

TWELVE POINTS OF LIGHT

POINT 6: THEOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

INTRODUCTION

A. Importance

1. Pope Pius V, in 1567, gave him title, *Universal Doctor of the Church,*” and also called him *Angelic Doctor.*
2. Produced what the Roman Catholic Church regards as its standard formulation of theology
3. Considered one of the greatest theologians of all times

B. Rise of Scholasticism

1. Foundations

- a. After centuries of invasions and cultural decay, theologians turned again to the New Testament, and to the scholars of the early church, to Augustine and to Gregory the Great.
- b. Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle - new interest as Greek philosophers were translated from Greek to Latin
- c. Maimonides (1135-1204), Jewish admirer of Aristotle
- d. Influence of Arab thinkers Avicenna and Averroes
- e. Acceptance of Scripture, Church Fathers, and Church Councils

2. Development

- a. In the 11th century in monasteries and schools maintained by cathedrals
- b. In the universities founded in the 12th and 13th centuries

3. Purpose

- a. Determine relationship between faith and reason
 - 1) If they are compatible, which should have priority?
 - 2) Can reason demonstrate as true what Christians believe about God?
 - 3) If it cannot, does what is received by faith complement what is reached by reason or do they contradict each other?
 - 4) If they contradict, which should be trusted?
- b. Deal with basic philosophical questions
 - 1) Metaphysics - study of being, what is, the existence of being
 - 2) Axiology - study of values, value judgments, their nature and type
 - 3) Epistemology - study of knowing; origin, nature, methods, and limits of knowledge
- c. Address basic issue - determine universals which give meaning to the particulars
 - 1) Realism
 - a) Universals have an existence which is independent of the mind of the thinker.
 - b) God is the source of universals, the ground for the existence of individual things and beings.
 - 2) Conceptualists (Moderate Realists)
 - a) Universals exist but not apart from individual things.
 - b) The ideas exist in the things.
 - 3) Nominalism
 - a) Universals have no objective existence.
 - b) Only particulars are real, and that universals are merely words coined by the intellect.
 - c) Such terms as man, city, nation, animal, and Church are concepts of the mind and only individual objects and events exist.
 - d) Men invent abstract terms and group individual objects under them.

4. Key Scholastics (School Men)
 - a. Anselm (1034-1109)
 - 1) Impacted by Augustine
 - 2) He was a realist
 - a) Faith comes before reason - believe in order to know
 - b) No conflict between faith and reason
 - c) Accepted Christian truth by faith but believed it could be demonstrated by the processes of the intellect and could be supported by reason.
 - d) Belief in God, nature of God, the Trinity, immortality, the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ can be reached by reason and are part of a rational view of the universe.
 - 3) His most famous theological works
 - a) *Monologius* (A Soliloquy) - best being argument of God.
 - b) *Proslogius* (A Discourse) - ontological (nature of being) argument for the existence of God
 - c) *Cur Deus Homo* (Why God-man) - the incarnation and the atonement (man should pay the debt but God can pay the debt)
 - b. Abelard (b. 1079 - 1142)
 - 1) A moderate realist - faith and reason go hand in hand.
 - 2) Rejected view of original sin and that all share in the punishment of Adam.
 - 3) Every human can cooperate with the grace of God and by good works escape punishment.
 - 4) By reason, which is the gift of God to man, individuals can discover what is good and then employ their wills to follow the good.
 - c. Hugo of St. Victor (1096 - 1141)
 - 1) Divided knowledge into two branches which do not conflict, philosophy and theology
 - 2) Man has three gates or organs through which knowledge comes to him - his physical eye, the eye of the mind, and the eye of the spirit.
 - 3) A mystic who highly valued contemplation.
 - 4) Promoted transubstantiation and in less than 100 years became official position of the Church.
 - d. Peter Lombard ©. 1100 -1160)
 - 1) Author of the most widely read textbook on theology in the Middle Ages, *Sentences*
 - 2) Compilation of quotations from Church Fathers
 - 3) Composed of four books which dealt with Theology Proper, Anthropology, Soteriology and Eschatology.
 - e. Albertus Magnus (1206-1280)
 - 1) Deeply interested in the natural sciences
 - 2) Attempted to employ Aristotle as an aid to Christian thought
 - 3) A contemporary and mentor of Aquinas

<i>THE LIFE OF THOMAS AQUINAS (1225-1274)</i>
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- A. Beliefs
 1. Deeply religious and wrote hymns and commentaries on the Scriptures
 2. A philosopher whose epistemology was moderate realism
 - a. Critical of Plato's realism and tended toward Aristotle
 - b. Made distinction between things which can be grasped by reason and those which are beyond it
 - 1) Philosophy deals only with that which reason can attain.
 - 2) Theology deals with all truth-that which can be reasoned and that which must be revealed.
 - c. Since God is the origin of both nature and revelation, they cannot be in conflict with each other.

3. On the existence of God
 - a. Rejected Anselm's view that the existence of God is self-evident
 - b. Held view that it can be demonstrated on basis of knowledge gained through one's senses and reason
 - c. Aquinas' Five Proofs of the Existence of God
 - 1) Argument from motion
 - a) Things do move and change from potentiality to actuality.
 - b) It is impossible for potentiality to actualize itself.
 - c) There must be a first being that is primary origin of all movement and is not moved by another.
 - d) The prime unmoved mover is God.
 - 2) Argument from efficient causality
 - a) All things have their causes, and some may be the cause of others, but none is its own cause.
 - b) There is an order of causes in which a first cause must exist, for if the first cause did not exist the others would also be nonexistent.
 - c) There must be a first cause.
 - d) That first cause is God.
 - 3) Argument from possibility and necessity
 - a) There are beings that begin to exist and cease to exist (possible beings).
 - b) Not all beings can be possible beings because what comes to exist does so through what already exists (nothing cannot cause something).
 - c) Therefore, there must be a being whose existence is necessary (one that never came into being and will never cease to be).
 - d) That necessary being is God.
 - 4) Argument from gradation (perfection)
 - a) There are different degrees of perfection among beings.
 - b) But things cannot be more or less perfect unless there is a wholly perfect.
 - c) Whatever is perfect is the cause of the less perfect.
 - d) That which is perfect is God.
 - 5) Teleological (purpose) argument
 - a) All things in the universe, even those which have no reason, move toward an end that is proper to them.
 - b) They could not do that out of themselves or through chance.
 - c) That which leads them to their end is God.
4. On natural law
 - a. His starting point for axiology (values) was natural law.
 - b. The origin of every law and every order is *eternal law*, which is in God as supreme ruler of the universe.
 - c. Natural law is universal because it is written in the hearts of all men and its precepts are the first principles of practical reason.
 - d. It was the basis for the appeal of the Declaration of Independence to *self-evident truths* and *unalienable rights* derived from *nature and nature's God*.

B. Key Writings

1. *Summa Contra Gentiles*
 - a. Designed to equip missionaries to the Moslems.
 - b. Contained arguments for the presentation of their faith.
2. *Summa Theologiae* (Summation of Theological Knowledge)
 - a. Determined to reconcile Aristotle to Christianity
 - b. Designed to equip beginners in the truths of Christianity

C. Impact

1. Brought philosophy and theology together in such a way that Christianity remained a viable option
2. His works were used in drafting the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545-63) to combat the rise of Protestantism.
3. Emphasis on nature opened the door for focus on natural sciences.
4. Opened the door for despair in society today
5. Definition of the dilemma
 - a. Break between grace and nature (faith and reason)
 - (1) Grace deals with things above the line
 - (a) God the Creator
 - (b) Heavenly things
 - (c) The unseen and its influence on the earth
 - (d) Man's soul
 - (e) Unity
 - (2) Nature deals with things below the line
 - (a) The created
 - (b) Earth and earthly things
 - (c) The visible and what nature and man do on earth.
 - (d) Man's body
 - (e) Diversity
 - b. The problem
 - (1) The issue is whether there are universals that give meaning to particulars.
 - (2) Aquinas viewed the will of man as fallen but not his intellect.
 - (3) Therefore, man is capable of pursuing knowledge independently of Scripture.
 - c. The result
 - (1) Aquinas signaled the birth of the humanistic Renaissance.
 - (2) His opening between nature and grace led to a complete break between them with nature swallowing up grace.
 - (3) Schaeffer refers to our society as living below the line of despair.
 - (a) Philosophy says there are no universals to give the particulars meaning.
 - (b) There is no reasonable way to get from nature to grace.
 - (c) Man can only take a "leap of faith" toward universal meaning.
 - d. The solution
 - (1) God is and has spoken to man concerning Himself and His creation.
 - (2) There is no gulf between nature and grace
 - (3) Universals are set by the God Who is there and is not silent.

CONCLUSION

- A. Aquinas was a deep thinker devoted to Scripture.
- B. Our society lives in despair not intended by Aquinas but made possible by his overemphasis on man's ability to reason independently of God.
- C. God alone is our ground of being and the One who gives universal meaning to the particulars of life.

INTERNET SOURCES

<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/>
<http://www.nd.edu/Departments/Maritain/etext/gc.htm>

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