

Sunday, March 13, 2011—Grace Life School of Theology—*Church History: A Tale of Two Churches*—Lesson 26 The “Christian” Middle Ages: The Internal History of the Catholic Church, Part 2

Scholasticism

- Alister E. McGrath, author of *Christian Theology: An Introduction* informs his readers that a complete definition of scholasticism is difficult to the due to the varied nature of the movement. Nonetheless, McGrath offers the following working definition:
 - “Scholasticism is best regarded as the medieval movement, flourishing in the period 1200-1500, which placed emphasis upon the rational justification of religious belief, and the systematic presentation of those beliefs. Scholasticism thus does not refer to a specific system of beliefs, but to a particular way of organizing theology—a highly developed method of presenting material, making fine distinctions, and attempting to achieve a comprehensive view of theology.” (McGrath, 34)
- “. . .scholasticism may be argued to have produced vitally important work in a number of key areas of Christian theology, especially in relation to the role of reason and logic in theology. The writings of Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham—often singled out as the three most influential of all scholastic writers—make massive contributions to this area of theology, which have served as landmarks ever since.” (McGrath, 34)
- Paul Enns, author of *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, also comments on the nature and origin of Scholasticism in his chapter on “Medieval Theology.” Enns states, “Scholasticism is the term given to the monastic schools called *scholae* during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It was there that scholars came to study in order to defend and explain the faith from a rational point of view. They did not endeavor to uncover new truth but sought to defend the doctrines of the church through reason.” (Enns, 435)
- “Scholasticism became prominent in large part because of the translation in the twelfth century of the works of Aristotle. Scholastics followed the deductive logic of Aristotle in their approach to understanding biblical truth. There were three forms of Scholasticism:
 - *Realism*—which followed Plato, taught that universal ideas exist apart from individual objects. Anselm and Bonaventura were prominent realists.
 - *Moderate Realists*—who followed Aristotle, taught that universal ideas such as truth and goodness have an objective existence but are not separate from their existence in individual things. Peter Abelard and Thomas Aquinas were representative of this view.
 - *Nominalism*—which was a reaction against realism, taught that ideas have no existence outside the mind. Ockham represented this view. Nominalists denied anything outside of human experience; hence, they denied the Trinity.” (Enns, 436)

- Shelley informs his reads that the goal of the Schoolmen (as they are sometimes called) was twofold: to reconcile Christian doctrine and human reason and to arrange the teachings of the church into an orderly system. (Shelley, 195)
- “A free search for the truth was never in view since the chief doctrines of the Christian faith were regarded as fixed. The purpose of discussion was to show the reasonableness of the doctrines and to explain their implications.” (Shelley, 195)
- *Anselm of Canterbury* (c. 1033-1109) born in Italy, but soon moved to France, he quickly mastered the arts of logic and grammar, and acquired a formidable reputation as a teacher. Anselm made decisive contributions in two areas of discussion: proofs for the existence of God, and the rational interpretation of Christ’s death upon the cross. (McGrath, 43)
- In *Proslogion*, Anselm sets himself about the task of formulating an argument which will lead to the existence and character of God as the highest good. The resulting analysis is often known as the Ontological Argument for the existence of God.
- Anselm’s work demonstrates a clear appeal to reason in matters of theology. “Anselm affirmed that no one can completely grasp God’s actions. Yet he denied that God contradicted logic; to the contrary, logic reflected the order and design of creation, and this orderliness pointed to the glory and power of God.” (Jones, 88)
- Anselm’s most important work is *Cur Deus homo* (“Why God became man”). In this work Anselm seeks to set out a rational demonstration of the necessity of God becoming man, and an analysis of the benefits which accrue to humanity as a result of the incarnation and obedience of the Son of God. (McGrath, 43)
- Paul Enns, reports that Anselm taught that “through sin man had robbed God of the honor that was due Him. God could elect either to punish sin or to provide satisfaction whereby His honor would be vindicated by providing the gift of His sin. He chose the latter and through his death Christ brought honor back to God.” (Enns, 437)
- *Thomas Aquinas* (1225-74) is referred to by Latourette as the prince of the schoolmen. (Latourette, 509) Aquinas was born at the castle Roccasecca in Italy the youngest son of count Landulf Aquino. Nicknamed “the dumb ox” due to his physical stature, Aquinas decided to join the Dominican order in 1244. Desiring him to become a Benedictine, his brothers forcibly imprisoned him in the family castle for one year hoping he would change his mind. Eventually Aquinas got his way, became a Dominican as well as one of the most important religious thinkers of the Middle Ages. (McGrath, 44)
- “In 1266, he began his most famous of his many writings, usually known by its Latin title, *Summa Theologica*. In this work, Thomas developed a detailed analysis of key aspects of Christian theology (such as the role of reason and faith), as well as a detailed analysis of key doctrinal questions (such as the divinity of Christ). The work is divided into three parts, with the second part subdivided into two. Part I deals chiefly with God the creator; Part II with the restoration of humanity to God; and Part III with the manner in which the person and work of Christ bring about the salvation of humanity.” (McGrath, 44)

- Amongst Aquinas' key contributions to theology the following are of critical importance:
 - The Five Ways—arguments for the existence of God:
 - *The First Way*—steams from the observation that things in the world are in motion or change. The world is not static, but is dynamic. Things don't just move—they are moved. Each cause of motion must also have a cause. Aquinas reasoned that there must be a single cause right at the origin of the series.
 - *The Second Way*—begins with the idea of causation. One event (the effect) is explained by the influence of another (the cause). Aquinas argued that all events must be traced back to a single original cause—which is God.
 - *The Third Way*—deals with the difference between contingent and necessary beings. God is a necessary being, human are contingent being according to Aquinas. Therefore, he argues that a being comes into existence because something which already exists brought it into being. In other words, our existence is caused by another being, i.e., God.
 - *The Fourth Way*—begins from human values, such as truth, goodness, and nobility. Where do these values come from? What causes them? Aquinas argues that there must be something which is in itself true, good, and noble, and that this brings into being our ideas of truth, goodness, and nobility. The origin of these ideas is God, who is their original cause.
 - *The Fifth Way*—is the “teleological argument itself. Aquinas notes that the world shows obvious traces of intelligent design. This design is result of a designer or someone or something else. Arguing from this observation, Aquinas concludes that the source of this natural ordering must be conceded to be God. (McGrath, 160-162)
 - Principle of Analogy—provides the theological foundation for knowing God through the creation. “The fact that God created the world points to a fundamental “analogy of being” between God and world. There is a continuity between God and the world on account of the expression of the being of God in the being of the world. For this reason, it is legitimate to use entities within the created order as analogies for God. In doing this, theology does not reduce god to the level of a created object or being; it merely affirms that there is a likeness or correspondence between God and that being, which allows the latter to act as a signpost to God. A created entity can be like God, without being identical to God.” (McGrath, 162)
 - Relation Between Faith and Reason—working under the assumption that the Christian faith is rational, Aquinas theorized that the faith can be supported and explored through reason. Aquinas' Five Ways illustrate his belief that reason is capable of lending support to the ideas of faith. However, he did not believe that the Christian faith was limited to what could be ascertained by reason. Faith goes beyond reason, having access to truths and insights of revelation, which

reason could not hope to father or discover unaided. Reason has the role of building upon what is known by revelation, exploring what its implications might be. In this sense, for Aquinas theology was a rational discipline because it used rational methods to build upon and extend what is known by revelation. (McGrath, 213)

- Philip Schaff refers to Aquinas as the “prince of the schoolmen” and places them next to Augustine and Origen in terms of their theological significance. (Schaff, 661)
- While professing to believe in the Scriptures were the only final authority and that the testimony of the church fathers was only probable (Schaff, 667) Aquinas held unswervingly to the following Catholic doctrines in his magnum opus *Summa Theologica*.
 - Infants are in hell for the sin of Adam. If the sacrament of baptism is not given, babies are lost forever. In addition, there is no salvation without Roman Catholic water baptism. (Aquinas, III 5, 7, 57)
 - The Catholic Church can save or damn anyone by giving or refusing to give water baptism to them. (Aquinas, IV 485)
 - It’s okay to kill heretics or kings who will not submit to the authority of the Pope. (Schaff, 673)
- In the end, Aquinas cannot be viewed as anything but a card carrying Roman Catholic. “In 1567 he was declared a respected teacher, a “Doctor” of the Roman Catholic Church. (Jones, 89)
- *William of Ockham* (c.1285-1347) born in England and studying at Oxford, Ockham is considered to be the last of the Scholastics. According to Ruckman, Ockham is the only schoolmen who resembled a Bible believer. Citing the German historian Kropatscheck, Ruckman reports the following regarding the teachings of Ockham:
 - “Ockham taught that the Bible alone was inerrant and that a Christian should not believe anything not found in that book, no matter who authorized it or who recommended it.” (Ruckman citing Kropatscheck, 440)
 - Ockham taught further that the New Testament church was not the Roman Catholic hierarchy, but the community of the faithful. In addition, Ockham denied the infallibility of the Pope. (Ruckman, 440)
 - Schaff reports that Ockham was excommunicated by Pope Benedict XII. (Schaff, 690)
- Andrew Miller, author of *Miller’s Church History* reports the following regarding William of Ockham:
 - “He boldly attacked the papal pretensions on many points, but especially as to temporal dominion and “the plenitude of power.” He denied the infallibility of the pope and the general councils; and maintained that the Emperor was not dependent on the pope, but that the Emperor has the right of choosing him.

These anti-papal opinions soon spread in all directions, . . . He died under the sentence of excommunication at Munich in 1347.” (Miller, 628)

- Ockham’s razor is a famous expression that comes from the writings of this Scholastic. Ockham advocated the elimination of all hypotheses which were not absolutely essential. Through this approach Ockham declared that justification was the direct accept of the sinner by God. “The way was thus opened to the more personalist approach of justification associated with the early Reformation.” (McGrath, 46)
- McGrath summarizes the impact of the Scholastic movement. He writes, “two themes began to dominate theological debate: the need to systematize and expand Christian theology; and the need to demonstrate the inherent rationality of that theology.” (McGrath, 480)

The General Councils of the Church and Development of Roman Catholicism

- No less than 13 church councils convened during the time period we have identified as the Middle Ages. The following is a brief summary of the major rulings from each council.
 - *Third Council of Constantinople (680)*—convened by Emperor Constantine IV they upheld the first “five holy ecumenical councils.”
 - Reaffirmed that Christ had two natures united in one person and the he had two wills, one human and one divine which had a moral unity resulting in a complete harmony between the two natures of the God-man.
 - Referred to Mary as “our Holy Lady, the holy, immaculate, ever-virgin and glorious Mary, truly and properly the Mother of God.
 - The council claimed not only to be “illuminated by the Holy Spirit” but also “inspired by the Holy Spirit” thereby leaving their judgments clean from all error, certain, and infallible.
 - *Second Council of Nicea (787)*—called by Emperor Constantine VI and Empress Irene and attended by representatives of Pope Hadrain I. This council dealt primary with the iconoclastic controversy. The council ruled in favor of venerating images. Anathemas were placed upon any who did any of the following:
 - Would not salute the holy and venerable images
 - Called sacred images idols
 - They also encouraged prayer to Mary and the saints, saying “I ask for intercession of our spotless Lady, the Holy Mother of God, and those of the holy and heavenly powers and those of all the Saints.”
 - *Fourth Council of Constantinople (869)*—was the last council called by an emperor and explicitly affirmed the Second Council of Nicea and condemned the schism orchestrated by Photius for changing the Nicene Creed. The Eastern Orthodox Church does not support the legitimacy of this and future councils.
 - *First Lateran Council (1123)*—was the first council called by a Pope signifies the increasing authority of the Catholic Church. This council affirmed the Concordat of Worms which granted to Pope the sole right to appoint bishops.

- *Second Lateran Council (1139)*—called by Pope Innocent II for reforming the Church, condemned the schism of Arnold of Brescia, a reformer who spoke against confession to a priest in favor of confession to one another.
- *Third Lateran Council (1179)*—convened by Pope Alexander III declared the right to elect the pope was restricted to the college of cardinals and that a two-thirds majority was necessary for the pope's election.
- *Fourth Lateran Council (1215)*—called by Pope Innocent III is considered a turning point in the development of Roman Catholic history. The council did the following:
 - Pronounced the doctrine of transubstantiation
 - Primacy of the Roman bishop
 - Dogma of the seven sacraments
 - Set up and empowered the inquisition to investigate and punish those suspected of heresy
- *First Council of Lyons (1245)*—was convened by Pope Innocent IV to heal the church's five wounds:
 - Moral decadence within the clergy
 - The danger of the Muslims
 - The Great Schism with the Eastern Church
 - Invasion of Hungary by the Tartars
 - The rupture between the Church and Emperor Frederick II who was deposed for imprisoning cardinals.
- *Second Council of Lyons (1274)*—organized by Pope Gregory X to bring about union with the Eastern Church, liberate the Holy Land, and reform moral within the Catholic Church. The council:
 - Unsuccessfully demanded affirmation of the double procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and Son, which Eastern Church rejects
 - Approved some newly founded monastic movements, including the Dominicans and Franciscans
 - Defined the procession of the Holy Spirit
- *The Council of Vienne (1311-1312)*—convoked by Pope Clement V to deal with the Templars (a military order of the Church), accused of heresy and immorality. Reaffirmed the establishment of the inquisition.
- *The Council of Constance (1413-1418)*—convened by John XXIII in order to end the Great Schism, to reform the church, and combat heresy. Over two hundred propositions of John Wycliffe were condemned. Likewise, John Hus who held similar doctrines refused to recant and was burned at the stake. Holding that ecumenical councils hold their power directly from Christ this council moved to decrease the power of the Roman bishop by ruling that ecumenical councils were of greater authority than the Pope.
- *Council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence (1431-1445)*—called by Pope Martin V the chief objective of this series of meetings was union with the Eastern Church who was seeking aid against the approaching Turks. In addition, controversies such

as double possession of the Holy Spirit, purgatory, and the primacy of the Pope were debated.

- *Fifth Lateran Council (1513)*—convoked by Pope Julius II to invalidate the decrees of the antipapal Council of Pisa. Lateran V began a few minor reforms but did not treat the main issues of the coming Protestant Reformation. (Geisler, 708-712)

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