

# TWENTY CENTURIES

## A Survey of Church History



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### THE SIXTH CENTURY

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- Post-Roman Empire Europe
- Monasticism and the Rule of Benedict
- Gregory the Great and the Roman Catholic Church
- Christianity in Britain

# Post-Roman Empire Europe

## The Post-Roman West

- Spain: Visigoths
- France: Franks & Burgundians
- Italy: Ostrogoths
- North Africa: Vandals
- Britain: Anglo-Saxons / Picts & Gaels



# Post-Roman Empire Europe



## Germanic conquests and the destruction of the Western Empire

- Germanic migrations overran the West and destroyed its institutions (except the church).
- Germanic nations tended to assimilate with the culture around them. Increasingly, they employed educated Romans to run their government, and thus many Christians
  - ✦ European society thus consisted of a Catholic, Latin population and tolerant, Germanic conquerors.
  - ✦ The Germans quickly adopted Latin ways and many accepted Christianity.

# Post-Roman Empire Europe



- **Prayer of Clovis, King of the Franks (493):**

“O Jesus Christ, You Whom Clotilda maintains to be the Son of the living God, You Who graciously give help to those in trouble, and victory to those who trust in You, in faith I beg for the glory of Your help. If You will give me victory over my enemies, if I may have proof of the miraculous power which those devoted to Your name say they have experienced, then I will put my faith in You and be baptized in Your name. I have called on my own gods, but I see all too clearly that they have no intention of helping me. I therefore cannot believe they have any power, for they do not come to the rescue of those who trust in them. I now call upon You. I want to believe in You, but first I need to be saved from my foes.”

# Monasticism & the Rule of Benedict



## Growth of Monasticism

- After Constantine's conversion, when Christianity became state religion, there is for the first time the problem of nominal Christianity. Monasticism was a way of pursuing a "higher life" of holiness.
- Two strands of monasticism: Individual and Corporate
  - ✦ Primarily in the East, people like the Anchorites pursued radical aestheticism in isolation as hermits.
  - ✦ Monastic communities began, focusing on prayer, ritual worship, and good deeds.
- By the 5<sup>th</sup> Century, as the Roman Empire broke down, loosely organized monastic communities provided order, preserved learning, and promoted asthetic holiness.



# Monasticism & the Rule of Benedict



- **Benedict of Nursia (480-543) and the Benedictine Rule**
  - Born in prominent Roman family, was disillusioned with sinfulness. Lived as a hermit, then established a monastery near Naples, at Monte Cassino in 529 A.D.
  - Rule of Benedict
    - ✦ Emphasized economic self-sufficiency
    - ✦ Formed monastery into spiritual family, emphasis on group not individuals
    - ✦ Orderly, common life: daily life organized with 4 1/2 hours for group prayer, 3-5 hours for individual study and prayer, 7 hours of work, and 7 worship services per day (Ps. 119:164).
    - ✦ Vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience

“The life of a monk ought to be a continuous Lent... This we can do in a fitting manner by refusing to indulge evil habits and by devoting ourselves to prayer with tears, to reading, to compunction of heart and self-denial.”
  - As Rule of Benedict spread, provided an institution that would survive the dark ages and continue, modified, to our own day.

“For over a millennium, in the centuries between the reign of Constantine and the Protestant Reformation, almost everything in the church that approached the highest, noblest, and truest ideals of the gospel was done either by those who had chosen the monastic way or by those who had been inspired in their Christian life by the monks.” Mark Noll

# Gregory the Great and Roman Catholicism



- Pope Gregory I (b. 540, pope 590-604)
  - Born to wealthy Roman family, was a civil servant, monk, papal ambassador, and finally pope.
  - The Roman Church as a political power
    - ✦ As the surviving Roman institution, the Church became a principal landowner in central Italy, France and beyond
    - ✦ The Latin people turned to the church to deal with the Germanic conquerors.
    - ✦ Gregory thus made treaties with the Lombard rulers, without consulting the Eastern emperor, and brought peace to Italy. Established the church as the key political body representing the Latin culture.
    - ✦ Papal lands were widely used to aid the poor.
    - ✦ In this way, Gregory made the Roman church a powerful political and social institution, key to the survival of the Latin West.
    - ✦ Begins the medieval institution of the Roman Catholic Church



# Gregory the Great and Roman Catholicism



- Pope Gregory I (b. 540, pope 590-604), cont.
  - Gregory on Church Leadership
    - ✦ Preserved papal authority against Frankish and Visigothic rulers. As peace-maker in the West, required many to convert to Christianity
    - ✦ Fought against supremacy of Constantinople
      - Argued that none of the five patriarchs could be titled “ecumenical” or “universal” patriarch
        - “Whoever calls himself universal priest, or desires that title, is by his pride the forerunner of Antichrist.” Two popes later, this title was adopted by the papacy.
      - Described Rome as first among equal patriarchies, because of Peter.
      - Gave himself the title, “Servant of servants.”

# Gregory the Great and Roman Catholicism



## Gregory the Great, cont.

### ○ Gregory's Theology

- ✦ Follower of Augustine, both in emphasizing sovereign grace for sinners and in emphasizing sacramental means of grace.
- ✦ Instituted baptismal regeneration, with penance required to make up for sins committed after baptism.
- ✦ Instituted doctrine of purgatory, for sins left over at death, along with masses for the dead.
- ✦ Union of liturgical and ecclesiastical model of salvation

# Gregory the Great and Roman Catholicism



## Gregory the Great, cont.

- Gregorian Worship
  - ✦ Standardized the Mass
  - ✦ Gregorian chant & responsive singing: simplicity, solemnity, unison singing
  - ✦ Opposed superstitious veneration of images of Christ, Mary, etc., but approved them as decorations in churches as teaching aids.
  
- Pastoral Care
  - ✦ Pastor must lead by example, “be a servant not a ruler, meditate daily on the Word of God, love truth more than popularity, and give a high place to preaching.”

# Christianity in Britain



- **Saint Patrick (386-460)**
  - Escaped slave in Ireland, lived in French monastery.
  - Return to Ireland where he preached the gospel for 30 years; famous for his prayers
  - Monastic foundation for church life. Many of his disciples spread the gospel through Britain
  - Origins of the Celtic Church
  - Separation from the continent led to a purer and more biblical (and mystical) form of Christianity



# Christianity in Britain



- Patrick's "Breastplate"

“Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise, Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.”



# Christianity in Britain



- **Augustine of Canterbury (d. 604)**
  - Sent by Gregory in 597 to establish papal church
  - Capitalized on the marriage of Aethelbert, king of Kent, to a Christian princess, to establish a monastery at Canterbury.
  - King Aethelbert was impressed by the dignity and beauty of Gregorian worship, allowed Augustine to evangelize, plant churches, and was personally baptized.
  - First bishop of Canterbury, established papal see and asserted his power over all other bishops.
  - Clashed with Celtic Christians who did not accept his authority.

# Christianity in Britain



- **Columba of Iona (521-597)**
  - Follower of Patrick; missionary to the Scots
  - Based from a monastery at Solway, evangelized most of Scotland and planted churches throughout the Highlands.
  - Established Iona in the Highlands as northern base.
  - Opposed and largely drove out Druidism, and converted Brude, King of the Picts

