

## **Church History**

### **Lesson 25 - Theological Developments In the Late Middle Ages**

#### **1. Introduction - The Late Middle Ages**

- 1.1. We have been looking at developments in the late middle ages. These are important to understand the development of the church, and to help us understand the events and trends that led to the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.
- 1.2. So far we have looked at the crusades, and the Papacy as it developed in the late Middle Ages. Today we will take a brief look at theological developments in the late middle ages. To do this we will look at a couple key theological controversies and also at several major figures who shaped thought during this time.

#### **2. Two Key Theological Controversies**

- 2.1. The controversy over predestination
  - 2.1.1. The controversy over a proper understanding of predestination is usually associated with a monk named Gottschalk, who lived from 804-869. Gottschalk studied in France, and read Augustine on the doctrine of predestination. This reading led him to determine that although the church claimed to revere Augustine, she had actually abandoned his teachings.
  - 2.1.2. According to Gottschalk's reading of Augustine, the proper view on predestination was a strict form of double predestination: God elected some to eternal life and elected the reprobate to hell. Furthermore, this was based solely on God's decree, not His foreknowledge of what people would choose.
    - 2.1.2.1. The main figure in the controversy regarding predestination was Gottschalk of Orbais, a monk who had carefully studied the writings of Augustine and had come to the conclusion that the church had departed from the teachings of the great bishop of Hippo, particularly in the matter of predestination. - Gonzales, location 5472
    - 2.1.2.2. During several years as a wandering monk and preacher, Gottschalk defended an extreme form of double predestination. Believing he had really understood Augustine, Gottschalk said God elected some to eternal life and assigned the reprobate to eternal fire. This was because of God's decree, not because of God's foreknowledge. - Ferguson, location 7335
  - 2.1.3. This led to a number of local councils, some of which upheld the teaching of Gottschalk, and some which condemned it. A council at Valence in 855 upheld double predestination. However, the majority of leading thinkers denied this teaching. Two synods at Quiercy in 849 and 853 condemned Gottschalk as a heretic. Pope Nicholas himself tried to intervene, but Gottschalk died while imprisoned in a monastery before he could make the trip to defend himself before the Pope.
    - 2.1.3.1. Synods at Quiercy in 849 and in 853 (the latter under Hincmar) condemned Gottschalk's doctrine and affirmed that God elects only to life, that free will lost in Adam is restored in Jesus Christ through baptism, that God intended the salvation of all, and that Christ died for the sins of all, not just the elect. - Ferguson, location 7337

- 2.1.3.2. A council at Valence in 855, on the other hand, upheld double predestination. Gottschalk himself, however, died still condemned. The varying responses to his teaching showed that strict Augustinianism was still alive, although most held back from many of its implications. - Ferguson, location 7340
- 2.1.3.3. After a debate that involved many distinguished theologians—including John Scotus Erigena—Gottschalk was declared a heretic and imprisoned in a monastery, where he is said to have gone mad shortly before his death. - Gonzales, location 5476
- 2.1.4. This event showed the doctrines of Augustine were still debated, and the church did not really have a firm position on a number of key doctrines. The debates over what Augustine had actually taught regarding predestination, free will, and salvation would flare to life again in the Reformation.
- 2.2. The controversy over the Lord's Supper
  - 2.2.1. The other great controversy in the late Carolingian period had to do with the nature of Christ's Presence in communion.
  - 2.2.2. The controversy began when a monk named Radbertus in 831 wrote a treatise named *On the Body and Blood of the Lord* (later revised in 844). In this treatise he argued for a realistic view of the Eucharist - the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The actual body of Jesus that was born of the Virgin Mary and crucified on the cross is miraculously multiplied at the consecration of the bread and wine so that they actually become the body and blood of the Lord. In this he anticipated the later more detailed teaching of Thomas Aquinas. He is thus the root of the doctrine of transubstantiation in the Roman Catholic Church.
    - 2.2.2.1. The first eucharistic controversy occurred in the mid-ninth century. Paschasius Radbertus (d. c. 860) wrote the first doctrinal monograph on the Lord's supper, *On the Body and Blood of the Lord* (831, revised 844). - Ferguson, location 7314
    - 2.2.2.2. Radbertus was a monk and later abbot at Corbie. He made a realistic identification of the eucharistic body with the human body of Jesus Christ that was born of Mary, was crucified on the cross, and is miraculously multiplied on the altars of Christendom at the consecration of the bread and wine. The elements become nothing less than the flesh and blood of Christ under the figure of bread and wine regardless of the faith of participants—a faith which is necessary, however, for spiritual blessings to be received. - Ferguson, location 7315
    - 2.2.2.3. The other great controversy of the Carolingian period had to do with the presence of Christ in communion. The occasion for the debate was a treatise *On the Body and the Blood of the Lord*, by Paschasius Radbertus, a monk of Corbie who would later be declared a saint. In his treatise, Radbertus declared that when the bread and the wine are consecrated they are transformed into the body and blood of the Lord. They are no longer bread and wine, but the very body that was born of the virgin Mary, and the same blood that ran at Calvary. According to Radbertus, although this transformation takes place mysteriously, and human senses cannot

usually perceive it, there are extraordinary cases in which a believer is allowed to see the body and blood of the Lord instead of bread and wine. - Gonzales, location 5478

**2.2.3.** Another monk in the monastery at Corbie, Ratramnus, was commissioned by Charles the Bald to write a reply to Radbertus. Ratramnus opposed the realistic interpretation of the bread and wine, stating that the bread and wine are symbols of the body and blood of Christ, but that they are not actually transformed into the body and blood of the Lord at the consecration of the elements. He stressed that the spiritual presence of Christ in the Eucharist is a mystery and the believer is nourished in their soul by Christ through the sacrament, but the symbols remain actual bread and wine. He made an analogy with water baptism, where the believer is spiritually united with Christ in His burial, and where the Holy Spirit applies this benefit to those who receive it in faith. Thus, the Eucharist is a commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ, not a repeat of the actual sacrifice of Christ.

**2.2.3.1.** Charles the Bald commissioned Ratramnus (d. c. 868), another monk at Corbie, to reply. Ratramnus opposed the realistic interpretation of the bread and wine, saying that the body and blood of Jesus Christ are present in a figure, not literally. The spiritual presence of the body of Christ is a mystery, available only to faith. As the elements nourish the human body, the spiritual reality nourishes the soul. The Holy Spirit works in the bread and wine to bring spiritual blessing even as he does in the baptismal waters. - Ferguson, location 7320

**2.2.4.** Once again, this controversy was not officially resolved by the Church at this point. Final resolution would await a later time. However, over time, the realistic view of Radbertus grew in popularity, especially among the populace. In 1054, it was reported that a monk named Berengerius denied the Real Presence and Transubstantiation, and his position was condemned by the Church. By this point transubstantiation is firmly rooted teaching the Roman Catholic Church and will be laid down as the official doctrine of the church at the Lateran Council in 1215.

**2.2.4.1.** This controversy shows that, by the Carolingian period, there were some who held that in communion the bread and wine cease to be such, and become body and blood of Christ. But it also shows that still at that time many theologians took this to be the result of popular exaggeration and inexact use of language. Shortly thereafter, some began to speak of a “change in substance,” and finally in the thirteenth century the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) would proclaim the doctrine of transubstantiation. - Gonzales, location 5487

**2.2.5.** However, the controversy also prefigured the controversies that would arise later in the Reformation, both in the discussion over the nature of Christ’s Presence in the sacrament, the necessity of faith to receive benefits from the Supper, and question of whether the Fathers had always agreed with one another.

### **3. Theological Developments: The Rise of Scholasticism**

- 3.1.** Scholasticism, which is derived from the Latin word *schola* which means “school”, became the dominant intellectual force of this period. It has come to denote not only the period, but also the methodology used during this time. The scholastics are known for organizing and teaching theology as a “science” in this period. Over time they built from basic principles into an entire sophisticated system.
  - 3.1.1.** The thirteenth century, which marked the apex of papal power and the birth of the mendicant orders, was also the high point of medieval “scholasticism.” This is the name given to a theology that developed in the “schools,” and which had its own characteristic methodology. - Gonzales, location 6235
  - 3.1.2.** We call this period in the history of Christian thought “Scholasticism” because a distinctive method of scholarship arose and because a unique theology of the Middle Ages emerged. The aim of the Schoolmen—as these teachers are sometimes called—was twofold: to reconcile Christian doctrine and human reason and to arrange the teachings of the church in an orderly system. - Shelley, location 3666
- 3.2.** As it developed, scholasticism moved from simply being cathedral schools (as opposed to monastery schools) and grew into medieval universities which developed around this time. These include Oxford, Cambridge, and the University of Paris, which are still among the leading universities in the world today.
  - 3.2.1.** As a result of these changes, the center of education had shifted by the twelfth century from monastic schools to cathedral schools (chapters 18 and 19) and out of the latter came the universities. - Ferguson, location 8172
  - 3.2.2.** The teacher in the cathedral schools was commonly known as the *scholasticus*, and the new learning that grew up has, therefore, been called Scholasticism. - Ferguson, location 8174
  - 3.2.3.** A new day dawned, however, with the coming of the great schoolmasters. We can trace the birth of universities to the magnetism of single teachers, whose skill and enthusiasm for learning attracted students wherever they happened to be. - Shelley, location 3691
  - 3.2.4.** In a way, this is another consequence of the growth of cities. From monasteries, which usually existed apart from centers of populations, theology moved to cathedral schools, that is, to schools connected with churches that had bishops—and therefore usually in cities. Then it centered in universities, which were vast associations of scholars gathered in the principal cities. - Gonzales, location 6240
- 3.3.** Over time, one of the central issues addressed by Scholasticism was the interaction between faith and reason. This especially became critical by the time of the 13<sup>th</sup> century as the writings of Aristotle were recovered in the West (from Islamic scholars) and became a chief source of authority for all scholars. At this happened, the principles of Aristotelian thought were applied to all areas of learning, including theology.
- 3.4.** Anselm (1033-1109)
  - 3.4.1.** Anselm was born in Italy in 1033. He became a monk, and in 1093 he was called to England to become the Archbishop of Canterbury. He did not want this post, as he felt certain that it would only lead to clashes with the King of England. In this, he was correct. He spent much of his career as the Archbishop of Canterbury exiled from England, first by William and then his

son Henry. During these exiles he spent his time thinking and writing treatises on various theological issues.

**3.4.1.1.** The most important forerunner of scholasticism was Anselm of Canterbury. - Gonzales, location 6245

**3.4.1.2.** In 1093, Anselm himself was called to England to succeed Lanfranc as archbishop of Canterbury. He went reluctantly, for he knew that he would soon clash with the king over the question of the relative authority of church and state. - Gonzales, location 6248

**3.4.1.3.** First under William, and then under his son Henry, Anselm spent most of his career exiled from Canterbury. He made use of those periods of exile, as he had done of his years at Bec, by meditating and writing on theological issues. - Gonzales, location 6251

**3.4.2.** Anselm is most notable in relation to scholasticism because of his desire to apply reason to questions of faith. In doing this he did not seek to prove what he did not already believe, but rather to find greater understanding of what he already believed. He also had full and firm conviction that one who believed could use reason to lead one to a fuller grasp of the truth. In this way, he had a very warm hearted devotion to God and His truth. As important as reason was to Anselm, he always stressed the priority of faith. His idea was the same as that of Augustine - "faith seeking reason." Reason could help defend the faith, but reason alone was not a path to faith.

**3.4.2.1.** Anselm's significance for the development of scholasticism lies in his desire to apply reason to questions of faith. What he sought in doing this was not to prove something which he did not believe without such proof, but rather to understand more deeply what he already believed. - Gonzales, location 6252

**3.4.2.2.** As to attitude, the Scholastics were characterized by great confidence in the powers of reason. They were convinced that there is no contradiction between faith and reason—Anselm more than most. - Ferguson, location 8194

**3.4.2.3.** Anselm certainly typified the Scholastic confidence in the powers of reason, and he employed dialectics and formal logic to demonstrate the truths of the faith. But his use of reason must be set in the context of the intellectual circumstances of his time. - Ferguson, location 8319

**3.4.2.4.** Anselm did not claim that reason by itself could discover the truths of Christian revelation, but once these truths were made known by revelation and accepted by faith, reason could demonstrate them. - Ferguson, location 8344

**3.4.2.5.** What is important for our purposes, however, is to note the method of Anselm's theology, which applies reason to a truth known by faith, in order to understand it better. - Gonzales, location 6262

**3.4.2.6.** "A Christian should advance through faith to understanding, not come to faith through understanding, or withdraw from faith if he cannot understand" (Anselm, Epistle 136). - Ferguson, location 8366

**3.4.2.7.** "I pray, O God, to know you, to love you, that I may rejoice in you. And if I cannot attain to full joy in this life, may I at least advance

from day to day, until that joy shall come to the full. Let the knowledge of you advance in me here, and there be made full. Let the love of you increase. . . . Meanwhile, let my mind meditate upon it [truth]; let my tongue speak of it. Let my heart love it; let my mouth talk of it. Let my soul hunger for it; let my flesh thirst for it; let my whole being desire it, until I enter into your joy, O Lord, who are the Three and the One God, blessed for ever and ever.

Amen.” (Anselm, Proslogion 26)Read more at location 8368

**3.4.3.** In this regard, Anselm is famous for developing what is known as the ontological argument for the existence of God. Briefly stated, this idea states that God is “that-than-which-no-greater-can-be-thought.” Furthermore, since being is greater than non-being, and since one conceives of God, it must be that God exists. By definition, “that-than-which-no-greater-can-be-thought” must also exist, or the thought would be greater than the reality and would in fact be the greatest thing. Thus to speak of God as not existing is to speak of a logical impossibility. This argument has been one of the major arguments for the existence of God in traditional Christian apologetics, though it is probably the most hotly contested of the arguments.

**3.4.3.1.** He developed in the Proslogion what has come to be called “the ontological argument for the existence of God.” Briefly stated, Anselm’s argument is that when one thinks of God, one is thinking of “that-than-which-no-greater-can-be-thought.” The question then is, is it possible to think of “that-than-which-no-greater-can-be-thought” as not existing? Clearly not, for then an existing being would be greater than it. Therefore, by definition, the idea of “that-than-which-no-greater-can-be-thought” includes its existence. To speak of God as not existing makes as much sense as to speak of a triangle with four sides. - Gonzales, location 6256

**3.4.3.2.** In the Proslogion (also titled “Faith Seeking Understanding,” as noted above), Anselm sought to combine these arguments into one embracing argument—the ontological argument. Even “The fool who says in his heart, ‘There is no God,’” must admit that there can be in the mind “something than which nothing greater can be conceived.” This “something,” however, cannot be only in the mind, for if it did not exist in reality, then anything which exists in reality would be greater. - Ferguson, location 8362

**3.4.3.3.** “That than which nothing greater can be thought” is “that which cannot be thought not to exist.”Read more at location 8375

**3.4.4.** Anselm’s other major contribution was regarding the doctrine of the atonement. He made this in his famous book *Cur Deus Homo* (Why the God Man?). In this book he provided logical proof for the satisfaction (or penal-substitutionary) theory of the atonement. This understanding of the atonement had ancient roots, going back at least to Tertullian, but it is Anselm’s formulation that has been most influential in the history of the Church. Anselm’s argument was that sin is an affront to the honor of God. And the magnitude of the sin - and therefore of the penalty - is measured by the magnitude of the One whose honor has been impugned. Since God is infinitely great, the penalty due our dishonor of God by our sin is also infinite

This means that the One paying the penalty for sin must be able to make an infinite payment. Only God could do this. However, since it is man who owes the debt, only a Man can pay the debt. Thus, the only way for sin to be atoned is through the Incarnation and sacrifice of Christ, the God-Man. This has become the dominant understanding of the atonement ever since Anselm, and the book *Cur Deus Homo* is considered a classic work for theologians.

- 3.4.4.1.** The same is true of Anselm's treatise *Why God Human?* There he explores the question of the reason for the incarnation, and offers an answer that would eventually become standard in western theology. - Gonzales, location 6264
- 3.4.4.2.** The importance of a crime is measured in terms of the one against whom it is committed. Therefore, a crime against God, sin, is infinite in its import. But, on the other hand, only a human being can offer satisfaction for human sin. This is obviously impossible, for human beings are finite, and cannot offer the infinite satisfaction required by the majesty of God. For this reason, there is need for a divine-human, God incarnate, who through his suffering and death offers satisfaction for the sins of all humankind. This view of the work of Christ, which was by no means the generally accepted one in earlier centuries, soon gained such credence that most western Christians came to accept it as the only biblical one. - Gonzales, location 6265
- 3.4.4.3.** Anselm also made a major contribution to explaining the atonement, the central doctrine of Christianity, but also its least authoritatively transcribed doctrine (never the subject of conciliar definition). *Cur Deus Homo* ("Why the God-Man") offered a logical proof for the satisfaction theory of the atonement. An epoch-making treatise, it is the most coherent statement of what has been the dominant Western explanation of the basis of Christian faith. - Ferguson, location 8384
- 3.4.4.4.** God's honor bulks large in Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*. Sin is so serious because sin is against God, who demands unswerving allegiance. At the same time, God is also concerned for human welfare. Along with the feudal idea of owing God his due, there is God's purpose of human fellowship with himself. - Ferguson, location 8387
- 3.4.4.5.** As the sinner, only a human being ought to make satisfaction for sin, but so great is the offense (since it was against the supreme God) that only God can make the satisfaction. Hence, the need for the God-Man, one both God and man. - Ferguson, location 8390
- 3.4.4.6.** Jesus Christ as a human being needed to do no more than remain righteous, but he did something more—he died. Death was the punishment for sin, so as a sinless person Christ had no need to die. Christ made his death an offering (sacrifice) to God, presented of free will and not of debt. He offered himself as a man; but what he did as a man was multiplied infinitely in its worth, for he was also

Deity. He offered an infinite satisfaction for sin. - Ferguson, location 8392

**3.5.** Peter Abelard (1079-1142)

**3.5.1.** Abelard came from a knightly background, and seemed to always maintain this sense of superiority to others, which often landed him in trouble. After being taught by a number of the greatest thinkers of the day, Abelard began to lecture to enthusiastic crowds in Paris - before he was even authorized to do so. For Abelard, the key to understanding lay in constant questioning. This zest for doubt, however, was alarming to many people in his day. But Abelard's unquestioned brilliance won him many followers, and he was appointed as the head of the school of Notre Dame in 1113.

**3.5.1.1.** Another important forerunner of scholasticism was Peter Abelard. Born in Brittany in 1079, Abelard spent his youth studying under the most famous scholars of his time, finding them wanting, and letting them know his opinion of them. - Gonzales, location 6271

**3.5.1.2.** V. PETER ABELARD (1079–1142) Abelard came from a knightly background that perhaps contributed to his sense of superiority. He studied under Roscellinus (a Nominalist), William of Champeaux (an exaggerated Realist who introduced dialectic argument into his instruction in metaphysics and theology), and Anselm of Laon. After giving a brilliant refutation of William's Realism, Abelard began lecturing to enthusiastic classes at Paris with no qualification except his genius. He became head of the school of Notre Dame in 1113 and decided to turn from philosophy (dialectics) to theology. - Ferguson, location 8430

**3.5.1.3.** "Abelard for love of learning had given up his inheritance rights to younger brothers, and roamed France to sit at the feet of the great masters, now listening, now openly challenging them in class." In time he established himself as a lecturer in Paris, where he attracted a host of students. He also began to write. - Shelley, location 3703

**3.5.1.4.** "The first key to wisdom," Abelard asserted, "is assiduous and frequent questioning. . . . For by doubting we come to inquiry, and by inquiry we arrive at the truth." This idea, commonplace to the Greeks, was hardly so to medieval Europeans. Abelard's zest for doubt won the applause of some, but alarmed as many others. - Shelley, location 3707

**3.5.2.** Abelard landed in real hot water in 1118 when he became involved in a love affair with one of his students, Heloise, the niece of one of the canons of Notre Dame. When Heloise became pregnant, their affair became known. They fled for a time, but then returned to Paris after Heloise had the child. She wanted to simply remain a mistress to Abelard so as not to hinder his career, but he married her in secret. However, her uncle Fulbert arranged for a band of men to break into Abelard's quarters and castrate him. After this, Heloise retired to a convent, and Abelard became a monk at a monastery. However, their letters to one another over the years became some of the most famous letters of the Middle Ages. Additionally, they were buried next to one another in death.

- 3.5.2.1.** He then went to Paris, where a canon of the cathedral entrusted him with the education of his very gifted niece, Heloise. The teacher and the student became lovers and had a child. Heloise's uncle, outraged, had some ruffians break into Abelard's room and emasculate him. Abelard then withdrew to a life of monastic retreat, but was followed by his many enemies, and by those who were convinced that his bold use of reason was heresy. - Gonzales, location 6274
- 3.5.2.2.** Abelard's career was cut short, however, in 1118 by the tragic issue of his love affair with one of his students, Heloise, niece of Fulbert, a canon of Notre Dame. When Heloise became pregnant and their affair was discovered, they secretly married, although Heloise attempted to dissuade Abelard from this step, willing to be his mistress rather than his wife so as not to impede his clerical career. - Ferguson, location 8435
- 3.5.2.3.** Having been mutilated at the instigation of Fulbert, Abelard decided to dissolve their union by placing Heloise in a convent and becoming a monk at the monastery of St. Denis (Denys). Their correspondence reveals both a self-analysis, prompted by Christian consciences aware of a fall into passion, and an individuality, usually associated with the Renaissance. Heloise shows herself the intellectual equal of Abelard and his superior in disinterested love and personal integrity. Theirs was a union of minds and emotions, and they continued in a relationship of nonromantic friendship. - Ferguson, location 8438
- 3.5.3.** After this, Abelard returned to teaching and writing, but his novel ideas attracted the ire of many more conservative voices in the church - most notably Bernard of Clairvaux. Bernard had Abelard condemned as a heretic in 1141. The errors he was charged with included a Modalist understanding of the Trinity, an exaggerated optimism about creation, Nestorian leanings in regard to Jesus, and a Pelagian understanding of grace, and stressing the proper motive in the heart at the expense of objective moral behavior.

  - 3.5.3.1.** Attacks on Abelard's doctrine of the Trinity as Modalist led to his being condemned unheard at a council at Soissons in 1121. - Ferguson, location 8445
  - 3.5.3.2.** Foremost among these was the saintly Bernard of Clairvaux, who had him condemned as a heretic in 1141. When Abelard appealed to Rome, he found that Bernard had already closed that door. - Gonzales, location 6277
  - 3.5.3.3.** Bernard of Clairvaux secured Abelard's condemnation at Sens in 1140, a condemnation confirmed by the pope in 1141. The errors charged against him, in addition to his Trinitarian doctrine, were an exaggerated optimism about creation, Nestorian leanings in regard to Jesus Christ, a latent Pelagianism on grace, transforming the atonement into a lesson in charity, and neglecting the objective element in morality by an excessive insistence on the subjective element (the motive). - Ferguson, location 8448

- 3.5.3.4. Another of his books, on the nature of the Trinity, invoked condemnation by a church council at Soissons in 1121, and the brilliant scholar found himself behind the walls of a monastery. - Shelley, location 3709
- 3.5.3.5. Resuming his pursuit of reason, Abelard again and again fell afoul of conservatives in the church, this time including Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux, the most influential churchman in Christendom.” Bernard pursued Abelard as devoutly as he preached the Second Crusade. “The faith of the righteous believes,” he declared, “it does not dispute.” At Bernard’s instigation, a church council at Sens in 1140 condemned Abelard for heresy. - Shelley, location 3713
- 3.5.4. Summary of the controversy between Abelard and Bernard: “ The conflict between Bernard and Abelard was more than a theological controversy. Theirs was a clash of two kinds of education: Bernard represented the older education based on Scripture, monastic exegesis, and loyalty to tradition and oriented toward prayer and contemplation. Abelard represented the new scholastic philosophy that put the curiosity and investigative power of logic at the service of faith. The career of Abelard marks the birth of the kind of person who is at home in the modern university, the professional academic.” - Ferguson, location 8453
- 3.5.5. The importance of Abelard and the growth of Scholasticism was in his method. He taught that one must rigorously question and also seek to work synthesis between seemingly contradictory ancient authorities. It was not enough to simply accept tradition and to cite ancient authorities.
  - 3.5.5.1. Abelard’s main contribution to the development of scholastic theology was the book Yes and No, in which he took up 158 theological questions and then showed that various authorities, including the Bible and the ancient Christian writers, did not agree on their answers. - Gonzales, location 6281
  - 3.5.5.2. Abelard’s purpose, however, does not seem to have been to discredit the authorities he set against each other, but simply to show that theology must not be content with citing authorities. It was necessary, as he saw matters, to find ways to reconcile such apparently contradictory authorities. Eventually, scholasticism used this method, for the typical scholastic work began by posing a question and then quoting authorities who seemed to support one answer, and other authorities who seemed to support another. What the scholastics did, and Abelard did not do, was then to offer an answer and “solutions” that showed how it was possible for all the authorities quoted to be correct. - Gonzales, location 6284
  - 3.5.5.3. The most significant of Abelard’s many works was Sic et Non (“Yes and No”) in which he arranged statements from the Bible and the church fathers on opposite sides of 158 questions. The object was not to discredit the authorities of the church, but to stimulate study. - Ferguson, location 8468
  - 3.5.5.4. This method exercised a decisive influence on the form of Scholasticism: the citing of authorities pro and con became the pattern of study. - Ferguson, location 8471







knew Thomas did not see any great intellectual abilities (his fellow students dubbed him “the dumb ox”), his great intellect eventually rose to the surface and he became the most important theologian of the Roman Catholic Church since Augustine.

- 3.8.2.1.** Thomas went to Paris, where he came under the influence of Albert the Great (Albertus Magnus). Albert’s gifts were more in natural science than philosophy and theology, but he introduced Thomas to Aristotle and to a program of reconciling Aristotelian philosophy with Christian theology. - Ferguson, location 9371
- 3.8.2.2.** Many who knew Thomas in his early years failed to see the genius in him. He was so big and quiet that his fellow students called him “the dumb ox.” But slowly his intelligence broke through his silence, and the Dominican order acknowledged his intellectual gifts. He thus came to spend most of his life in academic circles, particularly in Paris, where he became a famous professor. - Gonzales, location 6357
- 3.8.3.** Thomas was sent to Italy to be a theologian at the Papal court from 1259-1268. During this time he continued to study Aristotle. He then returned to Paris from 1268-1272.
- 3.8.4.** The real importance of Thomas is in his integration of Aristotle with Roman Catholic theology. He did this especially in his works *Summa Contra Gentiles* and the *Summa Theologica*. The *Summa Theologica* became the standard for Roman Catholic Theology until the modern day, and still exerts massive influence on modern Roman Catholic thought.
- 3.8.5.** One important contribution of Thomas was his understanding of the relationship between reason and revelation. The two must be clearly distinguished, but they are not in any way contradictory. However, they differ in their methods of searching after truth. Reason is based upon the visible creation, and if followed properly can lead one to “the vestibule of faith.” Revelation, on the other hand, looks to God as He is in Himself. It is thus superior to reason and also more certain.
  - 3.8.5.1.** Aquinas made a clear distinction between philosophy and theology, reason and revelation, but there is no contradiction between the two. Both are fountains of knowledge; both come from the same God. - Shelley, location 3777
  - 3.8.5.2.** The two differ in their methods of searching after truth. Reason is based upon the visible creation and can reach ideas that deal with “the vestibule of faith.” Revelation looks to God as He is in Himself and so is superior to reason both in its certainty and in its subject matter. - Shelley, location 3782
  - 3.8.5.3.** On the relationship between faith and reason, Thomas follows the path outlined by Albert, but defines his position more clearly. According to him, some truths are within the reach of reason, and others are beyond it. Philosophy deals only with the first; but theology is not limited to the latter. The reason for this is that there are truths that reason can prove, but which are necessary for salvation. Since God does not limit salvation to those who are intellectually gifted, all truth necessary for salvation, including that

which can be reached by reason, has been revealed. - Gonzales, location 6367

**3.8.5.4.** In this case, reason can prove what faith accepts. Therefore, the existence of God is a proper subject for both philosophy and theology, although each arrives at it following its own method. Furthermore, rational inquiry helps us to understand better that which we accept by faith. - Gonzales, location 6375

**3.8.6.** Aquinas believed that reason alone could prove the existence of God. He formulated five classical arguments for God's existence, which could be adduced from reason alone. (These have been defended and criticized until the present time, but many of these arguments still form a major part of classical Christian apologetics.) However, the full knowledge of God, such as the Trinity, can only be found through revelation. He thus gave a much greater capacity to the abilities of reason alone than Anselm. Furthermore, whereas Anselm (following Plato) began with God and ideas, Thomas begins 'below' and moves 'upward' (thus following Aristotle).

**3.8.6.1.** Reason, for example, can prove God's existence. Accepting Aristotle's principle—every effect has a cause, every cause a prior cause, and so on back to the First Cause—Thomas declared that creation traces back to a divine First Cause, the Creator.... However, the full knowledge of God—the Trinity, for example—comes only through revelation. From this knowledge we discover man's origin and destiny. - Shelley, location 3786

**3.8.6.2.** The five classical proofs for the existence of God arising from the thought of Thomas:

**3.8.6.2.1.** The ontological proof – existence is greater than non-existence

**3.8.6.2.2.** The cosmological proof – The universe is here, but contingent – it does not have to be here, so something must have created it. This was God.

**3.8.6.2.3.** Causality – Every effect must have a cause; the first cause is God

**3.8.6.2.4.** Motion – things move from potential to actual existence; God is the Prime Mover.

**3.8.6.2.5.** Teleological – Everything is moving to a goal; God is controlling all of this.

**3.8.6.3.** That is the purpose of Thomas' "five ways" or arguments for the existence of God. The five ways are parallel, and do not have to be expounded here. Let it suffice to say that each of them starts from the world as it is known through the senses, and then shows that such a world requires the existence of God. - Gonzales, location 6377

**3.8.6.4.** It is interesting to compare these arguments with Anselm's. Anselm distrusted the senses, and thus starts, not by looking at the world, but by examining the idea itself of God. Thomas' arguments follow the opposite route, for they start with the data known through the senses, and from them move on to the existence of God. This is a clear example of the manner in which Thomas' Aristotelian

orientation contrasts with Anselm's Platonist views. Whereas Anselm believed that true knowledge is to be found in the realm of pure ideas, Thomas held that sense perception is the beginning of knowledge. - Gonzales, location 6381

- 3.8.7.** Thomas' teaching on nature and grace were also very important. Thomas taught that at creation man was created with lower impulses and a higher intellect. He says that these will war within man. The image of God is the donum superadditum – this extra grace harmonizes the intellect and the impulses. In the fall, the donum superadditum was lost. The tension between the intellect and the body returns. However, man has not constitutionally changed. His intellect and appetites are not fallen in a way that prevents it from operating properly. All they need is a gift of grace. This gift of grace will not bring perfection in this life, but it restores the harmony and allows the intellect to grasp the truth. (This gift of grace was closely linked with water baptism which restored man to the state of grace.) In this understanding, grace does not destroy or replace nature. The two work together. And we must understand nature or we will misunderstand grace. There is however an inherent dualism. Grace and nature are two different spheres, and they operate separately from one another.
- 3.8.8.** Key areas of thought in Aquinas on a number of topics which will affect the Reformation:
- 3.8.8.1.** Predestination - He believes in it but says it is irrelevant because you do not know if you are predestined or not – there is no assurance. Even if you did know, it would lead to sloth. Thinking on this gives no spiritual profit.
  - 3.8.8.2.** Faith – Faith is the virtue that fulfills and perfects the intellect. It is presenting the intellect with the knowledge of God. Faith is essentially knowledge in this system. However, you do not need to know Christian doctrine; you only need to know that the Church knows the truth! This is an implicit faith. He also spoke of unformed and formed faith. Unformed faith purified the intellect from error, while formed faith purifies the heart.
  - 3.8.8.3.** Justification - Faith is appropriated by love, so that the will acts upon it. We are saved by faith working by love. This led to the question of how much love is needed to affect the will? The question becomes quantitative and there is no assurance of faith.
  - 3.8.8.4.** Church – The role of the laymen is to believe that the church knows the truth. Faith is not really individual in this system; you simply trust others to know the truth. This is a rigid distinction between clergy and laity.
  - 3.8.8.5.** Grace – It is necessary for everything – he is no Pelagian! However, grace is received through the sacraments. Grace, like faith, is also discussed in quantitative terms. How much grace is need, and how much do you have? Grace is everywhere available but imperfectly received. However, rather than being the unmerited favor of God, grace is thought of more in terms of a substance that is poured into one like a medicine.

- 3.8.8.6.** Free will – God moves each thing, and each thing is moved according to its manner. Likewise, God moves a man to righteousness in a manner which is according to his condition. It is natural that a man should be free, so God moves a man through his free will. The will and God congruously work together.
- 3.8.8.7.** Merit – There is condign merit, which is merit that is earned. Congruous merit is gracious merit that is more than you earned. The beginning of justification comes through congruous merit, but as you progress you move to condign merit.
- 3.8.9.** Aquinas also gave the classical form to the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. He taught that in the Mass and the Sacrament, Christ is sacrificed again, and in the prayer of consecration the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ. He used the Aristotelian categories of the form and the substans to explain this. The outward form remains unchanged to our sense, but the actual substans - the real essence - is changed into the body and blood. Thus, it still looks, feels, smells, tastes like bread and wine, but in its inner essence it is actually the body and blood of Christ.
- 3.8.9.1.** The sacrament of all sacraments, however, is the Lord’s Supper, which is more than the communion of the early church. As the Roman Church had for centuries, Aquinas held that it is a true sacrifice, continuing that of Christ on the cross, and predisposing God to be gracious to those for whom it was offered. - Shelley, location 3798
- 3.8.9.2.** In the Supper the bread and wine are changed miraculously into the actual body and blood of Christ—a doctrine known as “transubstantiation”—to which Thomas gave the classic presentation. - Shelley, location 3800
- 3.8.10.** Thomas also gave greater formulation to a number of other doctrines: the seven sacraments, the importance of penance, the treasury of merits, purgatory, the importance of priests and the papacy in dispensing grace to both the living and the dead. Flowing from Thomas these ideas flowered and then hardened until the time of the Reformation when they were reacted to so strongly by the Reformers as unbiblical ideas that hid and impeded the Gospel rather than expressing it.
- 3.8.10.1.** Aquinas taught that thanks to the work of Christ and the meritorious deeds of the saints, the church has access to a “treasury of merit”—a great spiritual reservoir. Priests may draw from this to aid Christians who have insufficient merit of their own. - Shelley, location 3806
- 3.8.10.2.** The wicked, said Thomas, pass into hell. The faithful who have wisely used the means of grace pass immediately to heaven. But the mass of mankind, who while Christian in desire and participants in the sacraments, have followed Christ inadequately, must suffer further purification in purgatory before attaining the joys of heaven. Thankfully these souls are not beyond the help of the church on earth. Prayers to the saints in heaven can prevail to relieve the pains of souls in purgatory. - Shelley, location 3808

- 3.8.10.3. The pope and his priests not only mediate the grace of God to sinners on earth—by the miracle of the Blessed Sacrifice and by their prayers for the dead—they reach beyond the grave to minister to suffering souls. - Shelley, location 3812
- 3.8.10.4. There is nothing new in this. It had been said many times before. But Thomas set the traditional teachings of the church in a grand, almost cosmic, framework. - Shelley, location 3814
- 3.8.10.5. Thomas also set forth the basic doctrine of the sacraments, but this part of his Summa was incomplete at his death. The sacraments are channels of God’s grace, which is thought of—in Roman Catholic theology generally in contrast to Protestantism—not so much as God’s attitude toward human beings, but as a kind of substance that can be infused into human beings. - Ferguson, location 9446
- 3.8.10.6. Thomas employed the Aristotelian distinction between substance (what something really is) and accidents (outwardly perceived qualities) to explain transubstantiation and argued from the presence of the whole Christ in each of the elements of the eucharist to justify communion in one kind (the bread) by the laity. - Ferguson, location 9453
- 3.8.10.7. Thomas also set forth the basic doctrine of the pope as the successor of Peter who personifies the church, defines what the faith is, and has fullness of authority that must be obeyed in order to receive salvation. - Ferguson, location 9455

#### **4. The Effect of Scholasticism and the Coming of the Reformation**

- 4.1. After reaching its high point in Thomas Aquinas, scholastic theology was marked by two characteristics. The first was its constant search for ever subtler questions to pose, and for fine distinctions with which to answer them. This was joined with the development of a dense style and technical vocabulary that were far beyond the reach of the uninitiated. Its second characteristic was the increasing rift between philosophy and theology, between what reason can discover and what is known only through divine revelation. - Gonzales, location 7219
- 4.2. Increasingly, scholasticism became concerned with ever finer points of thought which were increasingly incomprehensible to all but the scholastics themselves. Additionally, all of this had the effect of obscuring the clarity and simplicity of the Gospel. Finally, while the Renaissance would issue in a desire to return to the original sources, Scholasticism became an endless technical discussion over secondary sources rather than a close examination of the Scripture itself.
- 4.3. As we will see next month, many began to react against the developments of the late middle ages - an increasingly powerful and corrupt papacy, an increasingly complex and obtuse understanding of the Gospel and God’s grace and how it is received, and an increasingly corrupt church. Eventually these concerns would usher in the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

**Next Class: Forerunners to the Reformation**  
**Reading: Chapter 33 (In Quest of Reformation)**  
**Date: February 25**