

10th Through 15th Century Christian Writers

A Reference Chart of Key Authors, Works, and Historical Significance | High Medieval Period

WRITER	ACTIVE PERIOD	PROMINENT WORKS	SIGNIFICANCE & HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE
10th Century (c. 900–1000 AD)			
Symeon the New Theologian	fl. c. 980–1022 AD	Discourses (Catecheses); Hymns of Divine Love; Theological and Ethical Treatises	Symeon is the third and last figure in Eastern Orthodoxy to receive the title 'Theologian' — alongside John the Evangelist and Gregory of Nazianzus — a measure of his standing in the Eastern tradition. His writings represent the most intense and personal mystical theology of the medieval East, insisting that direct, conscious experience of the divine light is not reserved for the few but is the normal goal of every Christian life. His Hymns of Divine Love are among the most extraordinary spiritual poems of the medieval period. His insistence on experiential knowledge of God over institutional religion put him in repeated conflict with ecclesiastical authority. He is the fountainhead of the Hesychast tradition that culminated in Gregory Palamas and remains the living core of Eastern Orthodox spirituality.
Odo of Cluny	fl. c. 927–942 AD	Collationes (3 books); Life of Gerald of Aurillac; Occupatio (epic poem); Sermons	As the second abbot of Cluny and the architect of what became the Cluniac reform movement, Odo is one of the most consequential figures in medieval church history even though his personal writings are relatively modest. His reform of monasticism — emphasizing stricter observance of Benedict's Rule, exemption from local episcopal control, and direct subordination to Rome — became the template for the broader Gregorian Reform of the 11th century. The Cluniac network he helped build eventually encompassed hundreds of monasteries across Europe and provided the institutional muscle for the reform papacy. His Life of Gerald of Aurillac is an important early example of lay sanctity. Church historians of monasticism, reform, and the medieval papacy treat him as a foundational figure.
Gerbert of Aurillac (Pope Sylvester II)	fl. c. 972–1003 AD	Letters; mathematical and scientific treatises; On the Rational and the Use of Reason	Gerbert of Aurillac, who became Pope Sylvester II in 999, is one of the most remarkable intellects of the early medieval period — a scholar who studied in Islamic Spain, reintroduced the abacus and armillary sphere to the Latin West, promoted Arabic numerals, and was so far ahead of his contemporaries in science and mathematics that later generations accused him of sorcery. His pontificate, the first of the new millennium, was a landmark in the reform papacy's development and in the relationship between the papacy and the Ottonian emperors. His letters are a primary source for late 10th-century intellectual and political history. He represents the moment when Western European scholarship began its slow recovery of the classical and Islamic scientific traditions that would fuel the 12th-century renaissance.
11th Century (c. 1000–1100 AD)			
Peter Damian	fl. c. 1042–1072 AD	Book of Gomorrhah; Letters; On Divine Omnipotence; Life of Romuald	Peter Damian was the most uncompromising voice of the 11th-century reform movement that sought to purge the church of simony (purchase of church offices) and clerical sexual misconduct. His Book of Gomorrhah is the most explicit medieval treatise on clerical sodomy and the most forceful early call for disciplinary action against it — a document of enduring historical relevance. His letters to popes, emperors, and clergy are primary sources for the Gregorian Reform. His Life of Romuald founded the Camaldolese monastic order. A cardinal who repeatedly tried to resign his rank to return to monastic life, he embodies the tension between prophetic reform and institutional church power that defined the 11th century. He was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1828.
Berengar of Tours	fl. c. 1040–1088 AD	On the Holy Supper (De Sacra Coena); Letters	Berengar of Tours ignited the first major public eucharistic controversy of the medieval period by denying that the bread and wine are physically transformed into Christ's body and blood, insisting instead on a spiritual or symbolic presence. His position was condemned at multiple councils and he was forced to sign recantations he later repudiated, most famously the extreme physicalist formula of 1059. The controversy he generated forced the church to develop precise philosophical language for eucharistic theology, ultimately producing the doctrine of transubstantiation (formally defined at Lateran IV in 1215). Without Berengar, scholastic sacramental theology as we know it may not have developed when and how it did. He is essential for any historian of medieval doctrine, sacramental theology, or the development of scholasticism.
Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand)	fl. c. 1073–1085 AD	Dictatus Papae; Letters and Decrees; Register	Gregory VII's Dictatus Papae (1075) — 27 terse propositions asserting absolute papal supremacy over all bishops, councils, and emperors — is one of the most explosive documents in the history of Western Christianity. Its claims that the pope alone can convoke universal councils, depose emperors, and release subjects from their oaths of allegiance launched the Investiture Controversy, the defining political-ecclesiastical conflict of the medieval West. His dramatic excommunication and humiliation of Emperor Henry IV at Canossa (1077) — forcing the emperor to stand barefoot in the snow for three days to seek absolution — is the iconic moment of medieval papal power at its height. Gregory died in exile, defeated politically but theologically triumphant; his program shaped the canon law, ecclesiology, and political theory of the entire High Middle Ages.

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Michael Psellus	fl. c. 1040–1078 AD	Chronographia; On the Operations of Daemons; philosophical and theological orations	The most learned Byzantine intellectual of the 11th century, Psellus was a philosopher, historian, theologian, and court official whose career spanned seven imperial reigns. His Chronographia is the most vivid and psychologically penetrating Byzantine historical narrative, a primary source for 11th-century Constantinople written by an insider. His revival of Platonic philosophy in Constantinople seeded the Byzantine Platonist tradition that later influenced the Italian Renaissance through scholars who fled after 1453. His theological writings engage the relationship between Christian doctrine and Neoplatonic philosophy. Church historians of Byzantium, Eastern Orthodoxy, and the intellectual background of the Great Schism of 1054 rely on him as an indispensable primary source.
Anselm of Canterbury	fl. c. 1070–1109 AD	Proslogion; Cur Deus Homo (Why God Became Man); Monologion; On Truth; Letters	Anselm is the Father of Scholasticism — the thinker who established the method of applying rigorous logical analysis to theological questions that dominated medieval theology for four centuries. His Proslogion contains the ontological argument for the existence of God — one of the most discussed philosophical arguments in history, still generating responses from philosophers today. His Cur Deus Homo is the foundational work of satisfaction atonement theory, arguing that the infinite offense of sin required an infinite satisfaction that only a God-man could provide — a framework that shaped Western atonement theology across Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed traditions. His formula 'faith seeking understanding' (fides quaerens intellectum) defined the Scholastic program. He was the most important theologian in the Latin West between Augustine and Aquinas.
12th Century (c. 1100–1200 AD)			
Bernard of Clairvaux	fl. c. 1115–1153 AD	On Loving God; On Consideration; Sermons on the Song of Songs (86); Letters (over 500)	Bernard of Clairvaux was the most powerful churchman of the 12th century — a monastic reformer, mystical theologian, crusade preacher, and de facto arbiter of church politics who advised popes and humiliated Abelard. His 86 Sermons on the Song of Songs are the summit of medieval affective mysticism, interpreting the biblical love poetry as an allegory of the soul's union with Christ in a tradition that influenced every subsequent Western mystic. On Loving God is the most elegant medieval treatise on Christian motivation. On Consideration, written for his former pupil Pope Eugenius III, is a penetrating critique of papal administration and a guide to contemplative governance. As co-founder and promoter of the Cistercian order, his influence on medieval monasticism rivals Benedict's. He was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1830.
Peter Abelard	fl. c. 1100–1142 AD	Sic et Non; Theologia; Historia Calamitatum; Ethics (Know Yourself); Commentary on Romans	Abelard is the most provocative intellect of the 12th century — the man who more than any other established the dialectical method of theology that became Scholasticism's core procedure. His Sic et Non (Yes and No) juxtaposed contradictory statements from patristic authorities without resolving them, implicitly demanding that reason adjudicate between them — a methodological revolution. His moral theology in Ethics pioneered the analysis of intention as the determining factor in moral judgment. His Historia Calamitatum — the story of his love affair with Heloise, castration, and monastic career — is the most personal and psychologically revealing autobiography of the medieval period. Twice condemned by Bernard of Clairvaux, his ideas nonetheless permeated medieval theology through his students, including Peter Lombard.
Hugh of St. Victor	fl. c. 1120–1141 AD	Didascalicon; On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith; Mystic Ark of Noah; Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy	Hugh of St. Victor is the greatest theologian-educator of the 12th century — a thinker who held together mystical theology, rigorous scholarship, and practical pedagogy in a synthesis that influenced every subsequent medieval theological school. His Didascalicon is the most comprehensive medieval guide to the order of learning — what to read, in what order, and why — and established the canon of studies for medieval theological education. On the Sacraments is the first medieval systematic theology to give the sacraments a comprehensive theological treatment, directly influencing Peter Lombard. His mystical theology, drawing on Pseudo-Dionysius and Augustine, established the Victorine school as the leading center for the integration of scholarship and contemplation. Thomas Aquinas cited him as 'a second Augustine.'
Peter Lombard	fl. c. 1145–1160 AD	Four Books of Sentences; Commentaries on the Psalms and Pauline Epistles	Peter Lombard's Four Books of Sentences became the standard theological textbook of the medieval university system for over four centuries — every major theologian from the 13th through 16th centuries, including Aquinas, Bonaventure, Scotus, Ockham, and Luther, wrote a commentary on the Sentences as part of their academic formation. Organized around the Trinity, Creation and Sin, the Incarnation, and the Sacraments, it collected authoritative patristic statements on every major theological question and presented them for systematic analysis. Though Lombard himself was not a speculative genius, his organizational achievement created the common framework within which all medieval theology was conducted. No single textbook in Christian history has had a longer or more universal pedagogical dominance.
Hildegard of Bingen	fl. c. 1141–1179 AD	Scivias; Book of Life's Merits; Book of Divine Works; Physica; Causae et Curae; musical compositions	Hildegard of Bingen is the most multi-talented woman in medieval church history — a visionary theologian, natural scientist, composer, medical writer, and prolific correspondent whose output staggers modern scholars. Her three major visionary works — received, she insisted, as direct divine illumination — constitute a comprehensive theological worldview integrating creation, redemption, ethics, and eschatology in vivid symbolic imagery. Her 77 musical compositions constitute the largest surviving body of medieval monophonic music by a single composer, still performed and recorded today. Her medical writings (Physica and Causae et Curae) are primary sources for medieval natural science and medicine. Her correspondence with popes, emperors, abbots, and abbesses makes her letters a primary source for 12th-century church politics. Declared a Doctor of the Church in 2012.

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Gratian	fl. c. 1130–1150 AD	Decretum (Concordance of Discordant Canons)	Gratian's Decretum — a systematic compilation and harmonization of centuries of contradictory church law — is to canon law what Peter Lombard's Sentences is to theology: the foundational textbook that organized an entire discipline and made systematic study possible. Applying the dialectical method to legal sources, Gratian collected papal decretals, conciliar canons, and patristic statements, noted their contradictions, and proposed resolutions — creating the first comprehensive and internally coherent body of Western canon law. It became the basis of all subsequent canonical jurisprudence and remained in use until the 1917 Code of Canon Law. Historians of medieval law, church governance, the papacy, and the relationship between church and state cannot work without it.
John of Salisbury	fl. c. 1150–1180 AD	Policraticus; Metalogicon; Historia Pontificalis; Letters	John of Salisbury is the finest Latin prose stylist of the 12th century and the most sophisticated political thinker of the medieval period before Aquinas. His Policraticus is the first medieval treatise on political philosophy, analyzing the nature of the commonwealth, the duties of rulers, and — controversially — the conditions under which tyrannicide might be justified. His Metalogicon is the most important 12th-century defense of classical logic and the liberal arts, and a primary source for the schools of his day including a firsthand account of studying under Abelard. His Historia Pontificalis is a primary source for the papal court and the Council of Reims. A personal friend of Thomas Becket, he witnessed Becket's murder in Canterbury Cathedral — an event he recorded in letters that are primary historical sources.
Joachim of Fiore	fl. c. 1183–1202 AD	Exposition on the Apocalypse; Psalter of Ten Strings; Book of Concordance	Joachim of Fiore is the most influential prophetic thinker of the medieval period — a Cistercian abbot whose historical-prophetic scheme divided all of history into three ages corresponding to the Trinity: the Age of the Father (Old Testament), the Age of the Son (the church age), and the coming Age of the Spirit (a new era of contemplative Christianity). His identification of specific historical figures with apocalyptic symbols — and his expectation of a new spiritual order that would supersede the institutional church — generated a tradition of Joachimist prophecy that persisted through the Franciscan Spirituals, Cola di Rienzo, and eventually influenced modern revolutionary ideologies. Historians of apocalypticism, medieval prophecy, and the theology of history — including Adventist prophetic interpreters — must engage his framework.
13th Century (c. 1200–1300 AD)			
Pope Innocent III	fl. c. 1198–1216 AD	Letters and Decretals; sermons; On the Misery of the Human Condition; Fourth Lateran Council documents	Innocent III presided over what many historians regard as the apex of medieval papal power. His pontificate produced the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) — the most legislatively significant council between Nicaea and Trent, which defined transubstantiation, mandated annual confession, organized the crusades, regulated Jewish life, and reformed clergy. His letters and decretals are primary sources for virtually every major political and ecclesiastical event of his era: the Magna Carta crisis, the Albigensian Crusade, the approval of the Franciscan and Dominican orders, and the ongoing struggle with the Holy Roman Empire. Historians of medieval ecclesiology, canon law, crusade history, and the theology of papal supremacy all depend on his extensive documentary record.
Francis of Assisi	fl. c. 1208–1226 AD	Earlier Rule; Later Rule; Testament; Canticle of the Creatures; Letters	Francis of Assisi is the most beloved figure of medieval Christianity and the founder of the Franciscan order, which became one of the most transformative institutions in the history of the Western church. His insistence on absolute poverty — not just personal but corporate, with the order owning nothing — created the most radical critique of institutional wealth in medieval Christianity and generated the poverty controversy that convulsed the Franciscan order and the papacy for a century after his death. His Canticle of the Creatures is the first major poem in the Italian vernacular and the earliest document of Christian ecological spirituality. His Testament is the most revealing primary source for his own vision of the movement. Church historians of mendicant orders, poverty theology, lay spirituality, and medieval reform all center on him.
Albert the Great (Albertus Magnus)	fl. c. 1240–1280 AD	Summa Theologiae (his own); commentaries on Aristotle; On Animals; On Minerals; On the Causes of the Properties of the Elements	Albert the Great was the most encyclopedic mind of the 13th century — a Dominican theologian who set himself the task of making the entire body of Aristotelian and Arabic science intelligible to the Latin West. His commentaries on Aristotle's complete works were the foundational act of the Scholastic synthesis of faith and reason, and his most important contribution was teaching Thomas Aquinas, whose theological achievement was built directly on Albert's preparatory work. His natural scientific writings make him a primary source for the history of medieval science, botany, zoology, and mineralogy. He was the first to isolate arsenic and conducted original empirical observations unusual for his era. He was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1931 and is the patron saint of scientists.
Bonaventure	fl. c. 1250–1274 AD	Journey of the Mind to God (Itinerarium); The Soul's Journey into God; Life of Francis; Commentary on the Sentences; Breviloquium	Bonaventure — the 'Seraphic Doctor' — is the greatest Franciscan theologian and the most important mystical theologian of the 13th century. His Itinerarium Mentis in Deum (Journey of the Mind to God) is a compact masterpiece tracing the soul's ascent through the six wings of the Seraph to union with God, integrating Augustinian illumination, Franciscan affectivity, and Pseudo-Dionysian mysticism. As Minister General of the Franciscan order (1257–1274) he navigated the devastating poverty controversy and produced the official Life of Francis that became the order's authorized biography. His theological method — integrating reason, Scripture, and mystical experience — stands as the alternative Franciscan synthesis to Aquinas's Dominican Aristotelianism, and the two together define the range of High Scholastic theology.

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Thomas Aquinas	fl. c. 1252–1274 AD	Summa Theologiae; Summa Contra Gentiles; Disputed Questions; Commentary on Sentences; biblical commentaries	Thomas Aquinas is the most influential theologian in the history of Roman Catholic Christianity and one of the greatest systematic thinkers in any tradition. His Summa Theologiae — left unfinished at his death — is the most comprehensive and rigorously organized theological synthesis ever attempted, integrating Aristotelian philosophy, Augustinian theology, and the full range of patristic tradition into a unified hierarchical structure of knowledge. His five arguments for the existence of God, his natural law ethics, his sacramental theology, and his account of grace and virtue remain the normative framework for Catholic theology by explicit magisterial endorsement (Leo XIII's Aeterni Patris, 1879). His Summa Contra Gentiles demonstrates the reasonableness of Christian faith to non-Christian interlocutors. He was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1568 and is the patron of Catholic universities.
Roger Bacon	fl. c. 1247–1292 AD	Opus Majus; Opus Minus; Opus Tertium; Compendium of the Study of Philosophy	Roger Bacon is the most important proto-scientific thinker of the medieval church — a Franciscan friar who insisted, against the dominant deductive method of Scholasticism, that knowledge of the natural world required direct observation and experiment. His Opus Majus, a massive proposal for the reform of theological and scientific education sent to Pope Clement IV, argued that mathematics, optics, experimental science, and language study were essential tools for understanding Scripture and defending the faith. His work on optics, including analysis of lenses and the rainbow, anticipates modern physics. Though his actual experimental practice was limited, his methodological arguments for empiricism place him at the headwaters of the Western scientific tradition. He is a primary source for medieval attitudes toward science, technology, and the relationship between faith and natural knowledge.
Ramon Llull	fl. c. 1275–1316 AD	Ars Magna; Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men; Blanquerna; Book of Contemplation	Ramon Llull is one of the most original and peculiar figures of medieval Christianity — a Catalan mystic, philosopher, novelist, and missionary theorist who wrote in Latin, Catalan, and Arabic and devoted his life to the conversion of Muslims and Jews through reasoned argument. His Ars Magna — a combinatorial logical system using rotating wheels to generate all possible theological propositions — is a forerunner of formal logic and computational thinking. His Blanquerna is the first great novel in a Romance language and contains the earliest known version of the Lord's Prayer in Catalan. His insistence on learning Arabic and engaging Islamic philosophy directly makes him a pioneer of Christian-Muslim dialogue. He died, reportedly stoned by a Muslim mob in North Africa, as a missionary martyr.
14th Century (c. 1300–1400 AD)			
Meister Eckhart	fl. c. 1298–1328 AD	German Sermons; Latin Works (Opus Tripartitum); Talks of Instruction; The Book of Divine Comfort	Meister Eckhart is the most radical and speculative of the medieval German mystics and one of the most controversial theologians of the medieval period. His German sermons — preached to Dominican nuns and lay audiences — brought sophisticated Neoplatonic mystical theology into the vernacular for the first time, speaking of the 'birth of the Word in the soul,' the 'spark of the soul' (Seelenfünklein) that is one with God, and the necessity of 'detachment' (Abgeschiedenheit) from all created things including one's own self. Twenty-eight propositions from his works were condemned by Pope John XXII in 1329, but the condemnation paradoxically preserved his texts and amplified his influence on Tauler, Ruusbroec, and the entire Rhineland mystical tradition. Modern theologians from Heidegger to liberation theologians have engaged him as a primary interlocutor.
Gregory Palamas	fl. c. 1330–1359 AD	Triads in Defense of the Holy Hesychasts; The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters; Homilies	Gregory Palamas is the defining theologian of Eastern Orthodox mysticism and the figure whose work completed the Hesychast synthesis that has shaped Orthodox spirituality ever since. His central theological contribution — the distinction between God's unknowable essence and His knowable energies, through which real union with God is possible — was defined as Orthodox dogma at the Council of Constantinople (1351) and remains the normative framework for Eastern Orthodox theology of grace, prayer, and deification. His defense of Hesychast prayer practice (including bodily techniques of concentrated prayer and the vision of the uncreated divine light) against the humanist Barlaam of Calabria defined the boundary between Eastern and Western Christian spirituality. The essence-energies distinction is the central point of ongoing Catholic-Orthodox theological dialogue.
William of Ockham	fl. c. 1317–1347 AD	Summa of Logic; Dialogue on Papal and Royal Power; Eight Questions on Papal Power; Quodlibetal Questions	William of Ockham is the most important philosopher-theologian of the 14th century and the man whose work most decisively broke the High Scholastic synthesis of faith and reason. His nominalism — the position that universal concepts are merely mental names with no corresponding reality, known as 'Ockham's razor' — undermined the metaphysical foundations of Thomistic theology and opened the way for both the via moderna in theology and the empirical tradition in science. His political writings, developed during his conflict with Pope John XXII over Franciscan poverty, are the most sophisticated medieval arguments for conciliarism and the limitation of papal authority — directly influencing Marsilius of Padua and the conciliarist movement. Luther later claimed to be an Ockhamist, and Ockham's influence on the Reformation's epistemological foundations is pervasive.
John Wycliffe	fl. c. 1365–1384 AD	On the Truth of Sacred Scripture; On the Church; On Civil Dominion; On the Eucharist; English Bible translation (supervised)	John Wycliffe is the most important pre-Reformation reformer in the English-speaking world — the 'Morning Star of the Reformation' whose ideas on Scripture, the church, and the sacraments anticipated Luther by 150 years. His doctrine of dominion — that all authority is grounded in grace, so that a sinful pope or king forfeits legitimate authority — provided the theoretical basis for attacking papal wealth and power. His denial of transubstantiation brought condemnation but articulated a position later adopted by Reformed Protestants. His insistence that Scripture alone is the supreme authority and his sponsorship of the first complete English Bible translation made the vernacular Bible a political as well as theological program. His followers, the Lollards, survived underground until the Reformation. He directly inspired Jan Hus, whose martyrdom ignited the Hussite Wars.

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15th Century (c. 1400–1500 AD)			
Jan Hus	fl. c. 1402–1415 AD	On the Church (De Ecclesia); Letters from Prison; Sermons; Czech biblical translations	Jan Hus is the most important martyr of the pre-Reformation period and the figure whose execution transformed a theological controversy into a national and military uprising. Rector of the University of Prague and preacher at the Bethlehem Chapel (where he preached in Czech to enormous crowds), Hus drew heavily on Wycliffe to argue that the church's true head is Christ alone and that a pope living in mortal sin is no true pope. Summoned to the Council of Constance under an imperial safe-conduct that was then dishonored, he was burned at the stake on July 6, 1415. His martyrdom launched the Hussite Wars — 15 years of conflict in which Czech armies repeatedly defeated crusading forces — and created the first successful national Reformation, directly inspiring Luther a century later. Luther's discovery that he agreed with Hus was a turning point in his own break with Rome.
Thomas à Kempis	fl. c. 1400–1471 AD	The Imitation of Christ (4 books); Chronicles of Mount St. Agnes; biographies of Gerard Groote and Florens Radewijns	The Imitation of Christ is the most widely read Christian devotional book after the Bible itself, translated into more languages than any other Christian text except Scripture. Written in the tradition of the Devotio Moderna — the reform movement centered on practical piety, regular meditation, and interior conversion rather than theological speculation — it distills medieval mystical theology into accessible, rhythmic prose of extraordinary spiritual power. Its four books guide the reader from moral reform through interior life to the consolations of the eucharist, with a consistent emphasis on self-knowledge, humility, and love of Christ over intellectual achievement. Figures as diverse as Thomas More, Ignatius of Loyola, John Wesley, and Thomas à Becket's biography all testify to its transforming influence. It is the single most personally formative text in Western Christian devotional history.
Nicholas of Cusa	fl. c. 1430–1464 AD	On Learned Ignorance (De Docta Ignorantia); On Conjectures; The Vision of God; Catholic Concordance	Nicholas of Cusa — philosopher, theologian, mathematician, cardinal, and papal legate — is the most original thinker of the 15th century and a genuine bridge figure between medieval and modern thought. His On Learned Ignorance argues that the infinite God infinitely exceeds all human concepts, and that the highest human wisdom is the recognition of its own ignorance — a position that integrates Pseudo-Dionysian apophatic theology with humanist epistemology. His mathematical mysticism — using the concepts of the infinite, the minimum, and the maximum — anticipates modern concepts of infinity and influenced Giordano Bruno and Leibniz. His Catholic Concordance, written for the Council of Basel, is the most sophisticated conciliarist ecclesiology of the period. His irenic On the Peace of Faith is the most significant early Christian theology of religious pluralism.