

Overview of Church History

▶ DR. SHAWN NELSON

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| ▶ PREVIOUS | EARLY CHURCH FATHERS TO CONSTANTINE |
| ▶ TODAY | EVENTS OF THE REFORMATION |
| UPCOMING | SHARED BELIEFS BETWEEN ROMAN CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS |
| UPCOMING | OVERVIEW OF KEY DIFFERENCES |
| UPCOMING | ORIGIN OF DENOMINATIONS SINCE THE REFORMATION |

CHURCH HISTORY

This class will briefly touch on the major events in church history that explain how we went from the first-century church to today, with all of the different denominations.

Topics covered:

- Early church fathers & councils
- Early shared beliefs between Catholics and protestants
- Late medieval developments leading to differences
- Events leading to Reformation
- Origin of Denominations Since the Reformation.

Meeting Mondays

6:30 pm

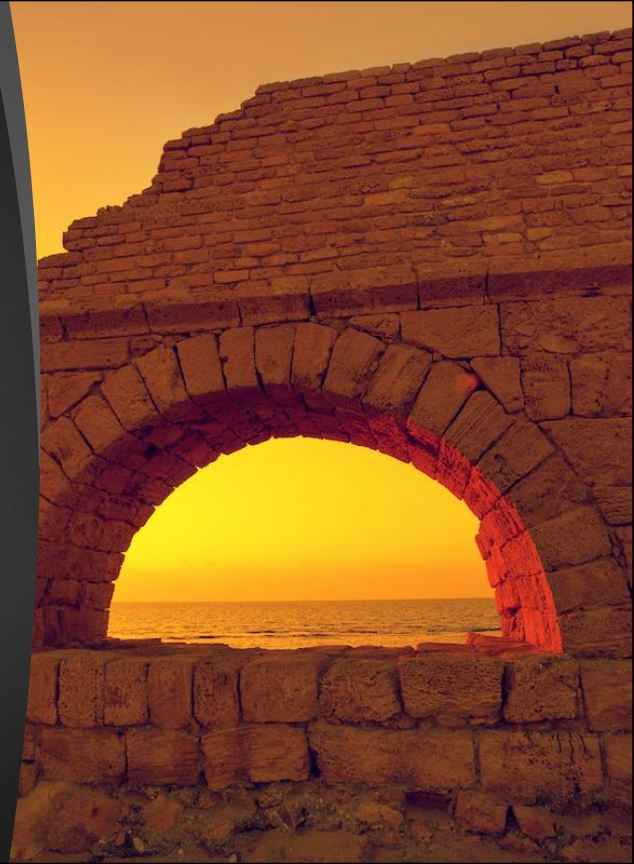
Light Church Chapel

831 3rd St, Encinitas

Why the Reformation?

Outline

- ▶ Church becomes powerful institution.
- ▶ Additional teachings/practices were added.
- ▶ People begin questioning the Church.
- ▶ Martin Luther's protest.



Today, we'll look at the events leading up to the Reformation.

What we've already covered:

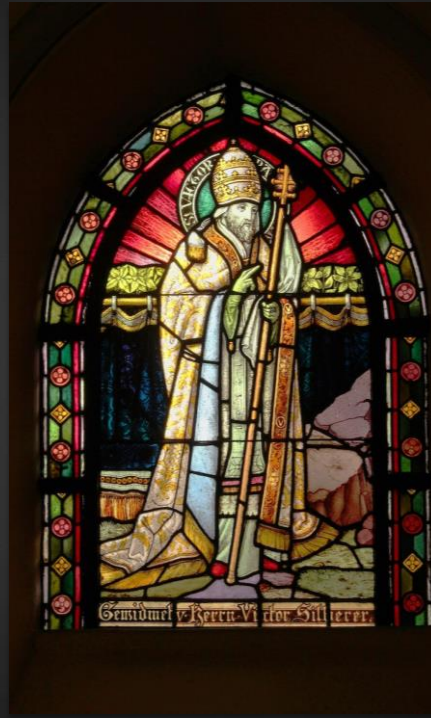
The First 5 Centuries:

- The Apostolic Fathers.
- From Persecution to Empire's official religion.
- Heresies help clarify Christian beliefs.

Up to the Reformation:

- Church becomes powerful institution.
- Additional teaching and practices were added.
- People begin questioning the Church.
- Martin Luther's protest.

It's a big span of time: we're covering 12 centuries!



Roman Bishop Exerts Influence

Church becomes powerful institution

1. Bishop of Rome attempted to apply power over others.

- In AD 195, the Roman church tried influence the affairs of foreign patriarchs.
- We could say there was a 'power grab' by the Bishop of Rome, named **Victor I**.
- There was **dispute over which day to celebrate Passover** (14th Nisan vs. Sunday)
- The churches of Asia Minor wanted to celebrate Easter on the 14th of Nisan (to put the focus on the crucifixion).
- But Victor wanted to celebrate it on the Sunday after.
- A council was convened to decide, and they decided on Sunday.
- But **bishops of Asia** continued the Passover on 14th Nisan.
- Victor of Rome excommunicated all of the churches in Asia.
- Eusebius wrote:

"Thereupon **Victor, who presided over the church at Rome**, immediately **attempted to cut off** from the common unity the parishes of all Asia, with the churches that agreed with them, as heterodox [heretics]; and he wrote letters and **declared all the brethren there wholly excommunicate.**" (Eus., Hist. eccl. 5.24.9)

Q. Why don't we celebrate the Sunday after 14th Nisan today?

- A. Today, Easter could be before the 14th of Nisan. For example, 3/31/24 when 14th Nisan is 4/21/24.
- B. The Council of Nicaea in AD 325 decided that Easter should be celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the spring equinox. This was done to standardize the date of Easter across all Christian communities. Therefore, Easter's date changes every year because it is based on lunar cycles.

Rome increasingly becomes the center



Church becomes powerful institution

2. Rome's influence increases over time.

- Rome's influence in the early Christian church grew gradually.
- Here are some likely reasons:
 - **Rome was one of the most important city** in the ancient world.
 - The Roman Empire **exerted a significant influence** on the Mediterranean world and beyond.
 - Rome was the **capitol of the Empire**, and where emperors like Constantine ruled from; people looked to Rome for guidance.
 - When Christianity became the official religion of the empire, the **clergy were on Rome's payroll**.
 - Rome was **often on the winning side in controversial theological debates**.
 - As a result, **Rome's authority in the church began to increase**, and people started **looking to Rome to settle disputes**.
- Over time, Rome developed this power and helped to establish the **Roman Catholic Church** by the 600s.
- It's important to note that other cities such as Jerusalem, Antioch, and Alexandria also played important roles in the development of Christianity.



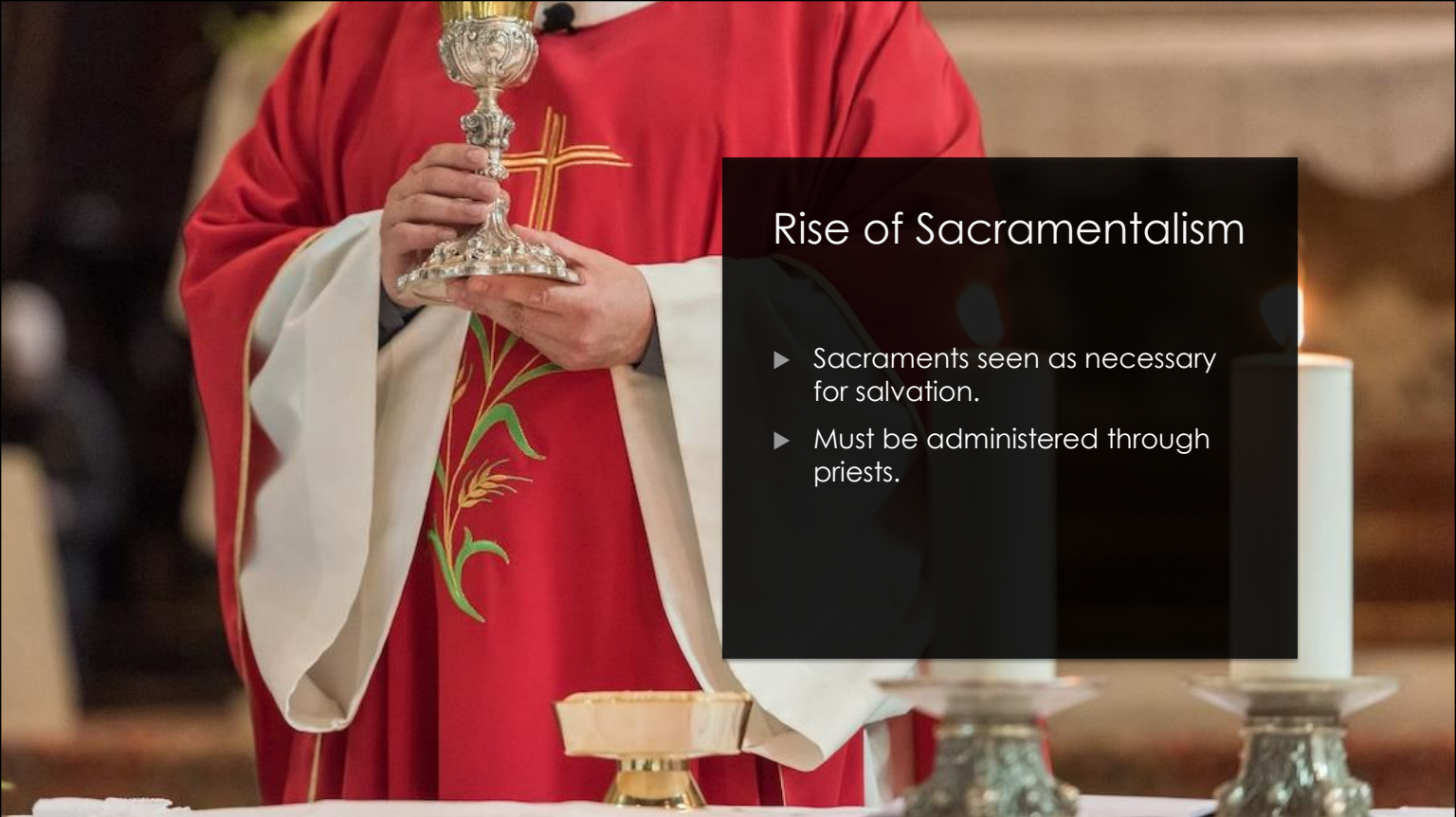
Church granted power to rule

- ▶ Donation of Constantine (forgery).
- ▶ Pope could rule over secular powers.

Church becomes powerful institution

3. Church granted power to rule

- There was a forged document called the “Donation of Constantine”.
- It said that **Constantine gave the pope power** to rule over Italy, Jerusalem, Constantinople and Alexandria.
- For **hundreds of years** people thought it was genuine.
- Used by the church to support right to rule over secular powers.
- Eventually church could even **punish heretics (Office of Inquisition, 12th c.)** with torture, being burned at the stake.



Rise of Sacramentalism

- ▶ Sacraments seen as necessary for salvation.
- ▶ Must be administered through priests.

Church becomes powerful institution

4. Rise of Sacramentalism

- During the Middle Ages, **sacraments were seen as necessary for salvation.**
- It was thought that the **external grace** conferred through the sacraments was **independent of the recipient's heart.**
- **Sacerdotalism** arose, which held that **only priests could administer** the sacraments.
- This institutionalized the idea that **salvation could only be attained through the Church.**
- The teaching was there was no salvation apart from **sacraments** which **can only be distributed through the church.**



Removal of scriptural checks & balances

- ▶ Latin Vulgate became official translation.
- ▶ Over time, fewer people could read it.
- ▶ Common people forbidden to have the Bible.

Church becomes powerful institution

5. Removal of scriptural checks & balances

- The Church commissioned **Jerome** to translate the Bible into **Latin** (4th c.).
- The **Vulgate** was “Latin of the **common, ordinary people**” (Latin Vulgate).
- This became the **official Bible** of the Roman Catholic Church.
- The **problem was fewer people could read it** over time as Latin disappeared.
- They refused future translations.

In 1229 the Council of Toulouse:

[the church] “**forbids the laity to have in their possession any copy of the books of the Old and New Testament**, except the Psalter, and such portions of them as are contained in the Breviary, or the Hours of the Virgin; and **most strictly forbids these works in the vulgar tongue.**” (14th canon)

In 1242 the Council of Tarracone said all non-Latin translations must be burned:

“We also decree that **no one shall keep the books** of the Old or New Testament in the Roman tongue; and should anyone be in possession of such books, he must **deliver them up to the bishop of the place TO BE BURNED**, within eight days after the publication of this article, and unless he do this, be he a priest or a layman, he shall be **suspected of heresy** until he shall have cleared himself.” (Giessler’s Text Book of Ecc. History, Vol 2, p. 392)

(Reading our Bible is an extremely important privilege!)

DISCUSS

- ▶ In light of the historical accounts presented, what are some potential dangers of a church becoming a powerful institution? Are there any biblical examples or warnings about the misuse of power?

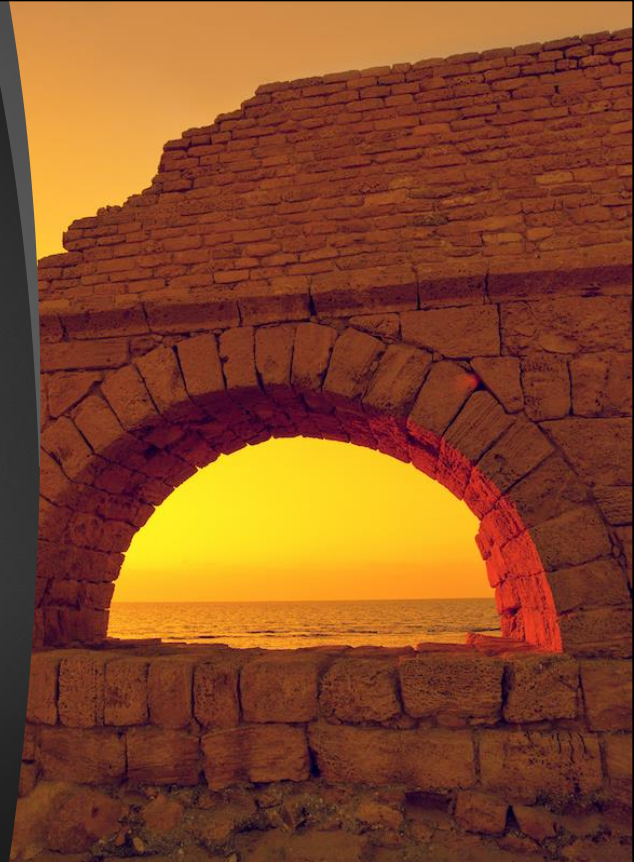
Think About or Discuss

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Why the Reformation?

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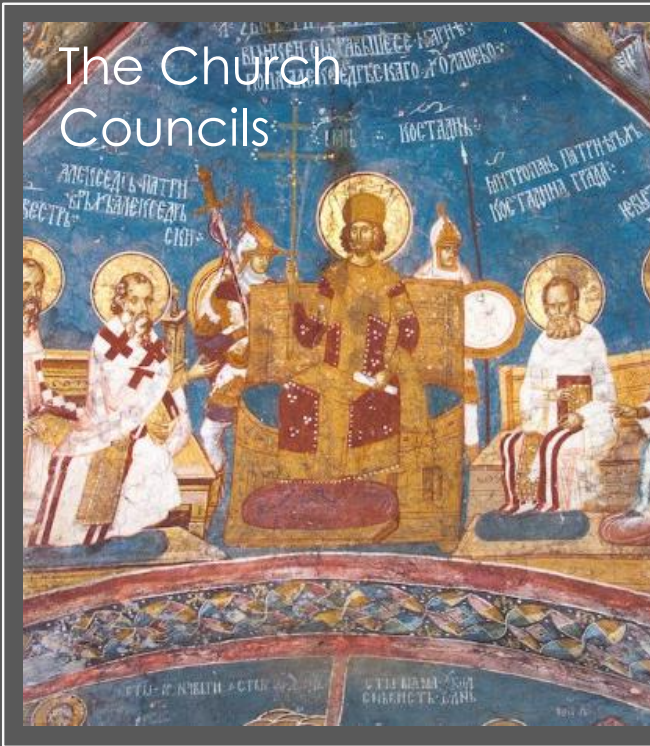


RECAP

We see the church became a powerful institution because of 5 factors:

- Rome's moves for power.
- Over time, more look to Rome for leadership.
- Church granted power to rule.
- Sacramentalism.
- People couldn't read Scripture to validate Church's practices.

Now let's see how additional teachings/practices were added over time...



Protestants agree with this...

1. The First Council of Nicea (325)

- **Christ is divine, of the same nature** as the Father.
- Bishops have jurisdiction over own geographical areas.

2. The First Council of Constantinople (381)

- **Proclaimed deity of the Holy Spirit.**
- Forbade heresies and paganism.

3. The Council of Ephesus (431)

- **Christ was one person with 2 natures:** fully human and fully divine (condemned Nestorianism).
- Said Mary was the “God-bearer” or “the mother of God” (*Θεοτόκος*). This doesn’t mean Mary is God, but that baby Jesus was fully God even in the womb (Jesus did not later become God at the baptism).

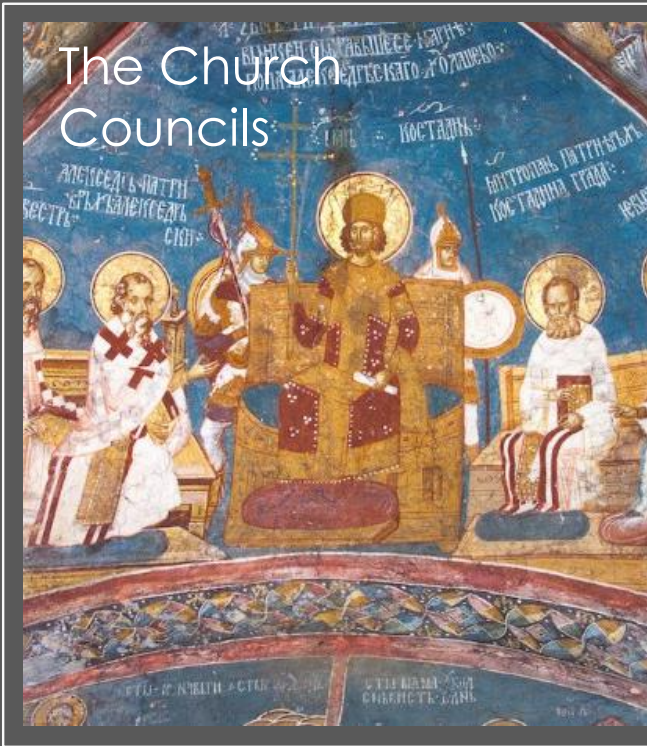
4. The Council of Chalcedon (451)

- **Reaffirmed Christ has 2 natures** (not one mixed one like Eutychians/monophysites were teaching)

We can quickly look at the church councils to see the additional teachings/practices were added over time.

First, it’s important to know that Protestants Agree with first Four Councils

We looked at these before.



The Church Councils

Protestants start disagreeing here...

5. The Second Council of Constantinople (553)

- **Perpetual virginity of Mary**
- Condemned heretical views about Christ's nature.

6. The Third Council of Constantinople (680)

- **Christ had two wills:** a human will and divine will.
- A pope was condemned.

7. The Second Council of Nicea (787)

- Addressed controversy called the **iconoclastic controversy**.
- Said **we must venerate images**.
- Encouraged **prayer to Mary**.

Protestants begin to disagree with dogma from these...

5. The Second Council of Constantinople (553)

- **Perpetual virginity of Mary**

This says Mary was **always a virgin**—not just before but even **after Jesus was born**. Mary had no relations in her marriage and no other children besides Jesus (children mentioned in Mk 6:3 and Mt 13:55-56 were from a previous marriage of Joseph, cousins or close to the family.)

- Condemned heretical views about Christ's nature: Arianism, Nestorianism, Eutychianism, monophysitism and adoptionism (we agree).

7. The Second Council of Nicea (787)

- Addressed controversy called the **iconoclastic controversy**. Some (like the Emperor!) were saying it was wrong to venerate icons and images of Jesus, the saints, etc. Conclusion was **we must venerate images**.
- Encouraged **prayer to Mary**.

Image Veneration

- ▶ 2nd Council Nicea said we must venerate images:

“...receiving their holy and honourable relics with all honour, **I salute and venerate these with honour**, hoping to have a share in their holiness. Likewise also the venerable images of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the humanity he assumed for our salvation; and of **our spotless Lady**, the holy Mother of God; and of the angels like God; and of the holy Apostles, Prophets, Martyrs, and of all the Saints — **the sacred images of all these, I salute and venerate...**” (2 Nicea, Session 1, AD787)



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Otherwise, the person is anathematized:

“Anathema to those who apply the words of Holy Scripture which were spoken against idols, to the venerable images. **Anathema to those who do not salute the holy and venerable images.**” (2 Nicea, AD787)

Meaning of “anathema”:

“...if anyone does not so believe, but undertakes to debate the matter further... such an one our holy ecumenical council (fortified by the inward working of the Spirit of God, and by the traditions of the Fathers and of the Church) anathematizes. **Now anathema is nothing less than complete separation from God.**” (The Letter of the Synod to the Emperor and Empress)

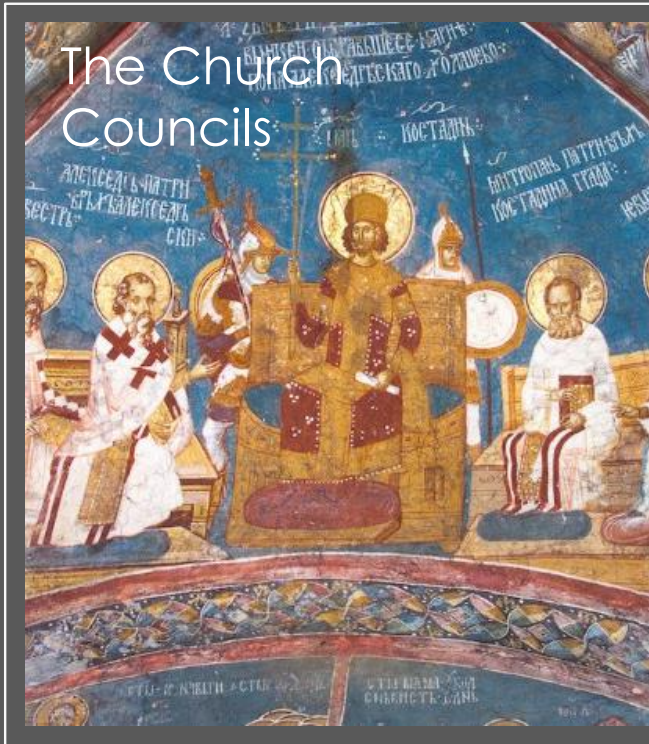


Prayer to Mary encouraged

- ▶ “If anyone shall not confess the **Holy Ever-Virgin Mary**, truly and properly the Mother of God, to be **higher than every creature** whether visible or invisible, and does not with sincere faith **seek her intercessions** as of one having confidence in her access to our God, since she bore him, let him be anathema.” (2 Nicea, 15, AD 787)

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Eastern Orthodox start disagreeing here...

8. The Fourth Council of Constantinople (869)

- Some **challenged filioque** clause of Nicene Creed which said the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father “and the Son”.
- Last council called by an emperor.

9. The First Lateran Council (1123)

- First council called by a pope.
- Said emperors & laypeople could not interfere with elections.

10. The Second Lateran Council (1139)

- Addressed the problem of two popes.
- **Celibacy of priests and monks.**
- Condemned a reformer named **Arnold.**

11. The Third Lateran Council (1179)

- Said only college of cardinals could elect pope.
- **Outlawed simony**, selling of church office or spiritual privilege.

Eastern Orthodox begin to disagree with dogma from these...

8. The Fourth Council of Constantinople (869)

- Last council called by an emperor.
- Some were **challenging the filioque** clause of Nicene Creed which said the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father “and the Son” (called the filioque).

10. The Second Lateran Council (1139)

- Addressed the problem of two popes elected by different groups of cardinals (had to depose one).
- **Celibacy of priests and monks** (1139 marriages declared invalid).
- Condemned a reformer named **Arnold of Brescia.**
 - Arnold was a reformer.
 - Taught people **could confess to fellow believers** (not required to confess to priests).
 - He was also **upset by wealth** of the church.

The Church Councils

Key turning point in development of Roman Catholicism...

12. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215)

- **Doctrine of transubstantiation.**
- **Primacy of Roman bishop.**
- Dogma of the **seven sacraments.**
- Creation of Office of **Inquisitors** (even allowing torture).

13. The First Council of Lyons (1245)

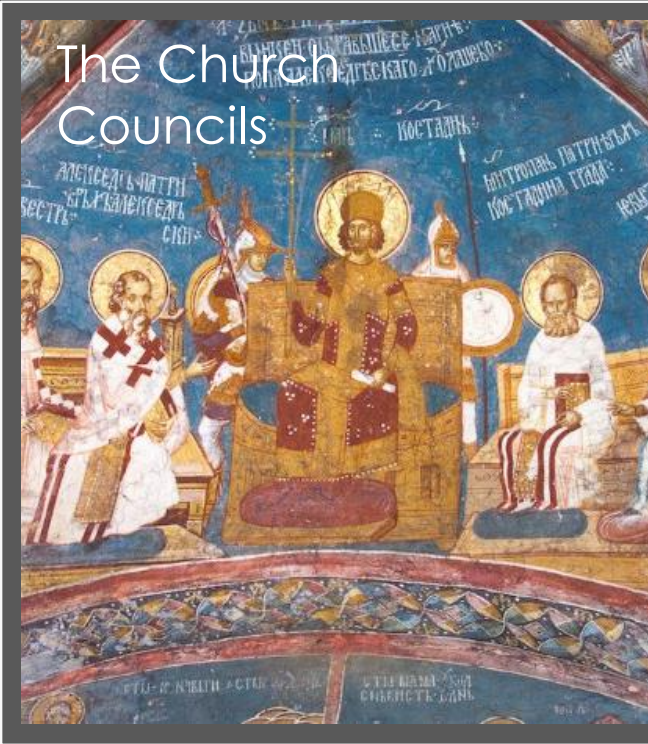
- Addressed **moral decadence** in clergy.
- Addressed Great Schism with East.

14. The Second Council of Lyons (1274)

- Failed attempt to unite with Eastern Church

15. The Council of Vienne (1311–1312)

- Addressed **immorality** with Templars, a church military order.



The following is a key turning point in development of Roman Catholicism...

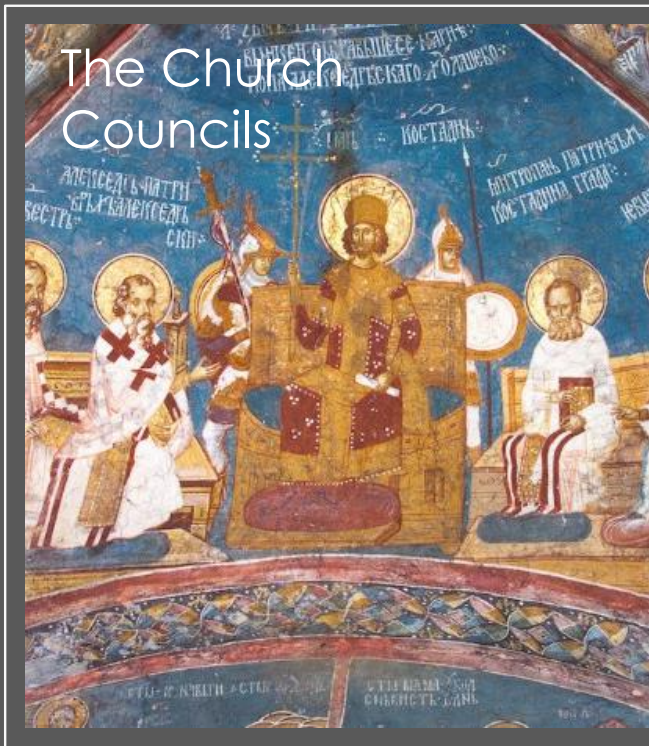
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Q. What are the seven sacraments in Roman Catholicism?

- Baptism
- Confirmation
- Eucharist (Communion)
- Penance (Confession or Reconciliation)
- Anointing of the Sick (formerly known as Last Rites or Extreme Unction)
- Holy Orders (Ordination)
- Matrimony (Marriage)

These sacraments are considered essential to the life of the Catholic Church and are believed to confer grace and spiritual benefits to those who receive them with faith and repentance.



The Church Councils

16. The Council of Constance (1413–1418)

- Problem of **3 simultaneous popes**; replaced all with new one.
- Failed attempt to unite with Eastern Church.
- **Condemned teachings of John Wycliffe** (1324-1384)
- **Burned John Hus** (1372-1415) at the stake.

17. The Council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence (1431–1445)

- Another failed attempt to unite with Eastern Church

18. The Fifth Lateran Council (1513)

- People calling for reform, but they didn't address any issues.

October 31, 1517 - Martin Luther posted *Ninety-five Theses* on the door of the church at Wittenberg

Ripe for Reformation

16. The Council of Constance (1413–1418)

- Failed attempt to unite with Eastern Church.
- Addressed problem of **3 simultaneous popes** by deposing all and installing new one.
- **Condemned teachings of John Wycliffe** (1324-1384)
 - Denounced **luxury** of church.
 - Wanted to translate Bible into language of the people.
 - Attacked papacy, veneration of saints, sacraments, transubstantiation and monasticism.
- **Burned John Hus** (1372-1415) at the stake.
 - Had similar beliefs as Wycliffe.
 - Hus denounced moral failings of clergy, bishops, papacy.
 - Spoke against indulgences.

October 31, 1517 - Martin Luther posted *Ninety-five Theses* on the door of the church at Wittenberg

DISCUSS

- ▶ How can we ensure that our own practices and teachings as Christians remain true to the biblical message and do not become overly influenced by tradition or cultural norms? Are there any biblical passages or teachings that underscore the importance of holding fast to the truth of Scripture?

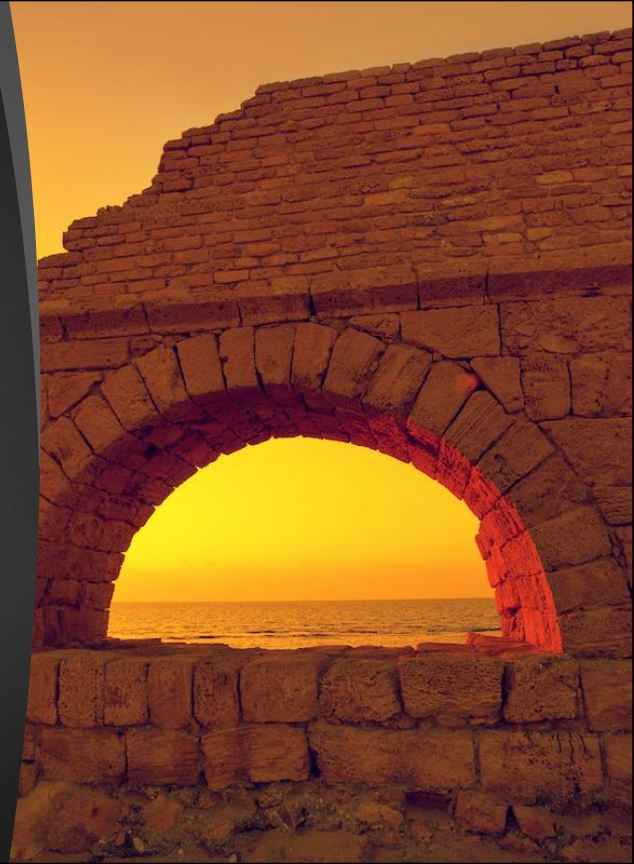
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Why the Reformation?

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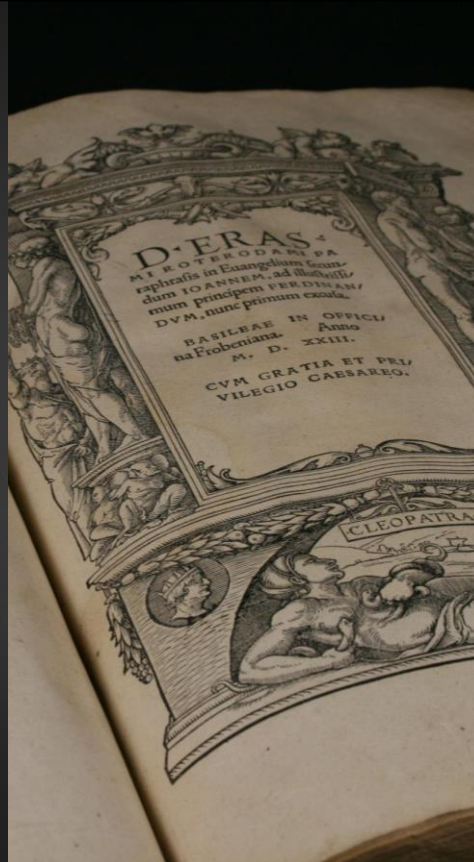
- ▶ Church becomes powerful institution.
- ▶ Additional teachings/practices were added.
- ▶ **People begin questioning the Church.**
- ▶ Martin Luther's protest.



People begin to question the Church.

Here are 2 major factors that led to questioning the church's authority...

1. Humanism



People begin to question the Church.

Factor #1. Humanism

- Humanism focused on **the value and potential of the individual person**.
- **Critical thinking** was put over dogma of the church.
- There was a growing **sense of individualism** and a **desire to question traditional authority**, including that of the church.
- **Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam** (c. 1469-1536).
 - **Believed personal Bible reading** could transform readers and bring them closer to God.
 - He **published the Greek New Testament** to help scholars understand the text in its original context.
 - Wanted return to original sources, like the writings of the **Bible** and **early church fathers**.

2. Printing Press



People begin to question the Church.

Factor #2. The Printing Press

- The development of printing technology in the late Middle Ages made it **easier and cheaper** to produce **books**, including **Bibles**.
- This made it possible for more people to **own and read the Bible for themselves**.
- **The printing press allowed people to have Bibles in their own hands.**
- People could see for themselves how different the church's practices and teachings were from the New Testament era.

- People also began to realize there were **errors in the Vulgate** translation.
- **Church practices** were shown to be based on **faulty translation**. 3 examples:
 - (1) Eph. 5:31-2 said marriage is sacrament in Vulgate but mystery in Greek;
 - (2) Matt 4:17 said to "do penance" but Greek says "repent";
 - (3) In Luke 1:28 Gabriel said Mary was "full of grace" but Greek meant "favored one" and there's no idea that she's a reservoir full of grace (*gratia plena*).

DISCUSS

- ▶ The removal of scriptural checks and balances was a significant issue during the Middle Ages. How do we ensure that Scripture remains at the forefront of our faith and practice? Are there any biblical passages or teachings that underscore the importance of Scripture in the life of a believer?

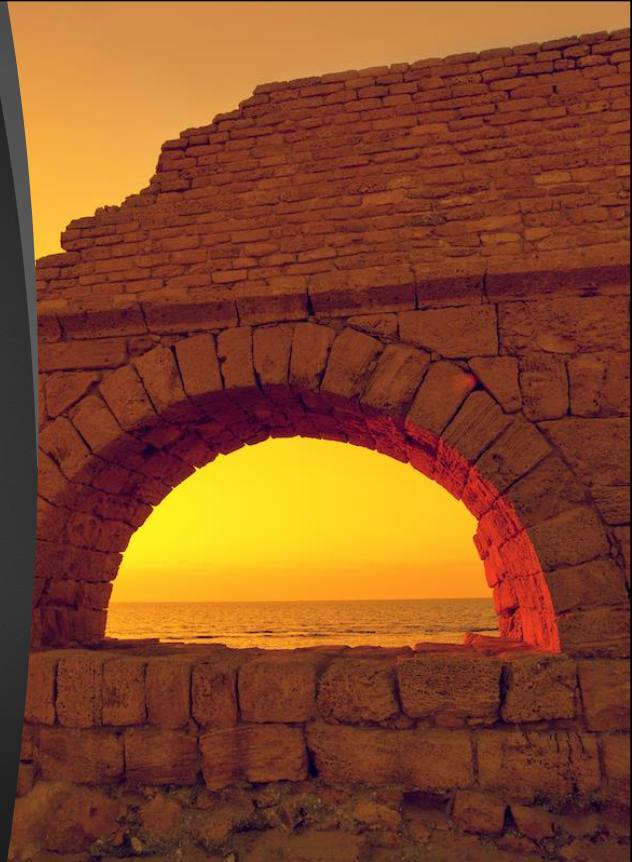
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RECAP

People begin to question the Church.

2 major factors that led to questioning the church's authority...

- Humanism.
- The Printing Press.

It was in this environment that we have Martin Luther's protest which sparked a reformation. Here's his story...



Luther's Story

Luther's Story

- Martin Luther was **commissioned to teach** through the books of **Romans, Galatians** and **Hebrews**
- As he studied, he discovered the biblical teaching of **justification by faith**.
- **Took a trip to Rome** and became upset with the **luxurious lifestyles** of pope, cardinals and bishops.
- The **pope wanted to sell indulgences** to help fund a building project.
- Luther wondered why the **pope was asking for more money** when he already had so much.
- He nailed the **Ninety-five Theses** on Wittenberg church door to **protest sale of these indulgences**.
- This began his formal protest of the Roman Catholic Church abuses.

Some additional objections

- Rejected **sacramentalism**. Affirmed forensic justification (salvation is an act of faith).
- Rejected **auricular confession** (confession to a priest), saying that biblically people are supposed to confess to their fellow brothers.
- Rejected **authority of the pope**. He went so far as to say that the primary problem with the RCC is the pope's desire for opulence and luxury
- Rejected **all sacraments except two**: baptism and the Lord's Supper.
 - There must be an element of faith on the part of the once receiving these two sacraments.
 - With the Lord's Supper he **rejected transubstantiation** but did hold to consubstantiation (the idea that Christ is somehow "under" the elements but that they're not transformed into Christ).
- Rejected **ordination of priests** (idea of priestly class).

Roman Catholic Church's Response

19. The Council of Trent (1545–1563) - Reaction to Protestant Reformation

- Church tradition equal to Scripture.
- Re-affirmed the seven sacraments.
- Re-affirmed transubstantiation
- Good works necessary for salvation
- Purgatory
- Indulgences
- Veneration of saints and images
- Prayers to dead saints
- Canonicity of 11 apocryphal books

1854 – Pope declared *ex cathedra* dogma of the Immaculate Conception

- Mary was born without sin.

20. The First Vatican Council (1870)

- Papal infallibility when Pope speaks *ex cathedra*.
- Mary as co-redemptrix discussed but not made dogma.
- Denounced atheism, materialism and pantheism.

1950 – Pope declared *ex cathedra* dogma of the Assumption of Mary.

- Mary's body was taken up to heaven at the end of her life
- Does not say whether she physically died or not.

21. The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965)

- Allowed mass in local languages (not Latin).
- No longer called Protestants “heretics” but “separated brethren.”
- Accepted salvation of sincere non-Christians.

(FYI) Post-Reformation Councils

This is provided for those curious about what the Roman Catholic Church's response was to the Reformation.

The Ecumenical Councils after the Luther's 1517 protest.

The Council of Trent was a series of meetings held by the Catholic Church in response to the Protestant Reformation.

Dogma



- ▶ Dogma is declared through a council or when the pope speaks *ex cathedra* (“from the chair”).
- ▶ Anyone rejecting Church dogma is under “anathema” (condemnation and/or excommunication).

What is “Dogma?”

dog·ma: a principle laid down by an authority as **incontrovertibly true**.

Where does it come from?

- Dogma is declared through a **council** or when the pope speaks *ex cathedra* (“from the chair”).
- **Anyone rejecting** Church dogma is under “**anathema**” (condemnation and/or excommunication).

Protestants are concerned with **Roman Catholic dogma** that’s been **added** over the years.

A quick survey of the councils to see dogmas we’re concerned about...

DISCUSS

- ▶ What do you think about having respectful dialogue between Protestants and Roman Catholics over their differing theological perspectives and practices? Why is it important, or why not? Are there any biblical teachings that can guide us in approaching these conversations with humility, love, and mutual respect?

Think About or Discuss

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