

EARLY MIDDLE AGES

EARLY CHURCH HISTORY – FALL 2023

THE SEVEN ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

- All seven of these councils are considered legitimate by both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches.
- 1. 1st Nicaea (325) – the nature of Christ
- 2. 1st Constantinople (381) – the nature of Christ
- 3. Ephesus (431) – the nature of Christ, theotokos
- 4. Chalcedon (451) – the nature of Christ
- 5. 2nd Constantinople (553) – the nature of Christ
- 6. 3rd Constantinople (680) – the nature of Christ
- 7. 2nd Nicaea (787) – approved use of religious icons

MONASTICISM

- 476-800AD, the Church was like an early version of a welfare state.
- "It conducted hospitals for the old and orphanages for the young; hospices for the sick of all ages; places for the lepers; and hostels or inns where pilgrims could buy a cheap bed and meal. It supplied food to the population during famine and distributed food to the poor." - Blainey
- Christian communes called monasteries started to form.
- Preserved classical craft and artistic skills
- Maintained schools and libraries
- Functioned as agricultural, economic and production centers
- Made advances in medicine and science

MISSIONARY EXPANSION

- After 476AD, the church provided the only unifying force in Western Europe.
- It actively preserved ancient texts and literacy that would otherwise have been lost.
- Missionaries carried Christianity North into Brittain and Ireland, East into Germania, and West into Gaul.

THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

- The Eastern Roman Empire became the Byzantine Empire, which lasted almost 1,000 years.
- By 565 AD, Justinian I had reclaimed most of the territory once occupied by the Roman Empire, including the city of Rome.
- By 630 AD, the Roman Senate ceased to exist – the building replaced by a church and the senators by bishops.
- The Bishop of Rome essentially became the “pope” during this period. Most of the popes were the sons of powerful eastern families and were appointed by the Byzantine Emperor.

THE RISE OF ISLAM

- 610 AD - Muhammad claimed to receive the Quran from the angel Gabriel in a cave near Mecca.
- By the time of his death in 632 AD, Muhammad had successfully unified the Arab tribes.
- By 740 AD, Muslims had conquered most of the Byzantine Empire.
- "At its height, the Arab Empire stretched from the Indus River and the borders of China in the East, to the Atlantic in the West, and from the Taurus mountains in the North to the Sahara in the South." - Matthews and Platt