

The Work of St. Thomas Aquinas

If a religious life has its high-points in mystical moments in which images and words ~~can~~ tend to vanish from consciousness, it remains that such high-points, ^{represent only} ~~are~~ a very small fraction of religious activity. Moreover, the more vital and the more efficacious such ~~an~~ activity is, the more it infiltrates, penetrates, purifies, transforms the symbols, the ~~language~~ rituals, the language, the art and literature, the social order, the cultural superstructure of science and history, philosophy and theology. That process may be witnessed in the Greco-Roman period of Christianity. ~~It was~~ It was repeated in quite a new manner during the middle ages. It recurred again when the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Counter-reformation repudiated ~~only~~ older cultural forms and introduced new religious exigences. It is finally the task before us today when ~~a~~ classicist culture has vanished and we live and feel, speak and work, in a quite different modern world.

But precisely because that task is upon us, we can be greatly interested in the work of St. Thomas Aquinas, for what we have to do is very similar to what he achieved. As we live in a new modern ~~society~~ social order and cultural fabric and, in it, feel at a loss to speak and act in a relevant manner so too perhaps, in the ^{Christian} thirteenth century, there were many to resist, many to feel disconcerted in the presence of the flood of new ideas from Arabic and Greek sources, many to wring impotent hands and ask what can ~~we~~ ^{be} done about it. The one answer was, of course, a new cultural synthesis. Such a synthesis cannot be the work of any single