

## Events:

### *Mysticism*

- Christian mysticism is a practice and an experiential knowledge that consists of deep prayer and meditation upon God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Do not confuse mysticism with Gnosticism. It does not seek out “secret” truths but rather “deeper” truths.
- Two major themes of mysticism are:
  - Identify with and imitate Christ in order to achieve a unity of the human spirit with the Holy Spirit
  - Seek the perfect vision of God in order to experience him “as he is” and not “through a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12)
- Mysticism is as old as Christianity with some of the key mysteries of the faith being described by the apostles themselves
  - **Galatians 2:20** – I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (ESV)
  - **1 John 3:21** – Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. (ESV)
  - **2 Peter 1:4** – by which [Christ] has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (ESV)
  - **1 John 4:16b** – God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (ESV)
- Classical mysticism follows certain practices along its journey:
  - Purification through discipline – gain control of the spirit over the body
  - Illumination by the Spirit – enlighten the mind and receive insight to truths
  - Contemplation of God – achieve spiritual union with God and His love
- Important mystics of the early church include:
  - The apostles Peter, John and Paul
  - Clement of Alexandria (150-215)
  - Athanasius (293-373)
  - Augustine of Hippo (354-430)
  - Pope Gregory I (540-604)
- Important mystics of the Middle Ages and Renaissance include:
  - Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109)
  - Francis of Assisi (1182-1226)
  - Bonaventure (1221-1274)
  - Meister Eckhart (1260-1328)
  - Juliana of Norwich (1342-1416)
  - Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471)
  - Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556)

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- Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)
- John of the Cross (1542-1591)
- Francis de Sales (1567-1622)
- Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)
- Important mystics of the modern era include:
  - T.S. Eliot (1888-1965)
  - Thomas Merton (1915-1968)
  - Thomas Keating (1923-)
- Some of the disciplines to consider along the pathway to spiritual growth include (Celebration of Disciple by Richard J. Foster):
  - Inward Disciplines
    - Meditation
    - Prayer
    - Fasting
    - Study
  - Outward Disciplines
    - Simplicity
    - Solitude
    - Submission
    - Service
  - Corporate Disciplines
    - Confession
    - Worship
    - Guidance
    - Celebration
- Do not treat these disciplines legalistically. Remember that there are two ditches – one on either side of the road that leads to sanctification.

## **Audio CD: #4 – Thomas Aquinas (Part II)**

### ***Discussion:***

- What did the Islamic philosophers mean by “double truth”?
- How did Thomas seek to reconcile the errors brought about by these Islamic teachers?
- Is Thomas then “good” or “bad” for Protestants to study?