

Paper 10: Introductory talk

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1066-1350: our period is bracketed by two events of huge importance: the conquest of England in what was effectively the last successful Viking invasion – for who were the Normans if not Norsemen? – and the Black Death. The former changed the European balance of power for ever; the latter in a single winter killed nearly half the folk of Europe and Asia in its inexplicable pestilence. Our period begins with a warming climate, balmy summers, mild winters, and seas in the far north free of ice, and an expanding population. It closes with abrupt worsening of the climate, seen in tree rings and ice cores, and the abandonment of marginal land as the spectre of starvation stalks every happy harvest. Many thought Apocalypse imminent, and the prophecies of the end of time by the Calabrian Abbot, Joachim of Fiore, who died in 1302, were much studied. The mind, and map, of Europe was remade in an age which still demands our admiration, our recognition of its effect on us, and, perhaps, our gratitude.

I tried lots of titles: and puzzled about what to leave out: this talk could so easily be a potted *1066 and Some of That*, but I can't do the cartoons. Or 'Crusades, Courtesy and Cathedrals' -

Finally, The Norman Conquests and the making of Europe.

1. '1066' last and most successful of major 'Viking' invasions of England – but that was not the only conquest: consider the subduing over our centuries of the Eastern March and the establishment, at the same time as the Normans were settling the Seine valley, of a Norse dynasty in Russia that lasted till

Ivan the Terrible; the expansion of the Normans into Sicily, south Italy, and, eventually through the Crusades into the Eastern Mediterranean and the Holy Land. England itself, with its own distinctive cultures of Anglo Saxon South and West and the Danelaw of the North and East, was drawn firmly into a Continental rather than North Sea/Scandinavian cultural and political context. The political colonisation of much of Europe by Normans speaking the French of the fat land of northern France which they had conquered led to the establishment of a European *lingua franca*: and in addition, Latin, the language of scholars and the universal, Catholic, Church unified the intellectual culture of Europe from Italy to the Scottish Highlands and northern Spain to the borders of Bohemia.

2. Indeed, one fact one must keep constantly in mind is that England was a trilingual country for all of our period, with the three languages differentiating semantically and structurally over time in what they were best addressed to do: the classy, literary, French; the legal, theological and intellectual Latin; and the English that by the second generation after the Conquest had become the cradle language of most people born in England. And as La3amon's *Brut*, the *Ancrene Wisse*, and *The Owle and the Nightingale* warn us, it is folly to underestimate the sophistication and high culture of what was going on in English, and to see it as automatically inferior or 'provincial' compared to what was being done in Anglo Norman French. After all, the Anglo-Saxon intellectual and cultural achievement was huge, and its vigorous life did not suddenly go out with the Conquest. Anglo Saxon scholars, indeed, like

Alcuin of York, the founder of the Palace School in Charlemagne's Aix la Chapelle, can fairly be said to have started the intellectual renaissance under Charlemagne and his descendants which consolidated, codified and copied the inheritance from the Classical past. That enormous endeavour made possible the intellectual adventures and achievements of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

3. So throughout our period England was part of a *European* intellectual, religious, court and mercantile culture.
4. We talk casually about 'Europe'. But it would make more sense to talk about Christendom - as they would have done. The word 'Christendom' implies several things: a universal adherence to the Christian faith, if not always its universal practice; it implies its awareness of itself as distinct from its mirror, heathendom. We will never begin to understand the middle ages if we lose sight of 1) that shared belief system and mythology, and 2) people's awareness of themselves as threatened by those outside Christendom. That did not stop Christians quarrelling among themselves, of course, for human nature is human nature however noble the theology or philosophy it professes. And the most glaring of these Christian quarrels was the split between the Eastern Greek Church and the Latin Western, which in 1054 came to a formal head over a major disagreement over the nature of Christ - a division which is still not settled. (Indeed, the Latin West was often as suspicious of the smooth and politic Greek as it was of its open opponents in the aggressive states of Islam. (And in

1204 the Fourth crusade actually sacked the Christian city of Byzantium.)

5. For make no mistake about it, Islam *was* a threat. Its armies swept out of Arabia in the seventh century, iconoclastic, sometimes doctrinaire, and very successful. The Moslem conquest rapidly demolished the Greek or Eastern Roman empire in Palestine, Egypt, the Vandal states of North Africa, and it took over with ease the Visigothic kingdom in Spain. There were Islamic states in Sicily and Asia Minor; the Moslem armies pushed as far north as Tours in 732 before being turned back by Charlemagne's grandfather. There was, to be sure, a very great deal of peaceable intellectual and mercantile contact and exchange between the two blocs, especially in Spain, where for a golden time Jew and Moslem and Christian seem to have worked and studied together – and from that intellectual powerhouse came the recovery of the lost works of Aristotle to the Latin West in the Thirteenth century. So it is just as wrong to postulate of mediaeval Islam as it is of modern a monolithic bigotry, just as it is of Christendom. But even so the ideological divide *was* profound, the political conflict was occasionally acute, the Mediterranean *was* dominated by the Moslem fleets, and Moslem slavers did raid the coasts of Europe with regularity. They were still raiding Brittany and Cornwall for slaves in the sixteenth century, and as late as 1642 a slaving fleet cleared every man and boy off the Icelandic Westman Islands.
6. Fear, of course, provokes reaction, and Christendom was undeniably on the back foot. In 1071 the Seljuk Turks routed the Byzantine armies

at Manzikert, and the road seemed open to Byzantium itself, the Christian bulwark of Europe against the strange and dangerous East, about which most people knew little and feared more. The Greek Emperor, Manuel Comnenus, appealed to Pope Urban II for help, in the name of their common faith. The result was Urban's preaching of the Holy War, the First Crusade, in 1096 at Clermont, promising plenary absolution from their sins to all those who took the Cross. The Crusade was well supported, and many younger sons of those quarrelsome Norman lords, who with the growth of Primogeniture* as a means of inheritance, stood no chance of having land and power of their own in Europe, seized the opportunity to carve out principalities for themselves in Palestine and the Near East - sometimes at the expense of their nominal allies the Greeks, rather than their avowed enemies, the Saracen. And so there was a Latin King in Jerusalem from 1099 to 1187, and when Jerusalem fell to Saladin, the Crusader State lived on till 1291 at Acre, never relinquishing its claim to the earthly lordship of the Holy Places. The whole of our period is dominated by the Crusading mentality: against the Moslem, the infidel, to the south and East, and against the heathen Letts and Ests and Slavs – the origins of our word 'slave' - in the eastern march. Orders of knights, semi-monastic in their vows, were founded to defend pilgrims to the holy places and to carry the war against the enemy: the Templars, the Hospitallers (**PIC Krak des chevaliers**), and in the north the Teutonic Knights, with their huge fortress at **Marienburg**. **PIC/**

7. This configuration of the moral, religious and political world is inscribed in almost everything one reads: in the *Chanson de Roland*, where a trivial rearguard action against the Christian Basques in 778 is inflated into a ‘clash of civilisations’, a Crusading ideology from in fact just before the First Crusade; *Pagans unt tort e Chrestiens unt dreit* – but at the same time, there is recognition of lots of common values, and even sympathy and identity. ‘What a baron he would have been...’ It is inscribed in the career of Arthur against the pagan Saxons, in Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace and La3amon; it is implicit in romances like *Floris and Blancheflor* or *Horn*; and it is explicit in the first history of the First Crusade to be written, which is called, significantly, ‘the Deeds of God performed through the Franks’. **Blank slide**
8. For this conflict, endemic thorough our period, was seen (sometimes intensely, sometimes less so) as apocalyptic. To understand this we need to glance at models of history and Time. Broadly speaking, Classical thinkers saw history as cyclic, a process of growth, maturity, decay and renewal. The Jewish model, which is taken over by the Church, is far different: time is not cyclic but linear, history has a goal in the light of which all events acquire their value and meaning, and time will one day have an end when the great and terrible day of the Lord comes at the Last Judgement. This apocalyptic **teleology*** underlies both Islam and Christianity – and, indeed post-Christian thought, as in Marx, took over the Judaeo-Christian model of linear time in its diagnosis of the political process and goals: from the Christian point of view, the enemies of Christendom become the minions of Antichrist

foretold in the Book of Revelation, and political and economic power relationships are mythologised by religious ideologies. The crusades would not have been ideologically possible without this sense of Christendom defining itself, in an eschatology, against the Other. (Nor is this idea dead: you can see exactly this happening in parts of America, or conversely in Islamic fundamentalism, in our own time.)

9. Models of the past, whether cyclic or linear, have a profound effect not only on understanding of the present, but also what one will see as ultimately important. Obviously, the way one writes history – historiography - is affected, and the major emphasis in historical writing in the middle ages is born out of the polarised model of the great Augustine of Hippo in the fifth century. Writing at a time when Christendom faced another devastating threat, not from Islam but from the Barbarian invasions, Augustine's* *City of God* proposes an interpretative model of Two Cities, that of God, which will endure, and that of this world, which like Troy and the Rome just sacked by Alaric, must fall. That radical understanding underpins many things: the attitude in the middle ages not only to the Other, but also to the things of this world, which are as dust and ashes compared to the glories of heaven to which one must aspire. Pope Innocent III's *De Contemptu Mundi* is one fruit; another is the idea that the only history that matters in the end is that of the Church, for the church will endure the wreck of all things – and one spin off from *that* is that in sheer numbers one of the major forms of historical narrative in the middle Ages is the Saint's Life. But the influence of this model is also felt in some of

the most interesting and learned historians, like Otto von Freisingen, who use this interpretative model and link it with the idea of the Four Monarchies that the world will endure: the Assyrian Empire, the Persian, the Alexandrian and the Roman. The fifth monarchy, according to interpretations of the *Book of Revelation*, would be the culminating *imperium* of the final days.

10. This eschatology inevitably affects how one reads old books → the use and application of past learning. If all that is written is written for our profit, as St Paul maintains, then from the pagan books of the past the Christian present may derive profit. But Christians, as the recipients of a revelation of God's purpose, have a unique vantage point from which to understand the wisdom the ancients never knew they had. **PICS (2) Chartres S Rose**. This is the fundamental premise of the Christian Humanist* movement of the cathedral schools and universities of the twelfth century, which was to have such profound effects on Europe's intellectual temper, and in whose debt we still are: the pagans, though, as Philip Sidney would later say, 'in a full wrong divinity', had glimpses of the truth which we can understand and use more fully than they. Hence the fables of the pagans, their myths, and the wisdom of their thinkers could be properly accommodated into a Christian culture. History has meaning its original actors may not have fully understood: and so the whole of past, especially sacred, history was subjected to the interpretative tool of Typology*.

11. And it affects how books are read – a fundamental assumption that many meanings are

concurrently contained in any serious text: *littera gesta refert***Handout**

12. But a reading of history, and current event, from an eschatological perspective inevitably raises questions about the relation between secular and sacred power – to put it bluntly, who is the final earthly authority, king and emperor or Pope and Church? Augustine had argued that the Emperor derived his authority from God, basing his argument on Our Lord's words to Pilate, and had a duty and right to correct and govern the Church; others, basing their stance on the spurious – but they did not know that till the fifteenth century – Donation of Constantine, by which Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, had supposedly given temporal authority to the successor of St Peter, the Pope, argued that the Church was supreme over the secular power. Much of our period is dominated by this Investiture Contest, between empire and Papacy – and it is not only about the right to appoint to church offices, but the ultimate source of earthly authority. The high water mark of Church power is in the time of the aggressively reforming Pope Gregory VII, whose authority was such that he could make the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV, after a penitent pilgrimage, stand barefoot in the snow in December 1077 in his courtyard at Canossa wanting for absolution; the low water mark is when the troops of Charles of France sack the city of Rome in 1527. It is this issue that led to the disastrous quarrel between Henry II of England and Becket, and Becket's murder in 1170; it is this that complicates the reign of John and the conduct of the Papal Legate Pandulph; it is this that in the end will be a major fault line in the Reformation. But it

also collides with the redefinition of ideas of kingship/authority that is happening in our period.

13. For though many words stay the same – knight, love, king, marriage – through our period, the content of them is often radically revised. Around 1000 kings were more or less *primi inter pares* – first among their equals, their peers; by 1300 they are well on the way to claiming Divinely sanctioned authority which sets them quite apart. It is in our period that the ceremony of crowning acquires all sorts of new and sacral symbolism: the king is anointed with oil, he takes vows that are religious, the whole ceremony is reminiscent of the ordination of a priest. There is a deliberate ideological borrowing not only from the paradigm of Augustus, the first Roman Emperor and the one whose reign must have been divinely sanctioned for in it Christ was born, but also from the anointing by the Prophet Samuel of King David. (Indeed, David, Solomon and Augustus are among the commonest reference points in art – MS, sculpture or glass - for what a king should be.)
- 14. PICs 4 Chartres N Rose Good kings and bad kings, kingdom of Heaven**
15. Our period sees the invention of sacral kingship – the sort of thing Richard II deliberately encouraged in that extraordinary Wilton Diptych
- 16. PIC. Wilton Diptych**
17. But the obvious mismatch between the weak and fallen human being and the divinely sanctioned office he holds leads to the invention of one of the most useful of doctrines, the idea of the King's Two Bodies, the one mortal, fallible and weak, the other in his office immortal and a channel of the divine authority. *Le roi est mort, vive le roi*. That doctrine

is still alive and well across the water: it is what saved Mr President when Bill Clinton was in deep trouble. But any reformulation of ideologies of power, such as I am sketching, is never smooth and uncomplicated: men and women argued endlessly about these changes and what they meant throughout our period. Theories of the state can range from a people owing obedience to a prince only in so far as he discharges his office justly, as in the twelfth century John of Salisbury, to the notion that obedience in all circumstances was obligatory, to the thorough Imperialist positions of Marsilio of Padua or Dante which heavily influenced French and English ideas of the Prince in the sixteenth century.

18. Furthermore, in an increasingly legalistic age the question begins to be raised as to who *should* be king in the first place. Is it enough to be king simply because of a conquest by yourself or your ancestors? While conquest is recognised as *one* legitimate title, it is nearly always backed up by others (Cf Chaucer's *Complaint to his purse*.) The new Norman states were run by people whose ancestral Norse culture had strong respect for law and precedent, and that law was far more to do with property than morality. They were now encountering in their conquered peoples the corpus of Roman, customary, and canon law, with a stress on legitimacy, succession and title. It is a little embarrassing if you are seeking to establish a state where property is transmitted through due succession if you have to admit that you yourself have power only because one of your grandfathers was a successful pirate. So in the eleventh century we see several instances of the construction of

authorising genealogies. The first historian of the Norman Dukes, Dudo of St Quentin (c. 965 - c.1043), in his *Historia Normannorum* written between 1015 and 1030, turns to the *Aeneid* as a ground for his history, and not only makes Duke Rollo a founder figure like Aeneas, but also his Northmen the descendants of the Trojan Prince Antenor. He draws too on the idea of the *translatio Imperii*, and thus is able to make Rollo into God's instrument, so legitimising his possession of Normandy. In fact, given the teleology implicit in the *translatio Imperii* and in the dominant Augustinian model of history, the Normans become a 'Chosen People'. Furthermore, as primogeniture rather than the partition of family holdings develops as the means of succession, genealogy becomes the legitimator of power. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries genealogy is increasingly used to buttress political claims, and the construction of nobles' genealogies with fictional ancestors is part of the *arriviste* Normans' self-invention as a people, and a means to the constitution of an aristocracy based on 'vertical' ancestry, rather than, as originally, by 'horizontal' kinship with the Duke. It is precisely this Norman colonisation of the past, parallel to their colonisation of European space, that we see in the vast work of the remarkable Geoffrey of Monmouth whose *History of the Kings of Britain*, with its assertion that the British Royal line descends from that of Troy, was unchallenged for the whole of the middle ages and exists in no less than 250 surviving MSS.

19. Like the word 'king', many other words stayed the same, but their content changes. For example, the word *cniht* 'knight' in AS means

simply servant, or page; by the end of our period it not only connotes how a man fights, but his social class and indeed the values by which he ought to live. It has begun to acquire the content of personal honour, of social graces like politeness and generosity and gentleness and the knowledge of the proper way to treat ladies – of his own class, be it said. The reasons for such shifts are very complex indeed, but one factor is the development, in an increasingly affluent Europe, of a Europe-wide courtly society. Court, *curia*, originally meant simply the group of people who ran, looked after, an organisation; but early in our period courts are already places not only of civil servants, but also of luxury, conspicuous display, good taste, polite behaviour, witty conversation, and are magnets for the young and ambitious of both sexes, many of whom have little to do except wait around until someone important notices them and gives them a job. Women acquire a clout, and a patronage, in them quite out of proportion to their legal status. This gives ‘courtly’ a meaning far fuller than simply the management of accounts and the writing of business letters. Furthermore, courts were not only royal: any local lord or bishop would have them in his measure, exercising patronage commensurate with his power and rank. In this sort of setting, the young of both sexes would inevitably ease their boredom by flirting, yet flirting when love and marriage are intimately connected with power was a risky business. Flirting, playing the game of love, could indeed be a stalking horse for much more serious issues: for in our period politics was eroticised and love was politicised. Laudine in Chretien de Troyes’ *Yvain* has a terrible emotional

dilemma when she is attracted to the man who has killed her husband, even though in fair fight; she has a political one when, as chatelaine, her sage counsellors urge her to marry that very man to ensure the defence of her dominions. Many of the best romances reconfigure real issues of ethics and politics into stories set in the never never land of Arthur's court, where they can be examined as if in a test tube. Indeed, the more baggage such a setting can carry as a result of constantly being revisited in story the better, since one can generate a provocative intertextuality, where the setting provides a detailed context in time and space and values for *this* new story. It is for precisely this reason that many mediaeval romances relate to one of the three great Matters of Romance*, the matter of Antiquity – basically Rome, Troy and Greece, the matter of France – Charlemagne and his peers - and the Matter of Britain - the story of Arthur, his rise and fall, and the individual stories of his knights. These are marvellous, neutral, places to test out ideas of chivalry, or the ethics of love, or fate and freewill, or good and bad kingship. Of course, how one treated that 'matter' was up to oneself: cf. the distinction between *matiere* (material) and *sens* ('spin') that Chretien makes at the beginning of his *Lancelot* which he wrote, so he says, to please his patroness.

20. That intimacy Chretien implies reminds us in how small a society writers operated. In 1066 England had about 1.1 million people, and just after the Black Death it was only 2.5 million. The implication is that everyone who was anyone knew everyone else who was anyone, and that powerfully affects how people think, act and write. It

powerfully affects the operation of patronage, and literary audiences are in the first instance at least likely to be people the writer knows and who may well be his social superiors – which affects how you write.

21. What became fashionable in one court rapidly spread to others, given the mobility of people in this small society. The dominion of Henry II, after he married Eleanor of Aquitaine whom he seduced away from her first husband, Louis of France, reached from Berwick on Tweed to the Pyrenees. Eleanor, herself daughter of a notable poet, brought to her courts in the north, the *langue d'oïl*, fashions developed in the *langue d'oc*, the south; she herself was patroness of the poet Wace, who put the Latin *History of the Kings of Britain* of Geoffrey of Monmouth into the supple French octosyllabic verse that could be enjoyed by Latinless ladies. Her daughter by Louis, Marie, inherited her tastes, and was one of the patrons of the incomparable Chretien.
22. Fascinating to try to map some of these networks of courts and intellectual centres **DIAGRAM pic and handout**
23. And from this diagram you will see we are not simply talking about taste and literary fashion, but their intimate link to the intellectual revolution taking place in twelfth century Europe. The epicentre of this revolution was Northern France, which had access through sea and land trade routes to just about everywhere. It is here that the Schools attached to the great cathedrals like Chartres, Paris and Laon powered a radical re-examination of the learning inherited from the Classical and Christian past and attempted, using the tools of logic and

linguistic analysis, to explore in rigorous argument some of the most basic theological issues. Now to get the full measure of their achievement we need to realise that there were many things they did not have: they had no Homer, except in a Latin epitome; they had only one book of Plato's the *Timaeus*, and that only in a Latin translation; in about 1000 they only had one book of Aristotle's, the *Categories* – an essential tool of linguistic logic, nevertheless. Hardly anyone spoke or read Greek except in Ireland. Most of the canon of Classical literature and philosophy was lost, only to be recovered in fourteenth and fifteenth century Renaissance which these under-equipped scholars made possible. But one very great achievement was the recovery and dissemination of the lost works of Aristotle from Moslem Spain in the thirteenth century, a development which affected the temper of European thought right down to now. Some of these scholars formed themselves into *universitates* independent of the cathedrals. Their province (as the name implies) was *every* sphere of human knowledge, to escape, as far as was possible, too much Church control. Their awarding of degrees licensed their members to teach everywhere, and many graduates, and undergraduates, were part of an international

24. **Diagram pic and handout:** schools
25. and very *mobile* intellectual elite. Many of them – all were clerks, in some sort of holy orders, by the way – were drawn into the buyers' market of careers in ecclesiastical or civil administration, and inevitably their way of thinking affected many things that were not originally scholarly or intellectual. The fundamental intellectual structure

of the period is the dispute, the *quaestio*, the marshalling and balancing of evidence on both sides of a case and the attempt to find by logic either a reconciliation between them or the superiority of one to the other. That intellectual discipline has left its marks everywhere: in the adversarial system of the law court or Parliament, in the popularity of dispute or quarrel poems, like the *Owle and the Nightingale*, where half the fun is leaving the audience to quarrel over the merits of two evenly balanced positions, in the representation of emotional distress as an internal quarrel between two voices, as in Chretien's mapping of Laudine's dilemma, or Lancelot's quandary when he has lost his horse. It has left its mark on the Courts of Love that were a fashionable amusement in certain rather fast courts like that of Marie de Champagne, Chretien's patroness – courts where the *topic* might be nugatory but the *methods used* were decidedly serious, and the methods themselves might be the fun. But much more to the point, it was this analytical and disputatory habit of mind that led to the examination of some of the fundamental concepts that people take for granted. The interrogation of concepts is a constant facet of early mediaeval enquiry. OK, so what exactly is marriage? Is it a legal contract, which as all contracts can, can be dissolved, or is it a sacrament, an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual unity? When does it happen? At the signing of a contract? At consummation? What if it is not consummated, indeed? Or what is love? Or what is a king? Or, much more serious, what exactly happens when the priest consecrates bread and wine of the Eucharist into the Body and Blood

of our Saviour? Even more serious, what relation do words have to the things they signify? Can universals, like Truth or Goodness, have any meaning unless seen in things that are true or good? The interrogation of abstract concepts fuelled some of the most bitter intellectual disputes of the middle ages, as the careers of Roscelin of Compiègne, or the great Peter Abelard amply demonstrate, for these are massive issues, many of which are with us now, as the merest glance at the critical theory of the last twenty years will show, and that fundamental divide between the Nominalist and Realist* positions lies at the heart of most mediaeval and later philosophy.

26. We need to look at this epistemological position in a little more detail. Platonism as filtered through late Antique writers like Macrobius and Boethius and Martianus Capella was fundamental to the mediaeval understanding of reality. Platonism in the end refers the world of phenomena to a world of Forms or Ideas, not directly perceivable except through their reflections in the phenomena that appear to our senses, but the ultimate Reality. Now this position has attractions, especially for the validation of general statements, but also problems: above all that it is unprovable. There always was unease with it, just as there is unease with the opposite position, which makes sense-impression the only determinator of meaning, and excludes the possibility of any general statement with real meaning. But taking a basically Platonic model of understanding for most of the middle ages will not take us far wrong.
27. Before we leave this bit of intellectual history I ought to summarise how the middle ages

organised knowledge. Following late Antique tradition, preserved in the *studia generalia* of Italy which had continued without a break since the last days of Rome, knowledge was divided into the seven Liberal arts:

28. **PIC Seven Arts and Handout**(Herrad).
Stress progression and maths
29. The most useful intellectual tool was the *summa*, which gathered together all the possible evidence and points of view on a given topic, and allowed informed dispute if not conclusion. Indeed, it's very tempting to see Andreas Capellanus' *De Arte Honesti Amandi* as a playful take on the academic *summa* directed to a fundamentally un-academic subject, love-affairs – rather like Ovid's outrageous and provocative redirection of the rhetoric and styles of didactic poetry to the business of picking-up girls and seduction. Once again, the mark of the *summa* is everywhere, organised logically like a computer's directory tree, a marvellous tool for organising knowledge in a retrievable and indeed memorable way. You can see it in all sorts of writing, from Aquinas to John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*; you can see its influence in the architecture and iconographic design of great mediaeval churches, which are in effect massive encyclopaedias. If you want to see exactly how useful it could be, look at a very late example, Robert Burton's fascinating lumber room of a book, the *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1620). Though it might do you good, I would not recommend you start with Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*.
30. Theology or Philosophy, of course, was seen as the queen of the sciences, and *pace* the excitable

Richard Dawkins, I would say it still is. It therefore is fitting that we should close this over-brief introduction by glancing at patterns of devotion and how they are expressed in art. Were there time, I'd be happy to introduce you to some of the subtlety of theological thought and argument, and would even persuade you that discussing how many angels could dance on the head of a pin is not a bad way of exploring the relation between spatial and non-spatial realities. But I shall restrain myself.

31. The great Alain of Lille, Alanus ab Insulis, wrote a little poem on the name of the Rose which epitomises a major strand in mediaeval sensibility: nothing is just itself, it stands for, points to, symbolises something else: *Omnis mundi creatura/quasi liber et pictura/nobis est in speculum./ Nostrae vitae, nostrae mortis, nostri status, nostrae sortis/ fidele signaculum.* Everything in the world stood as a symbol, carrying a second meaning for those who had ears to hear. This layered, polyphonic perception of reality affects reading and writing, music and architecture as well as theology and devotion. The world was not just the world, but the battlefield of a cosmic struggle between Good and Evil, where, even if the outcome of the war is not in doubt, each battle in which individuals are engaged. I chance my arm with a couple of huge generalisations: at the beginning of our period the military ethos deeply affects the perception of man's predicament, and casts the suffering Christ as a young warrior king reigning from the tree:
32. **PIC** Aaby Crucifix (go to Images 11-05-04)
33. **Here is no** suffering man, but a regal victor.
By the end of our period the emphasis has changed

radically: there is a humanisation, an emotionalisation, of the God/ man relationship. Christ's body become twisted with agony, and more and more there is emphasis on His humanity and the tenderness of his relation with his mother.

34. **PIC Theotokos v Virgin and child.**
35. **PIC 1 Look at the massive authority of Christ in Majesty in this carving (Chartes, Royal Portal)**
36. **PIC 2**
37. **PIC 3 or the static prophets and then**
38. **PIC Look at the emotionalism, Look how the bodies begin to move, of these sculptures from the later carving north portal at Chartres.**
39. **PIC , Cologne of crucifixion Gothic 'S' curve**
40. **deposition**
41. **and smile (Angel at Reims) –**
42. all in the interest of creating a response in the viewer where he or she begins to feel what intellectually is known: the humanisation of the unspeakable divine . The proliferation of decoration in art → affects conceptualization of religion – metaphor, originally explicatory analogy, becomes literal – which explains how we have an acutely physical map of the hell which every thoughtful person knew was not a place but a state. But also one of the major features of our period is the growth of emotional, personal devotion, which one sees in hymn and poem or in the meditations of St Bernard on the *Song of Songs*. One of its flowerings is in that remarkable crop of mystical writers, spiritual athletes who wrestled with the unknowability of God as Jacob did with the angel of the Lord, seeking to capture the numinous in a

web of imagery often borrowed from the new discourse of human love: try looking at the wonderful *Wooing of our Lord*, where Christ as lover of the soul has the urgent physicality of a human love, but we never lose sight of the man on the cross. Nor is this growth of mysticism simply a Christian phenomenon: it is exactly contemporary with the spread of Sufism within Islam, the search for the inner opening of the self to God, and indeed there may be contact between the two movements.

43. And this affects the world we see today. Arguably the most dramatic monuments of the middle ages are its castles and its cathedrals - and, indeed, as Ian Dunlop argued some years ago, both of them grow out of a crusading, missionary impulse. But the cathedrals of western Europe, most of which were rebuilt in whole or in part between 1100 and 1400, are stupendous achievements technically and artistically, and in terms of proportion of GNP were an economic sponge far greater than the NASA programme. The expense of those cathedrals and the rebuilding of even humble churches could never be justified on any economic terms, But they were not economically conceived: they were *ad maiorem Gloriam Dei*, a song of praise in stone, as well as a chance for a patron or a prelate to display his conspicuous wealth to the grandeur of the Church Militant on Earth. They are intricate encyclopaedias, even primitive computers with random access through any of nine doors, summarising in their mathematics, their proportions, and their iconography the whole of human knowledge of the earthly and heavenly realms, and quite literally, as le Corbusier said,

machines which require people to operate them in the communal rituals of the yearly round of the offices of the Church. I have not time to go into the development of the Gothic style – it's worth a lecture in itself.

44. But I shall close with the man who more than any other influenced its initiation and theory.

45. Suger* was the abbot of the abbey of St Denis, in the heart of the Ile de France. Early in the twelfth century he acquired a copy of the Mystical Theology of Pseudo-Dionysus the Areopagite, a late neo Platonist text. Suger's love for his abbey led him to embark on a huge rebuilding programme in the most up to date style, taking advantage of the new technical development of the cross vault which by carrying the weight of the roof down through piers allowed a much greater proportion of the wall to be used as window. He wrote about his abbey a lot. And from him I summarise a thought which offers a way of seeing not only Gothic architecture but also a major early mediaeval view of reality. The dark inside of the church is like the human mind, darkened by sin. But pierce it with windows, and the light of God floods in, and the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. You can hear lots of echoes of Plato already. But now in those windows put in stained glass, which, according to a strict and carefully designed scheme, progressive as you move from the west entrance up to the point of mystical communion where heaven and earth intersect, will recount the stories of sacred history. Now indeed you can see how the unknowable and unfathomable mind of God is revealed in his creation and its history, how the undivided light is splintered into colour and form

that our little minds can understand. And, as Pope Gregory the Great realised as long ago as 597, which will teach us in ways that words cannot.

46. Our forebears are, indeed, worth listening to. And how lucky you are to be studying this period. Make the most of it. You will never get the chance again. And go away changed.