

Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers

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Bradley, James

Bradwardine, Thomas

Born England, circa 1290

Died London, England, 26 August 1349

Thomas Bradwardine is chiefly known for his writings on mathematics, but may also have produced astronomical tables

Bradwardine enters the historical record in 1321 as a fellow of Balliol College, Oxford. Two years later he migrated to Merton College, where he remained until 1335. Bradwardine became chancellor of Saint Paul's Cathedral, London, in 1337, and some time thereafter he became chaplain to Edward III. Bradwardine preached that the English victories in the Hundred Years' War came from God's will rather than through the influence of celestial bodies. His theological masterwork, *De causa Dei*, emphasized divine action throughout creation. Bradwardine was elected archbishop of Canterbury in 1348, but King Edward quashed the election on a technicality. He received the royal assent in the following year and was consecrated archbishop on 10 July 1349, only to die of the plague six weeks later

At Oxford, Bradwardine chiefly lectured and wrote on mathematical subjects and produced the textbooks *De arithmetica speculativa* and *De geometria speculativa*. Composed in 1328, his *De proportionibus* gave an innovative treatment of velocity in terms of proportions between force and resistance; it helped shape late medieval and early modern approaches to kinematics. Bradwardine's philosophical works include *De continuo*, addressing the continuous or discontinuous nature of matter, and *Insolubilia*, concerning logical paradoxes.

Bradwardine may have compiled astronomical tables for calculating the positions of planets, but this has not been established for certain. It is certain that Bradwardine had an interest in astronomy and astrology. The astronomers John Maudith, Simon Bredon, and William Rede were his colleagues. Bradwardine himself owned astronomical works in manuscript. A theme in his later theological writings was the futility of astrological prediction

Keith Snedegar

Selected References

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