

IV. The Scholastic Period 1200-1500

A. Introductory Notes:

In these notes this period is given broader form than is probably good.

"Scholasticism" was the movement of a re-interest in philosophy and philosophical theology. It had its roots in the older palace schools of Alcuin and Erigena and its earlier expression with Anselm (d. 1109). In effect it died about 1400 but the influence it gave to humanism and the Renaissance has allowed me to extend its formal dates beyond what might be correct and into what is no doubt appropriate.

The period sees the effective end of the feudal system and ushers in the age of the Reformation by preparing the tools the reformers will use. Perhaps the most difficult thing is to trace the work of historical theology through this period. To do this we will return to the system of the very first period when we mentioned the subject and then noted what was taught about it. This will allow us to treat the subjects individually and the period as a whole.

The next most difficult problem is to see what the heart of the discussion is in this period. It is born out of philosophic inquiry and in particular the desire of the newer scholars to determine what is reality? Whether one thinks of reality in the physical or the spiritual world makes little difference. To the philosophers it is one question. They are able to think about it chiefly due to the fact of monastic quiet and world interest sparked by the Crusades, etc. And as they think, the philosophic schools fall on three general lines;

1. the realists felt that universals exist before individual objects. A dash of Platonism is found in this connexion but there are only a few truly original thoughts. Whatever it is that you have before you...it is not the real thing... just some emanation, so to speak, reflecting what is the real thing.

2. the modified realists are more moderate and think universals exist only in connexion with individual objects. Consequently the universals take their definition from the parts so to speak.

3. the Nominalists taught that universals existed only in thought and were resemblance names for abstractions. In this regard one can see ideas

THE SCHOLASTIC PERIOD

Humanism

Our approach

✓ The philosophic question

The schools of philosophers