CH 274: The Early Medieval Church

Spring, 2011: **PASTORS: CREATING AN IDEAL IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES**

**Time:** Tuesdays, 6:00-8:30 P.M.
**Place:** Room 110, Old Divinity School
**Prerequisite:** CH 13 or the equivalent
**Instructor:** Keefe
**Office:** 316 Old Divinity School Building
**Phone:** 660-3469; skeefe@div.duke.edu

**Description**

The purpose of this seminar is to examine the portrayal of the pastor in the early Middle Ages (6th-9th centuries). It was a period of great political transition. The church had to meet the challenge of Germanic culture and beliefs, but perhaps more significantly, of the breakdown of Roman institutions such as schools, the army, and courts of justice. The church took on the roles of educator, judge, defender of the poor and oppressed, manumittor, and arbitrator in civil disputes. The pastor becomes a critical figure, both socially and politically. The church is unavoidably entangled in the world. How did she avoid becoming of the world? The argument of this seminar is that the material we will be reading was written to create the ideal pastor and set a standard of Christian living based on monastic ideals.

I have broken down our meetings into different themes, as you will see on the schedule below. This seminar will encourage discussion in class and in your written assignments of the ideals and challenges of the 21st century pastor. “Leadership” and “engagement” are pressure words at DDS. Our readings may foster discussion on the extremely various ways these requirements of the 21st century pastor can be understood.

**Requirements**

1. **Weekly Reading Assignment.** The following books or xeroxes are listed in the order we will be reading them. Books with an asterisk are available at Cokesbury (located in the New Divinity School). If you purchase the book elsewhere, please make sure to get the same edition so that we are on the same page in class discussion of the book. The xeroxed reading will be handed out in class.

2. Each week you will be asked to write a 2-3 page response to the week’s reading. This may be as creative as you wish, that is, you might attempt to imitate the form of the reading (sermon, story, letter, dialogue, debate, pastoral rule). The point is to bring to our attention some insight you had on the purpose of the author, or the message of the text, or what is conveyed about the relationship of the pastor to his flock or the civil leaders. In the schedule below I have offered some reflections for each reading, on which you may wish to write. We will use your responses in class to discuss the texts.

3. "Archaeology" Report: Each week someone will be asked to give a brief report (no more than 20 minutes) on some piece of archaeological evidence related to our reading. It may be an ancient church, baptistery, town, manuscript, cemetery, liturgical rite, etc. (see Schedule for ideas). The report is to be given orally, but your notes and a list of all the primary and secondary sources you consulted must be handed in. I will help you with sources, but it is important for you to spend time in the library discovering sources previously unknown to you, whether reference works, journals, art and archaeology books, liturgical books, etc.

Illustrate your report as far as possible with slides, pictures from books, postcards, tourist guides, maps, diagrams, videos, tapes, etc. THIS MAY NOT BE A POWER-POINT PRESENTATION, BUT YOU MAY USE THE COMPUTER TO SHOW IMAGES, IF YOU CAN IDENTIFY THE ORIGINAL SOURCE OF THE IMAGE, ITS DATE AND ARTIST OR SCHOOL.

4. A final research paper (typed, 25-30 pages, with full bibliography), on a topic related to our readings that you would
like to explore in greater depth. It could be a church institution such as feeding the poor, ransoming captives, burying the dead. It could be on the position of women, slaves, Jews. It could be a theological debate, or a piece of archaeological evidence. You must submit the thesis of your paper and a preliminary bibliography (using at least one primary source) no later than MARCH 15. In the last three weeks of the course you will present your research paper to the class and we will discuss it. A week before your presentation you must give the class a reading assignment: either the paper itself, or a relevant article or chapter from a book that you found particularly helpful in writing your paper, and a brief statement as to what your paper will argue and what you wish the class to think about. Bring enough copies of your assignment for the entire class. This carefully thought out assignment will be part of the grade of your presentation.

The research paper is due on the day of your presentation. It must conform to proper standards regarding citation of sources (especially if you include artwork), and use of footnotes or endnotes (a reference to a website is NOT acceptable). The paper must have a title page and be paginated. In addition, the paper is your own research paper. To avoid its becoming simply a collection of modern writers' interpretations, you may NOT QUOTE SECONDARY SOURCES IN THE MAIN BODY OF YOUR PAPER. See the attached "Pointers for Writing a Good Research Paper." You should by all means use secondary (modern) sources to help you in your research, but put the information in your own words and give credit to the author in a footnote. You may, of course, quote primary sources (original documents) in the main body of your paper to support your arguments. I will go over this rule in class, but make sure you are clear on it.

This seminar is designed to encourage your independent work in the library, and your grade for the course will be measured largely by your efforts to make use of its resources and your input in class. Your final grade for the course will consist of: weekly participation, weekly written reflections, and archaeology report = 50%; research paper and class presentation of it: 50%.

Schedule (Assignments are DUE on the date given.)

1/18 Introduction

1/25 THE PASTOR AS THE ACCOUNTABLE SERVANT OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD
Reading: Pope Gregory the Great, The Pastoral Rule

For your reflection:

1) Gregory sets out a long series of opposite character types that a pastor should be sensitive to when preaching amendment of life. What pairs of opposites would you choose to preach to your congregation today? (For example, the youth and senior citizens, the sleek and the rednecks, the pregnant unwed and the married soccer moms, the gay and the straight, the Hispanic immigrants and the college professors, the computer-savvy and the un-teched, the lonely and the busy, the depressed and the content, the health-insured and the uninsured, liberals and conservatives.) What would you say to each group to make them aware of the pitfalls of their category?

2) Gregory talks about the physical deformities that once prevented a person in the Old Testament from becoming a priest. He sees these allegorically as defects in spirit. How might the pastor today be overweight, undernourished, out of shape, near-sighted, deaf spiritually (positively and negatively)?

3) For Gregory, what is the first and most important thing a pastor can do for his flock?

4) Gregory, of course, did not have female pastors in mind. How easily or difficultly could his Rule by a pastoral guide for women? Are there differences in the way women exercise their leadership or authority? What models do women pastors use today? Would “shepherdess” fit?

Archaeology Report:

2/1

THE PASTOR AS PREACHER

Reading: Caesarius of Arles, Sermons

For your reflection:

1) Choose one sermon of Caesarius that really “preached” to you, and reflect on why it did so.

2) How does Caesarius show his love for his flock?

3) How does Caesarius in his sermons go about the formation of Christian character? (Consider especially his use of the liturgical year and the Eucharist.)

Archaeology Report: Lérins: What is it? Where is it? Who
were some of its most famous visitors? Describe their regime. What is its importance for the image of the ideal pastor in the formation of western Christianity?

2/8

THE PASTOR AS BISHOP

Reading: Gregory of Tours, The History of the Franks: Intro, p. 7-52;
Map and Preface, p. 60-63;
Book I (p. 65-99);
Book II, chapters 1, 5, 7(part, p. 116-117), 13-17, 20, 22-24, 31, 34, 39;
Book III, chapter 34;
Book IV, chapters 2, 5-7, 11-12, 31 (just p. 226), 32, 35, 36, 42 (just p. 237), 43, 48 (just p. 244);
Book V, chapters 5 (just p. 262), 10, 11, 37, 42-46;
Book VI, chapters 5, 8, 11, 15, 40;
Book VII, chapters 29, 44-45;
Book VIII, chapters 7, 20, 39;
Book IX, chapters 6, 15, 22, 37;
Book X, chapters 1, 13, 23, 25, 31

For your reflection: What guidance might Gregory’s History give us about the role of the bishop today? Should his/her presence in the public arena become lesser/greater? Should he/she be predominantly a preacher/teacher or administrator? Should he/she take bold risks, put their lives and their flocks in jeopardy, become martyrs? Or should they flee persecution, as in Iraq? Should he/she be married, or avoid the distractions of family life? Should he/she own possessions or live with the poor, or in community?

THE PASTOR AS A TEACHER (1)

Reading: Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, p. i-180 (Introduction - Book II, chapter 22)

For your reflection: Bede never traveled more than 20 miles from his monastery all his life, yet he probably did more to evangelize the English than anyone before or since. How did he do it?


THE PASTOR AS A TEACHER (2)


For your reflection:
1) Reflect on Cuthbert’s description of Bede’s death and your feelings as you read it.
2) What is the relationship between his History and the Bible?

Archaeology Report: The Sutton-Hoo Ship Burial

THE PASTOR AS A HOLY MAN (SAINT)

Reading: A. T. Fear, ed., *Lives of the Visigothic Fathers*

For your reflection: Consider these saints as leaders in comparison with pastoral leadership today. Consider
the practices of poverty, fasting, prayer, healing, traveling, and protesting as traits of a holy pastor.


3/8        SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

3/15        THE PASTOR AS A CONFESSOR

Reading: McNeil & Gamer, eds., Medieval Handbooks of Penance

For your reflection:
   1) What do the penitentials tell us about the early medieval perception of sin?
   2) What is the role of the community in the process of reconciliation?

3/22        THE PASTOR AS A MISSIONARY

Reading: Emerton, ed., The Letters of St. Boniface (handout)

For your reflection:
   1) What is the role of the book in Boniface’s evangelization?
   2) How would a modern missionary in a foreign-speaking land compare with Boniface in his/her methods?

Archaeology Report: The Arnulf Ciborium (Portable Altar)

3/29        THE PASTOR AS A LEGISLATOR

Reading: Carolingian Episcopal Capitularies (handout)

For your reflection: Imagine yourself writing a capitulary for your diocese today. What reforms would you include? How would you prioritize them? What tone would you employ? How would you implement them?
Archaeology Report: Ancient Baptisteries of France.
Who were these pastors? Where did they come from? How were they educated? What influence did monasticism have on them?

The answers to these questions can be gleaned from pastors’ own writings and by others writing about them. The readings for the seminar are all primary sources, which means we have to know the context in which they were written and the objective of the
author. A history or a saint’s life is never a straightforward record of facts, but the author is creating an ideal of the faith and life Christians should strive to imitate.

At the same time, these sources are our chief and sometimes our only information about how the church progressed in reality, if one reads between the lines of hagiographic texts, sermons to the people, or handbooks of penance. Modern historians’ textbooks are based on these sources. It is, then, important to understand these sources for what they were and were not, to learn how to read these sources critically.

We need to talk about what is perceived as the most important task of the pastor today, and ask if there is any guidance in our readings. Can they still form us and form our congregations? With your reflections and insights, I believe they can. I encourage those who are going into ministry to try to identify with the material as pastors today (see some suggested questions for reflection in the schedule).