

Discipleship:
An
Introduction to
Systematic Theology and
Apologetics

The Doctrines of Redemption: The Reformation

The Heights Church December 3, 2017

The Reformation (13th century) – Thomas Aquinas (1225? – March 7, 1274)

- **Why integrate Aristotle with Christianity?**
 - On the positive side Christian scholarship increased in rigor from adding reason/logic.
 - There was a belief that the further back one went in history the better the information; so Greeks were better than Romans.
 - While Scholastics brought academic rigor to Theology it was by definition “the system of theology and philosophy taught in medieval European universities, based on **Aristotelian logic**, the **writings of the early Church Fathers** and having a strong emphasis on **tradition and dogma.**”
 - The fundamental problem was Scholastics did not believe in ***Sola Scriptura*** and were comfortable adding Greek philosophy to Christianity resulting in the doctrines of Transubstantiation, Purgatory and Limbo.

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- Islamic theologians had already integrated Aristotelean philosophy into their double truth concepts in which something could be true in faith and false in reason. Aquinas sought to integrate Aristotelean philosophy with Christianity and advance it beyond being too spiritual or ascetic.
- Given the new tool of Aristotle, the 13th Century theologians rethought previous work such as:
 - Grace and free will
 - Predestination and human freedom
 - Grace and merit
- He was very Augustinian and consistently embraced predestination.
- On the other hand like many contemporaries he consistently said we can not know if we are elect so work as hard as you can to earn salvation.
- Thomas is famous for his five proofs for the existence of God. He is the first to develop the “teleological argument for the existence of God.”

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- The teleological argument for the existence of God is the argument put forth in Romans 1:18 -23

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

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- Thomas argued that things lacking intelligence cannot act in a designated way unless directed by something with intelligence.
- Our knowledge of God from nature is true but **mediate, analogous** and **incomplete**.
 - Mediate – comes through the medium of creation.
- Language functions in one of three ways when applied to different beings:
 - Univocal – words mean essentially the same thing
 - Equivocal – words mean very different things
 - **Analogous** – words change proportionally to the difference between the beings described.
- According to Thomas our knowledge of God falls short of describing him exactly. We are different from God but not so different that our language is meaningless or equivocal. Therefore, Our knowledge of God from nature is **incomplete** but not worthless or not no knowledge at all.

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- **Thomas had a flawed view of Justification**
- Aristotle used “formed” to mean “to give life.” Thomas said Justification is by faith formed by love.
- For Thomas faith is information in the head until joined by love. Faith doesn’t transform. Love transforms. Faith is important but transformation comes from love. Grace produces the love and the sacraments deliver the grace that produces the love that transforms.
- The result is that Roman Catholics to this day believe sanctification precedes justification. We are sanctified so that we can be justified.

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- **Thomas was a strong defender of transubstantiation.**

It sometimes happens that such apparition comes about not merely by a change wrought in the beholders, but by an appearance which really exists outwardly. And this indeed is seen to happen when it is beheld by everyone under such an appearance, and it remains so not for an hour, but for a considerable time; and, in this case some think that it is the proper species of Christ's body. Nor does it matter that sometimes Christ's entire body is not seen there, but part of His flesh, or else that it is not seen in youthful guise, but in the semblance of a child, because it lies within the power of a glorified body for it to be seen by a non-glorified eye either entirely or in part, and under its own semblance or in strange guise... While the dimensions remain the same as before, there is a miraculous change wrought in the other accidents, such as shape, color, and the rest, so that flesh, or blood, or a child, is seen. And, as was said already, this is not deception, because it is done to represent the truth, namely, to show by this miraculous apparition that Christ's body and blood are truly in this sacrament.

— *St. Thomas Aquinas, **Summa Theologica**, Part III, Question 76: Of the Way in Which Christ is in This Sacrament, Article 8*