The Universities and the Rise of Scholasticism

2000 Years of Christ’s Power: Volume 2: The Middle Ages: Ch.7
Outline

1. The universities p261

2. The rise of scholasticism
   1. Faith and reason p265
   2. Systematic theology p265
   3. Philosophy and the writings of Aristotle p266

3. Great scholastic theologians
   1. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) p270
   2. Peter Abelard (1079-1142) p273
   3. Peter Lombard (1100-1160) p275
   4. Robert Grosseteste (1168-1253) p278
   5. Alexander of Hales (1170-1245) p279
   6. Bonaventura (1221-74) p280
   7. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) p281
   8. Duns Scotus (1265-1308) p294
   9. William of Ockham (1285-1349) p296
1. The universities

- 970 al-Azhar University, Cairo
  - Influence of Arab universities on European education (e.g. numerals)
  - Channels for flow of knowledge into Western academic institutions

- Western universities – 12th C.
  [Cathedral school (York, 7th C.), law school (Bologna, 890)]
  - Bologna and Notre Dame – *universitas scholarium v universitas magistrorum*

- 80 universities in Western Europe by 1500
  - 4 departments: theology, law, medicine, arts
  - Latin – the language of culture and civilization

- Method of learning
  - Lecture
  - Disputation
  - Outside the monastery – spiritual-academic divide
2. The rise of scholasticism

- Scholasticism = the mainstream theological teaching of the Middle Ages, taught in the schools by ‘the schoolmen’

- Outlook p265
  - Concerned about relationship between faith and reason
  - Aimed at a complete and systematic summary of Christian truth
  - Philosophical explanations - Realists (particulars) v Nominalists (universals)

- 13th C. – philosophy of Aristotle (Nominalist) popular
  - Translations - Arabic > Latin of all of Aristotle’s works
  - Siger of Brabant (1235-82), Averroist - view of creation, human soul
  - ‘Double truth’ theory – set reason and revelation in sharp contrast
  - Plato preferred by traditionalists
  - Schoolmen attempted to harmonize Aristotle with Christian theology
3. Great scholastic theologians

1. (1033-1109) **ANSELM OF CANTERBURY** p270

   • ‘first of the schoolmen’ – before the rise of the universities
   • Born in Aosta – studied at Le Bec – appointed Archbishop of Canterbury
   • Important writings
     - *Monologion* and *Proslogion*
       - Existence is a necessary aspect of perfection therefore a perfect God must exist
     - *Cur deus homo*
       - Ransom-satisfaction theory – voluntary payment to God (not Satan) by Christ for the outrage of sin, but not a penal atonement
   • Anselm’s search
     - It is ‘faith seeking understanding’ - ‘I believe in order that I may understand’
3. Great scholastic theologians

2. (1079-1142) Peter Abelard p273

- Born in Brittany – studied at Notre Dame – lectured in Paris – St Denis monastery
  - ‘the most brilliant Catholic thinker of the 12th century’
  - Heloise affair and Canon Fulbert action

- Important writings
  - Sic et non
    - 158 theological questions set out in Gratian style
    - First to employ this method for theology
    - Stimulated engagement with the great conversation of the Church
3. Great scholastic theologians

3. (1100-60) **PETER LOMBARD** p275

- Born in Lombardy – studied at Bologna & Paris – lectured in ministered in Paris
  - ‘the father of systematic theology’
  - *The* theological textbook of the Middle Ages

- Important writings
  - *Four Books of Sentences* (opinions)
  - Method
  - Sacraments
    - Baptism, holy communion, confirmation, penance, marriage, ordination, extreme unction
    - Causes, not just signs of grace
      - *ex opera operato* (by virtue of the act performed)
3. Great scholastic theologians

4. (1168-1253) **ROBERT GROSSETESTE** p278

- Born in England – Bishop of Lincoln
  - Reformed life and conduct of clergy – preached in English
  - ‘The work of a priest is not giving people the mass, but preaching the living truth.’
- One of the most learned Europeans of his day
- Pioneer scientist
- Precursor of John Wyclif
- Outspoken against:
  - King Henry III – for treating Bishops as civil servants
  - Pope Innocent IV – accused him of being an Antichrist
    - corruption within the Church
3. Great scholastic theologians

5. (1170-1245) **ALEXANDER OF HALES** p279

- Born in Hales, England – Archdeacon – lecturer at Paris University
  - ‘the king of theologians’
  - Tutored Bonaventura

- Legacy:
  - The first schoolman to join the Franciscans
  - The first schoolman to use Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* rather than the Bible as his theological textbook
  - Defined the ‘treasury of merits’ of the saints and for priestly absolution removing inward guilt
3. Great scholastic theologians

6. (1221-74) **BONAVENTURA** p280

- Born in Tuscany – Franciscan – Paris University – head of Franciscans
  - Cardinal and Bishop of Albano
  - ‘prince of mystics’

- Important writings
  - Commentary on the *Sentences*
  - *Legenda Maior*
  - Authoritative exposition of the *Franciscan rule*
  - *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* (The Journey of the Mind to God)
3. Great scholastic theologians

7. (1225-74) THOMAS AQUINAS p281

- Born in Roccasecca, Naples – Dominican – Cologne – Paris – itinerant lecturer
  - Greatest of the schoolmen
  - ‘the dumb ox’
  - Built Catholic faith on Aristotelian foundation
  - Tried to combine Augustine’s theology and Aristotle’s philosophy

- Important writings
  - *Summa Theologiae* – ‘a piece of straw’
    - Nature and Grace
    - Original sin – contra Augustine
  - *Summa contra Gentiles* - apologetic
3. Great scholastic theologians

*Summa Theologiae*

1. God and creation
2. Human nature, sin and virtue
3. Christ, salvation, the sacraments

**Method**

- 512 disputed questions examined
  - Evidence appearing to oppose his view
  - Reasons for his favoured view
  - Supporting arguments for his view
  - Refutation of arguments against his view

**Why famous?**

1. He claimed the existence of God could be proved by reason – ‘five ways’ – cause & effect
2. Our knowledge of God is by way of analogy – God surpasses human understanding and speech
3. He was the first Catholic theologian to fully define *transubstantiation*
3. Great scholastic theologians

Aquinas’s theology (*Thomism*) developed Catholic doctrines

1. Transubstantiation – substance and accidents; sacrament and sacrifice; requiem mass
2. Sin – mortal v venial
3. Merits of the saints and power of indulgences
   i. Link with penance and purgatory
   ii. Papal control over the ‘treasury of merits’

Despite serious differences, many continue to be influenced by his writing
3. Great scholastic theologians

8. (1265-1308) **DUNS SCOTUS** p294

  - ‘the subtle teacher’ or ‘duns’/dunce
- Reason cannot prove the existence of the Christian God
- Emphasised the supremacy of God’s revelation – accept rather than attempt to explain
- Began the process of separating theology from philosophy
- Scotus v Aquinas on Mary – immaculate conception?
  - Each Order followed their theologian - Franciscans upheld sinlessness, Dominicans denied it
  - 1854 - became official RC doctrine
- *Scotism* – few followers today

**Important writings**
- Commentaries on Lombard’s *Sentences*
3. Great scholastic theologians

9. (1285-1349) **WILLIAM OF OCKHAM** p296

- Born in Ockham, Surrey – Franciscan – Oxford – Avignon – Germany
- Heresy charges – excommunicated
- Against papacy
- Reason should be used to examine Scripture rather than attempt to prove God
- Semi-Pelagian – ‘neo-Pelagianism’ – *via moderna*
  - man can merit God’s grace by ‘doing his best’
  - Denied bondage of the will
  - Predestination based on God’s foreknowledge of natural human effort
- Gabriel Biel (1420-95) ‘the last of the schoolmen’ – Tubingen – greatest advocate
- Opposed by Thomas Bradwardine, Gregory of Rimini, John Wyclif

“This helps us to understand the forceful way in which the Protestant Reformers denounced scholasticism: they were, in part, condemning the neo-Pelagian theology of Ockham, Biel and the *via moderna*, which made salvation into the fruit of natural human free-will and merit, rather than (as the Reformers believed) the fruit of God’s sovereign grace.” p299
Extracts

• Anselm of Canterbury: p300
  *Proslogion* ch.1: A schoolman’s heart: faith seeking understanding
  *Cur deus homo* ch11-13,15: on sin and satisfaction
  *Third Prayer to Mary*: the medieval heart’s love for the Virgin Mary
• Peter Abelard p306
  *History of my Calamities*: the schoolman as sinner: love for Heloise
  *Sic et non*: Preface: how to read the Scriptures and the best theologians
• Peter Lombard, *The Four Books of Sentences*: on Christology and Sacraments p309
• Bonaventura, *The Journey of the Mind to God* ch.7:5,6: the schoolman as mystic p310
• Thomas Aquinas p312
  *Summa Theologiae*: Part 1: Q.23: article 5: on predestination
  *Summa Theologiae*: Part 3: Q.68: article 2: on baptismal regeneration
  *Summa Theologiae*: Part 3: Q.75: article 1: on transubstantiation
• Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense*: Part 3: article 19: on salvation p320
Further reading

1. Austin, Bill, *Austin’s Topical History of Christianity*, p.161-95


3. Miller, Andrew, *Miller’s Church History: From the First to the Twentieth Century*, ‘The Silver Line of Sovereign Grace,’ p.403-32

