

**THE INFLUENCE OF THE
SCHOOLMEN UPON
MODERN LITERATURE, A
PRIZE ESSAY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649274345

The influence of the schoolmen upon modern literature, a prize essay by Robert Jocelyn Alexander

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ROBERT JOCELYN ALEXANDER

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CHANCELLOR'S PRIZE ESSAY

THE

INFLUENCE OF THE SCHOOLMEN

UPON

MODERN LITERATURE

A Prize Essay

READ IN THE SHELDONIAN THEATRE, OXFORD, JUNE 13, 1877

BY ROBERT JOCELYN ALEXANDER, B.A.

BRASNOSE COLLEGE

*Being the Essay which obtained the Chancellor's Prize in the University
of Oxford for the year 1877*

'Non omnis moriar'

'Il faut que quelque chose subsiste du passé, ni trop ni trop peu, qui
devienne le fondement de l'avenir'—COUSIN



LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET

1877

26671. c

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Gough Add. Oxon 8.131. c

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

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To avoid the pedantry of perpetual quotation, a list is here given of some of the principal authors consulted.

When information has been more directly obtained from Scholastic writings, references are given in the notes.

Works of Sir James Mackintosh.—Vol. i. *Retrospect of Scholastic Ethics.*

Jourdain.—*La Philosophie de St. Thomas d'Aquin.*

Cousin.—*Fragments Philosophiques.* Par. v. 'Philosophie Scholastique. Abelard.'

Sharon Turner.—*Hist. of England*, vol. iv.

Hallam.—*Literary History.*

Ozanam.—*Dante.* Troisième Partie.

Victor le Clerc et Ernest Renan.—*Histoire Littéraire de la France au quatorzième Siècle.* (Particularly vol. i., Deuxième Partie.)

Paul Lacroix.—*Science et Lettres au Moyen-âge et à l'époque de la Renaissance.*

Remains of Bishop Copleston.

H. D. C. Maret, Docteur en Théologie et Chanoine Honoraire de Paris.—*Théodécès Chrétienne.* (Particularly pp. 53 to 86.)

L. Bautain, Professeur de Philosophie à l'Académie de Strasbourg.—*Philosophie du Christianisme*, pp. 44 to 142.

Dean Milman.—*Latin Christianity*, vol. ix.

Janet.—*Histoire de la Philosophie Morale et Politique.*

Hauréau.—*La Philosophie Scholastique.*

Ullmann.—*Reformers before the Reformation*, vol. i. chap. ii.

Taylor.—*Logic in Theology.*

St. George Mivart.—*Lessons from Nature.* (Particularly chap. xiv.)

Fuller.—*Church History*, Book iii. chap. xiv.

INFLUENCE OF THE SCHOOLMEN
UPON
MODERN LITERATURE.

Non omnis moriar.

Il faut que quelque chose subsiste du passé, ni trop ni trop peu, qui devienne le fondement de l'avenir.—COUSIN.

In the Library belonging to one of our Cathedrals,¹ there exists, on the title-page of a Scholastic volume, the following epigram in the handwriting of Sir Henry Wotton:—

Opening
remarks.

Qui habet Jo^m Bachonum, habet omnes Scholasticos:—
Qui habet omnes Scholasticos, habet nihil.²

The last line may be considered to express, in a terse form, the opinion of most modern writers. This depreciation of the Schoolmen springs, at least in some degree, from the fact that there is nothing new to be learnt from them—unless, indeed, it be a lesson of humility. It does not, however, follow that they have exerted no abiding influence on thought, or that Modern Literature could have assumed its present form without their assistance. A man who can read may choose to forget the spelling-book to

Deprecia-
tion of the
Schoolmen.

¹ Armagh Cathedral.

² The John Bacon here mentioned is more commonly known as Baconthorpe. Among other works he wrote a *Commentary on the Four Books of Sentences*. He was called 'Doctor Resolutus,' and died in London 1346.

which he owes his proficiency. He can well afford to do so, since it is of no further use to him. His obligation will nevertheless remain the same.

Necessity
of fixing
their liter-
ary posi-
tion.

When a parallel principle comes to be applied to a whole race of thinkers, many of whom died comparatively¹ young from excessive toil in the service of humanity, it is well to point out the place which they occupy in the long pedigree of literature, and to trace some of their lineaments on the face of modern thought.

Prelimi-
nary steps.

Before discussing directly their influence upon Modern Literature, it is necessary to form such a general estimate of Scholasticism as shall be sufficient for the purpose in view.

A short de-
finition.

Many definitions may be summed up in one,² by describing Scholasticism as a philosophical theology or a theological philosophy, in which the philosophy or theology preponderated according to the bias of the individual writer. No mere definition of any great system, however, affords sufficient light by which to examine its complicated influences. We must endeavour to fix our eyes upon Scholasticism in all its bearings, as it existed in the Middle Ages—a bright light, radiating out heat to the surrounding atmosphere, from which it in turn received colour.

Scholasti-
cism exam-
ined with
a view to
tracing its
influences
on litera-
ture.

One of its most striking attributes, and one which

¹ St. Thomas Aquinas was in his 48th year, Duns Scotus in his 43rd, at the time of his death. Many others, the date of whose birth is uncertain, died so soon after coming under public notice that it may very fairly be conjectured that they did not live to a great age.

² Hallam's *Lit. Hist.* He divides Scholasticism into Philosophy and Divinity. Petronius first made use of the word Scholasticism. Jerome says that Serapion first received, as an honour, the title of Scholiast. From the commencement of the Middle Ages it was given to all teachers of youth. Taken objectively, it qualified what they taught.—Heuman. *Præfatio ad libr. De doct. Schol.* Further definitions are given in Sharon Turner's *Hist. of England*, vol. iv.; Milman's *Latin Christianity*; Jourdain, *Esquisses de la Philosophie Scholastique avant St. Thomas*.

has been much overlooked, is an intense yearning for universality—for an all-sufficient explanation, a gigantic synthesis. From the very beginning the *trivium* and *quadrivium* gave earnest of aspiration after a system which was to embrace all known departments of learning. It is thus that we find so many doctors of the most different opinions contained in the truly catholic bosom of this great philosophy¹—the angelic, the seraphic, the invincible, the most resolute. Even Roger Bacon was duly sealed and registered as her own by the school, under the gorgeous title of '*Doctor admirabilis*.'

Aspiration
after uni-
versality.

It would evidently be impossible even to enumerate the many elements comprehended in this claim to universality. The '*doctores novi*' and the '*doctores antiqui*,' the conflicting disputants upon the reality of universals² and the cognate question of individuation,³ the Imperial-

Various
elements.

¹ Sharon Turner gives the following list:—

The Irrefragable	Alexander Hales.
The Angelical	Thomas Aquinas.
The Seraphic	Bonaventura.
The Wonderful	Roger Bacon.
The most Profound	Ægidius of Colonna.
The most Subtle	Duns Scotus.
The most Resolute	Durand.
The Invincible	Ockham.
The Perspicuous	Walter Burley.
The most Enlightened	Raymond Lully.

² The sentence of Porphyry, which gave rise to the whole dispute between the Nominalists and Realists, was translated as follows by Boethius:—'*Mox de generibus et speciebus illud quidem, sive subsistant sive in solis nudis intellectibus posita sint, sive subsistentia corporalia sint an incorporalia, et utrum separata a sensibilibus an in sensibilibus posita et circa hæc consistentia, dicere recusabo.*' The Greek which is thus rendered runs as follows:—*Αὐτίκα περὶ γένων τε καὶ εἰδων, τὸ μὲν εἴτε ὑφέστηκεν εἴτε καὶ ἐν μόναις ψαλαῖς ἐπινοίας κείται, εἴτε καὶ ὑφεστηκότα σώματά ἐστιν ἢ ἀσώματα καὶ πότερον χωριστὰ ἢ ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς καὶ περὶ ταῦτα ὑφεστώτα παραστήσομαι λέγειν βαθυτάτης οὐσίας τῆς τοιαύτης πραγματείας, καὶ ἄλλης μείζονος δεομένης ἐξετάσεως.*

³ Jourdain, *La Philosophie de St. Thomas d'Aquin*, vol. ii. pp. 77, 78.