

The Cloud of Witnesses

“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” – Romans 1:20

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” – 1 Peter 3:15

“So in everything, do to others as you would have them do to you.” – Matthew 7:12

Thomas Aquinas



- Thomas (1225-1274) was born into a privileged family—his father was the Count of Aquino, Italy, and was related to the reigning dynasty of Holy Roman Emperors. His family was ashamed of his decision to become a Dominican friar.

- “St. Thomas was a huge heavy bull of a man, fat and slow and quiet; very mild and magnanimous but not very sociable; shy, even apart from the humility of holiness... [He] was so stolid that the scholars, in the schools which he attended regularly, thought he was a dunce.” – G. K. Chesterton

- He is perhaps the most prominent scholar and philosopher in all of Christian history. He wrote 60 books totaling 25,000 pages, the most influential of which was his *Summa Theologica*. He forged a union of Christian faith and classical Aristotelian philosophy.

“He was one of the great liberators of the human intellect.” – G. K. Chesterton

The great Albert Magnus, a lecturer at the University of Paris, proclaimed to his class about Thomas (one of the students): “You call him a Dumb Ox; I tell you this Dumb Ox shall bellow so loud that his bellowings will fill the world.”

Thomas’ method of philosophy is characterized by:

- A profound regard for the God-given abilities of reason
- A belief that firm knowledge of God can be gained from the nature of the world around us
- Personal humility and respect for one’s opponents

On the Nature of Mankind:

“A man has free choice to the extent that he is rational.”

“Man cannot live without joy; therefore when he is deprived of true spiritual joys it is necessary that he become addicted to carnal pleasures.”

“The things that we love tell us what we are.”

“Three things are necessary for the salvation of man: to know what he ought to believe; to know what he ought to desire; and to know what he ought to do.”



Five Proofs for the Existence of God:

- 1.) The universe as we observe it requires an “Unmoved Mover” to be understandable.
- 2.) The universe also needs a “First Cause”—there is nothing that we know of that is completely uncaused, so the fact that things exist suggests there must be a First Cause.
- 3.) The universe also needs a necessary, non-contingent grounding.
- 4.) The fact that we recognize degrees in values—noble/nobler, good/better, holy/holier—implies that there must exist a perfection of those values (noblest/best/holiest) in order to make them understandable.
- 5.) The Teleological Argument—it is manifest that all created things fulfill a purpose and seem designed in order to achieve that purpose—therefore, there must be a Designer.

[Picture: Thomas Aquinas, flanked by the classical Greek philosophers Aristotle and Plato, and triumphing over the Muslim philosopher Averroes (Ibn Rushd)]

On Philosophy and the Knowledge of God:

“All that is true, by whomsoever it has been said, has its origin in the Spirit.”

“Because philosophy arises from awe, a philosopher is bound in his way to be a lover of myths and poetic fables. Poets and philosophers are alike in being big with wonder.”

“If, then, you are looking for the way by which you should go, take Christ, because He Himself is the way.”

On Humility and Relationships:

“Beware of the person of one book.”

“How can we live in harmony? First we need to know we are all madly in love with the same God.”

“To bear with patience wrongs done to oneself is a mark of perfection, but to bear with patience wrongs done to someone else is a mark of imperfection and even of actual sin.”