



Week 9: The Medieval Church Pastor Derek Vreeland

The Early Middle Ages (500-1000)

Benedict of Nursia (480–548)

Lived in a cave as a hermit, following the tradition of some of the early “desert fathers,” people like Anthony the Great from the third century who departed for the desert to live a life of prayer and contemplation.

The Rule of St. Benedict: a list of rules for monastic life

Maximus the Confessor (580–662)

Known for opposing *Monothelism*, the heretical teaching that Jesus Christ had only one will. The consensus in both the Western and Eastern Church was that Jesus had two wills.

From *Four Hundred Texts on Love*: “Love is a holy state of the soul, disposing it to value knowledge of God above all created things. We cannot attain lasting possession of such love while we are still attached to anything worldly.”

Second Council of Nicea (787)

This council, known as the Seventh Ecumenical Council, addressed the use of icons in worship.

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth” (Exodus 20:3-4 KJV).

At the council, the church agreed that venerating (showing respect) to icons is ok, because icons are “open books to remind us of God.”

“I do not worship matter, but the Creator of matter, who for my sake became material and designed to dwell in matter, who through matter affected my salvation...” —John of Damascus

The High Middle Ages (1000-1300)

The Great Schism (1054)

On July 16, 1054, both the Pope (the head of the Western Church) and the Patriarch of Constantinople (the symbolic head of the Eastern Church) each excommunicated one another from the Church, formally dividing the Church into two different groups, what we know today as the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church.

Why did they split?

1. The filioque controversy
2. Geographical differences
3. Cultural differences
4. Language differences
5. Different expectations for priests
6. Different emphasis on the Trinity
7. Politics

The Crusades

The First Crusade 1096 • The Second Crusade 1147 • The Third Crusade 1189 • The Fourth Crusade 1202 • The Fifth Crusade 1217 • The Sixth Crusade 1228 • The Seventh Crusade 1248

The Pope in Rome sent soldiers to the Holy Land to help Eastern Christians fight Muslims in Jerusalem. Crusaders ended up killing fellow Christians from the East, Jews, and Muslims alike.

This was a dark period for the Church, a time when political power and a version of the Christian religion without Jesus at the center committed horrible acts of violence in the name of "God and country."

Francis of Assisi (1181-1226)

Praying at a church in San Domino, he heard Jesus say, "Repair my church."

He had seen the plight of the poor and he forsook his inheritance to live among the poor. Francis became a beggar and a preacher of the gospel. He loved the poor and he loved all creation, especially animals.

Thomas Aquinas (1225 - 1274)

Thomas was Italian and perhaps the most important Christian thinker in the Western Church of the Middle Ages. His massively influential work is the *Summa Theologica*.

Aquinas may be the pinnacle of medieval scholasticism in the Western Church where deductive reason was used in our knowledge of God. This tradition is carried on in modern-day “apologetics” where Christian thinkers provide a rational and reasonable defence of the Christian faith.

Five Ways (or Five Proofs) for the Existence of God

The First Way: God, the Prime Mover

The Second Way: God, the First Cause

The Third Way: God, the Necessary Being

The Fourth Way: God, the Absolute Being

The Fifth Way: God, the Grand Designer

Virtues are aspects of our being, character traits, and dispositions of our soul.

Three Theological virtues: faith, hope, and love

Four Cardinal (or Moral) Virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance

Prudence (wisdom): queen of the moral virtues, perfects every human action. Prudence conforms reason to reality. Prudence brings the intellect into full maturity.

Justice (rightness): Working for the common good. Justice brings our human will to full maturity. Aquinas would say justice, as a state of being, “perfects” the will.

Fortitude (courage): Fortitude causes us to confront that which we fear so we can work through our fears and still do the right thing.

Temperance (moderation): Temperance helps us make sense of our desire for pleasure. Not all pleasure is bad, but to over-indulge is almost always bad. Temperance brings our desire to full maturity.

The Later Middle Ages (1300-1500)

John Wycliffe (1330 – 1384)

Lived through the Black Death, a bubonic plague that killed 75–200 million people in the 14th century. He challenged the authority of the pope and emphasized the central role of Scripture in the life of the Church. He worked to translate the Latin Bible (the Vulgate) into English.

Spanish Inquisition (1478)

The Spanish Inquisition was formed by King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella to weed out heresy in the Spanish Catholic Church due to corruption throughout the church and rid the Spanish kingdom of those who rejected the gospel.

Sentencing of confessed heretics was done publicly. Heretics who refused to confess were burned at the stake. It was a dominant force for more than 200 years, resulting in up to 30,000 executions.

The Inquisition remains a horrific example of the catastrophe of the merging of political power maintained by violence and religious authority without Jesus as the head.

Building St. Peter's Basilica (1506-1626)

The construction of beautiful churches and cathedrals was a part of the Middle Ages. During the late Middle Ages St. Peter's Basilica was constructed in Vatican City to replace the Old Basilica that had stood there since the 4th century.

One method used to raise money for construction costs was the granting of indulgences for those who made some kind of financial contribution. Indulgences were guarantees of forgiveness and the reduction of punishment in the so-called afterlife.

Catholic preachers and evangelists traveled throughout Western Europe selling indulgences. One German Dominican, Johann Tetzel, stirred up quite a bit of controversy...