Scholasticism and Mysticism in the Middle Ages
The High Middle Ages

- Population growth
- Feudalism as a social structure
- The achievements of monasteries
- Gregorian reforms (1050-1080)
- The rise of the medieval university
- Heterodox Christianity

Heterodox groups like these Cathars often were persecuted by the Inquisition
# Contrasting Temperaments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Scholasticism</th>
<th>Mysticism</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>External effects: Bible, church tradition, commentaries</td>
<td>Internal effects: heart-felt, individual experience of the divine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Reasoned argumentation; distrust of the emotions</td>
<td>Affections, tempered by right doctrine</td>
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<td>Nature of God</td>
<td>Highest intellectual truth</td>
<td>Highest moral good</td>
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<td>Main Virtue</td>
<td>Reason: ideas and doctrines are ends in and of themselves</td>
<td>Love reaches further than reason; ideas and doctrines must edify individuals and society</td>
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Following Jean Gerson, *On Mystical Theology* (1400)
Mysticism in the High and Late Middle Ages

Refer to the Chart
Biography of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

- Born in southern Italy; military father, aristocratic mother
- Educated at the Universities of Naples, Paris, and Cologne
- Influenced by Albertus Magnus (1200-1280)
- Joined the Dominicans (1244)
- Taught Bible and theology at Paris, Naples, and Rome until his death

Aquinas as he appears on a 15th c. altarpiece by Carlo Crivelli

Source: www.wikipedia.com
Major Theological Contributions

- Voluminous writings: commentaries, apologetic works, and philosophical treatises
- Reason: humanity has the capacity to know many things without the aid of divine revelation
- Natural Law and Ethics: virtuous acts are prescribed in natural law; virtue is determined both by the end and in the use of power to achieve it
- Politics: a “synthesis” between church and state; each has distinct authority and responsibility, but both are “Christian”