

Church History

Unit 4

Middle Ages and
Roman Catholic Theology

Manuscript



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Church History

Unit Four: Middle Ages and Roman Catholic Theology

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THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

Who was Charlemagne and what was his impact on the church?

Dr. Stephen Bagby

Well, Charlemagne was probably the most important political leader of the entire early Middle Ages, and maybe the entire Middle Ages in the West. He was really an extraordinary individual who is very difficult to put into a box and describe. He was a man who really helped consolidate Europe and bring unity to much of Europe. And sometimes that was done by way of wars, but other ways he did it were more peaceful. And Charlemagne is probably perhaps most well known to many students of church history as someone who really ushered in this age of Christendom, this joining of church and state. And, of course, he's famously crowned emperor in the year 800 by the pope, and so you see the church and state coming together with Charlemagne. But what a lot of people don't realize about Charlemagne is he ushered in an entire renewal of culture and learning during his time, and it's called the Carolingian Renaissance. And he was the leader of the Carolingian Empire at the time. That's why it's called the Carolingian Renaissance, or rebirth of culture. And so, this is a time of great learning and education, and this brought into his empire, which is in central Europe — modern day France and Germany. And what he did was he made monks more literate, he made monks learn Latin. And so, monks at this time then became more literate, and they were able to read the Bible in Latin, they were able to understand the church fathers and read them in Latin, and they're able to become more educated. They become the educated class as a result. And so, this whole class of, and groups of, monks became the educated class throughout Europe, and it really elevated the status of, not just monasticism, but Christianity throughout Europe. And you see with Charlemagne a number of reforms in the church, and you see a number of different contributions to culture. He changes the way people write in Latin. The introduction of Carolingian miniscule, or lower-case letters, spaces, and

punctuation, things like that that didn't exist before; you see this now. And so, reading and writing and communicating become much easier during this time with Charlemagne. And he ushers in a number of liturgical reforms as well and has a big impact on music in the early Middle Ages as well.

How did the advances of Muslims into North Africa, Palestine, Syria and Spain impact Christendom in the 8th century?

Dr. Todd M. Johnson

Only a few decades after Muhammad's death in 632, we find that Muslims were pressing into formerly-Christian lands in places like Egypt and all the way across to Morocco. These people had been Christians for several centuries, and initially, there were not many conversions to Islam when Muslims came across ... partly because Muslims would only tax non-Muslims, and so it was to the disadvantage of the Muslim conquerors to have people convert... And it actually took many centuries in a place like Egypt before Christians converted into Islam. But as Islam spread across North Africa, it then made its way into Spain, and this is really one of the first times in which Christians began to see that, perhaps, they were not going to be in the majority in every situation. And one of the surprising results of their spread into Spain was a time of flourishing in Christian, Muslim and Jewish relations, when Christians were no longer in the majority for several hundred years.

What were the major factors that shaped feudal society?

Dr. Craig S. Keener

Sometimes we think of feudalism as originating in medieval Europe, but actually it goes back to pre-Christian times in the Roman Empire. It may have taken on new forms later, but already throughout the Roman Empire you had landlords who owned vast estates — sometimes they didn't live anywhere near the estate, sometimes they'd live in cities — but landlords who owned vast estates with tenant farmers or serfs who worked on these estates. The land belonged to the landlord. If the tenants didn't produce as the landlords wanted, they could be expelled from the land. And the produce, the landlord would get a significant proportion of the produce. So actually, feudalism didn't originate in medieval Europe. It already existed in the Roman Empire.

What were the goals of the crusades?

Dr. Todd M. Johnson

The main goal of the crusades was to take back the Holy Land. The Holy Land was sacred to three different faiths at this time in history. Of course, Christians saw it as a holy place, Muslims saw it as a holy place, and Jews also saw it as a holy place. And so, once Muslims came in, in the 12th century, there was a sense in which this needed

to be liberated in order for Christians to continue to have access to the Holy Land. And that was one of the main motivations, was to go down there and take it back. Unfortunately, there were many mixed motives, and the people that eventually went down to the Holy Land, most of the people were of a military background, and then thousands, tens of thousands of poor people decided this was a great time to go on pilgrimage. And so, in one sense, this simple idea of going down and taking it back for Christianity completely backfired.

How should Christians today evaluate the crusades?

Dr. R. Scott Clark

I think Christians have to evaluate the crusades today carefully ... with an understanding that it was a very complex set of events that occurred over a long period of time, the story of which we know from, in a sense, two competing participants in the event. And so that makes us somewhat cautious. One the one hand, the story that has been largely received by the West since the Enlightenment, and even before, but particularly since the Enlightenment, I think is probably misleading in important ways. The story tends to be now that, you know, the church was on a land grab, and the West was on a land grab, a quest to conquest, to conquer Palestine, the Middle East. And I think the story is more complicated. Some more recent scholarship has suggested that, in fact, the crusades were, in important ways, a response to Islamic aggression, a military aggression. That part of the story sometimes is omitted. It's also arguable that we learned the whole business of going on military crusades, not from our own writers, our own impulses, but actually imitating Islam. Now, that's not a defense of them, but if you take pilgrimages, and you add to them a military aspect, you have a crusade. And then if you factor in the long-term threat presented by aggressive military Islam or Islamic expansion, Ottoman expansion and the like, the crusades become a more complicated story and one that we ought to seek to try to tell maybe a little more sympathetically than we sometimes do.

Dr. Amal Gendi, translation

When Christians these days look at the crusades, they should realize one important principle. The crusades that took place in the Middle Ages, when compared to the Islamic invasions in the seventh century, there is an essential and fundamental difference between the two. Both the crusades and Islamic invasions were done by people, meaning the crusades were done by Christians, and the Islamic invasions were done by Muslims. But the essential difference here is that, unlike the Muslims, when Christians did the crusades, they did so with selfish motives, ignoring the teaching of the Bible — meaning, *our* Scriptures did not call Christians to do the crusades.

MEDIEVAL ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGY AND THE RENAISSANCE

What were the major tenants of scholasticism?

Dr. Stephen Bagby

Scholasticism is a movement or an approach to learning in education and theology that happened in the 12th and 13th centuries and beyond. And I would say that scholasticism came from this idea that schools were developing — that’s where we get the word “scholasticism.” And these schools develop in the 12th and 13th centuries. The rise of universities come about at this time, like the University of Paris and Bologna and Oxford. And so, these universities emerge out of cathedral schools where monks are being trained in cities and cathedrals, and this education, then, is becoming separate from the cathedrals into “universities” as we know them today. And so, this model of education is, really, a unique way of doing academic study and theological study. And so, what you see in scholasticism is a movement where you are seeing a higher use of reason in theology, and the application of reason to the study of theology, often; certain approaches to logic that are being applied, trying to see the harmony between reason and revelation, often. And you’re also seeing in scholasticism even those who don’t use philosophy as much, someone like a Peter Lombard; he’s still trying to harmonize various people who have written in the past, and so he’s trying to harmonize the church fathers. And so, he’s very concerned about being exact and articulate and precise in his theology, and this is something that can certainly teach us today about being precise in our language and being accurate in how we talk and how we do our theology instead of being careless and reckless. They’re actually quite precise. And so, sometimes we may think that the scholastics were too disassociated from life and too “out there,” an ivory tower, as we would say today, but they were really making an attempt to show continuity throughout the Christian tradition, and they were making a strong attempt to be precise in their language and to be exacting in how they talked about God and the Christian life in the church.

What value does Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae* hold for Protestants today?

Dr. R. Scott Clark

Thomas’ *Summa Theologiae* is a valuable text for Protestants today for a couple of reasons. One, because it’s a great example of what the church was saying in the West in the 13th century. Thomas was deliberately synthesizing everything that had taken place, everything, really, that had been taught prior by those whom he regarded as orthodox. And so, it’s a great picture, in a way, of everything that had taken place prior and a synthesis of all of that. And so, it’s an opportunity to learn, and so we

should read Thomas as a fellow Christian, as a teacher from whom we still stand to learn. He's very clear, he's very articulate, he's very thoughtful. You're watching, really, a master teacher explain things to his students, and that all has been recorded for us in this large text. It's also an opportunity to see the Western church in the 13th century, or to see where it had gone wrong, and so we can learn from it that way. We can learn from the power of some of the assumptions under which Thomas labored. He assumed that God could only say of us, "justified," if we were really intrinsically justified. And we see the power of certain philosophical assumptions that he made that almost required him to come to that conclusion. And so, learning to criticize that and seeing that in him, enables us also to see that in ourselves, where our prior philosophical commitments might be influencing us. So, I don't think we should read Thomas uncritically, and I don't think we should read Thomas, as some have suggested, as if he were sort of a proto-Protestant, because that's certainly not the case. At the same time, I think we ought to read Thomas, and we ought to read him appreciatively as a master teacher and as a very clear expositor of, for example, the doctrines of election and reprobation. Few teachers in the history of the Christian church have been as clear about those as Thomas.

Dr. James K. Dew, Jr.

Protestants don't normally like to read Thomas' *Summa Theologica* because he's Catholic, and we have a bit of an aversion to that type of literature. But I think that the *Summa* is extremely valuable for us today as Protestants even. And I say that for a couple of reasons. Number one, if you want to know where some of the classical Catholic thoughts came from, Thomas is a great place to start. Second of all, Thomas is exhaustive. When he writes on something, he literally uncovers every rock, every stone, every nook and cranny of that topic and that concept and walks through it very thoroughly. And then lastly, I'd say just methodologically; it takes a bit of time to learn Thomas' method on how he's writing, but once you do learn this method, you have a model here of how to think and how to approach different questions. He'll start off with a particular category, say, God. He'll divide the topic up into various subtopics — the existence of God, the nature of God, the work of God, and so on and so forth — and on every one of those subtopics he'll ask a series of questions, and these questions are things that you can answer in a "yes" or "no" fashion. Does God exist? Yes or no? And he'll give you a yes or no. He always starts with his opponent's position. He'll tell you the reasons and the arguments that people put forward for why God doesn't exist, and then he'll say, "On the contrary," and he quotes from some expert. And this is where you clue in now that this is his position. And then he says, "I answer that," and he goes on to explain the reasons why he does think that God exists. And then he returns back to his opposer's reasons for denying God's existence and shows why those reasons don't work. And so, you don't have in Thomas anything quick, anything passing. You have a very, very thorough mind that kind of helps teach you how to think through various kinds of issues, and I've found that to be extremely valuable for me as a philosopher and a theologian.

Why did King Philip incarcerate and physically assault Pope Boniface VIII?

Dr. John Hannah

Pope Boniface VIII assumed the pontificate about the beginning of the 1300s. He published a statement called *Unum Sanctum* — One Holy Church. In that he argued that the church has superiority and primacy over the state; that has always been a tension through the medieval period, never resolved until Napoleon Bonaparte. And so, what that document specifies is that there is only one true teacher, there is only one to whom we must do obeisance, one to whom we must kiss the foot, and that was the Church, meaning Boniface VIII. So, it's Boniface's extreme position on unique authority that did not fit well with Philip.

Dr. Dan Lacich

Boniface VIII was a pope who claimed that he, as the pope, had ultimate authority, not only religious but even political, over not only everyone just in Europe, but every human being... But as you can imagine, he is making this statement to kings and princes who, in their own right, have some power, and there was bound to be conflict. One of the most notable is a conflict he has with Philip IV of France. Philip wants to start taxing the clergy because they've got lots of money, and Boniface says, "No, you cannot tax the clergy without my permission because I am your overlord." That caused a lot of strife. There was some fighting that goes on related to this. But what ends up happening, really, I think the significance for the Reformation is that Boniface's claim of authority of the church over every aspect of life I think set the table for some of the abuses that expanded and, by the time of the Reformation just became a powder keg of abuse that really, in many ways, brought about the Reformation. So, his attempt to control everything, I think, actually resulted in the exact opposite, and the Reformation was the way of breaking off those chains both politically and religiously.

What was the Renaissance?

Andrew Tooley, Ph.D.

The Renaissance was a 15th and 16th century intellectual and cultural movement. It was really a recovery of antiquity, a great interest in ancient Rome and Greece. So, there was really a belief throughout the medieval period — so from 1200s to really up until late 1400s — that there was kind of a fog over the medieval period, and there was a scholastic theology and scholasticism which was a method of organizing theology and organizing philosophies. And it was this idea that we need to return to the sources. So, there was this phrase, *ad fontes*, which was "back to the sources," and we need to go back and hear what, not only the early church, but early philosophers, Aristotle and Plato, what they had to say. So, it was really this belief that there was this kind fog, and we have to get through that fog and get back to ancient Greece and Rome to hear what they had to say about human beings, about life, about religion.

Dr. John Hannah

The essence of the Renaissance was the creation of the university system. The university system, as opposed to the church — monastic training — was an emphasis on returning to the sources, background. In other words, people were saying, “I want to believe what is true, but I want to see it; I want to study it.” So, it’s the birth of the humanities within the university system that ultimately was created, because when our missionaries intersected with Jews in Spain and Moors, they found that they had discovered Aristotle, that is, rational apologetical reasoning, whereas we had not. So, the Renaissance then produces two movements. It produces the Great Reformation in the north of Europe, and it also produces the Enlightenment — two sides of one coin — in southern Europe, because northern Europeans, in search for their sources went back to the early beginnings of their culture, of Christianity, but in the south of Europe they went beyond the first century to Greco-Roman culture, producing more of what we would call a secularity.

How did cultural humanism impact the religious academic world of the late Middle Ages?**Dr. Las Newman**

The cultural movement of humanism in the late Middle Ages was actually called “Christian humanism,” and it was a movement which began among scholars, particularly what we call the scholastic movement in the late Middle Ages. In monasteries, they were discussing philosophy and theology, but critically. They were discussing these things from a theistic point of view, from the point of view of God at work in the world and meaning of life and the use of reason in the world. ... and there was a whole set of people involved in it: Erasmus, Luther was part of that, Calvin became part of that, Tyndale. Many of what became known as the Reformation leaders, Magisterial Reformation leaders, were a part of this movement. It was a classical movement of scholars who studied ancient literature but were very much into modern philosophy and philosophy of life, philosophy of the universe, philosophy that would enable them to understand what life was about and the relationship between God and man in the universe. It became a cultural movement largely within southern Europe, Italy, Germany, but flourished and went on into England and Scotland and so on.

Dr. Jim Maples

During the late Middle Ages, the Renaissance period, there was a movement called scholasticism, later another movement called humanism. And humanism actually was a very intellectual movement. It was very religiously based, and it sought to promote eloquence, and it sought to promote intellectual inquiry, and it actually advocated a return to classical antiquity. *Ad fontes* was their slogan, “to the fount,” or to the original source, which proved to be a great help in the early days of the Reformation when people were encouraged to go back to the original Greek and Hebrew text and get away from the Latin Vulgate. And I think that had a remarkable impact on the later events in the Reformation.

What was the larger cultural impact of humanism in the late Middle Ages?

Dr. Kenneth J. Stewart

What we call the cultural humanism of the late Middle Ages was an attempt to borrow from antiquity — this would be from Greek and Roman times — models of speaking and writing which were deemed to be superior to that of the late Middle Ages. People in this period of time believed that they were living in an age of decline, and they had been led to believe that everything about the ancient world was superior to that of their own times. So, the people who were most curious to acquire this knowledge were actually people in the business classes. They wanted to be able to write legal documents, official letters, bills of lading — this would be what we call “commercial paper.” They wanted to do this in the best possible style. They began to make money out of doing it this way, and these are the people who, because they had succeeded so well in business, were then able to use their massive profits to sponsor works of art, painting, sculpture, and so on. So, it was an imitation of the literature and the speech and styles of writing from antiquity. Was this religious? Was this irreligious? I would say that originally it was neutral. It was neutral. It was really about style. Now, other things from antiquity were copied also. This would include styles of building — columns and cornices. It involved the imitation of ancient art, particularly sculpture. But there was nothing what we could call man-centered about this. It was simply an imitation of superior styles from long ago.

How was cultural humanism in the late Middle Ages different from secular humanism today?

Dr. Kenneth J. Stewart

Cultural humanism is a very different animal than modern secular humanism. I recently returned from Britain and I found out that there — this is shocking — more people are being married by what are called “humanist” ministers than by Christian ministers. What does this mean? It means that people, while they want to be married, want to be married explicitly without any reference to God or his ordaining marriage at the beginning of the world. So, modern secular humanism is anti-God and anti-theist. It’s really a shame that the same word “humanist” is used to describe both movements.

Dr. Las Newman

Secular humanism today is something that is devoid of a theistic understanding of life — life that regards the Creator — and we affirm who God is, and we recognize the importance of God in human life. Secular humanism now is, you know, a movement that came out of the Enlightenment, 17th, 18th century, and moved away from theism and embraced, in some instances, atheism, and became very much into what we now call the secular life. And so, humanism today is a very different thing from what we then called Christian humanism in the late Middle Ages.

Who were the Lollards in England?

Dr. Sean Lucas

The Lollards in England were disciples of John Wycliffe. After Wycliffe dies in Lutterworth, they pick up his mission to preach God's Word in the vernacular, to carry on this mission of translating God's Word for God's people by preaching. They also, though, were those who sought to separate those who were true Christians from those who were false. Some people believe that the word "lollards" meant "mumblers," but it might be that the word lollard comes from an Old English word that means "tares," like the wheat and the tares from Matthew 13. And that speaks to the way the Lollards sought to separate the wheat from the tares, those who were the true children of God from those who were false professors. And so, in their ministry, they sought to purify the church through the teaching of God's Word and the application of discipline to the church. They were important forerunners of the Puritans in the 16th and 17th century.

Dr. Ryan Reeves

The Lollards are the successors to Wycliffe. Their name comes from the fact that they were often very lay driven. They were not well educated. They would not have been Oxford folks like Wycliffe was. They would have been untrained, is the way we would say it. But because of that, they got made fun of for being "bumpkin" or kind of backwater, uneducated folks, and the "la-la-la" was a way of saying that they were "blah-blah-blah," as we might say in modern English, that they talk a lot of nonsense. What they were driven to was to the Wycliffe translation. They were very much a part of this reformation that had been pushed underground, and it was found in various parts throughout England, of the Lollard movement. And it's probably not enough to say there was a movement, because they were not organized. They're a series of what we would call house churches or cell churches, cell communities, this type of thing. But they carry on from Wycliffe in the 14th century on down to the Reformation. And when the Anglican Reformation gets going, the English Reformation, there are still Lollards around. Again, lay folks. They're not seeking education. They're avoiding the structures of the Catholic Church. But there are clear evidences of folks that are Lollards that come in and join the Reformation because they found that it was the flowering of what they had been maintaining from as far back as Wycliffe. So, we don't know a great deal about them, actually. Because they were so underground, there's not a lot of evidence. They didn't write a lot of books. They couldn't. But we know of their lineage because they endured, and we see them show up again. Almost like leprechauns, they pop back up again in the 16th century. And they see the Reformation again as the outcome of their stand against the Catholic Church on the Scriptures.

Who was Lorenzo Valla, and what was his significance for the background of the Reformation?

Dr. Dan Lacich

Lorenzo Valla is a fascinating and little-known character that had a huge impact on the Reformation. He was a scholar, particularly dealing in linguistics and ancient documents, and he proved that a document known as the Donation of Constantine was a forgery. Well, the Donation of Constantine purported to be Constantine I, the emperor, donating the entire Western empire, basically Europe, to the Roman Catholic Church. The church used that document for a couple of centuries to claim authority over all civil magistrates, to be the ultimate authority, that all kings needed to submit themselves to the church. When Valla comes along and proves that this document's a forgery, you can imagine the delight on the part of a lot of kings and princes to be able to say, "You have no claim on us any longer." Protestants began to circulate his work widely, and it became very useful to Henry VIII and to Thomas Cromwell, who was his minister. Cromwell used that document, and the forgery of that document, to prove that Henry did not need to submit to the pope and that, as the king of England, he was the supreme authority in England and not the pope.

How corrupt was the Roman Catholic Church in the late Middle Ages? Do Protestants exaggerate the corruption that existed during this time?

Dr. Dan Lacich

There's a claim that Protestants, even today, exaggerate the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church leading up to the Reformation. I'm not sure you can exaggerate it because it was significant, and the fact that it was taking place within the church makes it even more heinous, I think is the right word to use. The immorality that was rampant within the clergy, for instance, was just commonplace. One of the things that people don't realize is that celibacy was only enacted as canon law around the 11th century. That opened the door for incredible abuse. Now the clergy are not allowed to marry, but they've still got urges and desires, and what ends up happening is that most clergy ended up keeping mistresses, and that led to a further abuse — the bishop of a clergy would basically tax them as a penalty for having a mistress, but they could keep the mistress. So, bishops would actually encourage the clergy to have a mistress because the bishop gained money from the practice. At the time of the Reformation, Erasmus reports that one bishop claimed that in a single year 11,000 clergy were paying him the mistress tax. That's just wide-open abuse and corruption taking place within the church. When you also add in the fact that the whole system, if you will, of salvation and of the ability to purchase indulgences, just once again, you start putting money in, you start putting power in, the corruption continues to rise. And that was just widespread — the buying of church offices in order to gain money. And people might think, "Why would I buy a church office to gain money?" Well, a bishop, depending on the size of the diocese and the wealth of the diocese, could have himself set for life and not have to do anything. Simply pay a fee to the person who would

appoint the bishop; you now have this business, in a sense, where you're collecting from monasteries, churches, clergy taxes for mistresses, and you don't have to have any degree in theology, any practice whatsoever. You don't have to even care about who God is or if Jesus even lived or died. So, there was a lot of corruption that was going on because of the combination of money and sex and power being brought into the church.

Dr. Scott Manor

The church during the Middle Ages, especially the later part, the 15th century, was pretty corrupt. I think to downplay it would be to overlook a lot of the historical realities that were there. It's a mixed bag. Not every pope was horrible, but certainly not every pope was good... There were a handful of popes that were, in particular, notable for making some rather poor decisions. So, for example, you would have Callixtus III. He was far more interested in developing his army. He wanted to be seen as a bit of a Renaissance man, and so, he was not a great spiritual leader by any means. He was far more political in his use of the office. You would have Pope Paul II, for example, who was known to have a number of mistresses, and his whole purpose was to live a life of luxury, and he wanted to restore a lot of the ancient pagan monuments of ancient Rome. You would have someone like Innocent VIII or Alexander VI, both of whom again had mistresses. Popes weren't allowed to marry, and so on the one hand they were able to keep the rule of the law there, the letter of the law there, but it was known publically that they had a lot of mistresses, and in some instances actually had illegitimate children that they then bestowed ecclesial honors upon in their capacity as popes. And so, while there were certain popes that tried to do the right thing, the majority of the popes, especially in the 15th century, during this period of the Middle Ages, were not good leaders. They were not acting in the capacity as Christ to the people, which is the role of the pope.

What does the corruption in the late medieval church teach us about the need to watch out for corruption in the church today?

Dr. Dan Lacich

When we look at the corruption present in the church in the late medieval period, warning bells should be going off all over the place for today, because the big three of corruption has never really changed. During the Middle Ages, the medieval period, it was money, sex and power. And as we look across the church today, it's the same thing. You have pastors and religious leaders who clearly are engaged in practices related to money that do not honor Christ. You have pastors who are power hungry and have toxic churches because of the environment that they've created. And obviously, the sexual scandals that take place in churches today were taking place even then. So, I think one of the things that we really need to learn from the church throughout history is that the temptations remain the same, and we need to have a very deep look into our own hearts as to what motivates us, and we need to be willing to be in relationships with one another to confront that and to call that out in one another and not just turn a blind eye to it.

Dr. William Philip

It's easy to look at the medieval church and think, well, that was terrible and it's all understandable why the Reformation happened, and thank goodness we're not like that. But of course, the reality is, if we listen to the New Testament Scriptures, they are full of warnings all the time. The apostles are writing warnings to churches they themselves planted and taught. Just a few years later many of them were running into real difficulties — great immorality, all kinds of really dreadful problems. And so, I think as we look back over church history and see the corruptions that have happened, the chief thing that that teaches us is to look at ourselves very carefully. There is, really, absolutely no room for pride in the human heart or pride in our particular churchmanship, our particular position. If we begin to think that we're immune from these things, we're in a very dangerous position, and the Lord Jesus, the apostle Paul, all the others would warn us very carefully. So, we should look back on these things with understanding, not with approval but certainly not with pride. We need to be warning ourselves today and realizing that there, but by the grace of God, we can so easily go. That's why the Reformation spirit would warn us always to go back to the Scriptures, back to the word of God and to be always being reformed, otherwise the most Reformed church in the world can go in the most dangerous and bad direction. So, humility is the chief lesson, I think, as we look back on church history.

What was the “Babylonian Captivity of the Church” in 1309-1377?**Dr. Timothy George**

In ancient Israel the children of Israel were carried into captivity in Babylon. They were there 70 years. Now, in the last Middle Ages, moving toward the Reformation, there was a period of time when there was great disruption in the life of the medieval church, and the papacy itself was taken out of Rome to France, to Avignon. And for a period of 70 years it was, as it were, “captive” to the kings and leaders of France. And so that period is called the “Babylonian Captivity of the Church.” It's also the title of a book, a treatise by Martin Luther in 1520 in which he reviewed some of the teachings of the medieval Catholic Church and sought to shine the light of the gospel, the light of the Scriptures upon them, especially as it related to the sacraments.

What was the papal schism from 1378-1417, and how did it affect people's view of the papacy?**Dr. Kenneth J. Stewart**

To understand what was the papal schism, we have to understand what immediately preceded, and what had immediately preceded was the relocation of the papacy from Rome to Avignon in the South of France for a period of approximately 70 years. At the end of the 70-year period, there was seeming success in bringing the pope to live again at Rome. And it's worth acknowledging that he had left Rome because it was too dangerous a place for the pope to live. But he was coaxed to return to Rome only

for an unforeseen development to happen, and that was that those who had supported the papacy's residing in the South of France and who still wished it to be there, nominated a rival pope. So, the immediate consequence of the return of the papacy to Rome was the creation of a second, rival pope who continued to reside and function in the large papal headquarters at Avignon.

Now, this was shocking and this was surprising, but we're most concerned with the consequences of it, and the immediate consequence of this is that all of Europe's loyalty was divided. Those who favored a pope residing on French soil supported the Avignonese pope. Those who had always wished to see the papacy return to Rome supported the Roman pope. But there's more going on than meets the eye because existing political and national rivalries that already existed in Europe were played out in this way, and I'll give an example. France obviously preferred to have a pope residing on French soil. Other European countries which were traditionally allied with France — and Scotland would be a very good example — were drawn into supporting the pope residing on French soil. But England, France's traditional enemy, would never support a pope residing on French soil when there was a legitimate Roman pope. So, pre-existing political and national loyalties largely determined which of two popes were supported. Well, this went on for decades. There was a serious attempt to mend this breach. The difficulty was that neither pope in either place was automatically willing to relinquish or abdicate. Before this was over, there was even a brief period of time when there were three popes, and this conflict was resolved by the Council of Constance.

Dr. Ryan Reeves

The papal schism was one of several different fights that happened within the church at the top level. So, the way the pope is chosen is the cardinals vote on him, and on a couple of occasions, one in particular, there was some dissension as to who was being selected. And the same group, or at least a rump of them came out and then voted on somebody else afterwards. And in the Catholic Church, the ecclesiology is such that, because the pope is the head of the church, to have two now means that there's some doubt as to who's really leading the church. If it's supposed to be a church that can't err and is supposed to define all of doctrine in life for you, then if you have the situation where you have two popes issuing two commands, two sets of regulations, who are you going to answer to? And what happened is there actually ended up being a third pope because a council met, and they told the first two to stand down, and they voted in somebody else. Well, of course, the first two popes would not stand down, and so as a result you have three popes. And so, you have this situation, somewhat comical, but you have the situation where the church is led by three different voices all claiming to be the Vicar of Christ, to be the head of the church, and all claiming a certain level of spiritual authority that is supposed to be unquestioned. And so, the result is that, for a time, people start to think of ways, try to come up with ways biblically to offset that and say that the pope isn't the head of the church. And they have different strategies for doing it, but what it does is it functionally lessens the power of the pope.

What was simony, and how did the Catholic Church view this practice?

Dr. Sean Lucas

So, the word “simony” actually comes from a biblical character, the character Simon Magnus who, in the book of Acts, tried to buy the power to distribute the Holy Spirit to whomever he wished from the apostles. Of course, Peter rebuked him and he’s become legendary throughout history. So, this idea that Simon tried to buy something to distribute to others provides the root of the word “simony.” The idea in the Middle Ages was that lay leaders, really feudal lords, would purchase church offices and give them to their children, more times than not their illegitimate children, as a way of providing a living for them. The Catholic Church, at times, looked the other way, but Reformers such as Hildebrand, who became Pope Gregory VII, saw simony as both a corruption of church office and as a dangerous practice for the life of the church. He tried to reform it, and indeed many reforming popes would look at the practice and seek to reform it. It came up in the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, and later John Huss would point out the dangers of simony in his efforts in Bohemia as he tried to bring about reform. And so, the Catholic Church throughout its history has tended to look down on simony as a dangerous corruption of church office in the life of the church.

Dr. Dan Lacich

Simony was an interesting practice in the church... What would happen in the church is that you could buy position, ultimately buying spiritual power. You could pay money to buy an office within the church on the lowest level to be a pastor or to be a bishop or to be the head of a monastery. And most of these positions carried with them a fair amount of income, depending on how big the monastery or the diocese was. And so, you didn’t have to have any qualifications. You didn’t have to have any call from God for this. You just had to have a large enough purse to be able to purchase the office and have that be something that feathered your nest for the rest of your life. It was like buying a business is really what it was. And the practice, it did take place. Eventually the church realized that this was causing incredible damage, and one of the reforms within the Catholic Church that did come about was to eliminate that practice.

How significant was the breakdown of celibacy in the priesthood during the late Middle Ages?

Dr. Kenneth J. Stewart

The breakdown of celibacy among the priesthood in the late Middle Ages was widespread, and it was observed and commented on by common people. It’s important to acknowledge, however, that celibacy had not always been insisted on. To this day, celibacy is not required of priests in the Eastern Orthodox churches. But in the 1200s, because popes began to be selected from among the ranks of monks, the

ideal that had been insisted on by monks was transferred to the priesthood. And from that point on, the same expectation of celibacy was laid on both kinds of Catholic leaders, monks and priests.

Now, how widespread was this? We only have bits and pieces of information, but the simple fact is that many priests kept concubines. They may have been passed off as housekeepers, but many children were born to priests. And then the question was, what was to be done with these children whose official existence could not be acknowledged? They could not be acknowledged as the proper children of the priests, and so places in society had to be found for these children, both men and women, and monasteries received some of them, but those who did not find places in monasteries had to fend for themselves in a society that looked on them as symptoms of a very great problem. So, they were not only illegitimate, but they were the illegitimate children of people who weren't to have any children. This was not only a problem for priests, but it was a problem for bishops and even for popes who had many unacknowledged, illegitimate children.

Dr. Dan Lacich

Celibacy was something that, I think, caused a great deal of problems within the Roman Catholic Church leading up to the Reformation and even since. It was instituted around the 11th century. Up until that time priests could marry, and there didn't seem to be a whole lot of problems. But celibacy gets put into place. You don't simply eliminate someone's sexual desires because you pass a law, and what ends up happening is that priests and monks and others found ways to satisfy those sexual desires whether it was through mistresses, whether it was through brothels, whatever the case might be. So, saying that you couldn't marry and thinking that that meant you would be celibate really didn't result in what was intended. And so, now you have priests trying to hide their mistresses, you have bishops accepting payment in order to not do anything about the mistress that a priest has. You have priests and others participating in prostitution which obviously is going to cause a whole set of other problems. And it carries down until today. I think the Roman Catholic Church has recognized that they've got a serious issue to deal with in terms of sexual abuse within the clergy and are even beginning to have conversations about maybe we made a mistake way back then and need to figure out a different approach.

How did the Catholic view of salvation during medieval times differ from the teachings of Luther?

Rev. Dr. Stephen Tong, translation

The question of salvation is the central issue in the whole Bible, because the most important themes in the Bible are human sin and God's redemption, which can only be accomplished in Christ. The gospel is not pure when other factors are added to it. So, from the beginning of the sixth century, when religion became centered on venerating holy items and forgot about faith centered on Christ's redemption, the church had clearly diverged from God's Word. At Martin Luther's time, he saw these

unorthodox practices and beliefs increase and become more cumbersome, and finally become a great burden on the churches. The believers' hard work, the Pope's authority, pilgrimages to the Holy Land — all these things had replaced the most important core belief that Jesus Christ has shed blood for us and accomplished our salvation. So, Martin Luther endeavored to bring the church back to the gospel message centered on the Bible. Also, Calvin demonstrated clearly from the Scriptures that salvation was God's work before creation. Man has not achieved grace by keeping the covenant, nor is he reborn by being baptized. Instead, God's plan is to save us through Christ's redemption and the grace of the Holy Spirit. In the Reformation, Martin Luther rebuked the mistaken beliefs, and Calvin built up the true beliefs found in the Bible. In this way they established the faith we practice today.

Pastor Robert W. St. John, Jr.

Luther was concerned for the doctrine of grace. He was, you'll remember, an Augustinian monk, and so he was steeped in Augustinian theology. And Augustine did teach the doctrine of grace, and he could see that the church had departed from the doctrine of grace. So, basically scholastic theologians in their adaptation of Aristotle to theology had adopted his idea of habituation, that if a person repeats a virtuous act that they would be made virtuous in time. So, you do that act enough, and you will be righteous in that way, you will be virtuous in that way. And this became the means of salvation, by doing good works. However, Luther saw that this was indeed a defiance of the apostolic doctrine of grace.

Now, in the Catholic system, a person was born, and then they were baptized. At baptism, they were considered to be regenerated and justified — made righteous, as it were. But then this put them into a state of grace. So, they're living, as it were, in a state of grace, but of course, they know they're not going to be able to stay there. The priests are aware of human weakness, and they're going to fail, they're going to sin, and so, consequently, they have the confessional. So, when a person sins... He's in a state of grace, he sins, and so he goes to the priest in order to do penance. He is contrite over his sins, the priest sees if he is contrite, asks him questions to check his contrition, and then he is given a certain penance to do for that sin, and he does that penance, and when it's complete, the priest absolves him of that sin. So, that sin no longer counts against him, and he's once more in a state of grace. So, he continues in this circular work of sin, penance, being absolved, and back into a state of grace. As he lives, this is the good Catholic life, as it were, until the point when he dies. Now, when he dies there are sins that he didn't do penance for. You know, there are so many. So, now he's in purgatory, so he's paying for the sins, he's purging out — the idea of purgatory, "to purge" — he is purging himself of these sins; he's paying for them in purgatory. And when that process is finished, then he will enter heaven.

Well, when Luther looked on this system, he recognized that it was a system of human works. It was actually in defiance of grace, that the very idea of grace that Luther taught, it was God's goodness extended to us regardless of who we are or what we have done. In fact, in one of his theses in his Heidelberg Disputation, he says that God's love is different from man's love, that God's love creates what it desires.

Human love, he explains, looks for something, and then it appeals to us, and so we're drawn to it. We saw that girl, and we were attracted to her, and we married her. We walked on the car lot, and we saw the vehicle, and we really wanted it, and we loved it and said, "Man, I love that car," and so we bought it. That's the way human love works. But God, when he loves, he creates what he loves. That's the idea of grace that he advanced. It's not that God looks at us and, because of what we have done, that we have some righteousness in his eyes and make us desirable or acceptable, but the doctrine of grace teaches us that God has to create in us, has to justify us, has to receive us only on the basis of the righteousness of Christ. And so that is where Luther really differed from the Catholics on the matter of salvation.

Is it fair to say that the medieval Catholic Church taught salvation by works?

Dr. Carl L. Beckwith

It's often suggested, and I think you hear this a lot from Protestants, that Roman Catholics believe that we earn or merit our salvation. Is that true? Well, before I answer that, let me say what they do believe. They will say, for example, that we are saved by grace. Now, there are those who will hedge a little bit on that, but there are many who would insist that, indeed, we are saved by God's grace, and apart from that grace we could not have eternal life. So, on the one hand, medieval Roman Catholicism emphasizes the absolute necessity of God's grace for our salvation, but within that system of grace, they have an important place for merit such that all of the great medieval theologians — Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, all the way up to the Council of Trent — will explicitly say that "Yes, we merit eternal life, that the gift of salvation rests with God, but as God is working through me to do good works, and it is ultimately my works that merit eternal life."

Dr. Timothy George

Now, within medieval Catholicism there were many different streams of teaching. Some of them were purer than others. The best went back to St. Augustine who taught a doctrine of justification by faith and grace alone that very much matched up with the apostle Paul. Over time that became very diluted by all kinds of extraneous ideas, and so, what the Reformers did when they came on the scene was to refurbish the doctrine of grace as found in the Bible, as taught by St. Augustine, and as represented by some — we call them radical Augustinians — in the late Middle Ages. Luther himself was a member of the Augustinian order. He was a radical Augustinian. So, it's not as though he was inventing this doctrine whole cloth. It was already there mostly, primarily, in the Scriptures but also represented in the church. However, it has to be said that the doctrine that came to prevail in the late Middle Ages was far removed from what Paul taught and what St. Augustine taught, and so the Reformers were on a mission of retrieval. They wanted to bring that out and let it shine again.

Dr. Tim Sansbury

It's easy to say that the medieval Roman church taught salvation by works, but I'm not entirely sure it's fair to say that, because at least as I read Thomas Aquinas, with the reasonable critique of the degree to which Aristotle influences his thinking, to me he fits within the line of Christian theology that would go back to Augustine, and before that, of course, to the New Testament, of the importance and the primacy of faith and of the inability of works to, in any way, earn for us our salvation, while still, even in the New Testament, we recognize that those who are saved, that salvation should be exemplified by works in their lives, and we see that particularly in James. This is how I would interpret Thomas Aquinas. I think it's a reasonable and a right interpretation of him, and it brings him into the line that it's clear that he intended to be in, of Augustine and the early church theologians who recognize salvation by faith.

According to medieval Catholicism, what happened to a person at baptism?**Rev. Clete Hux**

According to medieval Catholicism, at my baptism, if I was baptized in the Catholic Church, it removed the guilt of original sin and gave me spiritual life; I was born again. So, we would call it today "baptismal regeneration" ... Of course, that's the first sacrament of the church.

Dr. Tim Sansbury

The question of what happens at baptism, I know, not the whole of medieval Roman Catholic theology but I know only through Thomas Aquinas. And Thomas Aquinas was interesting because he was one of the great thinkers, one of the great systematians in the history of the church, and he had this extraordinarily high view of God's sovereignty. But he also had a very high view of the transcendence of God, and this includes the temporal transcendence of God, so that God is not going through time linearly the way we are. In fact, as I understand Thomas, it seems as if time is really just this consequence of causes and effects, that there's no such thing as time but there is just the fact that this happened after that happened and so, therefore, it has the appearance of time. Well, that applies to baptism because when Thomas talks about the individual person, he talks about the person in two ways. One of the ways is the ultimately true truth of each person being an atemporal — or a supratemporal might be better language — this outside-of-time eternal being; that there's a kind of eternity to all of us. It's not the same as God's eternity, but there's a kind of eternity. And so, the events of our lives, such as salvation or justification, these are things which are first eternal realities, and secondarily, they are temporal realities. They have a point in time in which they seem to occur. So, this allows him to talk about regeneration as happening at the moment of baptism in a really strong way, because it's baptism that is the visible time at which this eternal reality comes into play. If that was all he said, it would make it sound as if baptism was necessary for regeneration to occur, and it would make it sound like baptism was sufficient for regeneration to occur. And it might even make it sound like baptism just did the whole work entirely,

and that's all that it took. But he has this interesting little section where he starts talking about what happens if a person comes to faith, or comes to understand the truth of the gospel and wants to be baptized but then isn't able to get baptized... And what he says there is that the reality of the regeneration or — and again the language is not identical to what we would use — but the reality of salvation having occurred, of God's work having been done, of the person having been justified, that reality is an eternal reality. And the mere intent, or the mere will to get baptized is functionally baptism for the person in the case that they don't get actually baptized. Because of the distinction between the eternity and the temporality of the person, in the case of anybody who doesn't die before baptism, it doesn't matter to talk about whether did regeneration happen way beforehand, or right beforehand, or at the moment of baptism? Well, regeneration is ultimately, justification is ultimately an eternal reality, and so there's no reason to talk about its appearance here in the natural world anytime other than at the moment of baptism. But he's very careful and very clear, and it's obvious that baptism is not necessary for salvation. And so, regeneration is merely simultaneous with it. It's not caused by it.

What were indulgences?

Pastor Robert W. St. John, Jr.

An indulgence was a letter of deferment for someone who could not fulfill their penance. That's originally what it was. It was a letter of deferment that would make some provision for someone who, by reason of health or circumstance, could not fulfill the normal penance requirements that the priest would lay upon them. So, for example, if there was an elderly woman who, she could not make a pilgrimage if that was part of the penance that was required of her, or she was required to pray on her knees on the church steps of St. Peter or something like that — she couldn't do it because of her knees are not good — then consequently, they could offer her, the priest could offer her, as a kindness, a letter of deferment, an indulgence, that would allow her to do something in place of that. And so that's originally what it was. However, it developed into something else altogether. Pope Sixtus, in the Middle Ages, I think about 12th century, he extended the prospect of indulgences to those in purgatory. And whether he realized it or not, he opened the door at that time for tremendous financial opportunity for the Roman Catholic Church. So, once indulgences were extended to those in purgatory, then they became a means of purchasing freedom from the sufferings of purgatory. Now, of course, you have to understand that purgatory was the final step in the life of a Christian in the Middle Ages who had died and was now, for those sins that they did not do penance for, they now had to pay for those sins in this stage of suffering known as purgatory. And so, in order to get a person free, then an indulgence might be purchased for one's father or one's mother who was suffering in purgatory, and it was this abuse that we are introduced to in the concept of indulgences that Luther was concerned about when he nailed his 95 Theses to the church door at Wittenberg.

Pastor Micah Ngussa

Indulgence was a kind of teaching from the Roman Catholics before Reformation that all believers must do work to earn salvation. But in doing that they started this process of indulgences, I mean, people should pay, give money to earn salvation. And actually, this was the plan for the Roman Catholics to earn money and especially on constructing St. Peter's church in Rome. So, they had to make people even pay for their dead people, and they collected a lot of money. And this was one of the things Martin Luther had to disagree with them because they were selling salvation in another way, and that was totally wrong according to the Bible.

Dr. Scott Manor

Indulgences is an interesting idea. And there's really three categories with which we can understand what they were and what they were not. So, beginning with what they were not, they were not intended to be a pardon for sin. They were not originally intended to be a license to sin. They were not intended to be forgiveness of sin. But they were, to go into the second category, is a way of restitution for the temporal penalty for our sin. And so, if a Christian commits some sort of sin, lying for example, then as a form of penance, then part of the consequence of that sin, is the temporal restitution of the believer to be brought back into right position with Christ. So, originally, indulgences were a way of being able to make some sort of financial gift in order to attain that, to pay off that need for restitution... So indulgences presume forgiveness of sin in its original idea. This changes at some point right in the Middle Ages. And what they are is — because it's a financial offset for sin — it becomes a way in which certain purveyors of these indulgences were able to attain a lot of money. And so, rather than keeping faithful to its original idea, indulgences became the notion that, "I could become saved because I have purchased an indulgence." "I have been made right with God because of this indulgence." Rather than it being on the back end of having been forgiven, it takes over the position of the method of forgiveness itself. And so, you have a lot of people during the Middle Ages who were actually making quite a great deal of money off of these indulgences, in large part because it's a way of selling salvation. And these funds end up getting used for the building of cathedrals, for example, or the crusades. And so, it becomes this thing that it was not originally intended to be. And yet, that's typically how we think of indulgences, as this method by which humans are made right with God simply by effectively paying a "sin tax."

What was penance, and how did penance impact the daily life of medieval Christians?**Dr. Robbie Crouse**

The concept of penance was hugely important in the Roman Catholic Church in the medieval period, and it impacted the daily life of medieval Christians in many ways. The concept of penance actually comes from a statement of Jerome in the early church that was often quoted, that penance was the "second plank" of salvation after a person had made shipwreck of their soul. The idea in Roman Catholic theology is that

baptism washed away original sin, but if you committed mortal sin, that is, sin leading to death after your baptism, you need a second plank of salvation to wash away that sin. And that plank is penance. The idea of penance was an act of piety or of contrition that, in some ways, showed your sorrow for sin and that, by the absolution of the priest, would then forgive the sin. Penance was done in a number of ways. It could be seen in pilgrimages that people would often do; sometimes pilgrimages to places of the saints, prayers to the saints, saying the Hail Mary. In many ways, this was more important than sacraments which Protestants continue to celebrate — the Lord's Supper and other ways. These acts of penance would have been very important for lay Christians in order to ensure their own salvation. It was this very thing that Luther railed against when he believed that medieval Christians were doing these acts of piety not out of a sense that God had saved them, but for a sense that they had to do these for God to accept them.

Dr. Carl L. Beckwith

The daily life of medieval Christians centered very much on the sacrament of penance and here's why: we sin. And medieval theologians recognized that there are two kinds of sins that we commit. There are mortal sins and there are venial sins. Now, as they thought about sin, they said this is the distinction between a mortal or a venial sin, that a sin means some kind of temptation has come to us; there is the suggestion of some kind of sin, and I begin to take some kind of delight or pleasure in that sin. If that's as far as I go and I do not give consent to that pleasure and then actually act upon the sin, then that's only a venial sin. And venial sins can be forgiven with last rites, the last sacrament in Roman Catholicism. But if I consent and act upon that suggestion and that pleasure of a sin, then that is a mortal sin that destroys the relationship that I have with God. Now, a mortal sin can only be forgiven through the sacrament of penance. So the daily life, really, of a medieval Christian is one who has to recognize and see the sins that they have committed, they must go to a priest, they must truly confess, they must be contrite in that confession such that they never want to commit the sin again and they're sorry for it, and then the priest will give them a conditional absolution that is based on satisfaction of some sort. Now, let me back up and explain what's going on here. A mortal sin creates both guilt and punishment. There's the guilt of the sin and there's the eternal punishment of that sin. When I go to the sacrament of penance in the medieval church, and I earnestly confess, what the priest does is he can absolve that guilt, and he can take that eternal punishment and transfer it into a temporal punishment, and now I am assigned satisfaction to overcome that temporal punishment. Now, the problem, of course, is that I continue to sin, and I continue to amass these punishments, and I cannot pay for them all. And there become, then, different ways of paying for those punishments, whether it's indulgences, whether it's the prayers of the saints, the treasury of merit that the church has available to it, but ultimately, I will end up in purgatory where I will continue to pay for the temporal punishments that the sacrament of penance has transferred from eternal to temporal for me to do.

Dr. Scott Manor

Penance is born out of the original root in Latin, *poena*, which is “penalty.” And so, there’s this sense in which all sin requires some kind of penalty. And on the one hand, you have Christ who pays the eternal punishment for our sin through his work on the cross. That’s understood. Penance was a form of paying off the temporal effects of our sins. With the eternal taken care of, there’s still the temporal, the here and now aspects of having to atone for our sin, or better put, being made right as the result of having committed a sin. And so, in the medieval era, penance took the form of a number of very arduous things. There were severe fasts that had to be taken. Sometimes you would see pilgrimages. Sometimes people would even be imprisoned or flogged, for example. And so, penance was a very serious matter with which the church exercised its authority over the people here and now to ensure that their sinfulness was accounted for in the here and now, that their punishment for this sin was made right through these acts of penance. That’s a difficult thing if you are a guy in the Middle Ages who is prone to sin. I mean, the daily life of someone living in the Middle Ages who has to deal with fasting because of his sin, pilgrimages because of his sin, it disrupts the way that anyone would go about their normal life. And so, what you see is the church eventually adopting a strategy of commutation, the shrinking and sort of boiling down of what the penance would actually be for an individual. And so, sometimes it might be an intense period of fasting or a single-day pilgrimage somewhere, or in certain instances you would get the notion of maybe a single payment for something. And so, penance eventually kind of finds its way into the whole notion of indulgences, of somehow being able to justify, make yourself right in terms of having to bear the consequences of your sin in the here and now, knowing that Christ has done it eternally, but there are still those residual effects here in this life.

**Is there any sense in which penance can be seen
as compatible with evangelical Christianity?**

Dr. Dan Lacich

Evangelicals often look at penance as being something totally outside the realm of biblical Christianity, of anything that we as evangelicals would engage in. But I think there’s a place for it, and I think there are some ways that we actually include penance in our churches and don’t realize that’s what we’re doing. If the view is that penance somehow makes up for sin so that we earn a standing with God then, no, that doesn’t have a place in evangelical Christianity. But if penance is viewed as a sign of a contrite heart and as putting somebody back on the right path of living a life of obedience, then I think it does have a place. And we do this, for instance, when a pastor falls into a grave moral failure. We understand, yes, they can be forgiven and are forgiven when they confess, repent, but that doesn’t mean that they automatically step right back into the role that they had. And, in healthy situations, there’s usually some period of time of counseling, of accountability, of carrying out lesser acts of ministry in order to kind of build back to where you need to be to be trusted and to be back in the role that you previously had. In a sense, that can be viewed as a type of

penance, a demonstration of a truly contrite heart. And I think in instances where pastors have refused to go through that kind of accountability, it's been shown that they typically fall right back into the same errors. So, I think, properly understood, there's a place for a plan of life to help someone get back on track and to, in some way, rebuild their life coming out of serious sin.

Rev. Jim Maples

Some would ask if the doctrine of penance is somehow compatible with the doctrine of, or with the doctrines of, evangelical Christianity, and one could say that as far as contrition and confession go, that could be seen as a part of repentance itself. But the idea of a temporal punishment as a satisfaction for sin has no ground of standing in any kind of evangelical belief.

What was meant by a treasury of merit in Roman Catholic theology?

Andrew Tooley, Ph.D.

The treasury of merit in Roman Catholic theology at the time of the Reformation was, really, this concept that Christ's death stored up, had kind of this treasure trove of merit that could be dispensed through the Roman Catholic Church to individuals who were penitent — so, who had gone through and confessed their sins and be absolved and do penance. And so, not only Christ had this treasury of merit that could be dispensed through the Catholic Church and through the pope, but saints. So, people who were so good, who were so, kind of, holy through their lives, there's no way they could use up all that good merit. So, it was stored up in heaven and then given to those who were really penitent.

Dr. Piotr J. Malysz

The beginnings of the very concept of the treasury of merit lie deep in, kind of, early early centuries of Christianity, that, in some sense, something akin to the treasury of merit has its roots in how Christians celebrated the lives of martyrs... Because Christians held martyrs in such high regard, it was also the case that martyrs were perceived as having a certain kind of special favor with God. And we see that already, again, in another early Christian text, *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, who are two Christian woman who because — Perpetua in particular — do not want to deny their faith, they have to die. Perpetua is a young mother in her early twenties who is asked to recant. She's asked that even by the authorities who are interrogating her and even by her own father, but she will not do it... She has several dreams in that account, and one of the dreams concerns her brother who must have died at a young age as a child and died of some sort of disease, some very serious, perhaps cancerous, condition. But in her dream, Perpetua — because she is ready to lay down her life to testify to the truth of Christianity and the truth of the gospel — in her dream Perpetua sees that her brother is healed... In that account, that's only a dream, she sees herself as particularly favored, and she sees that her action could have effects beyond simply her own life. So, in a sense, the beginning of the treasury of merit lies precisely in these kind of views of martyrdom where, in addition to this very, what

we might describe “orthodox” testimony to the work of Christ and to the truth and the validity and the importance and the significance and predominance of that work in the life of any Christian, there is also a sense in which, somehow, what the martyrs did was so out of the ordinary, this unorthodox sense, that it could, sort of, suffice for others...

Now, the notion of the treasury of merit, as such, does not develop until the fourteenth century when Pope Clement VI promulgates a bull — makes a pronouncement — and he declares that there is such a thing as a treasury of merit, and that it’s actually, sort of, up to the papacy to distribute merit out of it. Again, if we look at the martyrdom of Perpetua, there is no sense in which anybody other than God can apply the merit of martyrs if he so chooses, right? But with the treasury of merit as it, sort of, becomes kind of enshrined in Roman Catholic dogma, there is a sense in which it is almost like an account that the pope has access to and can distribute merit out of it. And that’s, for example, is what becomes the basis of indulgences, that there is extra merit won by extraordinary Christians — martyrs and other saints — and that, somehow, the papacy has access to that account.

Pastor Robert W. St. John, Jr.

Roman Catholic theology had to answer the question, how is a person made righteous? Now I say that purposely, “how are they *made* righteous?” because they taught that a person was made righteous at baptism... So where does this righteousness come from at baptism? Well, it comes from, in Catholic theology, the treasury of merit. Now, the treasury of merit is the sum total of the righteousness of Christ that is given in provision for the sins that you have committed in the past, that’s the righteousness of Christ. But it also includes the righteousness of the saints, that, in other words, there are some people who did so many good works that their righteousness exceeded their need for salvation; they did enough righteousness to save themselves, and so what’s God going to do with this other righteousness, you know, this leftover righteousness? He puts it then in the treasury of merit, and it can be dispensed by the church. So, the treasury of merit is a philosophical container, if you will, of righteousness, the righteous acts of saints and the righteousness of Christ that can be dispensed by the church in order to meet the need of sinners. And so, that’s generally the idea. Now, I would just add that, you remember that Paul said that he could have charged for, asked for, support from the churches that he ministered in, but he chose to support himself. Frequently enough he worked with his own hands and supported himself, especially in new churches where he was planting them and so forth. Now, this work that he did, this would be considered a work of super-arrogation. And a work of super-arrogation was something above and beyond what was expected. Well, that’s the kind of thing that then would go into the treasury of merit and could be dispensed by the pope for the need of sinners. So that’s the idea of the treasury of merit.

How did the Roman Catholic church view salvation during the time of the Reformation?

Dr. Dan Lacich

The view of the Roman Catholic Church regarding salvation during the Reformation is fairly complicated, and there's a couple of reasons for that. One is the view of grace that you find in the church at the time. Grace was seen almost as a commodity, as an empowerment. It's something that was given to you in order to cooperate in your own salvation. It was given to you to help you be obedient to the call of Christ, to the law of God, but you had a certain responsibility in participating in that grace. Added to that was there were different categories of sin. There were everyday sins that were not ones that would threaten your eternal salvation, known as "venial sins." But then you also had a higher category known as "mortal sins," and these were ones that if you died and had not been forgiven of a mortal sin, then you would have forfeited salvation; you were condemned. Grace comes into play in that it gives you the ability to live a life to not commit those sins, but also, it's important that once you die, if you've died in a state of grace, no mortal sin, but you've got venial sins, yes, you're going to go to heaven eventually, but first you have to pay a penalty for those venial sins; you still get some punishment, which is where purgatory comes in. So, it gets a little complicated involving grace. You add into that that it was understood that you could not have salvation outside the Roman Catholic Church. So, you could have done everything necessary to live an obedient life according to the church but commit some act along the way that you get excommunicated, and you've lost salvation, and you're condemned. On top of that, baptism was seen as something that washed away sin, and so, technically, you could go your entire life, be on the point of death, be baptized, die in a state of grace and without sin, and go to heaven. So, there were lots of different things going on when it came to salvation. But the impression that most people would have had is that, I need to work hard; I need to cooperate with grace in order to guarantee that I have a place in heaven.

Pastor Micah Ngussa

At the time of the Reformation, the Roman Catholics viewed salvation should be obtained by works. Their emphasis was just work, and this was one of the reasons Martin Luther had to disagree with them because as the Bible teaches salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ through the grace of God. But the Roman Catholics put on the things to be done in order for someone to get salvation, such as those things people were told to do — "good work." But with doing just good work, that will not help someone in salvation.

Rev. Clete Hux

The Catholic Church viewed salvation during the time of Reformation basically in the same way that they did in the Fourth Lateran council, that salvation came only through the Catholic Church, although it could exist outside the church but not outside of Christ. And it, through the Fifth Lateran council, basically affirmed that no salvation could be had apart from the Catholic Church. So that's basically how they saw salvation during the Protestant Reformation as well.

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