the church historically
  - Gives historical context for the development of doctrine
  - Serves as a timeline for the New Testament epistles
  - Invites us into the story (e.g., note its incomplete ending; “Acts 29”)

# ACTS OUTLINE

- **Acts 1:8** – *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*
- Textual Outline of Acts:
  - In Jerusalem (Chapters 1-7)
  - In Judea & Samaria (Chapters 8-12)
  - To the End of the Earth (Chapters 13-28)

# ACTS: A BRIEF SUMMARY

We should understand Acts as the continuing story of God's saving purposes. Acts demonstrates the fulfillment of God's saving promises (OT) as a result of the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. **In other words, Acts demonstrates that his kingdom has come now in the person and work of Christ and is advancing to the world through the ministry of his authorized and commissioned apostles.**

# “THEMATIC” ACTS OUTLINE

- **Formation of the Church (1-2)**
- **Foundation of the Church (3-5)**
- **Persecution of the Church (5-7)**
- **Expansion of the Church (8-12)**
- **Missions of the Church (13-20)**
- **Engagement of the Church (21-28)**





ITALY

MACEDONIA

Black Sea

PONTUS

Rome  
Three Taverns  
Forum of Appius  
Puteoli

Thessalonica  
Philippi  
Troas

BITHYNIA

GALATIA

CAPPADOCIA

Berea

Samothrace

MYSIA ASIA  
Pergamum

LYDIA PHRYGIA

Antioch

ACHAIA  
Corinth

Chios

Smyrna  
Ephesus

PISIDIA  
Laodicea

Iconium  
Lystra

Tarsus

Rhegium

Syracuse

Athens

Miletus

PAMPHYLIA  
Perga

Derbe

Antioch

Melita (Malta)

Patmos

LYCIA  
Myra

Cnidus

Rhodes

Cyprus

Salamis

PHOENICIA

SYRIA

Crete

Fair Havens

Paphos

Sidon

Damascus

Mediterranean Sea

Cyrene

Alexandria

EGYPT

Caesarea

Joppa

Gaza

Ptolemais

Samaria

Jerusalem



LIBYA

KEY	
	First Journey
	Second Journey
	Third Journey
	Journey to Rome

Kilometers



# DOCTRINE IN THE EARLY CHURCH

- **Doctrinal Development** – The implications of the gospel are more readily seen by the world through God’s redemptive acts
  - Theology becomes more clear over time as God reveals himself in his “Word” and his “works”
  - The Old Testament is a richly furnished room, dimly lit (per B.B. Warfield)
- **Doctrinal Unity** – The church recognizes gospel essentials and is collectively unified in *belief* over ethnicity, etc.
- **Doctrinal Duty** – Right gospel understanding leads to right action



# DOCTRINE IN ALL OF CHURCH HISTORY

- **Doctrinal Development** – Doctrines are debated and clarified over time in light of both internal and external pressures
  - Today, we “stand on the shoulders of giants”
- **Doctrinal Unity** – Looking back, Christian unity feels like a roller coaster. But, we are far more united in essentials than one often gives credit to
- **Doctrinal Duty** – The gospel has compelled Christians to action in every century since Pentecost. Praise God for his work!



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# PLAN FOR SESSION 2

- Discuss The Early Church (100 – 300 AD) in selected stories
- See the **External Pressures** on the church
- Learn the **Internal Pressures** from within the church
- Introduce 4 **C's** for this time period
  - Canon
  - Creed
  - Catechesis
  - Clergy (Liturgy)

# OVERVIEW OF THE EARLY CHURCH (100 – 313 AD)

- **Temple destroyed** in Jerusalem: 70 AD
- Heightened time of **Persecution**
- The **Patristic Period**: the time of the Church “Fathers”
  - Examples: Ignatius, Irenaeus, Tertullian
- **Christian Apologists** contend for the faith
  - Examples: *The Epistle to Diognetus*, Justin Martyr, Origen
- Rise of unorthodox Christian groups (i.e., Gnostics + Gnosticism)

# EXTERNAL PRESSURES ON THE CHURCH

- Varied levels of persecution after Nero (50s); increases heavily:
  - Septimius Severus (202-211)
  - Decius (249-251)
  - Valerian (257-260)
  - Diocletian and Galerius (303-311)
- Roman rulers sought to:
  - Return to ancient traditions
  - Condemn religious freedom (wanted apostates more than martyrs)
  - Persecutions could lead to schism, which could question unity

# EXTERNAL PRESSURES ON THE CHURCH

- Story of Polycarp
  - *“Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?” (The Martyrdom of Polycarp, 9)*
- Story of Ignatius
  - *“But if I suffer, I shall be emancipated by Jesus Christ; and united to him, I shall rise to freedom.” (Letter to the Romans, 5)*
- *Epistle to Diognetus*
  - *“They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners . . . They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven.”*

# INTERNAL PRESSURES WITHIN THE CHURCH

## Heretics and Heretical Communities

- **Gnosticism** gave a “secret knowledge” for spiritual ascension
  - **Marcion** was a Gnostic who divided the God of the OT and NT into two “gods” and mutilated the biblical canon to teach it
- **Montanus** was a self-proclaimed prophet who gave new revelation of God and led an unrestrained ecstatic movement
- **Monarchians** denied the Trinity, claiming the Father to have adopted Jesus, or that they are the same person with “modes”



# INTERNAL PRESSURES WITHIN THE CHURCH

Notable Protectors of Orthodoxy:

- Irenaeus: *Against Heresies, Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*
- Tertullian: *Apology, Against Marcion, Against Praxaes*
- Origen: *On First Principles, the Hexapla, Against Celsus*

“**Orthodoxy precedes heresy**, which is the deviation from essential teachings of the church.” – Stephen O. Presley

# CANON

- Canon – a “rule” or standard to be measured against
- The biblical “Canon” is the recognized list of books that are *inspired* (lit. *God-breathed*) by God
- Basis for New Testament canonicity:
  - Apostolicity – attributed or linked closely to an apostle
  - Universality – viewed and used as sacred Scripture across location time
  - Orthodoxy – consistent with Christian belief and other inspired texts

# CANON

Early “Canon” Lists:

- The Muratorian Fragment (c. 180)
- Origen’s List (c. 230)
- Eusebius’ List (c. 325)
- Athanasius Easter Letter (367 AD)

Often categorized books in categories:

Accepted | Questioned | Rejected

# CREED

Early Christians appealed to a “rule of faith”

- Developed to summarize essential beliefs
  - cf. Matthew 28:19-20
- Often seen as a theological narrative
  - i.e., the story of the Bible
- No single articulation of the “rule” is formally accepted, but all have the same family resemblance

# 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,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,

he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come 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.

# CATECHESIS + CLERGY

These pertain to the church's developing theology and worship

- Catechesis: a rigorous training of believers in the faith
  - May have covered moral/spiritual purity and lasted ~3 years
- Became a “Catechumen” when in the process for baptism
- The Episcopate, leadership for the Christian community, formed
  - Led churches in worship, preaching, membership, and care
- Early examples of Liturgy and Catechesis:
  - Hippolytus' *The Apostolic Tradition* | *Didache* | Tertullian's *On Baptism*

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What *external pressures* are facing the church today?**
  - Consider thinking locally (i.e., Dallas) and internationally (the U.K., Iran, etc.)
- 2. What *internal pressures* are a threat to the church's health today?**
- 3. Thinking of the 4 C's, how can our churches grow, and how can we help as members of them?**
  - Canon – knowing, teaching, and living Scripture as God's Word
  - Creed – holding to a unified, shared faith rooted in shared beliefs
  - Catechesis – discipling and teaching individuals as followers of Christ
  - Clergy – leading and rightly being led by a biblical leadership model





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# PLAN FOR SESSION 3

- Discuss the **Imperial Church** (313 AD – 451 AD)
- Outline the first four **Church Councils** and their content
- Trace how the church clarified a biblical **doctrine of Christ**
- Introduce notable **key figures** for this period

# ROME ACCEPTS CHRISTIANITY

- Constantine's "Battle of Milvian Bridge" (312 AD)
  - Apparent conversion account of Constantine
- The Edict of Milan (313)
  - Formal legalization of Christianity in the Roman Empire
- Impact of persecution-less Christianity
  - "Internal pressures"

# THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

- Called by Constantine in response to the Arian Crisis
  - First “imperial” movement in the church, beginning “Christendom”
- Notable Figures:
  - Arius – heretically claimed that the Son was not eternal
    - “There was a time when the Son was *not*”
  - Alexander – Bishop of Alexandria, argued for the Son’s eternality
  - Athanasius – Alexander’s secretary; continued the debate
- Important terms:
  - *homoousios* vs. *homoiousios* – is the Son the “same as” or merely “like” God?

# THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

- The Significance of Nicaea
  - Key moment of doctrinal history; bishops sense authority and agreement
  - Formed a creed that acted as a “test of fidelity”
  - Formally excluded heretics (i.e., Arians) from being viewed as Christians
- Affirmations about Jesus Christ:
  - *Homoousios* – the “same substance” of God
  - *Monogenes* – “only-begotten”; God the Son was “begotten, not made”
  - Jesus Christ is fully and truly God

# THE NICENE CREED

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the **Only Begotten** Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
**God from God, Light from Light,**  
true God from true God,  
**begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;**  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,  
and became man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,

and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with 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,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.]]\*

I believe in one, holy, catholic\* and apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

\*Note: bracketed section was added after the Council of Constantinople

\*\*that is, the true Christian church of all times and all places

# THE AFTERMATH OF NICAEA

- Constantine dies (337); next rulers are not kind to Christians
  - Constantine's son, Constantius II, rules as pro-Arian
  - Constantine's nephew, Julian the Apostate, sought for renewed Paganism
- Orthodox doctrine still needs more clarification
  - Nicaea's extent and authority were questioned
  - Arianism continued in government and in churches
  - The Holy Spirit begins to be questioned by "Spirit Fighters"
- Theodosius I establishes Christianity as official religion in 381

# NOTABLE DEFENDERS OF NICAEA

- Athanasius – Bishop of Alexandria (328)
  - Exiled five times between councils while promoting Nicene Christology
  - Connected nature of God and salvation:
    - “If Christ is not God, we are dead in our sins”
- The Cappadocian Fathers
  - Basil of Caesarea | Gregory of Nyssa | Gregory of Nazianzus
  - Affirmed God is one in essence (*ousia*) and three in persons (*hypostasis*)
  - Developed the doctrine of the Holy Spirit



# THREE MORE EARLY HERESIES

What does it mean that “The Word became flesh?” (John 1:14)

1. Apollinarianism – taught the divine Logos replaced a human mind
  - By this view, Christ does not have a true human nature
  - Condemned as heresy at the **Council of Constantinople (381)**
    - “For that which he has not assumed, he has not healed.” – G.Naz
2. Nestorianism – taught Christ has two *independent* natures
  - Each nature acted as own person, dividing Christ into 2 persons, 2 natures
  - This view was condemned at the **Council of Ephesus (431)**

# THREE MORE EARLY HERESIES

What does it mean that “The Word became flesh?” (John 1:14)

3. Eutychianism – taught Christ’s divine and human natures were unified into one new, “hybrid” nature
  - Claimed Christ only had one nature
  - Denied Christ’s true humanity; not “consubstantial” with us
  - This view was condemned at the **Council of Chalcedon (451)**

# THE DEFINITION OF CHALCEDON

“Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once **complete in Godhead and complete in manhood**, truly God and truly man, **consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood**; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, **recognized in two natures**, without confusion, without change, **without division**, without separation; **the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union**, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.”

# IMPLICATIONS OF CHALCEDON

- **Dogmatic:** more precisely defines right, collectively held Christology
- **Conciliar:** affirms councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, and Ephesus
  - Councils are only authoritative as they rightly sum and declare what Scripture teaches
  - The Nicene Creed becomes the church's creed—new ones are resisted
- **Ecclesiastical:** helps clarify relationships with political authorities
  - Bishoprics of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Jerusalem gain power
  - Rival centers of power cause division/dissent

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In 381, Christianity became Rome's state religion and began to blend in with the culture. **How does Christianity blend in with our culture today? In what ways does that offer a corporate *good* to the world? How does it impact it negatively?**
2. Our doctrine of Christ today was shaped and formed by events of the gathered church 1,600 years ago. **How ought that inform our belief and practice today?**
3. We talked about several *wrong* ways to view Christ from history. **In what ways do Christians (and non-Christians) view Christ wrongly today? Are they the same or different? How can we help?**



**WATERMARK**

# THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH (30 AD – 1500 AD)

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Ethan Howard

# THE PERIODS OF CHURCH HISTORY

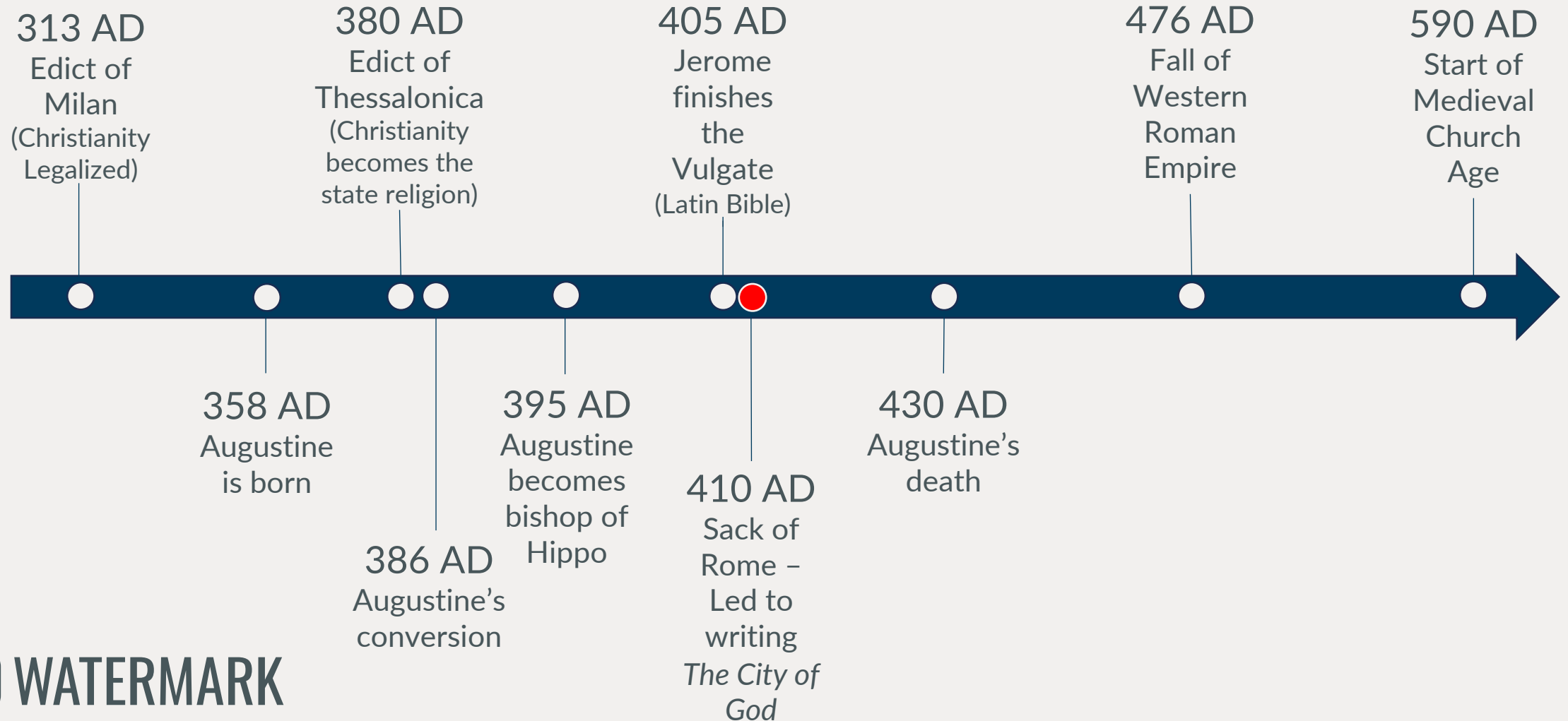
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# PLAN FOR SESSION 4

- Trace the end of the Imperial Church Age (313 AD – 590 AD)
- Survey Augustine's life, ministry, and contributions to the church
- Discuss Augustine's relevance for the modern church

# AUGUSTINE IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE



# AUGUSTINE'S LASTING RELEVANCE – WHY STUDY HIM?

- Foundational influence on **both** Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions
- Development on the Key Doctrines of Grace, Human Nature, and the Trinity
- Heavy Impact on Shaping Our Understanding of the Church and Society
- Pastor-Theologian
- Speaks to Struggles and Questions that Christians Face Today

# *CONFESSIONS* – AUGUSTINE’S SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

- Augustine’s autobiography with biblical/theological reflection written in 397 AD
- Family & Adolescence
- Early Career & Views on Christianity
- Longing for truth & Eventual conversion
- Bishop of Hippo & Influential church leadership and writings

# SIN, GRACE, & ABILITY OF MAN

- Pelagian Controversy Against the Church (Condemned in 418 & 431)
  - Pelagius taught that sins are *only* conscious choices
  - Man's problem is ignorance & imitation of sin, denying an inherited sin nature, which redefines divine grace
- Augustine's response
  - 4 States of Man:
    1. able to sin & able not to sin
    2. unable not to sin
    3. able not to sin
    4. not able to sin
  - Original sin
  - Salvation comes from and is completed by God as an act of grace

# *THE CITY OF GOD* VS. THE CITY OF MAN

- Written in response to Christian persecution after the Sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410
- Apologetic Takeaway – the structure of the book
- Donatist Controversy
- Key Themes
  - The Two Cities – 1) City of God: love for God; 2) City of Man: love for self, *libido dominandi* (lust of rule/to dominate)
  - Human Society & Politics – struggle for power
  - Divine Grace – transformation of citizenship
  - Church (Ecclesiology) – on a pilgrimage, comprised of saints who aren't perfect
  - End Times (Eschatology) – the direction of the two cities
  - Ordered Love

# ORDERED LOVE

- God is love (1 Jn 4:8) and creates out of an overflow of this love
- For one to love anything properly, one must love God, who is love itself, above all
- Sin is the distortion of love, as it stems from the love of self/the world, thus sin is disordered love
- Love of self & the lust to rule (*libido dominandi*) end up dominating oneself
- Jesus conquers this disordered love through loving service, transferring citizens from the City of Man to the everlasting City of God, properly ordering our loves in the process
- Properly ordered love brings about true peace and justice

# SOUND DOCTRINE AND THE TRINITY

- If one holds a correct lens or interpretation of Scripture, it must result in the twofold love of loving God and loving others
  - Love God for God's own sake
  - Love others for God's sake
- Unity, Diversity, & Equality in the Triune God of Love
- All works of God involve each person of the Trinity (e.g. Salvation, Creation, etc.)
- Once sinners, now saints, reflect God through properly ordered love



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What resonates with you from Augustine's life and/or conversion?
2. Augustine speaks of believers as citizens of the City of God presently. How might this interpretation of Scripture impact your life?
3. What are practical steps you could take to have properly ordered love?

# Q&A AND TAKEAWAYS



**WATERMARK**

# THE PERIODS OF CHURCH HISTORY

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# PLAN FOR SESSION 5

- Wrap up the Imperial Church (313 – 590)
- Begin the **Medieval Church** (590 – 1204)
  - Christianity continues to **expand**
  - The role of the **Papacy** grows in authority and power
  - **Monasteries** become highly influential
  - More **Internal and External Conflicts**
  - The rise in power leads the church toward the “**Great Schism**”
- *NOTE: Today’s emphasis is on the Western “Catholic” Church. Time restricts a full discussion of the Eastern “Orthodox” Church.*

# THE EXPANSION OF CHRISTIANITY

- The gospel goes out through missionaries across the world:
  - Mainland Europe | British Isles | North Africa | Middle East | India | China
- Story: St. Patrick in Ireland
  - British boy, captured and enslaved by the Irish for six years
  - Escaped captivity but returned to Ireland as a missionary
  - Monastic communities planted became first “towns”
- Story: Boniface in Germania (672-754)
  - Confronted pagan belief by cutting down the sacred oak tree of Thor

# PATRICK'S *CONFESSION*

“Therefore, indeed, I cannot keep silent, nor would it be proper, so many favours and graces has the Lord deigned to bestow on me in the land of my captivity. For after chastisement from God, and recognizing him, our way to repay him is to exalt him and confess his wonders before every nation under heaven.

For there is no other God, nor ever was before, nor shall be here-after, but God the Father, unbegotten and without beginning, in whom all things began, whose are all things, as we have been taught; and his son Jesus Christ, who manifestly always existed with the Father, before the beginning of time in the spirit with the Father, indescribably begotten before all things, and all things visible and invisible were made by him. He was made man, conquered death and was received into Heaven, to the Father who gave him all power over every name in Heaven and on Earth and in Hell, so that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and God, in whom we believe. And we look to his imminent coming again, the judge of the living and the dead, who will render to each according to his deeds. And he poured out his Holy Spirit on us in abundance, the gift and pledge of immortality, which makes the believers and the obedient into sons of God and co-heirs of Christ who is revealed, and we worship one God in the Trinity of holy name.”

## EXCERPT FROM: *LIFE OF BONIFACE (1954)*

“Boniface in their presence attempted to cut down, at a place called Geismar, a certain oak of extraordinary size called in the old tongue of the pagans the Oak of [Thor]. Taking his courage in his hands (for a great crowd of pagans stood by watching and bitterly cursing in their hearts the enemy of the gods), he cut the first notch. But when he had made a superficial cut, suddenly, the oak's vast bulk, shaken by a mighty blast of wind from above crashed to the ground shivering its topmost branches into fragments in its fall. As if by the express will of God (for the brethren present had done nothing to cause it) the oak burst asunder into four parts, each part having a trunk of equal length. At the sight of this extraordinary spectacle the heathens who had been cursing ceased to revile and began, on the contrary, to believe and bless the Lord. Thereupon the holy bishop took counsel with the brethren, built an oratory from the timber of the oak and dedicated it to Saint Peter the Apostle.”



# THE PAPACY ESTABLISHED

- Papal authority grows in Western Christianity
  - Claimed the “authority of Peter” on three texts:
    - Matt 16:16-19 | Luke 22:31-32 | John 21:15-19
  - Built off the steady role of the Bishop of Rome in the Arian controversy
  - Rome was somewhat isolated from other “patriarchs”
- The First Pope: Leo the Great (c. 400-461)
  - Claimed authority over councils (i.e., Council of Chalcedon)
  - Solidified power in “Leo’s *Tome*”

# THE PAPACY ESTABLISHED

- Gregory the Great (c. 540-604)
  - Most important Pope in the Middle Ages (590)
  - Born into wealth but gave it up to be a monk in 570
  - Elected to Pope reluctantly; became a writer, preacher, diplomat
    - Especially gifted in organizational leadership
    - **Began to link Christian baptism with state allegiance; “Christendom”**
  - Developed several doctrines:
    - Purgatory | Penance | Mass | “Semi-Augustinianism”
  - Reformed the papacy toward a “pastoral” office
  - Promoted monastic life as a positive development

# MEANWHILE... MONASTIC LIFE

- Monasteries, from the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, rise in popularity
- Seen as centers for piety, missions, communal living (towns!)
  - Commonly sought holy living through isolation, poverty, and devotion
- Exercised various levels of purity and involvement in civic life
- In the best Monastic examples (i.e., Anselm), there is little distinction between a robust theology and personal devotion
  - Little distinction between “head and heart”; “doctrine and piety”;  
“knowledge and prayer”

# MONASTIC PIETY

**ON CHARITY:** *Two old men lived together for many years without a quarrel. One said to the other: "Let us have one quarrel with each other, as is the way of men." And the other answered: "I do not know how a quarrel happens." And the first said: "Look, I put a tile between us, and I say, That's mine. Then you say, No, it's mine. That is how you begin a quarrel." So they put a tile between them, and one of them said: "That's mine." And the other said: "No, it's mine." And he answered: "Yes, it is yours. Take it away." And they went away unable to argue with each other.*

**ON HUMILITY:** *An old man said to a brother: "When a proud or vain thought enters you, examine your conscience to see if you are keeping God's commandments; if you love your enemies; if you rejoice in your adversary's triumph, and are grieved at his downfall; if you know yourself to be an unprofitable servant, and a sinner beyond all others. But not even then must you think yourself to have corrected all your faults; knowing that this thought alone in you shall undo all the other good you have done.*

# MONASTIC PRACTICE EXAMPLE: *LECTIO DIVINA*

- Anselm's Sacred Reading – “an action of the whole person, by which the meaning of a text was absorbed, until it became prayer”
  - Commonly practiced with the Psalms
- Monastic Prayer: three phases in one unified practice:
  1. *Lectio (divina)* – “reading”; **immersion in the text** and its explanation
  2. *Meditatio* – “meditation”; the **slow speaking of the words** from the page, owning them in mind and body. This step is **vocal and repetitive**.
  3. *Oratio* – “prayer”; founded on the first two and the required response to them, lest the process be incomplete. **Harmony** of God’s voice and ours.

# THE PAPACY → “CHRISTENDOM”

- Church + State in West begin to intermingle
  - 751 – Pope Zacharias helps elect Pepin the Short, king of the Franks
  - 754 – Pope Stephen crowns Pepin as king in Paris
    - Inauguration was steeped with Christian influence
- Charlemagne: King of Franks (mod. France and Germany)
  - Sought a Frankish-Roman Empire inspired by Augustine’s *City of God*
    - Dawn of the “Holy Roman Empire”
  - Lingering question: Who is superior between the Pope and Emperor?
    - Pope crowns emperor; Emperor organizes the church?

# RISING CONFLICTS

- Two Centers of Authority: Rome and Constantinople
  - The Icon Controversy
    - Paintings of Jesus, Mary, and saints were popularized in the East since the 400s
    - Appealed to simple and uneducated believers
    - Reverence for icons challenged as idol worship (Ex. 20:4-5)
    - Banned in 753, re-accepted in 787, officially approved by Eastern church
  - The Filioque Controversy
    - Theological debate about the Holy Spirit in the Nicene Creed (John 14:26, 15:26)
    - East: “[The HS] proceeds from the Father”
    - West: “[The HS] proceeds from the Father *and from the Son*”

# RISING CONFLICTS

- The Rise of Muhammad
  - Born and orphaned in Saudi Arabia, ~570 AD
  - Claimed supernatural visions from the angel Gabriel
  - Fled with family to Medina in 622 under threat of hostility
  - Returned to Mecca in 629 with 10,000 followers, conquering the city
- The Rise of Islam
  - Muhammad dies in 632; his followers sweep across N. Africa
    - Power vacuum from the Roman Empire's destruction led to ease in victory
  - Some similarities, yet striking differences lead entire communities astray



# THE PAPACY'S DECAY

- The papacy has been in significant corruption since Charlemagne
- Worship became characterized by observation over participation
  - Latin masses made participation impossible in many areas
  - Bread and wine not given to ordinary people; “Spectating”
  - Biblical exposition lost in regular gatherings
- More than 30 popes over 104 years (896-1000)

# THE PAPACY'S DECAY

- 1054 – Leo IX excommunicates the patriarch of Constantinople
  - The Head of the Eastern church refused to recognize Rome's supremacy; excommunicated the Roman pope's delegation in response
  - Based on: Icons, Filioque, celibacy, etc.
- 1095-1291 – Crusades (“Holy” Wars) occur
  - Emphasize pilgrimage and penance
  - Fracture relations with Islam and the East
- 1204 – Western Crusaders sack Constantinople
  - Finally reconciled and excommunications renounced in 1965

# THE PAPACY'S DECAY

- Under Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), the papacy reached the apex of its power
  - Kings and nobles derived authority from the Pope
  - The Pope led Crusades against “heretics”
- Never had the church been as powerful, but also as fractured

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do the stories of Patrick and Boniface sit with you today? How ought we imitate, *or not imitate* their models of faith?
2. Monasteries combined a robust theology of God with personal devotion. **What can we glean from them and their practices?**
3. Even within the church, absolute power still corrupts absolutely. **How can we be aware of and combat the corrupting influence of power in our churches today?**



**WATERMARK**

# THE PERIODS OF CHURCH HISTORY

- The Early Church (34 AD – 313 AD)
- The Imperial Church (313 AD – 590 AD)
- The Medieval Church (590 AD – 1517 AD)
- The Age of the Reformation (1517 AD – 1648 AD)
- The Age of Reason and Revival (1648 AD – 1914)
- The Age of Modernity (1914 AD – Today?)

# PLAN FOR SESSION 6

- Continue discussing the Medieval Church (590 – 1517)
- Trace the Papacy at its **highest point and into decline**
- Introduce various Monastic orders and **Medieval spirituality**
- Discuss the rise of **Medieval Scholasticism**
- Set the stage for **the Reformation** and early reformers

# BRIEF REVIEW AND CONTEXT

- Papacy reached its highest point in 13<sup>th</sup> Century
  - Innocent III (d. 1216) – Pope is God’s authority over the earth
  - Boniface VIII (d. 1303) – *Unam Sanctam*
    - There is “one holy catholic and apostolic church”
    - One body and the one head (Christ and the Vicar of Christ)
    - Two swords: the Pope’s spiritual one; the king’s temporal one
      - Temporal submits to the spiritual; no one judges the pope
    - *“Furthermore, we declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff.”*
- Medieval Church’s high point: the Pope as universal authority



# MONASTIC AND MEDIEVAL SPIRITUALITY

- Revivals of monastic life occurred frequently
  - Like the papacy, monastic communities varied in vibrancy and purity
- Early Monastic Orders (900 – ~1200)
  - Clunics (c. 1000) – independent and Benedictine; owned land; celibacy
  - Cistercians (c. 1100) – stricter, reform movement within Benedictines
    - Rejected wealth and adornments; cf. Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153)
- Mendicant Orders – emphasized poverty, preaching, & the Pope
  - Franciscans – St. Francis of Assisi (d. 1226), extreme poverty, poor care
  - Dominicans – Dominic (c. 1203), protected orthodoxy

# MEDIEVAL SCHOLASTICISM

- Scholarly movement that joined Christian theology and classical philosophy toward the compatibility of faith and reason
- Theology as “faith seeking understanding”
- Notable figures:
  - **Anselm of Canterbury**
  - Peter Abelard
  - Duns Scotus
  - William of Ockham
  - **Thomas Aquinas**

# MEDIEVAL SCHOLASTICISM

Marked by four key aspects:

1. Attitude – the power of reason
  - Presupposed doctrinal unity; explored apparent contradictions
2. Method – dialectical reasoning
  - Authority of reason and logic take key places in constructing theology
3. Content – question of universals
  - Various views on the real existence of universal concepts or forms
4. Form – engaging and debating authorities; focused on texts
  - Utilized: Scripture > commentaries > church fathers > philosophy

# MEDIEVAL SCHOLASTIC: ANSELM OF CANTERBURY

- Anselm: the “Father of Scholasticism”
  - Born 11<sup>th</sup> Cent. in Aosta, Italy
  - Became a *monk* in 1060; *prior* in 1063; *archbishop* of Canterbury in 1093
  - Works:
    - *Why God Became Man (Cur Deus Homo) | Monologion | Proslogion*
- Key contributions:
  - The “Ontological Argument” for God’s existence
  - Developed the “Satisfaction” theory of atonement

# ANSELM'S "PRAYER OF PRAISE"

“Lord, because you have made me, I owe you the whole of my love; because you have redeemed me, I owe you the whole of myself; because you have promised so much, I owe you my whole being. **I pray you, Lord, make me taste by love what I taste by knowledge; let me know by love what I know by understanding.** I owe you more than my whole self, but I have no more, and by myself I cannot render the whole of it to you. Draw me to you, Lord, in the fullness of your love. I am wholly yours by creation; make me all yours, too, in love. Amen.”

# ANSELM'S *PROSLOGION* (CHAPTER 1)

“Be it mine to look up to thy light, even from afar, even from the depths. **Teach me to seek thee, and reveal thyself to me, when I seek thee, for I cannot seek thee, except thou teach me, nor find thee, except thou reveal thyself.** Let me seek thee in longing, let me long for thee in seeking; let me find thee in love, and love thee in finding. Lord, I acknowledge and I thank thee that thou hast created me in this thine image, in order that I may be mindful of thee, may conceive of thee, and love thee; but that image has been so consumed and wasted away by vices, and obscured by the smoke of wrong-doing, that it cannot achieve that for which it was made, except thou renew it, and create it anew. I do not endeavor, O Lord, to penetrate thy sublimity, for in no wise do I compare my understanding with that; but I long to understand in some degree thy truth, which my heart believes and loves. **For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand. For this also I believe,—that unless I believed, I should not understand.**”

# ANSELM'S "ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT"

"And so, Lord, do thou, who dost give understanding to faith, give me, so far as thou knowest it to be profitable, to understand that thou art as we believe; and that thou art that which we believe. **And indeed, we believe that thou art a being than which nothing greater can be conceived.** Or is there no such nature, since the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God? But, at any rate, this very fool, when he hears of this being of which I speak—a being than which nothing greater can be conceived—understands what he hears, and what he understands is in his understanding; although he does not understand it to exist.

For, it is one thing for an object to be in the understanding, and another to understand that the object exists. When a painter first conceives of what he will afterwards perform, he has it in his understanding, but he does not yet understand it to be, because he has not yet performed it. **But after he has made the painting, he both has it in his understanding, and he understands that it exists, because he has made it.**"

# ANSELM'S "ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT"

"Hence, even the fool is convinced that something exists in the understanding, at least, than which nothing greater can be conceived. For, when he hears of this, he understands it. And whatever is understood, exists in the understanding. **And assuredly that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, cannot exist in the understanding alone. For, suppose it exists in the understanding alone: then it can be conceived to exist in reality; which is greater.**

Therefore, if that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, exists in the understanding alone, the very being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, is one, than which a greater can be conceived. But obviously this is impossible. Hence, there is no doubt that there exists a being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, and it exists both in the understanding and in reality."



# MEDIEVAL SCHOLASTIC: THOMAS AQUINAS

- Thomas Aquinas: *Doctor Angelicus*; the “Dumb Ox”
  - Youngest son of a nobleman, schooled at Monte Cassino
  - Joined the Dominican order in 1244 against family’s wishes
  - Taught in Aristotelian philosophy and had a legendary memory
  - Works: *Summa Contra Gentiles* | *Summa Theologiae* | Various commentaries
- Key Contributions:
  - Faith/reason: reason can prove faith (though some proved by revelation)
  - Arguments for God’s existence; begins with the senses
  - Ethics: 7 cardinal virtues
  - Expounded on the Sacraments and defended papal authority from Peter

# A PRAYER FROM THOMAS AQUINAS

“Give us, O Lord, a steadfast heart, which no unworthy affection may drag downwards; give us an unconquered heart, which no tribulation can wear out; give us an upright heart, which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside. Bestow upon us also, O Lord our God, understanding to know you, diligence to seek you, wisdom to find you, and a faithfulness that may finally embrace you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

# SETTING THE STAGE FOR REFORMATION

- Historical Setting of the 1300s – 1500s
  - Feudal system + monarchical powers + nationalism
  - Hundred Years War (1337 – 1475) between England and France
  - Bubonic Plague (Black Death) in 1347
  - Constantinople falls to the Turks in 1453

# SETTING THE STAGE FOR REFORMATION

- Papacy Divided in the West
  - \*Another\* Great Schism (1378 – 1417) – rival popes in Avignon and Rome
    - Gregory XI (1370 – 1378) replaced by Urban VI in Rome and Clement VII in Avignon
    - Corruption (simony), questions of authority (popes, councils, Scripture)
- Conciliar Movement
  - Call for a new universal council to end the “Babylonian Captivity”/Schism
    - Assumed that collective bishops had more authority than *any* pope
  - 1409 – “Universal” council called; rival popes call own councils
    - “Universal” council elects Alexander V; “The Year of Three Popes”
  - 1417 – Council of Constance: “Nations” chose Martin V as Pope

# SETTING THE STAGE FOR REFORMATION

- John Wycliffe (d. 1384)
  - Born in England; studied and taught at Oxford in 1345
    - Taught on the extent and limits of religious & civil authority
    - Sought to limit papal authority over civil authorities in England
  - Lived during the Avignon papacy and Great Schism
    - Taught the true church is the invisible body predestined to salvation
      - Over and against one in communion with Rome – Wycliffe condemned by pope in 1377
    - Critical of clergy; suggested the pope is among the reprobate
  - Bible ought to be in the vernacular, translated Latin Bible into English
  - Vehemently against transubstantiation (and *most* medieval positions)

# SETTING THE STAGE FOR REFORMATION

- John Hus (d. 1415)
  - Born in Czech Republic and became Chancellor of the University of Prague
  - Influenced by the writings of Wycliffe in Prague
  - Preached reforming sermons: return to sincere devotion in Christian life
  - Targeted: Immorality among the clergy, papal authority, indulgences
  - 1410 – summoned to Rome to defend positions
  - 1411 – excommunicated, but positions continued
    - Taught: the Bible is final authority over even the pope; ought not obey unworthy popes
  - Called to the Council of Constance... where he was killed for his beliefs

# JOHN HUS AT THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE

“I have said that I would not, for a chapel full of gold, recede from the truth.”

“I know that the truth stands and is might for ever, and abides eternally, which whom there is no respect of persons.”

“God is my witness that the evidence against me is false. I have never thought nor preached except with the one intention of winning men, if possible, from their sins, In the truth of the gospe; I have written, taught, and preached; today I will gladly die.”

# WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- The papacy continues to remove the weeds of “heretics”
- Indulgences, “remission[s] before God of temporal punishment due to sin whose guilt has already been forgiven,” are popularly bought and sold
- A return to original sources begin to cast new light on old theology (i.e., “penance” vs. “repentance”)
- One zealous university professor in Wittenburg, Germany posts his frustrations with the church for all to see...



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Medieval Scholasticism was clearly helpful in growing one's knowledge of God. **How did the selected prayers from Anselm and Aquinas marry knowledge with personal devotion?**
2. What conclusions ought we draw about the Papacy's decline and the early reformers' efforts?
3. **After sitting in this course for six weeks, what have been its biggest takeaways for you?** What do you make about our church's rich history, both for better and for worse? How ought that inform our lives today?