

Welcome to *World History!*

Sometimes students approach a history course with hesitation. They view history as a list of names, dates, and terms that are overwhelming to master or irrelevant to their lives. *World History*, Sixth Edition, works to address those concerns by giving you, the student, tools to help you understand the events of the past. These tools include guiding questions to prepare for upcoming learning, on-page reading check questions to assess your understanding of material, critical thinking questions to evaluate actions or understand relationships, and chapter summaries and reviews to remind you of key ideas and terms.

As you develop a better understanding of the material, you will hopefully begin to see history as more than just facts. Feature boxes, images, infographics, and primary sources help to remind you that history was lived by real people just like you. The relevance of these people becomes clearer as you see how the choices they made and the ideas they introduced continue to influence your world today.

Genesis 12 describes the faith of Abram, who went out from Haran to a place God would show him. Abram provided an example for all who would seek to “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7).

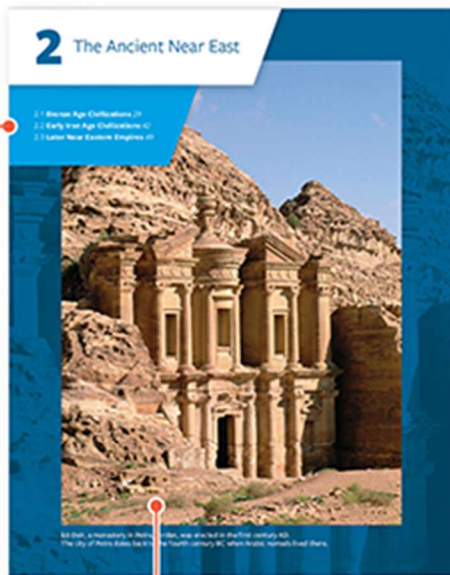
The study of history is especially relevant to Christians because they understand that God sovereignly controls the world. Each person is accountable to God, and all the events of human history are moving toward His preordained conclusion. These truths offer hope as well as an urgent incentive to think biblically. To aid you in developing a biblical perspective on the past, you will be introduced to several worldview themes important for studying civilizations: justice, power, community, environment, religion, and aesthetics. You will examine biblical teaching on these themes and then evaluate historical events based on what you have learned. It is our hope that this evaluation will do more than just shape your view of history, though. The study of the past will have even greater value if it teaches you how to serve God more effectively in the present. First Corinthians 10:11 indicates that the history of Israel is recorded in the Bible so that future generations can learn from it. In the same way, the successes and failures of world history can provide you with examples both of what to do and what not to do as you seek to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12).



Using Your Book

The purpose of this textbook is to help you develop a biblical and practical understanding of the major events, people, and movements of world history. To further that goal, several special features have been employed throughout the text. The following pages will introduce you to these features.

The **chapter outline** lists the section titles for the chapter.



Photographs, illustrations, and artwork help students visualize sites, people, and events.

Terms in bold type highlight significant people, places, and things.




Maps enhance understanding of events based on geographic context.

Guiding questions prepare students for upcoming learning.


FACTORS IN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

During the eighteenth century, conditions in Britain were most favorable for industrial development. Several factors combined to make the industrial age possible.

- 1 An Adequate Food Supply**
The industrial revolution was possible only as a result of agricultural advances. New methods of farming led to increased food supply that could meet the demands of a growing urban population. In the eighteenth century, **Jethro Bull** invented a seed drill, which enabled farmers to plant more efficiently, increase crop yields, and use the waste for fertilizing of land. **Charles Townshend** developed a new system of crop rotation. Instead of leaving fallow land for a year, he planted clover and turnips. These crops returned nutrients to the soil that other crops had removed and could also be fed to other crops. Townshend increased his crop yield by using fertilizer.
- 2 A Large and Mobile Labor Force**
Because of agricultural advancements, fewer farmers were needed on farms. In addition, the enclosure movement made it easier for wealthy landowners to incorporate open fields, previously used as common grazing lands, into their estates. Small farmers, unable to survive on what little land they owned, often had to sell their farms. Some people from urban centers helped form the labor force of industry.



The soil of all around farmers together with it was.



- 3 A Geographic Advantage**
Geographical location and natural resources. Britain's location between Northern and parts were shorter than on the European continent, allowing for the efficient delivery of raw materials to factories and finished goods to market. An abundance of rivers, together with infrastructure improvements such as canals, aided in the transportation of these materials. In addition, Britain had a large supply of natural resources that benefited the growth of industry.
- 4 A Favorable Environment for Business**
Unlike France and other European nations, British merchants did not have to pay import duties. Britain was a major industrial nation. Britain also occupied the most active of the European states, while other nations experienced revolutions in the eighteenth century. British society remained relatively stable and peaceful. The British government encouraged industrial development by issuing patents for new inventions, removing regulations that would hinder economic growth, and keeping them and other laws relatively low.
- 5 A Worldwide Empire**
In the eighteenth century, foreign trade became a vital part of the British economy. The trade expanded as the number of British colonial possessions increased. The needs to export certain raw materials for British industry and to sell as a market for British products.

How did Britain's colonies fuel the growth of the industrial revolution in Britain?

The Industrial Revolution and Changes in Society 608

Infographics combine graphics and text to aid student comprehension and memory.

Reading Check questions assess student understanding of the material.

Critical Thinking questions provide opportunities for analysis and evaluation.

HISTORY AT ITS SOURCE

Activity 2

Settela Steinbach Film

This colorized film vividly documents the reality of the Holocaust, showing individuals being transported by trains to Auschwitz. The film features a Dutch Roma girl, Settela Steinbach, who perished in Auschwitz. In Activity 2, you will watch this short film and analyze the emotions and behaviors of both the prisoners and the German soldiers.

History at Its Source feature boxes introduce primary sources that will be analyzed in the Student Activities book.

CONNECTIONS TO TODAY

The James Webb Space Telescope

On December 25, 2021, a new space telescope was launched by an international team under the direction of NASA. This huge and powerful telescope is named for James Webb, the director of NASA from 1961 to 1968 and a champion of space science research. The goal of the new telescope is to build on knowledge gained through the Hubble Space Telescope (launched in 1990). The Webb telescope has two key differences from the Hubble telescope that allow it to view parts of space never seen before. First, it sees objects in the infrared rather than visible light, which allows it to see through dust clouds and to see objects that are farther away. Second, it has larger mirrors (28 feet in diameter) than Hubble's (8 feet in diameter). This allows it to see objects that are much fainter than Hubble's. The advanced capabilities of the Webb telescope give it an advantage in seeing distant galaxies. Another difference of the Webb telescope is that its mirror is significantly larger than Hubble's. A larger mirror gives the ability to catch more light.

Though the Webb telescope provides amazing scientific data, many members of the team that operates it have a naturalistic mindset. The naturalistic theory of the universe teaches that when the Big Bang occurred, the universe would take billions of years to reach an end and would be visible only in the infrared. Scientists studying the telescope look for evidence from the electromagnetic spectrum to prove that they have found early galaxies. They are astounded that in the confirmation of the Big Bang and naturalistic principles.

All astronomers view the same universe. But they view it from different perspectives. Secular astronomers believe that the universe developed through natural processes without divine intervention, and they interpret the evidence accordingly. Those who believe that God created the world as we know it do not see the universe that way. Instead, they see evidence for the divine hand in the universe. For example, the Hubble telescope's discovery of the (false) evidence that the universe is expanding is a key piece of evidence that supports the scientific truth of God's hand.

Critical Thinking 1.2
Why do you think humans seek to come up with explanations of life after death?



Copper-plated mirrors, turned up for the Webb's launch, are lined up in a queue in the observatory. A small nearby the side of a science court across the mirrors and instruments from the crew.

Foundations of World History 18

Connections to Today feature boxes demonstrate the ongoing relevance of history or explain advancements to earlier innovations.

THE HISTORIAN'S CRAFT

Verifying Sources

The Donation of Constantine was a decree that supposedly came from the Roman emperor Constantine in the fourth century AD. After fighting to assume power, Constantine ruled the Western Roman Empire from 312 to 324 and a united Roman Empire from 324 to 337. Constantine moved his capital to the eastern part of the empire in 330, establishing the city of Constantinople. At that time, according to the decree, Constantine transferred religious authority within the Mediterranean region and political authority over Rome and the Western Roman Empire to the pope (Sylvester I at the time). The decree was widely known and was used to justify papal claims to political authority in Europe during the Middle Ages. The authenticity of the Donation was questioned several times, but finally in the fifteenth century Italian priest and humanist Lorenzo Valla used linguistic and historical evidence to prove that the document was a forgery.

1 Why is it important to verify sources?
2 What might be motivations for forging a document?



An anonymous artist depicted the symbolic transfer of power from Constantine to Pope Sylvester I.

The Historian's Craft feature boxes expose students to the work done by historians.

11 Europe in the Middle Ages

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The Bayeux Tapestry depicts the Norman conquest of England in 1066. According to legend, William the Conqueror's wife, Matilda, and her ladies-in-waiting created the tapestry.

Writers give various titles to the era in Europe lasting from approximately 500 to 1500. You are probably already familiar with names such as the “Dark Ages,” the “Medieval Era,” and the “Middle Ages.” (The term *medieval* itself comes from Latin words meaning “middle ages.”) The “darkness” of the ages lies more in our ignorance of the period than in its actual character. The era was, however, a “middle” age. The medieval world was a bridge between the ancient world of Greece and Rome and our modern world. Its character was shaped significantly by the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Church provided order and stability for the people of Europe, but its growing wealth and political power led to corruption and distracted from the biblical mission of the church.

11.1 Rise of Feudalism

What events led to the rise of feudalism in the European continent?

As you learned in Chapter 6, Germanic tribes moved into the territory of the Western Roman Empire, often fleeing hostile invaders such as the Huns. The tribes challenged the empire’s control over the region and, in two historic instances, even attacked Rome itself. Political authority in the Western Roman Empire ultimately disintegrated. Though the leaders of the Germanic tribes established their own kingdoms, the kingdoms were often small and lacked strong central governments. As a result, western Europe entered a time of social unrest and political disorder. Gradually, the Franks emerged from this chaos to become the most powerful of the Germanic peoples.

Growth of the Frankish Kingdom

Clovis and the Franks

In 481 a man named Clovis became the head of a Frankish tribe in northern Gaul. Through treachery and exceptional military ability, he conquered other Frankish tribes, uniting them into one kingdom. He soon became known as “King of the Franks.”

Like Constantine, Clovis cried out to God for help in a battle, vowing to believe in God and be baptized in His name if granted the victory. Emerging victorious, Clovis kept his vow. He even required three thousand of his soldiers to be baptized. As a result, Clovis gained the support of the Roman Catholic Church, which found him to be a powerful champion.

Mayors of the Palace

Clovis died in 511, and the kingdom was divided among his four sons. Though this royal line (known as the Merovingians for Clovis’s ancestor Merovech) continued to rule over the Franks well into the eighth century, they had lost much of their prestige and effectiveness by the seventh century through drunkenness, immoral living, and family strife. The mayor of the palace, the principal palace official, became the real power behind the throne.

Near the end of the seventh century, Pepin II became the mayor of one of the stronger Frankish states. He defeated all rival mayors and reunited most of the Frankish territories. His son Charles Martel (“the Hammer”) won fame in 732 by defeating the Muslims at the Battle of Tours in western France.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How did Germanic kingdoms develop in Europe?
- How did Charlemagne’s army and government operate?
- What did the Carolingian Renaissance achieve?
- Why did feudalism develop in Europe?
- What are distinguishing characteristics of feudalism?
- How were European society and government shaped by feudalism?

What was true of most of the early kingdoms established by Germanic tribes?

The baptism of Clovis



Pepin the Short (Charles Martel's son) became mayor of the palace in 741. He possessed all the powers of a king, but he wanted the title as well. Pepin asked the pope to decide who should be the rightful ruler of the Franks: Pepin or the Merovingian king. The pope concluded that the one who wielded the power should be king, whereupon Pepin seized the throne. This was the beginning of the Carolingian dynasty (named after its most illustrious member, Charlemagne). In 754 the pope sealed the change in ruling families by anointing Pepin king of the Franks. In return for the pope's support, Pepin defeated the Lombards, who had invaded central Italy, and gave their lands to the pope. These lands became known as the Papal States.

Charlemagne's Empire

When Pepin died in 768, his sons Carloman and Charles succeeded him as corulers. After a few years, Carloman died, and Charles became the sole ruler of the Frankish kingdom. Charles was not only the greatest Carolingian king but also one of the outstanding figures of the Middle Ages. His accomplishments won him the title **Charlemagne**, or "Charles the Great."

Military and Administrative Activities

As his father had done, Charlemagne rescued Rome, which had again been invaded by Lombards. With this foe subdued, he directed his military campaigns against the Saxons, a Germanic tribe in northern Europe. After thirty-three years, he conquered this people also. Near the Danube River in central Europe, he defeated the Avars, a nomadic people similar to the Huns. And in the south, he drove the Spanish Muslims back across the Pyrenees. By the time of his death, Charlemagne had created an empire that spanned most of western Europe. He laid the foundation for the modern European nations of France, Germany, and Italy.

Charlemagne divided his empire into hundreds of administrative districts, or counties. He appointed counts to supervise each district. They administered justice, maintained the peace, and raised an army in times of war. To ensure the enforcement of his policies on the local level, Charlemagne sent out pairs of royal messengers to investigate local conditions and to hear complaints leveled against any local officials.

What were the administrative districts in Charlemagne's empire called?



Activity 1

Life of Charlemagne

Life of Charlemagne is a biography written by Einhard, a monk whose academic and practical abilities gave him close contact with Charlemagne for more than twenty years. Einhard's biography of Charlemagne was based on his own observations as well as on information he obtained from the records of the royal court. In Activity 1 you will be reading excerpts from this biography, taking note of the tone of writing as well as the information included.

Crowning

Since the days of the Roman emperors, no one in the West had ruled as much territory as Charlemagne. On Christmas Day of 800, Pope Leo III placed a crown on Charlemagne's head and proclaimed him Roman emperor. Though the title did nothing to increase Charlemagne's actual power, it did have important effects upon later medieval history. It revived the idea of a restored Roman Empire that would again unite the territories of western Europe. It also raised a serious question: whose authority is supreme—the state's or the church's? Charlemagne's authority was unquestioned in his day, but later popes insisted that their authority superseded that of kings, noting that a pope had crowned Charlemagne.

Intellectual and Cultural Revival

In addition to his military and administrative accomplishments, Charlemagne was known for his efforts to advance education and culture. At his royal court at Aachen, he assembled the best scholars of western Europe, most notably Alcuin of York, England. Alcuin took charge of the palace school, training the king's children as well as the children of other noble families. He also taught the king. Perhaps it was under Alcuin's influence that Charlemagne developed a deep concern for a better-educated clergy. Believing that church leaders must have enough education to be able to read and explain the Scriptures, Charlemagne promoted the establishment of schools for priests and monks.

Because there had been little emphasis on intellectual life for several centuries in western Europe, many ancient manuscripts had been lost or damaged. Charlemagne's educational reforms renewed interest in the Bible and in the works of classical writers. Monasteries became key centers for the studying, copying, and preserving of ancient manuscripts.

Along with a revived intellectual life came a renewed interest in culture. Cultural achievements of Charlemagne's reign included a new and beautiful style of handwriting known as Carolingian minuscule. This style served as the model for much of today's lowercase writing. In addition, new forms of art and architecture appeared, highlighted in cathedrals, monasteries, and palaces. The intellectual and cultural revival that Charlemagne prompted is often called the **Carolingian Renaissance**. Its name acknowledges its interest in the classical world (like the Renaissance of the late Middle Ages, see Chapter 12) and shows the importance of its educational reforms for future intellectual growth in Europe.

What name was given to the intellectual and cultural revival prompted by Charlemagne?



There were many regional writing styles in Charlemagne's day. Carolingian minuscule improved communication by providing a style that was more uniform and easier to read.

Treaty of Verdun, 843



Notice how closely the modern states of France, Germany, and Italy correspond to the territory divisions of Louis's three sons.

Decline into Feudalism

Division of the Empire

When Charlemagne died in 814, his empire passed to his only surviving son, Louis the Pious, who reigned until 840. Louis's three sons engaged in a bitter rivalry over the empire that led ultimately to war. After years of fighting, the brothers met at the city of Verdun to settle their differences. In the **Treaty of Verdun** (843), they agreed to split the empire into three separate kingdoms. Charles the Bald received West Frankland; Louis the German, East Frankland; and the eldest brother, Lothair, retained the title of emperor and ruled the land between his brothers' kingdoms. With the division of Charlemagne's empire (and the weakness of subsequent Carolingian kings), western Europe lost the order and protection it had experienced under Charlemagne.

What were the three kingdoms established by the Treaty of Verdun?

Foreign Invasions

During the ninth and tenth centuries, the divided Carolingian Empire was plagued with a series of foreign invasions. From North Africa came Muslim raiders who devastated the Mediterranean coast of Europe. From the east came a group of Asiatic nomads (later known as Hungarians) who swept into the Danube region of southeastern Europe, ravaging the eastern borders of the empire.

However, the most feared invaders were the **Vikings**, or Norsemen. These Germanic tribes came from the lands known today as Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Some sailed down the rivers of Russia, while others sailed along the European coast and into the Mediterranean, plundering coastal villages and towns. The Vikings inspired terror; their swift raids left villages aflame, homes and crops destroyed, and churches and monasteries ransacked.

Feudal Society

As Charlemagne's empire gradually disintegrated, a new political system arose in which local rulers offered the people protection in return for their services. This system, known as **feudalism**, was the form of government prevalent in western Europe from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries. It provided relative order and security until more centralized governments again emerged.

Fiefs

Land was the basis of wealth and power under feudalism. Governing power gradually passed into the hands of landholding nobles called lords. In theory, the king was the supreme lord, owning all the land in the kingdom by right of conquest or inheritance. But when foreign raiders threatened his territory, the king had to rely on the help of powerful nobles. In return for their services, the king granted them the use of landed estates. The land grants became known as fiefs, or in Latin, *feudum*, from which our word *feudal* comes.

What did the king grant to nobles in return for their services?

A **fief** could be extremely large or very small. The recipient of such an estate became the king's **vassal** (servant). A vassal did not own the fief but held it as payment for service rendered to the king. Originally, the king granted his vassal the use of a fief for as long as the vassal lived. When the vassal died, the fief reverted to the king. Later, however, many fiefs became hereditary, remaining in the hands of the vassal's eldest son upon payment of a fee. Often a vassal parceled out portions of his fief to gain the services of lesser nobles, who became his vassals, and he, in turn, their lord. Each new vassal could likewise partition his fief and become a lord. This process could continue until a fief was too small to subdivide any further.

Lord-Vassal Relationship

The lord-vassal relationship was based on mutual obligations. The lord granted the vassal the use of a fief and guaranteed him protection and justice. The vassal, in turn, assisted the lord in his battles, providing knights for a specified number of days each year. Other possible duties of vassals could include supplying financial payments on special occasions (for example, when the lord's eldest son became a knight), attending the lord's court to give counsel and to assist in the administration of justice, and paying a ransom if the lord was captured in war.

Homage was the ceremony by which a man became a vassal and thus eligible for a fief.





By about the tenth century, castles had come to reflect their distinctive features: massive stone walls, towering battlements, wide moats, and wooden drawbridges.

Castles and Knights

The castle was the center of life for the nobility. It was not only the lord's home but also the local jail, the treasury, the armory, the court, and the seat of government. It was the lord's responsibility to protect the inhabitants of the surrounding countryside. When invaders threatened the land, the local villagers fled to the safety of their lord's castle.

Also important to the protection of life and property were the knights, the professional soldiers of the Middle Ages. Lords needed knights to defend their land and fight their battles. Knights promised to live by a strict code of behavior called chivalry, which required them to be brave in battle, skillful with their weapons, honest, generous, and loyal to their lords.

Manors

Most people in medieval Europe lived on manors. A manor was a self-contained farming community. Its population, like that of medieval Europe as a whole, consisted of clergy (a priest who cared for religious needs), nobility (a local lord who provided protection and justice), and peasantry (either farm laborers or craftsmen).

What three groups made up the population of a manor?

PEOPLE

Peasants were the vast majority of a manor's inhabitants. Most peasants were **serfs**. Serfs received protection from the local lord and the use of small portions of land to grow food for their families. In return, they provided services, such as working in the lord's fields. They also made payments, often in the form of goods, when they used resources such as the lord's mill.

When not actively engaged in war, mounted knights sometimes participated in tournaments. The joust and the melee were common tournament competitions.

In the joust, two knights carrying lances charged at each other and tried to unseat each other. In the melee, groups of knights fought what amounted to a full-scale battle, often fighting within a fenced area so the battle would be more exciting to watch.

A small percentage of peasants were freemen. They served as officials or skilled laborers (for example, blacksmiths, millers, and carpenters). Some freemen owned their own land, while others rented land from the lord of the manor. The freemen's living conditions differed little from those of serfs; however, there was one important distinction. Freemen were free to leave the manor, whereas serfs needed their lord's permission.

LAYOUT

The center of a typical manor was the village. Here peasants lived in clusters of one- or two-room cottages with thatched roofs and walls. Near the cottages were small plots for vegetable gardens or for stables to house livestock. (It was also common for some of the livestock to be housed inside the cottages.)

Two buildings dominated the manor: the lord's residence and the village church. Villagers took refuge in the lord's residence when enemies attacked. The residence might be either a castle or a simple wooden building known as the manor house. It was often situated on a high hill or some other defensible site. Not far from the lord's residence stood the village church. The church was the place not only for worship but also for village meetings, court sessions, and social gatherings.

Critical Thinking 11.1

What aspect of Christianity makes a good education important for Christian leaders (consider Charlemagne's reforms)?

The lord and the villagers shared the manor's fields, which were divided into long, narrow strips.



THE HISTORIAN'S CRAFT

Feudalism: Harmful or Helpful?

As you have learned, feudalism arose in Europe in response to the weakening of the Carolingian Empire. In the absence of strong kings, feudal lords protected the people of Europe from invaders and ensured justice and provision for their physical needs. During this period, society was locally centered, and economic efforts focused mainly on survival. On the other hand, as you will learn later in this chapter, the opposite circumstances occurred in the late Middle Ages. The power of great lords diminished, and, as it did, strong, centralized monarchies again became established in many places. Also, contact with the outside world was renewed, and trade expanded European economic opportunities.

Because these circumstances seem to place the feudal age in contrast with both the Carolingian Empire that preceded it and the European nation-states that followed it, many have thought of the feudal age as a dark period of European history and the enemy of monarchy and culture. However, some historians disagree with this analysis. They believe that feudalism, rather than being an opponent of progress, actually helped to shape and develop modern Europe. Consider two of their arguments.

- 1** The feudal system set kings up to be more powerful by giving them (at least technically) ownership of all the land in their kingdoms and making the great lords their vassals.
 - 2** The obligations between a lord and his vassals helped to promote principles of limited government and individual liberty. For example, two of the vassal's duties were to give his lord advice and to assist in the administration of justice. Nobles used these feudal customs to insist that kings should consult them on government policy. This principle was influential in the founding of representative bodies such as Parliament. It also prompted the idea of "no taxation without representation," which contributed to the outbreak of both the English Civil War and the American War for Independence.
- ?** Do you think feudalism was more harmful or helpful to European society and government? Use information from this feature or from the rest of the chapter to support your answer.



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How did church authority expand in the early Middle Ages?
- To what extent did the Catholic Church impact daily life in the Middle Ages?
- How did shifts of power between church and state during the High and later Middle Ages correspond to a biblical view of power?
- What qualities distinguished medieval art, architecture, music, and literature?
- What contributions did the medieval world make to the intellectual life of Europe?

11.2 European Religion and Culture

What was the religious and cultural life of medieval Europeans like?

Expansion of Church Authority

Amid the confusion and change that followed the initial fall of the Western Roman Empire, one stable institution remained, representing order and authority. This institution became known as the Roman Catholic Church. Eventually, the Catholic Church absorbed almost all the people in western Europe. As it did, it amassed great power, prestige, and wealth.

Leadership of Rome

To fully understand the Catholic Church, one must examine the development of Christianity in the days of the Roman Empire. At that time (and still today) the word *church* had two meanings. It referred specifically to a local assembly of believers. It also referred universally to the spiritual body composed of all true believers who are united by faith in Christ (Eph. 1:22–23). Recognizing the unity of their faith, early Christians described their church as *catholic*, a word meaning “universal.” Over time, however, the universal church came to be seen not only as a spiritual body but also as an outward, visible institution. This change came through the increasing influence of the church and the bishop of Rome.

Office of Pope

The church of Rome administered one of the church’s five patriarchates (see Chapter 7), the only one located in the West. With the collapse of the Western Empire in the fifth century, the Roman bishop became one of the few remaining sources of stability in the West. The prestige of the Roman bishop was also enhanced in 452 when Bishop Leo I persuaded Attila the Hun, who was engaged in a series of destructive conquests down the Italian coast, to spare Rome. Leo was hailed as *papa*, or pope (“Father-Protector”). This title had been applied to other bishops in both the East and the West. By the sixth century, however, it referred almost exclusively to the bishop of Rome.

During the fifth and sixth centuries, the bishops of Rome worked to translate their prestige into authority over all the churches. To support their claim of primacy (“first in rank”), the bishops of Rome advanced the **Petrine theory**. This theory, based on Matthew 16:18–19, holds that Christ gave Peter supreme authority over the church on earth, resulting in Peter’s becoming the vicar, or representative, of Christ on earth. Peter, traditionally considered by the Catholic Church to be the first bishop of Rome, then transferred his office with all its authority to those who succeeded him. The Petrine theory would be challenged in later centuries by the Reformation emphasis on the priesthood of the believer.

Perhaps the best representative of the early medieval popes was Gregory I (r. 590–604). He was a man of deep devotion and fervent piety who oversaw the churches of Gaul, Spain, Britain, Northern Africa, and Italy. Yet Gregory also promoted many ideas that Protestants would later identify as unscriptural: the mass, the equal authority of tradition and Scripture, the sacrament of penance, and the existence of purgatory (a place of temporary punishment where souls bound for heaven must go after death to pay for minor unconfessed sins).

Role of the Church in Medieval Life

The Middle Ages is often called an “age of faith.” Religion dominated society, and nearly every aspect of a person’s life was influenced by the Catholic Church. The power of the popes grew greater than that of monarchs. And the few bright spots of culture were made possible by the church.

The Sacraments

The sacramental system was the core of worship and doctrine in the Catholic Church. The church defined a *sacrament* as a religious act that granted grace (spiritual benefit) based on the recipient’s right intentions.

Receiving of the Holy Eucharist at mass | ▶



By the beginning of the thirteenth century, the church recognized seven sacraments. The church taught that no one could be saved without receiving the sacraments, which could be administered only by the church. Through the sacraments, the Catholic Church wielded great power over the Western world.

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

1 Baptism

Baptism removes original sin from infants and original sin and all subsequent sins from adults.

2 Confirmation

Confirmation gives the Holy Spirit to strengthen members of the Roman Catholic Church.

3 Penance

Penance enables people to merit forgiveness.

4 Holy Eucharist

The Eucharist gives grace to members of the church by presenting them with the literal sacrificed body and blood of Christ in the form of bread and wine.

5 Matrimony

Matrimony gives grace to a husband and wife in marriage to strengthen their union and make it unbreakable.

6 Holy Orders

Holy orders give priests the power to absolve, or pardon, sin and to conduct the Eucharist.

7 Extreme Unction (or Last Rites)

Last rites are given to a seriously ill or dying person to provide forgiveness of sins.

What did the Catholic Church teach regarding the sacraments?