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Roman Catholic Era Medieval Period

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Roman Catholic Era
Medieval Period
AD 1000—1500

The church's response to loss and decline under Islam was mixed: the cross in one and the sword in the other. The early church had generally condemned war. But the western medieval Roman Church said, "God wills it!" Apparently baptism had not washed away certain vices of the now Christianized barbarians and Vikings, whose ancestors regarded war as an art. While the church can transform her surrounding culture, the culture also changes the church, for better or worse.

A barbaric spirit entered the church. Viking descendants would lead all of the major Crusades. Muslims still remember the cruelty and revenge Christians inflicted on them in God's name, even though their retaliation was not too dissimilar. Hostility and persecution against the Jews in this period was equally atrocious by both Crusaders and Muslims. The theme and means of “evangelism” in the empire was by a “compel” focus. This notion came from the words of Jesus: “‘Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled” (NKJ Luke 14:23). The church took the exaggerated meaning of this word to justify torture, capital punishment and the Inquisition. By the words, "compel them to come in," surely Jesus meant something different.

But when the institutional church shows its worst face, there are always men and women, usually on the fringes of the church, who hold fast the gospel and become instruments for revival and mission (Paul Pierson). From the 10th to the 14th century there were many lay-led renewals. But monastic movements again began to multiply and sweep across Europe. Their overall and long-term effect was three-fold: (1) they purged corruption from the church. (2) They united nominal Christianity to biblical ideals. (3) They spread the faith to the unreached peoples. By the year 1200 the gospel had reached nearly every major people group in Europe. Only one or two remained, the Lithuanians (reached in the 14th century), and the Lapps (reached in the 16th century by Swedish Lutherans).

General status of Christianity at the millennium

As the new millennium dawns, it had been 32 generations since the Ascension of Christ and the world is 16.9% Christian, and 21.3% evangelized, with the Scriptures translated into 17 languages. The total martyrs since AD 33 is estimated to be 3,064,000 which represents 0.3% of all Christians ever at a rate of 3,400 per year. The world population was 275 million and curiously, the average male height was 5ft. 6 in. and the average life span was 30 years.

Most of the N. African church has been destroyed and is referred to as the “Land of the Vanished Church.” The Eastern church has authority over 624 dioceses around the eastern Mediterranean, which it was soon to loose to the Muslims. The Christian conversion of northern Europe by the Latin Western Church was completed with the
emergence of Christian kingdoms in Denmark, England, Hungary, Norway, Poland, Sweden and Scotland.

By 1020 over 50% of the population of Syria, Iraq and Khorasan (greater part of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) had become Nestorians. The authority of the Nestorian Catholics extends from the Tigris River to China, to the southern-most tip of India. This dominance would begin to unravel with the Turkish and Arab conquests throughout the Middle East.

In 1040 the Seljuk Turks (from Turkmenistan) seize power where the Nestorian Christians had dominated, and begin an empire which spreads into Afghanistan; in 1055 they captured Baghdad; then Christian Armenia and in 1071 the Seljuk sultan defeated the Byzantine army under the Emperor Romanus Diogenes. This led to the religious transformation of Anatolia, later the Ottoman Empire and eventually the Republic of Turkey. The Seljuk Empire would rule the region until the 13th century. Thus the whole of Asia Minor becomes Muslim.

After the Viking invasions ended in the eleventh century, Western Europe became settled, urbanized, literate, populous and prosperous. “Under these conditions, Europe ‘discovered’ the Gospels, which resulted in a deep religious change, comparable to the Reformer’s ‘discovery’ of the apostle Paul in the 1500’s” (Lynch, 1996, n/a).

**Early Catholic Reform and Lay Investitures**

When Hildebrand (1025-1085) became Pope Gregory VII in 1073 changed the election of the Pope from the selection by the aristocratic seven deacons of Rome and the German emperor to a procedure of election by the College of Cardinals. He held that the pope was to be rendered absolute subjection by all bishops, clergy and lay people. He sought to correct three abuses: (1) the marriage of the clergy, (2) simony and (3) investiture by secular princes.

Clerical marriage was prohibited in 1074 to prevent the clergy from becoming a hereditary dynasty. He battled hard to stop simony, the buying and selling of church offices from the biblical Simon the magician who tried to buy the gift of the Spirit from the apostles (Acts 8:9-25). During this period “many medieval churches were owned privately by wealthy laymen, monasteries or bishops. The owner sold or passed on the property as he wished, and its revenues went into his pocket. He appointed the priest, had him ordained, and paid him. Many owners gave the parish to a priest as a “living,” who was “rector,” and received all or most of the revenues” (Galli, 1996).

In 1075 he prohibited lay investitures. "For centuries the political leaders of Europe had been accustomed to appointing and/or investing with spiritual and secular authority the higher clergy of their realms. Understandably, such a practice often did not result in appointments of clerical leaders who were either spiritually sensitive or loyal to the church" (Vos, 1994). But the system was a method check-and-balance for the King. The noblemen held their lands (fiefdoms) by inheritance who kept and expanded their land by dynastic marriages and power. Meanwhile the bishops collected revenues from estates within their dioceses, but since they had no legitimate children, when a bishop died it was the king’s right to appoint a successor. A king could kept control of his lands through the bishops. The king could grant a bishopric to members of noble families.
he wished to reaffirm his friendship. Or if a bishopric was left vacant, the king could collect the estates’ revenues until the new bishop was appointed, when he was suppose to repay to the church what he had collected. The lack of this repayment was the motive of the dispute. The Church wanted to end this lay investiture because of the corruption and the practice of simony.

In the selection of the archbishop of Milan both the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Henry IV, and Pope Gregory had a candidate for the office. Pope Gregory threatened to excommunicate the emperor if he did not comply, so Henry IV called a synod of German bishops at Worms (1076) to depose the pope. Gregory excommunicated him and released all German nobles from any allegiance to him. The nobles demanded that Henry reconcile with the pope or loose his throne within a year.

In January, 1077 Emperor Henry IV came to the castle at Canossa in the mountains of Italy. Dressed as a penitent, the emperor stood barefoot in the snow for three days and begged forgiveness until, in Gregory’s words “We loosed the chain of the anathema and at length received him … into the lap of the Holy Mother Church.” (Shelley, 1995, p. 181) This broke the power of laymen intimidating Catholic authorities. Gregory insisted that the entire Christian community was to be organized under the pope as its only visible head and that he was guarded from all possibility of error by the presence of Peter perpetually in his successors at Rome. This became known as the Infallibility of the Pope, an essential doctrine for Roman Catholics.

Innocent III was like Gregory VII, however, in holding an exalted view of his office. “The successor of Peter,” he announced, “is the Vicar of Christ: he has been established as a mediator between God and man, below God but beyond man; less than God but more than man; who shall judge all and be judged by no one.”

Innocent III told the princes of Europe that the papacy was like the sun, while kings were like the moon. As the moon received its light from the sun, so kings derived their powers from the pope. The papacy’s chief weapons in support of this authority were spiritual penalties. Almost everyone believed in heaven and hell and in the pope’s management of the grace to get to one and avoid the other.

Thus, the pope’s first weapon in bringing peasants and princes to their knees was the threat of excommunication. He could pronounce their anathema and they would be “set apart” from the church, deprived of the grace essential for salvation (Shelley, 1995, p. 185).

As an extension of the lay investitures the pope created the authority of the interdict. This meant that the pope could block all the church’s benefits to an entire

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1 The first monarch called “King of the Romans” or “Emperor-elect” since he had not been anointed and crowned Holy Roman Emperor by the Pope. He argued with the Papacy as to whom appointed whom.
population because of someone’s rebellion, especially a rebellious leader. Thus all public worship, and the dispensing of any sacrament from the entire land or nation of a disobedient ruler would be threatened causing an entire population loose any hope of salvation. Pope Innocent III applied the interdict 85 times against rebellious leaders.

In England, King John differed with the Pope over the selection of the archbishop of Canterbury. Innocent placed England under interdict and excommunicated John. The barons of the land forced the king to capitulate. John’s reconciliation made him a vassal, England was received back as a fief paying the pope a sizable annual tribute.

These two instruments brought the papacy to its highest authority and influence in the thirteenth century. The influence of the pope in today’s world cannot be understood without an appreciation of where she secured the political and religious authority throughout the world. Many countries yet today operate under a concordat with Rome, meaning that all public or military officials must be submissive to Rome or face these consequences, especially in the Latin countries in Europe and Latin America, as well as in Asia.

**Holy Land Pilgrimages**

The religious pilgrimages were increasingly popular during this era, even though it was very risky and dangerous. Medieval Christians wanted to see with their own eyes the holy places and holy people that figured so prominently in their religion. “Between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries, hundreds of thousands made the long, expensive, and dangerous pilgrimage to the Holy Land” (Lynch, 1996, n/a).

The need for a pilgrimage arose out of two concepts: the need to do penance for sins and the cult of relics. A pilgrimage was considered penitential, like fasting or alms giving. Since it required the sacrifice of time and money it was “just” payment for their sins. It was dangerous because of possible shipwreck, robbers, capture and enslavement or disease. To the medieval pilgrim, it was worth the risk for the reward of forgiveness of sins and a renewed faith. Joseph Lynch, professor of medieval history at Ohio State University, writes this insight into the medieval faith that motivated much of the actions of the time:

Pilgrimage was rooted in the veneration of saints and their relics, or relicta (“things left behind”). Medieval Christians believed the barrier between this life and the next was porous: saints were not dead any more than Jesus was. Theologians taught that people could not only ask saints, God’s friends, to intercede for them, but could do so from any locale. But many medieval people believed that at the shrines, saints were present in a special way—St Peter at Rome, Saint James at Compostela, Saint Thomas Becket at Canterbury, and so on.

The bodily remains of saints were taken from their graves in solemn ceremony and placed in receptacles called reliquaries, which were often magnificent works of art. Since the demand for saint’s bodies outpaced the supply, the bodies were reverently dismembered, and the pieces received the same treatment as intact bodies. In addition, items associated with the saint—clothing, pieces of a cross or sword by which they were executed, and the like—were also revered.

Many medieval Christians found it deeply satisfying to go to the saint, kneel in his or her presence, touch his or her remains (if one was especially fortunate), and ask
the saint to intercede with God. Pilgrims often expected miracles, especially healing from infirmities and disease, at these shrines.

Concern for the dead was another central figure of late medieval religion, and the doctrine of purgatory was very much alive. The official teaching was hazy at the edges, but the point was clear enough: some Christians who had died in God’s grace were still burdened with unforgiven sins and unfulfilled penances. They needed to be cleansed.

People in purgatory could no longer help themselves, and they might remain in the purging fire for decades, centuries, or unimaginably long periods. Medieval Christians had a strong sense of solidarity, and they believed they could help one another even across the grave. One person’s prayers, alms, or good deeds could literally be donated to another person, including those in purgatory. Those concerned about dead parents, spouses, children, or others prayed for them, asking God to be merciful and to shorten their time in purgation.

Anything that would quench or destroy these hopes for eternal life would be dealt with firmly and conclusively. Thus the provocations from the Muslims motivated several hundred years of costly crusades to attempt to secure these sacred sites for their pilgrimages.

Eight Major Crusades\(^2\) drained Europe and destroyed any hope of reconciliation with Muslims

Many crusades did not fight against Muslims or take place in the Holy Lands. The Church marched against European pagans (i.e. Slavs) or heretics (i.e. Albigensians).

It was only the battlefield that stopped the initial conquest of Islam across N. Africa to Spain and throughout the Middle East in the seventh and eighth century. The Arab forces continued to strengthen waiting for the right opportunity to strike again in the East.

Meanwhile pilgrims to the Holy Lands continued to increase. By the eleventh century these pilgrims began to encounter persecution from the Seljuk Turks, fanatical converts to Islam who swept into the Near East defeating Jerusalem from their Muslim brothers and continued north into Asia Minor.

The Eastern Empire fell to the Muslim invaders in 1071 at the battle of Manzikert. Within a few years all of Asia Minor was lost. In 1095, in a response to a plea for help from the Eastern Emperor Alexius I, Pope Urban II proclaimed the first Crusade to regain the Holy Lands. The Pope promised riches and, most importantly, all participants would receive full forgiveness of all past sins and, if killed, immediate entrance into heaven. As Urban ended his impassioned appeal a roar rose from the multitude: Deus Volt! God wills it! So there on the spot Urban declared that Deus Volt! would be the crusader battle cry against the Muslim enemy (Shelley, 1995, p. 187).

\(^2\) Numbering the Crusades is not precise because a number of extraneous crusades occurred in the same time period (Albigensian Crusade in S. France in 1209 to eliminate heretics, and the Children’s Crusade to the Holy Lands. The Eighth Crusade (1270) dissolved and never made it to Syria. The Ninth Crusade (1271-1272) was a failure and ended the Crusades in the Holy Lands. There were other Crusades in N. Europe to subjugate and convert people groups to Christianity from the 12\(^{th}\) to the 16\(^{th}\) centuries. From 1420 to 1434 the Hussite Crusade was a military action against the followers of Jan Hus in Bohemia.
The Crusades defined a new type of war, a “Just War.” Augustine of Hippo had laid down the principles of a “just war” 600 years previous: “It was to be conducted by the state; its purpose was the vindication of justice, meaning the defense of life and property; and its code called for respect for noncombatants, hostages, and prisoners. All these evaporated in the heat of the holy cause” (Shelley, 1995, p. 187).

This new “Just War” took on the conquest of the Holy Lands from the infidels without any regard for prisoners or civilians. Unleashing this horde of Europeans warriors on the Middle East for over 200 years continues to effect world politics today. Atrocities of rape, desecration of dead bodies, massacres and plunder in search of promised gold left bitter scars that have never healed. For the first ten years the Crusaders determined to instigate terror against the Muslims and Jews by mass executions, throwing of severed heads over the besieged city walls, and the exhibition of naked cadavers.

The Crusades were horribly expensive. Caroline Marshal, professor of history at James Madison University, wrote that King Louis IX spent more than six times his annual income to finance one crusade.

Pope Urban II had gathered leaders of Europe at Clermont, in SE France in November, 1095. In a public meeting Urban called upon the men of France to defend their fellow Greek Christians, who had been invaded by the Turks. The liberation of Jerusalem, especially the Holy Sepulcher, from the infidel Muslims brought forth the battle cry, “God wills it! God wills it!”

Europe had learned to fear the Muslims as fearless devotees of Islam that promised their warriors a special heavenly reward if they died in battle. These Crusading warriors went because they hungered for forgiveness. Vows and pilgrimages to the Holy Land – touch sacred history and receive partial remission of sins – had become increasingly popular. “Now the pope announced a pilgrimage of extraordinary importance. Not only would Jerusalem and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher be delivered from defiling infidels, ‘Remission of sins will be granted to those going.’ All past sins would be forgiven!” (Galli, 1993, n/a). Though the Catholic Church had claimed the power to remit part of a sinner’s temporal punishment, this historic moment was the first time that complete remission would be granted.

First Crusade, 1095—1099

The First Crusade was the most successful of the eight crusades to the Holy Lands and the only one that would reach its objective of capturing Jerusalem. In 1096 at Nicaea, the first city besieged by the crusaders, about 43,000 knights, foot soldiers, and noncombatants were participants. Three years later at Jerusalem with barely more than 5,000 knights and infantry, it quickly conquered the coastal area and finally Jerusalem after a five-week siege, which ended in a three-day bloody conquest. This concluded nearly four years of prayer, courage, savagery and faith. The knights set up the feudal Latin kingdom, the Kingdom of Jerusalem that survived until 1291 when it finally fell to the Muslims again.
The council that initiated the First Crusade sought to renew the Truce of God, which “limited military bloodshed. Under the Truce of God, knights were forbidden to feud from Wednesday evening to Monday morning, and on holy days. The Crusades were likewise seen as a way to bring peace, because they redirected knights’ aggression away from Europe” (Marshall, 1993, n/a).

The Jews of Jerusalem fared no better than the Muslims as the city fell to the Crusaders. They were seen as aiding the Muslim enemy. It was seen as the judgment of God against unbelievers in the Holy City. No one was spared, not even those who pleaded for mercy. “By evening, soldiers and pilgrims, “weeping from excess of gladness,” picked their way through the bodies of people and horses, past piles of heads, hands, and feet, and made their way to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. There, “singing a new song unto the Lord in a high-sounding voice of exultation, and making offerings and most humble supplications, [they] joyously visited the Holy Place as they had long desired to do” (Galli, 1993, n/a).

In the summer heat the stench of decaying bodies became sickening. Surviving Saracens were forced to drag the dead bodies outside the walls, stack them into piles as “big as houses” then set on fire. A month later the crusading army defeated the Egyptians that responded to the Muslim request for aid. By the end of August the majority of the knights, having fulfilled their vows, headed back to Europe.

Second Crusade, 1147-1149

The Muslims mounted a threat from the North retaking Edessa from the Europeans and Bernard of Clairvaux, perhaps the greatest preacher of his day, responded to motivate a new wave of Crusaders, including the king of France, Louis VII and the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Here is an excerpt of his essay “On Loving God”:

Evil men have begun to occupy this land of the new promise, and unless someone resists them, they will be feasting their eyes on the sanctuary of our religion and will try to strain that very bed, on which for our sake slept our life in death; they will profane the Holy Places – the places, I say, purpled with the blood of the immaculate Lamb…. Why are you delaying, servants of the cross, why are you deceiving yourselves, you who have great physical strength and many worldly goods? Take the sign of the cross and the supreme pontiff, the vicar of him to whom it was said, “Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven,” offers you this full indulgence of all the crimes you confess with contrite hearts. Take the gift that is
offered to you and race one another to be the first to
take advantage of the irrecoverable opportunity of the
indulgence. I as you and advise you not to want to put
your own business before the business of Christ.”

Bernard of Clairvaux, son of a crusader and a monk,
persuaded the church to recognize a new order: the fighting
friars known as the Templars. Though they took vows of
poverty and chastity, these military monks were allowed to
kill. They defended the pilgrim roads in Palestine. One of
his famous statements was, “You have been entrusted with
the stewardship over the world, not given possession of it” (Miller, 1993, n/a)

As many as 50,000 volunteers joined together from France alone. This second
crusade was completely unsuccessful in taking Damascus, which encouraged Saladin to
eventually recaptured Jerusalem in 1187. As a result Bernard’s popularity deteriorated.

Third through Eighth Crusades, 1189—1272

Since the initiative of the Crusades came from the Catholic Church, it fell on the
Pope to raise the funds for the growing costs. In the Catholic Church sins had to be
confessed to a priest and a sentence of penance, some act of denial or repetition of
memorized prayers, to show the sincerity of the confessor. If he died before completing
his penance, he was told there is a purgatory, similar to hell, where his sins would be
purged in a period of time. For years the Church could remit part of this temporal
punishment in purgatory through the saying of mass, but Urban II at Clermont first
offered total remission or “indulgence” for the crusaders going to Jerusalem.

With the desperate need for finances, it only seemed reasonable that someone
contributing to the cause to enable the crusade could likewise receive an indulgence of
forgiveness. This opened the door to enormous and long-range fund raising negotiating
the forgiveness of sins for donations.

The Third Crusade (1188-92) brought King Richard the Lion-Hearted of
England (1157-1199) and King Philip Augustus of France who lead in the conquest of
port city of Acre. Though he had been crowned barely ten months earlier, Richard had
collected an unpopular tithe of all income, arm-twisted acquaintances for donations and
thus financed 800 mounted soldiers.

On one occasion while negotiating the release of hostages from Muslim captors, he
grew suspicious of their bad faith, so he ordered the immediate massacre of 2,700
Muslim hostages.

Twice Richard had mounted an assault on Jerusalem but only managed to get within
twelve miles of the Holy City. His supply lines were too limited preventing his advance.

After 16 months in Palestine, Richard heard his brother Philip was plotting a
takeover, and that France was amassing troops for an attack. Before departing he
managed a treaty with the Muslim general Saladin, eventually negotiating a treaty for
unarmed Christians pilgrims to enter Jerusalem freely and a free stretch of the coast from
Tyre to Jaffa for the Crusaders. Richard was 41 when a lone arrow in N. France killed
him.

Saladin and Guy de Lusignan 1187 surrender of Jerusalem
The Fourth Crusade (1202-1204) lacked funds to transport volunteers so they sacked a town near Venice, Zara (Zadar), then they were persuaded to join the efforts of a former deposed emperor to retake Constantinople and gain the support of the Eastern empire. This detour destroyed the capability of Constantinople to defend herself. The Crusaders set up the Latin Empire of Constantinople in 1204 and forgot about continuing on to Jerusalem. This is seen as the final break between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church. This empire lasted until 1261 but the city never recovered and eventually fell to the Turks in 1453.

The Fifth Crusade (1217-1221) with forces from Hungary and Austria they attempted to retake Jerusalem. Then they proceeded to Egypt where they were defeated in 1221 agreeing to an 8-year peace treaty.

The Sixth Crusade (1228-1229) was headed by Emperor Frederick II. After promising to lead a crusade but failing to do so, resulting in his excommunication by Pope Gregory IX in 1228. To make amends he goes to Palestine and through diplomacy negotiates Jerusalem, Nazareth and Bethlehem for ten years. The Jerusalem treaty gave the Christians most of Jerusalem, but the Muslims were given the control of the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aksa mosque. Later in 1244 the Muslims regained control of Jerusalem.

The Seventh crusade (1248-50) was provoked by the defeat of the Templars in Egypt, which was brought Louis IX of France in 36 ships loaded with 15,000 men, horses and supplies, to battle against Egypt, the center of Muslim power, which ending in failure as well. Louis was captured before making it back to the ship and forced to pay a high ransom. He blamed himself for the failure, believing that God was punishing him for his sins. He took his army to Palestine, where he built walls and towers around several costal cities. He said for four years before returning to France.

Twenty-two years later Louis IX mounted another crusade (sometimes counted as the Eighth) landed in Tunis, N. Africa, in 1270. Dysentery and typhoid swept through his unsanitary camp. As he was dying while doing penance on a bed of ashes, he whispered the name of the city he never won: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem.”

Louis became the only king of France named a saint by the Roman Catholic Church.

The Eighth crusade (1271-1272) was headed by the future Edward I of England, but was deemed a failure as well. The Egyptian Mamluks pledged to rid the Middle East of all the Christian Franks. With the fall of Antioch (1268), Tripoli (1289) and Acre (1291) there were no remnants of European forces left. Those Christians unable to abandon the cities were either massacred or enslaved.

Pope Innocent III would launch another crusade in the late thirteenth century in Europe to the south of France against the Albigensian heretics to crush a significant movement toward a more biblical Christianity independent of Rome, which could not be tolerated. Memorials to the massacre of several hundred thousand Albigensians remain to this day. As late as 1580 there was a crusade to Morocco that fits all the features of crusading.

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3 The Order of the Temple was organized to ensure the safety of the Christians who made pilgrimages to Jerusalem after the First Crusade. Endorsed by the Pope (1129) the order grew in membership and power. The non-combatant members helped organize a large economic infrastructure throughout Christendom as an early form of banking. After the Crusades they lost support and their secret initiation brought distrust.
The Muslims continued to advance from the late fourteenth century to the late seventeenth century. Vienna, in the heart of Europe, was besieged twice – once in 1683, which was not very long ago.

Results of the “Holy War” Crusades

Basically the Crusades ended in failure in 1242 when they lost Jerusalem, which remained in Muslim hands until 1917. Another objective of the Crusades was to heal the division between the Eastern and Western Catholic Church, but the fourth Crusade forever destroyed this possibility. There grew a total inability for the Latin Christians to understand the Greek Christians, which only hardened the division between them.

The Crusades introduce the use of indulgences for fund raising. This practice would degenerate into gross commercialization of the souls of men that men of integrity could not accept. In a day when people were obsessed with their sinfulness and uncertainty of their standing before God, there was only two options for relief: escape or renounce the world entirely in a monastery or soldiering in a Crusade in defense of the Church could make up for whatever sins that might have been committed.

The international travel brought the end of feudalism and provincialism in Western Europe. The major leadership was exposed to new foods, dress, cultures, and lifestyles, as well as the scars of the horrible aspects of war.

The destruction of the Byzantine Empire was not a good move for Europe. No longer would there be a buffer state between the Muslims and the West. Within a few years the Turks would begin an invasion of western Europe that would take Islam all the way to Vienna and leave the Muslim influence a dominant factor in a number of countries provoking wars until this day in Europe.

The Muslim world would never forget the atrocities of the war with the “Christian” world. Barbarism was common among the Vikings and pagan tribes raiding into the Roman Empire before they became “Christian.” Following their political and superficial conversion to Christianity, followed by the call for their sword to be used for the Church, it was too good to be true. The brutality of the Franks (who were the primary power in the Middle East) willingly massacred civilians and broke promises without remorse, whereas the Muslim leaders were considered warriors but men of honor. Regrettably the Crusader’s indiscriminate tactics would make it extremely difficult to ever bridge the gap with Islam by any means except the power of God.

The papacy gained the most from the Crusades. Its authority was greatly increased, in spite of the lack of beneficial results. The Church learned how to raise enormous funds for religious causes by selling indulgences. The power of the European kings also increased as many of the barons who had given the monarchs trouble went to the Crusades, from which many did not return.

Catholic support of violence as morally neutral

Augustine’s justification for a Just War was extended to accept the inevitable cruelties and horror of war. His classic example uses the decision of a surgeon who faces a patient with gangrene in the leg and is going to die. The surgeon believes that the
only way to save him is to amputate his leg. Against the agreement of the patient, the
surgeon straps him to a table and saws off the leg. This is illustrative of extreme violence.

The question is raised: was this violence evil? Augustine said no. In his logic he
concluded that if there is one exception to the concept that violence is evil, then violence
is not intrinsically evil and can be justified under certain circumstances.

Medieval theologians concluded that violence could be either evil or not [a
necessary evil?]. It was argued that the crusaders were defending their fellow Christians
in the East from the Muslim aggression, and argued that the control of the sacred sites in
Palestine made the conquest a Just War. Ironically, it is apparent that the medieval
Christians risked their lives and sacrificed nearly all they possessed to give themselves to
the Crusades as an expression of their love of God and their neighbor (Eastern Church).

Updates on other simultaneous events

1050 Celtic Church in Britain fights a losing struggle to retain its independence from
Canterbury and Rome; 1070 the Scottish Church resists intrusions; 1169 the English
king Henry II invades Ireland. 1172 marks the end of the Celtic era of Irish
Christianity and in 1284 the Celtic Church of Wales loses its independent existence
and becomes part of the Catholic Church of England.

1056 in the East, the Great Schism occurs between western (Rome) and eastern
(Constantinople) Christianity. The Roman cardinal Humbert places a bull of
excommunication of the patriarch Michael. The Byzantium church declines with
no further missionary outreach implemented.

1100 Christianization of Sweden, Poland, and Finland complete and Hungary accept
Christianity as the national religion.

1149 The Cathars (a dualistic neo-Manichean ascetic sect) or the Albigenses form an
organized Cathar church related to the Bogomil church with 11 bishoprics and wide
followings in France and Italy.

1150 Scottish monks at work in Kiev; Onguts (Tatars inhabitants of Mongolia) in the
time of Genghis Khan became Nestorian Christians through some heroic monks.

1160 The University of Paris, finest university of the Middle Ages, is founded; by 1500,
some 80 university have been established in Europe.

1198 Power of papacy reaches its height during reign of innocent III (1161-1216), who
excommunicated the Holy Roman emperor Otto IV (1182-1218) in 1210 and the
English king John (1167-1216) in 1209.

1200 Life expectancy in Europe is 33 years, rising to 35 by 1800, to 49 by 1900, to 70 by
1960, to 74 by 1980, 90 by 200 and expected to be 120 by 2030.

1209 Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) founds the traveling preachers (Franciscans), which
becomes the largest of the mendicant order; by 1270 they had missionaries in
almost every part of the known world. By 1400, there were missions from Lapland
to Congo and from the Azores to China. They soon reached a medieval peak of
60,000 Franciscans by 1400.

1211 Genghis Khan (1162-1227), titled the Universal Emperor of the Mongols, whose
mother was a Nestorian, attacks China with an army of only 129,000 and massacres
36 million in a decade. He would kill 25% of the population in Iraq and Iran.
1211 Over 80 Waldensians burned as heretics at Strasbourg followed by intermittent severe persecutions especially in 1545.
1215 Magna Carta, the charter of English liberties, was forced on the king by English nobles and commoners and signed by King John (1167-1216) guaranteeing basic liberties, habeas corpus, trial by jury, etc. This had a major effect on English law.
1229 Vernacular Scriptures prohibited by Synod of Toulouse, also at Tarragona, Spain.

**Papacy at its Height under Innocent III (1160-1216)**

In 1215 the Pope Innocent III called the Fourth Lateran Council to resolve a number of doctrinal issues. It was decided that at least annual confession to a priest was mandatory for all laypersons. Likewise it declared the dogma of transubstantiation, which means that the bread and wine become the physical body and blood of Christ upon the pronouncement of the priest. Each time the mass was said the priest could actually perform the sacrifice of Christ. The Council gave official sanction to the seven sacraments through which the Church would minister salvation grace to the faithful.

Likewise the council ordered all the Jews in the land to always wear distinctive dress and to stay in the ghettos.

Early in his reign the Albigensians, a dualistic Gnostic sect in S. France, killed two monks sent to teach them the faith. This was seen as an act of war resulting in a massacre of the Albigensians. Intolerance would soon turn more violent.

**The Inquisition**

The solidarity of a vast organization is often maintained by fear and threat. To bring those whose beliefs or practices that deviated sufficiently from the orthodoxy of the councils back into the Church. In the Early Church period it was the Arians and the Manicheans; in the Middle Ages the targets of the Inquisition was the Cathari (or Albigensians) starting around 1140 and Waldenses starting around 1170. Catharism was a dualistic/Gnostic-type movement meaning the “pure ones” who were in opposition to the Catholic Church protesting the corruption in the clergy.

Some Waldenses claim their heritage goes back to the apostles, but was revived by Peter Waldo in 1173 in Lyon. Their chief “error” was their contempt for ecclesiastical power since they taught and preached outside the control of the clergy. They were condemned for translating literally parts of the Bible deemed heretical by the Church and teaching that all that was needed for salvation was the Bible. They denied that the sacraments had any effect, but never developed a church independent from the Catholic.

Dominic Guzman was concerned about fighting heresy, thus founded the Dominicans or the Friars Preacher, in 1217, specifically to deal with the Cathars. They first attempted a peaceful conversion to Catholicism, but eventually the Church called for a crusade, the Albigensian Crusade (1209-1229), offering to any French nobleman the lands of the Cathars conquered, to eliminate the Cathar heresy in S. France. An estimated

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4 Cathars were a Christian religious sect with dualistic and gnostic aspects that appeared in France in the 11th century then expanded in the 12th and 13th centuries. It came out of the Bogomils of Bulgaria along with the Paulician movement. It was one of many movements which reacted against the power, abuse and materialism of the visible Catholic Church, because power is a manifestation of matter, which is all evil.
200,000 to 1 million people were massacred during the crusade. The two results of this Crusade was the institutionalization of the Dominican Order and the medieval Inquisition, which was given the full papal power of the state to suppress heresy.

Initially the Councils required the secular rulers to prosecute the heretics, but in 1231 Pope Gregory IX declared that a life imprisonment for the heretic who confessed and repented and capital punishment for those who persisted in their heretical views. Gregory obligated the secular authority to carry out the executions. He made it the duty of the Dominican Order to head the inquisitors. By the end of the decade the Inquisition had become a general institution in all the Catholic lands with special bureaucracy to help in every region of the Catholic Church.

Pope Innocent IV’s papal bull Ad existirpanda of 1252 authorized and regulated the use of torture in investigating heresy. A later papal bull in 1816 would forbid its use. The Dominicans had a reputation as some of the most fearsome torturers in medieval Spain.

After the 12th century a Grand Inquisitor headed each Inquisition. This inquisitional tribunal, the “Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Universal Inquisition” or the Roman Inquisition (1542-1860), persisted until the 19th century. In 1908 Pope Pius X renamed the organization: “Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office,” then in 1965 it became the “Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.”

A 1578 handbook for inquisitors spelled out the purpose of inquisitorial penalties: “… for punishment does not take place primarily and per se for the correction and good of the person punished, but for the public good in order that others may become terrified and weaned away from the evils they would commit” (Directorium Inquisitorum, edition of 1578).

The judge, or inquisitor, could bring suit against anyone. The accused had to testify against himself/herself and not have the right to face and question his/her accuser. It was acceptable to take testimony from criminals, persons of bad reputation, excommunicated people, and heretics. The accused did not have right to counsel, and blood relationship did not exempt one from the duty to testify against the accused. Sentences could not be appealed. Sometimes inquisitors interrogated entire populations in their jurisdiction. The inquisitor questioned the accused in the presence of at least two witnesses. The accused was given a summary of the charges and had to take an oath to tell the truth. Various means were used to get the cooperation of the accused. Although there was no tradition of torture in Christian canon law, this method came into use by the middle of the 13th century. The findings of the Inquisition were read before a large audience; the penitents abjured on their knees with one hand on a Bible held by the inquisitor. Penalties went from visits to churches, pilgrimages, and wearing the cross of infamy to imprisonment (usually for life, but the sentences were often commuted) and (if the accused would not abjure) death. Death was by burning at the stake, and it was carried out by the secular authorities. in some serious cases when the accused had died before proceedings could be instituted, his or her remains could be exhumed and burned. Death or life imprisonment was always accompanied by the confiscation of all the accused's property (Van Helden, 1995).
Later in the Renaissance (14th – 17th century) the targets of the Inquisition became the Hussites, Lutherans, Calvinists and Rosicrucians. The Spanish Inquisition was founded in 1478 by Ferdinand and Isabella, to assure that a Catholic orthodoxy endured in Spain, until it was abolished in 1834. It operated under the royal authority of the king and queen. The Portuguese Inquisition was similar from 1536 to 1821.

Since the Muslims had dominated the Spanish peninsula since 711 they had accepted a multi-culture/religious people (Jews/Muslims/Catholics), however, the Catholics had recently regained control and now, with the rise of heresies, the clergy’s authority seemed threatened.

The reports of murdered victims of the Inquisition in Spain vary from a total of 49,092 trials to over 341,021 from 1560 to 1700 according to the National Historical Archives of Spain. Different authors report between 2% and 10% of the population were executed. Whatever the real numbers were, it was an extremely difficult period to attempt to preach the faith in Christ as their personal Savior.

By all measures the worst of the inquisition occurred in Spain, giving rise to the “Black Legend” of the blood-thirsty intolerant Catholics. In order to avoid this persecution non-Catholic groups “converted” to Catholicism and became known as the conversos, especially Jews converts. Many attained high positions of nobility in Spain. Much of the later Inquisition targeted the conversos, suspecting the insincerity of their conversion to avoid persecution. During the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella between 80,000 and 300,000 Jews were forced to abandon Spain for other parts of Europe. The Portuguese Inquisition founded in 1532 treated the conversos similarly forcing another migration to the north. The converts to Catholicism from Islam were called moriscos [“secret Moors”] and they became the main target of the later Inquisition between 1560 to 1571.

Later the Spanish inquisition began to focus on any sect or Protestantism, especially in the Spanish Netherlands. After intense religious debates in the 17th century, the Spanish Inquisition developed more into a secret-police force working against internal threats to the nation, thus Catholicism became the Spanish identity and the Inquisition judged an “unSpanish activity.”

There were official Inquisitions in the Spanish New World, called the Tribunal del Santo Oficio de la Inquisición [Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition], in most countries, until Simon Bolivar (1783-1830) abolished the Inquisition in 1821.

The Inquisition was finally abolished during the reign of Napoleon and officially ended in 1813 although King Ferdinand VII re instituted it briefly and the last heretic condemned was a school teacher in 1826 hung for teaching deist principles (reason and logic, instead of revelation and tradition, should be used to prove the existence of God).

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5 A secret society of mystics from the late Medieval Germany (14th century on) allegedly held insights into nature, the physical universe and the spiritual realm. Many Masonic and occult societies based their doctrines on ideas from the Rosicrucians.

6 An estimated 100,000 to 200,000 Jews in the Iberian Peninsula converted to Christianity in the 14th century to avoid expulsion. Also called “marranos,” in Spanish meaning “pig”, a derogatory term for false converts who remained secret Jews.
In contrast to the crusading spirit, Francis of Assisi (1182—1226) pioneered a non-violent approach to winning Muslims. Tucker writes, “Not all Christians of this period... believed that military force was the appropriate way to deal with Muslims.... Francis of Assisi proposed that the Muslims should be won by love instead of by hate.... His example paved the way for others to view Muslims as potential brothers in Christ” (Tucker, 2001, p. 57). Francis started his ministry as an uneducated layman. This gentle Friar not only preached to the birds. He was intensely interested and practically involved in missions. One story has him on a hilltop stretching out his hands to the world and declaring, "There is our cloister." Francis and his followers determined to live the Christ-life in the world, and as missionaries to the cities. On the fifth Crusade he crossed battle lines and, after taking a beating, presented the gospel to the sultan of Egypt, Malik-al-Kamil. As the story goes, Francis offered to enter a fiery furnace with the sultan's priests to demonstrate the true faith, based on who would survive. The sultan refused both the challenge and the gospel. But he was deeply impressed with Francis and gave him a carved ivory horn.

Inspired by Francis' example, the Spaniard Raymond Lull (1235—1315), a wealthy layman who had a vision of “the Savior hanging on His cross, the blood trickling from His hands and feet and brow, look reproachfully at him” (Tucker 2001). After a second appearance, he was consumed with guilt and decided to forsake his wealth and prestige to devote himself totally to God. At this time a call to God was a call to live in a monastery in utter devotion to God, living as a reclusive monk, wholly separated from the temptations of the world. In a third vision he became conscious of his responsibilities to others, in particular, taking the message of Christ to the lost, especially the Muslim Saracens, the most hated and feared enemies of Christendom.

Franciscan, proposed to win Muslims in Tunis by prayers, love, tears, and martyrdom, rather than by force. To aid in his language study, Lull purchased a Muslim slave. Though he was past 40 when he began his missionary career and married with children, he decided to sacrifice his family. He set aside funds to support his wife and children and gave the remainder to the poor.

Lull’s first attempt to catch a ship to N. Africa left him so fearful that he could not board the ship! Consumed in guilt he determined to board the next ship, which he did though so fearful he broke out in a fever. Upon arrival he met with the leading Muslim scholar and called them to an open debate. Though it provoked some interest he was thrown into jail, expecting the death sentence. Rather he was stoned and thrown out of the city.

Lull returned to Europe to travel, teach and write books on his “new method” of confronting Muslims. Finally at the age of 75 after a 15-year absence, he returned to N. Africa to a town near Algiers. He immediately challenged the Muslim leaders to an open forum debate. Though he claimed to reach out in love, his messages reportedly were offensive and may have further embittered the Muslims toward Christianity. This time he was thrown in jail for six months, then his captors “plied him ... with all the sensual
temptations of Islam” (Tucker 2004, p. 60), then sent back to Europe. Five years later he returned to N. Africa at 80 years of age.

A forerunner in mission strategy, Lull worked to mobilize the church in Muslim outreach through language and culture learning, apologetics, and aggressive evangelism. Lull made four trips to North Africa to engage Muslims. On his third trip Lull won a few converts, but he did not win his ultimate reward: the martyr’s crown. After a ten-month pause, he returned to Bugia to see his band of converts, then he went to the market place to boldly proclaim the gospel to those who had expelled him so many years before. “Filled with fanatic fury at his boldness, and unable to reply to his arguments, the populace seized him, and dragged him out of the town; there by the command, or at least the connivance, of the king, he was stoned on the 30th of June, 1315” (Tucker 2004).

Lull’s strategic concern for language and culture learning makes his work a giant step in missions in general, and especially to the Muslims. He was convinced that the best way to convince the Muslim was an understanding built on systematic teaching and rational arguments. Other Catholic missionaries would emphasize social justice and good works.

The first Roman Catholic missionaries to China were Franciscan friars. John of Monte Corvino was in China from 1294 to 1330 who reportedly won one hundred thousand converts. "By 1368 the Ming Chinese rulers came to power and expelled the missionaries, resulting in Catholicism dying out in China." (Olson, 2003, p. 106) In addition the inflexibility of Roman leaders to force followers to use Latin and the nearly impossible transportation problems killed this initial effort. Christianity would not enter China for another two hundred years.

Two hundred years later a Jesuit missionary, Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) adopted the Chinese culture contextualizing Catholicism to the Chinese culture, which provided the opportunity for more Jesuits to enter China. Ricci had studied mathematics, astronomy and geography, which opened the door to a presentation of the gospel to the governor of Shiuqing. Chinese scholars were fascinated by his knowledge. Ricci and his partner shaved their heads and took on the garb of Buddhist monks. After a few years they had a few converts and a small chapel. Then Ricci changed his attire to that of a Confucian scholar, the religion of the intelligentsia. He reasoned that “if the Chinese could accept Confucianism as merely a philosophy, then they could accept Christianity as well, while not forsaking their traditional beliefs” (Tucker 2004, p. 68).

Ricci’s approach to make Confucianism compatible with Christianity appealed to the Chinese and opened the door for many conversions. He used the Chinese term for God “Lord of Heaven” (T’ien) from the ancient classics and did not ask the converts to abandon the ceremonies for honoring their ancestors.

By 1650 they had won two to three hundred thousand converts to their form of Catholicism. Later Franciscan and Dominican missionaries opposed the compromises with Confucian religion, which the Jesuits had made. The Jesuits had a monopoly on spreading Catholicism in China for years, thus jealousy was inevitable between orders. This resulted in a conflict, called the Chinese Rites Conflict, between the Pope and the
Chinese emperor resulting in persecution to the Catholics, limiting their influence (Olson, 2003, p. 106). The pope sided with the Dominican missionaries and the Chinese emperor, with the Jesuits and Ricci. By 1650 they had over 250,000 converts, but doctrinal conflicts with Rome negated their growth soon afterward.

Ricci rejected the notion of the *tabula rasa* – “the belief that non-Christian philosophies and religions must be entirely eradicated before Christianity can be effectively introduced.” Any attempt to contextualize the Christian message was viewed as *syncretism*—a mixture of Christian and non-Christian beliefs.

By special invitation Ricci was able to live in Peking near the Imperial Academy for ten years until he died. He was able to win a number of officials and scholars to Christ. One of them, Paul Hsu, a leading intellectual, passed on his faith to his children for generations. One of his descendants who kept the faith became the wife of Chiang Kai-shek.

**Royal Patronage**

The system of *royal patronage* whereby the Pope granted exclusive rights to spread the faith and convert the heathen wherever their respective countries explored and conquered gave special benefit and responsibility to Spain and Portugal. “Patronage” means the support, encouragement, and financial aid by an organization or nation. As such, missions became a function and responsibility of the government.

The *Portuguese Patronage* built a vast trade empire and used religion to assure submission to Portugal’s interests. Where creative Jesuit missionaries already existed they were suppressed to become subservient to Portugal. Franciscans and Dominicans under the Portuguese set up mission centers in the Congo, Angola, Guinea, Mozambique and Madagascar, but most of this work dissolved by the eighteenth century due to hazardous health environment (esp. Yellow Fever) and the association with the Portuguese slave trade. The missionaries failed to create national leaders and practiced only superficial methods to show numbers of followers rather than disciples.

The *Spanish Patronage* attempted to institutionalize the Spanish model in all aspects of life and culture. The Jesuits gave training and protection with instruction in Catholicism. The New World was largely the focus of the Spanish Patronage with the exceptions of N. America and Brazil.

**Jesuits and Francis Xavier**

Other Roman Catholic missionaries include the Portuguese Francis Xavier, (1506-1552) considered the *greatest Catholic missionary of all time*. As explorers were discovering lucrative trade routes to the East, the Catholic Church sought to expand throughout this new opportunity. Of the late Medieval Church Orders, the Jesuit Order was the most aggressive in world ventures.

*Ignatius of Loyola* (1491-1556) founded the Jesuits in 1535 with a small group of loyal, dedicated disciples who recruited the sharpest

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7 This was the approach of Xavier in India, which met with very little success, so in Japan he attempted a contextualized approach.
candidates and organized a military-like organization that was totally committed to Catholicism. In twenty-one years, at the death of Ignatius, there were a thousand members and within a hundred years there were more than fifteen thousand members of the Jesuits spread all over the world. One of the original six charter members of the Order was a young nobleman student who was associating with some Protestants, but quickly was recruited by Loyola to a life of poverty and celibacy in the spreading of the Catholic faith in the Jesuit Order.

There were no visions or mysticism in Xavier’s commitment to missions, rather one of the original two-man Jesuit team to India fell sick and Xavier was assigned in his place. In less that 24-hours he sailed for India in 1542. The moral corruption of the European influenced society that he discovered in India was discouraging, so he developed a strategy to focus on the children who could be trained to become effective Christian leaders in their community over time. This would be his strategy over most of his missionary career.

Xavier began a three-year ministry to South India, where he worked among the pearl fisherman. Tucker quoted Will Durant history of Xavier when he said, “I want to be where there are …out-and-out pagans” (Tucker 2004, p. 64). The high-caste Brahmans were antagonistic, but the Outcaste Paravas were open to change, since they could not be worse off in their society than they already were. Tucker writes, “Great crowds came out to learn and recite creeds, and baptisms were plentiful…Yet baptism was to him the most important aspect of the ministry, and he would not deny anyone, no matter how tired he was… Xavier’s emphasis on baptism and his concentration on children went hand in hand” (Tucker 2004, p. 64).

An idea of what Catholic “evangelism” meant is seen in James Brodrick’s quote of Xavier:

As it was impossible for me to meet personally the ever growing volume of calls…
I resorted to the following expedient. I told the children who memorized the Christian doctrine to betake themselves to the homes of the sick, ther to collect as many of the family and neighbors as possible, and to say the Creed with them several times, assuring the sick persons that if they believed they would be cured…
In this way I managed to satisfy all my callers, at the same time secured that the Creed, the Commandments, and the prayers were taught in the people’s homes and abroad in the streets” (Brodrick 1952, p. 204).

Neil quotes another description of Xavier’s practice in his History of Christian Missions:

On Sundays I assemble all the people, men and women, young and old, and get them to repeat the prayers in their language. They take much pleasure in doing so, and come to the meetings gladly…I give out the First Commandment, which they repeat, and then we all say together, “Jesus Christ, Son of God, grant us grace to love thee above all things.” When we have asked for this grace, we recite the Pater Noster together, and then cry with one accord, “Holy Mary, Mother of Jesus Christ, obtain for us grace from thy Son to enable us to keep the First Commandment.”
Next we say Ave Maria, and proceed in the same manner through each of the remaining nine Commandments. And just as we say twelve Paters and Aves in honor of the twelve articles of the Creed, so we say ten Paters and Aves in honor of

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8 Refers to the repetition of the Lord’s Prayer and the “Hail Mary” of the rosary.
the Ten Commandments, asking God to give us grace to keep them well” (Neil, p. 150).

Xavier considered himself a trailblazer so was anxious to move on to open other fields for the Jesuits. He left India in 1545 for SE Asia. Other Jesuits quickly filled Xavier’s place and soon there were dozens of Christian villages in India. For three-years Xavier minister in Malacca on the Malay peninsula in Indonesia, but his ultimate goal was to go to Japan. Tucker wrote that Xavier had met a Japanese in India who told him to go to Japan: “The king, the nobility, and all other people of discretion would become Christians, for the Japanese, he said, are entirely guided by the law of reason” (Tucker 2004, p. 66).

The reality in Japan was more difficult because of the language barrier, never the less, he wrote a few months later that the Japanese were “very fond of hearing about the hints of God, chiefly when they understand them” (Neil, p. 156). Two years later (1551) when Xavier left the country there were over a hundred converts. The Jesuits who followed him saw an incredible turning to Catholicism. By 1600 Xavier had a community of over 300,000. A change of politics brought terrible persecution, which eliminated Christianity for over 230 years.

Xavier sailed to India briefly to make plans to initiate the ministry in China. While Xavier was negotiating his entrance into China he contracted a fever and died on Shangchuan Island (near what would become Hong Kong). The relics of Xaviers body are in two churches, the Basilica in Goa, India houses his bodily remains, his right forearm was detached and is displayed in the main Jesuit church in Rome, and the church in Macao, SE China, enshrines his humerus bone.

**Robert de Nobili**, (1577-1656) an Italian Jesuit, is considered one of the greatest Catholic missionaries to India. He became aware of the tremendous cultural difference so he adapted to the Indian way of life, including food and dress to appear as a Sadhus Brahmin (Hindu monk). For forty-two years he labored among the higher castes winning many converts. He became an expert in Tamil and Sanskrit and was able to convert 12 Brahmins. Eventually the Roman church rejected his ministry philosophy as too syncretistic.

The Spanish missionaries to the New World began in the sixteenth century following the Conquistadores forcing and persuading converts to be baptized. Most of these new countries entered into a Concordat with Rome, swearing their allegiance to the Pope. Much of the effects of the Reformation in Europe went unperceived in Latin America for three hundred years until the late nineteenth century.

How can we evaluate the impact of Catholic missions? A number of observations are in order:

1) Roman Catholics, because of their powerful infrastructure, were able to do what Protestants had not yet attempted to do, nor had any vision to do.
2) The missionaries were part of Orders that were vital for support, supervision, and guidance.
3) It was obvious that the priests baptized millions who had only a slight concept of Catholicism with little or no understanding of the Christian gospel.
4) Frequent incorporation of animistic religion weakened the Catholic churches.
5) The superficiality of the conversions was shown by a lack of permanence in many places (Olson, 2003, p. 108).

**Three Currents of Thought that Shaped the Later Medieval World**

The dogma of the Church was continuing to evolve throughout the medieval period. The three key elements in the late medieval period according to Vos were Scholasticism, Mysticism and Monasticism. These were not three separate unrelated developments, but were all weaved together in the infrastructure of the Catholic Church.

**Scholasticism**

The schools in the cathedrals and monasteries developed into medieval universities primarily to understand and explain God’s revealed truth. Once began the movement revealed a massive thirst for truth. The Scholastics or teachers had a two-fold objective: to harmonize Christian doctrine and Greek philosophy of Aristotle and to arrange the teachings of the church in an orderly and logical system. Shelly clarifies that this was “not a free search for truth because truth was already fixed. Rather it was a search for the reasonableness of the doctrines and to explain their implications” (Shelley, 1995, p. 195). It was deductive logic and *a priori* methods, which were later superseded by the inductive reasoning of modern science and exegetical Bible study.

Scholasticism is hard to define adequately, but certain generalizations may be made concerning it. It was the sum of the teachings and methods of the prominent Western philosophers most widely accepted during the Middle Ages. It constituted a harmonization of philosophy and theology in one system for the purpose of rational demonstration of theological truth. The Scholastics sought certainty and better understanding of the truth and salvation by way of knowledge and reason (Vos, 1994).

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was the key Scholastic at the height of this movement and was responsible for formulating the sacramental system of the Roman Catholic Church that is a system whereby one could obtain salvation through the Church. He limited the number of sacraments at seven then defined their meaning: baptism, the Eucharist, confirmation, penance, extreme unction, holy orders and marriage. His concepts of a salvation through good works, sacraments and loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church guided the Council of Trent.
(1545—63) to define the Catholic view of salvation for centuries to come. Aquinas’ philosophical defense of the existence of God continues to be taught in modern times. This is the foundation of Calvinistic theology.

There were no schools throughout the medieval period except church schools. Charlemagne (741-813) had demanded that every monastery have a school. The best schools were in the cathedrals, churches of the bishops, which were located in major towns, primarily to train parish priests, but eventually were opened to everyone. The teaching modeled itself after the seven liberal arts (studies reserved for the *liberi*, “freemen.” These were grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. Few texts were available, which could never be contradicted, so the importance of great teachers became the key factor to early universities.

Peter Abelard (1079—1142) learned from the best of his day, and then began to lecture near Paris. His approach of doubting then inquiring to arrive at the truth, an idea coming from the Greek Socrates, was extremely rare in medieval Europe where no one dared to question anything. His popularity and willingness to question settled dogma led to his condemnation for heresy in 1140 and seclusion in the abbey of Cluny. However, his ideas gave seed to many investigative schools across the continent. The event that marked the flowering of the universities was the grouping of students and masters into guilds. “As craftsmen had done before them,” explains Fremantle, scholars banded together for mutual interest and protection, and called themselves *a universitas*, the medieval name for any corporate group (Fremantle, 1968).

In addition to lectures, the method of teaching was the disputation. Two or more masters—and occasionally the students—debated text readings, employing Abelard’s question-and-answer approach. “Scholasticism” developed in this context and came to stand for painstaking arrival at logical conclusions through questioning, examining, and arranging details into a system of logic. The Scholastic disputation stirred heated clashes and bitter feelings. Wars of logic ran for years between master and master, with adherents of each cheering their hero on with tumultuous stomping and whistling. Something important was happening in this raucous atmosphere. Students were learning to think. Unquestioning acceptance of traditional “authorities” was no longer assured, but the conclusions had to jibe with Christian doctrine (Shelley, 1995, p. 198).

**Mysticism**

In a world of conflict, conformity and control of every aspect of one’s life through the Church Canons, a set of laws to control the church and society superficiality, was all that was demanded. Mysticism is the pursuit to acquire a certainty of salvation through a spiritual experience or conscious awareness of God through personal experience, intuition or perception. The common way that most religions in the world sustain their following is the ability to transmit a feeling, a sense of divine encounter or “touch the finger of God.” This experience became the basis of assurance of divine reality.

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9 The ecclesiastical law of the Catholic Church is a legal system for courts, lawyers, and judges with principles of legal interpretation. Some Church officials were required to have a licentiate in Canon Law to promote justice, and serve as judges, advocates, procurators by the 15th century. By the 19th century the Canons included 10,000 norms covering all aspects of life with legally binding edicts.
Sometimes this mystical experience is attributed to heretical views that led its adherents to ignore the biblical instruction in favor of personal experience or subjective sensations. Mystics focus on the experience itself, with little concern for ontological discussions; assuming that the initiate will understand the specifics as they progress from one level to the next. The focus was on personal salvation or reality often to the exclusion of any service for God.

Many of these mystics appear often as genuine believers. Their emotional affection and appreciation for the death of Christ motivated the writing of hymns such as “Jesus the Very Thought of Thee,” and “Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts.”

Sometimes these experiences can include ecstatic revelation, enlightenment, or other perceived experience. It can include fading or loss of self, and often include a feeling of peace, joy or bliss. Possible techniques to achieve these experiences may include meditation, prayer, asceticism, devotions, canting of mantras or holy names and intellectual investigation. The same practices apply to a number of religions, but the similarities in experiences with the resulting passion for the angel, saint or deity.

Another manner the mystics sought to experience Christ was by walking where He walked and suffering where He suffered. One of the leading mystics, Bernard of Clairvaux, was a key motivator for the Second Crusade. Jesus was not the only object of these experiences. The cult of the Virgin Mary and devotion to “the Mother of God” wherein mystical encounters and communications with her presumed resurrected and ascended presence before God continues to be the passion of the Catholic Church. “Mysticism kept Scholasticism from being too academic, and Scholasticism helped the mystics keep their feet on the ground” (Vos, 1994).

**Monasticism**

The Monastic movement (from the Greek: monachos—a solitary person devoted to religious practice of renouncing all worldly pursuits in order to devote one’s life to spiritual work) as the practical foundation of the Roman Catholic Church throughout the Middle Ages. Those pursuing the monastic life were called monks or brothers and nuns or sisters. They were the writers, preachers, philosophers and theologians of the middle ages; they also headed up the Inquisition and mobilized participants for the Crusades.

Within the monastic walls there was more freedom to express personal investigations than outside the cloister. A number of critics of the papacy, such as Luther and Erasmus, had monastic backgrounds. The thirteenth century experienced the biggest growth of monasteries, thereafter it would decrease finally being eliminated by the Reformation, especially in N. Europe, then the French Revolution and Napoleon’s conquests ended the monastic expansion.

**Non-Catholic Dissident Movements (1215—1650)**

Many lay movements sought to recover the ideals of early Christianity. Some were more Evangelical than others, but they were all opposed to the superficial formalism of the sacrament driven Roman Catholic Church. They were often suppressed as heretical and all their possessions, properties and writings were taken and destroyed. Some of these groups include the Petrobrusians (Peter of Bruys -1117-1131, killed by a mob for
teaching against the Catholic Church, Paulicians (650-970), Arnoldists (1115), Henricians, Waldensians (1170s), Bohemian [Czech] Brethren (1457), Lollards (1384), Hussites (1415), Taborites (1415) and the Anabaptists (16th century to present). Most of these groups trusted only in the gospels and epistles for their faith, condemned infant baptism, the Eucharist (bread changes miraculously into the physical body and blood of Christ), sacrifice of the mass, prayers for the dead and a rejection of the liturgy in worship.

Peter Waldo - Waldensians

Peter Waldo (1140-1218) a merchant of Lyons, renounced property and gave the French the Word of God in their tongue. He inspired an evangelical movement of traveling street preachers in the style of Matthew 10. This was a radical innovation in an age when only bishops could preach. Though good Catholics they were fiercely opposed by the church and council. After an initial cautious encouragement, within a decade the authorities denied permission to preach, but they continued to do so. For the next three hundred years they were on the run, at times persecuted severely.

In 1184 the pope excommunicated them for disobedience. The movement spread from S. France to Italy, Spain and Bohemia. They rejected purgatory, the efficacy of mass and prayers for the dead and pioneered the use of the vernacular translations of Scripture. "Waldensians" were (and still are) a light shining in darkness.

Their movement introduces at least three breakthrough principles for renewal and missions: (1) the right of the laity to study the Scriptures in their mother tongue. They taught that the Bible was the final authority for belief and life. “Whatever a doctor of the church teaches that he cannot prove by the text of the New Testament, they consider it to be a complete fable.” (2) The right of laymen and women to preach. (3) The duty to "obey God rather than man" - a principle they invoked when the church prohibited their preaching. In spite of severe persecution (i.e. 1545 in Provence, France, three to four thousand were massacred) they survived and finally won toleration in Sardinia and Italy in 1848.

At first the Waldensians did not want to displace the church, rather offer what was lacking in the formal church – accountable obedience to Jesus (in the Word), authentic community life and the announcing of the true gospel. Although many made public appearance in services in their Catholic parish churches, they found their true fellowship and growth in “illicit” cell groups of brothers and sisters.

These Waldensian cells, meeting generally at night, in houses and barns, were marked by intense activity. Those present were laypeople, often ‘persons of basest occupations’ such as tailors, shoemakers and smiths. Women were there in disproportionate strength. At largely excluded from using their gifts in the church, they were finding among the ‘heretics’ liberty to teach and preach. Everyone participated: ‘Old and young, men and women, by day and by night, they do not stop their learning and teaching others.’ Illiterates were learning to read: ‘Learn but
one word a day,’ they admonished each other, ‘and after a year you will know three hundred, and then you will progress.’ The Bible was memorized and recited. In Austria one critic found an ‘unlearned rustic who could recite the Book of Job word for word, and many others who know the entire New Testament perfectly.’ After recitation, the Bible would be commented upon and applied. Many of these applications were anticlerical; and Waldensians had little tolerance for medieval beliefs and practices such as relics, holy days and purgatory. They were especially suspicious of sacraments administered by priests of dubious morals.

Before long the Waldensians began to develop a leadership structure of their own. At the behest of a rector (bishop), majors (presbyters) and minores (deacons) travelled from one Waldensian cell to another, preaching and hearing confessions. On Maundy Thursday, when cells met to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, the believers often washed each other’s feet, after which the itinerate minister distributed the elements of bread, wine and fish. (‘Protest and renewal: Reformers before the Reformation,’ 1986, n/a).

Most of what is known of these early groups like the Waldensians (or Vadensius) is found in accusations against them, rather than their own writings or any defense against their accusations. In Christian History (1989, Issue 22) a 13th century “police report” by an inquisitor was found in the Church archives in Carcassone, France.

The Poor of Lyons had their origins around the year 1170, founded by a certain Lyonese citizen by the name of Vadensius or Valdenses, after whom his followers took their name. The person in question was a rich man, but, abandoning all his wealth, he determined to observe a life of poverty and evangelical perfection, as the apostles. He arranged for the Gospels and some other books of the Bible to be translated in common speech; also some texts of Saints Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, and Gregory, arranged under the titles which he called “sentences,” and which he read very often though without understanding their import. Infatuated with himself, he usurped the prerogatives of the Apostles by presuming to preach the Gospel in the streets, where he made many disciples, and involving them, both men and women, in a like presumption by spending them out, in turn, to preach. These people, ignorant and illiterate, went about through the towns, entering houses and even churches, spreading many errors round about. They were summoned by the Archbishop of Lyons and forbidden such presumption. But they wished by no means to obey him, cloaking their madness by saying that they must obey God rather than men, since God had commanded the Apostles to preach the Gospel to every creature.

And thus they ended by despising prelates and the clergy, accusing them for being rich and for living a life of ease; whereas they applied to themselves what was said of the Apostles (whose imitators and successors they boldly declared themselves to be) by a false profession of poverty and feigned image of sanctity. Because of this disobedience and of this presumptuous appropriation of a task, which did not pertain to them [evangelism], they were excommunicated and expelled from their country.

Over the next two hundred years the Inquisition persecution (burning at the stake, imprisonment and torture) against the Waldensians eventually captured the main leadership and new leadership did not want to take the risks of being so outspoken, but
the seeds of truth had been planted. Such persecution tends to cause them to become introverted and loose their evangelistic outreach. Other groups began to spring up elsewhere.

**John Wycliffe - The Lollards**

If you read your Bible in English, thank God for the life of John Wycliffe (1330—1384), whose first complete English translation of the Bible (1382) prepared the way for England's reformation a century later. This was a very literal translation from the Latin Vulgate. He was a professor and master at Balliol College and chaplain to the king. The pope condemned his reform views in 1377 but the duke of Lancaster protected him.

Wycliffe's followers, the Lollards, believed that all people should have God's Word in their own language. They got their name from a Middle Dutch insult meaning “mumbler” of prayers. Their main task was to preach God's Word in the vernacular and interpret it literally as the only authority for the believer.

The Bible, he was convinced, had been conceived in God’s mind before creation. It was therefore entirely true, and the exclusive criterion of faith and practice, far superior to church tradition. Everyone ought to have access to its truth in his own language: ‘No man is so rude a scholar but that he may learn the words of the gospel according to his simplicity.’ The church likewise was an ideal reality, predestinated by God to be the body of the elect. Thus both the Bible and the true church stood in judgment upon the actual church, which Wycliffe increasingly came to see as a ‘synagogue of Satan.’ It had departed from the purity of its early poverty; it had lost its authority to interpret the Bible; and it had become entangled in a great web of abuse. Pilgrimage, purgatory, transubstantiation, along with many other aspects of ecclesiastical life, came under Wycliffe’s searing attack. Only the king, he was convinced, as God’s true vicar could intervene to reform the hopelessly compromised church (“Protest and Renewal,” 1986, n/a).

As the Bible continued to be taught, they movement became more and more evangelical. The cell groups in homes apparently did not celebrate the sacraments. Nor did the groups have membership rolls, but were groups of “known men and women” who were links in support groups joining one Lollard community with another.

Such groups tend to intermarry. A significant activity was a roving booksellers and evangelists. “A few priests participated in the movement, as did some wealthy urban merchants. But predominantly the Lollards were laypeople, especially those in the cloth trade. As with the Waldensians, women were prominent in the movement, reciting and expounding the Bible.”

The main activity of the cell groups was the reading of the English Bible. These Scriptures were available only in delicate manuscripts and very expensive to purchase, as well as very dangerous to possess. Different ones would possess different portions of the Bible, but most would carry it in their memory as most Bible Books were memorized.

By 1395 the Lollards in England became an organized anti-Catholic Anglican sect with ministers and spokesmen in Parliament. In 408 it was condemned by Thomas
Arundel, archbishop of Canterbury who banned all unauthorized versions of the Bible. Its leaders were burned at the stake. By 1530 the movement merged into Protestantism.

**Jan Huss - Hussites**

Wycliffe's writings directly inspired the Bohemian students at Oxford who carried his writings to their homeland where they influenced a priest Jan Hus (1369-1415) and professor at the University of Prague.

A parallel Czech reform movement had started as a result of studying the Scriptures led by Hus’ teachings demanding reform against simony, indulgences and abuses of the mass (selling its value to reduce the sentence of suffering of the dead in purgatory).

In 1400 Jan [John] Hus was appointed rector of the 3,000 seat Bethlehem Chapel, where he preached for the next twelve years delivering more than 3,000 messages. Overflowing crowds listened in the common language of Prague to his denunciations of the abuses of the church and the truth of the Scriptures. His Catholic superiors felt he was insubordinate and threatening in its tone.

In 1412 he was exiled to the South Bohemian countryside where he preached in barns. In 1415 he was summoned to the Council of Constance and promised a safe-conduct, but went through a rigged trial and immediately burnt at the stake as a heretic.

This reform movement was supported by most of Bohemia, including 452 Czech nobles who rallied in defiance. For Hus truth was supreme: “I have said that I would not, for a chapel full of gold, recede from the truth.” “I know,” he wrote in 1412, “that the truth stands and is mighty for ever, and abides eternally, with whom there is no respect of persons.” (Shelley, 1995, p. 231)

For the last time the marshal of the empire asked him if he would recant and save his life. Hus said: “God is my witness that the evidence against me is false. I have never thought nor preached except with the one intention of winning men, if possible, from their sins. In the truth of the gospel I have written, taught, and preached; today I will gladly die” (Shelley, 1995, p. 232).

Religious unrest began to spread in Prague and throughout the countryside. One of the major issues was the practice of giving the laypeople at the communion service both the bread and the chalice, rather than just the bread alone as in medieval custom. This practice of “Utraquism” (“under both kinds”) had been practiced by the Hussites since 1414 to breathe new life into the communion services.

Some of the reforms that they were insistent upon included the turning over the vast estates of the Church to the people, a denial of purgatory, the ceasing of the death-penalty for contact with the Waldensians, and a supremacy of the Bible over ecclesiastical authority. They met in large numbers on the South Bohemian hillsides, one of which was renamed Mount Tabor. Thus the Hussite movement became known as the Taborites, which formed the roots of the Bohemian Brethren (Unitas Fratrum or Unity of the Brotherhood) and later the Moravian Church, perhaps the greatest missionary church of all time.
**Taborites and the Bohemian Brethren**

Taborites were more militant stating that the “time to wander with a pilgrim’s staff is over. Now we shall have to march, sword in hand.” They seek to establish the Kingdom of God by force of arms and military campaigns including the destruction of Catholic churches. They organized of the most imposing fighting forces in fifteenth-century Europe under the theology of holy war. For the next fifteen years they were invincible. They fully expected Christ to return and appear on their Mount Tabor and become the emperor of Bohemia. In fact, when foreign Catholics attempted to crush the religious independence of the Czech people, it was the Taborites who were the key to the Czech defense.

The moderates among the Taborites and the war-weariness of the people led to a compromise with the Catholics, concluding that both the Utraquism and Catholicism should be tolerated forms of religious expression in Bohemia. The militant Taborites eventually lost their zeal and dissolved.

One group, however, called the *Unitas Fratrum* [“Unity of the Brethren”], was founded by Peter Chelcicky (d. 1460). He disagreed with the righteous violence philosophy of the Taborites, saying that it denied Jesus’ teachings. He declared that state power was necessary, but it was ordained to be exercised by unbelievers: “These two divisions, the temporal order of force and Christ’s way of love, are far removed from each other. For the fullness of authority lies in the accumulation of wealth and vast gatherings of armed men, castles, and walled towns, while the fullness and completion of faith lies in God’s wisdom and the strength of the Holy Spirit.” Such themes as these distinguished and fueled the uniqueness of the Czech Brethren.

When the Reformation of the sixteenth-century Europe began survivors of these late-medieval renewal movements were forced to decide to remain independent, return to Catholicism, or join the Reformation. In 1532 the Waldensians joined the Reformation. The Lollards were sympathetic to the reformation ideals, but were as uncomfortable with the Reformation Church of England as with medieval Catholicism. They became the subsequent English Separationists.

In 1520 the Utraquists split between the Roman Catholics and the Protestant causes, but the Czech Brethren retained a clearly articulated separate identity. Although they would lose their pacifism in the sixteenth century, they survived bitter persecution from the renewed Catholics in the seventeenth century. This group would identify with the Anabaptism movement and in the eighteenth-century become the Moravian Brethren, out of which the modern missionary movement exploded.

**Savonarola** (1452—1498) was a Dominican priest who preached against the worldliness and corruption of the church in Florence, Italy. He became the spiritual leader of the Democratic Party that came to power with the departure of the Medici in 1494. As virtual dictator of Florence he tried to reform both the state and church.

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10 This group would become the Moravian Church.
11 The Medici were a powerful and influential family in Italy from the 14th to 17th century. Estimates that they were the wealthiest family in Europe.
Eventually his political power base eroded and his fights with the pope resulted in his excommunication in 1497. A year later he was arrested, tried for sedition and heresy, cruelly tortured, hung and his body burned. His bold preaching style and daring opposition became a model for others who would follow.

Simultaneously in Holland, Belgium, N. Germany and N. France a mystical movement was beginning called the Brethren of the Common Life, a Roman Catholic community in the 14th century founded by Gerard Groote. Their emphasis on Bible reading, meditation, prayer, personal piety and religious education produced a number of leaders and writers. Their goal was a revival of practical religion within the Catholic Church, meeting in homes where they shared their properties in common. They generally established good relations with the townspeople, attended the parish churches but had no particular doctrinal position.

The Brethren were deeply devoted to the cause of education. They established several schools in the Netherlands and Germany that were outstanding for scholarship and piety. Four of their best-known students were Nicholas of Cusa, Erasmus, Luther, and Thomas à Kempis, who is credited with writing the widely distributed Imitation of Christ (Vos, 1994).

Waldensians, Lollards, and Hussites typify an astonishingly large variety of lay renewal movements of the Middle Ages in Europe. Oppression by the church prevented many of these from achieving their explosive missionary potential.

They were, however, forerunners to the modern missionary movement in significant ways. First, they pioneered the concept of contextualization by giving people the Word of God in their own language. Second, they confirm that revival and mission movements almost always start with ordinary people on the outside of the organized church, rather than with the ecclesiastical leadership. And third, the opposition they faced within the Catholic Church shows that once the truth of God’s Word and the mandate for the believers became known no amount of opposition would stop them from fulfilling Christ’s purpose.

Other historical events of interest during this period

1258 Hulagu Khan and Mongol hordes sack and destroy Arab caliphate capital Baghdad and two years later the Saracen stronghold of Damascus in an attempt to destroy the Muslim world. They kill 800,000 in Bagdad but spare the Christians. They destroy Aleppo and Antioch. Hulagu (whose wife is a Christian) professes the Christian faith. He died in 1265.

1260 The Mongol emperor Kublai Khan (1215-1294), ruler of north China with 15 million inhabitants and south China with 65 million inhabitants, asked Marco Polo (1254-1324) and his brother to return to Europe with a request to the Roman pope for 100 missionaries. He wrote the pope: “Send me 100 men skilled in your religion…and so I shall be baptized, and then all my barons and great men and then
their subjects. And so there will be more Christians here than there are in your parts.” Two Dominicans were sent, but they turned back; then in 1278, the pope sent five Franciscans, and no more. This was probably the greatest missed opportunity in Christian history. By 1342 the Mongol dynasty becomes Muslim.

1296 Franciscans have 17 stations of works throughout Mongolian Empire, with a monastery in Cambaluc (modern Beijing).

1300 Global Status: 42 generations since the Ascension. The world is 23.2% Christians and 28.2% evangelized and Scripture translations in 26 languages. The Renaissance begins with the arts then through education and admiration of the Greek and Roman culture and anti-Christian paganism.

1312 Final conversion of the Tatar race to Islam under khan Uzbek, ruler of the Golden Horde; completed by 1342. Many of these had been Nestorian Christians.

1325 Aztecs founded their capital city of Tenochtitlan in the valley of Mexico. At the dedication of the Great Temple, 20,000 slaves were sacrificed to the god of war Huitzilopochtli. By 1500, the population reached 500,000. The Aztecs ruled over an empire of 5,500,000 people, but in 1523, it was destroyed by Cortes and the conquistadors.

1347 Worst known outbreak of the Bubonic plagues sweeps into Europe from the Orient where it killed 13 million in China; In Europe, 33% of the population of an estimated population of 60 million are killed. 98% of all European victims are Christians, since they tended to help the sick, instead of avoiding them. The Black Death becomes history’s greatest disaster killing an estimated 75 million people over a four-year period. The plague ends in 1353 having killed 17% of the world population.

1370 The Vatican Apostolic Library, the world’s largest Christian collection, has 1,100 books. A cost of one copy of the Bible then was $50,000.

1391 Start of the anti-Semitic massacres in Spain and Portuguese: 40,000 Jews killed in Seville.

1400 The Inquisition begins investigating witchcraft seriously, burning at the stake 30,000 witches from 1400-1550.

1420 Age of Discovery begins as prince Henry the Navigator establishes maritime training center at Sagres, Portugal; the world opens to European shipping and European imperialism.

1436 Incas begin rule in Peru.

1452 Pope Nicholas V granted the right to reduce any “Saracen, pagans and other unbelievers” to hereditary slavery, thus legitimized the Catholic slave trade. By 1850 10 million slaves transported to the New World; 2 million more die on board ship.

1438 Invention of printing by Johannes Gutenberg. The press made 150 copies of the Gutenberg Bible (45 have survived till today), which sold for $5 each. The Bible was printed in 2 large volumes (648 and 634 pages). By 1456 there were 70,000 Bibles in Central Europe in 15 languages; also 100,000 NTs.

1445 First Christians baptized in Senegal, Guinea Bissua, Equatorial Guinea, Mauritania, by the Portuguese traders and explorers, as well as the French, Dutch and English traders. 1471 First Christians in Ghana (then Gold Coast); 1482, First Christians in Zaire (then Congo); 1487 First Christians in Nigeria.
1452 St Peter’s basilica in Rome is planned as the world’s largest church; in 1506 the foundation stone is laid and in 1626, the basilica is completed.

1453 The fall of Constantinople to the Muslim Ottoman Turks and the end of the Byzantine empire; 1457 Turkish Muslims conquer Yugoslavia.

1478 Spanish Inquisition established to uncover hidden Jews and Muslims.

1488 Portuguese navigator Bartolomeu Dias (1450-1500) sails around the Cape of Good Hope, becoming the first European to travel up the eastern coast of Africa.

1492 Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) sails to the New World, and discovers the Bahamas, Cuba, Haiti). Over the next few decades more than 100,000 Spaniards emigrate from the Old World. Columbus lands on Hispaniola where Indians numbered 500,000; by 1519, only 500 Indians left alive; a whole race and way of life were destroyed.

1493 Pope issues the Demarcation Bull ‘Inter Caetera,’ giving Portugal authority over Africa, and much of Asia and later Brazil, while granting authority over the rest of the world west of the Azores to Spain.

1499 Christianity is extinguished in China, Central Asia and across the Muslim world; Christianity steadily decreasing in influence worldwide.

1500 49 generations have passed since the Ascension. The world is 17.9% Christian and 20.5% evangelized with printed Scriptures in 12 languages out of the 34 translations. The total martyrs in AD 33, 17,398,000 (0.7% of the total Christians ever) with a recent rate of 8,400 per year.

Conclusion

First, as we learned from Acts, the gospel can take root and flourish within any culture. Second, when a "Christian" civilization collapses, the seed of the gospel can revive it and/or survive it, and can also take root elsewhere. This two-fold vitality empirically confirms the universal character of the gospel that is forever and for every people to the end of the age. Thirdly, the gospel is frequently planted initially somewhat imperfectly, but as time passes and truth is reviewed, it becomes clearer and clearer.
References


