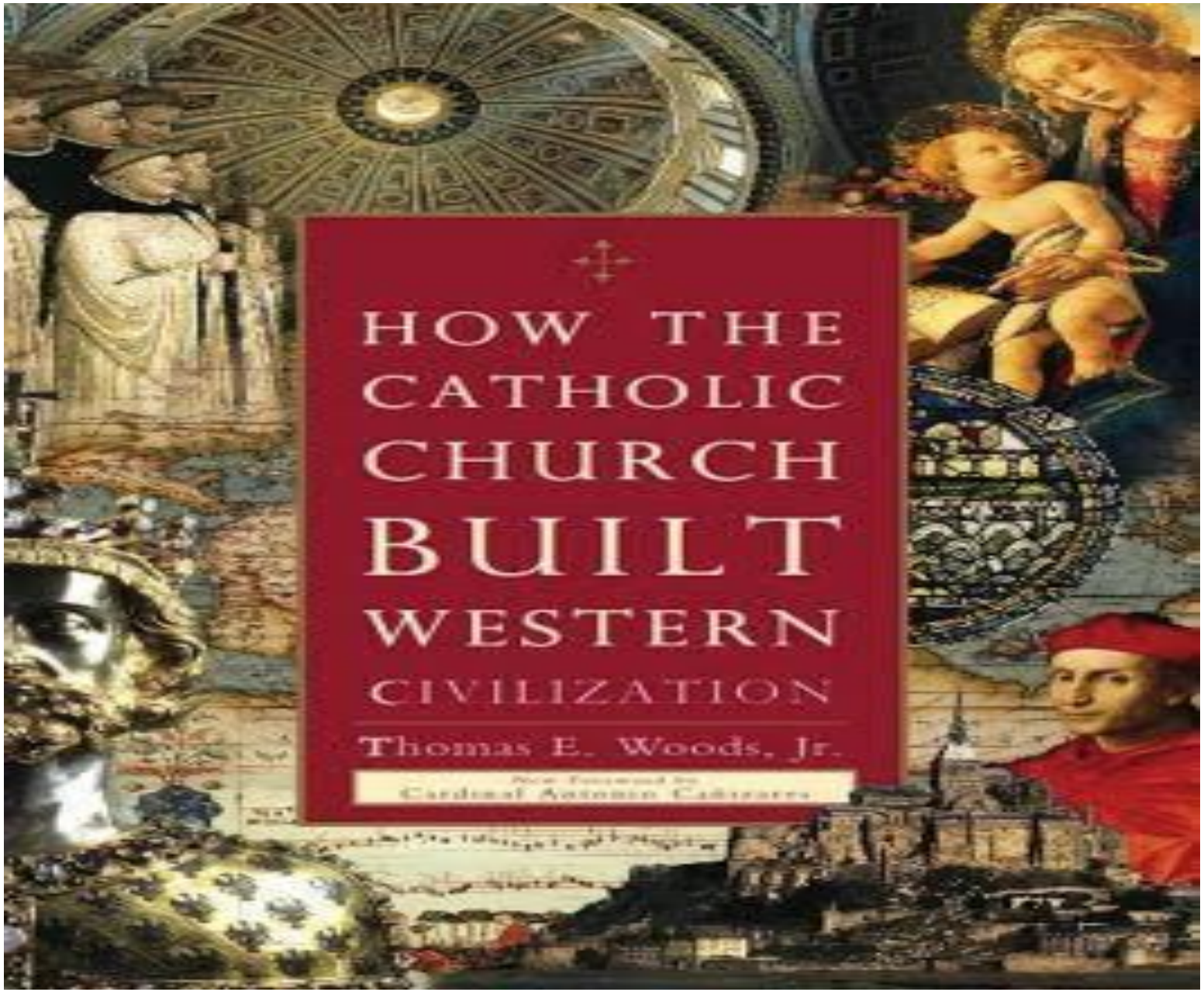
HOW THE CATHOLIC CHURCH BUILT WESTERN CIVILIZATION
Thomas E. Woods, Jr.

# PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit
did instruct the hearts of the faithful,
grant that by the same Holy Spirit,
we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations.

Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.
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# "WESTERN CIVILIZATION"

**This term refers to Europe and places colonized by Europeans.**

They key feature of "western civilization" is that it was inspired by Greco-Roman culture & government, and it carried on Greco-Roman traditions into the future.

**Archaic Period (800 BC – 480 BC)**

776 Traditional date for the first historic Olympic games.

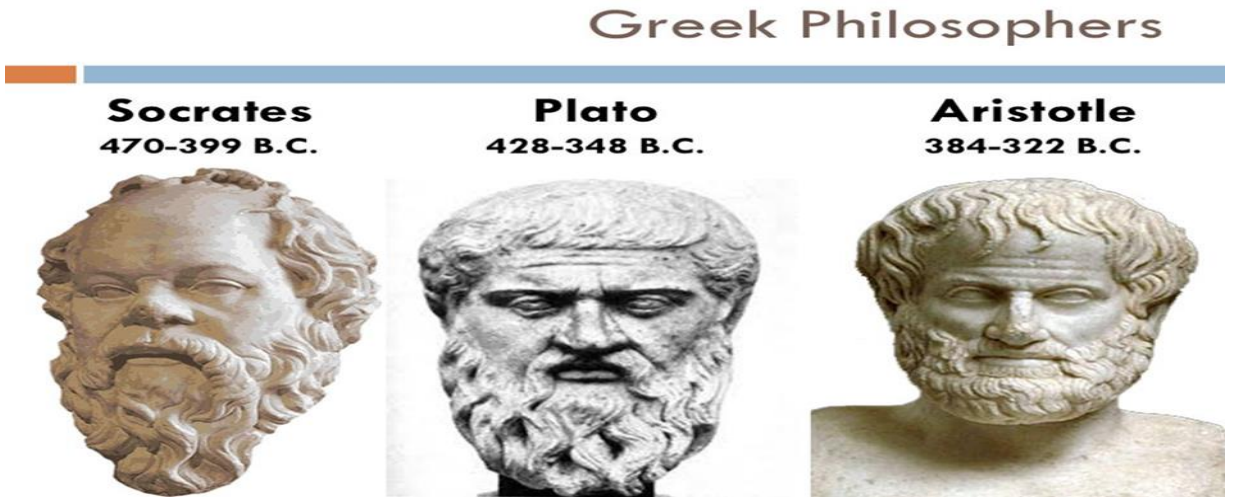
Greek alphabet developed, that the earliest surviving Greek literature was composed

**Classical period (480 BC – 323 BC)**

Classical Greece had a powerful influence on the Roman Empire and on the foundations of western civilization. Much of modern Western politics, artistic thought (architecture, sculpture), scientific thought, theatre, literature, and philosophy derives from this period of Greek history.

327 BC Alexander invades northern India, but his army is despondent and refuses to march further eastwards. Alexander the Great dies in 323 BC

146 BC Romans conquer Greece.



## Map of the ancient Greek Empire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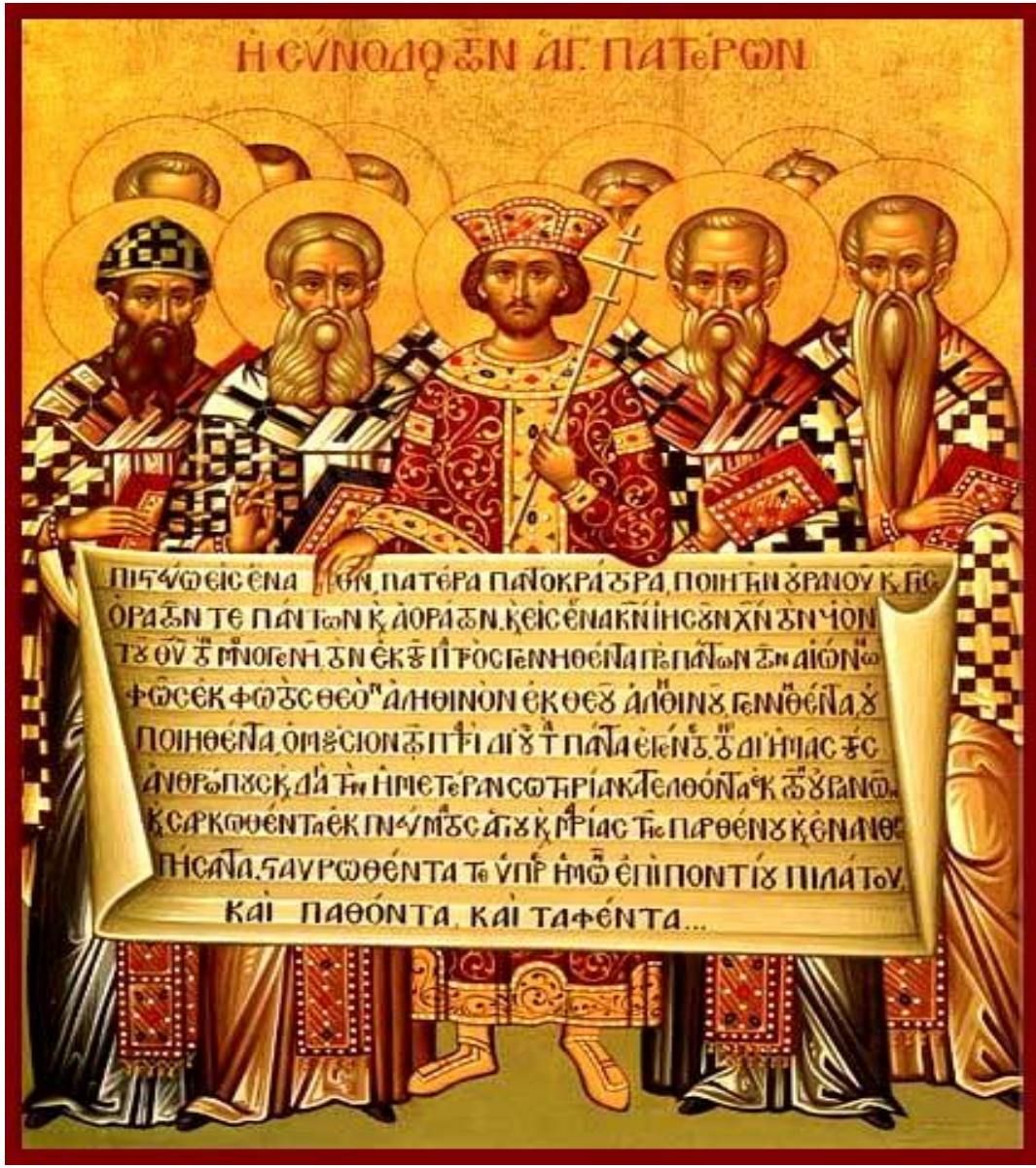
Roman Empire (200 AD)
Britannia
Londinium
Germans
Central Europe
Sarmatians
Gallia
Lugdunum
Mediolanum
Illyricum
ROME
Italia
Thessalonica
Hispania
Graecia
Asia Minor
THE ROMAN EMPIRE
Ephesus
Athens
Syria
Gades
Africa
Carthage
Antioch
MIDDLE EAST
Judaea
AFRICA
Berbers
Alexandria
Aegyptus
Arabs

# Barbarian Invasions

- By the late second century, a hodgepodge of Germanic tribes, moving westward from central Europe in what is referred to as the Völkerwanderungen (Migration Period), had begun to press on the Rhine and Danube frontiers. As time went on and Roman generals began devoting themselves to making and unmaking emperors instead of guarding the frontiers, the tribesmen began to pour in through the resulting gaps in the Roman defenses. These invasions hastened the collapse of Rome.

- The barbarians were rural or nomadic peoples with no written literature and little political organization, aside from loyalty to a chief. According to some etymologies of the word, all the Romans could make out of these peoples' various languages was "bar, bar, bar"—hence "barbarian."

The barbarians were warrior peoples whose customs and conduct struck the Romans as savage. As Christopher Dawson put it, “The Church had to undertake the task of introducing the law of the Gospel and the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount among peoples who regarded homicide as the most honorable occupation and vengeance as synonymous with justice.”

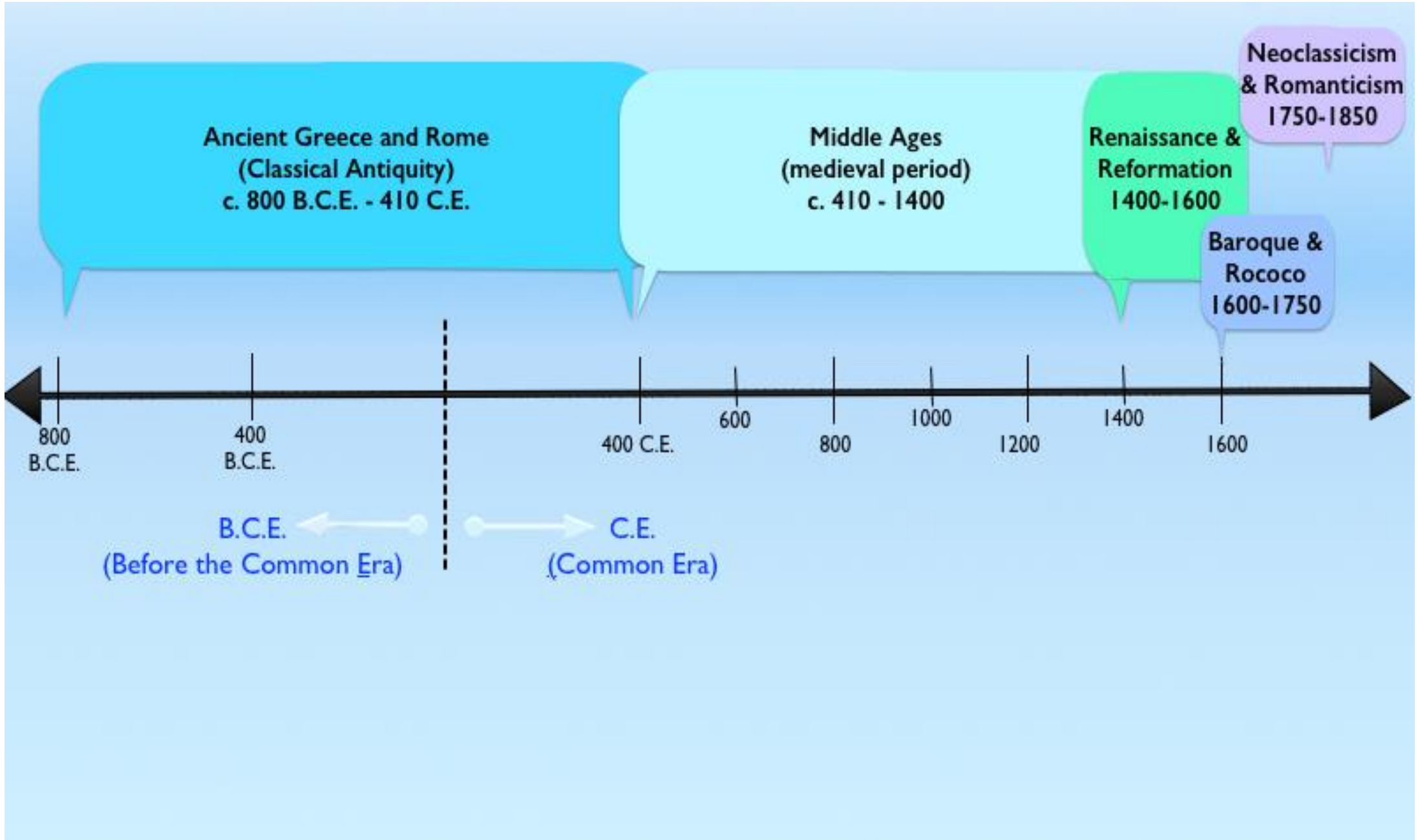



**With the 313 AD Edict of Milan Constantine gave Christians and unspecified "others" indulgence to worship as they please. The edict also mandated the return of property that had previously been confiscated.**

**A translation of the edict text is at http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/bible/milan.stm**

# Sack of Rome.

- Stilicho great defender of Rome died in AD 408.
- Alaric attacked Rome - starved her into submission through seiges.
- In AD 410 gained entry - Rome plundered by barbarian warriors for three days.
- Alaric's historic "sack of Rome" caused untold damage to Empire.


Ancient Greece and Rome
(Classical Antiquity)
c. 800 B.C.E. - 410 C.E.
Middle Ages
(medieval period)
c. 410 - 1400
Renaissance &
Reformation
1400-1600
Neoclassicism
& Romanticism
1750-1850
Baroque &
Rococo
1600-1750
800
B.C.E.
400
B.C.E.
400 C.E.
600
800
1000
1200
1400
1600
B.C.E.
(Before the Common Era)
C.E.
(Common Era)

# The Middle Ages

**Prejudice against the Middle Ages**

From the 2001 book called Second Messiah by Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas:

“The establishment of the Romanised Christian era marked the beginning of the Dark Ages: the period of Western history when the lights went out on all learning, and superstition replaced knowledge. It lasted until the power of the RomanChurch was undermined by the Reformation.”

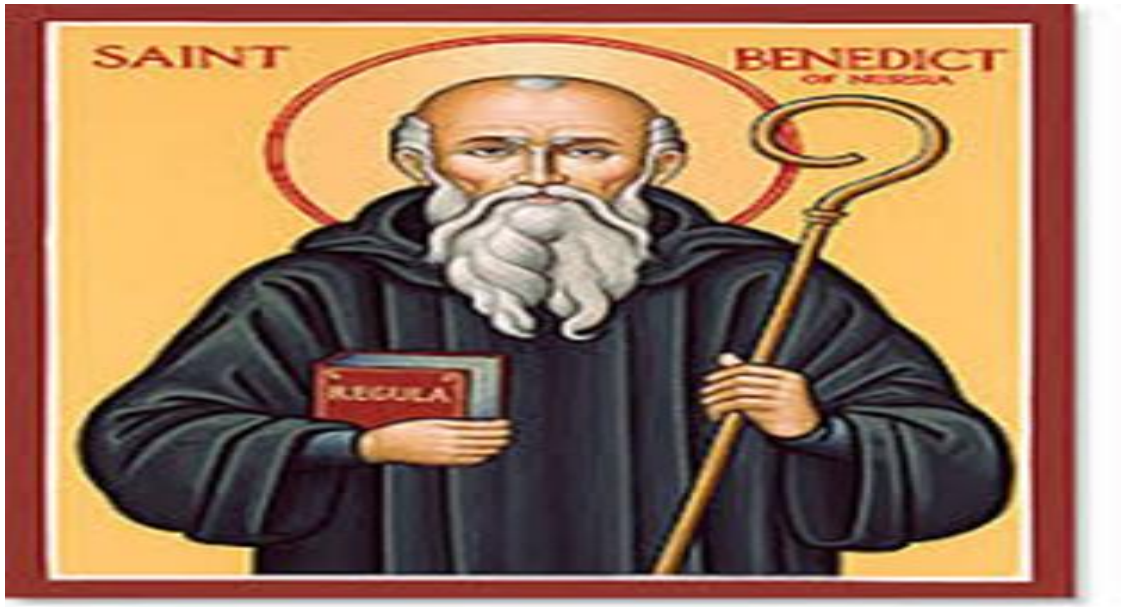
“Everything that was good and proper was despised and all branches of human achievement were ignored in the name of Jesus Christ.”

- The Church, as the educator of Europe, was the one light that survived the repeated barbarian invasions. The barbarian invasions of the fourth and fifth centuries had ushered in a serious decline in those aspects of life with which we associate the very idea of cultural achievement, urban life, and the life of the mind.
- In the ninth and tenth centuries, Western Europe would fall victim to more waves of devastating attacks—this time from Vikings, Magyars, and Muslims. (For an idea of what these invasions were like, bear in mind that one of the better-known Viking warriors was named Thorfinn Skullsplitter.)
- The unfailing vision and determination of Catholic bishops, monks, priests, scholars and civil administrators saved Europe from a second collapse.

# How the Monks Saved Civilization

# Monasticism

- Early forms of monastic life are evident by the third century. Saint Anthony of Egypt (also known as Saint Anthony of the Desert), whose life spanned the mid-third century through the mid-fourth century.
- Saint Anthony's sister lived in a house of consecrated virgins. He became a hermit, retreating to the deserts of Egypt for the sake of his own spiritual perfection, though his great example led thousands to flock to him.
- The hermit's characteristic feature was his retreat into remote solitude, so that he might renounce worldly things and concentrate intensely on his spiritual life.
- Hermits typically lived alone or in groups of two or three, finding shelter in caves or simple huts and supporting themselves on what they could produce in their small fields or through such tasks as basket-making.




- Cenobitic monasticism (monks living together in monasteries), the kind with which most people are familiar, developed in part as a reaction against the life of the hermits and in recognition that men ought to live in community.
- This was the position of Saint Basil the Great, who played an important role in the development of Eastern monasticism.
- Western monasticism is most deeply indebted to one of its own: Saint Benedict of Nursia.

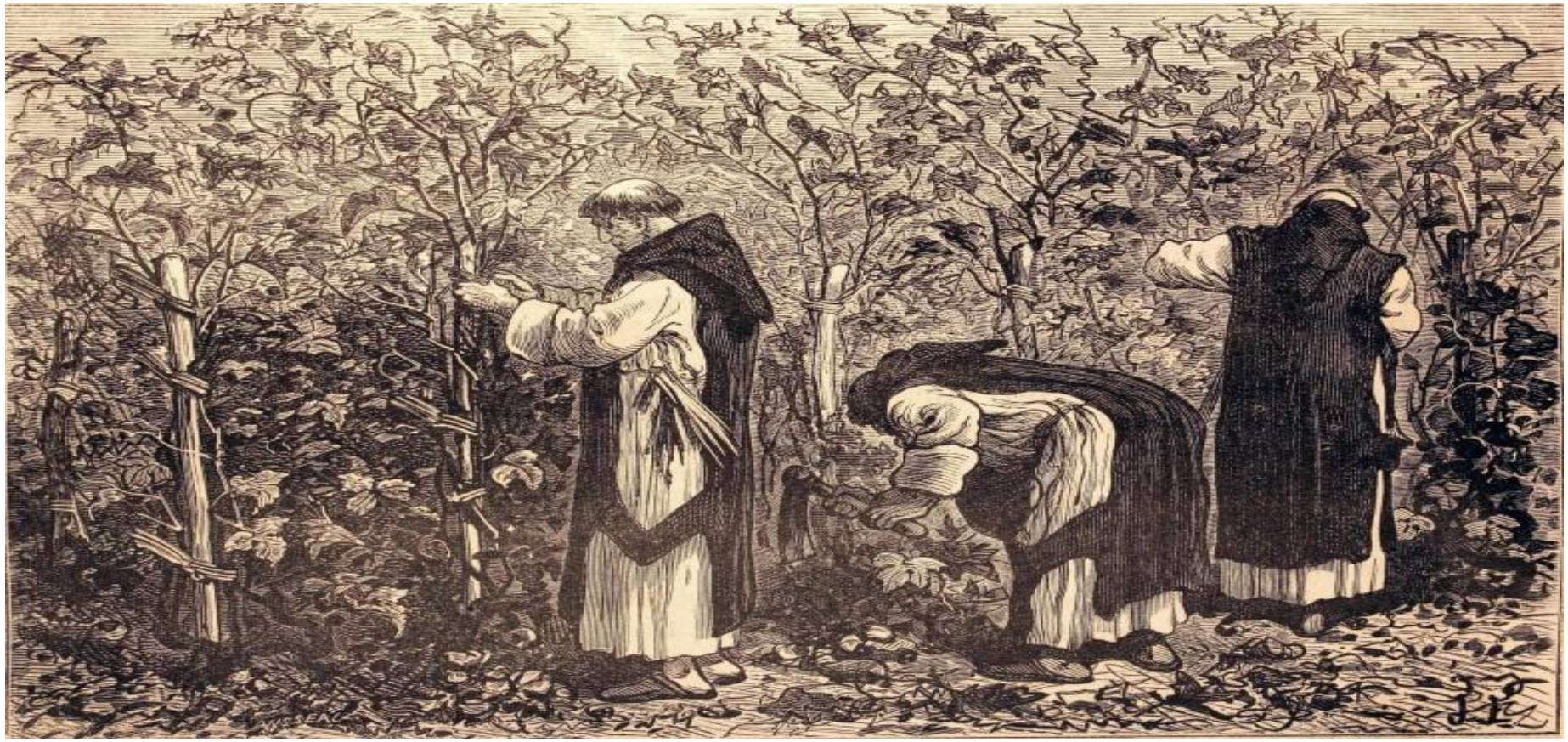

- Saint Benedict established twelve small communities of monks at Subiaco, thirty-eight miles from Rome, before heading fifty miles south to found Monte Cassino, the great monastery for which he is remembered. It was here, around 529, that he composed the famous Rule of Saint Benedict, the excellence of which was reflected in its all but universal adoption throughout Western Europe in the centuries that followed.

- Each Benedictine house was independent of every other, and each had an abbot to oversee its affairs and good order. Monks had previously been free to wander from one place to another, but Saint Benedict envisioned a monastic lifestyle in which each remained attached to his own monastery. (Poverty, Chastity, Obedience, Stability)

- Throughout the period of great turmoil, the Benedictine tradition endured, and its houses remained oases of order and peace.
- Mere statistics can hardly do justice to the Benedictine achievement, but by the beginning of the fourteenth century, the order had supplied the Church with 24 popes, 200 cardinals, 7,000 archbishops, 15,000 bishops, and 1,500 canonized saints.
- At its height, the Benedictine order could boast 37,000 monasteries. And it was not merely their influence within the Church to which the statistics point; so exalted had the monastic ideal become throughout society that by the fourteenth century the order had already enrolled some twenty emperors, ten empresses, forty-seven kings, and fifty queens.
- Thus a great many of Europe's most powerful would come to pursue the humble life and spiritual regimen of the Benedictine order.
- Even the various barbarian groups were attracted to the monastic life, and such figures as Carloman of the Franks and Rochis of the Lombards eventually pursued it themselves.

# THE PRACTICAL ARTS

- “We owe the agricultural restoration of a great part of Europe to the monks,” observes another expert. “Wherever they came,” adds still another, “they converted the wilderness into a cultivated country; they pursued the breeding of cattle and agriculture, labored with their own hands, drained morasses, and cleared away forests.
- By them Germany was rendered a fruitful country.” Another historian records that “every Benedictine monastery was an agricultural college for the whole region in which it was located.”
- Even the nineteenth-century French statesman and historian François Guizot, who was not especially sympathetic to the Catholic Church, observed: “The Benedictine monks were the agriculturists of Europe; they cleared it on a large scale, associating agriculture with preaching.”



Manual labor, expressly called for in the Rule of Saint Benedict, played a central role in the monastic life. Although the Rule was known for its moderation and its aversion to exaggerated penances, we often find the monks freely embracing work that was difficult and unattractive, since for them such tasks were channels of grace and opportunities for mortification of the flesh.

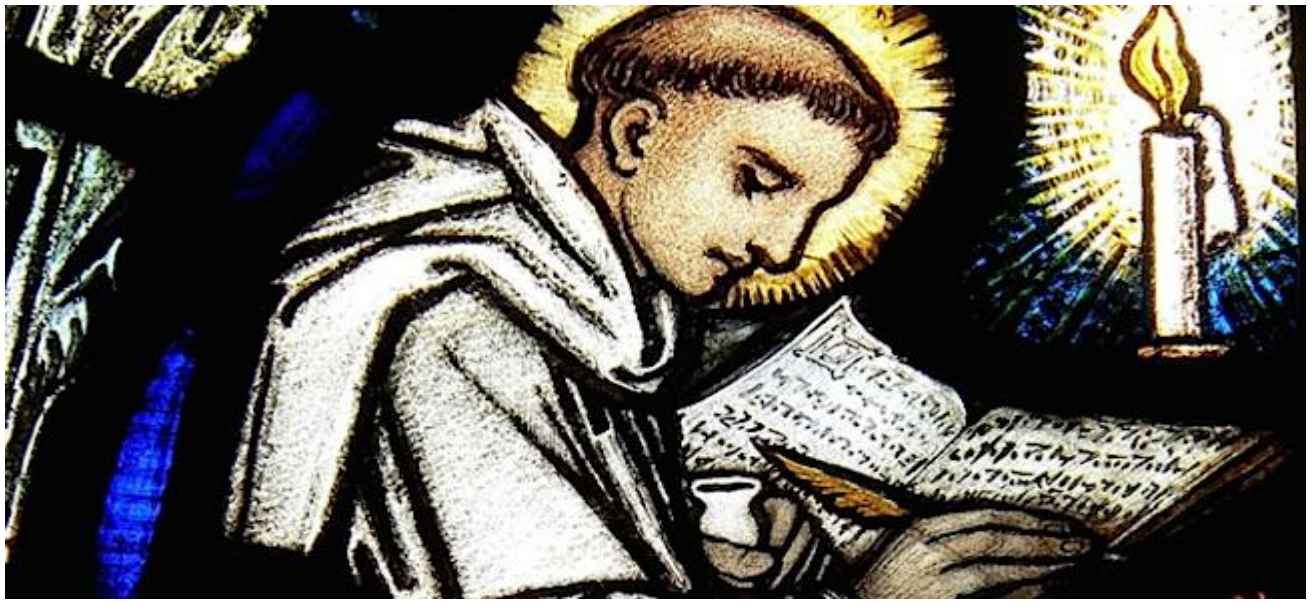
- Wherever they went, the monks introduced crops, industries, or production methods with which the people had not been previously familiar.
- Here they would introduce the rearing of cattle and horses, there the brewing of beer or the raising of bees or fruit.
- In Sweden, the corn trade owed its existence to the monks; in Parma, it was cheese making; in Ireland, salmon fisheries—and, in a great many places, the finest vineyards.
- Monks stored up the waters from springs in order to distribute them in times of drought. In fact, it was the monks of the monasteries of Saint Laurent and Saint Martin who, spying the waters of springs that were distributing themselves uselessly over the meadows of Saint Gervais and Belleville, directed them to Paris.
- In Lombardy, the peasants learned irrigation from the monks, which contributed mightily to making that area so well known throughout Europe for its fertility and riches.
- The monks were also the first to work toward improving cattle breeds, rather than leaving the process to chance.

- The discovery of champagne can be traced to Dom Perignon of Saint Peter's Abbey, Hautvilliers-on-the-Marne. In 1688, he developed champagne through experimentation with blending wines. The fundamental principles he established continue to govern the manufacture of champagne even today.
- Thanks to the great network of communication that existed between the various monasteries, technological information was able to spread rapidly. Thus we find very similar water-powered systems at monasteries that were at great distances from each other, even thousands of miles away.
- "These monasteries," a scholar writes, "were the most economically effective units that had ever existed in Europe, and perhaps in the world, before that time."
- The monks used waterpower for crushing wheat, sieving flour, fulling cloth, and tanning.

# CHARITABLE WORKS

Benedict's Rule called for the monks to dispense alms and hospitality. According to the Rule, "All guests who come shall be received as though they were Christ." Monasteries served as gratuitous inns, providing a safe and peaceful resting place for foreign travelers, pilgrims, and the poor.

# THE WRITTEN WORD



- The monastic contribution with which many people are familiar is the copying of manuscripts, both sacred and profane.
- In addition to their careful preservation of the works of the classical world and of the Church fathers, both of which are central to Western civilization, the monks performed another work of immeasurable importance in their capacity as copyists: their preservation of the Bible.
- Without their devotion to this crucial task and the numerous copies they produced, it isn't clear how the Bible would have survived the onslaught of the barbarians.

# Monks as Teachers

- Saint John Chrysostom tells us that already in his day (c. 347–407) it was customary for people in Antioch to send their sons to be educated by the monks.
- Saint Benedict instructed the sons of Roman nobles. Saint Boniface established a school in every monastery he founded in Germany, and in England Saint Augustine and his monks set up schools wherever they went.
- Saint Patrick is given credit for encouraging Irish scholarship, and the Irish monasteries would develop into important centers of learning, dispensing instruction to monks and laymen alike.
- The Monks not only established the schools, and were the schoolmasters in them, but also laid the foundations for the universities.
- They were the thinkers and philosophers of the day and shaped the political and religious thought.
- To them, both collectively and individually, was due the continuity of thought and civilization of the ancient world with the later Middle Ages and with the modern period.

# The Church
# and the University

- Although many college students today couldn’t locate the Middle Ages on a historical timeline, they are nevertheless sure that the period was one of ignorance, superstition, and intellectual repression.
- Nothing could be further from the truth—it is to the Middle Ages that we owe one of Western civilization’s greatest—unique—intellectual contributions to the world: the university system.
- The university was an utterly new phenomenon in European history. Nothing like it had existed in ancient Greece or Rome. The institution that we recognize today, with its faculties, courses of study, examinations, and degrees, as well as the distinction between undergraduate and graduate study, comes to us directly from the medieval world.
- The Church developed the university system because, according to historian Lowrie Daly, it was “the only institution in Europe that showed consistent interest in the preservation and cultivation of knowledge.
- We cannot give exact dates for the appearance of universities at Paris and Bologna, Oxford and Cambridge, since they evolved over a period of time—the former beginning as cathedral schools and the latter as informal gatherings of masters and students. But we may safely say that they began taking form during the latter half of the twelfth century.

Historian of science Edward Grant states:

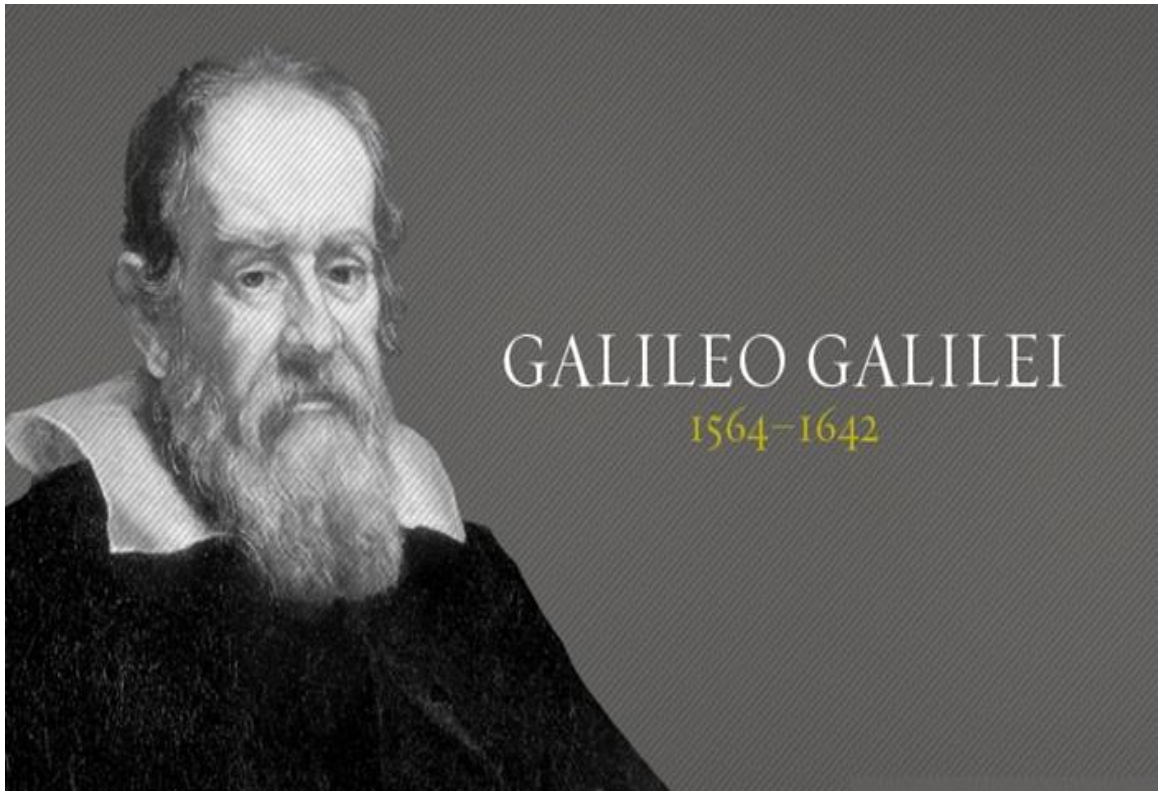
- What made it possible for Western civilization to develop science and the social sciences in a way that no other civilization had ever done before?

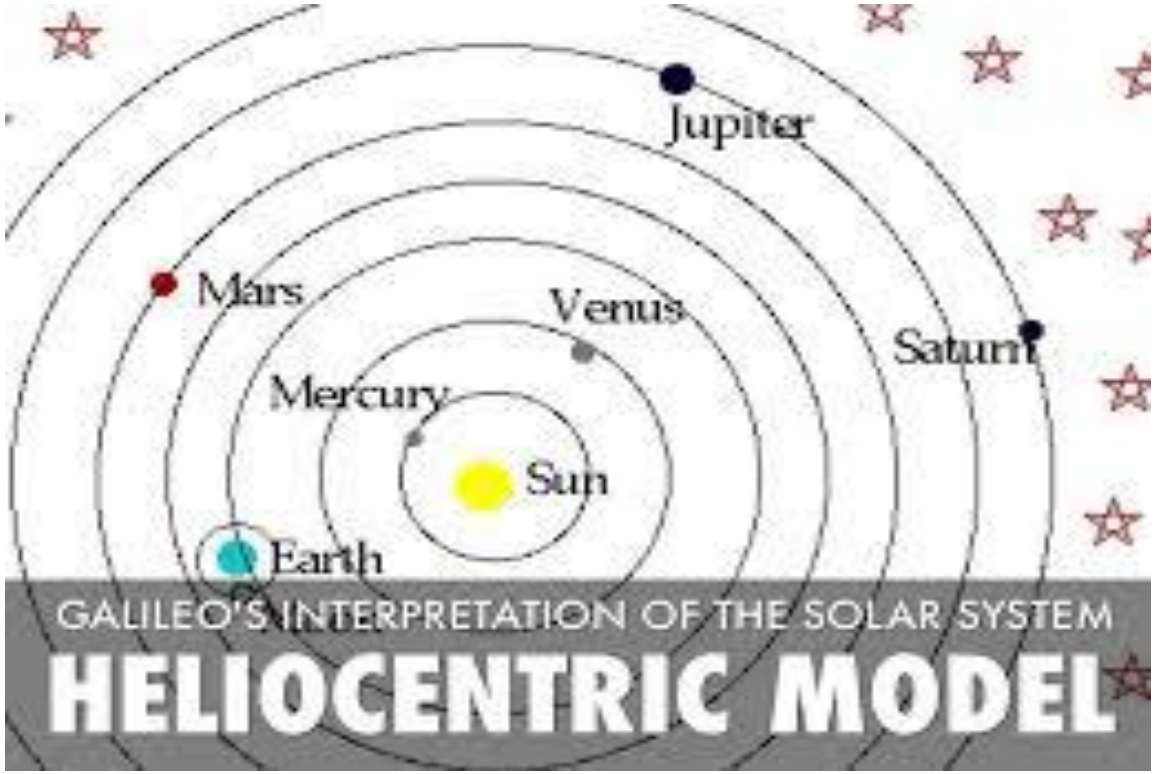
- The answer, I am convinced, lies in a pervasive and deep-seated spirit of inquiry that was a natural consequence of the emphasis on reason that began in the Middle Ages.

- With the exception of revealed truths, reason was enthroned in medieval universities as the ultimate arbiter for most intellectual arguments and controversies.

- It was quite natural for scholars immersed in a university environment to employ reason to probe into subject areas that had not been explored before, as well as to discuss possibilities that had not previously been seriously entertained

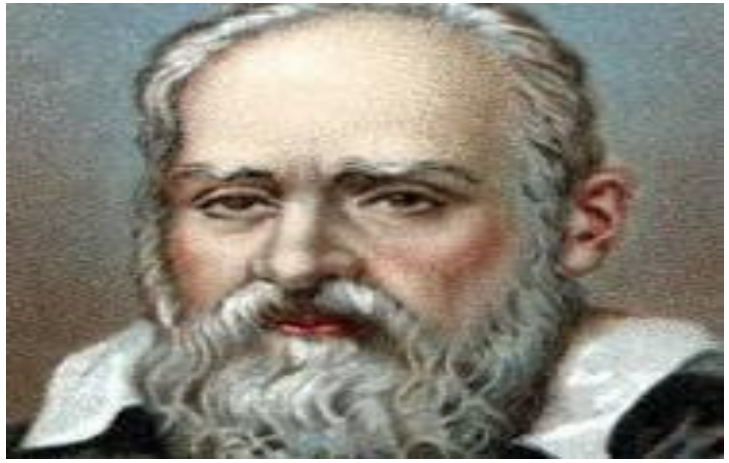
# The Church and Science



- Polish astronomer Nicholas Copernicus (1473–1543) had come from a religious family, all of whom belonged to the Third Order of Saint Dominic. He was a figure of no small renown in ecclesiastical circles. He was consulted by the Fifth Lateran Council (1512–1517) on the subject of calendar reform.
- In 1531, Copernicus prepared an outline of his astronomy for the benefit of his friends. Churchmen and academic colleagues alike implored Copernicus to publish his work for general circulation.
- Thus at the urging of friends, including several prelates, Copernicus finally relented and published Six Books on the Revolutions of the Celestial Orbits, which he dedicated to Pope Paul III, in 1543.

- Copernicus retained much of the conventional astronomy of his day, which was overwhelmingly indebted to Aristotle and above all to Ptolemy (87–150 A.D.), a brilliant Greek astronomer who posited a geocentric universe.
- Copernican astronomy shared with its Greek precursors such features as perfectly spherical heavenly bodies, circular orbits, and constant planetary speed.
- The significant difference that Copernicus introduced was that he placed the sun, rather than Earth, at the center of the system.
- This heliocentric model posited a moving Earth orbiting the sun just as the other planets did.
- Although viciously attacked by Protestants for its alleged opposition to Holy Scripture, the Copernican system was subject to no formal Catholic censure until the Galileo case.



- Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), in addition to his work in physics, made some important astronomical observations with his telescope that helped to undermine aspects of the Ptolemaic system.
- He saw mountains on the moon, thus undermining the ancient certainty that the heavenly bodies were perfect spheres.
- He discovered four moons orbiting Jupiter, demonstrating not only the presence of celestial phenomena of which Ptolemy and the ancients had been unaware, but also that a planet moving in its orbit would not leave its smaller satellites behind. (One of the arguments against the motion of the Earth had been that the moon would be left behind.)
- Galileo’s discovery of the phases of Venus was yet another piece of evidence in favor of the Copernican system.

- Initially, Galileo and his work were welcomed and celebrated by prominent churchmen. In late 1610, Father Christopher Clavius wrote to tell Galileo that his fellow Jesuit astronomers had confirmed the discoveries he had made through his telescope.

- When Galileo went to Rome the following year he was greeted with enthusiasm by religious and secular figures alike.

- He wrote to a friend, “I have been received and shown favor by many illustrious cardinals, prelates, and princes of this city.” He enjoyed a long audience with Pope Paul V, and the Jesuits of the Roman College held a day of activities in honor of his achievements.

- in 1612 he published his Letters on the Sunspots, in which he espoused the Copernican system for the first time in print, one of the many enthusiastic letters of congratulation came from none other than Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, who later became Pope Urban VIII.

- The Church had no objection to the use of the Copernican system as an elegant theoretical model whose literal truth was far from established, but which accounted for celestial phenomena more reliably than any other system.
- There was thought to be no harm in presenting and using it as a hypothetical system. Galileo, on the other hand, believed the Copernican system to be literally true rather than merely a hypothesis that yielded accurate predictions. But he lacked anything approaching adequate evidence to support his belief.
- In the absence of strict scientific proof, Galileo nevertheless insisted on the literal truth of the Copernican system and refused to accept a compromise whereby Copernicanism would be taught as a hypothesis until persuasive evidence could be produced on its behalf.
- When he took the additional step of suggesting that apparent scriptural verses to the contrary had to be reinterpreted, he was viewed as having usurped the authority of the theologians.

- In 1616, after Galileo had publicly and persistently taught the Copernican system, Church authorities told him that he must cease to teach the Copernican theory as true, though he remained free to treat it as a hypothesis. Galileo agreed, and continued on with his work.
- In 1624, he made another trip to Rome, where once again he was received with great enthusiasm, and where influential cardinals were eager to discuss scientific questions with him.
- Pope Urban VIII presented him with several impressive gifts, including two medals and a statement urging further patronage for his work.
- The pope spoke of Galileo as a man “whose fame shines in the sky and is spread over the whole world.”
- Galileo’s Dialogue on the Great World Systems, published in 1632, was written at the urging of the pope, but it ignored the instruction to treat Copernicanism as a hypothesis rather than as established truth.
- Galileo was censured and prohibited from publishing on Copernicanism.

# The Christian Worldview and Science

- Father Stanley Jaki is a prizewinning historian of science—with doctorates in theology and physics—whose scholarship has helped give Catholicism and Scholasticism their due in the development of Western science.
- Jaki's many books have advanced the provocative claim that far from hindering the development of science, Christian ideas helped to make it possible.

- Jaki places great significance on the fact that the Christian tradition, from its Old Testament prehistory through the High Middle Ages and beyond, conceives of God—and, by extension, His creation—as rational and orderly.
- Throughout the Bible, the regularity of natural phenomena is described as a reflection of God's goodness, beauty, and order.
- Jaki directs our attention to Wisdom 11:21, in which God is said to have "ordered all things by measure, number, weight."
- This point, according to Jaki, not only lent support to Christians in late antiquity who upheld the rationality of the universe, but also inspired Christians a millennium later who, at the beginnings of modern science, had embarked on quantitative inquiry as a way of understanding the universe.

- This point may appear so obvious as to be of little interest. But the idea of a rational, orderly universe—enormously fruitful and indeed indispensable for the progress of science—has eluded entire civilizations.
- One of Jaki's central theses is that it was not coincidental that the birth of science as a self-perpetuating field of intellectual endeavor should have occurred in a Catholic milieu.
- Certain fundamental Christian ideas, he suggests, have been indispensable in the emergence of scientific thought.
- Non-Christian cultures, on the other hand, did not possess the same philosophical tools, and indeed were burdened by conceptual frameworks that hindered the development of science.
- In Science and Creation, Jaki extends this thesis to seven great cultures: Arabic, Babylonian, Chinese, Egyptian, Greek, Hindu, and Maya. In these cultures, Jaki explains, science suffered a "stillbirth." Such stillbirths can be accounted for by each of these cultures' conceptions of the universe and their lack of belief in a transcendent Creator who endowed His creation with consistent physical laws.
- To the contrary, they conceived of the universe as a huge organism dominated by a pantheon of deities and destined to go through endless cycles of birth, death, and rebirth.
- This made the development of science impossible. The animism that characterized ancient cultures, which conceived of the divine as immanent in created things, hindered the growth of science by making the idea of constant natural laws foreign.

- Created things had minds and wills of their own—an idea that all but precluded the possibility of thinking of them as behaving according to regular, fixed patterns.
- The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation militates strongly against such thinking. Christ is the monogenes, or “only begotten,” Son of God. Within the Greco-Roman worldview, on the other hand, “the universe was the ‘monogenes’ or ‘only begotten’ emanation from a divine principle not really different from the universe itself.”
- Christianity, since it reposed the divine strictly in Christ and in a Holy Trinity that transcended the world, avoided any kind of pantheism and allowed Christians to view the universe as a realm of order and predictability.
- Jaki does not deny that these cultures made some impressive technological contributions. His point is that we do not see the flowering of formal and sustained scientific inquiry emerging from this work.
- This is why another recent treatment of the subject could argue that “the earlier technical innovations of Greco-Roman times, of Islam, of imperial China, let alone those achieved in prehistoric times, do not constitute science and are better described as lore, skills, wisdom, techniques, crafts, technologies, engineering, learning, or simply knowledge.”

- The Greeks assigned conscious purposes to the material actors of the cosmos; thus Aristotle explained the circular motion of celestial bodies in terms of their affection for such a pattern. Jaki has argued that in order for science to progress, it was up to the Scholastics of the High Middle Ages to carry out the depersonalization of nature, so that, for instance, the explanation for falling stones was not said to be their innate love for the center of the earth.
- A great deal of scholarly attention has been devoted to the scientific contributions of Muslim scholars, particularly in such branches of study as medicine and optics. In addition, the translation by Arab scholars of ancient Greek classics led to their dissemination throughout the Western world in the twelfth century—a profoundly important part of Western intellectual history.
- The fact is, however, that the contributions of Muslim scientists typically occurred in spite of Islam rather than because of it. Orthodox Islamic scholars absolutely rejected any conception of the universe that involved consistent physical laws, because the absolute autonomy of Allah could not be restricted by natural laws. Apparent natural laws were nothing more than mere habits, so to speak, of Allah, and might be discontinued at any time.

# THE SCIENTIST-PRIEST

- It is a relatively simple matter to show that many great scientists, like Louis Pasteur, have been Catholic. Much more revealing, however, is the surprising number of Catholic churchmen, priests in particular, whose scientific work has been so extensive and significant.
- Roger Bacon, a Franciscan who taught at Oxford in the 13th century, was admired for his work in mathematics and optics, and is considered to be a forerunner of the modern scientific method.
- St. Albert the Great (c. 1200-1280) was a renowned naturalist who insisted on direct observation in the acquisition of knowledge. He explained that the aim of natural science was not to simply accept the statement of others on faith but to investigate the causes that are at work in nature.

- Fr. Nicolaus Steno (1638-1686) has been credited with setting down most of the principles of modern geology and has sometimes been called the father of stratigraphy (the study of the strata, or layers, of the earth).
- The great bulk of Catholic priests interested in the sciences came from the religious order founded by Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century – the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits).
- They had contributed to the development of pendulum clocks, pantographs, barometers, reflecting telescopes and microscopes, to the scientific fields as various as magnetism, optics and electricity.
- They observed, in some cases before anyone else, the colored bands on Jupiter's surface. They theorized about the circulation of the blood, the theoretical possibility of flight, the way the moon affected the tides, and the wave-like nature of light.
- All these were typical Jesuit achievements, and scientists as influential as Fermat, Huygens, Leibniz and Newton were not alone in counting Jesuits among their most prized correspondents.

- One of the greatest Jesuit scientists was Father Roger Boscovich (1711-1787). He developed the first geometric method for calculating a planet's orbit based on three observations of its position.
- Fr. Boscovich gave the first coherent description of an atomic theory, well over a century before modern atomic theory emerged and is considered the true creator of fundamental atomic physics, as we understand it.

# Church Architecture

- Gothic Architecture is an architectural style that flourished in Europe during the High and Late Middle Ages.
- The characteristics of Gothic architecture are stone structures, large expanses of glass, clustered columns, sharply pointed spires, intricate sculptures, ribbed vaults, and flying buttresses. One of their main characteristics is the ogival, or pointed arch.

# Canon (Church) Law

- The Catholic Church began to systematize its canon law in the twelfth and thirteenth century, which then laid the foundations for the development of Western law in such areas as marriage, property, and inheritance.
- Canon law acted as a model which introduced rational trial procedures, the insistence upon consent as the foundation of marriage and upon wrongful intent as the basis of crime; the development of equity to protect the poor and helpless against the rich and powerful.
- The Church's influence on the legal systems and legal thought of the West extends also to the development of the idea of natural rights.

# International Law

- The Church also exerted its influence on the development of international law. Laws governing the interaction of states had remained vague throughout the years, and had never been articulated in any clear way.
- The origins of international law began in the 16th century with the debate over the mistreatment of Native American peoples by the European conquerors.
- Catholic theologians in Spain held the behavior of their own civilization up to critical scrutiny and found it wanting. The Catholic conception of the fundamental unity of the human race informed the deliberations of the great 16th century Spanish theologians who insisted on universal principles that must govern the interaction of states.
- They proposed that in matters of natural right, the other peoples of the world were their equals and that the commonwealths of pagan peoples were entitled to the same treatment that the nations of Christian Europe accorded to one another.