

## Document Packet: "Medieval Philosophy"

<b>Question:</b>	▪ Why does Abelard feel the need to question the writings of the Christian fathers?
<b>Document #1</b>	
<p>There are many seeming contradictions and even obscurities in the innumerable writings of the Church fathers. Our respect for their authority should not stand in the way of an effort on our part to come at the truth. The obscurity and contradictions in ancient writings may be explained upon many grounds, and may be discussed without impugning the good faith and insight of the fathers....</p> <p>In view of these considerations, I have ventured to bring together various dicta [comments] of the holy fathers, as they came to mind, and to formulate certain questions which were suggested by the seeming contradictions in the statements. These questions ought to serve to excite tender readers to zealous inquiry into truth and so sharpen their wits. The master key of knowledge is indeed, a persistent and frequent questioning. Aristotle, the most clear-sighted of all the philosophers, was desirous above all things else to arouse this questioning spirit, for in his <i>Categories</i> he exhorts a student as follows: "It may well be difficult to reach a positive conclusion in these matters unless they be frequently discussed. It is by no means fruitless to be doubtful on particular points." By doubting we come to examine, and by examining we reach the truth.</p> <p>[Abelard then presented 158 problems to which he provided the arguments for (yes) and against (no). Here are just a few examples:]</p> <p>Should human faith be based upon reason, or no?          Is God the author of evil, or no?          Do we sometimes sin unwillingly, or no?          Does God punish the same sin both here and in the future, or no?          Is it worse to sin openly than secretly, or no?</p>	
<b>SOURCE:</b> Peter Abelard, <i>Sic et Non</i> , 1120.	

<b>Question:</b>	▪ Why does St. Bernard think that the writings of Church Fathers should not be questioned?
<b>Document #2</b>	
<p>We have in France an old teacher turned into a new theologian, who in his early days amused himself with dialectics and who now gives utterance to wild imaginations upon the Holy Scriptures. . . . I know not what there is in heaven above and in the earth beneath which he deigns to confess ignorance of: he raises his eyes to heaven and searches the deep things of God and . . . brings back unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter, while he is ...prepared to give a reason for everything, even for those things which are above reason; he presumes against reason and against faith. For what is more against reason than by reason to attempt to transcend reason? And what is more against faith than to be unwilling to believe what reason cannot attain?...</p> <p>And so he promises understanding to his hearers, even on those most sublime and sacred truths which are hidden in the very bosom of our holy faith; and he places degrees in the Trinity, modes in the Majesty, numbers in the Eternity. . . . Who does not shudder at such novel profanities of words and ideas?</p>	
<b>SOURCE:</b> St. Bernard of Clairvaux, early 12c.	

<b>Questions</b> :	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How does Thomas Aquinas prove the existence of God?</li> </ul>
<b>Document #3</b>	
<p>God's existence can be proved in five ways. The first and clearest proof is the argument from motion. It is certain, and in accordance with sense experience, that some things in this world are moved. Now everything that is moved is moved by something else....We are therefore bound to arrive at a first mover which is not moved by anything, and all men understand that this is God.</p> <p>The second way is from the nature of an efficient cause. We find that there is a sequence of efficient causes in sensible things....We are therefore bound to suppose that there is a first efficient cause. And all men call this God.</p> <p>The third way is from the nature of possibility and necessity. There are some things which may either exist or not exist, since some things come to be and pass away, and may therefore be or not be....We are therefore bound to suppose something necessary in itself, which does not owe its necessity to anything else, but which is the cause of the necessity of other things. And all men call this God.</p> <p>The fourth way is from the degrees that occur in things, which are found to be more and less good, true, noble, and so on....There is therefore something which is the cause of the being of all things that are, as well as of their goodness and their every perfection. This we will call God.</p> <p>The fifth way is from the governance of things. We see how some things, like natural bodies, work for an end even though they have no knowledge....There is therefore an intelligent being by whom all natural things are directed to their end. This we call God.</p>	
<b>SOURCE:</b> St. Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologica</i> , late 13c.	

<b>Question:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is university life like for a student in the early 13c?</li> <li>▪ How much power do the professors/lecturers have?</li> </ul>
<b>Document #4</b>	
<p>....In the...meetings of the masters and in the...positions of the boys and youths there shall be no drinking. They may summon some friends or associates, but only a few. Donations of clothing or other things, as has been customary, or more, we urge should be made, especially to the poor. None of the masters lecturing in arts shall have a cope {coat} except one round, black, and reaching to the ankles, at least while it is new.... No one shall wear with the round cope shoes that are ornamented or with elongated pointed toes. If any scholar in arts or theology dies, half of the masters of arts shall attend the funeral at one time, the other half the next time, and no one shall leave until the sepulture is finished, unless he has reasonable cause. . . .</p> <p>Each master shall have jurisdiction over his scholar. No one shall occupy a classroom or house without asking the consent of the tenant, provided one has a chance to ask it. No one shall receive the licentiate from the chancellor or another for money given or promise made or other condition agreed upon. Also, the masters and scholars can make both between themselves and with other persons obligations and constitutions supported by faith or penalty or oath in these cases: namely, the murder or mutilation of a scholar or atrocious injury done a scholar, if justice should not be forthcoming, arranging the prices of lodgings, costume, burial, lectures and disputations {debates}, so, however, that the university be not thereby dissolved or destroyed.</p> <p>As to the status of the theologians, we decree that no one shall lecture at Paris before his thirty-fifth year and unless he has studied for eight years at least, and has heard the books faithfully and in classrooms, and has attended lectures in theology for five years before he gives lectures himself publicly. And none of these shall lecture before the third hour on days when masters lecture. No one shall be admitted at Paris to formal lectures or to preachings unless he shall be of approved life and science. No one shall be a scholar at Paris who has no definite master....Done in the year of Grace 1215, the month of August.</p>	
<b>SOURCE:</b> Rules of the University of Paris, 1215.	

# Document #5

