

# OVERVIEW OF CHURCH HISTORY IN 36 ILLUSTRATED LECTURES

## LECTURE 16 – CHURCH LIFE IN MIDDLE AGES: SCHOOLMEN

We'll start with a prayer from the period to be studied. Before printing was invented, hand-written collections of prayers, called 'Primers', were popular.

God, be in my head and in my understanding; God, be in my eyes and in my seeing;  
God, be in my ears and in my hearing; God, be in my mouth and in my speaking;  
God, be in my hands and in my holding; God, be in my soul and in my believing.  
(Sarum Primer, from C13 in Salisbury, England.)

The rest of this page is an outline of this lecture.

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In preparation, read Cairns, 193 (Mass), 235-238 (medieval life), 226-234 (Schoolmen).  
Olson, 311-15 (Introduction) and skim-read 316-325 (Anselm), 325-330 (Abelard) and  
331-347 (Aquinas, life 332-335)  
Lion, 286-7 (Schoolmen); Vos, 70 (Schoolmen) (Lion, 300-1 (Church life))

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 'Middle of the Middle Ages'

In our first Lecture, we saw that historians divide Church History into four broad periods and they call the thousand years between c500 and c1500 the 'Middle Ages', or the 'Mediaeval Period'. They subdivide it into three, (a) the Dark Ages from c500 to c1050, when there were many barbarian invasions, then (b) from c1050 to c1350 the years of the Schoolmen, who developed a new way of learning (part of our subject now), then (c) the Renaissance, from two French words meaning 're-birth', a revival of sculpting and painting and reading Greek and Latin literature, from c1350 to 1500. This lecture is therefore about only (b) 'The middle of the Middle Ages', or the 'High Middle Ages'.

We'll look first at Church life in these years, and then at academic life, particularly at teachers known Schoolmen. This Lecture, and all the remaining Lectures in this course, look only at Western Christianity; the Eastern Church, based on Constantinople, developed differently and we don't have time to look at it.

### 1.2. 'The Medieval synthesis' - Church and State working together

Mediaeval belief was that every aspect of life and death was under the co-operation of Church and State, working together - contrast how most today regard the sacred (Church) and the secular (State) as separate spheres of life. In the Middle Ages, everything - politics, social order, religious practice, economic relationships and more - was based on the Christian faith as communicated by the Church and protected by the secular rulers. They worked on the basis that human beings, because they are corrupted by sin, need to be saved, and that salvation came through the merits of Christ, communicated by God's grace, which was received through seven sacraments - we'll look at them on pages 5-7.

### 1.3 Church buildings (Lion, 46-7, 293-9)

In Northern Europe, until about the year 1000, people built in wood - they still do in much of Scandinavia. When people in France and Germany and Britain visited the shrines of the apostles in Rome and saw stone-built churches, they wanted to have their churches 'after the manner of the Romans'. Italian stonemasons and glassmakers were hired to come north, and the years from 1050 to 1500 saw the building of cathedrals throughout western Europe - more than five hundred, many of which remain Europe's chief architectural glory today. Peace, wealth and architectural skills coincided in a way that had never happened before - every city wanted a bigger and higher and better cathedral than its neighbours. (A 'city' is a conurbation that has a cathedral.)

There are examples on the next page of the two different styles of architecture which were used - Romanesque and Gothic. One feature of cathedrals may not be obvious from the photographs - the floor-plan was Cross shaped - the symbol of the Cross was central.

Cologne Cathedral, Germany, begun in 1248.  
It is 144 metres / 472 feet long and the west tower is 156 metres / 512 feet high. →

The Notes continue on page 4.

Every city wanted a bigger and higher and better cathedral than its neighbours. And not just the building. Stained glass windows were important, as few could read, so pictures depicting Isaac carrying wood, Moses lifting up the serpent in wilderness, Jesus bearing the cross and visions from Revelation were educational: 'So all those coming to church, though ignorant of letters, wherever they turned could gaze upon the lovely sight of Christ and his saints.'

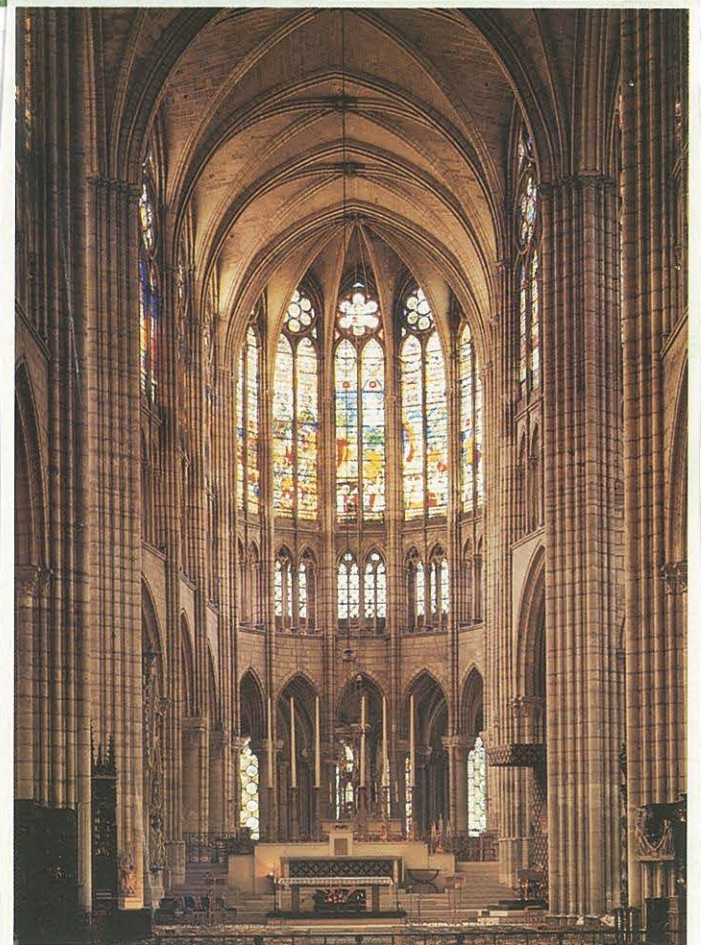


Above, the cathedral at Pisa in Italy, built in stone and white marble between 1063 and 1350 in the **Romanesque style**, which required heavy internal arches to support the weight of the roof. The bell tower began to incline in 1173 and supporting columns had to be added – giving the world ‘the leaning tower of Pisa’.

On the right. The ‘choir’ – the part of the church behind the altar – of St Denis, Paris, the first to be built in the **Gothic style** of architecture.

This style was used to build cathedrals in Northern Europe from the C12 on – the walls were much lighter and consisted of pointed arches, which encouraged the eye ‘to soar to heaven’, and the stained-glass windows taught Bible stories to those unable to read.

One of the finest examples of Gothic architecture is the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris – see Cairns page 237, which also has a picture of the intricate stone carving that went into cathedral building.



#### 1.4 Churches as centres of local life

Church-buildings were generally simple in country districts - cathedrals were built only in large centres - but even so, the church was usually the best building in the town; people were proud of it and filled it on Sundays and on many other days also. The church was the centre of community, where people gathered for almost every sort of occasion. The priest, like his church, had many functions. He was usually better educated than his parishioners, and so took the lead in the local community. He was the peace-maker in disputes, and the chaplain of craft guilds.

A parish is the geographical area around a church building; parishes are linked together, in Scotland nowadays by the Presbytery, in the Roman Catholic Church by the diocese, presided over by a bishop. By the year 1200, Western Christendom was divided into four hundred dioceses, that is 400 bishops, and the bishop ordained priests into the individual parishes under his control.

#### 1.5 Social involvement

People looked to the Church for practical help long before the State did anything for those in need. Bishops were expected to use part of their income to provide for the poor, and 'poorhouses' were often established near cathedrals. With the growth of cities and trade, the middle classes grew wealthy, and one of the parish priest's most urgent tasks was to urge people to remember the Seven Works of Mercy:

giving food to the hungry,  
 drink to the thirsty,  
 shelter to the homeless,  
 clothing to the naked,  
 help to the sick,  
 visits to prisoners, and  
 burial of the dead.

People were encouraged to make bequests, with which the Church founded institutions to care for the ill, the aged and the needy. These were dedicated to a saint and called by his name, e.g. St Bartholomew's hospital in London, founded in 1123. Most mediaeval works of mercy were in the hands of the Church.

Church bells - there were very few clocks - marked the beginning, middle and end of the working day, so the church was literally at the centre of community life.

Holy water acquired many functions in the life of medieval Christians. After it had become customary in the ninth century to sprinkle the faithful with it before Sunday Mass as a reminder of baptism, people would often take some of the water home to sprinkle on objects in and around the house that needed protection or special favour. The medieval Church believed that holy water could be used to exorcise demons, to free the human spirit of bad dreams or delusions, to save the human heart from worldly desires and cares, to keep a person from carnal sins, and to prepare the heart for prayer and for worthy reception of the sacraments. It could also protect against infertility, increase harvests, provide protection against illnesses, and drive out the plague. Ecclesiastical tolerance of folk-uses of holy water did, however, have its limits. The baptismal font in the church now had a lid, to prevent people from stealing and misusing its water.

## 1.6 Preaching

Preaching in parish churches was at a low ebb. Most priests had little training, and certainly no 'sermon preparation classes'. They were expected to teach their people the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and to celebrate communion, hear confessions, baptise infants and bury the dead, and that was it. On Sundays, they read from what was called the 'lectionary', a Bible reading prescribed by the bishop for that Sunday. In place of preaching, they read what were called homilies - a little message written by someone else and read to the congregation by the priest. This, at least, was in the local language - the rest of the church service was in Latin, which few understood.

## 2 SACRAMENTS<sup>1</sup>

Some aspects of life and worship were regarded as particularly important, bringing specific touches of God's grace at key stages in life. They became known as 'Sacraments' and seven became official Catholic theology through a decision of the Council of Florence in 1439. (Lion, 265-6) They were:

2.1 Baptism was the sacrament immediately after birth. Babies were baptized within a few days of birth, not waiting until Easter as previously, and baptism was now by pouring water onto the forehead (affusion). Augustine's teaching on original sin dominated Church practice, so baptism was vital for salvation - it was believed to wash away the stain of original sin. With high infant mortality, baptism was immediate.

2.2 Confirmation was when you 'confirmed', for yourself, the promises made on your behalf by your parents and godparents at your baptism in infancy - so it was the sacrament for coming of age. It was the ceremony by which the baptised person became a full member of the Church, by the laying on of the bishop's hands.

2.3 Eucharist (now called the Mass) was the sacrament for spiritual nourishment. It was called the Mass because the closing words of the communion liturgy were, in Latin, *ite, missa est* - 'Go, the congregation is dismissed'. By the Middle Ages there were a number of important changes in the way the Mass was conducted.

First, in the Early Church, all Christians took part every Sunday, but from the C5 onwards, lay communion was less frequent in the West, and by the Middle Ages only the clergy took part on a regular basis; lay people took part only once a year, for reasons we'll look at on page 8.

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<sup>1</sup> The seven Catholic sacraments were reduced in number to two (baptism and communion) by Protestants at the Reformation, but the seven are still recognised by the Roman Catholic Church today. It teaches that simply to have a sacrament conferred upon a person conveys God's grace: *ex opere operato* ('on account of the the work which is done'), i.e., there is a built-in efficacy in a sacrament, independent of faith or moral character of the celebrant or recipient. (Compare the Donatists, Lecture 9, who insisted on the purity of the minister officiating). Protestants rejected this view in the C16, teaching instead *ex opere operantis* ('on account of the work of the one who works'), i.e., that subjective factors (faith and love of God) determine amount of grace received through sacraments.

For example, *ex opere operantis*, if you pray while thinking about what to eat for dinner, not much will come of your prayers, or if you abstain from meat on Fridays in order to impress your friends, you will not receive the same grace as someone who abstains through love of God.

Secondly, because the Church now taught that the bread and wine were miraculously converted into Christ's actual flesh and blood (called 'transubstantiation' - to be discussed on page 13) - many people felt unworthy and afraid to approach the awesome mystery of Christ's sacrifice - a proper sense of reverence at taking communion had turned to fear, and this deterred many laypeople from taking part.

Thirdly, recitation of the liturgy was in Latin, although it was now understood by only the learned few. While the priest recited the Latin words, merchants transacted business and wives discussed their neighbours. Popular religion had its focus in actions, not words - people would kneel when they came into church, stand for the reading of the Gospel and and stop chattering when the priest 'elevated' the elements of the Eucharist.

Fourthly, there was now a distinction between 'High Mass' and 'Low Mass'. High Mass was the traditional communion liturgy, celebrated every Sunday, and people were expected to attend, even if they didn't understand the language. In addition, the parish priest now celebrated what was called 'Low Mass', every weekday. It was called this because the priest spoke in a low voice, which the laity could not hear; spiritually-minded laypeople attended Low Mass on weekdays, praying and meditating in silence while the priest, with his back to them, celebrated the Mass entirely on his own

Fifthly, and finally under this section, the Pope, unashamedly looking for money, introduced a Requiem Mass, nowadays often called a Funeral Mass. He decreed that if you paid the Church to hold this special Mass, for an individual who had died, it hastened passage of deceased through purgatory to heaven - much criticised at Reformation. Nowadays the family don't have to pay for it - it's part of the pastoral care of the local Catholic Church.

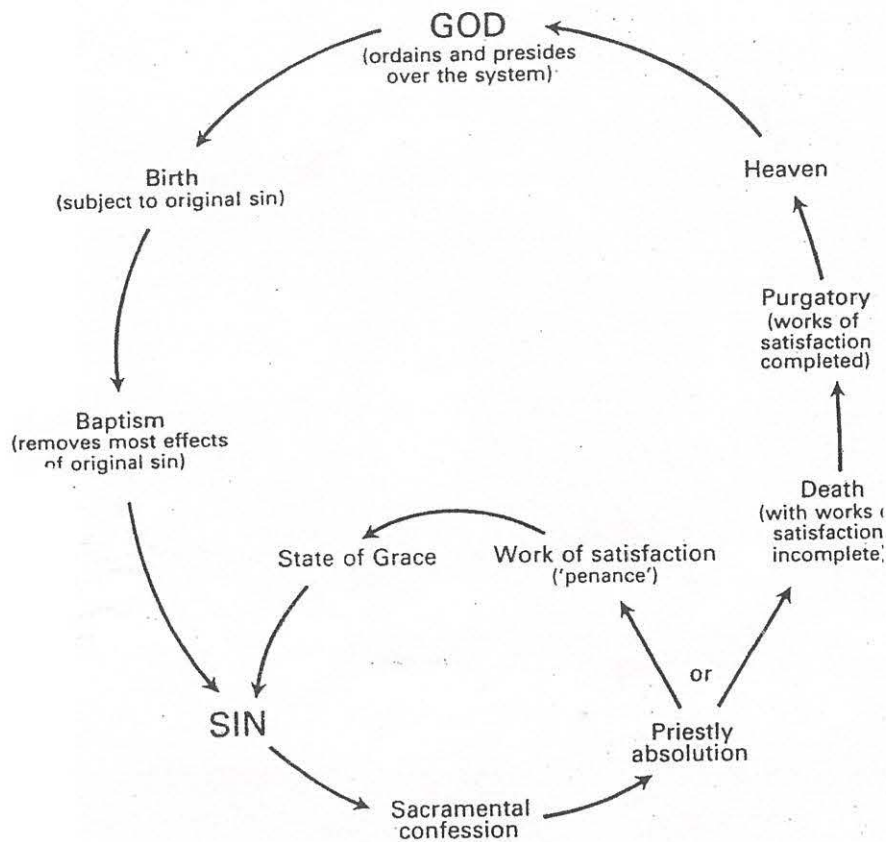
2.4 Penance was the sacrament for dealing with sin - confession to a priest, receiving his 'absolution' or forgiveness, and submitting to whatever discipline the priest imposed, which might be fasting or abstaining from attending Mass. We'll come back to that in moment.

2.5 Marriage was the sacrament for family life. The ceremony was brief - vows were made, a ring put on, and a blessing was given, just inside the church door.

2.6 Extreme unction was the sacrament for death - the priest anointed dying people with oil, signifying the Holy Spirit, to prepare them for their journey to next life; it is often called 'the last rites', concluding with a final blessing in the name of the Trinity and the exhortation, 'Set out, Christian soul, from this world in peace.'

2.7 Ordination was the sacrament for becoming a priest. Some devoted families dedicated a son to the Church, and sent him to live in the bishop's house, to learn and work with him, or to a monastery for training among the monks, but most candidates for priesthood received no formal education - there were no seminaries for training for the priesthood until the C16. Ordination was by the bishop, so candidates presented themselves three days before the ceremony and took a three-day oral exam. They were ordained if they had sound grasp of the Catholic faith and could express it in simple language, if they were aged 24 or above, and if they were not disqualified by illegitimacy. They were ordained into a parish. Their duties were much as today - saying Mass, especially on Sundays, baptising, hearing confessions, visiting the sick, burying the dead and exhorting parishioners to care for the poor. By the C11, celibacy of priesthood had fallen into decay and although the Second Lateran Church of 1129 (Lecture 11) declared clerical marriage null, clerical concubinage remained widespread during the Middle Ages.

## 3. THE PENITENTIAL CYCLE



Late medieval religion was about saving souls, not by a once-for-all 'justification', but by a lifelong cycle of sin, absolution and penance.

'Canonical penalties' (imposed by the Church and supervised by the Church throughout life) which had not been completed at death were atoned for after death, in purgatory (these were called 'temporal penalties' because they were completed during the 'time' spent in purgatory).

They did not distinguish 'justification' (being made right with God

through faith in Christ) and 'sanctification' (being made like Christ through discipleship).

Glance at that chart, starting at the top and going anticlockwise. Baptism removed the penalty, although not the power, of original sin; as people grew up, they committed lesser or greater sins. They confessed their sins to a priest ('Father, I have sinned ...') and originally absolution - the remission of sins - was granted only after the works of penance had been completed. But when many sins had been confessed, the penance for them could take a long time, and people might die before they had completed their penance. To solve this problem, the priest was now authorized to give absolution as soon as the sins were confessed, on condition that the penitent carried out whatever 'penance' the priest had imposed. When they had done that, they were again in a 'State of Grace' but, human nature being what it is, they committed further sins. While alive, they went through the circle at the foot of the chart, usually once a year, for reasons we'll see in a moment.

People who died before completing that penance went for a time to Purgatory, and as described in the note beside the chart they completed their 'time' there and then went to heaven. 'Temporal penalties' could, as we have seen, now be alleviated by obtaining 'Indulgence' from the Church.

In the later Middle Ages, most lay people confessed their sins to a priest and communicated at Mass only once a year, usually at Easter. I said earlier that we would see why this was so. The clergy were aware that many people had embraced Christianity in a shallow way, following the religious loyalties of their leader. They wanted people genuinely to repent of their sins before taking communion, so they told people to confess their sins during Lent, to be ready for Easter Communion. The priest sat in front of the altar, with a line of penitents waiting in turn to kneel before him and speak words that only the two of them could hear. If someone was slow in finding words, the priest might mention the seven deadly sins - pride, covetousness, lust, envy, gluttony, anger, sloth.

Then priest would then tell them what they must do to express regret for their sins, and assure them of Christ's forgiveness. That was quite a labour-intensive process, and so to embark on it once a year was all that was expected, although many neglected even that.

#### 4 SCHOOLMEN / SCHOLASTICISM (Cairns, 226-234; Lion, 281-93; Vos, 70)

##### 4.1 Schools and universities (Cairns, 234-235)

When Charlemagne was crowned king of the Holy Roman Empire in 800 (Lecture 11 and Topic 11), he revived the educational system in the West, which had not functioned properly since the barbarian invasions of three hundred years before. Under Charlemagne, and for the next four hundred years, education was available in two forms:

(a) most of it was in schools in monasteries, which were primarily for boys who were training to become monks, although some monasteries accepted children of wealthy and noble parents, who came as boarders in the monastery, to be educated and then go back into the secular world. A teacher called a *scholasticus* was appointed to teach novices, and if the monastery had a famous *scholasticus*, many came to study under him.

(b) to a lesser extent in the bishops' schools, that is schools held in the bishop's house, which were primarily for boys training to become priests, although they also provided general education for boys living in neighbourhood.

Then there was a development. As we saw at the beginning of this lecture, the years 1050-1350 were three centuries of great church building - called cathedrals. The name cathedral came from the Greek *cathedra*, which meant the bishop's seat or chair. So teaching moved from the bishop's house to the bishop's cathedral building, and the bishops' schools became known as cathedral schools

In the C12, cathedral schools began to eclipse monastic schools. By 1200, the revival of learning in Western Europe led some cathedral schools to evolve into a new form of education, which has become worldwide in our day - universities.

Latin was the only language spoken in universities, so a Latin-speaking student from any country could study in any university in any part of Europe: All a student needed was to understand Latin and to pay his fees. It was a long academic year, 11 months, with just a few weeks off for Christmas and Easter. There were two teaching methods:

(a) Lectures were much as we know them, but students had to take full notes as few people possessed books.

(b) Disputations - how to 'solve problems'. We need to look at Disputations, because they gave rise to the mind-set of teachers known as Schoolmen. In a Disputation, teacher and student set out to solve a problem. The problem would be two statements which appeared to contradict each other, but which were both found in authoritative texts. For example, one early Church Father might be quoted as saying, 'God cannot die', but another Church Father might be quoted as saying, 'God died on the cross'. The student would have to give all the arguments for and against each statement, by quoting passages from the Bible and theologians, and offering his own comments on these passages. The teacher would then analyse what the student had said, and would offer his own solution to the problem. In the example used, the teacher might say: 'Both statements are true. In his divine nature, God cannot die; but when he became a man, he took upon himself a human nature which can die. Therefore on the cross, God suffered death in his human nature, but



he remains incapable of dying in his divine nature.’ Disputation was a powerful method for training students in logical thinking, but it led to:

#### 4.2 The rise of Scholasticism (flourished 1050-1350)

The teaching that dominated Western education in the Middle Ages is called ‘Scholasticism’, from the word ‘school’, a place where learning takes place, and it simply means ‘school theology’ - the theology that was taught in the schools and (later) in the universities. Theologians were now called ‘Schoolmen’, because of their distinctive approach to theology, which we’ll look at in a moment.<sup>2</sup>

To introduce us to the Schoolmen, our Topic for this lecture is the first, and one of the most influential, of them, Anselm, who became Archbishop of Canterbury.

TOPIC - ANSELM OF CANTERBURY (c1033-1109) - was taken at this point in the Lecture; here, it is printed at the end of the Notes for this Lecture.

#### 4.3 Distinctives of the Schoolmen

The Schoolmen were not trying to find new truth – they were trying to relate existing truth to reason, to buttress faith by reason. They had two basic passions:

##### (a) The relationship between faith and reason

Schoolmen talked endlessly about this, wrestling with the relationship of faith and reason.

Anselm, for example, saw no need for conflict between faith and reason. He believed that Christian truth will stand any scrutiny, that faith has nothing to fear from reason. Schoolmen kept going back to Augustine’s words: ‘Understand so that you may believe; believe so that you may understand.’ Which do we put first, faith or reason? How far can ‘reason’ (the human mind) find out about God without using God’s revelation in the Bible? Can we work out the doctrine of the Trinity by pure reason; if not, can we demonstrate that the Trinity, as revealed in Scripture, does not contradict reason? Different schoolmen gave different answers, but they kept on asking the questions.

(b) Systematic theology. Scholastic theologians wanted to offer a complete, systematic account of Christian truth. They wanted to organize the material, which meant examining doctrines from every point of view and bringing all Christian doctrines together into a system that set out and explained the entire body of revealed truth. Schoolmen spent much time and effort inquiring into questions which most Christians in later ages would find pointless – that’s why Scholasticism has a bad name. For example, Who sinned most, Adam or Eve? Can one angel be in two places at the same time? Can two angels dance on the point of one needle?

(Continued on page 11; page 10 is a chart with details of the best-known Schoolmen.)

<sup>2</sup> Scholasticism became a despised term at the Reformation – our word for fool (dunce) derives from one of the great leaders of the Schools, Duns Scotus. Erasmus attacked the irrelevance of much of the theological discussion which took place in universities of his time, because it had become long and argumentative, dependent on philosophical thought. It is ironic that a movement which was so dismissive of Scholasticism should itself become scholastic in the way it defined its theology.

## Scholasticism

NAME	DATES	PLACES OF MINISTRY	REPRESENTATIVE WORKS	VIEW OF RELATIONSHIP OF FAITH AND REASON	VIEW OF NATURE OF UNIVERSALS	NOTABLE FACTS
ANSELM	1033–1109	Italy France Canterbury	Monologium Proslogium Cur Deus Homo	"Faith precedes knowledge."	Realist— <i>universalia ante rem</i>	Was born in Italy. Entered monastery in France. Became Archbishop of Canterbury (1093). Opposed lay investiture. Devised ontological argument for the existence of God. Promulgated substitutionary view of Atonement.
PETER ABELARD	1079–1142	France	Sic Et Non Christian Theology Story of Misfortunes	"Nothing is to be believed until it is understood."	Moderate Realist— <i>universalia in re</i>	In early years had disputes with most of his teachers. Became head of cathedral school in Paris. Fathered child out of wedlock with Heloise. Was castrated by order of her uncle. Retired to monastery. Was condemned as heretic by instigation of Bernard of Clairvaux.
BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX	c.1090–1153	France	Degrees of Humility and Pride Loving God	"God is known so far as He is loved."	Mystic—this not an issue	Was born of noble parents. Entered Cistercian monastery (1113). Founded monastery in Clairvaux. In preaching encouraged Second Crusade. Was vehement opponent of Abelard. Was a noted hymn-writer.
PETER LOMBARD	1095–c.1159	Italy Paris	Four Books of Sentences	Dilemmas of faith to be resolved by reason.	Moderate Realist	Was born in northern Italy. Studied under Abelard. Became bishop of Paris. His <i>Sentences</i> became first standard medieval systematic theology. Emphasized seven sacraments.
HUGH OF ST. VICTOR	c.1096–1141	Saxony Paris	Summa Sententiarum	Faith is a certainty "above opinion and below science."	Mystic	Was born in Saxony. Entered school of St. Victor in Paris, where he later became master.
ALBERTUS MAGNUS	c.1200–1280	Bavaria Padua Paris Cologne	System of Nature The Praise of Mary	"Theology is science in the truest sense."	Moderate Realist	Was born in Bavaria. Entered Dominican order. Was teacher of Aquinas. Became bishop of Regensburg. Was renowned student of natural sciences. Was knowledgeable in Aristotelian philosophy. Advanced veneration of Mary.
JOHN BONAVENTURE	c.1217–1274	Italy	On the Poverty of Christ Life of St. Francis Breviloquium Journey to the Mind of God	True knowledge comes only from the contemplation of the divine mystery.	Mystic	Was born in Tuscany. Entered Franciscan order at age 17. Became head of Franciscans. Advanced veneration of Mary. Was noted hymn-writer.
THOMAS AQUINAS	c.1225–1274	Italy Paris Cologne	Summa Theologica Summa Contra Gentiles Contra Errores Graecorum	Natural reason leads one to the "vestibule of faith."	Moderate Realist	Was born to noble family in Aquino. Entered monastery at Monte Cassino at age 5. Entered Dominican order at age 19. Studied under Albertus Magnus. Taught at Paris, Cologne, and throughout Italy. Leaned heavily on writings of Aristotle and Augustine.
JOHN DUNS SCOTUS	c.1266–1308	Britain Paris Cologne	Opus Oxoniense Questiones Quodlibetales	Knowledge of God cannot come from reason but must be accepted on the basis of the authority of the church. "A thing may at the same time be true in philosophy and false in theology."	Moderate Realist	Was born in British Isles. Entered Franciscan order. Studied and taught at Oxford. Earned doctorate in Paris. Was opponent of Aquinas. Influenced doctrine of Immaculate Conception. Protestants later coined the word "dunce" in reference to him.
WILLIAM OF OCKHAM	c.1280–1349	England Paris Munich	Summa Logicae Dialogus Inter Magistrum et Discipulum	"Doctrines peculiar to revealed theology are not susceptible to proof by pure reason."	Nominalist— <i>universalia post rem</i>	Was born in Surrey. Entered Franciscan order. Studied under Duns Scotus. Taught in Paris. Was excommunicated for his views. Opposed papal infallibility. Denied civil authority of church.

#### 4.4 Peter Abelard (1079-1142) (Second name on the chart on page 10.)

(Cairns, 230-1; Lion, 288-9; Lane, 90-2)

Abelard was a Frenchman, born in Brittany in north-west France into an aristocratic and pious family. He was a clever student and came to the cathedral school of Notre Dame in Paris, which was developing into Paris university. He was dissatisfied with the teaching of the school's head, William of Champeaux (1070-1121), and set up his own rival lectures. Students deserted the head to listen to Abelard and new students flocked from all over Western Europe to sit at his feet. They loved his teaching method which started, like all Schoolmen, by putting, side by side, various statements from the Bible, the early Church Fathers and other authoritative Church teaching, which appeared to contradict each other. However, Abelard was different from the others because he reconciled these apparently conflicting statements by teaching that the answer is not 'yes' or 'no' - the answer is: yes and no, there may be more than one answer, so think them through. In 1122 Abelard wrote a book called *Sic et non* ('Yes and no'). His aim was to provoke people to think for themselves and to use reason as the tool for it. He did not exalt reason above faith; like all Schoolmen, he believed they belonged together.

#### 4.5 Peter Lombard (c1095-c1159) (Lane, 94-5)

Peter the Lombard was born near Milan in Lombardy, northern Italy, hence his name. From c1140, he taught theology at the Cathedral school in Paris, and became bishop of Paris in 1159. He is famous for his *Four Books of Sentences*, collections of quotations from the Bible, the early Church fathers, ecumenical Councils, and other authorities. His method was to state the teaching of Church, prove it from the Bible, give the opinions of early Church Fathers, and then resolve any seeming contradictions by careful use of logic. Lombard's *Sentences* became the standard theological textbook in Western universities until the Protestant Reformation of the C16, and Peter is called 'the father of systematic theology'. At that time books were scarce and costly, and here was one book with selections from whole libraries of information, so for many people, the Bible and the *Sentences* were the only two books they owned.

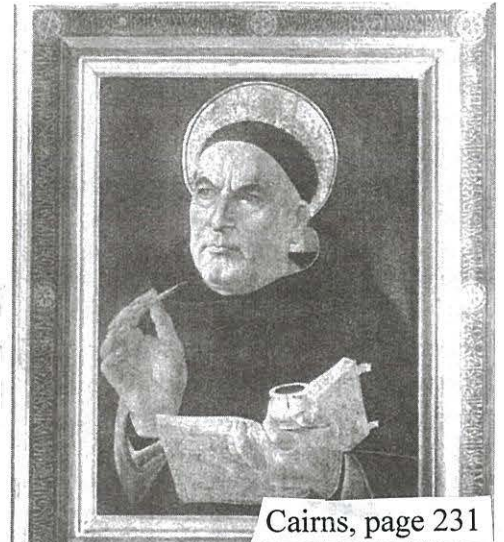
One other fact to note about Peter Lombard. He was the first Catholic theologian to define the number of 'sacraments' as seven - (page 5, above). This became official Catholic theology at the Council of Florence in 1439, that sacraments are not just signs which declare and apply God's grace, but they are effective causes of grace in believers whenever they received them = you get grace from God even if you are just going through the motions. Scholastic theologians coined the phrase in the footnote on page 5 - *ex opere operato* (by virtue of the act performed) - grace flowed through the sacraments, without regard to the moral or spiritual fitness of the priest performing them or the person receiving them. Protestant Reformers, by contrast, held that people must exercise faith in Christ if blessing is to be received through a sacrament - it is not automatic.



Abelard in a 14th century painting, with his 'wife' Héloïse. At the height of his fame as a teacher, he fell in love with the talented niece of a secular canon, Fulbert, with whom he lodged in the precincts of Notre-Dame. Héloïse became pregnant and so, to appease Fulbert, Abelard married her but in secret so as not to mar his own career. When Fulbert publicly disclosed the marriage, and Héloïse denied it, Abelard sent her to a convent; the outraged Fulbert forced Abelard to become a monk.

4.6 Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)  
(Cairns, 231-2; Lion, 291-3; Lane, 100-4)

Thomas was born near Monte Cassino in central Italy, where Benedict had his monastery, but he didn't join the Benedictines, he joined the Dominican order, and became a Friar. He studied theology at Paris and taught there and then, from 1261, he travelled, teaching in various Italian cities, including Rome. He was the greatest of the medieval Schoolmen. As mentioned in an earlier Lecture, it is sometimes said that there have been three giants in the history of the Church - the Apostle Paul, Augustine of Hippo and the Reformer John Calvin - but many add a fourth, Thomas Aquinas.



Cairns, page 231

Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican monk, who developed the Roman Catholic church's present system of theology.

His most famous work is *Summa Theologica* (Summary of all Theology or Theological System, i.e. systematic theology). We'll look at only two aspects of his teaching.

(a) His proofs (by reason) for the existence of God.

Aquinas asked himself the question, still relevant today, how can I know that God exists? As a Schoolmen, he used reason to provide arguments for the existence of God – Five 'Ways' or Arguments, set out in the chart on the next page. He said that all 'effects' need 'causes', and so everything in this universe was depended on a 'cause', and so he argued from the fact of creation to the need for a Creator, i.e. God.

**Arguments for the Existence of God—  
the Five Ways of Thomas Aquinas**

CHART

ARGUMENT	OBSERVATIONS	IMPLICATIONS	CONCLUSION
FROM MOTION	Motion cannot initiate itself but must be motivated by something already in motion.	An infinite chain of movers is impossible, for then there would be no first mover and therefore no motion at all. The chain must have a beginning.	The unmoved Prime Mover is what we call God.
FROM CAUSALITY	Certain events are caused by prior events, which are themselves caused, etc.	As above, the causal chain cannot be infinite.	The uncaused First Cause is what we call God.
FROM POSSIBILITY	Certain things are transitory, their existence derivative. Their existence is possible rather than necessary.	The chain of derivative existence cannot be infinite but must find its source in a self-existent necessary Being.	This self-existent necessary Being is what we call God.
FROM IMPERFECTION	We judge certain things to have a lesser degree of perfection than others.	Relative assessments require an absolute standard of perfection. According to Aristotle, that which is greatest in truth is greatest in Being.	This absolute standard, God, must exist.
FROM DESIGN	Inanimate things function together to accomplish an ordered purpose.	This cannot occur by chance but requires an intelligent Designer.	This Designer is what we call God.

(b) He was first theologian to offer a full doctrine of 'transubstantiation' = the bread and wine 'change substance' into the body and blood of Christ at the priest's words of institution during every Mass.

In the early Church, as far back as we can go, Christians believed that the bread and wine used in the Lord's Supper could and should, in some sense, be called 'the body and blood of Christ'. No attempt was made to explain this belief; it was regarded as a holy mystery, which human reason should humbly adore rather than seek to explain.

However, in the C9, a monk called Radbertus argued that the bread and wine of Communion were changed into the flesh and blood of Christ, so that the bread and wine no longer existed - they only seemed to be bread and wine, but in reality they were now the flesh and blood of the Saviour, miraculously effective for washing away sins.

Other Western theologians opposed him, maintaining that the bread and wine remained bread and wine. The Western Church tolerated both views as valid, but Radbertus' view became increasingly popular. The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 officially sanctioned his teaching, but it took the mighty intellect of Aquinas to explain what it meant.

Aquinas explained that when a priest pronounces the words: 'This is my body, this is my blood', the 'substance' (that's one of the two key words) (= the unseen, inner reality) of the bread and wine is miraculously changed into Christ's flesh and blood. However, the physical form of the bread and wine, their taste and smell (their 'appearance', which Aquinas called their 'accidents') (that's the other key word), remains the same. As far as our human senses are concerned, they seem still to be bread and wine, but inside and unseen, they have changed into Christ's flesh and blood.<sup>3</sup>

Without accepting Aquinas' views, which Protestants do not (see below), it is only fair to note: (1) what Aquinas said, and (2) what Protestant critics claim that he said. He said that the bread and wine do not become physically the flesh and blood of Christ; what we can see, touch, smell and taste, (the physical qualities), remain bread and wine. Aquinas called the 'touch, smell and taste' of the bread and wine their 'accidents', but not their 'substance'. The 'substance' of the bread and wine - their innermost essence, which we cannot see - have changed into Christ's flesh and blood.

A crude illustration of transubstantiation is to imagine a football filled with air. We cannot see or touch the air inside the football, yet it is the air that gives the football its shape and bounce. If someone lets the air out of the football, and fills it instead with some other gas, the football's outward form, shape and texture would not change, and outwardly it would look and feel the same as before. But its 'inner reality' has changed; it is now not air that is giving the ball its shape and bounce, but the new gas. In a similar way, Aquinas held that in the Eucharist, the outward physical qualities of the bread and wine do not change; but 'inside', beyond sight and touch, the inner reality has become the body and blood of Christ.

Protestants do not accept that the Mass is a (fresh) offering for sin, a (fresh) sacrifice of Christ, that (to quote from the Council of Trent) 'is truly propitiatory'.

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<sup>3</sup> The Church decided in 1415 that lay people should no longer be given the wine (only the bread) during the Mass. This followed from the belief now held that the bread and wine were miraculously converted into Christ's actual flesh and blood. The priest could safely give a wafer to the communicants, but because of the possibility of even a drop of the wine ('the blood of Christ') being spilled, it was not offered. Only since the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s have both bread and wine again been offered to lay Roman Catholics.

## 5 OTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN MEDIEVAL CHURCH LIFE

### 5.1 Musical instruments in worship

The Early Church did not use instruments in worship, regarding them as Jewish or pagan. Early singing was simple chanting, then Ambrose of Milan (Lecture 8) introduced hymn-singing in the C4. Pope Gregory the Great (590- 604) introduced a new style, to be sung alternately by priest and congregation - what we now call the Gregorian chant (named after him), simple tunes, sung in unison - no parts and still no musical instruments. This prevailed in both West and East for many centuries and still in the Eastern Church today, and it is still popular in Roman Catholic services - listen to Gregorian chants on Google - still without accompaniment.

The first musical instruments in the Western Church date from the C8, when a Frankish king presented an organ to a church near Paris in 757. From the C8 on, harps and violins are depicted in Western musical manuscripts. Between 900-1100, organs became common in Western abbeys and cathedral churches, but not yet in parish churches. When 'part-singing' became popular, organ and other instruments helped people to sing their own parts.

There were 'organ controversies' about the place of musical instruments in Christian worship. It was the C14 before they became regular and accepted in ordinary Western worship - which became one more barrier between the East and the West, Orthodox and Catholic. The Orthodox have strongly condemned it as a betrayal of apostolic practice.

### 5.2 The cult of Mary

If asked why it had been necessary for Christ to die, most medieval people would have answered that it was to satisfy the just wrath of the Father against sin. In popular religion the Father was not loving in any obvious sense; the Son loved to the extent of dying on behalf of sinners, but it was the Mother of God who embodied love most attractively. Sculptures and pictures presented Jesus as a corpse on the knees of his tenderly mourning mother. Alternatively, it was popular to see him as a baby on her knees or at her breast. Woodcuts made it possible to pin up such pictures on cottage walls. Mary was seen as someone you could talk to, a compassionate woman who would speak kindly on your behalf to her son Jesus. Statues of her often have a sympathetic face,

Latin hymns were addressed to Mary in the C5 and festivals held in her honour in the West in the C8; by the C12 she was the Second Eve, as her son was the Second Adam, reopening Paradise. She was to be 'adored' as the Queen of Heaven. There was a real cult of Mary in the Middle Ages - 'Notre Dame', the name of many cathedrals, is 'Our Lady', the name given by the French Catholic Church to Mary.

Three ideas developed over the centuries:

- (a) her virginity had been perpetual,
- (b) she was born sinless - the Immaculate Conception - free from 'original' sin and also from personal sin; this was fiercely debated for centuries, but officially promulgated in 1854, and
- (c) she had been 'assumed' into heaven without passing through death, not officially confirmed until 1950.

If, as an evangelical in ecumenical dialogue, you find yourself discussing the role of Mary, ask, 'Was Mary redeemed by the merits of her son?' If the answer is 'yes', you are not far apart; if the answer is 'no', you cannot go along with it.

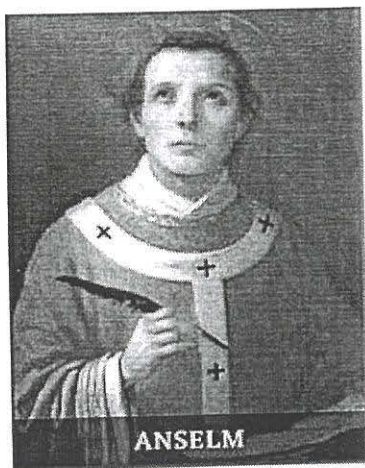
## OVERVIEW OF CHURCH HISTORY IN 36 ILLUSTRATED LECTURES

### TOPIC FOR LECTURE 16 – ANSELM (c1033-1109)

Please tell us about the life of Anselm, who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093, including his stormy relationship with two successive kings of England – what was the issue and what does it tell us about Church/State relations?

There is a little about Anselm in Cairns, 229-30; Olson, 316-8; Lion, 284; Lane 87-90.

Concentrate on his biography rather than his theology; there is a brief outline, on the next page, of one aspect of his theology - what is meant for Jesus to give his life as ‘a ransom for many’ (Mark 10.45 and 1 Tim. 2.6).



As mentioned in the Lecture, all the Schoolmen wrestled with the relationship of faith and reason. Anselm saw no conflict between them. His most famous work, *Cur Deus Homo* (*Why God Man*, i.e. *Why did God become Man*) was the first systematic theology of atonement and of permanent value to Church.

Jesus spoke of himself as giving his life ‘a ransom for many’ (Mark 10.45 and 1 Tim. 2.6). A ‘ransom’ is the price paid for the release of a slave. From earliest times, Christians had asked themselves, to whom was the ‘price’ paid? Until Anselm, the answer was, ‘to the devil’. Anselm said, ‘No, Satan has no ‘rights’ over the human race; he has taken us captive unjustly. Christ’s death was paid as a ransom, not to Satan, but to God.’

The word that Anselm used to answer the question was ‘satisfaction’, which means ‘payment of what is due’. He did not use ‘satisfaction’ as in penance - remember Tertullian (Lecture 5), who started the idea that Christians who sinned after baptism could do good works and so make ‘satisfaction’ to God for them. That was for sin after baptism – and it is a different use of the word ‘satisfaction’ from the way that Anselm used it. He was concerned with the sin which (it was universally believed) was forgiven in baptism. How was that achieved? How was it possible? Anselm, like all the Schoolmen, wanted to define everything, to organize the material. Why did God become man? *Cur Deus Homo* is the mind of a scholastic theologian at work. He is not content simply to know that Christ died for sinners. He wants to know why Christ had to die for sinners. Why did salvation happen this way, rather than some other way? This search for a rational understanding of Christian truth was the driving force behind scholastic theology.

For Anselm, the Word of God became flesh in order to satisfy the demands of divine justice: people had sinned and offended God - through original sin, not necessarily actual sin, the original sin with which we come into the world; only a perfect sacrifice could satisfy the demands of divine justice. Christ, therefore, came as the perfect victim, the one who died in order to satisfy divine justice and save people from their sins.

Anselm wrote: ‘Such satisfaction none can make but God, and yet the debt is owed by none but Man, so the God-Man had come to pay it.’ Anselm was thus Augustinian in his views of salvation.

Anselm's doctrine of the atonement (that is, his new interpretation of ‘ransom’) contained many fruitful ideas that later theologians built into the classic Western understanding of Christ’s death. Most, however, rejected Anselm’s view that while Christ offered his perfect life as satisfaction to God, he did not suffer punishment of sin. The classic substitutionary concept of atonement sees Christ's ‘payment’ of his life to his Father as being one and the same thing with his suffering sin’s punishment on humanity’s behalf.

However, we are straying beyond Church History – this is the theology of the Atonement, so we’ll leave Anselm there.