

ON SCRIPTURE IN THE SUMMA THEOLOGIAE

by Michael M. Waldstein

According to some interpreters, St. Thomas's *Summa Theologiae* is an example of rational-systematic construction distinct from the interpretation of Scripture.

Saint Thomas is one of the most notable witnesses of this distinction between works of exegesis and biblical theology on the one hand and theology properly speaking or rational theology on the other, a dissociation which was already prepared in the twelfth century...It is theology, now an autonomous science, which becomes the key and the point of convergence of all the other annexed disciplines: grammar, philology, patristics and exegesis.¹

A similar judgment is the more or less conscious foundation of the widespread practice of reading the *Summa Theologiae* as a systematic text akin to Descartes's *Meditations* or Hegel's *Logic*. One of the features of this practice is the understanding of distinct sections of the *Summa* as relatively independent "treatises," building blocks of the system. On such a reading, the "treatise" *De Deo Uno* (*Summa Theologiae*, I qq. 2-26) takes on particular importance. It is the first "treatise" and therefore the foundation on which the *Summa's* entire edifice is allegedly erected, similar

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to Descartes's "cogito" and ontological proof of God's existence in the *Meditations*.

If this reading is correct, one is faced with acute problems:

These five ways have been generally taken to provide the warrant for the assertion of the third article [*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 2, a. 3] that God is and to parallel in their importance what St. Thomas wrote about similar argumentation in the *Summa contra Gentiles*... Concluding to the assertion of the divine existence is obtained, maintains Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae* I q. 2, a. 2, ad 2, by *rationem naturalem*. The response in which the argument is formulated makes no appeal to the mysteries of Christ, the disclosures of the indwelling Spirit, the experiences of holiness, the special influence of grace, Christian history, revelation etc. Many have read Aquinas as proposing that what can be obtained by *rationem naturalem* is adequate as foundation for his treatment of the reality of God in the subsequent questions 3-26, antecedent to his consideration of the Trinity as such. The only explicit appeal to something beyond *rationem naturalem* ...[is] contained in the "sed contra," propositions read by many to function as proof-texts to indicate that what is concluded in the "*respondeo dicendum quod*" coincides with the word of God as contained in Scripture. This means that critically important questions such as those bearing on the goodness of God, the love and mercy of God, divine providence, predestination, and reprobation, are treated as if they did not demand that the Christ-Event be given a pivotal, even specifying position in their consideration.²

The present essay argues for three main conclusions. First, far from being intended as a sample of rational theology, conceived

as an autonomous science dissociated from Scripture, the *Summa Theologiae* is a particular pedagogical voice at the service of Scripture. Second, far from proceeding *more geometrico* to construct a system in the Cartesian sense, the *Summa Theologiae* offers complementary perspectives on a reality that remains indivisible and inexhaustible. Third, far from being the foundation on which the edifice of the *Summa Theologiae* is erected, the five ways in particular are intended to manifest to us as knowers dependent on sensation what is already and more eminently contained in God's revelation and held by faith.

The essay approaches these conclusions by turning, first, to St. Thomas's discussion of the nature of sacred teaching; second, to his claim that Scripture, the divinely revealed truth, is the all-encompassing foundation of sacred teaching; third, to the central role of Christ in the fourfold sense of Scripture.

I

SACRED TEACHING AND "THE RIVERS"

At the very beginning of his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, St. Thomas interprets the rivers of paradise as signs of the Trinity and its revelation.

...sibi manifestatio dicentis Patris convenit et totius Trinitatis.

Unde dicitur, "Nemo novit Patrem nisi Filius et cui Filius voluerit revelare" et "Deum nemo vidit unquam, nisi unigenitus qui est in sinu Patris."

...it belongs to him [the Son] to be the manifestation of the Father who utters [him as Word] and of the whole Trinity.

And so it is said, "No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him" (Matthew 11,27), and "No one has ever seen God except the only-begotten who is in the bosom of the Father" (John 1,18).

Recte ergo dicitur ex persona Filii: "Ego sapientia effudi flumina." Flumina ista intelligo fluxus aeternae processionis, qua Filius a Patre, et Spiritus Sanctus ab utroque, ineffabili modo procedit.

Ista flumina olim occulta et quodammodo confusa erant, tum in similitudinibus creaturarum, tum etiam in aenigmatibus scripturarum...

Venit Filius et inclusa flumina quodammodo effudit, nomen Trinitatis publicando, "Docete omnes gentes, baptizantes eos in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti." Unde "Profunda fluviorum scrutatus est et abscondita in lucem produxit." (*Commentary on the Sentences*, Prologue).

In his commentary on Psalm 22,15 ("I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast."), St. Thomas develops another aspect of revelation along similar lines. It is in the passion, concentrated in the piercing of Jesus's side and the flow of blood and water, that the rivers of the Trinity are opened up.

Per cor Christi intelligitur Sacra Scriptura, quae manifestat cor Christi. Hoc autem erat clausura ante passionem, quia erat obscura; sed aperta est post passionem, quia eam iam intelligentes con-

Rightly, therefore, is it said by the person of the Son, "I, wisdom, poured forth the rivers." Those rivers I understand to be the flows of the eternal procession whereby the Son ineffably proceeds from the Father and the Holy Spirit from both.

These rivers were once hidden and in some way poured together, both in the likenesses of creatures and in the enigmas of the Scriptures...

The Son came and poured out the pent up rivers, as it were, by bringing the name of the Trinity out into the open, "Teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Whence [it also says,] "He searched the depths of the rivers and brought forth what was hidden into the light" (Job 28,11).

By "the heart" (Ps 22,15) of Christ one understands sacred Scripture, which manifests the heart of Christ. For this [heart] was closed before the passion, because [Scripture] was dark;

siderant, et discernunt quomodo prophetiae sint exponendae (*Commentary on the Psalms*, 21,11; Hebrews 22,15).

but [Scripture] is open after the passion, because the [disciples] now read it with understanding, and see how the prophecies are to be interpreted.

The two texts just quoted are significant examples of the spiritual interpretation of Scripture. The rivers of paradise (signified by the letter of Genesis 2,8-14) signify something further (=spiritual sense of Genesis 2,8-14), namely, the procession of persons in the Trinity, the self-revelation of God in the Son, and the effective "publication" of this revelation in baptism. The heart of Christ (signified by the letter of Psalm 22,15 and John 19,33-37) also signifies something else, namely, Scripture. One of the roots of this signification is the reciprocal relation between the heart of Christ and Scripture. In all its diversity, Scripture does one thing. It manifests the heart of Christ. The heart of Christ, in turn, makes the Scriptures intelligible, because it is only through it that the disciples understand the Scriptures. The emphasis on Jesus in these examples of spiritual interpretation is not accidental. The spiritual sense of Scripture, in St. Thomas's understanding, always and essentially involves Jesus.

As a teaching rooted in God's revelation through Jesus, sacred teaching differs in kind from accounts of God accessible to human reason through the created world.

...theologia quae ad sacram doctrinam pertinet, differt secundum genus ab illa theologia quae pars philosophiae ponitur (*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2).

...the account of God which belongs to sacred teaching differs in kind from that account of God which is laid down as a part of philosophy.

Although sacred teaching differs in kind from philosophical accounts, it can employ them to make what God reveals more manifest to us, given our mode of knowledge.

Haec scientia accipere potest aliquid a philosophicis disciplinis, non quod ex necessitate eis indigeat, sed ad maiorem manifestationem eorum quae in hac scientia traduntur. Non enim accipit sua principia ab aliis scientiis, sed immediate a Deo per revelationem (*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2).

This science can take something from various kinds of philosophical learning, not because it needs them by necessity, but to make that which is passed on in this science clearer. For it does not receive its principles from other sciences, but immediately from God by revelation.

The unity of sacred teaching as a discipline of learning lies precisely in this aspect that distinguishes it from philosophy, even religious philosophy, namely, being revealed by God rather than discovered by the light of human reason.

Quia igitur Sacra Scriptura considerat aliqua secundum quod sunt divinitus revelata...omnia quaecumque sunt divinitus revelabilia, communicant in una ratione formali objecti huius scientiae. Et ideo comprehenduntur sub sacra doctrina sicut sub scientia una (*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 3, c.).

For since sacred Scripture considers things inasmuch as they are divinely revealed...all things whatever that can be revealed by God share the one character of the formal object of this science. And in this way they are gathered under sacred teaching as under one science.

II

SACRED TEACHING AND SCRIPTURE

The formal aspect that unites sacred teaching is not only "revealed by God" in the abstract, but "revealed by God in Scripture."

Prophetis etiam et apostolis credimus...Successoribus autem eorum non credimus nisi in quantum nobis annuntiant ea quae

We believe the prophets and apostles...But we do not believe their successors *except inasmuch as* they declare to us what the for-

illi in scriptis reliquerunt (*Disputed Questions on Truth* q. 14, a. 10, ad 11).

mer left behind in writing.

...sola canonica Scriptura est regula fidei. Alii autem sic edisserunt de veritate, quod nolunt sibi credi nisi in his quae vera dicunt (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 21, l. 6, n. 2656).

...only the canonical Scripture is the rule of faith. Others wrote about the truth in such a way that they do not want us to believe them except in matters of which they spoke the truth.

What St. Thomas has in mind in these texts is clearly not a biblicism that limits itself to the repetition of words contained in Scripture, but a discipline of learning that begins to unfold the wealth contained in the sacred texts.

Si igitur principia ex quibus procedit haec doctrina sunt ea quae per revelationem Spiritus Sancti sunt accepta et in sacris Scripturis tradita, consequens est quod in hac doctrina non alia tradantur quam ea quae in sacris Scripturis habentur. Hoc est ergo quod concludit, quod nullo modo aliquis debet audere dicere ... "praeter ea quae nobis divinitus ex sanctis eloquiis sunt expressa," idest, exprimuntur per sancta eloquia. Signanter autem non dicit: in sanctis eloquiis, sed "ex sanctis eloquiis," quia quaecumque ex his quae continentur in sacra Scriptura elici possunt, non sunt aliena ab hac doctrina, licet ipsa etiam in sacra non contineantur Scriptura (*Commentary on Denys the Areopagite, De Divinis Nominibus*, I, l. 1, n. 11) [text following Ulrich Horst, *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 13 (1962) 166 with note 42].

Since the starting-points from which this teaching goes forward are those things that are received by the Holy Spirit's revelation and handed on in the sacred Scriptures, it follows that this teaching does not hand on anything except what is found in the sacred Scriptures. And so he [Denys the Areopagite] concludes that in no way should anyone dare to say anything ... "except what has been divinely expressed to us out of the holy sayings," that is, expressed by the holy sayings. It is significant, however, that he does not say, "in the holy sayings," but "out of the holy sayings," because whatever can be drawn from what is contained in sacred Scripture is not foreign to this teaching, even if it itself is not contained in sacred Scripture.

The primary avenue for unfolding the Scriptures is found, according to St. Thomas, in the writings of the Fathers. In fact, he occasionally calls these writings "sacred scripture(s)"³ without equating them with the Sacred Scriptures *par excellence*. One of the *Quodlibetal Questions* asks, "Whether everything written by the holy Fathers is from the Holy Spirit." The argument "contra" suggests an answer in the affirmative:

CONTRA, ad eundem pertinet facere aliquid propter finem et perducere ad illum finem. Sed finis Scripturae, quae est a Spiritu Sancto, est eruditio hominum. Haec autem eruditio hominum ex Scripturis non potest esse nisi per expositiones Sanctorum. Ergo expositiones Sanctorum sunt a Spiritu Sancto (*Quodlibetal Questions* 12, q. 17, sed contra).

ON THE OTHER HAND, it belongs to one and the same person to do something for the sake of a goal and to lead to that goal. But the goal of Scripture, which stems from the Holy Spirit, is that people learn. However, people cannot learn from the Scriptures except through the commentaries of the Saints. Therefore the commentaries of the Saints are from the Holy Spirit.

The body of the article seems to confirm this impression:

RESPONDEO. Dicendum quod ab eodem Spiritu Scripturae sunt expositae et editae...et praecipue quantum ad ea quae sunt fidei, quia fides est donum Dei; et ideo interpretatio sermonum numeratur inter alia dona Spiritus Sancti (*Quodlibetal Questions* 12, q. 17, c).

I RESPOND: It is by the same Spirit that the Scriptures are interpreted and published...especially with regard to what is a matter of faith, because faith is a gift of God; and thus the interpretation of sayings is numbered among the other gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12,10).

Yet the answer to the first objection makes a distinction that safeguards the uniqueness of Sacred Scripture as the one rule of faith. The first objection had argued that statements of the Fathers on occasion contradict each other, which cannot possibly be from the Holy Spirit. The response to the objection qualifies

the inspiration of the Fathers as a special charism which all true interpreters share to some degree and on some occasions. By contrast, the inspiration of Scripture is more stable.

AD PRIMUM ergo dicendum quod gratiae gratis datae non sunt habitus, sed sunt quidam motus a Spiritu Sancto... et ideo de aliquibus occultis revelandis, aliquando tangitur mens a Spiritu Sancto et aliquando non....

To the first point: Charisms are not permanent dispositions, but they are a movement from the Holy Spirit...and thus with regard to the revelation of hidden things, at times the mind is touched by the Holy Spirit and at times not...

...dicta expositorum necessitatem non inducunt quod necesse sit eis credere, sed solum Scriptura canonica, quae in veteri et in novo testamento est (*Quodlibetal Questions* 12, q. 17, ad 1).

...the sayings of the interpreters do not involve necessity so that it would be necessary to believe them. This is true only of the canonical Scripture which consists of the Old and New Testament.

The Fathers are thus in one way necessary and in another not: they are necessary because they open the Scriptures as readers who share in the same Spirit that speaks through the Scriptures. Yet, particular interpretations cannot automatically compel assent by the mere fact that they are Augustine's or Gregory of Nyssa's, because Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa have the gift of interpretation only in the manner of a charism, not of permanent inspiration.

In sum, sacred teaching is related in essentially different ways to different kinds of texts. When it appeals to authoritative philosophical texts, it does not appeal to its proper ground, but to something outside itself. As in philosophy itself, such appeal has only probable force (though the philosophical arguments themselves may be more than probable). When it appeals to Scripture, sacred teaching appeals to its proper ground and its appeal has the force of necessity.

When it appeals to the writings of the Fathers, it appeals to its proper ground, but its appeal has only probable force (again

SCRIPTURE IN THE SUMMA

the arguments of the Fathers themselves may be more than probable).

...sacra doctrina huiusmodi auctoritatibus utitur quasi EX-TRANEIS argumentis, et *probabilibus*.

Auctoritatibus autem canonicae Scripturae utitur PROPRIE, ex *necessitate* argumentando.

Auctoritatibus autem aliorum doctorum ecclesiae, quasi arguendo ex PROPRIIS, sed *probabiliter*.

Innititur enim fides nostra revelationi Apostolis et Prophetis factae qui canonicos libros scripserunt: non autem revelationi, si qua fuit aliis doctoribus facta (*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 1, a. 8, ad 2).

...sacred teaching uses such [philosophical] texts as arguments OUTSIDE [itself] and [merely] *probable*.

But it uses texts of the canonical Scripture PROPERLY arguing from *necessity*.

But [it uses] texts of the other teachers of the Church arguing from What Is PROPER but *in probable fashion*.

For our faith rests upon the revelation entrusted to the apostles and prophets who wrote the canonical books not on [another] revelation—if any was made to other teachers.

III

THE FOURFOLD SENSE OF SCRIPTURE AND CHRIST

In his inaugural lecture as *Baccalarius Biblicus* in Paris (*De Commendatione et Partitione Sacrae Scripturae*), St. Thomas offers the following outline of Scripture to guide his hearers through the complex labyrinth of texts.

Scripture Leads to Eternal Life:

(I) BY GIVING COMMANDMENTS (*praecipiendo*): OLD TESTAMENT

(A) Commandments of the KING who can punish: the Law

(I) Private law given to an individual or a familyGenesis

Michael M. Waldstein

(II) Public law given to the people

(a) The law passes from God to his mediator, Moses: "And God said to Moses..."

(i) Equity in judgmentExodus

(ii) Visible mysterious signs (*sacramenta*) pertaining to the cultLeviticus

(iii) Offices and the administration of the commonwealthNumbers

(b) The law is set forth by the mediator, Moses, to the people: "And Moses said..."Deuteronomy

(B) Exhortation by the king's ENVOYS to follow his Law: the Prophets

(I) Prophets that set forth the benefits offered by the king to incline the people to obey the Law

(a) The attainment of the bequest (the land)Joshua

(b) The destruction of the enemiesJudges

(c) The exaltation of the people

(i) The private exaltation of one personRuth

(ii) The public exaltation of the whole people, culminating in kingship1-4 Kings

(II) Prophets that propose the Law as a law that must be obeyed

(a) To all (*in communi*)

(i) Loving caresses (*blandiendo*) in the promise of benefits:

(1) Announces INCARNATIONIsaiah

(ii) Terrifying through the threat of punishment:

(2) Announces PASSIONJeremiah

(iii) Persuasion through the castigation of sins

(3) Announces RESURRECTIONEzekiel

[(4) Christ's DIVINITYDaniel]

(b) To particular groups (*in particulari*)Minor Prophets

(C) Commandments of the FATHER who educates: the Hagiographers and Apocrypha

(I) By deeds, since deeds have no less power than words in moral matters

[(a) Instruction about the future bearing on caution

.Joshua]

(b) Narrative of the past bearing on the virtues

SCRIPTURE IN THE SUMMA

- (i) JusticeI-2 Chron
 - (ii) TemperanceJudith
 - (iii) Courage
 - (a) In attackingI-2 Maccabees
 - (b) In enduring sufferingTobit
 - (iv) Prudence
 - (a) In repelling insidious attacksEsdras
 - (b) In repelling violenceEsther
 - (II) By words
 - (a) Asking for the gift of wisdom; instruction in wisdom through prayer to GodPsalms
 - (b) Teaching wisdom, according to the two tasks of the wise person
 - (i) Exposing liarsJob
 - (ii) Saying what is true
 - (a) Wisdom is commendedWisdom
 - (b) The precepts of wisdom are proposed in "the three books of Solomon"
 - First degree of virtue: political virtue and the proper use of the worldProverbs
 - Second degree of virtue: purifying virtues, leading to contempt of the worldEcclesiastes
-
- Third degree of virtue: virtues of the purified soul: delight in wisdom aloneCanticle
-
- [(III) By words and deeds together (ends in praise of the fathers of the people)Sirach]

(2) BY HELPING (*adiuvando*) THROUGH THE GIFT OF GRACE:
NEW TESTAMENT

- (A) The origin of grace
 - (I) Christ's human nature emphasized
 - (a) Christ's dignity as KING:
 - (a) Mystery of the INCARNATION ManMatthew
 - (b) Christ's dignity as PROPHET:
 - (b) Victory of the RESURRECTION LionMark

Michael M. Waldstein

- (c) Christ's dignity as PRIEST
 - (c) Mystery of the passion OxLuke
 - (II) Christ's divine nature emphasized
 - (d) The heights of divinity EagleJohn
 - (B) The power of gracePaul
 - (C) The power of grace works itself out
 - (I) In the beginning of the ChurchActs
 - (II) In apostolic instruction ordered to the growth of the ChurchCanonical Letters
-
- (III) In the Church's fulfillment: the bride joins the wedding-banquet of the bridegroom: eternal lifeRevelation

The overall intention of Scripture, according to this outline, is to lead to eternal life. The Old Testament leads to life by giving the law, summarized in the love of God and neighbor. The New Testament leads to life by pointing to the gift of grace. Both Testaments have a three-step rhythm of increasing fulfillment. The Old Testament begins with the law of love promulgated by the King who can threaten punishment (Pentateuch). It continues with the king's emissaries, the prophets, who exhort the people to follow the law of love (Joshua to the minor prophets). And it culminates in God's fatherly education of his people in the ways of love. The high-point of this third part is found in the Song of Songs. The New Testament begins with an account of the origin of grace in the life and suffering of Jesus (Gospels). It continues with Paul, the emissary or apostle par excellence, who unfolds the power of grace. And it culminates in the texts that show how the power of grace is consummated. The high-point of this third part is found in the wedding feast of the Lamb (Revelation to John 21-22).

A single principle shapes both of these structural levels, namely, God's providence leading along a path to life from promise to fulfillment. This principle is clearest in the correspondence between the theological high-points of the two Testaments, namely, the Song of Songs and the wedding feast of the Lamb (Revelation to John 21-22). The Song of Songs, the song of love

par excellence, points ahead to the consummation of all love in the wedding of the Lamb (Revelation to John 21-22). It is at this point, the central point of biblical theology, that one can understand why the multiple senses of Scripture (literal and spiritual) are so important to St. Thomas. Scripture speaks not merely as a text (literal sense) but, inasmuch as the final plans of God's providence are revealed in it, it opens up God's speech through things themselves. The sense of the text (literal sense) remains the foundation, but God's revelation carries further, making use of what the text signifies to signify something further.

It is important to be clear on the distinction between literal and spiritual. The spiritual senses are not indirect textual senses such as metaphor or allegory. All forms of speech, from "literal" speech to metaphorical and allegorical speech, are textual senses and thus belong to the literal or historical sense. In the statement, "The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" (Deuteronomy 26,8), the metaphors of hand and arm are used to refer to God's power. The text's literal sense is, therefore, the reference to God's power (*Summa Theologiae* I q. 1, a. 10, ad 3), not the "literal" reference to some hand and arm. Daniel uses complex allegories to signify kingdoms. Beasts appear, each of which signifies a distinct kingdom or king. The literal or historical sense, as St. Thomas understands it, is not the appearing of beasts, but the appearing of kingdoms and kings.

Hircus, vel alia huiusmodi, per quae aliae personae a Christo in Scripturis designantur, non fuerunt res aliquae, sed similitudines imaginariae, ad hoc solum ostensae, ut illae personae significarentur; unde illa signification qua per illas similitudines personae illae, aut regna designantur, non pertinet nisi ad historicum sensum.

A he-goat or other [figures] of this kind, by which persons other than Christ are pointed at in the Scriptures were not things but imaginary likenesses shown only for this purpose, namely, to signify those persons. Therefore, the signification by which persons or kingdoms are pointed out by those similitudes belongs exclusively to the historical sense.

Sed ad CHRISTUM designandum etiam illa quae in rei veritate contigerunt, ordinantur sicut umbra ad veritatem; et ideo talis significatio, qua per huiusmodi res CHRISTUS aut eius membra significantur, facit alium sensum praeter historicum, scilicet allegoricum.

Si alicubi vero inveniatur quod Christus significatur per huiusmodi imaginarias similitudines, talis significatio non excedit sensum litteralem; sicut Christus significatur per lapidem, qui excisus est de monte sine manibus (Dan. 2, 34) (*Quodlibetal Questions* 7, q. 6, a. 2, ad 1).

The allegorical, moral and anagogic senses of Scripture, understood as spiritual senses, differ, therefore, from all literary devices including metaphor and allegory in being senses, not of words, but of things signified by words.

Sicut enim dictum est, sacra Scriptura veritatem quam tradit, dupliciter manifestat: per verba, et per rerum figuras.

Manifestatio autem quae est per verba, facit sensum historicum vel litteralem; unde totum id ad sensum litteralem pertinet quod ex ipsa verborum significatione recte accipitur.

Sed sensus spiritualis, ut dictum est, accipitur vel consistit in hoc

Now, even things that happened in truth are ordered to pointing at CHRIST as a shadow to the truth; and therefore, this sort of signification, in which CHRIST or his members are signified by things, results in another sense besides the historical, namely, the allegorical.

However, if one finds in some other text that Christ is signified by imaginary likenesses, this sort of signification does not go beyond the literal sense. It is in this way that Christ is signified by "the stone which was cut out, not by human hands..." (Dan 2, 34).

As said above, it is in two ways that sacred Scripture manifests the truth which it passes on, namely through words and through figures [that consist] of things.

The manifestation through words results in the historical or literal sense. For this reason, whatever is rightly taken from the signification of the words belongs to the literal sense.

But the spiritual sense, as pointed out above, is taken or consists

quod quaedam res per figuram aliarum rerum exprimuntur, quia visibilia solent esse figurae invisibilibus, ut Dionysius dicit. Inde est quod sensus iste qui ex figuris accipitur, spiritualis vocatur

Veritas autem quam sacra scriptura per figuras rerum tradit, ad duo ordinatur: scilicet ad recte credendum et ad recte operandum.

(1) Si ad recte operandum; sic est sensus moralis, qui alio nomine tropologicus dicitur.

(2) Si autem ad recte credendum, oportet distinguere secundum ordinem credibilium; ut enim Dionysius dicit (Cael. Hier., IV), status Ecclesiae medius est inter statum Synagoga, et statum Ecclesiae triumphantis. Vetus autem testamentum figura fuit novi: vetus simul et novum figura sunt caelestium.

(2-a) Sensus ergo spiritualis, ordinatus ad recte credendum, potest fundari in illo modo figurationis quo vetus testamentum figurat novum: et sic est allegoricus sensus vel typicus, secundum quod ea quae in veteri testamento contigerunt, exponuntur de Christo et Ecclesia.

(2-b) Vel potest fundari in illo

in this that some things are expressed through the figures of other things, because what is visible is the figure of the invisible, as Denys says. This is why the sense taken from figures is called spiritual.

Now, the truth which sacred Scripture passes on through figures [that consist] of things is ordered to two [ends]: to believing rightly and to acting rightly.

(1) If to acting rightly, then we have the moral sense which is also called tropological.

(2) If to believing rightly, one must distinguish according to the order of things believed. For, as Denys says, the state of the Church is between the state of the Synagogue and the state of the triumphant Church. Now, the Old Testament was a figure of the New. The Old together with the New are a figure of heavenly things.

(2-a) The spiritual sense which is ordered to believing rightly can be based on that manner of figuration by which the Old Testament [pre]figures the New, and thus it is the allegorical or typological sense according to which things that happened in the Old Testament are set forth about Christ and the Church.

(2-b) Or it can be based on that

modo figurationis quo novum simul et vetus significant Ecclesiam triumphantem; et sic est sensus anagogicus (*Quodlibetal Questions* 7, q. 6, a. 2, c).

manner of figuration by which the New and the Old [Testament] together signify the triumphant Church, and thus it is the anagogic sense (Greek anagoge = leading up).

In this understanding, spiritual senses are something found *only* in Scripture: only in a text which is the word of God can words lead to a signification found beyond themselves in things, because only God, in whose providence all things are held together and ordered to one goal, can speak through things.

Once one sees the spiritual senses as rooted in God's providence, one can understand why Jesus is always implied in them. As St. Thomas puts it in a text already quoted above "even things that happened in truth [i.e., not only words, but things signified by words] are ordered to pointing at Christ, as a shadow is ordered to the truth; and therefore, this sort of signification, in which Christ or his members are signified by things, results in another sense besides the historical, namely, the allegorical" (*Quodlibetal Questions* 7, q. 6, a. 2, ad 1).

Given the manner in which they are rooted in God's providence the spiritual senses are not an automatic schema that applies to everything spoken of in Scripture.

AD QUINTUM DICENDUM, quod quatuor isti sensus non attribuntur sacrae Scripturae, ut in qualibet eius parte sit in istis quatuor sensibus exponenda; sed quandoque istis quatuor, quandoque tribus, quandoque duobus, quandoque uno tantum.

TO THE FIFTH: These four senses are not attributed to Scripture such that every part of Scripture must be interpreted by reference to those four senses, but in some places by reference to those four, in some by three, in some by two and in some by only one.

THE PRINCIPLE FOR DETERMINING THE NUMBER OF SENSES

In sacra enim Scriptura praecipue ex prioribus posteriora significantur; et ideo quandoque in sacra Scriptura secundum sensum litteralem dicitur aliquid de priori quod potest spiritualiter de posterioribus exponi, sed non convertitur.

For in sacred Scripture what is later is signified by what is earlier and so sometimes something is said in sacred Scripture according to the literal sense about something earlier which can be set forth spiritually about something later, but the relation is not convertible.

FOUR Senses: The Old Testament

Inter omnia autem quae in sacra Scriptura narrantur, prima sunt illa quae ad vetus testamentum pertinent; et ideo quae secundum litteralem sensum ad facta veteris testamenti spectant, possunt quatuor sensibus exponi.

First among all that is told in sacred Scripture, is what belongs to the Old Testament. And therefore events in the Old Testament expressed by the literal sense can be set forth according to the four senses.

FOUR Senses: Christ

Secunda vero sunt illa quae pertinent ad statum praesentis Ecclesiae, in quibus

Second is what belongs to the state of the present Church among which

- (1) illa sunt priora quae ad caput pertinent, respectu eorum quae pertinent ad membra;
- (2) quia ipsum corpus verum Christi, et ea quae in ipso sunt gesta, sunt figura corporis Christi mystici, et eorum quae in ipso geruntur,
- (3) ut in ipso, scilicet Christo, exemplum vivendi sumere debeamus.

- (1) what belongs to the head is prior to what belongs to the members.
- (2) For the body is truly Christ's and what is done in him is a figure of Christ's mystical body and what is done in it,
- (3) so that it is in him, Christ, that we must find the exemplar for living.
- (4) It is also in Christ that the

(4) In Christo etiam futura gloria nobis praemonstrata est;

future glory is shown to us already now.

- (1) unde ea quae ad litteram de ipso Christo capite dicuntur,
- (2) possunt exponi et allegorice, referendo ad corpus eius mysticum;
- (3) et moraliter, referendo ad actus nostros, qui secundum ipsum debent reformari;
- (4) et anagogice, in quantum in Christo est nobis iter gloriae demonstratum.

- (1) For this reason, that which is said according to the letter about Christ himself, the head,
- (2) can be set forth allegorically, referring to his mystical body,
- (3) and morally, referring to our acts that must be formed anew following him himself,
- (4) and anagogically, inasmuch as in Christ the way of glory is shown to us.

THREE Senses: The Church

Sed quando secundum litteralem sensum dicitur aliquid de Ecclesia, non potest exponi allegorice; nisi forte ea quae dicuntur de primitiva Ecclesia, exponantur quantum ad futurum statum Ecclesiae praesentis; possunt tamen exponi moraliter et anagogice.

But when something is said of the Church according to the literal sense, it cannot be set forth allegorically, except, perhaps, that what is said about the Early Church may be set forth with reference to the future state of the present Church. However, it can be set forth morally and anagogically.

TWO Senses: Moral Instruction

Ea vero quae moraliter dicuntur secundum sensum litteralem, non consueverunt exponi nisi allegorice.

Those things, however, that are said with reference to morals according to the literal sense are set forth only allegorically.

ONE Sense: Glory

Illa vero quae secundum sensum litteralem pertinent ad statum gloriae, nullo alio sensu con-

Those things, finally that belong to the state of glory are set forth in no other sense, because they

sueverunt exponi; eo quod ipsa non sunt figura aliorum, sed ab omnibus aliis figurata (*Quodlibetal Questions* 7, q. 6, a. 2, ad 5).

are not the figure of other things but rather [pre]figured by everything else.

One can observe in this text that Jesus stands both in the middle and at the end of the spiritual senses. He stands in the middle, announced by the history that precedes him and announcing the history that comes after him. And he stands at the end as the one in whom all things are consummated. In this way a reference to Jesus is an essential feature of every spiritual sense. For this reason St. Thomas can call Scripture "the heart of Christ" both in the sense that it manifests this heart and in the sense that the meaning of its words and the meaning of things is disclosed by that heart.

CONCLUSION: THE FIVE WAYS AS A TEST-CASE

If theology, according to St. Thomas, occupies itself with the inexhaustible rivers of God's revelation poured from the pierced side of Jesus, if the one rule of theology is Scripture, and if Scripture in its four senses has Christ at its center and end, one is led to adopt a particular approach to the *Summa Theologiae*.

(1) One is led to see the *Summa* as standing essentially in the service of Scripture, as a particular pedagogical way of lending voice to Scripture.

(2) Since Scripture "manifests the heart of Christ" one is led to expect that the *Summa Theologiae* is not a systematic text in a sense akin to a geometric demonstration where one proceeds from foundations to what is implicit in those foundations. One is led to expect that breaking pieces of a system from the *Summa Theologiae* as "treatises" intelligible in themselves will not do it justice. One is led to expect that its parts are designed to interlock, to open up more and more what remains inexhaustible, namely, the rivers of the Trinity flowing from the side of Christ into the world, as mediated by the word of Scripture.

(3) The "five ways" of demonstrating God's existence from effects can serve as a test-case for the proposed approach to the

Summa. Given St. Thomas's explicit discussion of the relation between Scripture and philosophical arguments shortly before the five ways are introduced ("This science [=theology] can take something from various kinds of philosophical learning, not because it needs them by necessity, but to make that which is passed on in this science more manifest" (*Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2)), one is led to understand Exodus 3,14 cited in the same article (*Summa Theologiae*, I q. 2, a. 3, sed contra), as the pre-given revelation which the five ways are intended to "make more manifest." As philosophical arguments developed in a theological text, the five ways are judged correctly to the degree in which they are judged, not as foundations of the theological enterprise, but as *subservient* parts, *subservient* to the larger whole of God's self-revelation.

In his commentary on John, St. Thomas argues that Jesus's statements, "Unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins" (John 8,24) and "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am" (John 8,28), make use of Exodus 3,14 and show its fulfillment. God in the flesh, who repeats the original words of divine self-revelation "I am," proves himself as the God of the covenant by dying in the flesh and by offering the hope of salvation in his own blood (*Commentary on John*, 8,24.28, nn. 1179; 1191). Since Exodus 3,14 prefigures John 8,24.28 and is fulfilled in it, it would be a mistake to consider the Exodus quote with its auxiliaries, the five ways, in isolation from the discussion of the Son's incarnation and passion in the *Tertia Pars*.

This point is confirmed by St. Thomas's division of the *Summa* into three parts (*Summa Theologiae*, I q. 2, prologue): God and the flowing of creatures from God; the movement of rational creatures into God; Christ who through his incarnation is the way to reach God. These three parts focus on aspects of one and the same process. It is the flowing of rational creatures from their origin that imparts to them the longing for that origin. It is not surprising, then, that the prologue to the *Prima Secundae* begins with a brief recapitulation of the movement discussed in the *Prima Pars*, the procession of God's image from its exemplar

SCRIPTURE IN THE SUMMA

(Ia IIae, prol.). The *Prima Secundae* and *Secunda Secundae* look at the flowing of the image from its exemplar from the other side, from the side of the image's longing and effective tendency toward its exemplar. The *Tertia Pars*, finally, speaks of Christ as the way. This division suggests that the *Summa's* three parts are best read as distinct perspectives on a whole which must be kept in view from the very beginning.

NOTES

¹ Ceslas Spicq, *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, 15.695.

² Michael J. Buckley, S.J., "Necessary Foundation? The Function of the Proofs for the Being of God Within the Entire Structure of the *Summa Theologiae*," Introductory notes for a faculty seminar on St. Thomas's theological method, University of Notre Dame, 1991/92.

³ "Aut enim sacra scriptura dicitur canon bibliae, aut dicta sanctorum patrum. [The term] 'sacred Scripture' refers either to the canon of the Bible or to the sayings of the Fathers" (Sent. I, d. 33, a. 5, obj. 3). "Hic per scripturas non canonem Bibliae, sed dicta sanctorum significat." By 'Scriptures' he [Peter Lombard] does not refer here to the canon of the Bible in this text, but to the sayings of the holy [Fathers]." (Sent. II, d. 24, expositio textus). On this use of "sacra scriptura" for non-biblical texts, a use widespread up to the seventeenth century, see Yves Congar, "Traditio und Sacra Doctrina bei Thomas von Aquin," in J. Betz and H. Fries, ed., *Kirche und Überlieferung: Festschrift Joseph Rupert Geiselmann* (Freiburg: Herder, 1960) 170-210, esp. 181, note 28.

Quodlibeta