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MARY IN SACRED SCRIPTURE: AN ECUMENICAL REFLECTION*

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ONE OF THE KEY DIFFERENCES between the Catholic and the Evangelical understanding of Scripture is the role that Tradition plays in passing on the realities mediated by Scripture. Underlying this may be a different implicit understanding of cognition itself. A short study such as this will be unable to address these issues in the depth that they merit, but it may help to locate an area of convergence as well as difference in a way that moves the conversation forward.

To approach this topic, I have selected a method that in archeology would be called a "trench" approach. Rather than scrape off layer after layer to see the whole of the site in its successive historical periods, I will dig a trench and then try to elaborate certain principles that seem to be explicative of what has been uncovered. I have selected for my "trench" one of the two events in which Mary, the mother of Jesus, plays a clear role in the Gospel of John. There are only two accounts in which she is explicitly mentioned: the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1-12) and Jesus' words to Mary and to John from the Cross (John 19:25-27). For the sake of brevity, and because one text will be sufficient to illustrate the Catholic manner of reading such texts, I will begin with an historical–theological analysis of John 2:1-12, an enigmatic text, and then trace a history of how the text has

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been understood in the history of the Church. I will then present some reflections on the principle that "the Church is the interpreting subject of the Scriptures" as being the basis for a Catholic understanding of the role of Mary in the economy of salvation. Then, after giving some examples of "Tradition at work," I will conclude with a few reflections on how one might proceed from here.

I. A Study of John 2:1-12

A) General Remarks

Revelation takes place primarily in *events* that require divine light to be understood. These events reach us through the life of the community that narrates them, thus interpreting them by transposing event into word. They also live on in the memory of the community as liturgically enacted, commented upon, and invoked as principles of community memory in prayer and moral action. All of this activity forms a community culture, and some of this goes to make up a body of authoritative literature that is recognized to be the work of God in a particular way, having a unique function and authority in God's plan of salvation.[1]

This principle is enunciated in *Dei Verbum* (no. 2):

> This economy of revelation is brought about by actions and words intrinsically connected with each other so that the works accomplished by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm both the teaching and the realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the works and bring to light the mystery contained in them.

Commenting on these words, Hans Urs von Balthasar says:

> The gradual clothing of the events within the folds of Scripture is not only an inevitable drawback (because the people of the Orient of that time did not know,

[1] For a good account of the reality of Scripture as part of God's plan, see Telford Work, *Living and Active: Scripture in the Economy of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002).

in fact, an historiography in the modern understanding of the term), but assuredly also this corresponds unqualifiedly to a positive intention of the Spirit.[2]

This means, in effect, that we must make every effort to enter into sympathetic communion with the literary expression employed by the Holy Spirit through the human authors, transmitters, glossators, etc., but we must also recognize that grasping the intention of the author is not merely a literary and psychological task—"what he was trying to say"—but also a theological responsibility, being in touch with the *reality* his mind intended. Otherwise, to quote the familiar expression of George Steiner, our commentary becomes nothing but "texts about texts."[3] I will return to this fundamental principle of cognition later.

Because of the "intrinsic connection between actions and words," it is of fundamental importance to contextualize the literary means employed by the author. One of the primary contributions of historical and literary study has been to render a text more intelligible by placing it in its cultural and linguistic context and to understand the immediate context of a given passage by appreciating its place and function within the structure of the work itself. I will attempt this now in regard to the passage under consideration.

B) The Wedding at Cana

And on the third day, a wedding took place in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus was invited—and his disciples—to the wedding. And as the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him: They have no wine. And Jesus said to her: What [is this] to me and to you, woman? Has not my hour come?[4] His mother said to the servants: What ever he says to you, do it. There were standing there six stone jars, in keeping with the purification [rites] of the Jews, each one holding two or three measures (16-24 gallons). Jesus said to

[2] Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Il senso spirituale della scrittura," *Ricerche Teologiche* 5 (1994): 7.

[3] George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 6. Elsewhere in the same study, he says, "It is the break of the covenant between word and world which constitutes one of the very few genuine revolutions of spirit in Western history and which defines modernity itself" (ibid., 93).

[4] I will explain and defend this translation below.

them: Fill the jars with water. And they filled them up to the top. And he said to them: Draw [it] now and take [it] to the headwaiter; so they took it. As the headwaiter tasted the water become wine, and he did not know where it was from—the servants knew who had drawn the water—the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him: Everyone first puts out the good wine, and when they have drunk plenty, the inferior wine; you have kept the good wine until now. This, the beginning of the signs, Jesus did at Cana of Galilee; and he manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

After this he went down to Capernaum, he and his mother, and his brothers, and his disciples, and he remained there not many days.

C) *The Context through Which John Interprets Cana*

1. Narrative

It is important to locate this text within a brief and schematic presentation of the nature of narrative.[5] I begin by defining narrative as a literary presentation of a completed action. Tzvetan Todorov describes its basic structure:

> The minimal complete plot consists in the passage from one equilibrium to another. An "ideal" narrative begins with a stable situation which is disturbed by some power or force. There results a state of disequilibrium; by the action of a force directed in the opposite direction, the equilibrium is re-established; the second equilibrium is similar to the first, but the two are never identical.[6]

If we could use an X-ray on a narrative text, we would discover that lying underneath the actual word texture are several layers which, for our purposes, may be reduced to three: event, plot, and "poetics." The *event* is "what happened"; it may be something the narrator makes up or borrows from the story tradition of the culture, or, as in our case, it may be an historical happening. On the second level, this event must be given shape; that is, its *plot* must be discerned and presented. The action has

[5] Much of what follows draws from Francis Martin and Sean McEvenue, "Truth Told in the Bible: Bible Poetics and the Question of Truth," in *The International Bible Commentary: A Catholic and Ecumenical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century,* ed. William R. Farmer et al. (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1998).

[6] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose,* trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 111.

to be lifted out of its historical flow of events and given its own beginning, middle, and end (equilibrium—disequilibrium—new equilibrium). To do this well is the art of storytelling, as Aristotle observed long ago. Finally, there is the more complex layer lying just below the surface of the narrative text. It may be called its *poetics*. This term refers to the whole complex of images, allusions, resonances, and associations, the flow of thought and feeling created by the words. It is at this level that the narrative interprets the event in an important way. If *event* may be compared to a room, then *plot* is the architecture of the room and *poetics* is its furniture.

The understanding of layers in narrative is very important in making out what the inspired authors are doing when they recount an event. Every narrator is an interpreter, and those whom the Holy Spirit instructed and inspired are no exception. In fact, the ancients, who had a much more sophisticated understanding of this law of narrative than do we with our mechanical view of history-writing, took their responsibility very seriously. It is most especially at the level of poetics that the biblical authors interpret the event, and it is at this level that they choose words, images, and so forth that will place the event on which they are meditating within the interpretive context of the biblical tradition.[7] For the New Testament the basic interpretive context is the Old Testament, often already interpreted by successive retellings in the Old Testament itself and in the liturgical celebrations of the events narrated therein.[8] As a general principle it may be said that when the Fourth Gospel re-reads and alludes to Old Testament passages in order to shed light on an event it is recording, it understands them in the light of their contemporary Jewish interpretation, especially their liturgical expression in the life of the people. Thus the "poetics" of a

[7] For a masterful analysis of the poetics of OT narrative, seeMeir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative. Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

[8] For a study of this procedure in the OT, see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).

Johannine narrative is often drawn from the liturgical life of the Judaism of the first century.

2. Application to the Cana Event: Allusions to Sinai

Such a principle is particularly helpful in understanding why John is careful to locate our incident "on the third day."[9] After the introductory presentation of Jesus as the Word of God made flesh now manifest to us and revealing his glory (John 1:1-18), there is a succession of revelatory events that are presented as taking place over a period of four days. There is *first* the Baptist's witness to those sent from Jerusalem, pointing away from himself to the presence of one in their midst who is greater than John but unrecognized by his interlocutors. Then, *on the next day* (1:29), John witnesses to his own disciples regarding what he learned at Jesus' baptism, and calls Jesus "Lamb of God" and "Son of God." *On the next day* (1:35), after the Baptist's reiterated designation of Jesus, two disciples follow Jesus and one, Andrew, brings Peter to Jesus who gives him a new name. Then, *on the next day* (1:43), Jesus calls Philip who calls Nathanael who is promised that you (pl.) will see the Son of Man as "the place," "the house of God," and "the gate of heaven" of Jacob's dream (Gen 28:16-17)—in short, the new Temple where the glory of God will be revealed.[10]

Four days of successive revelation have passed, culminating in a solemn promise made to Nathanael, the fulfillment of which will be the matter of the rest of the Gospel. Then, "*on the third*

[9] In what follows, I am presenting one view of this section of the Fourth Gospel. It is, in my opinion, the most coherent and most in keeping with the general manner in which the Gospel interprets the events in the life of Jesus in the light of the biblical traditions of Israel. My main point is to show the importance of the Johannine passage that mentions Mary, the manner in which this event is to be understood and its relevance for a biblical Mariology.

[10] For an extended discussion of the Jewish background understanding of Jacob's dream, see Francis Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man*, Biblioteca di Scienze Religiose 14 (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1976). Also worth considering is the perceptive remark of R. Bultmann, "Jesus is the Son of Man, not as understood by Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic, as he who will come one day on the clouds of heaven, but in his earthly presence; for in this earthly presence, in which he enjoys continual communion with the Father, he shows to faith the miracle of his doxa" (Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G.R. Beasley-Murray, R.W. N. Hoare, and J. K. Riches [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971], 107).

day there was a wedding feast at Cana." The closest parallel to this succession of four days followed by a notice of "the third day" is in the rabbinic rendering of the Exodus account of the giving of the Torah.[11] In the Old Testament text itself (Exod 19:10-19), the instructions concerning preparation for the Lord's descent mention four times that this will take place on "the third day." Three of these expressions, in the Septuagint, are couched in the same Greek phrase as is found in John's Gospel. There are several indications that, in New Testament times, Jewish liturgical practice included not three but several—either six or seven—days of preparation for the feast of Pentecost, the giving of the Law.[12] It is to that practice that John is alluding. Several texts that reflect that practice are extant, the oldest of which is the "Tractates" (*Mekhilta*) on Exodus attributed to Rabbi Ishmael, the substance of which dates from the second century of our era.

Confirmation that the Sinai event as understood in the whole of the Jewish tradition is the correct background for John's account of Cana can be seen in how the notion of "glory" (*kabod*) becomes more explicit as the tradition develops. Exodus 19:16 mentions a "heavy cloud" (*anan kabed*) on Mount Sinai as YHWH descends. In Deuteronomy 5:24, when, after mentioning the same phenomenon, the people say: "Behold YHWH our God had us see his glory [*kĕbodo*] and his greatness." In the Aramaic interpretive translations (Targums) of the Sinai passage, the word "glory" occurs frequently.[13] Finally, on Exodus 19:9 in Targum Neophyti, we find the theme of "belief": "And YHWH said to Moses: Behold my Word [*memra*] will be revealed to you in the might [in the

[11] There are, of course, other competing explanations of the series of days mentioned by John. The closest parallel is the liturgical practice commemorating the giving of the Law as reflected in several early Jewish texts that comment on Exodus 19 and following.

[12] The variation between "six" and "seven" days depends upon whether "the third day" means three days after the aforementioned days or simply, in the Semitic manner of counting days, "the third day" includes the last of the preceding series.

[13] The fundamental work regarding Sinai in the Jewish tradition and its relation to John is to be found in J. Potin, *La Fête juive de la Pentecôte: Étude des textes liturgiques. I. Commentaire, II Textes, Lectio Divina 65a, 65b* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1971). See also A.M. Serra, "Le tradizioni della teofania sinaitica nel Targum dello Pseudo Jonathan Es. 19.24 e Giov. 1:19-2:12," *Marianum* 33 (1971): 1-39. It is nicely summed up in Francis Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading John 1-4* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 55-59.

thick] of the cloud so that the people may hear when I speak with you and also that they may always believe in your prophecy, Moses my servant."[14]

3. Other Possible Echoes of Sinai Traditions

The instruction of the Mother of Jesus to the servants, "Do whatever he says to you," is clearly reminiscent of the threefold response of the people at Sinai to the proposal of the Covenant: "all that YHWH says we will do" (Exod 19:8; 24:3, 7).[15] Later rabbinic commentary can see this proposal on the part of YHWH and its wholehearted acceptance as effecting a marriage.[16] This may explain the discreet insistence on the nature of the occasion achieved by the twofold notice in the first two verses of our text that this is a "wedding feast" (*gamos*). Finally, one may note that wine is a frequent symbol in Israel for the Torah/Wisdom, for the eschatological age, and sometimes a combination of these, often while evoking or explaining Proverbs 9:5: "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed."[17]

[14] Translation by Martin McNamara and Michael Maher in *Neophyti 1*, edited by Alejandro Diez Macho, v. 2, *Éxodo* (Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, 1970), 462. Compare Exodus 14: 31: "And Israel saw the great work which YHWH did against the Egyptians, and the people feared YHWH; and they believed in YHWH and in his servant Moses."

[15] It may also echo the words of Pharaoh to the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; do whatever he tells you." (Gen 41:55). This is less likely, however, since the nature of the relationship between Jesus and Mary is different, and the allusion to the covenant is in keeping with the general allusion to the covenant in the present context.

[16] Commenting upon Exodus 19:17, the Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael (d. 2d century) says: " 'The Lord came from Sinai,' to receive Israel as a bridegroom comes forth to meet the bride." See Jacob Z. Lauterbach, ed., *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael,* The Jewish Publication Society Library of Jewish Classics (1933; reprint, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976), 2:219. For a more complete listing of texts in this regard, see B. Olsson, *Structure and Meaning in the Fourth Gospel: A Text-Linguistic Analysis of John 2:1-11 and 4:1-42*, Coniectanea Biblica, New Testament Series 6 (Lund: Gleerup, 1974), 26. For a discussion of the wider, usually messianic atmosphere of the New Testament use of the marriage theme, including those NT passages in which Jesus is called, or calls himself "spouse," see Ethelbert Stauffer, "*gameo*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament 1*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Geoffrey Bomiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1964).

[17] For a complete study of this theme, see A.M. Serra, *Contributi dell'antica letteratura giudaica per l'esegesi di Gv. 2:1-12 e 19:25-27*, Scripta Pontificiae Facultatis Theologicae 'Marianum' *31* (Rome: Herder, 1977), 229-60.

D) An Interpretation of John's Interpretation of the Cana Incident

While other interpreters point to other possible background settings for the narrative and its allusions,[18] it is clear to everyone that the Cana incident is very important in John's understanding. It is the first complete narrative in the Gospel; it is included in a series of days of revelation; it is the first/beginning of Jesus' signs; it reveals his glory and initiates the disciples' faith; and it is paired with the incident at the end of the Gospel that then leads into the statement, "after *this,* Jesus knowing that *now* everything had been accomplished . . ." (John 19:28).

Accepting the liturgical practice of preparing for the celebration of the giving of the Torah as background for the narrative interpretation of the incident, we are alerted to see in the expression "on the third day" an indication that there will be another Sinai revelation. Although it is historical reminiscence, the mention of the "wedding feast" probably alludes, as I have shown, to the spousal overtones attributed in Israel's tradition to the covenant at Sinai. Then, as the third factor in the setting of the narrative along with "the third day" and the "wedding feast," there is the presence of "the mother of Jesus," followed by the mention that "Jesus was invited—and his disciples—to the wedding."

Having established what narratologists call the "equilibrium," John introduces us into the "disequilibrium," namely, the notice that the wine ran short. The "force" toward new equilibrium is described in steps: the words of the mother of Jesus to Jesus, "they have no wine"; Jesus' reply; the words of his mother to the servants; the words of Jesus to the servants; their response. The new and better equilibrium is articulated in the words of the

[18] I am convinced that the liturgically interpreted Sinai incident forms the allusive background of the Johannine narrative. However much of what I say, in company with nearly all commentators, about the importance of this event as presented in the Fourth Gospel, especially in regard to the role of Mary, while clarified by the Sinai allusions, does not depend upon these allusions for its basic message.

headwaiter.[19] This is followed by the narrator's comment: "This, the beginning of the signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee; and he manifested his glory and his disciples believed in him." The solemnity of the narrator's comment, with its three heavily freighted Johannine terms—"sign," "glory," and "believe"—invites us to look more deeply into this event in an effort to move, as the ancient commentators would express it, from *historia* to *mysterium*.[20]

The *historia* of the event is simple. Jesus miraculously changed water into wine at a wedding feast in Cana. The *mysterium*—the inner dimension of the event—requires study and a share in John's understanding. This is achieved by allowing the Holy Spirit, through the words of John, to bring us into living contact with the event itself: we understand and speak about this event under the aegis and authority of the biblical narrative.

Every event, since it is the action of subjects and not merely of agents, has some degree of interiority. This can range from the apparently insignificant action of two men shaking hands—until we know that this gesture reverses twelve years of enmity—to the death of a man on a cross—until we are taught prophetically that this brings about the salvation of the world. Jean Lacroix once described this inner dimension of history, referring to it as "mystery": "Mystery is that which opens up temporality and gives it its depth. It introduces a vertical dimension into temporality. It

[19] There is a similar rhythm in the second Cana miracle, explicitly so named (Jn 4:46-54). There is a request, an apparent rebuke, a further insistence, Jesus' declarative word, the statement of the official's faith, and finally the report that "he and all his household believed." Both the mother of Jesus and the royal official are brought to a new level in their relation to Jesus as a result of the apparent rebuke and their response - Mary as disciple and collaborator and the official as believer.

[20] "What he did then, let us listen to now, and in his external action let us make out the mystery" (Rupert of Deutz, *Commentaria in evangelium sancti Johannis,* ed. H. Haacke, *Corpus Christianorum continuatio medievalis* 9:231). Saint Augustine has much the same to say: "*In ipso facto* [the event itself], *non solum in dicto* [the text of the Old Testament], *mysterium* [the plan of God revealed in Christ] *requirere debemus*," (*On Psalm 68* [*PL* 36:858]). For more patristic expressions of the same theme, one may consult Ignace de la Potterie "The Spiritual Sense of Scripture," *Communio* 23 (1996): 738-56.

makes of it the time of Revelation, of unveiling."[21] Postponing for the moment a broader discussion of the topic of "mystery" itself, I wish to describe John's understanding of the event as he narrates it.

1. Coming in Touch with the Event

Jesus performed a prophetic gesture that foretold that the future effects of his ministry, including his death, resurrection, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, would be the promulgation of a New Law. John saw this and presented, in symbolic language, the anticipated fulfillment of the Sinai event as it was transmitted in the liturgical practice of his people. Jesus' prophetic gesture at Cana was much the same as his multiplying the loaves, in which he foretold how he himself would one day be the eternal and living manna for God's people. This gesture in regard to the bread, taking place as it did near the feast of Passover and in the desert, was partially but also erroneously understood by the crowd as Jesus' claim to be the new Moses: "When the people saw the sign which he had done, they said, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!' . . . they were about to come and take him by force to make him king" (John 6:14-15). The context of this manna sign, it is true, as well as the discourse that follows, made the gesture easier to understand. On the other hand, Jesus' action in cleansing the temple, which occurs in John's Gospel immediately after the sign at Cana, and prophesies the new

[21] Jean Lacroix, *Histoire et mystère* (Tournai: Castermann, 1962). I give here the complete text: "Un temps sans mystère, si meme on pouvait le concevoir, serait un temps vide, strictement linéaire. Le mystère est ce qui ouvre la temporalité et lui donne sa profoundeur, ce qui introduit une dimension verticale: il en fait le temps de la révélation et du dévoilement. Ainsi acquiert-il sens" (7). The same understanding is fundamental to the work of Henri de Lubac: "God acts *within* history, God reveals himself *within* history. Even more, God inserts himself *within* history, thus granting it a 'religious consecration' which forces us to take it seriously. *Historical* realities have a *depth;* they are to be understood *spiritually: historika pneumatikôs*. . . . and on the other hand, *spiritual* realities appear in the movement of becoming, they are to be understood *historically*: *pneumatika historikôs*. . . . The Bible, which contains revelation, thus also contains, in a certain way, the *history* of the world" (Henri de Lubac, *Catholicisme: Les aspects sociaux de dogme chrétien* (Paris: Cerf, 1938, 1941) 119. The translation is from de la Potterie, "The Spiritual Sense of Scripture," 743 (emphasis in original).

temple, despite or because of Jesus' words was not fully understood: "When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken" (John 2:22). Such a remembering is a striking instance of the role of the Paraclete: "But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and will bring to your remembrance all I said to you" (John 14:26).

Up to this point I have concentrated upon the transposition of the gift of the Law at Sinai, prophetically realized here and to be effected at the Cross.[22] There are other aspects of the narrated mystery. One of the most enigmatic of these is the abrupt introduction of "the mother of Jesus," never before mentioned in the gospel and presented to us here even before Jesus and the disciples. All that is initially said of her is that she was "there" (*ekei*). There then follows the notice that Jesus was "invited" (singular verb), and his disciples. The disequilibrium is introduced by an expression that could be translated, "and as the wine was failing." This is continued by the words of Jesus' mother: "They have no wine." In light of the other markers in the text so far ("third day," "wedding feast"), a reader familiar with the current overtones of the Sinai story could already suspect that the "wine" being spoken of here is more than the drink required at the wedding.

2. The Nucleus of the Restored Equilibrium

As all commentators point out, the first part of Jesus' response is clear; it establishes a gap of interest or of understanding between Jesus and his mother, placing their relationship on a new

[22] In using the word "transposition" here, I am avoiding the Hegelian overtones of the word usually used to describe this process, namely, "sublation" (*Aufhebung*). The most helpful description of this process is that by Bernard Lonergan (who uses "sublation"): "What sublates goes beyond what is sublated, introduces something new and distinct, yet so far from interfering with the sublated or destroying it, on the contrary needs it, includes it, preserves all its proper features and properties, and carries them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context" (Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* [New York: Herder & Herder, 1972], 241).

basis: "What [is this] to me and to you?" Jesus calls his mother "woman," a term he is recorded to have used in addressing other women,[23] but not a term recorded as a form of address to one's own mother. Perhaps the most satisfactory explanation, one adopted by many commentators, is that the term alludes to Eve ("she shall be called woman [*gynē*] because she was taken from her man" [Gen 2:23]). Such a designation is even more apt when one considers Jesus' words to her from the cross.[24] The presence of multiple allusive contexts in one narrative (here Gen 2 and Exod 19-24) is found elsewhere in John, a notable example being the allusions to the sources of the "living water" in John 7:38.

After some form of distance has been established, Jesus' response is given. It can be understood in one of two ways. The majority of commentators, both ancient and modern, understand the phrase to mean, "my hour has not yet come." A certain small number, also ancient and modern, defend the meaning, perfectly justifiable on philological grounds, "has not my hour already come?"[25] In either case, the key word "hour" becomes another instance of the Johannine "plasticity" in regard to certain terms (the verb *pisteuein* would be another). In addition to our text here, there are several types of statements regarding the term *'ōra* in the Fourth Gospel.[26] When it is used with the article, it always refers to the hour of the passion and resurrection, the glorification of Jesus. Without the article, the hour can be described as "coming" or "coming and already here." With a possessive pronoun, "hour" designates a specific moment.

The determination of the meaning of Jesus' response to Mary was significantly advanced by a 1974 article of Albert Vanhoye.[27]

[23] John 4:21 (the Samaritan woman); 20:13 (Mary Magdalene); Matthew 15:28 (the Canaanite woman).

[24] This opinion is that of Raymond Brown who links the "woman" here to Revelation 12. For a discussion and references to other authors, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John I-XII*, Anchor Bible 29 (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 107.

[25] The most recent study of this phrase is that of Albert Vanhoye, "Interrogation johannique et éxègese de Cana (Jn 2:4)," *Biblica* 55 (1974): 157-67.

[26] See Brown, *John I-XII*,517-18.; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:507-8.

[27] Vanhoye, "Interrogation johannique."

I will try to sum up in a few lines the main direction of that study. First, Vanhoye points to a characteristic form of question in the Fourth Gospel that supposes a negative response but, in reality, requires a positive response, though of a different nature than that expected by the question: "Are you greater than our father Jacob?"(John 4:13-14); "Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?" (John 7:35).[28]

Second, Vanhoye indicates a particular grammatical form in the New Testament in which, when a question is responded to by the introductory word *oupō*, the response itself is always a question.[29] Thus, following upon the first question, "What [is this—the lack of wine—] to me and to you woman?" the response should be understood as another question: "Has not my hour come?" Understood thus, the preceding term "woman" should be understood as a declaration that from now on the relation between Jesus and his mother is founded, not on the ties of human birth, but on the nature of Jesus' mission as determined by the Father.[30] If one accepts the allusion to Eve in the term "woman," then Jesus' words mean that the relation is no longer son and mother but rather "Adam" and "Eve." Jesus' question to her, then, admits of both a positive and a negative response: yes, the hour has incipiently begun, and no, it is not yet here in the fullness of its reality. Such a view of the working out of the Father's plan in history is characteristic of the New Testament, particularly of John, and explains why he can state that this "sign" revealed the "glory" of Jesus. Even if one retains Jesus' words as a statement about the "hour" not yet present, John's use of the expression "he manifested [*ephanerōsen*] his glory" introduces the

[28] For other examples, see John 8:53, 57 (about Abraham); 8:22 ("Is he going to kill himself?").

[29] Vanhoye credits the study of Boismard for having first pointed this out: Marie-Émile Boismard, *Du baptême à Cana* (Paris: Cerf, 1956). Examples of this characteristic are found in Matt 16:19; Mark 4:40; 8:17.

[30] The Synoptic Gospels contain examples of the same kind of "distancing from" or transposing of the relationship based on physical motherhood. See Luke 2:41-50; Mark 3:31-35 par; Luke 11:27-28. This process of distancing was probably a form of temptation for Mary who had to undergo such temptations as did her Son himself. For a discussion of Jesus' forming of a "Messianic family," see Xabier Pikaza, "Familia messiánica y matrimonio en Marcos: Introducción exegética," *Estudios Trinitarios (Salamanca)* 28 (1994): 321-421.

same tension between the hour begun but not yet brought to completion (John 19:28) as does Jesus' question, "Has not my hour come?"

Mary's next action shows that she accepts her new relation to Jesus as disciple with a special role as his companion in the now initiated "hour." Understanding this significant shift in their relationship is the key to understanding the full dimension of the narrative.[31] As I have already shown, her words echo those of the people in response to God's offer of a covenant: "Whatever he says to you, do it." After a description of the water jars destined for Jewish purification rites,[32] we hear of Jesus' directives, their being fulfilled, and the reaction of the head waiter. His words to the groom (who only appears in the narrative at this point) are a perfect illustration of the Johannine capacity to retain the "earthy" dimension of an event while having it reveal a divine mystery (recall the conversation with the Samaritan woman). "You have kept the excellent wine until now," is at once the conclusion of the wedding narrative and the proclamation that, indeed, the initial "sublation" of the wisdom and Torah of Sinai has begun. As Augustine expresses it: "The choice wine Christ has kept until now: this is his Gospel."[33]

At this point, John ends his narrative proper and begins his commentary: "This, the beginning of the signs, Jesus performed (*epoiēsen*) at Cana in Galilee." This sign is the *archē* of the signs, both as being the first and as being, as it were, the "seed" of all that follow. Much work has been done on the significance of the term *semeion* in the Fourth Gospel. For our purposes, it will suffice to use the following two descriptions of "symbol" given by Gilbert Durand: "The symbol is the epiphany of a present reality" and "The symbol is, by the very nature of the signified something

[31] "As soon as this is grasped, the implied request, the persistence of trust, the triumph of faith, are seen to hang together harmoniously" (Bruce F. Westcott, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London: John Murray, 1902), 36).

[32] The exact symbolic function of this description need not be discussed here, as it does not touch directly on the narrative's teaching about the mother of Jesus. Most commentators see in it a reference to the water of the OT becoming the wine of the NT.

[33] Augustine, *Tractates on John* 9.2 (*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* 36/38 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1954), 91.

inaccessible, an *epiphany,* that is, an appearance, by and in the signifier, of the inexpressible."[34] These definitions apply equally well to the literary creations of symbol by which reality is revealed, not represented, and to a narrative that gives a word-existence to an event in such a way that the event itself can be seen as a symbol, an epiphany, of some other event in which it objectively shares. Entering into this world is what the ancients meant by the "spiritual understanding" (*sensus spiritualis*) of a biblical event/text. I will return to this briefly in the next section.

By this sign Jesus reveals his "glory." This mention of the *doxa/kabod* of Jesus is an evocation, as I have shown, of the revealed glory of YHWH at Sinai, and thus to Jesus as the source of the new Covenant. But there is more. "Glory" in this sense refers to a uniquely divine reality:

> The expression "the glory of YHWH" means God Himself insofar as He is revealed in his majesty, His power, the glow of His holiness, the dynamism of His being. The glory of YHWH is therefore epiphanic. . . . God manifests his glory by striking interventions. . . . In the second type of divine manifestations the visible reality (Ex 16,10) is the flashing radiance of the divine being. . . . The essential revelation of the NT is the connection of glory with the person of Jesus. . . . In John the revelation of glory in the life and death of Jesus appears still more explicit.[35]

To say of this "sign" that by it Jesus revealed his glory is to make an extraordinary claim—one far surpassing the immediately perceptible event. And to state that, as a result of this sign, "the disciples believed in him" is to go further. Admittedly, as John implies by the manner in which he presents faith throughout his gospel, the "beginning of the signs" evokes but the beginning of faith. But it is significant. Significant too is the fact that John

[34] Gilbert Durand, *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire* (11th ed.; Paris: Dunod, 1992), 135, 7-8.

[35] Xavier Léon-Dufour, ed.., *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (1973; repr. Gaithersburg, Md.: The Word among Us; Boston: St. Paul's Books and Media, 1995), 202-4. See also Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to John,* trans. Kevin Smyth, 3 vols., vol. 1, Herder's Theological Commentary on the New Testament (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 335: " The *doxa* revealed by Jesus through the change of water into a munificent gift of wine, is primarily his divine and creative power, the *dunamis* that is proper to him as God."

states only of the disciples that they "believed [incipiently] in him." This is not said of Mary. Her reaction to Jesus' words to her establishes her on a different plane. She has already accepted the role assigned to her by Jesus in their new relationship.[36] There is a subtle confirmation of this in the order in which verse 12 describes the entourage of Jesus as he goes to Capernaum. She is now mentioned after Jesus but before the rest: "After this he went down to Capernaum, he and his mother and his brothers and his disciples and he remained there not many days."

3. The Place of Mary

It is impossible, of course, to elaborate the entire New Testament presentation of Mary from what is perhaps the most enigmatic of the Marian texts, especially since even the complete Johannine theology regarding Mary requires an analysis of the other event in which Mary appears in the Fourth Gospel (John 19:25-27).

Analysis of the plot of the story shows us Mary as the announcer of the "disequilibrium" and, in her words to the servants, the initiator of the movement by which "the force in the opposite direction" establishes another equilibrium. However, there is another and most important level just "below" as it were the actual verbal texture of the narration.[37] It is mostly here that one finds the poetics of the narrative.

In regard to John's narrative of the Cana incident, there is a growing consensus among commentators that the interpretive context is the Jewish celebration of the feast of the giving of the Law, with subsidiary allusions to Genesis and a whole host of allusions to the themes of "bride," "wine," etc. At this level of poetics, then, we see the mother of Jesus calling attention to the fact that the present supply of "wine," that is, the beverage for the

[36] This is more evident if Jesus' words are a question to Mary, as I have shown, but they are true even if his words are interpreted as a statement.

[37] For an overview of these questions, one might consult Martin and McEvenue, "Truth Told."

wedding, is deficient. Jesus' reply accomplishes two things. First, it distances them both from the immediate concern. Then, second, by calling her "woman," and asking, "Has not my hour come?" he places the whole incident in the context of the insufficiency of the Torah and invites her to a new relationship to him, based on the reality of his Father's plan and the presence of the hour. Mary accepts this invitation and speaks to the waiters in terms of the Sinai covenant proposal.

It is legitimate to ask whether this dialogue pertains to the interpretive poetics employed by John in order to bring his audience into a spiritual understanding of the event rather than to exact historical reminiscence. I would respond in the affirmative: The historicity of the miracle is not in doubt, but John has the freedom to interpret the event through the use of allusive vocabulary. One of the aspects of this allusive vocabulary is to present the mother of Jesus in the act of becoming the most prominent of his disciples and most intimately associated with him in the living out of "the hour" until its completion in his ultimate glorification. If time and space allowed, I would need to trace now the further deepening of her role when from the cross Jesus establishes her not only "the mother of Jesus," but as "woman" in a more profound sense: the new Eve, mother of the believers. And, of course, to understand fully the Catholic understanding of the biblical teaching about Mary, one must look in the same way at all the other texts where Mary figures, directly or indirectly.

Now, however, I prefer to reflect on how this text has been carried and interpreted by the Tradition. This may help show how Catholics understand biblical teaching in general and particularly biblical teaching on Mary. The next part of my study is dedicateed to developing the "General Remarks" enunciated at the outset. I will follow this with a brief representative view of how this event as narrated by John has been understood in the history of the Church.

II. The Transmission of the Cana Incident in the History of the Church

A) Mystery or Fact Plus Value?

In asking this question, I am returning to investigate how the Fourth Gospel understands, in George Steiner's words, "the covenant between world and word." In other words, is this narrative presenting a dogmatic truth using narrative as a convenient vehicle or is it uncovering for us the "mystery," the revelation of a portion of God's plan as it actually transpired in the event?

One may recall the statement in John 1:16: "While the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." This dogmatic statement from the Prologue of the gospel can help us pose the question in these terms: Does John narrate this event, decorating it so that it becomes a symbol of his dogmatic position vis-à-vis the relationship between Torah and Jesus, or does he see in the event itself a historical realization of this mystery and mediate the mystery to us through allusions to Sinai? In other words: Is this gesture of Jesus the inauguration and prophecy of the new Torah/Wisdom to be conferred as the fruit of his death and resurrection, or is John's narrative a story which utilizes aspects of the Cana event as the vehicle for his symbolic presentation of Jesus as the source of the new Covenant/Torah? Or again, is the Cana narrative mediating a mystery or a particular value attached to a fact?

Prior to the revolution in cognition theory inaugurated by William of Ockham and Duns Scotus a question such as this would have been unintelligible. Now this unresolved question lies at the root of many of the differences in the manner in which the Scriptures are read in the churches. The discussion of Mary is a propitious occasion to look at this question, for there are aspects of some Catholic positions concerning Mary that cannot be traced back to the explicit and surface expressions to be found in Scripture.

It is necessary to devote some lines here to a presentation of what lies behind a Catholic reading of Scripture. After doing so I will continue my reflection on the Johannine text by tracing the lines of its understanding in the history of the Church.

B) Two Principles

From a Catholic point of view, there are two important principles that influence the way we read Scripture. The first is that the Church is the interpreting subject of the Scriptures and the second is that the "*mira profunditas*" so often spoken about in regard to Scripture derives, ultimately, from the events that it narrates and comments upon.

1. The Interpreting Subject

In an essay dedicated to "The Spiritual Basis and Ecclesial Identity of Theology," Joseph Ratzinger discusses the Church as the subject of theology, thus opening up its interior mystery:[38]

> The Church, moreover, is not an abstract principle but a living subject possessing a concrete content. This subject is by nature greater than any individual person, indeed than any single generation. Faith is always participation in a totality and, precisely in this way, conducts the believer to a new breadth of freedom. On the other hand, the Church is not an intangible spiritual realm in which everyone can pick what suits him. She is endowed with a concreteness rooted in the binding Word of faith. And she is a living voice which pronounces itself in the organs of faith. . . .
>
> But how exciting exegesis becomes when it dares to read the Bible as a whole. If the Bible originates from the one subject formed by the people of God and, through it, from the divine subject himself, then it speaks of the present. . . . [W]ithout the living subject, either one must absolutize the letter, or else it vanishes into indefiniteness.[39]

[38] Much of the material in this section is derived from a study of Joseph Ratzinger's understanding of biblical hermeneutics published in *Nova et Vetera* 5 (2007): 285-314. It is used here with permission of the publisher.

[39] Joseph Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology: Essays to Orient Theology in Today's Debates,* trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 61, 64-65.

"Subject," as the term is being used here, may be defined as "the locus of agential receptivity and active engagement." Employed this way the primary reference must be to a person, predicated analogously of divine and human persons.[40] The term may also be used to apply to collective entities as "subjects"—the state, a family, a race, and so forth—which can be loci of receptivity and engagement but whose unity is found in a bond that is external to the persons who make it up. There is also a third way of being a subject, and this is the way of the Church, the Body of Christ which is neither a person, defined as "the incommunicably proper existence of spiritual nature,"[41] nor a collectivity. Aquinas says that the Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ, may be considered as a "quasi person" united to Christ its Head.[42] It is this "mystical person" which is the subject of revelation and its interpreter.

The Church is a mystical person, a mystery as well as an agent. The Scriptures have been entrusted to the Church as a source of life, that life which consists of a transforming knowledge of Jesus Christ, "the leader and perfecter of faith" (Heb 12:2). Such a faith-vision is expressed by Aquinas who, while he does not use the word "subject," expresses the same truth: "The formal objective of faith is the First Truth as this is made known [*manifestatur*] in Sacred Scripture and in the teaching of the Church which proceeds from the First Truth" (*STh* II-II, q. 5, a. 3).

In another essay, Ratzinger approaches the question of the Church as the subject of revelation primarily in terms of the relation between revelation, Scripture, and Tradition.[43] In his

[40] For a brief but clear treatment of "person" in theological predication see Joseph Ratzinger, "Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology," *Communio* 17 (1990): 439-54.

[41] "Spiritualis naturae incommunicabilis existentia," from Hugh of St. Victor (see Ratzginer, "Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology," 449.

[42] "Sicut enim naturale corpus est unum, ex membrorum diversitate consistens, ita tota Ecclesia, quae est mysticum corpus Christi, computatur quasi una persona cum suo capite, quod est Christus" (*STh* III, q. 49, a. 1). *STh* III, q. 19, a. 4: "Grace was in Christ . . . not simply as in an individual man, but as in the Head of the whole Church, to whom all are united as members to the head, forming a single mystical person." Also *STh* III, q. 48, a. 2: "The head and members form as it were a single mystical person."

[43] This is, in fact, the title of an article he wrote in 1958: Joseph Ratzinger, "Offenbarung - Schrift - Überlieferung," *Trierer theologische Zeitschrift* 67 (1958): 13-27.

1964 study, published along with a study by Karl Rahner, Ratzinger considers the question in just these terms, proceeding in part by a series of five "theses."[44] I will excerpt some lines from that essay.

The first thesis, "revelation and Scripture," begins by stating that "tradition" derives from the nonidentity of "revelation" and "scripture" (35). The nonidentity lies in the fact that revelation is more than Scripture to the extent that the reality exceeds its verbal expression, and also because there can be Scripture without revelation, as when a nonbeliever reads Scripture. "For revelation always and only becomes a reality when there is faith. . . . It is a living reality which calls for the living man as the location of its presence" (36). Ratzinger expresses the same principle elsewhere when he says that for St. Bonaventure, "*Revelatio* refers not to the letter of Scripture, but to the understanding of the letter; and this understanding can be increased."[45]

Another thesis, "Christ the revelation of God" means that "the actual reality which occurs in Christian revelation is nothing and no other that Christ himself" (40). Thus, "faith is equivalent to the indwelling Christ"[46] (this is expressed in Eph 3:17), which implies that by faith "the individual encounters Christ and in him enters the sphere of influence of his saving power" (41). On a broader scale, it also means that the Pauline expression "Body of Christ" "implies that the community of the faithful, the Church, represents Christ's continued abiding in this world in order to gather men into, and make them share, his mighty presence. . . . It also follows that the presence of revelation is essentially connected with the two realities 'faith' and 'Church,' which themselves, as is now clear, are closely connected" (ibid.).

[44] Joseph Ratzinger, "Revelation and Tradition," in Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, *Revelation and Tradition* (Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1966). Numbers in parentheses refer to the pages in this study.

[45] Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure,* trans. Zachary Hayes (1971; reprint, Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1989), 68.

[46] This statement can find a remarkable echo in the work of some Lutheran theologians who maintain that this is Luther's position as well. See Karl Braaten and Robert Jenson, eds., *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998).

The fourth and most fully developed thesis has to do with "the nature of tradition." The basic principle stems from the fact that the reality of revelation is in excess (*Überhang*) of Scripture (45). Revelation itself, the explicitation of the Christ-reality, has its double yet single enduring presence in faith and in the Church and it occurs in preaching, which is an unfolding of what is presented, first in the Old Testament and then in the New Testament; it is also an interpretation of the Christ-event itself on the basis of the *pneuma.* "But it is precisely in this Church that Christ is living and present; in the Church which is his Body in which his Spirit is active" (42). The move to include the Gentiles, thus moving from "Kingdom" to "Church," "opened out that new interpretation of the message of Christ which is the essential message of the Church" (ibid.).[47] After discussing the "Old Testament theology of the Old Testament" (a series of new readings of older texts),[48] Ratzinger moves on to the "New Testament theology of the Old Testament" (i.e., its "spiritual sense"),[49] the "New Testament theology of the New Testament" (established by looking at successive expressions of the Mystery), finally arriving at what he calls the "Church theology of the New Testament." By this last he means the continuation of that successive process already begun in the New Testament itself but now no longer canonical. He calls this "dogmatic theology" and goes on to specify that "in a precise sense we could designate only dogma as such as the Church's theology of the New Testament" (45).

Finally, the essay develops the three "sources" (*Wurzeln*) of tradition. The first I have already shown: the excess of the reality of revelation over Scripture. The second is "The specific character of New Testament revelation as *pneuma* as opposed to *gramma*

[47] For an appreciation of this initiative of the Holy Spirit, see F. Bovon, *De vocatione gentium: Histoire de l'interprétation d'Act. 10,1-11,18 dans les six premiers siècles*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese 8 (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1967); and Brant Pitre, *Jesus, The Tribulation, and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; GrandRapids, Mich. Baker Academic, 2005).

[48] See Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel.*

[49] See Francis Martin, "The Spiritual Sense (Sensus Spiritualis) of Sacred Scripture," in *Sacred Scripture: The Disclosure of the Word,* ed. Francis Martin (Naples, Fla.: Sapientia Press, 2006), 249-75.

and consequently what one might call in Bultmann's terminology the impossibility of objectifying it" (ibid.). From this comes the fact that the rule of faith has a guiding priority in interpretation. The third source is given as,

> The character of the Christ-event as present and the authoritative enduring presence of Christ's Spirit in his Body the Church and, connected with this, the authority to interpret Christ yesterday in relation to Christ today, the origin of which we have observed in the Church's reinterpretation by the apostles of the message of the kingdom. (Ibid.)

Ratzinger goes on to enumerate the "levels" of tradition: (1) The original *paradosis* made by the Father of his Son who continues this action as judgment and gift of salvation and remains in the whole of his mystery in the Church. This superabundant *tradition* remains "the decisive fundamental reality which is antecedent to all particular expressions of it, even those of scripture, and which represents what in fact what has been handed down." (2) The presence in faith of the indwelling Christ. (3) The organ of tradition, which is the authority of the Church, that is, those who have authority within it: these are the "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers" spoken of in Ephesians 4:11 whose authority is diverse but real. (4) The expression of tradition as the rule of faith. Finally, there is exegesis, or interpretation, whose basic principle is that "revelation becomes present through preaching" and therefore that "[t]radition by its very nature is always interpretation, does not exist independently, but only as exposition, interpretation 'according to the scriptures'" (47).

This principle must, of course, be balanced by the insistence that the Church's witness is linked to an exegesis "which investigates the literal sense, and so guards the link with the *sarx* of the Logos in opposition to all *gnosis,*" (48) "defending the *sarx* of history against the caprice of *gnosis* which perpetually seeks to establish its own autonomy" (49). The Church performs this function in virtue of the right of *prescriptio:* The Church is the rightful owner of Scripture (Tertullian). This raises the issue of the delicate balance between the rule of faith and the historically

ascertainable literal sense of Scripture in confrontation with those types of gnosis which seek either to claim a "higher" knowledge on the basis of modern historical study or to bypass such historical work in the name of a "spiritual" understanding. The key is a restored understanding of human cognition and of faith as a way of knowing. Some approaches to this were made by *Dei Verbum* but the crucial question of how the Church uses Scripture to correct the potential exuberances of "tradition" has yet to be thoroughly considered.[50]

"The act of faith essentially consists in an act of knowing; that is its formal or specific perfection; this is clear from what its object is."[51] This splendidly dense statement of Aquinas may be explicitated by Ratzinger's remark that "to know the person of Christ is the foundation of theology."[52] *Dei Verbum* 8 presupposes that "faith is a way of knowing" and at the same time places this principle in the context of the growth of Tradition, which growth it understands to be a combination of the increased knowledge of all the members of the Body of Christ and the preaching of those with the episcopal charism.[53] It is important to note in this text

[50] It is worthwhile pointing out that Ratzinger appreciates the fact that Vatican II did not advance the discussion as to how tradition can be criticized: "On this point Vatican II has unfortunately not made any progress, but more or less has ignored the whole question of the criticism of tradition" (Joseph Ratzinger, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Chapter 2," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II,* ed. H. Vorgrimler [New York: Herder and Herder, 1969], vol. 3, pp. 181-97, at 185). In another study, I have tried to point out that, in fact, Vatican II did redirect tradition, but without offering any theoretical basis for doing so. See Francis Martin, "Dei Verbum: Revelation and Its Transmission," in *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition,* ed. Matthew Lamb and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 55-75.

[51] "Ad decimum dicendum, quod actus fidei essentialiter consistit in cognitione, et ibi est eius perfectio quantum ad formam vel speciem; quod patet ex obiecto, ut dictum est; sed quantum ad finem perficitur in affectione, quia ex caritate habet quod sit meritoria finis" (Aquinas, *De Verit.,* q. 14, a. 2, ad 10).

[52] Joseph Ratzinger, "*Deus locutus est nobis:* Some Reflections on Subjectivity, Christology, and the Church," in *Proclaiming the Truth of Jesus Christ: Papers from the Vallombrosa Meeting* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997), 21.

[53] It will be helpful here to return to Ratzinger's statement to the effect that, "Tradition then exists concretely as presence in faith, which again, as in the in-dwelling of Christ, is antecedent to all its particular explicit formulations and is fertile and living, thus developing and unfolding throughout the ages." (*Revelation and Tradition*, p.46).

how the council places this reality within the life of the whole Christ which is presented as the subject of interpretation:

> The Tradition which is from the Apostles makes progress in the Church under the assistance of the Holy Spirit.[54] There is a growth in understanding, both of the realities as well as of the words that have been handed on. This takes place as a result of the contemplation and study of the believers who ponder these things in their heart (see Lk 2:19, 51), as well as by the intimate knowledge of the spiritual realities which they experience, and by the preaching of those who have received with episcopal succession the sure charism of truth. Thus, as the centuries advance, the Church continually moves toward the plenitude of divine truth until the words of God reach their fulfillment in her.

The ministries enumerated in Ephesians 4:11 as "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers" ultimately derive from, are sustained by, serve and direct that whole body of the faithful whose growth in understanding, achieved through "contemplation and study" and an "intimate knowledge of the spiritual realities which they experience," is the source of the growth of Tradition. Tradition, therefore, is a slowly moving, meandering stream with eddies, strange turns, and unexpected directions. It carries within it the pure gold of divine knowledge and the flotsam and jetsam of human deficiency. That is why, from a Catholic point of view, an essential dimension of this whole movement must include, in addition to the contemplation, study, and spiritual and mystical experience of all the faithful, a divinely constituted organ of tradition which constitutes the prophetic function of preserving the purity of the apostolic heritage. One of the often unexpressed reasons for this is precisely the fact that "faith is a way of knowing." When "knowing" becomes an adjudicating function of the knower, there is not knowing, but conformity imposed by the knower. This ignores the fact that, that since God's "motive" in creating is *agapē*, there is present in creation what Jacques Maritain calls "the basic generosity of existence."

[54] See Vatican I, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, Constitution *Dei Filius*, ch.4 (Denz. 1800 [3020]).

2. *Mira Profunditas*

One of Joseph Ratzinger's most trenchant criticisms of the cognition theories that lie at the root of much biblical interpretation is to be found in his 1989 essay "Biblical Interpretation in Crisis," which was published the same year in German and in English. The occasion for the English text was the Ratzinger Conference on Bible and Church.[55] Early in his presentation, Ratzinger observes that historical criticism of the Bible labors under many of the erroneous presuppositions of modern historical investigation, especially the notion that history is a "science" in the same way as are the empirical sciences (6). A diachronic analysis of the results of the method can show unmistakably that, contrary to the positive sciences, after two centuries there are few if any assured results that have become a common basis for progress (8). In addition, modern fascination with an understanding of history as made up of a succession of moments has eliminated the biblical vision of history as the working-out of God's plan of salvation:

> If we are to understand modern exegesis and critique it correctly, we simply must return and reflect anew on Luther's view of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. In place of the analogy model which was then current, he substituted a dialectical structure. (12)[56]

One must also note that while there has been a continuity in the historical analysis of the biblical text, it lies not so much in a settled body of agreed-upon results as in the perdurance of philosophical presuppositions at work in what is called historical reason (14).

[55] Josef Ratzinger, "Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: On the Question of the Foundations and Approaches of Exegesis Today," in *Biblical Interpretation in Crisis: The Ratzinger Conference on Bible and the Church,* ed. Richard John Neuhaus, Encounter Series (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989). Numbers in parentheses refer to pages in that essay. The translation of the full text of Ratzinger's contribution can be found in *Opening up the Scriptures,* ed. Jose Granados, Carlos Granados, and Luis Sánchez-Navarro, Ressourcement: Retrieval and Renewal in Catholic Thought (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 1-29.

[56] On the importance of the ancient understanding of the "spiritual sense" of Scripture and the view of history it implies see Martin, "The Spiritual Sense (Sensus Spiritualis) of Sacred Scripture."

The real philosophic presupposition of the whole system seems to me to lie in the philosophic turning point proposed by Immanuel Kant. According to him, the voice of being-in-itself cannot be heard by human beings. Man can only hear it indirectly in the postulates of practical reason, which have remained, as it were, the small opening through which he can make contact with the real, that is, his eternal destiny. . . . (15)[57]

In theological terms, this means that revelation must recede into the pure formality of the eschatological stance, which corresponds to the Kantian split. As far as everything else is concerned, it all needs to be "explained." What might otherwise seem like a direct proclamation of the divine can only be myth, whose laws of development can be discovered. It is with this basic conviction that Bultmann, along with the majority of modern exegetes, reads the Bible. He is certain that it cannot be the way it is depicted in the Bible, and he looks for methods to prove the way it really had to be. To that extent there lies in modern exegesis a reduction of history into philosophy, a revision of history by means of philosophy. (16)[58]

Concretely, this means that the event is not accessible either to the biblical author or to his reader. What one attains is one's own interpretation of, in our case, John's understanding of an event that he knows only through community transmission and the filter of his own mental categories. Contrast this with the faith contact with an event that can be attained even through a written medium. Such an understanding lies at the heart of what the ancients called "the spiritual sense." Herein lies the *mira profunditas* celebrated by generations of believers. The profundity is in the event itself as it is attained through the sacred text which, as we have seen, interprets the event as it narrates it and may then add further interpretation by way of commentary or explanation. This gives rise to that "growth in understanding" spoken of by *Dei Verbum*.[59]

[57] For an account of Marburg neo-Kantianism and its influence on Bultmann, see Roger A. Johnson, *The Origins of Demythologizing: Philosophy and Historiography in the Theology of Rudolph Bultmann* (Leiden: Brill, 1974)

[58] An example of fidelity to the revealed reality leading beyond the biblical expressions can be seen in the adopting of the term *homoousion* at Nicea.

[59] This would be the place to discuss more fully, if space allowed, how the mind, enlightened by faith, knows the event and penetrates more deeply into its understanding. In addition to Ratzinger's article from which I am quoting and my own article on the spiritual sense, mentioned above, see F. Martin, "Revelation as Disclosure," in *Wisdom and Holiness, Science and Scholarship: Essays in Honor of Matthew L. Lamb* (Naples, Fla.: Sapientia Press,

C) Traditional Reflections on the Role of Mary at Cana

Tradition is the One Christ, the new "I" who, speaking both individually and communally, says, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). It is the *una persona mystica* we encounter in the expressions of Augustine and Aquinas. It is the Christ who, through baptism, is "put on" with the result that now "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is not male and female, for you are all one [singular masculine] in Christ" (Gal 3:8). This "one man" can be called "the Christ": "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with the Christ" (1 Cor 12:2, see also 1 Cor 1:13). This one man both possesses and receives the form (*typos*) of teaching to which we are entrusted and to which we give obedience from the heart (Rom 6:17). Jesus Christ is the one who, as God incarnate, is the source of the body's life. He is the one who, through the Holy Spirit, animates our prayer and understanding, and who prays for us.

The flow of life-giving understanding courses through the Body of Christ in saints and in sinners, in scholars, in peasants, in children. It is found, to invoke *Dei Verbum* once again, in the prayer and contemplation of all the faithful, in their intimate understanding of the realities they experience, and in the consistent preaching of those endowed with the grace of episcopacy. It is a meandering and, often, a very wide stream whose direction is discreetly guided by the Holy Spirit in and through the spiritual power of believers and their corporate interaction, and this takes place in the whole divided Body of Christ.[60] In the course of this movement certain positions are eliminated or moved to the extremity and others begin to congeal and to be recognized by the Body as the more central understanding of the Spirit's message. This is expressed in preaching, in liturgy, in the life of the faithful and in the guidance of those in leadership (the apostles, prophets,

2007), 205-47.

[60] Passages to this effect are found in John Paul II, *Ut unum sint,* and in its citation of previous documents.

evangelists, pastors and teachers). In matters of importance the bishop of Rome, who continues the strengthening role entrusted to Peter, may declare a truth to be contained in the apostolic heritage. This he always does in consultation with all those "who have received with episcopal succession the sure charism of truth."[61]

1. Some Ancient Interpretations of John 2:1-12

Thanks to the leadership and energy of Professor Thomas Oden, who has edited the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture,* readers today have easy access to representative expressions of the broad stream of Tradition.[62] I wish to note two characteristics of this ancient form of interpretation. First, it is "canonical" in that none of the theologians considers himself bound solely to the interpretation of the text in hand, but rather can range over the whole canon of Scripture to talk about the reality mediated and interpreted by the specific text being considered. Second, it is "liturgical" in the sense that much commentary takes place in a liturgical setting, and also because the manner in which the event is treated and made present in the liturgy itself has a bearing on how it is understood.[63]

[61] It might be noted here that over the two millennia of the Catholic Church's existence, she has defined the meaning of some ten or twelve texts. See:Maurice Gilbert, "Textes bibliques dont l'Église a défini le sens," in *L'autorité de l'Écriture,* ed. Jean-Michel Poffet (Paris: Cerf, 2002).

[62] *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture,* vol. 4A, *John 1-10,* ed. Joel C. Elowsky (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2007); vol. 4B, *John 11-21,* ed. Joel C. Elowsky (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2007). I owe a personal debt of gratitude to Joel Elowsky for generously supplying me with information even before the publication of the first volume.

[63] Sometime early in the fifth century, Pope St. Leo I told his congregation assembled for the liturgy: "All those things which the Son of God both did and taught for the reconciliation of the world, we not only know in the account of things now past, but we also experience in the power of works which are present" (Leo the Great, *On the Passion* 12 [*Sources chrétiennes* 74:82]). That Leo intended by this to refer not only to the sacraments of the Church but also to the reading of the Scriptures is evident from his oft-repeated notion that the gospel text, when received by faith, *makes present* that about which it speaks: Leo the Great, *On the Resurrection* 1 (*Sources chrétiennes* 74:123); *On the Epiphany* 5 (*Sources chrétiennes* 22:254); *On the Passion* 5 and 18 (*Sources chrétiennes* 74:41, 112).

I present here Joel Elowsky's introductory résumé of the texts commenting on John 2:1-4. In addition to efforts to understand the dialogue between Jesus and Mary, the principal themes are those of matrimony and the new wine of Christ's teaching and life.

Overview: Christ, as a servant, attends his servant's wedding (Chrysostom) held in Galilee of the Gentiles rather than Jerusalem or elsewhere in Judea (Cyril), fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah (Eusebius). According to the chronology in John, the wedding was held three days after his baptism (Theodore of Mopsuestia). On the third day, that is, in the last times, the Word descends to earth to consummate his marriage to our human nature which he heals (Theodore of Heraclea). The third day also signifies the Trinity, while the miracle Christ performs at the wedding is a foretaste of the dowry of his blood which Jesus will give for his bride (Caesarius). Jesus accepts this wedding invitation as an opportunity to confirm his institution of marriage (Origen) portending his own wedding to the church (Augustine). His presence sanctifies the institution of marriage (Maximus) and annuls the Genesis curse (Cyril).

When the wine runs out, Mary turns to Jesus expecting a miracle—but from where did she get such an idea since this was the first miracle John relates to us (Romanos)? Perhaps she also was hoping for some recognition for her son (Theodore). But Jesus still rebukes Mary for her request, even as he still loved and respected her (Chrysostom). We also get a glimpse of the divine nature in this rebuke, however (Ammonius, Augustine). He rebukes her because of her focus on the physical wine when he has in mind the wine of our redemption (Maximus) as he waits for the hour known only by his Father (Irenaeus). The miracle was not done out of necessity but rather to manifest his glory which would only be fully manifested when his hour had come on the cross (Augustine).[64] As the creator of time itself, Christ knew what the most appropriate hour would be for him to accomplish his work, but he also honored his mother and so performed the miracle at the proper time (Romanos).

It is interesting to see in the texts that follow a sympathy for the allusive context (Sinai) of the text, although it is most probable that the rabbinic background was not known. At least four of the commentators speak generally of the bride to be wedded as being either the nations or the Church which is to be sealed with a new covenant. Several, as one can see from the résumé, understood this event as ratifying the goodness of marriage. A certain number, as can also be seen from the résumé,

[64]For this pericope, see also Severus of Antioch, *Homily* 119 (*PO* 26:375-439).

see in Mary's words an importunity, although none interpret Jesus' words as a rejection of her. Nor do any of the texts adduced here understand Jesus' reply to Mary as a question, though there are scattered examples of this.[65]

In regard to John 2:5-11, the résumé gives the following:

> Overview: Jesus grants his mother's request in order to show both that he honors his mother (Bede), and that he was not governed by fate. The jars used were for purification which meant they would have been thoroughly cleaned; there could be no deception in how the miracle was accomplished (Chrysostom). These jars also symbolize the womb of the virgin in which Jesus had been conceived and which had also witnessed a transformation of nature (Ephrem). As a king coming to his own banquet, Christ not only brings his own wine but also pours it for his guests as a servant (Ephrem). He makes his own wine of the gospel out of the water of the law and prophets which, without Christ, have no taste (Augustine). The one who created water out of nothing could change that same water into wine (Maximus). The detail the evangelist John provides proves the genuineness of the miracle (Theodore) as the miracle gradually unfolds before all those who witness it, culminating in the witness who could best testify to what had happened, that is, the steward in charge of the wedding who judged the wine superior (Chrysostom). Such superior and abundant wine proved also to be a generous wedding present for the new couple. (Theodore)
>
> Jesus only uses his power for a purpose (Ephrem). Changing water into wine is a miracle that goes beyond the senses and thus manifests the power of God (Hilary). Jesus chose appropriate witnesses who could testify both to the miracle and to the quality of the wine (Chrysostom). The miracle proved Jesus' sonship (Maximus of Turin) and that he was the King of glory prophesied in the Psalms (Bede). Changing water into wine is no different than changing wine into blood (Cyril) and so we continue to celebrate the mystery of the changed wine in the church's banquet today (Romanos).

One sees here a common trait of patristic commentary in the interweaving of commentary and application, unlike our historical analysis which leaves the text and the event in the past and then tries to make them relevant.[66] I will give some brief quotations of some of the passages collected by Elowsky and then add some others, mostly from a later date. The aspect of the event which

[65] The most ample discussion of the early witnesses to this understanding—Ephrem (as well as an interpolation in his text), Theodore of Mopsuestia, Gregory of Nyssa—is found in Boismard, *Du baptême à Cana*, 156-58.

[66] See the remarks in Jon D. Levenson, "Is Brueggemann Really a Pluralist?" *Harvard Theological Review* 93 (2000): 265-94.

most of these theologians comment upon is the incipient bridegroom–bride relation of Christ and the Church. Some imply and others explicitly connect this event with the beginning of the preaching of the new Torah, the gospel.

Ephrem the Syrian: Let Cana thank you for gladdening her banquet!
The bridegroom's crown exalted you for exalting it,
And the bride's crown belonged to your victory.
In her mirror allegories are expounded and traced,
For you portrayed your church in the bride,
And in her guests, yours are traced,
And in her magnificence she portrays your advent.
Let the feast thank him, for in multiplying his wine
Six miracles were beheld there:
The six wine jugs set aside for water
Into which they invited the King to pour his wine.
(*Hymns on Virginity* 33.1-2)

Augustine: He omitted none of the ancient Scriptures, i.e., the water, and for that reason they were called senseless by the Lord because they still tasted water, not wine. But how did he make wine from water? When he opened their understanding to them and explained the Scriptures to them, beginning with Moses through all the prophets. (*Tractates on the Gospel of John* 9.5)

Bede: By this sign he made manifest that he was the King of glory, and so the church's bridegroom. . . . Therefore, let us love with our whole mind, dearly beloved, the marriage of Christ and the church, which was prefigured then in one city and is now celebrated over the whole earth. (*Homilies on the Gospels* 1.14)

Some other remarks:

Origen: None of the other three Evangelists noted that John the disciple had reported in regard to the first work of Jesus that: "This was the beginning of the signs that Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee." In fact that which took place at Capernaum was not the principle [*archē*] of the signs, for the most outstanding [*proēgoumenon*] of the signs of the Son of God is the joy [of the wedding banquet]. In all the circumstances in which men might find themselves, it is not so much in the healings, in healing the sick, that the Word shows forth his

proper beauty, but in the joy of the sober drink by which their good [spiritual] health enables them to enjoy the wedding feast. (*Homilies on John* 10.65-66)[67]

Ephrem: The terrestrial bridegroom invites the celestial Bridegroom and Lord, ready for the espousals, to come to the wedding feast. . . . But he in his turn invites us just as he and his disciples had been invited. (*Commentary on John*)[68]

Ephrem: Cana is the praise of Thee, for through Thee came the joy of this feast. The bride is the holy Church, the guests at table are Thy guests, and the triumph of the miracle looks forward to Thy coming in majesty. (*Hymn on the Lord's Mysteries* 24.1)[69]

Cyril of Alexandria: He descended from heaven in order to unite himself to human nature and to persuade it, as its Bridegroom, to allow itself to be made fruitful by the spiritual seed of Wisdom. For this reason, humanity is called the Bride, and the Savior, the Bridegroom. (*On John*)[70]

Other texts could be adduced here. Most of them accent the twofold themes of the new wine of Christ's gospel and wisdom and the theme of marriage, with all its overtones of human marriage, the marriage of Christ to the people, and the marriage of Christ to each individual soul. As the literature multiplies, it is harder to collect and categorize, but one can notice a tendency to continue the same themes with a greater accent on the role of Mary as a "facilitator" in the procuring of the new wine of

[67] *Sources chrétiennes* 157:422-24. This is one of the earliest interpretations that develops so explicitly the wedding banquet as the experience of the Word on a collective and individual level.

[68] Ephrem, *Commentaire de l'Évangile concordant,* ed. L. Leloir, *Corpus scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 145 (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1954), 46-47. Translation in Ignace de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant,* trans. Bertrand Buby (New York: Alba House, 1992), 200.

[69] Ephrem, *S. Ephraem Syri Hymni et Sermones,* ed. T. J. Lamy, 4 vols. (Malines: H. Dessain,1882-1902), 2:822. Hugh Rahner, who cites this text, comments as follows: "This deep significance of the marriage at Cana therefore includes the whole history of salvation from the first coming at the Incarnation to our Lord's return at the end of days. Throughout this history, extending through the centuries, humanity is being changed into the wine of the life of grace, while Mary is there, the mother who cares and intercedes, standing at the very center of the mystery in which God takes human nature from the child of Eve: Mary is the mother of all who are sanctified by their faith in the coming of God" (Hugo Rahner, *Our Lady and the Church,* trans. Sebastian Bullough [Bethesda, Md.: Zaccheus Press, 2004], 55-56).

[70] *PG* 72:2278. Translation in de la Potterie, *Mary in the Mystery of the Covenant,*200.

Christ's wisdom and in the wedding union. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, who in his biblical commentaries is a remarkable source of the statements and attitudes of his predecessors, says of the wedding aspect of Cana:

"And the Mother of Jesus was there." In its mystical meaning [= the spiritual sense],[71] the mother of Jesus, the Blessed Virgin, is present in spiritual marriages as the one who arranges the marriage [*sicut nuptiarum consiliatrix*] because it is through her intercession that one is joined to Christ through grace: "In me is every hope of life and strength" (Sir 24:5). Christ is present as the true groom of the soul, as is said below (John 3:29): "He who has the bride is the Bridegroom," while the disciples are the friends of the bridegroom, as it were joining the Church to Christ, as one of them said: "for I betrothed you to Christ to present you as a pure bride to her one husband" (2 Cor 11:2).[72]

About a century before Aquinas, Rupert, abbot of Deutz, commented on the same passage. One might note in his commentary the fact that Mary and the Church are intertwined in a way that reflects and synthesizes many of the statements already encountered.[73]

And there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee. The whole household is rejoicing, and the household is the Church, "And the mother of Jesus was there," when this marriage was celebrated, for not one of the children or guests at this marriage is ignorant of how Christ became man. [There follow some lines concerning false teachers.] And the only true festival and heavenly marriage-feast is the one where the mother of Jesus is there—and that means the Church, the mother, is there. And here every day by the espousals of virginal souls to Christ is the true faith in God made man proclaimed. (*Commentary on John* 2)[74]

[71] This, for Aquinas, is a valid mode of expounding the reality mediated by Scripture. For a complete account of the spiritual sense of Scripture see Henri de Lubac, *Sources of Revelation,* trans. Luke O'Neil (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968).

[72] Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelium S. Joannis Lectura* (Rome: Marietti, 1952), no. 343.See also the remark "to the mother pertains the procuring of the miracle, to Christ the consummation of the miracle, and to the disciples the beholding of the miracle" (ibid., no. 344).

[73] For a complete treatment of the spousal theme at Cana one may consult Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church,* trans. Michael Mason (reprint; San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), chap. 9.

[74] *PL* 14:32. Translation in Rahner, *Our Lady and the Church.* This "*explanatio secundum mysteria allegoriae*" follows a commentary on the "*historia.*"

2. Subsequent Understandings of the Cana Event

a. The contemplation and experience of the faithful

Obviously, the foregoing overview has several lacunae. The understanding of the significance of the Cana event continued to be broad from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries and controversial from the sixteenth century until now, especially in the West because of the division of the Church during this period. This situation should be studied in detail, something that exceeds the limit of this article.[75] It is, however, possible to see an "undertow" of comprehension of the event of Cana that moves in the direction of a deeper penetration of the event itself. I stress that it is the *event* that must be interpreted, not merely the words. This has taken place, to repeat the words of *Dei Verbum* once again, through the contemplation and study of all the faithful, by the intimate knowledge gained through spiritual experience of the realities mediated by Scripture, "and by the preaching of those who have received with episcopal succession the sure charism of truth." Leaving aside for the moment this last aspect of a growth in understanding, I wish to reflect upon the activity of the faithful, especially those engaged in the study of the Sacred Scriptures who are often working in conjunction with Church leaders.

The convergence of Protestant and Catholic use of historical methods in biblical interpretation has facilitated a certain common understanding of the Old Testament and New Testament texts in general—thus, also of the Johannine text under consideration. This has been an important step, but it has not been without a certain ambiguity and with a concentration on the intercessory role of Mary to the neglect of all the other dimension of the mystery. A fine example of what can be accomplished and what is left to accomplish is the 1978 ecumenical study, *Mary in the*

[75] For a brief but important résumé of the positive aspects of the Reformers thinking about Mary see Timothy George, "Evangelicals and the Mother of God," *First Things* 107 (February 2007): 20-25.

New Testament.[76] In that study a significant first step was taken in working toward what the text *says,* but there was little discussion about the reality mediated by the texts: what the texts are *talking about.* This latter is often relegated to the domain of "theology," but such a division of labor risks embracing the Kantian dichotomy mentioned above and can reduce Tradition to a succession of more or less successful interpretations now being corrected by the historical-critical method (not to deny the clarifications that modern historical and philological advances can actually effect).

An example of a lapse into such thinking can be found in a remark by Raymond Brown in his magisterial *The Death of the Messiah.* Brown says of John 19:26-27, "I agree with Schürmann that the significance of this episode lies in the new relationship between the mother of Jesus and the beloved disciple, not in the symbolism attached to Mary in the history of interpretation." In a footnote Brown mentions an article by A. Kerrigan who, "by arguing that Jesus conferred a universal maternity directly on Mary *confuses Johannine theology with that of the later Church"* (emphasis added).[77] Implied here is the position that subsequent Church teaching is a symbolism which develops a theology that goes beyond the *intentio auctoris* as expressed in the text and determined by the historical-critical method. Such a view of the relation between reality, thought, and language restricts interpretation to an attempt at determining what the author is trying to say (a psychological consideration). In fact, interpretation involves understanding the reality *intended* by the mind of the author: this is an epistemological and metaphysical consideration. The growth in understanding of this latter, the reality, is precisely what "progresses in the Church" in the power of the Word of God and by the three means mentioned in *Dei Verbum.*

[76] Raymond E. Brown et al., eds., *Mary in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

[77] Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave,* ed. David Noel Freedman, The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 2:1024.

In regard to the Cana event, the contributors to *Mary in the New Testament* carefully consider most of the exegetical options available to them and do not explicitly reject but a few. Their concluding lines are, however, quite restrictive. The authors first describe two extreme exegetical positions.

> At one extreme of the spectrum is an exegesis once popular among Roman Catholics (but scarcely held by any scholar today) that the story is an example of Mary's power of intercession: the first miracle worked by Jesus was at the behest of his mother, and this is meant to teach us to pray to Jesus through Mary. On the other extreme, it has been argued that by persisting in her demand after Jesus' refusal, Mary showed that she really did not believe in Jesus. . . .
>
> Rather she falls into a general category of those who, despite their good intentions misunderstand Jesus (e.g. Nicodemus in chap. 3 and the Samaritan woman in ch. 4). . . .
>
> [The request for a sign in the Fourth Gospel might mean: a hostile lack of faith, an excessive enthusiasm for signs], and still other times a request for a sign shows both naïve trust and a lack of comprehension, leading ultimately to solid faith (4:47, 48, 53; 20:30-31). The fact that the mother of Jesus remains with him after he has changed water into wine (2:12) and ultimately appears at the foot of the cross (19:25-27) makes it likely that it is the last mentioned category that most suits her in the Johannine spectrum. But until she appears at the foot of the cross, she is not yet a model for believers and indeed is kept distinct from the disciples who at Cana saw his glory and believed in him (2:11 – notice the continued distinction between the mother and the disciples in 2:12).[78]

Another ecumenical statement about Mary was produced by the well-known *Groupe des Dombes* in 1999.[79] This group of theologians, more sensitive to the dynamics of Tradition and aware of the implicit patristic attention to the realities rather than to the words of Scripture, at the end of their brief overview of patristic teaching about Mary have this to say:

> The patristic texts we have been reading here may seem to go beyond the councils. In fact, however, these texts do not depend on the councils but, like the councils themselves, on scripture and the faith of the apostles. Then too, the gap we see between their belief and the letter of the scriptures (their assertion of Mary's perpetual virginity, for example) is seen by them not as a departure from

[78] Brown et al., eds., *Mary in the New Testament*, 193-94.

[79] Alain Blancy and Maurice Jourjon, eds., *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints* (New York and Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 2002).

the scriptures but as fruit of their conviction that the scriptures in their entirety are spiritual. This is why perpetual virginity, like the phrase "consubstantial with the Father," interprets the letter of the scriptures. That is how the Fathers, even those we describe as "literalists" read the scriptures.[80]

The document treats Mary in the Gospel of John specifically (nos. 177-84). It is remarkable for its delicacy of presentation and degree of convergence:

While John the evangelist calls Mary the "Mother of Jesus," it is Jesus who reveals and assigns her vocation to her when he calls her woman and appoints her to be the mother of the beloved disciple while she is at the cross. . . . Is it that he is unwilling to think of Mary as the one who brought him into the world? No, the context shows rather that he wants to give Mary a role beyond that of simply physical motherhood. . . .

Jesus is present at a human celebration [Cana] not in order to satisfy needs felt there but to manifest his glory and inspire faith. It is this latter purpose that he makes known in advance by performing the sign. It is in this way that the theological perspective of the gospel reveals itself. Mary is present at this revelation, although she does not realize it. . . .

[Jesus' question] does not simply underscore the limitations of Mary, who does not understand how and when the glory of Jesus will be revealed. It also invites her to adopt the outlook of her Son and to abandon her own initiative in order to follow his. It can be said that in this sense the episode of Cana is a milestone on the way of Mary's conversion, for she is made to understand that her role henceforth is to lead servants to her Son and to listen to his word and obey it fully. . . .

The Gospel of John structures three elements: Mary-as-Mother of Jesus, Mary-as-woman, and Mary as mother-of-the-disciples, in a theological gradation: starting with Mary, "Mother of Jesus," it proceeds by way of Mary as "woman" to Mary "mother-of the disciples" with a new kind of motherhood that is of a different order than the first and that the church professes with him.[81]

The last of the examples I wish to give of a collaborative effort to study, contemplate, and experience the realities of revelation is the recent Anglican–Roman Catholic statement.[82] I will concentrate on what the document says about Cana:

[80] Ibid., no. 28.

[81] Ibid., no. 184 (emphasis in original).

[82] The Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission, *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ* (Toronto: Novalis, 2005).

John gives a prominent position in his Gospel to the wedding at Cana (2:1-12), calling it the beginning (*arche*) of the signs of Jesus. The account emphasizes the new wine which Jesus brings, symbolizing the eschatological marriage feast of God with his people and the messianic banquet of the Kingdom. The story primarily conveys a Christological message: Jesus reveals his messianic glory to his disciples and they believe in him (2:11).

The presence of the "mother of Jesus" is mentioned at the beginning of the story: she has a distinctive role in the unfolding of the narrative. Mary seems to have been invited and be present in her own right, not with "Jesus and his disciples" (2:1-2); Jesus is initially seen as present as part of his mother's family. In the dialogue between them when the wine runs out, Jesus seems at first to refuse Mary's implied request, but in the end he accedes to it. This reading of the narrative, however, leaves room for a deeper symbolic reading of the event. In Mary's words "they have no wine", John ascribes to her the expression not so much of a deficiency in the wedding arrangements, as of the longing for salvation of the whole covenant people, who have water for purification but lack the joyful wine of the messianic kingdom. In his answer, Jesus begins by calling into question his former relationship with his mother ("What is there between you and me?"), implying that a change has to take place. He does not address Mary as "mother", but as "woman" (cf. John 19:26). Jesus no longer sees his relation to Mary as simply one of earthly kinship.

Mary's response, to instruct the servants to "Do whatever he tells you" (2:5), is unexpected; she is not in charge of the feast (cf. 2:8). Her initial role as the mother of Jesus has radically changed. She herself is now seen as a believer within the messianic community. From this moment on, she commits herself totally to the Messiah and his word. A new relationship results, indicated by the change in the order of the main characters at the end of the story: "After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples" (2:12). The Cana narrative opens by placing Jesus within the family of Mary, his mother; from now on, Mary is part of the "company of Jesus", his disciple. Our reading of this passage reflects the Church's understanding of the role of Mary: to help the disciples come to her son, Jesus Christ, and to "do whatever he tells you". . . .

[The concluding line of the discussion of Mary in John's Gospel:] When John's account of Mary at the beginning and end of Jesus' ministry is viewed in this light, it is difficult to speak of the Church without thinking of Mary, the Mother of the Lord, as its archetype and first realization. [83]

b. The preaching of those who have received with episcopal succession the sure charism of truth

[83] Ibid., nos. 23-27. The reader is encouraged to read this whole section for its use of the Tradition in understanding the reality mediated by the text.

Taking for granted that my readers know the Roman Catholic position regarding the role of the magisterium and most particularly the papacy, it will suffice here to recall that study/contemplation, experience, and episcopal succession are meant to interact mutually in the Church. This understanding includes the position that the Church, the interpreting subject of Scripture, "subsists" in the Catholic Church.[84]

In a 1997 essay, Joseph Ratzinger addressed the issues of revelation, Christology, the role of office in the Church, and the notion of the Church as subject:[85]

> For the believer, however, the Church is not a sociological subject created by human agreement, but a truly new subject called into being by the Word and in the Holy Spirit; and precisely for that reason, the Church herself overcomes the seemingly insurmountable confines of human subjectivity by putting man in contact with the ground of reality which is prior to him. . . . (23)
>
> The Second Vatican Council teaches the historical continuity between the Church founded by Christ and the Catholic Church in the now-famous paragraph 8 of *Lumen Gentium*: "This Church constituted and organized as a society in the present world subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him, although outside of her structure, many elements can be found of sanctification and truth which, as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, impel toward Catholic unity". . . . (24)
>
> *Subsistere* is a special case of *esse*. It refers to existence in the form of an individual subject. That is exactly what it means here. The Council wanted to say that the Church of Jesus Christ, as a concrete subject in the world, is found in the Catholic Church. (27)

In light of this last consideration, I wish to look at an example of the teaching of the magisterium of the Catholic Church regarding the event at Cana. I have selected the 1987 encyclical of John Paul

[84] Helpful in this regard is an essay of Joseph Ratzinger in which he gives an example of Tradition using Scripture to correct itself (something I mentioned earlier that still awaits an explicit magisterial teaching). By incorporating the teaching on Mary as chapter 8 in the constitution on the Church, Vatican II served to correct some theological and devotional excesses. When the postconciliar reflections on the Church became too rigid, Pope Paul VI issued his *Marialis cultus* which taught that Mary is rightly called "Mother of the Church." The encyclical *Redemptoris mater,* which I will consider below reflects these two "course corrections." See. Hans Urs Von Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger, *Mary: The Church at the Source,* trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997).

[85] Ratzinger, "*Deus locutus est nobis.*" Numbers in parentheses refer to pages in the essay.

II, *Redemptoris mater,* which, in the course of its commentary, refers back to the teaching of Vatican II. The key concept in this teaching about Cana is the explicit use of the idea of "mediation," a notion not necessarily foreign to expressions such as "mother of the disciples" found in the ecumenical documents mentioned above, but nevertheless embodying a whole set of theological positions that touch on anthropology, death, the true nature of the Body of Christ, and more. I will quote some passages from the encyclical, including its recourse to the statements about mediation in *Lumen Gentium.*

If through faith Mary became the bearer of the Son given to her by the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit, while preserving her virginity intact, in that same faith she discovered and accepted the other dimension of motherhood revealed by Jesus during his messianic mission. One can say that this dimension of motherhood belonged to Mary from the beginning, that is to say from the moment of the conception and birth of her Son. From that time she was "the one who believed". . . .

From this point of view, particularly eloquent is the passage in the Gospel of John which presents Mary at the wedding feast of Cana. She appears there as the Mother of Jesus at the beginning of his public life. . . . We are familiar with the sequence of events which resulted from that invitation, that "beginning of the signs" wrought by Jesus—the water changed into wine—which prompts the Evangelist to say that Jesus "manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him" (Jn. 2:11).

Mary is present at Cana in Galilee as the Mother of Jesus, and in a significant way she contributes to that "beginning of the signs" which reveal the messianic power of her Son. . . . Even though Jesus' reply to his mother sounds like a refusal (especially if we consider the blunt statement "My hour has not yet come" rather than the question), Mary nevertheless turns to the servants and says to them: "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn. 2:5). Then Jesus orders the servants to fill the stone jars with water, and the water becomes wine, better than the wine which has previously been served to the wedding guests.

What deep understanding existed between Jesus and his mother? How can we probe the mystery of their intimate spiritual union? But the fact speaks for itself. It is certain that that event already quite clearly outlines the new dimension, the new meaning of Mary's motherhood. Her motherhood has a significance which is not exclusively contained in the words of Jesus and in the various episodes reported by the Synoptics (Lk. 11:27-28 and Lk. 8:19-21; Mt. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:31-35). In these texts Jesus means above all to contrast the motherhood resulting from the fact of birth with what this "motherhood" (and also "brotherhood") is to be in the dimension of the Kingdom of God, in the

salvific radius of God's fatherhood. In John's text on the other hand, the description of the Cana event outlines what is actually manifested as a new kind of motherhood according to the spirit and not just according to the flesh, that is to say Mary's solicitude for human beings, her coming to them in the wide variety of their wants and needs. . . . Thus there is a mediation: Mary places herself between her Son and mankind in the reality of their wants, needs and sufferings. She puts herself "in the middle," that is to say she acts as a mediatrix not as an outsider, but in her position as mother. . . . As a mother she also wishes the messianic power of her Son to be manifested, that salvific power of his which is meant to help man in his misfortunes, to free him from the evil which in various forms and degrees weighs heavily upon his life. . . .

Another essential element of Mary's maternal task is found in her words to the servants: "Do whatever he tells you." The Mother of Christ presents herself as the spokeswoman of her Son's will, pointing out those things which must be done so that the salvific power of the Messiah may be manifested. At Cana, thanks to the intercession of Mary and the obedience of the servants, Jesus begins "his hour." At Cana Mary appears as believing in Jesus. Her faith evokes his first "sign" and helps to kindle the faith of the disciples .

We can therefore say that in this passage of John's Gospel we find as it were a first manifestation of the truth concerning Mary's maternal care. This truth has also found expression in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. It is important to note how the Council illustrates Mary's maternal role as it relates to the mediation of Christ. Thus we read: "Mary's maternal function towards mankind in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its efficacy," because "there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5). This maternal role of Mary flows, according to God's good pleasure, "from the superabundance of the merits of Christ; it is founded on his mediation, absolutely depends on it, and draws all its efficacy from it."(LG #60). It is precisely in this sense that the episode at Cana in Galilee offers us a sort of first announcement of Mary's mediation, wholly oriented towards Christ and tending to the revelation of his salvific power.

From the text of John it is evident that it is a mediation which is maternal. As the Council proclaims: Mary became "a mother to us in the order of grace." This motherhood in the order of grace flows from her divine motherhood. Because she was, by the design of divine Providence, the mother who nourished the divine Redeemer, Mary became "an associate of unique nobility, and the Lord's humble handmaid," who "cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the Savior's work of restoring supernatural life to souls." (LG #61) And "this maternity of Mary in the order of grace . . . will last without interruption until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect." (LG #62)[86]

[86] Catholic Information Network (CIN), 16 December 1996.

III. SUMMARY

The object of this study has been to present the Catholic understanding of the biblical teaching on Mary, not by giving a résumé of that teaching, but by giving an example of that understanding, tracing out how the interpretation of one passage, and an enigmatic one at that, developed over the centuries. This may serve as an illustration of the way that Catholic teaching develops out of the realities mediated by Scripture and not merely out of an analysis of the words.

My brief treatment of narrative was intended to locate the level of the narrative process at which the interpretation of an event mostly takes place, namely, what I have called its "poetics." I maintain that the main interpretive context employed at the poetics level for the wedding at Cana was the liturgical feast which commemorated the giving of the Law. This served as an interpretive matrix for the manner in which the incident was presented.

In regard to the event itself we can see that John is teaching us that by changing water into wine in such a context, Jesus was declaring his identity as the bearer of the eschatological gift of a new wisdom/teaching/Law, and implying that the marriage between God and his people would be raised to a new level. All of this could have been accomplished by Jesus and by the narrator without including Mary. However, her intervention and Jesus' response served to invite her to a new relationship with Jesus, that of disciple and collaborator. This relationship will be deepened at the cross. The gospel writer's concluding remarks include the key Johannine terms, "sign," "glory," and "belief," thus accenting the true significance of this event.

I felt it necessary to set forth some basic interpretive principles of Catholic theology in order to clarify the Catholic stance in regard to Scripture. The first is the notion of the Church throughout the centuries as the interpreting subject of the Scriptures. This includes liturgy, preaching, and custom and includes the three manners in which "the Tradition which is from

the Apostles advances in the Church under the assistance of the Holy Spirit." The most significant difference between Catholics and Evangelicals in this regard would be the understanding of the phrase, "the preaching of those who have received with episcopal succession the sure charism of truth."

I also wanted to point out the "default Kantianism" in the manner in which texts are interpreted. It is for this reason that I continue to speak of "the *reality* mediated by the text," though space does not permit a more extended consideration of both language and cognition and its allied topic, the spiritual sense of Scripture and of the history it mediates.

Finally, I tried in a schematic fashion to trace the way in which the Cana incident has been understood in Tradition. This is not an exhaustive study, tracing some of the twists and turns and backwaters of the successive interpretations of the event. Nevertheless, as the subsequent ecumenical efforts have borne out, my examples (regrettably lacking in a more ample presentation of the understanding of the early Reformers) do represent the "main stream" of the Tradition. Continued close and contemplative attention to the event mediated in this text will allow the efficacious power of the Word to draw all Christians together.

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ST. THOMAS AND THE SACRAMENTAL LITURGY

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I. LITURGY AS A PATTERN OF SIGNS

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS is, among other things, a philosopher and theologian of the *sign*.[1] For him the sacramental Liturgy belongs to the order of signs. And this is surely correct. The Liturgy is a pattern of signs and symbols that speak to our senses of the spiritual realities they seek to represent. So much might be said, of course, of any worthwhile art form,[2] and the Symbolist poets of late-nineteenth-century France held it to be true of nature itself. As one of their number, Charles Baudelaire, wrote in his sonnet *Correspondances*:

> La nature est un temple où de vivants
> piliers
> Laissent parfois sortir des confuses
> paroles:
> L'homme y passe à travers des forêts
> de symboles . . .[3]

[1] For a philosophical account of signs, see J. Haldane, "The Life of the Sign," *The Review of Metaphysics* 47 (1994): 451-70. A mainly theological account, indebted to Thomas but not exclusively so, is E. Masure, *Le Signe. Le passage du visible à l'invisible* (Paris, 1948).

[2] A connection eloquently made, and then applied to the sacraments, by the Anglo-Welsh lay Dominican artist and poet David Jones in the essay "Art and Sacrament," published in H. Grisewood, ed., *Epoch and Artist: Selected Writings by David Jones* (London, Faber and Faber, 1959), 143-79. Of relevance to the present essay is C. C. Knight, "Some Liturgical Implications of the Thought of David Jones," *New Blackfriars* 85 (2004): 444-53.

[3] Cited, with discussion, in P. Mansell Jones, *Baudelaire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 32-33.

(Nature is a temple whose living pillars emit now and then confused words; man passes that way through forests of symbols. . . .) In a theistic context, Aquinas draws close to Baudelaire's viewpoint in the *Disputed Questions on Truth* when he affirms that natural knowledge of God in this life comes about *per speculum et aenigma sensibilium creaturarum,* "through the mirror and enigma of sensory creatures."[4] For the ancients "mirror" and "enigma" were closer than they are for us. Mirrors were highly polished metal where one might have to peer hard to make out that which was mirrored. At any rate, enigmatic mirrors must be the starting point for our enquiry, for as Dom Cipriano Vagaggini, principal architect of the new Eucharistic Prayers in the Roman Missal of 1969, explains, "the whole liturgical economy . . . falls under the concept of sign."[5] I only hope my account will not be too enigmatic—much less, in Baudelaire's word, "confused."

For Thomas, to specify the *liturgical* sign we have to mention something further. The liturgical sign in particular is to express *the reality of the holy*—the reality of the holy *as pertinent to human salvation.* Because the Liturgy operates in a context in which the order of the day is not natural truth but a saving truth which, by definition, goes beyond the natural, this particular set of signs can only be approached by the distinctive understanding that comes from faith in divine revelation. Though, as we shall see, the primary saving sign for Thomas is the humanity of the Word made flesh, in the Church of the Word incarnate this unique sign is itself represented by the ritual signs we call the sacraments. Thomas is speaking in the formal perspective of Christian faith when he defines a sacrament as "the sign of a holy reality insofar as it makes human beings holy."[6] But sacramental theology—the study of such signs—does not flourish when sundered from a theology of the Liturgy as a whole. A similar

[4] Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae De Veritate,* q. 13, a. 2.

[5] C. Vagaggini, O.S.B., *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy: A General Treatise on the Theology of the Liturgy,* trans. Leonard J. Doyle and W. A. Jurgens (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1976), 32.

[6] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 60, a. 2.

thumbnail description of the wider Liturgy might read: the Liturgy is the total complex of signs at work in the Church's worship for the purposes of the divine sanctification of human beings. That is broad enough to include the Liturgy of the Hours or Divine Office, the sacramentals (a word that means "little sacraments"), and the other ceremonies that make up the complete pattern of Catholic worship. Sacramentality here has a more extended sense than the septet of great sacraments as defined by the Council of Trent. It is not good for the sacraments to be alone, divorced from their context in the wider worship of the Church—nor, for that matter, from the role of sign in the entire divine economy. To cite Vagaggini again, "The liturgy . . . is nothing else than a certain phase of revelation, a certain way in which the meaning of revelation is realized in us."[7]

II. The Congruence of Sign in the Divine Plan

For Thomas it is altogether appropriate that God should lead human beings to supernatural communion with himself through sensibly perceptible signs. As he writes in his little treatise "On the Articles of the Faith and the Sacraments of the Church," it is congruent that God grants his grace through bodily things.[8] When the divine freedom embraced the purpose of human salvation nothing compelled it to use this particular means. But that it should so do was altogether suitable. Here, as always when Thomas speaks of *convenientia*—appropriateness, congruence, fittingness—we have a tacit appeal to theological aesthetics.[9] Theological "convenience" for Thomas denotes how the divine Wisdom selected really quite the best means for realizing the mystery of salvation and so the glorification of man in God. Wisdom itself—or, rather, himself—chose the human body to be the gateway of salvation. That for Thomas is an example of the characteristic *beauty* of the divine ordering of the universe in

[7] Vavaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy*, 3.

[8] Thomas Aquinas, *De articulis fidei et sacramentis Ecclesiae* (Marietti ed., n. 614).

[9] G. Narcisse, *Les raisons de Dieu: Argument de convenance et esthétique théologique selon saint Thomas d'Aquin et Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Fribourg: Editions universitaires, 1997).

creation and redemption. In Thomas's Latin, "the beautiful" is termed *pulchrum*. So we could say, punningly, it was *pulchrum* that the body be the *fulcrum* of human salvation. The body is the fulcrum, or, as the North African writer Tertullian put it in a pun of his own in the third century, our flesh—in Latin, *caro*—is the "hinge"—in Latin, *cardo*—of our salvation.

III. The Relevance of Thomas's Anthropology

This raises the question of Thomas's anthropology, his account of man. In a positivist philosophical climate, such as that of modern Britain, it may seem odd to mention it, but Thomas was going against the grain of much ancient philosophy when he insisted that the human body was absolutely integral to the human person.[10] Though the soul alone is by nature indestructible and therefore immortal, man is nonetheless one single reality of body and soul together. He is, as Thomas tersely remarks, *unum simpliciter*.[11] The soul may be the actuating principle of the human being, but it is the body that renders man a concrete reality. Using the matter-form analysis of such realities, which he had learned from Aristotle, Thomas stresses that only with the help of its matter can form unfold its own dispositions and perfect them.[12] The body, so understood, belongs intrinsically to the human personal subject, the *suppositum* or hypostasis. This is the source of its distinctive dignity as a *human* body and is what befits it for possible entry into the realm of grace.

The place of the body in personal soul-life is reflected in its role in human knowledge. The working of the mind is so dependent on the body for the content of its thinking that even sheerly intellectual objects are mediated to it through a process that begins with the senses.[13] In a Thomist maxim, *omnis cognitio*

[10] In Thomas's view, the *Platonici* regarded the relation between soul and body as accidental, not substantial (see *Summa contra Gentiles* II, c. 83).

[11] *STh* I, q. 76, a. 1.

[12] Ibid.; see also *STh* I, q. 76, a. 4.

[13] *STh* I, q. 84, aa. 6-7.

incipit a sensu: "all knowledge starts from the senses." The norms of human understanding apply analogously to the realm of salvation as well. Were it not so, supernatural life would damage natural life, rather than fulfil it.[14] It is appropriate, then, that knowledge of the divine offer to bring man salvation should likewise have its origin in the senses. Thus in the *Tertia Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae,* where Thomas is thinking specifically of the principal liturgical signs, the sacraments, he makes the point that the rationale for the sacraments is the same as that for verbal imagery in the Scriptures, the primary testimonies of revelation. The Bible uses imagery because it is connatural to man to acquire knowledge of the spiritual order through signs that are grounded in the sensible realm. What is true of the Word of God written in Scripture is no less true of the spiritual and intelligible goods through which man is sanctified, the "sacred things" signified by the sacraments.[15] So the divine economy, by the way it has disposed saving history, renders man a liturgical being in such a fashion that this is in conformity with our human nature as such.

In the single most important doctrinal statement of the Roman magisterium on the Liturgy, the encyclical *Mediator Dei* of 1948, Pope Pius XII grounded not only the interior but also the exterior character of the Church's worship on a twofold consideration that bears a strong family resemblance to Thomas's. Firstly, man is naturally a body-soul composite. Secondly, divine providence has so worked in the history of salvation that "recognising God through the visible we may be drawn by him to love of the invisible." Here the pope cites the Preface of the Nativity in the Roman Rite, itself a mosaic of texts from the sermons of his predecessor St. Leo the Great.[16] This passage of the encyclical is almost certainly a *reprise* of Thomas, who uses the same Leonine text in a similar context.[17]

[14] See *STh* III, q. 65, a. 1.

[15] *STh* III, q. 60, a. 2.

[16] Pius XII, *Mediator Dei,* 24 (*Christian Worship,* trans. G. D. Smith [London: Catholic Truth Society, 1948], p. 18).

[17] *STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 3, ad 2.

IV. A Caveat

Reference to the "invisible" invites the *caveat* that Thomas cannot be presented as a "Christian materialist" for whom man is simply a "ceremonious animal." Indeed, Thomas remained close enough to the Platonist tradition to hold that, in the words of a recent study, the divine essence "can only be known in the most sublime way when the human mind is able to function *independently of the senses*."[18] What begins in the senses does not necessarily end there, as the Beatific Vision will demonstrate. In *De Veritate* Thomas maintains that, though initially it is natural to know God through sensory experience, in the beatified state it will be "natural" for human intelligence to know the essence of God through divine assistance.[19]

It would be not only crass but unfaithful to Thomas's world-picture as a whole were we to draw from his emphasis on the role of the senses the conclusion that, applied to cult, the mere performance of ritual activity, by outwardly "active" participation, meets the needs of liturgical man. Once again, Thomas is far from materialism. As Anton Pegis wrote in a celebration of the seventh centenary of Aquinas's death:

[18] P. Quinn, *Aquinas, Platonism and the Knowledge of God* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1996), 2 (emphasis added). See e.g., *ScG* II, c. 68; III, c. 61; IV, c. 1; IV, c. 55; *STh* I, q. 77, a. 2; and the whole of II-II, q. 175. On the general issue of St. Thomas's Platonism (and not merely Aristoteleanism), see W. J. Hankey, "Aquinas and the Platonists," in S. Gersh and M. J. F. M. Hoenen, eds., *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages: A Doxographic Approach* (Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 2002), 279-324. Though Thomas's "knowledge of Platonism derived from a complex tradition of commentators and followers who in varying degrees had themselves modified original sources . . . the presence of Platonist elements in the work of Thomas Aquinas is multifaceted and profound." Thus F. O'Rourke, "Aquinas and Platonism," in F. Kerr, ed., *Contemplating Aquinas: On the Varieties of Interpretation* (London: SCM Press, 2003), 249-50. O'Rourke takes up a point made earlier in R. J. Henle, *Saint Thomas and Platonism: A Study of the Plato and Platonici Texts in the Writings of St. Thomas* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1956), namely, that while Aquinas usually rejects the *via* or methodic principle of the Platonists, he often accepts their *positio* or substantive conclusions—sometimes reaching these by a *via* indebted to Aristotle!

[19] *De Verit.*, q. 13, a. 1. In Thomas's homely comparison in this text, a beard is natural to a grown man but not to a baby boy. Cf. Quinn, *Aquinas, Platonism and the Knowledge of God*, 68.

[For Thomas] embodiment is not to be understood simply as the existence of the soul in the world of matter; on the contrary, it is the existence of the body in the spiritual world of the soul itself. The existence, the life and the economy of the human composite derive from the nature of the soul, so that it is not strictly correct to say that in the human composite the soul is in the body; it is more proper to say that the soul exists in the body—and in the world of matter—only because the body exists in the world of the soul.

And Pegis concludes: "The human body is matter existing and functioning with and within the life of the intellectual soul."[20]

For Aquinas, writing in an imagistic mode, which is more connatural to him than some critics of Scholastic abstraction allow, the intellectual soul of man exists on the "horizon" and, as he writes, at the "confines, as it were" between things bodily and things incorporeal. It is itself intelligent substance and not just the form of a body.[21] Naturally, this has implications for worship. When Thomas declares the soul to have its being "above motion and time, touching eternity," accepting from that Neoplatonically inspired text the *Liber de causis* the soul's situation "on the horizon below eternity but above time," this cannot be without consequence for the celebration of the Liturgy.[22] Our expectations of liturgical worship cannot go unaffected if it be true that the soul, whose life the body shares, exists on a boundary between time and eternity.[23] Of our nature, we strive for timelessness in a temporal world. Christian worship must take that into consideration. It cannot simply consecrate the world. We are not altogether at home here. We are *viatores,* wayfarers in exile. The Liturgy is not just consolation in time. It must tug at our moorings. It is preparation for eternity.

[20] A. Pegis, "The Separated Soul and its Nature in St. Thomas," in A. Maurer, ed., *St. Thomas Aquinas 1274-1974: Commemorative Studies,* vol. 1 (Toronto: PIMS, 1974), 14.

[21] *ScG* II, c. 68.

[22] *Liber de causis,* prop. 2: "in horizonte aeternitatis inferius et supra tempus." That Thomas was not merely expounding another's thought but appropriating it is made clear in *ScG* III, c. 61. For the far from marginal issue of the Neoplatonist Proclus's influence on Thomas's *Summa Theologiae,* see W. J. Hankey, *God in Himself: Aquinas's Doctrine of God as Expounded in the 'Summa Theologiae'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

[23] *ScG* II, c. 81.

V. The Application to Worship

Thomas's fullest statement of the application to worship of the issues involved may well be a text from book 3 of the *Summa contra Gentiles,* where he is speaking, as throughout the first trio of books of that work, somewhat in a philosopher's tone of voice. There he treats the creation of sensible things, *sensibilia,* as a "reminder" of "divine realities." He gives a rationale for God's institution, according to the biblical narrative, of *sensibilia sacrificia,* "sacrifices in sensible form." The sacrificial cultus was urged on Israel, explains Thomas, so that man might "represent" to himself his own complete dependence on the Creator Lord. And the same rationale—representation, signification—is offered for the existence of sacraments—God putting in place "certain hallowings through things of sense" in acts of washing or anointing, eating or drinking. In these symbolic actions, the God of creation and providence was, writes Thomas, "signifying to mankind that it receives gifts in the intelligible order from a source outside itself, and [more especially] from God whose own Name, after all, is expressed by sensible words."[24]

Elsewhere, in the *Secunda Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae,* Thomas mounts a lengthy enquiry into the virtue of religion whereby we act justly—that is, duly—towards God as the source and goal of all existence. In its course, he raises and adjudicates a number of issues that such provision of sensible media for the God-man relationship suggests. The first of some nineteen "questions" (i.e., question 81) proposes a general rationale for exteriority—for ritual *cultus*—in divine worship. In its seventh article, Thomas takes as the signature tune for his positive exposition of the issues the third verse of Psalm 83, which reads in the Latin Psalter: "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." Just as internal actions belong to the heart, explains Thomas, so external actions belong to the flesh. And God, the Psalmist is saying, has to be worshipped in both. The *corpus* of the article gives the pith of the argument. Thomas writes:

[24] *ScG* III, c. 119.

Because God possesses perfect glory to which creatures can add nothing, we do not give honour and reverence to God for his sake, but rather for our sake, because when we do so our mind is subjected to him and in this our perfection consists. . . . The human mind, however, needs to be led to God by means of the sensible world [*conjugatur Deo sensibilium manuductione*], since "the hidden things of God are manifested by those things that are made," as St. Paul states. Hence, in divine worship the use of corporeal things is necessary so that by using signs, man's mind may be aroused to the spiritual acts which join him to God.[25]

The Pauline reference is to the celebrated text in the Letter to the Romans so important in the history of natural theology.[26] But for our purposes we can notice especially how in Thomas's account exterior acts are subordinated to interior worship, which is the heart of the matter.

A little later in these questions, Thomas's discussion of vocal prayer confirms what has just been said. Common prayer—he means prayer using the texts of the Liturgy—is necessarily vocal. As he explains:

Common prayer is offered to God by ministers of the Church representing all the faithful. Such prayer should be known to all the people for whom it is offered, which would be impossible unless it were vocal.[27]

Indeed, the prayer of the individual person is appropriately vocal too. The use of the voice excites interior devotion. Through external signs, which may be either words or gestures, the mind is moved to apprehend and to desire—in fact, to "increase holy desire," *desiderium sanctum,* quoting St. Augustine's *Letter to Proba* on prayer (now to be found, divided into sections, in the Office of Readings of the Roman Rite).[28] In this passage, Thomas as it were underwrites in advance the concern of the twentieth-century liturgical movement that all worshipers share by gesture or voice—and not only by recollected silence—in the liturgical symbols. Yet he is realistic when he goes on to admit that signs

[25] *STh* II-II, q. 81, a. 7.

[26] Rom 1: 20.

[27] *STh* II-II, q. 83, a. 12.

[28] See L. Maidl, *Desiderii interpres: Genese und Grundstruktur der Gebetstheologie des Thomas von Aquin* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1994).

can also distract. In which case, when devotion is already fervent, they should, in personal praying, be laid aside.

Two further considerations are pertinent to vocal prayer. In justice, our body, and not just our soul, owes God worship—Thomas cites the rather quaint Vulgate version of Hosea 14:3: "Give unto God the heifers of your lips." And, he adds, whether we like it or not, we shall find that where there is intense love for God—literally, "vehement affection" for him—there will be an overflow from the soul to the body and this will naturally manifest itself in outward ways. Here it is Psalm 15:9 that Thomas finds serviceable: "My heart has been glad and my tongue rejoiced." As David Berger puts it: "The joy and jubilation of the soul endowed with grace by God cannot do other than let the soul's fulness flow over into the body."[29] Still, it seems fair to conclude from the questions on the virtue of religion that Thomas's emphasis on the "cardinal," hinge-like, importance of the worship of the body is always at the service of an even-more marked stress on the worship of heart, mind, and soul—which is what his view of the time-eternity relation might lead us to expect.

VI. The Liturgy before the Liturgy: The Case of Israel

The use of texts from the Hebrew Bible to pinpoint a discussion of the principles of *Christian* prayer and worship reminds us that Thomas devotes a great deal of attention to the institution of worship among the people of Israel, under the Old Covenant. So far we have been thinking chiefly of those presuppositions of the Liturgy in revelation that concern the individual human being as worshipper. Now we must begin to factor in their corporate counterparts: Israel, and Christ as Head and Bridegroom of the Church, herself a corporate personality, his body and bride. In tacit reference to the longest treatise on any topic at all in the *Summa Theologiae* (that on the Old Law),

[29] D. Berger, *Thomas Aquinas and the Liturgy*, trans. C. Grosz (Naples, Fla.: Sapientia Press, 2004), 74. This beautiful little book inspired the present essay.

Thomas declares: "The ancient Fathers [i.e., our spiritual ancestors in Israel], by observing the sacraments of the Law, were brought towards Christ through the same faith and love by which we are still brought towards him."[30] In his biblically oriented study of Thomas's soteriology, *Christ's Fulfilment of Torah and Temple,* Matthew Levering comments on this passage: "The sacraments of the Mosaic Law, while they do not *cause* grace, nonetheless belong to the movement whereby men and women under the state of the Old Law participated in the New Law."[31] As Levering explains, in the ceremonial precepts of the Law the people of Israel

> found a figurative outline of the manner by which the disorder that obstructed human beings from receiving God's grace would be healed. By participating in this figurative drama (through the sacraments of the Old Law), they could be proleptically, and implicitly, united to the future Messiah who, by perfectly fulfilling all aspects of the Law, would make this grace available to all.[32]

And this is so even if, as Levering concludes,

> the ultimate reward of the New Law (beatific communion with God in heavenly glory) is received by the souls of the holy men and women of the Old Testament only *after* Christ had undergone his passion.[33]

Thomas always takes a broad view but never to the point of anticipating the tendency of twentieth-century so-called transcendental theology, which would suppress what is distinctive in each epoch of salvation history, with all that history implies for significant discontinuities as well as continuities in the divine plan.

However, as Levering shows, while Aquinas does not seek to relativize the great turning-points of salvation history in the name of the a priori structures of the God-world relationship, his reading of Scripture *is* an example of a theology of worship

[30] *STh* III, q. 8, a. 3, ad 3.

[31] M. Levering, *Christ's Fulfilment of Torah and Temple: Salvation according to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 23.

[32] Ibid., 24.

[33] Ibid.

centered firmly on Jesus Christ. The precepts on which Israel founded her worship have to be interpreted in the light of the message of the prophets, not least the prophets of "He who Cometh," the expected Mediator. Indeed, for Thomas, the entire state or way of life of the Jewish people was meant to be "prophetic and figurative" of the Incarnation.[34] The Jews were elected precisely so that Christ might be born among them. For Thomas, the life of the Word incarnate, lived out in obedience to the Torah, came to its climax on the Cross, where Jesus's self-sacrifice, perfect in its love and freedom, fulfilled the laws regarding ritual sacrifice and purity that Israel had received from the Lord, and fulfilled too the role of the Jerusalem Temple as the locus of true—that is, nonidolatrous—worship.

VII. A Christocentric View of Worship

As these references to the rationale of Israelite worship suggest, we cannot—for Aquinas—begin to write a theology of the sacramental Liturgy until we recognize that human beings are not only creatures but *fallen* creatures. As rational creatures made with a natural desire for God, and destined by a further determination of the divine loving kindness to share his life, we are on a course of return. But it is a course of *impeded* return. In a circular movement, which in the *Summa contra Gentiles* Thomas declares to be the most perfect of all movements,[35] man first comes forth from God in creation—an initial movement that is indissolubly linked to his elevation into a condition of grace. In both respects, as a bearer of his own nature and a recipient of divine grace, the human creature then strives to return to God as the One whom Thomas calls in the *Summa Theologiae* "the goal of all our desires and actions" (*finis omnium desideriorum et actionum nostrarum*).[36] Sin impedes this return, to which man nonetheless still aspires with a desire that is naturally ineradicable

[34] *STh* I-II, q, 104, a. 2, ad 2.
[35] *ScG* III., c. 82.
[36] *STh* II-II, q. 4, a. 2, ad 3.

yet of itself ineffective.[37] Effectively, the return is only made possible by the mystery of the Incarnation, which reunites man to his divine source.[38] When in the divine person of the Word human nature is assumed into union with the divine nature this is for all of us the way home to the Father's house. As Thomas puts it in his commentary on St. John's Gospel, Christ's humanity is our way of tending towards God.[39] Redemption from sin can now take place in that very nature where sin was committed and, once committed, ratified again and again. (There are implications here for the organic character of the process of salvation, as well as for the way it respects human dignity.)

Thomas uses the concept of "instrumental causality" to speak of the task that thus awaited the Lord's humanity in its personal union with the Word. We are saved, for Thomas, not by the eternal decrees which, as in John Calvin's thought, so determined matters that Christ's human actions would divinely *count* as saving us. Rather are we saved *by* the humanity of Christ which brings about the effect that is man's salvation *instrumentaliter,* that is, of its own working, albeit through the power it receives from the principal agent in the saving process, the triune God. Influenced in this by the Greek Fathers and notably by St. Cyril of Alexandria, and after him St. John of Damascus,[40] Thomas holds that the body-soul unity of Christ's human nature, in its radical engracement through the hypostatic union, is the very means of divine salvation reaching us. Since the sixteenth century at least, the Thomist school has not shrunk from employing the phrase "*physical* efficacy" in this regard.[41] The basic idea was taken up by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in the early paragraphs of their Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy where they maintain, "[Christ's] humanity, in the union with the person of the Word,

[37] *Super Boet. de Trin.,* q. 6, a. 4 ad 5.

[38] *Comp. theol.,* 201.

[39] *In Joan.* 7, lect. 4.

[40] See, e.g., *STh* I-II, q. 112, a. 2, ad 1.

[41] The terminology is probably owed to Thomas's sixteenth-century disciple and namesake Thomas de Vio, Cardinal Cajetan. See B. Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology* (2d ed.; London: Longmans, 1960), 334-35. Some would prefer the formula "real and intrinsic" to "physical."

was the instrument of our salvation."[42] And the point, the purpose, of this unique, indeed astonishing, ennoblement of human nature is the human race's return to God.

By his insistence that we are saved through the instrumental causality of the humanity of the Word, Thomas is committed to the view that salvation reaches us through the causal mediation of visible signs—which are, therefore, far more than *merely* revelatory in character. Here, in the *Tertia Pars,* signs are not only pedagogical—which has been the dominant message hitherto. More than this, Thomas is now saying, they are effectively salvific. It was by assuming human nature for the work of our salvation that the Logos "placed himself in the order of signs."[43] As the primordial sacrament of salvation, the Incarnation will be the basis for the sacramental Liturgy. Situating the two together, the one principally and the other derivatively, allows the sacramental signs to show themselves as images and mediations of the original "sacrament" of Incarnation itself.[44] As the *Summa contra Gentiles* has it, the sacraments are "as it were visible instruments of the incarnate God who suffered" (*quaedam instrumenti Dei incarnati passi*).[45]

It is a feature of Thomas's sacramentology that it can maintain simultaneously two positions often treated as alternatives. First, the sacraments are signs, and so belong happily to the normal world of human agency, to the life of human culture in its natural setting in the cosmic environment. But second, they are genuine causes of the salvific effects they signify, which is only explicable

[42] *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 5.

[43] M. de la Taille, *The Mystery of Faith and Human Opinion Contrasted and Defined* (London: Longmans and Green, 1930), 212. The maxim guided the reflections on art, sign, and sacrament of David Jones (see note 2). Though some Thomist theologians criticized De la Taille' s work, it was for his interpretation of the interrelation of the Last Supper, the Cross, and the Mass (where, he held, the Cross would not be the atoning Sacrifice without the acts done at the Supper, such that the Eucharist is the sacrament of *both*) and not for the principle the maxim represents.

[44] Berger, *Thomas Aquinas and the Liturgy,* 66.

[45] *ScG* IV, c. 56.

if they also belong with action that is divine.[46] The sacraments are not merely declarative signs, they are efficacious ones, efficacious in communicating the fruits of our redemption.[47]

VIII. The Priesthood of Christ As Foundation of the Liturgy

By far the most important Christological theme Thomas invokes in this connection from the New Testament and the Fathers is the priesthood of Christ. The office of a priest—and on this point social anthropology and traditional theology are at one—is to serve as a mediator between God and human beings, conveying men's prayer and penance to God and God's gifts to men. Thomas completely approves of the decision of the author of the Letter to the Hebrews to describe Jesus Christ and his work in priestly terms. As he remarks pithily in the *Tertia Pars:* "Through [Christ] divine gifts are bestowed on human beings, and he himself reconciled the human race to God. Thus priesthood is maximally fitting to Christ."[48]

In his commentary on the Letter to the Hebrews, Thomas sets out at some length the priestly office of Christ, the divine Word

[46] *STh* III, q. 62, a. 4. An influential example of a theology of the sacraments that is all sign and no causality is L. M. Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence,* trans. P. Madigan and M. Beaumont (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1995).

[47] Berger draws into unity Thomist Christology and the Thomist theology of the sacraments when he writes: "As all the graces Christ earned for us come to us objectively through his human nature, which remains forever God's united instrument . . . and as thus Jesus' human nature is the physical and instrumental cause of the sanctification of mankind, so these graces are bestowed on us subjectively and in a structured way through the visible sacraments, which are likewise physical and instrumental causes of sacramental grace. Just as God took on visible human nature to redeem mankind, he now employs the tangible signs of the sacraments, in which he inseminates the natural elements with supernatural strength to convey and communicate the fruit of this redemption to each concrete human being" (Berger, *Thomas Aquinas and the Liturgy,* 74). On the need to hold together sign and cause in the theology of the sacraments, see L. G. Walsh, O. P., "The Divine and the Human in St. Thomas's Theology of the Sacraments," in C. J. Pinto de Oliveira, ed., *Ordo sapientiae et amoris: Image et message de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Fribourg: Editions universitaires, 1993), 321-52.

[48] *STh* III, q. 22, a. 1.

who assumed the wounded human condition to the extent of the humiliation of the Cross, thereby becoming "Lord"—that is, meriting to be exalted to the glory of heaven and installed in his humanity as our merciful judge and faithful advocate with the Father.[49] It is in this context of New-Testament-inspired reflection that Thomas is moving when in the *Summa Theologiae* he calls Christ the "primal agent" in the *genus* of priesthood. Just as the sun is not illumined but illuminates, and fire is not warmed but warms, so Christ is the "fount," *fons,* of all priesthood worth the name.[50] Likewise, his supreme priestly act—the sacrifice he consummated in his passion and death—has an everlasting power that invigorates all the sacrifices dependent on it while receiving nothing from them. In other words, the sacrifice of our great high priest is the source of whatever is valid for salvation in the sacrificial worship of the Church. In a Thomist perspective, the entire Liturgy of the Church thus shares in the "liturgy" of Jesus's life—the worship he gave the Father through the visible signs which were the "mysteries," the chief events, of that life—and the Church's worship is effective only by their power.[51]

All the mysteries of Christ's life can be included here because the Savior's self-oblation on the tree, the "baptism" (in blood, not water) of which he said he was "straitened" until it was "accomplished" (Luke 12:50), made of his whole life the priestly service of God. All his significant actions and sufferings can be considered as ordered to the offering on the Cross, the offering that will transmit for all time the salvation there merited.[52] Though situated in the past, these actions and sufferings of the incarnate Word, with the Cross as their center, have present efficacy. The Liturgy draws attention to this in explicit fashion since its prayers and sacrifices are pleaded on the basis of the

[49] G. Berceville, O.P., "Le sacerdoce du Christ dans le *Commentaire de l'Epitre aux Hébreux* de saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue Thomiste* 99 (= *Saint Thomas d'Aquin et le Sacerdoce: Actes du colloque organisé par l'Institut Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin les 5 et 6 juin 1998 à Toulous*), 150.

[50] *STh* III, q. 22, a.4.

[51] Berger, *Thomas Aquinas and the Liturgy,* 69.

[52] *In Hebr.*X, lect. 1.

unique merits his human career and destiny gained him: the goods we seek from God are sought, as the terse Roman formula has it, "through Christ our Lord." Thomas writes epigrammatically: "the whole cult of the Christian religion is derived from the priesthood of Christ" (*totus ritus christianae religionis derivatur a sacerdotio Christi*),[53] a statement that must be interpreted in the light of its fellow in the immediately previous question of the *Summa Theologiae:* "Through his Passion he inaugurated the rites of the Christian religion by 'offering himself as an oblation and sacrifice to God.'"[54]

Christ's priesthood means utter ecclesial fruitfulness in the sacramental Liturgy. Thomas never—or, if ever, then (in the words of W. S. Gilbert in *H. M. S. Pinafore*) *hardly* ever—speaks of the sacrifice of Christ without simultaneously thinking of its actualization in the sacraments and especially the Holy Eucharist.[55] Dom Vagaggini, fulfilling his brief as a Thomist Benedictine, wrote:

> Christian worship is the worship of God instituted by Christ in his mortal life, chiefly on Golgotha, as Redeemer and Head of the redeemed humanity which was to be formed into his Church, his body and his spouse, the expression of himself and the continuation of his work in the world until his glorious return. It is, therefore, the worship of God in Christ and through Christ: begun by Christ, continued invisibly by him in us, through us and for our benefit, that is, in his Church, by means of his Church and for the benefit of his Church, who simply takes part and associates herself in his worship. The proper excellence of the divine life on which Christian worship is formally based is, therefore, the divine life manifested in Christ.[56]

It was said more succinctly by Pius XII, "The Liturgy is nothing more nor less than the exercise of the priestly function of Jesus Christ," words which achieved a resonance in both the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council

[53] *STh* III, q. 63, a. 3.

[54] *STh* III, q. 62, a. 5, with an internal allusion to Eph 5:2.

[55] Berceville, "Le sacerdoce du Christ dans le *Commentaire de l'Epitre aux Hébreux de saint Thomas d'Aquin,*" 151.

[56] Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy,* 135.

and, thirty years later, the present *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.[57]

IX. Liturgy and Sacraments

Even in those aspects of the Liturgy that house or contextualize the seven sacraments—the ceremonies, sacramentals and official prayers—the blessings the Liturgy requests flow out, writes Vagaggini, not only

> according to the private moral dignity of those individuals who carry out or are the recipients of those rites and prayers, but also according to the moral dignity of the Church as a spouse *intimately united to Christ her Bridegroom*, as a *body intimately united to Christ its Head*.[58]

The all-important role of Christ as principal liturgist shows itself especially, however, in the celebration of the sacraments, where the level of objectivity of what is taking place is raised to a higher pitch, the interval being signalled by the difference between two Latin tags. Not merely is there spiritual good here *ex opere operantis Ecclesiae*, by the Church's confident supplication as the Lord's bride and his body. Rather, what we have before us in the sacraments is bestowed *ex opere operato*, by the very deed of Christ. In the Thomistic theology of the sacraments, no sacrament bears grace except inasmuch as it is related to the passion of Christ, the all-perfect satisfying, reconciling deed of God for our salvation in the humanity of the Son. In every sacrament what is signified is the sacrifice of Christ in his passion and its fruits in grace and glory. A German interpreter of the mission of the Dominican Order and its classical theology, writing during the

[57] Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, 22 (*Christian Worship*, p. 17); *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1069.

[58] Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy*, 117 (emphasis added to a translation slightly emended). In regard to the sacramentals, Vagaggini poses and answers the question, how can *things* be sanctified? He replies, "In consideration of the Church's impetratory prayer, they are taken under the special divine protection or acceptance for the spiritual good of whoever possesses them or uses them with the proper dispositions" (ibid., 87).

First World War, found in the sacraments life through loving death:

> seven streams [that] flow forth from Christ's Cross, to carry from there to the end of the ages the salvation that springs out of the heart of the God-man [*das dem Herzen des Gottmenschen entquellende Heil*].[59]

In Thomas's *Summa Theologiae,* indeed, the treatise on the sacraments follows immediately the treatise on Christology—an appropriate linkage, as Aquinas himself explains, because the sacraments of the Church "derive their efficacy from the Word incarnate."[60] This is at its most evident in the way Christ's act of petition and praise on Calvary finds subsequent sacramental expression in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which for Thomas is the undoubted center of the liturgical cosmos.[61] That explains how the Thomist school came to rally so wholeheartedly to the Council of Trent whose fathers taught (in the council's twenty-second session) that the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass are substantially identical, differing only by the outer form of the one oblation. That is also why, as Thomism understands it, the Mass can be offered by its ministerial celebrant, and co-offered through and with the priest by the people, *only in virtue of sacramental character.* That "character" is for Thomas participation—in various grades conferred by baptism and confirmation for the lay faithful, by orders for presbyters and bishops—in the priesthood of Christ, the Head of the Church.

As David Berger has rightly emphasized, in the present state of excessive subjectivism in the Liturgy, Thomas's account of the Church's worship as truly the act of our eternal high priest is of the highest importance. The Liturgy, as the service-books of the Catholic Church understand it, is only conceivable "from above." Once treated as essentially established "from below" it becomes "anthropocentric idolatry." No doubt Berger's rallying to the Old

[59] B. Dörholt, *Der Predigerorden und seine Theologie* (Paderborn, 1917), 119, quoted in Berger, *Thomas Aquinas and the Liturgy,* 70-71.

[60] *STh* III, q. 60, *prologus.*

[61] M. Morard, "L'Eucharistie, clé de voûte de l'organisme sacramentel chez saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue thomiste* 95 (1995): 217-50.

Roman Liturgy makes him, in the eyes of some, a suspect guide. But we can note that no different message is given by Michael Kunzler, author of what is widely regarded as the best contemporary manual of liturgiology from the mainstream of the German-speaking Church. As Kunzler writes:

> A share in the fullness of divine life for the mortal creature is conceivable only as God's gift. If the Church's Liturgy claims to be powerful for the salvation of men, then this can only be so under the aspect of the divine *catabasis*—God's descent, "he came down from heaven." What happened once for all in the Incarnation and redemptive work of Christ, comes to pass daily in the liturgical actions of the Church. In them there takes place God's *catabasis* in which the triune God assumes the initiative and acts for the salvation of men.[62]

The Liturgy as saving action is "catabatic": coming down from God to human beings. What by contrast is "anabatic"—going up to God—about the Liturgy is the glorification of God by men. But notice that, while the catabatic aspect of the Liturgy must come first, it is to such anabatic glorification that the sanctifying divine action is ultimately directed. The example of our great high priest tells us so. Christ's entire life and passion was directed chiefly to the glorification of the Father: even the salvation of the human race was subordinated to this goal. So also in the Liturgy the soteriological intent of the rite, aiming as it does at our sanctification, is itself subordinated to its doxological purpose. This may seem an unnecessary exaltation of God at the expense of man, shades of a Feuerbachian nightmare. But we see that things cannot be otherwise, once we realize that our sanctification is nothing other than our incorporation into the glorification of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. As Vagaggini, again, puts it:

> The sanctification of man is ordered to the adoration, the glory given to God in Christian worship, and not vice versa. The two inseparable ends of the Liturgy, sanctification and worship, are not parallel or independent aims, but one is subordinated to the other: sanctification looks to worship.[63]

[62] M. Kunzler, *The Church's Liturgy*, trans. P. Murray et al. (New York: Continuum, 2001), 2.

[63] Vagaggini, *Theological Dimensions of the Liturgy*, 141.

The implication is plain: our sanctification only takes hold of us to the extent that we allow ourselves to be carried up into the doxological movement of Christ's own existence, living as he did for what the Letter to the Ephesians calls "the praise of [God's] glory" (Eph 1:14b). This will be our beatitude, our eternal happiness.

The early twentieth-century Carmelite Elizabeth of Dijon took just that formula of Ephesians—"to the praise of his glory"—as the motto of her doctrine, a fact which suggests the importance of her mystical theology now. The timeliness of Elizabeth's "spiritual mission" to the contemporary Church, in reminding it of the primacy of doxology, was noted in a book-length study by the Swiss dogmatician Hans Urs von Balthasar.[64] He wrote that monograph in 1952, just at the moment when the Western Catholic study of the Liturgy was starting to take, in the name of pastoral welfare, its reformist—and all too often either didactic or indeed frankly anthropocentric—turn.[65]

Today a revival not only of the sense of objectivity of the sacramental Liturgy in its divinely given salvific aspect but also of the primacy of doxology in the grace-influenced human intention of worship is a major desideratum for our Church.[66] The doxology in question is best regarded as what one American student of Balthasar's thought has called "*mutual* doxology."[67]

[64] H. U. von Balthasar, *Elisabeth von Dijon und ihre geistliche Sendung* (Cologne-Olten, 1952).

[65] For the situation in the 1950s and its historical background, there are some indications in A. Nichols, O.P., *Looking at the Liturgy: A Critical View of its Contemporary Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 11-48. These earlier and not altogether happy trends were compounded in the post-conciliar period by the advent of theologies (feminist, interreligious, or merely liberal) radically incompatible with the proper underpinnings—Trinitarian, Christological, pneumatological, ecclesial, cosmological, and eschatological—of a liturgical life that is doxological in the evangelical and Catholic sense. Here we may hope *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992) will bring—in time—a new orientation. See M. F. Mannion, "The Masterworks of God: The Liturgical Theology of the Catechism of the Catholic Church," in idem., *Masterworks of God: Essays in Liturgical Theology and Practice* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2004), 1-19.

[66] M. F. Mannion, "The Renewal of Liturgical Doxology," in Mannion, *Masterworks of God*, 236-63.

[67] K. Mongrain, *The Systematic Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar: An Irenaean Retrieval* (New York: Crossroad, 2002), 51.

For at the end of the ages we who glorify the Father in the Holy Spirit through the Father's Son Jesus Christ will also be glorified by them. As Thomas puts it in perhaps the most pregnant and poignant text of his treatise on the sacred signs:

> A sacrament is a sign that commemorates what precedes it—Christ's Passion; demonstrates what is accomplished in us through Christ's Passion—grace; and prefigures what the Passion pledges to us—future glory.[68]

Like the twentieth-century Anglo-Welsh poet David Jones, Thomas saw the Mass-Liturgy as pointing more ramifyingly than any other rite of the Church to humanity's past, present, and future as well as to all the mysteries of the life of Christ. For this a certain complexity in both text and gesture seems a necessity. As Thomas wrote: since in the Eucharist "there is comprised the whole mystery of our salvation, it is performed with greater solemnity than are the other sacraments."[69]

CONCLUSION

Mark Jordan, who likes to think of Thomas's *Summa Theologiae* as what he terms an "ideal curriculum" for theological wisdom, remarks of it:

> The *Summa* is read whole when it is taught—taught to a community of beginners in the pursuit of an integral theology. . . . The *Summa* is read whole when it is enacted as a single theological teaching, with morals at its centre and the Passion of Christ as its driving force, before a community committed to sanctification through mission, *with the consolations of sacraments and liturgy,* in the illumination of contemplative prayer.[70]

The *Summa Theologiae* is not the whole of St. Thomas's theology, as the contemporary rediscovery of his biblical exegesis is proving. Yet the word "consolations" for "sacraments and liturgy" may

[68] *STh* III, q. 60, a. 3.

[69] *STh* III, q. 83, a. 4.

[70] M. D. Jordan, "The *Summa*'s Reform of Moral Teaching—and Its Failures," in Kerr, ed., *Contemplating Aquinas,* 53 (emphasis added).

stand so long as it is taken in its strongest sense, indebted as this is to the prophetic scrolls in the Book of Isaiah. Conscious of that prophetic background, "looking for the consolation of Israel" was the best formula St. Luke could find for those people in the near vicinity of Jesus who had kept alive the Jewish hope of divine visitation.[71] "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; he has visited his people and redeemed them."[72] These words of the Canticle of Zachary—words of mutual glorification and robust objectivity—are a good indicator for how, in the spirit of St. Thomas, to share the "sacramental Liturgy" of the Church.

[71] Luke 2: 25.
[72] Luke 1: 68.

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HOMO ASSUMPTUS AT ST. VICTOR: RECONSIDERING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VICTORINE CHRISTOLOGY AND PETER LOMBARD'S FIRST OPINION

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AROUND THE YEAR 1270, Thomas Aquinas began composing the *Tertia Pars* of his *Summa Theologiae,* which treats of Christ the Savior. Here, after an opening question on the "fittingness of the Incarnation," he delves into a detailed consideration of the mode of the union of humanity and divinity in the Incarnate Word. In the sixth article of his second question, which inquires "whether the human nature was united to the Word of God accidentally," he reviews the ancient Christological heresies of Eutychianism and Nestorianism before explaining that "some more recent masters, thinking to avoid these heresies, through ignorance fell into them."[1]

Summarizing the first position set forth in book 3 of Peter Lombard's *Sentences* (which modern scholars know as the *homo assumptus* theory), Thomas continues: "For some of them conceded one person of Christ, but proposed two hypostases or two supposita, saying that a certain man, composed of soul and body, was from the beginning of his conception assumed by the

[1] *Summa theologiae* III, q. 2, a. 6: "Quidam autem posteriores magistri, putantes se has haereses declinare, in eas per ignorantiam inciderunt" (*S. Thomae Aquinatis Summa Theologiae,* 3 vols., ed. P. Caramello [Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1952 and 1956], 3:17). All subsequent Latin quotations will be taken from this edition. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the *Summa* will be my own.

Word of God."[2] After briefly explaining the Lombard's second and third opinions (now known as the subsistence theory and the *habitus* theory, respectively), Thomas concludes: "Therefore, it is clear that the second of the three opinions that the Master proposes, which affirms one hypostasis of God and man, should not be called an opinion, but an article of Catholic faith. Similarly, the first opinion which proposes two hypostases, and the third which proposes an accidental union, should not be called opinions, but heresies condemned by the Church in Councils."[3]

What is perhaps most striking here to the student of the twelfth-century theology on which Thomas is drawing is the way in which the thirteenth-century Dominican master, writing a little more than half a century after the Fourth Lateran Council, imposes the categories of orthodoxy and heresy on an earlier Christological presentation from which such distinctions were markedly absent. Indeed, scholars of the *Sentences* consistently note the Lombard's refusal to make a final determination among his three positions. Philipp Rosemann, for example, affirms, "From a reading of the *Sentences* themselves, it is not possible to determine with certainty which of the theories Peter preferred."[4] Similarly, Marcia Colish observes that even on this central doctrine of Christianity, "Peter really does think that the three opinions he outlines can truly be maintained within the orthodox consensus."[5] Such a holding together of differing positions or explanations within the bounds of acceptable belief, summarized

[2] Ibid.: "Quidam enim eorum concesserunt unam Christi personam, sed posuerunt duas hypostases, sive duo supposita; dicentes hominem quondam, compositum ex anima et corpore, a principio suae conceptionis esse assumptum a Dei Verbo."

[3] Ibid.: "Sic igitur patet quod secunda trium opinionum quas Magister ponit, quae asserit unam hypostasim Dei et hominis, non est dicenda opinio, sed sententia Catholicae fidei. Similiter etiam prima opinio, quae ponit duas hypostases; et tertia, quae ponit unionem accidentalem; non sunt dicendae opiniones, sed haereses in Conciliis ab Ecclesia damnatae." For an overview of Aquinas' theology of the hypostatic union as it developed throughout his career and in relation to the Lombard's three opinions, see Joseph Wawrykow, "Hypostatic Union," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas,* ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 222-51.

[4] Philipp W. Rosemann, *Peter Lombard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 130.

[5] Macia L. Colish, *Peter Lombard,* 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 1:399.

in the phrase *diversi sed non adversi,* was characteristic of twelfth-century theological thought.[6]

Peter Lombard describes what has come to be dubbed the *homo assumptus* theory in this way:

> Some people say that in the very Incarnation of the Word, a certain man was constituted from a rational soul and human flesh, from which two every true man is constituted. And that man began to be God—not, however, the nature of God, but rather the person of the Word—and God began to be that man. Indeed, they concede that that man was assumed by the Word and united to the Word, and nevertheless was the Word. . . . Not, however, by the movement of one nature into another, but with the quality of both natures being preserved, it happened that God was that substance and that substance was God. Hence, truly it is said that God became man and man became God, and the Son of God became the son of man and vice-versa. And although they say that that man subsists from a rational soul and human flesh, they do not, however, confess that he is composed of two natures, divine and human; nor that the parts of that one are two natures, but only soul and flesh.[7]

Although Peter (in good, politically correct medieval fashion) does not reveal which of his contemporaries might be among the "some people" who hold this Christological position, Hugh and Achard of St. Victor are usually among the first names that modern scholars associate with it. This is conspicuously evidenced by the footnote to Peter's "alii" in Ignatius Brady's critical edition,

[6] On this theme, see Henri de Lubac, "A propos de la formule: *diversi sed non adversi,*" in *Mélanges Jules Lebreton = Recherches de science religieuse* 40 (1952): 27-40; and Hubert Silvestre, "'Diversi sed non adversi'," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 31 (1964): 124-32 (both cited in Colish, *Peter Lombard,* 1:399 n. 1).

[7] Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae,* lib. 3, d. 6, c. 2, no. 1 (3d ed. rev., ed. Ignatius C. Brady, 2 vols. [Grottaferrata: Quaracchi, 1971-81], 2:50): "Alii enim dicunt in ipsa Verbi incarnatione hominem quondam ex anima rationali et humana carne constitutum: ex quibus duobus omnis verus homo constituitur. Et ille homo coepit esse Deus, non quidem natura Dei, sed persona Verbi; et Deus coepit esse homo ille. Concedunt etiam hominem illum assumptum a Verbo et unitum Verbo, et tamen esse Verbum. . . . Non tamen demigratione naturae in naturam, sed utriusque naturae servata proprietate, factum est ut Deus esset illa substantia, et illa substantia esset Deus. Unde vere dicitur Deus factus homo et homo factus Deus, et Deus esse homo et homo Deus, et Filius Dei filius hominis et e converse. Cumque dicant illum hominem ex anima rationali et humana carne subsistere, non tamen fatentur ex duabus naturis esse compositum, divina scilicet et humana; nec illius partes esse duas naturas, sed animam tantum et carnem." Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the *Sentences* will be my own.

which points the reader directly to Hugh's *De sacramentis* (lib. 2, p. 1, cc. 9 and 11). Almost immediately after the publication of Brady's edition, Lauge Olaf Nielsen, in his monograph on twelfth-century theologies of the Incarnation, averred: "There can be little doubt that the source of the first theory in the Lombard's survey was Hugh of St. Victor's Christology."[8] About two decades prior to Nielsen's study, Walter Principe listed both Hugh and Achard of St. Victor as proponents of the Lombard's first position, which he described thusly: "[T]his theory's starting-point was that that which was *assumed* into this personal identity with the Word was an individual human substance, a 'certain' individual *man* fully constituted as a man from a rational soul and human flesh: hence the frequently-used expression *homo assumptus* or 'assumed man.'"[9] Principe drew on the seminal work of Nikolaus Haring, who affirmed that "the first theory . . . apparently originated in the mind of Hugh of St. Victor."[10] Similarly, Everhard Poppenberg, in his *Die Christologie des Hugo von Sankt Victor,* maintained that Hugh "confessed to having a mindset close to [the *homo assumptus* theory]," though Poppenberg failed to point his reader to any textual evidence suggesting such a confession, pedagogical intention, or self-understanding on the Victorine's part.[11]

The question of the relationship between the Victorines' Christology and Peter Lombard's first opinion—as the latter was understood at the time the *Sentences* were written, in the thirteenth century, and in modernity—thus comes into sharp relief. The problem is muddied, of course, by several layers of anachronism. Poppenberg himself notes that Hugh composed his

[8] Lauge Olaf Nielsen, *Theology and Philosophy in the Twelfth Century: A Study of Gilbert Porreta's Thinking and the Theological Expositions of the Doctrine of the Incarnation during the Period 1130-1180* (Leiden: E. J. Brill,1982), 256.

[9] Walter Henry Principe, *William of Auxerre's Theology of the Hypostatic Union* (Toronto: PIMS, 1963), 65.

[10] N. M. Haring S.A.C., "The Case of Gilbert de la Porrée Bishop of Poitiers (1142-1154)," *Mediaeval Studies* 13 (1951): 1-40, at 29. Principe reveals his debt to Haring's presentation of the Lombard's three opinions in *William of Auxerre's Theology,* 197 n. 31.

[11] P. Everhard Poppenberg, *Die Christologie des Hugo von St. Victor* (Westphalia: Herz Jesu-missionhaus Hiltrup, 1937), 47.

De sacramentis, the primary locus of his Christology, "a good decade before [*ein gutes Jahrzehnt vor*]" (now we believe a full two decades before) the Lombard wrote the *Sentences,* and wonders whether the three positions that Peter sets forth were so clearly determined at the time of Hugh's writing.[12] Furthermore, the common designations for the three theories (*homo assumptus,* subsistence, and *habitus*), which surely influence how a modern reader approaches the texts of those thinkers to whom the theories have been attributed, were first given by P. B. Barth in 1919.[13]

On the other hand, the astute chronographer of twelfth-century theology may maintain that the Lombard composed his *Sentences* (and therefore his three opinions) in the mid-to-late 1150s, immediately subsequent to Achard's sermons which contain the essential elements of Victorine Christology. According to this line of thought, advanced by Jean Châtillon nearly four decades ago, Achard was one of the masters whose teaching directly inspired the Lombard's first opinion.[14] Châtillon affirms: "A quick examination of the Christological vocabulary of the sermons confirms this general judgment. Achard is indeed oen of those theologians who speaks more readily about the mystery of the God-man in terms of 'assumption' rather than 'incarnation.'"[15]

[12] Poppenberg, *Die Christologie,* 46-47. It is believed that Hugh penned his *De sacramentis* c. 1134, while the final edition of the *Sentences* is dated to 1155-57. See Damien van den Eynde, *Essai sur la succession et la date des écrits de Hugues de Saint-Victor* (Rome: Apud Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, 1960), 100-103; Hugh of Saint Victor, *On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith (De Sacramentis)*, trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America,1951), ix; and Colish, *Peter Lombard,* 1:25.

[13] See P. B. Barth, "Ein neues Dokument zur Geschichte der Frühscholastischen Christologie," *Theologische Quartalschrift*, Bd. 100 (1919): 409-26, esp. 423; and Nielsen, *Theology and Philosophy in the Twelfth Century,* 247 n. 22.

[14] "Un examen rapide du vocabulaire christologique des *Sermones* confirme ce jugement global. Achard est en effet de ces théologiens qui parlent plus volontiers du mystère de l'Homme-Dieu en termes d'"assomption' que d'"incarnation'" (Jean Châtillon, *Théologie, spiritualité et métaphysique dans l'oeuvre oratoire d'Achard de Saint-Victor* [Paris: J. Vrin, 1969], 194-96). Châtillon contends that Achard composed his sermons while he was teaching theology at St. Victor and before he became abbot, that is before the year 1155 (ibid., 138-42).

[15] Ibid., 194.

The precise wording of Châtillon's affirmation is significant in light of the purpose of the present article. As we shall see, a quick examination of the Christological vocabulary of Achard's sermons as well as of Hugh's systematic consideration in *De sacramentis* reveals that both Victorine masters consistently employ the phrase *homo assumptus*. But what precisely did they mean and intend by it? Did Hugh and Achard hold and teach the Lombard's first opinion, as generations of scholars have assumed? If so, was it—as Thomas Aquinas suggests—less than an opinion? Was it perhaps more? This study aims to re-evaluate the received scholarly view of the relationship between the Victorines and the *homo assumptus* theory by carefully considering Hugh's and Achard's understanding—on their own terms and in their own terms—of the nature of the union of divinity and humanity in the Incarnation, as set forth in book 2, part 1 of *De sacramentis christianae fidei* and in several of Achard's sermons. I will argue that whereas their teaching shares certain points of contact with the Lombard's first opinion properly understood, the Christology of Hugh and Achard aligns to a greater extent with the second position set forth in the *Sentences*. In fact, the fluidity and complementarity of the three positions as the Lombard describes them is surely a function of the twelfth-century theological context generally and seem to mirror Victorine Christological thought more particularly.

I. Hugh on the Mode of the Union

Hugh begins his consideration of the Incarnation by highlighting, in the prologue to the second book of *De sacramentis,* its soteriological necessity or fittingness. The reader of sacred Scripture should not be surprised, Hugh maintains, to find mundane realities treated in the midst of the lofty mysteries of faith. After all, God himself, who authored Scripture and revealed himself therein, "deigned to be humbled, descending to human things in order that afterward he might raise man up to divine

things."[16] In the background here is Augustine's understanding, as he had learned it from the preaching of Ambrose, that the divine Incarnation is intended to teach the educated reader who scoffs at the unworthiness of the scriptural text humbly to descend from his pride in order that he might finally be exalted.[17] Divine humility is the salvific antidote for human pride. That Hugh opens his treatment of the Incarnation in this Augustinian way presages his emphasis on the humanity of Christ and its soteriological significance. This is clearly seen in his explanation of why it was fitting that the Son rather than the Father or the Holy Spirit was sent in the flesh:

> The Son of God was made Son of Man in order that he might make the sons of men sons of God. . . . Therefore, lest the incommunicable name be divided, the Son alone assumed flesh in order that one and the same might be both Son of God and Son of Man: Son of God [by virtue of having been] begotten from the Father according to divinity; Son of Man [by virtue of having been] born from a mother according to humanity.[18]

While the language here sounds quite similar to that of Peter Lombard's first opinion, Hugh's use of such words as *humana, humanitas,* and even *homo* intimates a concern with an assumed *nature* rather than an assumed *person.* Confirmation of this is found when, over against Apollinarianism—the ancient heresy that interpreted John 1:14, "the Word became flesh," to mean that the Word had assumed a human body but not a human mind or soul—Hugh affirms: "But the Catholic faith holds that God assumed all that was man's except fault, because he could not have been true man unless he had assumed all that pertained to

[16] *De sacr.* 2.prol.: "Nam ipse Deus humiliari dignatus est, ad humana descendens, ut hominem postmodum ad divina sublevaret" (*PL* 176:363; Deferrari, trans., 205). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

[17] See, e.g., Augustine, *Confessiones* 3.5.9; and 6.5.7-8 (*CCL* 27:30-31, 77-79).

[18] *De sacr.* 2.1.2: "Factus est Filius Dei, Filius hominis, ut filios hominum, filios Dei faceret. . . . Ne ergo incommunicabile nomen divideretur, solus Filius carnem suscepit, ut unus et idem esset et Filius Dei et Filius hominis. Filius Dei secundum divinitatem genitus a Patre; filius hominis secundum humanitatem natus ex matre" (*PL* 176:372D-373A; Deferrari,trans., 206-7).

the truth of human nature."[19] As we will soon see, Hugh generally understands the word *homo* as a kind of shorthand for "all that was man's," which itself is an abbreviated way of speaking about "all that pertained to the truth of human nature."

In a wonderful reflection on the scriptural and creedal affirmation, "He was conceived of the Holy Spirit," Hugh explains that Christ took all that pertained to the truth of human nature from his human mother alone. What, then, does it mean to say, "He was conceived of the Holy Spirit"? The answer, Hugh believes, is to be found by considering the customary mode of human conception. Neither the nature of the woman alone nor the nature of the man alone is sufficient, of course, in producing a new human fetus. The man comes to the aid of woman through love so that what was impossible in either by herself or himself becomes possible in the woman "through herself" (*per se*). In Hugh's view of human reproduction, the seed of the human offspring is formed by the woman alone, although it is sown or planted by the couple together.[20] Similarly, he explains that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit not because Mary received the seed from the substance of the third Trinitarian person, but rather because "through the love and operation of the Holy Spirit [human] nature supplied the substance for the divine offspring from the flesh of the virgin."[21] The upshot of this exegesis, which is a prelude to Hugh's detailed consideration of the union of *Verbum* and *homo*, is that Christ derives full humanity exclusively from the fully human nature of his mother.

[19] *De sacr.* 2.1.6: "Sed Catholica fides habet totum quod hominis erat, praeter culpam, Deum assumpsisse, quia nec aliter verus homo esse potuisset, nisi totum quod ad veritatem humanae naturae pertinebat, assumpsisset" (*PL* 176:383B; Deferrari, trans., 218).

[20] *De sacr.* 2.1.8: Et quidem in muliere amor viri, in viro autem amor mulieris, idem agree solet, ut quia in altero solum natura sibi sufficiens non est; alterutrum sibi per dilectionem subveniat, ut quod in neutra per se potuit, in utraque per se cum altera possit. Igitur semen humani partus a sola muliere formandum concipitur, quod simul a viro et muliere seminatur (*PL* 176:393A; Deferrari, trans., 229).

[21] *De sacr.* 2.1.8: Concepit ergo Maria de Spiritu sancto, non quod de substantia Spiritus sancti semen partus acceperit, sed quia per amorem et operationem Spiritus sancti, ex carne virginis divino partui natura substantiam ministravit (*PL* 176:393B; Deferrari, trans., 229).

Although Hugh uses the language of *homo assumptus* throughout his consideration of the mode of the incarnational union, he makes clear at the outset what he intends by *homo:*

> But he [i.e., the Word] assumed flesh and soul, that is man, nature not person [*id est hominem, naturam non personam*]. For he did not assume man, a person, but rather he assumed man into person [*Neque enim assumpsit hominem personam; sed assumpsit hominem in personam*]. Therefore, then, he assumed man [*hominem assumpsit*] because he assumed human flesh and a human soul [*carnem humanam et animam humanam assumpsit*].[22]

Here again we see that *homo* does not mean, for Hugh, a human person somehow constituted of body and soul prior to or at the very moment of conception. Indeed, the assumption of "man" did not suddenly make the divine Trinity a Quaternity; rather, the "assumed man" (*homo assumptus*) was assumed *into* the second Trinitarian person. Throughout his treatment of the union, Hugh is careful to avoid the pitfall of a Nestorian, two-person Christology. That it can be rightly affirmed that, in the Incarnation, "God is man" and "man is God" means—perhaps counterintuitively—that the one assuming and the one assumed are one and the same person.[23] Hugh explains:

> God is man on account of the humanity which he took up and has [*propter humanitatem quam suscepit, et habet*]; and man is God on account of the divinity [*propter divinitatem*]. This is said not of two but of one, because God and man are not two, but one [*non duo sed unus*], [namely] Jesus Christ.[24]

Hugh here explicitly *does not* teach what Walter Principe identifies as the crux of the *homo assumptus* theory, namely, that the Word assumed an individual human substance that was fully

[22] *De sacr.* 2.1.9: "Assumpsit autem carnem et animam, id est hominem, naturam non personam. Neque enim assumpsit hominem personam; sed assumpsit hominem in personam. Ideo autem hominem assumpsit; quia carnem humanam et animam humanam assumpsit" (*PL* 176:394A; Deferrari, trans. 230).

[23] Ibid. (*PL* 176394B-C; Deferrari, trans., 231).

[24] Ibid.: "Et est Deus homo propter humanitatem quam suscepit, et habet; et homo Deus propter divinitatem, non de duobus dicitur, set de uno; quia Deus et homo non duo sed unus est Jesus Christus" (*PL* 176:394C; Deferrari, trans., 231).

constituted as a man from soul and flesh.[25] For Hugh, the Word took humanity (*humanitas,* that is, human flesh and a human soul) up into his very person and thereby became man (*homo*); the Word did not assume an already-constituted human person to himself. The Victorine master makes this clear in chapter 9 of this part of *De sacramentis* (whose title is *De unione verbi, animae, et carnis*) when he explains that the second Trinitarian person assumed a human soul and flesh simultaneously:

> Therefore, to be sure, he did not assume a person because that flesh and that soul, before they were united to the Word into person, had not been united in a person. There was one union, and that one was a union of the Word and flesh and soul. Not the Word first and the flesh, nor the Word first and the soul, nor the soul and flesh first, but at the same time the Word and soul and flesh.[26]

It must be observed, if only in passing, that Peter Lombard describes the proponents of his second Christological position as teaching that Jesus Christ, subsisting in two natures, consists of the three substances of divinity, flesh, and soul.[27] For Hugh, neither a union of human soul and flesh prior to the assumption nor the simultaneous union of Word and soul and flesh created a human person who was the subject of the Incarnation. Rather, the

[25] Principe, *William of Auxerre's Theology,* 65.

[26] *De sacr.* 2.1.9: "Ideo vero personam non assumpsit, quia caro illa et anima illa priusquam verbo unirentur in personam, non erant unita ad personam. Una unio fuit, et ad unum unio fuit, et verbi et carnis et animae. Non prius verbum et caro, nec prius verbum et anima, nec prius anima et caro sed simul verbum et anima et caro" (*PL* 176:394A; Deferrari, trans., 230).

[27] Peter Lombard, *Sentences* III, d. 6, c. 3, no. 1: "Sunt autem et alii, qui istis in parte consentiunt, sed dicunt hominem illum non ex anima rationali et carne tantum, sed ex humana et divina natura, id est ex tribus substantiis: divinitate, carne et anima, constare" (Brady, ed., 2:52). Haring notes the extreme difficulty of providing a clear exposition of the Lombard's three positions because "their exponents often failed to define their terms with sufficient clarity." As an example, he observes that whereas twelfth-century proponents of the second opinion regularly speak of two or three "substances" or even three "essences" in Christ, this duality or trinity of substances becomes reduced in the final analysis to a duality of natures (Haring, "The Case of Gilbert," 28-29). Such imprecise use of philosophical terminology among twelfth-century thinkers such as Peter Lombard and the Victorines has surely contributed to the ease and rapidity with which modern scholars have associated Hugh and Achard with the first opinion.

eternal Word is the sole *persona* or individual subject of this sacred mystery:

> But, indeed, the Word was a person before this union [of Word and soul and flesh], because it was the Son who was the person just as the Father was a person and the Holy Spirit was a person. And the person was eternal just as the Word was eternal and the Son was eternal. And the Word did not begin to be a person when he began to be man [*Nec coepit esse persona Verbum, quando homo esse coepit*]; rather, he assumed man so that man might begin to be a person [*sed assumpsit hominem, ut homo persona esse inciperet*], but not another person than that one who took him to himself. And so the Word, a person, took to himself man, not person but nature [*Verbum persona accepit hominem, non personam, sed naturam*] in order that he who took up and that which he took up would be one person in the Trinity [*ut qui suscepit et quod suscepit una esset in Trinitate persona*].[28]

In the final phrase, Hugh's use of the neuter form of the relative pronoun (*quod suscepit:* that which he took up) rather than the masculine form (*quem suscepit:* whom he took up) again suggests that he intends by *homo assumptus* to connote what is constitutive of human nature or humanity (that is, a thing) rather than a fully constituted human person. When he writes that the Word *assumpsit hominem, ut homo persona esse inciperet,* however, he is not affirming that the human nature was somehow transformed into a person. Rather, as the following sentence makes clear, he is simply teaching that, at the moment of assumption, the constituent parts of the human nature came to belong to the person of the assuming Word. Indeed, that the Word assumed humanity is evident when Hugh writes: "God is man, who just as in His divinity from eternity had perfect goodness, indeed he himself was perfect goodness, so in his humanity from first conception [*in humanitate sua a prima*

[28] *De sacr.* 2.1.9: "Sed erat quidem Verbum ante hanc unionem persona, quia Filius erat qui persona erat, sicut Pater persona erat, et persona Spiritus sanctus erat. Et erat persona aeterna sicut Verbum aeternum erat, et Filius aeternus erat. Nec coepit esse persona Verbum, quando homo esse coepit; sed assumpsit hominem, ut homo persona esse inciperet, nec alia persona quam illa erat, quae eum acciperet. Itaque Verbum persona accepit hominem, non personam, sed naturam, ut qui suscepit et quod suscepit una esset in Trinitate persona" (*PL* 176:394A-B; Deferrari, trans., 230-31).

conceptione] he received full and perfect goodness."[29] *Deus* is *homo* by virtue of the *humanitas* that he assumed at the initial moment of conception. So, humanity having been assumed, *Deus* and *homo* are one.

But if *Deus assumens* and *homo assumptus* are one, how precisely did the union occur? Does Hugh speak of this union in more precise theological terms? After a brief nod to the "truly ineffable" (*vere ineffabilis*) nature of the Christological union, he proceeds in his attempt to make some headway against the inability of human language finally to capture such a profound *sacramentum*. What, he inquires, does the predicate *homo* signify? If we seek the significatory *quid* of *homo* (i.e., the *what* to which the word points), the answer, according to Hugh, is *natura*. If, by contrast, we seek the *quem* or *whom* that *homo* signifies, it is *persona*. Whereas the *quiddity* that *homo* connotes is different from that signified by *Deus* (viz., humanity and divinity, respectively), the two predicates share a common *quem* or *qui* (viz., the second Trinitarian person).[30] So, in the Incarnation, there are two 'what's united in a single 'who'. This means, on the one hand, that the two 'what's can and should be distinguished by different signs, and, on the other hand, that the one 'who' can be spoken of differently according to the particular 'what' that the theologian aims to reference. For Hugh, the predicates *homo* and *Deus* simultaneously serve both functions.

Hugh provides a convenient summary of his own use of theological terminology toward the end of chapter 9:

> When I say "man," I signify human nature [*naturam significo humanam*], that is, soul and flesh. When I say "God," I signify divine nature [*naturam significo divinam*], that is, the divinity of the Word. Similarly, when I say "man," I signify person according to soul and flesh [*personam significo ex anima et carne*].

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[29] *De sacr.* 2.1.6: "Similiter Deus homo, qui sicut in divinitate sua ab aeterno perfectam bonitatem habuit; imo ipse perfecta bonitas fuit, ita in humanitate sua a prima conceptione, plenam et perfectam bonitatem accepit" (*PL* 176:385D; Deferrari, trans., 221).

[30] *De sacr.* 2.1.9: Quid significant homo? naturam. Quem significat homo? personam. Si quaeris quid significat homo aliud significat homo: et aliud Deus. Homo enim significat humanitatem; Deus significat divinitatem. Si quaeris quem significat homo, eumdem significat quem Deus, quia idem est et homo et Deus (*PL* 176:394D; Deferrari, trans., 231.

Likewise, when I say "God," I signify person with regard to divinity [*personam in divinitate*]. "Man" indicates no more in nature than soul and flesh, and no more in person than according to soul and flesh. And neither does "God" indicate more in nature than divinity, nor more in person than with regard to divinity. And nevertheless in Christ, person according to soul and flesh, and person with regard to divinity are not two persons, but is one person.[31]

This twofold understanding of *homo* and *Deus* enables Hugh to provide an answer to the vexing question of how one can say that in the Incarnation *homo Deus est,* "man is God." He explains: "Because humanity was united to divinity personally [*personaliter*]. The nature of God is divinity, the nature of man is humanity; and, indeed, divinity is not humanity, nevertheless God is man: different natures, one person."[32]

What is striking to one who brings even a vague familiarity with the ancient Christological controversies and the conciliar formulations that intended to settle them to the reading of Hugh's Christology is its thoroughgoing orthodoxy, in content if not in language. I have tried to suggest how Hugh's language of *homo assumptus* and *Deus assumens* serves as a sort of shorthand for the traditional doctrine of the hypostatic union worked out by Cyril of Alexandria and Leo the Great over against the positions of Nestorius and Eutyches, and summed up in the Chalcedonian formula "one person, two natures."[33] While neither Hugh nor Achard seems to have known the Council of Chalcedon directly

[31] Ibid.: "Quando dico homo, naturam significo humanam, id est animam et carnem. Quando dico Deus, naturam significo divinam, id est Verbi divinitatem. Item quando dico homo, personam significo ex anima et carne. Item quando dico Deus, personam significo in divinitate. Non amplius notat homo in natura, quam animam et carnem, neque in persona, quam ex anima et carne. Neque amplius Deus notat in natura quam divinitatem, neque in persona quam in divinitate; et tamen in Christo persona ex anima et carne, et persona in divinitate non duae sunt personae, sed una persona est" (*PL* 176:398A-B; Deferrari, trans., 234-35). Hugh elaborates further on this theme when he subsequently writes: "And so in Christ we say that one is human nature and the other divine. We do not, however, say that one is man and the other God; rather, that God and man are one Jesus Christ" (*PL* 176:398C; Deferrari, trans., 235).

[32] Ibid.: "Quare homo Deus est? Quia humanitas divinitati personaliter unita est. Natura Dei divinitas, natura hominis humanitas; et divinitas quidem humanitas non est, Deus tamen homo est. Natura diversa, persona una" (*PL* 176:394D-395A; Deferrari, trans., 231).

[33] See *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils,* ed. Norman P. Tanner, S.J., 2 vols. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), 1:36-103, esp. 69-70 and 86-87.

or perfectly, textual and historical evidence suggests that they—like other notable twelfth-century theologians, including Anselm of Laon and Abelard—had a basic knowledge of its Christological definition.[34]

II. Achard on the Mode of the Union

Achard's understanding of the mode of the Christological union cannot be found in a *summa* of theology like Hugh's *De sacramentis;* rather, it lies scattered throughout a number of sermons that he delivered to the community of St. Victor on significant feast days, likely during the early 1150s.[35] His most sustained and detailed treatments of the Incarnation appear in Sermon 1 (on the Nativity of the Lord) and Sermon 4 (on the Lord's Resurrection), both of which I will consider below. He provides briefer, scattershot considerations of the ontological status of the God-man in several other homilies whose central focus is not the Incarnation, such as Sermon 5 (on Palm Sunday) and Sermon 15 (on Quadragesima). The reader who approaches these sermons hoping to nail down Achard's doctrine of the mode of the union in Christ faces a challenging task indeed. Nevertheless, these sermons, to which I first turn, provide some significant data concerning the Victorine abbot's general approach to the Incarnation and his use of Christological vocabulary.

In Sermon 5, Achard offers a reflection on the gospel account of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, paying particular attention to the exact wording of Matthew's narrative. He hones in on "the Mount of Olives," where Jesus commands his disciples to go into the village and procure for his imminent soteriological purpose a donkey and a colt (Matt 21:1-2). Achard finds in this passage the fulfillment of Isaiah 2:2, "In the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be prepared on the

[34] Ludwig Ott, "Das Konzil von Chalkedon in der Frühscholastik," in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart,* ed. Aloys Grillmeier and Heinrich Bacht, vol. 2 (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1953), 873-922, esp. 906-21.

[35] For a detailed consideration of Achard of St. Victor's life and work, including his sermons, see Châtillon, *Théologie,* 11-149.

summit of the mountains." Jesus is the mountain and his preparation is his "having been predestined to be the Son of God in power, namely, of the same quality and quantity of power, wisdom, and goodness as the Word himself, to whom he is united personally."[36] Achard's language here appears to pigeonhole him as a proponent of a kind of Nestorianism or adoptionism according to which Jesus, "the mountain," somehow comes to share in the power and authority of the divine Word or Son by the eternal will of the Father. At least in this brief quotation, which represents the extent of Achard's reflections on the Incarnation in this sermon, Jesus appears to be a purely human person who begins to participate in the Word by some sort of union at a certain moment in time. This view is perhaps only confirmed when the Victorine preacher, in the very next line, says, "For the assumed man [*homo assumptus*] has no less by grace than the assuming Word [*Verbum assumens*] has by nature."[37] Although Achard, like Hugh before him, does aver that *homo assumptus* and *Verbum assumens* are united "personally" (*personaliter*), here he fails to give further explanation of this crucial adverb. Fortunately, however, he does provide some clarification on the precise mode of the union in Sermon 15 (on Quadragesima).

The scriptural text on which Sermon 15 is based is a single, brief verse from the Gospel of Matthew: "Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit" (*Ductus est Jesus in desertum a Spiritu* [Matt 4:1]). At the outset, Achard, as if aiming to elucidate what remained unclear in Sermon 5, unequivocally identifies Jesus with the eternal Son of God: "Obviously this Jesus, who was led into the desert, is the Word of God on high—that Word, ineffable to us, but not to that one whose Word he is; that Word, great and

[36] *Sermo* 5.1: "*Mons*, inquit, *preparatus*, id est predestinatus, ut esset Filius Dei in virtute, ejusdem videlicet potentie, sapientie, bonitatis, cujus est et quante ipsum Verbum cui personaliter unitur" (*Achard de Saint-Victor Sermons inédits*, ed. Jean Châtillon [Paris: Vrin, 1970], 67). Unless otherwise noted, all translations will be my own. For an English translation of Achard's works, see *Achard of Saint Victor: Works*, trans. Hugh Feiss, O.S.B. (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 2001).

[37] Ibid.: Non enim minus habet homo assumptus per gratiam quam Verbum assumens per naturam (Châtillon, ed., 67; Feiss, trans., 140).

profound, which *was in the beginning with God and* himself *was God* [Jn. 1:1]."[38] Jesus was led into the desert, Achard explains, when God came to man (*cum Deus venit ad hominem*), who had deserted God by virtue of his sin and consequently had, in turn, been justly deserted by God.[39] In order to demonstrate his great mercy and love, God came to man (*ad hominem accessit*) in the most profound way imaginable. Achard explains:

> For what greater approach of God to man could have occurred than that God, bursting open the heavens of man and descending wholly to man, *was seen on earth* by man *and lived* with man [Bar. 3:38]? For the sake of man, God himself was even *found in the condition of a man* [Phil. 2:7]; indeed, he was truly a man.[40]

In spite of his prior identification of Jesus with the divine Word, Achard's language here (namely, that of *Deus* and *homo*) and his partial quotation of Philippians 2:7 are certainly more suggestive of the Lombard's first and third opinions, respectively, than of the subsistence theory. Two observations must be made, however. First, Achard's aim here is to explain the gracious soteriological purpose of the Incarnation in language that is both scriptural and rhetorically powerful, not to render the exact mode of the union mentally comprehensible by means of perfect verbal precision. Indeed, later in this very sermon, he emphasizes the absolute impenetrability of the Incarnation by the rational mind when he asks rhetorically: "What intellect can grasp, even feebly, his way by which he [i.e., the Son] became a way for us, namely, how he came from the bosom of the Father into the bosom of the

[38] *Sermo* 15.1: "Quippe, hic Jesus, qui ductus est in desertum, Verbum Dei est in excelsis. Verbum illud ineffabile, sed nobis, non illi cujus est Verbum; Verbum illud magnum et profundum, quod *erat in principio apud Deum, et* ipsum *Deus erat*" (Châtillon, ed., 199; Feiss, trans., 298).

[39] Ibid. (Châtillon, ed., 200; Feiss, trans., 298-99).

[40] Ibid.: "Que namque Dei ad hominem major potuit fieri accessio, quam quod Deus, hominis dirumpens cellos et ad hominem totus descendens, *in terra* ab homine *visus est et cum* homine *conversatus est*? Ipse etiam pro homine *habitu inventus est ut homo*, immo vere homo" (Châtillon, ed., 200; Feiss, trans., 299).

mother?"[41] Second, here and throughout Sermon 15 Achard uses the word *homo* not to designate a single human person who was assumed by the eternal Word, but rather to reference all of humankind or humanity in general.

These themes of the utter inscrutability—and, by extension, indescribability—of the Incarnation and *homo* as a kind of shorthand for humanity conspicuously converge toward the end of Sermon 15, where Achard sets forth ten mysteries that are to be believed rather than discussed, enumerated rather than examined, proposed rather than explained.[42] The most profound of these mysteries, of which the human mind cannot even conceive, is represented for Achard by the fourth way that Solomon (the wisest of humans) confesses to be veiled for him, namely, "the way of a man in his youth" (Prov 30:18-19).[43] Invoking the words of Jeremiah 31:22, "The Lord will do something new on the earth," Achard explains:

> His youth pertains to this newness; this is his humanity [*humanitas*]. For the man [*homo*] himself is recent, but God is not recent; recently in humanity [*nuper in humanitate*], but for a long time in divinity; for a long time not in time, but in eternity; not from the beginning, but in the beginning, and even before the beginning inasmuch as he is the beginning of the beginning of the universe.[44]

The language with which Achard here proposes the mystery of the God-man is both striking and revealing. The God who has existed eternally *in divinitate* has done a new thing in coming to be *nuper in humanitate*. The *homo* of whom the Victorine preacher speaks, in spite of the very word itself, is none other—that is, no other person—than God "in humanity."

[41] *Sermo* 15.24: "Viam autem ejus, qua nobis via factus est, quis vel tenuiter capiat intellectus? Quomodo scilicet de sinu Patris in sinum venerit matris?" (Châtillon, ed., 227-28; Feiss, trans., 332).

[42] See sections 17-33.

[43] *Sermo* 15.19 (Châtillon, ed., 221; Feiss, trans., 324).

[44] *Sermo* 15.24: "Ad hanc novitatem ejus pertinet adolescentia; hec est humanitas ejus. Ipse enim homo recens, sed Deus non recens; nuper in humanitate, sed olim in divinitate; nec olim ex tempore, sed in eternitate; non a principio, sed in principio, sed et ante principium, utpote principii universitatis principium" (Châtillon, ed., 227; Feiss, trans., 331-32).

Similarly, elsewhere in Sermon 15 Achard describes Jesus Christ as follows: "via est ad Patrem, *mediator Dei et hominum* [1 Tim. 2:5], hominem suscipiens, et per se Deum et hominem Deum."[45] Although *hominem suscipiens* may be most accurately rendered "taking up man," particularly in light of the preceding scriptural quotation, Achard intends to signify by this phrase the assumed humanity. It is by virtue of his assumption of human nature, Achard appears to teach, that the Word who is God per se came to exist as "the man-God." He subsequently provides further explanation: "[I]pse Deus, quamvis in locis pluribus, immo in omnibus sit spiritualiter atque essentialiter, secundum modum tamen aliquem existendi, id est personaliter, in uno tantum est loco, in ipso videlicet homine assumpto per gratiam, plenitudine divinitatis sue."[46] He makes clear in the following discussion that he intends "*in ipso . . . homine assumpto*" as a reference to the human nature having been assumed. Drawing on Colossians 2:9, he explains that the Word assumes to himself what is of the body and grants to the body what he is in himself, "not confusing [the human and divine] natures, but wonderfully and ineffably uniting them, not changing them, but joining them."[47] For Achard, *personaliter* connotes a particular mode of existence according to which God is physically localized; *personaliter* stands in sharp contrast to *spiritualiter* and *essentialiter,* descriptors of the deity's eternal, customary, uncircumscribed mode of being. The adverb *personaliter* here signifies an assumed human nature rather than an assumed human person, as in the phrase "in ipso . . . homine assumpto." Whereas Achard failed to explain what he meant by *personaliter* in Sermon 5, here in his homily on Quadragesima he provides a clear and concise definition: "through the union of the person" (*per unionem persone*).[48] In sum, a careful consideration of the precise Christological terminology of Sermon 15 reveals Achard's conviction that the eternal Word of God, far from

[45] *Sermo* 15.22 (Châtillon, ed., 225).

[46] *Sermo* 15.26 (Châtillon, ed., 230).

[47] Ibid.: "non naturas confundens, sed mirabiliter et ineffabiliter uniens, nec mutans, sed socians" (Châtillon, ed., 230; Feiss, trans., 335).

[48] Ibid. (Châtillon, ed., 230; Feiss, trans., 335).

assuming a man in some Nestorian sense, took up a human nature and united it to his very person, thereby beginning to exist *personaliter.*

Achard confirms and further develops this view of the incarnational union in Sermons 1 and 4. The scriptural text for Sermon 1 (on the Nativity of the Lord) is Isaiah 7:14, "Behold a virgin will conceive and bear a son, and will call him Emmanuel." Using Matthew 1:23 as an interpretive intertext, Achard avers:

> Emmanuel means *God with us*, that is, God in our nature. For he is God and man, having a natural unity with God the Father, with whom He is one in nature. He also has a unity with the Virgin mother and other men, with whom he is also one in human nature [*cum quibus et ipse unum in natura humanitatis*]. For he is one in being with the Father [*homoousion Patri*] and one in being with the mother [*homoousion matri*], that is, consubstantial with both.[49]

Here he uses language quite similar to that of the traditional Chalcedonian formula of Christ's double consubstantiality.[50] The Incarnate Word is one person who is united with God the Father in his divine nature and likewise is united with us in his human nature. For Achard, the nouns *Deus* and *homo,* far from designating persons, are simply shorthand for Emmanuel's connaturality with the deity and with humankind, respectively.

Again following Hugh, Achard explains that whereas the Incarnation constituted a work performed by the Trinity as a whole, only the divine Son actually became incarnate, for several soteriologically fitting reasons. In Achard's words, "the Son is in our nature in a singular and special way," that is, he united our nature to himself personally (*personaliter*) so that the assumed and

[49] *Sermo* 1.1: "*Emmanuel* interpretatur *nobiscum Deus* id est Deus in nostra natura. Est enim Deus et homo, habens unitatem naturalem cum Deo Patre, cum quo unum in natura; habet et unitatem cum Virgine matre et ceteris hominibus, cum quibus et ipse unum in natura humanitatis. Est enim homousion Patri, et est homoousion matri, id est utrique consubstantialis" (Châtillon, ed., 24; Feiss, trans., 97).

[50] On Achard's knowledge of the Christological teaching of the Council of Chalcedon, see Feiss, trans., 37 n. 69; and Ott, "Das Konzil von Chalkedon," 906-21.

the assuming would be one person.[51] Of the Trinitarian persons, only the Son "came forth not only all the way to us, but even into us [*non solum usque ad nos, sed etiam in nos*]."[52] After all, Achard reminds his hearers, the Holy Spirit came forth *ad nos* when he appeared as a dove and as tongues of fire, but never *in nos*, meaning a coming "all the way into a participation in our nature so as to become man [*usque in nature nostre participationem, ut homo fieret*]."[53] That the Word became *homo* means that without losing what he was eternally he took to himself all that is constitutive of our human nature. As a result, everything that belonged to the assumed man by nature became the assuming Word's by condescension, and conversely everything that belonged to the assuming Word by nature became the assumed man's by grace. "Therefore, on account of this ineffable union of humanity and divinity," Achard explains, "God is truly said to be man, and man is truly said to be God."[54] He concludes this homiletical consideration of the mode of the union by noting that whereas the Father and the Son are one not in person but in nature, the assumed man and the assuming Word are one not in nature but in person.[55] It is quite clear, then, that like Hugh two decades earlier, Achard uses the words *homo* and *Deus* to predicate the two natures that were united in the single person of the Word.

Achard also provides a detailed Christological consideration in Sermon 4 (on the Resurrection), sections 5-7. Here he interprets

[51] *Sermo* 1.2: "Filius tamen quodam singulari et speciali modo est in nostra natura, quam sibi personaliter univit sic, videlicet, ut assumptum et assumens essent una persona" (Châtillon, ed., 26; Feiss, trans., 98).

[52] Ibid.: "Tres enim operati sunt in uno, non tria, sed unum: solus enim Filius exivit, non solum usque ad nos, sed etiam in nos" (Châtillon, ed., 27; Feiss, trans., 99).

[53] Ibid.: "Spiritus sanctus exivit usque ad nos quando in specie columbe apparuit vel in linguis igneis; non tamen exivit usque in nos, id est usque in nature nostre participationem, ut homo fieret" (Châtillon, ed., 27; Feiss, trans., 99).

[54] *Sermo* 1.5: "[P]ropter hanc igitur ineffabilem unionem humanitatis et deitatis Deus dicitur vere et est homo, et homo dicitur vere et est Deus" (Châtillon, ed., 33; Feiss, trans., 103).

[55] Ibid.: "Pater enim et Filius unum sunt, non in persona, sed in natura; homo assumptus et Verbum assumens unum sunt, non in natura, sed in persona" (Châtillon, ed., 33; Feiss, trans., 103-4).

the instructions for eating the paschal lamb given in Exodus 12:8-9, which mandate eating its "head, feet, and entrails." Allegorizing these instructions, he explains:

> The head of Christ is God [*Deus*]; the feet, his humanity [*ejus humanitas*]; certainly the entrails, which are between the head and feet, are the personal union of the divine and human nature [*unio personalis divine et humane nature*].[56]

In what follows, he aims to counter erroneous ways of thinking about each of these aspects of the Incarnate Word. It is noteworthy that here at the outset he identifies the feet of Christ not with *homo,* which would provide a convenient parallel to *Deus,* but rather with *ejus humanitas.* This, in conjunction with his identification of the entrails with the union of the two natures, intimates his understanding that God, in Christ, assumed humanity and began to exist in two distinct natures. This fundamental perspective on the Incarnation provides the hermeneutical key that unlocks the meaning of Achard's subsequent *homo-assumptus* language in this sermon.

First, Achard explains that some Christian thinkers eat the lamb's head in the wrong way by gnawing at and diminishing Christ's full divinity. They do so by denying that the assumed man (*homo assumptus*) has by grace all that the assuming Word has by nature. "Whatever is said positively of God—that he is wise, good, and the like—is also said of the man [*de homine*]," Achard explains.[57] Although his language here is that of *homo assumptus,* he—like Hugh before him—means by it the humanity or human nature that the assuming God assumed. This is made clear in his subsequent interpretation of Colossians 2:9, "In him all the fullness of divinity dwells bodily," and of Christ's own words in Matthew 28:18, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Both of these passages make sense, according to

[56] *Sermo* 4.5: "Caput Christi Deus est, pedes ejus humanitas, intestina vero, quod est inter caput et pedes, id est unio personalis divine et humane nature" (Châtillon, ed., 59; Feiss, trans., 131).

[57] Ibid.: "Quicquid enim de Deo dicitur positive, et de homine, ut sapiens, bonus et similia" (Châtillon, ed., 60; Feiss, trans., 132).

Achard, only if the power and authority of the divine nature was conveyed to "an inferior nature" (*nature inferiori*).[58] This inferior nature is signified by the adverb *corporaliter* in Colossians 2:9. In the body, by which the Apostle Paul intends to reference Christ's human nature or humanity, the totality of the power and wisdom and goodness of God dwells.[59] Similarly, the "me" with which Matthew 28:18 concludes refers to Christ in his human nature. So when Achard asks rhetorically, "Now if *homo assumptus* did not have as much power as the Word, how would it be true that all power had been given to him?" he is affirming that the assumed human nature came to possess the full power of the assuming person of the Word.[60]

Second, Achard considers those Christian thinkers who eat the feet of the lamb incorrectly by gnawing at Christ's humanity irreverently. Among these inappropriate feet-eaters, he includes the ancient adherents of Docetism and Apollinarianism. His primary concern, however, seems to be with his own contemporaries who hold Christological nihilism, the belief that "when the Word became man [*homo*], he did not become something [*non . . . aliquid*], nor in that which is man [*homo*] is there the something which we are [*aliquid quod nos sumus*]."[61] If nihilism is correct, Achard asks, how is it that Christ is consubstantial with us according to his humanity (*nobis est consubstantialis secundum humanitatem*) just as he is consubstantial with the Father according to his divinity?[62] The something (*aliquid*) that we are that became constitutive of the

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] *Sermo* 4.6: "Sunt adhuc quidam inimici veritatis qui dicunt quod quando Verbum factum est homo, non est factum aliquid, nec in eo quod est homo est aliquid quod nos sumus" (Châtillon, ed., 61-62; Feiss, trans., 133). Feiss (123-24) maintains that Peter Lombard seems to have held this position and may be the object of Achard's refutation here. Philipp Rosemann, on the other hand, has shown that in *Sentences* III, d. 10, c. 1 the Lombard critiques and ultimately rejects nihilism (Rosemann, *Peter Lombard,* 131-33). In fact, Peter Lombard here presents some compelling arguments against nihilism that Achard himself may have known and had in mind.

[62] *Sermo* 4.6: "Sed si hoc est, quomodo nobis est consubstantialis secundum humanitatem, sicut Patri secundum divinitatem?" (Châtillon, ed., 62; Feiss, trans., 133).

Word in the Incarnation is human nature. Through this nature, the Word shares "a consubstantial sameness" (*idem consubstantiale*) with us.[63] Two important observations must be made here. First, Achard again clearly identifies *homo* with *humanitas*, suggesting nature rather than person. When the Word became incarnate, he became something, indeed the same something that we are, through the assumption of a human nature. Second, in order to make his case against contemporary Christological feet-eaters, Achard again invokes language similar to that of the Chalcedonian formula, which he appears to take as a rule marking his own position off from a handful of ancient and contemporary heresies.

The third major group over against whom Achard develops his Christology consists of those who inappropriately eat the entrails of the paschal lamb, that is, those who misunderstand the union of divinity and humanity (*unio deitatis et humanitatis*).[64] Some loosen or completely undo (*solvent*) the union by denying that the assumed is the same person as the assuming Word. Achard asks rhetorically, "For how was what is not the same person with the Word united personally to the Word?"[65] In an effort to counter contemporary Nestorians, he suggests that humanity and divinity are united in the single person of the Word. Following Hugh, he points out that if "what was assumed" (*quod assumptus est;* note that he does not use *homo assumptus* here) is another person than that of the Word, then there are four persons in the Godhead.[66] If, on the other hand, what was assumed is in no way a person, then Christ according to his humanity is not a something (*aliquid*) but rather nothing. Christological nihilists maintained that although the Word assumed a body and soul, the body and soul of Christ were not united to each other in the same way they are

[63] Ibid. (Châtillon, ed., 62; Feiss, trans., 133).

[64] *Sermo* 4.7 (Châtillon, ed., 62; Feiss, trans., 134).

[65] Ibid.: "Quomodo enim personaliter unitum est Verbo quod non est eadem persona cum eo?" (Châtillon, ed., 63; Feiss, trans., 134).

[66] Ibid.

in other human beings.[67] To affirm otherwise, nihilists believed, would be tantamount to teaching Nestorianism.

Against this view, Achard draws on the Church's proclamation in the Pseudo-Athanasian Creed, which was recited at St. Victor each day at Prime, that Jesus Christ is "perfect God and perfect man, subsisting from a rational soul and human flesh."[68] This creedal affirmation serves to counter both nihilism and Nestorianism, in Achard's estimation, because it makes clear that *perfectus Deus* and *perfectus homo* are one and the same *persona* who subsists not only in the divine nature which he had from eternity but also in a human nature consisting of soul and flesh. The Victorine's Nestorian opponents apparently objected that if what was assumed by the Word is a person, then the Word assumed a person.[69] By means of an analogy, Achard explains the fallacy of this argument: "Someone brought into a house a certain nude man, whom he afterwards clothed. Look, the one who was brought in is clothed! Therefore the first person brought him in so clothed."[70] The someone bringing in is the Word, *Deus assumens,* divinity; the nude man brought in is what was assumed, *homo assumptus,* humanity; the house represents the union, the Incarnation itself; and clothing represents personhood. According to Achard, if the analogy represented a valid argument, Nestorianism would be correct: there would be two fully constituted persons in the Incarnation. But what can be affirmed as true in this analogy is only that the one brought in was nude and was subsequently clothed. Analogously, then, the Christological reality is that *homo assumptus,* that is, a human nature, was taken up into the person of the Word. Thus, in language strikingly similar to that of Hugh, Achard concludes that "the Word assumed man, not a person but into person, so that it

[67] See Feiss, trans., 134 n. 19 and the references given there.

[68] *Sermo* 4.7: "*Perfectus Deus, perfectus homo, ex anima rationali et humana carne subsistens*" (Châtillon, ed., 63; Feiss, trans., 134).

[69] Ibid.: "Notanda est objectio quorumdam, que sit: Si id quod assmptum est a Verbo est persona, ergo Verbum assumpsit personam" (Châtillon, ed., 63; Feiss, trans., 134).

[70] Ibid.: "Non est argumentum; veluti: Iste introduxit in domum quemdam nudum, quem postea vestivit; ecce qui introductus est, vestitus; ergo introduxit ita vestitum" (Châtillon, ed., 64; Feiss, trans., 134).

might become a person. For we concede that the Word assumed a nature because he became of a different nature than the one he had been previously."[71]

Conclusion

At the end of his 1948 essay on the Christology of Achard of St. Victor, Jean Châtillon wondered whether the Victorine's doctrine really merits the serious criticisms that Thomas Aquinas levels against those who maintain that a certain man was assumed by the Word at the moment of conception.[72] He concluded: "The texts that we have cited require us to respond, with regret perhaps but without any possible hesitation, that Achard is clearly in that category of theologians whose opinion is declared heretical by the Angelic Doctor"[73] The present study, which provides a re-reading of some of the same sermons that Châtillon examined some sixty years ago, highlights the need for some thoughtful "hesitation" on this question. I have aimed to provide a thoroughgoing reconsideration of the common scholarly assumption that has too easily associated Achard and Hugh of St. Victor with Peter Lombard's first Christological opinion, particularly as it was understood by Thomas Aquinas. In line with the traditional scholarly view, I have shown that both Hugh, in *De sacramentis,* book 2, part 1, and Achard, in a number of his sermons, consistently employ the phrase *homo assumptus* when they describe what was taken up by the divine Word in the Incarnation. A closer analysis of these texts, however, reveals that both Victorines use *homo* to predicate

[71] Ibid.: "Ita quoque Verbum assumpsit homine, non persona, sed in persona, ut faceret personam. Concedimus enim quod Verbum assumpsit naturam, quia alterius nature factum est quam prius fuerat" (Châtillon, ed., 64; Feiss, trans., 134-35).

[72] Jean Châtillon, "Achard de Saint-Victor et les controverses christologiques du XII[e] siècle," in *Mélanges offerts au R. P. Ferdinand Cavallera doyen de la faculté de théologie de Toulouse à l'occasion de la quarantième année de son professorat à l'Institut Catholique,* ed. Jules-Géraud Saliège (Toulouse: Bibliothèque de l'Institut Catholique, 1948), 317-37, esp. 336. Cf. *STh* III, q. 2, a. 6.

[73] "Les textes que nous avons cités nous obligent à répondre, avec regret peut-être, mais sans hésitation possible, qu'Achard entre manifestement dans cette catégorie de théologiens dont l'opinion est déclarée hérétique par le Docteur angélique" (Châtillon, "Achard de Saint-Victor," 336).

a human nature comprised of a rational soul and human flesh rather than a fully constituted man or human person.

Hugh makes perfectly clear that the 'what' that *homo* signifies is *natura humana,* just as *Deus* signifies *divina natura.* Though admittedly the 'whom' signified by the term *homo* is *persona,* it is *persona* according to human nature. For Hugh, in Christ the human nature or humanity was united to the divine nature or divinity *personaliter,* that is, in the single person of the eternal Word. The Word did not assume man, a person, but rather he assumed man into his very own eternal person. By virtue of the fact that in the Incarnation the assuming and the assumed are one and the same person, Hugh can affirm that the Word's assumption of *homo* in no way made the Trinity a Quaternity. A rational soul and human flesh were not united prior to their being taken up by the second person of the Godhead. In the Incarnation, it is only possible to speak of one union, namely, of Word and soul and flesh simultaneously.

In several sermons that he delivered to the community of St. Victor approximately two decades after the composition of *De sacramentis,* Achard reaffirms and variously develops Hugh's basic understanding of the mode of the Christological union. Although the central purposes of his sermons are rhetorical, pastoral, and even contemplative, Achard nevertheless works hard to avoid the dual pitfalls of Nestorianism and nihilism when treating the Incarnation. For the Victorine preacher, the *homo* that the Word assumed is nothing more nor less than full humanity or human nature. In the unfathomable sacred mystery that is the Incarnation, the eternal Word did a new thing by assuming a human nature to himself and beginning to exist *personaliter.* The Word most certainly existed as a person previously, but *homo* now began to be a person through the union of the person, namely, that selfsame second person of the Trinity. The Word or Son became consubstantial with us just as he had always been consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

In Sermon 4, Achard is particularly concerned to counter erroneous ways of thinking about Christ's divinity, humanity, and

the union of the two natures. By drawing on the Church's theological and creedal tradition and by invoking the analogy of a nude man being introduced into a house, he skillfully and safely navigates between the Scylla of Nestorianism and the Charybdis of nihilism. When the Word assumed *homo,* Achard affirms, he became something (*aliquid*), the same something that we are, namely, a human consisting of soul and flesh. He did not become a person other than the assuming Word. In the analogy, a clothed man was not brought into the house; rather, a naked man (i.e., a human nature) was brought in and subsequently clothed by means of the personal union. Like Hugh before him, Achard clearly teaches that the Word assumed a human nature and thereby became of a nature different from the one he had previously, indeed eternally, possessed.

In light of this analysis of the mode of the Christological union according to Hugh and Achard, it is possible—as generations of scholars have maintained—that the Victorine masters were proponents of Peter Lombard's first opinion and perhaps even inspired his description of this opinion. However, the scholar wishing to make this claim must do so with great care and only after having properly understood the Lombard's first position as he presents it. To reiterate, Peter describes the first opinion as follows:

> Some people say that in the very Incarnation of the Word, a certain man was constituted from a rational soul and human flesh, from which two every true man is constituted. And that man began to be God—not, however, the nature of God, but rather the person of the Word—and God began to be that man. Indeed, they concede that that man was assumed by the Word and united to the Word, and nevertheless was the Word. . . . Not, however, by the movement of one nature into another, but with the quality of both natures being preserved, it happened that God was that substance and that substance was God. Hence, truly it is said that God became man and man became God, and the Son of God became the son of man and vice-versa. And although they say that that man subsists from a rational soul and human flesh, they do not, however, confess that he is composed of two natures, divine and human; nor that the parts of that one are two natures, but only soul and flesh.[74]

[74] Peter Lombard, *Sent.* III, d. 6, c. 2, no. 1 (Brady, ed., 2:50). For the Lombard's Latin, see n. 7 above.

Two significant points—points that scholars have often overlooked when summarizing this position—must be made. First, the Lombard clearly states that those holding this opinion say that a certain man was constituted from a rational soul and human flesh "in the very Incarnation of the Word" (*in ipsa Verbi incarnatione*), not prior to it. Second, that man, having been constituted at the moment of assumption, began to be the very person of the Word. He was not a separate, fully constituted person either before or after the assumption. As we have seen, the Christological teaching of both Hugh and Achard appears to align well with these elements of the Lombard's first position. In maintaining that Peter Lombard's first opinion teaches that the Word assumed a fully constituted human person or hypostasis or supposit and thus identifying it with Nestorianism, some medieval theologians such as Thomas Aquinas and some modern scholars appear to have failed to understand the nuances of this position as described by the Lombard himself. Consequently, many modern scholars, observing the thoroughgoing use that the Victorines make of *homo-assumptus* language, have come wrongly to associate Hugh and Achard with what they wrongly understand to be Peter Lombard's first position.

Furthermore, Peter Lombard concludes his description of the first opinion by asserting that its adherents do not affirm that Christ is composed of two natures, which Hugh and Achard clearly do teach. As the foregoing analysis demonstrates, Hugh teaches that the Incarnation represents a simultaneous union of the Word or divinity with a rational soul and human flesh, the constituents of humanity. Similarly, a central component of Achard's treatment of the Incarnation is the conviction that the Word assumed a human nature and began to exist in a different nature than the one in which he had existed from eternity. These elements of Victorine Christology comport more with Peter Lombard's second opinion than his first. The Lombard explains what has come to be called the subsistence theory in this way:

> There are others, however, who partially agree with these [proponents of the first opinion] but say that that man [Jesus Christ] consists not only of a rational

soul and flesh, but of a human and divine nature, that is, of three substances: divinity, flesh, and soul. They confess that this Christ is only one person, indeed merely simple before the Incarnation, but in the Incarnation made composite from divinity and humanity. He is not, therefore, another person than he was previously, but whereas previously he was the person of God only, in the Incarnation he also became the person of man: not so that there were two persons, but so that one and the same was the person of God and man. Therefore, the person who was previously simple and existed in only one nature [now] subsists in two natures.[75]

It is significant that the adherents of this position, as the Lombard describes them, are in partial agreement with the first position (*qui istis in parte consentiunt*). This suggests, of course, that the three positions were neither mutually exclusive nor as clearly delineated as they would become in the following century and beyond. In the twelfth century, the second opinion was not a summary of orthodoxy to the exclusion of the first and third opinions. Thus, it is quite possible that when Peter composed his description of the second opinion he had Hugh and Achard in mind as those who agreed *in parte* with the teaching of the first opinion. After all, Victorine Christology does harmonize, both linguistically and substantially in the ways just mentioned, with the Lombard's first position. But, as the present investigation manifestly shows, the Victorine teaching on the mode of the union corresponds to an even greater degree with the second Christological position summarized in the *Sentences*. Indeed, nearly every sentence in the Lombard's description of this position finds a parallel affirmation, often in quite similar linguistic terms, in the Christological treatments of Hugh and Achard.

In sum, the picture of the relationship between Victorine Christology and the Lombard's text that emerges in the light of

[75] Peter Lombard, *Sent.* III, d. 6, c. 3, no. 1: "Sunt autem et alii, qui istis in parte consentiunt, sed dicunt hominem illum non ex anima rationali et carne tantum, sed ex humana et divina natura, id est ex tribus substantiis: divinitate, carne et anima, constare; hunc Christum fatentur, et unam personam tantum esse, ante incarnationem vero solummodo simplicem, sed in incarnatione factam compositam ex divinitate et humanitate. Nec est ideo alia persona quam prius, sed cum prius esset Dei tamtum persona, in incarnatione facta est etiam hominis persona: non ut duae essent personae, sed ut una et eadem esset persona Dei et hominis. Persona ergo quae prius erat simplex et in una tantum natura exsistens, in duabus et ex duabus subsistit naturis" (Brady, ed., 2:52-53).

our analysis looks markedly different from the traditional scholarly view. The Victorines' own treatments of the mode of the union do not easily and immovably locate Hugh and Achard in the fixed and heretical category of the Lombard's first opinion. On the contrary, in the content and language of their teaching, the Victorines seem to illustrate—even exemplify—the fluidity and complementarity of the first two positions described in the *Sentences*. Perhaps the Lombard's descriptions of these positions as fluid and complementary owes a direct debt to Hugh, whom Peter likely met and learned from during his stay at St. Victor some two decades prior to his composition of the *Sentences*.[76] Indeed, for the Lombard's inability and refusal to make a determination concerning which of the opinions on the sacred incarnational mystery is correct or represents orthodoxy, perhaps—just perhaps—we have the Victorines to thank.[77]

[76] On the "lively possibility" that Peter was an external student at St. Victor who sat under Hugh's instruction between 1136 and the beginning of his own teaching career, see Colish, *Peter Lombard*, 1:16-20.

[77] Earlier versions of this article were presented at the 43rd International Congress on Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo, Mich., 2008) and in the Medieval Studies Fall 2008 Lecture Series at Fordham University. I am grateful for the helpful comments and suggestions that colleagues offered at both lectures, and for the assistance of Angela Kim Harkins. Any errors or oversights that remain are my own.

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THE USURY PROHIBITION AND NATURAL LAW: A REAPPRAISAL

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AQUINAS'S DISCUSSION OF USURY in the *Summa Theologiae* would seem to be a prime illustration of his natural law teaching at work. Especially evident among natural law precepts are those that restrain injustice—"that one should do evil to no man" (*STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 3)—and Aquinas treats usury as a sin against justice. Further, his support for the usury prohibition places him in a broad and long tradition that includes both Christian and pagan authors, and he does not hesitate to note that even the natural reason available to Aristotle can see its evil (*STh* II-II, q. 78, a. 1, ad 3). Aquinas's usury teaching and his natural law teaching appear to go together. But while lively scholarly debates continue to simmer over the character of his natural law teaching and its ongoing relevance for moral theology, the obsolescence of his usury teaching is usually thought to be well established. As one expert on the contemporary relevance of Aquinas's natural law teaching puts it, the issue of usury would require careful interpretation, but the inquiry would be "merely of historical interest."[1]

In this essay, I seek to reopen the question of the relation between the usury prohibition and natural law. Some recent work on each side of the relation points toward a seldom-recognized

[1] Martin Rhonheimer, "Sins against Justice (IIa IIae, qq. 59-78)," trans. Frederick G. Lawrence, in *The Ethics of Aquinas,* ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 287-303, at 291.

convergence. The work of those such as Herman Daly and John Cobb, which highlights how healthy economic practice requires building up local communities, asks us to undo the anthropocentric habits of thought that neglect our situatedness as members of a larger whole that human reason cannot encompass, a whole shot through with trustworthy divine purpose.[2] Such work encourages us to recover something long forgotten that was taken for granted by many premodern thinkers like Aquinas, and opens up the possibility of a renewed intelligibility for the usury prohibition. On the natural law side, work such as that of Servais Pinckaers, which seeks to recover a more integrated theological anthropology by exposing the nominalist roots of the commonly assumed split between human freedom and the category of the "natural," helps us reimagine ourselves as both natural and free because shot through with inclinations that reflect God's wisdom and providence.[3] Such work offers resources for letting go of accounts of our agency that are still haunted by the specter of an "autonomous" nature—autonomous precisely because of its independence from any convictions about an intrinsic purposiveness in nature.

These two lines of inquiry illumine each other. Both teach us to refuse typically modern approaches to human agency, whether the extreme individualism of *homo economicus* or the voluntarism of a moral self whose primary feature is the freedom of indifference. In doing so, both point toward a different account of human agency, one more sensitive to our membership in a larger, beneficent, teleological order that already inscribes its logic in the depths of our being. I suggest that aiming for such an account helps us overcome some misunderstandings of Aquinas, both on usury and on natural law.

[2] Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr., *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future* (2d ed.; Boston: Beacon, 1994).

[3] Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Mary Thomas Noble, O.P. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995); and *The Pinckaers Reader: Renewing Thomistic Moral Theology*, ed. John Berkman and Craig Steven Titus (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

Although this revision of our approach to human agency helps us appreciate important features of Aquinas's thought, I do not know of any concept Aquinas uses to distinguish the salient elements of human agency. In this essay, I will use the term "ontological poverty." What I mean to evoke with this term will become more evident as my argument progresses, but, as a starting point, it refers to the lowly neediness of creatures whose existence is not their possession, but a gift. It is meant to evoke not only such creatures' humble status in the scheme of things but also their corresponding dependence on a purposive order in which they participate but whose full contours exceed their grasp.

Although for Aquinas the usury prohibition and natural law go together, in the subsequent history of interpretation they came apart. A typical way to account for the diverging histories of these two teachings is to suggest that modern versions of natural law teaching still prohibit injustice, but that changing economic circumstances have removed the specter of injustice from most instances of lending at interest. I suspect that this conclusion is accepted too readily. For one thing, we have not yet learned as much as we should from Aquinas's usury teaching about the sorts of questions that must be asked of such practices if we are to avoid injustice. For another, such a conclusion fails to account for the significant ways in which our assumptions about natural law have changed.

A careful reading of Aquinas's usury teaching suggests that, for him, justice in economic exchange requires keeping nominal wealth (money values) tied relatively closely to real wealth (actual goods and productive human activities), and that doing so requires that exchanges fit within the cycle of nature's provisions through which God cares for creatures in general and humans in particular. The placement of exchanges within that cycle reflects our ontological poverty.

When we recognize the role of this ontological poverty in Aquinas's thought, and the role of the correlative virtues of hope, patience, and humility in specifying the human good and therefore what it means to be human, we gain a deeper grasp of

what Aquinas understood to be natural to humanity as such. Having grasped that, we can see more clearly why the usury prohibition and natural law teaching went together for Aquinas.

Seeing why they went together, we can understand something new about why they came apart. In particular, the subsequent history of economic practice and thought is the story of the gradual "discovery" of an autonomous economic science in which real wealth is accounted for only insofar as it has fallen under the accounting of nominal wealth (and can thus be reckoned as "capital").[4] Such a science is disinclined to ask how exchanges fit within a broader cycle of nourishment beyond its calculations and is therefore quite different from economic thought that assumes the ontological poverty of the creature. In fact, insofar as these changes seemed to involve a rationalizing trajectory, the old usury teaching came to appear the relic of a less mature form of economic thought.[5]

Meanwhile, natural law teaching did not meet the same fate because it proved capable of being disjoined from traditional but apparently outdated assumptions about the receptive and even

[4] For more on the distinction between real and virtual wealth, and how the character of this distinction has been neglected by economists, see Daly and Cobb, *For the Common Good,* 418-28.

[5] D. Stephen Long gives a telling account of how the usury prohibition has been either rejected as irrational or marginalized as a mere precursor to modern economic thought in "Usury: Avarice as a Capital Vice," in D. Stephen Long and Nancy Ruth Fox with Tripp York, *Calculated Futures: Theology, Ethics, and Economics* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 133-57. The standard story is that the transition from medieval to modern economic thought follows a rationalizing trajectory to keep pace with the inevitable emergence of a depersonalized economic system. In light of contemporary economic realities, so the story goes, the usury prohibition seems quaint, embedded as it is in a sort of economic analysis focused on individual actions rather than social structures. Max Weber gave classic articulation to this view of economic history in *Economy and Society,* vol. 1, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). Our main historical accounts of the usury prohibition credit Aquinas and others for advancements in economic understanding, but they echo the dominant assumption that Aquinas's teaching is obsolete insofar as they read the history primarily as one of "advance," in which the usury prohibition received more and more qualifications that enhanced its rationality as it was adapted to emerging economic realities. See John T. Noonan, Jr., *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957); and Odd Langholm, *Economics in the Medieval Schools: Wealth, Exchange, Value, Money and Usury according to the Paris Theological Tradition 1200-1350* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992).

lowly virtues required to adequate humans to their place in an encompassing and purposeful divine order. Indeed, natural law teaching not only survived; it found a new role that made its place in the thought of many moralists more significant than it had been for Aquinas and others. We can see this shift in the history of the usury prohibition. Both Noonan and Langholm show that, as this history progressed, the arguments in support of the ever-more-qualified usury prohibition gradually appealed to fewer peculiarly Christian doctrines and sources, in favor of what seemed to be a more universal rational standard increasingly identified with natural law. As Aquinas's usury teaching fell out of favor, appeals to natural law became more fashionable. The newfound resonance of natural law answered to the increasing autonomy of a number of forms of thought about humanity, not only economic science. Amid these changes, the function of natural law teaching mutated as well. For Aquinas, appealing to natural law meant recognizing our ontological poverty and confessing that the order thus written into our nature and the nature of the cosmos is a manifestation of God's providence. In modernity, natural law became a way to ground moral claims in a language that apparently appealed to humanity as such regardless of one's religious commitment or moral tradition.[6]

These newer versions of natural law made little room for acknowledging our ontological poverty. Doing so would have involved them in the suggestion that what is natural to us cannot be grasped apart from grasping the naturalness of our subordination to God and of our creaturely receptivity. It seems that accounting for what is natural to us in a way that does justice to our ontological poverty involves one in theological claims of the sort that were considered extrinsic to the emerging autonomous sciences. Not that these theological claims must be Christian ones—something very much like Aquinas's ontological poverty is at work in Aristotle's thought as well, as a study of

[6] For a brief account of these changes and their ongoing influence, see Russell Hittinger, "Natural Law and Catholic Moral Theology," in *The First Grace: Rediscovering the Natural Law in a Post-Christian World* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2003), 3-37.

Aristotle's account of the evil of usury bears out.[7] But for Aquinas, as for Aristotle, unlike many modern thinkers, the account of what is natural to humanity is not extrinsic to a theological account of the situation of human agency. Recognizing this difference can help us wring from our understandings of natural law enough of the modern assumption of an autonomous nature to see how the usury prohibition and natural law go together for Aquinas.

The goal of the first part of this essay is to offer a reappraisal of Aquinas's usury teaching, explaining in some detail how the assumed ontological poverty of the human being, situated within a purposeful, encompassing order, helps us make sense of Aquinas's arguments. My thesis is that since Aquinas hits on an aspect of humanity's natural situation typically neglected in modernity, particularly in discussions of economic ethics, his usury teaching offers untapped tools for considering what makes exchange just.

The second part of this essay raises questions about the usual problematics of natural law in modernity in order to recover neglected aspects of Aquinas's teaching. A full account of natural law is of course beyond my scope here. I intend merely to contribute to efforts to overcome the modern assumption of an autonomous nature in interpretations of Aquinas's ethics, an assumption whose origins were dimly on the horizon at his time and whose origins I believe he was trying to resist with his adherence to the usury prohibition. The assumption of an autonomous nature involves an extrinsicism, in which one's account of what is natural to humanity can be articulated independently from the kind of theological claims required to situate human agency as Aquinas situates it.

To clarify what is at stake, I will discuss two interpreters of Aquinas on natural law who point beyond any autonomous nature, but whose thought still shows signs of this extrinsicism. Pamela Hall and John Bowlin have led us a long way on these

[7] I offer readings of Aristotle and Aquinas that support this claim in my *He Became Poor: The Poverty of Christ and Aquinas's Economic Teachings* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009).

issues, showing why natural law in Aquinas cannot function autonomously as some sort of moral anchor amid peculiarly modern forms of moral uncertainty.[8] Hall displays the impossibility of any autonomous natural law by stressing how acquaintance with natural law is woven into the development of virtue in a community of virtue, and she shows how natural law is expressed not over against but through human and especially divine law. Bowlin equally questions any autonomous natural law, but stresses how such a reading of Aquinas would contradict his persistent concern with the difficulty of knowing and doing the good and his distinction between the general moral knowledge readily accessible to humans and the detailed determinations of the eternal law in the mind of God, which alone establish what is truly good. Despite these advances in recovering an authentically Thomistic account of the natural law, something of the modern bifurcation between what is assumed to be natural and a Christian account of the circumstances of humanity remains. I contend that retrieving what Aquinas's usury teaching reveals about what is natural to humanity can help to heal that lingering wound.

I. The Usury Prohibition and Ontological Poverty

D. Stephen Long writes, "The usury prohibition, as well as other key elements of scholastic economics, is not a global economic system that all persons could adhere to irrespective of their theological commitments."[9] I agree. My attempt here to rehabilitate the intelligibility of Aquinas's usury teaching in the *Summa Theologiae* and to correlate it with his teaching on natural law is not intended as an argument for developing from the usury prohibition a more just economic system that could replace global capitalism. As Long suggests, to do so would be to misunderstand how modern nation-states and their economies are configured to resist the priority of virtue that alone makes the usury prohibition

[8] Pamela M. Hall, *Narrative and the Natural Law: An Interpretation of Thomistic Ethics* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994); and John Bowlin, *Contingency and Fortune in Aquinas's Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[9] Long, *Calculated Futures,* 149.

sensible. Long shows how most modern interpreters of the usury prohibition have tried to understand it as a moral rule that might apply to a secular society. Even writers in the tradition of modern Catholic social teaching, who employ a modified language of usury to indict modern economic systems both capitalist and socialist, seem to aim their teaching at society as a whole, downplaying specifically Christian claims and neglecting the role of the Church.

Long emphasizes the vision of a holy people adorned with virtue as the aspiration that makes forbidding usury meaningful. Even when lending at interest seems mutually beneficial and there is no question of exploitation, the desire for unlimited increase, for money as an end in itself, smacks of the avarice incompatible with the vision of a community of virtue.

The following discussion complements Long's insightful treatment by exploring more directly why usury might manifest not only avarice but injustice. Why is the particular sort of avaricious pose usury instantiates and fosters not only repulsive to those with a concern for virtue but also necessarily unjust, creating inequities that become more and more destructive?

A) Nature's Provision and the Conventions of Exchange

To begin to answer these questions, we must not only place the usury prohibition within a community of virtue; we must place it also within the cycles of nature's provision for creatures through which God sustains us. To do so, we must first do three things: (1) examine the homology Aquinas expects to exist between God's provision and genuine human need, (2) explore the virtues required by our placement in that natural circuit of nourishment, and (3) reflect on the relation between this real wealth and the nominal wealth we call money. Along the way, this discussion will clarify what I mean by the term "ontological poverty."

The homology between God's provision and genuine human need is presumed by Aquinas in a number of texts. We see it wherever he argues from the premise that God's provision will

not be insufficient. In the article in the *Summa* on theft, for example, he justifies human dominion over external goods with reference to Genesis 1:26 ("Let humans have dominion over the fishes of the sea, etc.") as well as to Aristotle's argument that those goods are made for the sake of human beings, as the imperfect is for the sake of the perfect (*STh* II-II, q. 66, a. 1). That God intends such things for human sustenance (ibid., ad 1) suggests that the provision he brings forth from nature will not be insufficient for human needs.

We also see texts assuming the other side of the homology. That is, just as Aquinas assumes God's provision will fit human need, he also assumes that genuine human need will fit God's provision—God's provision will correspond to human need rather than far exceeding it. Thus, in discussing the external act of covetousness, Aquinas insists that having more than one requires directly harms the neighbor, "since one man cannot overabound in external riches, without another man lacking them" (*STh* II-II, q. 118, a. 1, ad 2). He is not just shaming the rich. He is expressing his confidence in the homology between God's provision through nature's fruitfulness and human need. The common *telos* of nature's goods is to meet the needs of creaturely sustenance, particularly the sustenance of human beings. Excess goods in one place are meant for those elsewhere who lack them. For this reason, in *De Regno* Aquinas commends a moderate amount of trade: "when there is an over-abundance of some commodities in one place, these goods would serve no purpose if they could not be carried elsewhere by professional traders."[10] Such moderate exchange then becomes a part of God's care for human nourishment. It helps the homology between God's provision and human need achieve its ends. In assuming this sort of homology, Aquinas agrees with Aristotle in the *Politics:* nature's devices of human industry and exchange fulfill the homology for whole

[10] Thomas Aquinas, *De Regno* II, c. 7. See the translation by Gerald Phelan and revised by I. Th. Eschmann, O.P., in *On Kingship: To the King of Cyprus* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1949), 78.

communities, just as nature's device of mother's milk fulfills the homology for the newborn infant.[11]

Humans are thus placed within a circuit of nourishment with its origins in God's gifts (through nature's fruitfulness and human industry), which aims at true human need. The exact contours of this circuit and its produce can never be adequately traced, however. This indeterminacy is partly due to the fact that human industry and exchange always play a role in establishing what nature provides and how it is distributed. As long as human labor could be better arranged, and as long as exchanges could be more appropriate to human need, the limits of God's actual provision may be yet undiscovered.

Indeterminate as its contours are, this context nevertheless helps specify the human good and thus what it means to be human insofar as certain virtues are called for by this context. Especially relevant are hope, patience, and humility. The assumed homology between God's provision and human need summons hope. Aquinas discusses hope first of all as a passion (*STh* I-II, q. 40) and later as a theological virtue (*STh* II-II, q. 17). The virtue directs us primarily to our highest end, God, but it suitably aims secondarily at temporal goods needed for the present life insofar as those hopes are part of our journey toward God (*STh* II-II, q. 17, a. 2, ad 2). In this sense, hope trusts that in general what comes forth from nature's fruitfulness will be sufficient to meet human needs. And since human industry and exchange are natural elements of that fruitfulness and of its proper distribution, humans have reason to hope that continued work and continued exchange can yield sufficient goods, even when a local harvest, for example, seems discouraging.

When hope gets out of measure, though, presumption enters in. Human placement within this circuit of nourishment calls for virtues that stave off presumption. In other words, the homology between God's gifts and human need cuts both ways. Genuine human need gives us a measure of what to hope for from God's

[11] Thomas Aquinas, *In Pol.* I, lect. 6-7; on Aristotle, *Politics* 1257a1-1257b23. See the English translation of Aquinas's commentary by Richard J. Regan, *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2007), 42-54.

provision, but the limits of God's provision also discipline our understanding of legitimate human need. Legitimate human demand fluctuates with the variations in the provision God brings forth from the earth. Trust in God's providence thus involves not only an expectation of sustenance, but also a yielding of ourselves, a receptivity whereby we conform our demands for sustenance to the temporally unfolding determination of that provision. This is where patience and humility become important. Patience endures difficulties for the sake of future good, willing to bear hardship rather than do evil (*STh* II-II, q. 136). Humility restrains the soul from tending immoderately to high things, acknowledging the disproportion between oneself and that which surpasses one (*STh* II-II, q. 161).

The virtues that fit us for our placement in this circuit of nourishment indicate our ontological poverty. Aquinas's assumptions about the homology between God's gifts and human need do not lead to a Malthusian analysis of the constraints imposed on our agency by our ecological context. Such an analysis would call for different virtues. Rather, Aquinas has in view our metaphysical lowliness before God, which summons the paired virtue sets of hope and trust on the one hand and humble and deferent receptivity on the other. In this regard, Aquinas's comments on poverty of spirit are quite pertinent. True hope that is not presumptuous is accompanied by the fear of the Lord that is a gift of the Holy Spirit (*STh* II-II, q. 19). This fear fits us to hope in God by teaching us the lowliness of our position before him, so that we are properly aware both that only he can bring us to our final end and that we owe everything to him. The beatitude whose act corresponds to this fear is poverty of spirit. When we fear God, we no longer look for glory in ourselves, either through pride or by externals of honor and wealth. All vainglory is cancelled, and we despise worldly goods (*STh* II-II, q. 19, a. 12). Not that we no longer care about self-preservation, but the more aware one is of one's insignificance before God, the more

vehemently he "casts himself into God's omnipotent arms."[12] Part of what flourishing in our particular, creaturely context involves is a recognition of our lowliness and a willingness to live trustingly with the vulnerability that entails.

How can particular economic exchanges put into practice these virtues that fit us within the circuit of nourishment through which God intends our sustenance? Most importantly, money values must remain tied to the real wealth God brings forth. This brings us to the third preliminary to our discussion of usury. Money introduces a distinction between the real wealth God brings forth and humans use on the one hand and the nominal wealth humans use to measure and facilitate the movement of real wealth on the other. Aquinas follows Aristotle in finding money metaphysically curious.[13] Here is a measure of value whose commensurability with the thing measured cannot be demonstrated. Here is a measure of value that creates strictly quantitative relations between qualitatively different things. The oddity of it marks a gap, a gap between use value and exchange value, between natural wealth-getting and unnatural wealth-getting, and between true wealth and virtual wealth. Of course, money is "natural" insofar as its invention is integral to the development of the *polis*.[14] Without it, nature's provision would be hindered from reaching its end. But money introduces a danger as well, for it facilitates the accumulation of exchange value as an end. Indeed, insofar as it represents wealth it borrows real wealth's desirability, but it contains no residue of real wealth's direct usefulness to remind us of wealth's true end. When money becomes an end in itself, exchange values threaten to come loose from their intended relation to the true usefulness of things. God's provision is already indeterminate, but when wealth is measured primarily in money

[12] William J. Hill, O.P., *Hope: Summa Theologiae IIa IIae. 17-22,* vol. 33 of Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* Blackfriars edition, ed. Thomas Gilby et al. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 170.

[13] For a richly insightful account of Aristotle's economic thought, see Scott Meikle, *Aristotle's Economic Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

[14] Aristotle, *Politics* I.1257a41-42.

it becomes harder still to discover how far that money represents God's actual provision.

There is no way to guarantee the correspondence between money values and real wealth, but Aquinas assumes that certain warning signs indicate that money values are diverging from real wealth in consequential ways. These warning signs stem from the recognition that nominal wealth, in order to remain tied to real wealth, must respect the homology between God's provision and genuine human need. It must locate itself within the cycle of nature's fruitfulness for genuine human need. True wealth has its origin in God's gifts through nature's provision and aims at human sustenance. Whenever the conventions of exchange value provide the opportunity to imagine a different origin or a different end for wealth, we have reason to suspect that human purposes are detaching exchange value from real wealth, producing injustice.

B) Aquinas on Usury

With these preliminary remarks in place, we can turn to Aquinas's teaching on usury. It is often thought that Aquinas and others thought of usury as unjust because they had in mind loan sharks taking advantage of the poor. Of course, such situations were common enough, were commonly associated with usury, and were uniformly condemned by theologians. But Aquinas knew that usurious loans were often made to traders who were just as financially secure as the lenders, and that the motivation for such loans was not the desperation of economic vulnerability but the desire for a growth in wealth that would benefit both lender and borrower.[15] Even knowing of such scenarios, Aquinas finds all usury inherently unjust because it creates titles to nominal wealth insufficiently tied to real wealth.

Aquinas's lack of focus on the plight of poor borrowers prompts Joan Lockwood O'Donovan to lament that his arguments

[15] John Finnis, *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 207-8.

omit much of the patristic concern for charity to the needy, focusing instead on the equality of value in things exchanged. She sees this shift as evidence of a movement away from an older Christological idealism.[16] What she fails to notice is that Aquinas, by offering arguments that apply to every instance of interest-charging, confirms the rationale of the usury prohibition even in productive loans where the borrower is not needy. Aquinas is concerned not only for charity, but for keeping all exchanges answerable to the contours of real wealth.

What justifies charging interest on a loan? Perhaps there is a natural rate of return on capital, a rate of productivity of real wealth. Perhaps interest is the return on a loan that is meant to correspond to the rate we would expect on the real wealth for which money is a symbol. If that is what interest is, then interest may be tied to real wealth. But if interest is truly to attempt to track investment returns, it would become a dividend. The lender would assume the risk of the venture along with the borrower. Aquinas knows of such arrangements, through the medieval practice of forming a *societas*. He approves of such arrangements, because both borrower and lender yield to what actually comes to their investment through God's provision. But while the investor entrusts his money at his own risk, the usurer transfers risk to the borrower, so that the borrower "holds the money at his own risk and is bound to pay it all back" (*STh* II-II, q. 78, a. 2, ad 5). Noonan worries that Aquinas is grasping at straws here, making risk the distinguishing factor when that has little coherence with his broader views.[17] But, *pace* Noonan, Aquinas is here concerned to resist presumption. The interest-charging lender presumes insofar as his claim to possible future wealth is not conditioned by any receptivity to what God's providence may actually end up

[16] Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, "The Theological Economics of Medieval Usury Theory," in Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, *Bonds of Imperfection: Christian Politics, Past and Present* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 97-120, at 109-12.

[17] Noonan also thinks that here Thomas revokes his earlier insistence that use and ownership of money are inseparable. What Noonan overlooks is that Thomas does not attribute the use of money in a *societas* to the craftsman, while the ownership remains with the investor. Rather, in a *societas* each aspect of the enterprise is shared. See Noonan, *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury*, 143-45.

providing. The investor does not presume, but takes the risk of waiting to see what comes of it.[18]

The lender's profit in a *societas* depends, of course, on what the borrower actually does with the money. Perhaps interest could be construed as a sort of standard rate of return money would normally be expected to get. This argument again sets up an artificial invulnerability for the lender. In Scholastic discussions, this principle was called *lucrum cessans,* that foregone gains can justify a title to compensation beyond the principal. This title would gradually gain adherents among both canonists and theologians after Aquinas's time, but already Aquinas's contemporary Hostiensis was the first canonist to endorse it. Aquinas resists it because he finds it presumptive. A lender, Aquinas says, cannot contract in advance for potential gains foregone "because he must not sell that which he has not yet and may be prevented in many ways from having" (*STh* II-II, q. 78, a. 2, ad 1). However reliable the standard rate of return, any actual profit must stem from actual investment, which always involves waiting to see, a receptivity that *lucrum cessans* circumvents. Securing such titles to interest in advance guarantees that if God's provision does not keep pace with the accumulation of interest, the unforeseen shortfall in real wealth will pinch the borrower disproportionately. We should recognize a warning sign that nominal wealth is coming loose from real wealth whenever a secure title to future money value is established irrespective of the contingencies that may affect whether any real wealth will be created to correspond to it.

John Finnis suggests that Aquinas should have accepted something like *lucrum cessans,* given his account of recompense for a loss. Aquinas says that a person who suffers a loss that costs him potential future gains should not be compensated for those

[18] Lending at interest appears as a manifestation of our changing attitude toward time: "The whole attitude toward time that we take is moving away from living in time as exclusively a matter of *waiting,* and toward living in time as a matter of industrious exploitation of time, of *making* time" (Charles Mathewes, "On Using the World," in *Having: Property and Possessions in Religious and Social Life,* ed. William Schweiker and Charles Mathewes [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004], 189-221, at 196).

future gains at their full value, since it was only potential and not actual wealth, but he should receive some compensation. For example, a man whose seeds are pulled out of his field should be compensated not for the full value of the anticipated crop, but at a rate that considers "the condition of persons and things" (*STh* II-II, q. 62, a. 4, ad 1). Finnis argues that where there is a market in equities and bonds, foregone gains constitute the sort of loss that should be compensated at this sort of discounted rate.[19] But notice that the farmer who accepts recompense for his stolen seeds does not presume on God's provision. The actual fruitfulness of nature may be more modest this season because of the lost seeds. There may be no increase in real wealth to correspond to the payment the farmer receives. But the farmer still suffers some of the shortfall, while the other portion falls deservedly on the thief who must pay the recompense. Charging interest for *lucrum cessans* is quite different. Finnis's argument implausibly likens charging interest to collecting damages for unjust harm.

Another possible justification for interest, but one that would not have occurred to Aquinas, is the inflation rate. In some economies, money regularly depreciates over time. In order for a lender to receive back years later an amount equal in value to what he lent, he must receive not just the principal amount but a supplement to make up for the principal's loss of purchasing power. Perhaps this justifies interest-charging. Although Aquinas could not have thought of such a justification, I believe he could accept it. But such a supplement is not what interest is. If it were, the return to the lender would be tagged to the inflation rate. A lender might owe a borrower money at the end of repayment if the supplement paid happened to exceed actual inflation. On the contrary, interest is a set amount contracted for in advance, not tied closely to any natural rate of return on capital nor to an inflation rate.

What interest amounts to is a payment for the use of money. Its independence from real wealth is evident in that it compounds

[19] Finnis, *Aquinas*, 205-10.

indefinitely. No real wealth compounds indefinitely.[20] Compounding interest, contracted for in the terms of a loan, is one more tool for making money from money. And a tool that makes money from money takes money as an end and cannot locate its profit within the circuit of nourishment that begins with God's gifts and takes as its end human sustenance.

Aquinas's centerpiece argument against usury, the consumptibility argument, takes aim at this notion of payment for the use of money. Another warning sign that nominal wealth is coming loose from real wealth is when a claim to money value is established that *cannot* have a correlative in real wealth creation. This is the case when a price is put on the use of money, for money has no vendible use. It may appear to, insofar as lending money is thought to resemble a rental situation. If I hand over to you my house for awhile, I can then demand it back along with the rents for the time you used it. Surely a loan of money works the same way? To show that it does not, Aquinas distinguishes things that are consumed in use from those that persist through the use and thus bear the capacity for repeated uses. Wine, for example, is used by being "used up," unlike houses which persist, despite some depreciation. Since money is "sunk in exchange," Aquinas says, money is more like wine (*STh* II-II, q. 78, a. 1).

Critics of Aquinas as far back as Calvin have pointed out that whether money is consumed and gone like wine depends entirely on what sort of product it is exchanged for. If I use the money I borrow to buy wine and I drink it down, clearly the money cannot be recovered nor reused. But if I use it to buy a house and I rent out the house, I can recover both the sum borrowed and a surplus in rents. Of course, it does not take much mastery of finance to realize this, and so sympathetic readers have tried to explain that Aquinas's consumptibility argument does not foolishly assume that loans are only used to purchase consumptibles. Typically, they get Aquinas off the hook by suggesting he has a primitive view of

[20] Daly and Cobb, *For the Common Good,* 413. Daly and Cobb point out that although capital improvements can expand real wealth, they require more and more annual revenue to energize and maintain them, and annual revenue is limited by gross global photosynthetic product.

money. Noonan claims that Aquinas always sees money as a measure, and one that must be fixed according to its legal, face value at that. Therefore, whoever tries to make a certain amount given equal to a greater amount returned "is guilty of diversifying the measure."[21] Langholm doubts Noonan's attribution of a "fixed" value for money, but finds the consumptibility argument intelligible only in terms of a "metallist" view of money, according to which money is identified less by its exchange value than by the actual pieces of coin that are "consumed" in any exchange.[22] The argument, suggests Langholm, makes no sense in a credit economy.

But the consumptibility argument hinges neither on a certain use of the loan nor on a specific view of money.[23] It appeals to the condition of possibility of money, the distinction between use value and exchange value. Wine, for example, has both a use value (it can be drunk) and an exchange value (it can be sold). A house also has a use value (it can be lived in) and an exchange value (it can be sold). But there is a crucial difference in the relation between use value and exchange value in the two cases. If the wine is used, it cannot also be exchanged. But one can use the house and then exchange it. Since the house persists through the use, repeated potential uses of the house accumulate over time, uses that are themselves exchangeable without transferring the entire exchange value of the house. This is what makes a house rentable. Money is not like the house because it has no accumulating potential uses that could be exchanged (rented) without transferring the entire exchange value of the money. Since any money that is not kept out of circulation is abstracted exchange value, there is no way to exchange the use of it without exchanging it.

To charge for its use without conforming that charge to the temporally unfolding determination of God's provision is to extract a spurious profit from money that amounts to a covert

[21] Noonan, *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury*, 52.

[22] Langholm, *Economics in the Medieval Schools*, 240-42.

[23] To his credit, Finnis recognizes this; see Finnis, *Aquinas*, 217 nn. b and c.

theft. The usurious act, by its nature, takes money as its end and detaches nominal wealth from its connection to real wealth.

C) Keeping Money-Making from Eclipsing the Order on Which It Depends

Aquinas's arguments are intended to show how certain sorts of exchange necessarily move us from wealth-getting that conforms to the natural cycles of nourishment by which God sustains us to a sort of acquisition that is unlimited. In Marx's terminology, C-M-C' (money as a medium aimed at gaining useful commodities) becomes M-C-M' (commodities as a medium aimed at increasing money), which leads to M-M' (money making more money). M-C-M' cannot be definitively ruled out by the canons of justice, or even by the canons of virtue in general (although perhaps M-M' can). I do not have space here to explore Aquinas's remarks on the just price, but those remarks make clear that M-C-M' can aim at genuine human need and can remain a practice tied to real wealth. Money is just odd enough to allow this possibility. But Aquinas is also realistic enough about the power of money to eclipse use values that he advises kings strictly to limit the activities of traders. Since their activities are or can easily become aimed at M', to allow them too much scope would risk the economic culture of the whole community becoming growth-driven, aimed at unlimited expansion. And if the community's economic culture is growth-driven, it cannot be virtue-driven. Aquinas's warning is ominous:

> Since the foremost tendency of tradesmen is to make money, greed is awakened in the hearts of the citizens through the pursuit of trade. The result is that everything in the city will become venal; good faith will be destroyed and the way opened to all kinds of trickery; each one will work only for his own profit, despising the public good; the cultivation of virtue will fail since honour, virtue's reward, will be bestowed upon the rich. Thus, in such a city, civic life will necessarily be corrupted.[24]

[24] *De Regno* II, c. 7 (Phelan and Eschmann, trans., ??).

Aquinas is not saying that all development and progress is vicious. But he is saying that allowing production and exchange to be oriented around growth fosters vice, allows injustice, and points money-making on a limitless growth trajectory that cannot stay disciplined by the contours of real wealth.

I am not an economist. I lack the expertise to specify precisely how these tools for identifying injustice could be employed in contemporary exchanges. But I will mention a few suggestions for today that seem to me to resonate with Aquinas's thought on these issues. As we have seen, Aquinas sees warning signs that money wealth is coming loose from real wealth when claims to money wealth have no clear origin in God's provision. In a similar vein, Daly and Cobb have suggested that money wealth's exponential growth trajectory is aided by the *ex nihilo* creation of money by banks. The task of money creation, they say, should be removed from the province of banks by requiring them to keep one hundred per cent of their deposits in reserve.[25] They also suggest that money wealth could be tied more closely to real wealth if dividends replaced interest payments: "Dividends are variable, *ex post* earnings based on real experience, whereas interest-bearing assets are *ex ante* promises based on expectations which become unrealistic if projected very far into the future."[26] Aquinas also sees warning signs when a profit is not aimed at the human sustenance for which all God's gifts are intended. Mary Hirschfeld points out that the modern concern for upward mobility and technological advance has erased any sense of an upper limit on consumption. We are left unable to identify what is enough. Hirschfeld suggests that local agreements about what constitutes human flourishing can provide a corrective.[27] These are a few ways to counteract exchange value's tendency to legitimate claims to wealth that outstrip God's gifts through nature's provision.

[25] Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb, Jr., *For the Common Good*, 428-35.

[26] Ibid., 434.

[27] Mary Hirschfeld, "Standard of Living and Economic Virtue: Forging a Link between St. Thomas Aquinas and the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 26 (2006): 61-78, at 73-75.

Although from the perspective of modern economic science the usury prohibition appears irrational or primitive, its basic logic remains simple enough. D. Stephen Long has suggested that that logic boils down to this: "money does no work; people do."[28] It is even better to say that money does no work; God does—that is, God's gift of nature's fruitfulness does. Since human industry is part of nature's fruitfulness, this second formulation includes the first. But it underscores more clearly why good exchanges require the sorts of antipresumptive virtues I have suggested. Acknowledging and embracing the ontological poverty these virtues indicate is especially important because it trains our attention on precisely what our normal modern economic assumptions make invisible: that human purposes do not form the first condition for economic reflection, but rather exist within a comprehensive divine order that exceeds and circumscribes them.

II. Ontological Poverty and Natural Law

Why is usury contrary to natural law for Aquinas? Natural law is the rational creature's participation in the eternal law, through which the human being "has a natural inclination to its proper act and end" (*STh* I-II, q. 91, a. 2). The human being exercises its own sort of providence, thus participating through reason in God's providential wisdom, by acting in accord with these natural inclinations, beginning with the inclination to goodness expressed in the precept "good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided" (*STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2). Inclinations to proper human ends, such as life, children, and community, point human action in the right direction, a direction brought to maturity by the development of virtue, so that ultimately natural law prescribes all the acts of the virtues (*STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 3). Among the precepts of natural law, then, are the acts of justice, which usury transgresses by selling what does not exist, destroying the equity justice demands.

[28] D. Stephen Long, *Divine Economy: Theology and the Market* (London: Routledge, 2000), 239.

The foregoing account of Aquinas's discussion of usury helps us specify why Aquinas says that not only usury but any other title to interest on a loan sells what does not exist. Such arrangements presumptively multiply one's claim to nominal wealth without that claim being disciplined by the contours of real wealth. This distinction between nominal wealth and real wealth depends on Aquinas's theological claims about God's provision and its ends and on the corresponding assumptions about the dependent and receptive situation of the human being within that trustworthy natural order. What makes usury contrary to nature is not merely that it contravenes our natural inclination to live in society justly, but that it does so by disrupting the receptive virtues that fit us for participation in the networks of nourishment by which God sustains what he has created. The usury prohibition shows that what is contrary to nature in human action, and thus conversely what is natural to humanity, cannot be fully apprehended apart from acknowledgment of the features of our humanity I have been evoking with the term "ontological poverty."[29]

A) Natural Law and Christian Conviction

If Aquinas's arguments about usury illustrate something of what he understands as natural to humanity, then most contemporary interest in natural law cannot correspond to Aquinas's natural law teaching. Most contemporary interest in natural law is motivated by a perceived imperative to appeal to all people of good will regardless of their theological convictions and thus seeks to say as much as possible about humanity without saying

[29] "Nature" in Aquinas's ethics therefore refers to more than just reason, but also to all those features of our agency that help to set the parameters of our flourishing. Aquinas certainly identifies the natural law with right reason, but as Jean Porter notes, "human reason stems out of the intelligibilities inherent in our nature as creatures and as animals, and while it goes beyond these, it also respects their essential structure." Porter goes on to cite *STh* II-II, q. 154, a. 12, in which Aquinas distinguishes the order of nature from the order of right reason, as the latter's presupposition (Jean Porter, "Right Reason and the Love of God: The Parameters of Aquinas's Moral Theology," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas,* ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow [Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005], 167-91, at 183).

things that will be contested by those who do not share Christian faith. But what is natural to humanity according to Aquinas, as I have said, cannot be understood apart from our situatedness within an encompassing order that calls forth our receptive trust and humility—cannot be understood, that is, apart from the theological claims involved in acknowledging our ontological poverty.

For Aquinas, our ontological poverty is natural to us, yet he cannot give an account of humanity that adequately acknowledges it without appealing to specifically Christian knowledge. I have already discussed how Aquinas's assumption of our ontological poverty is manifested in and shaped by his discussions of theologically oriented virtues like hope, patience, and humility, and of the beatitude of poverty of spirit. Two Christian doctrines stand in the background of each of those discussions, giving them their peculiar shape. First, a sense of our metaphysical lowliness is carried by the teaching of *creatio ex nihilo*. Our lowliness and dependence before God corresponds to our being from nothing. Thus humility is an appropriate virtue for us, for the giver of the gift of being owes us nothing; rather, we owe all.[30] Our proper estimation of ourselves is to grasp the "poverty" of our place in relation to that giver. Second, Aquinas's Christology prompts him to see the pattern for our embrace of this lowliness as the pattern of Christ. In proposing the beatitude of poverty of spirit, Christ calls us to renunciation and self-abandonment, casting the shadow of the cross on the Christian practice of humble vulnerability, and extending our sense both of our ontological poverty and of the depths of the divine charity in which we are invited to participate as our true end. So the trusting receptivity that helps keep exchanges bound by the contours of real wealth derives from specifically Christian teachings for Aquinas and is placed by him on a trajectory aimed at the vision of Christ's self-abandoning humility and dangerously exposed trust in God, the vision that draws mendicants continually to renew their poverty.

[30] On our insufficiency, see *STh* II-II, q. 161, a. 6, ad 1.

Although the acknowledgment of our ontological poverty is communicated by Aquinas in specifically Christian terms, he is not surprised to find an analogous deferent dependence assumed by Aristotle. After all, some sort of disproportion between human beings and the First Cause can be recognized by such a philosopher. That God is infinitely above human beings was known by ancient philosophers (*STh* I, q. 7, a. 1). Moreover, by philosophy apart from *sacra doctrina* one can grasp that God is our cause, that God is not part of what is caused, and that our distance from God is due not to a defect in him, but to the fact that he superexceeds everything that is caused (*STh* I, q. 12, a. 12). That Aristotle confesses such things, and that he places human economic activity within an encompassing natural order calling for receptivity and trust gives Aquinas confidence that recognizing something like our ontological poverty is possible to natural reason.

But making these sorts of confessions, in the way Aristotle or Aquinas makes them, is exactly what modern forms of knowledge assume to be supplemental to giving an account of the natural. Modernity gave rise to new forms of knowledge that aspired to autonomy, to the prerogative to pursue their inquiries emancipated from the "dogmatic" constraints of any premodern tradition of knowledge. Furthermore, modern political economy has aspired to impersonal and universal foundations for social organization, casting a shadow of parochial particularity on any community whose fundamental knowledge about humanity is not "emancipated" and hence apparently universal. One effect of these developments was that any traditional confessions about the place of humanity in the cosmos came to be seen as contingent features of a humanity that could more fundamentally be described in other terms, the terms of the modern natural and human sciences, which were becoming the preferred route to uncovering what is "natural" to humanity as such. The emerging idea of nature as the "real world" supposed to exist beneath the contingencies of religious conviction ruled out an account of humanity-as-such that would acknowledge its ontological poverty.

Interestingly, this is an appropriate place to revisit D. Stephen Long's view that the usury prohibition can only make sense for a peculiar sort of community. If the usury prohibition reveals something crucial about what Aquinas takes to be natural to humanity, and most modern sciences construe nature differently, it may be that it takes a peculiar community, one that retains an account of the human being amenable to our ontological poverty, to grasp Aquinas's natural law teaching.

The desire by theologians to speak not to and for such a community but to and for an allegedly more universal audience provides the proper background for understanding why natural law has become for scholars such a significant topic within Aquinas's teaching, even though he gives so little attention to it himself. Modernity has provoked a crisis over how to relate claims rooted in any traditional knowledge to the modern autonomous sciences. In that crisis, one move that has been found perpetually appealing to many is to invoke natural law as a way either to make new moral or religious claims or to reconstruct old moral or religious claims without seeming to base them on any too-narrow account of humanity. In short, natural law has seemed to many an anchor to secure otherwise eminently challengeable moral or religious claims while speaking a language intentionally designed to appeal to humanity as such regardless of religious background or moral tradition.

Among the more serious attempts to refashion natural law for such a task in recent moral theology is that of John Finnis, Germain Grisez, and Joseph Boyle.[31] They consciously depart from Aquinas while drawing inspiration from him. We gain a sense for why they focus their efforts on natural law from their rationale for departing from Aquinas: they prefer to follow Hume on the separation of ought from is, and Aquinas does not go on from his treatment of the most general shape of natural law to specify adequate action-guiding principles. That is, in their view natural law is to provide secure obligations, but not through any

[31] See especially John Finnis, Germain Grisez, and Joseph Boyle, "Practical Principles, Moral Truth, and Ultimate Ends," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 32 (1987): 99-151.

peculiar teleology. Another more recent example is found in Jean Porter's work, especially *Nature as Reason*.[32] Porter is explicit about how the task of natural law theory has changed in modernity. Nature-grace issues, she says, have gradually transformed into issues of the universal and the particular in terms of our awareness of "diverse cultures and ways of life."[33] Peculiar religious convictions here become "particularities" that must be related to a more universally agreeable account of humanity. Porter tries to bridge the gap by seeing Christianity's message of grace as a specific vision of happiness rooted in a more general notion of well-being construed from a more "universal" perspective (even if Christians have theological reasons to appreciate that perspective). She derives from the more general notion of well-being a rather robust account of the human good which waits to be further specified by a particular account of happiness.

B) Hall and Bowlin on Natural Law in Aquinas

These approaches offer a very different sort of natural law teaching from that found in Aquinas. Two scholars whose work most helps us see this difference are Pamela Hall and John Bowlin. Hall challenges the notion that natural law gives us some access to knowledge of the good that would do an end run around the need for developing virtue in a community that fosters virtue. Further, she shows that for Aquinas God's answer to the obscurity of natural law is revelation, drawing us toward grace and the theological virtues, which are often treated "in unreal isolation from his so-called natural moral philosophy."[34] Bowlin dismisses the idea that modernity's anxieties about basic obligations can be addressed by Aquinas's natural law teaching, since Aquinas asks not how we can be sure there are moral obligations, but why, given that we live in a great drama of virtue and vice, good and

[32] Jean Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005).

[33] Ibid., 324.

[34] Hall, *Narrative and the Natural Law*, 1.

evil, governed by divine providence, the good is so difficult to know and so difficult to do once we know it.[35] In Bowlin's view, we distort Aquinas if we suppose that studying our nature can accomplish what in fact only virtue can do. Indeed, if natural law could do so much, argues Bowlin, Aquinas would have much less reason for his eschatologically inspired discontent with the virtue possible in this life. Here I will briefly sketch some of the lessons from Hall and Bowlin that are most relevant to the concerns of the present essay.

Hall's book *Narrative and the Natural Law: An Interpretation of Thomistic Ethics* makes it clear that one must be in the right sort of community in order to learn what nature has to teach. She leads us out of our modern assumption that natural law is so defined by human purposes that it cannot be natural unless it is known by all. In fact, her book can be read as a sustained account of the difficulty of knowing the natural law. Hall focuses on the nature of practical reasoning—how practical reasoning attains moral wisdom and how social and historical contexts shape its progress. Natural law, she suggests, is only promulgated by being learned, through the growth of prudence, and our success in developing knowledge of the natural law is very much subject to our community's success in fostering such knowledge.[36] But Hall insists on holding prudence and law together. Prudence does not develop in a vacuum, but navigates amid the signposts of law, including the law of our nature. Still, left to its own devices, prudence could easily go astray.

Hall uses the example of the Germans mentioned by Caesar who lived by stealing. She takes up Goerner's idea that the Germans could have learned the natural law precept against stealing from the destructive consequences of their own long-term raiding. As they picked their neighbors bare, they would have begun to go hungry themselves, and learned to adopt a different way of life. Hall avers, though, that their adopting a nonraiding lifestyle would count as learning the natural law only if they

[35] Bowlin, *Contingency and Fortune in Aquinas's Ethics*.

[36] Hall, *Narrative and the Natural Law*, 35-36.

recognized their former practice as depriving them of some part of their flourishing. If they only stopped raiding because of expedience, eagerly awaiting the opportunity to return to it, they could hardly be said to have learned that their former practice was unjust.[37] On the one hand, our natural inclinations point us toward a pattern of flourishing, and so we always have the possibility of recognizing that our previous way of life somehow deprived us of the full enjoyment of such flourishing. On the other, actually recognizing what nature has to teach depends on communally mediated practical wisdom. The fallibility of human knowledge of natural law is one of the main reasons for the divine law, old and new.

What Hall accomplishes by following Aquinas's discussion of law in all its different types is a demonstration that natural law is not an extra avenue to knowledge of the good over against human law and divine law; it is what human law strives imperfectly to instantiate and what divine law reinstills and perfects. In this sense she frees us from the grip of our assumptions about an autonomous nature.

In *Contingency and Fortune in Aquinas's Ethics,* John Bowlin's burden is to show that the primary moral language Aquinas employs is an Aristotelian one that defines virtue in terms of the skills required for successfully navigating a world of contingency. Aquinas's ethics is not a Stoic retreat from that contingency, taking refuge by locating moral goodness in a formally good will. Furthermore, Aquinas does not share the Stoic interest in supplementing such a formal account with specific prescriptions derived from nature. Rather, precisely because good action is attentive to the particularities of the contingent and ever-shifting external world, such unfailing prescriptions are unavailable at any level of concreteness sufficient to guide action. Only virtue succeeds as such a guide. By stressing the functional elements in Aquinas's reading of the moral life, Bowlin wants to correct distortions in our reading of Aquinas that creep in when we are

[37] Ibid., 98.

motivated by fears about moral skepticism or by a modern confusion about the good that turns to natural law for answers.

Bowlin faults Finnis, Grisez, and Boyle, as well as Porter and others, for looking to natural law to provide a moral certainty it cannot. Insofar as Finnis, Grisez, and Boyle supplement Aquinas's sketch of natural law with Kantian-style precept-making and Porter and others look to the hierarchical ordering of the natural inclinations for direct normative guidance, they neglect the importance of virtue or fail to grasp how contingent is the good and how indeterminate is the happiness at which virtue aims.[38] Bowlin borrows Schneewind's characterization of how morality shifts in the context of secularization. According to Schneewind, morality as an external standard to which humans must conform is gradually replaced by the view that "'morality itself is a creation and projection of our inmost nature and that consequently we are naturally both aware of what it tells us to do and motivated to do it.'"[39] Bowlin suggests that by rooting morality in such an autonomous nature, these modern natural law theorists reflect a secularized notion of morality as an expression of ourselves.

Hall and Bowlin take us very far toward undoing contemporary tendencies to interpret Aquinas's natural law teaching in light of modern assumptions about an autonomous nature. They also get us much closer to grasping how Aquinas's usury teaching and his natural law teaching complement one another. Hall recovers much of what it means to be a member of a benevolent, encompassing teleological order the logic of which pulses through our agency by showing the interpenetration of a peculiarly Christian account of salvation history with Aquinas's account of nature. Bowlin helps us retrieve humanity's dependence on an order that exceeds its grasp by displaying the

[38] Bowlin, *Contingency and Fortune in Aquinas's Ethics*, 94. Bowlin's comments about Porter are directed at her earlier work. In my judgment, she elaborates her position in *Nature as Reason* in ways that allay some of Bowlin's concerns insofar as the direct normative guidance of the natural inclinations is replaced with a more nuanced account of the interplay between prudence and law. But Bowlin's basic concern that in Porter's hands natural law becomes an anchor to tie Aquinas's particularist convictions about the good to an apparently broader and more secure account of humanity still applies.

[39] Ibid., 120.

situatedness of human agents in a world that draws them toward a difficult good governed by an eternal law that is quite beyond any knowledge we could straightforwardly derive from reflection on our nature.

C) Modern Extrinsicism in Hall and Bowlin

At the same time, neither Hall nor Bowlin fully undoes the modern problematic. Once we see that for Aquinas tracing our natural ontological poverty is inseparable from giving a Christian account of humanity's situation in the cosmos, we can recognize where the modern assumption that the "natural" and the "religious" are extrinsic to one another persists even in Hall and Bowlin. Then we can see the directions that still need to be pursued to recover an authentically Thomistic account of natural law.

It would be a mistake to think that modern assumptions about nature arose entirely outside of Christian theology. On the contrary, Christian theologians have been among the most important figures in the advent of the modern assumption that giving an account of what is natural to humanity and giving a peculiarly Christian account of humanity's situation in the cosmos are two different and separable tasks. One example of a theological development that exemplifies the modernizing direction is the confession of a double finality for humanity. Theologians' concern for the "integrity of the natural" and the "gratuity of the supernatural" seemed to justify the split between a natural and a supernatural end on theological and scriptural grounds, even while the split legitimated Christians engaging new "natural" sciences on their own terms. So, for example, Cajetan, whose adoption of double finality proved very influential, became an example of engagement with an increasingly "rationalized" economics.[40] As many have shown, this double finality is a departure from Aquinas, for whom human nature is characterized in terms of its situation as it is known to faith, a situation that does not demand elevation to a graced union with God but is

[40] Long, *Calculated Futures,* 147 n. 28.

marked by an openness to truth and goodness that corresponds to humanity's actual calling to the vision of God.[41]

Although Hall is concerned to integrate natural law into the providential ordering by which God brings human beings to friendship with him through charity, Cajetan's double finality still casts its shadow. Hall acknowledges her debt to Porter's earlier work, in which human nature offers enough moral guidance apart from revelation that the list of natural inclinations in the *Summa* (*STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2) gives "an outline of what a human life should properly look like."[42] Porter maintains the autonomous significance of this "natural end" by characterizing human flourishing, even in the life of theological virtue, as aiming at a "proximate end" understood in terms of those natural inclinations. This double finality does not make Porter's account of humanity untheological, but it does make humanity, as it might be understood apart from the image of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, the first and foundational subject of moral inquiry. This approach tends to make the account of what is natural to humanity independent of the most peculiarly Christian convictions. The life of theological virtue is then accounted for as a supplement to or a specific determination of the naturally good life.

Hall demurs from Porter's implication that the proximate end is the measure even of infused virtue, but she remains unsure how to account for any other measure. Part of the trouble is that she, like Porter, believes that practical reason needs a determinate end to reason toward and that only a connatural end is available since our supernatural end is God, who cannot be speculatively grasped.[43] But this line of reasoning is faulty. That the end for Aquinas is God is as true for the "natural" life as it is for the life of charity (*STh* III, q. 1, a. 3, ad 2 and 3). What practical reason

[41] A number of scholars have taken up these issues, but the most compelling account of the difference between Aquinas's views and those of his interpreters remains the work of Servais Pinckaers, O.P. See *The Sources of Christian Ethics* and *The Pinckaers Reader,* especially, in the latter, "Aquinas on Nature and the Supernatural," 359-68.

[42] Jean Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), 89. Cf. Hall, *Narrative and the Natural Law,* 66.

[43] Hall, *Narrative and the Natural Law,* 88 n. 108.

needs in either case is not a speculative grasp of the origin and end of all things, but practice in seeking the goods at which the virtues already aim (*STh* II-II, q. 47, a. 6). Practical wisdom's direction will therefore be provided by the teleological ordering of the agent's virtues. Such a direction is available to us for our graced end insofar as the graced virtues are in those who have the Holy Spirit. Indeed, revelation and the gift of the Holy Spirit make our grasp of this direction *more* certain than a knowledge of the human good built on any other basis, and more appropriate to humanity's actual situation than any guesses about what virtuous life might have looked like apart from the drama of sin and grace (*STh* I, q. 1, aa. 1 and 5). Hall bears witness to a lingering extrinsicism when she tries to divide Aquinas's account of prudence between its infused and acquired versions and to show that the acquired version delivers the basic shape that the judgments of prudence take. Aquinas, because he is not concerned to protect the autonomy of any proximate end, makes no attempt to separate the directions pointed by acquired and infused prudence.

Hall's apparent concern to reserve a "nature" not too tainted by peculiarly Christian claims is perhaps not unrelated to her tendency to minimize the role of the Church. Given her emphasis on the role of a community in shaping knowledge of natural law, and on the role of Israel in God's plan to restore that knowledge, one wonders why she makes so little of the Church.[44] In the closing paragraphs of her chapter on the new law she mentions the Church as one of the communities in which true virtue can be fostered, but even there its role is played down:

> Thomas, as we have noted, recognizes how human communities, governed by civil law, can foster and teach pursuit of the good. Beyond these, with greater specificity and comprehensiveness of moral teaching, is the community of believers which is the Church. The community of those still *in via* is linked for Thomas with those who have completed their journey and who now stand

[44] On the church's role in salvation, see Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation according to St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), especially chapter 5, "Israel, the Church, and the Mystical Body of Christ."

before the face of God. Even within the community of believers still on the way, other sorts of society may be freely chosen as a means towards progress in the virtues.[45]

One does not get the sense that the Church's theological account of our human agency is crucial for grasping what is natural to humanity. Hall helpfully teaches us that knowledge of natural law is communally mediated for Aquinas and that his account of natural law is inseparable from his account of salvation as revealed through divine law. But the modern extrinsicism that cordons off religious particularity from accounts of what is natural still echoes in her treatment of Aquinas.

Bowlin avoids the double finality that still plagues Hall's account, but his interpretation of Aquinas swings, like a pendulum, too far the other way, reproducing the extrinsicism differently. Bowlin is very concerned not to characterize Aquinas as turning to nature for a moral anchor, and rightly so. For Aquinas nature on its own doesn't give much guidance. Bowlin wants to avoid offering a "secularized" interpretation of Aquinas, where morality is no longer an external standard but rather an expression of ourselves. But as he avoids the Scylla of claiming that nature on its own could direct us, he courts the Charybdis of claiming that virtue's guidance comes "on its own," as much despite nature as because of it.

In Bowlin's hands, natural law loses its prescriptive force. Natural law, he says, disposes to virtue only in the sense that it disposes to all human acts.[46] The upshot would seem to be that our natural inclination to act rationally is no more integrally connected to the development of virtue than it is to the development of vice. According to this reading, Hall's plundering Germans could learn virtue, but their new good acts would have no more relation to natural law than their old bad ones. Such a reading seems hard to square with Aquinas's assertion that by natural law "we discern what is good and what is evil" (*STh* I-II, q. 91, a. 2).

[45] Hall, *Narrative and the Natural Law*, 90.

[46] Bowlin, *Contingency and Fortune in Aquinas's Ethics*, 131.

This account of natural law fails to undo modern extrinsicism. Bowlin is anxious to show that in Aquinas's comments on natural law he is motivated by "something other than the desire to show how our nature tells us what we should and should not do in particular."[47] This may be true about Aquinas's motivations, but Bowlin is so keen to avoid suggesting that nature could give moral guidance that he seems to strip nature of any moral meaning whatsoever. To argue against those who find moral guidance from nature apart from virtue, Bowlin contends for virtue with no help from nature. Part of the problem, perhaps, is that Bowlin adopts Schneewind's account of morality's shifts in the context of secularization. Schneewind sees a move away from morality as an external standard and toward morality as an expression of ourselves. To avoid a secularized Aquinas, Bowlin puts him on the external standard side. But the very tension between external standards and what is internal to our humanity is alien to Aquinas. One is reminded of Pinckaers's diagnosis of modernity's split between human freedom and external obligations. It derives, he says, from nominalism, which rejected Aquinas's account of humanity as naturally oriented toward the good, in which our nature is shot through with the divine purposes.[48] In Pinckaers's view, what paves the way for the secular is not the notion that morality stems from within, but the introduction of a sort of interiority fundamentally alienated from the goods inscribed in our own nature. That shift produces the apparent conflict between the "expression of ourselves" and "external moral standards." Bowlin loses sight of the internal dynamism of Aquinas's account of nature, reproducing modernity's extrinsicism and portraying holy living again as "over against" nature.

Conclusion

I indicated at the start that recent scholarly trajectories both in economics and in natural law point toward a convergence around

[47] Ibid., 109 n. 64.

[48] Pinckaers, "A Historical Perspective on Intrinsically Evil Acts," in *The Pinckaers Reader*, 185-235, at 211-13.

a renewed account of human agency that helps us to recover the intelligibility of the usury prohibition and to overcome modern tendencies to preserve "autonomous" accounts of what is natural to us alongside theological convictions about what is natural to us. Such a renewed account of human agency would help us see how for Aquinas the usury prohibition and natural law teaching go together. I have tried to point in the direction of such a renewed account with the notion of "ontological poverty."

I want to conclude by returning to a comment from the introductory section in which I suggested that Aquinas's adherence to the usury prohibition was part of an effort to resist the dim beginnings of the emergence of an autonomous nature. Can we really say that Aquinas resisted such a notion, since such a notion likely hardly existed among his contemporaries? As I have mentioned, Pinckaers sees the roots of modern "autonomous nature" in the nominalist revolution of the fourteenth century. But in *Economy and Nature in the Fourteenth Century: Money, Market Exchange, and the Emergence of Scientific Thought,*[49] Joel Kaye contends that the key Scholastic thinkers of the fourteenth-century naturalistic revival, who revolutionized thinking about nature and laid the groundwork for modern science by reconceiving nature in more mathematical terms, were prepared for this revolution in part because of their attention to emerging market realities. The scope of exchange value's influence expanded throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Studying the movements of exchange value led many Scholastics to accept approximation, relative measurement, and the quantification of qualities, in revision of older, less fluid conceptual categories. They found it difficult to avoid the conclusion that an apparently self-equalizing system of exchange was producing relative justice out of shifting individual calculations. The same acceptance of relativity and geometrical equalization they learned from studying exchange made them the most notable contributors to the new natural philosophy. Kaye

[49] Joel Kaye, *Economy and Nature in the Fourteenth Century: Money, Market Exchange, and the Emergence of Scientific Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

proposes that when Aquinas decided to defend the usury prohibition on the basis of a divine order that requires a correspondence between the just intentions of the agent and action that accords with that order, he resisted the already emerging idea that order might arise out of an impersonal, mechanical process.

If Kaye is correct, then the initial moves toward the emergence of an autonomous economic science, one that would take the order produced by the shifting movements of nominal wealth as the primary horizon of human economic activity with little attention to how exchanges fit within a natural cycle of nourishment beyond its calculations, were taken in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by those who found increasing justifications for interest on a loan. By refusing to make those moves, Aquinas sought to safeguard the receptive and lowly virtues required to adequate humans to their place in an encompassing and purposeful divine order.

Aquinas's assumption of our creaturely lowliness, our "ontological poverty," and thus of the benevolent, encompassing, and penetrating teleological order that natural law teaching presupposes, was at stake in his defense of the usury prohibition. If we hope to overcome the extrinsicism through which an autonomous nature still haunts interpretations of Aquinas's theology, perhaps we would do well to think hard about the assumptions embodied in our everyday economic practice.[50]

[50] I am grateful for the comments I received on the paper delivered at the Society of Christian Ethics on which this essay is based, particularly those of Albino Barrera, John Bowlin, William George, Mary Hirschfeld, Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, and Charlie Pinches. I am also indebted to John Berkman for encouraging me to revise it for publication, and to the anonymous reviewers appointed by *The Thomist,* who saved me from some, though surely not all, errors.

BOOK REVIEWS

Church and Society: The Laurence J. McGinley Lectures: 1988-2007. By AVERY CARDINAL DULLES, S.J. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008. Pp. 480. $39.95 (cloth). ISBN 978-0-8232-2862-1.

On 12 December 2008 Avery Cardinal Dulles, S. J., died, and thereby his long and fruitful life, one tirelessly dedicated in service of Christ and his Church, was brought to its earthly culmination. After a year of illness, his body finally yielded to a recurrence of his old foe, polio. Providence, it seems, had permitted that his last days be marked by suffering, an opportunity to grow in conformity to the image of Christ crucified. As one of his countless students, I cannot possibly read the thirty-eight lectures collected in this volume without a mixture of gratitude for a theological life lived in full and sorrow that such a mighty force for the cause of the gospel has departed the scene. Yet, it is not sadness that is the most proper response for the passing of a theologian, but rather reading what he has written. We honor Avery Dulles's life by engaging his thought and grappling with his legacy. This collection provides an excellent opportunity to do just that. The essays span Dulles's two decades as the Laurence J. McGinley Professor of Religion and Society at Fordham University, a post he held after his mandatory retirement from the Catholic University of America in 1988 at the age of seventy. The diversity of themes—including the death penalty, religious freedom, the population of hell, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, and evolution—testifies to the wide-ranging erudition and boundless curiosity that characterizes the work of America's greatest Catholic intellectual.

Those familiar with Dulles's style will greet like an old friend the way in which he brings to each theological conundrum a mastery of the history of theology, fidelity to the Church's magisterium, clarion judgment in assessing new trends, and a virtually unique way of drawing conclusions without closing the question. New readers will delight to discover a reliable guide for how to think theologically. They will come to know that Dulles earns that trust because, first of all, he trusts the Tradition through which God has elected to communicate himself. Moreover, Dulles always does his homework, and, for that reason, those many distillations of positions held by theologians past and present, as well as of official Church teaching, can be accepted on the authority of a master craftsman.

Dulles's gifts as a theologian are on full display in each of these lectures, although some stand out for particular mention. Of particular poignancy is Dulles's decision to respond to the atrocity of 9/11 with reflections on "Christ

Among the Religions" and "When to Forgive." In the first, Dulles bluntly informs a New York audience with the dust of the fallen towers still in their lungs that religious safety zones belong to the irretrievable past. "Like it or not, most of us are destined to live in a religiously mixed society that includes people of many faiths and of no faith at all" (361). Accordingly, it is necessary that we think deeply and carefully about how religions ought to relate to one another. In pure Dullesian fashion, we are offered four models for consideration: coercion, convergence, pluralism, and tolerance. Ruling out the first three on Catholic principles, he settles on tolerance as the most adequate, but quickly insists we avoid the common fallacy of equating tolerance with approval. "We tolerate things that we find less than acceptable" (365). While the ambiguities of the term most likely account for its scarcity in magisterial documents, Dulles maintains that toleration best coheres with Vatican II's teaching on non-Christian religions. The council affirms that the religions can contain "seeds of the word" and "rays" of truth as well as grave errors. Yet, even at their best, none of the religions can substitute for the faith revealed in Christ Jesus. Because they may hinder the salvation of their adherents, "the council's attitude toward them is one of qualified approval and toleration" (367). Dulles ends the lecture with suggestions for tolerant coexistence, highlighting the value of dialogue to overcome misunderstanding and preclude open hostility. He cautions, however, that postconciliar experience teaches that dialogue is no "panacea" and that the Church properly resists the worldly temptation to oppose commitment to dialogue with upholding particular religious truth claims.

Equally pertinent to the aftermath of 9/11 is Dulles's investigation of the deceptively complex issue of forgiveness—that is, when we should forgive, who should be forgiven, under what set of circumstances, and how the act is related to the right demands of justice. Defining forgiveness as "the renunciation both of resentment and of claim to requital" (374), he wisely distinguishes kinds of resentment and their moral significance. Thus, while the resentment expressed in a sudden burst of anger when wronged is morally neutral, resentment as deliberate malice is morally wrong, and resentment as moral indignation in the face of true evil is a positive good. The cardinal does not himself draw the connection to the ways in which his hearers reacted to the attacks, but the implication is clear enough—initial anger was appropriate, malice sinful, moral judgment essential. Forgiveness for Christians is not opposed to our ability to distinguish between good and evil but presupposes it. Even the forgiven sinner must do penance. Moreover, Jesus' call for his followers to forgive their enemies cannot be translated into public policy. Indeed, the state is positively obliged to punish offenses against the common good and reserve clemency for exceptional cases. The lecture concludes with a heartfelt appeal to the benefits of forgiveness between individuals and even nations. Acknowledging the power of malice to yield malice, authentic forgiveness alone has to the power to break the bloody cycle. A powerful message spoken out of season.

Other articles stand out simply because they are among the best short treatments of their subject available. Although the following is not a complete

list, I alert the reader to Dulles's careful navigation of the difficult theological waters of the "Historical Method and the Reality of Jesus(?)," "Can Philosophy be Christian?", "Justification Today," "The Death Penalty: A Right-to-Life Issue?", "Religious Freedom: A Developing Doctrine," "How Real is the Real Presence?", and "Who Can Be Saved?" These lectures are clear enough to introduce the subject to the novice and meaty enough to provide a running start for arguments among specialists. That Dulles can manage both tasks is due to his long-standing theological conviction that God has revealed himself symbolically, revealed symbols which can be expressed in propositions yet inevitably overflow the conceptual borders of any particular system. Accordingly, to grapple with a great issue requires joining in on a two-thousand-year-old conversation studded by sparkling intellects, a variety of historical and cultural dynamics, and under the guidance of Scripture, Tradition, and the Church's teaching authority. It is Dulles's great genius to draw his readers into that conversation by revealing just how much we moderns need our ancestors, especially when we must go beyond them.

No serious consideration of Dulles's long career can avoid the question of how his thought has developed over time. It is common, let us not deny it, to claim that the change was from left to right: the one-time champion of academic theology's role in realizing the promise of the Second Vatican Council became increasingly wary of many contemporary theological trends and supportive of their magisterial correction. Since these writings begin more than twenty-five years after the close of the council, they provide ample material for considering Dulles's relationship to postconciliar theology. To be sure, one finds in these pages a theologian thoroughly committed to the theology embodied in the texts of Vatican II, even when it brings him into conflict with certain conservative trends. A prime example is his vigorous defense of the reality of lay ecclesial ministry. Dismissing all attempts to restrict the lay apostolate to the world and the term "ministry" to the ordained, Dulles uses Scripture and official teaching to argue that theology needs to catch up to where the Spirit has taken the Church.

So, what if any change in Dulles's position can one detect in this material? A good place to look is in two of the strongest pieces in the volume: "True and False Reform in the Church" and "Benedict XVI: Interpreter of Vatican II." In the first, Dulles looks at two erroneous conceptions of reform after the council. The first he calls "restorative reform," the attempt to "reactualize" a real or, more often, an imagined past. Such an approach neglects the persistent human element in the Church that renders every particular historical period in need of purification and development. "Progressive reform," on the other hand, fails more radically because it includes the essential teachings of the faith as part of what needs to be reformed. With particular force Dulles states: "I wish to make it clear that anyone seeking to reform the Church must share the Church's faith and accept the essentials of her mission. The Church cannot take seriously the reform advocated by those who deny that Christ was Son of God and Redeemer, who assert that the Scriptures teach error, or who hold that the Church should

not require orthodoxy on the part of her members. Proposals coming from a perspective alien to Christian faith should be treated with the utmost suspicion if not dismissed as unworthy of consideration"(404-5). Tough words, to be sure, but necessary ones for discerning the nature of Dulles's own development. They point not to a change in theological position so much as the way he reads the signs of the times in academic theology. Too many theologians after the council began to take their cues from the secular culture rather than the great tradition, too many approach the magisterium with dismissive distrust, and, most disastrously, too many demonstrate a willingness to compromise revealed teachings. In stark contrast, Dulles found in John Paul II an imaginative reception of the Second Vatican Council capable of exciting young minds and yielding fruits for the new evangelization. It should come as no surprise that this collection contains five lectures dedicated to the thought of John Paul II.

Further data for understanding the evolution of Dulles's thought is found in his masterful treatment of Benedict's developing interpretation of the council. Ratzinger has famously admitted that his initial analysis of the unfolding council was "unduly dependent on Karl Rahner as a mentor" (480). It is difficult not to wonder whether Dulles would now say the same thing about himself. Rahner often appears in these essays, but rarely as the authority one finds in Dulles's earlier writings. Moreover, Dulles attends to the ways in which Ratzinger's interpretation of the council came to be influenced by a conviction that its texts were being distorted by progressivist theologians. This would lead to an insistence on a hermeneutic of continuity which stresses the interpretative importance of past teaching. Likewise, Dulles is critical of those theologians who take the texts of Vatican II as a springboard to the future rather than a normative guide. Of special interest is Dulles's description of Ratzinger's shift from being keenly appreciative of Protestant, specifically Lutheran, concerns to a stance "more confessionally Catholic" (474). Dulles, although he has never yet wavered in his ecumenical commitments, has become much less sanguine on the immediate prospects of theological agreement. Perhaps the greatest similarity between Dulles and the current pontiff is that each has allowed the council's stormy aftermath to strengthen the conviction that the reformist impulse is legitimate only as if arises from and is nourished by the living tradition of the Church. Like Benedict, Dulles has never viewed theology as primarily a rational exercise, but rather as a craft nurtured within the community of believers in all its varied dimensions (e.g., liturgical, mystical, artistic, institutional, and intellectual). He, like the pope he served as cardinal, was a man who longed to breathe in the rich air of the Church of Christ. May all who read this book find like sustenance.

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A Secular Age. By CHARLES TAYLOR. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, 2007. Pp. xii + 874. $39.95 (cloth). ISBN 978-0-674-02676-6.

Charles Taylor's most recent book is surely his *magnum opus* in every sense. He is a man who has always written long (a 600-pager on Hegel in the 1970s; the 600-plus-page classic *Sources of the Self* in the 1990s), and here he writes very long indeed, so long that reading the book in bed is uncomfortable. As usual with Taylor, however, length does not mean a turgid waste of words: he is stylistically more like Gibbon than Hegel, and it is not much of an exaggeration to say that *A Secular Age* is a book difficult to abandon once begun. It has a story-line (how did we get to our present secular condition?), fascinating characters (Rousseau, Schiller, Weber, Péguy, Hopkins), and a relaxed, urbane, sometimes chatty style, unafraid of the sentence-fragments characteristic of the demotic oral, and capable, too, of vivid coinages ("fragilization," "excarnation") and of elegant summary formulations ("this hubristic rage to define," "the manichean rigidities of embattled orthodoxy"). One of the greatest strengths of the book—and one which contributes greatly to its readability and interest—is that Taylor engages with literature, prosaic and poetic, as much as he does with philosophy and theology. There are conversations with Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Camus, Rilke, Jeffers, and others; and Taylor's readings of these works show a finely developed literary sensibility working in close harness with precise analytical and distinction-making skills.

The book has diagnostic and prescriptive threads, each present at every stage of the argument and often very closely woven together. The diagnostic, however, performed usually in genealogical mode, is dominant; the prescriptive, while very much present (and very Catholic in tone and substance), is given many fewer words, and arrives at prominence only toward the end of the book. In spite of this, the prescriptive is the book's engine. Taylor can, he thinks, identify mistaken responses to secularity and is happy to say what they are and what is wrong with them. This also means that he has ideas about how secularity ought be responded to, both by the non- or anti-religious, and by the religious, especially Catholics, upon whom (being one himself) his interest is focused. These recommendations, fueled as they seem to be by something approaching moral indignation, are what make it important for him to perform the diagnosis. Only, Taylor thinks, if we understand the etiology of our condition (it is not, for him, exactly a disease) can we respond rightly to it. Hence the length and detail of the genealogical diagnosis.

It is difficult to avoid the impression that there is a fallacy lurking here somewhere, perhaps that of misplaced historicism: it is not the case that a particular condition, cultural or physiological, requires attention to etiology for understanding what it is, or for recommending treatment. Genealogical understanding is only one kind among others, and treatment doesn't require it. But even if Taylor overemphasizes the necessity of the kind of analysis productive of such understanding, his performance of that analysis is nevertheless of a very high order. He has read enormously, thought deeply, and

cares to communicate what he knows even to those, like me, who have read and thought much less than he

Taylor wants primarily to show his readers how the inheritors of Western (Latin) Christianity—that is the "we" of the book, and it comprises the vast majority of those who live now in Western Europe and North America, no matter the extent of their ignorance of their heritage—have arrived at the secularity which he takes to be our current condition. This secularity is not, however, some settled set of attitudes or beliefs or institutional arrangements, whether the retreat of religion in public life (what he calls secularity 1), or the decline of religious belief and practice (secularity 2). It is, rather, the current conditions for religious belief and practice (secularity 3), conditions deeply effective no matter the particulars or extent of religious belief and practice in any actual case. It is notorious that the variables that determine secularities 1 and 2 are ordered differently in different places, even if attention is restricted to Europe and North America. People in the United States are much more likely to be religiously observant than those in the United Kingdom or Italy; and religion has a distinctively different public place in England, where there is an established church with a monarch at its head, than in France, where there is a two-hundred-year history of laïcité. But for people in all these places, whether the post-Catholic middle classes of Milan or the whitebread Baptists of Waco, secularity 3 obtains, and shapes their religious convictions and practices (or lack thereof). Religious belief/practice and its absence or rejection (very different things, those) are placed upon the same field, the field of secularity 3.

Mapping this terrain is Taylor's principal purpose, and the detail and subtlety of the map makes effective summary of it in a short review very difficult. But at least this much can be said. First, the cultural field is one in which there are known options: the believer and the unbeliever, the observant and the nonobservant, are each aware of the other in their many varieties, and this awareness gives shape to whatever set of convictions and practices has been adopted. No set of such is simply given, now. What is given is a field upon which there are many such. Second, the self who has adopted (or refused) some particular religion has become "buffered," no longer in immediate contact with a cosmos in which place and time are enchanted, rhythmically intertwined with a presence that transcends them, and, therefore and thereby, turned recursively into itself as a subject which can remake itself by discipline and which can understand and manipulate the world by means of instrumental reason. The contrast here is with a "porous" self which understands itself, dispositionally if not occurrently, as continuous with and open to a cosmos (beautifully ordered, as the word's etymology suggests) which does not explain itself and therefore cannot be finally explained by reason's instrumental and analytical exercises. Third, and closely related to the second, there is "excarnation," which is the transfer of life away from the body and into the head, so that reason becomes the arbiter of what the body tells us—and that whether the body is telling us something aesthetically (as when we hear music), or sexually (as when we exchange physical intimacies), or religiously (as when we receive the body of

Christ on the tongue). All this leads to, or conjointly constitutes, the "immanent frame" of secularity 3, and in occupying it—a matter about which we have and can have no choice—we "stand in the Jamesian open space . . . where the winds blow, where one can feel the pull . . . to stand here is to be at the mid-point of the cross-pressures that define our culture."

Taylor is not claiming, it is important to see, that secularity 3 cannot be resisted, opposed, withdrawn from, or otherwise called into question. Quite the reverse: the story he tells is largely one of such resistance, whether by the romantic high priests of the aesthetic (Wordsworth, Hölderlin), the fascist advocates of blood and soil (Hitler, Franco), the socialist advocates of a new world order and the concomitant restarting of history (Lenin, Stalin, Pol Pot), the radical religiously motivated rejection of late modernity in all its aspects (bin Laden), or the nostalgic identification of a past era, before secularity, in which all was as it should be (the thirteenth, greatest of centuries, as some Thomists might have it) and which we should seek once again to approximate. Secularity 3 does, however, provide the field upon which those battles are fought. Its most violent and thoroughgoing opponents are as shaped by it as those who embrace it wholeheartedly. Consider as illustration (not one Taylor uses) the difference between the medievalism of the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood in nineteenth-century England and the convictions and practices of the twelfth-century English. The former is a creature of secularity 3, even when it seeks exactly to reject it. It chooses something formerly given.

Taylor's analysis of secularity 3's antecedents and varieties is extraordinarily rich and nuanced, very much more so than is suggested by the preceding brief summary. It seems a bit churlish, then, to identify a missing element, and I do so only because of surprise at its absence: I kept waiting for it to appear, being sure that it would, wondering at its delayed entrance and then at its final effective absence. I mean a depiction of the deep symbiosis between the economic arrangements of the twenty-first century's globalized and increasingly virtual economy, on the one hand, and the excarnate buffered self occupying the immanent, option-based frame of secularity 3, on the other. The invention of the limited liability corporation (a legal quasi-person), with roots in the seventeenth century and something approaching full development in the nineteenth, together with the consequent development of the market as the principal engine of social and political development (according to now almost-standard analyses of politics and economics across the political spectrum, we now occupy not nation-states but market-states) is surely among the things to have contributed most profoundly to the sense that buffered selves have of themselves as consumers, choosers, defined by the act of purchase and consumption more than by anything else. This is of course perfectly compatible with Taylor's analysis; but its presence would have enriched it, and its effective absence leaves aside something of central importance.

This lack sometimes has real effects on the analysis, as when Taylor comments on what the twenty-first century urban environment shows. It does not, he says, show the replacement of Christianity by capitalism, the commercial spires

displacing those of the cathedral. Rather, he says, the city is like a cacophony, a series of special-interest temples to "fragmentary instrumental rationality." But perhaps that just is capitalism, considered in the economic sphere: the cacophony is unified by the profit motive, and the fragmentation explained by the rapid move from physical to virtual commodities. There is a flattening and buffering here, certainly; and as contribution to the "sensed context" (a nice phrase, several times repeated) in which the buffered selves of the inhabitants of secularity 3 live and move and have their being, I find it difficult to think of a more powerful and poignant example than the visits to the shopping mall which punctuate and order the temporally flattened cycle of late modernity. If there is a porosity to the late modern self, it is given by what Thomas Frank has called the "conquest of cool": the appropriation of the language of authenticity (which Taylor treats beautifully) by the advertising industry in the service of self-identification via the (commercial) brand, and the construal of every other source of meaning in terms of that one.

In analyzing and depicting secularity 3, Taylor is consistent in rejecting both nostalgia for a time when it was not (the temptation of religious conservatives), and evolutionary optimism for its further and fuller development (the temptation of non- or anti-religious progressives). He wants to understand what secularity 3 is, first, and then to discriminate the responses to and uses of it which are more likely to shed blood and cause suffering from those less likely to do so. And it is here in this normatively prescriptive part of the enterprise that his Catholicism comes to the fore. What concerns Taylor—what he wants to argue against and to persuade his readers that they too should reject—is the "code-fetishism" or "nomolatry" evident both in liberal attitudes to secular law and in Christian identifications of a particular set of codifiable norms to which all the orthodox must hew. Common to both these is the thought that one size fits all: that there is a single model of human flourishing whose lineaments can be captured by and prescribed in law. Also common is the elevation of codified law over phronesis, or (what comes more naturally to Catholic lips) the virtue of prudence. And common to both as well—whether the Kantian dream of perpetual peace or the Catholic one of the pure church to which everyone belongs—is the tendency to reach for the ideal community by a violent act of purification, ideal-typically directed at the exclusion and perhaps also the slaughter of the scapegoat. Taylor is quite clear, and rightly so, that neither the easy secular identification of religion as the principal source of scapegoating violence, nor the easy Christian identification of the pagan and the heretic as the one who must be cast out so that the church's purity can be maintained, can be defended. What he wants is something more and something deeper, not a general abstractly theoretical answer, but rather "moves, always within a given context, whereby someone renounces the right conferred by suffering, the right of the innocent to punish the guilty, of the victim to purge the victimizer."

This is surely right, and when Taylor comes to look for instances of such "moves" at the end of the book, he finds them without exception in Catholic figures—not because he thinks them absent elsewhere, but because this is the

"given context" from which he writes. He treats, as instances, Jacques Maritain in his move from support of *Action Française* in the 1920s to his advocacy of human rights and democracy after the Second World War; Ivan Illich, in his critique of the church's attempt to regulate and organize the "network of agape" which is the true Christian life, and thus to corrupt Christianity in the direction of re-establishing the distinction between the pure-elect and the damned; Charles Péguy, in his critique of the degeneration of love into habit, and of the organic into the logical, and his elevation over these of the mystical and the love-joined communion of saints; and Gerard Manley Hopkins, in his reconfiguration of the poetic so that words may exhibit with proper density and intensity their participation in the created order. These, for Taylor, are Catholic instances of those who have followed "new itineraries in Western modernity." From them, lessons about how to be Catholic within the unavoidable frame of secularity 3 can be drawn. Common to all of them (except, probably, Maritain) is deep disaffection with the church in its juridical and institutional aspects, combined in every case (even, I think, in Illich's) with a refusal to reject orthodoxy because of this disaffection. It is revealing that Taylor chooses such examples. For him, secularity 3's frame means that being Catholic cannot, without deep danger, be a matter of uncritical embrace of the institutional form and of those who, along with oneself, belong to it. It must, instead, be tensive and conflicted, constantly aware of the *ecclesia semper reformanda* demand of the gospel, and of the need to check the tendency to secularity 3 to make of religious faith a code-fetishistic act of violence exactly because those who perform such an embrace are, whether they know it or not, buffered and excarnate selves acting in a disenchanted world.

Taylor's worries about code-fetishism and nomolatry are well-taken and partly justified, no doubt; and the diagnosis of secularity from which they issue is of an unparalleled richness. This is not the place, even had I the competence, to engage him critically; but it is perhaps worth emphasizing more than he does that codes and their elaboration and the attempt to order one's life around them can themselves all be "moves" (or practices) aimed at deconstructing the sense of oneself as worthy to judge the worth and/or purity of others and therefore at acknowledging secularity 3's reality and force while denying it ultimacy; and that the Church hands on many practices, almost absent from Taylor's book, whose first and last aim is the deeper conformity of the practitioner to Christ. I mean almsgiving, fasting, and above all else the sacraments of Eucharist, penance, and anointing the sick. Perhaps these facts might temper Taylor's emphasis upon the need for a critical and tensive embrace of the Church under the conditions of secularity 3, and suggest something more like a rapturous self-giving to the embrace of the *sponsa verbi* even under those same conditions.

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The Catholic Priesthood and Women: A Guide to the Teaching of the Church. By SARA BUTLER, M.S.B.T. Chicago and Mundelein, Ill.: Hillenbrand Books. 2007. Pp. 132. $23.00 (cloth). ISBN 978-1-59525-016-2.

In this short book, Sr. Sara Butler manages to set forth clearly the teaching of the Church regarding the ordination of women to the priesthood, and to concentrate attention on one of the most profound issues facing the Catholic Church today, namely, the relation between historical analysis and the word of God. After pointing in the Introduction to "the failure to notice the difference between the fundamental reasons for the tradition and the theological arguments offered to elucidate it" (xi), the first chapter of her book sets forth the immediate historical and theological context for the statement in Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* 4:

> Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. Lk 22:32) I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful.

Chapter 2 considers the development of understanding in regard to the reality of woman that took place in the Church largely because of the ferment in society regarding "women's rights." In the Church, it was Pius XII who began to set forth personhood rather than motherhood as the foundation of these rights. After tracing the continued development from John XXIII through Paul VI, Vatican II, and John Paul II, Butler arrives at the revised Code of Canon Law of 1983 which most directly addressed the council's teaching on the natural and baptismal equality of all the faithful: "For the most part, the new roles open to women after the Council are identical with the new roles open to non-ordained men" (29) and this applies as well in marriage where "all reasons of the 'subjection' of woman to man in marriage must be understood in the sense of 'mutual subjection' of both 'out of reverence for Christ'" (*Mulieris dignitatem* 24). All of this can be understood as a development in understanding and in that sense a development of doctrine.

Chapter 3 considers three objections made in light of the just-mentioned development in the Church and in society. The first, raised by liberal feminists, maintains that the Church is unjust in denying women access to positions of leadership; the second, held by Catholic feminists, is similar but it points to a faulty anthropology as the basis for the discrimination; and the third, raised by Protestant Christians, points to the radical equality given to all the baptized, and thus the injustice of preventing women from an office that is based on baptism. The answers to all three objections are courteous and complete. The principles involved are, briefly: (1) No one has a right to priestly ordination. (2) Women do have access to positions of leadership, as do nonordained men. (3) The

magisterium bases itself on the *fact* of Jesus' choice of men, a choice which as his counter-cultural way of relating to women manifests, is not culturally determined. (4) A solemn declaration of the magisterium regards only the object of the definition, not the theological process by which it is arrived at. (5) Baptism gives everyone equal dignity and equal access to salvation, while priestly ordination is another sacrament conferred on those who are called to a particular role in the Church. These principles appear throughout the work and are applied to various aspects of the question.

Chapter 4 develops the Church's fundamental reasons for this decision. These are to be distinguished from the theological arguments in regard to the teaching which are discussed in the following chapter. Butler points out that the intra-Catholic discussion prior to *Inter insigniores* was divided in regard to the foundational principles to be followed: is the teaching on ordination based on Jesus' choice recorded in the Scriptures and appealed to throughout the tradition or is it that "the Church's practice represents an unexamined way of acting dictated by historical and cultural prejudices against women and sustained by appeal to certain Pauline texts?" (58). The author, along with most theologians and historians, has already acknowledged the "historical and cultural prejudices" in the Church's history, and has discussed them and their ongoing rectification in chapter 2. Here, it is a question of the *reasons* for the decision. Drawing on the rather infrequent occasions when this issue arose in the history of the Church, this study first acknowledges that some of the arguments were based on the prejudices already mentioned, but that the principle consistently invoked was the action of Jesus himself. Most of the discussion had to do with the practices of groups whose teaching was otherwise also in conflict with the Catholic Church. Intimately connected with this discussion was the contemporaneous development of an understanding of priestly character whose existence is implied as early as St. Irenaeus. Perhaps Butler could have treated this more at length. We thus see that the basic response of tradition, which found a clear articulation in the work of St. Epiphanius (fourth century), was twofold: the primary reason why only men can be ordained derives from the decision of Jesus, and a secondary reason, added as an illustration of this decision, is the fact that Mary herself was not selected to be one of the twelve.

Having established the consistency with which tradition set forth the reasons for the exclusive ordination of men to the priesthood, chapter 5 considers the theological arguments in favor of this tradition. These are considerations of the fittingness (*convenientia*) of a fact or truth of the faith, a procedure first employed by Hebrews 2:10 (*eprepen*). It is a mode of reasoning that seeks to render the revealed reality more intelligible after having accepted in faith the truth of what is revealed. This is a common mode of procedure in Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* in which, for instance, his first consideration of the incarnation is about the "fittingness" (*convenientia*) of this mystery which he concludes is *convenientissimum* (*STh* III, q. 1, a. 1, *sc*).

Thus, after having accepted in faith the truth about the apt subject of priestly ordination as this had been passed on in tradition and is now authoritatively

taught by *Ordinatio sacerdotalis,* Butler considers the *fittingness* of this truth in order to make it more understandable. She proceeds by way of consideration of the Church's theological "arguments" which are based on the analogy of faith ("the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation" [CCC 114]). Briefly, *Inter insigniores* presents three Christological arguments: (1) the priest acts *in persona Christi* in certain sacramental functions; (2) The formula *in persona Christi* implies that the priest himself is part of the sacramental sign; and (3) because he is a sacramental sign of Christ who was and is a man, it is fitting that the priest be a man. John Paul II further advances the consideration of the fittingness of a male priesthood by developing the nuptial dimension of the covenant. He does this by considering the "nuptial mystery" implied by Scripture's use of the image of matrimony in both Testaments (*Mulieris dignitatem*) and then looking to the manner in which the priest, as one configured to Christ, "faces" the Church, his Bride (*Pastores dabo vobis).*

Chapter 6 considers "More Objections to the Church's Teaching." Two of these are objections to the fundamental reasons presented by the Church, and another five are objections to the Church's case for the fittingness of the traditional practice. "In both cases, the critics privilege the findings of historical scholarship over the witness of tradition, and their conclusions deviate from the 'settled doctrine' of the Catholic Church" (93). This reflection aptly sums up the central issue in much of the modern approach to Church teaching and practice, which allows that these may continue to operate within specific fields ruled by methods of their own, but that the final judgment on truth has been withdrawn from their jurisdiction and removed to the general domain of historic epistemic criteriology.

Though such a procedure is hardly ever articulated in this manner, it is frequently operative when the Church's tradition is subject to historical analysis. On the contrary, a very particular form of correlation in required in which the light of faith is a discerning and healing factor that separates the truth of the new historical information from the error that is admixed with it. In this way, by respecting what is true in the new historical results and letting itself be modified by it, revelation acquires a healing capacity to distinguish truth from falsehood and thus to free the new understanding to play its full and legitimate role in the development of doctrine. In this correlative process neither the tradition nor the historical information is "foundational," though they are not on the same plane. It is the very nature of faith that it be the integrating factor and that historical information be taken up into this level. Aquinas once remarked to those who maintain that bringing philosophy and the human sciences into revelation was like mixing water with wine, that the genuine process is more truly described as changing water into wine. Regarding the question of the ordination of women to the priesthood, the process has for the most part been completed. What is needed now is a broader understanding of the place and roles of women in the Church, as well as a deeper grasp on the nature of the priestly character.

The last chapter of the book is a brief consideration of the position that the ordination of women is an instance of the development of doctrine. Butler first lists the criteria for judging whether or not a tradition belongs to the *"verbum Dei traditum"* as outline by the Council of Trent: (1) it must have the gospel as its source, (2) it must have been received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ or come to them by revelation, and (3) it must have been preserved without interruption in the Catholic Church. She then goes on to consider the criteria, outlined by Newman, by which a development may be judged to be authentic. One of these is that it leads to a deeper synthesis of truths already held. This is true, Butler points out, in regard to the increased recognition of women's rights and dignity, but it is not true of the ordination of women. The conclusion, therefore, is that the restricting of priestly ordination to men belongs to "the divine constitution of the Church" (*Ordinatio sacerdotalis* 4).

This fine book, irenic, and thorough despite its length, ends with the following sentence: "Closing off this possibility [of the ordination of women] has led the Church to search for new ways to identify the 'genius' of women and a new commitment to foster to foster the collaboration of men and women in the Church and in society" (112). Such collaboration can only deepen the Church's resources and increase our capacity to preach the gospel.

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Weakness of the Will from Plato to the Present. Edited by TOBIAS HOFFMANN. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008, Pp. 344. $59.95 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-8132-1520-4.

As the title indicates, the study moves thematically and historically from Plato to the present day. It nicely complements an earlier publication, also edited by Tobias Hoffmann (with Jörn Müller and Matthias Perkhams), *The Problem of Weakness of Will in Medieval Philosophy*. It stands to this earlier edited volume as larger concentric circles stand to a center point. The theme of weakness of the will is approached from a variety of perspectives, in greater textual detail, and with an enhanced connection to present-day concerns. The authors of this volume do not try to fit their expertise into the narrowly construed focus of Aristotelian incontinence. Rather, they write in dialogue with the central theme of *akrasia*, offering a rich perspective on a problem that is clearly of interest to contemporary philosophers.

Not all the essays relate directly to the Aristotelian aspect of the weak will, that is, that all-too-real human experience of acting counter to what one knows

to be the best course of action. Some take up the biblical thread: the experience of St. Paul and his reflection upon his own "divided self" of Romans 7 ("I do not do what I want, but I do what I hate"). Drawing from both philosophical and theological traditions, the essays focus alternately upon three themes: first, *akrasia* (incontinence); second, ambivalent personal identity; and third, moral education. Organized historically, the volume concludes with an excellent reflection upon the contemporary philosophical question itself. In the best tradition of philosophical reflection, the volume provides excellent historical studies, contemporary analysis, a reflexive critique, and an exceptionally thorough bibliography. It contains something for everyone: the historian of philosophy, the ethicist, and the student of human character.

The first three essays focus on antiquity, laying out the philosophical sources for the discussion of weakness and the will. In "Weakness and Will in Plato's *Republic,*" Kenneth Dorter offers a reasonable solution to the apparent inconsistency found in the dialogues and the *Republic.* Plato's *Protagoras, Laches, Charmides,* and *Meno* appear to deny altogether the possibility of incontinence. This position is at odds with what Socrates says in book 4 of the *Republic:* that, because of the tripartite soul, it is possible for one to know the good and yet be too weak to master temptations. Dorter argues that there is no discrepancy with the position in the *Republic,* once we recognize that Socrates' claim in book 4 is superseded by what he says in book 7: that wisdom, once achieved, entails that knowledge which is invulnerable to weakness of will.

Terrence H. Irwin also focuses on Plato's *Protagoras,* upon how Aristotle reads Plato and upon the relationship of *Nicomachean Ethics* 7 to *Magna Moralia* on the issue of incontinence (*akrasia*). In "Aristotle Reads the *Protagoras,*" he traces the development of Aristotle's position as it relates to the claim mentioned above: that knowledge is not dragged around by passion. Irwin's excellent study achieves a twofold goal. First, it explains the way in which Aristotle's reading of Socrates over time both helped him to understand the possibility of incontinence and revealed his own acknowledgment of human experience: that there can be a higher type of knowledge that is invulnerable to the passions. Second, as a reading of Aristotle's own reflection on the matter, it helps the reader understand the relationship of the *Ethics* to the *Magna Moralia.*

Lloyd P. Gerson's helpful "Plotinus on Weakness of the Will: The Neoplatonic Synthesis" develops another theme traced in this volume: personal identity. For the Neoplatonic approach, the entire question of *akrasia* reduces to the question of identity, and ultimately of self-knowledge. In this, the philosophical tradition of antiquity touches the early Christian reflection on Romans 7. The discussion of this aspect of the theme opens the way for the Christian philosopher-theologians.

Four essays focus on the medieval Christian development of this topic. In "Body Double: St. Augustine and the Sexualized Will," James Wetzel claims that it is not weakness of will but self-deception that characterizes Augustine's understanding of Romans 7. In this essay, he offers a novel interpretation of the conversion moment in *Confessions.* He argues that Augustine's own intellectual

journey in that text is better understood from the perspective of the transition from a materialist to a radically immaterialist conception of God, spiritual reality, and human immortality. Book 8 of the *Confessions* involves not a call for more will power, but an intellectual enlightenment about what it means to be human.

Denis J. Bradley's "Thomas Aquinas on Weakness in the Will" presents a close analysis of the relationship of intellect and will that illustrates how Aquinas develops an Aristotelian-based Christian understanding of human action counter to intention. While concentrating on the *Sententia Libri Ethicorum,* Bradley notes that, in Aquinas's later works (like *De Malo*), he transposes the discussion of *akrasia* to the plane of the will. He thereby complicates and deepens, but does not repudiate the original Aristotelian explanation of incontinence.

In "Henry of Ghent's Voluntarist Account of Weakness of Will," Tobias Hoffmann identifies Henry as the first real voluntarist, seeing in the will the cause for its own shortcomings. The aim of this very helpful essay is to bring to light Henry's internal logic as he deals with issues of choice against reason, incontinence, and the role of virtue in a post-1277 context. Henry holds, foundationally, that to reject the possibility of choice against reason is to deny free will. Following this, he shows how free choice is involved in incontinence and how the passions corrupt reason by way of a disordered will. Finally, the central role of virtue appears as the only way to strengthen the will against further calamity.

In a very interesting essay, Giuseppe Mazzotta turns our attention to Dante, an author not often treated in such a volume. His "Dante: Healing the Wounded Will" stresses the role of moral education, presenting an argument for poetry and its ability to heal the will. Using texts from the *Vita Nuova* and *Divine Comedy,* Mazzota documents how Dante sees the importance of all art to transform the will by offering truer perceptions of the moral order. Here again, the theme of the divided self emerges early in the *Inferno;* the journey from Hell to Heaven involves the personal transformation from a divided to an integrated self.

Two essays focus on early Modern thinkers. Both illustrate the extent to which Aristotle's primacy has been eclipsed. In "Montaigne's Marvelous Weakness," Ann Hartle claims that, despite his use of traditional categories and language, Montaigne introduces a new moral possibility and a new standard of moral perfection. Virtue is not inclination, but rather involves the struggle and difficulty of mastering passions/appetites. Montaigne's model involves innocence/goodness/integrity rather than the Aristotelian model of moral weakness/moral strength/moral virtue. Moral weakness appears as innocence, rather than moral failure. The essay concludes with a helpful summary of how this vision corrects classic virtue with a Christian approach, opening toward the theological virtues. Missing, however, is any reference to Stoic authorities who might have played an influential role in Montaigne's understanding of moral development and character.

In "Descartes's Feeble Spirits," John C. McCarthy notes that there is no evidence that Descartes ever took *akrasia* seriously (185). In the *Discourse on*

Method, weak or feeble spirits serve as a foil for the Cartesian philosopher; they never rise to the level of incontinence. Weak spirits err insofar as they require more certainty than the subject allows. However, in the *Passions of the Soul* a more genuine problem emerges: what does it mean to judge or act against the will when clear, distinct knowledge is unavailable? Because the passions make an unreliable claim to truth, to be weak in spirit is to be a weak soul. The soul's proper weapons involve resolve, and the closest approximation to the experience of *akrasia* appears in the battle between the will and the passions.

Like Descartes, Kant never gave *akrasia* a thorough treatment. Thomas E. Hill, Jr. in "Kant on Weakness of Will," offers an overall explanation of Kant's moral theory, showing where the concept of a weak will would fit. Once he has rejected earlier historical approaches and reacted against his predecessors Hobbes and Hume, Kant defends the will as an active power of the mind, not an inner desire or event. To this extent, the phenomenon of the weak will does not fall within the same set of contours as it did for earlier thinkers. Nevertheless, weakness of will does reveal itself in a twofold manner: either as too vague to accomplish what it desires or as half-hearted in its attempt to achieve what it intends. In each case, the weak will is not a will overpowered by passion; it is a will that fails to achieve its end.

Nietzsche locates the weak will in the question of identity: the weak willed person has no authentic self at all. Rationality is of no use here. Indeed, reason can be identified as the culprit. Tracy B. Strong's "Nietzsche, the Will to Power and the Weak Will" illustrates the radical transformation of attitude toward the weak will in modernity. The weak-willed person is too rational, according to Nietzsche, and chooses "ought" over "must," giving in to conventional morality rather than expressing an inner, dynamic self.

Alfred R. Mele's "A Libertarian View of Akratic Action" brings the topic into the present. Mele engages in an exercise that considers the question from an "event causal libertarian" approach (rejecting both noncausal and agent causal variants for the purposes of his study). *Akratic* action is defined as action counter to conscious belief and the question for the libertarian approach is: "can such actions be free?" The exercise ends with a broadening of the frame to include the agent's past, and suggests that issues of character have to be taken into account for an appropriate solution to the question.

Alasdair MacIntyre's excellent concluding essay, "Conflicts of Desire," raises questions about the assumptions that have grounded the development of this philosophical issue: actions according to character need no explanation; only those out of character do. We are naturally conflicted, yet the "normal self with occasional lapses" appears today as a socially important fiction. Should we be focused on weakness of will or on the strength of our desires? MacIntyre rejects the notion of character that informs the current discussion and hold that "sometimes rationality requires that we live on the edge of practical and theoretical inconsistency" (284). At the close of the volume, such an essay moves the entire study from an historical tracing of ideas about weakness of will to a more engaging critique of the foundations for contemporary moral discussion.

This is an important volume that expands our understanding of Western philosophers and their relationship to the Aristotelian and Christian traditions. Of particular historical interest are those essays that take a creative approach to familiar figures (Plato, Augustine, Plotinus, and Descartes), those that offer new critical insights into key thinkers (Aristotle, Henry of Ghent, Montaigne) and those whose discussion enhances the topic under consideration (Dante, Aquinas, Kant, and Nietzsche).

The two final essays, both offering contemporary perspectives, are certainly welcome contributions; they move the volume beyond the trajectory of a purely historical study. The volume would have been even more interesting had there been essays representing Eastern, Jewish, or Islamic philosophical approaches to this aspect of human experience. And, while the volume itself may not exhaust the subject in the sense that it offers any type of solution to the phenomenon of the weak will (as MacIntyre argues, there may not be one), it does expand and enhance our understanding of and appreciation for individual philosophers and for the rich legacy of reflection on a topic of enduring interest.

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The Lamb of God. By SERGIUS BULGAKOV. Translated by BORIS JAKIM. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008. Pp. 472. $34.00 (paper). ISBN 978-0-8028-2779-1.

This translation of *Agnets Bozhyi*, first published in 1933, is the first volume of the "great trilogy," *On the Divine Humanity* (the second volume deals with the Holy Spirit and the third with the Church and the Last Things). It contains Bulgakov's Christology, and so is essential to understanding the controversy over his sophiological reconstruction of Christian doctrine. After the long triumph of the neo-patristic movement spearheaded by Georges Florovsky, moreover, it is essential for understanding today's renewed current of sophiological theology in Orthodox circles and beyond. In the life of the spirit, after all, resurrection always follows death.

The book is introduced by a long (ninety pages) historical essay on patristic and conciliar Christology, from Apollinarius of Laodicea to Constantinople III. There follow five chapters, the first on the divine Sophia, the second on creaturely sophia, the third on the constitution of Christ, the fourth on the kenosis of Christ, and the last on the work of Christ. (I will return to the introduction.) The first chapter is perforce Trinitarian, and declares the relation of the uncreated Sophia to the divine persons. The divine Sophia is God as

manifested to himself; it is the content of the life of God, and contains the intelligibility of the All, united in a One—it is the All-Unity. What Bulgakov is reacting to and trying to correct is an abstract view of the essence of God, a view in which there are only "attributes" of God, a view in virtue of which the persons will be thought to act capriciously according to some Enlightenment notion of freedom. It is in this chapter that we find some of the formulations that caused V. Lossky to accuse Bulgakov of confusing the persons and the nature. God, for Bulgakov, is "one tri-hypostatic Person." This sounds bad, until we realize that "person" here means subjectivity, and that Bulgakov is saying there is one tri-hypostatic consciousness or subjectivity in God. It is also in this chapter that the relations of the person are conceived very much in the terms of the economy. Thus, the procession of the Son is the self-emptying or kenosis of the Father. There is an inner-Trinitarian sacrifice already before the foundation of the world. Those who have read Balthasar will have already made up their minds about the virtues and vices of proceeding in this way, but it is helpful to see it developed in another theology of comparable ambition and scope.

It is not until the second chapter that Bulgakov begins to realize the systematic potential of his sophiology. Creaturely sophia is the expression of the divine Sophia; the world is the expression of the interior content of the life of God, in which the All-Unity becomes multiplied into the many creatures and their manifold relations to one another. Among these creatures, preeminently, is man, the microcosm of the world and therefore especially to be counted as the created image of the divine Sophia. Bulgakov is saving the created order from being thought of as an arbitrary result of a nominalistically understood divine power. No, to recall Augustine, things are made in order and number and weight. God does not *choose* natures, tailor them and construct them at will so much as render a part of his own eternal intelligibility temporal and really distinct from himself. This makes one cause with the Christian neo-Platonism of Augustine and Aquinas. Wisdom, so to speak, is prior to power. This is important today in vindicating the nonviolent metaphysics of Christianity over against the various contemporary materialisms of anguish and despair.

Also in this chapter, however, we glimpse the tightness and comprehensiveness of Bulgakov's systematic ambitions. First, God must create; although God is beyond the opposition of freedom and necessity, still, it cannot be that he does not create, and that he does not aspire to a love that is love of what is other, and that he does not love what he creates as he loves himself. This is to say, therefore and second, that he must deify the creation. Third, given sin, God must redeem us in order thence to deify his creation. Fourth, God must become man, even independently of our need for redemption. From the anthropological side, man aspires by his nature to deification and Christology is the supreme form of anthropology. Last, God takes responsibility for fragile and weak humanity, for the Fall and for sin in general, since these are "consequences" of the creation of the world.

But now for the Christology proper. We turn first to the introductory historical essay, which helps us not only to focus Bulgakov's Christological

intention but to anticipate how he will fulfill it. As to the fulfillment, his appreciation of Apollinarius and sympathy for Nestorius prepare us for a Christology that will recapitulate elements of both "Alexandria" and "Antioch." The intention itself is revealed in his judgment that the conciliar achievement is strictly dogmatic but by no means theological. That is, Apollinarius's question, posing "the problem of the unity of the God-Man as composed of two natures," was answered dogmatically, which is to say negatively, but it was never answered positively and theologically. Chalcedon leaves us only with the four exclusions whereby the two natures of one and the same Christ are said to subsist without change and without confusion, without division and without separation. Positive Christology, on the contrary, consists for Bulgakov in showing the suitabilities of the Incarnation: the fittingness of the relation of human nature to the Logos that appropriates and hypostatizes it and the ordination of the natures, divine and human, to one another.

Chapter 3 enlists the sophiology of the first two chapters to provide the positive statement of these suitabilities within a Christology that is structurally Apollinarian. For Bulgakov, the human being is composed of body, rational soul, and hypostatizing spirit. Since the soul of man is itself already the seat of the created-uncreated hypostastatizing human spirit, the Incarnation is possible—which is to say that human nature is possibly the seat of the absolutely uncreated hypostatizing Logos. Also, the Incarnation is seen to be *conveniens* in that the Logos is to uncreated Sophia as a human hypostasis is to human sophia. Human nature is therefore suited to the Logos and the Logos to human nature. The Logos, moreover, can be said to be already in a certain way the "divine man," since the Logos is directly the hypostasis of Sophia (by contrast to the other divine persons) and is therefore the divine person suitable for Incarnation. It is because the Logos takes the place of the human-divine-hypostatizing spirit that Bulgakov concludes that Christology is the extreme form of anthropology: in Christ, "man for the first time realizes the entire fullness of his essence." Further, the natures of Christ are suitable one to the other because of their common sophianicity (for beautiful ideas let there be beautiful words). Sophia, as it were, mediates the divine and human natures in Christ and is their common term in that man is the microcosm of world, the world in which the Logos inscribes the creaturely sophia, image of the divine Sophia.

If chapter 3 is Apollinarian in inspiration, chapter 4 is beholden to Bulgakov's appreciation of Nestorius, in that, again and again, the natures are spoken of as if they were agents, as themselves principles of action and consciousness. Here Bulgakov takes up the topics of the kenosis of the Logos, the communication of idioms, and Christ's theandric action and consciousness. Kenosis is read off not only from Philippians 2 but is deduced from Chalcedon. Chalcedon forbids us to think of the natures as changing, yet requires us to hold them inseparable. They can be inseparable, however, only if there be some common measure between them. There can be some common measure between them only if the glorious mode or state of the divine nature is put aside. Once again, sophiology provides the key to this lock: the divine nature is not changed, but its self-

manifestation as Sophia, its mode of glory, is laid aside. This seems to be a distinction between what is manifested and its manifestation and therefore one need not rush to judgment in defense of the divine simplicity, though, to be sure, some of Bulgkov's formulations make us think of a real distinction. Strictly, the kenosis of the divine nature is a putting aside only of the divine glory. On the other hand, kenosis is supposed to be an act not identical with the Incarnation but in some way prior to it.

The last chapter takes up the work of Christ under the heads of Christ the Prophet, Priest, and King. The sophianic character of the union of the natures makes of Christ the universal man, and this plays a key role in how Bulgakov explains the universal effect of Christ's work under all three aspects. His reflections on the universality of Christ as man are arresting and contain many flashes of brilliance, as when Christ is presented as the one in whom all men are to recognize themselves. Brilliant, too, is the appreciation of Mary and her completion of the sophianizing of the human nature to be assumed by the Word, a completion of a process begun in Zion and presided over by the Holy Spirit throughout the course of the Old Testament. Stunning, too, is the apprehension of the Transfiguration as a sort of ordination unto high priestly work of Calvary, as is that of the buried body of Christ as the "absolute relic." Attention to the liturgy and the Eucharist in triangulating doctrine is constant.

Reading Bulgakov is like reading Balthasar, in that there are many turns of phrase that one hopes are metaphorical and not formal. This is so especially in the soteriology, as to the suffering of God, the wrath of the Father, the punishment for sin that is born by the Son. Calling sin a "consequence" of the act of creation (see above) is also worrisome. As to Bulgakov's Christology proper, readers may have most trouble with his understanding of kenosis. Why does he understand it as something that must happen, as it were, to the divine nature prior to the assumption of the human nature? It is, I think, because his is a Christology where the principle of the union is the natures, not the hypostasis, notwithstanding the structural similarity of his thought to Apollinarius. Evidence for this is to be found (1) in his dismissal of St. Cyril of Alexandria as confused and incoherent, (2) his complete failure to reckon with Constantinople II, and (3) his understanding of the communication of idioms as meaning that divine things are said of the human *nature* (not the man) and human things said of the divine *nature* (not the Son of God). In addition to thinking about the position of St. Cyril, a reader will therefore also want to ask whether the conciliar achievement is purely negative, whether there is not indeed a positive contribution in the distinction of hypostasis and nature of which Bulgakov, like so many in the twentieth century, did not take sufficient advantage.

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Le mystère de l'être: L'itinéraire thomiste de Guérard des Lauriers. Préface de SERGE-THOMAS BONINO, O.P. By LOUIS-MARIE DE BLIGNIÈRES. Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2008. Pp. 454. 48 € (paper). ISBN 987-2-7116-1965-8.

This book is the first monograph on the thought of French Dominican Louis-Bertrand Guérard des Lauriers (1898-1988). Although he vigorously took part in the philosophical and theological debates of the 1950s and 1960s, his name has became almost exclusively connected with the "Cassiciacum Thesis," an idea he developed in the 1970s which has come to be called Sedeprivationism. It is therefore laudatory that author Louis-Marie de Blignières, founder and prior of the Fraternity of St. Vincent Ferrer (France), has chosen to direct the reader to the philosophical rigor and systematic insight with which Guérard des Lauriers discusses a pivotal question in contemporary Thomistic metaphysics: the discovery of the subject of metaphysics and the apprehension of being. (For a recent contribution to this debate see R. McInerny's *Praeambula Fidei: Thomism and the God of the Philosophers.*) De Blignières's study intends to do three things. First, it gives an exposition of Guérard des Lauriers's thought which, in its mature form, is contained in a single dense and concise manuscript. Second, it examines to what extent the "synthesis" of Guérard des Lauriers is rooted in Aquinas's works, whether explicitly, implicitly, or virtually. For this reason the book offers three appendices (323-424) containing a chronologically and thematically ordered list and French translation of all the places in the *corpus Thomisticum* containing *ratio entis, natura entis, actus entis,* and their variations. Third, it aims at a systematic elaboration of Guérard des Lauriers's thought with the help of the insights of contemporary scholars, among whom the author mentions explicitly Tomas Tyn, Jan Aertsen, Pierre-Ceslaus Courtès, and Leo Elders.

The central feature of Guérard des Lauriers's thought lies in his development of an approach towards the *ratio entis* with respect to a threefold division of the mind (*mens*). The main part of the book is therefore divided into two parts: part 1 (43-135; chaps. 1-2) contains the psychological analysis and metaphysical foundation of the threefold division of the mind while part 2 (139-315; chaps. 3-5) discusses in depth the three approaches towards the *ratio entis.* Two of three functions of the human mind are well known and correspond to what traditionally is indicated by the terms *ratio* and *intellectus.* Guérard des Lauriers however finds in the intellectual life of thinkers from various disciplines—here he mentions, among others, Maritain, Einstein, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Poincaré, Bergson—a third component of the mind which he calls "pneumatism." This component manifests itself in "the spontaneous inclination to ask 'why'" (57) and is more intimate than reason or intelligence for it orders the rhythm of the life of the mind. Although it operates secretly for most, it exists in every human being and reaches its summit in the genius, whether he is a poet, a scientist, or an artist. At this point Guérard des Lauriers develops a psychological analysis of the stages of the act of discovery, particularly within

mathematics, which enables him to list the following features of "pneumatic knowledge": a "negative choice" which directs the mind away from insignificant hypotheses, a "special esthetic sensibility" for perceiving harmony, and "positive intuition" or intuitive anticipation of the known object which shows the hidden leitmotiv: the connaturality of the mind with being.

Chapter 2 examines the roots of this pneumatic knowledge within the nature of the mind. The central theme here is the communicability of being (*mens capax entis*). Guérard des Lauriers proposes, next to the real actualization of this communicability which is the object of Thomistic epistemology, a "virtual actualization" which anticipates the direct apprehension of the proper object of human knowledge. While through direct apprehension the mind is entirely centered on the object and apprehends the form of things, the "pneumatic" or confused apprehension is a reaction by the subject to the presence of the object and apprehends the "form of the intellect." The confused apprehension "expresses and includes partially an activity of the mind which is not yet measured by the object" (105). De Blignières illustrates this reasoning with testimonies regarding the nature of artistic and scientific discoveries. According to Guérard des Lauriers, the activity of discovery, as manifested by the case of induction, shows that there is an ontological "plus" in the formulation of the hypothesis compared to the initial facts. He compares this active element of induction with an aesthetic sensibility, on the grounds that both point to a harmony between mind and being. At this point De Blignières develops Guérard des Lauriers's argument with respect to the beautiful as "an antenna of being" (107). With respect to this much-debated aspect of Thomistic metaphysics, De Blignières argues that beauty is neither reducible to truth or goodness nor a mixture of both, but rather is *ens ut communicans* (123), that is, "the splendor of the act which communicates itself to the thing according to the measure of the intelligibility of the form" (125). These pages contain an intriguing development and correction of Aertsen's argument on the place of beauty and its order within the transcendentals.

Chapter 3—the beginning of the second part—introduces the reader to the central subject of the book: the threefold approach toward the *ratio entis*. Guérard des Lauriers's intention is nothing less than to coordinate the three types of approaches in twentieth-century Thomism: "the rational approach of classical Thomism (analogy), the noetical approach which Maritain has started anew and the pneumatic approach (Geiger, Gilson) which is characterized by the importance attached to the judgment of separation and to participation" (142). By way of introduction to the rich content of these three chapters, we can use the spatial and musical metaphors by which the author throughout the book describes these three approaches. The rational approach, which starts from our "primordial contact" (147-52) with being and discovers the analogical nature of being, follows the movement of a straight line. "The analogy is the staff on which beings play the universal symphony of being and the key is the first contact with being" (140). The noetic approach resembles a composed, spiral movement and discovers through resolution the theme of the symphony: *esse* is

separable from being but in virtue of the same mode according to which *esse* is immanent in being. The pneumatic or sapiential approach starts from this "mysterious mixture of transcendence and immanence" (261) and follows a circular movement, uncovering the score of the symphony which has two movements: *ens*, by way of *esse*, shows its Source, and God shows the being of beings.

Acknowledging with Aquinas (*In Boeth. de Trin.*, q. 6, a. 2, ad 5) that in metaphysics images are only useful as starting points (263), De Blignières analyzes in chapter 3 (143-208) Guérard des Lauriers's three stages of the rational approach: formation of the first concepts of being, predicamental modes of being, and internal differentiation of being on the basis of the relations act-potency and one-many. This leads to the conclusion that in the unique case of *esse*, the two types of analogy mutually imply each other (207). One of the particular merits of De Blignières's exposition is the combination of these three stages with the derivation of the transcendentals, thereby integrating the approaches of Aertsen and John Wippel.

Chapter 4 (209-68) is entirely devoted to the vexed question of the starting point of metaphysics. Guérard des Lauriers argues for the textual and systematic limits of both the traditional approach (third degree of abstraction) and the twentieth-century approach exemplified by Geiger (judgment of separation) and proposes as a middle way the inseparability of the judicative and quidditative approaches. Although this proposal contains similarities to the works of such authors as Maritain, Wippel, and Elders, as De Blignières notes, the novelty of Guérard des Lauriers lies in his extensive argument regarding the way these two approaches can be combined. In these speculative pages (248-68), the reader will profit greatly from the extensive citations of Guérard des Lauriers's unedited manuscript.

Chapter 5 (269-317) applies the results of chapters 3 and 4 to the question of the *ratio entis*, both with respect to the distinction between essence and *esse* and with respect to the relation between participation and causality. Guérard des Lauriers defends the position that both the distinction between essence and *esse* and the participated nature of being on the vertical level presuppose the existence of God in order to be rigorously demonstrated. The sapiential approach takes the way of causality, relying on the distinction between the *per se* and the *per aliud*, which is at the heart of each of the five ways. The question as to the why of the *ratio entis* receives an answer in the observation that a being is not *per se* according to its *esse* (291). This leaves open the question as to how the *ens per se* is reached by the demonstration of God's existence. For we know that "God is" is true without knowing the being of God itself. It is here that Guérard des Lauriers points to the importance of *ens ut verum* as a relation in order to throw light on the relation between effect and cause. Finally, the analysis of created being benefits from the recognition that created being depends on God, not only in terms of participation (301-8)—a point also stressed by Elders, Tyn, and Wippel, among others—but also in terms of the three components of being (*ens*). For according to Guérard des Lauriers even

Thomists have too often neglected the supposit or individual subject as the third element, next to *esse* and essence. Particularly interesting is Guérard des Lauriers's argument that whatever belongs in God *ad rationem vel subsistentis, vel essentiae, vel ipsius esse* (*ScG* IV, cc. 11, 13) reflects itself in a participated way in the distinction between supposit, essence, and the act of being in created beings (308-15).

I hope to have given the reader a glimpse of this complex but intriguing and engaging study which makes a forceful case for a return of a classical metaphysics within (French) Thomism. Father de Blignières deserves our gratitude for recovering, through the lens of Fr. Guérard des Lauriers, an important part of twentieth-century Thomism. Equally impressive is his knowledge of a large number of contemporary Thomists (of which I have mentioned only a few) which enables him successfully to show the ability of Guérard des Lauriers's thought to integrate these newer perspectives.

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Dante's Hermeneutics of Salvation: Passages to Freedom in the "Divine Comedy." By CHRISTINE O'CONNELL BAUR. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007. Pp. 327. $55.00 (cloth). ISBN 978-0-8020-9206-9.

A decade ago, in *Dante's Interpretive Journey* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), William Franke observed, "Professional Dante criticism sometimes has a tendency to avoid or bracket the unanswerable, ultimate, philosophical, and theological questions that are nevertheless cause for perennial wonderment on the part of the readers of the poem. . . . That the project of the *Commedia* is to reveal theological truth may be said to be fairly widely accepted even among specialists. . . . Nevertheless, we as critics are content on the whole to leave Dante's theological affirmations opaque, treating them as natural enough for someone of Dante's time and temperament, but not seriously allowing that they could have any claim upon us in reading his poem today" (181-83). Franke is pointing to a paradox of contemporary Dante reception: the *Comedy* has ever more readers, ever fewer of whom are equipped to make any sense of, much less accept, the profound medieval and Catholic understanding of man and the world, and the claims to prophetic truth or revelation, that form the very motivation and substance of the poem. If we ignore all that—philosophy, theology, God, Catholic belief and morality, afterlife, providential view of history, salvation and damnation, the call to conversion—aren't we missing the whole point of the poem, its challenge to us?

Those who seek to engage the *Comedy*'s challenge, its moral-existential claim on the reader, can either try to make Dante's philosophical-theological understanding live again and matter for the modern reader (including Catholics), or else they can attempt to translate that challenge into terms more familiar or palatable to our own time, in particular into the language of psychology or of movements in contemporary philosophy. In *The Metaphysics of Dante's Comedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), I pursued the first path; in *Dante's Interpretive Journey*, William Franke pursued the second. Franke read the *Comedy* through the lens of the existential-ontological hermeneutic philosophy of Heidegger and Gadamer, to see how the text and the philosophy could illuminate each other.

A decade later, Christine Baur's book takes up precisely the same project. The essential principles, and the outlines of much of the analysis, were already laid out by Franke, a fact that Baur, despite her frequent citations from Franke, perhaps does not sufficiently acknowledge. Franke's book is philosophically more penetrating than Baur's, and it analyzes the hermeneutic philosophical method in relation to the *Comedy* with greater objectivity and critical sophistication. But Baur develops the outline of Franke's analysis in much greater (sometimes repetitive) detail, and extends it to passages and questions not treated by Franke. Her book is carefully structured, with an almost Scholastic articulation of argument, and her analysis is lucid, precise, exhaustive, and often strikingly perceptive.

Baur begins by arguing "that Dante belongs to a hermeneutic tradition, extending (at least) from Augustine to Hans-Georg Gadamer" (16), for which the subject and object of knowledge are constituted together in the act of interpretation. In this tradition, language, as the mediator of beings and Being, "*is* the means to God," salvation is a matter "of learning how to interpret, how to read" (22). "Narrative for Augustine and Dante symbolizes a kind of interpretive journeying through space and time, recapitulating the events of one's life in order to disclose their meaning as part of a larger whole" (ibid.). Meaning, says Baur, is always meaning *for* someone in time and history, as for the pilgrim of the poem and his counterpart the reader. Baur reminds us that Dante did not need to introduce into his narrative the distinction between the pilgrim undergoing the journey and the poet who is now struggling to recall it and recount it: he could have presented the journey as a poetic fiction, or else have recounted it in the present tense. Dante introduces the duality between pilgrim and poet because "the very meaning of his vision in the afterlife is bound up with the process by which such a vision is achieved and articulated" (26). Narrative is therefore not a problem to be overcome in representing conversion and salvation; it is an enactment of the solution (29).

Baur's argument is that Dante is not attempting (and failing) to "represent something 'in itself'"; rather, he is recounting the evolution of his own self-interpretation, which is simultaneously "an interpretation of the world within which he finds himself" (33). The pilgrim's journey through the three realms of the afterlife charts the evolution of his understanding of himself and the world.

To be in hell, says Baur, is to be unable to see any possibility within oneself to be other than one is. It is to experience oneself as not free, as determined by external forces, seeing only the literal present reality, with no sense of how one's interpretation of the world partly constitutes what the world is. It is, in short, to live without hope. (Baur makes the incisive point that the inscription on the gate of hell [*Inferno* 3.9] means not only "Give up hope when you enter here" but also implies that one enters by giving up hope.) To enter purgatory, Baur continues, is to discover one's own freedom, to believe oneself to be free to determine (interpret) oneself and the world, to enact possibilities implicit in one's being. To enter paradise is to experience oneself as fully free in the love of God, to interpret the world as salvific, "as saving Word" (38), to be "able to read (not write) God's book" (39). The *Comedy* seeks not simply to describe this journey, but rather to re-enact it, inviting "each reader to re-enact it for himself" (ibid.). From a literary point of view, Baur's analyses of the episodes of Francesca, Ulysses, and the Medusa as infernal failures of self-intepretation are rather sketchy, but still persuasive. (The figure of Ugolino would actually serve as the paradigm case for her argument.)

Another key point for Baur is that freedom is not freedom *from* the limited historical reality of a finite being, but freedom *within* that reality. Baur argues—it is a stimulating claim—that because for Dante (as for Heidegger) Being or the absolute is not an object, and thus not a something external to oneself, there is no God's-eye perspective: "Dante claims to give an account of the infinite never from the perspective of the infinite, but only from his own, finite perspective" (57). His account of the vision of God is an account of himself seeing God. Hence again the necessary duality of pilgrim and poet: "the poet *is* the pilgrim who has become known to himself through the narrative" (61).

Baur's controlling idea, which runs as a theme through the book, is that reading, or interpretation of self and world, fails in two opposing ways: it can be (1) "heretical, overly active" or (2) "literal, entirely passive" (68). Both are attempts to "eradicate temporality" (ibid.), the first by seeking to transcend time, place, and perspective, seeing the text as universally meaningful apart from all context, the second by seeking to recover the text as an historical object without direct relevance to the present moment, to re-enter the text's context and become one with it. Drawing on the tradition of Dante criticism, Baur terms the first tendency "Romantic" and the second "historicist" (represented by Singleton). Baur shows that the poem itself teaches us to read: Dante's Statius, in his Christian context, reinterprets the text of Virgil, applying it to himself, to discover a possible Christian salvific meaning in the text that it did not have for Virgil. Baur's point is that this is clearly not a historicist reading, in which, according to Gadamer, "we have given up the claim to find in the past any truth that is valid and intelligible for ourselves" (94). But Paolo and Francesca, reading the Lancelot romance, "failed to recognize that the text even had a context apart from their own reading of it": they have no sense of how their situation differs from that of the romance, they miss the cautionary moral point of the story, stop reading (interpreting), and "simply assimilate the text to fit their own interests"

(89). This is overly active, Romantic reading. Proper reading, says Baur, is instead a process of conversion, a continuing "free and resolute appropriation of one's past with respect to a future possibility that one projects for oneself" (104). It is a dialectic between reader and text, self-interpreter and world, past and present, parts and whole.

The second half of the book is less focused. It recapitulates the first half, applying its ideas first to an analysis of the art on the terrace of pride (*Purgatorio* 10-12), in which interpretation (conversion) is seen as a dialectic between pride and humility. Here the argument becomes slightly muddled: from a Heideggerian stance, the posited finite self aspires and moves through knowledge of itself in the world towards authenticity and an apprehension of the being of its being ("one must assert oneself [one must risk pride] in order to reach one's very telos" [150]). From a medieval stance, things look very different: it is precisely through the surrender of self that Being can become conscious of itself in us: only God can know God. The aspiration to know God is not pride; pride is to seek to know/be God without sacrificing oneself, which is the root of freedom. It is true, however, that such self-sacrifice, which is perhaps not the same as *Dasein*'s openness to "futural possibilities" (102), is anything but passive.

The argument concludes with an exhaustive review and analysis of the question of why Dante's Virgil is damned. Baur's answer is that Virgil—our alter-image when we begin reading—embodies the unevolving infernal hermeneutics that the pilgrim leaves behind. To understand why Virgil is in hell is a test of the reader's own "leap of faith" through reading: whether he has accompanied the pilgrim in his conversion to a "paradisal hermeneutic horizon" (241), committed himself "to the belief that we are free" (242).

This book certainly demonstrates the fecundity of the hermeneutic approach in showing "what Dante has to say to the reader of today" while allowing Dante "to remain medieval" (100), especially in recovering a sense for the *Comedy*'s truth claims as a claim on the reader-interpreter (the site for the disclosure of Being), in preserving the idea that "all understanding involves self-transcendence" (4), in accounting for the centrality of the concept of freedom in the *Comedy*, and in understanding narrative recapitulation as intrinsic to enacting conversion, all while simultaneously showing that Heidegger can be understood to elevate "the interpretive to the ontological," so that it becomes "genuinely illuminative/disclosive of Being" (5). The last chapter, however, also shows the limitations that perhaps Dante reveals in the hermeneutic approach, at least in the form that approach takes in this book. The result of the reader's participation in Dante's re-enactment or recapitulation of his conversion in narrative is that the reader should now engage in "paradisal hermeneutics" (173). What this means is not clear, but it involves the following: "one's world . . . and one's self should be more meaningful than before" 176); the reader's "interpretive horizon is now a disclosure made through faith, hope, and love" (174); "we will see our own finite freedom for possibilities mirrored back to us in the infinite face of God" (242); "the unchanging truth that underlies all appearances . . . will be disclosed" (176). The problem, Baur notes, is how does

one know if one's hermeneutics are now paradisal? "Evaluating whether or not this is happening is an existential task that each reader must perform on his own" (ibid.). If, as the author suggests, "Our reading of texts should aim at achieving the same insight or the same vision claimed by the authors of those texts" (4), these sentences perhaps indicate how far we are from that goal. We seem to have domesticated the transcendent, lost the hope Dante aims to communicate, reduced the stakes and made them nearly unintelligible. As I have noted, in Dante's world, "the unchanging truth that underlies all appearances" is the *subject* of all experience; if one has experienced that, the question of whether one (or who) has experienced it cannot even arise (which is precisely the ambiguity the *Comedy* creates around the vision of God in *Paradiso* 33). Dante's challenge and that of the Cross (rarely mentioned in this book)—as well as their hope—seem considerably more radical, and ultimately much simpler: *Be willing to be nothing. Only nothing can be everything.* But perhaps that is hermeneutics in a nutshell.

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