



Monasticism, Fall of Rome, and Rise of the Papacy

The Advent of the Middle Ages

Introduction

- The Middle Ages arrived due to many factors, but three events stand out as prominent.
 - These events themselves began during the patristic period, and thus there is some continuity between the era of the early church and the Middle Ages. But there is also a great degree of continuity.
- The rise and normalization of monasticism.
- The Fall of the Western Roman Empire.
- The ascendancy of the papacy.



Monasticism

- Monasticism will be one of the most impactful movements in church history.
- The origin of the monks.
 - In the latter half of the third century, some Christians became so disgusted with the sinfulness of the Roman Empire that they decided to isolate themselves from civilization itself.
 - They looked to men like John the Baptist since He lived in a remote desert. They often practiced asceticism (self-denial and self-harm).
 - By the time of the 4th century, monasticism became more widespread, highly popular, and very much respected.
 - The first monks were in Syrian and Egypt. Eventually it will spread.
 - The word monk comes from the Greek *monachos*, which means living alone. At first, they all lived solitary lifestyles, but eventually, three types of monasticism would emerge.



Hermits

- The first were hermits, which comes from the Greek word *eremos*, which means desert.
 - So hermits were monks that lived isolated lives in harsh deserts. They also lived in caves.
- Hermits were not clergy early on, but in fact were fed up with the hierarchy. They were lay-persons seeking greater faithfulness and spirituality.
- The most famous desert monk was Anthony (251-356)—yes he lived 105 years! He was a close friend of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria.
 - Athanasius wrote a popular biography of Anthony, which helped spread the idea of desert monasticism to both the East and West.



Anthony, the Ultimate Hermit

- Anthony was born into a rich family, but as a young man he sold all of his wealth and gave it to the poor.
- He retreated to an abandoned desert fort near the Red Sea for 20 years.
 - In that time, he prayed, fasted, studied Scripture, and engaged in fierce battles with demons. He was isolated that full 20 years. He emerged from it in the 4th century, and gathered around himself disciples to whom he could pass on what he learned in his solitude.
- To most people, he seemed to be on a higher plane. He even did miracles. His life likely had the largest impact on attracting others to the monastic life.
 - From him we get the image of people traveling far into the wilderness to find the sage who knows the secret to the universe.
 - People thought being in the wilderness would lead to God giving special revelation to people.
 - As people searched for him, it just motivated him to go deeper into the wilderness and let his disciples deal with small issues. Only the most significant questions made it to Anthony.



Cenobites

- The second kind of monk was the communal monk, which is known as cenobitic monasticism (combines *koinos* and *bios* or common life). The place they would live together was called a monastery, which was originally the name of the caves of hermits.
- The man who started this was Pachomius (290-346).
 - He was a native of southern Egypt and a former soldier. He tried the monastic life alone at first as a hermit, but in 320 he founded a community in the Egyptian village of Tabbenisi.
- They would work, pray, and ate together. They shared all things in common. Everyone worked and provided for the community with manual labor. They believed this kept with the example of the Jerusalem church in Acts 2:44-45.
 - Pachomius wrote a “rule” which was a list of rules or policies to govern the monastery. Other monasteries would adopt this rule and it became widespread. The rule listed the times and schedule for all the activities of the community. There were set times for work, study, prayer, and eating.
- They also had to give strict obedience to the monastery leader. He was the abbot (comes from Aramaic abba). From abbot came the noun abbey, which is what monasteries were called.
 - Much later they will be known also as convents and cloisters. Some monasteries in the East used different titles for their leaders.

Sketes

- A third type of monasticism was a smaller form of the second kind.
- They were called sketes since it began in Skete, Egypt.
- These were groups of 12 that followed a single leader (modeled off of Christ and the Apostles).
- Various sketes would assemble together for worship services.



Different Kinds of Monks

- In addition to there being different kinds of monasticism, there were also different kinds of monks.
- Hermit comes from *eremos*, which means desert – they dwelt in deserts.
- Anchorite comes from *anachorein*, which means “to take to the hills.” Some of them also lived in small rooms.
- Dendrites lived in huts in trees.
- Stylists lived on top of pillars.
- Adamites walked around naked. Many monks tamed animals in an attempt to restore mankind back to pre-Fall conditions.
- People liked monks because the wilderness was associated with the devil and they thought the monks battled Satan in the wilderness to keep him distracted and away from the cities.



Women Monks

- Monasticism was not limited to men.
- Women could be monks too.
- They were called nuns, which was the feminine version of the Latin word for monk.
- Their monasteries were called nunneries, and the leader was the abbes.
- They were segregated from male monasteries.



Monastic Asceticism

- Monks would practice asceticism—denying themselves food and other necessities.
 - This became a popular way of life in Rome before it was Christian, due in large part to the influence of Neoplatonism in the 3rd century, since it called for asceticism.
- In the church, celibacy was a big part of the asceticism.
 - By the end of the 4th century, most Christians believed celibacy was superior to marriage. It was the higher life. Congregations at this point began to demand that their bishops be celibate.
 - This way of life was so esteemed that by the 5th century, every major famous churchman was a celibate ascetic.
- Because the monasteries specialized in this, it eventually became normal that the bishops came out of the monasteries. So what started as a lay movement eventually became something quasi-required for future clergy.
- The following 3 things became normative for monks in the middle ages.
 - Poverty was designed to help them get over materialism.
 - Chastity was to help them defeat lust.
 - Obedience was designed to help them overcome self-will.

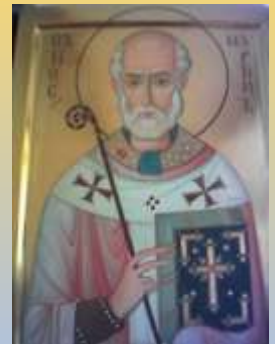


Eastern Monasticism

- The early monks of Egypt (Desert Fathers) had a major influence on future generations of monks.
 - Their theology was built heavily on the writings of Origen, who also was an ascetic.
 - Their practices and philosophy were recorded in the *Sayings of the Fathers*. But even more so, it was the writings of Evagrius Ponticus (345-399)—native of Asia Minor that settled in Egypt— in the 380s that summed up the Desert Fathers and provided their way as a framework to others.
 - He had a large impact on Eastern theologians as well as John Cassian, who successfully promoted monasticism in the West.
- Syrian and Egyptian monks tended toward isolation, whereas the Greek or Hellenistic form discouraged that.
- Basil of Caesarea (Cappadocian Fathers) shaped the Greek version. It was more connected to the surrounding culture.
 - He wrote a list of rules that are still influential in Eastern Orthodox monasticism today.
 - Monasteries run under Basil's rules were not cut off from society, but they educated children, nursed the sick, and gave hospitality to travelers.
 - By the 5th century, it became an accepted rule that only a bishop could establish a monastery.

Western Monasticism

- In the West, monastic communities began to emerge in the mid 4th century.
 - Athanasius's *Life of Anthony* was translated into Latin and influenced many.
- Furthermore, the West had their own highly esteemed monk, a man named Martin of Tours (335-397).
 - He was an ex-soldier and zealous anti-Arian. He founded a loose association of hermits in France in the 360s and then promoted monasticism after becoming the bishop of Tours in 372.
 - From Tours, his monks spread throughout France evangelizing pagans, founding monasteries, and planting churches.
- Another important figure was John Cassian (360-435), a Scythian that lived among the Egyptian Desert Fathers for seven years before moving to France and founding a monastery and nunnery in Marseilles in 415.
 - He was a disciple of Evagrius Ponticus. Cassian's writings *Institutes* and *Conferences* spread throughout the West the ways of the Desert Fathers of Egypt and greatly influenced the development of the Western monastic movement.



Western Monasticism

- Western monasticism enjoyed enthusiastic support from leading churchmen from its beginning.
 - Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine of Hippo all were supporters and participants. This gave it respectability and authority.
- It was an even more cultured version than the East, because in addition to all the other stuff, they believed in cultivating the mind through the study of literature.
 - This was an old Roman principle, and for that reason, monasticism in the West would attract converts from the Roman aristocracy.
 - The Roman noble Cassiodorus (477-570) successfully popularized the union of asceticism and culture; theological and secular studies together.
 - For this reason, the Western monasteries actually saved and guarded Western European civilization and culture.
 - When the Roman Empire fell, the monasteries were repositories of the preserved old knowledge. They became the vital centers of education in the Western Catholic world.
- The Western monks were also great missionaries from the end of the patristic age up through the Middle Ages.
 - Since they were free from ties of marriage and family, and they already disciplined themselves to live in poverty, they were equipped to carry the faith into Pagan lands. Both England and Germany were primarily evangelized and Christianized by monks.

Western Monasticism and the Catholic Church

- In 529, Benedict founded a monastery just south of Rome (still there today).
 - It kept the rule of the other monasteries, but added one more – submission to the local bishop.
 - This tied monasticism to the church and made it subordinate to the institutional church. This change will assist greatly in the rise of the papacy a little later.
- Augustine the Missionary (not of Hippo) was a Benedictine monk commissioned by Pope Gregory I in 596 to go to England. He gets credit for converting England to Roman Christianity.
 - There was a far older version of Christianity there (Celtic Christianity), but this monk convinced them to leave it.
- Later on, an English monk named Boniface in the 8th century traveled over to northeastern Europe and spread Roman Christianity to the Arians.
 - By this time, Benedictine monasteries were throughout all of Western Europe (it was mostly rural) and these were the primary ministers to people.
 - They all answered to local bishops, who in turn, answered to the Roman bishop.

Cluny

- The monastery founded at Cluny in 910 will lead to Western monasticism being beholden to the papacy.
- Many monasteries became worldly as each generation was less committed than the previous. Monks were becoming wealthy (abandoning poverty), and breaking chastity.
- The monks at Cluny wanted to ensure purity in their monastery.
- The only way was to turn all authority over to one central location and one central figure. This person could then force them all to live in purity. That was the abbot of Cluny.
- The Pope appreciated the effort, and allowed them to not be under the control of the local bishop, but instead under the control of the Pope himself.
- That is the only they had to answer to.
 - Other monasteries also wanted to be under the bishop of Rome. Thus, by that point, the Pope already controlled all bishops, but now also all monks. Thus, what began as a lay movement, was now under the control of the bishop of bishops.



The Fall of Rome

- The Germanic tribes were being pushed out of their native lands (Poland, Russia, Balkans, etc.) due to the expansion of the Huns.
- Many of them formed confederations to where various tribes were united under a single chief.
 - The federations were the Ostrogoths (Western Goths), Visigoths (Eastern Goths), Franks, Vandals, Lombards, Burgundians, Angles, Saxons, and the Jutes.
 - Even in their federations, they could not stop the Huns.
- So they sought safety in the Roman empire, and migrated in from the North. This had been going on since the 2nd century, but by the 4th and 5th centuries, the Roman empire could no longer keep them out.
 - Previously, the Romans stopped them by placing garrisons all along the northern border. But by the 4th century, the Empire had been in decline for a long time of civil wars and economic disasters.
 - This is one reason Constantine moved the capital of the empire to the East—Constantinople—to remove himself from the immediate threat of Germanic invasions.

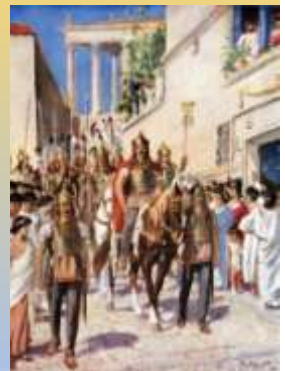
Germanic Religious Make-up

- By the 4th centuries, the Germanic tribes and Romans were familiar with each other. By this point, most of the Barbarians were Arian Christian.
 - Some Goths were won by Arian missionaries (Ostrogoths, Vandals, Lombards, and Burgundians).
 - Others decided that once they entered Roman territory they would adopt the religion. Well, in 376, the Visigoths entered in through the Balkans, and Rome was presently ruled by Arians (this was prior to the Council of Constantinople). So they automatically accepted Arianism.
- Some German tribes remained Pagan: Franks, Angles, Jutes, and Saxons.
 - They worshiped Wodin as the chief along with other deities like Thor (god of thunder), Tiwaz (god of war), Freya (goddess of fertility), Saeter (a water god).
 - The names of most of our weekdays were chosen because of belief in these Germanic false gods. Tuesday is Tiwaz's day, Wednesday is Wodin's day, Thursday is Thor's day, Friday is Freya's day, and Saturday is Saeter's day.



Roman Decline

- It was clear Rome was in decline when Arian emperor Valens was killed by the Visigoths in 378 after the Romans treated them badly.
 - Theodosius took over and reasserted control, but he let the Goths stay as allies to Rome.
- After his death, Visigoths under Alaric (395-410) wanted more territory and moved into Italy. He successfully captured Rome and sacked it in 410.
 - That was one reason Augustine wrote *City of God*.
- Around the same time, the Arian Vandals, pressured by the Visigoths, pushed West and took over France, Spain, crossed into N. Africa and besieged Roman holdings there.
 - With their navy, the Vandals controlled N. Africa and persecuted orthodox Christians severely.
- The defense of Italy was in the hands of the Roman army, which was mainly Germanic at this point. So emperors in the West were puppets at the whims of the military generals, who were Germanic.
 - In 476, one of the Germanic generals deposed the final Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus. Even though Rome was a shell before this, history looks at this as the fall of Rome.
 - Interestingly, the German conquerors considered themselves Roman, and even their chosen rulers of Rome saw themselves as subordinate to the Caesar in Constantinople.



Geographic Spread of the Germanic Tribes

- Over the years, tribal conflicts divided these Germanic forces to where the fall out was as follows: Visigoths settled Spain, the Ostrogoths settled Italy, the Franks and Burgundians settled France, the Vandals settled Northwest Africa, and Angles, Saxons, and Jutes settled Britain.
- The Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Franks remained Pagan.
- The Visigoths, Angle's Saxons, and Jutes tended to carry out ethnic cleansing to eradicate the native populations of these new lands that they claimed.
 - This happened in West North Africa and Britain.
- In the rest of Europe, the Germans were in the minority even though they had the military power.
- Besides, they lacked the culture and civilizational achievement of the Roman peoples they ruled.
 - So they relied on their educated subjects to help them govern and serve as advisors. This helped lead to their adoption of Roman system.
 - And the part of the Roman system that had the greatest level of organization and continuity was the Roman church itself.



Conversion of the Franks

- In 496, something major happened.
 - The background to this event is that the Frankish king Clovis (481-511) married a Burgundian princess (Clotilda) and she was Catholic.
- She tried to persuade him away from Paganism, but he resisted.
- In 496, he found himself in military trouble fighting other Germans called the Alemanni.
 - Desperate, he prayed to the Lord that his wife told him about. He promised God that he would become a Christian if Christ gave him victory.
 - In his prayer, he admitted his own gods did nothing for him, so he was now wanting to see if the Christian God is real.
- Well, victory was granted to him and his enemy was killed.
- Clovis was baptized as a Christian soon after.
 - In the culture of the Franks, the people have to follow the religion of their chief.
- So the Franks became the first Catholic kingdom among these new Western nations. Western Catholics praised him as a new Constantine.



The Conversion of the Arians

- For the rest of the kingdoms that were Arian, it took patient and labor intensive evangelism to win them over to the Catholic faith.
- Some still resisted, like the Vandals in Africa and the Ostrogoths in Italy.
- Justinian (527-565) from the East destroyed them with military invasions.
 - This was the East's last attempt to bring them back into Byzantine Empire.
 - After Justinian died, the Gothic kingdoms regained independence.
- They reestablished Arianism, but eventually the Frankish kingdom will dominate most of Western Europe and the Catholic faith will be standard.



The Consequences of Rome's Fall and the Europe's New Germanic Character

- As the government abandoned the West to deal with the Germans, the bishops were able to maintain their churches and their Christianity.
 - They were able to convert most of the Germanic tribes to Christianity over time.
- This brought a number of benefits.
 - First, it allowed the West to transfer allegiance away from the Old Roman government and give it to the new Germanic order.
 - Second, it brought many new subjects (Germanic tribes) under their jurisdiction to influence.
 - Third, the eventual uniting of the Germans under the Franks under Charlemagne allowed for a united Western government that could be controlled by the church.
- Converting the Germans from Paganism was not overly difficult.
 - They had no strong religion of their own, and no traditional way of worship. The established church of the West seemed impressive. Christianity was also ancient by this point. The Germans had no ancient method.



The Changes Benefited the Bishop of Rome

- The greatest difficulty was with Arian Germans rather than Pagans. With their eventual conversion, the premiere bishop in the West was looked upon as the one to show them the light.
 - The end result was the loyalty of a militaristic people who were strong enough to defeat the Western Empire. They were great warriors and were the future of Europe, and they were loyal to the bishop of Rome.
 - With this new political structure forming, the bishop of Rome was able to avoid the Caesaropapism of the East, and create an actual theocracy.
 - It takes a few centuries, but eventually the Germanic rulers would derive their authority from the Pope and only be legitimate if the Pope performed the coronation. It was the crowning by the Pope that made Charlemagne the sole emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in A.D. 800.
- And the reason this occurred is because the Catholic Church was the one great Roman institution that survived the collapse of Rome in the West.

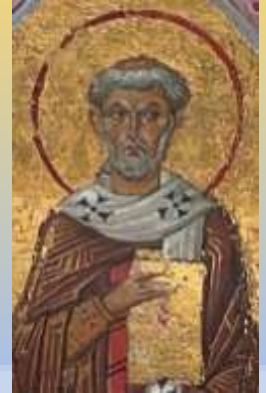


Gregory I

- Gregory the Great (540-604) was the perfect leader of the Western church for the time. He could exploit the political situation.
- It is during his 14 year papacy that the papacy becomes the great political and spiritual power that will dominate Western Europe for 1000 years.
- Gregory politically ignored the emperor of Constantinople and made his own political treaties with the Germanic kingdoms in Western Europe.
 - That was unheard of. He was acting like a head of state. And by this point, the papacy owned a lot of land in Italy.
- Because of these alliances, later popes could rely on Frankish kings rather than Byzantines for military protection.
- Gregory is also responsible for sending missionaries to Britain to Christianize those pagan rulers. It was largely successful.
 - He also strengthened the dependence of the bishops in the West upon Roman as the premier bishop.
- He was the first to successfully unify the Germanic political power with the Roman ecclesiastical power into a theocracy with the church on top and the state on the bottom.
- He was the first to say that all who were to be consecrated to bishop had to have his prior consent (a declaration of his authority over all other bishops).
 - He made his Gregorian chant the official music of the Western church.
 - He solidified the sacramental system permanently.
 - Sacraments can only come from those ordained by the church with Apostolic Succession.

Talented Bishops of Rome

- Gregory's ascendancy as a true Pope was built on the contributions of talented bishops of Rome that came before him.
 - They successfully convinced the West of Petrine theory.
- Anicetus (154-165) was the first monarchical bishop of Rome.
 - The church grew big enough to have several churches in Rome, and he became the bishop in charge of the other presbyters. This was the start of a hierarchy in Rome.
- Innocent I (402-417) was the **first** to use the Petrine Tradition.
 - This is the argument that Peter was the foundation of the church and has the keys of the kingdom. He allegedly was the first pope (bishop of Rome) and all succeeding bishops of Rome are in that tradition. They are the head of the church. He made a list of popes.
- Leo I (440-461) added to what Innocent argued, but he used Scriptures to advance it, and even declared it to the other Patriarchs.
 - Matthew 16:18-19 was used, John 21:15-17 (restoration of Peter), and Luke 22:31-32 (Peter is told to strengthen his brothers).
- And then add Gregory I and everything said about him.



Rome's Track Record on the Theological Controversies

- The advancement of the Petrine tradition was then used to account for the fact that bishop of Rome was on the right side of every major theological controversy that led to an ecumenical council.
 - Number 1 = Nicea (325) ; Christ's relationship to Father is homoousias.
 - Number 2 = 1st Constantinople (381) ; refuted patripassionism (modal monarchianism) – idea that the Father died on the cross / also wrote Nicene Creed. Montanists and Apollinarius were condemned.
 - Number 3 = Ephesus (431) ; Condemned Nestorius and the followers of Pelagius.
 - Number 4 = Chalcedon (451) ; confirmed theotokos and hypostatic union.
 - Number 5 = 2nd Constantinople (533) ; condemned monophysites.
 - Number 6 = 3rd Constantinople (681) ; condemned monotheletes.
 - Number 7 = 2nd Nicaea ; condemned iconoclasm.

Result: The Papacy

- These factors all collectively created a situation where the Western church was under the leadership of a single bishop.
- Catholic religion was defined by monasticism, and the monasteries all answered to the Roman bishop.
- The bishops in the West were recruited from the monasteries, which increased their likelihood of loyalty.
- The Western bishops in general already accepted Petrine theory for centuries.
- The new Germanic political order that provided protection to the local bishops was itself beholden to treaties with the bishop of Rome.
- And there were no patriarchates in the West to compete with Rome.
- The Eastern and Western church were one church in name only by this point. The language, liturgy, style of monasticism, and relationship to the state were increasingly different.



Conclusion

- The Middle Ages is characterized by the following:
 - Ethno-national kingdoms that eventually become the nations of Europe we know today.
 - A unified religion of Roman based Catholicism with a major separation between clergy and laity. Clergy took vows of celibacy, poverty, and obedience to the Pope.
 - Missionaries were monks.
 - Monasteries were the repository of knowledge.
 - The political powers in Europe were legitimized only by church recognition and provided protection for the church and its property.
 - Church and state were blended where everyone born into society was simultaneously part of the church and state.
- This lesson showed how all of that came about. Monasticism, the fall of Rome, and the growth in the influence and power of the bishop of Rome all converged to characterize the Middle Ages.