



## **The Christian Tradition 3: The Growth of Medieval Theology 600-1300**

*Jaroslav Pelikan*

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"A magnificent history of doctrine."—*New York Review of Books*

"In this volume Jaroslav Pelikan continues the splendid work he has done thus far in his projected five-volume history of the development of Christian doctrine, defined as 'what the Church believes, teaches, and confesses on the basis of the word of God.' The entire work will become an indispensable resource not only for the history of doctrine but also for its reformulation today. Copious documentation in the margins and careful indexing add to its immense usefulness."—E. Glenn Hinson, *Christian Century*

"This book is based on a most meticulous examination of medieval authorities and the growth of medieval theology is essentially told in their own words. What is more important, however, than the astounding number of primary sources the author has consulted or his sovereign familiarity with modern studies on his subject, is his ability to discern form and direction in the bewildering growth of medieval Christian doctrine, and, by thoughtful emphasis and selection, to show the pattern of that development in a lucid and persuasive narrative. No one interested in the history of Christianity or theology and no medievalist, whatever the field of specialization, will be able to ignore this magnificent synthesis."—Bernhard W. Scholz, *History*

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## The Christian Tradition 3: The Growth of Medieval Theology 600-1300 Details

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## **From Reader Review The Christian Tradition 3: The Growth of Medieval Theology 600-1300 for online ebook**

### **Greg says**

Pelikan continues his masterful account of the history of Christian doctrine in this, his third volume covering the medieval period leading up to the protagonists of the Reformation. Because this is a part of a larger work, Pelikan is able to place doctrinal developments during this time in a broader perspective. For him, that means Augustine. Disputes during this time rose out of some embarrassing elements of the foremost father, namely his doctrines of predestination, grace, and the sacraments. He shows that the primary "heretics" of the day actually attempted to quote Augustine in their defense against orthodoxy, yet this was to no effect. Especially revealing is Pelikan's use of primary source material on both sides of the debate, especially Bernard of Clairvaux and Peter Abelard. My only criticism is the treatment of the impact of the crusades on doctrine. Bernard especially used his views of salvation when promoting the crusades, and he gets no mention, other than that Christian apologetics saw a resurgence clarifying their position against the Islamic challenge and again against Judaism. I believe this was a missed opportunity. Other than that - truly revealing and outstanding.

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### **John Pillar says**

Pelikan does any excellent job of synthesizing the development of doctrine during the Medieval period. Not only does he manage to cull out the key developments of doctrine and the challenges that typically encompassed them, he manages to do so in such a manner as to emphasize their relevance to the Christian believer. He is also meticulous in calling out his references throughout.

My only criticism is that there are a few occurrences where the necessary brevity for a particular topic, when considering the large scope work as a whole, results in a need for clarification. Of course, this may be more of a reflection on the limits of the reader than the talents of the author.

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### **Felix says**

A very in-depth analysis of a few important medieval (western) Christian ideas - theodicy, human guilt, scholasticism, and so on. Excellent for clarification of obscure doctrinal points, but less helpful for contextualization of those points in the broader medieval and even western context, as the overall methodology of primary source material is not well explained - I admittedly don't have a serious background in Latin Christianity, but by the end of the book I had very little idea what the relevance was for many of the authorities cited.

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### **Scott says**

Certain sections very good; others more cumbersome. All in all, a very nice addition to Pelikan's 5 vol series.

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## **M Christopher says**

The hardest of these books for me to get through, so far, not even Pelikan could completely interest me in "The Augustinian Synthesis," "Summa Theologica," or "The Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies." Perhaps, as a good Baptist, it is because I see the theologians of this period going completely off the rails at so many points, which inspired Luther, et al., to reform. Consider some of these chapter headings: "Mary as Mediatrix," "The Real Presence," "The Grace of the Sacraments." Nope, nothing there for a descendant of the Far Left Wing of the Reformation.

Still recommended as part of a majestic overview of the history of Christian Doctrine.

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## **Katy Wilmotte says**

3.5 stars.

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## **Jacob Aitken says**

Pelikan's analysis of medieval theology is seeing it as a troubled synthesis of the Augustinian tradition. Merely saying one is an Augustinian is not good enough. All Westerns claim Augustine. Warfield's statement that the Reformation was a triumph of Augustine's doctrine of grace over Augustine's doctrine of the church is simply false. And Pelikan shows why.

Pelikan begins his narrative by showing the unity of "the Faith." The Faith, following St Vincent of Lerins, is that which is believed at all times by all peoples everywhere. Deviating from this point, as Pelikan (and history) shows, almost always leads to heresy and schism. And those who fall into schism rarely continue. Pelikan gives a number of helpful passages from Bede to the point.

Pelikan notes that Augustine's ambiguity on the sacraments was embarrassing, it was his clarity on grace that embarrassed his followers. And this tension would spark the Eucharistic and predestinarian debates of the 9th century and the 11th century. Pelikan is nothing if not fair. He does show how Berengar and Gottscalc did honestly and accurately quote Augustine to the contrary of the rest of the church. But that was their fault: they quoted the doctor of the Church against the Church.

Regardless, they can't be seen as the protagonists because their doing theology outside the interpretation of the church did leave them to other, more troubling conclusions (e.g., trine deitas). The Eucharistic debates hinged on the "conversion." How do the elements change (198)? It becomes clear that the Church did teach a real presence in the Eucharist, if not necessarily a full-orbed transubstantiation. Berengar and later Protestants would retort that many Fathers did teach a "figurative" presence to the Body. But the Catholic response was when the Fathers spoke of the Eucharist as a "figure," it was a figure of the Church not the real Body of Christ or the Eucharist. This is a good point Pelikan makes, and brings up the Medieval view of the threefold body, but Pelikan should have developed the point.

How did the church react to attacks on the Faith? Interestingly, as it appears to Pelikan, most of the

divergences from catholic unity promoted some form of manicheanism or dualism. This almost always attacked the doctrine of God (since it posited different deities opposed to one another) and always downplayed the liturgies (235). Minimalism was never separate from heresy--a lesson some could learn today!

Also includes discussion of Mary, the saints, and scholasticism. Even if one disagrees with the cult of Mary, the cult of the saints, the views on the liturgy, almost always does the discussion come back to the troubled Augustinian synthesis: even if you do not like the conclusions, you must confess that the reasoning is consistent with previous teachings. Indeed, an uncomfortable point.

In any case, medievalism set the stage for later Reforms. It left key questions unanswered. Combined with an increasingly volatile political situation, troubling times were ahead...and that is the next volume.

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Jacob Aitken

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**Wyatt Houtz says**

Helpful.

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