

## Historical Theology: Salvation in the Medieval Era (AD 500-1500)

Week 8: 3/1/23

Overview: the patristic era focused on the nature of Christ. The medieval era concentrated on “how” God through the God-man brought about salvation.

It is medieval, not dark ages. It’s a huge time period with some good thinkers and students of Scripture too.

Discussion continued about election/God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility in salvation along with discussion on predestination and reprobation. We will look at that discussion in the future.

### **Key Figures:**

Gregory the Great (540-604): Influential bishop of Rome. Known for views on purgatory, mission work, and monasteries.

Purgatory: Gregory was not the first figure or the one who finalized the concept, but it flourished under his leadership. He saw purgatory as a cleansing fire for minor sins that would be purged away. With not so great exegesis, he supported this from Matt 12:32. Called for a sacrifice of Mass to offered for 30 days so a monk could be released from purgatory!

Officially became Catholic doctrine in 1439 at Council of Florence “if truly penitent people die in the love of God before they have made satisfaction for acts and omissions by worthy fruits of repentance, their souls are cleansed after death by cleansing pains; and the suffrages of the living faithful avail them in giving relief from such pains, that is, sacrifices of masses, prayers, almsgiving, and other acts of devotion which have been customarily performed by some of the faithful for others of the faithful in accordance with the church’s ordinances.”

What is wrong with this doctrine?

What is the difference between penance and repentance?

### **“How” Christ Brought Salvation:**

The classic view/ransom view: was prevalent in patristic age. Christ “paid a ransom” to Satan. This does deal with the language of redemption (Colossians 1:13-14).

Anselm of Canterbury’s (1033-1109) Satisfaction Theory:

Sin ruined humanity and humans no longer give God the honor he is due.

Anselm said humanity always belongs to God and is in God’s power and does not belong to Satan. Therefore, ransom would not be made to redeem us from Satan.

“Therefore, everyone who sins is under obligation to repay God the honour which he has violently taken from him, and this is the satisfaction which every sinner is obliged to give to God.” (*Cur Deus Homo* 1.11 “Why God Became Man”)

God must be just and cannot simply release unpunished sinners (*Cur Deus Homo* 1.12).

Humanity has sinned and cannot make their own reparations, but only the one who has committed the sin is fit to offer the repayment.

The only fit person is the God-man, “No one can pay except God, and no one ought to pay except man: it is necessary that a God-Man should pay it” (*Cur Deus Homo* 2.6).

Peter Abelard’s (1079-1142) Moral Influence Theory:

Critiques the classic/ransom view: if one leaves their righteous lord as a result of the seduction of another master, the original lord would never need to repay to secure back his original slave. So, no ransom is due to Satan.

Christ’s death does not secure justification by his blood, but instead it is love shown in his sacrifice that is applied to those who love Christ.

What is wrong with this view?

Thomas Aquinas' (1225-1274) View of Salvation:

Agrees with Anselm that someone must be sinless to make satisfaction for sins. He also thinks that humans participate with God to obtain salvation through works of grace like penance, confession, contrition. "Penance is a medicine for sin that the divine doctor will use to heal" and "grace is not simply imparted to them; rather, it is gradually infused into them as they participate in the acts of grace in the church, namely, the sacraments (*Salvation in Historical Theology for the Church*, 156 and 157).

Imputation and Infusion: Pastor Jacob

How do purgatory and infusion ideas correspond?

Examining a key biblical text on justification of the ungodly: Romans 3:19-4:9

## Further Resources

**Homework:** <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-does-the-bible-say-about-purgatory>

**To prepare for next week:** <https://jgduesing.com/theology-in-the-medieval-era-william-m-marsh-on-scripture-and-tradition/>

### **For the semester:**

Duesing, Jason and Nathan Finn. *Historical Theology For The Church*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2021.

Duesing, Jason. *Seven Summits in Church History*. Nashville, TN: Rainer Publishing, 2016.

Ferguson, Everett. *Church History, Volume One: From Christ to the Pre-Reformation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013.

Litfin, Bryan. *Getting to Know The Church Fathers: An Evangelical Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.

Akin, Daniel, editor. *A Theology for the Church*. Nashville, TN: B&H, 2007.