



History of the Church

**HISTORY OF
CHRISTIAN**

Scholasticism, Part 1

The Rise of the University and Schoolmen

Introduction

- The 12th and 13th centuries saw a flowering of knowledge and education in Western Christendom, and it reached its apex in 13th century.
- This is due in part to two related movements: the university system and scholasticism.
 - We will talk first about the university system.
 - We will then discuss Scholasticism.
 - This will then require a closer look at certain scholastic thinkers.



European University System

- Western Europe learned the university concept from Islamic civilization, particularly, their oldest university, Al-Azhar University in Cairo, which was founded in 970.
 - Islamic civilization built this off what they learned from conquered Byzantines.
- When the Roman Empire fell in the West in 476, the new Gothic order was nowhere near as educated as the Romans. Much was lost.
 - The monasteries did a decent job preserving the knowledge they could acquire, but much of it was in the Eastern Empire.
 - There was some education in Western Europe, but it was led by the monasteries and Cathedrals (churches that seat a bishop).
 - The Norse invasions likely set civilized education back even further.
- While this happened in the West, the Islamic forces conquered and spread throughout the Middle East.
 - They came in contact with the math, science, and learning of the Byzantines, which itself was based on the ancient Greco tradition.

Throughout the centuries, this allowed Muslim civilization to advance well beyond Western Europe in terms of science, medicine, technology, philosophy, and arithmetic.
- During the Crusades, the West came into contact with the greater Islamic intellectual achievement, and the ideas will be brought back to Europe. This sets the stage for the university system.



Formation of the First Universities

- This new knowledge was absorbed by the current educational apparatus in Western Europe, namely the Cathedral and monastery schools that provided a free general education to boys in the parish area.
- The first European university was Bologna University.
 - Originally it was a law school founded in 890, but that school morphed into a university and was recognized as such by HRE Frederick Barbarossa in 1155.
- The second was the University of Paris, which grew out of the famous school attached to Notre Dame Cathedral. The subsequent universities modeled themselves on Bologna and Paris.
 - Each represented a different model. Bologna represented the *universitas scholarium*, and Paris represented the *universitas magistrorum*—the university of scholars vs. the university of masters.
- What is the difference? With the former, the students are in charge. They control the policies and they hire and fire teachers.
 - For obvious reasons, they would have difficulty attracting good teachers. Also, students are the least able to discern what they need to be taught.
- With the latter, the teachers are in control—they set policies and tuition fees for the students. Oxford and Cambridge followed this model too.
- The university of scholars refers to the whole body of students, and the university of masters refers to the whole body of teachers.
 - The word university itself means “whole body” and it was a center for preserving and communicating the sum total of human knowledge. So the word university actually came from these two methods of organization.

University Specialties

- Many universities emerged in the period from 1200-1500, to where by 1500, there were 80 universities in Western Europe.
- Some were famous for specialties: Paris for Theology; Bologna for Law; Salerno for Medicine; Oxford for science and math.
- However, any developed university would have four departments of faculty: theology, law, medicine, and the arts. Again, the goal was for the university to possess and communicate the sum total of all human knowledge.
- The normal age for entering the university was 14 or 15. Women were not eligible for university education.
- The prerequisite for boys was education in Latin (it was the only language spoken in the universities) and the means to pay the tuition.
 - The Latin requirement made it to where any Latin-speaker from any part of Europe could study in any other country in Europe. There was no national-language barriers.
 - However, the student bodies were divided up according to nationality. And each national body had its own rules.
 - Each body was presided over by a university officer called a *proctor*.
 - The Proctors elected a single *rector* that was the head of the university. Each of the faculty departments was governed by a dean



Educators and their Method

- As far as the teachers go, they were almost always clergy, regardless of subject.
- The few laymen-teachers had to be celibate, as did the students (they had to be unmarried during their time at the university).
- The academic year was 11 months, with only a few weeks off for Christmas and Easter.
- Education was accomplished by two means: the lecture and the disputation.
- The lecture consisted of the teacher reading a set text to the students, and offering his comments on the text.
- The students would take very detailed notes (most of them probably didn't have the book since books were hard to come by).

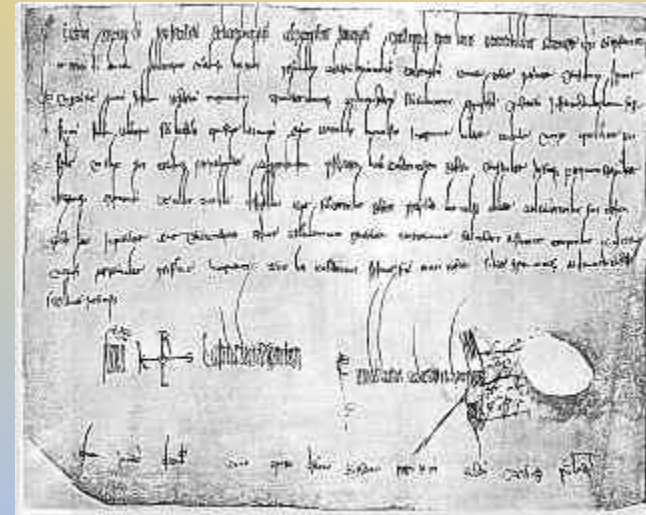


Disputations

- The disputation would be where a teacher and student would set out to solve a problem.
 - Two statements would be presented that seem to contradict each other, but both were found in authoritative texts. For example, one church father says, “God can’t die,” and a different church father says, “God died on the cross.”
- The student would then be required to give all the arguments for and against each statement—he would quote Bible passages and great theologians—and he would have to offer his own comments on the passages.
- The teacher would then make comments on what the student had said, and he would offer a solution to the problem.
 - In the example above, he could say, “Both statements are true if interpreted properly. God’s divine nature cannot die, but when God became a man, He added a human nature to Himself which can die. But He still remains incapable of dying in His divine nature.”
- This method of disputation was a very effective method of training students in logic, argumentation, and just good thinking.
 - It enabled them to be proficient on any subject for which they had to do a disputation.
- Lecturers would also perform disputations. They would introduce a debate subject, draw up theses, announce they would defend them in a debate, and then challenge anyone in the audience to argue with them and disprove the theses.
 - One of the most debated topics was transubstantiation.

University Degrees

- When a student finished his university education, he was awarded the degree of bachelor.
- The curriculum was at its core a system of liberal arts (7 liberal arts).
 - There were two halves to it – trivium and quadrivium. Trivium (three ways) was comprised of the study of grammar, logic, and rhetoric.
 - After completion, they move up to the next level or second half. Quadrivium (four ways) included arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music.
- It would take 5 to 6 years to earn the bachelor's degree.
- If one desired to attain the higher degree of master or doctor, it took around 14 years (especially for doctor).
- This was required if you wanted to be a lecturer at a university.
- The only subjects in which you could pursue higher degrees than Bachelor were theology, law, and medicine.
 - If you were doctor, you were an expert.



Results of the University System

- The university system and its growth revolutionized theology in Western Europe.
 - Prior to this, it was the monasteries that provided the learning. The leading theologians were monks that studied in the setting of the monastery. The university challenged this older system.
- Theology now became an intellectual subject in its own right, and people studied in the academic context of the university as opposed to the practical context of the monastery.
 - The studying was allowed without the rules or disciplines of the monasteries.
 - In the early universities, recreational time often included recess, drunken brawls, and the killing of one another.
 - Most students carried a sword to class. Some families were hesitant to send their young men to school. Eventually, things calmed down.
- The great theologians were now not the monks of the monasteries, but the university professors that earned a living by teaching doctrine.
- This freed Western theology from ecclesiastical control, and it fostered intellectual energy, debate, and writing. It also encouraged free academic discourse.
 - But on the negative side, it divided intellectual and theological pursuits from each other.



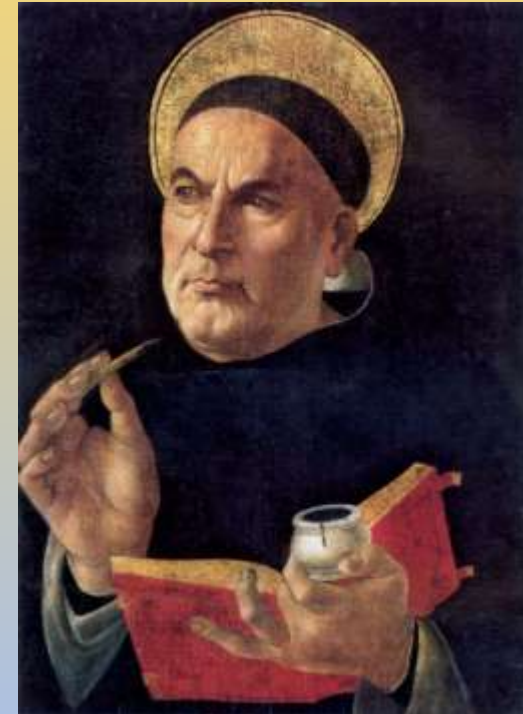
Scholasticism

- Scholasticism is the term historians use to describe the theological teaching that dominated the universities in the Middle Ages.
 - Scholastic comes from the word school. It just means school theology. It is a theology of and for the schools. Scholastic professors were called schoolmen.
- The schoolmen developed a distinctive approach to theology. The next few slides summarize it.
- First, they were concerned about the relationship between faith and reason.
 - They wanted to see how far pure reason could discover or prove the doctrines of the Christian faith without the aid of special revelation.
 - And if a doctrine could not be shown by pure reason, could it still be shown to be in harmony with reason?
 - A key example would be the Trinity—you likely cannot discover it with pure reason, but you can use reason to show how it does not contradict reason.
- They also debated whether or not something might be false from the standpoint of reason and yet still be true according to divine revelation.
 - Different schoolmen gave different answers.



Scholastic Approach to Theology

- Second, they wanted to offer a complete and systematic account of Christian truth, which demanded the writing of systematic theologies.
- This required that each doctrine had to be examined logically from every point of view (biblical, logical, and historical).
- The schoolmen would then try to bring all the individual Christian doctrines together into a system of theology called a *summa* or summary.
- In their quest for a universal system of doctrine, they exerted great effort on questions that most Christians of later times would find silly.
 - For example, could God have become incarnate as a woman? As an animal?
 - Can one angel be in two places at the same time?
 - How many angels can fit on the head of a needle or pin?
 - Who sinned more, Adam or Eve?

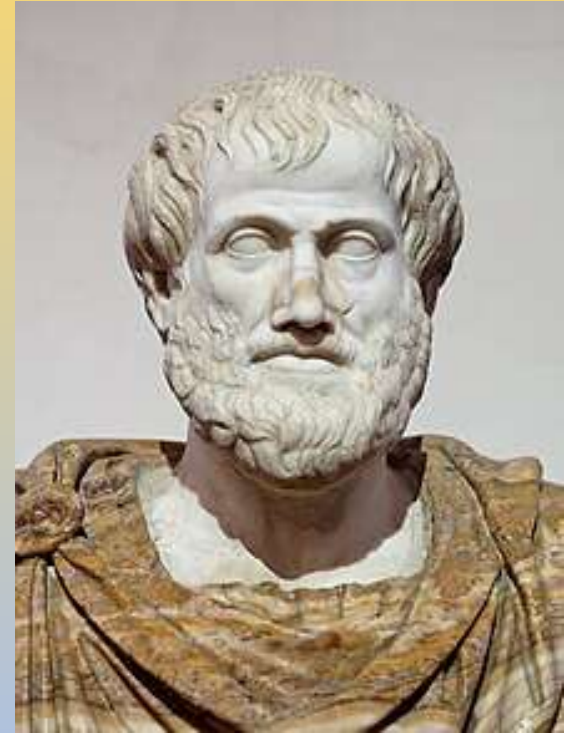


Realism vs. Nominalism

- Third, the schoolmen were philosophers as well, answering questions besides just church teaching.
 - What is matter? What is mind? What is time? What is space? What is being? What is the nature of cause and effect?
- One of the big debates was between realism and nominalism. These were two ways of answering what is the relationship between an individual thing (e.g., a fish) and what makes that thing the same as other things of the same kind—what makes different fish all to be fish, that is fishness.
- The general idea (fishness) is called a universal.
- Realists followed the footsteps of Plato and thought the universal is more real than the individual thing.
 - Humanity is more real than any individual human since it exists independently of the many individual humans in which humanity has an individual existence.
- Nominalists were influenced by Aristotle, and they held the opposite. Individual things were more real than the universal.
 - They argued that the general idea of humanity is just a name (Latin *nomen*, hence nominalism) that has no reality of its own apart from individual human beings.
- Some tried to offer positions as a *via media* between pure Realism and Nominalism.
- This debate certainly had serious implications for theology.
 - A pure Nominalist would not see divinity or divine essence as a real thing, but instead it is the existence of the Three Persons as divine that is the basis of our word “divine.” However, this would cause one to see each person of the Trinity existing in their own right as separate individuals.
- John Wycliff was a pure Realist, William of Ockham was fierce Nominalist, and Thomas Aquinas aimed for a middle course.

Scholasticism and Aristotle

- The 13th century scholastic theology relied increasingly on the philosophy of Aristotle (384-322 B.C.).
 - Some of Aristotle's writings were available to Western Europeans since Boethius translated them into Latin in the 6th century.
 - But all the rest of Aristotle's writings became available in the 1100s through interaction with the Muslim philosophers Avicenna (980-1037) and Averroes (1126-1198).
 - They translated them from Greek to Arabic (and added their commentary), and then Christian scholars translated them from Arabic (with the commentaries) into Latin.
 - So it was through Muslim Spain that they found their way into Europe.
 - Later scholars will then translate Aristotle directly from Greek into Latin.
- The rediscovery of Aristotle by Western Europe had a massive impact on Western thought.
- They believed that Aristotle provided an interpretation of God, humanity, and the world that was logical, persuasive, and comprehensive—and he did this without any reference to the Bible.



Aristotle's Influence

- Unfortunately, some were so enthusiastic for Aristotle that they accepted and taught even the anti-Christian elements of his thought (e.g., an eternal world).
 - They were called Averroists (due to their acceptance of Averroes' commentary).
- Some of them taught that the universe was eternal and human souls are not immortal, but are reabsorbed into the world soul after death.
- The Church condemned this as heresy, and so some Averroists put forth a theory of “double-truth.”
- This was the idea that human reason by itself would compel philosophers to accept certain things as truth, but then divine revelation would expose those things as false.
 - Well this set reason and faith in sharp conflict. It claimed that if a person followed reason, he would end up believing things that contradicted revelation.
 - This will have consequences in the Enlightenment period.
- At first, most Catholic theologians opposed Aristotle as a dangerous counter philosophy to Christianity.
 - They were committed Platonists, and the early statements of Averroists gave them reason to stick with Plato.

Plato vs. Aristotle

- Platonism helped Christians articulate the Great Tradition and Augustine was a Platonist. Aristotle disagreed with some of Plato's main ideas.
- Plato claimed the human soul had innate knowledge of the world of forms, and this knowledge did not depend on our experience in this world.
 - Beauty, justice, and things like that are intuited from this inner knowledge.
- Aristotle disagreed. He claimed all human knowledge comes from experience mediated to the soul through the physical senses.
 - Thus, we know that a spiritual being like God exists by reasoning from our experience in the external world. But the soul itself does not have any direct or immediate spiritual knowledge of God.
- Even though traditional Catholic theologians successfully suppressed Aristotle for a while, by the 13th century, Aristotle was favored by many.
- The Scholastics proclaimed him the great pagan forerunner of the Christian truth. Their goal was to marry Aristotle's philosophy with Christian theology.
- The upheavals this caused in Europe saw no equivalent in the Eastern Church.
 - Aristotle was never lost to them, and the Greek didn't need to be translated since they spoke it. The Eastern church had already long adapted and absorbed Plato and Aristotle into their theology in equal doses.
 - So there was no Eastern equivalent of Western scholasticism.

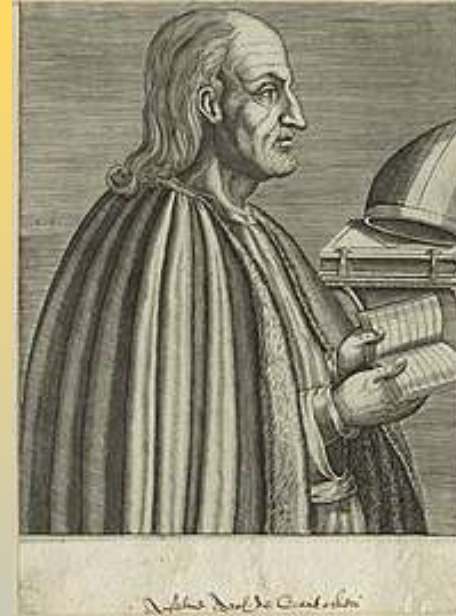


In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle identifies five *ways of knowing*—also called the five *intellectual virtues* and more commonly known by their Latin names.

Habit	Description	Systematic Theology
νοῦς Intelligentia Self-sufficient understanding	What is immediately self-evident, needing no demonstration	First principles given to it—like understanding
ἐπιστήμη Scientia Knowledge	Needs to be demonstrated	Demonstrates conclusions—like knowledge
σοφία Sapientia Wisdom	Knows what to do with the conclusions and what they mean	Utilizes a variety of inferences—like wisdom
φρόνησις Prudentia Prudence	Has to do with things that are done	Directs action—like prudence
τέχνη Ars Art	Has to do with things that are made	Edifies the Church—like art

Anselm of Canterbury

- Now we will turn to the great scholastic theologians. They were some of the greatest Christians thinkers in the history of Christianity.
- We will begin with Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109).
 - He technically lived before the first universities arose, but he is considered the first schoolman nevertheless.
 - He was born in Italy, served as an abbot in France, and then eventually became the archbishop of Canterbury in England. He spent a lot of his time in conflict with two kings of England during the great investiture controversy.
 - Anselm lived a very moral life, he was devoted to truth and right living, and he truly loved Christ. One of his famous lines is, "I believe so that I may understand."
 - Anselm on most issues was in step with Augustine.
- His two most important works are *Monologion* and *Proslogion*. They tried to prove the existence of God by pure reason.
 - We get the ontological argument from Anselm.
 - His argument for God's existence amounts to this: By definition, God is the most perfect of all possible beings. But if God does not exist, He would not be the most perfect of all possible beings. A God who does exist is more perfect than a God that does not exist. Therefore, if God is by definition the most perfect of all possible beings, He must exist.
 - To this day, people argue vehemently about whether or not this is a valid argument.
- He also wrote *Cur Deus Homo* which was a systematic theology of the atonement.

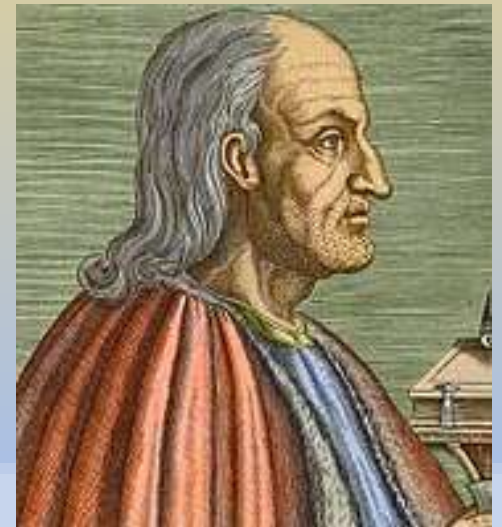


Anselm and the Atonement

- Anselm's work on the atonement has had a longer lasting impact on Western theology.
- He rejected the ransom to Satan theory of the atonement.
 - Satan has no rights to us, for he is a robber and an outlaw that has unjustly taken us captive. Christ's death was not a ransom to Satan, but a ransom to God.
- Human sin outraged God's honor and majesty. Therefore, the human race must either suffer punishment or offer compensation (i.e., satisfaction) to God for the outrage.
 - Unfortunately, we cannot offer any compensation big enough to meet the outrage. Sin is infinitely serious, so a just satisfaction to God would have to be infinite in value. Only God could offer Himself such infinite satisfaction.
- Since God is merciful, He has willed to save sinners. Because He is just, satisfaction must be made.
 - So God the Son became human in Christ and as the God-Man with infinite value, He offered Himself on our behalf as an infinite satisfaction to God for the outrage.

Satisfaction Theory

- **Anselm** lived in a *feudal* society in which the overlord is responsible for maintaining order and justice.
- **Justice** in such a society required honoring the overlord and paying him the veneration due his lofty position.
- **Anselm** suggested the position of human beings to God was similar to the position of vassals to their overlord in the feudal society of his day. ■



Anselm's Satisfaction Theory of Atonement

- Since Christ never sinned, death was not due to Him, so He freely surrendered His life on the cross to the Father.
 - God then rewarded Christ for His self sacrifice by applying the infinite worth of the merit of His death to the elect.
- There is a lot in this theory that shaped the classic Western Christian understanding of Christ's death.
 - The big problem is He did not believe Christ suffered the punishment of sin, but instead offered an infinite compensation for our sin.
 - The Bible points to a substitutionary death, which means He died for our sins. Our punishment became His.
- Anselm's argument, however, shows us the mind of a scholastic.
 - It wasn't good enough just to know that Christ died for sinners. He wanted to know why.
 - Why did salvation happen this way and not another way?
 - Those are the questions scholasticism tried to answer. In addition to what was mentioned here, he wrote other notable works.

