

The Golden Age of the Medieval Church – Part 2

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – an overview of the apex of the W medieval church in the papacy and in scholasticism
2. aim – to cause us to grasp how the western church reaches its apex and ushers in its own decline

b. outline

1. The Mendicant Orders
2. The Apex of the Papacy
3. The Rise of Scholasticism

c. overview

1. we have arrived at the “middle” of the medieval age (c. 1000) – the **Golden Age**:
 - a. the monastic reforms and the Crusades left the church in Europe looking for a “center”
 - b. **i.e.** the church had reached its zenith, and a time of “fresh thinking” begins to appear

I. The Mendicant Orders

Content

a. the mendicants

1. mendicants = those who lived by begging
2. the precursor to the mendicants were the Waldensians, followers of Peter Waldo (**early 12th C.**)
 - a. he devoted himself to a life of poverty, and gained a number of followers
 - b. he was forbidden to practice his form of religion by Rome, persecuted into valleys in the Alps, where his followers remained until embraced by the Reformers

b. Francis of Assisi (c. 1181-1226)

1. he was Italian; his mother was French, his father had trade relations with France
2. being fond of the songs of the French troubadours, he earned the nickname Francesco
3. he had a religious experience that led him to embrace a life of poverty (like Peter Waldo)
4. he eventually gave up everything (including his inheritance) to live as a hermit
5. in 1209, after hearing **Matthew 10:7-10** (**i.e.** Jesus sending his disciples out to preach with nothing), he discovered the idea of preaching to the poor in the cities while taking care of their needs, and he gained a small following
6. he appealed to Innocent III to start a monastic order, which the pope granted after making Francis wallow like a pig in the mud, an order he led until 1220
7. the order *eventually* shed its order of poverty, and gained great land holdings after Francis' death

c. the Dominicans were another order of poverty-based monks in Spain

1. they began under Saint Dominic (**c. 1200**), designed to *both* live in poverty (for the purpose of discipline) *and* to study doctrine (and call forth orthodoxy)

II. The Apex of the Papacy

Content

a. Innocent III (1198-1216)

1. elected to the papacy during the time of the Crusades and political upheaval in Europe
2. he wielded tremendous power and influence over the emperors of
 - a. Germany – where he actually *installed* young Fredrick as emperor
 - b. France – where he *intervened* in the marital affairs of the King
 - c. England – Stephen Langton archbishop of Canterbury over the protests of John Lackland
3. he played a role in the mendicant orders, the Crusades, the Latin Empire, and the Reconquista
4. he called the **Fourth Lateran Council** in **1215**
 - a. it established as dogma the concept of *transubstantiation*
 - b. it instituted episcopal inquisition (**i.e.** requiring bishops to inquire into heresy in their diocese)
 - c. it ordered every cathedral to have a school, and open to the poor
 - d. it required clergy to abstain from various “cultural” pastimes (**e.g.** theater, games, hunting)
 - e. it required confession and communion to be taken at least once a year

b. successive popes of the Golden Age

1. the first Dominican Pope: Innocent V (1276)
2. the first Franciscan Pope: Nicholas IV (1288-1292)
3. the papacy reached its *zenith* of power under Boniface VIII (1294-1303)
 - a. his bull *Unam Sanctam* declared that temporal authority is *always* under spiritual authority
 - b. the same also declared that “for salvation all human creatures be under the Roman pontiff”

II. The Rise of Scholasticism

Content

a. the age of medieval scholasticism

1. scholasticism = a system of theology and philosophy based on Aristotelian logic and the early church fathers, having a strong emphasis on tradition and dogma
 - a. **i.e.** a new time of *rational thinking* paired with *religious faith* – is there *logic* to the Christian religion?
2. although more of an *asset* to the Golden Age, the rise of new theological activity would *aid* in ushering in the Renaissance and the Reformation (and the collapse of the Golden Age)
3. the new scholasticism began in the monasteries, but by the 12th C. had moved specifically into *cathedral schools*; by the 13th C. into *universities* (from rural areas to urban churches to gatherings of scholars in major cities)
4. two developments significant for the rise of scholasticism in Western Europe:
 - a. the rise and growth of universities: rigorous academic exercises and *specialization*
 - b. the reintroduction of the teachings of Aristotle into Western Europe
 1. up to this point, the church was largely *Platonic* in its approach to theology: that the “real” was abstract, existing *outside* of the range of the senses; the senses were *untrustworthy*
 2. Aristotelian philosophy *valued* the senses as a part of the process leading to true knowledge; the ability to see and hear were *essential* in determining truth; the independence of reason from the constraints of faith and theology
 3. Platonists argued that faith is *necessary* in order to achieve correct understanding
 4. the “middle ground” was the path taken (mostly!) during the medieval scholastic period

b. the forerunners to medieval scholasticism

1. Peter Abelard (1079-1142)
 - a. in his book *Yes and No*, he took up 158 theological questions
 - b. to show that various authorities (the Bible and ancient Christian writers) were often at *odds* on the answers to these questions – the book was *greatly opposed*, and Abelard was accused of heresy
 - c. however, Abelard’s purpose was *not* to discredit the authorities, but to show that theology must not be content with just “citing authorities”
 - d. the goal was to *reconcile* such authorities – the *method* adopted in all of scholasticism
 1. **i.e.** pose a question, quote authorities on *both* sides, then find solutions to prove a position
2. Peter Lombard (1096-1164)
 - a. in his *Four Books of Sentences*, Lombard compiled an early “systematic theology” on the main themes of Christians (**i.e.** from God to “the last things”; eschatology)
 - b. the *Sentences* became the basic textbook for teaching theology in the universities
 - c. Lombard determined that there were seven (7) sacraments (or means of grace): baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, holy orders and matrimony
 1. this became established Roman dogma from this point forward
3. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109)
 - a. in his *Proslogion*, he established the idea of applying *reason* to faith
 1. not to *prove* something he did not believe; to *understand* more what he already believed
 - b. in his *Proslogion*, he developed the *ontological argument* for the existence of God
 1. ontological = the nature of *existence* or *being*
 2. **point #1:** to think of God is to think of “that [of] which no greater can be conceived”
 3. **point #2:** to think of God *only* in the mind is to allow for something *greater* (**i.e.** existing)
 4. **conclusion:** therefore, since humans can *conceive* of a “greatest possible being,” that being *must* exist in reality, otherwise we have *not* thought of the greatest possible being
 5. although never a *compelling* (or complete) argument for the existence of God (**i.e.** the biblical picture of *assumption*), Anselm developed the idea of *applying reason* to faith

c. the main medieval scholastic – Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274)

1. born in Naples to an aristocratic family; at 5 was placed in the Benedictine abbey of Monte Cassino to begin his education; at 14 moved to the University of Naples
2. in 1244, he became a Dominican; his family disapproved and locked him up in the family castle trying to dissuade him; he escaped and went to study at Cologne
3. although *extremely* intelligent, his fellow students called him the “dumb ox” failing to see it; eventually his genius was recognized by the Dominican Order, and he spent most of his life in academia, particularly in Paris
4. his greatest works: *Summa Contra Gentiles* (a manual on theology for missionaries among Muslims) and *Summa Theologica* (an instructional guide for moderate theologians)
 - a. the *Summa [Theologica]* (3500 pages) = a compendium of all of the main theological teachings of the Catholic Church – the basis for Thomas as the “father of the Catholic Church”
 - b. cycle: the existence of God, creation, man, man’s purpose, Christ, the sacraments, God
5. the *Five Ways* (1½ pages!) of proving the existence of God
 - a. the unmoved mover = moving things require a *mover*; something has to *start* the moving
 - b. the first cause = some things are caused; something *uncaused* has to *start* the causing
 - c. the argument from contingency = something *existing* must create that which *exists*
 - d. the argument from degree = degrees of perfection exist; there must be something *perfect*
 - e. the teleological argument = all natural things in the world have an *end* (or purpose); nothing can establish *its own purpose*; therefore there must be a being that establishes purpose
6. while Anselm *began* with a concept “in the mind” and moved to an *external* conclusion, Aquinas moved in the opposite direction, beginning with things “in the world” and moved to *internal* conclusions
7. Aquinas’ thinking “bridged the gap” between pure Platonism and radical Aristotelian philosophy; he “joined” faith and theology to observation and reason; *Thomism* opened the way for Western modernism (i.e. the scientific method) and the Renaissance