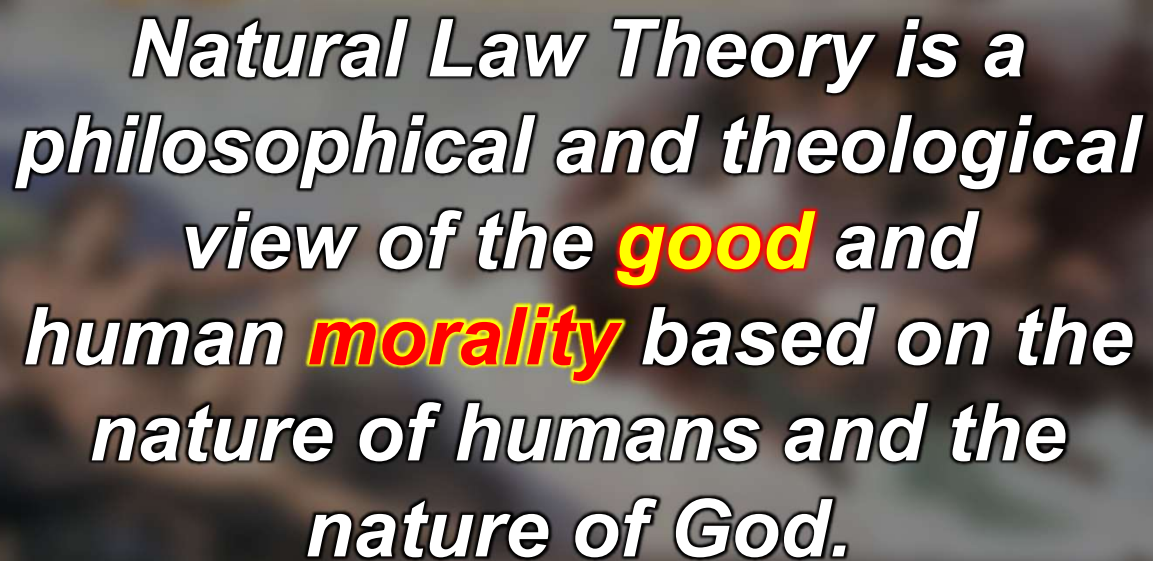


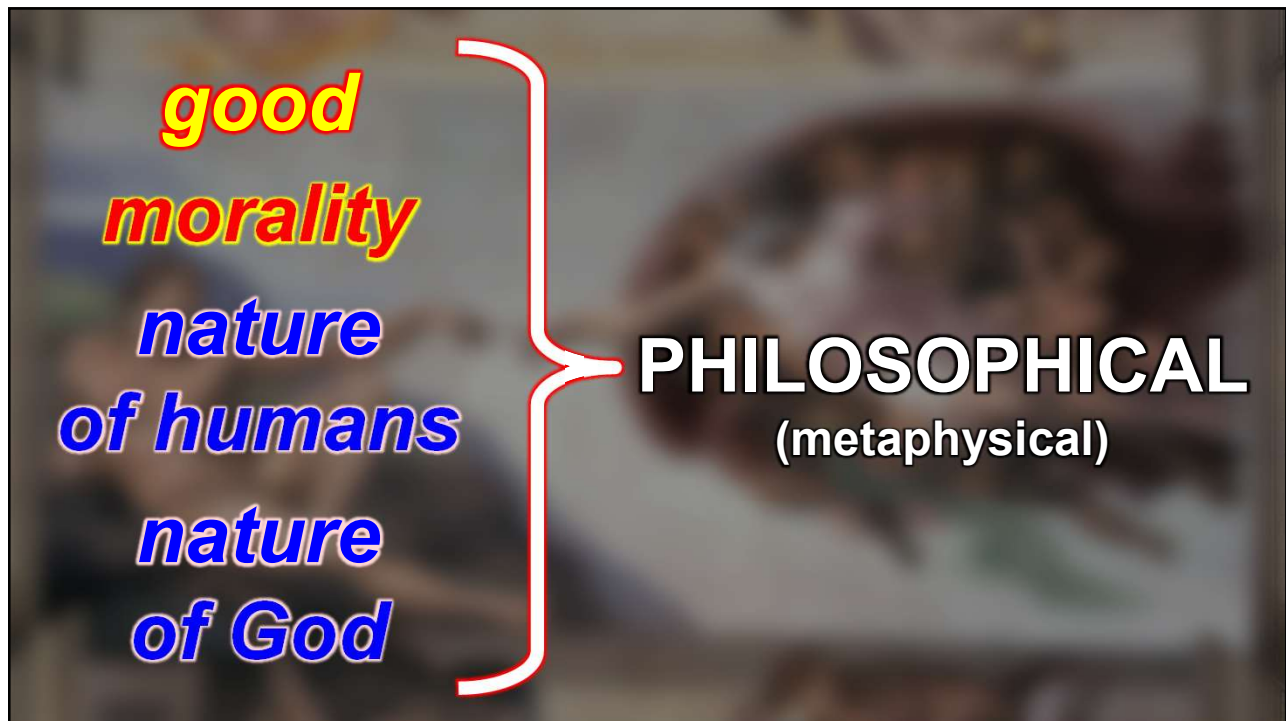
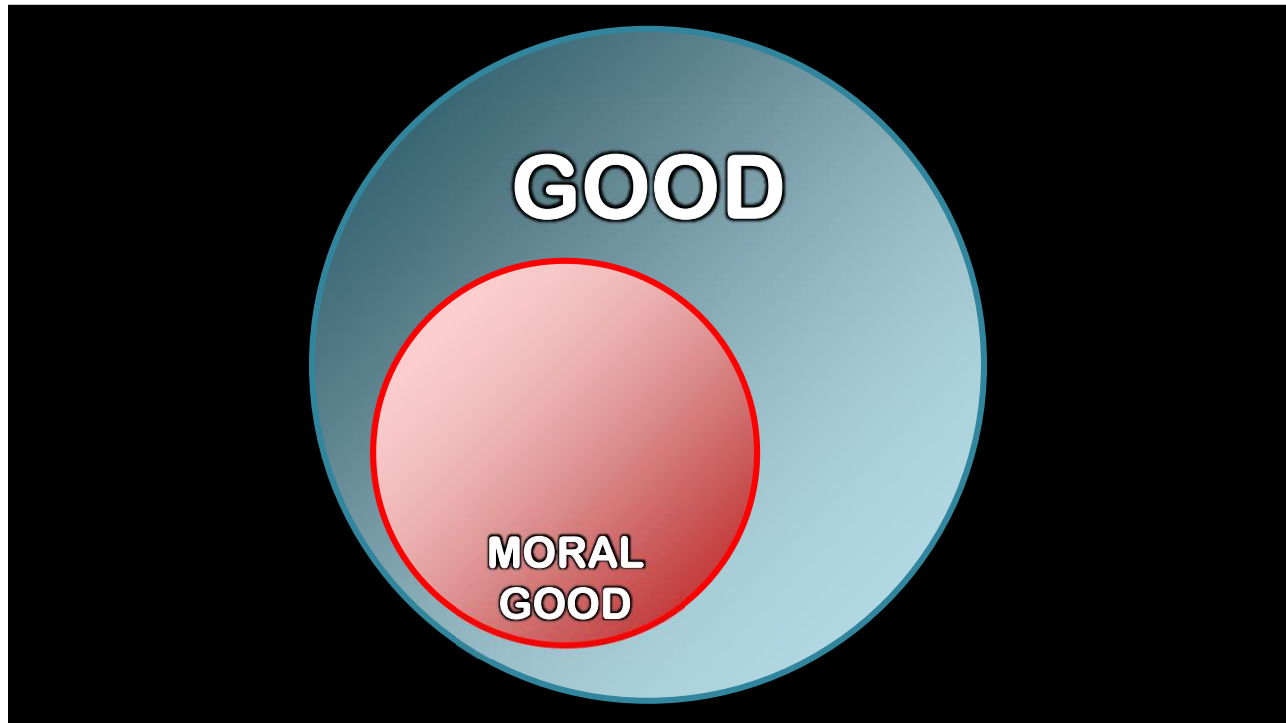


***Natural Law Ethics is  
commonly referred to as  
Natural Law Theory.***



***Natural Law Theory is a  
philosophical and theological  
view of the **good** and  
human **morality** based on the  
nature of humans and the  
nature of God.***

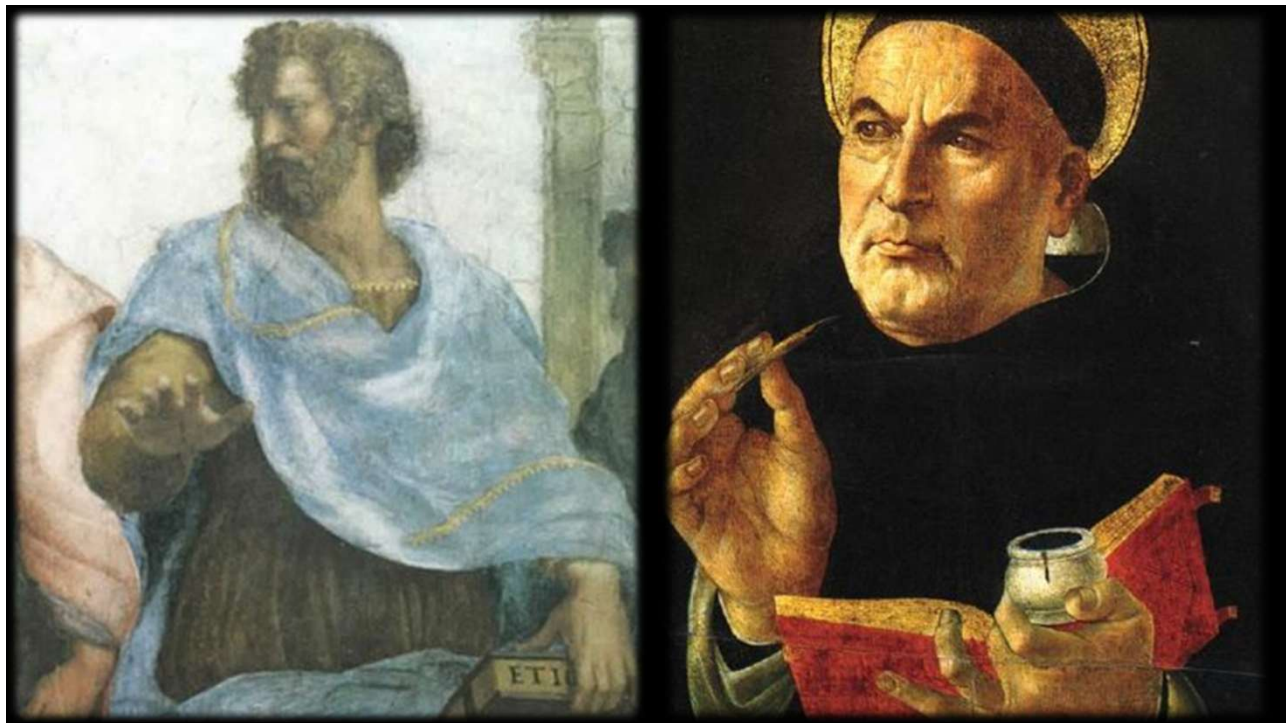
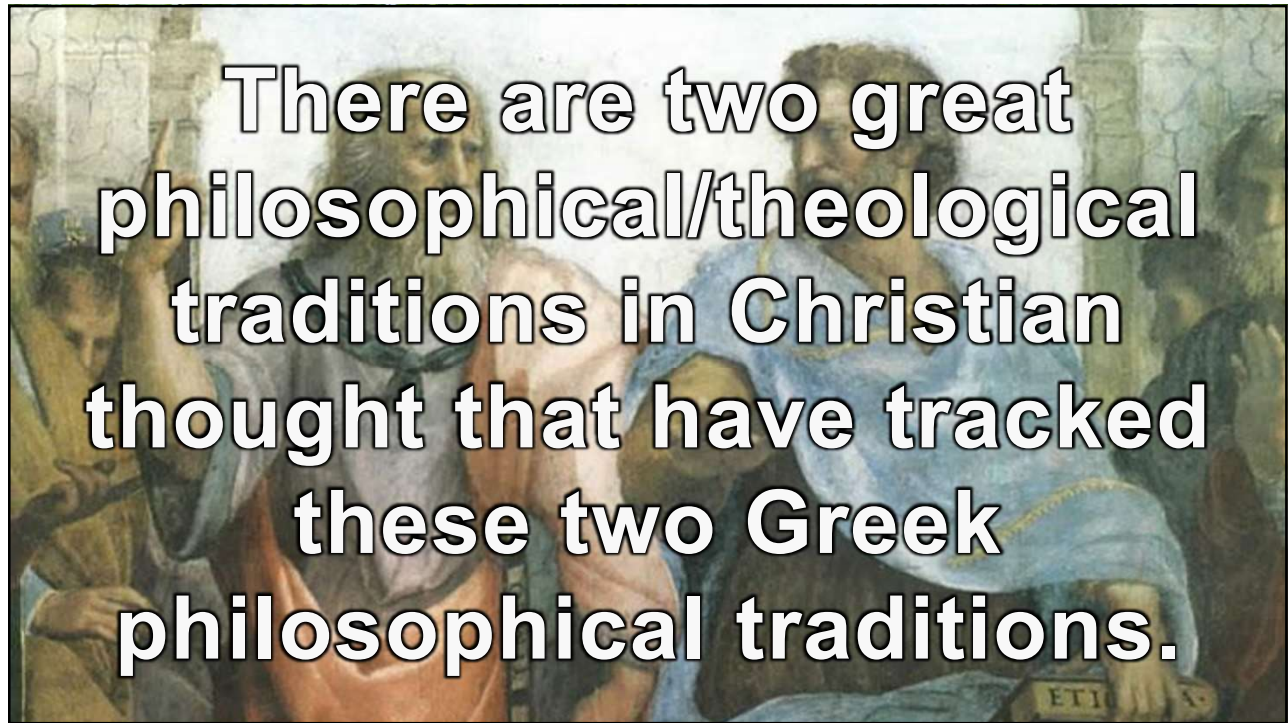


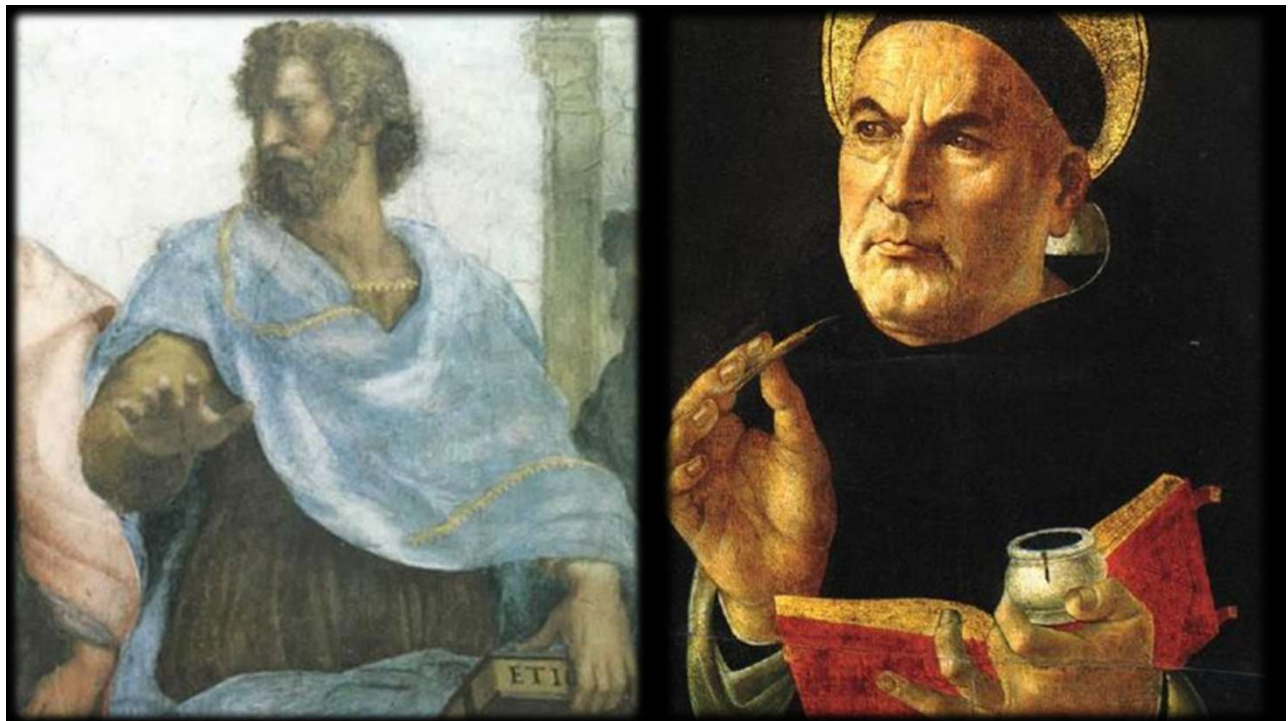
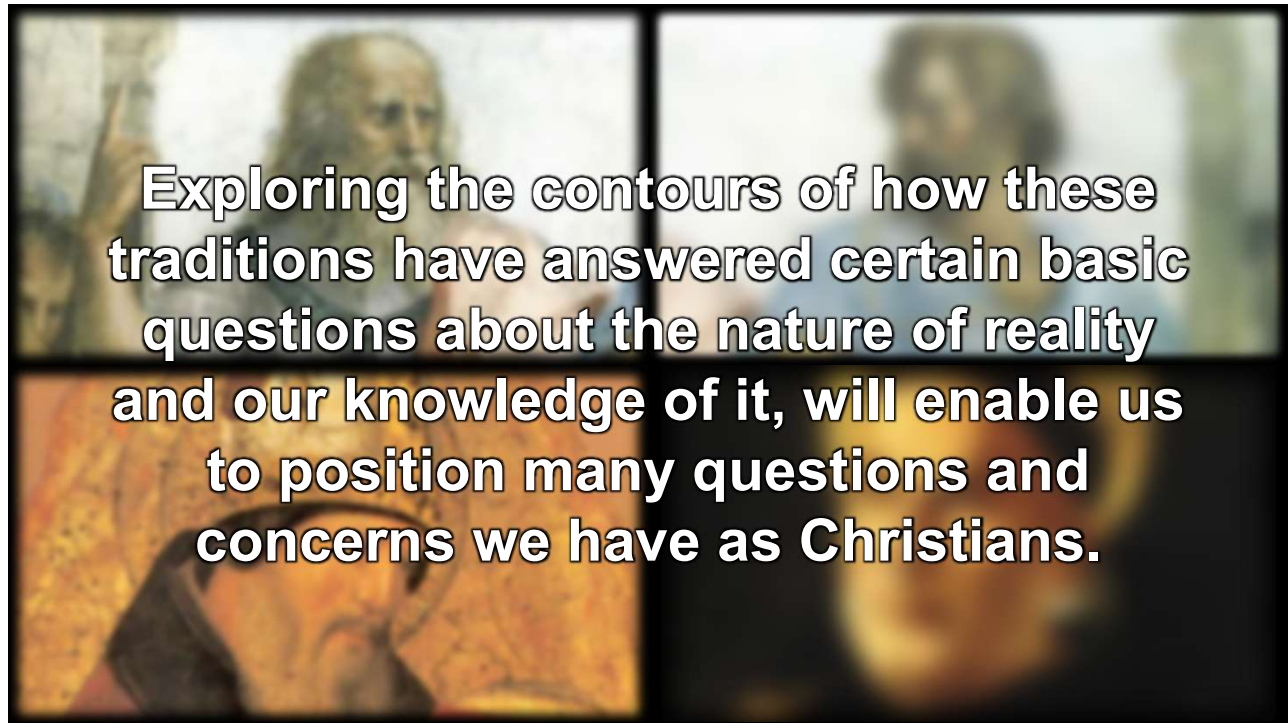


**There are two great  
philosophical traditions  
in Western thought that  
have endured since the  
ancient Greeks.**







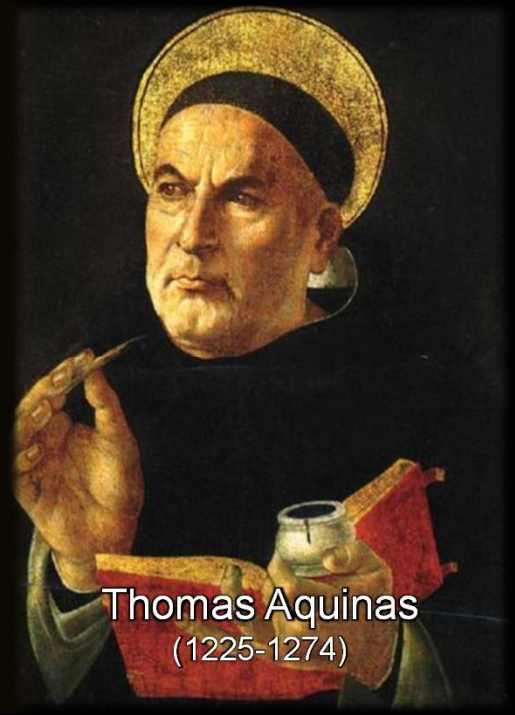




***Given that certain aspects of human morality are philosophical issues, Natural Law Theory maintains that such aspects of the good and moral good can be known by human reason apart from Scripture.***

***This is not to say that every aspect of such things is accessible by human reason. This is especially the case with man's eternal destiny.***

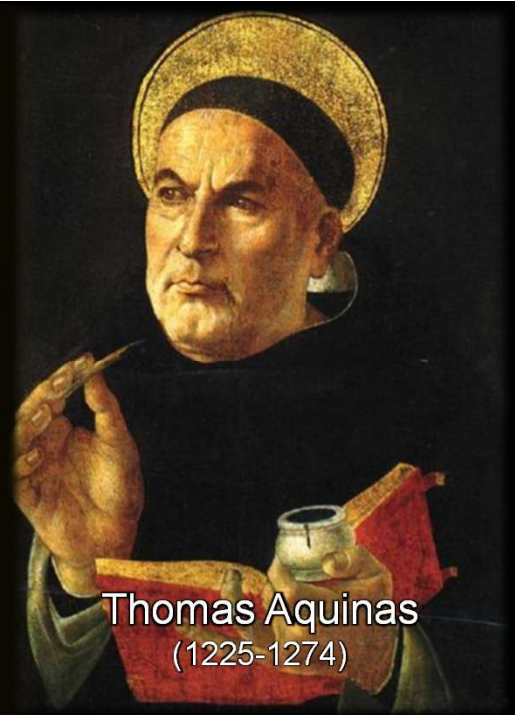
***"It was necessary for man's salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God, besides philosophical science built up by human reason ... because man is directed to God as to an end that surpasses the grasp of reason. ..."***



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***"But the end must first be known by men who are to direct their thoughts and actions to the end. Hence it was necessary for the salvation of man that certain truths which exceed human reason should be made known to him by divine revelation."***

[Summa Theologiae I, 1]

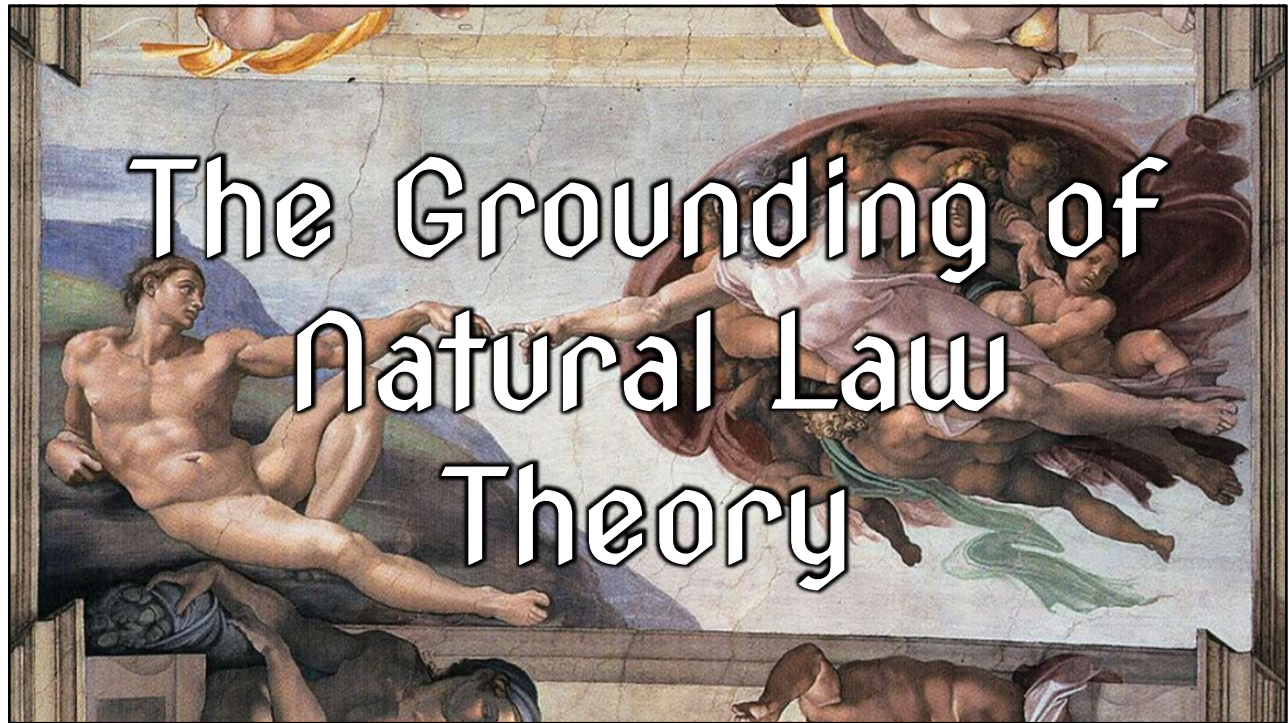


Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)



*While I agree with Aquinas's metaphysics regarding the philosophical aspects of human morality and goodness in achieving our **end** in this life, as a Protestant Evangelical, I do not agree with him regarding how we gain that ultimate **end** in the next life.*

*While I agree with Aquinas's metaphysics regarding the philosophical aspects of human morality and goodness in achieving our end in this life, as a Protestant Evangelical, I do not agree with him regarding how we gain that ultimate end in the next life.*

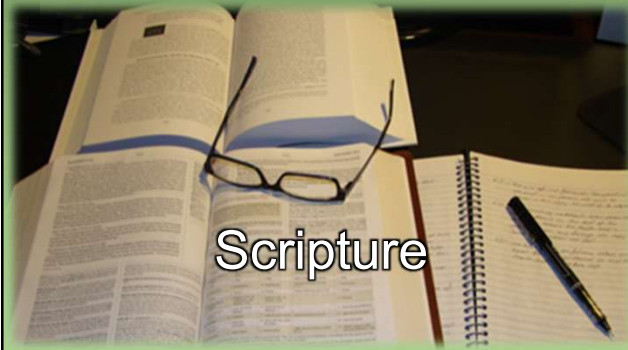


*Natural Law theorists seek to defend its elements on the basis of both sound reason (General Revelation) and **biblical exegesis***





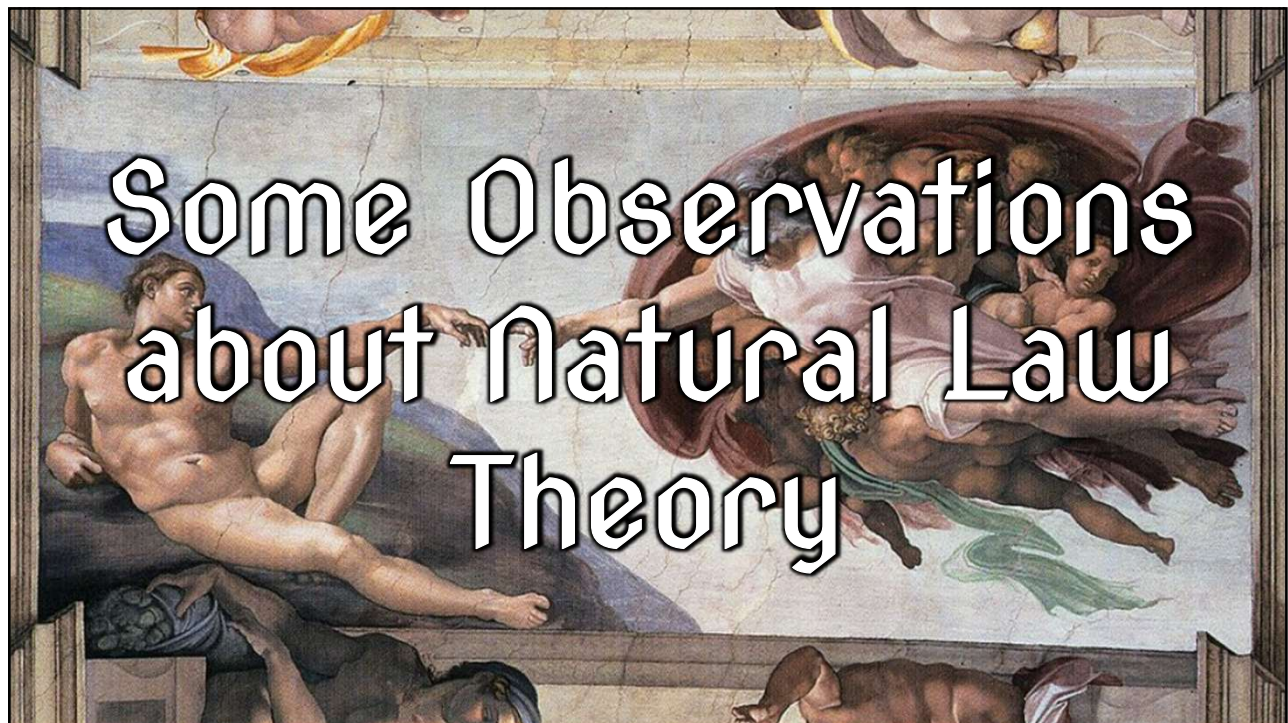
***Natural Law theorists seek to defend its elements on the basis of both sound reason (General Revelation) and biblical exegesis (Special Revelation).***



Scripture

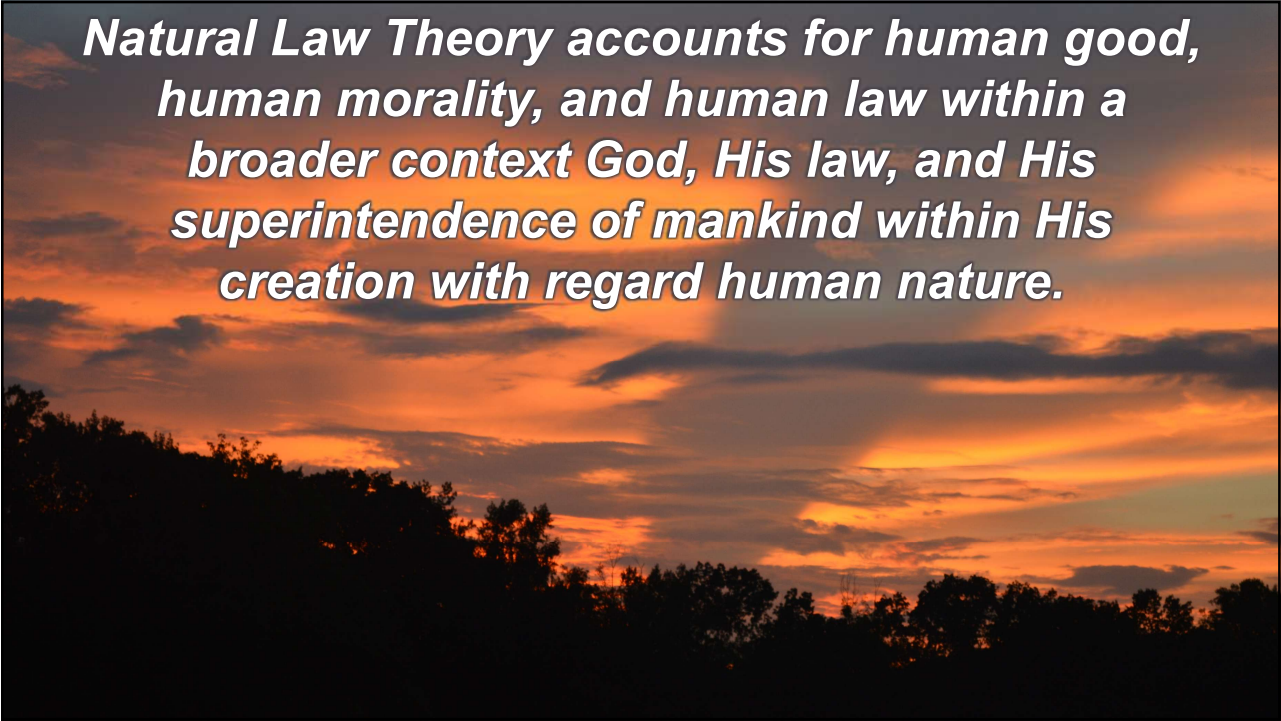


Sound Reason



**Some Observations  
about Natural Law  
Theory**

***Natural Law Theory accounts for human good, human morality, and human law within a broader context God, His law, and His superintendence of mankind within His creation with regard human nature.***



***It stands in stark contrast to the view of God and morality commonly found in contemporary Evangelical apologetics.***





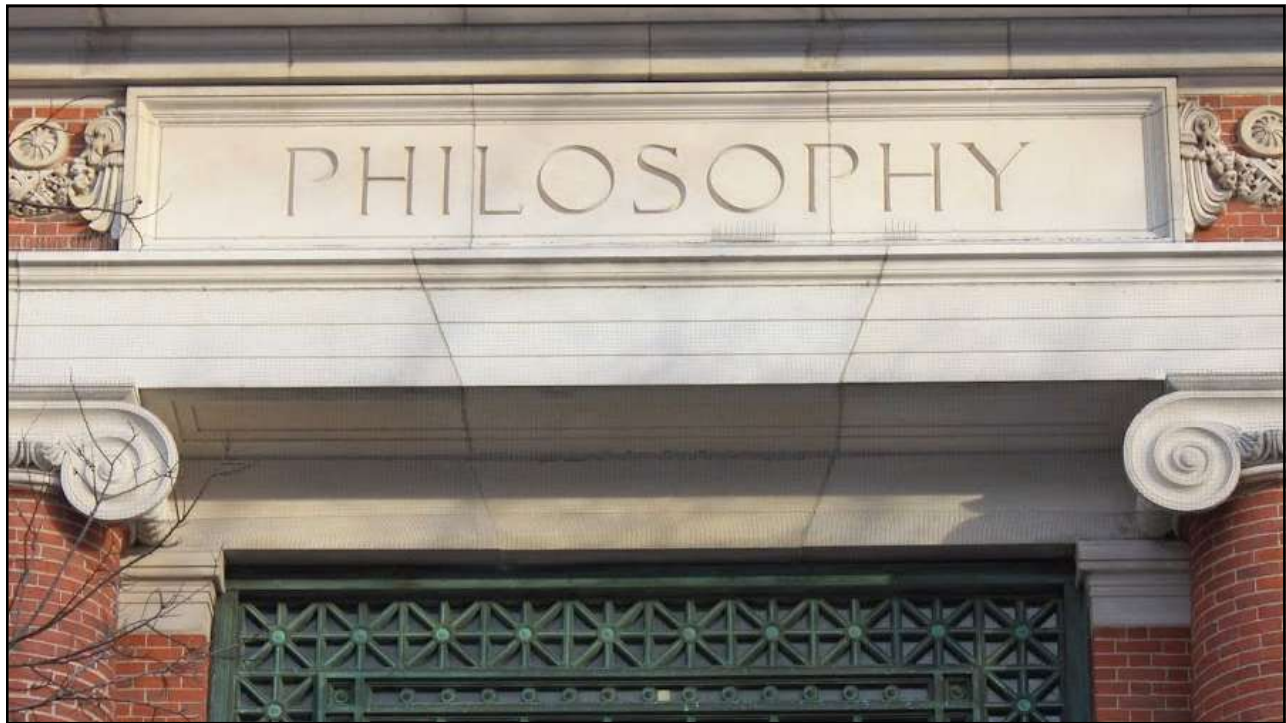
*This is especially true regarding the view  
commonly found among contemporary  
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*This is especially true regarding the view  
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Christian **analytic philosophers**.*

- ❖ *Natural Law Theory accounts for human good, human morality, and human law within a broader context God, His law, and His superintendence of mankind within His creation with regard human nature.*
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- ❖ *This is especially true regarding the view commonly found among contemporary Christian analytic philosophers.*

- ❖ *Natural Law Theory accounts for human good, human morality, and human law within a broader context God, His law, and His superintendence of mankind within His creation with regard human nature.*
- ❖ *It stands in stark contrast to the view of God and morality commonly found in contemporary Evangelical apologetics.*
- ❖ *This is especially true regarding the view commonly found among contemporary Christian **analytic philosophers.***





***Analytic philosophy and Classical philosophy are two (among several) ways of understanding the nature, content, and procedures of philosophy.***

*The most obvious difference is that Classical philosophy does philosophy largely along the contours and categories of Ancient Greek and Medieval Philosophy.*

*Because of this, the moral argument for God's existence will differ between those apologists who employ Classical philosophy and those apologists who do not.*



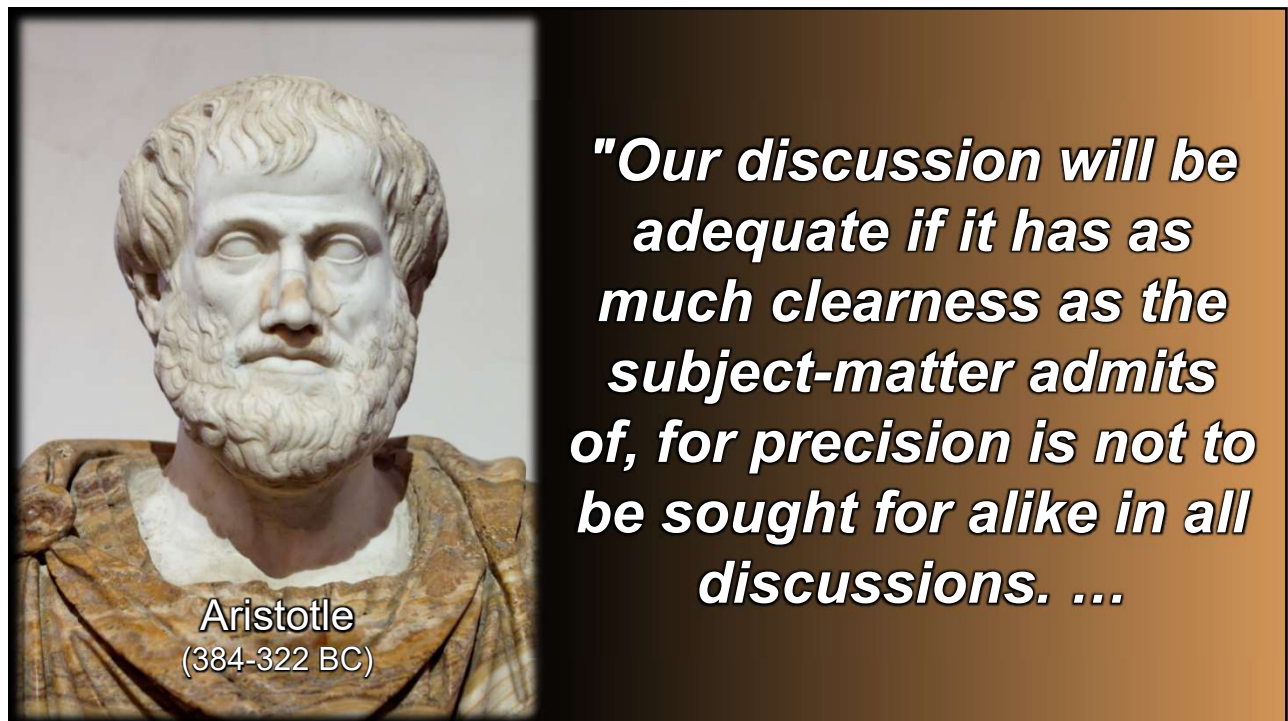
- 1. If God does not exist, then objective moral values do not exist.***
- 2. Objective moral values do exist.***
- 3. Therefore, God exists.***



*As a model of morality that follows the contours and categories of Ancient Greek and Medieval Philosophy, Natural Law Theory traffics in certain fundamental concepts, most of which themselves need to be unpacked, including:*

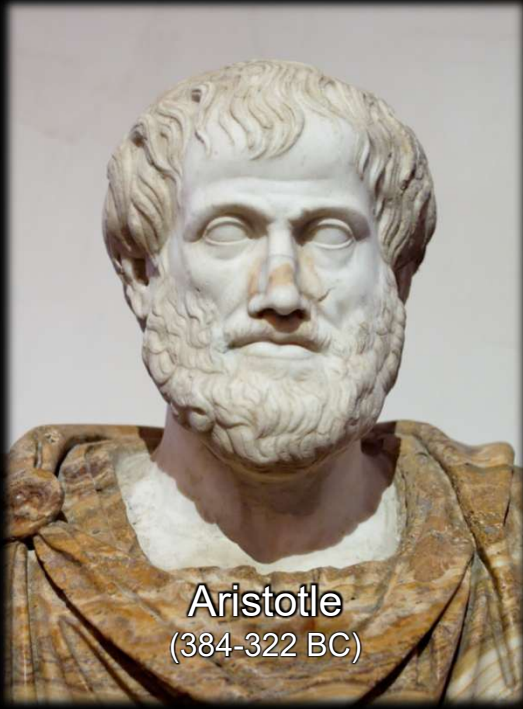
*law      nature / natural      human nature*  
*nature vs. function      substance vs. accident*  
*act / potency      teleology      existence*  
**God as Being and Goodness itself**  
*good and evil      good and moral good*  
*obligation      the Transcendentals*  
*convertibility of 'being' and 'good'*





*"Our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness as the subject-matter admits of, for precision is not to be sought for alike in all discussions. ..."*

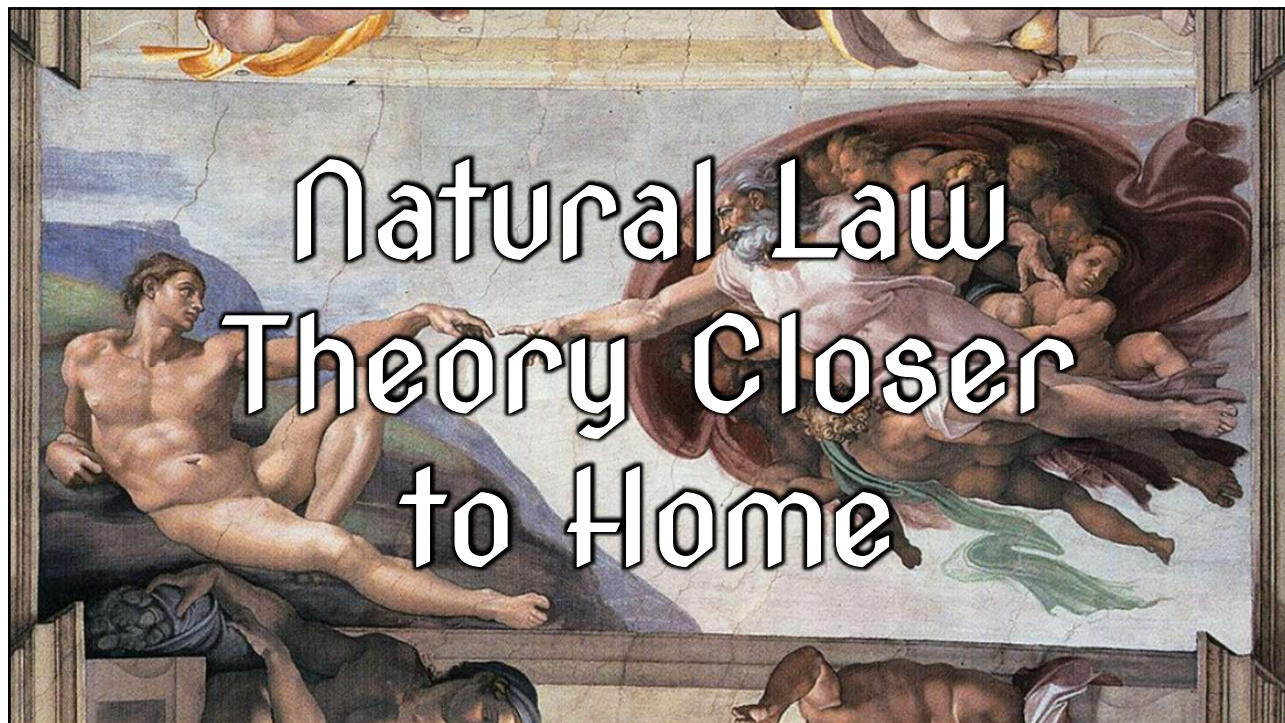




**Aristotle**  
(384-322 BC)

***"For it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits."***

[Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 3, 1094<sup>a</sup>11, 25, trans. W. D. Ross in Richard McKeon, ed. *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), 936]

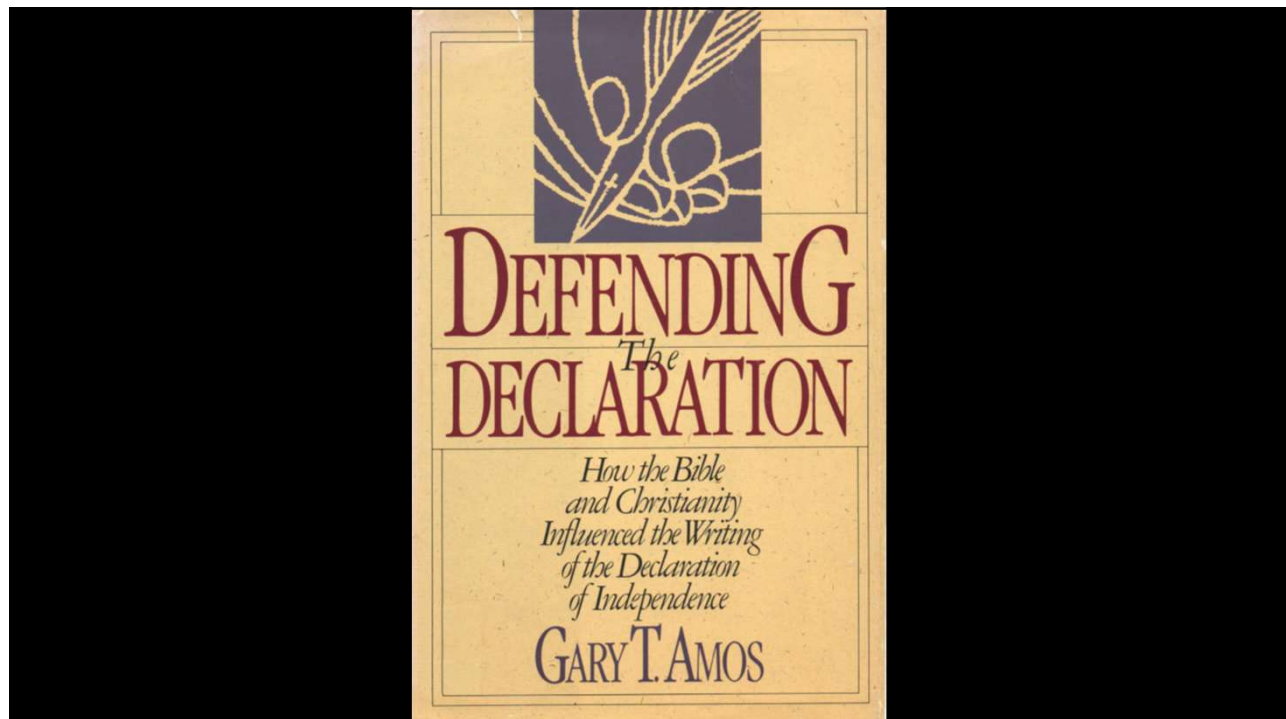


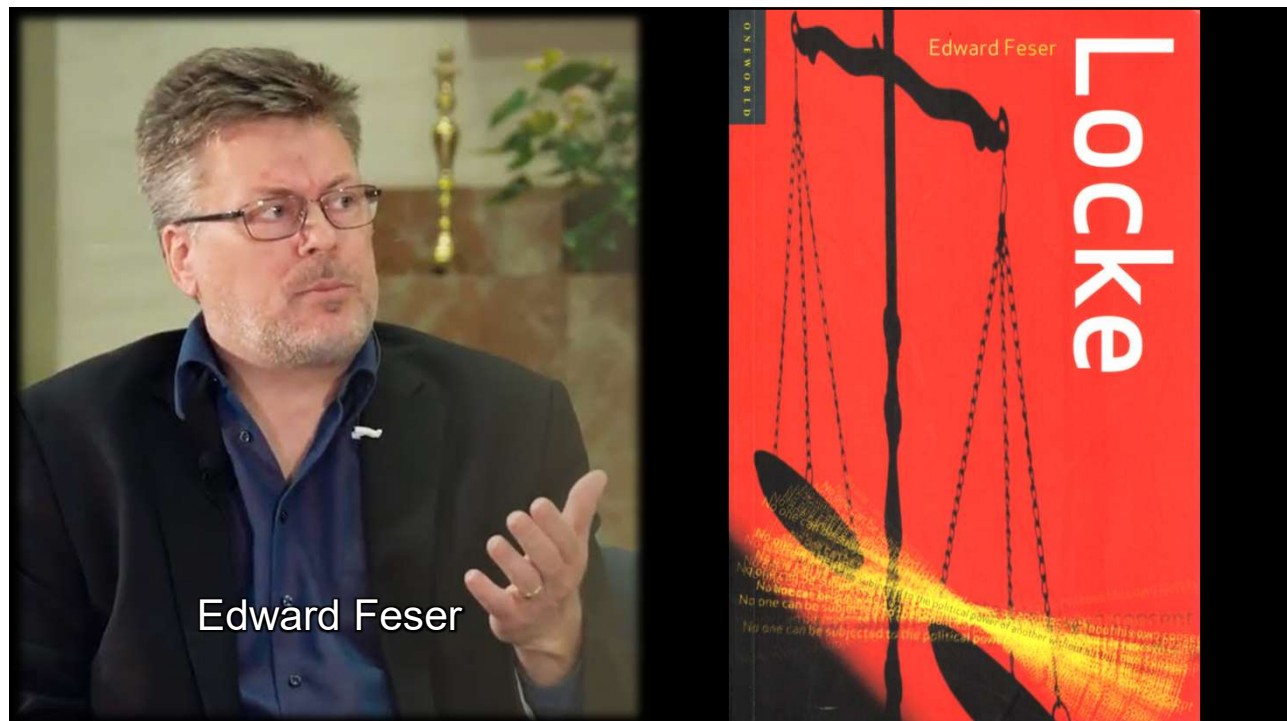
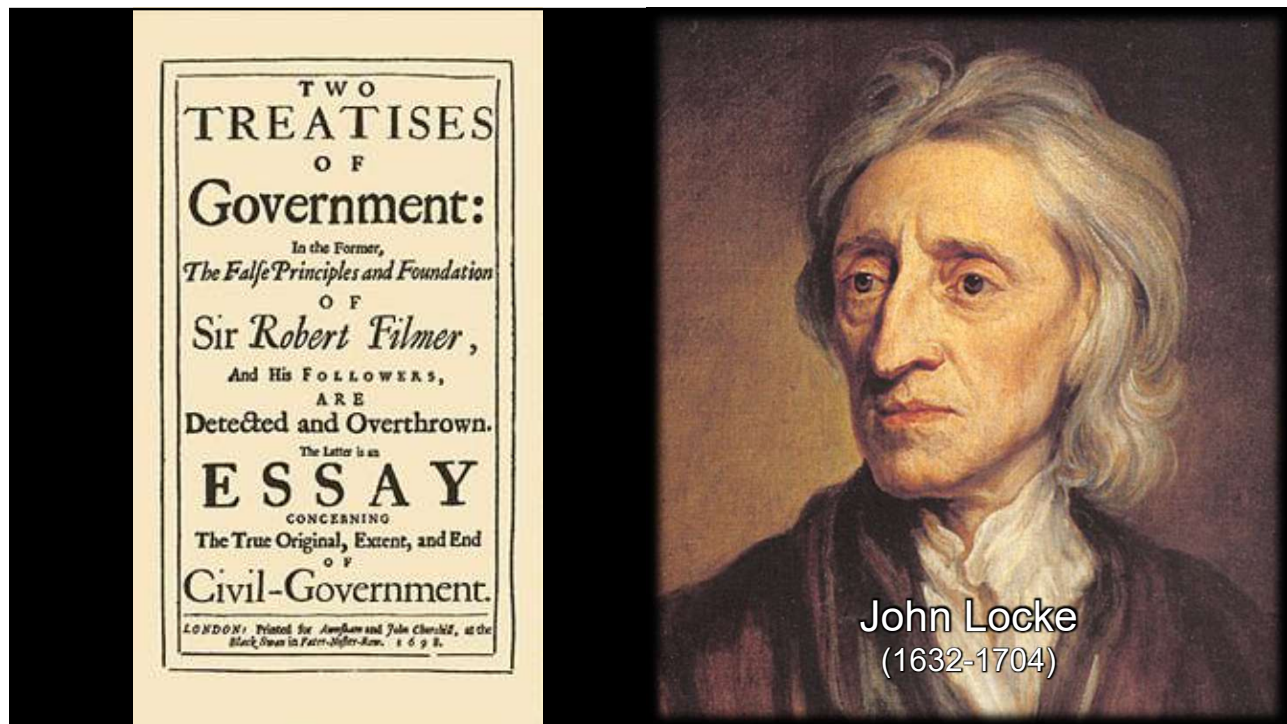


IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,

"...the Laws of Nature  
and of Nature's God..."









Hon. Clarence Thomas

Laurence H. Tribe

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## Clarence Thomas and 'Natural Law'

By LAURENCE H. TRIBE  
Published: July 15, 1991

What is really at stake in the nomination of Judge Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court? While any candidate nominated to replace Justice Thurgood Marshall would likely accelerate the Court's rightward trend, Judge Thomas's adherence to "natural law" as a judicial philosophy could take the Court in an even more troubling direction.

Most conservatives criticize the judiciary for expanding its powers, "creating" rights rather than "interpreting" the Constitution. These critics talk of returning issues like abortion to democratically elected and politically accountable bodies.

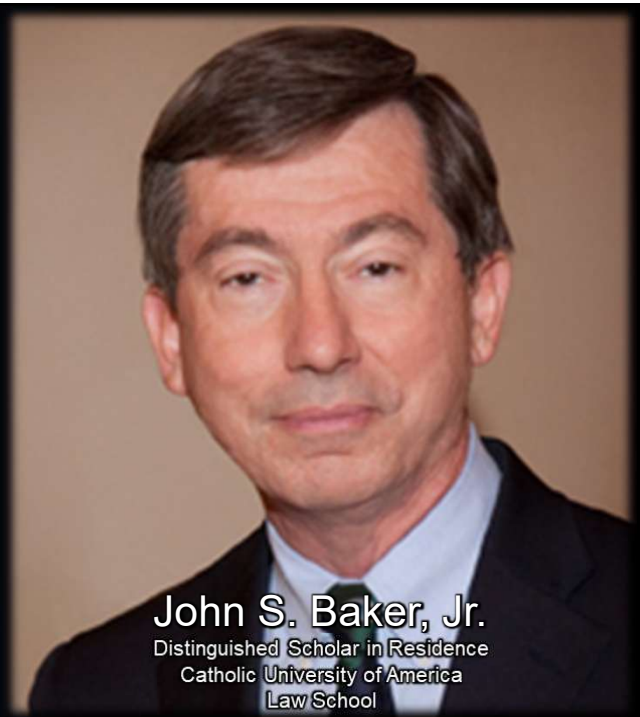
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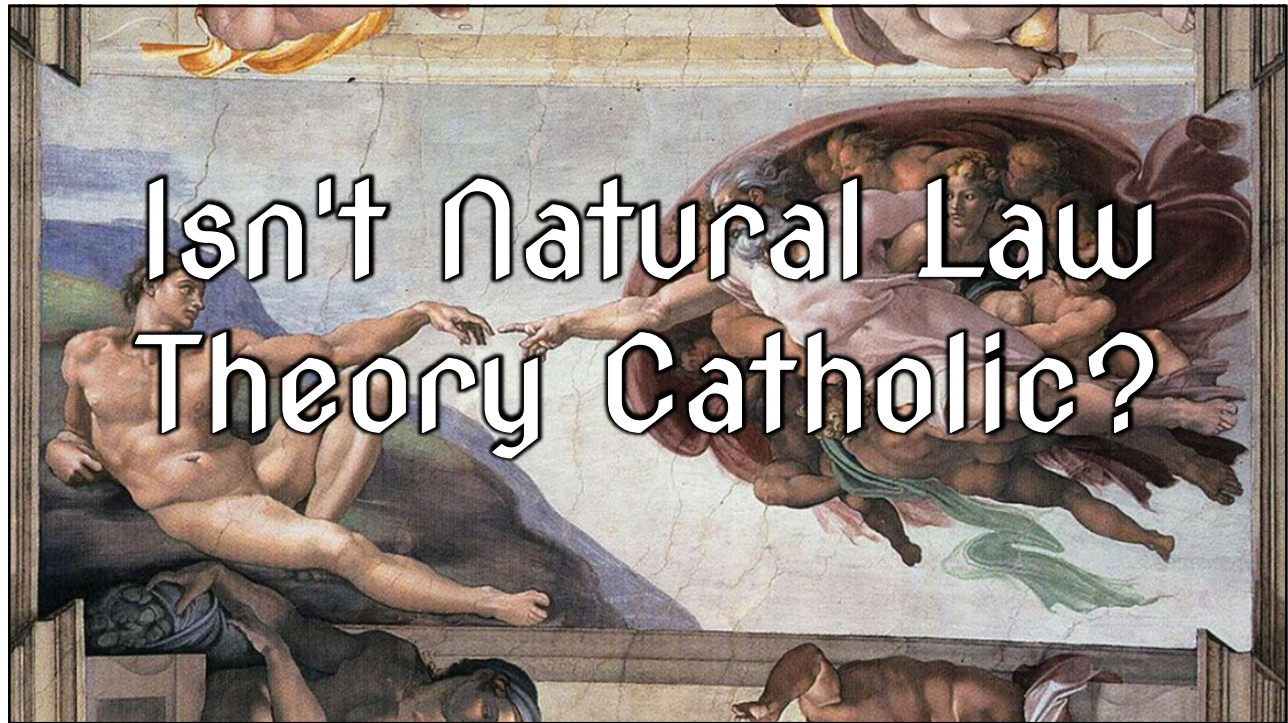
***"The anxious questions asked by the Senators about natural law and the nominee's disavowal that natural law would have any role in his decision of actual cases evidence a pervasive lack of understanding or acceptance of natural law."***

[*"Natural Law and Justice Thomas," Regent University Law Review (1999-2000): 471*]



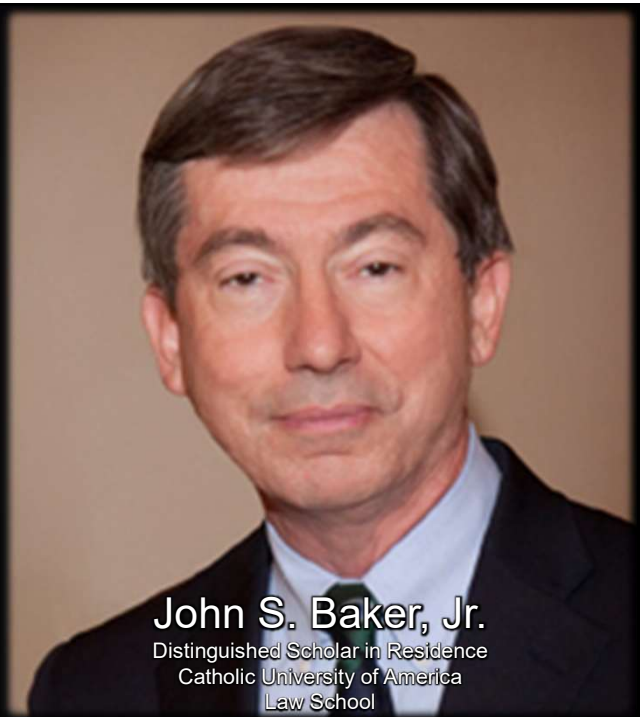
**John S. Baker, Jr.**  
Distinguished Scholar in Residence  
Catholic University of America  
Law School



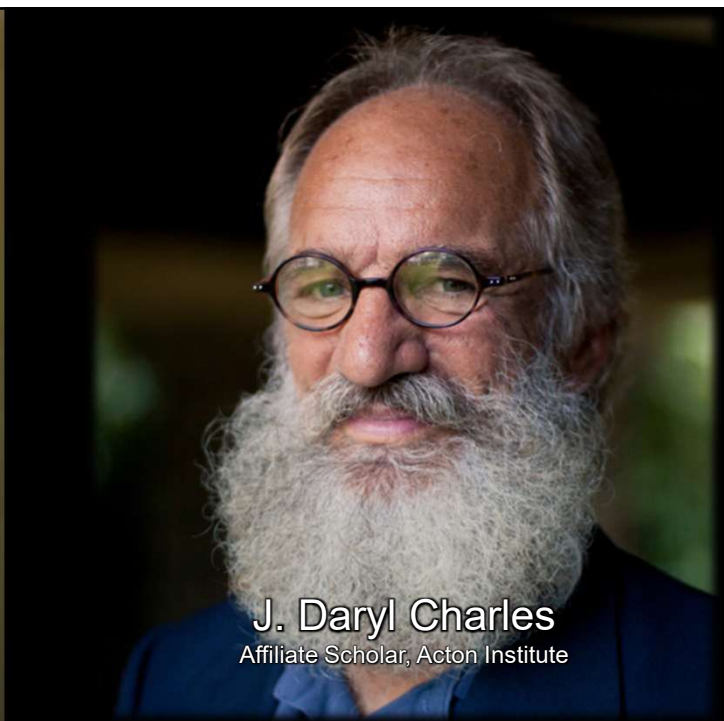
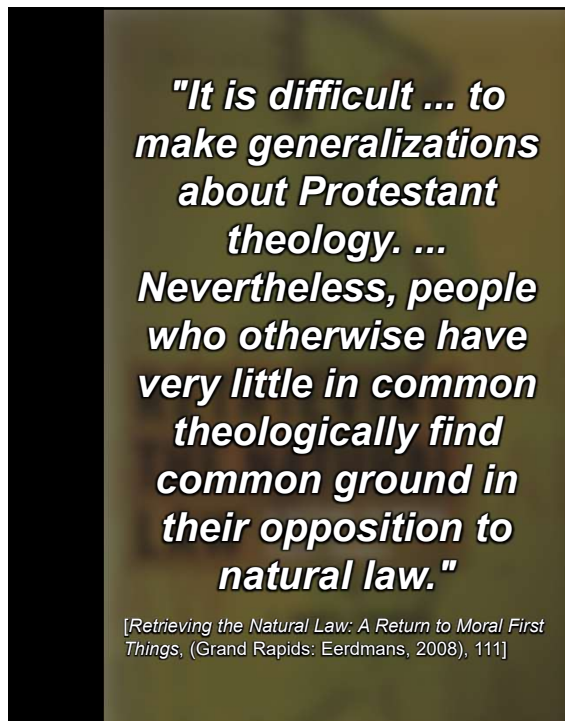
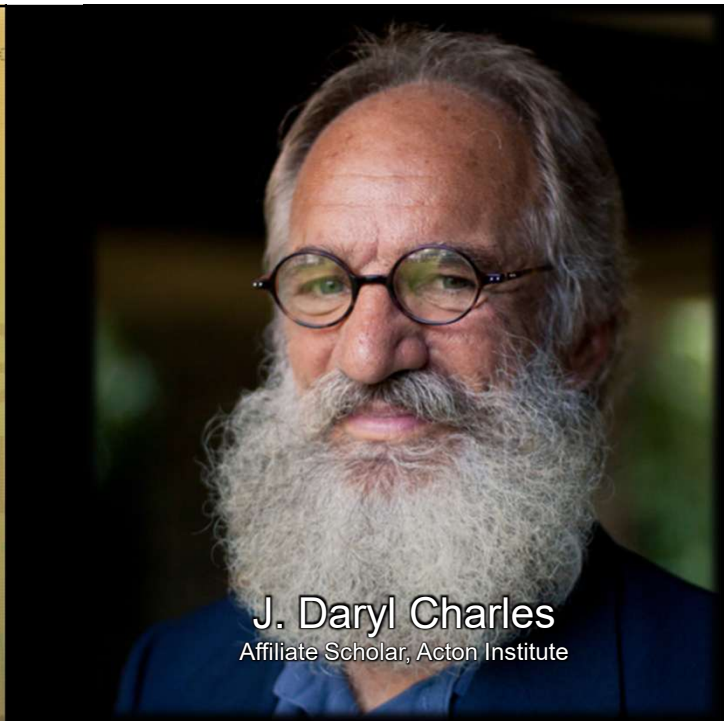
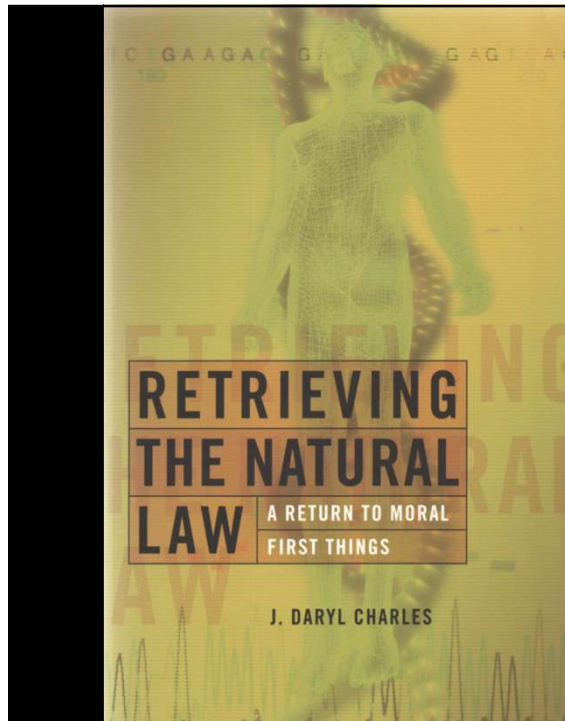


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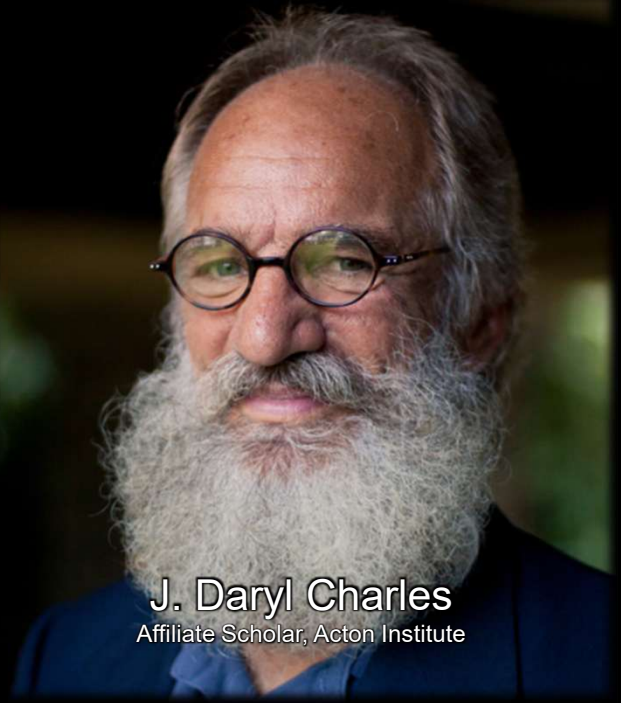
**John S. Baker, Jr.**  
Distinguished Scholar in Residence  
Catholic University of America  
Law School





***"One is hard-pressed  
to identify a single  
major figure in  
Protestant theological  
ethics who has  
developed and  
defended a theory of  
natural law."***

[Retrieving, 112]

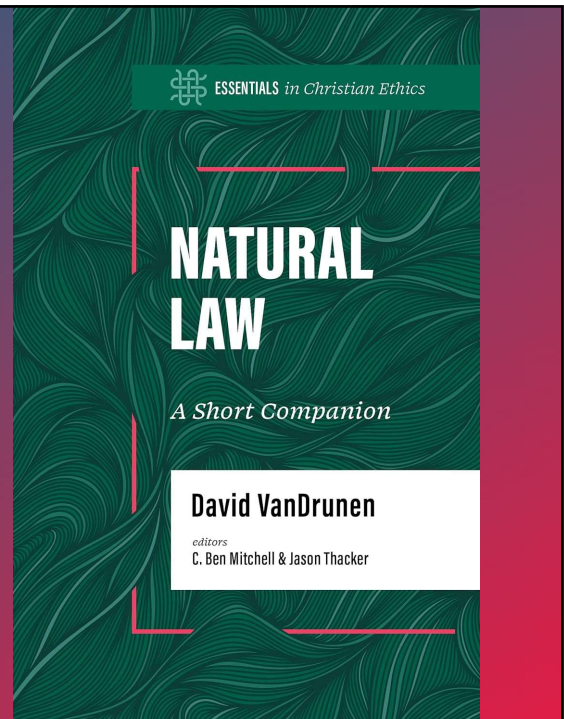


**J. Daryl Charles**

Affiliate Scholar, Acton Institute



**David VanDrunen**



ESSENTIALS in Christian Ethics

# NATURAL LAW

*A Short Companion*

**David VanDrunen**

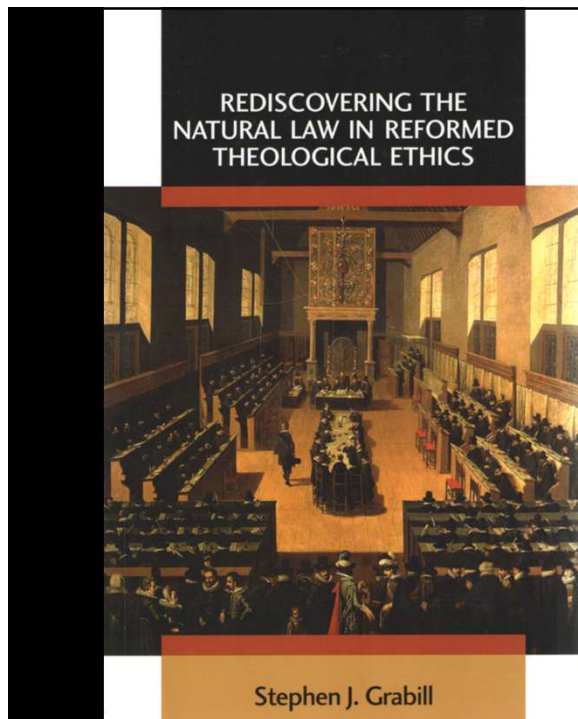
editors  
C. Ben Mitchell & Jason Thacker



David VanDrunen

***"Protestants should not affirm natural law despite being Protestant. They should affirm natural because they are Protestant. ... Protestants believe that Scripture is the highest authority for Christian faith and life, and since Scripture clearly teaches the reality and importance of natural law, Protestants must affirm natural law if they wish to be true to their own convictions."***

[David VanDrunen, *Natural Law: A Short Companion* (Brentwood: B&H Academic, 2023), 11, emphasis in original]



REDISCOVERING THE  
NATURAL LAW IN REFORMED  
THEOLOGICAL ETHICS

Stephen J. Grabill



Stephen J. Grabill

Acton Institute and  
Grand Rapids Theological Seminary



***"While evangelicals today (both inside and outside of confessional traditions) may be surprised—even dismayed—by [Peter Martyr Vermigli's] strong affirmation of divine witness through the natural order,***



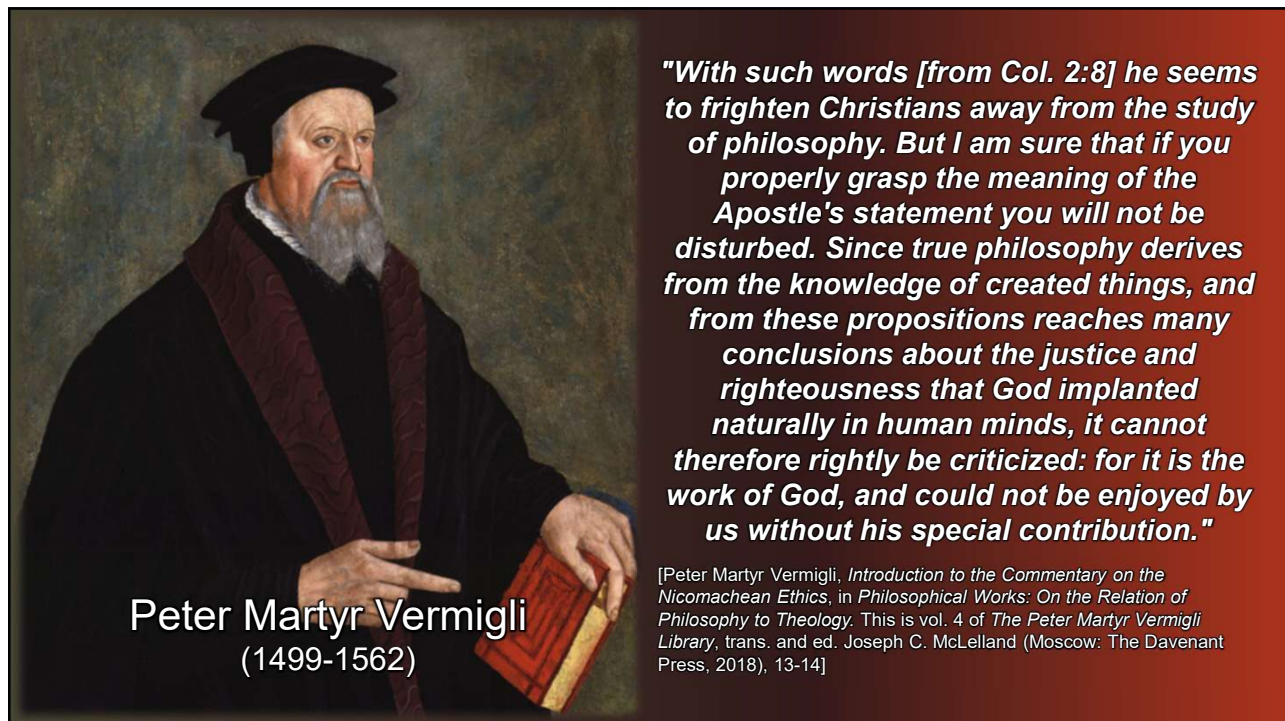
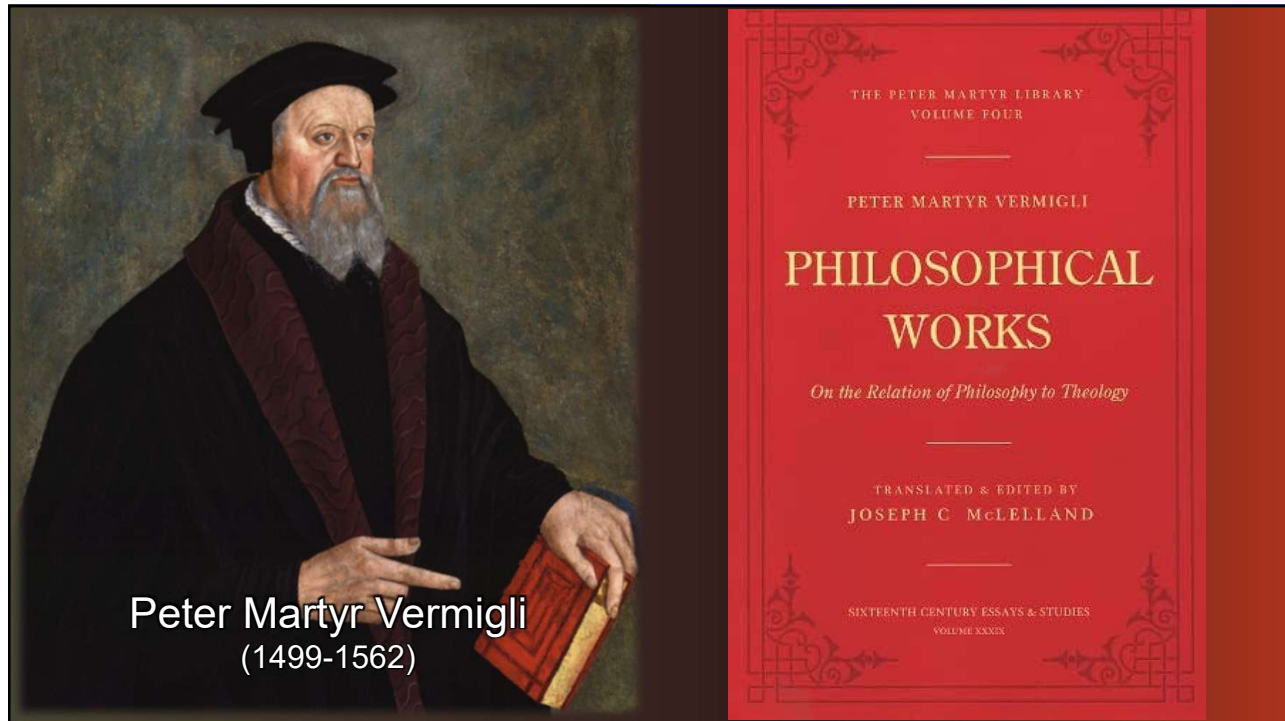
**Stephen J. Grabill**  
Acton Institute and  
Grand Rapids Theological Seminary

***"the older magisterial Protestant tradition (Lutheran and Reformed) not only inherited but also passed on the doctrines of lex naturalis and cognitio Dei naturalis, especially the idea of an implanted knowledge of morality, as noncontroversial legacies of patristic and scholastic thought."***

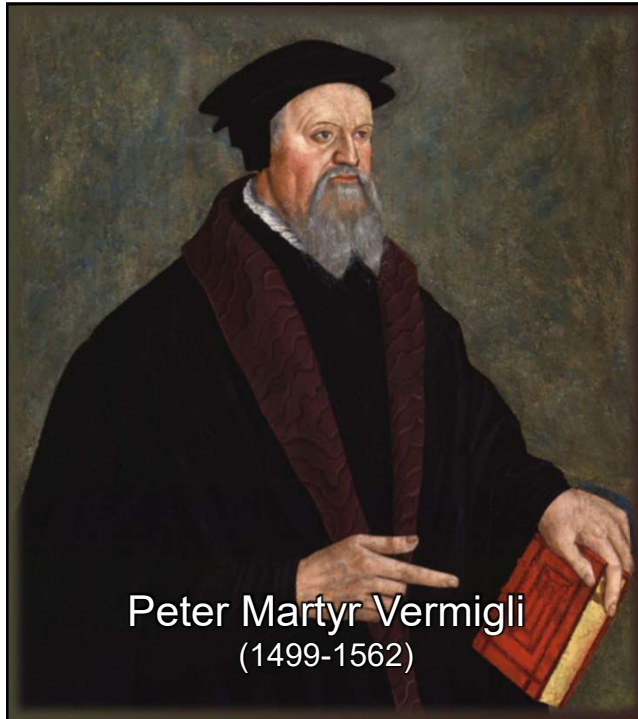
[Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 1]



**Stephen J. Grabill**  
Acton Institute and  
Grand Rapids Theological Seminary







**Peter Martyr Vermigli**  
(1499-1562)

***"The goal of philosophy is that we reach that beatitude or happiness which can be acquired in this life by human powers, while the goal of Christian devotion is that the image in which we are created in righteousness and holiness of truth be renewed in us, so that we grow daily in the knowledge of God until we are led to see him as he is, with face uncovered."***

[Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Introduction to the Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, 15]



**David VanDrunen**



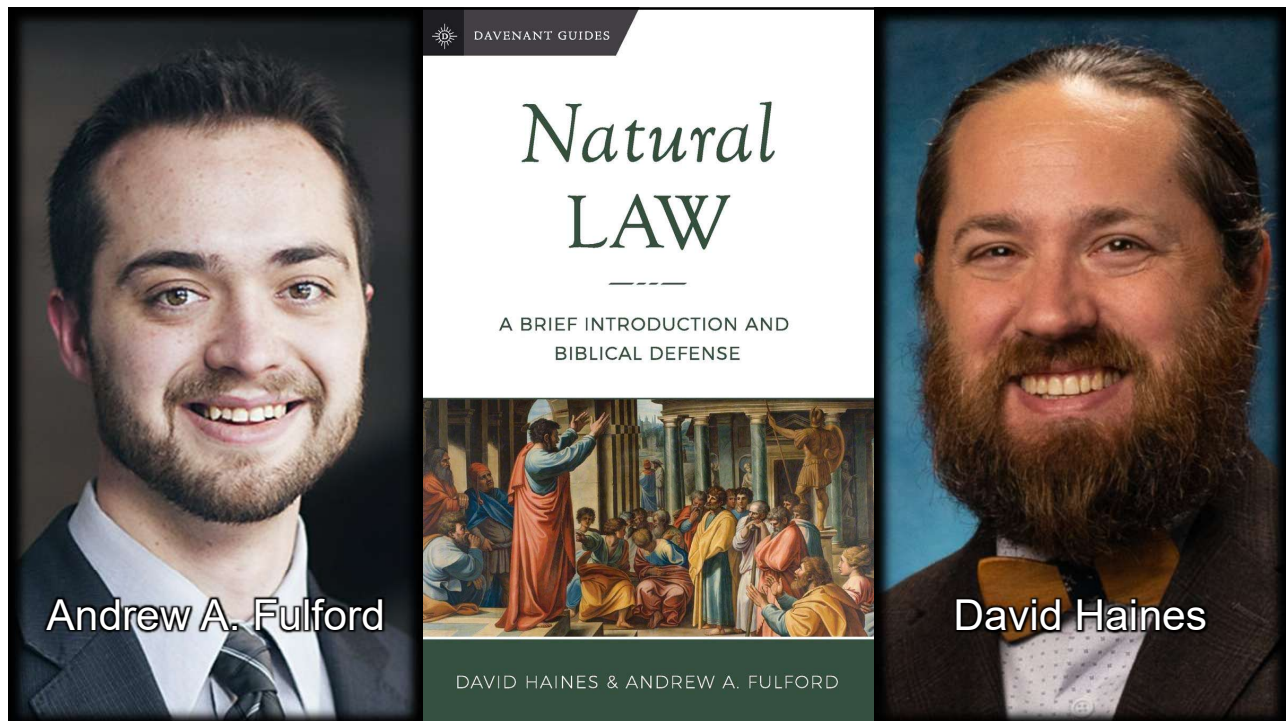
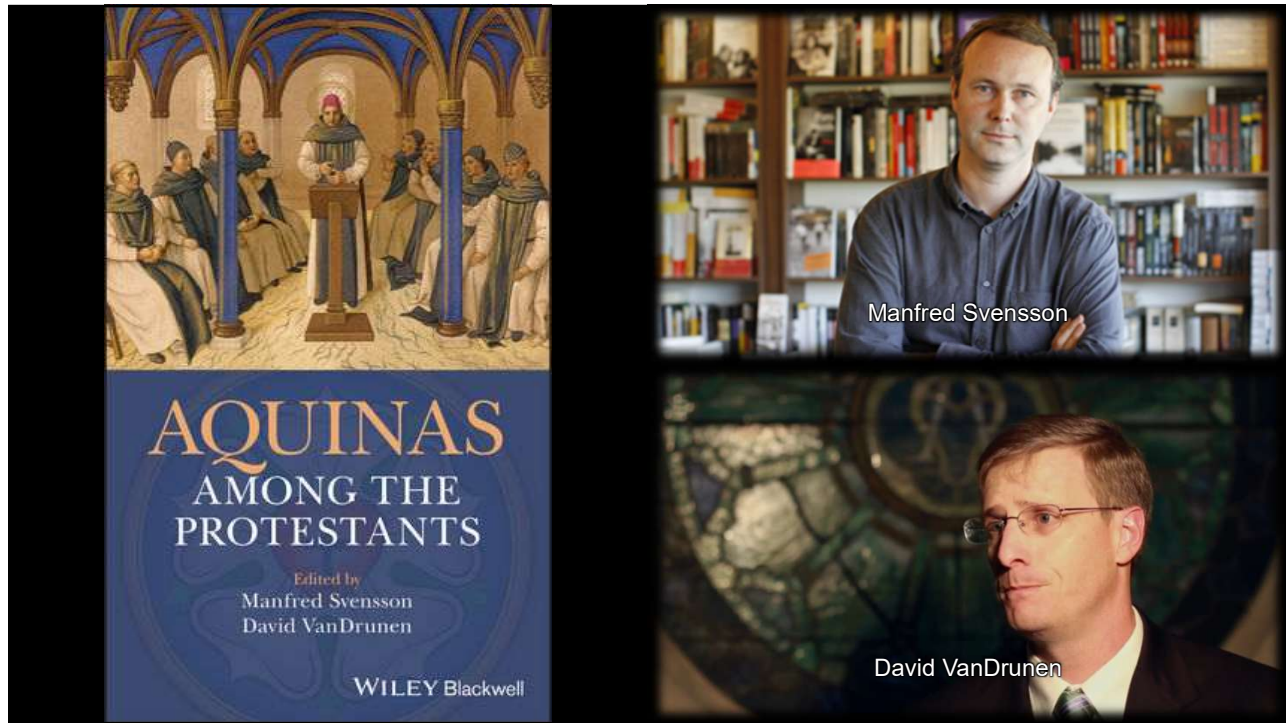
ESSENTIALS in Christian Ethics

**NATURAL LAW**

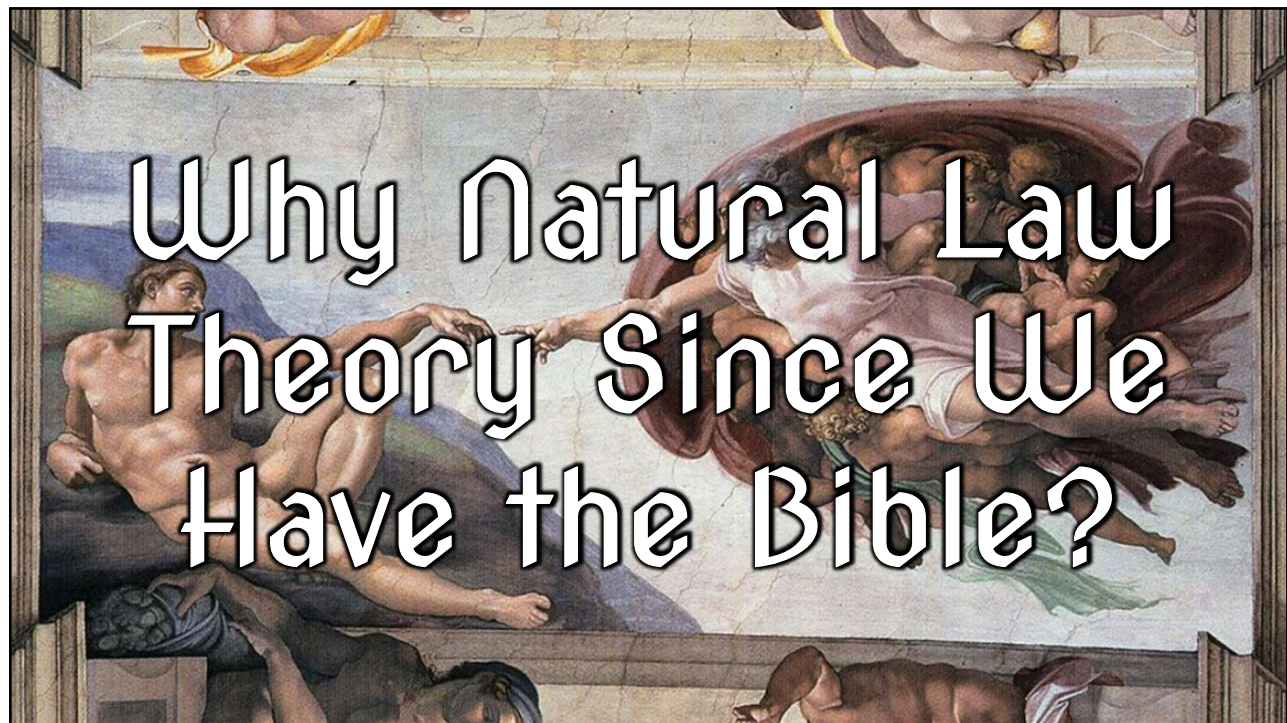
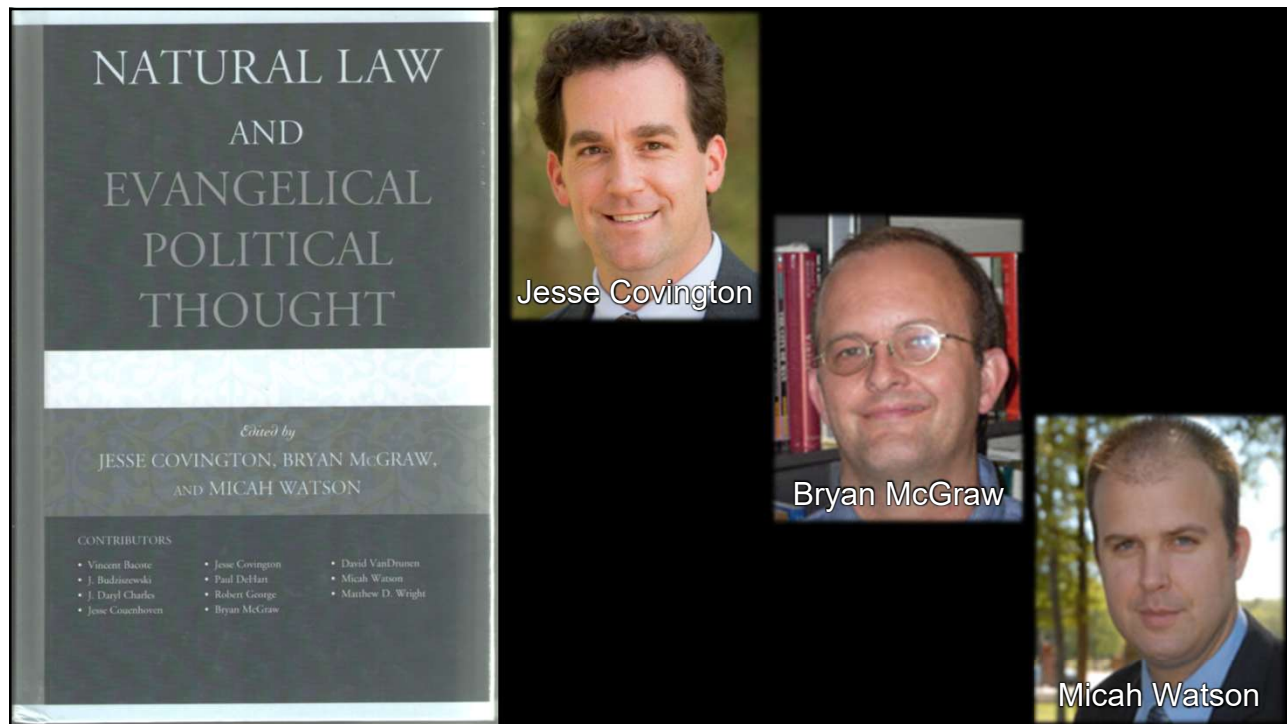
*A Short Companion*

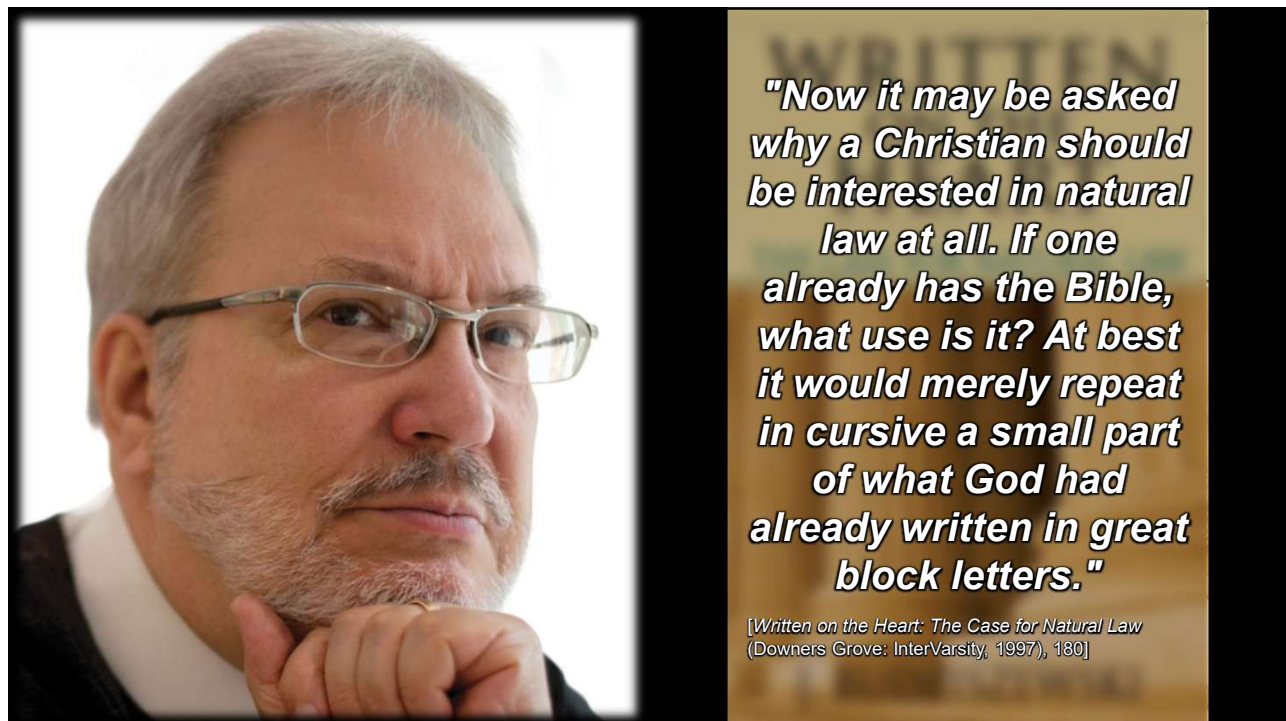
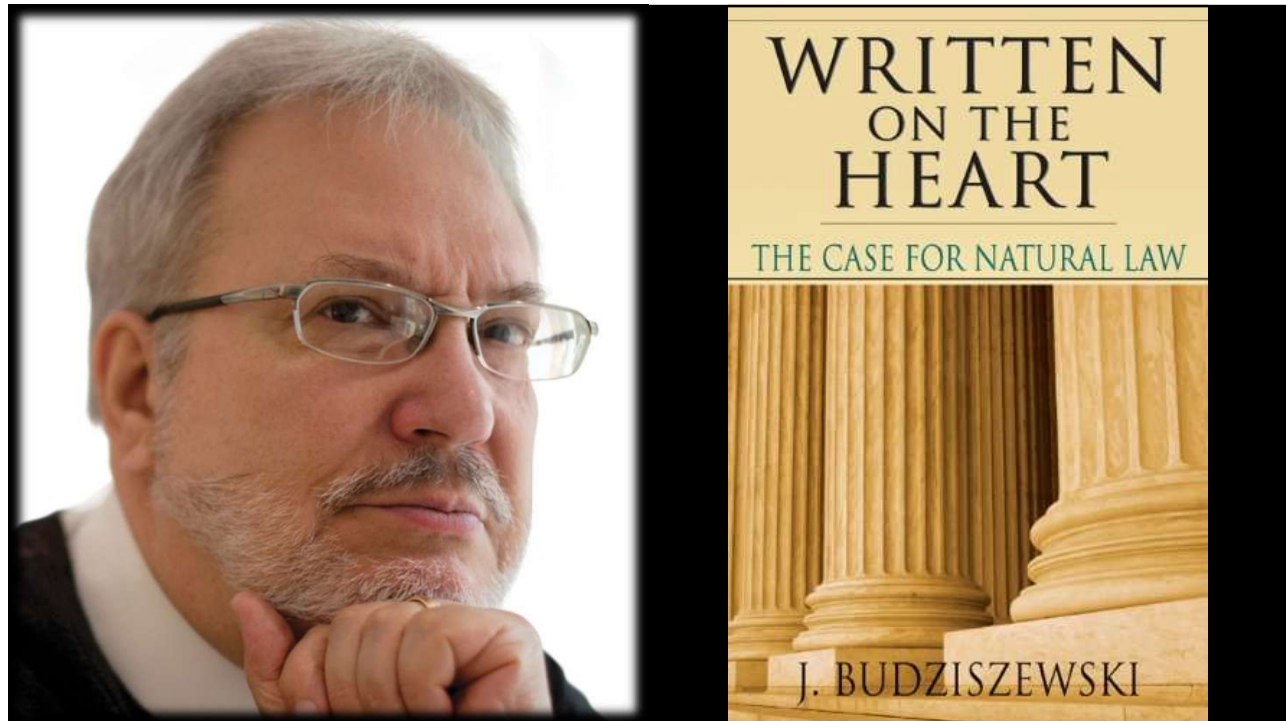
**David VanDrunen**

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C. Ben Mitchell & Jason Thacker







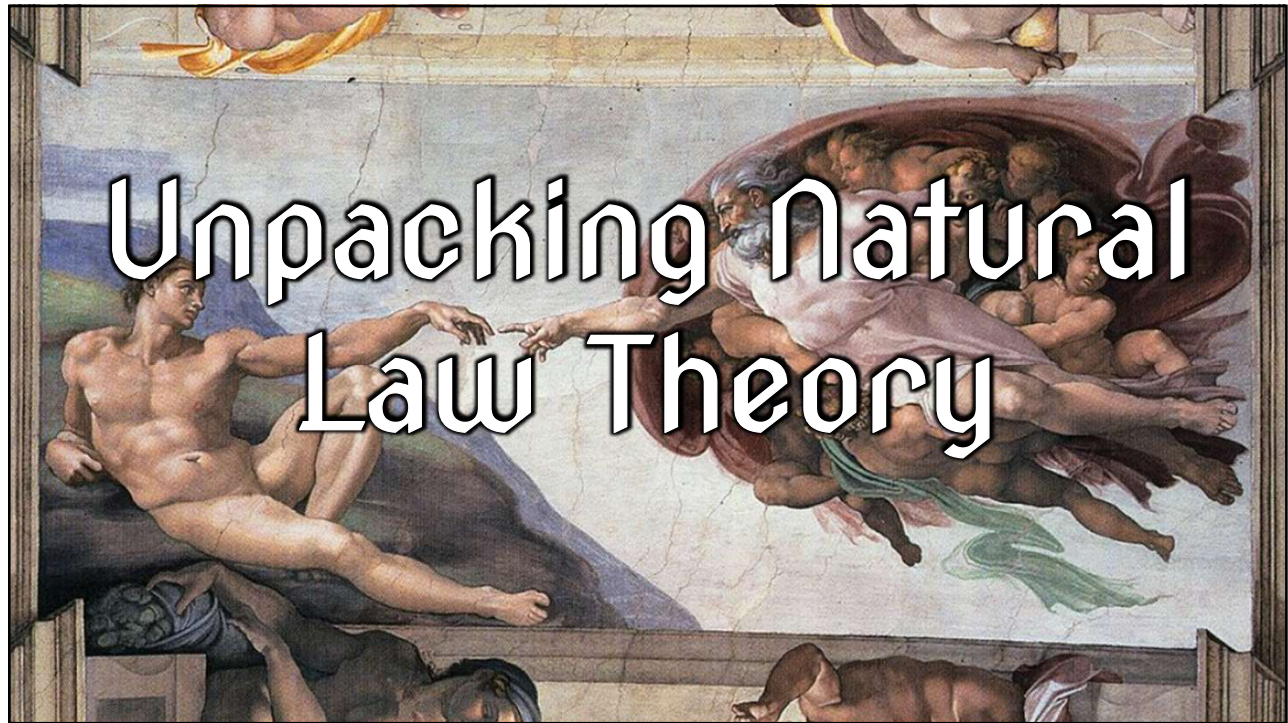




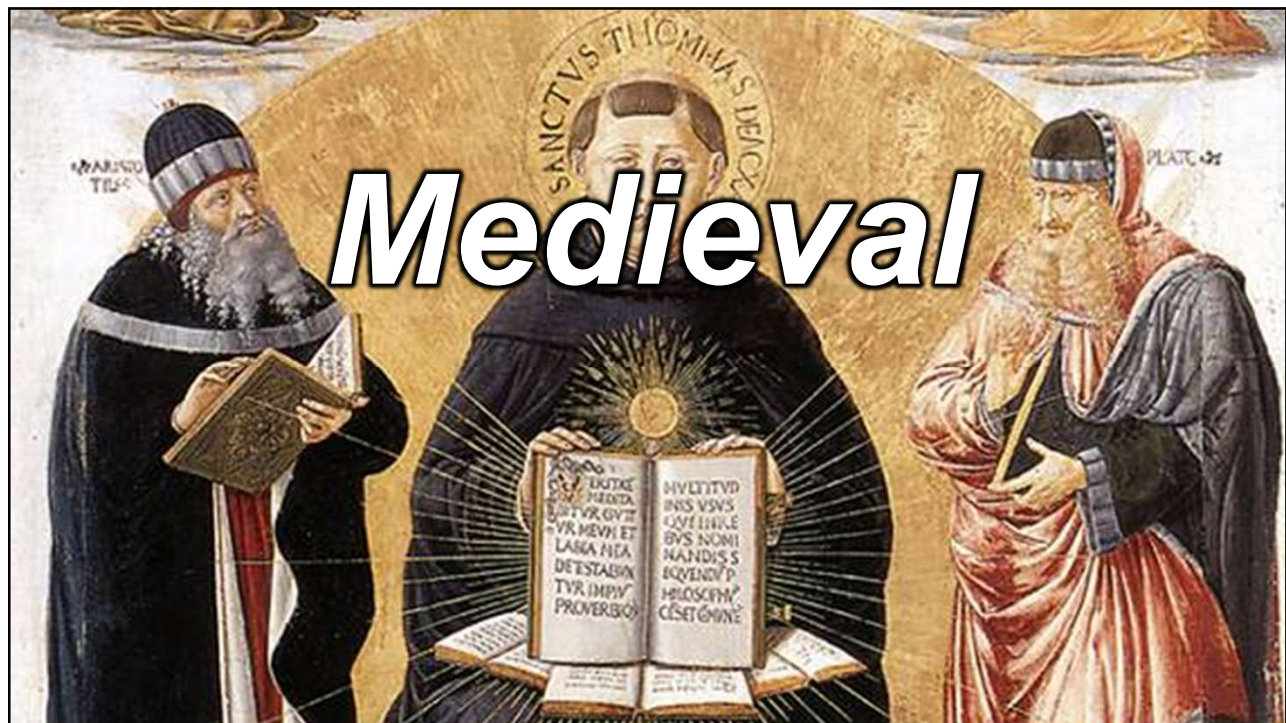
# Biblical Morality or Morality?



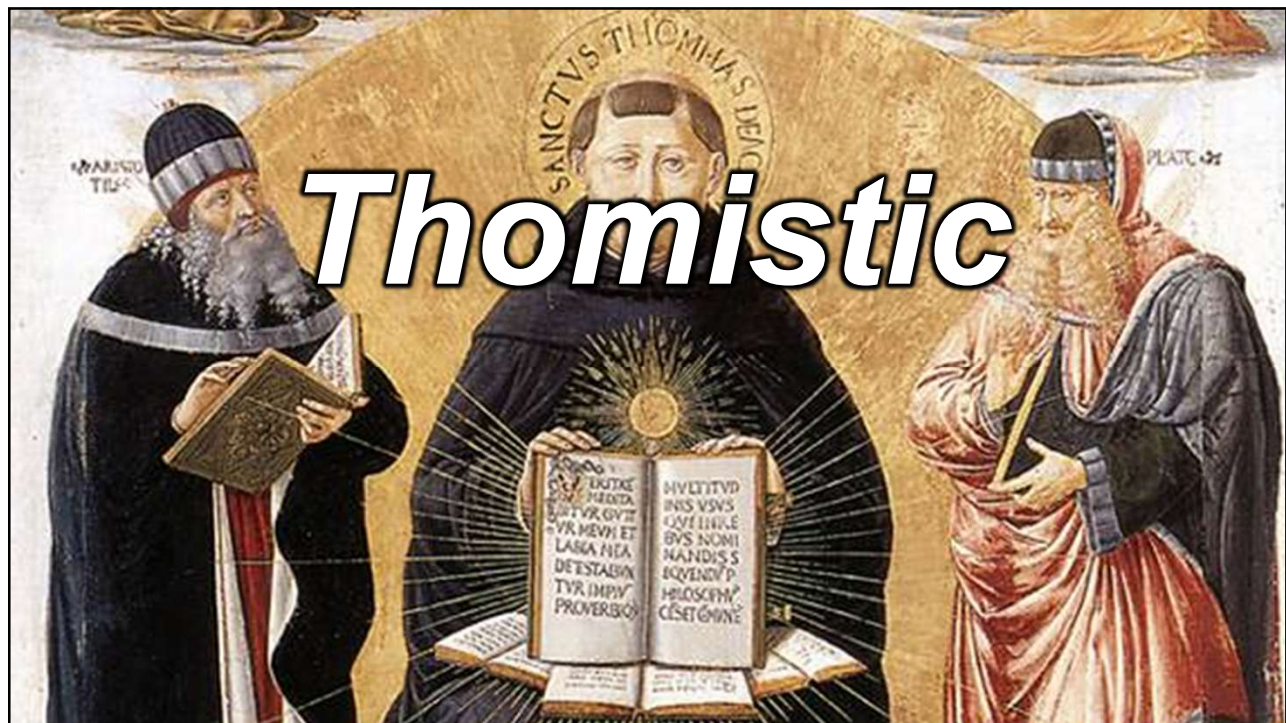
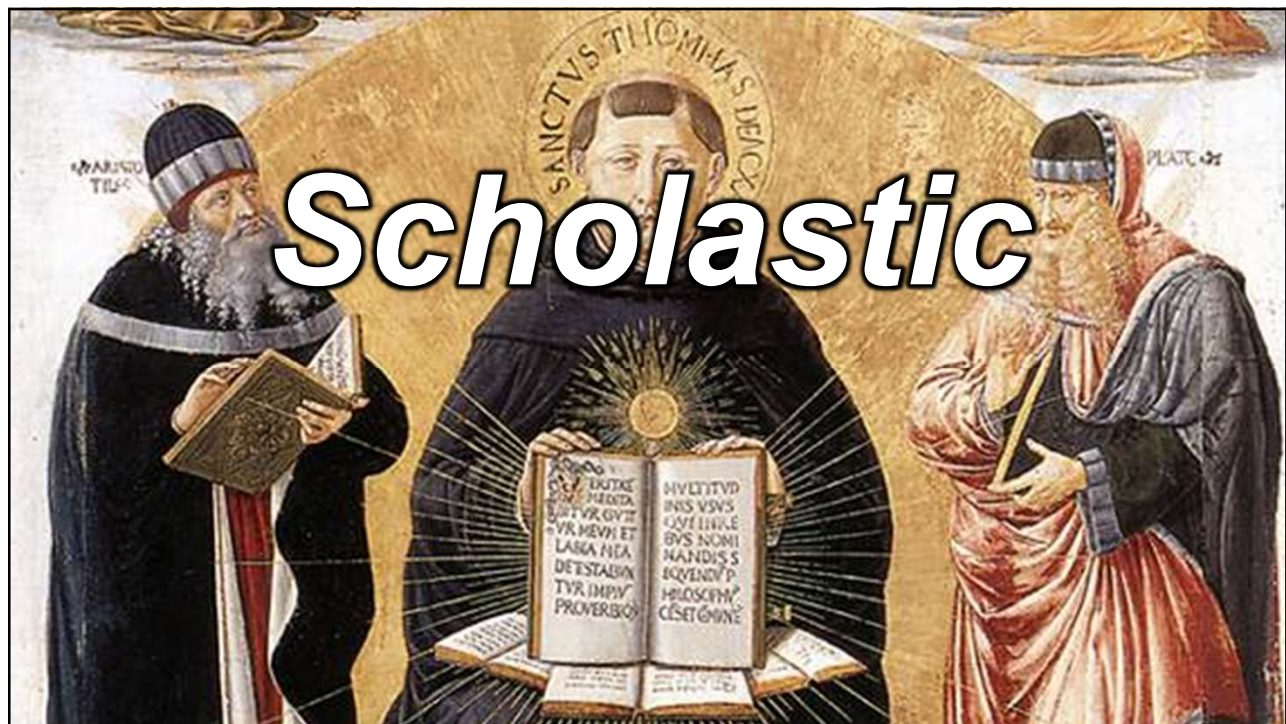
	<p> <b>Romans 4:4-5</b> </p> <p> <i>Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. {5} But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.</i> </p>	
<p>supernatural</p>		
	<p> <b>Romans 12:17-18</b> </p> <p> <i>Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. {18} If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.</i> </p>	
<p>natural</p>		









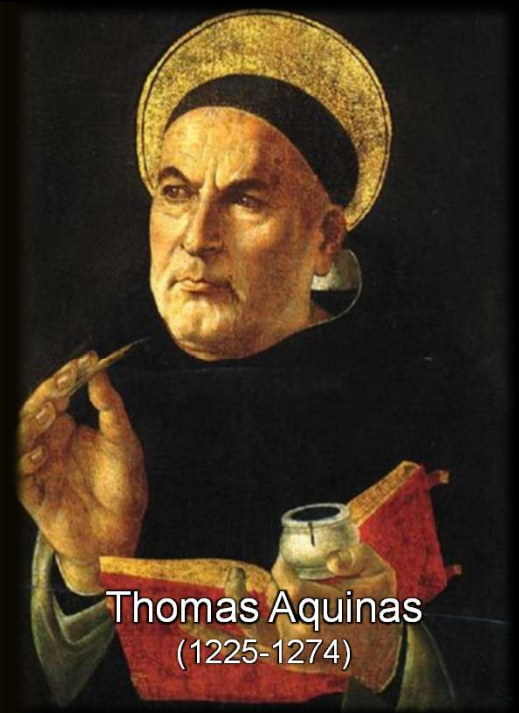





# What Is Law?

***"Thus from the four preceding articles, the definition of law may be gathered; and it is nothing else than **an ordinance of reason for the common good, made by him who has care of the community, and promulgated.**"***

[Summa Theologiae (hereafter ST) I-II, Q. 90, art. 4, trans. St. Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologica: Complete English Edition in Five Volumes, trans. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981)]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)



# Various Kinds of Law



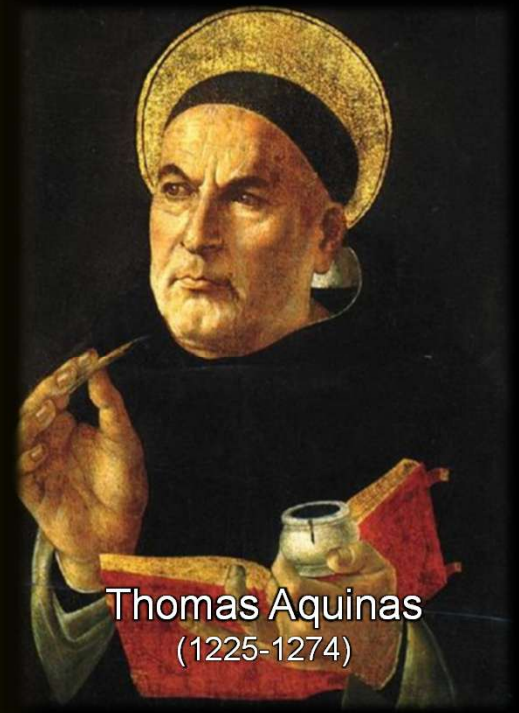
## ETERNAL LAW

*God's providential working  
of the universe*

*The plan by which God  
governs creation*



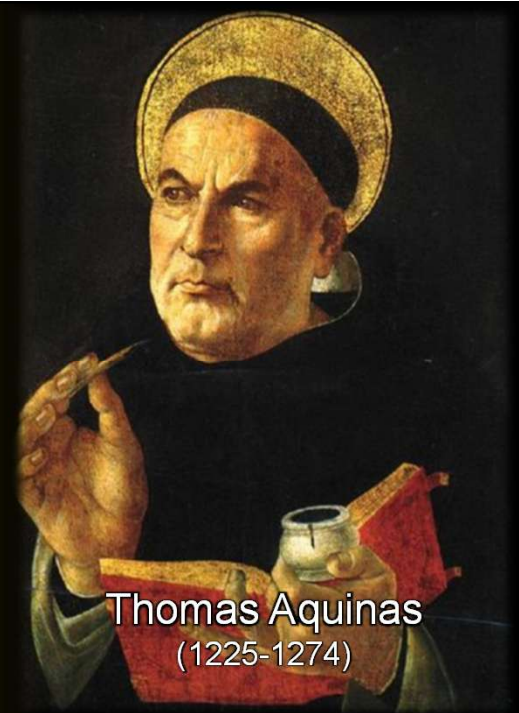
***"It is evident, granted that the world is ruled by Divine Providence ... that the whole community of the universe is governed by Divine Reason. Wherefore the very Idea of the government of things in God the Ruler of the universe, has the nature of a law."***



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

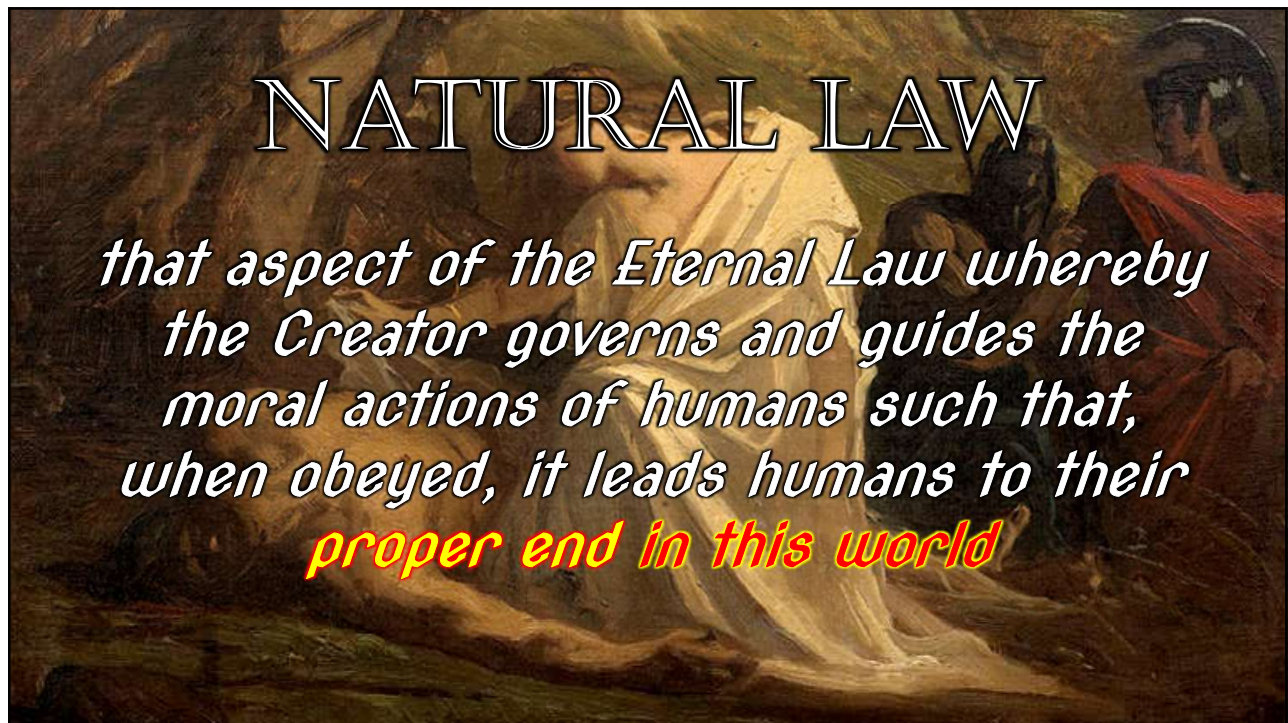
***"And since the Divine Reason's conception of things is not subject to time but is eternal, according to Prov. viii, 23, therefore it is that this kind of law must be called eternal."***

[ST-II Q91, Art. 1]

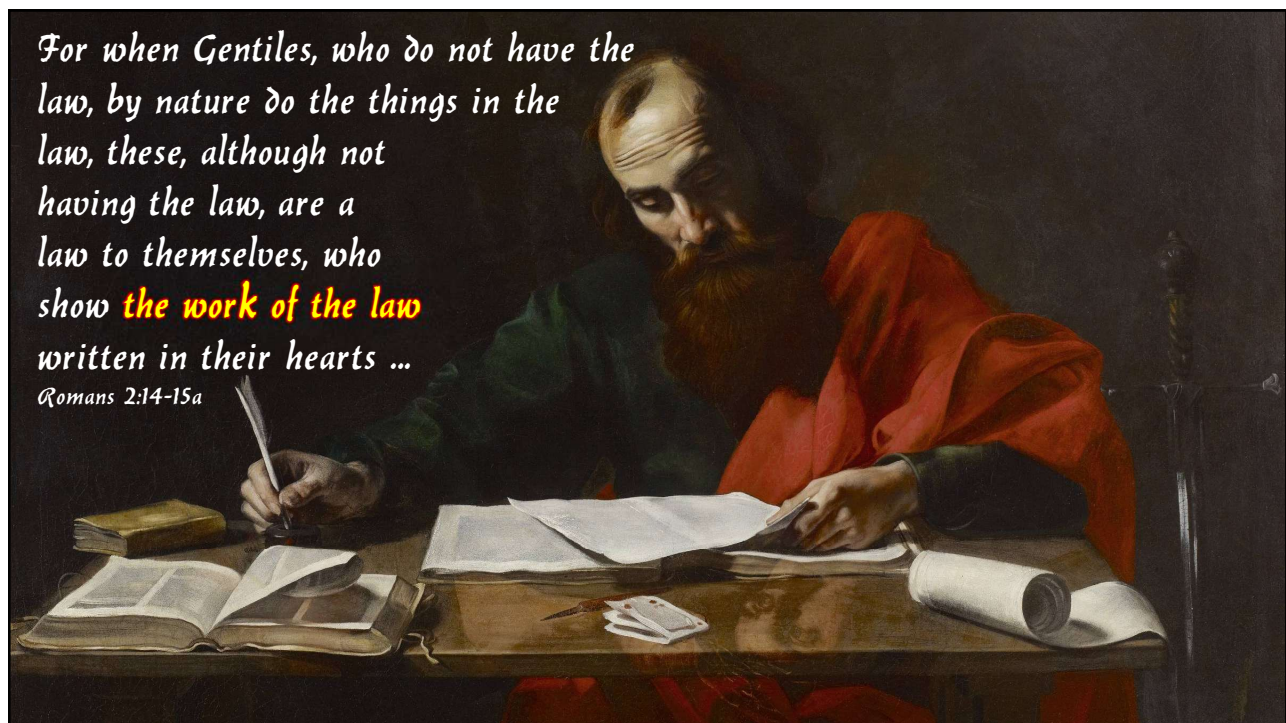


Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)





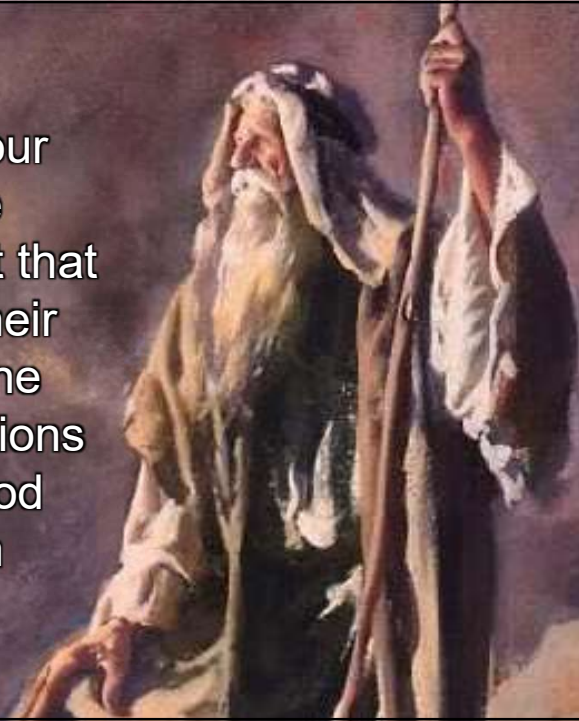






Deut. 9:5

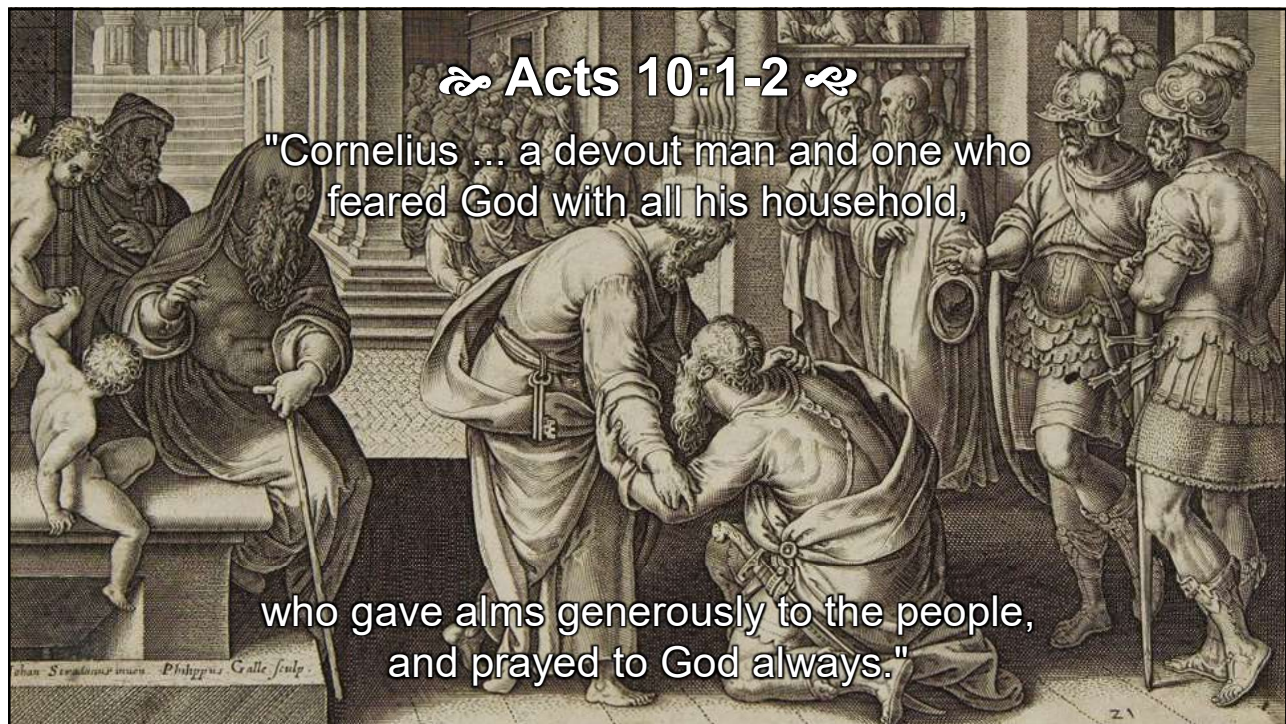
"It is not because of your  
righteousness or the  
uprightness of your heart that  
you go in to possess their  
land, but because of the  
wickedness of these nations  
that the LORD your God  
drives them out from  
before you."



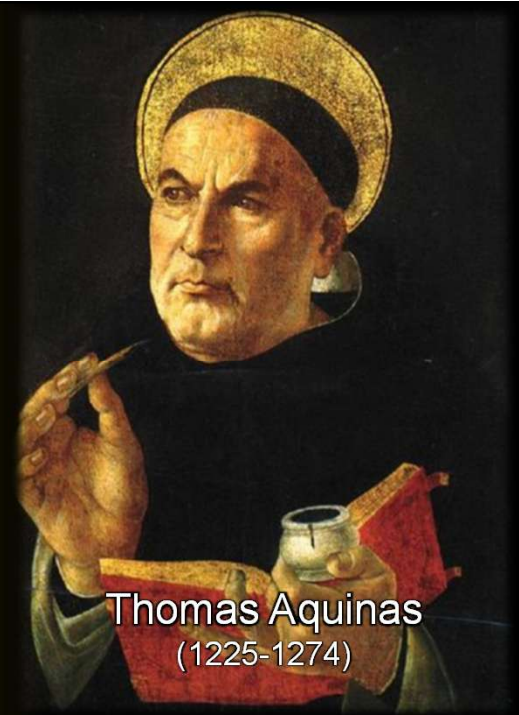
***The heavens declare  
His righteousness,  
and all the peoples  
see His glory.***

Psalms 97:6

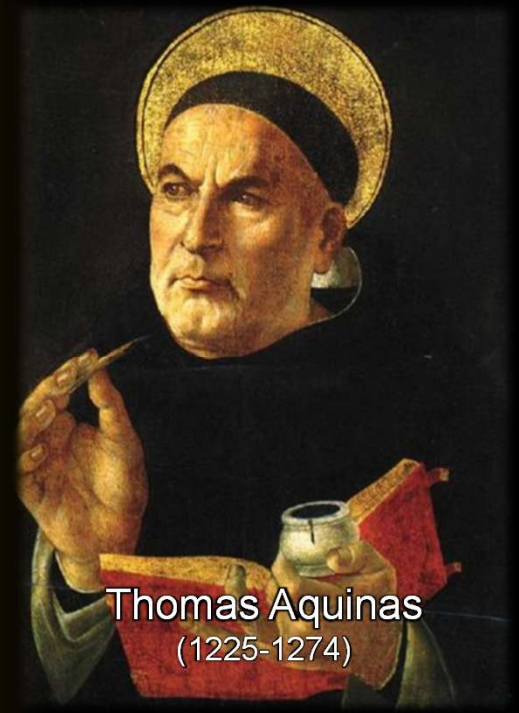




***"It is evident that all things partake somewhat of the eternal law, in so far as, namely, from its being imprinted on them, they derive their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends."***



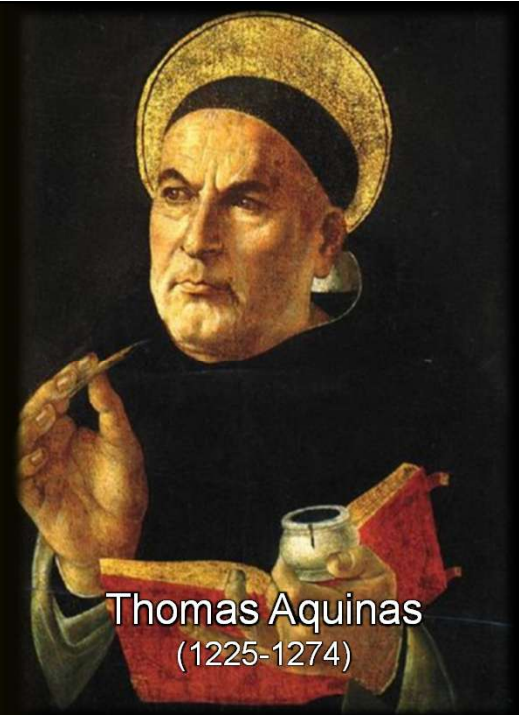
***"Now among all others, the rational creature is subject to Divine providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others."***



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***"Wherefore it has a share of the Eternal Reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end: and this participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called the natural law."***

[ST II Q91, Art. 2]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)



***"Therefore in reading the profane authors, the admirable light of truth displayed in them should remind us, that the human mind, however much fallen and perverted from its original integrity, is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its Creator."***



John Calvin  
(1509-1564)

***"If we reflect that the Spirit of God is the only fountain of truth, we will be careful, as we would avoid offering insult to him, not to reject or condemn truth wherever it appears. In despising the gifts, we insult the Giver."***

[*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans), Bk. II, Chap. 2, §15, p. 236]



John Calvin  
(1509-1564)

***"Nothing, indeed, is more common, than for man to be sufficiently instructed in a right course of conduct by natural law, of which the Apostle here speaks [in Rom. 2:14-15]."***

[Institutes of the Christian Religion, 2 vols. trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975), Bk. II, Chap. 2, §22, p. 241]



John Calvin  
(1509-1564)

***"Since man is by nature a social animal, he is disposed, from natural instinct, to cherish and preserve society; and accordingly we see that the minds of all men have impressions of civil order and honesty."***



John Calvin  
(1509-1564)



***"Hence it is that every individual understands how human societies must be regulated by laws, and also is able to comprehend the principles of those laws."***



John Calvin  
(1509-1564)

***"Hence the universal agreement in regard to such subjects, both among nations and individuals, the seeds of them being implanted in the breasts of all without a teacher or lawgiver. ... It is true, that some principle of civil order is impressed on all."***



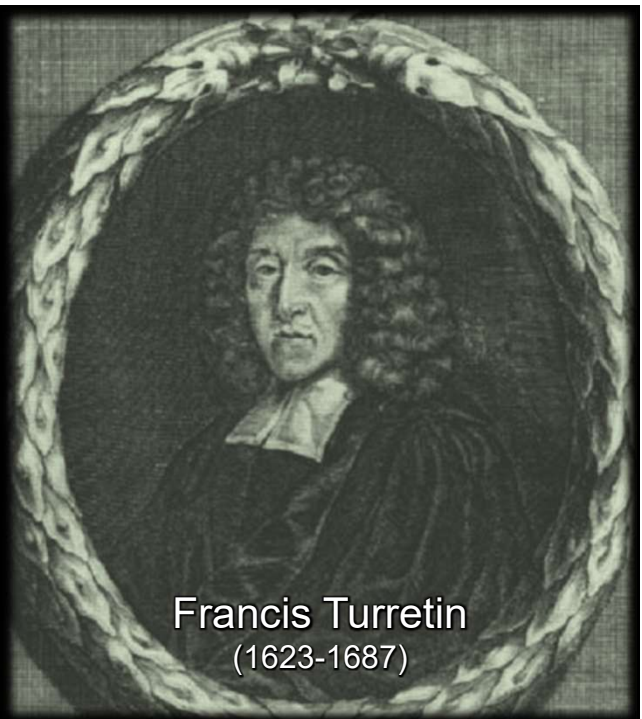
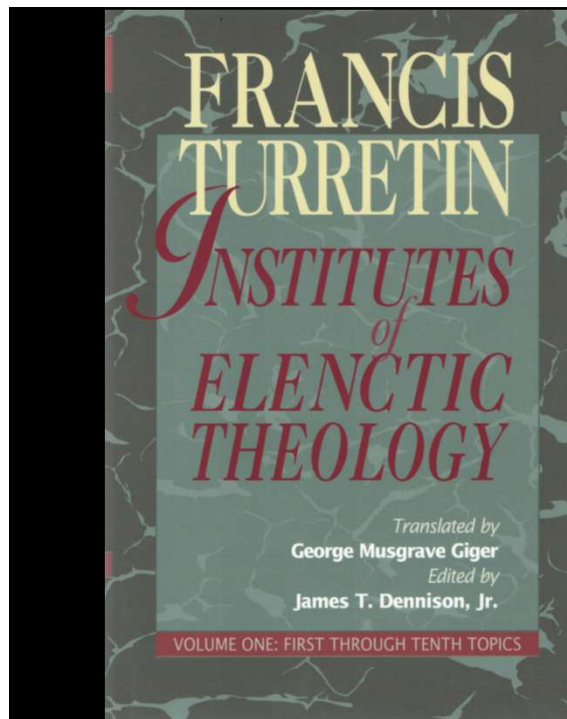
John Calvin  
(1509-1564)

***"And this is ample proof  
that, in regard to the  
constitution of the present  
life, no man is devoid of the  
light of reason."***

[*Institutes*, Bk. II, §13, pp. 234-235]



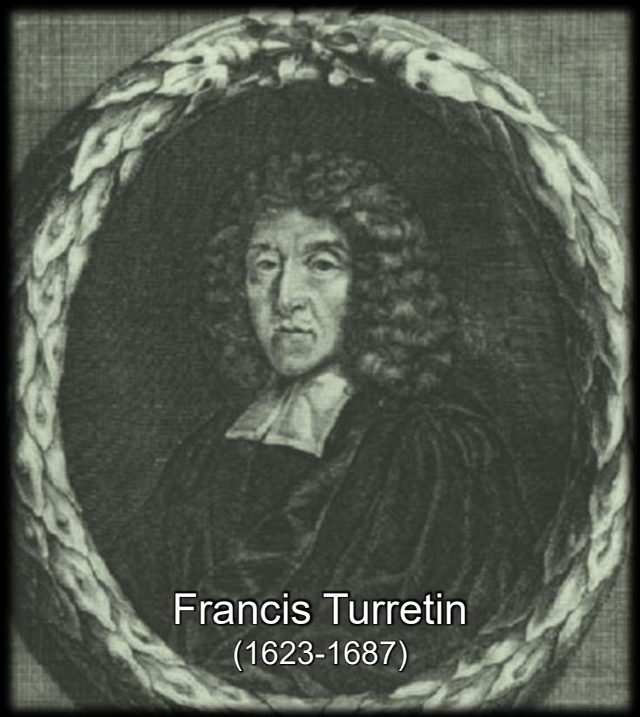
John Calvin  
(1509-1564)



Francis Turretin  
(1623-1687)



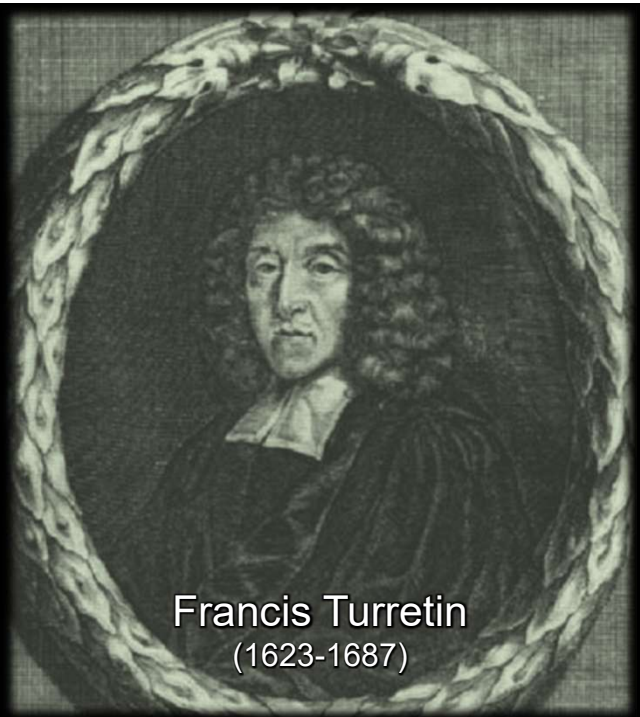
***"Natural law is taken strictly and properly for the practical rule of moral duties to which men are bound by nature. ... The orthodox ... affirm that there is a natural law ... arising ... from a divine obligation being impressed by God upon the conscience of man in his very creation ... drawn from the right of nature itself, found both on the nature of God, the Creator ... and on the condition of rational creatures themselves***



Francis Turretin  
(1623-1687)

***"(who, on account of their necessary dependence upon God in the genus of morals, no less than in the genus of being, are bound to perform or avoid those things which sound reason and the dictates of conscience enjoin upon them to do or avoid)."***

[Institutes of Elenctic Theology, First Topic: Theology, Q. XI, §§V, VII, IX, trans. by George Musgrave Giger, (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1992, vol. 2, pp. 2, 3]



Francis Turretin  
(1623-1687)

*"One may well ask, 'How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?' The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: there are just laws, and there are unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that 'An unjust law is no law at all.' Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine when a law is just or unjust?"*

Martin Luther King, Jr.  
(1929-1968)

*"A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law, or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas, an unjust law is a human law **that is not rooted in eternal and natural law**. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust."*

[Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letters from Birmingham Jail," April 12, 1963]

Martin Luther King, Jr.  
(1929-1968)



***"In regard to Thomas and Calvin on natural law, therefore, one seems safe in saying that Calvin could appeal to natural law without thereby placing himself definitively in one medieval school or another [regarding the debate between the realists and the voluntarists]."***



David VanDrunen

***"Indeed insofar as ideas of natural law were intimately woven into the fabric of the European ius commune of which Calvin the law student would have imbibed in his youth, he had no reason to consider his reference to natural law as anything out of the ordinary."***

[David VanDrunen, "Medieval Natural Law and the Reformation: A Comparison of Aquinas and Calvin," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 80 (2006): 77-98]



David VanDrunen

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[David VanDrunen, "Medieval Natural Law and the Reformation: A Comparison of Aquinas and Calvin," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 80 (2006): 77-98]

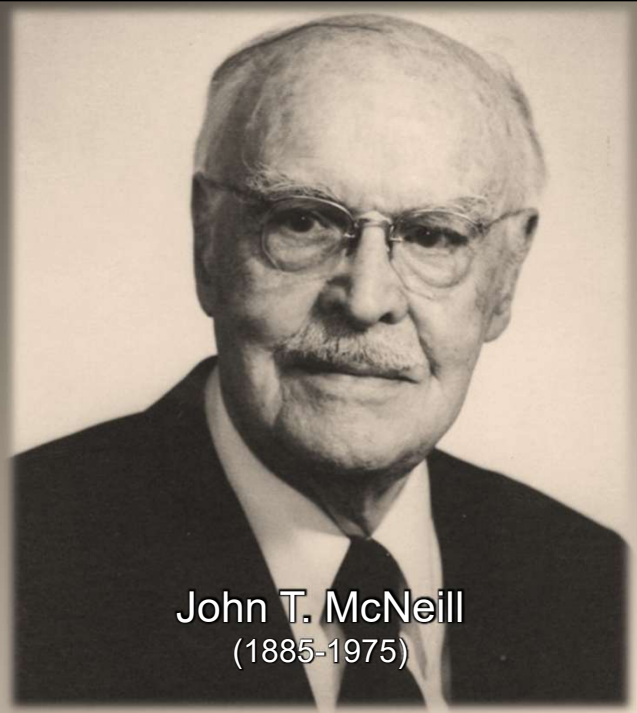


David VanDrunen

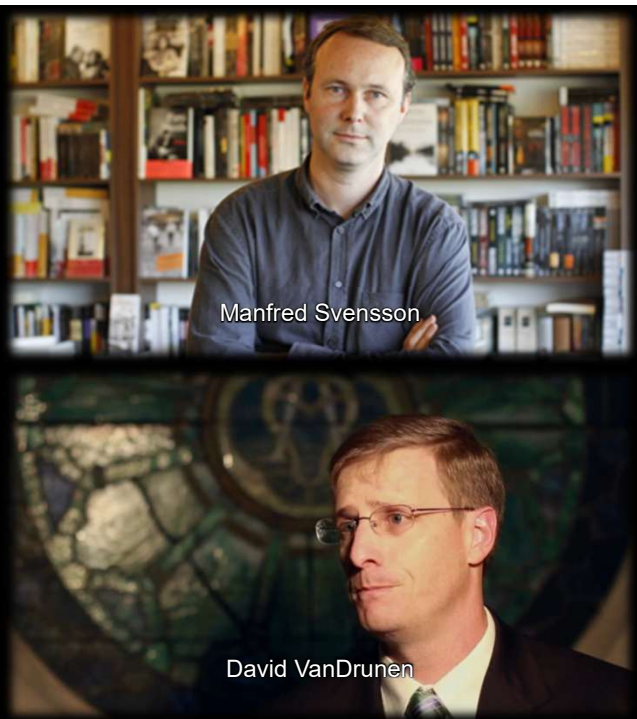
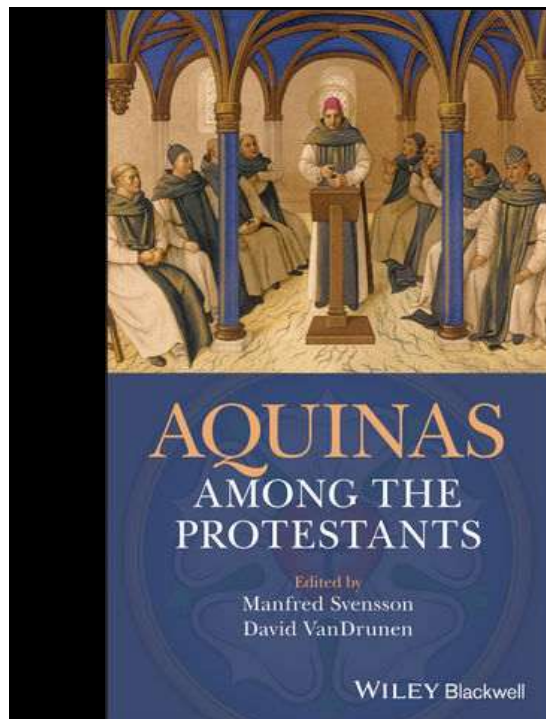


*"There is no real discontinuity between the teaching of the Reformers and that of their predecessors with respect to natural law. Not one of the leaders of the Reformation assails the principle. Instead, with the possible exception of Zwingli, they all on occasion express a quite ungrudging respect for the moral law naturally implanted in the human heart and seek to inculcate this attribute in their readers."*

[John T. McNeill, "Natural Law in the Teaching of the Reformers," in *The Journal of Religion* 26, no. 3 (July 1946): 168-182. The citation is from p. 168]

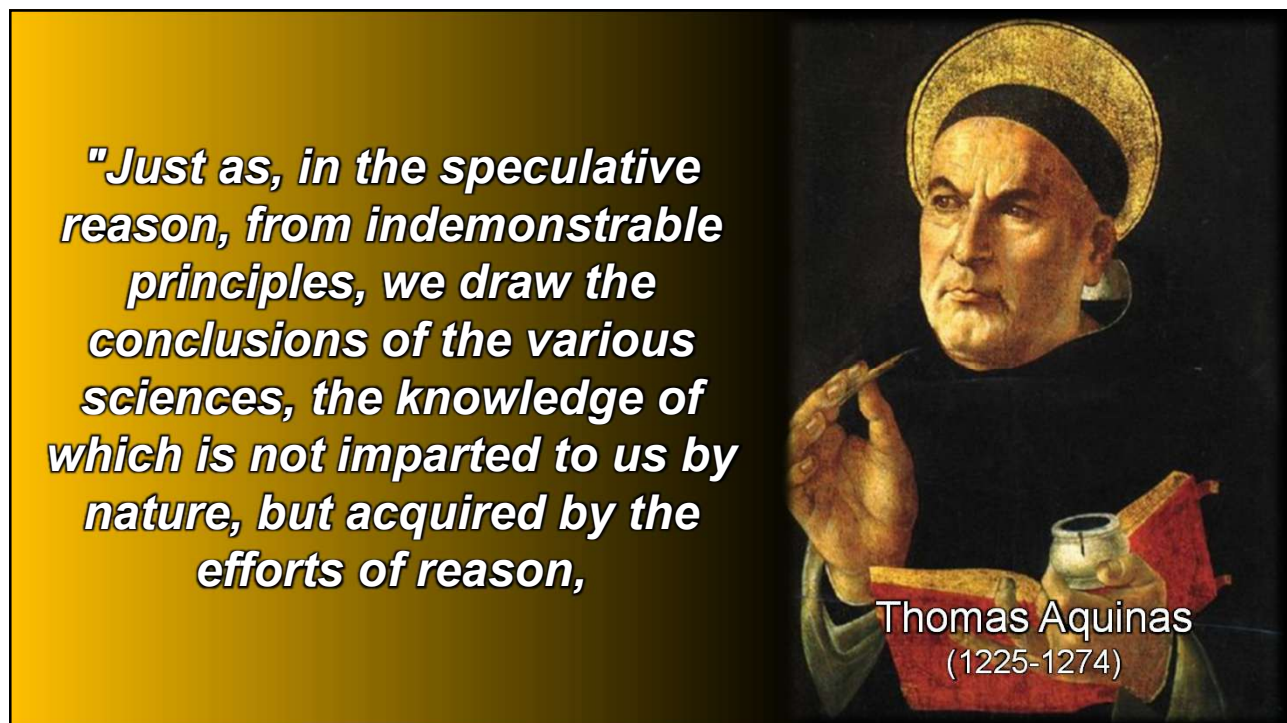


John T. McNeill  
(1885-1975)



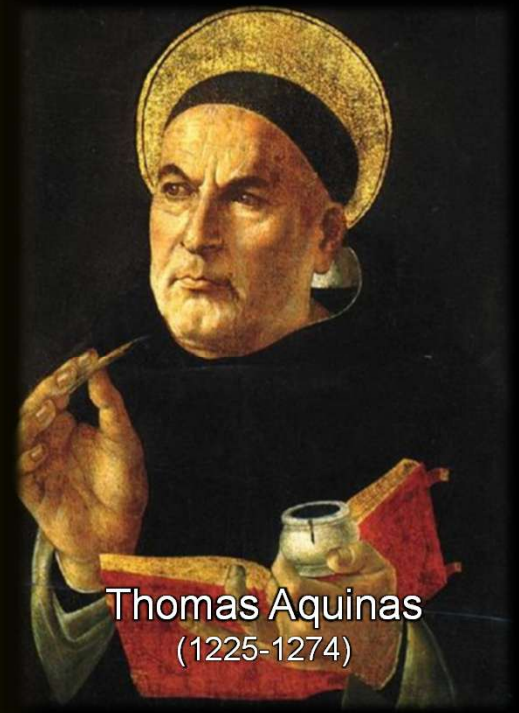
Manfred Svensson

David VanDrunen



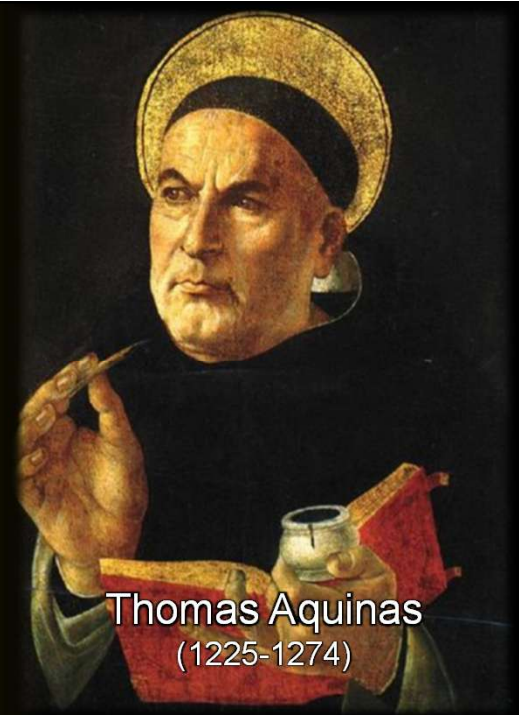


***"so too it is from the precepts of the natural law, as from general and indemonstrable principles, that the human reason needs to proceed to the more particular determinations of certain matters."***



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

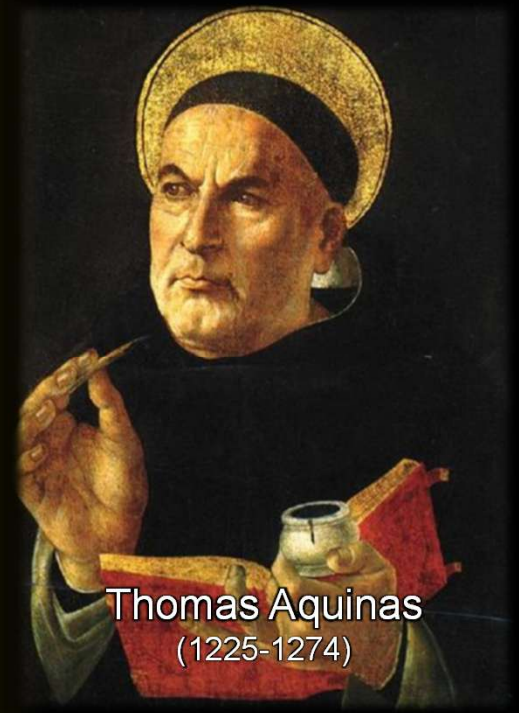
***"The practical reason is concerned with practical matters, which are singular and contingent: but not with necessary things, with which the speculative reason is concerned."***



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***"Wherefore human laws  
cannot have that inerrancy  
that belongs to the  
demonstrated conclusions of  
sciences."***

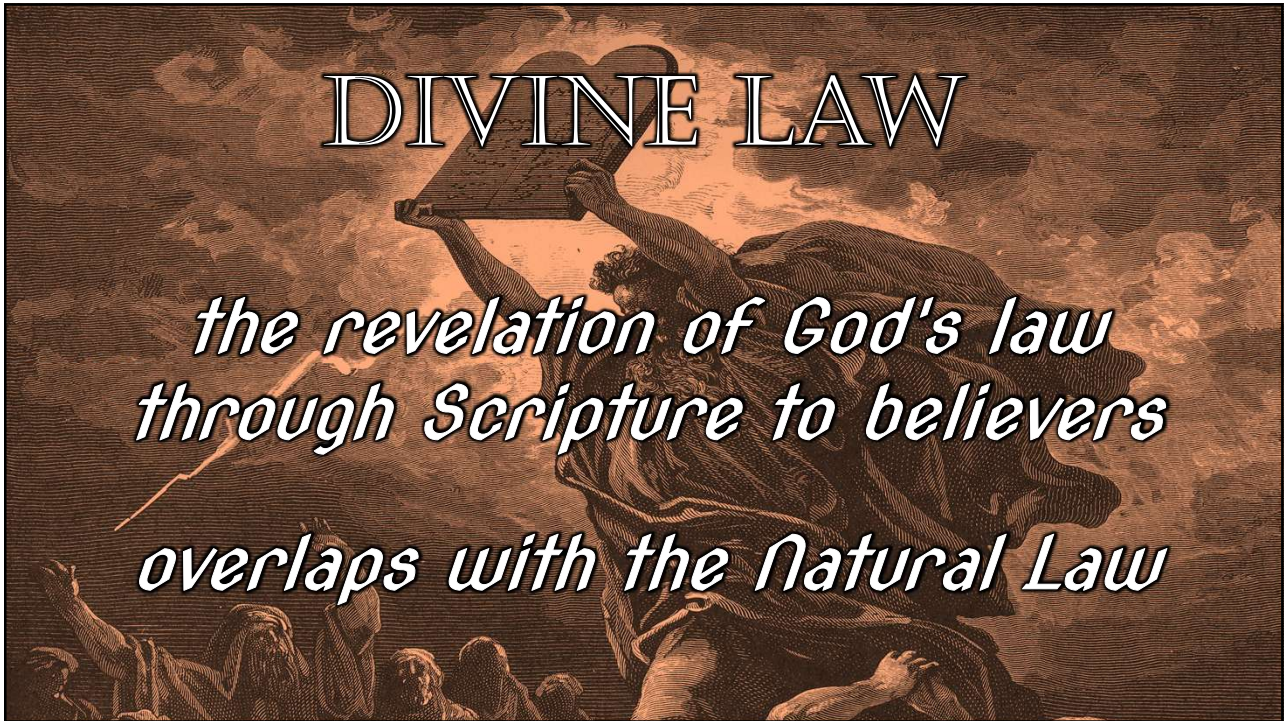
[ST I-II Q91, Art. 3, ad. 3]]



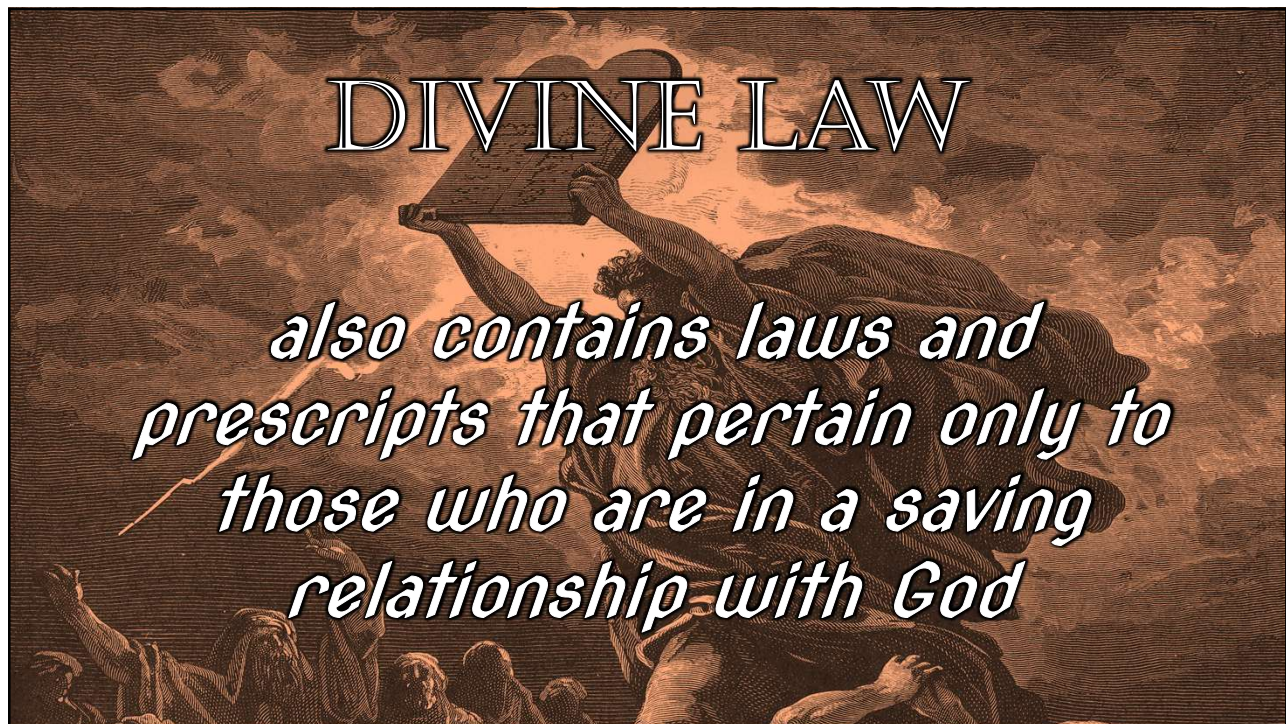
Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

## DIVINE LAW

*the revelation of God's law  
through Scripture to believers  
overlaps with the Natural Law*

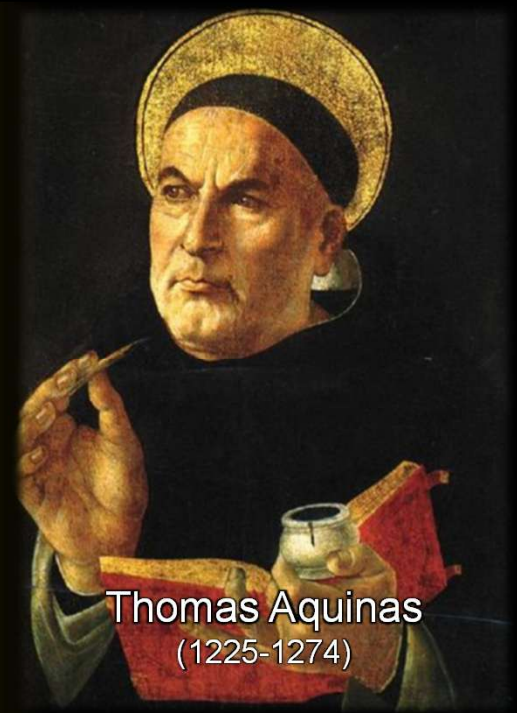






*"It was necessary for the directing of human conduct to have a Divine law. ... If man were ordained to no other end than that which is proportionate to his natural faculty, there would be no need for man to have any further direction on the part of his reason, besides the natural law and human law*

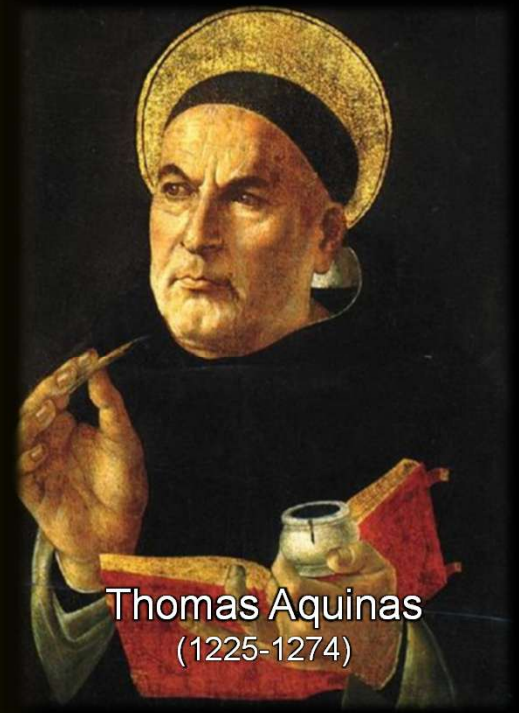
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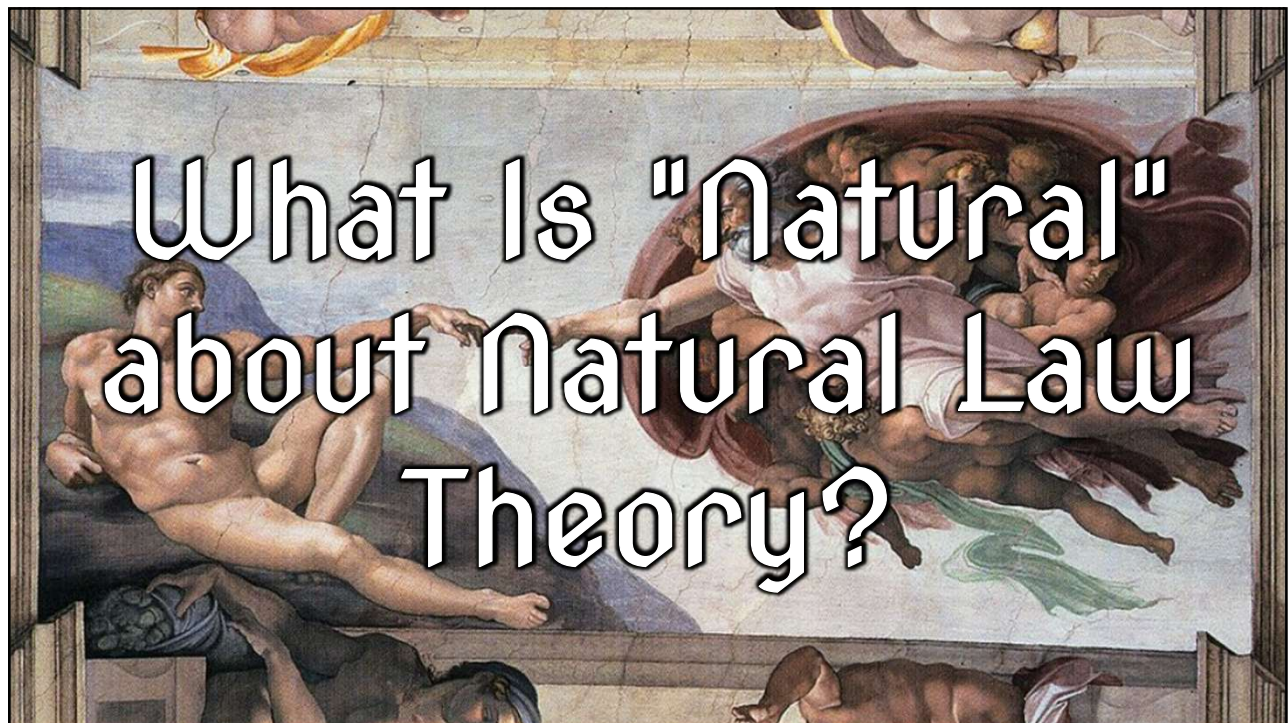


***"But since man is ordained to an end of eternal happiness which is inproportionate to man's natural faculty ... it was necessary that, besides the natural and the human law, man should be directed to his end by a law given by God."***

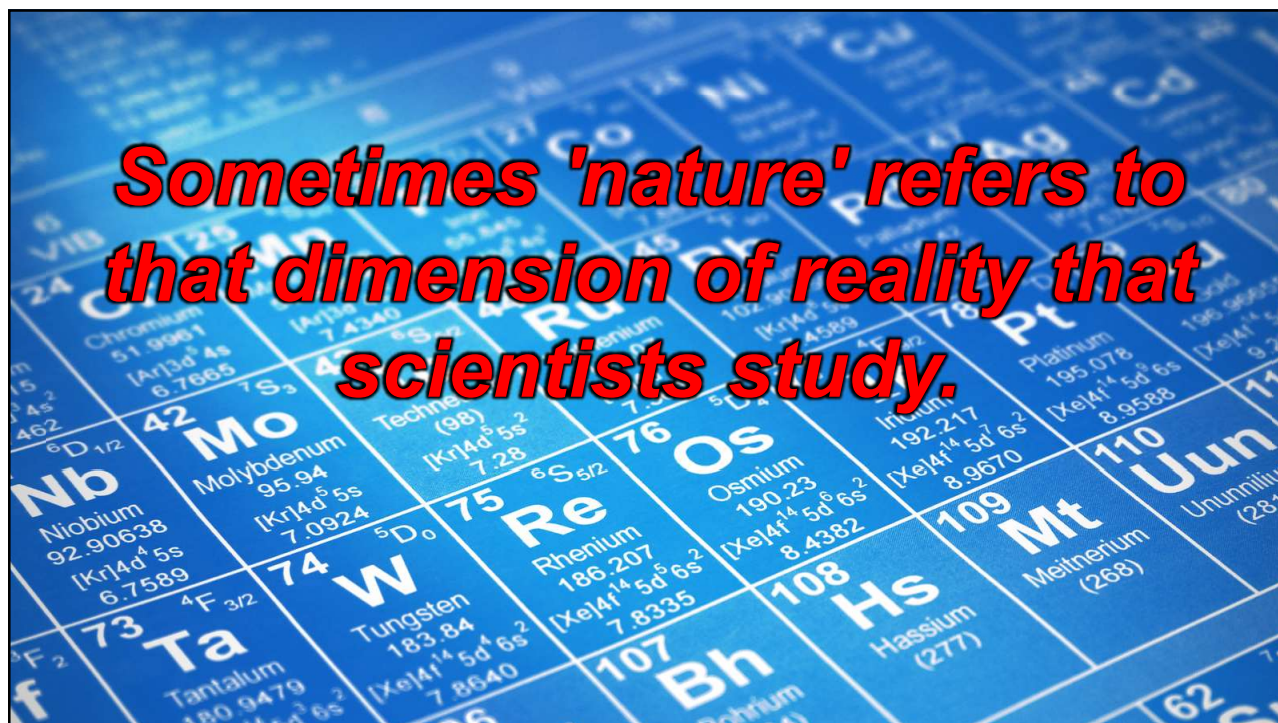
*(ST I-II Q91, Art. 4)*



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

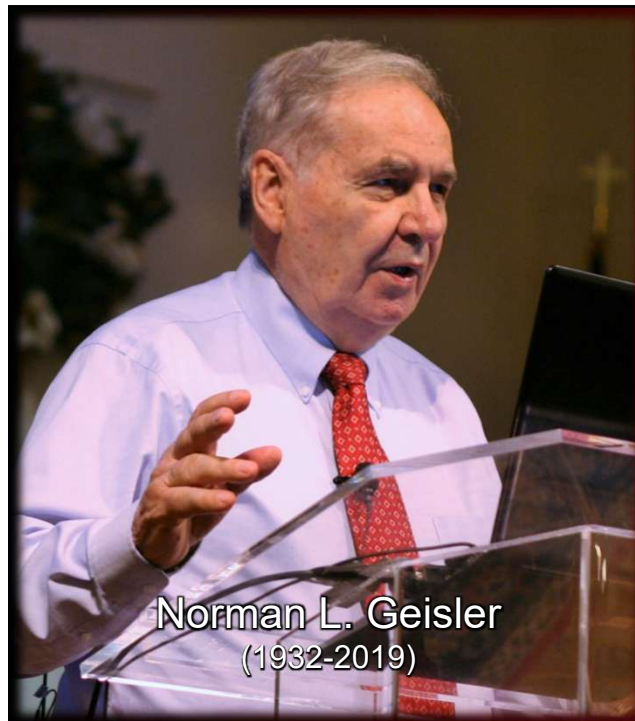
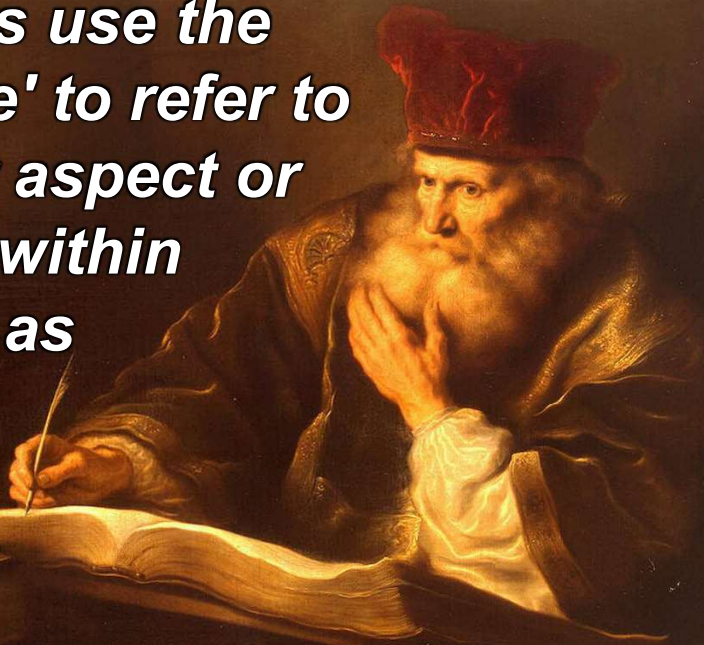








***Theologians use the term 'nature' to refer to a particular aspect or propensity within each of us, as in the "sin nature."***

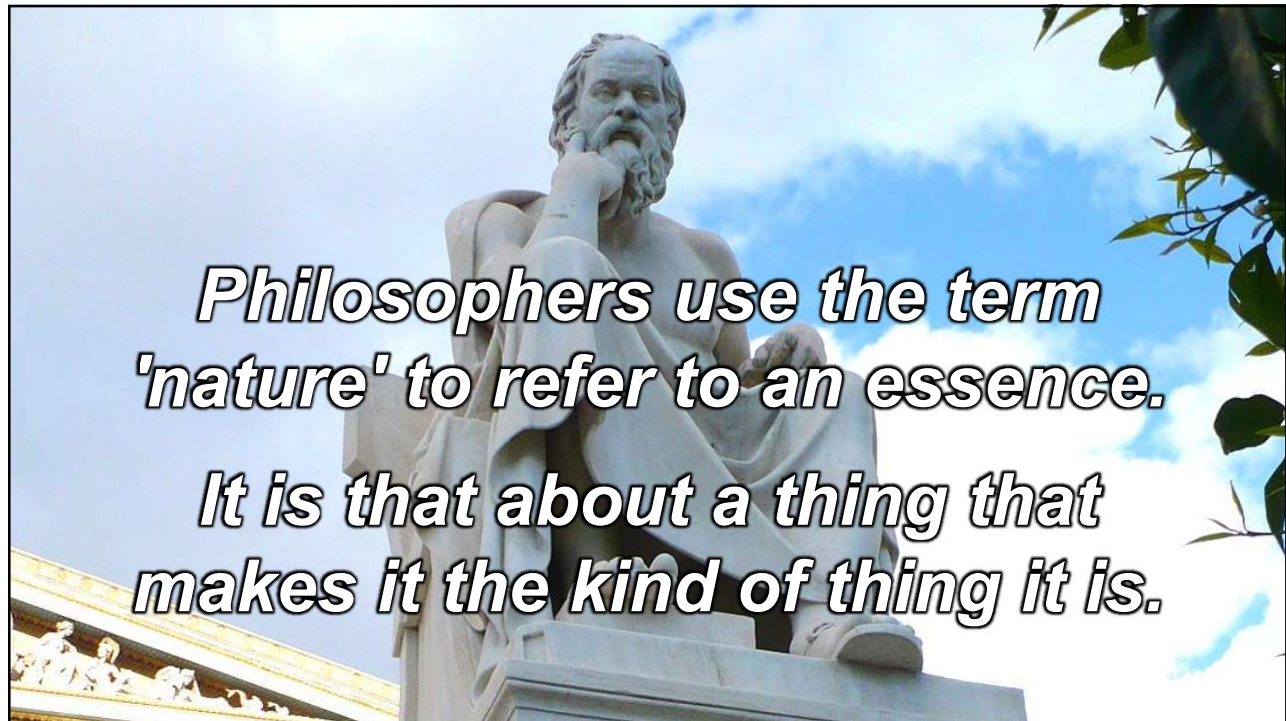


**Norman L. Geisler**  
(1932-2019)

***"Everyone who is naturally generated from Adam—every human—inherits a sinful nature from him. ... Being sinners by nature, short of and without salvation, we inevitably are and do what comes naturally: We sin."***

[Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Vol. Three: Sin Salvation* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2004, 125.)]





# "What-ness"

*with respect to its matter:*

*Form*

*with respect to its operations:*

*Nature*

*with respect to its accidents:*

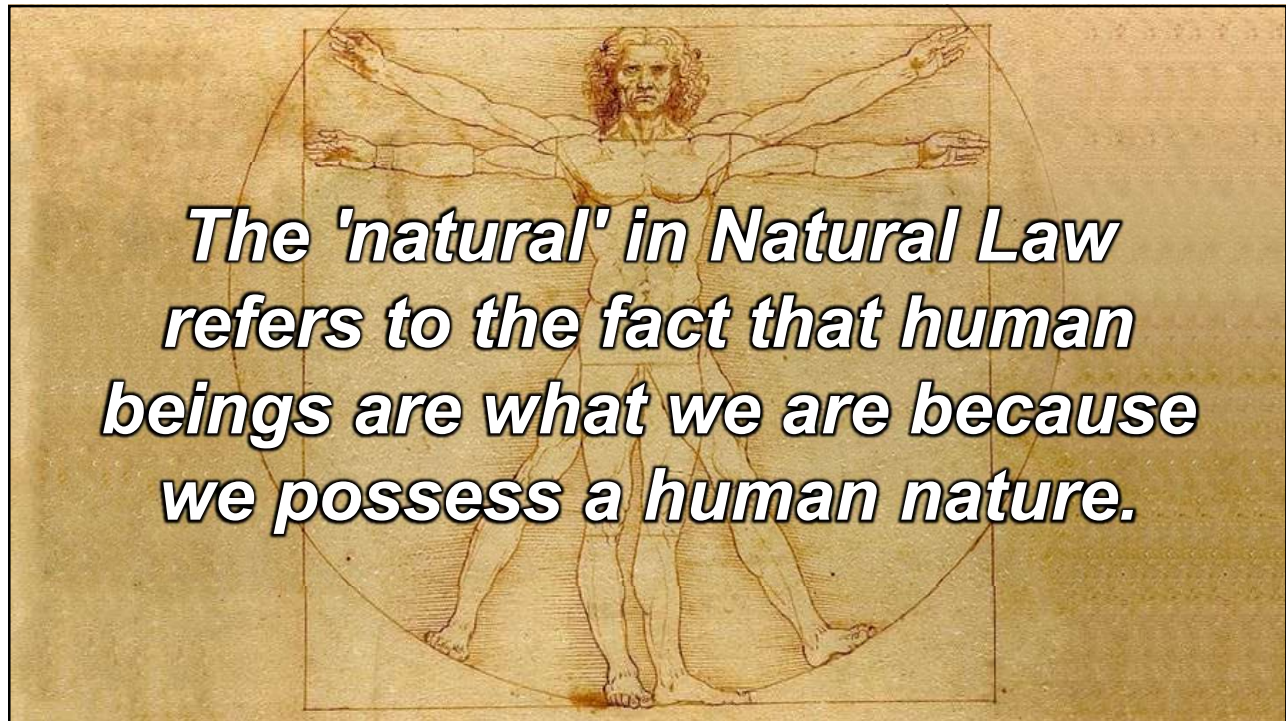
*Substance*

*with respect to an intellect:*

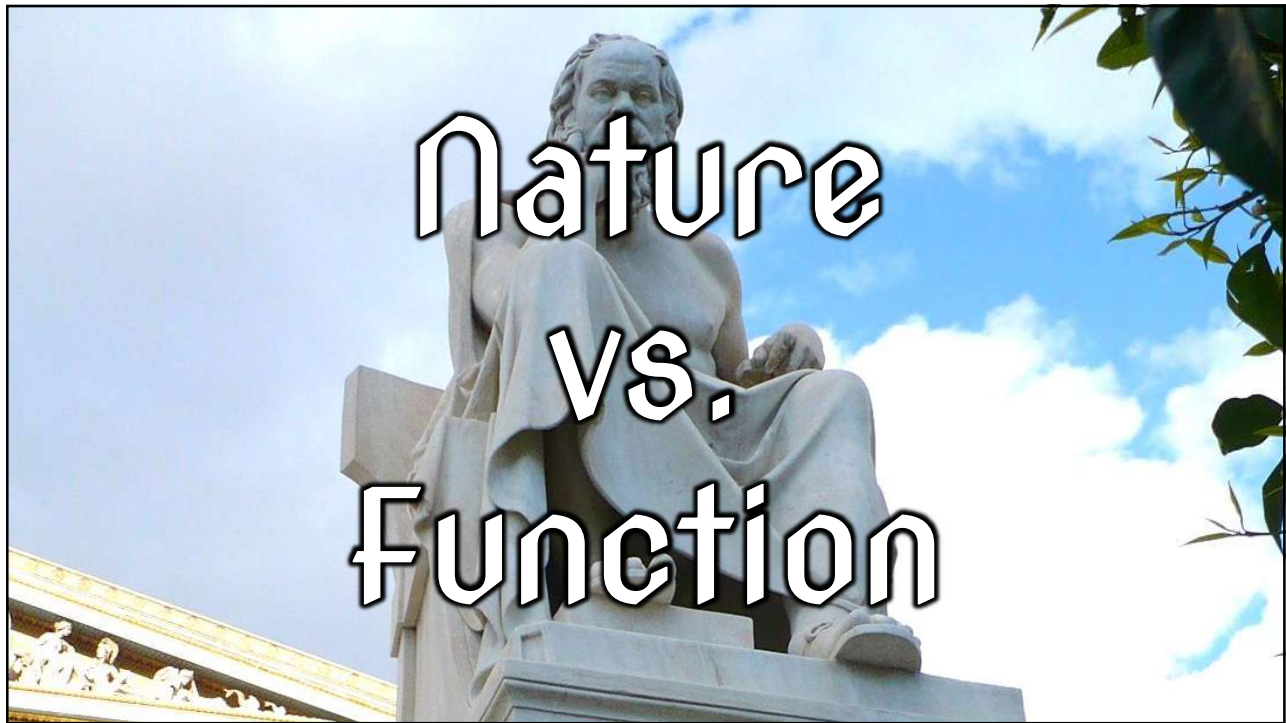
*Quiddity*

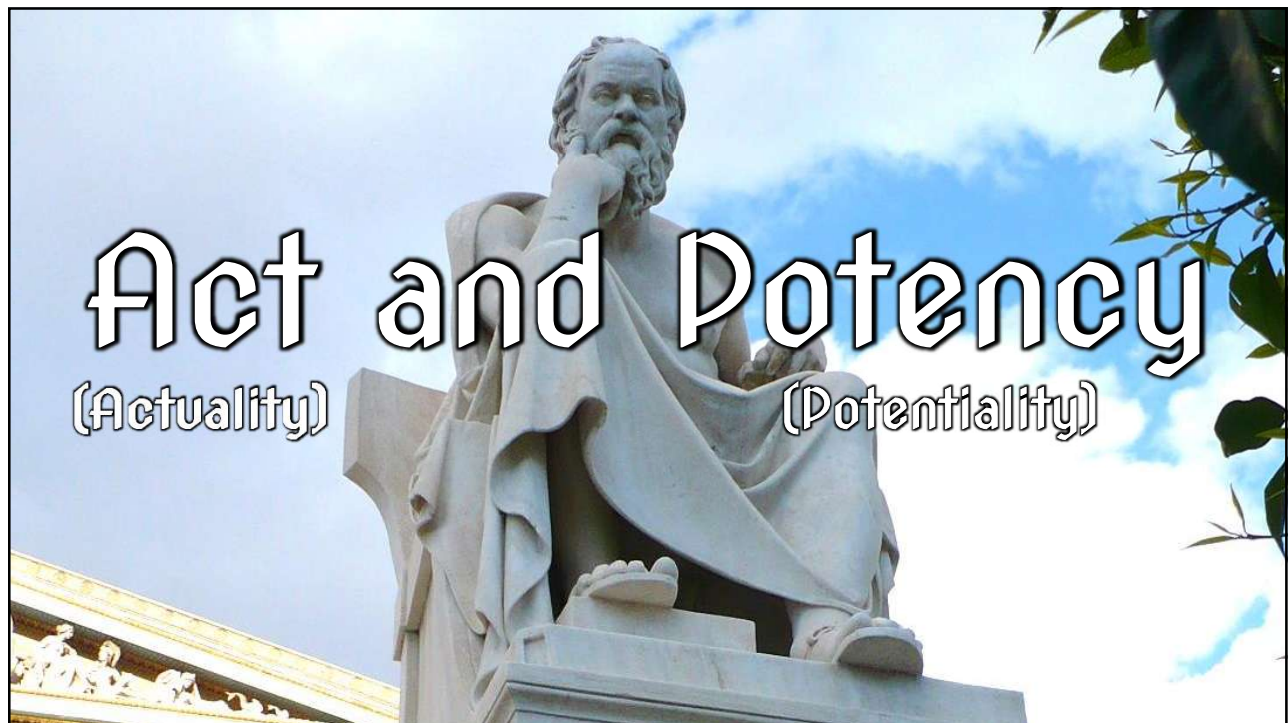
*with respect to its existence:*

*Essence*











**Act and potency are sometimes  
referred to as actuality  
and potentiality.**

**This is how Aristotle and Aquinas  
account for change.**

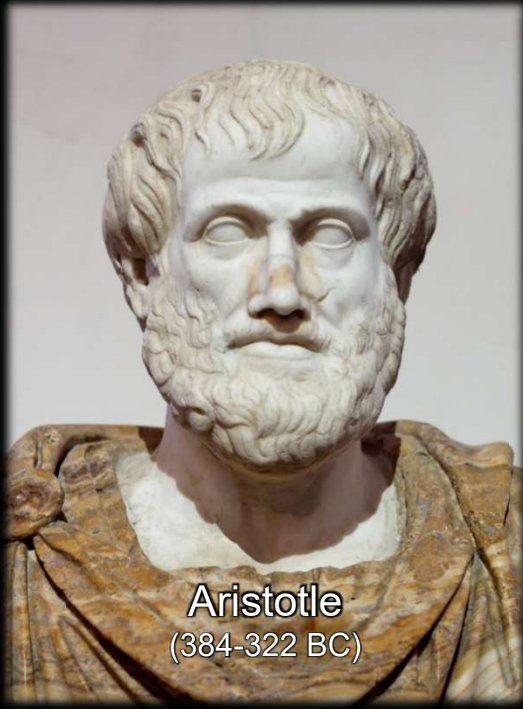
**∞Potency∞**

**= the power or capacity or  
possibility to be actual or  
real**

*There are both logical and metaphysical senses of the terms "potency" or "possible."*

*Logically, something may be possible (or potential) in as much as it is not a contradiction.*



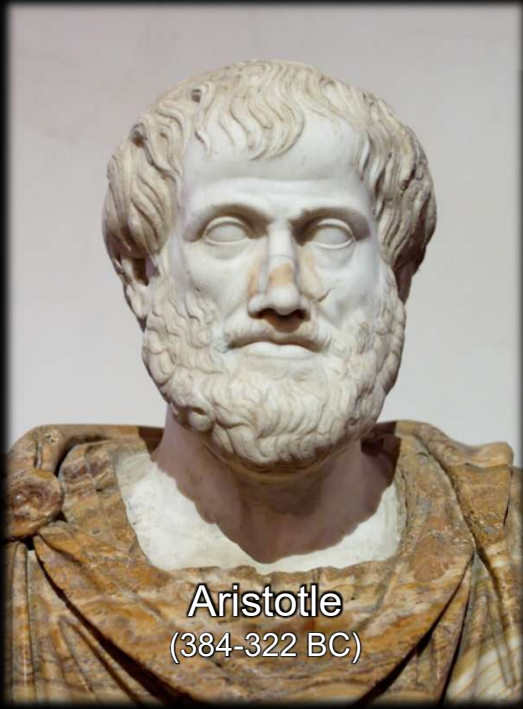


Aristotle  
(384-322 BC)

**"The possible, then, in one sense, as has been said, means that which is not of necessity false."**

[*Metaphysics* D (V), 12, 1019<sup>a</sup>30, trans. W. D. Ross, in Richard McKeon, ed. *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), 765]

***Metaphysically, a potency is a real capacity in a real thing.***



**"Potency' then means the source, in general, of change or movement in another thing or in the same thing *qua* other."**

[*Metaphysics*, D (V), 12, 1019<sup>a</sup>15 - 1019<sup>a</sup>20, trans. W. D. Ross, in Richard McKeon, ed. *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), 765]

**Aristotle**  
(384-322 BC)

**↻ Act ↻**  
(or Actuality)

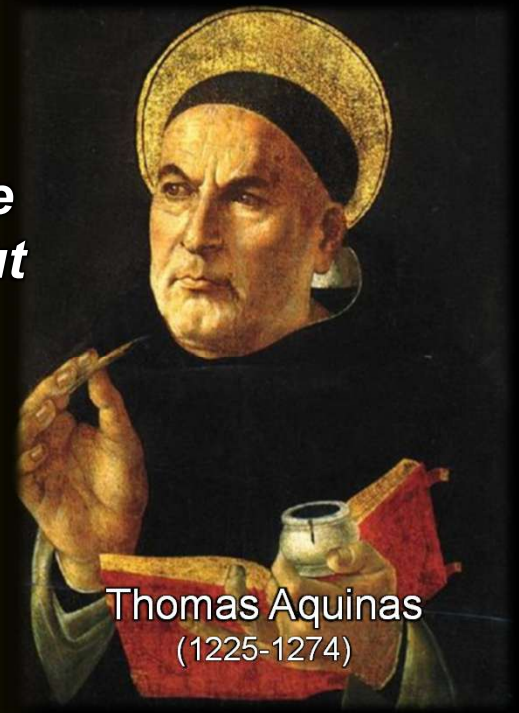
**= to be real**

**A potency is actualized by a cause.**



***"By non-existence we understand not simply those things which do not exist, but those which are potential, and not actual."***

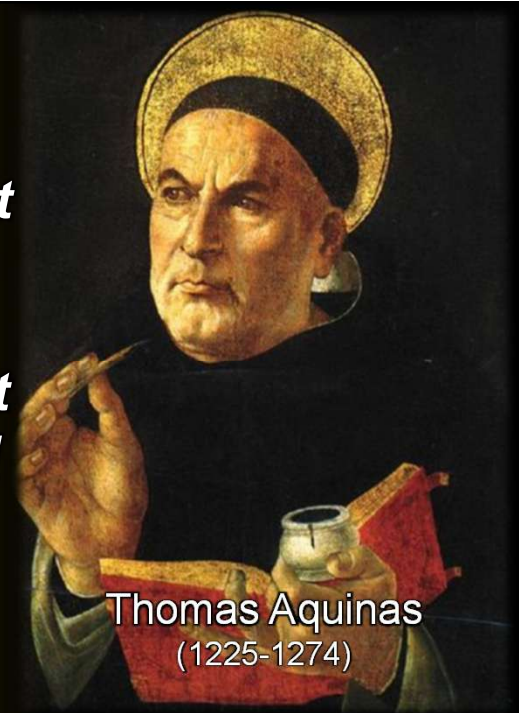
[*Summa Theologiae*, I, 5, 2, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1948), 12]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***"Observe that some things can exist though they do not exist, while other things do exist. That which can be is said to exist in potency; that which already exists is said to be in act."***

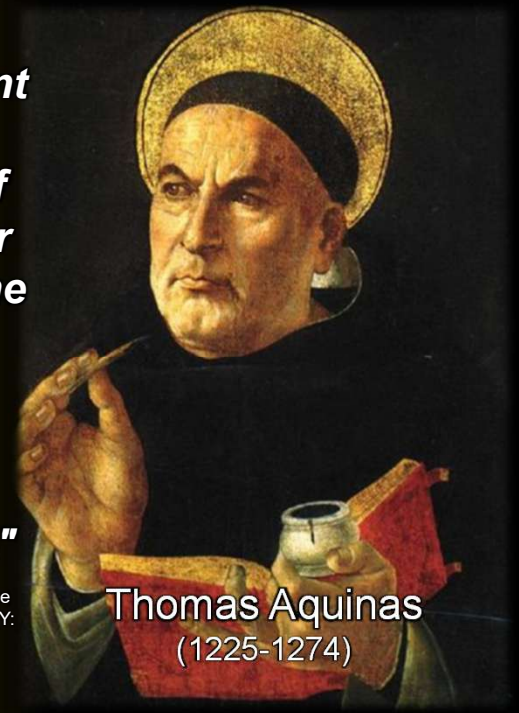
[*On the Principles of Nature*, trans. Vernon J. Bourke in *The Pocket Aquinas* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1960), 61]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***"Now, from the foregoing it is evident that in created intellectual substances there is composition of act and potentiality. For in whatever thing we find two, one of which is the complement of the other, the proportion of one of them to the other is as the proportion of potentiality to act; for nothing is completed except by its proper act."***

[Summa Contra Gentiles, II, 53, §1-2, trans. James F. Anderson (University of Notre Dame Press Edition) vol. 2, p. 155. Reprint of *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith* (Garden City, NY: Hanover House)]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)

***"Howsoever anything acts, it does so inasmuch as it is in act; howsoever anything receives, it does so inasmuch as it is in potency."***

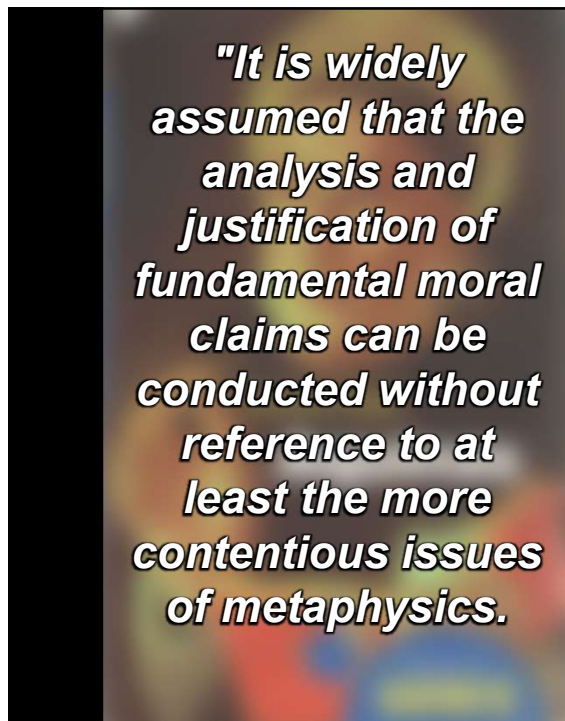
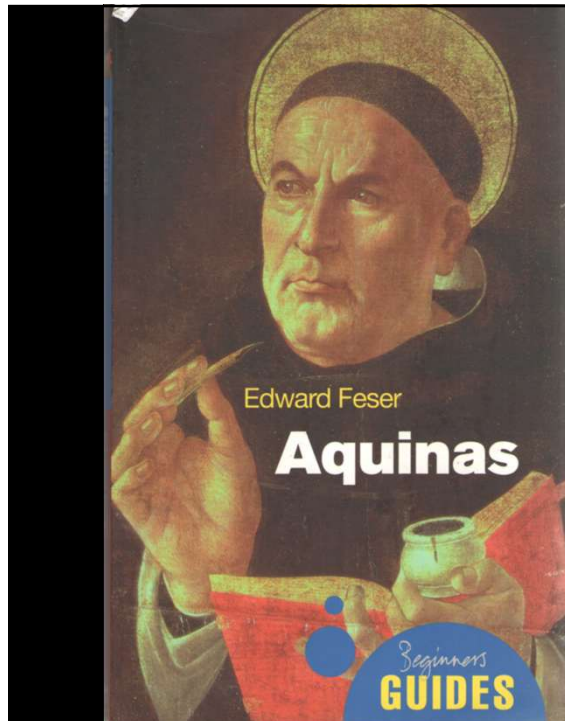
[Bernard J. Wuellner, *Summary of Scholastic Principles* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1956), 5]

SUMMARY OF SCHOLASTIC  
PRINCIPLES



BERNARD J. WUELLNER



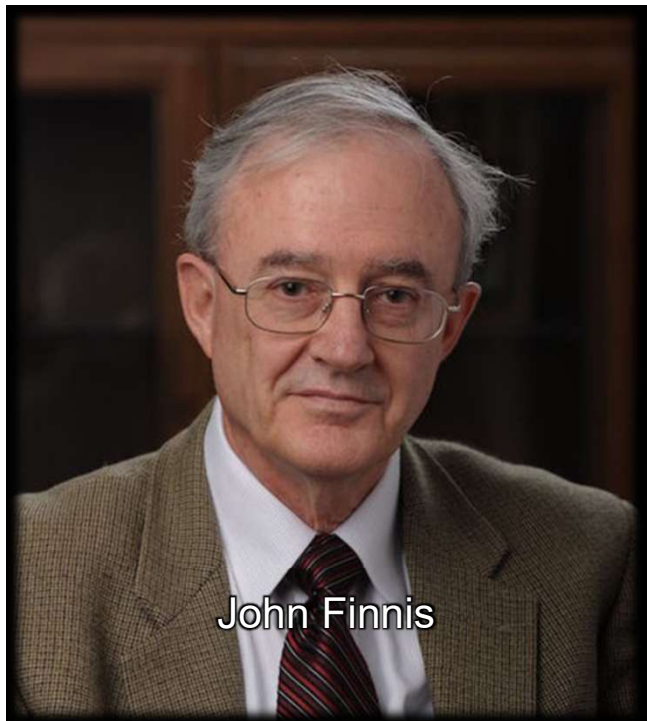


***"Nothing could be further from the spirit of Thomas, for whom natural law ... is 'natural' precisely because it derives from human nature, conceived of in Aristotelian essentialist terms."***

[Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide (Oxford: One World), 174]



Edward Feser

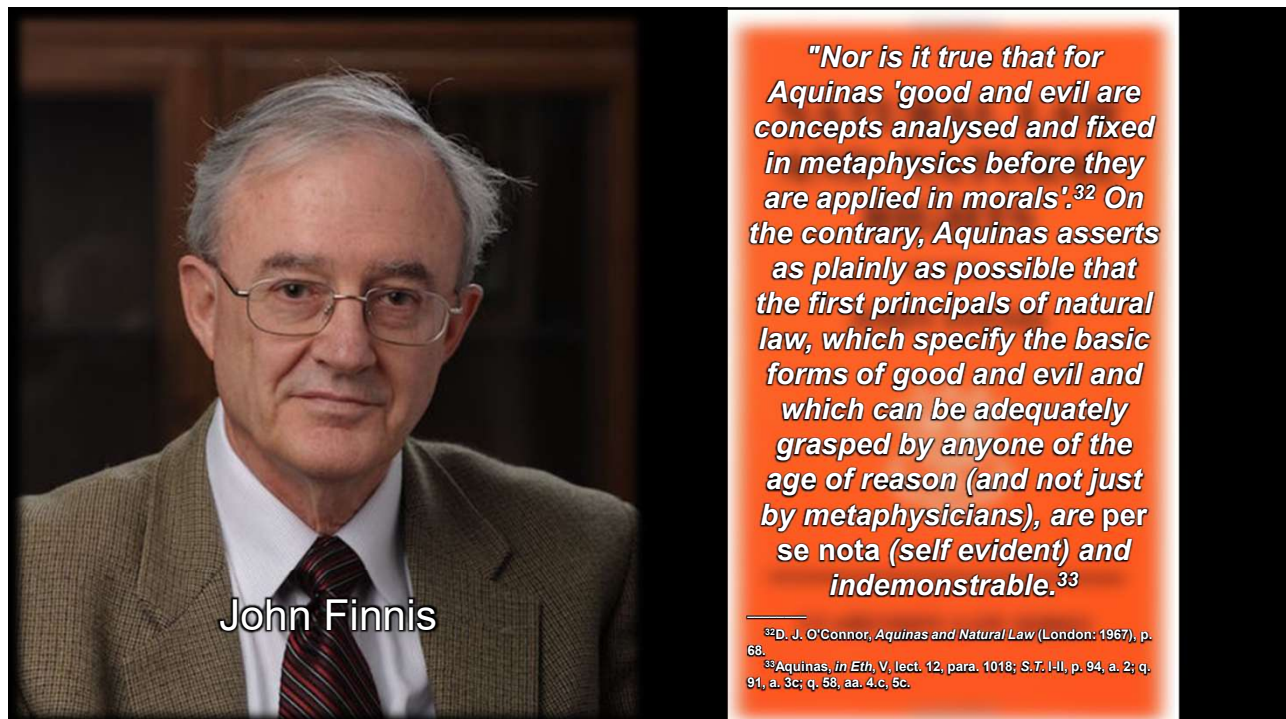
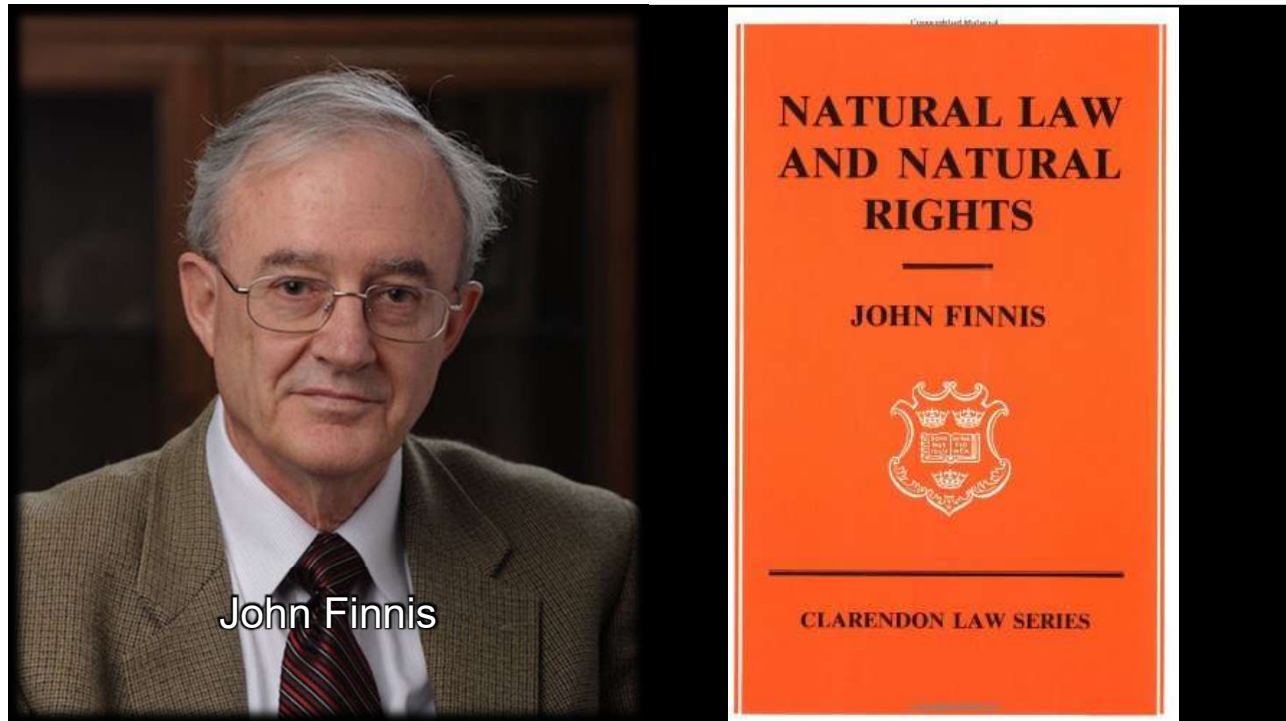



John Finnis



Germain Grisez  
(1929-2018)





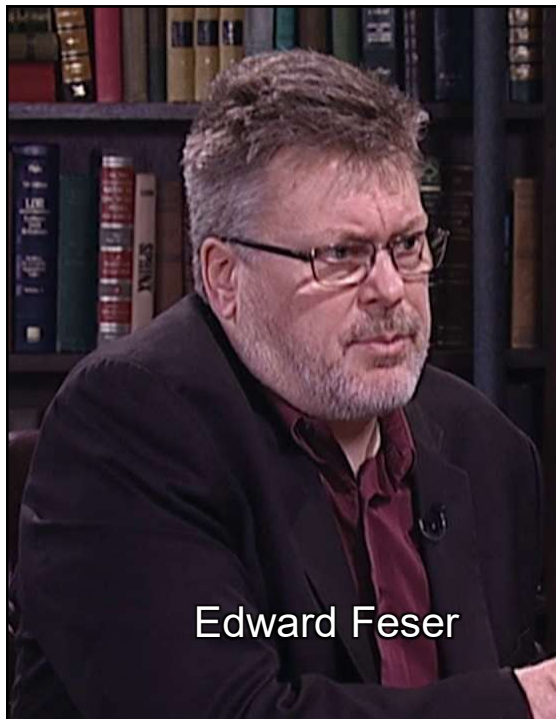


John Finnis

*They are not inferred from speculative principles. They are not inferred from facts. They are not inferred from metaphysical propositions about human nature, or about the nature of good and evil, or about 'the function of a human being'<sup>34</sup> nor are they inferred from a teleological conception of nature or any other conception of nature. They are not inferred or derived from anything."*

<sup>34</sup>Cf. the objections of Margaret MacDonald, 'Natural Rights' in P. Laslett (ed.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society* (Oxford: 1956), 35 at p. 44.  
<sup>35</sup>Pace Strauss, *Natural Right and history*, pp. 7-8.

[John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, 33-34)]




Edward Feser

***"The hope of side-stepping [the Humean fact/value dichotomy] objection is part of the reason why Germain Grisez and John Finnis have sought to develop a 'new' natural law theory which, unlike the traditional version, does not seek to ground morality in premises concerning the metaphysics of human nature."***

[Edward Feser, "Being, the Good, and the Guise of the Good" in *Neo-Scholastic Essays* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press), 279-320, p. 298, n.2]





John Finnis

*"Nor is it true that for Aquinas 'good and evil are concepts analysed and fixed in metaphysics before they are applied in morals'.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, Aquinas asserts as plainly as possible that the first principals of natural law, which specify the basic forms of good and evil and which can be adequately grasped by anyone of the age of reason (and not just by metaphysicians), are per se nota (self evident) and indemonstrable.<sup>33</sup>*

<sup>32</sup>D. J. O'Connor, *Aquinas and Natural Law* (London: 1967), p. 68.  
<sup>33</sup>Aquinas, *in Eth.* V, lect. 12, para. 1018; S.T. I-II, p. 94, a. 2; q. 91, a. 3c; q. 58, aa. 4.c, 5c.

But we are not claiming that good and evil have to be analyzed and fixed **BEFORE** they are applied in morals.

This is a confusion of the epistemology of morals with the metaphysics of morals.

*"Nor is it true that for Aquinas 'good and evil are concepts **analysed and fixed in metaphysics before they are applied in morals**'.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, Aquinas asserts as plainly as possible that the first principals of natural law, which specify the basic forms of good and evil and which can be adequately grasped by anyone of the age of reason (and not just by metaphysicians), are per se nota (self evident) and indemonstrable.<sup>33</sup>*

<sup>32</sup>D. J. O'Connor, *Aquinas and Natural Law* (London: 1967), p. 68.  
<sup>33</sup>Aquinas, *in Eth.* V, lect. 12, para. 1018; S.T. I-II, p. 94, a. 2; q. 91, a. 3c; q. 58, aa. 4.c, 5c.

Just because we can know X before we know anything about the metaphysics of X does not mean that there is no metaphysics of X.

Nor does it mean that the metaphysics of X should never come into the discussion when the reality of X is in dispute.

*"Nor is it true that for Aquinas 'good and evil are concepts analysed and fixed in metaphysics before they are applied in morals'.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, Aquinas asserts as plainly as possible that the first principals of natural law, which specify the basic forms of good and evil and which can be adequately grasped by anyone of the age of reason (and not just by metaphysicians), are per se nota (self evident) and indemonstrable.<sup>33</sup>*

<sup>32</sup>D. J. O'Connor, *Aquinas and Natural Law* (London: 1967), p. 68.

<sup>33</sup>Aquinas, *in Eth.* V, lect. 12, para. 1018; S.T. I-II, p. 94, a. 2; q. 91, a. 3c; q. 58, aa. 4.c, 5c.

A person may know that God exists even if he never considers the metaphysical aspects of God.

But it can become critical to introduce the metaphysical issues in a dispute about the existence of God.

*"Nor is it true that for Aquinas 'good and evil are concepts analysed and fixed in metaphysics before they are applied in morals'.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, Aquinas asserts as plainly as possible that the first principals of natural law, which specify the basic forms of good and evil and which can be adequately grasped by anyone of the age of reason (and not just by metaphysicians), are per se nota (self evident) and indemonstrable.<sup>33</sup>*

<sup>32</sup>D. J. O'Connor, *Aquinas and Natural Law* (London: 1967), p. 68.

<sup>33</sup>Aquinas, *in Eth.* V, lect. 12, para. 1018; S.T. I-II, p. 94, a. 2; q. 91, a. 3c; q. 58, aa. 4.c, 5c.



Finnis is missing Aquinas's point. Aquinas maintains that it is the **DOING** of good and evil that is self-evident and indemonstrable, not the **BEING** of good and evil.

*"Nor is it true that for Aquinas 'good and evil are concepts analysed and fixed in metaphysics before they are **applied in morals**'.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, Aquinas asserts as plainly as possible that the first principals of natural law, which specify the basic forms of good and evil and which can be adequately grasped by anyone of the age of reason (and not just by metaphysicians), are **per se nota (self evident) and indemonstrable**."<sup>33</sup>*

<sup>32</sup>D. J. O'Connor, *Aquinas and Natural Law* (London: 1967), p. 68.

<sup>33</sup>Aquinas, in *Eth.* V, lect. 12, para. 1018; S.T. I-II, p. 94, a. 2; q. 91, a. 3c; q. 58, aa. 4.c, 5c.

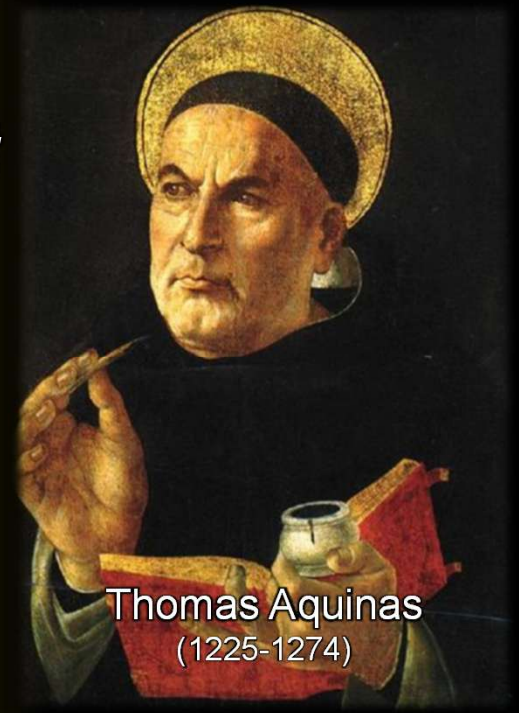
*"Good is the first thing that falls under the apprehension of the **practical reason**, which is directed at action."*

[ST I-II, Q94, art. 2]



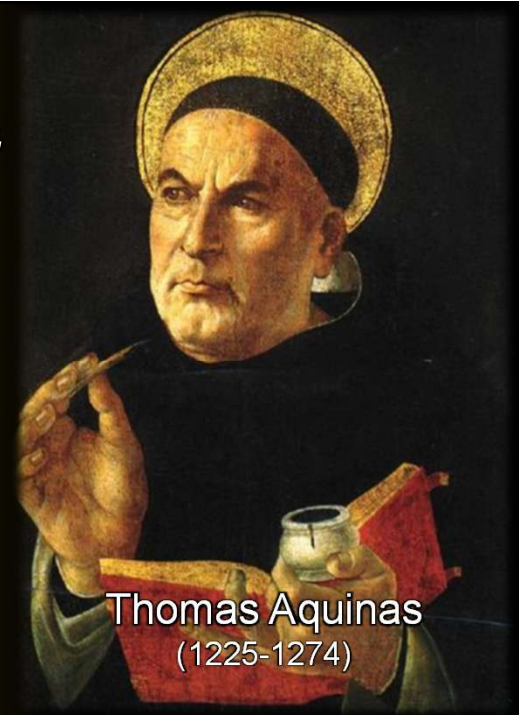
Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***"Hence, this is the first  
precept of law:  
quod bonum est  
faciendum et  
prosequendum, et  
malum vitandum."***



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***"Hence, this is the first  
precept of law:  
that good is  
to be done and  
pursued and  
evil avoided."***



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)



Finnis is missing Aquinas's point. Aquinas maintains that it is the **DOING** of good and evil not the **BEING** of good and evil that is self-evident and indemonstrable.

Second, Aquinas maintains that there is a difference between something being self-evident in itself though not to us and self-evident in itself and to us.

*"Nor is it true that for Aquinas 'good and evil are concepts analysed and fixed in metaphysics before they are applied in morals'.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, Aquinas asserts as plainly as possible that the first principals of natural law, which specify the basic forms of good and evil and which can be adequately grasped by anyone of the age of reason (and not just by metaphysicians), are per se nota (self evident) and indemonstrable.<sup>33</sup>*

<sup>32</sup>D. J. O'Connor, *Aquinas and Natural Law* (London: 1967), p. 68.

<sup>33</sup>Aquinas, *in Eth.* V, lect. 12, para. 1018; S.T. I-II, q. 94, a. 2; q. 91, a. 3c; q. 58, aa. 4.c, 5c.

*"A thing can be self-evident in either of two ways; on the one hand, self evident in itself, though not to us; on the other, self-evident in itself, and to us."*

[ST, I, 2, 1]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

For example, the equation  $2 + 2 = 4$ , though self-evident in itself (in as much as the predicate '4' is contained in the subject ' $2 + 2$ '), will not be self-evident to a child learning arithmetic who has yet to learn what the equal sign means.

*"Nor is it true that for Aquinas 'good and evil are concepts analysed and fixed in metaphysics before they are applied in morals'.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, Aquinas asserts as plainly as possible that the first principals of natural law, which specify the basic forms of good and evil and which can be adequately grasped by anyone of the age of reason (and not just by metaphysicians), are per se nota (self evident) and indemonstrable.<sup>33</sup>*

<sup>32</sup>D. J. O'Connor, *Aquinas and Natural Law* (London: 1967), p. 68.

<sup>33</sup>Aquinas, *in Eth*, V, lect. 12, para. 1018; S.T. I-II, q. 94, a. 2; q. 91, a. 3c; q. 58, aa. 4.c, 5c.

Thus, for Aquinas it is a first principle of law that the good is to be done and evil avoided.

This, however, says nothing against the case for and the relevance of the metaphysics of what it is that makes something good or evil.

*"Nor is it true that for Aquinas 'good and evil are concepts analysed and fixed in metaphysics before they are applied in morals'.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, Aquinas asserts as plainly as possible that the first principals of natural law, which specify the basic forms of good and evil and which can be adequately grasped by anyone of the age of reason (and not just by metaphysicians), are per se nota (self evident) and indemonstrable.<sup>33</sup>*

<sup>32</sup>D. J. O'Connor, *Aquinas and Natural Law* (London: 1967), p. 68.

<sup>33</sup>Aquinas, *in Eth*, V, lect. 12, para. 1018; S.T. I-II, q. 94, a. 2; q. 91, a. 3c; q. 58, aa. 4.c, 5c.



Third, there is a difference between whether they are inferred from speculative principles **BEFORE** they are employed in action, and whether they can, in fact, be inferred from speculative principles.

*They are not inferred from speculative principles. They are not inferred from facts. They are not inferred from metaphysical propositions about human nature, or about the nature of good and evil, or about 'the function of a human being'<sup>34</sup> nor are they inferred from a teleological conception of nature or any other conception of nature. They are not inferred or derived from anything."*

<sup>34</sup>Cf. the objections of Margaret MacDonald, 'Natural Rights' in P. Laslett (ed.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society* (Oxford: 1956), 35 at p. 44.

<sup>35</sup>Pace Strauss, *Natural Right and history*, pp. 7-8.

[John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, 33-34)]

For example, one does not have to infer from speculative principles that God exists before one is able to believe that God exists.

*They are not inferred from speculative principles. They are not inferred from facts. They are not inferred from metaphysical propositions about human nature, or about the nature of good and evil, or about 'the function of a human being'<sup>34</sup> nor are they inferred from a teleological conception of nature or any other conception of nature. They are not inferred or derived from anything."*

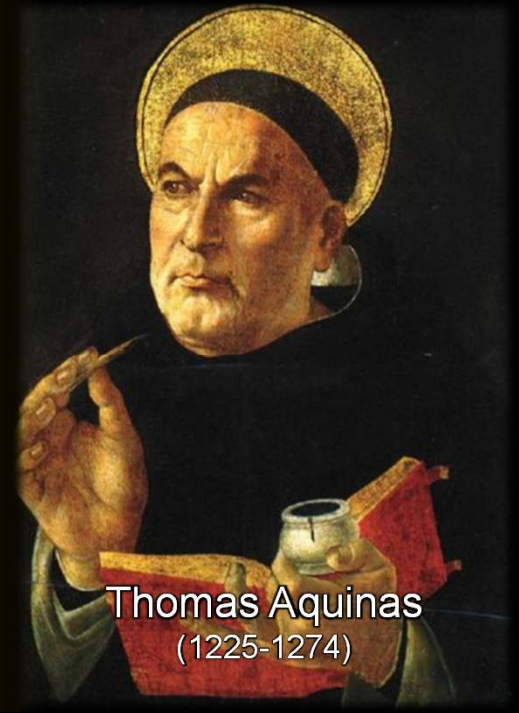
<sup>34</sup>Cf. the objections of Margaret MacDonald, 'Natural Rights' in P. Laslett (ed.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society* (Oxford: 1956), 35 at p. 44.

<sup>35</sup>Pace Strauss, *Natural Right and history*, pp. 7-8.

[John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, 33-34)]

***"There is nothing to prevent a man, who cannot grasp a proof, accepting as a matter of faith, something which in itself is capable of being scientifically [i.e. rationally] known and demonstrated."***

[ST, I, 2, 1]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

This, however, is not to say that the existence of God cannot be so inferred from speculative (i.e., metaphysical) principles.

This is exactly what Aquinas does deftly.

***They are not inferred from speculative principles. They are not inferred from facts. They are not inferred from metaphysical propositions about human nature, or about the nature of good and evil, or about 'the function of a human being'<sup>34</sup> nor are they inferred from a teleological conception of nature or any other conception of nature. They are not inferred or derived from anything."***

<sup>34</sup>Cf. the objections of Margaret MacDonald, 'Natural Rights' in P. Laslett (ed.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society* (Oxford: 1956), 35 at p. 44.

<sup>35</sup>Pace Strauss, *Natural Right and history*, pp. 7-8.

[John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, 33-34)]



The same point applies to morality, as I hope will become clear as we go along.

Thus, it would seem that Finnis's view is not aligned with Aquinas's.

*They are not inferred from speculative principles. They are not inferred from facts. They are not inferred from metaphysical propositions about human nature, or about the nature of good and evil, or about 'the function of a human being'<sup>34</sup> nor are they inferred from a teleological conception of nature or any other conception of nature. They are not inferred or derived from anything."*

<sup>34</sup>Cf. the objections of Margaret MacDonald, 'Natural Rights' in P. Laslett (ed.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society* (Oxford: 1956), 35 at p. 44.

<sup>35</sup>Pace Strauss, *Natural Right and history*, pp. 7-8.

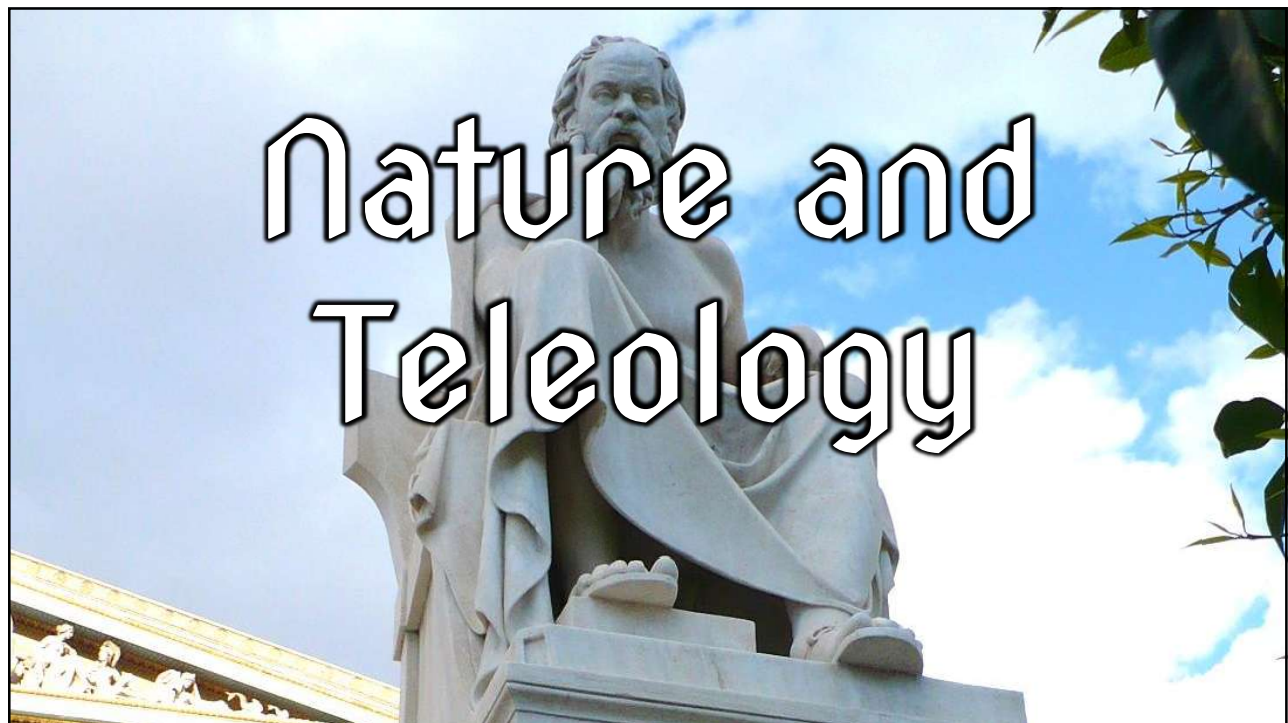
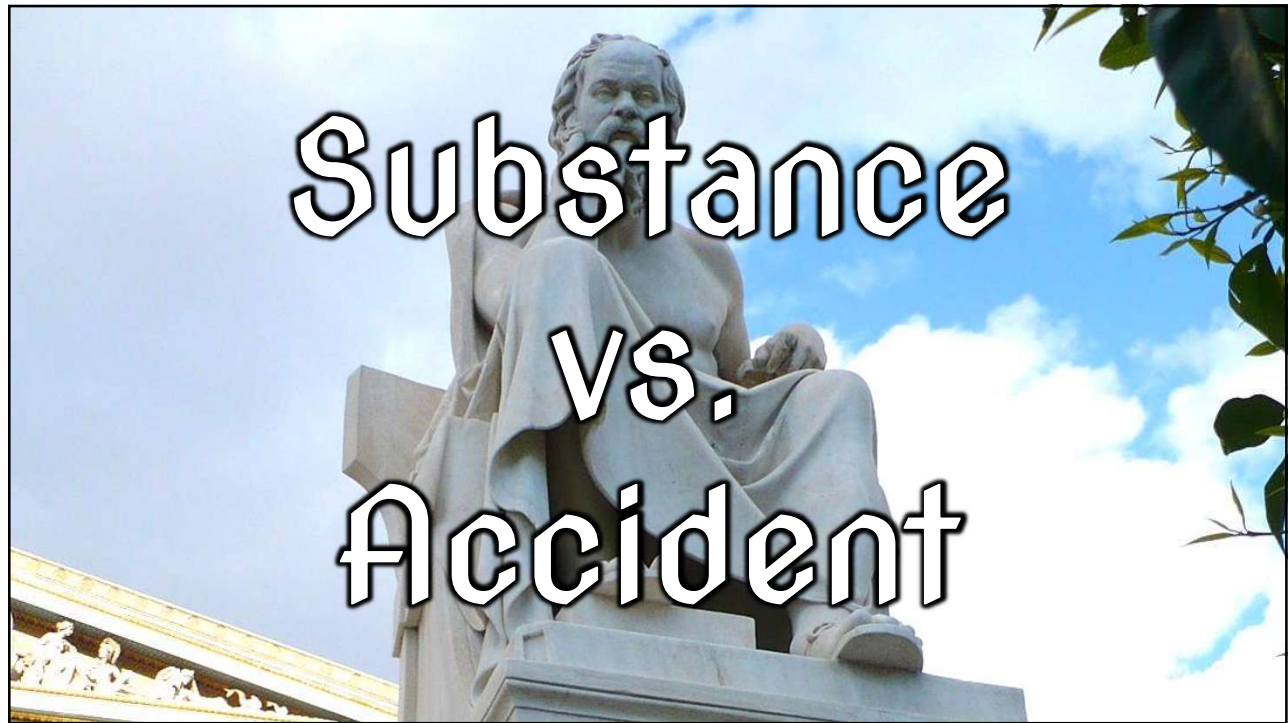
[John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980, 33-34)]

***"Whenever things have such a definite nature ... the operation appropriate to a given being is a consequent of that nature. Now, it is obvious that there is a determinate kind of nature for man. Therefore, there must be some operations that are in themselves appropriate for man."***

[SCG III, 129, §4, trans. Vernon J. Bourke (University of Notre Dame Press Edition) vol. 3:II, p. 163. Reprint of *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith* (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1956)]



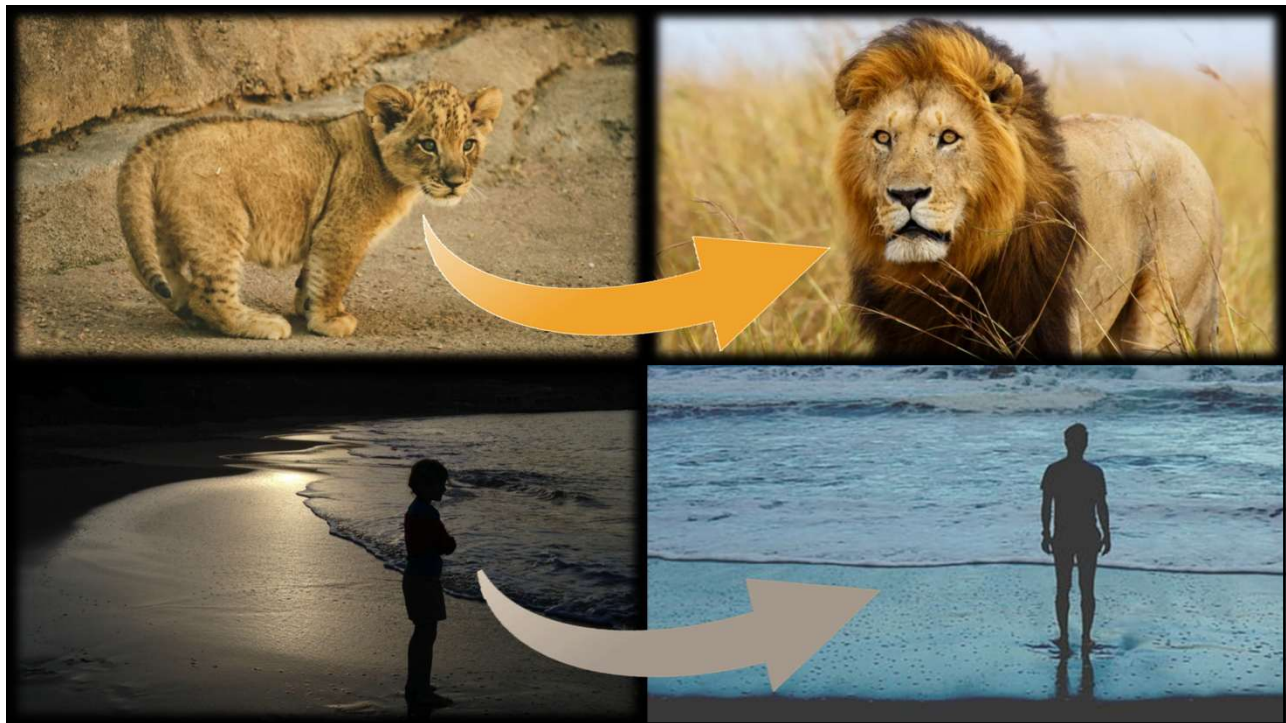
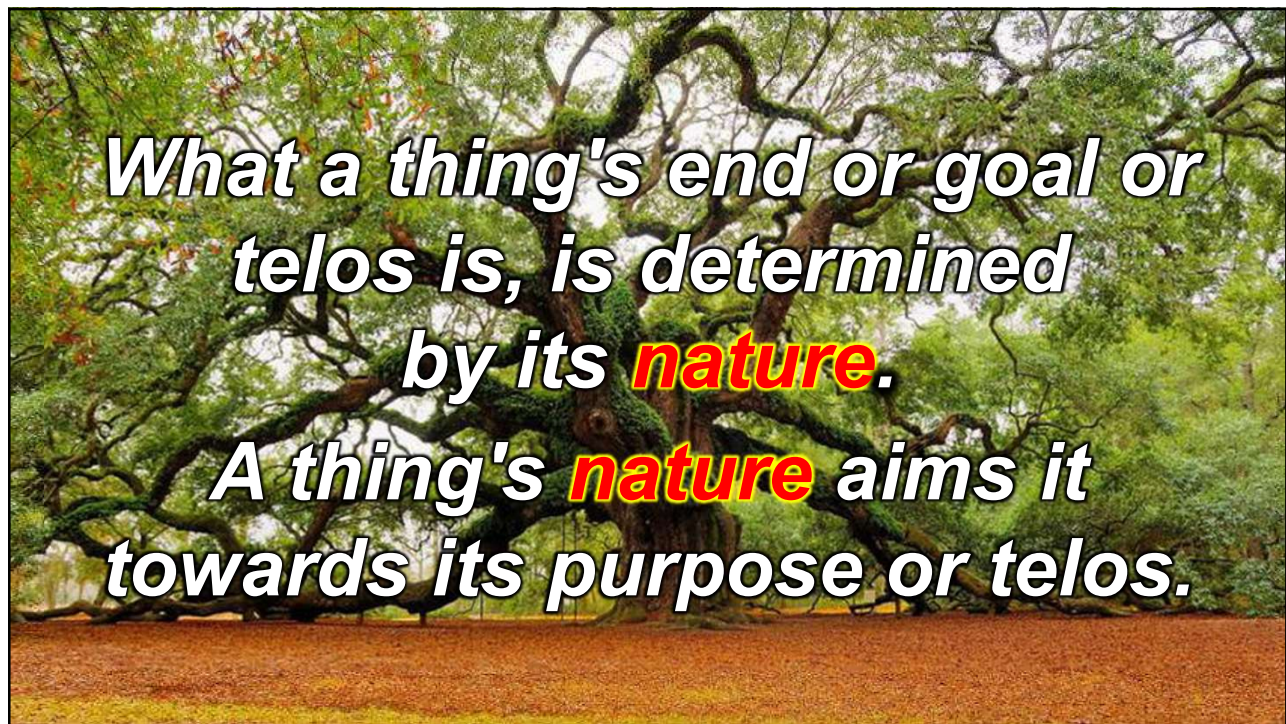
**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)







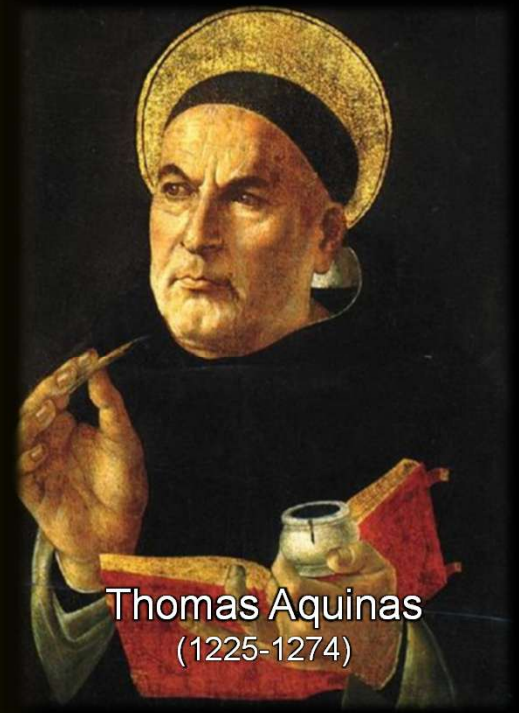
***As a living thing grows and matures, it does so, if unimpeded, towards its proper end or goal or telos.***





***"Whenever things have such a definite nature ... the operation appropriate to a given being is a consequent of that nature. Now, it is obvious that there is a determinate kind of nature for man. Therefore, there must be some operations that are in themselves appropriate for man."***

[SCG III, 129, §4, trans. Vernon J. Bourke (University of Notre Dame Press Edition) vol. 3:II, p. 163. Reprint of *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith* (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1956)]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)

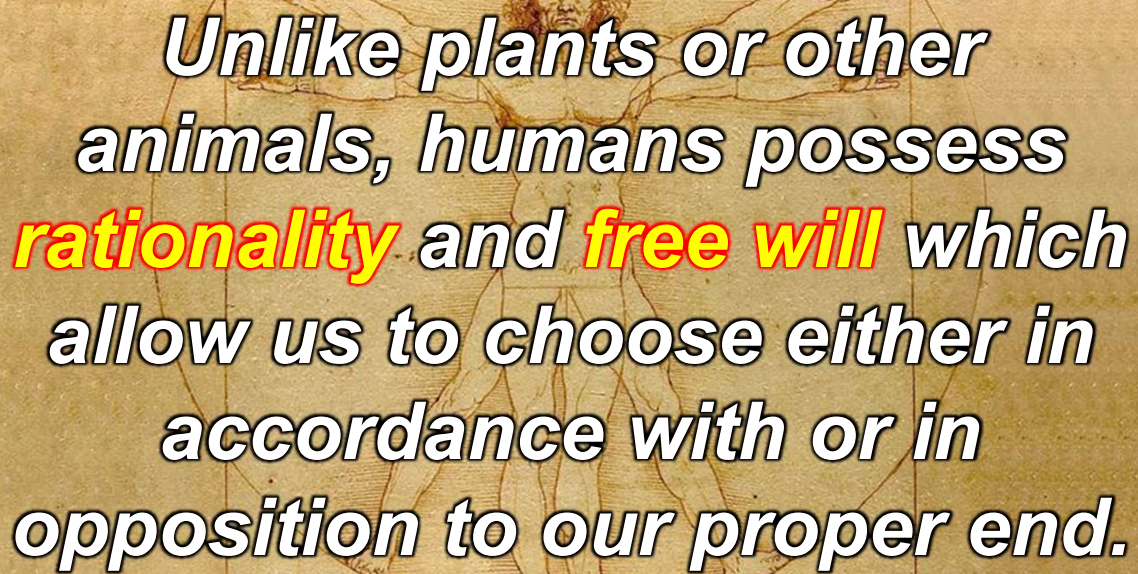
***"Whenever things have such a definite nature ... the operation appropriate to a given being is a consequent of that nature. Now, it is obvious that there is a determinate kind of nature for man. Therefore, there must be some operations that are in themselves appropriate for man."***

[SCG III, 129, §4, trans. Vernon J. Bourke (University of Notre Dame Press Edition) vol. 3:II, p. 163. Reprint of *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith* (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, 1956)]

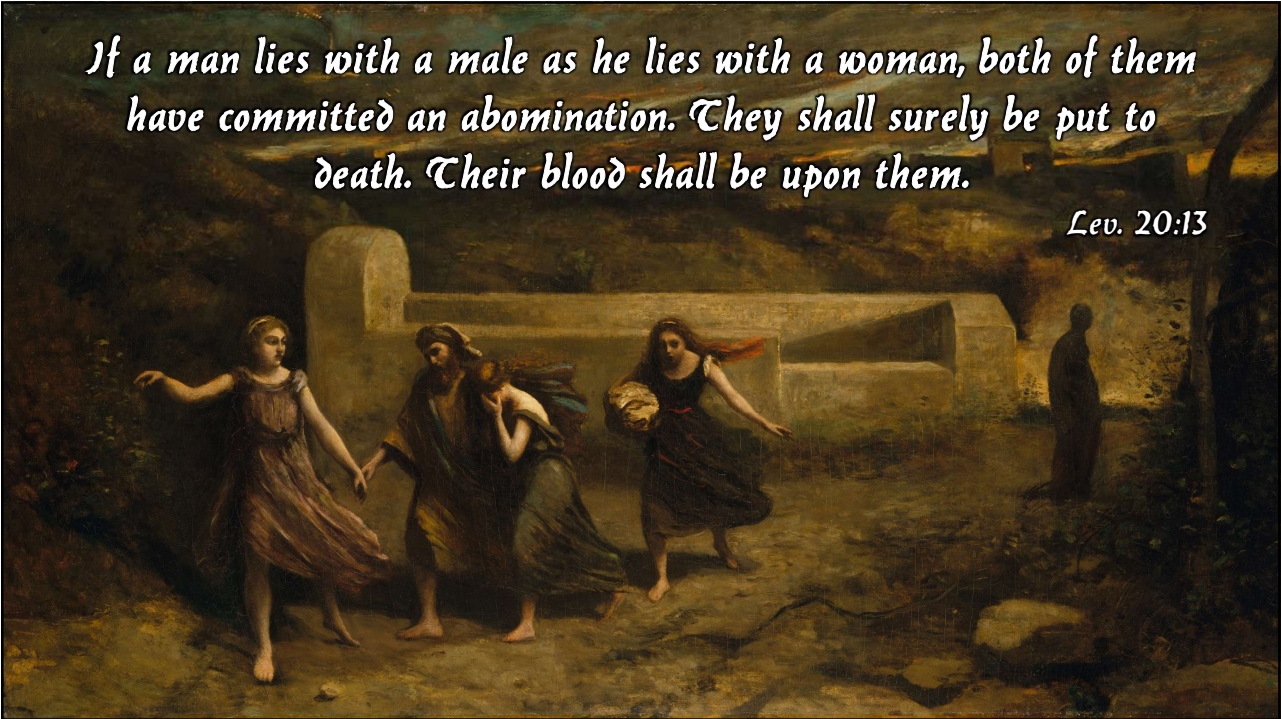
This nature for the human is not merely a reference to the human body.

Rather the nature involves that nature with respect to the operations.



The background of the first slide is a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man. The figure of the man is centered, with his arms and legs extended to touch the boundaries of a square and a circle. The text is overlaid on this image.

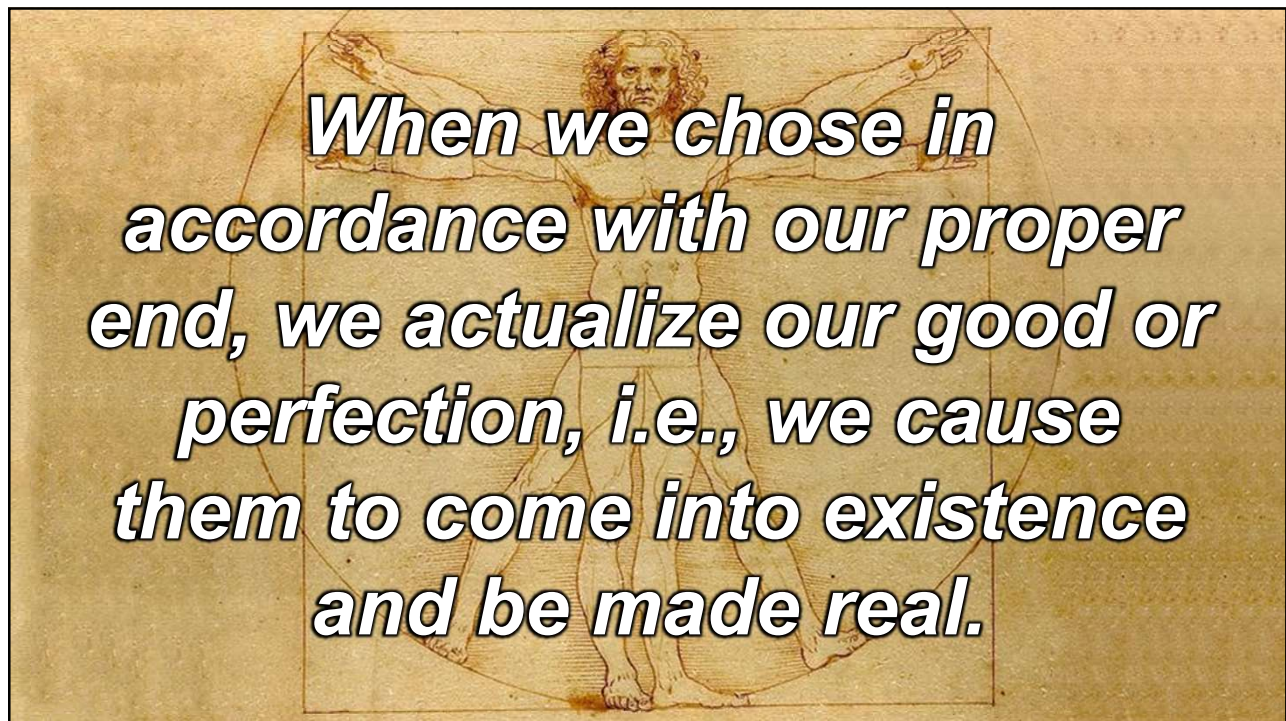
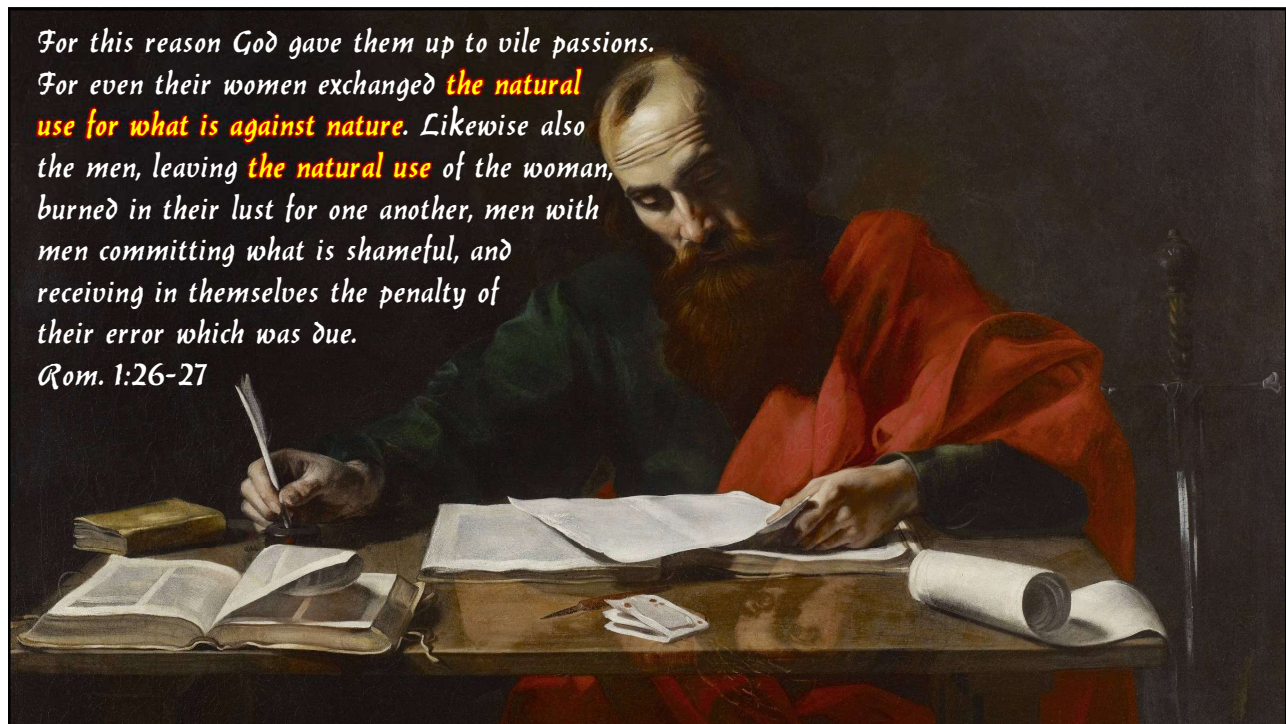
*Unlike plants or other animals, humans possess **rationality** and **free will** which allow us to choose either in accordance with or in opposition to our proper end.*

The background of the second slide is a painting depicting the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah. It shows several figures in a dark, desolate landscape, with one figure in the foreground appearing to be in a state of distress or being carried. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the painting.

*If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.*

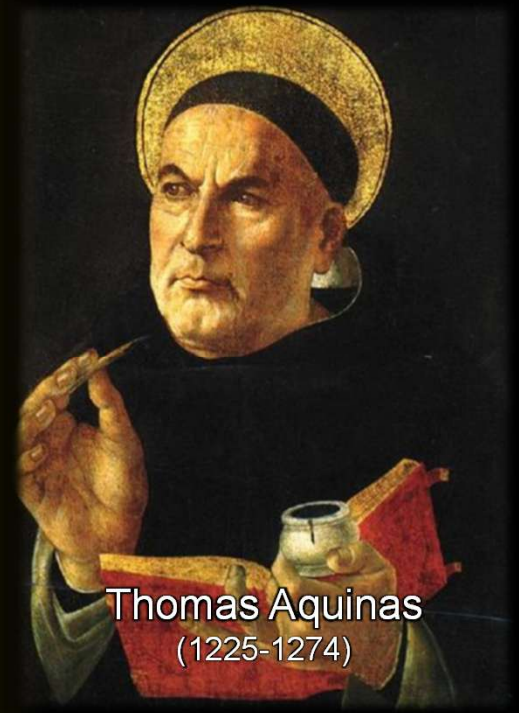
*Lev. 20:13*





***"Those acts are properly called human which are voluntary because the will is the rational appetite, which is proper to man."***

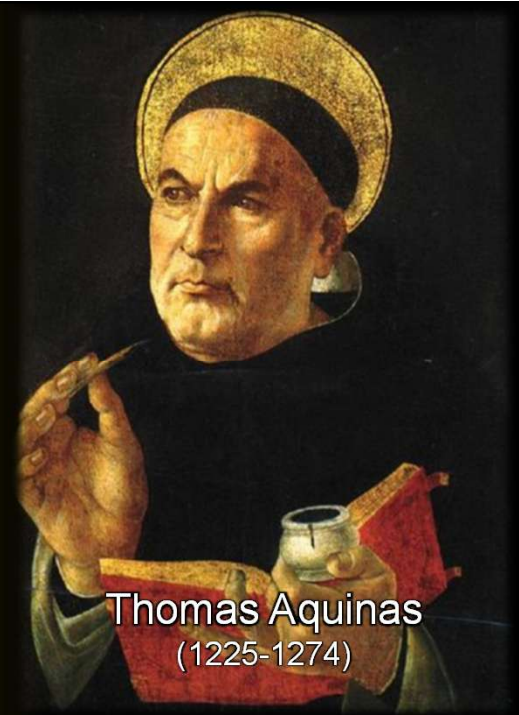
[ST I-II, Q6, introduction]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

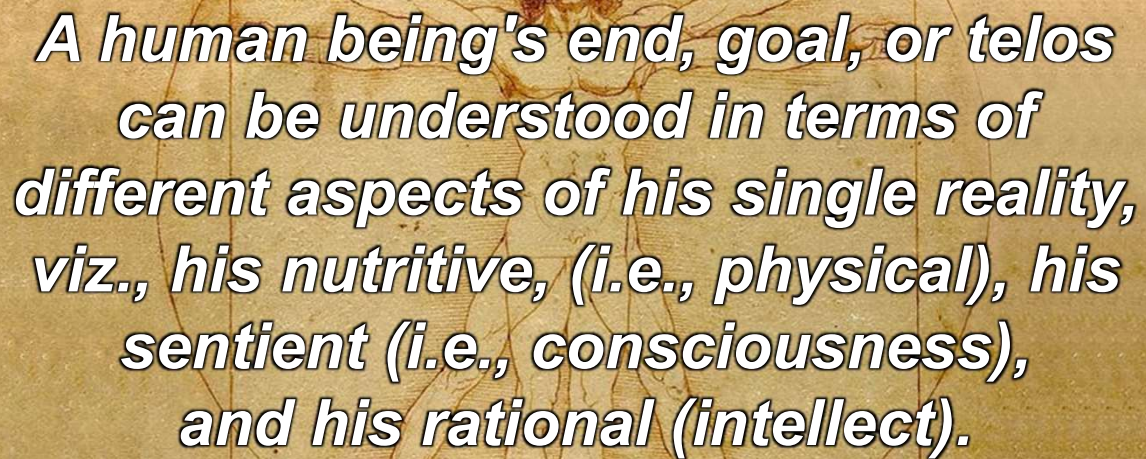
***"Man determines himself by his reason to will this or that, which is true [good] or apparent good."***

[ST I-II, Q9, ad. 3]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)



The background of the first slide is a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man. The figure is shown in two superimposed positions, with arms and legs extended to touch the boundaries of a square and a circle.

*A human being's end, goal, or telos can be understood in terms of different aspects of his single reality, viz., his nutritive, (i.e., physical), his sentient (i.e., consciousness), and his rational (intellect).*

The background of the second slide is another reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man, showing the same figure within the square and circle.

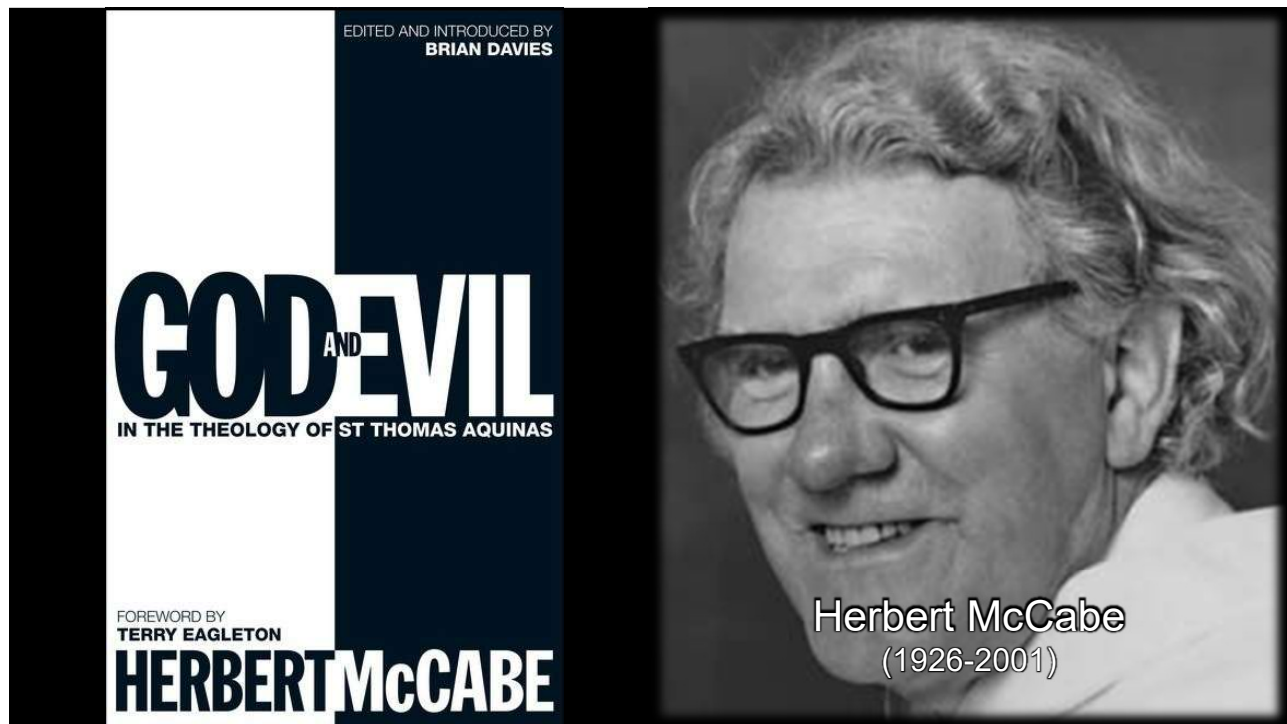
*To these Aristotelian categories, the Christian Thomas Aquinas will add the eternal / spiritual aspect.*



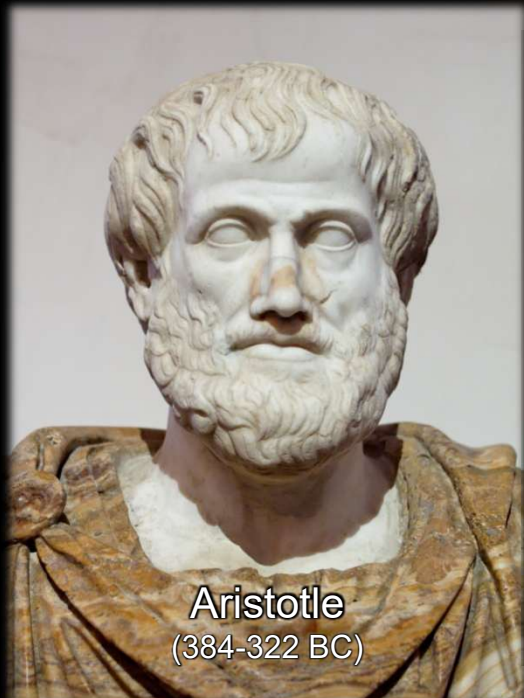










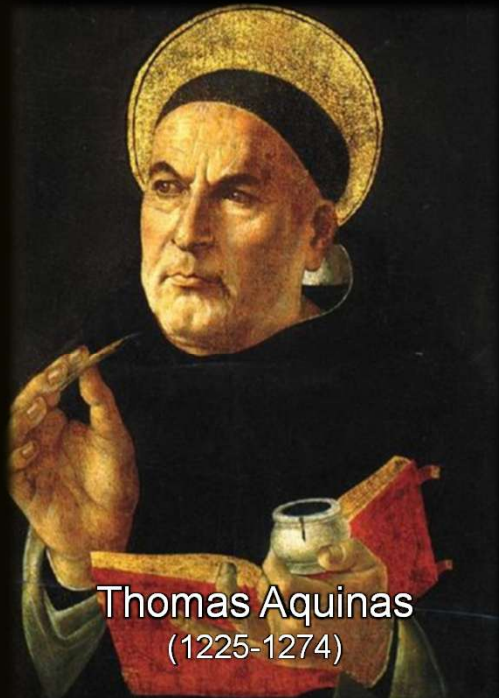


***"Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has been rightly declared to be that at which all things aim."***

Aristotle  
(384-322 BC)

[Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 1, 1094a1-2, trans. W. D. Ross in Richard McKeon, ed. *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), 935]

***"The essence of goodness consists in this, that it is in some way desirable."***

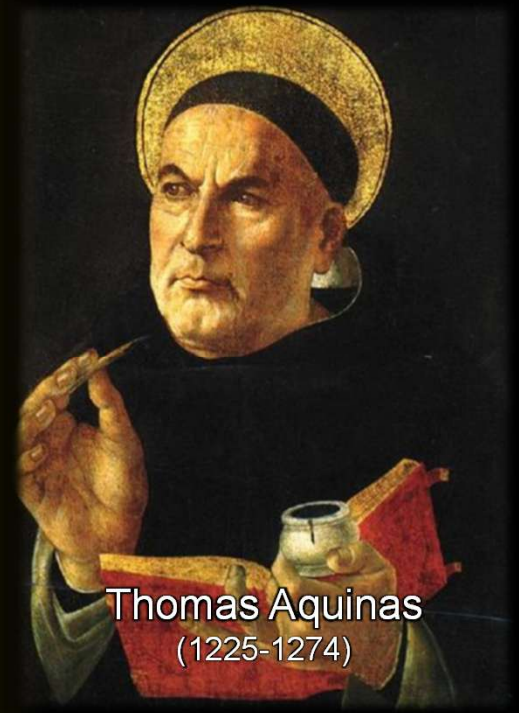


Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

[*Summa Theologiae* I, Q5, art. 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province in *St. Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologica: Complete English Edition in Five Volumes* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981), 23]

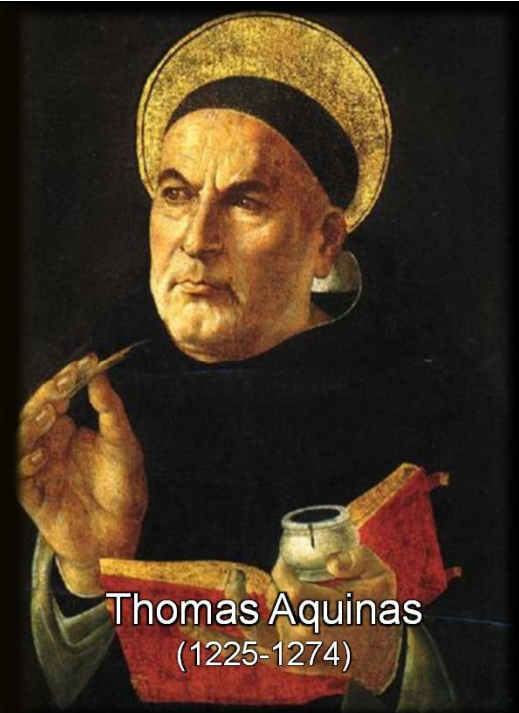
***"Goodness  
signifies  
perfection which  
is desirable."***

[ST I, Q5, art. 1]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

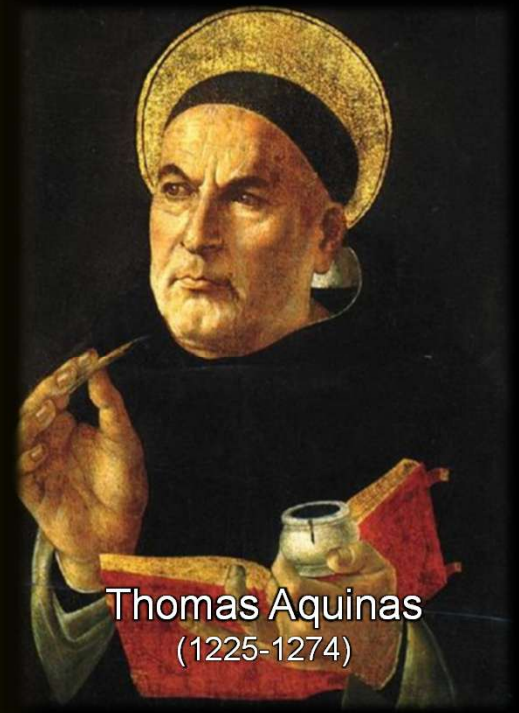
***"Since, however, good has the  
nature of an end, and evil, the nature  
of a contrary, hence it is that all  
those things to which man has a  
natural inclination, are naturally  
apprehended by reason as being  
good, and consequently as objects  
of pursuit, and their contraries as  
evil, and objects of avoidance.  
Wherefore according to the order of  
natural inclinations, is the order of  
the precepts of the natural law."***



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

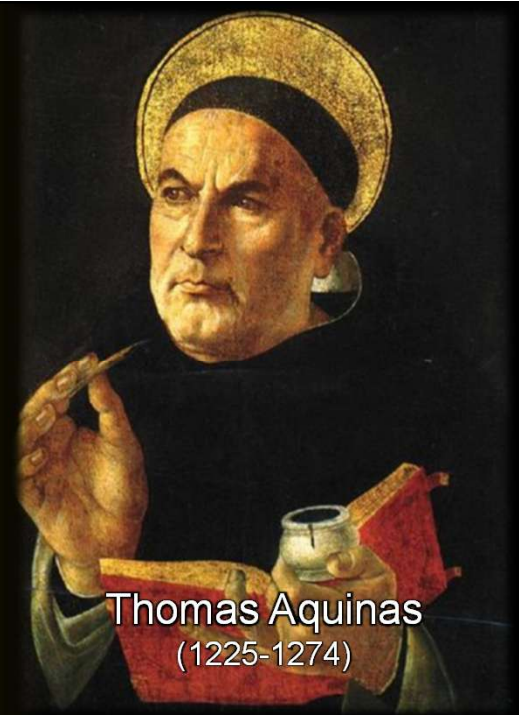


*"Because in man there is first of all an inclination to good in accordance with the nature which he has in common with all substances: inasmuch as every substance seeks the preservation of its own being, according to its nature: and by reason of this inclination whatever is a means of preserving human life, and of warding off its obstacles, belongs to the natural law."*



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

*"Secondly, there is in man an inclination to things that pertain to him more specially, according to that nature which he has in common with other animals: and in virtue of this inclination, those things are said to belong to the natural law, which nature has taught to all animals, such as sexual intercourse, education of offspring and so forth."*

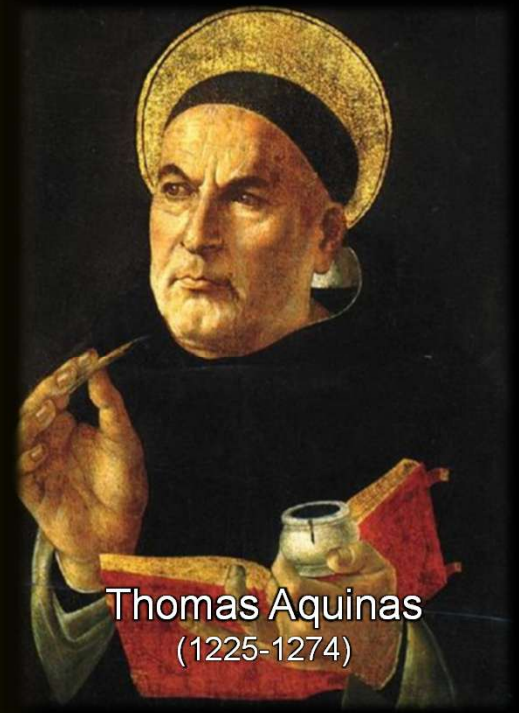


Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)



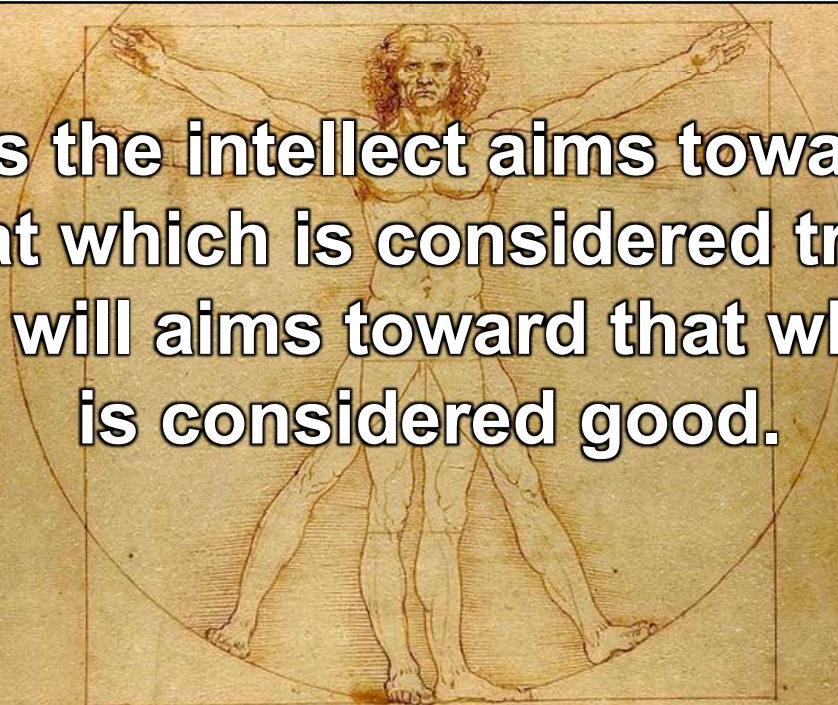
*"Thirdly, there is in man an inclination to good, according to the nature of his reason, which nature is proper to him: thus man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God, and to live in society: and in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to the natural law; for instance to shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live, and other such things regarding the above inclination."*

[ST I-II, 94, art 2]

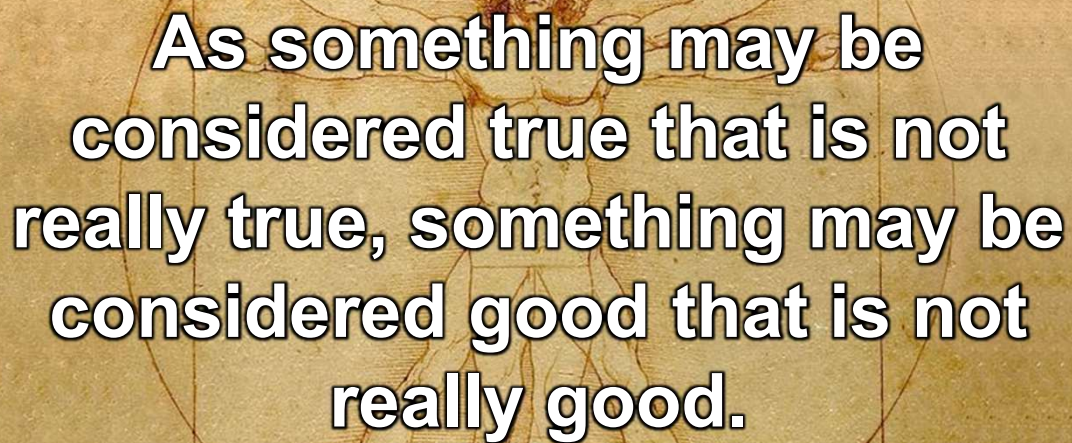


Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

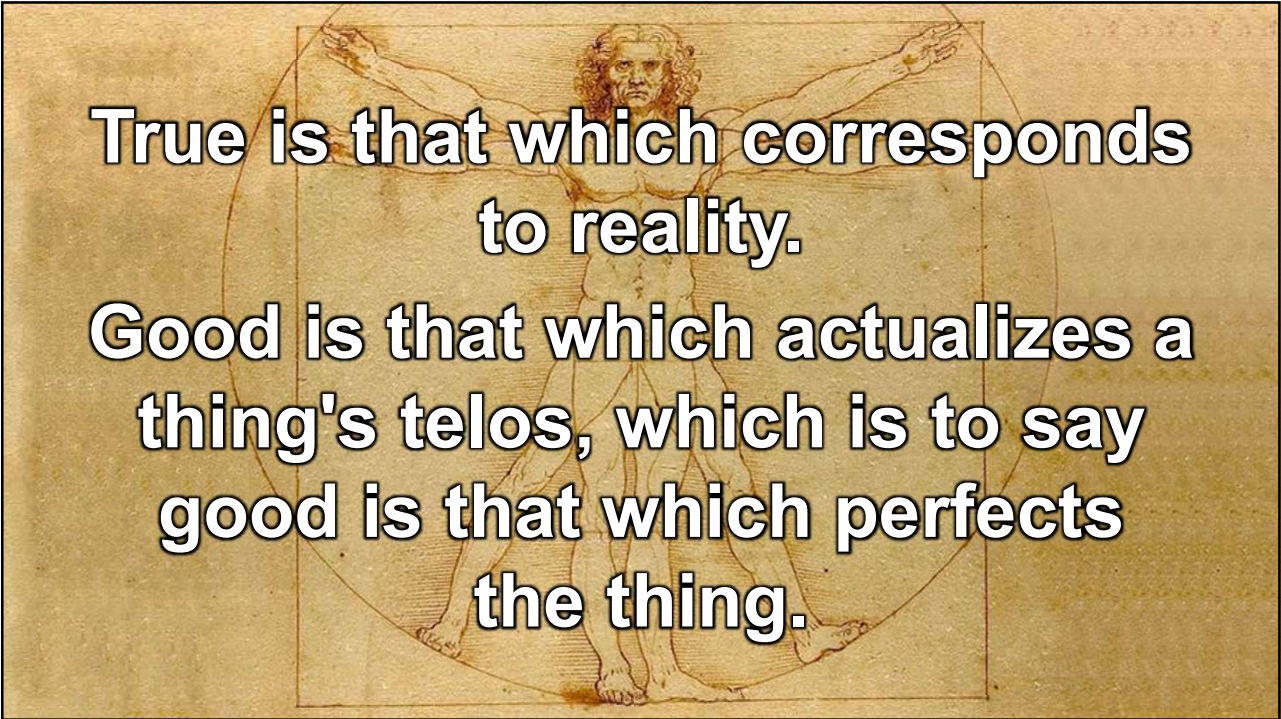
**As the intellect aims toward that which is considered true, the will aims toward that which is considered good.**





The background of the slide is a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man drawing. The figure of the man is centered, with his arms and legs extended to touch the boundaries of a square and a circle. The text is overlaid on the upper half of the drawing.

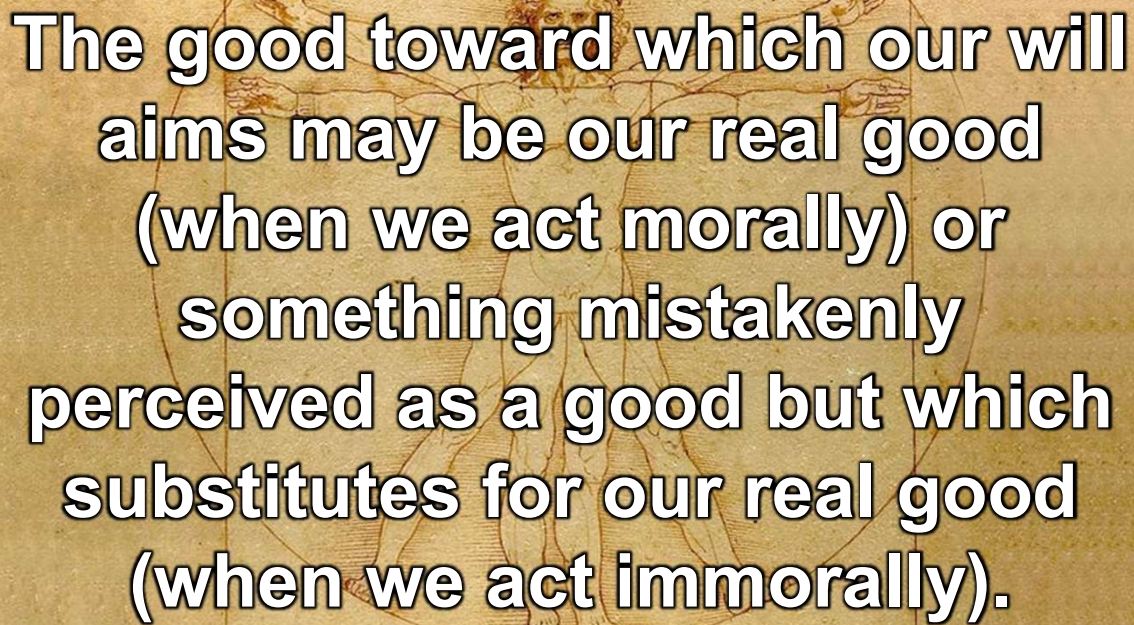
**As something may be  
considered true that is not  
really true, something may be  
considered good that is not  
really good.**

The background of the slide is a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man drawing. The figure of the man is centered, with his arms and legs extended to touch the boundaries of a square and a circle. The text is overlaid on the upper half of the drawing.

**True is that which corresponds  
to reality.**

**Good is that which actualizes a  
thing's telos, which is to say  
good is that which perfects  
the thing.**

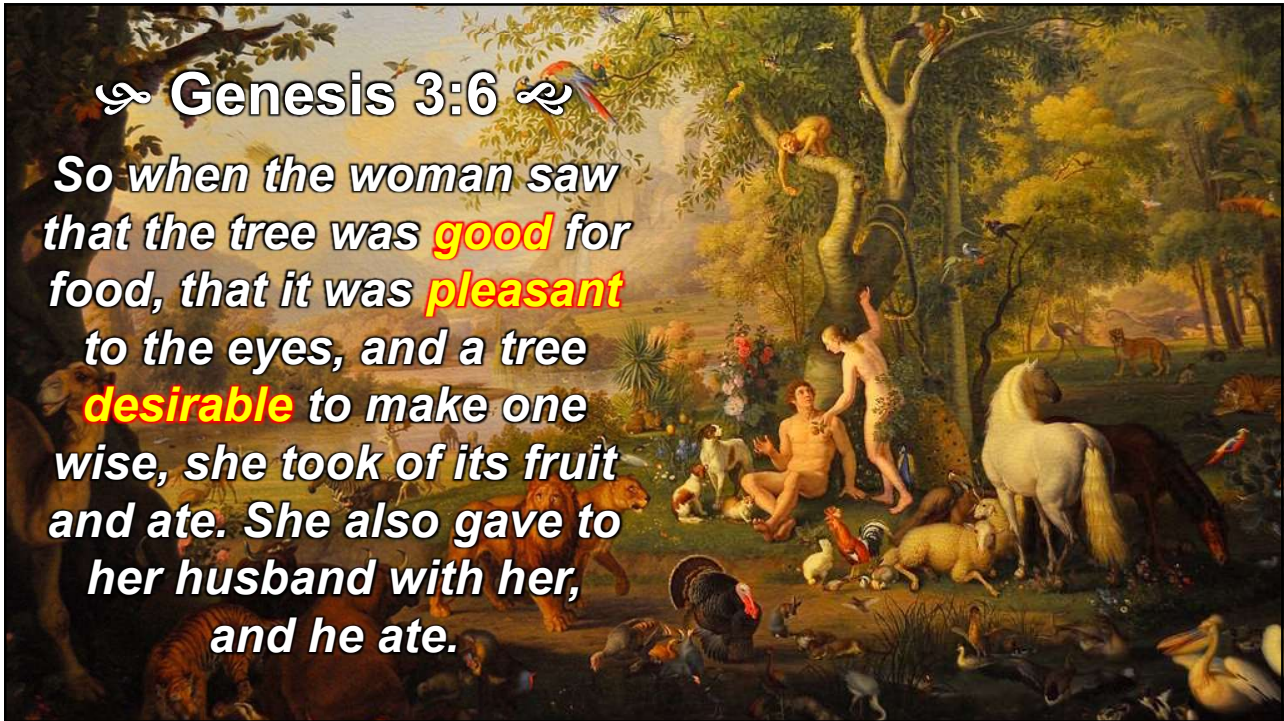




The good toward which our will aims may be our real good (when we act morally) or something mistakenly perceived as a good but which substitutes for our real good (when we act immorally).

✧ Genesis 3:6 ✧

*So when the woman saw that the tree was **good** for food, that it was **pleasant** to the eyes, and a tree **desirable** to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.*







## ❧ Proverbs 12:15 ❧

*The way of a fool is **right in his own eyes**, but he who heeds counsel is wise.*

## ❧ Proverbs 21:2 ❧

*Every way of a man is **right in his own eyes**, but the LORD weighs the hearts.*



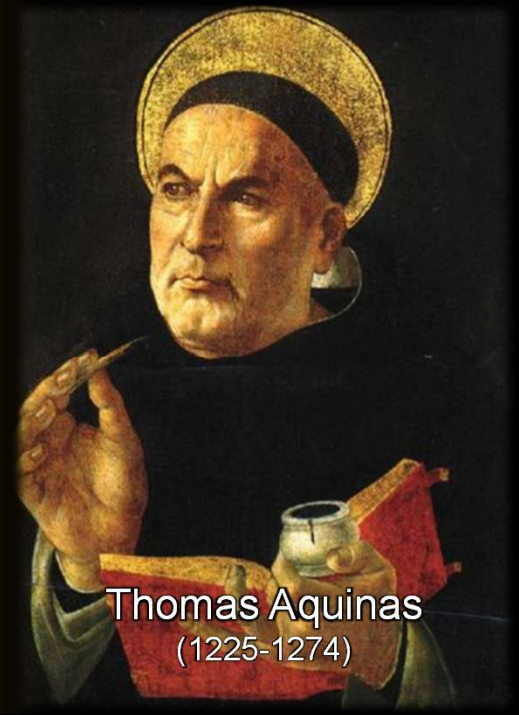
## ❧ 1 Kings 15:5 ❧

*... because David did what was **right in the eyes of the LORD**, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.*



*"Never, therefore would evil be sought after, not even accidentally, unless the good that accompanies the evil were more desired than the good of which the evil is the privation."*

[ST I, 19, art 9]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

A human being is a good human being when he **acts well**, since it is a **perfection** of a human to have a **virtuous character** in accordance with the kind of thing he is by virtue of his **human nature** or **essence**.





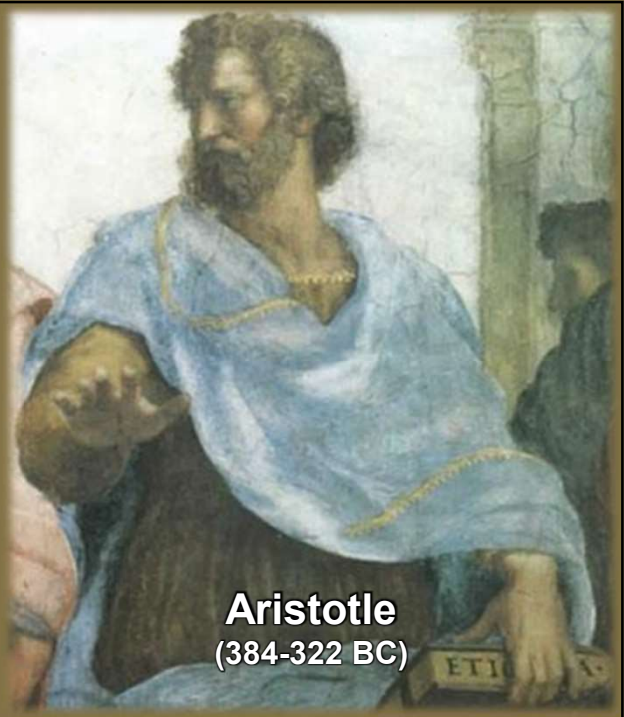
☞ Genus ☞  
*animal*

☞ Specific difference ☞  
*rationality*

☞ Species ☞  
*human*

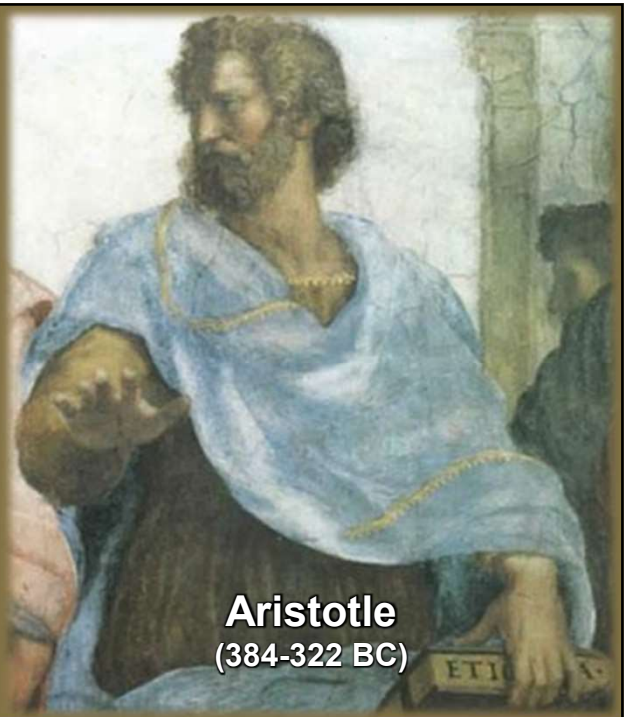
☞ Proper accident ☞  
*five fingers*

☞ Accident ☞  
*black, blonde, or no hair*

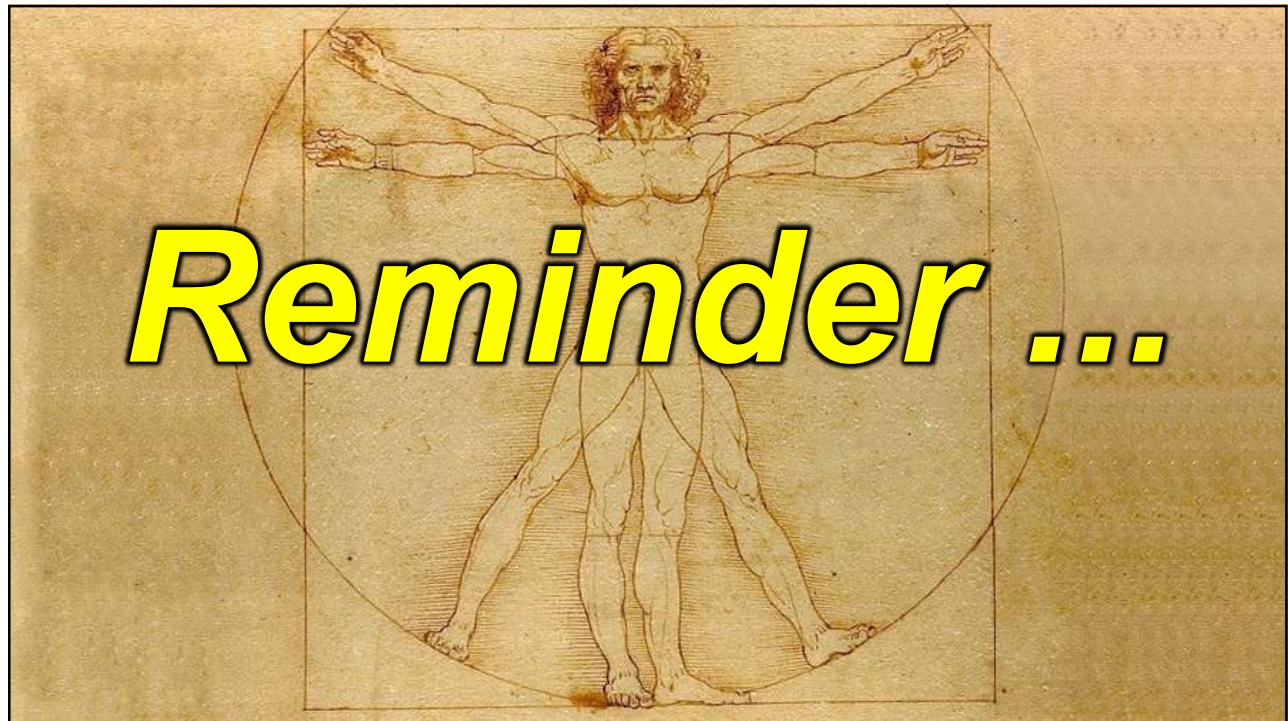


Aristotle  
(384-322 BC)

☞ PROPERTIES ☞



Aristotle  
(384-322 BC)

The image shows the famous Vitruvian Man drawing by Leonardo da Vinci. The figure is inscribed within a circle and a square. Overlaid on the drawing is the following text:

**Natural Law Theory, as a model of human morality, will define human goodness:**

- initially (proximately) in terms of what perfects human nature, and
- ultimately in terms of God as infinite being and goodness.





*One of the most common distinctions contemporary philosophers make regarding evil is between **natural evil** and **moral evil**.*

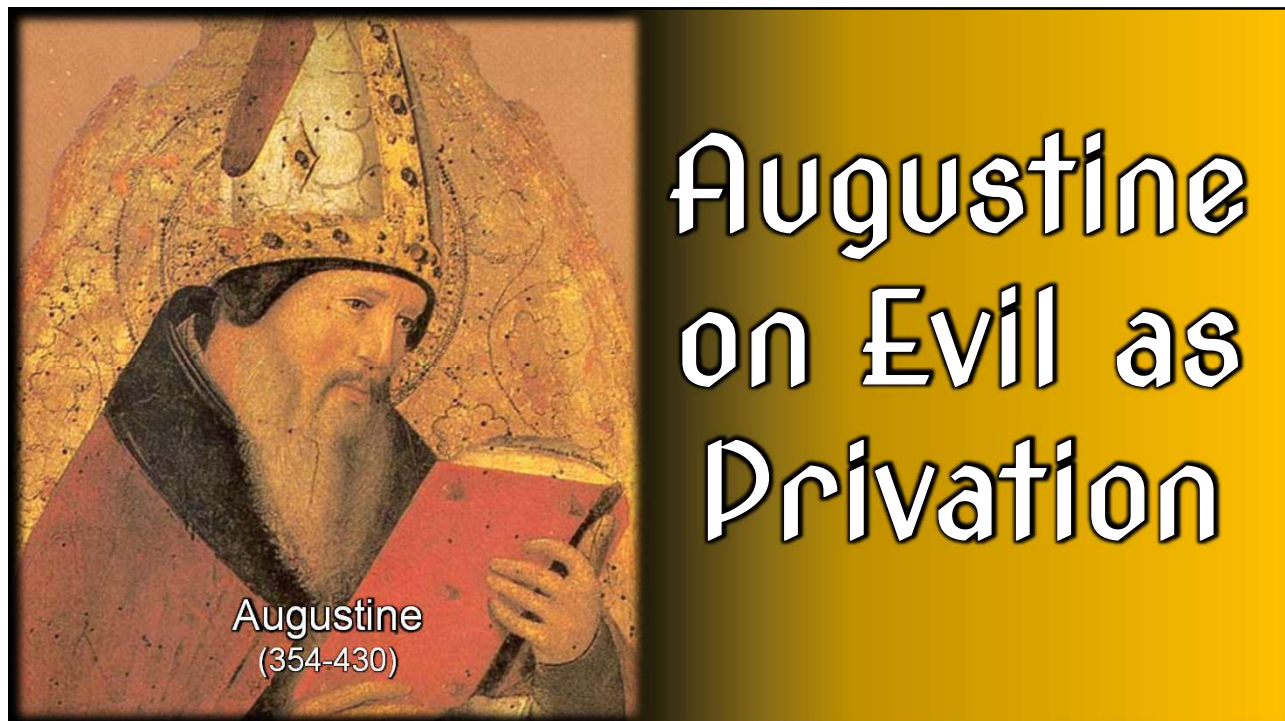




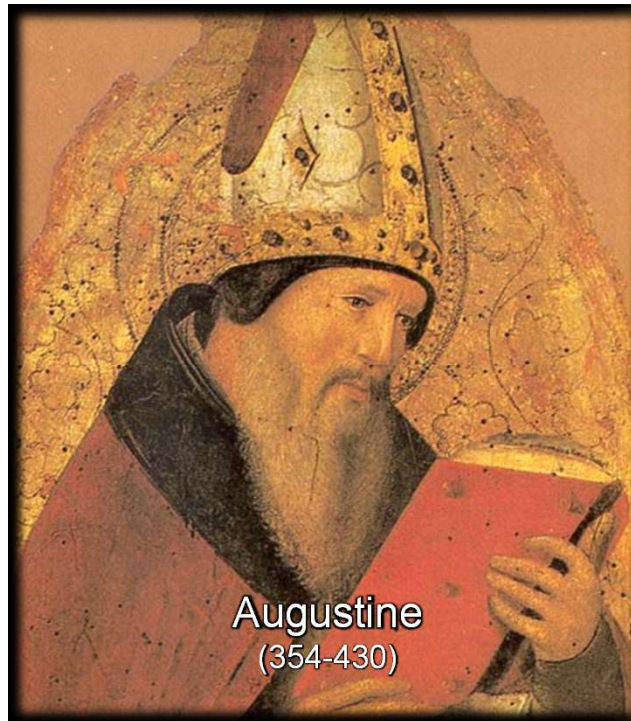
***This distinction in contemporary philosophy differs from the understanding of evil in the Classical / Medieval / Scholastic / Thomistic tradition.***

***If God created everything except Himself, and, if evil is something, then it would seem that God created evil.***

*If God did not create evil,  
then it would seem either:  
evil is **unreal**  
or  
evil is **not a thing**.*

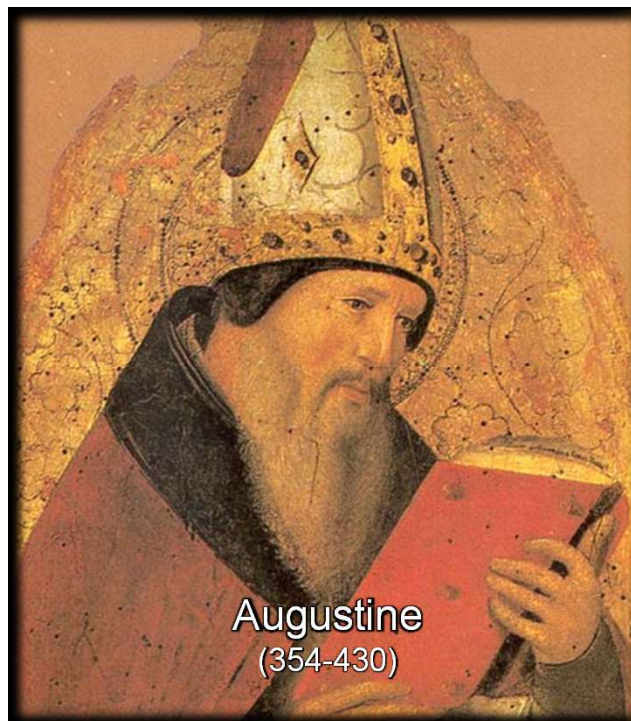






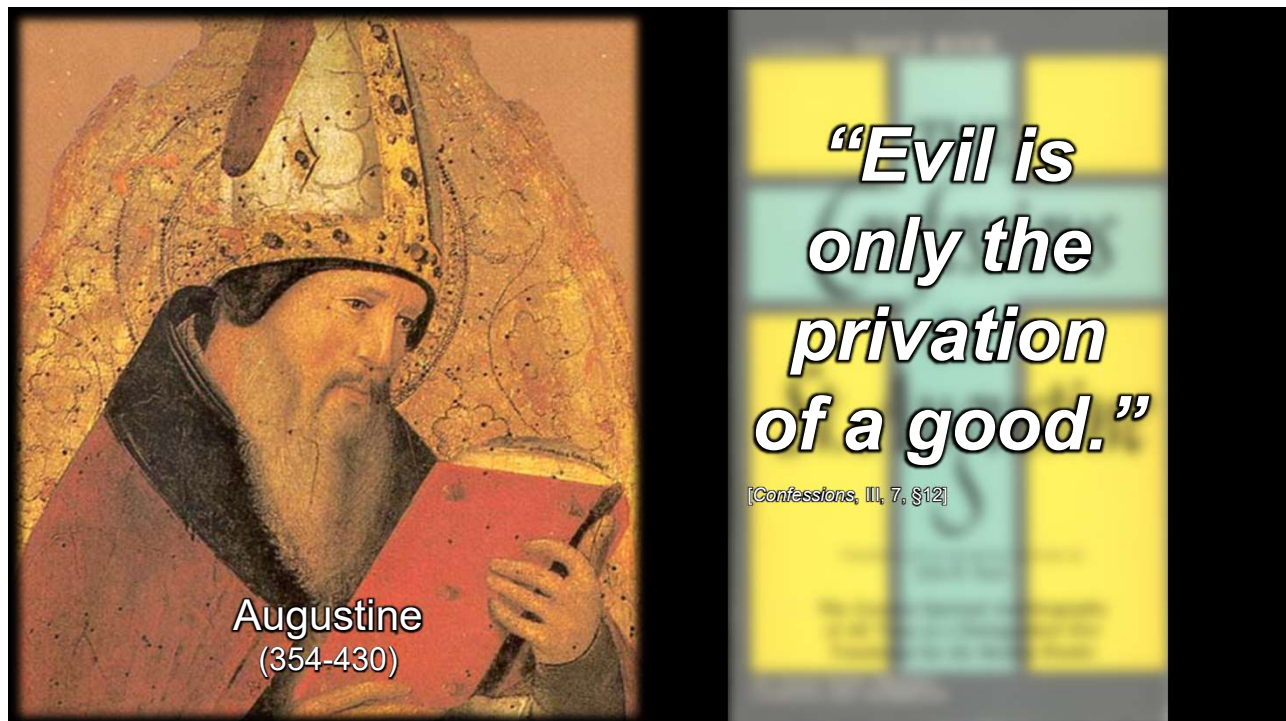
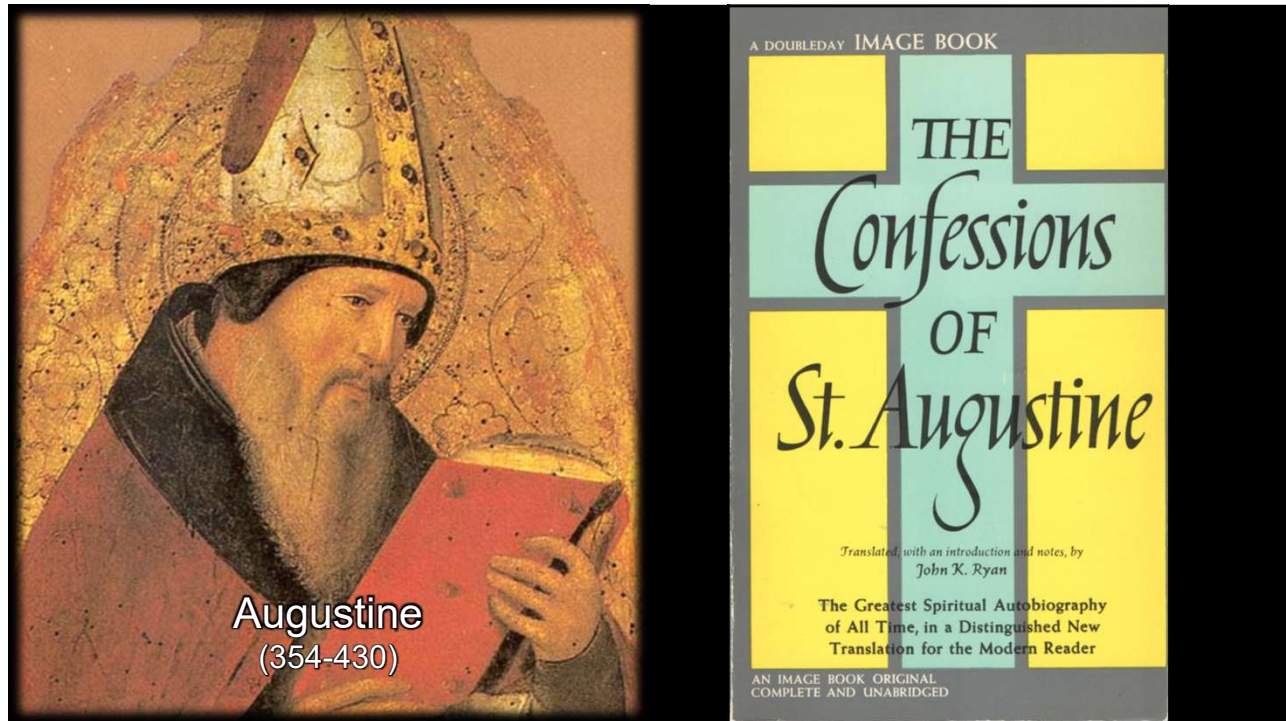
Augustine  
(354-430)

There is a  
difference  
between:  
**being nothing**  
(unreal)  
and  
**not being a thing.**



Augustine  
(354-430)

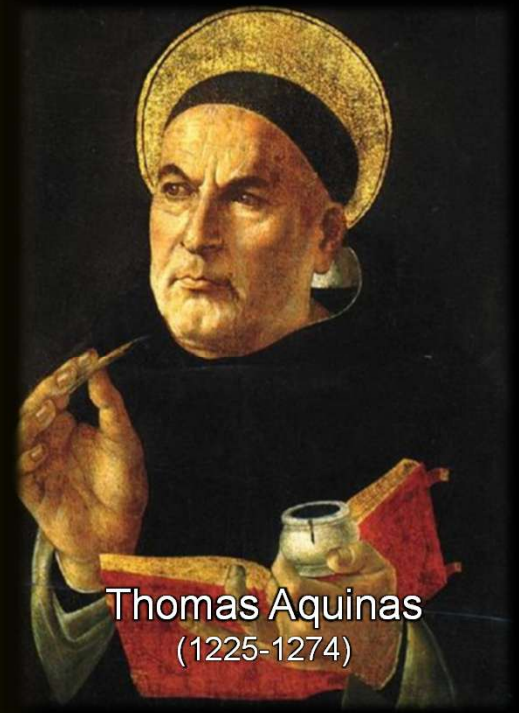
Augustine argued  
that evil is real but  
is not a thing.  
Rather, it is a  
**privation** or a **lack**  
in things.





***“Now evil is in a substance because something which it was originally to have, and which it ought to have, is lacking in it.”***

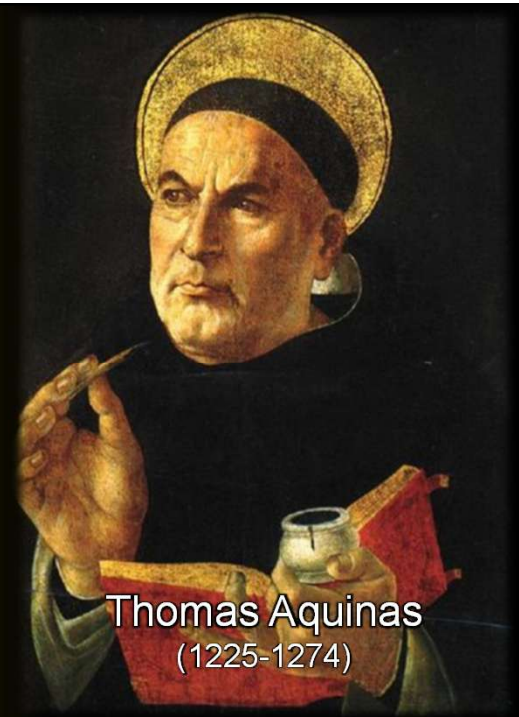
[*Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 6, §1]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***“Evil is simply a privation of something which a subject is entitled by its origin to possess and which it ought to have.”***

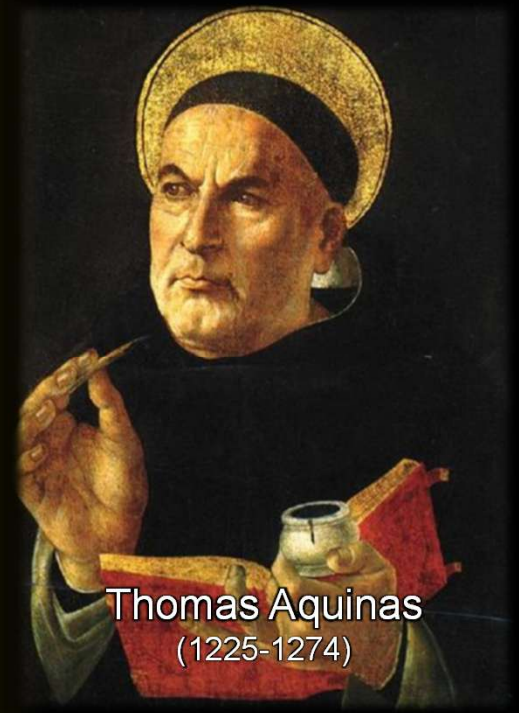
[*Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 7, §2]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***“Evil cannot exist by itself, since it has no essence... Therefore, evil must be in a subject.”***

[*Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, 11, §2]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***Note that there is a difference between a **privation** and a **negation**.***



A **negation** is the mere absence or removal of something.

A **privation** is the absence or removal of something that "ought" to be there.



**privation**

**Blindness is the privation of sight.  
But blindness is not a thing in itself.**

**A rock cannot see, but it is not blind because it "ought" not be able to see.**

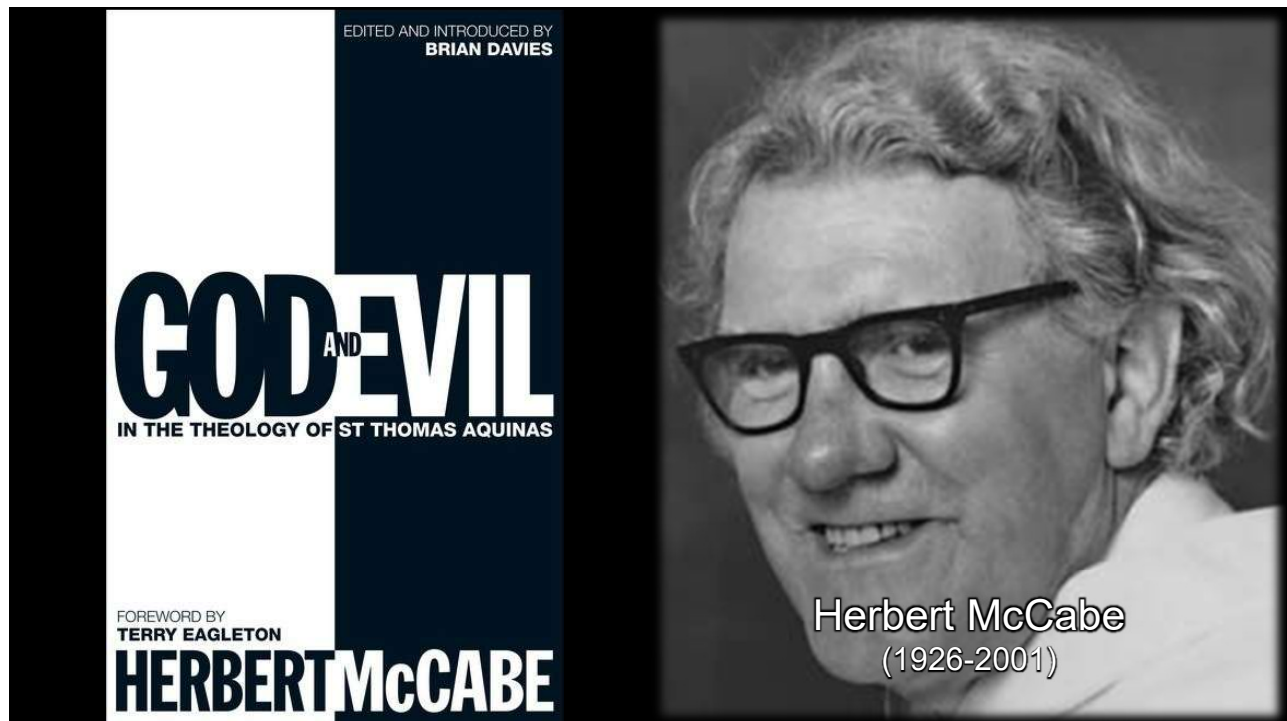


**negation**



**Blindness is the  
displacement of sight.  
But blindness is not a  
thing in itself.**

**A rock cannot see, but  
it is not blind because  
it "ought" not be able  
to see.**



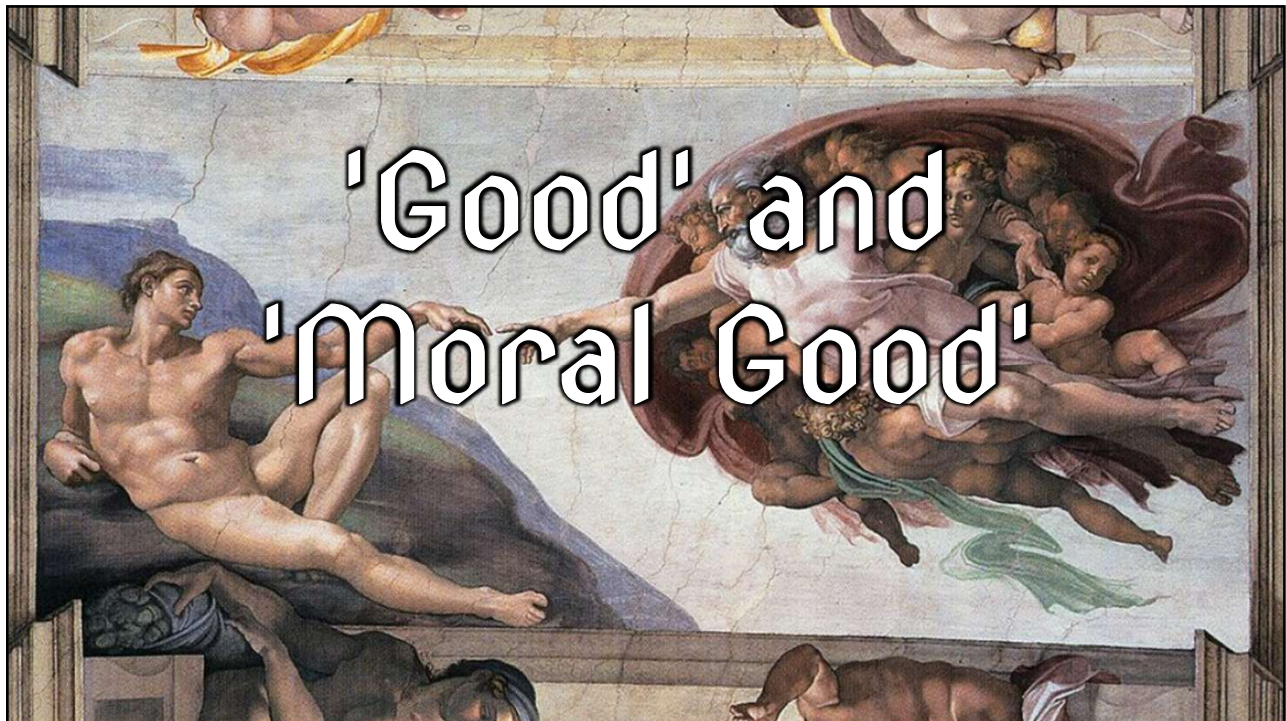


**"A perfect *X* is  
an *X* that has  
all its  
*properties*; an  
imperfect *X*  
lacks one of  
more of its  
*properties*."**

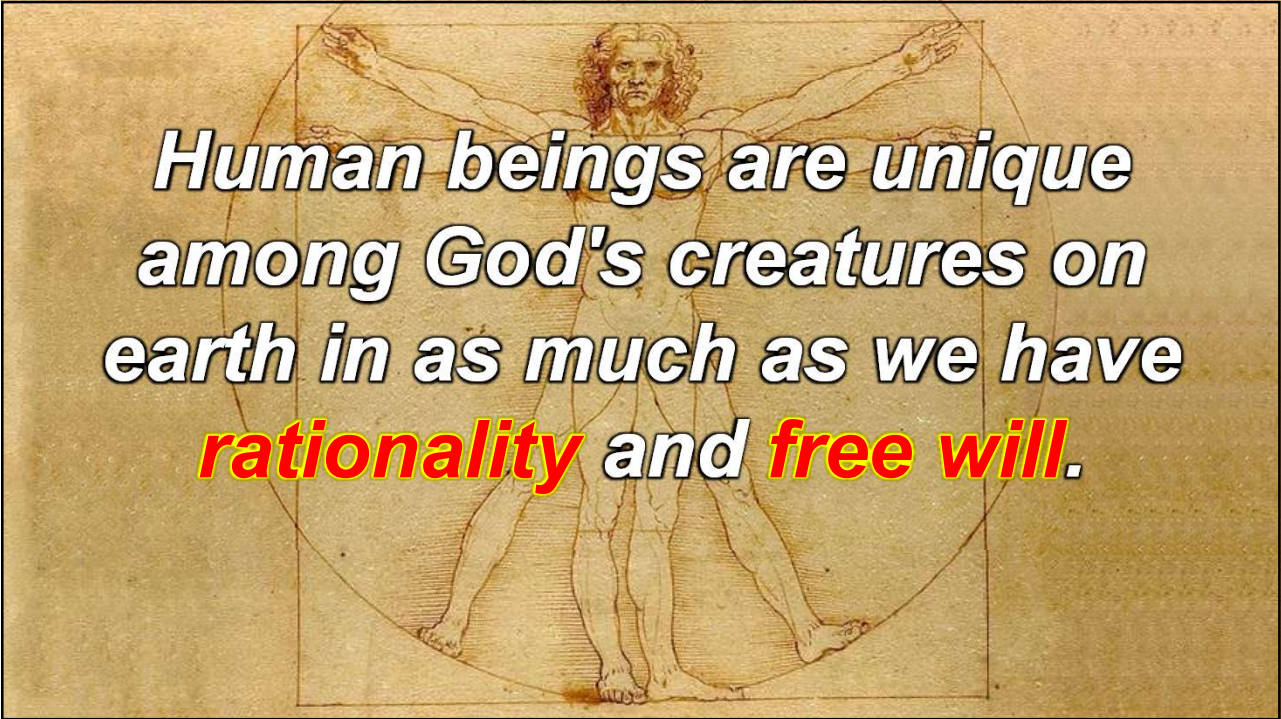
[*God and Evil in the Theology of St Thomas Aquinas* (London: Continuum, 2010), 40]



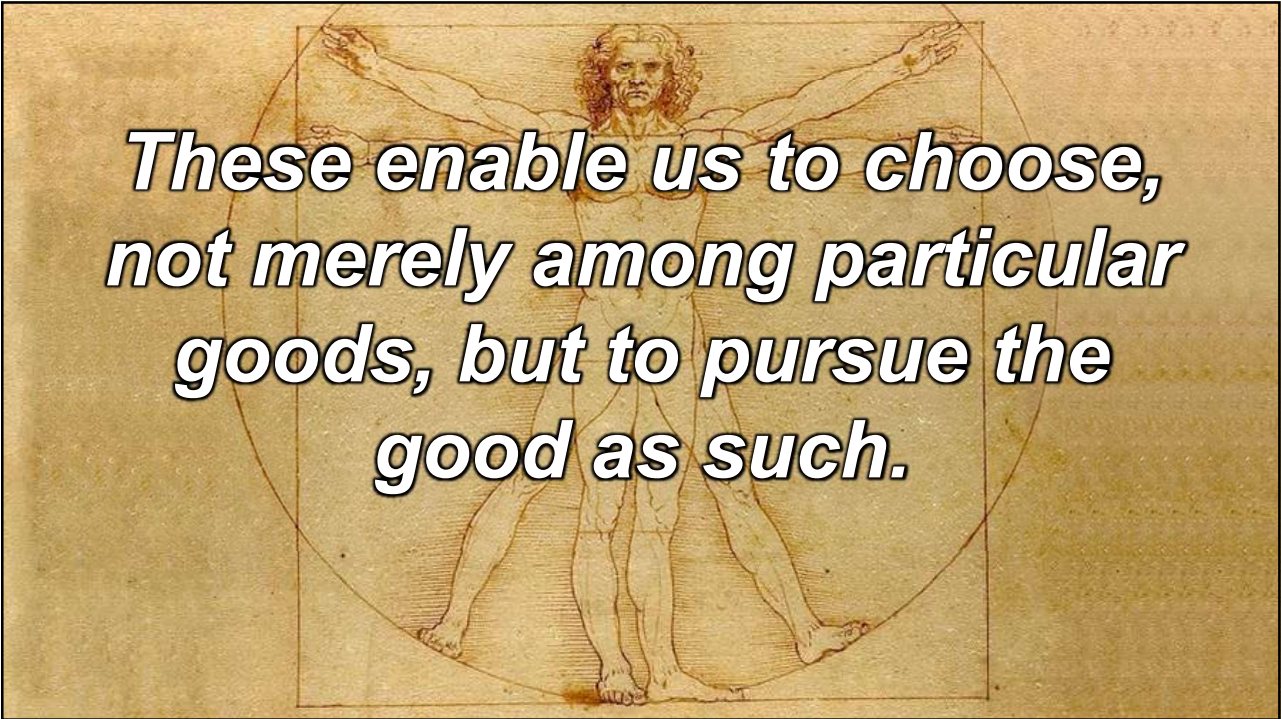
Herbert McCabe  
(1926-2001)





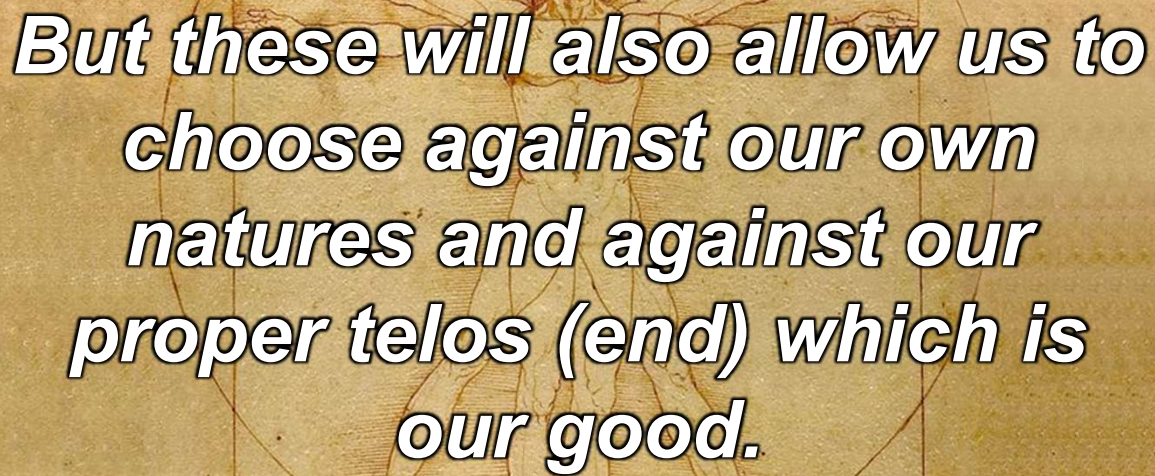
The background of the slide is a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man drawing. The figure of the man is centered, with his arms and legs extended to touch the boundaries of a square and a circle. The text is overlaid on the upper half of the drawing.

*Human beings are unique  
among God's creatures on  
earth in as much as we have  
**rationality** and **free will**.*

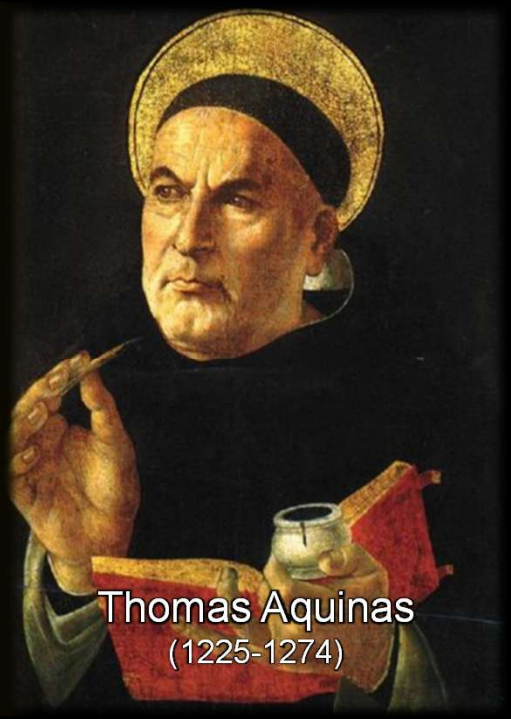
The background of the slide is a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man drawing. The figure of the man is centered, with his arms and legs extended to touch the boundaries of a square and a circle. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the drawing.

*These enable us to choose,  
not merely among particular  
goods, but to pursue the  
good as such.*



The background of the first slide is a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man. The figure of the man is centered, with his arms and legs extended to touch the boundaries of a square and a circle. The text is overlaid on the central part of the image.

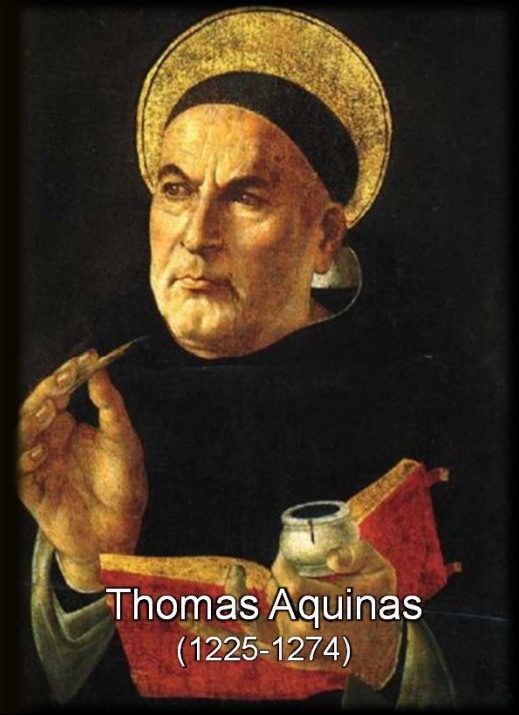
***But these will also allow us to choose against our own natures and against our proper telos (end) which is our good.***

The background of the second slide is a portrait of Thomas Aquinas. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a black habit with a gold halo. He is holding a quill in his right hand and a book in his left. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

***"Evil may be considered either in a substance or in an action . . .***

**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)

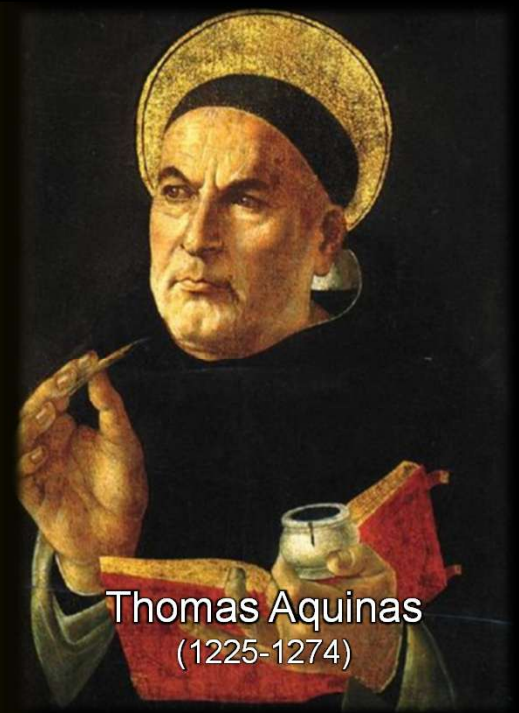
***"Moral fault is found primarily and principally in the act of the will only . . . so . . . an act is moral because it is voluntary. . . ."***



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

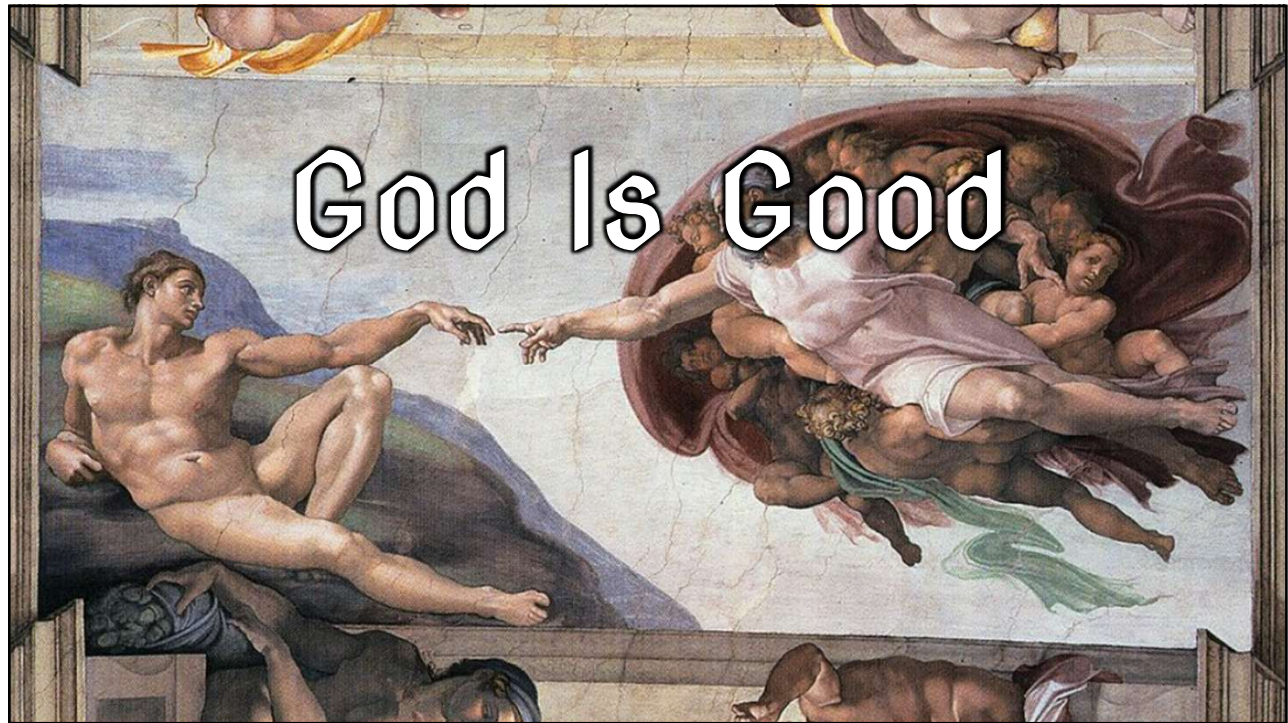
***"The root and source of moral wrongdoing is to be sought in the act of the will."***

[Summa Contra Gentiles, III, 10, §13]

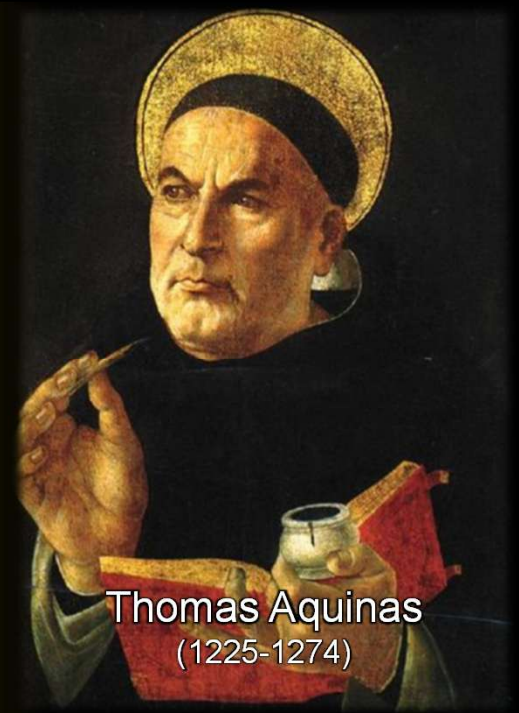


Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)





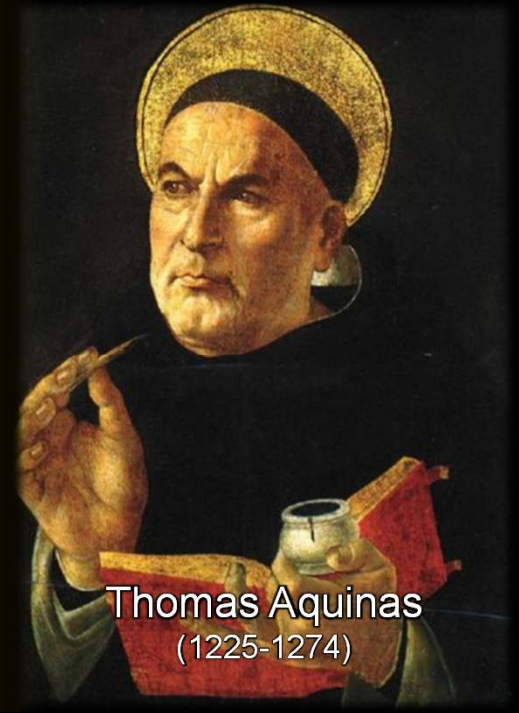
*"Goodness and being are really the same, and differ only in idea; which is clear from the following argument. The essence of goodness consists in this, that it is in some way desirable. Hence the Philosopher says [Ethic. i]: 'Goodness is what all desire.'"*



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

*"Now is it clear that a thing is desirable only in so far as it is perfect; for all desire their own perfection. But everything is perfect so far as it is actual. Therefore it is clear that a thing is perfect so far as it exists; for it is existence that makes all things actual, as is clear from the foregoing [Q. 3, A. 4; Q. 4, A. 1]. Hence it is clear that goodness and being are the same reality."*

[ST I, Q5, art. 1]



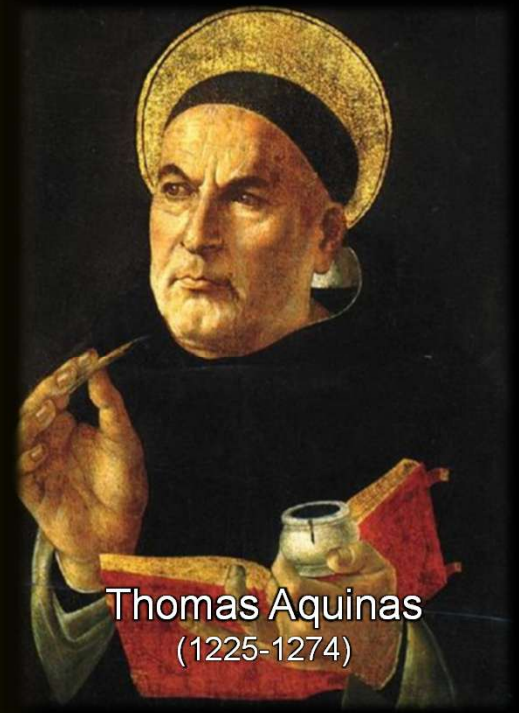
Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

1. 'Good' is first identified with 'desirable' (appetible).
2. 'Desirable' is identified with 'perfect'.



***"Now it is clear  
that a thing is  
desirable only in  
so far as it is  
perfect; for all  
desire their own  
perfection."***

(ST I, Q5, art. 1)

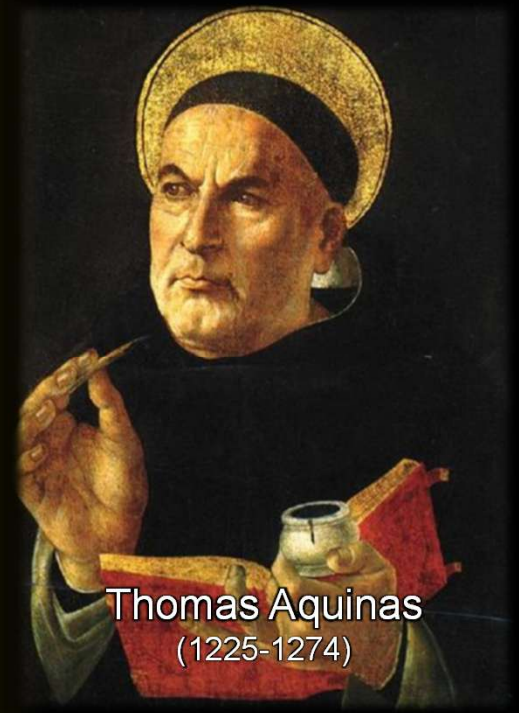


Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

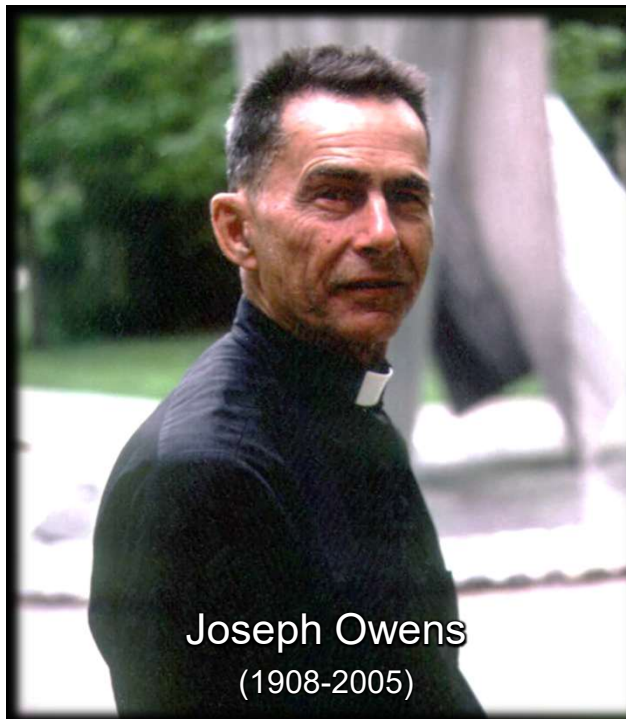
1. 'Good' is first identified with 'desirable' (appetible).
2. 'Desirable' is identified with 'perfect'.
3. 'Perfect' is identified with 'act' or 'actuality'.

***"Everything is perfect so far as it is actual."***

(ST I, Q5, art. 1)



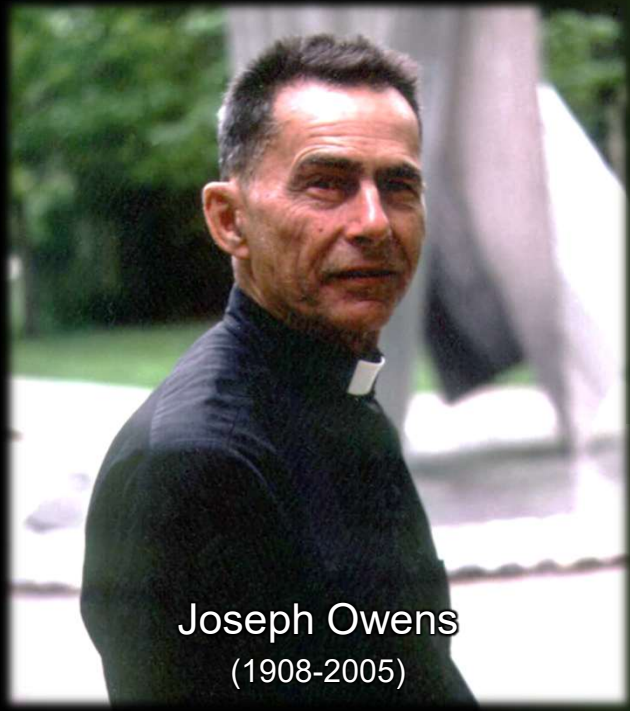
Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)



Joseph Owens  
(1908-2005)

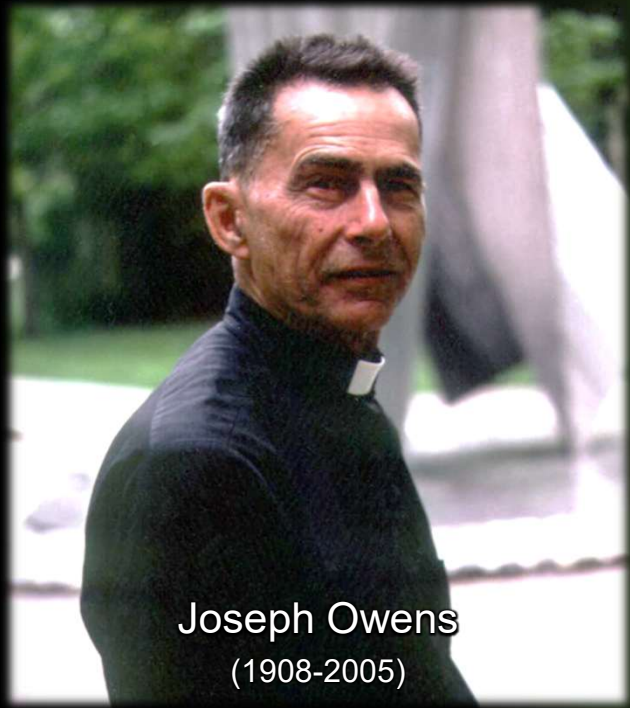
***"An alternate word for actuality in this respect is 'perfection' (entelecheia). It was used by Aristotle along with actuality to designate the formal elements in the things."***



A portrait of Joseph Owens, a man with short dark hair, wearing a black clerical shirt with a white collar. He is looking slightly to the right with a thoughtful expression. The background is blurred, showing greenery and a white structure.

***"These perfected the material element in the sense of filling its potentiality and completing the thing."***

Joseph Owens  
(1908-2005)

A portrait of Joseph Owens, a man with short dark hair, wearing a black clerical shirt with a white collar. He is looking slightly to the right with a thoughtful expression. The background is blurred, showing greenery and a white structure.

***"Since existence is required to complete the thing and all the formal elements and activities, it may be aptly called the perfection of all perfections."***

Joseph Owens  
(1908-2005)

[An Interpretation of Existence (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1968), 52-53]

# perfection

(entelecheia, ἐντελέχεια)

en, ἐν = in

+

telos, τέλος = end, goal

+

echein, ἔχειν = to have

# perfection

(entelecheia, ἐντελέχεια)

***to have the end or goal in***



1. 'Good' is first identified with 'desirable' (appetible).
2. 'Desirable' is identified with 'perfect'.
3. 'Perfect' is identified with 'act' or 'actuality'.
4. 'Actuality' is identified with 'being'.

***A full exploration of how it is that 'being' and 'good' are convertible, which is to say that 'being' and 'good' are really the same, requires a examination of the Medieval doctrine of the Transcendentals.***

New Scholasticism 59 (1985): 449-470

## The Convertibility of Being and Good in St. Thomas Aquinas

by Jan A. Aertsen

IN MANY medieval thinkers, e.g. Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, the statement can be found: "being and good are convertible" (*ens et bonum convertuntur*).<sup>1</sup> That is to say, "being" and "good" are interchangeable terms in predication (*converti enim est concernim praedicari*).<sup>2</sup> Wherever "being" is predicated of something, the predicate "good" is involved as well.

That must imply that "good" is here not a concept that adds a real content or a new quality to "being", as a result of which "being" is restricted. For in that case there would be no question of convertibility.<sup>3</sup> "Good" is an attribute which pertains to every being, it is a property of being as such, a "mode that is common, and consequent upon every being."<sup>4</sup> In other words, "good" is coextensive with "being", it is one of the so-called *transcendentia*<sup>5</sup> which, since Suarez, are usually referred to as "transcendentals".

<sup>1</sup> Alexander of Hales, *Summa I*, Inq. 1, Tract. 3, q. 3, membrum 1, c. 1, s. 1, "An idem sit bonum et ens"; Bonaventure, *In II Sent.*, d. 1, p. 1, s. 1, q. 1, fundam. 5, "Res et bonum convertuntur, sicut vult Dionysius", d. 34, s. 2, q. 2, fundam. 4; Albert the Great, *De Bone q.* 1, s. 6; *Summa Theol.* tract. 6, q. 29; Thomas Aquinas, *In I Sent.* 8, 1, 2; *De Ver.* XXI, 2; *In De Hebdomadibus*, lect. 3; *Summa Theol.* I, 16, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Ver.* I, 2 obj. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *De Pot.* IX, 7 ad 5: Bonum quod est in genere qualitatis, non est bonum quod convertitur cum ente, quod nullam rem supra ens addit.

<sup>4</sup> *De Ver.* I, 1: modus generaliter consequens omne ens.

<sup>5</sup> Comp. Albert the Great, *Summa Theologiae* tract. 6, q. 27, c. 2: Bonum dicitur intentionem communem et est de transcendentibus omne genus sicut et ens.

449



Jan A. Aertsen  
(1938-2016)

## Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought

FROM PHILIP THE CHANCELLOR (CA. 1225)  
TO FRANCISCO SUÁREZ



BY  
JAN A. AERTSEN

BRILL

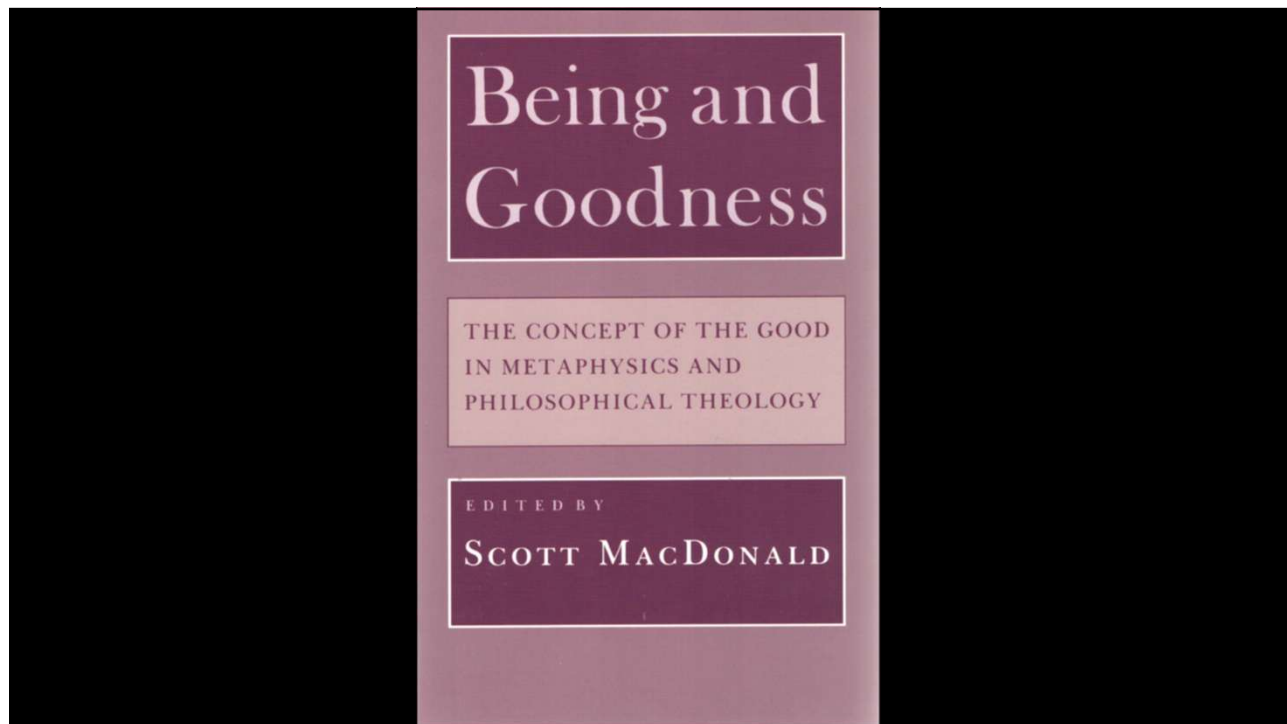
## Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals

*The Case of Thomas Aquinas*

By  
Jan A. Aertsen

BRILL

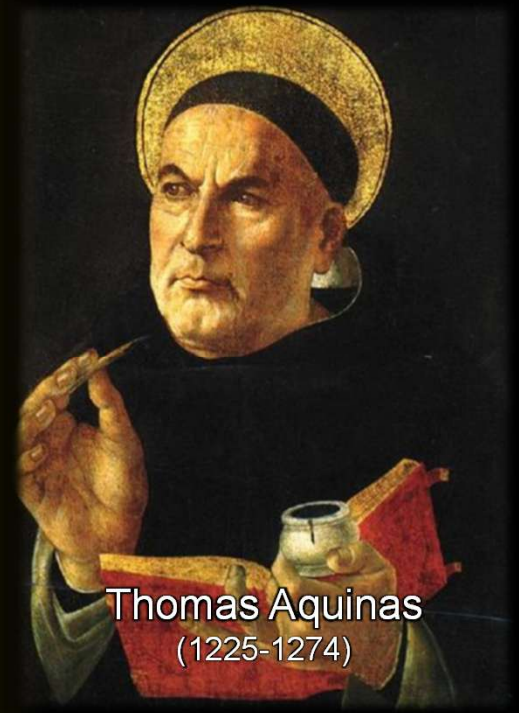




1. 'Good' is first identified with 'desirable' (appetible).
2. 'Desirable' is identified with 'perfect'.
3. 'Perfect' is identified with 'act' or 'actuality'.
4. 'Actuality' is identified with 'being'.
5. God is goodness itself in as much as God is being itself.

***"To God alone does  
it belong to be His  
own subsistent  
being."***

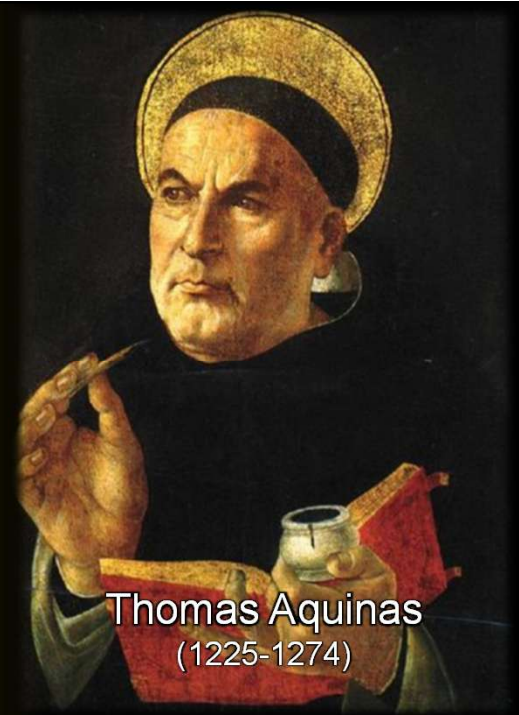
[ST 1, Q 12, art. IV]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***"God is absolute  
form, or rather  
absolute being"***

[ST, I, Q3, art. 7.]

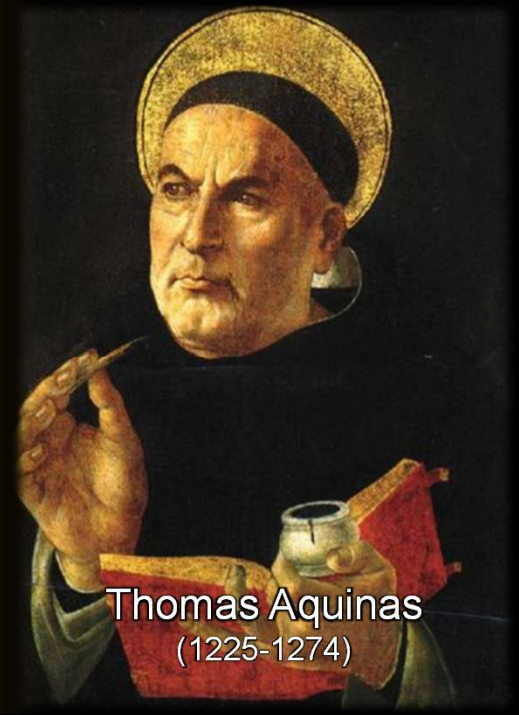


Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)



***"God is supremely being ... He is being itself, subsistent, absolutely undetermined."***

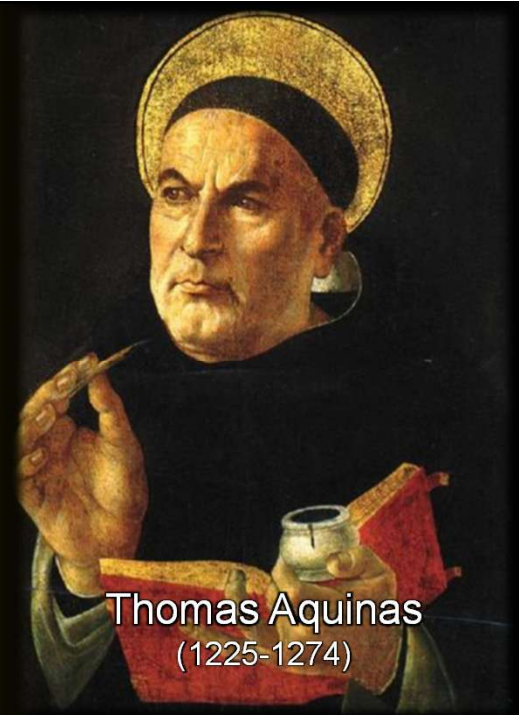
[ST 1, Q 11, art. iv.]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

**"God is supremely being, inasmuch as His being is not determined by any nature to which it is adjoined; since He is being itself, subsistent, absolutely undetermined."**

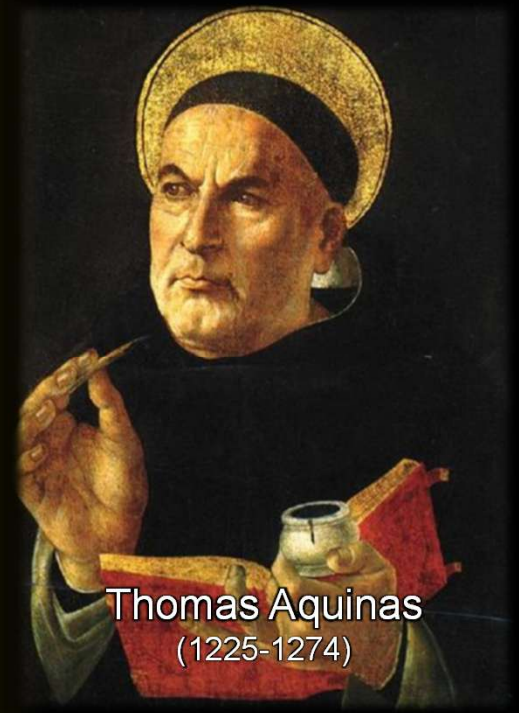
[Summa Theologiae 1, Q 11, art. 4.]



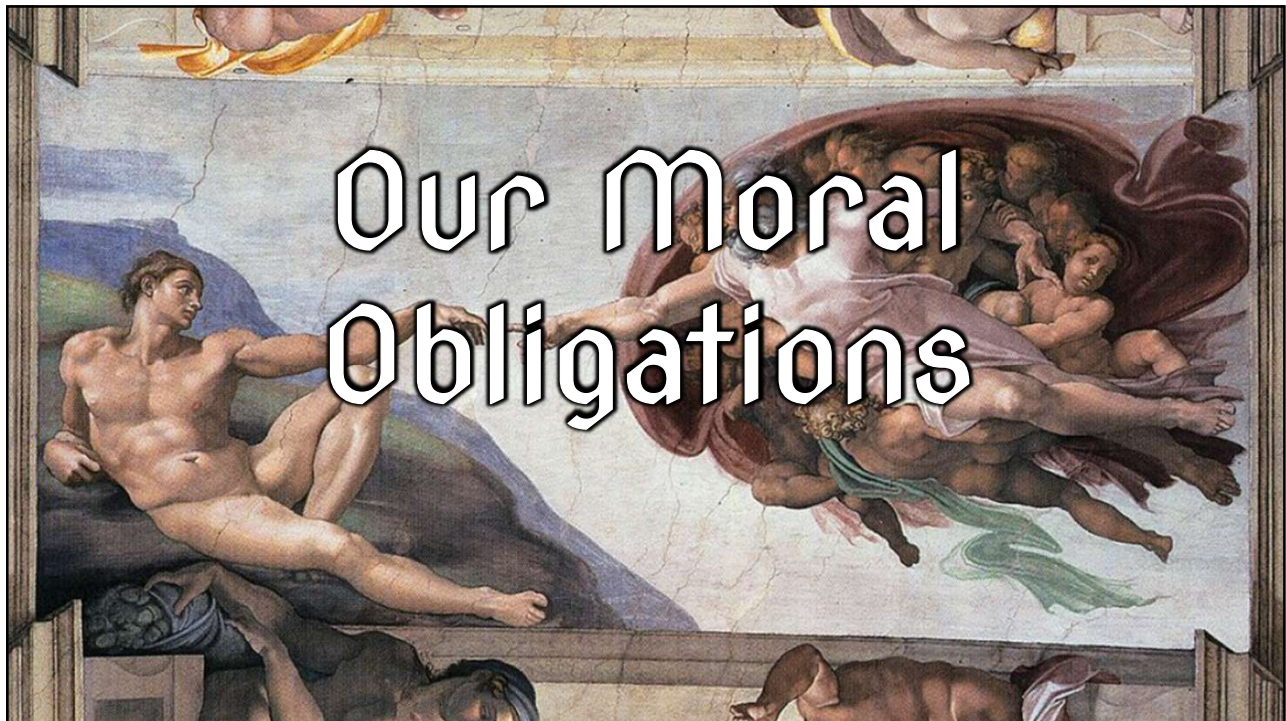
Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***"Good belongs  
pre-eminently  
to God."***

(ST I, Q5, art. 1)



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

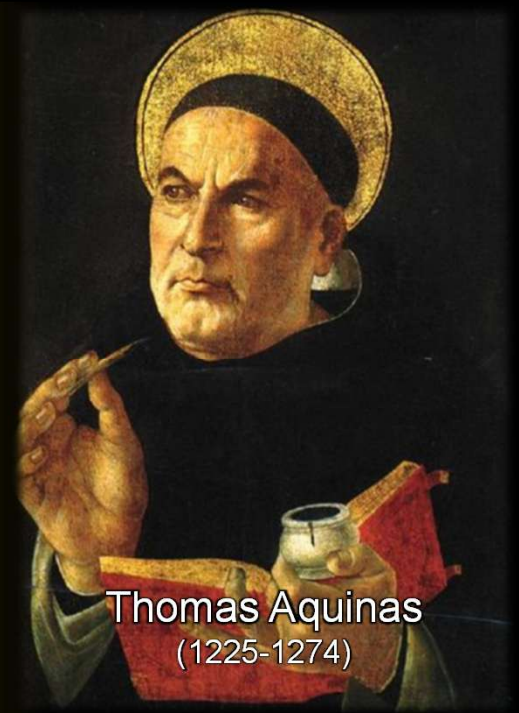


**Our Moral  
Obligations**



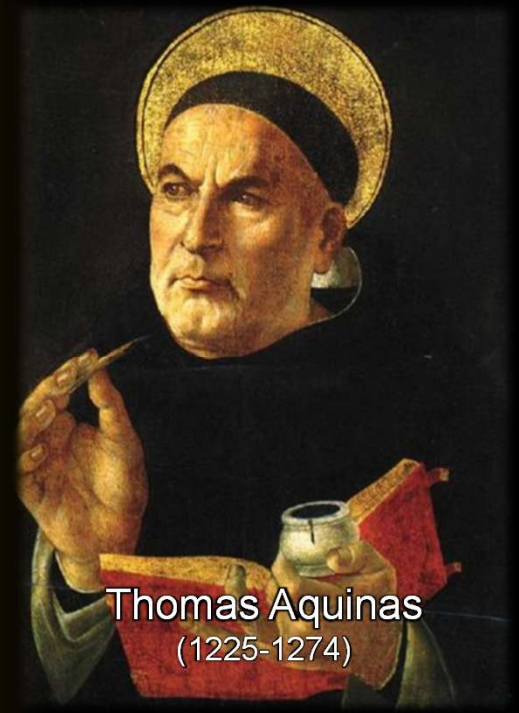
# Our Moral Obligations In General

***"This is the first  
precept of law ...***



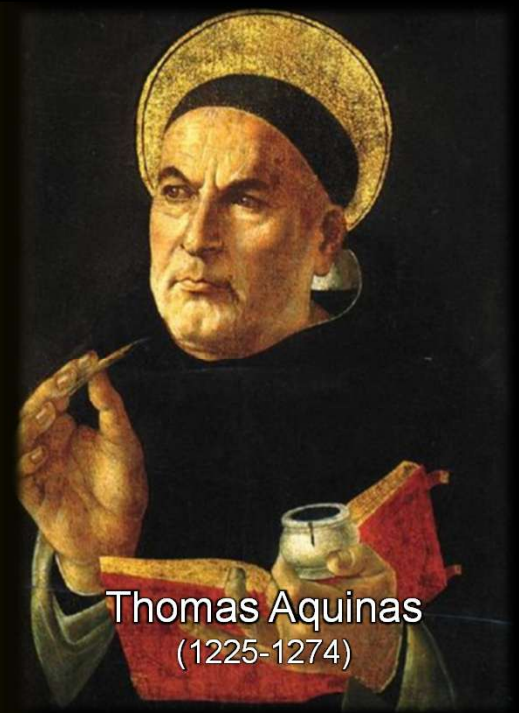
Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***"Bonum est  
faciendum et  
prosequendum,  
et malum  
vitandum."***



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***Good is  
to be done and  
pursued  
and evil  
avoided.***



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)





# Our Moral Obligations To Our Fellow Man

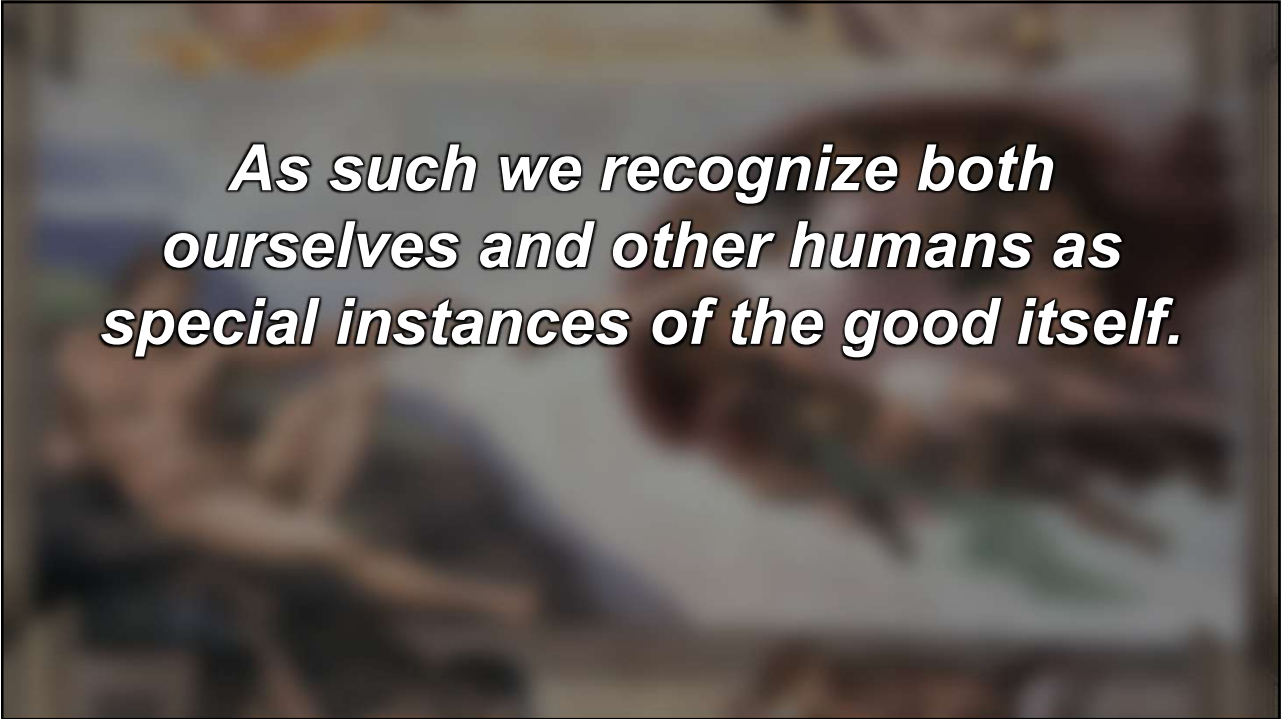
***Natural Law Morality focuses primarily on our relationship to our fellow man as God manages our peaceful co-existence in society.***

# Biblical Morality or Morality?

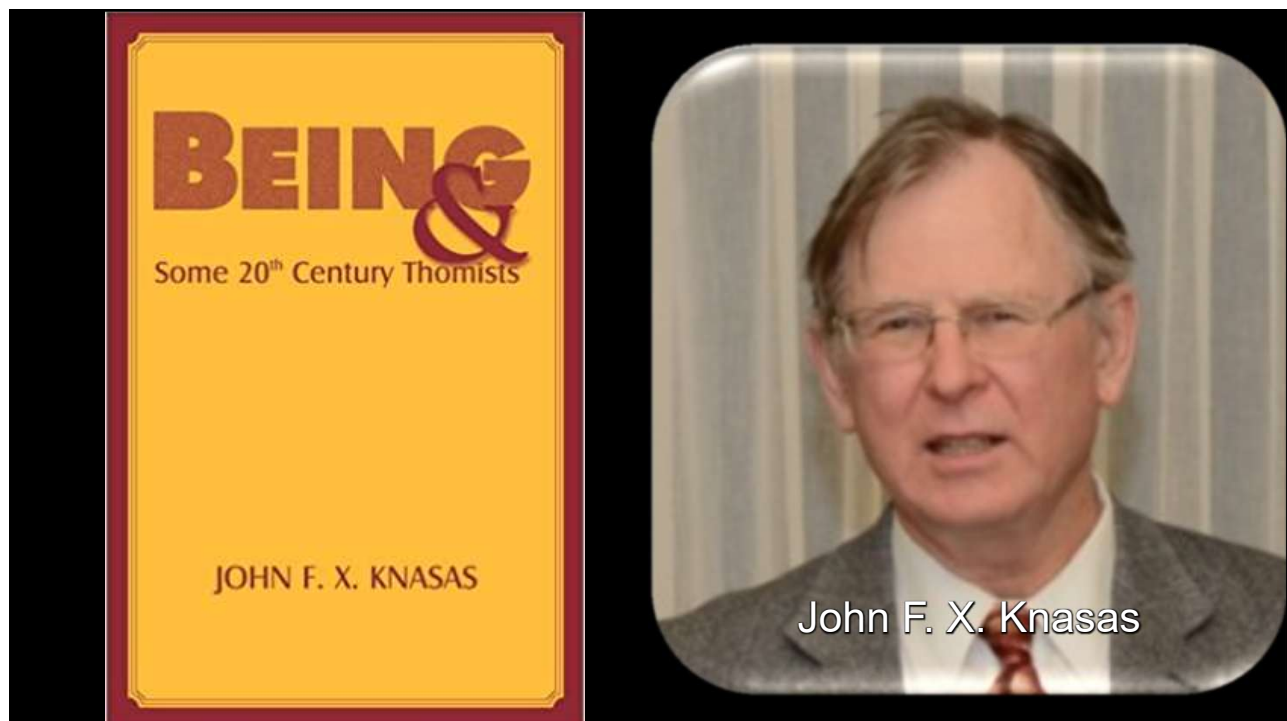


*Further, our moral obligation to our fellow man arises out of our recognition that human beings, unique among God's creatures on Earth, are willers, not merely of particular goods, but of the good as such.*





***As such we recognize both  
ourselves and other humans as  
special instances of the good itself.***



*"To see man as the willer of the ratio boni is to engender a special status among things. ... No other thing in our experience so directly and intimately relates to the ratio boni. Only man has good as the proper object of his appetitive power ... and to understand this fact is for one to realize that one should treat oneself and others in a special way."*

[Being and Some Twentieth-Century Thomists (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), 253.]



John F. X. Knasas

*"Though all beings express the ratio boni, only the human expresses it in a sufficiently heightened way that confronts the freedom of the will with an obligation, a moral necessity. To see the good is to ignite volition; to see the good as in the human willer of it is to ignite obligation."*

[Being and Some Twentieth-Century Thomists, 262.]

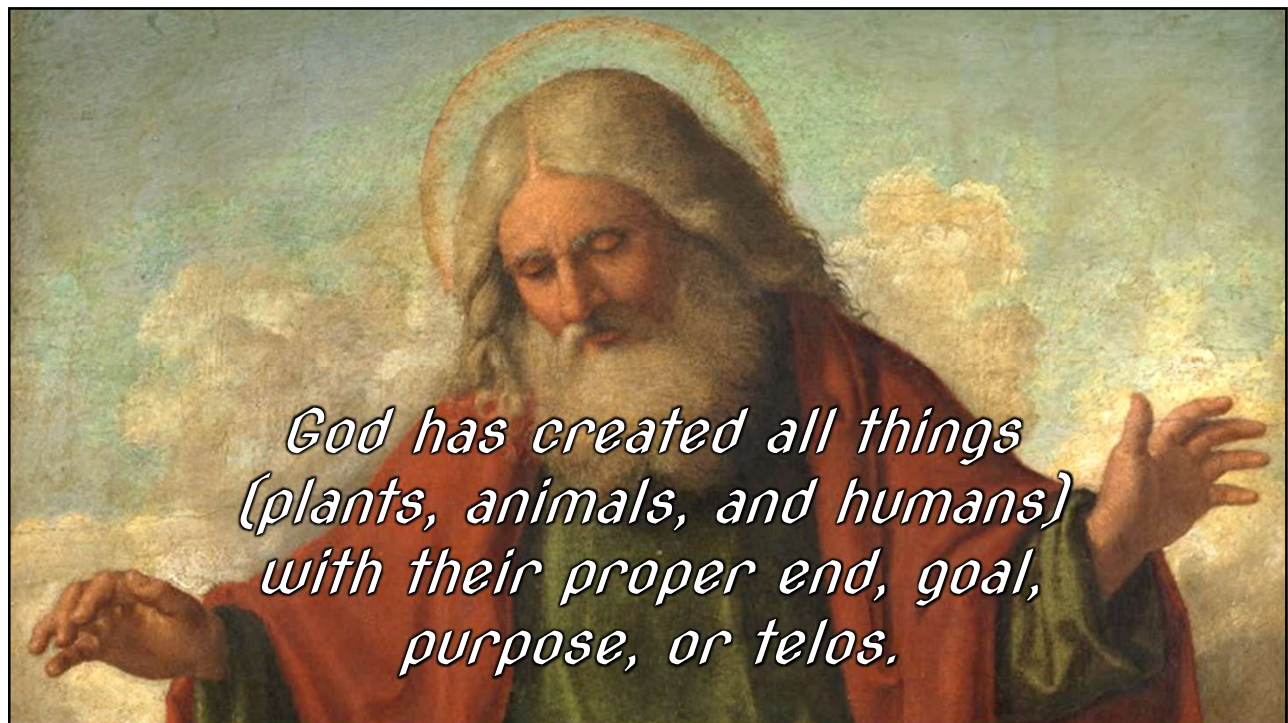
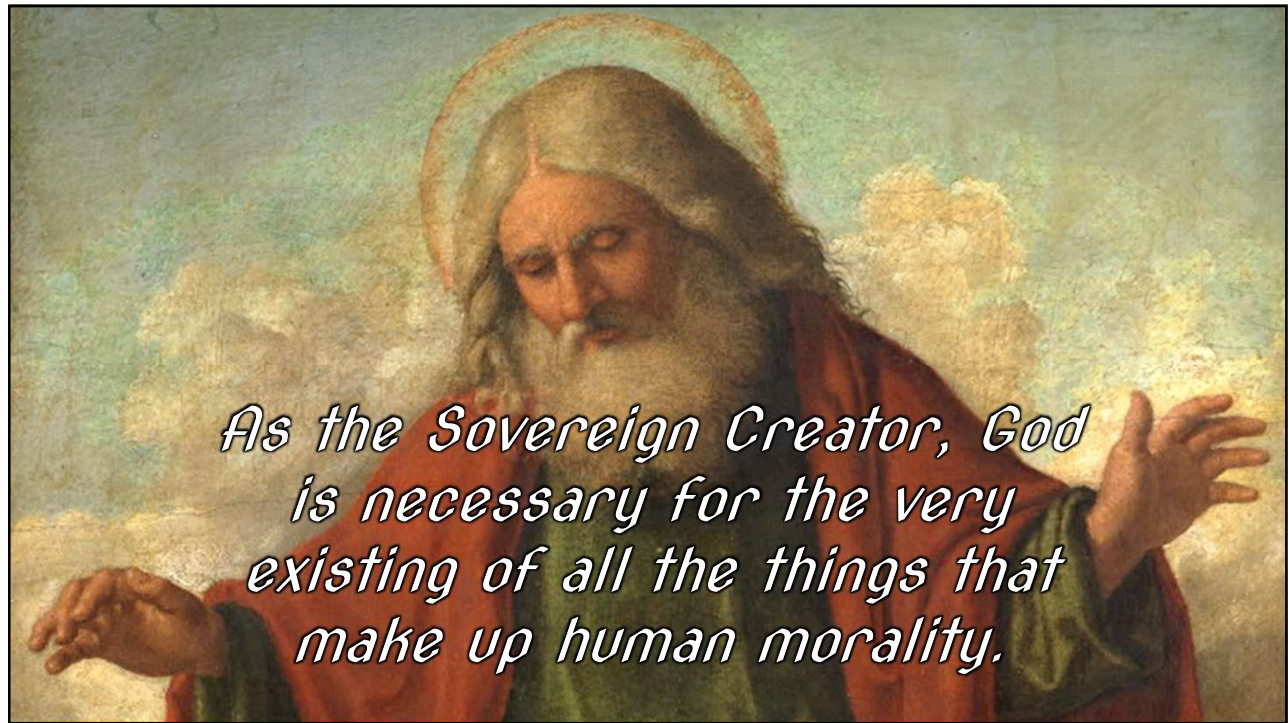


John F. X. Knasas

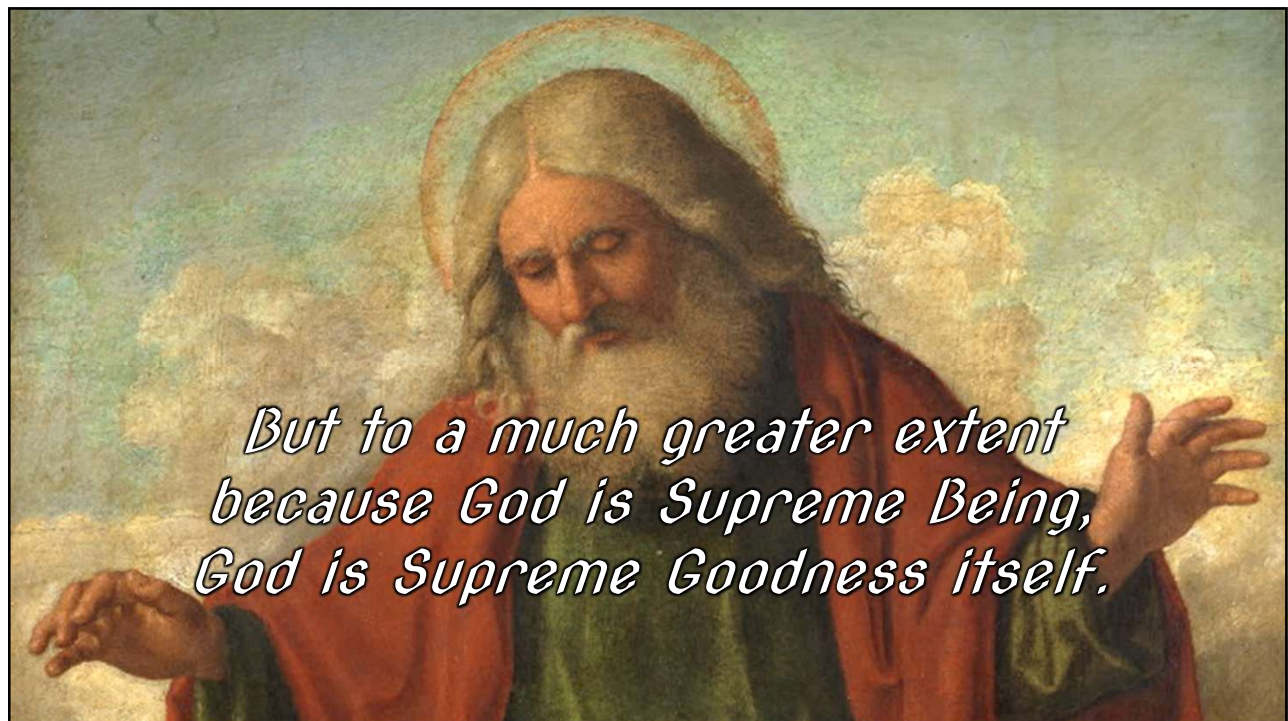
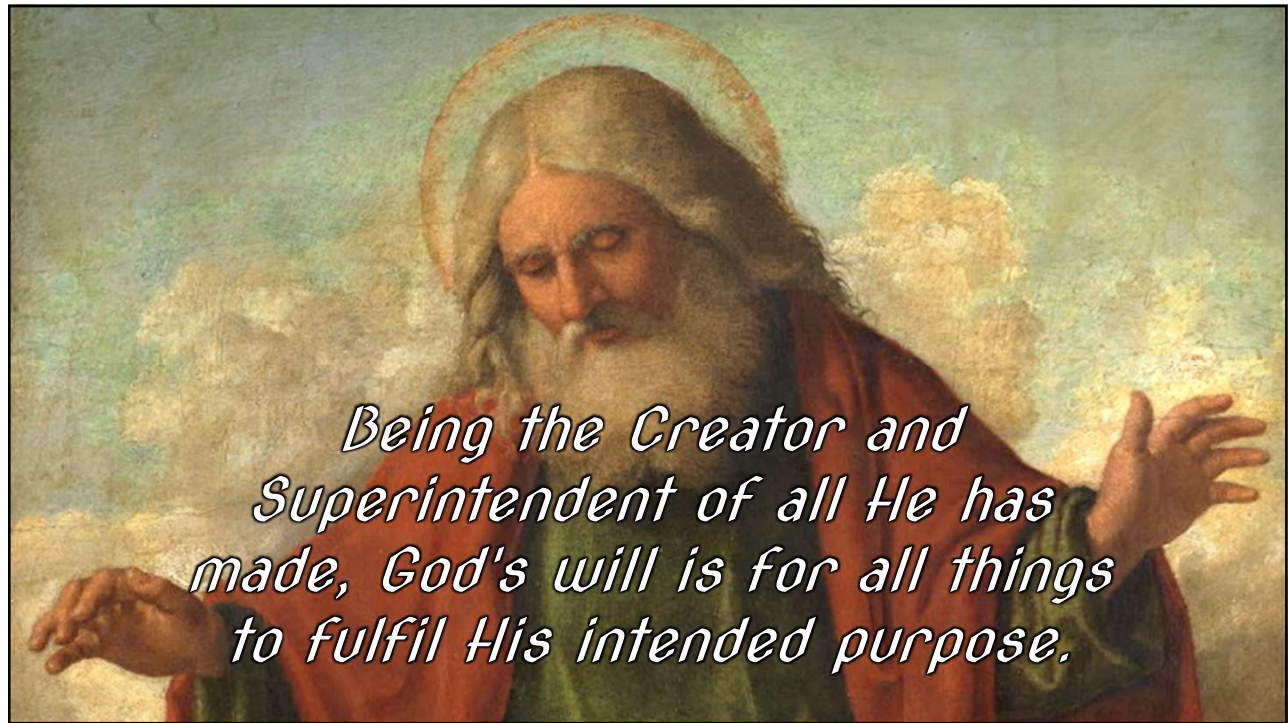


# Our Moral Obligations To God





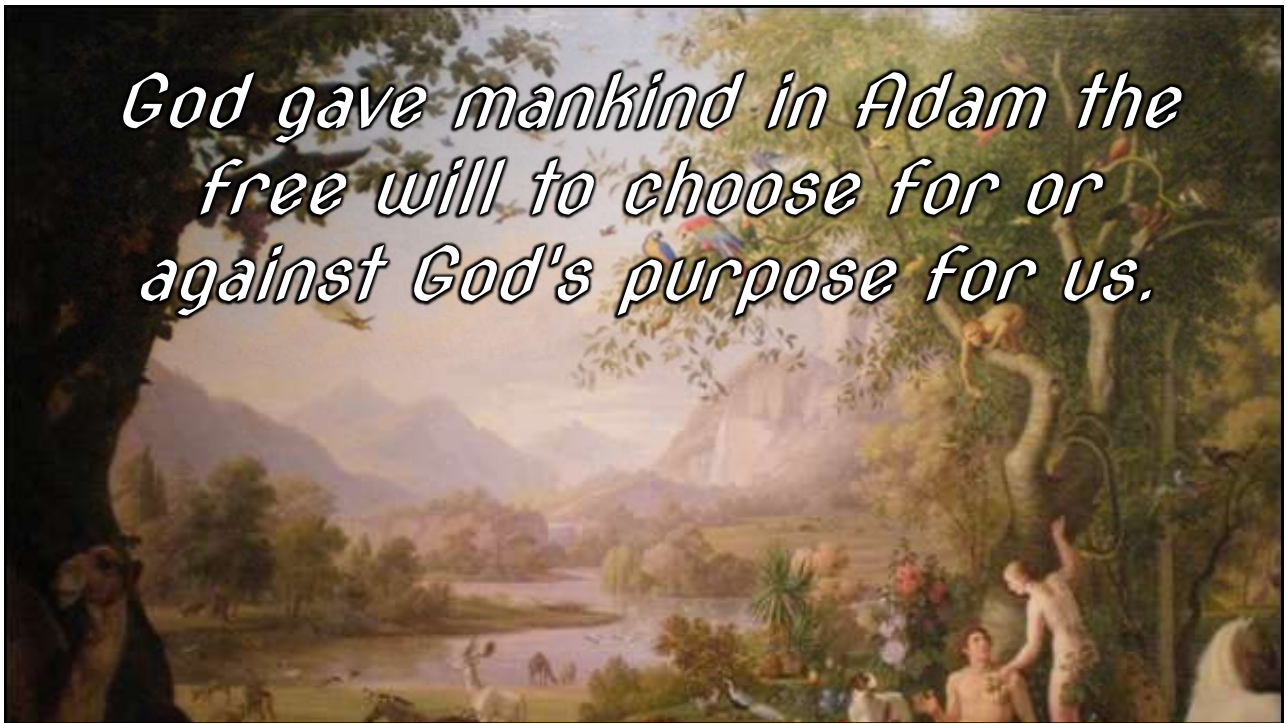








*God gave mankind in Adam the  
free will to choose for or  
against God's purpose for us.*







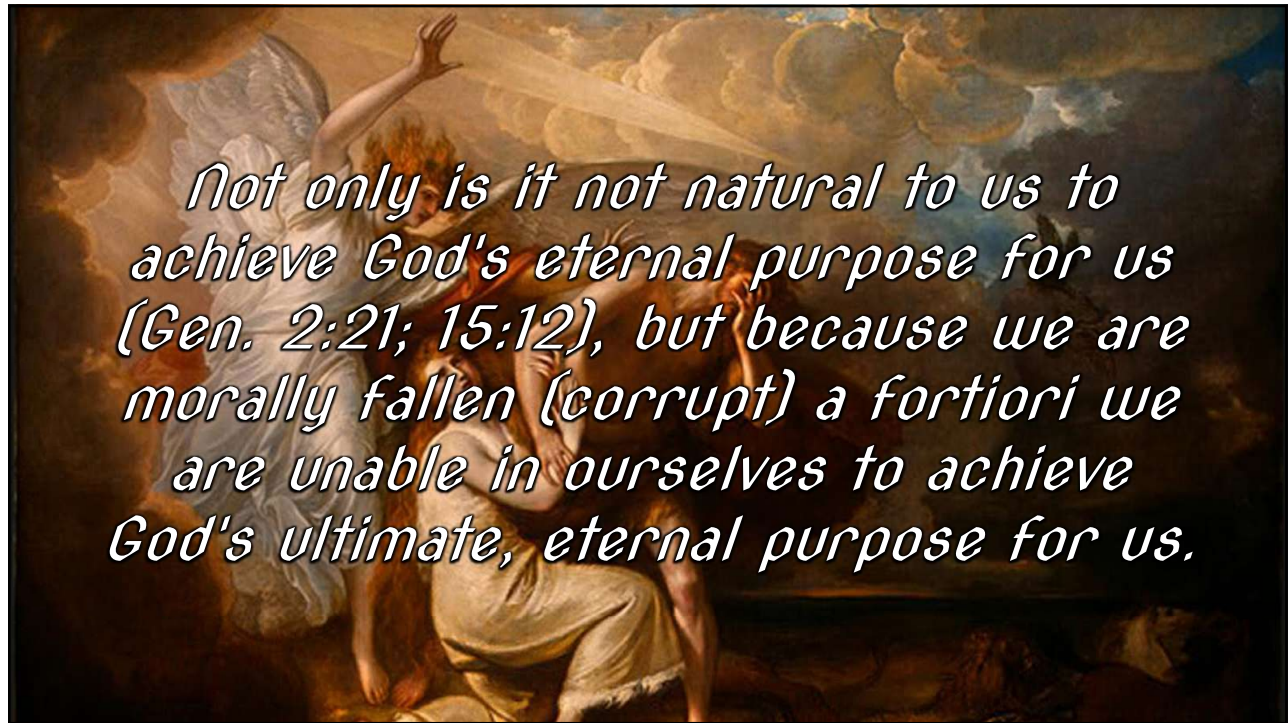
*We are all morally obligated to  
obey the will of our Maker  
since His purpose for us is:*

*our proximate good in this  
life as we flourish in  
peaceful co-existence with  
our fellow man  
in society.*

*our ultimate good  
in the next life as we rest in  
blessedness knowing and  
enjoying Him forever  
in Heaven.*



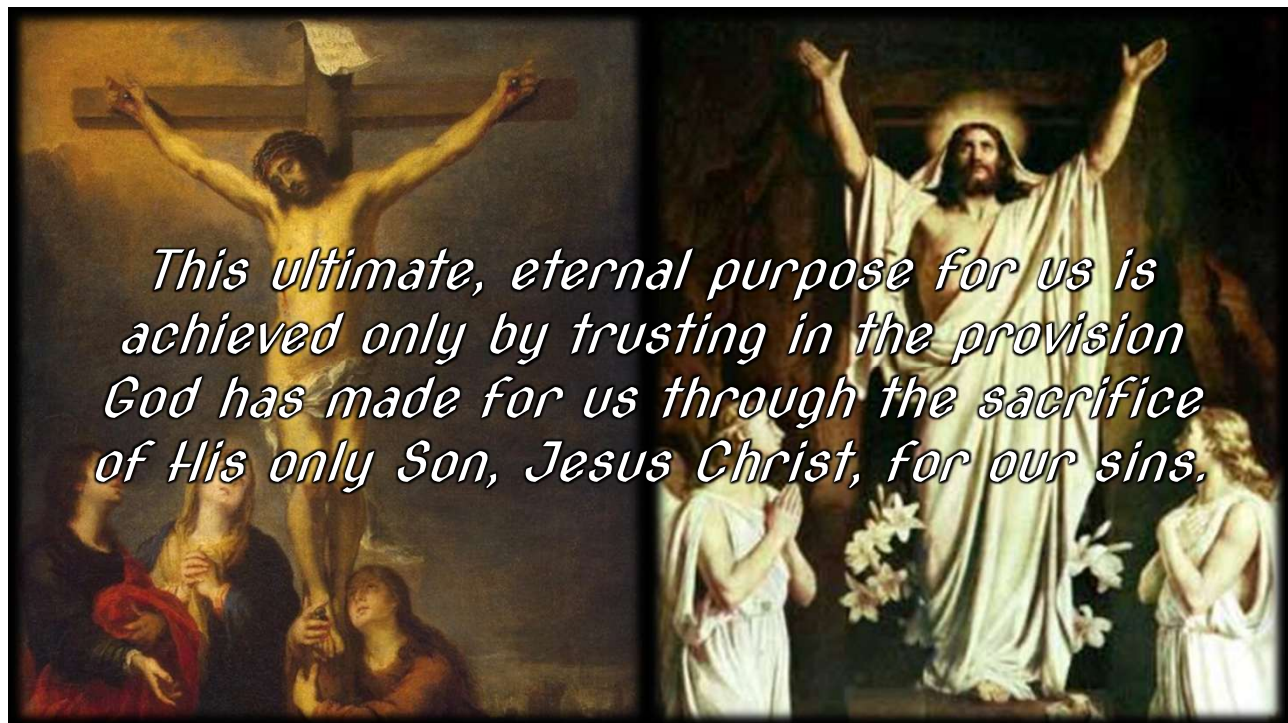
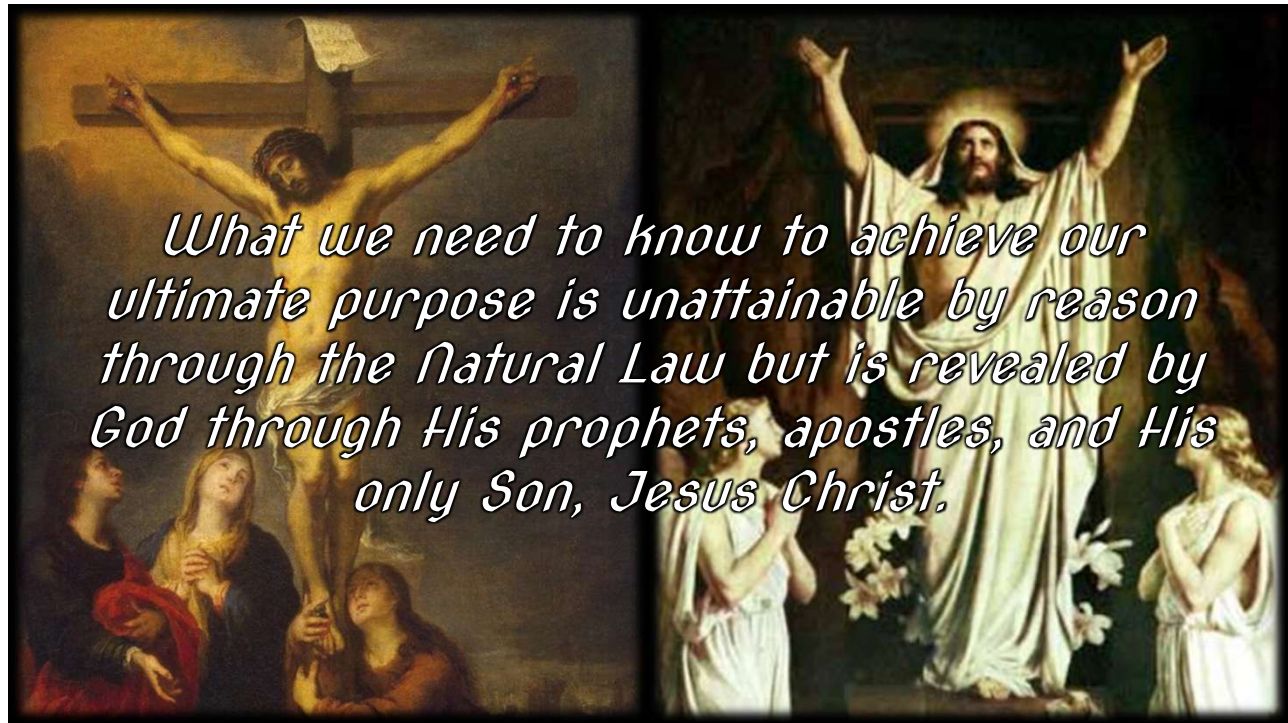




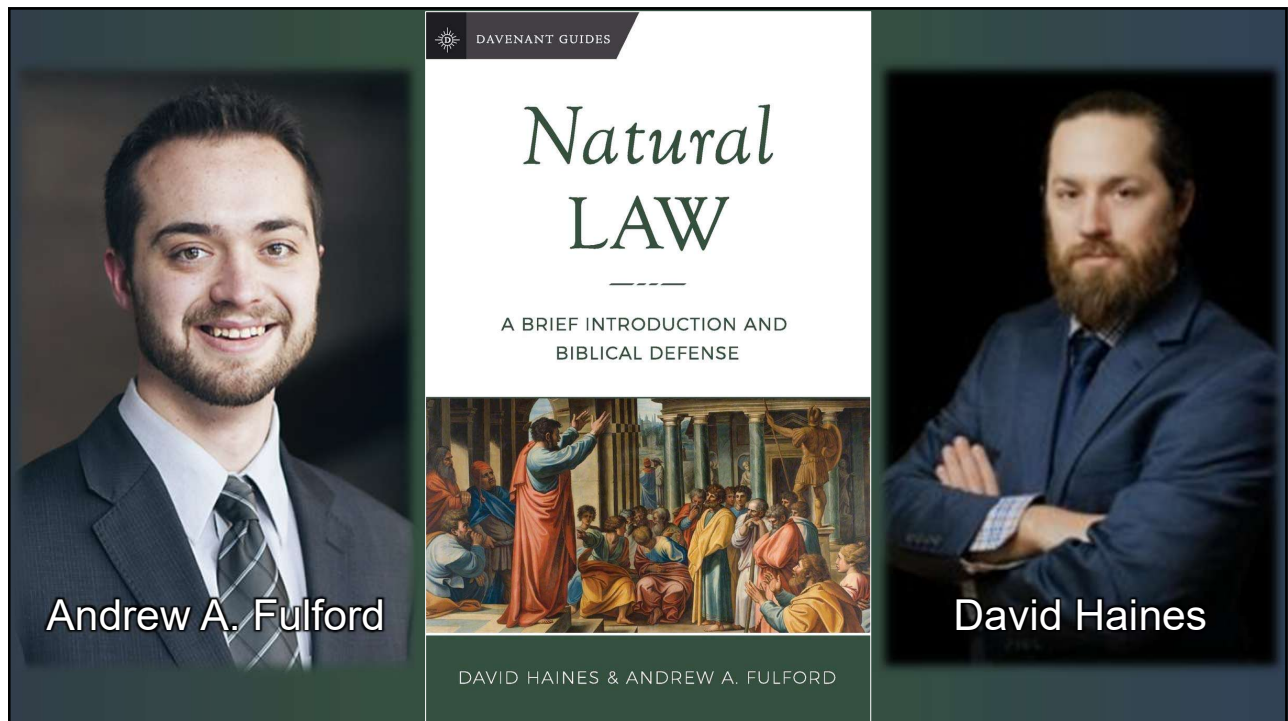


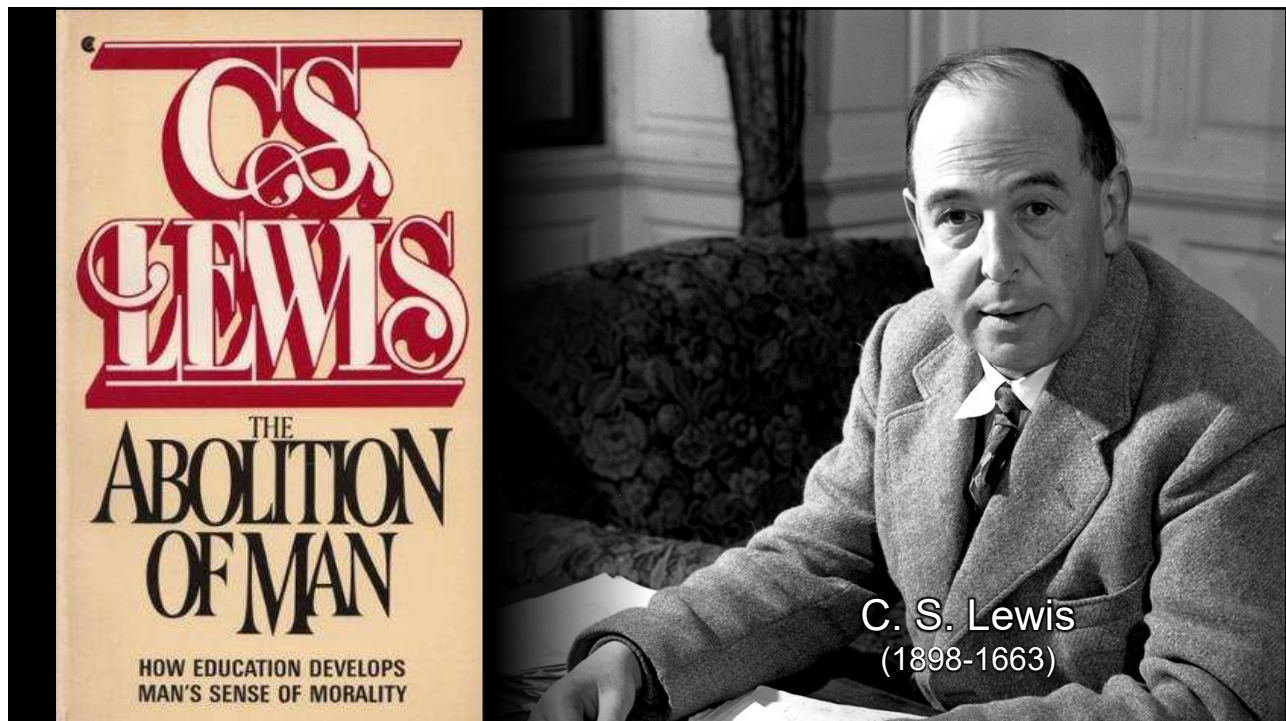
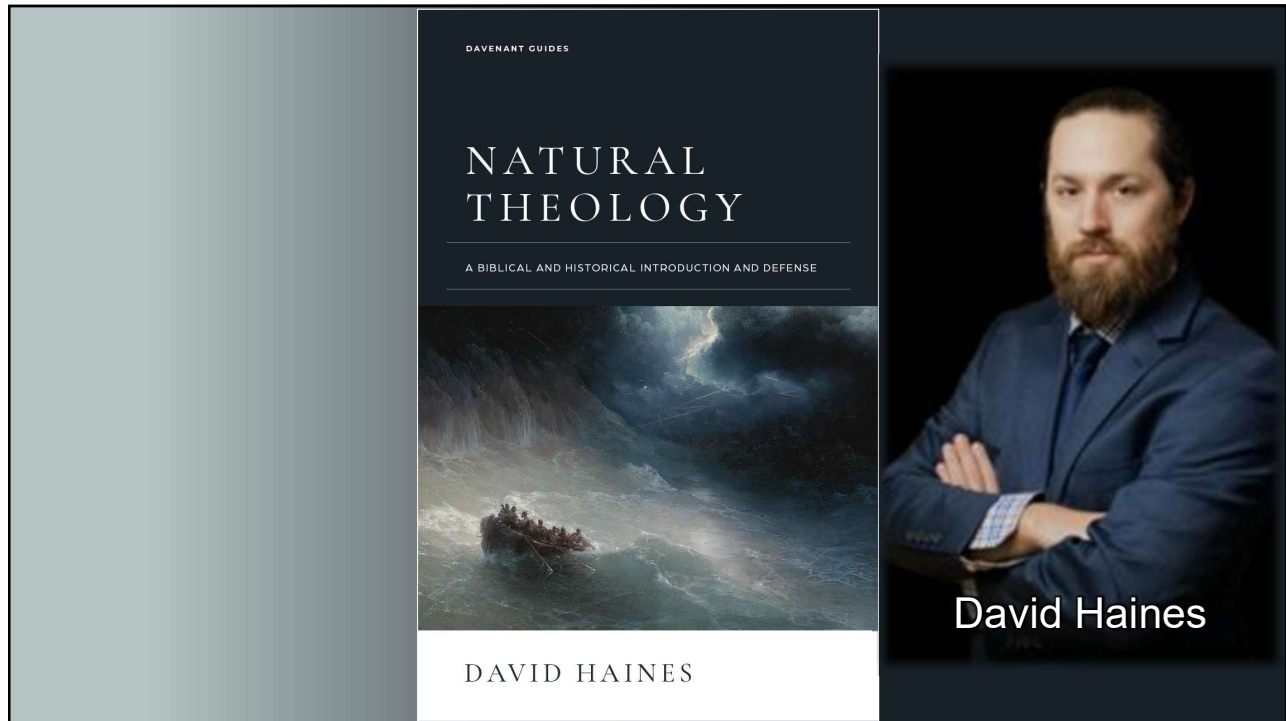




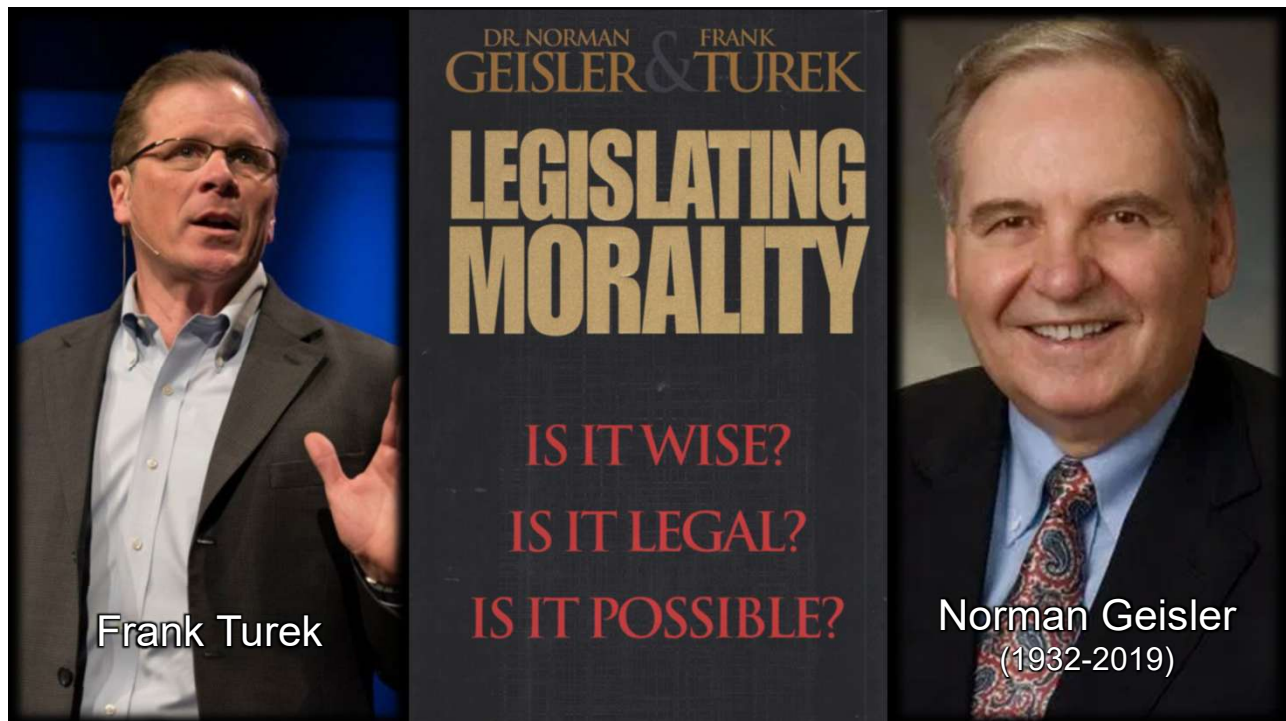
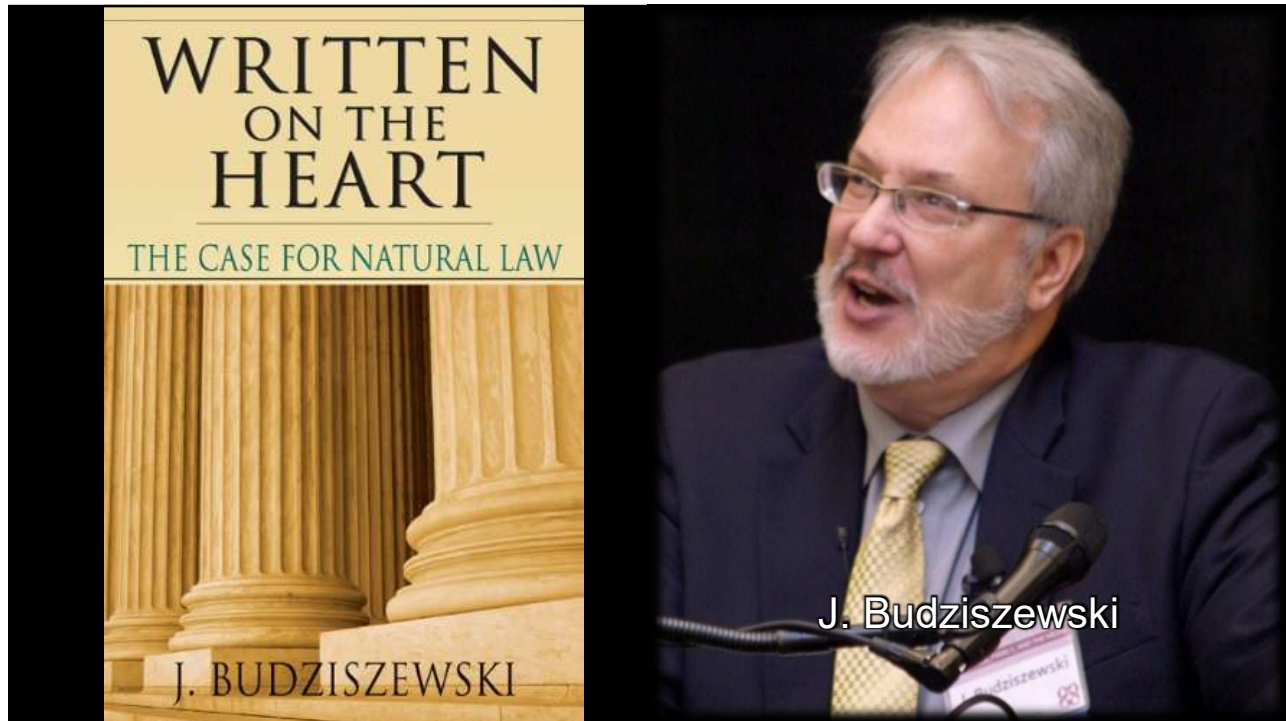


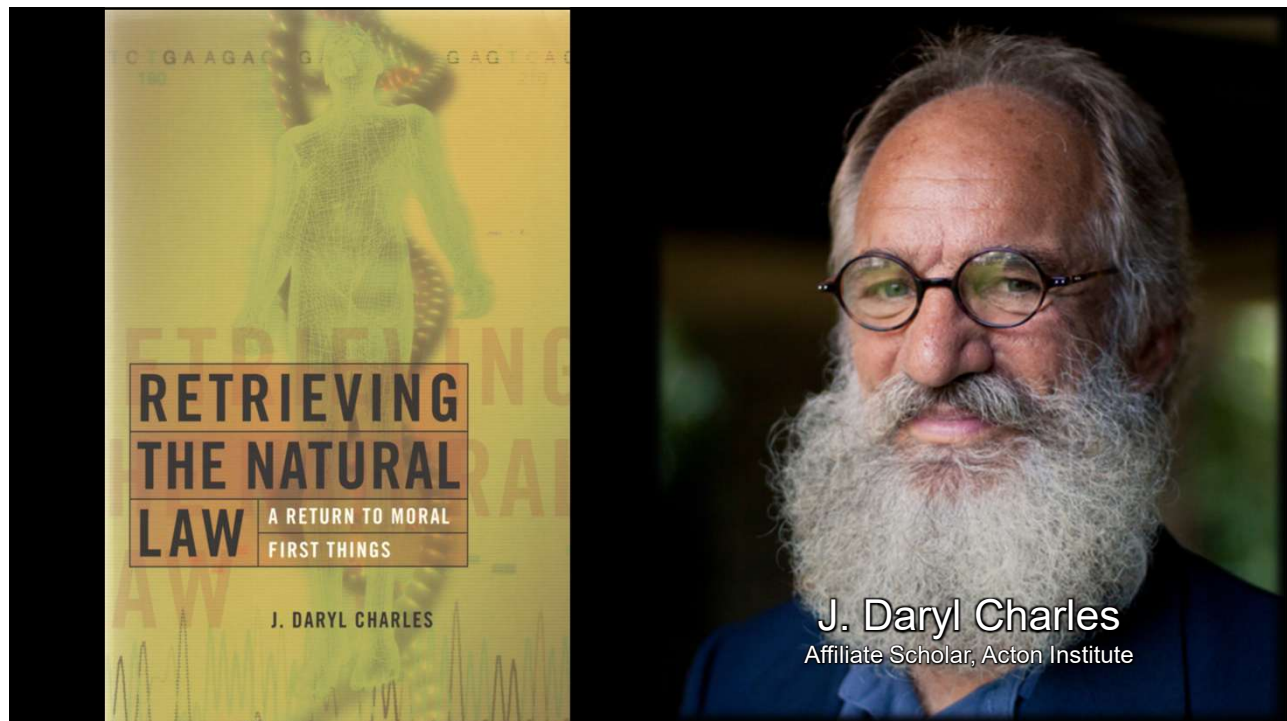
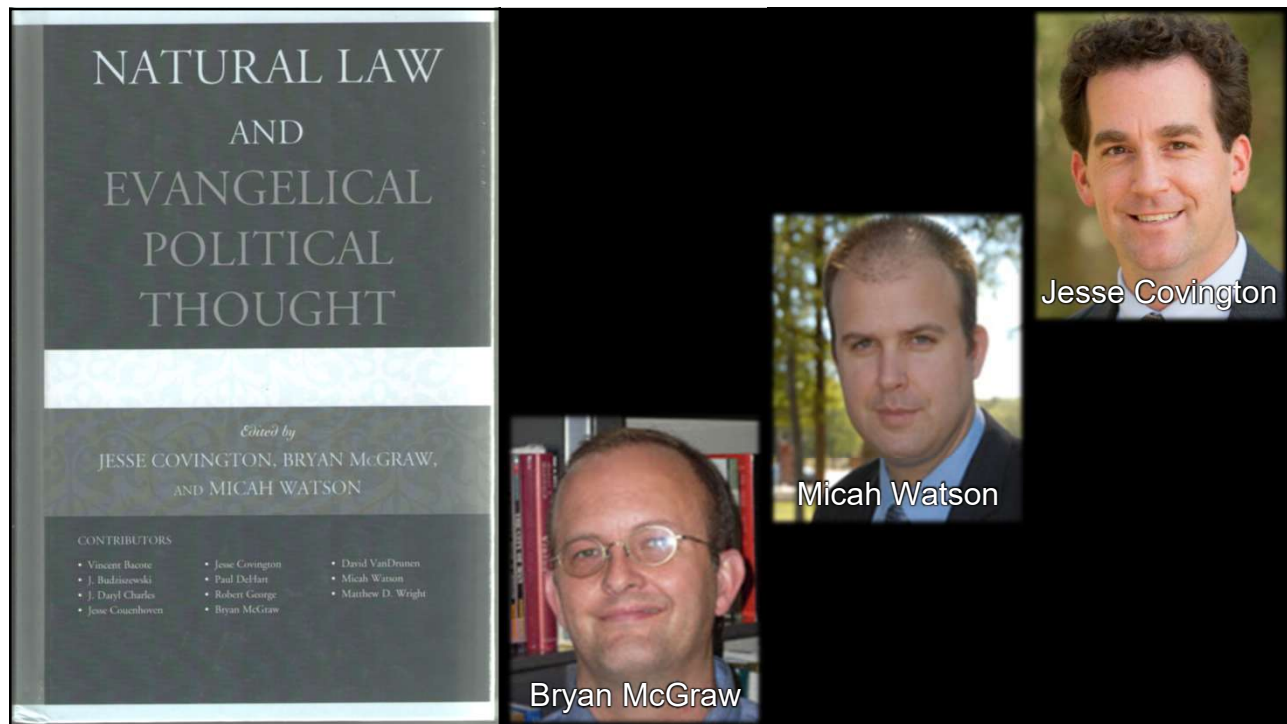




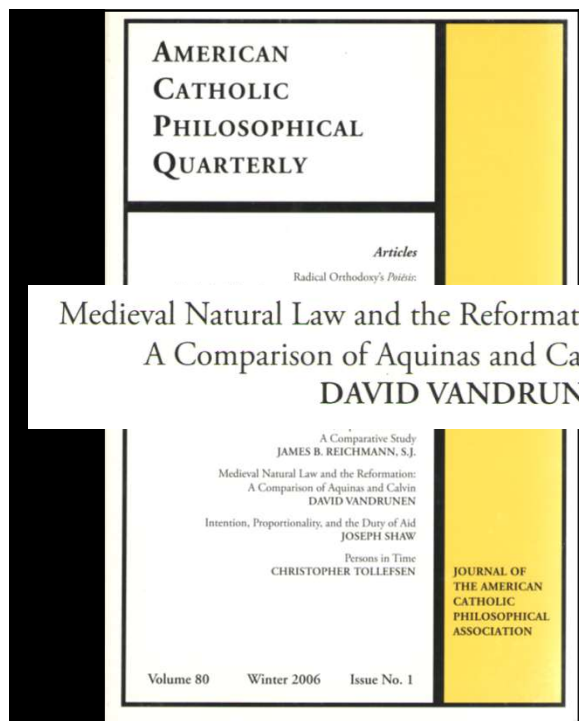
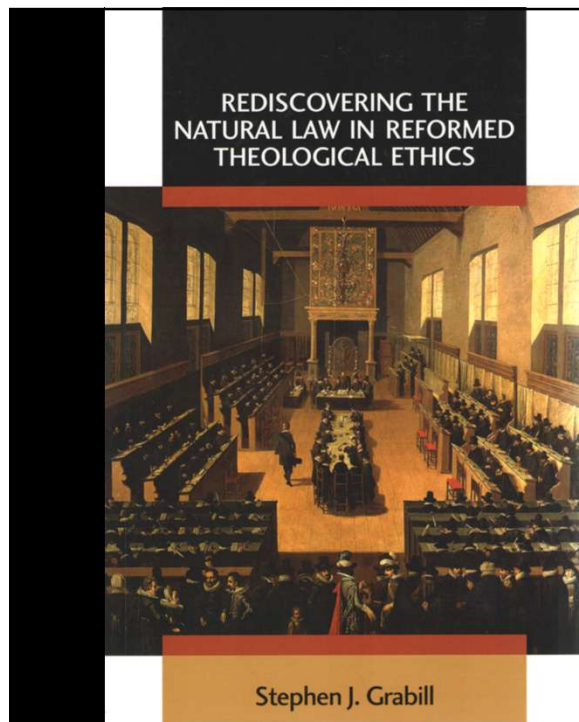


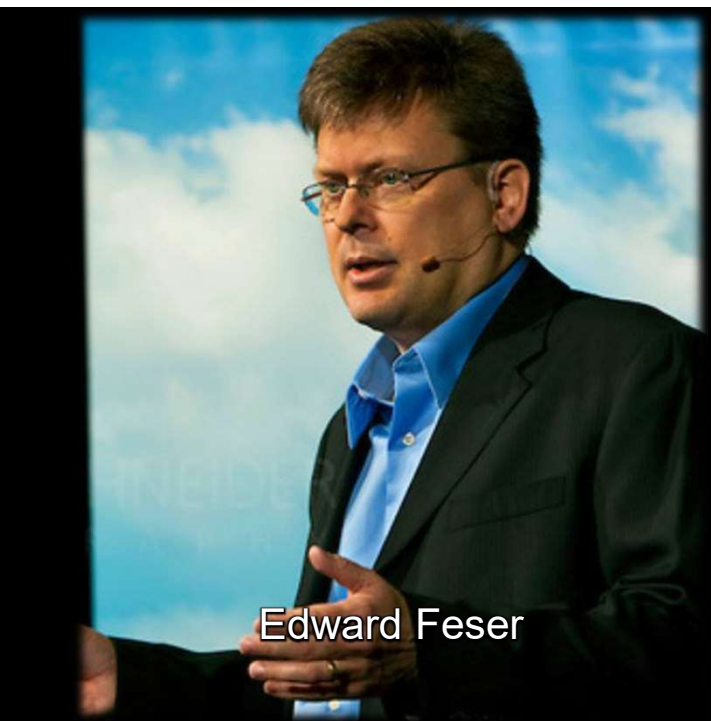
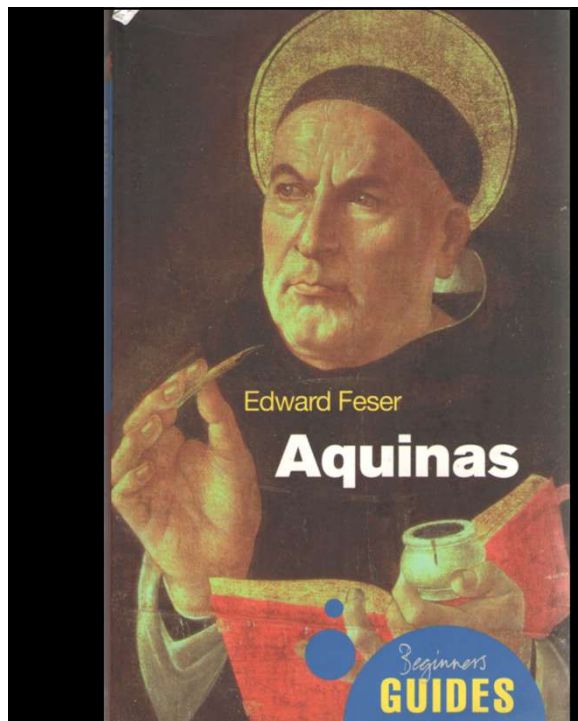
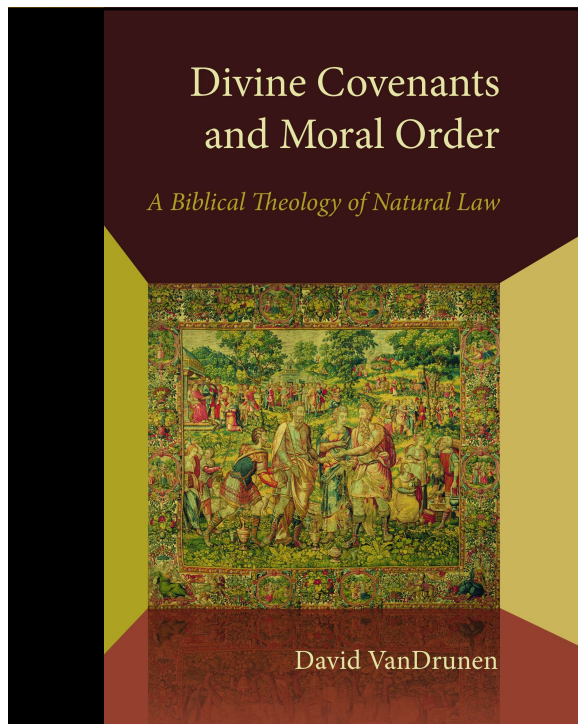




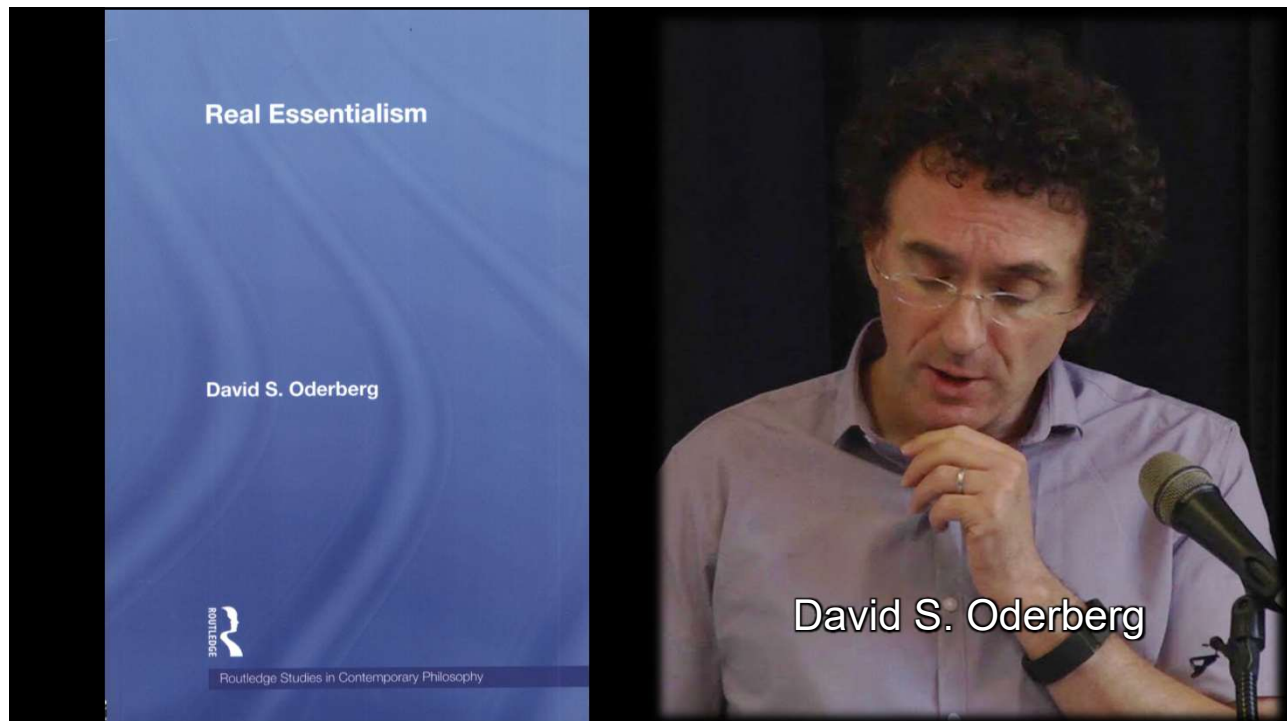
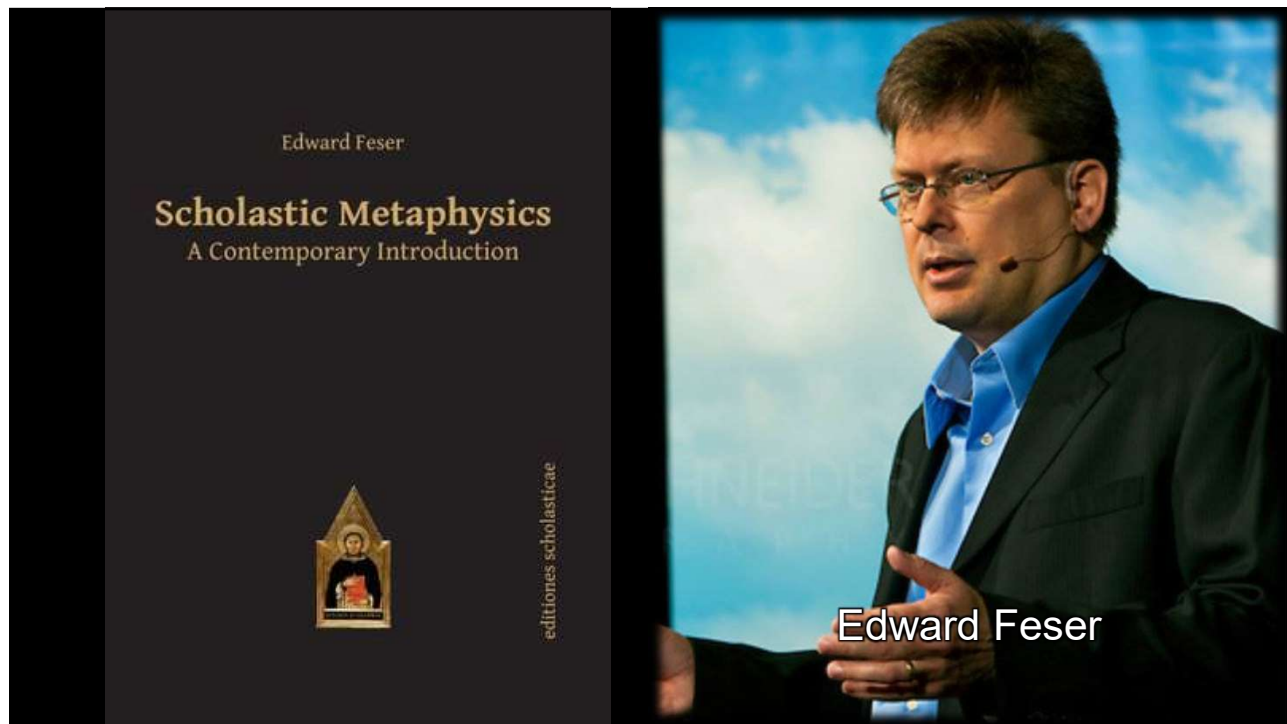


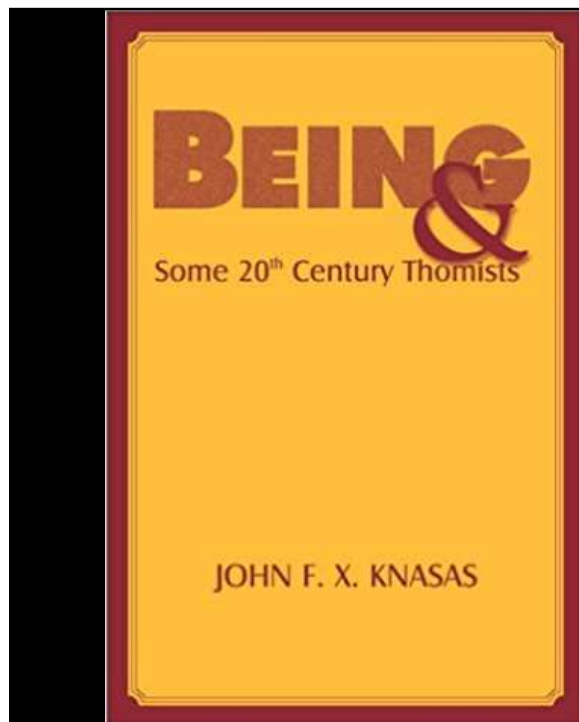












John F. X. Knasas

*New Scholasticism* 59 (1985): 449-470

### The Convertibility of Being and Good in St. Thomas Aquinas

by Jan A. Aertsen

IN MANY medieval thinkers, e.g. Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, the statement can be found: "being and good are convertible" (*ens et bonum convertuntur*).<sup>1</sup> That is to say, "being" and "good" are interchangeable terms in predication (*conversum enim est conversum predicari*).<sup>2</sup> Wherever "being" is predicated of something, the predicate "good" is involved as well.

That must imply that "good" is here not a concept that adds a real content or a new quality to "being", as a result of which "being" is restricted. For in that case there would be no question of convertibility.<sup>3</sup> "Good" is an attribute which pertains to every being, it is a property of being as such, a "mode that is common, and consequent upon every being."<sup>4</sup> In other words, "good" is coextensive with "being", it is one of the so-called *transcendentia*<sup>5</sup> which, since Suarez, are usually referred to as "transcendentals".

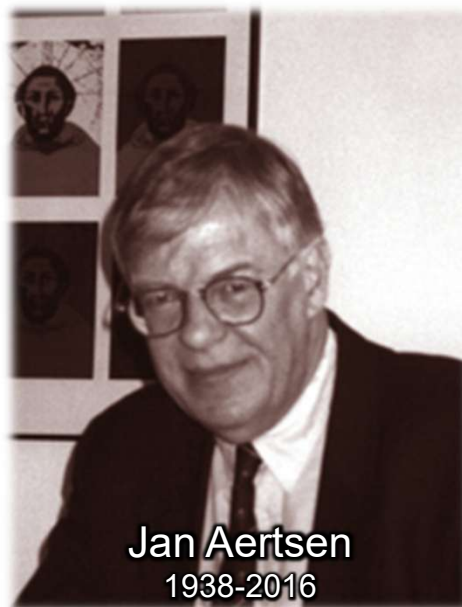
<sup>1</sup> Alexander of Hales, *Summa I*, Inq. 1, Tract. 3, q. 2, membrum 1, c. 1, a. 1, "As idem est bonum et ens"; Bonaventure, *In II Sent.*, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 1, fundam. 5, "Ea et bonum convertuntur, sicut vult Dionysius", d. 24, a. 2, q. 3, fundam. 4; Albert the Great, *De Bono* q. 1, a. 6; *Summa Theol.* tract. 6, q. 28; Thomas Aquinas, *In I Sent.* 8, 1, 3; *De Ver.* XXI, 2; *In De Beatitude*, lect. 3; *Summa Theol.* 1, 16, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *De Ver.* 1, 2 obj. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *De Pot.* IX, 7 ad 5: Bonum quod est in genere qualitatis, non est bonum quod convertitur cum ente, quod nullam rem supra ens addit.

<sup>4</sup> *De Ver.* 1, 1: modus generaliter consequens ens.

<sup>5</sup> Comp. Albert the Great, *Summa Theol.* tract. 6, q. 27, c. 2: Bonum dicitur intentionem communem et est de transcendentibus omne genus sicut et ens.

Jan Aertsen  
1938-2016



