

**THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH (A.D. 600–1500)**

**Lecture 2**

Topic: Aquinas, Duns Scotus; The Renaissance

Due: Gonzalez, 1.376–385

Class 8; Lecture 2

8. IV Lateran Council (1215).

IV Lateran Council was the greatest of the medieval councils and was called by the greatest medieval pope, Innocent III (1198–1216). The purpose of the council was stated at its start by Innocent himself, “to eradicate vices and to plant virtues, to correct faults and to reform morals, to remove heresies and to strengthen faith, to settle discords and establish peace, to get rid of oppression and to foster liberty, to induce princes and Christian people to come to the aid and succor of the holy land.”

IV Lateran Council was the first to use the term “transubstantiation” in their doctrine of the Eucharist.

9. Thomas Aquinas (1224/25–74).

The importance of Thomas cannot be overestimated. Notice what Pope Leo XIII stated: “St. Thomas Aquinas may be said to have been present at all the Ecumenical Councils of the Church after his time, presiding as it were, by his invisible presence and his living teachings over their deliberations and decrees; but that greatest and most special honor was given to the Angelic Doctor at the Council of Trent, when, during its sessions, together with the Bible and the formal decrees of the Sovereign Pontiffs, the Fathers of the Council had the open Summa placed upon the altar so that thence they might draw counsels, arguments, and oracles. This was a singular honor and praise accorded to St. Thomas which was not given to any of the Fathers or other Doctors of the Church” (4 August, 1879).

a) His life.

1225 or 1227	born at Roccasecca.
1239–44	studied at University of Naples.
1244, April	joined Dominican order.
1244, May	abducted on journey; attempted seduction.

1245, July, Aug.	returned to Dominicans; to Paris for study.
1248	went to Cologne with Albertus Magnus.
1252	returned to Paris.
1259	wrote <i>Summa Contra Gentiles</i> .
1266	began <i>Summa Theologiae</i> .
1272	moved to Naples.
1273, Dec. 6	experienced breakdown; ceased writing.
1274–Feb.	leaves for Council of Lyon; fell ill.
1274–Mar. 7	died.
1277, Mar. 7	condemnation of his teachings at Paris.
1323, July 18	canonization.
1325, Feb. 14	revocation of Paris' condemnation of his teaching.
1369, Jan. 28	transferral of relics to Toulouse.

From *Christian History Magazine*, 73; Ralph McNerny, “The Dazzling Dumb Ox.”

### His Death

In 1274, the pope summoned him to consult on doctrinal questions at the Council of Lyons. On the way, Thomas fell ill. Some writers speculate that he simply had no desire to continue arguing his work, which he had come to view as mere “straw.”

When the seriousness of Thomas’s condition became clear, he was removed to the Cistercian abbey at Fossanova. The monks there are said to have asked him to comment on the Song of Songs, and he complied.

One report holds that when those reading the text to him spoke the words, “Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the fields,” Thomas fainted. After he revived, he received the *Viaticum*, or final Communion. Then he died.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph McNerny, “The Dazzling ‘Dumb Ox,’” *Christian History Magazine-Issue 73: Thomas Aquinas: Greatest Medieval Theologian* (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 2002).

Shortly after Thomas Aquinas died, on March 7, 1274, miracles began to occur near his body. The monks of the Cistercian abbey at Fossanova, where Thomas was buried, feared that the remains might be stolen and taken off to a Dominican resting place.

Jealous of their treasure, the Cistercians took macabre precautions. They “exhumed the corpse of Brother Thomas from its resting place, cut off the head and placed it in a hiding place in a corner of the chapel.” That way, if the corpse were taken, the head would still be theirs. His sister was given a hand, a finger of which was to take a grisly trajectory of its own.<sup>2</sup>

b) His writings.

(1) Commentaries.

- Commentaries on Scripture (Pauline epistles, Gospels of Matthew, John, etc.).
- Commentaries on Aristotle (*Metaphysics*, *De Anima*).
- Commentaries on the works of earlier Christian writers (Pseudo-Dionysius, Boethius, Lombard).

(2) *Quaestiones* (takes a specific problem, discusses pro and con positions, presents solution, answers objections).

- Disputed Questions (on truth, the soul, evil, virtues, etc.).
- Quaestio de quolibet* (questions on whatever you want).

“Twice a year near Christmas and Easter, in the faculties of arts, law, medicine, but especially in the faculty of theology, the masters were free to hold a disputation in which the choosing of the subjects to be debated was left to the initiative of the members of the audience, who could raise any problem they liked. In the phrase of Humbert of Romans, it was a disputation ‘on anything at anyone’s will.’” –M.D. Chenu

- Opuscula* (short treatises dealing with questions of the day).

(3) Syntheses.

- Summa Contra Gentiles*.

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<sup>2</sup> Ralph McInerny, “The Dazzling ‘Dumb Ox,’” *Christian History Magazine-Issue 73: Thomas Aquinas: Greatest Medieval Theologian* (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 2002).

An apologetic summa perhaps designed as a handbook to help Dominican missionaries who were preaching in areas (esp. Spain) where they were in contact with people educated in Aristotelian philosophy.

“...I have set myself the task of making known, as far as my limited powers will allow, the truth that the Catholic faith professes, and of setting aside the errors that are opposed to it. To use the words of Hilary: I am aware that I owe this to God as the chief duty of my life, that my every word and sense may speak of Him.”

•*Summa Theologiae*.

A summary of theology written to replace Lombard's *Sentences*. It was meant to be an introductory work.

“Because the Doctor of catholic truth must teach not only the advanced student, but to him devolves, moreover, the task of instructing beginners...we intend, in the present work, to impart the matters that pertain to the Christian religion in such a way as may befit the instruction of beginners.”

c) His method.

“...this doctrine does not argue in proof of its principles, which are the articles of faith, but from them it goes on to prove something else;...”

“...Sacred Scripture, since it has no science above itself, disputes argumentatively with one who denies its principles only if the opponent admits some at least of the truths obtained through divine revelation. Thus, we can argue with heretics from texts in holy Scripture, and against those who deny one article of faith we can argue from another. If our opponent believes nothing of divine revelation, there is no longer any means of proving the articles of faith by argument, but only of answering his objections—if he has any—against faith. Since faith rests upon infallible truth, and since the contrary of a truth can never be demonstrated, it is clear that the proofs brought against faith are not demonstrations, but arguments that can be answered.”

“...It is especially proper to this doctrine to argue from authority, inasmuch as its principles are obtained by revelation:...”

“...sacred doctrine also makes use of human reason, not, indeed, to prove faith (for thereby the merit of faith would come to an end), but to make clear other things that are set forth in this doctrine.”

“...sacred doctrine makes use also of the authority of philosophers in those questions in which they were able to know the truth by natural reason,...”

“...sacred doctrine makes use of these authorities as extrinsic and probable arguments, but properly uses the authority of the canonical Scriptures as a necessary demonstration, and the authority of the doctors of the church as one that may properly be used, yet merely as probable. For our faith rests upon the revelation made to the apostles and prophets, who wrote the canonical books, and not on the revelations (if any such there are) made to other doctors.”

d) His Theology.

- Proofs for the existence of God (*Summa* I. q. 2. a. 1 – 3).

—Is it possible by reason to demonstrate that God exists?

—The arguments for the existence of God.

- On Transubstantiation.

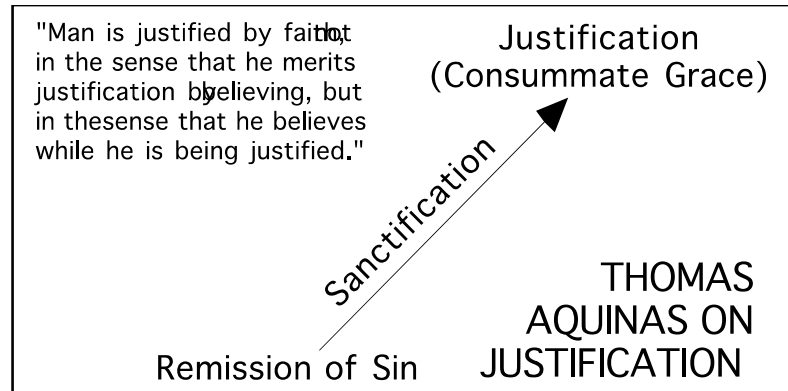
“He is then able to bring about not merely a changing of form . . . but the changing of the whole being of a thing, so that the complete substance of this is changed into the complete substance of that. And this actually happens by divine power in this sacrament. The complete substance of the bread is converted into the complete substance of Christ’s body, and the complete substance of the wine into the complete substance of Christ’s blood. Hence this change is not a formal change, but a substantial one. It does not belong to the natural kinds of change, and it can be called by a name proper to itself—‘transubstantiation’” (*Summa*, 3a. 75. 4).

- On Salvation.

Aquinas’ soteriology is the classic Roman Catholicism. It is Thomas’ soteriology which serves as the basis of the Council of Trent’s counterattack on the Protestant Reformation.

Aquinas followed the same basic soteriological pattern as

Lombard—sanctification precedes justification—however, Thomas is more elaborate and precise.



Thomas' doctrine of salvation is based on his doctrine of merit.

(1) Definition of merit.

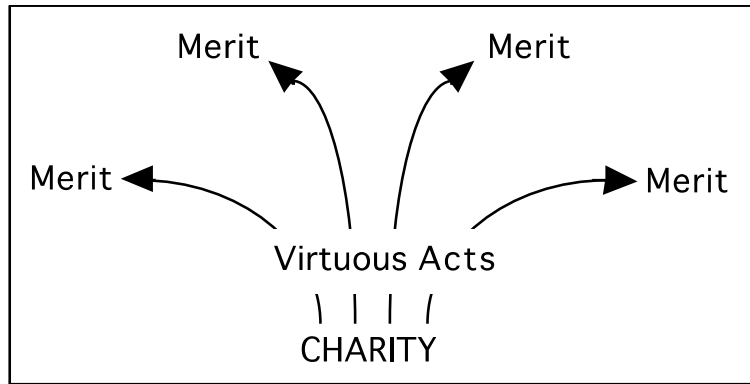
- "Merit and reward mean the same thing." Hence, meritorious works can merit reward.

- Merit was not a work of an individual. Rather, it was the effect of "co-operative grace." Cooperative grace was "when the soul is not only moved but also a mover, the operation is attributed to the soul as well as to God. We then speak of 'co-operative grace.'" In other words, meritorious works are done in and through a Christian by the Holy Spirit. Hence, it is not accurate to say that man's meritorious works are either wholly of God or wholly of man.

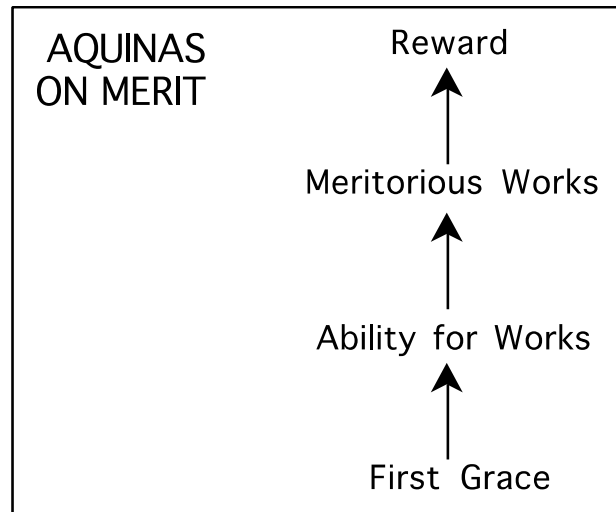
(2) Conditions of Merit.

- Before meriting anything one must make retribution of sin and be reconciled to God—"first grace" (i.e., through Christ).

- All exercises of meritorious workings (i.e., virtue) are based on charity which first must be infused.

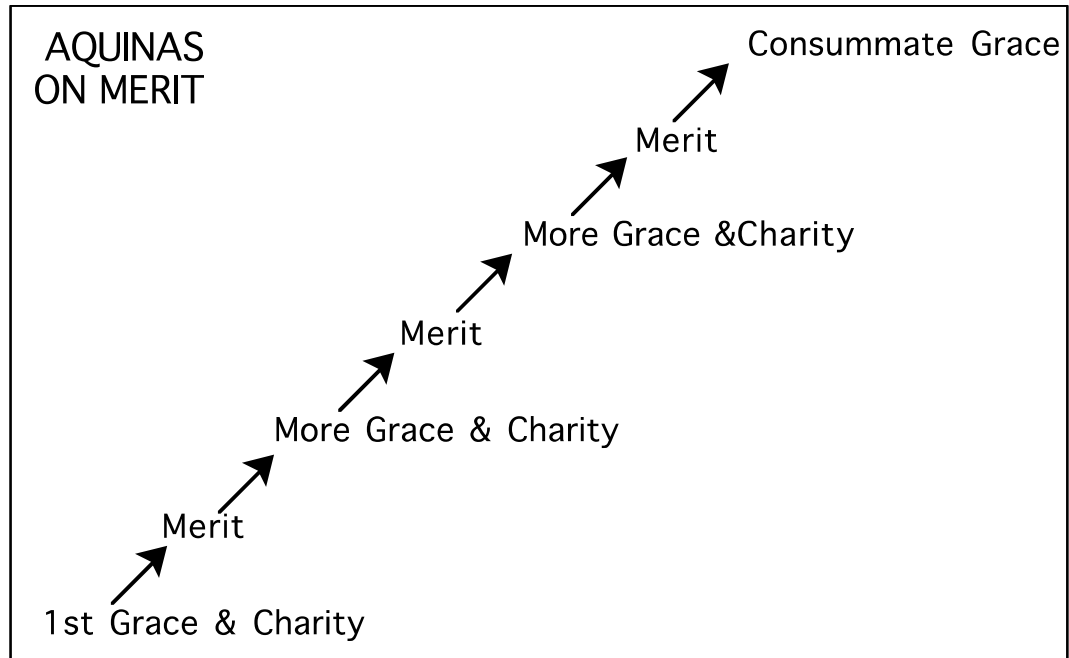


- Proceeds from Holy Spirit.
- Proceeds from man's free will.

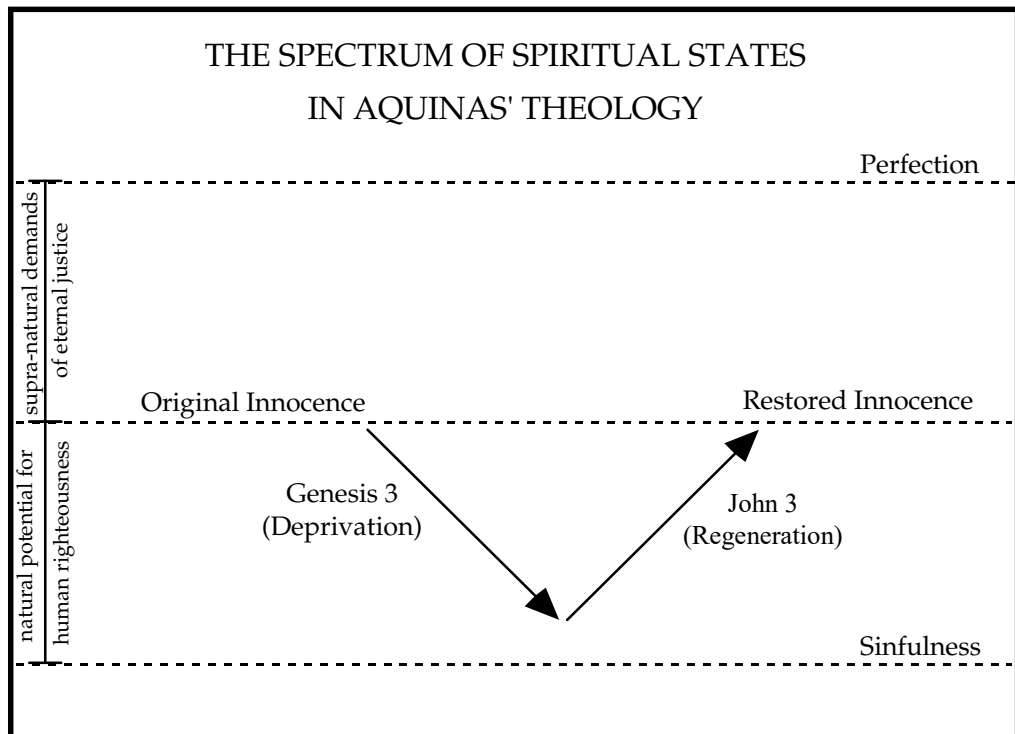


(3) Results of merit

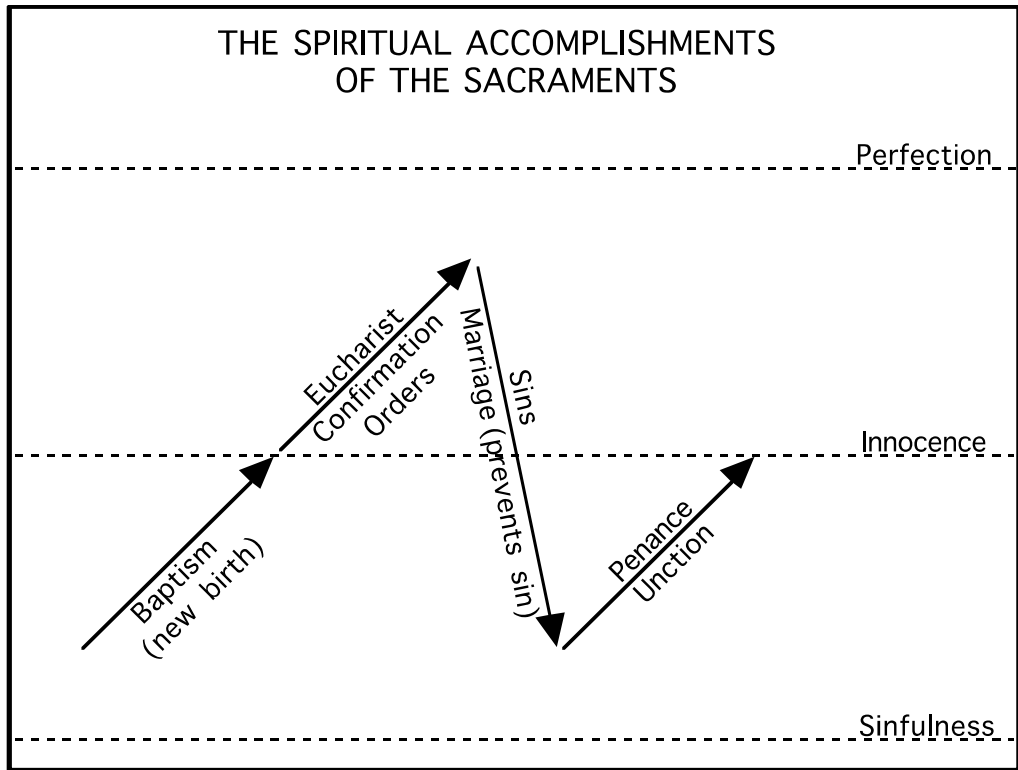
- Merit increases grace and charity. The increased grace can then be used to do greater works of merit and merit still greater grace and charity. This process is completed when consummate grace is merited (i.e., heaven obtained). There must be no inhibiting sin or merit will be stopped and lost.



•Aquinas' view of the spiritual life can best be expressed as a spectrum ranging from sinfulness to perfection. This understanding of Aquinas helps define the accomplishments of each sacrament.







N.B. From *Christian History Magazine*—Issue 73: “Thomas Aquinas: Greatest Medieval Theologian”

**The Link: He’s Our Man**  
**Evangelicals can embrace a rich inheritance from Aquinas.**

*In a 1974 Christianity Today article marking the 700th anniversary of Aquinas’s death, author Ronald Nash said some nice things about the deceased but ultimately judged his system of thought “unsuitable for a biblically centered Christian philosophy” and “beyond any hope of salvage.” Norman Geisler disagreed with that assessment then, and he disagrees with it now. We asked Dr. Geisler, president of Southern Evangelical Seminary and author of Thomas Aquinas: An Evangelical Appraisal (Baker, 1991), for his evaluation of the Angelic Doctor.*

**You’ve studied Aquinas for 45 years now. What makes him so appealing?**

He’s insightful, he’s incisive, he’s comprehensive, he’s systematic, he’s biblical, he’s devout, and he’s successful. By successful, I mean, first, how many other books are still being read 700 years later? Second, he single-handedly withstood the onslaught of intellectual Islam in the thirteenth century. He reversed the course of history.

**Why isn’t Aquinas more popular with evangelicals?**

Evangelicals have largely misinterpreted Aquinas, and they have placed on him views that he did not hold. Many people are concerned that he separated faith and reason, denied depravity (especially the effects of sin on the human mind), and stood for everything that “Roman Catholic” means to Protestants today. Let me take those concerns one by one.

Francis Schaeffer criticized Aquinas for giving rise to modern humanism and atheism by separating faith and reason. Aquinas would do cartwheels in his casket if he heard that!

He believed in the integration of faith and reason, not the separation. He made a distinction but no disjunction. Aquinas said that faith brings the highest kind of certainty and that reason, weak and fallen, cannot attain Christian faith.

Still, Aquinas held human reason in such high regard that some accuse him of denying depravity. He did not. He believed in original sin, he believed in the effects of sin on the mind, and he believed that the mind was so depraved that it could not know supernatural truths. God’s revealed truths could be accepted only by faith.

And then there’s the concern that Aquinas was a Roman Catholic, and we Protestants disagree with Catholicism at key points. In truth, most Protestants today could have accepted what the Roman Catholic church taught up to the time of the Reformation.

Even Martin Luther and John Calvin believed that the Roman Catholic church, up to the Council of Trent, was basically orthodox—a true church with sound fundamental doctrines as well as significant error.

Many of the Catholic beliefs that concern Protestants most were not declared dogma until long after Aquinas. For example, Aquinas denied the immaculate conception of Mary, and it was not declared dogma until 1854. Aquinas never believed in the bodily assumption of Mary, which was defined in 1950. Aquinas didn't believe in the infallibility of the pope. That was not pronounced until 1870—600 years after Aquinas.

On the other hand, Aquinas held many beliefs associated with the Reformation. He upheld a version of *sola scriptura*. He believed in salvation by grace through faith—just look at his commentary on Ephesians 2:8–9.

John Gerstner, the late Calvinist theologian, went so far as to claim that Aquinas was basically a Protestant.

### **How can we avoid the misconceptions and find the real Aquinas?**

Read him! Quotes and excerpts in other people's books don't count, because many of his critics have taken him out of context. Get it from the horse's mouth, or should I say the dumb ox's mouth.

Aquinas is worth reading. He has stood the test of time. And even where he errs, you can learn more from the errors of a great mind than you can learn from the truths of a small mind. You can see a whole lot farther standing on the shoulders of giants.

### **What will people find when they read Aquinas, besides philosophy?**

People are rediscovering Aquinas as a biblical exegete. He wrote some of the greatest commentaries on the Bible—no one has surpassed his commentary on the Gospels to this day. He has 10 pages on John 1:1, and 78 pages on chapter one. He culls from the Fathers, from the second century up to the thirteenth century, and weaves them together in a continuous commentary.

After all, he was a member of the Order of Preachers. They had to preach the Bible every day and go through the entire Bible in three years.

### **What can thinkers engaged in today's theological and philosophical debates learn from Aquinas?**

We can learn from him in the way he answered Muslim Aristotelianism. He answered it by fighting bad ideas with good ideas, by fighting the pen with the pen, not the sword. We're not going to win the battle of ideas by the sword. We're going to win the battle of ideas with ideas—better ones, more logical ones, more consistent ones.

Second, we can learn how important it is to understand the philosophy of the day. It's like 1 Chronicles 12:32 says, the men of Issachar "understood the times."

Aquinas studied the philosophy of the day, which was Aristotle. He understood it better than his opponents, and he could use it to refute opponents who misused it. We need to do the same thing in every field.

Aquinas is a tremendous example for us because, today, the basic battle is the battle for God. The only way we're going to defend the orthodox, historic view—held by Aquinas, Augustine, the Reformers, and the creeds and councils of the church—that God knows the future infallibly, that God is eternal and unchangeable, that God even exists, is to go back to Aquinas and his great arguments.

### **What can Christians who aren't theologians or philosophers learn from Aquinas?**

First of all, his absolute, unconditional commitment to Christ. He was an extremely devout person. He spent hours in prayer and Bible reading and Bible study. His whole life had a biblical basis—just read his prayers.

In one Thomistic class I took at a Catholic institution, the professor would pray a brief part of one of Aquinas' prayers before class. He would say, "Inspire us at the beginning, direct our progress, and complete the finished task within us." Aquinas had such a succinct way of getting to the heart of an issue.

Here's another of his prayers: "Give me, O Lord, a steadfast heart, which no unworthy affection may drag downwards; give me an unconquered heart, which no tribulation can wear out; give me an upright heart, which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside. Bestow on me also, O Lord my God, understanding to know you, diligence to seek you, wisdom to find you, and faithfulness that may finally embrace you, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

I can't tell you how Aquinas has enriched and changed my life, my thought. He has helped me to be a better evangelical, a better servant of Christ, and to better defend the faith that was delivered, once for all, to the saints.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "The Link: He's Our Man," *Christian History Magazine-Issue 73: Thomas Aquinas: Greatest Medieval Theologian* (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 2002).

10. Duns Scotus (ca. 1265–1308) The “Subtle Doctor.”

DS was the first to promote the immaculate conception of Mary, that she was free from inheriting Adam’s original sin and was sinless. This doctrine was rejected and opposed by Albertus Magnus, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas. Over subsequent centuries his idea gradually came to be accepted and become official dogma in 1854.

11. William of Ockham (ca. 1289–ca. 1349) (Nominalism, Ockhamism, Via Moderna).

**Parenthesis:** Realism, Conceptualism, and Nominalism, what is it about? It is no minor issue; it deals with the nature of reality and authority. Realists, such as prevailed in the Middle Medieval Period, argued that reality was in the perceived external object [the church is real and has authority, *ante rem*]. This approach to knowledge was deductionistic. Today we would call them dogmatists.

The Nominalist approach is more akin to modern rationalism. Truth is not a matter of declaration and blind obedience; it is a matter of reason. Nominalists reversed the order of the Realists. Reason or acts proceed reality and define it, *post rem*. For example, reason define justice; justice does not precede reason. They were “proto-rationalists” yet in a world that affirmed the possibility of truth. Luther was trained in this tradition and that, in part, explains his detachment from the traditions of the church.

Conceptualists, Moderate Realists, such as Aquinas and Abelard sought a position between the two [*in rem*]. Reality exists in the finite because there is a concept that exists prior to it and behind it. He agreed with the nominalist in method, not conclusion; they agreed with the realist in conclusion, not method.

I. The Church, the Renaissance, and the eve of the Reformation.

1. The turmoil in the church.

a) The Avignon Papacy (1309–77) - “The Babylonian Captivity”.

Clement V (pope from 1305 to 1314) was under the influence of the king of France. In 1309 he moved the seat of the papacy to Avignon which was under French dominance. This, to many churchmen, amounted to the establishment of the papacy in France.

b) The Great Schism (1378–1417) and Conciliar Movement.

(1) Background.

Pope Gregory XI died while in Rome (1378).

A Roman mob forced the election of a Roman pope, Urban VI.

The College of Cardinals claimed that the election of Urban VI was invalid and elected Clement VII as pope.

(2) Council of Pisa (1409).

Rival popes were deposed. A new pope was elected. However, both of the deposed popes refused to step down.

(3) Council of Constance (1414–17).

One pope resigned. The other two were deposed. Martin V was elected as the sole pope.

The Council of Constance healed the schism but raised profound questions about the relative authority of popes and councils dividing the leadership into two factions.

Conciliarists vs. papalists.

Papalists- remained loyal to the ideal of papal supremacy.

Conciliarists - appealed to the authority of councils in hopes of reforming the church.

Says Kung, “The reformation came about in part by the fact the Conciliar Movement failure to restructure the papacy (117)”.

c) The prevailing character of the churchmen and laity.

(1) the higher clergy.

Simony (buying and selling of church offices).

Multiplication of benefices (church offices and the right to receive income from them).

Economic concerns dominated the life of the church.

(2) the lower clergy.

Ignorance.  
 Multiplicity.  
 Greed.  
 Immoral.  
 Privileged.

(3) The laity.

—the multiplication of relics.

The castle church in Wittenberg contained “over five thousand relics, among which were: thirty-five fragments of the true cross, milk of the Virgin Mary, a piece of the burning bush of Moses, and 204 parts of the bodies of the Holy Innocents of Bethlehem. An indulgence of more than 1443 years could be obtained by venerating these relics” (John P. Dolan, *History of the Reformation*, 188).

—Veneration of saints.

Dolan wrote (289) that “through an over-emphasis on the lives of the saints a genuine distaste for the Scriptures arose.”

—the combination of magic and mass.

“People thought of little else than how to exploit the mass for temporal ends” (Joseph Lortz, *The Reformation in Germany*, 1.124).

According to Dolan (196), “Gazing upon the sacred Host at the elevation became for many the very essence of the Mass devotion. In many cities, the populace ran from church to church to see the elevated Host as often as possible, believing that rich rewards came from such practices. There were incidents where lawsuits were started in order to insure a more favorable view of the altar.”

(4) ridicule of the church.

—Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–75) and *The Decameron*.

—Dante (1265–1321) and *The Inferno*.

d) The challenge of the criticism of the church.

(1) Waldenses.

—A Christian community that seems to have originated in twelfth century France. Its numbers grew rapidly. From the time of Innocent III it was severely persecuted.

—Early Protestants appealed to this group to answer the question “Where was your church before Luther?” The Waldenses became Protestants in the sixteenth century.

Teachings:

—strict asceticism.

—importance of preaching.

—refusal to recognize the validity of sacraments administered by unworthy priests.

—rejection of practices believed to be against Scripture (prayers for the dead, veneration of saints and relics).

(2) John Wycliffe (ca. 1330–84).

An English philosopher, theologian, and reformer who is best known for his attacks on the ecclesiastical hierarchy and for his attack on the doctrine of transubstantiation as philosophically unsound and historically novel. Initially he had the support and protection of powerful secular rulers. His views gradually caused him to lose much of his support.

(a) His writings summarized.

*On Divine Lordship:*

—Only God can exercise lordship by right.

—If He should grant a portion of his lordship to a man it should be regarded as a temporary and limited loan.

*On Civil Lordship:*

—All lordship is based on grace.

—Thus, a righteous pauper has a better moral right



to lordship than an unrighteous pope or emperor.

—If church leaders live unrighteous they should be deprived of their possessions.

—The ills of the church can largely be traced to the great wealth of bishops, monks, and priests.

*On the Pastoral Office:*

—Pastoral duties include (1) purging the church of moral stain and (2) feeding Christ's sheep on His Word.

—Parishioners should deal with any priest who fails in these duties by (1) withdrawing their alms and (2) not attending his services.

*On the Truth of the Holy Scriptures:*

—The Church's tradition, conciliar pronouncements, and papal decrees must be tested against the Scriptures.

*On the Church:*

—He distinguishes the Institutional Church from the Invisible Church (those who will be saved).

*On the Power of the Pope*

—He denied the divine institution of the papacy.

—He acknowledged Peter's primacy among the apostles, but attributed it to his love for Christ.

—No successor of Peter has Peter's authority unless he has the same qualities.

—A pope who fails to follow Christ in simplicity and poverty is the Antichrist.

(Later Wycliffe will recommend abolishing the

papal office altogether because the pope was in reality the Antichrist.)

—A. G. Dickens wrote: “Perhaps the only major doctrine of the sixteenth-century Reformers which Wycliffe cannot be said to have anticipated was that of Justification by Faith Alone.”

- (b) The condemnation of Wycliffe by the Council of Constance: His alleged views.

—Peter neither was nor is the head of the holy catholic church.

—That papal dignity originated with the emperor, and the primacy and institution of the pope emanated from imperial power.

—The pope is not the manifest and true successor of the prince of the apostles, Peter, if he lives in a way contrary to Peter’s. If he seeks avarice, he is the vicar of Judas Iscariot. Likewise, cardinals are not the manifest and true successors of the college of Christ’s other apostles unless they live after the manner of the apostles, keeping the commandments and counsels of our Lord Jesus Christ.

—Christ would govern his church better by his true disciples scattered throughout the world, without these monstrous heads.

—The apostles and faithful priests of the Lord strenuously governed the church in matters necessary for salvation before the office of pope was introduced, and they would continue to do this until the day of judgment if—which is very possible—there is no pope.

- (c) His followers.

Lollardy was a movement that included followers of Wycliffe and others who were critical of the church in England. The Lollards survived until the Reformation and seem to have hardened church authorities against reform while providing a channel for criticizing the church.