

# EXPLORING CHURCH HISTORY TO UNLOCK NEW AVENUES FOR CHURCH FINANCING

Academy of Global Church  
Leadership: **CHURCH  
FINANCING**

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# **Exploring Church History: Modells of Church Financing in History. An overview**



# Structure

- 1) The formation of an ecclesiastical financing system during the period of ancient Christianity
- 2) Benefices, Foundations, Mass stipends and Surplice fees: the medieval system of church financing
- 3) Transformations caused by the Reformation and Counter-Reformation
- 4) New models of church financing: state subsidies, church contributions and church taxes, voluntary donations, asset management
- 5) The debates about a poor church and about the end of the Constantinian age



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# The formation of an ecclesiastical financing system during the period of ancient Christianity

# First steps of Church Financing

- Living from their own wealth or from their own profession
- Obligation to provide maintenance for itinerant missionaries
- Voluntary donations
- Support for poor churches

Ministers and widows within the Roman Church around 250: The list of Pope Cornelius (251-253)

# Churches as owners of real property and the role of bishops

- Beginnng of church property
- The restitution of 313 (cf. Laktanz and Eusebius)
- Donations and last wills
- The rule of the bishophs in Ancient Christianity
- Models of division: the Roman concept of the papes Simplicus and Gelasius



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# **Benefices, Foundations, Mass stipends and Surplice fees: the medieval system of church financing**

# The consequences of re-ruralisation

- Foundation of churches by landowners
- The patronage law and the dependence of the clergy from the founder families
- Beneficia propter officia: the benefice system
- The pursuit of better benefices



# New fees since the Early Middle Ages

- The sacerdotalisation of presbyters and the formation of a parish system
- The tithe: obligatory contributions in the Carolingian Empire through capitularies (765 and 779)
- Surplice fees: for baptisms and funerals, and later also for wedding ceremonies.
- The Mass stipends (impetration and propitiation, depending on the priest's intentions)
- The limited rights of Bishops

# Advantages and disadvantages of the benefice system

- Flexibility in responding to new needs (founding hospitals, schools, universities, monasteries, preacher offices and so on)
- High identification of founders and faithful
- Personal responsibility of the benefice owners
- Inflexibility and growing burden
- Slow devaluation due to inflationary processes



# **Transformations caused by the Reformation and Counter- Reformation**

# The 16th century Reformation

- Reform attempts of the late Middle Ages
- Urban/local Communalism and the responsibility of the sovereigns
- A new theology of ministry
- The end of many votive masses and the beneficiaries
- The dissolution of Monasteries
- Reduction and academization of the parish clergy
- Remaining of the benefice structure; centralisation and redistribution of church property



# The Counter-Reformation

- The problem of financing new efforts, especially Jesuit college.
- The rededication of monastery property and foundations
- New functions of old monasteries





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# **New models of church financing: state subsidies, church contributions and church taxes, voluntary donations, asset management**

# Enlightenment and secularisations

- The critique of monasticism and monasteries
- The period of secularisations and desamortisations  
1780-1850
- Society and pastoral care in transition
- State compensation and supplementation of  
beneficiaries' incomes

# From a benefit system to a civil servant system

- Subsidies from the states
- Equalisation of pastors' salaries with judges' salaries
- Local church taxes
- Church taxes and the increase of power of the church governments
- From local identification to the distant highly institutionalised church





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# The debates about a poor church and about the end of the Constantinian age

# Debates and models

- The medieval ideal of a poor church
- The poison that came into the church through Constantine
- Marsilius von Padua
- A poor church is a church dependent on the state
- The connection between the financing system, ecclesiology and mentalities within the church