[PHOTO]

[PHOTO CAPTION} *A page from a 12th century Bestiary. Bestiaries, collections of moralising descriptions of animals both real and legendary, were among the most popular books of the 1100s and 1200s. A pseudo-scientific catalogue, bestiary texts were drawn from the Greek Physiologus. The Getty Museum's manuscript is a compilation that includes two rare treatises by Hugo de Fouilloy in addition to the Bestiary. Source: Unknown artist/maker; Hugh of Fouilloy (French, about 1110 - about 1173/1174). From the Getty Open Content Program, 2025*

[INTRO]In some respects, the 13th century is thought by historians to be the apogee of the High Middle Ages. In reality it was a mixed bag for the ordinary man. The Crusades were in full flow, and they helped build the sea powers of Venice and Genoa, and fuelled the early days of the Reconquista in Spain, but the Crusades had begun to lose steam in the Middle East. The papacy was at the height of its political and financial influence, with figures such as Innocent III wielding considerable religious power, often to the detriment of protestant groups, such as the Waldensians and new cults, such as the Cathars.

[TITLE] **The Catholic Church In The 13th Century: a timeline of key events**

[MAIN TEXT]The 13th century saw a succession of influential popes, including Innocent III, Gregory IX, and Boniface VIII. These popes played significant roles in shaping the Church and its relationship with secular powers during a period of change and conflict. Pope Gregory IX founded the Papal Inquisition, while Boniface VIII was best known for his battle for supremacy with King Philip IV of France, a battle which he lost and which ultimately led to a decline in papal power by the end of the century. These popes, along with others of the era, navigated a complex landscape of political, religious, and intellectual challenges, which they did not always rise to, leaving a lasting impact on the Catholic Church and its relationship with the wider world.

Monasticism, the rise of university cities across Europe and axial relationships with religious and educational institutions in Persia, Spain and Egypt, resulted in a fruitful flow of advancements in mathematics, logic, philosophy and theology. In Europe, at this time, Cambridge and Bologna in particular began to come to prominence. In particular, with the publication of treatise by theologians such as Peter Lombard, the scholastic critical model became a touchstone of intellectual argument and ideas. His ideas, as scholasticism began to dominate critical theological ideas, influenced Church doctors, such as Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Albertus Magnus. These theologians added to the heft that the Catholic Church wielded on history in the 13th century.

Scholasticism is a method of theological inquiry that emphasises logical reasoning and the use of dialectic to resolve theological questions. The method led to the development of organised and comprehensive theological systems, often beginning with arguments for the existence of God. Moreover, the rediscovery and assimilation of Aristotle's works, particularly by Aquinas, led to a more rational and philosophical approach to theology. Even so, the century didn’t swallow Aristotelian thought wholesale. The influence of Averroes, Sigurt of Brabant and the publication of the Condemnation of 1277 by the Bishop of Paris, and the Condemnation of Paris in 1277, led to new lines of theological, philosophical and scientific enquiries. Alongside scholasticism, mystical theology also flourished, with figures like Bonaventure exploring the experiential aspects of faith.

Meanwhile, the early 13th century in England witnessed the first serious revolt of the elite against the irascible and unpredictable monarchy of John Lackland, which culminated in the signing of the Magna Carta and the foundations of the extraordinarily long road to modern-day democracy and advancements in legal systems and economics.

It was a century in which civilisations clashed: Christians v Muslims; Mongols v just about everyone in Eurasia. The rise and cruel expansion of the Mongol Empire, led by Genghis Khan and his sons, which, at its peak, would almost touch the gates of Vienna. The Mongol conquests significantly impacted the Muslim world, including the sack of Baghdad in 1258, which led to the decline of the Islamic Golden Age. For every action there is a opposite reaction and it applies to politics as much as science As the Abbasid empire was broken by the Khans, the Mamluk dynasty was established in Egypt. It marked a shift in power in the Middle East and also fuelled harassment of remnant Christian communities in the eastern Mediterranean.

With such a conflict ridden and dynamic century, no wonder that economic growth began to slow down as government resources were often redirected to fund defence. The century ended with the onset of the Great Famine.

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**1200**: Albertus Magnus (1200-1280) is born. He would become, in turn, a Dominican friar, the teacher of Thomas Aquinas, and a prolific writer on various subjects, including theology and natural science.

**1202-1204**: The catastrophic Fourth Crusade gets underway. It was supposed to recapture Jerusalem, what it did was fatally weaken the Byzantine Empire, as the crusading army sacked Constantinople and stayed there. Initially targeted at capturing Jerusalem, the Fourth Crusade resulted in the sack of Constantinople, significantly weakening the Byzantine Empire. There were many reasons for the attack. By the time the Crusaders got to Constantinople they had run out of money. Heavily reliant on Venice for transportation across the Mediterranean, the Venetians charged increasingly expensive carriage rates. Partners in the fourth crusade, the Venetians actively encouraged the Crusaders to attack the city in the hope of expanding their dominance of Mediterranean trade and at the same time increase their profits from the ill-advised venture. The administration of Constantinople was, albeit indirectly, also complicit in the city’s sacking. The Byzantine prince, Alexios IV Angelus (son of the Emperor  calling upon the Fourth Crusade to help him gain power. Hungry for money, the Crusaders agreed, but then Alexios refused to pay for the favour. There were other reasons too: since the split between the eastern and western churches in 1054, over time religious and political differences regularly turned into antagonism. The sack of the city helped fire and deepen these divisions.

**1205:** The Doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo dies in Constantinople. Although blind, Dandolo, was a prominent leader of the fourth crusade and encouraged the sack of Constantinople, partly to eliminate it as a commercial rival of the city state of Venice. Interestingly, if you visit Hagia Sofia, you can still see the headstone of the tomb of Dandolo in one of the doorway of the mosque. His body was removed and likely destroyed when Mehmet the Conqueror took over the city in 1453.

**1206:** Genghis Khan unites the Mongol tribes and establishes the Mongol Empire. Under leaders, such as Genghis Khan, Kublai Khan (Genghis Khan’s grandson), and others, the Mongols expanded across Asia and into Eastern Europe, creating one of the largest contiguous land empires in history.

**1215:** The First Baron’s war in England breaks out. This first outbreak lasted about two years. The barons, led by Robert Fitzwalter, rebelled against the despotic and incompetent rule of King John I, the last of the sons of Henry II. The rule of King John I is often compared, negatively, to that of his father, Henry II, who established Angevin rule across England and much of France. King John had waged a series of conflicts against the French king, Philip II of France, gradually losing much of his family’s land to the French monarch. John quickly acquired the nickname Lackland, in acknowledgement of his lack of military prowess. The King had also begun to row back from the agreement, known as Magna Carta, signed on June 15th that year.

**1215:** The Magna Carta was signed. A beautifully written copy of the Magna Carta can be seen in a glass case at Salisbury Cathedral. The tightly written charter is a document that outlines the protection of church rights and the protection of the barons from illegal imprisonment. Magna Carta held clauses that theoretically noticeably reduced the authority of the King, such as Clause 61, called the ‘security clause’, which allowed the barons to override the King at any time by means of force, a medieval legal process known as *distraint*. The charter also put limits on the feudal payments that landowners (essentially the barons) owed each year to the crown; and a confirmation of rights outlined in the Charter of Liberties. The Charter of Liberties, signed in 1100 by Henry I. The document addressed abuses of royal power by his predecessor William II (who was in fact, Henry’s brother, William Rufus). It specifically forbade the over-taxation of the barons, the abuse of vacant parishes or sees, and the practices of simony (the sale of ecclesiastical privileges) and pluralism (the holding of more than one ecclesiastic position). As the Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton, who drafted Magna Carta, both charters covered almost identical rights. That might have been the case, but in the event, neither side kept to its terms. In the event, the charter was annulled by Pope Innocent III, leading to the First Baron’s War (*see entry above*). John died soon after, but after his death, the regency administration of his son (Henry III), reissued Magna Carta stripped of much of its content. Many years later, short of funds, Henry III reissued Magna Carta again in 1225 in exchange for a grant of new taxes. His son, Edward I, reissued the charter for the last time, in 1297, this time confirming it as part of English law. Now the charter is part of English heritage; but it set the stage for the eventual creation of an English parliament, which set the country on a long, tortuous road to democracy.

**1215:** The Fourth Lateran Council, convened by Pope Innocent III, defined key doctrines. The council addressed a number of issues, including the sacraments, the role of the laity, the treatment of Jews and heretics, and the organisation of the church. The teachings of the Cathars and Waldensians were condemned, resulting in their hounding and persecution by the Church. Innocent also ordered a four-year truce among Christian rulers so that a new Crusade could be launched. The Orthodox churches do not accept any of the five Lateran councils as truly ecumenical. The decree mandating annual confession and the promotion of the doctrine of transubstantiation, raised the profile of the council in Catholic history. Transubstantiation is of particular import, as it raised to the status of miracle, the moment in the alteration of substance by which the bread and wine become in reality the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The council was years in preparation. Over 1200 abbots, priors and bishops attended, as did the representatives of Frederick II, the Holy Roman Emperor of the west. It was the most important council to have taken place, up to the calling of the Council of Trent in 1563, in response to the Reformation and the rise of Protestantism across Europe.

**1216:** Innocent III (1198-1216) dies:

**1216:** Lothario of Segni, known to us asPope Innocent III (1198-1216) dies**.** Considered one of the most powerful Popes of the Middle Ages, Innocent III asserted papal authority over secular rulers and played a key role in the Fourth Crusade. Innocent greatly extended the scope of the Crusades, directing crusades against Muslim Iberia and the Holy Land as well as the Albigensian Crusade against the Cathars in southern France. He personally organised the Fourth Crusade of 1202–1204, which ended in the sack of Constantinople. Innocent III famously annulled the Magna Carta, likely because he believed that the revolt of the barons in England, violated not only the feudal rights of King John I, but also his own. England had been ceded as a papal fief by the King two years earlier, who was coming under pressure from his disaffected barons, and whose lands were steadily encroached upon by the French crown, taking advantage of his incompetence and weakness as a military leader. He agreed to become a vasal of the pope, which included an annual tribute of 1000 marks. The English barons were horrified by this development, but the agreement remained in place until 1365 when the English parliament declared the agreement invalid. Pope Innocent’s commitment to reform resulted in the famous Fourth Lateran Council, which established important doctrines (transubstantiation among them) and a clampdown on simony. However, its pursuit of heretics and Jews rightly attracted criticism and controversy.

**1216:**  The Order of Preachers was founded. We know it today as the Dominican Order, founded by the Spanish priest Dominic de Guzman (1170-1221), in France. The order was quickly approved by Pope Honorius II (1216-1227), shortly before he died. The order was founded to combat heresy and to promote the study of theology. Several notable theologians have been Dominicans, including St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Albert the Great, sometimes called Simon Magnus (1200 to 1260), and St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380. Other prominent figures include Cardinal Cajetan, John of St. Thomas, and more contemporary theologians such as the French priest Yves Congar (1904-1995) and the Peruvian liberation theologist Gustavo Gutiérrez (1928-1924).

**1221:** Giovanni di Fidanza (1221–1274), known to history as Bonaventure, is born. He would become a Franciscan bishop, Minister General of the Franciscans, known as the Order of the Friars Minor and a cardinal. He is best known as a theologian and philosopher. also renowned for his influential writings, including *The Journey of the Mind into God,* and for his role in shaping Franciscan theology and spirituality. He was canonised by Pope Sixtus V, in 1588 and his feast day is July 15th.

**1220:** On the feast of Pentecost in 1220 the first general chapter of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans) was held at Bologna, and a system of democratic government of the monks, who were devoted to poverty and teaching. At the second general chapter, held on Pentecost in 1221, also at Bologna, the order was divided geographically into provinces. After a visit to Venice in 1221, Dominic died at Bologna. A great friend of St Francis, he was deeply influenced by the piety, simplicity and achievements of the Franciscan order, which he sought to replicate, although the order was characterised by a passionate devotion of the faith against the so-called heresies of the Cathars and Waldensians, who the Dominicans helped to suppress, rarely in a kind or sympathetic way. The rise of so many Dominican theologians at the height of the Medieval period however, helped soften the image of the order.

**1221:** St Dominic dies on August 6th 1221, in Bologna, Italy, and was canonised on July 3rd, **1223:** The Franciscan Order, founded by Saint Francis of Assisi, received formal papal approval.

**1225:** Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) was born. He would grow up to become one of the most famous doctors of the Church and influencer in the Medieval period. His stature as an intellectual helped to soften the image of the Dominicans, who would be regularly associated with the callous suppression of heretics in the 13th and 14th centuries. He became celebrated for his theology and philosophical works. He took the scholastic method to a new level and took his inspirations from leading philosophers of ancient Greece. He is regularly invoked by leading Catholic influencers even in the 21st century, by luminaries such as Pope Benedict XIII and Bishop Baron.

**1226:** Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone (c.1181 –1226), better known as Francis of Assisi, dies. Canonised in 1228 by Pope Gregory IX, he is one of the most beloved of saints and alongside St Catherine of Siena is the patron saint of Italy. Commonly portrayed wearing a brown habit with a rope tied around his waist, by the 13th century Italian painter Giotto, the rope is regularly featured as consisting of three knots which represent poverty, chastity, and obedience. His sanctity was defined in his lifetime by the stigmata.

**1227:** Honorius III (1216-1227) dies. Best known for approving the founding of the Franciscan and Dominican order, Pope Honorius III continued the reforms instigated by Pope Innocent II. He also supported the build-up by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II’s efforts to recover the Holy Land from Muslim control, sometimes known as the Fifth Crusade, specifically Emperor Frederick II's crusade, which was launched in 1228, some months after the death of Honorius III. He also was a strong supporter of the 20 year long crusade against the Albigensians in southern France. for his strong support of the Crusades.

**1227:** Gregory IX (1227-1241) succeeds Honorius III as pope. Pope Gregory IX is known for two important developments. First, he ordered the first complete collection of papal decretals, called the Corpus Iuris Canonici, a code of Catholic canon law, which remained a foundation of ecclesiastic law until 1918. Decretals are canonical epistles, written by the pope either alone, or with cardinals, that determine and answer a controversy within the Church’s teaching or administration. His second major act was to establish the so called Papal Inquisition; a series of institutional measures established to combat heresy and enforce religious conformity dating from 1233. There had been other papal enquiries, called inquisitions, but this took the term to a new level. It was centralised, it appointed special inquisitors, selected from religious orders, such as the Dominicans, who were empowered to investigate and prosecute heretics, and under certain conditions apply torture. In 20th century eyes, it was not one of the Church’s finest moments.

**1250:** The Mamluk Sultanate is founded in Egypt.

**1253:** Robert Grosseteste (c. 1175-1253), the English statesman, theologian, and scientist, known for his work on optics and his influence on the development of English theology dies.

**1258:** The Mongol conquest of Baghdad, effectively ending the Abbasid Caliphate.

**1259:** Treaty of Paris is signed between Louis IX of France and Henry III of England.

**1265:** Simon de Montfort convenes the first English Parliament.

**1271-1295:** Marco Polo travels to China, documenting his experiences.

**1274:** The Second Council of Lyons, aiming to reconcile the Eastern and Western churches, but ultimately unsuccessful.

**1277:** The Condemnation of 1277. With so many theological lines of enquiry influenced by Aristotle in the 12th century, it was inevitable that at some point, there would be blowback. In 1277, the Bishop of Paris, Étienne Tempier, issued a treatise, attacking some 219 propositions stemming from Aristotelian thought that was influencing theological debate at the University of Paris. Aristotle’s treatises, such as Physics, and On the Soul, were by 1277 translated into Latin and included in the study curriculum at the university. Some interpretations of Aristotle’s teaching, particularly on natural causes and determinism, clashed with Christian teachings on free will, divine creation, and the possibility of miracles.  The condemnation was not a blanket ban on Aristotle's works, but rather a targeted response to specific interpretations and their perceived implications. It also asserted God’s absolute power over creation, the operation of free will over environmental determinism, and the immortality of the soul (*please see the entries for Siger of Brabant and Averroes*). The condemnation marked a turning point in scholastic philosophy, encouraging a move away from strict adherence to Aristotelian principles and a greater emphasis on divine omnipotence and contingency. It led to a re-evaluation of Aristotelian philosophy and its compatibility with Christian doctrine. Many centuries later, science scholars such as Pierre Duhem (1861-1916), a leader in the study of thermodynamics, argued that the condemnation of 1277 marked a turning point in the development of modern science by encouraging a more critical approach to Aristotle.

**1284:** Siger of Brabant (c. 1240–1284) dies. A controversial figure associated with the ‘Radical Aristotelianism’ movement, who challenged some traditional theological doctrines. Radical Aristotelianism, often associated with Averroism (*see the entry for Averroes in the 12th century timeline*), was a philosophical movement in the 13th and 14th centuries that emphasised the use of reason and Aristotle's philosophy, sometimes leading to conclusions that conflicted with Christian doctrine. Key points of contention included the nature of the soul, the possibility of earthly happiness, and the eternity of the world. Some conclusions derived from Aristotelian philosophy clashed with core Christian beliefs. Aristotle’s proposition of a single, universal intellect (which has ties with Indian Brahmin mystical beliefs), were regarded as contradicting the Catholic belief in the immortality of the individual human soul. The movement is also associated with the theory of ‘double truth’. This concept suggests there can be conflicting truths that result from philosophy and religious dogma, reflecting the tension between them. In today’s world, this is superseded by the addition of scientific truths, creating even more intellectual tension. Despite these considerations, it had a lasting impact on Medieval and Renaissance thought; and there is an argument that its emphasis on reason and natural philosophy, led to the Enlightenment and modern, rigorous, scientific enquiry and the rise of the natural sciences.

**1285:** William of Ockham (1285–1347) is born. Although William is best known largely for his contributions to logic and philosophy, he also had a significant impact on theological thought in the late Middle Ages.

**1291:** The last Crusader stronghold in the Holy Land falls, marking the end of the Crusades.

AI Overview