MONASTICISM
Questions for discussion

Excerpts from Part IV of *The Urantia Book*

We will begin our extended discussion of monasticism by reading and commenting on the first four excerpts from Part IV of *The Urantia Book* (*i.e.,* documents A-01 through A-04), essentially as if we were conducting a study group meeting. *(In contrast, we will consider document A-05 on James and Judas Alpheus in connection with questions 31 and 32 on the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox veneration of saints and, in particular, in relation to the cult of "Saint Jude" that is highlighted in documents G-05 and G-06.)*

Origins and patterns

1. In your view, what is the relationship, if any, between the practice of monasticism and the true teachings of Jesus? If you believe that the relationship was very limited or perhaps even non-existent, did this situation arise because of special factor pertaining to monasticism, or mainly because the true teachings of Jesus had not been understood in general or were being disregarded and ignored intentionally and deliberately?

2. In section 3 of Paper 136, the Midwayer Commission tells us: "Jesus did not go into retirement for the purpose of fasting and for the affliction of his soul. He was not an ascetic, and he came forever to destroy all such notions regarding the approach to God" *[the Midwayer Commission, 1512:7 / 136:3.3]*. In contrast, the early Christians do not seem to have understood this, for ascetic practices were notable, prominent, and widely admired in the Eastern half of the Roman Empire where Greek was spoken (*e.g.,* the Egyptian hermit Anthony, the abbot Pachomius, the theologian Origen, the scholar and translator Jerome). What convinced early Christian believers that asceticism, self-denial, and setting oneself off from society were techniques that brought such eccentric individuals closer to God? Is it reasonable to trace a broad continuity with prior observances by certain minor Jewish sects such as the Essenes? May there also have been implicit echoes of ascetic and perhaps even masochistic practices that some of the mystery religions had adopted or promoted, mystery religions that had attracted a significant number of believers in the early centuries of the current era? Please explain your views.

3. The essential concept of Western monasticism seems to be the assertion that God favors and rewards devoted servants who isolate themselves, abandoning the standard patterns and structures of society so as to affiliate with a self-selected elite who live independently or even autarkically, while devoting a substantial share of their active energies to group religious observances that may enshrine valuable spiritual insights, but that, on balance, are stereotyped and repetitive. In part, these overall arrangements represent the antithesis of normal family life featuring the care and nurture of children. Is there anything in the true teachings of Jesus that favors or justifies this isolation from society, while insisting on strict separation of the sexes? If not, why was the psychology and practice of monasticism a central feature of Christianity for approximately 1,200 years (from about 300 CE to about 1500 CE)?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR QUESTION 4

The historian Gert Melville states:

The story thus far has focused only on the Christian regions of the Middle East and of North Africa, a focus justified because the establishment of religious communities in the West was remarkably delayed. *[document B-01, page 10]*

Taking the lead in developing a new model was Martin of Tours (316/17-397), who after breaking off his military career had retreated with a crowd of like-minded followers to the desolation of the forests near Poitiers. Elected bishop of Tours, around 375 he founded communities in Marmoutier for both women and men to live a strongly eremitical life inspired by the model of the early church. ...

The deserts of the East became the forests of Europe. And from the Loire region to the Iberian Peninsula, the number of monasteries that venerated Martin grew rapidly — surely not least because at the end of the fifth century the first Frankish king, Clovis, helped to establish Martin's cult and promoted him as a kind of "royal saint." These "Martinian" monasteries were long left to a certain disordered spontaneity, shaped by the movements of wandering monks who left behind crowds of their followers in various places. *[document B-01, page 11]*

In parallel, the historian C. H. Lawrence summarizes early events as follows:

The deserts to which the early ascetics were drawn were those of Egypt, Syria, and Judea. Egypt, in fact, was the cradle of the monastic movement, which gradually spread into all the lands penetrated by the Church. *[document B-02, page 3]*

Probably Hilary of Poitiers (c. 315-67) played just as big a part [as Athanasius] in transplanting Eastern monastic practices to the lands of the Western Empire. Hilary had been driven into exile in Asia Minor by the ascendancy of the Arian heresy at the imperial court, and during his enforced travels he must have encountered the monastic movement. On his return, he sponsored a group of ascetics in his episcopal city of Poitiers, and he became the patron and mentor of St Martin of Tours, who settled in Gaul about the year 360.

Martin is the first major figure in Gallic monasticism. He had had a career in the Roman army before his conversion. Having decided to adopt the life of an anchorite, he installed himself in a cell near Milan, where he remained until the hostility of the Arian bishop persuaded him to migrate to Gaul. The reputation of Hilary drew him to Poitiers, and it was at Liguge, in the vicinity of the town, that he settled in a hermitage, which became a focal point for like-minded souls. Martin's association with Hilary made him widely known and led to his appointment to the see of Tours, but his elevation to the episcopate in no way diminished his devotion to the monastic life. Even as a bishop he persisted in maintaining the life-style of a hermit; and after the year 372 he organised his disciples as a colony of hermits at Marmoutier, outside Tours.   *[document B-02, pages 11-12]*

Despite the promotion by Athanasius and the example of St Martin, many bishops regarded the monastic movement with mistrust. This was heightened by the conspicuous and sometimes violent part played by monks in the theological controversies that rent the Eastern Church. The increasingly public role that the monks were assuming seemed to pose a threat to the hierarchical order of the Christian community. In 451 the Council of Chalcedon decreed that monasteries were subject to the jurisdiction of bishops, whose approval must be obtained for any new foundations, and insisted that monks should not interfere in ecclesiastical business.   *[document B-02, page 14]*

All the same, unless it was to suffer the fate of all fringe movements, monasticism had to be domesticated and brought under the roof of the institutional Church. Its authenticity as a divinely ordained paradigm of the Christian life had to be recognised. It needed episcopal approval and encouragement. … Several monasteries of Gaul and Italy attracted the patronage and protection of bishops. Early in the fifth century, communities of clergy following a monastic regime were serving bishops at Vercelli and Aquileia, and at Rome the liturgical offices in the Lateran basilica were executed by a community of monks — the first of a group of basilican monasteries — under papal patronage. …

By the fifth century then, the ascetical tradition of the Eastern desert had been transmitted to the West. Monasticism had struck roots in Italy and southern Gaul.   *[document B-02, page 15]*

END OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. It is clear that the various approaches to monasticism represented practices and traditions that were imported into the western half of the Roman Empire because of intellectual and cultural influences from the eastern Mediterranean — characteristic patterns associated with persons who read, wrote, and spoke in Greek. In effect, these activities were copied bodily or at least echoed conceptually, so that they could be applied in Italy and in other parts of western Europe where believers read, wrote, and spoke in Latin. Why?

— Did this partly stem from the fact that western Europe was an intellectual backwater at the time, especially in regard to developing Christian teachings and doctrines? After all, the crucial church councils that adopted standard Christian doctrines on the nature and identity of Jesus and on the Trinity — the councils of Nicaea (325 CE), Constantinople (381 CE), and Chalcedon (451 CE) — operated in Greek and all occurred in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). Very few bishops from the western half of the Roman Empire attended, and the bishop of Rome was not present. (Even though historians now identify this particular bishop as "the Pope," his claim to authority over the entire Christian church was not accepted at the time.)

— Did Western adoption of monastic practices amount to following the leader, or is it better to think of it as an implicit assertion of equal standing on cultural and spiritual levels — the notion that since believers in the eastern half of the Roman Empire had been practicing monasticism for at least two centuries, it was important for Christians living in the western half to show that they could be equally rigorous and equally devout? Please analyze the overtones and implications.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR QUESTION 5

In document D-04 — the chapter entitled "Monks and Nuns" from the book *The Birth of the West: Rome, Germany, France, and the Creation of Europe in the Tenth Century* — the historian Paul Collins appraises monasticism in ways that are fundamentally favorable, while highlighting its contributions to the development of Western society. In part, Collins declares: "Monastic and convent life provided the ordered context in which the West was born." The following five paragraphs summarize his general conclusions.

The story of Gottschalk illustrates the power of monasticism in the social structure of the tenth century. The theory behind this system held that the monk and the nun were tasked with living on earth the kind of life that the saints lived in heaven. Clearly, many monks like Rabanus Maurus were deeply involved in the world, but the essence of the monastic ideal remained contemplative. And while not all monks were educated, monasteries did preserve learning and education. Monasticism stood outside the shifting boundaries of kingdoms and transcended the petty politics of localism. Monasteries were beacons of stability and learning in a landscape characterized by the collapse of any coherent form of government.

Monasticism was an integral part of Charlemagne's reform of government and he had employed ascetic monk Benedict of Aniane (ca. 750–821) to systematize monasticism and impose the Benedictine rule on all monasteries in the empire. This reform was one of the great emperor's lasting contributions to the centuries that followed, and monasticism became the bedrock upon which the culture of the tenth and following centuries was built. *[document D-04, page 7]*

If the social role of the monastery was clear enough, what was its religious purpose? First, monks and nuns were not committed to religious life just for their own salvation; their lives also had broader social, political, and religion purposes. They saw themselves fighting spiritual battles, just as soldiers conducted military campaigns. This is the hardest thing for the secularized mind to understand. For tenth-century people the spiritual world was as real, if not more real, than the natural, political, and social worlds. For them the safer and protection of entire societies depended upon the prayers, discipline, and good works of frontline troops like monks and nuns to ward off the forces of evil and the devil. As the statutes of a major monastery in Winchester put it: "The abbot is girded with spiritual weapons supported by a phalanx of monk endowed with the heavenly gift of expelling the airy wiles of demons from the king and the clergy, assisted by the strength of Christ."

Monks also offered their lives in penance for the sins of others. The church penitential system still imposed quite heavy penances (usually forms of fasting) even for common sins. Given that all people sinned, their lives could be tied for long periods performing endless penances. But they weren't because it was widely accepted that others did their penance for them. *[document D-04, page 10]*

Monasteries and convents clearly stood out as havens of stability, culture, and intellectual life amid the general chaos of life in the later ninth and early tenth centuries. Even though they were meant to prefigure the ordered and hierarchical life of heaven, in fact these institutions modeled real possibilities for life here on earth. An order like Cluny showed that a kind of monastic "empire" could be established and administered that was both larger and more efficient than anything else in France at that time. More than that, monasteries and convents provided educated people who could assist monarchs to develop more ordered and efficient government structures and create the kind of cultural and intellectual life needed to underpin the renewal of secular society. Monastic and convent life provided the ordered context in which the West was born. *[document D-04, page 21]*

END OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

5. Please comment on the conclusions of the historian Paul Collins that appear above. At your option, you may wish to focus on certain aspects, while setting aside other factors.

The abbot Benedict as a symbol and model

6. Historians make it clear that "the Rule of St. Benedict": (a) was a syncretic text that owed much to the work of lineal predecessors (*e.g.,* "the Rule of the Master" and "the Rule of our Holy Father Basil"), and (b) was not composed all at once, but was amended and expanded over an extended period *(document C-01, page 7 and document C-02, pages 4-6)*. Nonetheless, the document's renown and standing stimulated broad respect for the principle that "the Rule is sovereign," and "Centuries of landed endowment turned many abbeys into rich and powerful corporations" *(document C-02, pages 8-9)*.

— Why did "the Rule of St. Benedict" become a revered text, almost canonical, as well as the almost universal pattern that guided and dominated monastic life in western Europe for several hundred years?

— Did the circumstances of society in that era, partly as reflected in the political goals and objectives of certain emperors, contribute to the preeminence and wealth of Benedictine monasteries? Please analyze the situation and explain your views.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR QUESTION 7

The historian Gert Melville states:

In the last decade of the sixth century, Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) wrote a text in Rome that would soon be comparable to only a few others in its importance for shaping the development of monastic life in the West. The text concerns the origins of Benedictine life.

In four books entitled *Dialogues on the Life and the Miracles of the Italian Fathers (Dialogi de vita et miraculis patrum italicoruni)* Gregory aimed to prove that the Italian peninsula had nurtured an asceticism equal in standing to that of the East. One of its protagonists was Benedict, from the central Italian city of Nursia (today Norcia), who for decades was the abbot of a monastery on Monte Cassino. The pope, as he admitted, did not know the abbot personally but had only heard of him through contemporary witnesses. Among them were even two of Benedict's successors as abbot. Gregory seems to have seen in Benedict — who was "blessed in grace as well as in name" (*Dialogues 2*. Prologue) — a particularly powerful model character, one worthy of the entire second book of his *Dialogues*. [document C-01, page 1]

END OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

7. Even though Pope Gregory the Great never met the abbot Benedict of Nursia and seems to have possessed very few facts about him, Gregory tossed off a hagiographic text that appears to have been closer to propaganda than biography or history. As a result, this objectively obscure abbot was acclaimed and revered as "a saint" for many centuries, Further, in some contexts Benedict has been described as "the Father of the West," and in 1964 a papal document even referred to him as "the Patron of Europe" *(document C-01, page 3)*.

— Although it seems reasonable to doubt that Pope Gregory the Great had all this in mind, please advance your own interpretation of his goals and motives.

— One possible verdict on this segment of Gregory's writings would be to call it deceptive and distorted, as well as an abuse of the Pope's authority and prestige. Another possible interpretation might be linked to the opinion that under the circumstances of Gregory's era, it was understandable and natural for him to write as he did, especially in view of the fondness of contemporaries for texts featuring hagiography and miracles. How do you appraise all this?

8. According to the historian C. H. Lawrence, the Rule of St. Benedict provided for child oblates "donated to the monastery by their parents" *(document C-02, page 16)*. In effect, this amounted to involuntary servitude, for a boy who was seven years old or somewhat older could not possibly make an informed choice about a lifelong commitment that would isolate him from society and permanently separate him from his parents and siblings. On the other hand, it is reasonable to infer that these parents believed they were making a gift to God that would earn them merit in heaven. Further, the child oblate would be assured of life in a stable environment in which he would receive adequate food and a good education according to the standards of the day.

For example, the monk Bede (623/3 – 735 CE) was a child oblate who adjusted very well to the monastic environment and who proved insightful and highly productive, at least from an intellectual perspective *(documents G-01 through G-04)*. On the other hand, the achievements of Bede are so exceptional that they deserve to be called unique. As an implicit and persuasive contrast, in document D-04 the historian Paul Collins narrates the life of a child oblate whose father consigned him to a fate that proved highly problematic — the story of the Saxon boy Gottschalk, who lived from about 804 to about 869 CE *(document D-04)*. To clarify the social context in which the custom flourished, Collins states:

> Many children were brought by their parents to monasteries and nunneries and promised to monastic life in a liturgical ceremony. Essentially, the parents were making vows their children would have to live out as adults — including lifelong celibacy, poverty, community life, and obedience. Until the twelfth century when monastic leaders abolished the practice, *oblatio puerorum* (the offering of young boys) was the principal form of monastic recruitment. *[document D-04, page 3]*

— Is it remotely possible to harmonize the practice of child oblates with the true teachings of Jesus, or with the much more general principle of freewill choice and discretion in regard to spirituality and religion? In your opinion, why did Christians living in western Europe from the sixth to twelfth centuries accept this tradition, which we find contradictory and thoroughly offensive? If you believe that the circumstances of that distant era made the custom of child oblates understandable or perhaps even reasonable, please explain your views.

The monastic paradigm

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS 9 AND 10

The historian C. H. Lawrence explains the daily routine of group prayer:

- Between 2:00 and 3:00 am: Nocturns (now called Matins) and Lauds
- First light: Prime
- About 9:00 am: Terce
- About mid-day: Sext
- About 3:00 pm: Nones
- Evening: Vespers
- At dusk: Compline

[Documents C-02, page 12 and D-02, pages 2-3]

Benedict's Rule laid down detailed instructions for the order of psalmody so as to ensure that the entire psalter was recited in the course of each week. The lessons were drawn from the Bible and the Scriptural commentaries of the Fathers and the recorded acts of the martyrs. In the course of the following centuries the office was greatly elaborated, musically as well as textually, but the basic pattern as it is outlined in the Rule persisted and came to be the standard framework of daily worship in the Western Church. Its traces are clearly visible in all the service-books, Protestant as well as Catholic, that are derived from the medieval tradition. *[document C-02, pages 12-13]*

But as we have seen, by the eleventh century the relatively simple liturgical scheme of the Rule had been greatly enlarged by the addition of further services — the offices of the dead and of All Saints, by additional psalms and freshly composed hymns and sequences for the ever-growing number of saints' days. The community now attended

two masses daily: the 'morning mass' celebrated immediately after Terce, and the high mass that followed the office of Sext at about midday. Besides these, there were the private masses murmured at side-altars in the early hours before daybreak, for by this period it had become the practice to ordain a high proportion of monks to the priest-hood. ...

It is impossible for the modern student to assess the psychological impact upon the individual of these interminable hours spent daily in communal vocal prayer and liturgical rituals. How much of the participation was simply mechanical? It is significant that some of the most reflective minds of the period rejected the Cluniac pattern of observance and that the new orders of the twelfth century cautiously pruned the traditional monastic liturgy. Even at Cluny, Peter the Venerable reduced the 'hateful multiplicity of familiar psalms', and composed a new hymn for the feast of St Benedict that was shorter than the old one 'on account of the boredom of the singers'. *[document D-02, page 4]*

The virtual elimination of manual work in favour of intellectual activities was partly the result of the great elaboration of the monk's liturgical duties. Far more of his day was spent in choir than St Benedict had envisaged; and choir duties were physically exhausting as well as time-consuming. The change also reflected changing social assumptions. Tilling and hewing were work for peasants and had servile associations. Peter the Venerable argued that the delicate hands of his monks, who came from social classes unfamiliar with toil, were more suitably employed furrowing parchment with pens than ploughing furrows in fields. It was one of the objects of the Cistercians and other reformers of the twelfth century to reinstate manual labour in the monk's timetable and to assert its spiritual significance. But it was a reversal of the prevailing trend, in which the Benedictine houses did not in general follow the reformers. *[document D-02, pages 5-6]*

END OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

9. The daily round of group prayer clearly made it impossible for any monk to get "a good night's sleep" as we would understand it. Further, the stressful timetable and cumulative fatigue undoubtedly undermined creative imagination and any ability to think in original terms. Do you interpret these physiological and psychological implications as elements of a deliberate strategy aimed at making monks docile, passive, obedient, and conformist, or just as indirect and incidental outcomes of enforcing a Rule for monastic life that the 6th-century abbot Benedict of Nursia adapted from models he had inherited from predecessors who are much less prominent now?

10. A Melchizedek of Nebadon states: *"No collection of religious writings gives expression to such a wealth of devotion and inspirational ideas of God as the Book of Psalms" [a Melchizedek, 1060:3 / 96:7.3].* Even though the daily round of group observance included a range of other texts, it is quite possible that many monks found it spiritually helpful and inspiring to recite segments from the psalms, at least at moments when they were receptive to the underlying ideas. Boredom, however, was also quite possible, as is clear from one of the passages cited on page 9 above. Although that outcome may have been frequent or even typical, Christians of the monastic era — which extended from about 300 CE to about 1500 CE — appear to have believed that rote repetition of set, stereotyped prayers was intensely pleasing to God and was especially effective as a technique for accumulating spiritual merits aimed at atoning for sin and warding off God's anger. Please interpret and comment on these convictions, while seeking to explain why they flourished and prevailed for well over one thousand years.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS 11 AND 12

The historian C. H. Lawrence explains the intense preoccupation with sin, penance, and atonement that dominated the European Middle Ages:

Medieval rulers shared with their people current doctrinal assumptions about the economy of salvation. These assumptions included the ideas of vicarious merit and the need to make satisfaction or reparation for sin. The merit that accrued to an individual through prayer and good works could be applied to other people, and not only to living people but also to the dead. This concept played a crucial role in medieval religious practice. To found and endow a community of monks was to ensure for the donor an unceasing fund of intercession and sacrifice which would avail him and his relatives both in their lifetime and after death.

The concern with vicarious merit was associated with the belief that people could, and should, make satisfaction for their sins. Repentance attracted divine forgiveness, but without satisfaction it was not enough; compensation must be paid to the wronged party, and in the case of sin, the wronged party was God. The concept of satisfaction was fostered by the early medieval penitentials. These extraordinary documents belong to the same mental world as the barbarian law codes, with their elaborate tariff of monetary compensations for offences against persons and property. They were primarily manuals compiled for the guidance of priests who had to hear confessions and allocate appropriate penances. Private auricular confession and the use of a penitential were both features of monastic life. It seems that these practices were first extended to Christians living in the secular world by the Celtic Church, and that the Irish monk-missionaries transported them to the Germanic peoples of England and the Continent. Columbanus composed a penitential for the secular clergy as well as for monks. And under the influence of the Irish treatises, penitentials were also compiled in England

and circulated by the Anglo-Saxon missionaries abroad. From the eighth century lay people were exhorted to confess their sins at least once a year, and a penitential treatise became part of the stock-in-trade of a priest.

The penitentials laid down a nicely graduated scale of satisfactory penances appropriate to every sin. Thus, in the seventh-century penitential attributed to Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, a priest or deacon who vomits on account of drunkenness is assigned forty days of penance; a layman who commits the same offence is allocated fifteen days; fornication with a virgin involves a year's penance; homicide, seven years; and so forth. During his period of penance the sinner was required to fast on bread, salt, and water, and to abstain from the sacraments; if a married man, he must abstain from conjugal intercourse. A year of penance involved performing these ascetical exercises for three Lents — three periods of forty days each.

Medieval piety was haunted by the menace of these terrifying documents. The careless could easily accumulate more than a lifetime of canonical penance. What if the sinner should die without having completed his penance? Moralists of the twelfth century declared that the outstanding balance of satisfaction had to be made up in purgatory. But in earlier centuries, before the doctrine of purgatory had been fully articulated, it seemed doubtful whether the penitent who died without having discharged his debt could be saved. The best hope lay in the possibility of commutation or substitution: periods of canonical penance might be commuted to alms-giving, pilgrimage, or other recognised good works. This was the basic conception underlying the medieval indulgence. Indulgences remitted a stipulated period of canonical penance and were attached to specified works of piety such as visiting a shrine or contributing to the building of a church. Alternatively, a penitent might find helpers who could perform the acts of satisfaction on his behalf.

These features of the medieval penitential system in part explain the eagerness of princes and others to found and endow monasteries. A gift to a monastery was of itself a meritorious act which might remit a long period of penance. More important, the monks, through their penitential life of continual prayer and fasting, acted as surrogates for their benefactor; they performed the satisfaction on his behalf. Moreover, as a deathless society established in perpetuity, they would continue to render him this service until the end of time. ...

This also explains the concern of secular-minded princes and magnates for the cause of monastic reform, which is a recurrent theme of Charlemagne's capitularies. The prayers and mortifications of holy men would be efficacious with God. But clearly to a benefactor who hoped to participate in the merit acquired by a monastic community, to reap the spiritual dividends as it were, a community of lax and negligent monks was a poor investment. *[document D-01, pages 1-3]*

END OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

11. In referring to "the early medieval penitentials," the historian C. H. Lawrence calls them "extraordinary documents [that] belong to the same mental world as the barbarian law codes, with their elaborate tariff of monetary compensations for offences against persons and property" *[document D-01, page 1]*. What does this mean? Please associate this statement of Lawrence's with the political and legal environment that prevailed during the first few centuries after various barbarian tribes had overrun the western half of the Roman Empire. Why were Christians living in that era convinced that God's quest for "satisfaction" for sin embodied and replicated the vindictive overtones that pervaded and dominated the barbarian law codes?

12. In effect, the medieval Christian church, having invented one appalling set of fallacies that terrified sincere believers (*i.e.,* "satisfaction" and purgatory), then invented self-serving doctrines that were intended to overcome the problems that the church had created (*i.e.,* indulgences). Although traditional teachings about indulgences did not always have the net effect of raising revenue for the church, the temptation to exploit the fears of believers often led in these directions. For example, materialistic motives clearly underpinned the campaign to raise funds by selling indulgences that the Dominican friar Johann Tetzel conducted in Germany in 1517, the most flagrant abuse that led Martin Luther to post his 95 theses on the door of the cathedral in Wittenberg. (Many narratives proclaim that he did this October 31, 1517, but that specific date is not accepted by the full range of scholars who have written on the subject.)

In your view, which of the following factors was more influential and important:

— The historical circumstances outlined above, those implicitly leading from the barbarian law codes and early medieval penitentials to subsequent Roman Catholic doctrines concerning purgatory and indulgences; *[or]*

— Chronic errors about the character of God effectively depicting him as a King-Judge who is preoccupied with sin and punishment, and who resolutely and unvaryingly consigns unrepentant sinners to eternal punishment in hell.

Please explain your conclusions and the reasons for them.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR QUESTION 13

The historian C. H. Lawrence states:

Charlemagne made it a primary task of his regime to subjugate the warlike and heathen people of Saxony and to incorporate the area into the Frankish realm. This involved the destruction of German paganism and the forcible conversion of the Saxons to Christianity; for religious unity was the counterpart of political dominion; Roman Christianity was the common bond that united the different peoples of Western Europe in obedience to the Frankish ruler. It was here that the monks, alongside the bishops and secular clergy, had an essential role to play. When Charlemagne embarked upon the conquest of Saxony, he summoned an assembly at Paderborn to apportion the task of conversion, and the lion's share was assigned to the frontier abbeys of Hersfeld and Fulda. Abbot Sturmi, grown old and tired, spent his last days preaching to 'the depraved and perverse race', destroying pagan temples, and building churches. The same kind of missionary role was performed in the south by Reichenau from its island fastness on Lake Constance. Its founder, St Pirminus, was a contemporary of St Boniface. He was a Visigoth who had come to the Frankish court as a refugee from southern Gaul, which was harassed by the Arabs; and Charles Martel sent him to plant monastic missions among the Alamans.

The importance of the abbeys as mission stations and centres of Frankish loyalty was reflected in the pattern of royal munificence. A few favoured monasteries in the central heartlands of the Frankish realm, like Saint-Denis, received generous gifts; but the most lavish land grants were reserved for the abbeys like Fulda, Hersfeld, and Lorsch, which lay east of the Rhine, and the abbeys of Aquitaine and Septimania, which were close to the Pyrenean frontier. *[document D-01, pages 4-5]*

The very lavishness with which lands had been showered upon the monasteries made it inevitable that they would be made to support many secular purposes. Charlemagne was not prepared, any more than his father had been, to divert huge estates solely to the maintenance of relatively small groups of men and women vowed to a life of prayer and seclusion. He used the abbeys freely as a form of property with which he could reward loyal supporters and relatives or remunerate ministers.

This royal exploitation took two forms. In some cases a portion of an abbey's estates would be allocated as a fief to a royal vassal; the early Carolingians, hungry for land with which to reward loyal service, constantly appropriated monastic property in this way. It is to this practice that we owe the *polyptiques* — the early inventories of monastic estates and movable property, made at royal command, which have been of such value to economic historians. In other cases the king would grant the abbey totally to a lay vassal or relative. Just as the grant of a secular estate included both the land and the

peasant tenants who worked on it, so the grant of an abbey as a 'benefice' or fief to a royal servant included both the lands of the monastery and the monastic establishment itself together with the monks, who were part of the human stock, as it were, of the estate. In this case the recipient of the grant became the lay abbot and could lay claim to most of the rights over the community that were assigned to an abbot by the Rule or by monastic custom. Most of those Charles favoured in this way seem to have been secular clerks, but under his successors the conferment of abbeys on laymen was not uncommon. *[document D-01, page 6]*

END OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

13. Please evaluate the following potential motivations, commenting on the degree to which they may have influenced certain Western emperors (*i.e.,* Charlemagne and a number of his lineal successors) to found, fund, or promote particular monasteries:

a. The emperor's concern about his own spiritual status, a belief that the prayers and other observances of the monks would be an effective way to atone for his sins and other shortcomings, perhaps including aspects whereby he had failed to rule his empire as God wished.

b. The view that the work and influence of monasteries were a useful tool for promoting religious and political unity, and, by implication, the solidity and stability of the imperial regime.

c. The option of granting lordship over a monastery to a supporter or servant, or perhaps just a sizable share of the revenue that the monastery produced.

d. Convictions about the indirect effect of monasteries, the spiritual influence whereby they intensified personal consciousness of sin and the need to evade or escape God's punishment. From this perspective, an emperor tended to believe that monasteries made notable contributions to his ongoing campaign to tame territorial princelings — on the understanding that many of these senior nobles were aggressive and quarrelsome, inclined to attack neighbors or indulge in other disruptions that were equally fractious, bumptious, tendentious, and rambunctious.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR QUESTION 14

During the final decade of the 11th century, a number of monks living in France who were not satisfied with the relatively relaxed atmosphere prevailing in many of the Benedictine monasteries, nor with the material ease that the monasteries' great wealth tended to engender, decided to step away from the existing tradition of western monasticism and work out a new framework. They specified that their settlement at Cîteaux would reflect "the principle of rigorous poverty, upheld while following literally the rule of Saint Benedict" *[document D-03, page 4]*.

In the year 1100, the Pope formally recognized this new settlement, an administrative decision of his that sufficed to establish the Cistercian Order, which grew very rapidly. The historian Gert Melville tells us:

> Around the middle of the twelfth century, not least as a consequence of the continued influence of Bernard of Clairvaux, the Order had come to number some 340 abbeys with around 11,000 members. A century later the numbers had doubled. Among the Order's houses were those with more than a hundred monks and *conversi* (including Clairvaux itself, Rievaulx in Yorkshire, and Fontenay in Burgundy). The expansion in fact encompassed all of Latin Christendom and often extended far beyond its borders. *[document D-03, page 15]*

In spite of their devotion to the principle of rigorous poverty,

> … the Cistercians resolved to accept goods, vineyards, meadows, and forests from their donors. For the administration of those estates they chose to take on *conversi* — laity bound to the monastery … As will become clear, over the course of a century their combination of a strong economy and frugality would lead inevitably to considerable wealth, the effects of which could "tarnish purity," as Pope Innocent III later warned. *[document D-03, page 5]*

It is important to bear in mind that the Cistercian monks were far from the first group of human beings who ended up with practical realities that deviated quite substantially from their original ideals, but this is not the main point that deserves thoughtful reflection. To the contrary, we should examine their organizational innovations and management practices, methods that diverged quite substantially from the top-down approach of entirely hierarchical authority — at least in relation to how the Order's many monasteries coordinated with each other to pursue mutual objectives. Although intense commitment to "the rule of Saint Benedict" created an explicit baseline that was highly prescriptive, broad consultation among Cisterican monasteries included many aspects that were cooperative and collegial:

In content, the *Carta caritatis* [the Charter of Charity, approved in 1119] systematically and comprehensively encompassed all the needs for regulation faced by what was soon a community of abbeys that, though widely dispersed, had its own identity. First, it established that the mother abbey of Cîteaux was not to impose any burdens on its daughter houses but should nevertheless feel responsible for the welfare of the souls in each. It therefore denied any sort of the hierarchical or even proprietary and legal orientation toward a central authority that was true in the congregations of monasteries that already existed. A second aspect of the document concerned equality of life and a sense of unanimity (*unanimitas*). In the foreground stood the Rule of Saint Benedict, to be observed in all points and to the letter, according to the example of Cîteaux itself. Furthermore, patterns of daily life, all liturgical rites, and all of the hourly rhythms of prayer were to be the same in every abbey. ...

The *Carta caritatis* turned next — in its most extensive passage — to matters of organization for the community of monasteries. Key topics included the relationships of the abbeys to one another as well as regulations regarding visitation. The latter were to proceed along lines of filiation and were not to become instruments of lordship but rather a service of love that was to regulate, correct, and improve the circumstances in each daughter house in the interest of the welfare of souls. ...

Finally, the *Carta caritatis* turned to the establishment of a body that was truly an innovative achievement: the general chapter, the annual gathering of all abbots as equals and representatives of their houses. Its most important task was to care for the salvation of the souls of all of their members and in that spirit "to make arrangements whenever something concerning the observance of the holy Rule or the statutes of the order is to be improved or encouraged, as well as to reinvigorate harmony and mutual love anew." That is, the general chapter was to react with flexibility to new needs or deviations and, through correction, to preserve whatever seemed worthy of preservation. Regulations oriented toward the future had to be adaptable to new circumstances in a way that did not abandon original principles. Consequently the general chapter was further tasked with the punishment of abbots who broke either already established norms or the Rule. Furthermore, regular participation in the general chapter was required. *[document D-03, pages 10-11]*

END OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

14. In principle, all of the Cistercian monks were intensely devoted to the highly prescriptive requirements of "the rule of Saint Benedict." For us this is distracting and perhaps disconcerting, but please examine and comment on the innovative methods that the Cistercians invented as a framework for consultation and coordination among monasteries with equal standing. Do these approaches have implications that may be broadly useful in our era, on the understanding that the procession of "changes, adjustments, and readjustments" that a Melchizedek predicts and emphasizes in section 1 of Paper 99 *[a Melchizedek, 1086:4 / 99:1.1]* **includes** the requirement for humanity to invent new techniques of group functioning that will be more cooperative and collegial than the traditional system of top-down orders issued by leaders, managers, and supervisors *(one of the heritages from* Romanità *that still remain pervasive)*?

Background information for questions 15, 16, and 17

Many people are familiar with the conclusion that monks and monasteries served civil society by preserving literacy in eras when knowledge and learning were not prominent features of Western civilization, when political institutions did not operate or subsidize schools, and when only a small elite were actually able to read and write. All this is true from broad and general perspectives, and it is also important to remember that monks and monasteries served as surrogate factories for preparing handwritten texts until Johannes Gutenberg invented movable type in about 1440 CE, the crucial innovation that made it possible to print books, newspapers, and other documents rapidly and accurately.

On a more general level, however, we should bear in mind that the intellectual activities of monks and monasteries were predominantly intended to maintain basic literacy that enabled clerics and a few others to understand and recite religious texts in Latin. In comparison, medieval monks and monasteries had very little interest in other intellectual matters. Further, they tended to be hostile to the innovations in abstract and logical reasoning that transformed Christian theology during the twelfth through fifteenth centuries, advances that eventually led Western civilization to the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the scientific revolution. After all, monastic leaders and spokesman contended quite strenuously that the doctrines of faith had to be accepted and appreciated in their own right, from the perspective of tradition and ecclesiastical authority. Therefore, in their view, it was highly inappropriate to subject Christian teachings to independent intellectual scrutiny based on logical analysis!

In the final segment of the chapter entitled "The Cloister and the World" *(document D-02)* — Chapter 7 of *Medieval Monasticism* by C. H. Lawrence — the historian summarizes all these factors in considerable detail. The following paragraphs are key features of his account.

The work that went on in the scriptorium or writing-room was vital to the interior life of the monastery and it also provided an important service to the outside world. At any given time several monks were likely to be engaged in copying texts or composing books of their own. Sometimes they worked in the northern walk of the cloister alongside the church, but often a separate room off the cloister was allocated to the task. The ninth-century plan of Saint-Gall provides for a spacious scriptorium above the library, with seven writing-desks. The first charge on the workers in the scriptorium was the reproduction of the books needed for the services in choir and the readings in the refectory — the antiphoners, tropers, missals and lectionaries. An equally important task was the provision of grammars for the education of boys in the cloister and the multiplication of books to stock the library.

Most of the energies of monks engaged in writing would be devoted to making copies of approved texts or standard authorities. If exemplars were needed, they could be borrowed from other monasteries. Since pen, ink, and parchment were the sole materials of production, books took a long time to make and they were rare and costly objects in the medieval world. Men used them as security for loans, and they were often passed on by pious bequest — they figure conspicuously in the wills of bishops and other higher clergy. A complete Old Testament, which was generally sold with the standard gloss, might cost more than the total annual stipend of a country priest. A whole flock of sheep would be needed to provide the parchment for it. Understandably, therefore, some abbeys demanded a deposit before lending books. 'Send by the bearer of these present letters', writes Peter the Venerable to the monks of the Grande Chartreuse, 'or by some other trustworthy person securities for the books I have sent — not as a pledge for their better preservation, but so that the orders of our father St Hugh relating to such loans may be observed.'

It was not only the humble copyists of texts who worked in the scriptorium of course. The regulated leisure of the cloister offered the ideal conditions for authorship. The evidence lies in the product. The monastic writing-office was the factory that, until the twelfth century, produced the great majority of the literary works, secular as well as sacred, that filled the libraries of the Middle Ages. Abbo of Fleury (d. 1004), grammarian, mathematician, historian, and hagiographer to Fulbert of Chartres ('the most famous master of all France'), held that, after prayer and fasting, the practice of literary composition did most to bridle the lusts of the flesh.   *[document D-02, pages 6-7]*

Monastic writers of the twelfth century treated the schools as an alien territory. They liked to contrast the snares of the scholastic life with the studious peace of the cloister — 'the blessed school, where hearts are instructed by Christ, and we learn without study or lectures how we ought to live', as Peter of Celle wrote to John of Salisbury, who had found a pleasant place of exile in the city of Paris. The school Peter referred to was the metaphysical one represented by the monastic discipline. But monasteries also had schools in the more literal sense. As long as there were child-oblates, there had to be a school in the cloister and monk-schoolmasters to educate them. On the other hand, formal instruction was rarely provided in the monastery other than for the children who were destined to become permanent members of the community — the so-called *nutriti*. The education of outsiders in the cloister was, in fact, forbidden by the conciliar decrees of the ninth century. ...

On the other hand, many of the Benedictine abbeys and priories were proprietors of grammar or song schools, which were conducted in a house outside the enclosure in the adjacent borough. In these cases the monastic body licensed a secular clerk to conduct the school and teach all comers in return for fees. As a rule, monks did not teach in external schools themselves. In a cottage school of this kind with a secular schoolmaster, instruction can hardly have gone beyond the level of Latin grammar, taught from the primer, basic arithmetic, and knowledge of the service books required to sing the offices in church.

In the twelfth century there was a growing trend to phase out child-oblates, and with them the claustral school. The new orders refused to accept children altogether. Postulants were not admitted under the age of fifteen or eighteen, and were expected to have received their essential literary schooling before they entered the religious life. ... Before the middle of the thirteenth century, monasteries in general were disinclined to send their monks to study in the urban schools of the seculars. ...

Obviously the objection was based in part upon the fear of subjecting young monks to the temptations and distractions of student life in the city; but there was more to it than that. Monastic writers of the twelfth century were profoundly convinced that the intellectual activities of the schools were incompatible with the monk's profession. The root cause of this antipathy was a divergence of purpose and method. A monastery was usually a place of learning. Monks, after all, were committed by the Rule to reading books, and those who had the necessary talent also aspired to writing them. But the literature proposed for reading, both public and private, and the type of books that were produced, were determined by the overall purpose of the

monastic life — spiritual growth in the search for God. The literary products of the cloister, whether they were theology in the form, of Biblical exegesis, or hagiography, or even history, were designed primarily to provide food for meditation and inspiration for conduct. The object of the scholastic treatise, on the other hand, and of the debates that underlay it, was to advance inquiry and speculation.

The conflicting aims are manifested by the differences of style and method. The divergence had been brought about by the rise of scholasticism, the product of a new intellectual and social milieu. The great expansion of the schools that had begun in the last decades of the eleventh century was associated with the recovery by Western scholars of the lost intellectual capital of the ancient world in the form of Greek and Arabic science and philosophy, made available through the medium of Latin translation. ... The books of Aristotle's logic provided a system of rational analysis that could apparently be applied in every field of learning. In the course of the twelfth century the application of dialectic or analytic logic to the materials of study created new sciences of theology and canon law, as well as new secular sciences of logic, jurisprudence, and medicine. And the nerve-centres of the new learning were the law schools of Bologna and the cathedral schools of northern France.

The new learning not only extended the range of the medieval curriculum; it brought about a revolutionary change in the method of study. Medieval teaching was based upon the study of authoritative texts. For theology the basic text was the Bible, and an authoritative guide to Biblical exegesis was provided by the commentaries of the Fathers. This was common ground to both monastic and scholastic theologians. The monk wrote Scriptural commentaries; and the schoolman commented on the text of the Bible in the classroom. But in the schools, the new intellectual tools gave rise to a different type of theological inquiry which employed the disputation as its method.

The scholastic disputation was a system of logical discourse aimed at clarification through the definition of terms. As time went on, collections of *Questiones* — debated problems — raised in the process of commenting on the authoritative text, circulated separately from the text that had prompted them, and finally might be organised systematically to form a *summa* — an independent doctrinal treatise. By the middle of the twelfth century, the new methodology had produced in Peter Lombard's *Four Books of Sentence* the first of the great syntheses of Christian doctrine that, alongside the Bible, was to form the basis of instruction in the university theology class-rooms of the thirteenth century. ...

It was precisely this new methodology and the new race of teachers who practised it — the professional *magistri* of the nascent universities — that aroused the misgivings of monastic theologians. They were suspicious of the application of the human categories of analytic logic to the data of Revelation. To teach young men by encouraging them to debate in the schools about the attributes of the Trinity or the nature of Christ seemed an invitation to presumption, pride, and error. Had not Cassian — still the most widely read master of the spiritual life — warned his disciples to receive the teachings of the Fathers like mutes, to be quick to hear but slow to speak, and not to be seduced by those who sought skill in disputation, for such could not enter the arcana of the spirit? The dialectical method, by contrast, thrived upon contradictions between the ancient authorities. The tendency to elevate alongside them the *Sentences* or doctrinal formulations of the leading *magistri* to the status of authorities evoked much scathing criticism from more conservative claustral scholars. ...

By contrast with the analytical method of the schoolmen, monastic theology — theology written by and for monks remained literary in form and style, deriving much of its imagery and inspiration from the Fathers, and continued to cling to the traditional modes of Biblical exegesis. This method of exposition, which had been inherited from Christian antiquity, elaborated the 'spiritual', as opposed to the literal sense of the text: an allegorical or moral significance was extracted from persons, things, and events, referred to in both Old and New Testaments. ...

The gulf that separated the schools from the monastery would in time be narrowed, if never completely closed. ... The first compilation to apply dialectic to the task of organising the ancient canons of the Church and papal decretals into a systematic treatise was the Concordance of Discordant Canons published about the year 1140. This, which was immediately adopted as a text by the law schools and laid the foundation of a new canonistic science, was the work of Gratian, who was a monk of Bologna.

The expansion of the secular schools and, at the end of the twelfth century, the rise of the universities, signified that intellectual leadership had passed from the cloister. But monastic learning could not remain isolated indefinitely from the intellectual tide that was sweeping through the Western world. The absorption of men from the schools, not all of whom waited until old age before taking the habit, and the challenge of the Mendicant Orders of the thirteenth century, gradually broke down the barriers between the two worlds. In the course of the thirteenth century, the Cistercians and the black monks began sending a small selection of their men to the schools, and established houses of study for them at the universities. These were for monks attending lectures in the faculty of theology. Besides

a number of theology graduates, most Benedictine abbeys and houses of canons regular of any size contained a few canonists and civil law graduates who had passed through the law schools of Bologna, Orleans or Oxford.

Although the intellectual apartheid between monks and schoolmen was relaxed in time, the traditional modes of study were still followed and the old classics of ascetical theology were still read in the cloister. The *lectio divina* of the Rule referred as much to public reading in the chapterhouse and refectory as to reading by individuals. Lists of books with passages marked for reading at mealtimes or in the chapter-house, survive from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; and the choice of literary fare displays an undisturbed adherence to the traditional programme of monastic study. At Saint-Martial of Limoges, at Anchin, at Conches and Saint-Denis, the community continued to be offered a similar diet of the Lives of the Fathers, Gregory's Dialogues, Cassian, Smaragdus on the Rule, and the homilies and Scriptural commentaries of the Fathers from Jerome to Bede. Here and there the homogeneity of the list is lightened by a few items of more recent hagiography, such as the Life of St Francis. But there is a total absence of scholastic theology, or even the work of protoscholastic theologians like St Anselm. If most monastic libraries were by the thirteenth century stocked with scholastic treatises and copies of the Lombard's *Sentences* for private study, in public reading at least, the emphasis is upon edification rather than intellectual nourishment. In a sense, the new learning of the schools, by clarifying the distinction between the natural and the supernatural, between nature and grace, had sharpened the line of demarcation between the cloister and the world.   *[document D-02, pages 30-35]*

END OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

15. In early centuries of the era when monasticism thrived, many Benedictine monasteries sponsored grammar schools for boys living nearby, on the understanding that a secular clerk, not a monk, would teach the boys in return for fees that parents paid. This practice appears to have diminished and died out in the twelfth century, around the same time that monasteries ceased to recruit and accept child oblates. We do not have evidence serving to confirm that these two outcomes were interrelated and linked, but it seems reasonable to speculate that they were. In addition, nothing in the record available to us attests to a conviction among monks that they had an affirmative duty to contribute to the general welfare of civil society, perhaps because they were convinced that their fundamental obligation was to concentrate on the spiritual economy of guilt and atonement associated with sin and their view of God's inclination to punish human beings severely. In any case, please offer your own tentative theory about why the monasteries ceased to sponsor grammar schools for boys who lived nearby.

16. In effect, monasteries and the secular schools operating in towns and cities appear to have adopted dramatically different views of the purpose of education and of the relationships among faith, knowledge, and wisdom. Please analyze and appraise the underlying differences. Do you believe that as a practical matter, there was some way to harmonize these divergent viewpoints, or that they were essentially irreconcilable? Please explain your conclusions and the reasons for them.

17. If we set aside the fact that it is difficult to identify any aspect of monasticism that conforms to and honors the true teachings of Jesus, it remains almost equally challenging to render an overall verdict on the degree to which monastic practices may have contributed to the growth and development of Western civilization, at least from social and intellectual perspectives.

How do you appraise these factors? In your opinion, does the balance of advantages and disadvantages seem to shift significantly during the period of 1,200 years that we are obliged to consider (*i.e.,* from about 300 CE to about 1500 CE)? If so, would you be inclined to subdivide this overall period into three segments (perhaps *early*, *middle*, and *late*), thereby giving you a reasonable framework for describing trends and tendencies? If not, please use some other approach that, in your view, provides an appropriate way to organize and unify your conclusions.

Women believers: opportunities and constraints

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS 18 THROUGH 22

Since the entire period when monasticism flourished amounted to a patriarchal era during which men organized, dominated, and ruled all of western Christendom, this pervasive atmosphere of male authority and control constrained and limited the religious opportunities that were available to women.

On the other hand, it is not clear that monasticism made the situation worse, and some aspects of monasticism during these centuries appear to have offered opportunities to a limited number of female believers that were more diverse and perhaps more challenging than roles that were readily available to them in civil society. Any such opportunity, however, was heavily dependent on personal circumstances. Further, it automatically compelled a woman to disavow or abandon the normal context of family life associated with a husband and the upbringing of children.

The situations of a monk and of a nun were not entirely analogous, partly because the overtones of relative exclusiveness and upper-class privilege appear to have been more intense and more obvious in relation to nuns. The historian C. H. Lawrence informs us:

> The nunneries of the early Middle Ages not only offered women the chance to pursue the ascetical life; they attracted endowments because they performed an important social role in providing a haven for the daughters and widows of the aristocracy for whom no suitable marriage could be found. The women who entered them, and the families that placed them there, expected them to enjoy the society of their own kind. Many of them were thus aristocratic and socially exclusive communities. If girls of humbler origins were admitted at all, it was only in the capacity of servants. ...
>
> In any case, the need for a postulant to bring a dowry to support her in the religious life must have been an obstacle to recruiting women from landless families. The canonists accepted the propriety of the age-old custom by which a gift of property was offered to a monastery to help meet the cost of feeding and clothing a recruit; but to exact a gift as a condition of admission was simony. 'It is one thing to make a voluntary offering,' observes Gratian, 'it is another thing to pay an exaction.' The Lateran Council of 1215 singled out nunneries as common offenders: 'the stain of simony has so infected many nuns that scarcely any are received as sisters without a price'. Such depravity was to be punished by the expulsion of the offenders to do penance in a more austere order. Nevertheless, whatever the decretists said, many women's foundations of the eleventh and twelfth centuries were small and poorly endowed. They could not afford to accept new members unless they brought additional income with them, and the prohibition of gifts or contracts to secure admission proved impossible to enforce.
>
> Consequently, the majority of nuns came of aristocratic or knightly families. Hildegarde [of Bingen] defended this exclusiveness, which was still a feature of most nunneries in the twelfth century: 'what man would keep his whole flock in a single pen? There should be discrimination; otherwise, if different people are congregated together, the flock may be rent asunder through the pride of those who are socially superior and the shame of those who are of a different class; for God differentiates between people both on earth and in heaven.' ...
>
> Where lists of those professed are available, research has revealed that a significant proportion of the inmates were either married women or widows. Some of those who took the veil during the lifetime of their husbands were casualties of the matrimonial chess-game played by the aristocracy in

pursuit of male offspring. Some were refugees from a marriage that had become intolerable. Others were wives of men who had entered a monastery themselves, having obtained the consent of their spouses. In most cases other than the last, a sense of vocation was probably not the primary motive for entering the religious life.   *[document E-01, pages 1-2]*

Many of the women living in a convent were not actually nuns, but canonesses who were bound to obedience, but not to poverty. Therefore a canoness "could own personal property and had her own apartment and servants" *(document D-04, page 18)*. On the other hand:

But the secular canonesses were not the only nuns. There were also vowed nuns living an enclosed life according to the Benedictine rule, bound to singing the office like the monks and to embracing stability and poverty. Originally, a woman simply took a vow before the abbess and donned a veil. But this became more elaborate as nuns were increasingly seen as brides of Christ. By the tenth century a ritual had evolved that included a male guardian "giving away" the prospective nun during Mass.   *[document D-04, page 19]*

It was entirely normal for a particular nun to serve as the abbess who exerted authority over a convent, and this remained the case throughout the Middle Ages. On the other hand, opportunities were even broader during early centuries when certain noblewomen operated in contexts with a Germanic cultural background:

In the early Germanic world noblewomen enjoyed a higher political status and a greater power of disposing of themselves and their property than they came to possess at a later period. This relative independence was reflected in the masterful government of double monasteries by the royal abbesses of Merovingian Gaul and Anglo-Saxon England. They ruled both the men and the women of their communities with the self-assurance that was their birthright. But in the different world of the tenth and eleventh centuries the independence of women, both outside and inside the cloister, diminished. An aristocratic society, whose legal arrangements and modes of thought were conditioned by the military fief, reduced women to a strictly subordinate role. And the inferiority of their status was reinforced by the male chauvinism of the Latin Church. Not only sacramental acts but all ecclesiastical functions, including teaching, were confined to men. Had not the writer of the Epistle to Timothy said, 'Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men'?

A clergy that was required *ex professo* to be celibate tended to stress the moral and intellectual weakness of womankind. Ascetical literature was written largely by men, and to the male ascetic woman appeared primarily

in the guise of the temptress. Paradoxically, the elaboration of the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary did nothing to counteract this image, for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which was gaining ground at this period, exempted her from the taint and consequences of original sin and thus detached her from the normal experience of the human race.

This change in the position of women was reflected in their declining role in the monastic world. By the tenth century many of the early women's abbeys had vanished from the map. Some had been taken over by canons. Houses of canonesses survived and new foundations were occasionally made, because they continued to serve a social purpose for the higher aristocracy who felt the need to provide protection and supervision for their unmarried womenfolk. ...

Women, in fact, played a largely subordinate role in the initiatives that launched the major ascetical revivals of the tenth and eleventh centuries. These were movements initiated and led by men and sponsored by patrons who were interested in creating male monasteries. Those women's houses that were founded in their wake were few and undistinguished by comparison with the plethora of important foundations for monks. It was not necessarily that fewer women were attracted to the religious life or even that their social circumstances precluded such initiatives. The problem lay partly in the mentality of the monastic reformers, who regarded contact with women as a hazard to their souls to be avoided at all costs, and who were therefore reluctant to assume the responsibility of directing nuns. ...

The subordinate role of women in the monastic revival is evident in the first Cluniac foundation for nuns. It came late in the day, when the Cluniac empire already numbered its colonies in hundreds. In fact, the movement was approaching its climacteric when St Hugh decided in 1056 to create a house for women at Marcigny in the region of Autun. ...

The house had some of the features of a double monastery, for Hugh established in the vicinity a small community of twelve monks from Cluny to provide the necessary sacramental services and help with business management. But the spirit of the foundation was very different from that of the double monasteries of earlier times: the nuns were placed under the supervision of the prior, who was the director of both communities and who was appointed by the abbot of Cluny. ... Hugh clearly judged it inappropriate that the ladies should be allowed to run their own affairs and organise their own religious life without male supervision.*　*[document E-01, pages 2-4]*

*　Hugh of Cluny (1024-1109), abbot of Cluny from 1049 until his death. *Reference:* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugh_of_Cluny

In regard to the Cistercian Order, the historian Gert Melville recounts a roller-coaster pattern that began with hesitation, shifted to acceptance, and then imposed stringent limits:

> The Order was notably reluctant in its early years to accept women. In this regard it followed a particular tradition among the hermits, who strictly rejected women's communities on principle …

> But there were women's monasteries early on that stood in a more or less close relationship with the Cistercians. So, for example, the women's monastery of Le Tart was founded near Clairvaux in the 1120s with the help of Abbot Stephen Harding, and soon an entire congregation of monasteries grew from there. Yet until 1200, there was no discernible institutional tie between Le Tart and the Order. The same is true of many other women's monasteries that stood close to the Cistercians in terms of their core ideals and normative foundations …

> At the beginning of the thirteenth century, however, the stance of the Order changed, not least because of pressure from without. Through the legal process of affiliation and incorporation, such women's monasteries with Cistercian ties finally gained access to the Order. As a consequence, their number grew, according to James of Vitry, "like the stars in heaven," and in certain regions they overtook the number of male monasteries. But the opening of the Order to women soon again met sharp limitations. In 1220 the general chapter decided to limit future incorporations of women's communities, so that the flood of women to monastic life soon had to be cared for by the emerging mendicant orders. *[document D-03, pages 15-16]*

This leads us to the Franciscans and Dominicans, the mendicant orders that became increasingly prominent in the 13th century. As a practical matter, however, the cultural and social circumstances of the late Middle Ages simply did not permit individual women, or even small groups of women, to wander through towns and cities while endeavoring to minister to believers and, in return, receive appropriate food and lodging. Although Clare of Assisi hoped to associate herself and other female believers as closely as possible with Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan order, the order for women that she founded ("the Poor Clares") was definitely contemplative and observed a regime of strict enclosure *(document F-01, pages 29-31)*. Further, the traditional approach to monasticism likewise applied to all nuns associated with the Dominican Order *(document F-01, page 30)*.

The Beguines: an urban experiment with feminine characteristics

The historian Gert Melville describes a strong movement focusing on pious women that emerged in the final years of the twelfth century. He states that the movement's focal point was "the vibrant urban environment of the Low Countries and the Rhineland," but adds that "it spread from there to northern France and along the Rhine down to Switzerland" *(document E-02, page 1)*.

> In the first half of the thirteenth century, in many places a form of community life emerged in which the Beguines lived together under the direction of a mistress (*magistra*). In this case too they renounced lifelong vows, with the result that they could leave the community (to marry, for example), though they had to leave behind the property they had brought when they joined. ... In a few houses of Beguines the women embraced manual labor to support themselves, for example, in textile work, and devoted themselves in addition to religious exercises and prayer to charitable work such as care for the sick and dying and care for the homeless and the poor. In its outward form their pattern of life thus already had a strong affinity to the world of the monastery, and their houses were not infrequently tied, though without vows, to religious life — for example, to the Cistercian Order. They also often assimilated themselves to the mendicant orders by way of the pastoral care offered through those communities.

The historian C. H. Lawrence supplies considerably more detail, partly by analyzing the movement from social and psychological perspective:

> The Beguines, like the Cistercian nuns, were a product of the extraordinary spirit of religious fervour that swept through certain sections of Western society in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. They were groups of laywomen living in the towns of northern Europe and in some rural areas of Swabia, who came together to practise a new form of religious life. They were not affiliated to any religious order, nor did they follow any recognised monastic rule. The movement probably owed its recruits to the social exclusiveness of the nunneries; possibly it represented a conscious and widespread rejection of the affluent image and formalism of the established orders. But there was more to it than this. Its piety was rooted in the cult of voluntary poverty and the current ideas of the apostolic life, but it flowered in a very different soil. In northern Europe it was an urban phenomenon. ...
>
> The rapid spread of the Beguines is one of the most arresting religious phenomena of the later Middle Ages. As they gradually secured recognition from the authorities of church and state, Beguinages sprang up everywhere in the northern towns. In some cases the houses were purchased out of funds brought to the communities by new members; in others, buildings

were donated by members of the ruling nobility. By the end of the thirteenth century, Namur contained five Beguinages, and Cologne, the biggest and most populous of north German cities, had witnessed fifty-four such foundations. In Brussels, where the Beguines enjoyed the patronage of the dukes of Brabant, they were allowed to appropriate the chapel of La Vigne to their use, and they secured a right to have their own chaplains and their own burial ground. Here, as in other towns of the Low Countries, they came to constitute a separate enclave within the city. ...

Why were so many women attracted to the movement? The relatively free regime of the Beguinage, which offered its members a total surrender to God through a life of prayer and active service to their neighbours, clearly met the spiritual aspirations of women who had heard the call to the apostolic life. ... Just as the nuns and canonesses had provided a home for the ladies of the landed classes for whom no suitable marriage could be found, the Beguinages, in turn, offered a refuge to the surplus daughters and the widows of the wealthier bourgeoisie. Nor were they only a haven for the unmarriageable. The religious life offered an escape, usually the only escape, for girls who found themselves forced by their families into a marriage they did not desire. Being the children of affluent families, they were readily attracted by the ascetical ideal of voluntary poverty and also, no doubt, by the relative absence of institutional constraint that characterised the life in the Beguinages. *[document E-01, pages 14-16]*

On the other hand, not everyone was pleased, to put the matter mildly:

... the women's movement encountered much hostile criticism from both the laity and the more conservative sections of the clergy. The spectacle of laywomen, without the sanction of any religious order, engaging in an active apostolic role was offensive to both male chauvinism and clerical professionalism. ...

In the end the conflict was resolved by a compromise. The Council of Vienne in 1312 censured 'certain women, commonly called Beguines, who lose themselves in foolish speculations on the Trinity and the divine essence ... these women promise obedience to nobody, and they neither renounce their property nor profess any approved Rule'. Their way of life was permanently forbidden. But this was without prejudice to 'those faithful women who wished to live as the Lord shall inspire them, following a life of penance and living chastely together in their hospices, even if they have taken no vow'. **In other words, the Beguines would be tolerated as long as they stayed in their convents and accepted clerical supervision.** Female vagrancy and similar antics were not acceptable. Most Beguinages,

in fact, attached themselves to houses of Franciscan or Dominican friars, who supplied them with spiritual directors and confessors.

In its tamed form the Beguinage survived the onslaught of its critics and persecutors. In many of the cities of the Rhineland, northern France and the Low Countries, it remained an established and respected institution, providing a home for the sick and destitute as well as for the sisterhood. In a limited sense the Beguines represented a movement of women's liberation. Even after their wilder manifestations had been suppressed, their informal associations offered unmarried women a greater degree of freedom and initiative than was allowed them either in a traditional convent or in a lay family. Their simple piety based upon study of the vernacular Bible and their cultivation of mystical experience, which in the writings of Hadewijch of Antwerp was expressed in the erotic imagery of the *Brautmystik* or 'bridal' mysticism, placed them alongside the friars as preachers and exponents of a new kind of religious experience. **It was a distinctively feminine spirituality, individualistic and intuitive, which focused upon the humanity of Christ and sought to identify with his sufferings by mortification of the body.**
[document E-01, pages 18-19 — emphasis added: the sentence formatted in bold]

Extraordinary achievements

From intellectual and cultural perspectives, the twelfth-century abbess Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1171) — whom we previously encountered as an advocate of class consciousness and social discrimination (*i.e.,* on page 24 above) — appears to have been the most distinguished woman who lived in a convent during the entire Middle Ages. In the first two paragraph of the Wikipedia article about her, she is described as follows:

a German Benedictine abbess, writer, composer, philosopher, Christian mystic, visionary, and polymath. She is one of the best-known composers of sacred monophony, as well as the most-recorded in modern history. She has been considered by many in Europe to be the founder of scientific natural history in Germany.

Hildegard's fellow nuns elected her as *magistra* in 1136; she founded the monasteries of Rupertsberg in 1150 and Eibingen in 1165. She wrote theological, botanical, and medicinal texts, as well as letters, liturgical songs for women choirs to sing and poems, while supervising miniature illuminations in the Rupertsberg manuscript of her first work, Scivias. There are more surviving chants by Hildegard than by any other composer from the entire Middle Ages, and she is one of the few known composers to have written both the music and the words.
[*Reference:* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hildegard_of_Bingen]

In addition, the historian Paul Collins calls attention to Hrosvitha of Gandershieim (c. 935 – 1001), stating that she was an aristocratic Saxon and "was part of an intellectual renaissance that flowered during the reigns of the three Ottos" *(document D-04, page 16).* The corresponding article in Wikipedia article provides more detailed information, describing her as follows:

> a German secular canoness, who wrote dramas and poems during the rule of the Ottonian dynasty. Hrotsvitha lived at Gandersheim Abbey. She is considered the first female writer from the German Lands, the first female historian, the first person since antiquity to write dramas in the Latin West, and the first female poetess in Germany.

> Hrotsvitha's six short dramas are considered to be her most important works. She is one of the few women who wrote about her life during the early Middle Ages, making her one of the only people to record a history of women in that era from a woman's perspective. She has been called "the most remarkable woman of her time", and an important figure in the history of women.

> [*Reference:* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hrotsvitha]

END OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

18. A Melchizedek states: "We do not regard a planet as having emerged from barbarism so long as one sex seeks to tyrannize over the other" *[a Melchizedek of the Jerusem School of Planetary Administration, 564:6/ 49:4.4].* On that basis:

    a. Please comment on how women were treated during the period we are examining (from about 300 CE to about 1500 CE), especially in the context of monasticism.

    b. Please proceed to apply the same general criterion to the situation of women on Urantia now, while avoiding any temptation that might lead you to focus solely on North America.

19. The historian C. H. Lawrence tells us that the 11th century abbot Hugh of Cluny "clearly judged it inappropriate that the ladies should be allowed to run their own affairs and organise their own religious life without male supervision" *(document E-01, page 4 — as cited on page 26 above).* Although it is possible to dismiss the statement by declaring that this conviction was characteristic of his era but not of ours, does the exclusively male hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church (and of the various Eastern Orthodox Churches) embody overtones that are broadly similar? Please analyze the net implications and their psychological overtones.

20. In discussing the urban experiment that is now called the Beguines, the historian C. H. Lawrence states: "The spectacle of laywomen, without the sanction of any religious order, engaging in an active apostolic role was offensive to both male chauvinism and clerical professionalism" *(document E-01, page 18, as cited on page 29 above).* Please analyze this statement, doing your best to explain it.

21. Factors associated with social exclusivity and class consciousness appear to have been considerably stronger in connection with convents for women than they were in relation to monasteries for men. Why? Was this reality simply a result of the social patterns that prevailed in this era, or did it also betoken differences in the religious and spiritual expectations that Christian believers of these eras associated with monks and nuns? Please explain your answer.

22. After referring to "the male chauvinism of the Latin Church," the historian C. H. Lawrence points out that clergy who were required to be celibate "tended to stress the moral and intellectual weaknesses of womankind" *(document E-01, pages 2-3, as cited on page 25 above).* He then comments that ascetical literature, written largely by men, primarily portrayed women "in the guise of the temptress" and then adds: "the elaboration of the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary did nothing to counteract this image, for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which was gaining ground at this period, exempted her from the taint and consequences of original sin and thus detached her from the normal experience of the human race" *(document E-01, page 3, as cited on page 26 above).* These observations tend to imply that conventional reverence for Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as doctrines that were evolving and accumulating — subsequently including "the Assumption," the teaching that Mary was bodily assumed into heaven — were actually a net disadvantage for female believers in general, for they could not possibly meet this standard and would always suffer from the comparison. Do you agree with this general conclusion? If so, please analyze the net implications. If not, please explain your alternative viewpoint and the reasons for it.

New approaches in cities and towns

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS 23 THROUGH 28

Economic and commercial activity appears to have intensified in the 12th century, as if many inhabitants of Western Europe had finally awakened from an extended era of torpor and slumber. The historian C. H. Lawrence states:

> In the century and a half before 1200 western Europe had experienced a prolonged period of economic and demographic expansion which had both solvent and stimulating effects upon the religious life. As commercial wealth and industrial activity grew, urban populations increased and the physical area of many towns was enlarged. In northern Italy and Flanders, where a thriving textile industry was organised on a capitalist basis, and in the Rhineland, several cities underwent an expansion to a point where they had begun to attain the dimensions of a modern town. Rapid urban growth, the expansion of international trade, the rise of a new bourgeoisie deriving its wealth from commerce, and the creation of an international community of learning which gave birth to the first European universities, all tended to break down the isolation of local communities and to produce a society that was more mobile, more critical and, at the upper levels, more affluent than before. It is a truism that city populations provided the most fertile seed-bed for religious dissent and anticlericalism. ...

> Another feature of economic growth was the emergence of a literate section of the laity. Literacy was ceasing to be a clerical monopoly. Commercial activity on any scale demanded of its practitioners at least a degree of formal literacy; and, in fact, by the end of the twelfth century the ability to read and write the vernacular, and to a lesser extent Latin, was quite common in the larger Italian towns. Well-to-do merchants sent their sons to the city schools, while their wives and daughters attended classes where they learned to read the Latin Psalter. The rise of an articulate town-dwelling laity, critical of the intellectual and moral shortcomings of the clergy, brought to the surface the tension between the traditional assumptions of monastic spirituality and the aspirations of lay people newly awakened to a sense of their Christian vocation. ...

> These aspirations of the laity presented the medieval Church with a pastoral challenge it was ill-equipped to meet. The diocesan and parochial structure of the Western Church had developed to serve the needs of a rurally based population. Its clergy, apart from an educated elite which was absorbed by the schools and the ecclesiastical bureaucracy, were largely recruited locally from the ranks of the free peasantry, and educationally most of them were

only a little above the level of their rustic parishioners. The numerous churches that were to be found in bigger towns were generally appropriated to monasteries or collegiate bodies and were too poorly endowed to attract the services of educated clerks. *[document F-01, pages 2-3]*

In this general context, "There was a growing recognition that a mode of life modelled upon that of the Apostles should involve not only the renunciation of worldly goods but also a commitment to active evangelism" *(document F-01, page 2)*. The historian C. H. Lawrence tells us that this vision stirred individual ascetics "to combine mendicancy with the role of the itinerant preacher," but clarifies this by stating: "It was later in the [12th] century that the cult of voluntary poverty combined with the apostolic preaching of 'metanoia', or interior conversion, to inspire a more revolutionary form of religious life which was adopted by a number of more or less organised groups of preachers roving the towns of France and northern and central Italy" *(document F-01, page 2)*. Lawrence identifies two examples that were prominent at the time:

- "[T]he Waldenses or Poor Men of Lyons," a group that followed "Waldes, a wealthy cloth merchant and banker of Lyons" who had given away his fortune and had "set off on a career of itinerant preaching, supporting himself solely by begging" *(document F-01, pages 4 and 5 passim)*. After the group encountered intense hostility from the secular (diocesan) clergy, they "drifted into a radical anti-sacerdotal position" *(document F-01, page 5)*.

- "The Humiliati ... a religious fraternity, dedicated to the new style of apostolic life, which had gained a substantial following in the cities of Lombardy and the Veneto. Their members sought to realise in their lives what they believed to be the life-style of the apostolic Church, represented by voluntary poverty or at least frugality, simplicity in food and dress, penitential discipline, regular prayer, and preaching" *(document F-01, page 5)*.

Pope Innocent III (who reigned from 1198 to 1216) eventually authorized lay preaching, a papal decision that the historian C. H. Lawrence describes as "an extraordinary breach in the sacerdotal professionalism of the medieval Church" *(document F-01, page 5)*. Lawrence elaborates as follows:

> Admittedly, he hedged the permission about with a proviso that the lay brethren should confine themselves to spiritual exhortation and avoid questions of dogmatic and sacramental theology; but even with this limitation a significant frontier had been crossed. To more conservative churchmen lay preaching usurped the function of the official ministry; it was synonymous with subversion and heresy, and the initial reaction of authority had been to stamp on it. Thus both the Humiliati and the Waldenses were included, along with heretical sects, in a general condemnation by Pope Lucius III in 1184. It was left to the shrewd intelligence and inspired pragmatism of Innocent III to rehabilitate the Humiliati and to reconcile the orthodox section of the Waldenses led by the Spanish priest Durandus of Huesca and Bernard of Prim. *[document F-01, page 6]*

In this historical milieu, Francis of Assisi (1181/1182 – 1226), the son of a prosperous silk merchant, suddenly emerged from obscurity in the first decade of the 13th century. In the year 1209, Francis led a small group of early followers to Rome, where they besieged Pope Innocent III and eventually persuaded him to sanction their preaching and begging, activities that they proposed to continue carrying out as unordained *Fratres Minores* (Friars Minor, or Little Brothers) *(document F-01, page 13)*.

This apparently reluctant authorization by Innocent was "the first step in the creation of a new religious order" *(document F-01, page 13)*, an order that became highly influential and extremely wealthy even though the spiritual idealist who founded it had envisioned modest ministry to Christian believers suffused with humility and poverty. Although his followers eventually departed quite substantially from these wishes of his, we should bear in mind that the Franciscans, as well as their contemporary competitors the Dominicans, really did minister to persons living in urban areas along the general lines that Francis advocated:

> The friars came, then, on an urban scene that had grown accustomed to the visitation of wandering preachers and wild prophets and to the sight of unkempt and threadbare evangelists. They were part of this scenario themselves, and they might well have proved as ephemeral as the rest. The fact that they persisted and expanded into a Europe-wide organisation can only be explained, in human terms, by the peculiar genius and unique vision of their founders and by the shrewdness of the ecclesiastical authorities who perceived their possibilities and gave them support. The two first and greatest of the Mendicant Orders originated in the early years of the thirteenth century, and they grew side by side in a kind of symbiosis, though their antecedents and the circumstances of their origin were very different. The Dominicans were founded by an Augustinian canon, and from the outset they were a clerical order, which retained many of the features of the canons regular and had discernible roots in the twelfth-century ideology of the apostolic life. The Franciscans, on the other hand, owed their origin to the literal and uncomplicated but intense vision of a layman.   *[document F-01, page 6]*

Francis' original concept was not suited to a large organization, partly because his emphasis on lay friars was a grave disadvantage in the Franciscan Order's implicit competition with the Dominicans. After several generations, however, the difference had diminished quite substantially, for in that later period recruitment and staffing patterns had shifted, and most Franciscan friars were also ordained priests.

In the official Rule that Pope Honorius III approved in 1223, Francis expressly forbade the brethren to own buildings or to touch money. In 1230, however, Pope Gregory IX responded to the requests of provincial ministers of the Order by issuing a papal interpretation that enabled the Franciscans "to appoint a *nuntius* or 'spiritual friend' as a trustee to receive and hold money on behalf of the brethren, to whom they could apply to pay for necessities; they were thus enabled to accept gifts of money, notably the legacies that were showered upon them by grateful penitents" *(document F-01, page 14).* The historian C. H. Lawrence identifies this step as "the beginning of the inevitable retreat from St Francis's uncompromising ideal of absolute poverty" *(document F-01, page 14).*

Pope Gregory's convenient rationalization appears to have occurred in the context of other major departures from Francis' intentions, for:

> as time went on, Francis became a sign of contradiction to his followers. Within four years of his death the leaders of the order sought a papal ruling which declared his death-bed Testament to the brethren to be without binding force, and provincial ministers were ordering copies of it to be burned. Later in the century the order he had inspired was rent by controversy over the meaning of his life and teaching, especially over his uncompromising ideal of poverty; and eventually the conflict between the 'Spiritual' party — the rigorists for absolute poverty, who claimed to be the authentic custodians of the founder's message — and the less radical 'Conventuals' ended with the Spirituals being driven into schism. *[document F-01, page 6]*

As a practical matter, it would seem, "the Friars Minor had been subjected to a clerical takeover from within" *(document F-01, page 15).*

In contrast, the Dominicans, "a clerical and learned order" *(document F-01, page 15)* appear to have remained disciplined and unified throughout their history. The Order was founded by Dominic Guzman, whom the historian C. H. Lawrence identifies as "a Castilian priest of aristocratic birth" *(document F-01, page 15).* In 1206, while returning to Spain with a companion, he encountered Cistercian abbots at Montpellier, France who were struggling to combat the Cathars *(i.e., the Albigensian heresy, against whom Pope Innocent III had preached a crusade).* In brief:

> Catharism held that the universe was a battleground between good, which was spirit, and evil, which was matter. Human beings were believed to be spirits trapped in physical bodies. The leaders of the religion, the perfect, lived with great austerity, remaining chaste and avoiding all foods that came from sexual union. *[SOURCE: Encyclopedia Britannica Online, https:// www.britannica.com/event/Albigensian-Crusade, accessed on August 10, 2020]*

The Cistercians were not making much headway, and Dominic persuaded them that this was at least partly because of "their prelatical style and large retinue" *(document F-01, page 15)*. Therefore they agreed to send their servants and clerks home with the horses, whereupon all of them set out on foot on "an itinerant preaching tour, holding public debates with the Cathar leaders at Servian and Beziers and other towns of the Midi" *(document F-01, pages 15-16)*. These tactics proved much more effective, although it is at least equally important to bear in mind that the subsequent twenty years of military struggle (1209-1229) ultimately succeeded because a large number of nobles and soldiers from northern France wreaked immense death and destruction on the population and citadels of the south. (Although this was not quite a civil war, it came close.)

Dominic, unlike Francis, was always intensely interested in theology and doctrine. In 1217, while conducting a chapter in Toulouse (*i.e.,* an organizational and administrative assembly):

> he announced the decision to disperse. There was a diaspora of the Toulouse community; some were dispatched to Paris, some to Spain, and some to Bologna. The Preachers were thus launched on a universal mission, a fact proclaimed by a bull of Honorius III issued in 1218, which commended the brethren to prelates everywhere and invoked support for their preaching efforts. The selection of Paris and Bologna as early objectives highlighted an element in Dominic's strategy that was to be vigorously pursued by his successors: his friars not only sought to provide for the theological education of the preachers; they made it their aim to capture the leading intellectual centres of their time. *[document F-01, page 17]*

The Dominican Order's rigor and natural aptitude for higher education made many Dominican friars effective exponents of the rigid, systematic, and authoritarian theology of the late Middle Ages. The most widely admired example is Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), a Dominican friar whose extremely ambitious work *Summa Theologica* incorporates substantial strands of the philosophy of Aristotle and continues to be cited and revered as a crucial contribution to the Roman Catholic tradition. (Aquinas taught for a number of years at the University of Paris, serving as a regent master of theology and philosophy.)

In addition, the historian C. H. Lawrence identifies Albertus Magnus, Robert Kilwardby, Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, and Duns Scotus as scholars of their times whose writings still repay study *(document F-01, page 26)*, although I doubt that any of us would be willing to devote the time and energy that would suffice to verify this appraisal or dispute it. Since the last three persons listed in the series were Franciscans rather than Dominicans, it also seems appropriate for me to mention the Franciscan friar Roger Bacon (1219/1220 – c. 1292), who made notable contributions to the

advance of human thought. The Wikipedia biography identifies Bacon as "a medieval English philosopher and Franciscan friar who placed considerable emphasis on the study of nature through empiricism. … He is sometimes credited (mainly since the 19th century) as one of the earliest European advocates of the modern scientific method." [SOURCE: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Bacon, accessed on August 10, 2020.]

By the middle of the 13th century, secular clerics who taught at the universities were dismayed that three of the twelve chairs in the theology faculty has now been reserved for friars of the mendicant orders, who seemed likely to win control of a fourth chair. It is not difficult to understand these concerns, for "The brilliant success of the Mendicant teachers necessarily reduced the opportunities open to the secular masters of the faculty" *(document F-01, page 27)*. In February 1252, the secular masters of the University of Paris:

> approved a statute ordaining that each religious order should be restricted to conducting a single school and to a single master of the faculty. This ordinance proved to be the opening salvo of a bitter struggle that continued for many years. But the conflict was more than a squabble over academic posts. The friars were in the university, but not exclusively of it, and they tended to take lightly their obligations towards the academic corporation. *[document F-01, page 27]*

The underlying frictions were certainly not confined to higher education, for the popularity of the Franciscans and Dominicans among urban believers threatened the standing and income of the secular clergy:

> Their success as preachers and confessors siphoned congregations away from parish churches, and of course with the people went the flow of offerings and pious bequests, which were diverted into the trust funds administered for the friars. Many of the great urban preaching churches of Europe, like Santa Croce in Florence, embellished with frescoes and paved with the monuments of the civic aristocracy, bear eloquent witness to their success in winning the patronage of the city populations of the thirteenth century. *[document F-01, page 26]*

> After a decade of wrangling, it was [Pope] Boniface VIII who in the end devised the terms of a truce with the bull *Super Cathedram*, promulgated in 1300. This decreed that friars might only preach in parishes with the consent of the incumbent; that provincials of the friars should present a number of their members to the bishop, who would license them to hear confessions in his diocese; and that though the friars might accept requests for burial in their cemeteries, a quarter of the mortuary dues and bequests were to be reserved for the parish priest. This proved to be a workable

settlement. Papal support saved the mission of the friars; and they in turn made themselves the foremost exponents of the papalist ecclesiology of the thirteenth century. As centrally governed international orders, devoted to Rome and to the preservation of orthodox faith, they corresponded exactly to the needs of a papacy that was in the process of creating a centralised system of church government and law. *[document F-01, page 29]*

The popularity of Franciscan and Dominican friars as confessors largely stemmed from their new and innovative approach to "the sacrament of confession." The historian C. H. Lawrence tells us:

> The fact was, the friars made themselves the chief exponents and practitioners of a new school of moral theology, which had been developed in the schools of Paris. It was a form of casuistry, in the proper sense of the word, which escaped from the straitjacket of the old penitentials with their fixed tariff of punishments, and placed greater emphasis on the circumstances and intentions of the penitent. Its application made, of course, greater intellectual and psychological demands upon the confessor than the older system, and it was easily open to misunderstanding and misrepresentation. *[document F-01, page 23]*

It is almost self-evident to point out that the preference of many believers for the friars did not make them popular among the secular clergy. C. H. Lawrence states:

> All the same, the conflict with the secular clergy left a long residue of bitterness, and echoes of the dispute continued to reverberate in England and elsewhere down to the Reformation. In the fourteenth century, regardless of papal privileges and *Super Cathedram*, and notwithstanding the regular licensing of Mendicant confessors by bishops, writers of manuals of instruction for the parish clergy still questioned whether a penitent who confessed to a friar had fulfilled the canonical requirements for absolution: he would be safer to repeat the confession to his own parish priest in accordance with the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council. The friars emerged victorious, but not unscathed. The grievance of the clergy lived on in popular literature. Chaucer's friar — the confidence trickster who sold easy penances and traded on the credulity of pious women — and Langland's four orders guilty of 'glossing the Gospel' for their own advantage, were stereotype lampoons derived, by a process of literary descent, from the bitter polemics of thirteenth-century Paris. *[document F-01, page 29]*

If we do our best to sum up and unify all the outcomes and implications, it is clear that the advent of the Franciscans and Dominicans in the 13th century was a seminal event that changed the medieval Church substantially, even though it remained rigid, autocratic, and dictatorial. Here are the net conclusions of the historian Gert Melville:

The almost explosive spread of the settlements of these two orders, noted above, is the story of a success that was both immediate and unchecked. From the thirteenth century on, Franciscans and Dominicans were leaders in pressing forward with missions. They served as ambassadors, advisers, confessors, and tutors of the powerful, whether secular and spiritual rulers or rich merchants and patricians, for whom they carried out charitable work and with whose help all might find their way through the famous eye of the needle and on to salvation (Mark 10:25). But above all, both orders served the common people through their preaching and pastoral care in the cities — an activity sustained by their right, as orders exempt from the authority of local bishops, to dispense the sacraments regardless of established parochial structures. Their only competition in that context came after a time from the other mendicant orders, especially smaller ones such as the Carmelites or Augustinian Hermits, as well as from those approved congregations of hermits best described as "urbanites" (*urbanite*), as contemporaries often called them.

Mendicant friars were visible nearly everywhere. Their monastery was the world (so it had been said metaphorically), and they made their way into it, moving beyond the walls of their own communities and churches to beg and to proclaim the word of God in the streets and plazas of the cities. A Franciscan like Berthold of Regensburg (1201-1272), who traveled across Europe, who drew thousands everywhere he went, who preached about the sins of every rank of society, and who called all to contrition and repentance with his sharp words, became a hero to the masses. To Benedictines like Richer of Sens, who remained hidden behind monastery walls, such a life lived "among the people" must have seemed perverse. Richer wrote in around 1270, astonished at how the friars could settle in the cities, where immorality and profit reigned and where worldly affairs flourished. But the mendicants went into the cities precisely for that reason, since it was there that so many more sinners could be found and converted by the word of God. City dwellers, in turn, were deeply touched that men of God on that mission would pay them notice and take so much care for their souls — and this, moreover, on behalf of the official church rather than as suspicious, freelance zealots (there were many of these too in the urban environment) on the hunt for heretics.

Dominicans (and to a lesser extent also Franciscans) were deployed as inquisitors against heretics, to be sure. In fact their success was such that soon a play on words came to call them the *domini canes* (the "dogs of the Lord"). The phrase is captured visibly on the walls of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, where Dominicans stand guard along the border between the church militant on earth and the church triumphant in heaven. *[document F-02, pages 1-2]*

From quite similar perspectives, the historian C. H. Lawrence points out that for ordinary Christian believers, the spiritual implications were profoundly encouraging:

> Preaching and ministering to the people was the *raison d'être* of the friars; and the message they brought was different. They demonstrated that it was possible for a committed Christian to live in the world of men, yet not be of the world. Assurance of salvation need no longer be sought by flight from the human hive or by attachment to the shirt-tails of an enclosed spiritual elite; those who lived in the world, whatever their status, could fulfil the demands of the Christian life by sanctifying the ordinary duties and humdrum tasks of their estate; all that was needed was that they should repent and base their lives on the Gospel.   *[document F-01, page 1]*

END OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

23. Without claiming that the activities and characteristics identified below are definitive or comprehensive, it seems reasonable to state that the mendicant orders (mainly the Franciscans and the Dominicans):

— Carried out their work among Christian believers living in cities and towns in ways that rebutted and overcame impressions previously associated with the monastic tradition: the implication that God especially favored a small number of professional servants who had separated themselves from civil society (*i.e.,* cloistered monks).

— Conducted persuasive and accessible preaching that emphasized New Testament narratives and helped Christian believers understand moral and spiritual teachings that the Christian tradition had long ascribed to Jesus.

— Expounded a more sophisticated and more nuanced approach to moral theology, sin, guilt, and forgiveness.

— Competed with the local (diocesan) clergy and effectively undermined their previous monopoly, while operating in ways that implicitly increased the autocratic, centralizing authority of the Pope.

— Contributed to a common Christian culture and the relative unity of Western Christendom as a whole, especially because they belonged to participatory institutions that were transnational, mobile, and flexible.

— Made significant and substantial contributions to philosophy, theology, and scholarship, but almost entirely so as to shore up and sustain a pervasive atmosphere of uniformity and conformity that remained authoritarian, domineering, and oppressive.

Please endeavor to unify these factors, weaving them into your net conclusions. If you believe that the personal ministry and other work of the Franciscans and Dominicans represented a definite advance on previous practices, please explain why you think so.

24. The historian C. H. Lawrence describes the decision of Pope Innocent III to authorize lay preaching as "an extraordinary breach in the sacerdotal professionalism of the medieval Church" *(document F-01, page 5 and page 34 above)*. Please probe the implications, partly by explaining why it was up to the Pope to tell individual believers whether or not they could talk about their religious views in public. How does all this compare with current political institutions requiring complete respect for the freedom of speech and expression, especially as enshrined in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States?

25. Which is more important, the spiritual idealism whereby Francis of Assisi enjoined sensitive and loving ministry to believers in the context of complete, apostolic poverty, or the fact that this approach was unrealistic and impractical for any large organization? Was it essentially inevitable that the Franciscans and Dominicans, like the Benedictines and Cistercians before them, would become extremely wealthy, given the propensity of prosperous believers to make generous donations in return for the spiritual benefits that they considered notable and important? Should the Franciscans simply have enjoyed the comfortable lifestyles that these bequests had effectively ensured, or can you describe some other approach that they could have adopted, some set of practices that you consider more suitable?

26. Was the controversy over tenured posts in medieval universities *(as described in document F-01, page 27 and on page 38 above)* merely a predictable squabble among egotistical academics, or did it also involve meaningful factors associated with the independence of a university and its right to manage its internal affairs? As a practical matter, was any medieval university truly independent of rules and requirements established by the organized, institutional Church? To what degree may this controversy among academics have echoed into the Renaissance, the Reformation, and perhaps even onward into more recent centuries?

27. As explained in document F-01, page 29 and on page 39 above, the secular clergy did not welcome the fact that Franciscan and Dominican friars tended to be more popular as confessors than they were. Do there appear to have been good reasons for this preference, or are you inclined to believe that the complaints of the secular clergy had substantial merit, perhaps on the grounds that they were responsible for the pastoral care of everyone living in a specific location and therefore had a more informed understanding of the context and circumstances? How do you compare these relatively minor distinctions with the invasiveness and dictatorial overtones of the canonical requirement that a believer confess his or her sins to a priest at least once a year?

28. If Dominican friars really did relish the pun in Latin whereby they could be identified as *domini canes*, "the dogs of the Lord" *(as stated in document F-01, page 2 and on page 40 above)*, may that have been because they considered themselves guard dogs or hunting dogs? How might these reflections relate to the fact that Dominicans and Franciscans were frequently appointed as inquisitors who were responsible for ferreting out and punishing heresy among Christian believers?

Conversion, saints, and miracles

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS 29 AND 30

Although document G-01 is excerpted from the detailed eulogy that I prepared in order to honor my father (who passed on to the mansion worlds on February 27, 2015), the main point for our purposes is the conversion narrative drawn from *The Ecclesiastical History of the English* People, a text that the monk Bede wrote in the year 731 CE.

In this case, however, Bede was narrating events that had occurred in 627 CE. At that time, King Edwin of Northumbria — a region straddling land now located in northeastern England and southeastern Scotland — adopted Christianity as the official religion for himself, for his court, and for all his people, depriving all and sundry of any standing to dissent or take issue with his royal edict. If we accept the narrative that Bede wrote just over one century later, the decisive factor appears to have been concerns expressed by one of the king's chief men, to the effect that "[M]an appears on earth for a little while; but of what went before this life or of what follows, we know nothing" *(document G-01, page 3)*.

By implication, Bede's narrative constitutes a reasonable paradigm for the conversion to Christianity of the tribes and ethnic groups that exercised authority over various segments of western Europe after the western half of the Roman Empire ceased to exist in the year 476 CE. This process of conversion did not stem from personal persuasion or from evangelization in any sense that we would recognize. To the contrary, specific local chieftains, kinglets, and kings decided to convert, and these political decisions of theirs compelled their subjects to trail on after them.

In relation to western Europe as a whole, a considerably more influential event had occurred when Clovis was baptized in the year 496 CE. (Clovis, the chieftain of the Salian Franks, unified all the Franks and became their first king.) In effect, the baptism of Clovis initiated a long sequence of events that finally caused the pope to crown the Emperor Charlemagne in the year 800 CE.

END OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

---

29. Since the Christian faith had been the state religion in the western half of the Roman Empire — and since this continued to be the case in the eastern half, which did not fall to barbarians and which maintained the long-existing linkages between the imperial state and the imperial church — was it natural to assume that conversion of a particular Western ruler would automatically entail conversion of all his subjects, and that individuals would have no voice in the matter except to follow along and obey? Does Bede's narrative implicitly associate him and King Edwin of Northumbria, as well as all of their ecclesiastical and political successors, with Christianity's long-standing traditions of authority and uniformity? Please analyze and explain these factors.

30. Since the Christian church continued to be a trans-national institution, some historians have called it "the noblest Roman of them all." Therefore a succession of Popes, cardinals, and other clerics residing in Rome sought for many centuries to compel civil rulers to comply with the rules and instructions that they issued, especially in regard to the appointment of bishops (a topic that often led to compromises or even cooperation). In addition, church leaders maintained that clerics were exempt from civil authority and could not be put on trial in civil courts, even for murder or other grave offenses.

Without entering into the details of any of this, please permit me to call your attention to the net implications of political and ecclesiastical chains of command operating in parallel, so that, at least in some instances, influential individuals and groups could maneuver between them, endeavoring to obtain relief from onerous requirements or diminution of their net effect.

In your view, did this implicit competition between persons exerting political and ecclesiastical authority contribute to the efforts of Western individuals and groups to assert and maintain their rights, eventually leading to a respect for law as an impartial standard that governs the actions of political and ecclesiastical leaders, just as it applies to the actions of citizens and believers? In addition, was this implicit competition between the political and ecclesiastical chains of command an important or even necessary ingredient in the political, social, and religious evolution that eventually led to the respect for the freedom of expression and belief that prevails in Western societies?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS 31 AND 32

— The Midwayer Commission provides detailed biographic information about Jesus' apostles James and Judas Alpheus *(Paper 139, sections 9 and 10, as excerpted in document A-05)*. If we compare this candid portrayal with the Wikipedia article on the cult of "Saint Jude the Apostle" *(document G-05)* and the Roman Catholic "Prayer to St. Jude" *(document G-06)*, it is difficult to believe that these three documents pertain to the same person.

— Section 4 of Paper 195 is entitled "The European Dark Ages," and document A-02 consists of the full text. For your convenience, here are the first two paragraphs:

> The church, being an adjunct to society and the ally of politics, was doomed to share in the intellectual and spiritual decline of the so-called European "dark ages." During this time, religion became more and more monasticized, asceticized, and legalized. In a spiritual sense, Christianity was hibernating. Throughout this period there existed, alongside this slumbering and secularized religion, a continuous stream of mysticism, a fantastic spiritual experience bordering on unreality and philosophically akin to pantheism.

> During these dark and despairing centuries, religion became virtually sec-
> ondhanded again. The individual was almost lost before the overshadowing
> authority, tradition, and dictation of the church. A new spiritual menace
> arose in the creation of a galaxy of "saints" who were assumed to have
> special influence at the divine courts, and who, therefore, if effectively
> appealed to, would be able to intercede in man's behalf before the Gods.
> *[The Midwayer Commission, 2074:7-8 / 194:4.1-2]*

END OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

31. Here are several factors that may have contributed to the Roman Catholic cult of
"Saint Jude" and to spiritual reverence for other deceased human beings whom the
various Christian churches are inclined to call "saints":

— A cultural carry-over from previous pagan practices and traditions associated with
minor gods, demigods, and "heroes."

— The human inclination to venerate spiritual leaders, as a Melchizedek explains in
section 5 of Paper 92:

> Most great religious epochs have been inaugurated by the life and teachings
> of some outstanding personality; leadership has originated a majority of the
> worth-while moral movements of history. And men have always tended to
> venerate the leader, even at the expense of his teachings; to revere his per-
> sonality, even though losing sight of the truths which he proclaimed. And
> this is not without reason; there is an instinctive longing in the heart of
> evolutionary man for help from above and beyond. This craving is designed
> to anticipate the appearance on earth of the Planetary Prince and the later
> Material Sons. On Urantia man has been deprived of these superhuman
> leaders and rulers, and therefore does he constantly seek to make good this
> loss by enshrouding his human leaders with legends pertaining to super-
> natural origins and miraculous careers. *[A Melchizedek, 1008:7 / 92:5.5]*

— The psychological desire to focus on a humanized, approachable, and sympathetic
being to whom one can pray for spiritual assistance, at least partly to compensate for
and overcome the intimidating or even frightening overtones that stemmed from
portraying the Father as a King-Judge, and also from the atonement doctrine and the
concept of original sin.

Please appraise and/or interweave these three factors to the degree you believe that
this is appropriate. If you prefer, however, you are free to add and/or substitute other
factors that you believe contributed to the cult of "saints."

32. In effect, praying to "Saint Jude" or some other "saint," while seeking to recover from physical ailments and/or solve other practical difficulties in human life, implies an intense and entrenched belief that the energy and power of spirit produces direct effects in the material world. By implication, it also reflects a belief that the realm of spirit is superior to and in command of the realm of matter, all as God designed and intended.

These beliefs ignore the crucial role of mind as the third constitutive element of finite reality, a contributing factor that, from our perspective, intervenes between matter and spirit:

> Always must man's inner spirit depend for its expression and self-realization upon the mechanism and technique of the mind. Likewise must man's outer experience of material reality be predicated on the mind consciousness of the experiencing personality. Therefore are the spiritual and the material, the inner and the outer, human experiences always correlated with the mind function and conditioned, as to their conscious realization, by the mind activity. Man experiences matter in his mind; he experiences spiritual reality in the soul but becomes conscious of this experience in his mind. The intellect is the harmonizer and the ever-present conditioner and qualifier of the sum total of mortal experience. Both energy-things and spirit values are colored by their interpretation through the mind media of consciousness. [A Melchizedek, 1136:1 / 103:6.6]

— In your view, will it be necessary to proclaim and explain the intervening role of mind in order to persuade traditional believers that spirit does not act directly on matter, that it is inappropriate for them to pray for material advantages or benefits, and that in creating finite reality, God projected and intended an interdependent blend of matter, mind, and spirit?

— If so, what are the steps that will eventually engender or reinforce this degree of understanding and wisdom?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR QUESTION 33

Documents G-03 and G-04 consist of excerpts from *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (written in Latin in 731 CE). In these excerpts, the monk Bede recounted multiple tales of supposed miracles, as well as other tales that he associated with the afterlife.

END OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

33. When the monk Bede wrote his history, he must have included tales of miracles and the afterlife because he was convinced that Christians living in the 8th century would appreciate and believe these stories. To the best of your understanding, did Bede have good reasons to think this? Why do the tales he told seem foolish to us now?

Economic and commercial factors

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS 34 THROUGH 37

To my surprise, I discovered that Rodney Stark, the author of a book about how Christianity has contributed to advances in society and civilization in the Western world (*i.e., The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success*) included a detailed description of capitalism as an economic system, while proclaiming that the extensive agricultural production and marketing that many monasteries conducted during the Middle Ages actually amounted to the origin of capitalism *(document H-01)*.

In effect, Stark was reacting to (and seeking to rebut) a controversial thesis that the German sociologist Max Weber had advanced in his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), to the effect that capitalism, as it existed then, descended from viewpoints and attitudes that are closely associated with the Protestant faith, and specifically from the Calvinist version thereof *(documents H-02 and H-03)*.

Colleagues, I suspect there will be broad agreement that any thesis portraying current economic arrangements as the outcome of Protestant or Roman Catholic theology amounts to utter balderdash. On the other hand, it is difficult to decide whether we should award the grand prize for absurdity to Max Weber or to Rodney Stark. After all, the Midwayer Commission is quite emphatic:

> Jesus was not, therefore, a political reformer. He did not come to reorganize the world; even if he had done this, it would have been applicable only to that day and generation. Nevertheless, he did show man the best way of living, and no generation is exempt from the labor of discovering how best to adapt Jesus' life to its own problems. **But never make the mistake of identifying Jesus' teachings with any political or economic theory, with any social or industrial system.** *[The Midwayer Commission, 1580:5 / 140: 8.10 — emphasis added: the final sentence formatted in bold]*

END OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION

34. The view that prosperity and wealth are signs of God's favor has extensive but well discredited roots in Christian tradition, perhaps partly stemming from folk beliefs that Christianity inherited from Judaism (even though the Book of Job rebuts these contentions in ways that are effective, coherent, and convincing). Is it plausible to argue that Calvinist theological principles associated with the doctrine of predestination create psychological overtones that implicitly conflate spiritual standing with material prosperity? In your opinion, how would the eminent Protestant reformer John Calvin (1509-1564) have reacted to Max Weber's thesis? Please do your best to sort through and analyze all the intellectual, theological, and spiritual strands involved in all this.

35. When you consider Max Weber's thesis in the context of the preceding four hundred years of intense controversy and competition pertaining to the merits and defects of Protestant and Roman Catholic approaches to Christian theology and to human life in general, do you detect overtones of triumphalism, an implicit contention that the Protestant tradition has definitely prevailed and that the capitalist economic system is eloquent evidence? In any event, please construe Max Weber's thesis, and Rodney Stark's rebuttal, as by-products of the Protestant Reformation and of the social, cultural, and political wrangling between Protestants and Roman Catholics that has lasted almost to the present.

36. The extensive agricultural production and marketing that medieval monasteries carried out on property that wealthy believers had donated or bequeathed was certainly not a mystery to the 20th century sociologist Max Weber, and it is difficult to believe that he was entirely unaware of even more persuasive examples of large-scale commerce and trade, such as the highly profitable exploits of merchants who hailed from Venice or who were associated with the Hanseatic League *(documents H-04 and H-05)*. In your view, why did Weber ignore all this, effectively pretending that capitalism as practiced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was a fundamentally new phenomenon that did not descend from the economic and commercial approaches practiced in previous centuries?

37. It seems reasonable to accept Rodney Stark's contention that the agricultural production and marketing conducted by medieval monasteries was a notable example of economic and commercial activity, embodying careful attention to the principles of profit, loss, and effective management of material resources. Further, the excerpt from his book includes a reasonable account of trends in Christian theology related to profit, interest, and the idea of a just price for commodities bought or sold.

In all this, however, it is difficult or even impossible to detect spiritual implications or any relationship whatsoever to the true teachings of Jesus. Is this obvious gap just a defect of Rodney Stark's, or does there seem good reason to argue that Christian theology and Christian ethical principles should have confined themselves to spiritual and religious matters, and that it is inappropriate and unwise to intermingle spiritual and commercial concerns? Is the underlying difficulty at least somewhat related to confusion about the relationships that link and differentiate the three constituent realms of finite reality — matter, mind, and spirit? What solutions do you recommend?

For a table identifying all the underlying documents and access to a ZIP file that would enable you to download them rapidly and easily, please feel free to consult the following folder on the Internet:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ptIkzgQucwf27zqBJMR00KirIuePOSpk