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Principal Events of the Middle Ages (Part 3)



Church History - Steve Gregg

In this third installment of a lecture series on the Middle Ages, Steve Gregg discusses the rise of the Roman Catholic Church and the contrast between it and the Eastern Orthodox and Protestant churches. Gregg delves into the origins of the Inquisition, which began as a means to persecute the Cathars and Albigensians, and how heretics were treated throughout history. He also examines the influence of monasticism, the contributions of famous scholastic Thomas Aquinas, and the role of mystics in emphasizing personal experiences with God. Gregg concludes with a discussion on how the Renaissance and Reformation ushered in new religious thought and movements outside of the institutional church.

Transcript

This is now our third week covering the notes I've given you on 15 principal events of the Middle Ages. Originally I thought that would be one lecture, and now it's turned out to be three, and I do intend to finish it up tonight. I've given you a handout for it, and we have covered the first ten of what I've called the 15 principal events of the Middle Ages.

And I don't mean to suggest that there are not other events that might have been in some ways as important as the ones I've included, but which are omitted in my outline. Everyone's going to have to make their own choices when they talk about history. So many things happened, no one could ever tell them all.

John himself said that if only all the words and doings of Jesus were recorded, the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. And if that's true of a life that was only 33 years long, then how much more is that true if somebody would wish to catalog all the events that have occurred in 2,000 years? There'd simply be no possibility of doing so, and every person who deals with history has to make his own selection of points that he feels are significant enough to mention, because so many things must be left out. Anyway, tonight I want to begin by talking about the Inquisition.

This is one of the great scandals of church history, one of the great blots on the church, and by the church I mean the institutional church here. Remember, from the beginning

I've been seeking to make a difference between the institutional church and the genuine church. Now, in the genuine church, I don't want to be so arrogant as to be able to identify with perfection, because only God knows who really is a part of the real church, only those who are really his.

The Bible says the Lord knows his own, but it also says, let those who name the name of Christ depart from iniquity. And there is usually some evidence that somebody really does belong to the true church by the fact that their lives are changed, and they depart from iniquity and they follow Jesus. There have always been, throughout history, those people who did that.

In some cases, those people were the leaders in the churches, in the institutional church. At other times, they were persecuted by the institutional church. And at times like that, when the godly were persecuted by the institutional church, it becomes more evident at such times that there is a difference between the true church, the body of Jesus Christ, and that institution which was recognized by the world as the church.

Of course, in the period of time that we are addressing, the church in the Western world, at least, was the Roman Catholic Church. There was also an Eastern Church at this time, and for some reason, the events of the Eastern Church are not cataloged in as much detail by most treatments of church history, at least in the West, because probably they did not have as much impact on the culture in which we live and the age in which we have inherited from the past. Most of us come from Western culture, and therefore, the events that happened in the Western Church are more significant to understanding the church in our area, in our age, in our culture.

So we do remember there was an Eastern Church during this period of time, but we simply can't cover everything that happened, and so we'll talk about the things that seem most relevant to the development of the Roman Catholic Church leading up to the Protestant Reformation. We will not talk about the Protestant Reformation this week, but we will talk about things leading up to that period of time when the Reformation took place. Also, there will be a lecture next time about some of the groups during the same period of time.

We've been talking about the Middle Ages, which is from 600 to about 1500 A.D., and in our next session, we'll be talking about some of the groups that arose during that same period of time, which were malcontent, they were nonconformist, they were not a part of the institutional church. Some of these groups were genuinely heresies, and they were labeled as such by the Roman Catholic Church. Others, which were equally labeled as heresies by the Roman Catholic Church, we might, if we knew them and their doctrines, might not be so convinced that they should be so labeled.

But it was these alternative groups that arose that caused the Inquisition to be resorted to by the Roman Catholic Church. In the 12th century through the 14th century, and now

you remember that's the 1100s through the 1300s, the Inquisition were a principal feature of the Church's relationship to those who did not agree with it. And the original Inquisition seemed to have arisen because of the rise of a cultic group called the Cathars, or the Albigensians, and also a group arose called the Waldensians, or sometimes called the Waldensians.

The Waldensians were a group that really wanted to bring more purity into religion. The Albigensians or the Cathars were more of a cult, more of an alternative religious system. They were not trying to purify the Church, they were more doing something outside the Church.

And the official beginning of the Inquisition would probably be with the Third Lateran Council in 1179 calling for a crusade, actually, against the Cathars or the Albigensians in France. This did not accomplish that much. The Cathars survived this.

And by the way, it was pointed out to us last week that the Cathars still exist under another name today, although many historians believe that they are gone. So they have survived. But the Cathars were more or less a Gnostic sort of a group, and not really Christian in their theology at all.

And they were labeled as heretics, and of course, probably we would look at their doctrines and label them as heretics as well in our own day, although I hope we would deal with them a little more tolerantly than the Roman Catholic Church did at that time. And when we look at the Inquisition, we really need to remember some things about the mindset of European Christendom in those days. Frankly, no matter how many concessions we make to them, there are still things that were done that simply are unconscionable.

There must have been some very wicked men, it seems to me, that were involved in the perpetration of the Inquisition. But it doesn't mean that everybody who participated or everybody who approved of the Inquisition necessarily were as wicked as we would assume them to be, simply because in those days it was a general assumption that all of Europe was Christian, and that if they were Christian, that would mean, of course, what we would today call Roman Catholic. We say Roman Catholic in contrast to Protestant or in contrast to Eastern Orthodox.

But in Western Europe, all Christianity that was recognized and officially sanctioned was the religion of the Pope and of the institution that followed his leadership. And therefore, for a person to deviate from that form of Christianity was regarded to be a deviation from not only Christianity as a whole, but also treason against whatever nation, whatever Catholic nation these people lived in, because the kings were Catholic and they pretty much expected everyone in their domain to be Catholic. Everyone was baptized as an infant.

Everyone in Europe was baptized as an infant into the Roman Catholic Church. And they paid their taxes to the Roman Catholic Church, as well as to the king. And that being so, it was hard to distinguish, in the mind of the average person, probably most people, it was hard to distinguish between a crime against the Church and a crime against the state, because there was such a thorough blending of the concept of the Church and the state.

These were almost one. There were certainly rivalries between the popes and the monarchs. But nonetheless, the monarchs never seriously dreamed of renouncing Christianity and just simply not being Christian anymore.

And once in a while, when the heat got very high in the conflict between a pope and a king, the pope would simply threaten to put the king's country under the interdict, and that would usually solve things. The king would buckle under and do what the pope said, because the kings, however much they may have disliked the pope, didn't want to be branded as non-Christian. It was just assumed Europe is Christian.

And anyone who deviated from the standard definition of Christian was not only non-Christian in their mind, but also a traitor against their nation. And in most societies, including our own, a traitor against the nation, somebody who is a spy, for example, or sells out their nation to an enemy, is usually considered to be worthy of death, and that was the way it was understood. Now, it wasn't always the case in the earliest of days that all heretics were killed, but it was this mindset that justified the searching out of heretics in order to persecute them.

Now, the Inquisition was a special court, an ecclesiastical court, set up to inquire, that's why it's called the Inquisition, to inquire into certain accusations of heresy. If a person was accused of being a heretic, he'd be brought before the Inquisitors, and they would interrogate him to see if he were a heretic or not. There was nothing like justice in these Inquisitions, such as we would understand justice in a court of law today.

But remember, we cannot always judge people of centuries ago by the high standards that we have come to anticipate. I mean, even the founders of this country, when they said that everyone has the right to a jury trial and to face his accuser and so forth, and to have a defense and so forth, I mean, that was radical. Those were radical ideas that Europe had never really seriously adopted or probably thought about.

And so we would think it very strange for anyone, especially a church, to approve of a trial where the defendant didn't really have an attorney, the defendant didn't have... he was considered guilty unless proven innocent, and he might be tortured in order to get a confession out of him. And then if he did confess, he'd be required to repent of his heresy, and if he didn't repent, he'd be turned over to the secular authorities to be executed, burned at the stake. It was the execution of choice in those days.

Now, if he did repent under the Inquisition, if he did repent and say, I'm sorry, I was a heretic, I now see the error of my ways, I will now behave, I will now believe the right things, that person would then still have to be punished in some way, but he wouldn't be burned at the stake. He'd have to do penance of some kind. Penance could mean going to an inquisitory jail.

It could just be having a property confiscated from him. It often meant scourging, being whipped. Sometimes they'd have to make a pilgrimage to some particular place and be whipped there.

But that's what they did to the people who repented. The people who didn't repent, they would sometimes brand them on their bodies or sometimes make them wear some emblem on their clothing to make clear that they were a heretic. There were a lot of ways in which these people were humiliated and subjected to painful penance if they confessed to being a heretic and repented.

But if they didn't repent, they'd be turned over to the secular authorities and then they would be put to death. The development of the Inquisition began, as I say, with the Third Lateran Council in 1179. This is when there was a crusade against the Cathars in France called for.

As I say, it didn't manage to get rid of them all. And later on in 1184, Pope Lucius III established a bishop's inquisition and declared that if a person was condemned by this inquisition as being a heretic, he would be turned over to the secular authorities for punishment. It was not considered appropriate for the Church to shed blood.

They could torture. They could burn. Not burn to death, but they could use hot irons and burn.

They could drive things under your fingernails. They could stretch you out on the rack. They could take hot pincers and pull flesh out of your side.

Although some blood would be shed in such a case, if they didn't kill you, they were not guilty of shedding blood. But if it came to the point where you were to be executed, they didn't feel that was the Church's job. They'd turn you over to the king or his authorities, and they'd do the job.

They'd do the dirty work. Now, unfortunately, the people who carried out these inquisitions sometimes were probably sincerely believing they were doing God's will, eradicating Europe and the Church of pernicious heresies. And in some cases, they probably were indeed getting rid of real heretics, although that doesn't mean that's the right way to do it.

And yet sometimes, of course, the people that they persecuted in this way were not really heretics in the sense of people who reject Jesus Christ or orthodox Christianity.

They were simply people who were thinking for themselves. Many times they were reading the Bible for themselves and disagreeing with the established Church's understanding of things.

And these people would be accused. And the thing is they could be accused anonymously. They would not be told who their accuser was.

And in order to prove their accuser's accusations false, the defendant would have to prove that his accusers had malice toward him and that they might be falsely accusing him because of malice. But, of course, since he didn't know who his accusers were, it would be hard for him to prove that they had malice toward him. So in some cases the best hope they had was to just make a list of everyone they knew who might have malice toward them and hope that their accuser's name might be on the list.

And that might do for them. The accused in the Inquisitions did not have lawyers. I think in the early days they did, but the lawyers found out that if they defended a person accused of heresy, they often would be the next one accused.

And in many cases the only way out of that was simply to confess that you are a heretic and repent even if you were innocent. Now, of course, in some movements some of the people that were persecuted by the Inquisition were people of conscience who believed very strongly the views for which they were being persecuted and they could not, under persecution or under torture, they could not deny their views against their conscience. And so a lot of these people ended up just being burned as heretics.

In 1199, Pope Innocent III was the first pope to refer to heresy as treason, which, of course, gives a political, criminal kind of flavor to what would otherwise be just a belief system or a religious idea. But again, this seems strange to us only because we have grown up in a culture that takes for granted a separation of the realms of the Church and of the State, but there was no such assumption or understanding in those days. And therefore if you are a heretic, and that just means if you disagreed with the Church, you were guilty like Benedict Arnold was guilty of treason against his government and was hanged for it, only you'd be burned instead.

Now, if you just reflect on that for a moment, what would it be like to live under that kind of a system? What if there had never been a Reformation or there had never been an alternative to the Roman Catholic Church that ever gained any momentum and gained any strength and any credibility? If we were still living in an age where the Roman Catholic Church was the only church in the West that had any authority and that all people were expected to toe the line and be part of it, or be burned at the stake, of course all of us would probably end up being burned at the stake unless we could keep our views a secret. A guy like me who goes on the radio and challenges everything, I wouldn't last a week in those days. And I must confess to you I'm very thankful for the change.

And of course I attribute much of that change to the Reformation, though there are other factors. The Inquisition pretty much died out before the Reformation, but if there had been no Reformation there would be nothing that would prevent recurrent waves of Inquisition or a perpetuating of it in waning and waxing degrees throughout the rest of time. And so we have much to be thankful for that we didn't live during that time.

But there were many people who were like us back then, who did differ from the Church and felt strongly that the Bible taught something different than what the Church was teaching. And these people were like maybe Christians today in China or in some other persecuted country. You're an underground church.

And Pope Honorius, maybe I'm not pronouncing that right, assisted by the French monarchs, ordered the burning of heretics in 1224. And that could be perhaps the... It's hard to know which of these dates we would really point as the beginning of the Inquisition, but when it was determined that heretics would be burned, that certainly introduced the worst stage of the Inquisition. Now, what's wrong with the Inquisition? Why would we have any reason to object to it besides the fact that we would be victims of it were we living at that time? Obviously we would be victims if we lived at that time and therefore we would disapprove of it.

But is that just a subjective thing on our part? I mean, do we just object to it because it would condemn us? I think objectively there is something very unchristian about the whole system, of course. And that is that I don't believe that Jesus ever sought to establish an order where anyone would forcibly be made by the Church to comply with his teaching. Although Jesus makes it very clear that when the judgment comes, all people who did not comply with his teaching will suffer greatly for it.

And it's not as if there are no consequences for the rejection of Christianity. But Jesus said, well, actually God said in Deuteronomy, and Paul quoted him, and so did the writer of Hebrews, God said, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. And the Lord will judge his people.

This was not actually even an attempt to convert non-Christians. This was an attempt to purge the Church of her own people who were going astray and try to bring them to repentance. There were later, in the late 1400s, movements, especially in Spain, to forcibly convert Muslims and Jews to Christianity.

And this is sometimes spoken of as the Spanish Inquisition, but actually that was not done by the Church. That was done by the Spanish monarch, seeking to convert the Jews and the Muslims to the faith. That was a later thing, somewhat different than the original Inquisition.

The Inquisitions were trying to purge the Church of heresy in its own midst. But this, again, is not what the Bible even recommends. The Bible does acknowledge that there

are within the Church people whose beliefs are intolerable, and whose behavior is intolerable.

And from time to time you'll read of it. And Paul talks about the need to discipline such people. But the discipline that he recommends does not take the form of taking a physical sword, or even the sword of the saint, to punish them, but rather simply to deliver them to Satan, and leave them really to the spiritual torment, or whatever torment, that may come from simply being dissociated from the Church.

And so the idea of taking up the sword to persecute such people really grew, although many years later, from the teachings of Augustine, who actually taught that although it is better to convert people by preaching, it is justifiable to convert them by the sword as well, if necessary. And of course the Inquisitions were simply one of the most gruesome applications of that principle, taken to a real extreme. So that is what the Inquisitions were.

And we want to move along now and talk... Number 12 on our list is not really an event so much as some movements that were existing during the period of time we're talking about. Scholasticism, mysticism, and monasticism. Now we've talked about monasticism a little in the past.

We'll come back to it here. But I want to introduce to you a couple of movements. One is called Scholasticism.

And this arose in the 9th century and to the 12th century. For the period from the 800s to the 1100s, it was rising. It was coming up.

And some of the early, usually regarded founders of the Scholastic movement were Anselm and Abelard. And it reached its height in the 13th century, and probably the most famous Scholastic of the 13th century was Thomas Aquinas. And then in the 14th and 15th centuries, the Scholastic movement declined.

And the Scholastic movement was really an attempt to join, to harmonize Western philosophy with theology. The attempt was to make theology palatable to the mind, to the thinking person in the West, with Western philosophy as a basic foundation for thinking, to show how theology in the Bible was consistent with philosophy in the West. Now, I'm not really sure that this can be done legitimately, but it's in some respects simply an attempt at apologetics, just like we still engage in to a certain extent.

We try to show people that belief in creation is more reasonable, even scientifically, than the more popular view in the scientific community of evolution. Or we try to show that the Bible is the word of God, even though the culture at large doesn't tend to accept it. And so we resort to the kind of argument that we think will appeal to a person in our culture to make our theological point.

I don't think the motivation is itself wrong, but I think that it can become too artificial. I think that it can be a mistake in some ways to try to make the foolishness of preaching be replaced by the wisdom of men and of the princes of this age, which come to nothing. Paul said that when he came to Corinth in 1 Corinthians 2, he did not come with enticing words of men's wisdom in presenting the gospel because he did not want their faith to rest in men's wisdom.

Now, I'm not saying this as a criticism of the men I mentioned in the scholastic movement. I'm simply saying that whereas the scholastic movement has some degree of parallel, at least in its general mentality, to becoming involved in Christian apologetics today, someone like Francis Schaeffer or C.S. Lewis, perhaps, would be modern scholastics in this century. Not exactly in the Catholic sense of the scholastic movement, but, I mean, sort of the counterpart.

I believe in that. I believe that's okay. Some of the arguments for the existence of God that Thomas Aquinas formulated are still used by Christian apologists today.

The rise of this movement largely is responsible for the formation of many of the theological ideas that became official at the Council of Trent much later. In 1545 to 1563, the Council of Trent formalized many of the ideas that really just turned out to be the ideas of Thomas Aquinas, which he had introduced and became official at the Council. But there was an attempt here, of course, to make Christianity agree with what Western philosophy taught, and to make it palatable to rational-thinking people.

And that is, in some senses, good, and probably in some senses not all that good. It can go too far. But I certainly believe in it, in a sense.

I believe that there is a place for that kind of dialogue with wisdom, with science, with philosophy. Then another movement that was contemporary with scholasticism was mysticism. Now, mysticism goes all the way back to the time of the Apostles.

To a very large extent, John the Apostle would have to be called a mystic by the definition that we're using. And I think the Apostle Paul was a mystic. Maybe it's not as pronounced in his writings as it is in John's, but I think much of his thinking would have to go along a mystical line.

A mystic was a person who emphasized a more individualistic and personal experience of God, as opposed to just involvement in the institutional church. Mysticism has always laid emphasis on knowing God personally and internally. And, of course, there have been many Catholic mystics, and, of course, the period we're talking about, all of them were Catholic mystics.

Bernard of Clairvaux is one of the best known of the movement. In our modern times, there are some who don't go quite... it wouldn't be totally mystics in the same sense, but

among those of modern times who have been regarded as modern mystics would be A.W. Tozer, for example. He would be pleased to regard himself as a mystic.

There are, of course, people who would fit that description more than he does, or did. Pardon? Thomas Merton today would be a mystic. Now, he is Roman Catholic, is he not? John Michael Talbot? He's a mystic also, yeah.

Okay. Yeah, he is a Franciscan, and, of course, some of you know him from his music, mostly. But the best known mystics of the Middle Ages lived in the 12th century.

And, as I say, the best known of them would be Bernard of Clairvaux. He wrote some hymns that we still are acquainted with. One of them is the hymn, O Sacred Head, Now Wounded.

If you are familiar with that song, as I am, the music that comes to mind is the music of Johann Sebastian Bach put to the words written by Bernard of Clairvaux. Also among his hymns would be Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee, and Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Heart. And these hymns are still well known and sung today.

The writings of Bernard are edifying, certainly to a large extent. Some other well-known people of the period would be, I'd say Thomas Akempis would belong in that category with his *The Imitation of Christ*. And so this movement was sort of a reaction to the over-institutionalization of the Church.

Now, there were some mystics who emphasized personal experience over the objective scriptural norms to the point where they got off into questionable doctrines, possibly actual heresies. But they were people who were seeking after God and seeking to know God in their hearts. And there are some ways in which probably the scholastic movement and the mystical movement probably balanced each other out a little bit.

I don't know that there were many people who would have been part of both movements. I don't know that that would be... Do you know of any like that? Oh, Thomas Aquinas would have been a mystic as well. So, there are people like Thomas Aquinas who sort of had their feet in both camps.

Now, monasticism we've mentioned in an earlier lecture, but it's important to mention it here about the medieval period as well because monasticism is thought to have probably been during this period of time where the papacy was really, well, mostly weak, frequently, or at least not infrequently, corrupt, and where there could have been a general revolt against the Roman Catholic Church as there later was in the Reformation. There could have been one much earlier had it not been for monasticism. Monasticism was, of course, the system of setting up monasteries and people becoming monks or friars.

And basically, the monasteries became the centers of scholarship. The monks were the

writers of the period, the theologians of the period, the philosophers and the teachers of the period. Yet, the monasteries enjoyed a fair bit of independence from the control of the papacy.

The papacy generally approved of monasticism. In fact, some of the popes had been monks before they became popes. Though not most of them.

And the popes allowed the monasteries to work, but the monasteries had their own internal government, pretty much. And they were the centers of missionary activity and of benevolent philanthropic works and so forth. And the monks were pretty much the culture preservers of the period.

And since they were officially Catholic, the good things that they represented and that people saw in them basically were attributed to the Catholic Church. And probably they provided sort of a pressure valve for the general discontent and criticism that would have been rising with greater pressure against the Catholic Church, except there were these movements that people could not deny. There were some good people among them.

And there was actually some freedom in there that might not have been in the Church without the monastic movement. There are several orders of monks that arose over the periods of time. One of the earliest was, of course, St. Benedict, around the year 500, established the Benedictine Order, which really developed the Western European form of monastic life, and almost all the other orders that came along afterward in some ways were offshoots of that and adopted some of his teachings and practices.

The Cluniac Order came into existence in 910, and the Cistercian Order in 1098. And I mentioned Bernard of Clairvaux before. He was of that order, the Cistercian.

And then the Franciscan Order we would probably be very familiar with because St. Francis of Assisi, its founder, is a very popular person. There are movies that we've seen about him, and his prayers and so forth are familiar even to Protestants. Francis, in 1209, established the Order of the Franciscans.

The Dominican Order, which, as I said, was probably the leading order in the enforcement of the Inquisition, although the Franciscans were in there too. Franciscans and Dominicans both were the friars that largely did the inquiring in the Inquisition. But, of course, the Dominicans were named after St. Dominic, and that order was established in 1216.

There was also the Order of the Augustinian Hermits. There were several bands of Italian monks prior to 1256 which merged together into the Augustinian Hermits in 1256. And at a much later date, Martin Luther was an Augustinian monk.

Of course, prior to his involvement in the Reformation as leading the Roman Catholic

Church. But monasticism had these various orders, and each of them had their own strengths and their own distinctives. They were all started probably by good men.

I mean, I don't know any of those men personally, but from what I've read, they were men of true piety. And many of the men who were monks, I'm sure, were as godly as any Christian today is godly. And yet, of course, they were living in a time where they had tunnel vision.

They didn't know any form of Christianity but that of the Roman Catholics. And whatever you or I might find objectionable about Roman Catholicism, much of that might be found in the writings of the monks and in their convictions and the way they prayed and the way they preached. But their hearts, at least in many cases, were true hearts of true Christians, I believe.

And they loved the Lord. And they did many good works through the Middle Ages. Let's move along now to the 13th of our 15 events.

And this is what has been called the Church's Babylonian captivity. Like the Babylonian captivity in the Old Testament, where Judah was carried away into Babylon for 70 years, so the Church had a period of time from 1305 to 1377, which is just about 70 years, which some of the Italian patriots referred to as the Church's Babylonian captivity. Some of the Italian Christians who spoke of it that way were Petrarch and Dante.

You're probably familiar with Dante. They called it that because the papacy was removed from Rome during this period of about 72 years and was resident just south of France. Now, remember, the pope, by definition, is the bishop of Rome.

He's the bishop of the Roman Church. And yet, for seven popes in a row, you did not have, first of all, Italian popes. They were French popes.

Secondly, they were not in Rome, and therefore it's hard to know how they could be regarded as the bishops of Rome since they weren't even in the Roman Church. They were relocated, and I've avoided saying it until now because I don't pronounce French words well, but I believe the place that they were would be pronounced something like Avignon, and this city became an alternate city of popes for this period of time. And there was a series of French popes.

The first of them to actually remove from Italy and set up his headquarters in Avignon was Boniface VIII. That is a typographical error. I hurriedly did this and didn't even have time to write a spelling check on these handouts, but Boniface VIII was the first of these popes to do that.

And there was, I should point this out, one of the reasons for this, and one of the reasons this became scandalous, is because there was, at that time, a growing sense of nationalism that had not really been there in the Roman Empire previously. I mean,

there was always nationalism, but more and more, the monarchs of these various lands, of Spain and France and England and so forth, and the Holy Roman Empire, these monarchs were getting their act together much more. There had been a lot of disarray in Europe for some centuries, and now these guys were getting more efficient in the way they ruled, and the people of their countries were starting to take more pride in their monarchies and in their nationalities.

And so it began to be the case, as it had not very much before, that a man began to think of himself as a Frenchman or an Englishman or a Scot or a Hungarian, rather than simply just a Roman of the Roman Empire. And so there was this growing nationalism, which caused the French and the Italians not to think of each other quite as brotherly as they once did. The Italians were proud of their Italian-ness, the French were proud of their French-ness, and when a French pope was elected by the cardinals, he just preferred to live in Avignon.

Now, there's more to it than that, and I read a couple of chapters in different books earlier today about this, and it's quite complex. I don't mean to oversimplify it or suggest that it's more simple than it is, but that's basically one of the factors that led to this removal of the pope from there, and about seven popes later, Gregory XI moved back to Rome in 1377, and that was the end of that period of time where the Bishop of Rome wasn't living in Rome. There was another pope just before Gregory XI who had moved back to Rome, but his tenure there was very short, and the papacy continued to be in Avignon until Gregory XI actually moved there deliberately.

And then the next event to follow, and very shortly thereafter, would be the papal schism. That is a splitting of the papacy. Again, this was for a short duration, but it was very disruptive to the church at the time.

From 1378 to 1417, there was great confusion in Europe as to who it was, the real Bishop of Rome, who was the real pope. Now, that wouldn't bother us too much. I mean, that wouldn't throw our whole Christian lives in disarray if there was that kind of confusion today because we don't believe that it matters a whole heck of a lot who the Bishop of Rome is.

I don't live in Rome. Who do I care? Who do I care who's the bishop there? But you see, when the Bishop of Rome was thought to be the father figure of the whole church and had the apostolic authority to decree things that were binding the whole church, in a situation like that, of course, it's very disruptive if you don't know who it is, who is Peter's successor. When there's two or more people at the same time in different parts of Europe claiming to be that one person.

Gregory XI, as I said, was the pope who moved the papacy back to Rome. Following his death in 1387, the Italians demanded an Italian pope. They were tired of French popes and they were putting pressure on.

Now that the papacy was back in Rome, that was Italian territory, and therefore the College of Cardinals was under more pressure and they caved in and they did elect an Italian pope. His name was Urban VI. They did this in 1378.

I got the numbers wrong. Of the date of the death of Gregory, it was 1378, not 87. But Urban did not please the cardinals.

He was actually quite a loose cannon. He was actually really a dictatorial kind of a guy and not a good leader in the sense of bringing coherence to the church. And so the same cardinals that had elected him unelected him.

They chose to replace him and they voided his election. But when Urban refused to step down and he refused to recognize this voiding of his position, the cardinals just went ahead and chose another pope to replace him. They chose a guy named Clement.

Or they named him Clement. The popes don't really bear their real names after they're elected popes. But Clement was the next pope and he was positioned at Avignon to be the rival pope to the pope Urban who was in Rome.

And so now there were two popes. Neither of them recognized the other. And the European monarchs then had to decide among themselves, since they were Catholics, which pope they were going to recognize.

And Europe was fairly split on it. England and Italy and Hungary and Scandinavia and the Holy Roman Empire, which is largely associated with Germany, they supported Urban, who was in Rome. But France and its territories and also Spain and Scotland supported Clement, who was in Avignon.

And therefore there were two popes for a while. But it got worse. The cardinals tried to resolve this situation.

They called a council of Pisa in 1409 and they decided to depose both popes and replace them with one pope of their choice because since both popes had some following, it was important to kind of just depose both of them and start from scratch again. But both popes refused to attend the council, so the bishops just used the opportunity to elect a third pope, Alexander V. But he wasn't recognized by Urban or Clement and therefore there were three popes for a while, all of them claiming to be the successor of Peter, all of them claiming to be the head of the church, the temporal head of the church. And of course this introduced a lot of confusion into the situation in European ecclesiology and politics.

Finally, this was resolved that the council of Constance in 1414 through 1418, by this time none of the original guys in the schism were still pope, they had died and left their office to successors. By this time a guy named Pope John XXIII had succeeded Alexander. Alexander was the one that was elected to replace Urban and Clement but just became

pope number three.

But Clement had now died and he was succeeded by Pope John XXIII. Now he was forced to give up his role as pope in 1415 at the council of Constance. The same year, Pope Gregory XII, who was now Urban, although he wasn't the one right after Urban, there had been another one in between, but he was at Rome, the pope at Rome, he resigned.

So we have the successor to Alexander is deposed, the successor to Urban, he resigns, and this left only the pope at Avignon, which was the Spanish pope Benedict XIII, and he also was deposed by the council a couple of years later in 1417. So they had three popes gone within two years and now the slate was kind of clean, they could elect one pope and there would be no more confusion, so they did that. They appointed Pope Martin V, he was elected to be pope in 1417 and that ended the period of the schism.

So that's the papal schism. Now, both the Babylonian captivity of the popes when they were in France and the papal schism, which happened immediately afterwards, caused there to be, of course, a somewhat lengthy period of time where the church politics were thrown into serious disarray and the unity of the papal church in Europe was greatly compromised. And this is recognized as a period of real decline in the power of the papacy in Europe.

Things got worse for the popes, by the way, and really came to a head against the popes in the French Revolution, which we'll get to eventually, not today. But there's one other thing I just want to make reference to, I'm not going to go into detail on it because I want to save that for when we talk about the Reformation, but the 15th principal event of the Middle Ages and pretty much that which kind of brought an end to that period, besides the Reformation, was the Renaissance. Now, the Renaissance is a word that means rebirth, being born again.

And what was reborn there was not the church, but culture, and especially classical culture, began to be reasserted. Because of the weakness of the church, I suppose, partly, and discussed with it, people began to think on their own a little more. They no longer simply just followed the church in whatever it said, and there began to be people philosophizing, reading the classics.

There was a revival of interest in the arts. And whereas the church, for hundreds of years, had largely been the sponsor of culture, of the arts and of literature and so forth, private citizens, private individuals began to promote these things. And the church became more secularized.

Of course, it had become very weakened before this. And it was more, really, Europe became more secularized. Now, it's not that Europe ceased to be Catholic, but even like today, I mean, many countries in Europe are probably officially Catholic or officially Protestant, but that doesn't mean they're not secular.

I mean, their religion is merely a label that they wear. It's not, with many of the citizens, it doesn't really have any effect on the way they live their lives or even describe their real belief system. And that's true in much of Europe today.

It's probably true in America today. But it certainly became true during the time of the Renaissance. Now, this was from about 1300 to about 1600, and therefore it overlaps the period of the Reformation.

Many of the developments of free thinking and especially the invention of the printing press, which made it possible to distribute works of literature widely, I mean, we just take for granted the fact that there are printing presses, that you can just go to the store and buy a book that exists in a million copies or ten million copies. Or if it's Hal Lindsey's book, it might be twenty million copies. And, you know, these are cheaply produced, mass produced, but before the invention of the printing press, every book that you read had to be handwritten by somebody.

It took a long time, it was an expensive process, and most people just didn't have books. For that reason, most people didn't read. They didn't have to learn to read.

There was nothing to read. You know, I mean, in a day where there aren't really books available and there aren't newspapers and there aren't magazines, what's the motivation to learn to read? Only the people who really went to university or whatever really had access to written works prior to this time. But with the invention of the printing press, of course literature began to be dispersed more abroad, much of which was critical of the Church, and this was even before the time of Luther.

There were many people, many of the philosophers of the Reformation were not at all friendly toward the theology of the Church. People like Voltaire, you know, he was simply not a friend of the Church. Of course he's later than that, but he's sort of a result of the Renaissance.

He's actually a century later. There was pretty much an intellectual revolt against Roman Catholicism, although it's not as if Europe threw it over altogether. It was something that really allowed people to express and to develop their feelings of discontent about the Roman Catholic Church, to criticize it and kind of get away with it a lot of the time, which the Inquisition period, people hadn't gotten away with it very much.

And that, of course, paved the way somewhat for Martin Luther to be able, and others in other countries, to be able to raise criticisms in an environment where it was not a given that you'd stand before the Inquisition. Now, you still were in danger, as John Huss found out, and as some of these other guys, even Martin Luther. He had to be kidnapped and hidden for some years to avoid his being killed for his beliefs.

And we'll talk more about that at another time. It was still dangerous to be a preacher

and be preaching contrary to the Church. But there were many people who were not preachers, and they were just philosophers and other things, and there was much that was published that was not friendly toward the Church, not very flattering to the Church.

And I think the general mood of Europe became much more secular, much less interested in what the Pope had to say about things. There were still, of course, pious Catholics who did care about those things, and Luther himself was one of those, up to a point. There was Christian humanism that arose in that time, and then the rise of modern science is traced to the Renaissance, the beginning to adopt scientific methods of inquiry, rather than just accepting fiat declarations about the nature of things, because the Church says so.

People began to explore the world in a scientific method, which, of course, gave rise to the mindset that we have in our culture today, where people just assume that if it's not provable scientifically, it doesn't exist anywhere in the realm of truth at all. And so these were some of the developments that really weakened the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in that period of time, and it was in the latter part of the Renaissance period that the Reformation took place, which we'll have something to say, not next time, but after that. We're going to not go any further tonight, although we haven't gone as late as we sometimes do, but we've just come to the end of our list.

And as I say next time, what I want to do is talk about the same period of time, but look at it at an entirely different angle, and that was what kinds of religious thought, what kind of movements, were going on outside the institutional church. Some of these I feel a strong amount of sympathy for. Some of them we would probably object to them just as much as we object to cults today, but the Church objected to all of them, and we can see by examining some of these movements that God really had some people, that their hearts were His, and they'd be part of what most of us would regard the body of Christ in that period of time, but they certainly were not regarded as part of the body of Christ by the institutional and established church.

So I've got a long list of people like that, and a lot of these we'd have to call precursors to the Reformation, although some of them aren't rightly called that at all, because only those people who really emphasized that we need to go back to the Word of God and not go by papal authority and so forth, people like Wycliffe and Hus, I think they would be true precursors to the Reformation. There are other people who disagreed with the Church, and some of them might have been real men of God, but it's hard to say that they were really on the same track as the Reformation. Some really interesting people and movements that arose, and you'd be surprised if you're not aware of the period, that it wasn't just all darkness.

I mean, much of the light that sought to assert itself got quenched by burning at the stake, but there was some light there, and so the dark ages were not uniformly dark.

We'll look at that next time.