**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

Sermon Series Ekklesia

*Man’s Attempted Path to God*

*From 200’s Bishop Cyprian – Wycliffe 1382 A.D.*

February 17th, In the Year of Our Lord 2018

Most people are content to go to church and hear a good sermon. This is a good life. Some of us are called to explain things for others to hear. It is understood there is a smaller audience that is receptive. We are in a time that the Word of God and faith in anything is not popular to those who control the mass media and secular society overall. The mass media moguls have been successful in making conversation or witness of people of faith irrelevant in popular society and in many academic cultures. There is a hostility. This makes our witness all the more important. My view is obvious, we must know what has taken place before our time. We must be a witness to the core of God’s teachings in His Word and Spirit. There has been so much added to the Truth in God’s Word. There are layers upon layers that the foundation is blurred. This leads to us and our witness to be accurate.

**First 7 Ecumenical Councils**

1. **325**– 1st Ecumenical Council of Nicaea condemns Arius and clarifies the dogma of Christ’s divin­ity by expanding Creed’s 2nd stanza
2. **381**– 1st Ecum. Council of Constantinople expands 3rd stanza of creed defining the divinity of the Holy Spirit and also condemns Apollinaris’s heresy that Jesus lacked a complete human soul
3. **431**– Council of Ephesus defines Christ as the incarnate Word of God and proclaims Mary *Theotokos* (“God-bearer” or “Mother of God”) after deposing Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople
4. **451**– Ecum. Council of Chalcedon defines Christ as having both a divine and a human nature in one person
5. **553**– 2nd Ecum. Council of Constantinople confirms Christological & Trinitarian doctrine against the Nestorians
6. **680**– 3rd Ecum. Council of Constantinople affirms that Jesus had a truly human will as well as a truly divine will against the Monothelites
7. **787**– 2nd Ecum. Council of Nicaea vindicates the veneration of images based on the humanity of Christ as the image or icon of the unseen God

**John 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

**John 1:2** He was with God in the beginning.

**John 5:17** Jesus responded to them, "My Father is still working, and I am working also."

**John 5:19** Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, the Son is not able to do anything on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son likewise does these things.

**John 5:23** so that all people may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

**John 10:38** But if I am doing them and you don't believe me, believe the works. This way you will know and understand that the Father is in me and I in the Father."

**John 12:45** And the one who sees me sees him who sent me.

**John 14:7** If you know me, you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

**John 14:9** Jesus said to him, "Have I been among you all this time and you do not know me, Philip? The one who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, Show us the Father?

**John 14:23** Jesus answered, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

**John 16:15** Everything the Father has is mine. This is why I told you that he takes from what is mine and will declare it to you.

**John 17:10** Everything I have is yours, and everything you have is mine, and I am glorified in them.

**John 17:11** I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by your name that you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one.

**John 17:21** May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me.

**John 17:22** I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one.

**Matthew 11:27** All things have been entrusted to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son desires to reveal him.

**Luke 22:70** They all asked, "Are you, then, the Son of God?" And he said to them, "You say that I am."

**1 Timothy 3:16** And most certainly, the mystery of godliness is great: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

**Titus 2:13** while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**1 John 5:7** For there are three that testify:

**1 John 5:20** And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know the true one. We are in the true one that is, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

The age of the Church councils that were called or orchestrated by the state lasted a long time. And, in that time, the Bishop of Rome grew in statue politically and acted as the Political head of the countries in the West. Remember, since the capital of the empire was moved to Byzantium in 330 A.D. by Constantine, he renamed the city Constantinople. The heads of State there sought to rule through the Christian faith. They turned Faith in God into a religion of the State, thus, the Roman Bishop at first claimed authority in matters of religion and, in time, political matters. Many churches in the West went along with this because of the political pressure. The Eastern Churches never did succumb to the Roman Bishop’s claims of authority over all of Christendom. They gave a respectful nod due to the historical events involving Paul and Peter who ministered and were martyred in Rome. However, the Eastern Church ordained its own Bishops and conducted its own affairs. In 1054 A.D., there was an official split (Schism) between the two.

The self-proclaimed headship by the person holding the Bishop’s office in the Roman church did have its advantages. When the Germanic tribes overtook Rome, the Roman Bishop was instrumental in negotiating a peace with them. In time, the Church actually gained new converts by converting many of the tribes who were opposed to the Roman government adopted by the religious beliefs taught by the Roman Bishop. This placed the Roman Bishop in a prestigious position among the new rulers of the German and Frank blood lines.

The Franks (Latin: Franci or gens Francorum) were a collection of Germanic peoples, whose name was first mentioned in 3rd century Roman sources, associated with tribes on the Lower and Middle Rhine, on the edge of the Roman Empire. Later the term was associated with Romanized Germanic dynasties within the collapsing Roman Empire, who eventually commanded the whole region between the rivers Loire and Rhine. They then imposed power over many other post-Roman kingdoms and Germanic peoples, and still later they were given recognition by the Catholic Church as successors to the old rulers of the Western Roman Empire. (Wikipedia)

The Middle Ages, the medieval period of European history between the fall of the Roman Empire 476 A.D. and the beginning of the Renaissance (around 1350 – 1600), are sometimes referred to as the "Dark Ages." Most historians view the era lasted for about 900 years.

 In 476 C.E. Romulus, the last of the Roman emperors in the west, was overthrown by the Germanic leader Odoacer, who became the first Barbarian to rule in Rome.

Scholars vary in determining how “Dark” the Middle ages were. However, we do know that the elite class who controlled society did preserve sacred text of the Bible. Below, we note the Monastic orders that were started. These Monastics were centers of preserving the Biblical text and many records of their day. They preserved letters of leaders and song books and other writings that contained quotes from the Bible. During the time, the Latin Vulgate was the Authorized Bible of the State-Church. Below are two noted Monastic orders that others after them borrowed from their writings and experience.

**Basilian monks** are monks who follow the rule of Saint Basil the Great, bishop of Caesarea (330–379). The monastic rules and institutes of St. Basil are important because their reconstruction of monastic life remains the basis for most Eastern Orthodox and some Greek Catholic monasticism. Saint Benedict of Nursia, who fulfilled much the same function in the West, took his Regula Benedicti from the writings of St. Basil and other earlier church fathers. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, monks do not generally call themselves "Basilians", while the Greek Catholics do. Thus the expression "Basilian monk" almost always refers to religious of those Eastern Catholic Churches which follow the Byzantine Rite.

**Benedict of Nursia**

2 March 480 – c. 543 or 21 March 547 AD)

a Christian saint, who is venerated in the Catholic Church,

the Eastern Orthodox Churches,

the Oriental Orthodox Churches,

the Anglican Communion and Old Catholic Churches. He is a patron saint of Europe.

Benedict founded twelve communities for monks at Subiaco, Lazio, Italy (about 40 miles (64 km) to the east of Rome), before moving to Monte Cassino in the mountains of southern Italy. The Order of Saint Benedict is of later origin and, moreover, not an "order" as commonly understood but merely a confederation of autonomous congregations.

Benedict's main achievement is his "Rule of Saint Benedict", containing precepts for his monks. It is heavily influenced by the writings of John Cassian, and shows strong affinity with the Rule of the Master. But it also has a unique spirit of balance, moderation and reasonableness (ἐπιείκεια, epieíkeia), and this persuaded most religious communities founded throughout the Middle Ages to adopt it. As a result, his Rule became one of the most influential religious rules in Western Christendom. For this reason, Benedict is often called the founder of Western Christian monasticism.

**Rule of Saint Benedict**

Seventy-three short chapters comprise the Rule. Its wisdom is of two kinds: spiritual (how to live a Christocentric life on earth) and administrative (how to run a monastery efficiently). More than half the chapters describe how to be obedient and humble, and what to do when a member of the community is not. About one-fourth regulate the work of God (the Opus Dei). One-tenth outline how, and by whom, the monastery should be managed. Following the golden rule of Ora et Labora - pray and work, the monks each day devoted eight hours to prayer, eight hours to sleep, and eight hours to manual work, sacred reading, or works of charity.

**The Middle Ages or Dark Ages (5th -1300’s)**

 *Many religious and political events took place:*

End of the Roman Empire.

Europe and the Roman World breaks-up into small independent states.

Church-State Established.

Eastern Church rejected Roman claims of authority.

Church learns to work through the new leaders very well.

The Holy Roman Empire (Latin: Sacrum Romanum Imperium; German: Heiliges Römisches Reich) was a multi-ethnic complex of territories in Western and Central Europe that developed during the Early Middle Ages and continued until its dissolution in 1806 during the Napoleonic Wars. The largest territory of the empire after 962 was the Kingdom of Germany, though it also came to include the neighboring Kingdom of Bohemia, the Kingdom of Burgundy, the Kingdom of Italy, and numerous other territories.

On 25 December 800, Pope Leo III crowned the Frankish king Charlemagne as Emperor, reviving the title in Western Europe, more than three centuries after the fall of the earlier ancient Western Roman Empire in 476.

Charles Martel (Defeats Islamic forces at Tours ( Nick name “The Hammer” Died on 22 October 741) was a Frankish statesman and military leader who as Duke and Prince of the Franks and Mayor of the Palace, was the de facto ruler of Francia from 718 until his death. The son of the Frankish statesman Pepin of Herstal and a noblewoman named Alpaida, Charles successfully asserted his claims to power as successor to his father as the power behind the throne in Frankish politics. Continuing and building on his father's work, he restored centralized government in Francia and began the series of military campaigns that re-established the Franks as the undisputed masters of all Gaul.

After establishing unity in Gaul, Charles' attention was called to foreign conflicts with the Islamic advance into Western Europe a foremost concern. Arab and Berber Islamic forces had conquered Spain (711), crossed the Pyrenees (720) and seized Narbonensis, a major dependency of the Visigoths (721–725). After intermittent challenges, Arab and Berber Islamic forces under Abdul Rahman Al Ghafiqi, the Arab Governor of al-Andalus, advanced towards Gaul and then onto Tours, "the holy town of Gaul". In October 732, the army of the Umayyad Caliphate led by Al Ghafiqi met Frankish and Burgundian forces under Charles between the cities of Tours and Poitiers (modern north-central France), leading to a decisive, historically important Frankish victory known as the Battle of Tours (or ma'arakat Balâṭ ash-Shuhadâ, Battle of the Palace of Martyrs). This battle ended the "last of the great Arab invasions of France," a military victory termed "brilliant" on the part of Charles.

After Tours, Charles took the offensive, destroying fortresses at Agde, Béziers and Maguelonne, and engaging Islamic forces at Nimes, though ultimately failing to recover Narbonne (737) or to fully reclaim the Visigoth's Narbonensis. He thereafter made significant further gains against fellow Christian realms, establishing Frankish control over Bavaria, Alemannia, and Frisia, and compelling some of the Saxon tribes to offer tribute (738).

Apart from his military endeavours, Charles is considered to be a founding figure of the European Middle Ages. Skilled as an administrator as well as a warrior, he is credited with a seminal role in the emerging responsibilities of the knights of courts, and therefore in the development of the Frankish system of feudalism. Pope Gregory III, whose realm was being menaced by the Lombards, and who could no longer rely on help from Constantinople, asked Charles to defend the Holy See and offered him the Roman consulship, though Charles declined.

He divided Francia between his sons, Carloman and Pepin. The latter became the first of the Carolingians. Charles' grandson, Charlemagne, extended the Frankish realms to include much of the West, and became the first Emperor in the West since the fall of Rome.

Renaissance – begins 1350 ca.

 The Middle Ages are also viewed in two parts. From the fall of the Roman Empire in the 5th century A.D. to the Renaissance 1350 – 1600 a period of Rebirth of the discovery of literature and art and classical philosophy.

As Roman power in Gaul declined during the 5th century, local Germanic tribes assumed control. In the late 5th and early 6th centuries, the Merovingians, under Clovis I and his successors, consolidated Frankish tribes and extended hegemony over others to gain control of northern Gaul and the middle Rhine river valley region. By the middle of the 8th century, however, the Merovingians had been reduced to figureheads, and the Carolingians, led by Charles Martel, had become the de facto rulers. In 751, Martel's son Pepin became King of the Franks, and later gained the sanction of the Pope. The Carolingians would maintain a close alliance with the Papacy.

Enlightenment

European politics, philosophy, science and communications were radically reoriented during the course of the “long 18th century” (1685-1815) as part of a movement referred to by its participants as the Age of Reason, or simply the Enlightenment.

Ulfilas, Gothic Wulfila, (born c. 311 CE—died c. 382, Constantinople [now Istanbul, Turkey]), Christian bishop and missionary who evangelized the Goths, reputedly created the Gothic alphabet, and wrote the earliest translation of the Bible into a Germanic language. Although his life cannot be reconstructed with certainty, fragments have come from 4th- and 5th-century ecclesiastical historians.

<http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Wulfila>

There were works commissioned by State Leaders such as Charlemagne to covert some tribes under his realm, but these were isolated and only a few books of the New Testament were translated into those native languages. By-in-large, it was not until Wycliffe in 1382 in England produced a text in a native tongue that was intended to be distributed to the common person that the Word of God was read by the populace.

It is true that society at large was not literate during this time. For the most part, only the State and Church officials were trained to read and write. This was a convenient way to keep in power. In my assessment, once the strangle-hold on God’s Word was broken only then did Western Man start to control his own life.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transmission\_of\_the\_Greek\_Classics

The Vulgate (/ˈvʌlɡeɪt, -ɡət/) is a late-4th-century Latin translation of the Bible that became the Catholic Church's officially promulgated Latin version of the Bible during the 16th century. The translation was largely the work of Jerome, who in 382 had been commissioned by Pope Damasus I to revise the Vetus Latina ("Old Latin") Gospels then in use by the Roman Church. Jerome, on his own initiative, extended this work of revision and translation to include most of the books of the Bible, and once published, the new version was widely adopted and eventually eclipsed the Vetus Latina; so that by the 13th century, it had taken over from the former version the appellation of versio vulgata[1] (the "version commonly used") or vulgata for short, and in Greek as βουλγάτα ("Voulgata").

**From 390 to 405**, Jerome translated anew from the Hebrew all the books in the Hebrew Bible, including a further version of the Psalms. ... The Vulgate is usually credited as being the first translation of the Old Testament into Latin directly from the Hebrew Tanakh rather than from the Greek Septuagint.

The Catholic Church affirmed the Vulgate as its official Latin Bible at the Council of Trent (1545–63), though there was no authoritative edition at that time.[2] The Clementine edition of the Vulgate of 1592 became the standard Bible text of the Roman Rite of the Roman Catholic Church and remained so until 1979 when the Nova Vulgata was promulgated.

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What Changed?

Did any of this change the Gospel Message? NO.

Did any historical event, political leader, culture, adopted traditions

 change the Good News of Jesus Christ the incarnate God? NO.

Did God change the way he communicated to people? NO

Prayer and God’s Spiritual intercession still reached-out to mankind.

**The availability of the Word of God, the Bible to the common person** -

Latin was a language spoken and read at the time of Jerome’s translation from 390 to 405 A.D. Not all the Roman World read or communicated in Latin. It was the language of the ruling class. However, within 200 years, Latin stopped being spoken or communicated ~~in~~ by the common person. The Church still retained the Latin Language Bible. There wasn’t any desire to teach or educate the masses. There wasn’t a public education system. It was convenient for the Ruler of both State and Church not to educate people to read and write. This was reserved for the ruling class.

 In a short time, very few people in society read the Bible. They were totally dependent on the State-Church rulers. By the late Middle Ages, the State-Church issued decrees prohibiting the laity or common man to possess the Bible much less read the Bible. This was an obvious political oppressive policy to prevent anyone to question political or religious rulings by the State-Church. We noted a few weeks ago the comparison to our American system. What if the politicians said the laws that they passed were within the confines of the U.S. Constitution, but they never allowed the people to possess or read the document? They could do whatever they wanted. In addition, they chose not to educate the populace. Even if they were to get their hands on the Constitution or the Bible, they did not have the ability to read. The State-Church had all power ‘wrapped up’ for 900 years.

 The Roman Bishop and Roman Church reached it zenith in 1215 A.D. calling the 4th Lantern or 12th Ecumenical council.

 The Fourth Council of the Lateran was convoked by Pope Innocent III with the papal bull Vineam domini Sabaoth of 19 April 1213, and the Council gathered at Rome's Lateran Palace beginning 11 November 1215. Due to the great length of time between the Council's convocation and meeting, many bishops had the opportunity to attend. It is considered by the Catholic Church to have been the twelfth ecumenical council and is sometimes called the "Great Council" or "General Council of Lateran" due to the presence of seventy-one patriarchs and metropolitan bishops, four hundred and twelve bishops, and nine hundred abbots and priors together with representatives of several monarchs.

During this council, the teaching on transubstantiation— a doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church which describes the method by which the bread and wine offered in the sacrament of the Eucharist becomes the actual blood and body of Christ— was defined.

 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth_Council_of_the_Lateran>

This council represents the complete control of a person’s life from cradle to grave. The installation of Transubstantiation alone, if believed, is enough to control a person’s life not only here in this temporal world but also in the eternal life to come. They claimed that the Church through it officers had the only authority on earth to administer the Lord’s Supper to remove sin.

Transubstantiation (Latin: transsubstantiatio; Greek: μετουσίωσις metousiosis) is, according to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, the change of substance or essence by which the bread and wine offered in the sacrifice of the sacrament of the Eucharist during the Mass, become, in reality, the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that in the Eucharistic offering bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ. The reaffirmation of this doctrine was expressed, using the word "transubstantiate", by the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215. It was later challenged by various 14th-century reformers, John Wycliffe in particular.

The manner in which the change occurs, the Roman Catholic Church teaches, is a mystery: "The signs of bread and wine become, in a way surpassing understanding, the Body and Blood of Christ." The precise terminology to be used to refer to the nature of the Eucharist and its theological implications has a contentious history, especially in the Protestant Reformation.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transubstantiation

 Shortly after 1215, there came Decrees prohibiting the possession of the Bible by the common person.

 Historian tells us that Latin stopped being spoken in the 600’s.

Decree of the Council of Toulouse (1229 C.E.): “We prohibit also that the laity should be permitted to have the books of the Old or New Testament; but we most strictly forbid their having any translation of these books.”

Ruling of the Council of Tarragona of 1234 C.E.: “No one may possess the books of the Old and New Testaments in the Romance language, and if anyone possesses them, he must turn them over to the local bishop within eight days after promulgation of this decree, so that they may be burned...”

**Proclamations at the Ecumenical Council of Constance in 1415 A.D.:** Oxford professor, and theologian **John Wycliffe**, was the first (1382 A.D.) to translate the New Testament into English to “...helpeth Christian men to study the Gospel in that tongue in which they know best Christ’s sentence.” For this “heresy”, Wycliffe was posthumously condemned by Arundel, the archbishop of Canterbury. By the Council’s decree “Wycliffe’s bones were exhumed and publicly burned and the ashes were thrown into the Swift River.”

Fate of William Tyndale in 1536 A.D.: William Tyndale was burned at the stake for translating the Bible into English. According to Tyndale, the Church forbid owning or reading the Bible to control and restrict the teachings and to enhance their own power and importance.

One product of the Crusades did introduce Western educated men to the Greek Classics. By the beginning of the 1300’s, the last crusade was over and the filtration of Greek writing and other books began to circulate through Europe. Learned men started to go analyze the Greek New Testament text.

[After the Fourth Crusade (1202–1204 A.D.) and the Sack of Constantinople (1204), scholars such as William of Moerbeke gained access to the original Greek texts of scientists and philosophers, including Aristotle, Archimedes, Hero of Alexandria and Proclus, that had been preserved in the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire, and translated them directly into Latin.] ttps://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\_of\_Moerbeke

2 Timothy 4:1-5 1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. NAU