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KENOTICISM AND THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED[1]

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MODERN CHRISTOLOGY is deeply marked by a kenotic turn that transpired in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is often presumed that this development in theology is motivated, among other things, by a soteriological concern. God, in choosing to identify himself (even in his very deity) with us in our suffering, death, and separation from God, has shown an ultimate form of solidarity with us and has reconciled us to his divine life, even amidst the greatest of antithetical circumstances. In this article I will argue that there are soteriological difficulties inherent to this idea, and contrasting advantages to classical Christological understanding of the redemption.

The first part of the article presents succinctly some of the chief intellectual concerns of modern kenotic Christology and examines in light of these how it tends to treat the soteriological work of the passion of Christ. I will argue briefly that there are soteriological difficulties to which this way of thinking inevitably gives rise. The second part of the article seeks to confirm and deepen this thesis by examining Thomas Aquinas's theology of the divinity of Christ crucified. Here Aquinas is taken as a representative of the soteriology of the classical tradition. How, for Aquinas, is the divinity of Christ manifest in the Paschal mystery? First, in that Christ as man knew of his own divine identity and therefore delivered himself over freely to suffering and death for our sake;

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second, through the manifestation of the divine power of Christ during the crucifixion (the divinity of Christ is operative in and through his passion); third, in the teaching that the one who was crucified raised himself from the dead. After exploring each of these ideas, I will briefly compare them in the third part of the article with representations of the mystery of Christ present in the modern kenotic tradition. The last part of the paper reflects on particular differences and notes their repercussions, with a view to thinking about the con-temporary relevance of Aquinas's Christology. I will argue that Aquinas's thought helps us see why the deity of Christ crucified has an essential soteriological importance. His theology of the passion thereby helps us understand how the modern kenotic turn in Christology merits to be challenged or rethought in light of the classical patristic and medieval tradition.

I. Two Facets of Modern Kenotic Christology and Their Soteriological Characteristics

A) Two Facets of Modern Kenotic Christology

Modern Christology has been marked by a kenotic turn in a twofold way. First, modern attempts to rethink the divinity of Christ have been deeply affected by the influence of the Kantian critique of classical metaphysical discourse regarding God. Following Kant, modern German Protestant theology has tended to concede as a premise of dogmatic theology that human beings are naturally incapable of attaining knowledge of the divine essence or nature (at least in the ways that pre-Kantian thinkers often presumed.)[2] Consequently new questions emerge:

[2] See the analyses of Kant's effect on modern Protestant theology in Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History* (London: Judson Press, 1973), 266-312 (especially 306-8); and Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialogical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), as well as the analysis of Kant's influence on modern thought by Eberhard Jüngel in his *God as the Mystery of the World,* trans. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1983), 69-71, 129-40, 263-67, 276-80. Kant's most characteristic claims on this subject are to be found in the "Transcendental Dialectic" of the *Critique of Pure Reason,* book 2, chapter 3 (A568/B596–A794/B732).

how—epistemologically—might we even conceive of the divine nature and what characteristics might be ascribed to God in light of his historical incarnation? If God's existence and characteristics (attributes/divine names) cannot be known by way of metaphysical reasoning, then what role should or could classical ontology have in the construction of a modern Chalcedonian Christology? How, specifically, might we speak of the two natures in Christ, and particularly of the divine nature of the incarnate Son, if the very idea of the divine nature remains ultimately alien to natural human thought?

An influential answer was developed in the nineteenth century in the kenoticism of Gottfried Thomasius, who was himself influenced by the speculative thought of G. W. F. Hegel regarding divine becoming.[3] Thomasius argued that God the Son divested himself of various divine attributes (relational attributes such as 'omnipotence' or 'omniscience') for the duration of his earthly sojourn.[4] God could thus be known in our limited spatio-temporal domain as one who lived an authentically human life among us (the condition for the latter being the divestment of certain divine attributes). Yet this self-emptying does not deepen the gulf between the world and God, for God in his eternal wisdom and love is revealed to us precisely in his act of self-limitation.[5] This view was criticized and reformulated in the twentieth century by thinkers like Karl Barth and Sergius Bulgakov.[6] For them it is not

[3] On Hegel's Christology see James Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel* (Albany and London: State University of New York Press, 1983).

[4] Gottfried Thomasius, *Christi Person und Werk,* 3d ed., in 2 volumes (Erlangen: A. Deichert, 1886-88). On the self-emptying of "relational" divine attributes, see ibid., 1:608. Thomasius's views are presented in the English translation of his work by Claude Welch, *God and Incarnation in Mid-Nineteenth Century German Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 64-74. An excellent analysis of the development of modern kenotic Christology is given by Wolfhart Pannenberg in his *Jesus God and Man,* trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 307-23.

[5] Thomasius, *Christi Person und Werk,* 1:412.

[6] For Barth's treatment of Thomasius, see *Church Dogmatics* 4/1, trans. G. W. Bromiley (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2003), 180-82. After criticizing Thomasius, Barth goes on to develop his own concept of kenoticism (ibid., 182-210). See on this Bruce L. McCormack, "Karl Barth's Christology as a Resource for a Reformed Version of Kenoticism," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8 (2006): 243-51. For Bulgakov's interpretations of kenosis in light of Thomasius, see *The Lamb of God,* trans. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 219-47; and the analysis by Paul Gavrilyuk, "The Kenotic Theology

the case that God divests himself of his deity in becoming man, but rather that the human vulnerability of God in Christ is an expression of the divine essence. God in his personal being as Son is free to identify with us in our suffering and lowliness, as an expression of his very deity as love.[7] This view in turn influenced (in complex, historically varied ways) the thinking of Pannenberg, Balthasar, Jüngel, Kasper, and others.[8] All of these thinkers affirm the presence of the divine nature in the historical Son incarnate. Yet God the Son in his human life need not reveal his divinity as something transcendent of or in distinction from his human characteristics in order for us to know that he is truly God. Rather the human characteristics of finitude, obedience, suffering, and so on are indicative of what God is in his personal mode of being as the Son, and the Son's incarnation has itself revealed to us in new ways the latent capacity for historicization of the divine nature.[9] Human thought, to find God, then, need not surmount the horizon of human sensible and historical experiences. Rather, the transcendent God who evades our natural knowledge has made known to us who he really is (in his very deity) precisely in and

of Sergius Bulgakov," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58 (2005): 251-69.

[7] See, for example, the clear statements of Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 4/1:185, 193; Bulgakov, *Lamb of God,* 223.

[8] Noting the importance of Barth's kenotic theory, Pannenberg pursues a variant of this idea in *Jesus God and Man,* 307-23, and develops a later position in his *Systematic Theology,* vol. 2, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapid, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994), 375-79. This idea is programmatic in the thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday, though it takes on a different expression in his early work, *Mysterium Paschale,* trans. Aidan Nichols, O.P., (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), than in the later prototypical presentation of *Theo-drama* 4, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 317-51. Jüngel pursues the idea thematically in *God as the Mystery of the World,* 299-396. Walter Kasper adopts a qualified version of kenotic theology in *Jesus the Christ,* trans. V. Green (London: Burns & Oates, 1976), 181-85; and *The God of Jesus Christ,* trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 189-97.

[9] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology,* 2:377: "By distinguishing the Father from himself as the one God, the Son certainly moved out of the unity of the deity and became man. But in so doing he actively expressed his divine essence as the Son. The self-emptying of the Preexistent is not a surrender or negation of his deity as the Son. It is its activation. Hence the end of his earthly path in obedience to the Father is the revelation of his deity." Pannenberg here references Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 4/1:129ff.; 177ff.; 179ff.

through his sensible and historical forms of being.[10] The continuity between the heights of the divine identity of God and his human lowliness is guaranteed by a concept of kenosis, a kenosis originating from within the divine freedom and love that constitute the divine essence. Free self-emptying on the part of God is the condition so that we might discover who God is within our creaturely sphere. In his love God is free to be both supreme and lowly, both impassible and suffering, both eternal and temporal, and so on.[11] The wedding between these seeming contraries is guaranteed by God's freedom to diversify his attributes.[12] The free self-emptying of God incarnate in Christ takes place because of love, and reveals that love to man in human historical terms, particularly in and through the Paschal mystery.

The second feature of modern kenoticism pertains not to Christ's divine nature, but to his human knowledge. The nineteenth-century post-Enlightenment critique of the Gospels as historical sources led to the prevalent acceptance of two ideas. First, the four Gospels cannot be presumed to be accurate portrayals of the sayings and aims of the historical Jesus free from any post-Paschal theological reconstruction of the early Christian community. Therefore Jesus' explicit claims in the Gospels to a high knowledge of himself as Son need not be considered historical.[13] Second, the aims and intentions of the historical Jesus of Nazareth must be understood in some sense by attempting to situate him within the limited horizon of his cultural-historical context. Initial history-of-Jesus portraits thus gave way eventually (particularly in the work of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer)

[10] See the clear expression of the concept by Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World,* 299-314.

[11] Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ,* 194-95. The view is expressed more radically by Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God,* 221-23, 231-32.

[12] See the analysis of this 'di-polar' idea of God in modern kenotic Christology in Gilles Emery, O.P., "The Immutability of the God of Love and the Problem of Language Concerning the 'Suffering of God,'" in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering,* ed. James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White, O.P. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 27-76.

[13] The idea originates prominently with Gotthold Lessing, with origins in the naturalism of Spinoza and the English deists. See the study of the historical origins of the idea by Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 447-76.

to the idea of the historical Jesus as an early-first-century self-designated eschatological prophet.[14]

Under the pressures of this twofold tendency of thought modern kenoticism sought a middle way between classical orthodoxy and modern skepticism. One need not presume (in the face of modern historical-critical thought) that God became man in such a way as to maintain an extraordinary human historical consciousness of his divinity (such as that which is presented in the Gospel of John). The historical Jesus need not have had a prophetic knowledge of his own identity and of his impending death. On the contrary, consistent with the metaphysics of kenosis, the Son could cede any such supernatural awareness of his unique dignity, and precisely in doing so could reveal ever more deeply the mystery of his identity as God. For God has shown his solidarity with us precisely in adopting a typically human experience of historical life and consciousness. This is a view we find, again, clearly expressed in Thomasius, but taken up subsequently by thinkers such as Bulgakov, Pannenberg, Jüngel, and Kasper.[15] The historical Jesus could be understood within his historical context as a Jewish prophetic figure animated by hope of an imminent apocalypse. His relative nescience and even his disappointed cry of dereliction ("My God, why have you abandoned me?" [Mark 15:34; Matt 27:46]) all indicate here not a disjuncture between the claims of the Church and the claims of modern history, but rather a discovery of the continuity between the two.[16] Theological study of the gospel informed by the concerns of modern historiography leads us to a deeper understanding of the unique revelation of the love of God who freely unveils himself in the historical limitations and lowliness of man. Even more, such limitations reveal the inner life of God, who

[14] Johannes Weiss, *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892); Albert Schweitzer, *Geschichte der leben-Jesu-forschung* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1913).

[15] Thomasius, *Christi Person und Werk,* 1:465ff. Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, 232-37; Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology,* 2:375-77; Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World,* 343-47; Kasper, *Jesus the Christ,* 115-19, 163-68.

[16] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology,* 2:375: "This obedience [of Christ] led him into the situation of extreme separation from God and his immortality, in the dereliction of the cross. The remoteness from God on the cross was the climax of his self-distinction from the Father."

can "come to be" and thus manifest his very self (deity) in the event of human suffering, obedience and death.[17] The limi-tations of the historical consciousness of Christ as man are the occasion for God to be in his very essence "God with us."

B) Two Points of Contrast with Classical Christology

Any student of the history of doctrine regarding the person of Jesus Christ cannot fail to be struck by a singular contrast between this modern development and the classical patristic and medieval patrimony of the Catholic faith. Ways of articulating the differences are multiple. Certainly there are the outstanding issues raised by the classical treatments of the attributes of the divine nature of Christ (divine simplicity, eternity, immutability, etc.). There is also the question of the classical treatment of the qualities of Christ's human knowledge. Against Arius, for example, the fourth-century patristic tradition formulated an understanding of the Incarnation that was to remain fundamentally normative in the subsequent tradition up until modern times. Christ is God the eternal Word and as God he is eternally begotten of the Father before all creation in an ineffable, transcendent way that excludes all ontological subordination.[18] Being one with the Father, he cedes none of his divine prerogatives in becoming man, yet is truly begotten of the Virgin Mary as a human being born in time.[19] The incarnate Word therefore truly lives, suffers, and dies in his human

[17] Bulgakov, *Lamb of God,* 232: "The *historical* Golgotha was only a *consequence* of the metaphysical one. The metaphysical Golgotha made the historical one possible and real." The idea is discussed thematically in a different way by Balthasar in his concept of Trinitarian inversion. See *Theo-drama* 3, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 515-23.

[18] Athanasius, *Contra Arian.* 1.15-16, 28; Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunom.* 2.7; 4.1; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orat.* 29 and 30.

[19] Athanasius, *Contra Arian.* 1.39-40: "For he is offspring of the Father's essence, so that one cannot doubt that after the resemblance of the unalterable Father, the Word also is unalterable. . . . .He was not from a lower state promoted; but rather, existing as God, he took the form of a servant, and in taking it, was not promoted but humbled himself" (John Henry Newman, trans., *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters,* Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series [repr.: Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994], 329.

nature, even while he remains eternal and impassible as God.[20] Consequently the kenosis of Philippians 2:6-11 refers not to a surrender of the divine prerogatives or attributes, nor to a diremption of God's being into what God formerly was not, or into what he was eternally intended to become. Rather, it refers to the condescension and love with which God—without ceasing to be the transcendent Lord—assumes a human nature and suffers as man to redeem us.[21]

This view carries over into a treatment of the human knowledge of Christ. Against Apollinarius the tradition insisted that Christ as man has a true human soul (implying knowledge and will), and against Arius it insisted that this knowledge can be limited (humanly) without there being any compromise of the divine nature of Christ as God.[22] This means, however, that the distinction of natures implies as well a distinction of forms of knowledge. The Lord's knowledge is limited as man because he is truly human. In his Sonship, however, he remains immutably the divine Wisdom of the Father, creating and upholding all things in being.[23]

From the perspective of this tradition of thought, the modern kenotic turn is problematic for at least two reasons. First, such a view surrenders artificially a true sense of the transcendent deity of Christ and his unity with the Father, instead ushering into God a problematic conception of divine becoming and temporal

[20] See, for instance, Cyril of Alexandria, *De Symbolo* 24; *Ad Acacium* 7; *Ad Succensum* 2.4. A helpful study of Cyril on this point is offered by Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 135-71.

[21] Friedrich Loofs noted that the modern concept of a kenotic self-emptying of the deity is absent from patristic readings of Philippians 2. Rather, the kenosis of the Son is based upon his divine assumption of human nature, as an act of free divine goodness (Herzog-Hauck Realencyklopädie, 3d ed., s.v. "Kenosis" (Leipzig: J. Hinrichs, 1903), 10:246-63, esp. 248ff.) Aquinas follows this view in his *In Phil*. c. 2, lect. 2. (All references to Aquinas's biblical commentaries are based upon the Marietti editions.)

[22] Athanasius, *Contra Arian*. 3.45; *Tom. ad Antioch*. 7; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep*. 51 (to Cledonius). Irenaeus had already expressed the idea of a real but limited human knowledge in Christ in *Contra Haer.* 2.28.6-8.

[23] See the helpful presentation of the patristic and medieval development of the distinction between divine and human knowledge in Christ in Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Le Verbe Incarné* vol. 2 (Paris: Cerf, 2002), appendix 2, "La Science du Christ," 415-39.

historicization.[24] If the Son is distinguished from the Father precisely in and through the economy, does God in the distinction of Son and Father then depend upon the economy to be triune? Here we might question the underlying philosophical presuppositions. Instead of reconceiving Trinitarian ontology in light of the Kantian critique, one might take issue with various of that critique's prohibitions as premature and artificial. Perhaps it is necessary to speak of an ontology of the divine names (of classical attributes of the divinity) and to apply this form of thought to the consideration of the divine nature of Christ—even after the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This, at least, is the claim of the First Vatican Council (*Dei Filius*) and papal encyclicals like *Aeterni Patris* and *Fides et Ratio* (even if how best to proceed in such an endeavor continues to be a subject of controversy in modern Catholic theology).[25]

Second, regarding the human knowledge of Christ the unmitigated adoption of Enlightenment presuppositions is questionable as well. The argument seems to be that *if* the gospel portraits of the historical Jesus are subsequent theological reconstructions of the early Church (which they are) *then* the historical Christ could not have had both a first-century Jewish historical consciousness and an extraordinary prophetic and supernatural awareness of his own filial identity. Why does this follow? The claim is neither metaphysically nor historically compelling. Could the early Church not have constructed a theological account of the historical Jesus' extraordinary self-awareness, and portrayed his aims and intentions in ways that corresponded to the supernatural inspiration that he himself possessed? Such a view, as Romano Guardini pointed out long ago, is at least as, if not more, historically compelling simply to pure reason as anything that affirms the contrary.[26] Someone of extraordinary character seems to have been the inspiration behind

[24] See the arguments to this effect by Thomas Weinandy, *Does God Change?* (Petersham, Mass.: St. Bede's Press, 1985).

[25] See the contemporary presentations of Aquinas on the classical divine names by Rudi te Velde, *Aquinas on God* (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2006); Edward Feser, *Aquinas* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 62-130.

[26] Romano Guardini, *The Humanity of Christ: Contributions to a Psychology of Jesus,* trans. Ronald Walls (New York: Random House; London: Burns & Oates, 1964).

the movement that led to the composition of the Gospels. Why could the historical Jesus not have had an extraordinary, prophetically informed self-understanding?

C) Soteriological Characteristics: Classical Christology Rearticulated by Kenoticism

In addition to the speculative and historical issues that have been alluded to above, however, there is another important context for determining what is at stake in the kenoticism of modern Christology, one which presupposes the contrasting positions briefly described above, and which raises related but logically distinct issues. This is this issue of soteriology. Classically, Christological doctrines of salvation presuppose that the divinity of Christ plays an integral role in the salvation he effectuates on our behalf, by means of the Incarnation and the Paschal mystery. For Athanasius, this occurs principally by way of the union of human and divine that transpires in and because of the Incarnation. After the image of God had fallen into the slavery of sin, death, and nonbeing, God took upon himself human life so as ineradicably to reunite humanity with God.[27] The deity of Christ is essential to the mystery of salvation precisely because it bears in itself the power and authority to elevate our frail humanity to a state that transcends death, suffering and hell.[28]

Without contesting this more typically Eastern account, Western soteriology, especially after Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo,* understands the divinity of Christ as integral to the power of the atonement (*satisfactio*) offered by Christ as man. Christ substitutes his obedience and love for our injustice, lovelessness, and disobedience, so as to render us just. Only because he is an innocent man is Christ's human obedience and love redemptive

[27] Athanasius, *De Incarn*. 3-10; *Contra Arian*. 2.70. Aquinas takes up this argument in *STh* III, q. 1, a. 2; *ScG* IV, c. 54.

[28] Athanasius, *De Incarn*. 20: "We have, then, now stated . . . the reason for his bodily appearing: it was in the power of none other to turn the corruptible to incorruption, except the Savior himself, that had at the beginning also made all things out of nought: and that none other could create anew the likeness of God's image for men, save the Image of the Father; and that none other could render the mortal immortal, save our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the very Life" (Newman, trans., 46-47).

and just in our stead (as one of us who is human). Only because Christ is God are his human actions of a uniquely infinite dignity, by virtue of the Godhead united to his human action.[29]

Modern kenotic theories of atonement typically do not seek to deny the validity of these classical theories at base, but rather to modify them (albeit radically) in light of the kenotic Trinitarian metaphysics mentioned above. Typically the traditional theories are reread in two innovative and interrelated ways. First, the free kenotic movement of the divinity into history is appealed to in order to understand that God takes suffering, death, non-being, and separation from God (hell) into his own deity in order to save us.[30] The journey of the Son into the far country of our human condition is the result of a free decision by God to take up *into himself* our condition in its most abject state of distance from God in order that ultimately we might be reconciled with God in the life of the resurrection.[31] The theme of "solidarity" with us in our human state hereby is given a metaphysical tone of a decidedly unique kind, and this movement within the life of God becomes the condition not only for our knowledge of God (who reveals his

[29] Aquinas offers his own interpretations of Anselm on this point in *STh* III, q. 1, a. 2; q. 48, a. 2, corp. and ad 3. In the latter article he notes especially the irreducible role of the divinity of Christ in granting the merit of the atonement an infinite value. Responding to the objection that the human bodily suffering of Christ was of finite value, he responds (ad 3): "The dignity of Christ's flesh is not to be estimated solely from the nature of flesh, but also from the Person assuming it—namely, inasmuch as it was God's flesh, the result of which was that it was of infinite worth." All translations of the *Summa* are from the 1920 Fathers of the English Dominican Province *Summa Theologica* (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1947).

[30] The most extreme examples are found in Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World,* 343-47, 361-65; See also Bulgakov, *Lamb of God,* 257-61, 344-79; and Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 4:332-38. I will return to this topic below.

[31] Karl Barth gives this theme a famous prominence in *Church Dogmatics* 4/1, sect. 59: "[I]n this event God allows the world and humanity to take part in the history of the inner life of His Godhead, in the movement in which from and to all eternity He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and therefore the one true God. But this participation of the world in the being of God implies necessarily His participating in the being of the world, and therefore that His being, His history, is played out as world-history. . . . The self-humiliation of God in His Son would not really lead Him to us, the activity in which we see His true deity and the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ would not be genuine and actual . . . the way into the far country would not be followed, if there were any reservation in respect of His solidarity with us, of His entry into world-history" (p. 215). The idea is developed programmatically in the above cited works of Jüngel, Pannenberg and Balthasar, all in acknowledged direct dependence upon Barth.

Trinitarian life to us through this kenosis) but also for our "divinization" or union with God in something like the classical Athanasian sense of the term.[32]

Second, then, the kenosis of Christ's human understanding plays a key role in this event. The "descent" of Christ's understanding into the night of hell on the cross becomes the key juncture where he shows his solidarity with us in our separation from God. This is the place where the innocent Son of Man in his obedience to the Father takes upon himself the consequences of the sin of the world. Anselm's atonement theory is reinterpreted through Calvin as a penal substitution theory (Christ represents us as sinners, becoming a subject of divine punishment or dereliction in our stead).[33] In truth Calvin's idea is alien to and even explicitly contradicts Anselm and Aquinas on the subject of Christ's atoning justice.[34] Nevertheless, it has typically been reinterpreted within the context of a kenotic theology to suggest how or where in particular God identifies with us historically in his very deity, and thereby not only reconciles us with God but also makes restitution for all human sin. God himself takes upon himself the burden of guilt on our behalf. In his kenosis, God alone is reprobated on the cross, so that we might be deemed righteous and reconciled to him in grace.[35]

Here, however, we can raise two trenchant questions. First, is it reasonable to assume that God can save us truly and effectively if he "freely" introduces into his own deity the historical states of suffering, death, nonbeing, and separation from God? Besides the metaphysical absurdities that these views suggest, there is the

[32] See, for example, Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 4:361-67.

[33] See Calvin's development of this theme in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2.16. On the late medieval origins of penal substitution theory, see Léopold Sabourin, "Le bouc émissaire, figure du Christ?," *Sciences Ecclésiastiques* 11 (1959): 45-79

[34] See the arguments to this effect by Philippe de la Trinité, O.C.D., *What Is Redemption?* (New York: Hawthorne, 1961). Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* 1:8 contains an explicit repudiation of the notion of penal substitution. Aquinas follows this line of thinking in *STh* III, q. 47, a. 3, corp. and ad 1; *ScG* IV, c. 55.

[35] In *Church Dogmatics* 4/1, sect. 59, Barth reinterprets Calvin's theology of penal substitution, affirming the descent of Christ into hell on the cross as the reprobation unique to Christ so that all might be elect. The idea is central to Balthasar's theology (*Theo-Drama* 4:338-51). See also Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World,* 361-65; Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology,* 2:375-79.

question of the justice and soteriological purpose of such proposals. For if God saves us only at the cost of introducing into his own being the very grave ills that threaten us, then our union with God is of a questionable soteriological value, for our ills have now been introduced into the very life of God. There is ultimately, in a kenotic world, nothing that itself necessarily transcends the world of ills, insofar as these have now become a constitutive part of the being of God, or so it would seem.[36] Likewise, if God is God (in the historical becoming of his own being) only by way of his solidarity with us in a world in which evil has given rise to a number of serious ills, then God is only the triune God in and through his union with a world of evils. Does God then need evil to be himself, in and through the historical development of the Son in distinction from the Father, which would not be possible except through the kenosis?[37]

Second, we can raise the issue of the knowledge of Christ and the meaning of the atonement. Originally the atonement theory of Anselm was meant to articulate how it is that Christ as man can be authentically just before God in such a way as to repair the intrinsically disordered state of the human race as it stands before God. Christ as man brings authentic love, obedience, and justice to where it was lacking in the human race. In at least some versions of kenotic theory, however, the atonement is conceived of primarily in terms of substitution in the realms of suffering, where the substitution is forensic. Christ is deemed sin or separated from God for us, while for his sake we are deemed reconciled with God. Irrespectively of how we understand the latter concepts (our reconciliation through "extrinsic justification" vs. the doctrine of justification of the Council of Trent, etc.) the former idea is somewhat odd. If Christ as man is innocent and Christ as God is one with the Father, then his assumption of separation from God for our sake has no *intrinsic* meaning in the order of justice and no real metaphysical intelligibility. Therefore an arbitrary extrinsic imposition of a declaration of Christ as sin

[36] See the argument to this effect by David Bentley Hart, "No Shadow of Turning: On Divine Impassibility," *Pro Ecclesia* 11 (2002): 184-206.

[37] See, on this point, the insightful reflections of Bruce D. Marshall, "The Dereliction of Christ and the Impassibility of God," in Keating and White, eds., *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering,* 246-98.

for our sake by God is not only unjust but also intrinsically ontologically absurd. One can argue that in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself by himself becoming sin for our sake, thus introducing into *his* very deity the wedding of contradictories that has been mentioned above. God is free as Father to transcend suffering, while as Son he is free to take upon himself in his very deity the lowliness and obscurity of the cross event. But even if this ontology is conceded (!) it makes little sense in the order of justice because it obfuscates or even removes the key Anselmian notion: that Christ substituted his human moral innocence for our moral guilt, and in this way made restitution or satisfaction for our sins by restoring the human race to intrinsic righteousness and friendship with God.[38]

On both these points then, we can question whether modern kenotic Christologies truly stand in continuity with and maintain the truths of classical soteriology as elaborated by Athanasius and Anselm respectively. In what follows I will explore a sense of the contrast further by examining a key set of ideas about redemption in the thought of Aquinas, surely an eminent representative of the classical tradition on the issues under consideration. Aquinas presents us with a portrait of Jesus profoundly different from virtually any twentieth-century Christology. One of the most acute points of difference lies in his understanding of Christ's divinity as it is present in the event of his crucifixion, and as it is manifest though his death and resurrection. This presence has profound soteriological implications.

II. Aquinas on the Divinity of Christ in His Passion

A) Christ Delivered Himself over to Death Freely

The first teaching of Aquinas to be considered is that Christ as man knew of his own identity in his passion, and correspondingly freely embraced the mystery of the cross, delivering himself over freely to suffering and death for our sake. This theological perspective weds two distinct ideas: that Christ knew who he

[38] See Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* 1.11-25; 2.6-7; especially as interpreted by Aquinas, *STh* III, q. 48, aa. 1-4; *ScG* IV, c. 55.

himself was, and that he could freely choose whether or not to give his life. These notions should be considered distinctly and in sequence.

In speaking about Jesus' self-understanding, it is significant to begin with to note that Aquinas does not ignore the idea of a progressive development of understanding in the faith of believers, leading to a gradual enlightenment and doctrinal clarification through time.[39] On the contrary, his treatise on faith shows marked sensitivity to this phenomenon at multiple points by its use of the distinction between implicit faith and explicit faith.[40] The ancient Israelites knew certain things implicitly within faith that were subsequently rendered explicit to human knowledge, after Christ.[41] Likewise, the Apostles possessed an imperfect form of faith during the earthly life of Jesus, and only at Pentecost was the understanding of the disciples perfected.[42] Church teachings develop as what lies implicit within the original apostolic deposit of faith is rendered more explicit to us who come after the apostolic age, and is defined solemnly by councils and by the pope.[43] Individuals, likewise, can be held more or less responsible for rendering an account of what is to be believed (as *minores* or *maiores* in the faith), depending on the teaching they have received and how explicit their understanding of Christian truths has become.[44]

Yet if Aquinas is more than aware of the developmental character of human understanding of divine mysteries in general, he refrains from applying this doctrine of development to the mystery of Christ's self-awareness in particular. In his mature works (very originally, in comparison with his contemporaries) he posits the notion of a natural acquired knowledge that is proper

[39] See Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P., "The Role of the Apostles in the Communication of the Divine Revelation according to the *Lectura super Ioannem* of St. Thomas Aquinas," in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas,* ed. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 318-46.

[40] *STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 7; *In Heb*. c. 11, lect. 2.

[41] *STh* II-II, q. 2, aa. 7-8.

[42] And not after the Resurrection—where modern theologians tend to place the transformation. See *STh* II-II, q. 174, a. 6; q. 176, a. 1, ad 1; *In Eph*. c. 1, lect. 3; sermon *Emitte spiritum* (Sermon for the Feast of Pentecost).

[43] *STh* II-II, q. 1, aa. 7 and 10.

[44] *STh* II-II, q. 2, a. 6.

to the human mind of Christ.[45] Evidently, in this sense Christ is understood to have undergone a progressive natural development in his self-understanding throughout his life. Jesus as a human being has an active intellect that progresses in understanding through time, from childhood to maturity, in keeping with the ordinary developmental traits of our human nature.[46] Nevertheless, in his knowledge of supernatural mysteries (including that of his own identity as the Son of God), the Christ is not receptive of a revelation communicated by another as we are. Rather, Jesus as man is aware of divine truth in an extraordinary way because he must in turn communicate this saving truth to us. Here, Aquinas explicitly invokes a soteriological principle.[47] Salvation consists of knowledge of God by way of authentic revelation in this life, and of the reception of the beatific vision in the next. Christ is not saved by another, but is, rather, himself the unique Savior. Consequently, as the redeemer of human beings, the Son made man must in some sense already "see" the term of our process of salvation and himself have a prophetic knowledge sufficient to enlighten us as to who he is and as to the meaning of the divine economy.[48] Aquinas qualifies these affirmations carefully: Christ does not believe in the Father but "sees" the Father in an immediate filial vision. However, during his earthly life this immediate knowledge of the Father exists in such a way that Christ can still be humanly subject to ordinary natural learning and even intense intellectual and psychological suffering.[49] Likewise, Christ has infused, prophetic knowledge of the mystery of God, but his infused, prophetic knowledge is exercised in a *habitual* fashion, meaning he need not know all things actively in an extraordinary fashion. Rather, while he had the capacity to

[45] *STh* III, q. 9, a. 4; q. 12, aa. 1-4. See Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., "Le savoir acquis du Christ selon les théologiens médiévaux: Thomas d'Aquin et ses prédécesseurs," *Revue Thomiste* 101 (2001): 355-408.

[46] See Aquinas's comments on Luke 2:52 in *STh* III, q. 12, a. 2.

[47] *STh* III, q. 9, a. 2.

[48] Ibid.: "Men are brought to this end of beatitude by the humanity of Christ . . . 'the author of their salvation' (Heb. 2:10). . . . And hence it was necessary that the beatific knowledge, which consists in the vision of God, should belong to Christ pre-eminently, since the cause ought always to be more efficacious than the effect."

[49] See *STh* III, q. 14, a. 1, ad 2; q. 15, a. 5, ad 3; q. 45, a. 2; q. 46, a. 8.

know all that was necessary for his mission, he is given to know actively in a punctual fashion only those things that it is fitting for him to reveal to us, in order to facilitate our salvation.[50] This knowledge exists in and amidst his ordinary natural knowledge procured through human experience, and in the midst of a particular cultural-historical milieu that informs his mode of self-expression.

In a way consistent with these principles, Aquinas insists that the earthly Christ prior to the time of his crucifixion understood and taught explicitly of his own identity as the Son of the Father, as he who is one with the Father (that is to say, as God).[51] Jesus as man knew that he "came into the world," in the sense that he preexisted the world before the creation.[52] Simply put, Aquinas takes it as a theological given that Christ knew as man of his own divine origins, and this not by faith in the word of another, but by the immediate knowledge of vision.[53]

[50] *STh* III, q. 11, a. 5. I am purposefully choosing here to underscore selective elements of Aquinas's thought, in a sense that I take to accord best with the evidences of Scripture. Aquinas does speculate, for instance, in III, q. 12, a. 1 that Christ as man knew all things by his acquired knowledge that man can know naturally (including presumably mathematics, natural science, etc.). As Torrell has pointed out (*Le Verbe incarné,* 2:362-63) we would do best to consider that Christ as man, in his infused and acquired knowledge, knew all that he needed to know for the accomplishment of his mission as Savior.

[51] *In Ioan.* c. 17, lect. 1.

[52] *In Ioan.* c. 1, lect. 7 (Marietti ed., 176). Contemporary scholarship tends to acknowledge that the Jesus of the synoptic Gospels (and not only John's Gospel) speaks in ways that suggest a theology of pre-existence. See Simon J. Gathercole, *The Pre-existent Son* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006).

[53] This view has been upheld within Catholic doctrine by the recent magisterium. See the *Catechism of the Catholic Faith,* para. 473; and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Notification on the works of Fr. Jon Sobrino, S.J., Jesus the Liberator (1991) and Christ the Liberator(1999)* (issued 26 November 2006), para. 8: "The filial and messianic consciousness of Jesus is the direct consequence of his ontology as Son of God made man. If Jesus were a believer like ourselves, albeit in an exemplary manner, he would not be able to be the true Revealer showing us the face of the Father. . . . Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, enjoys an intimate and immediate knowledge of his Father, a 'vision' that certainly goes beyond the vision of faith. The hypostatic union and Jesus' mission of revelation and redemption require the vision of the Father and the knowledge of his plan of salvation." I have argued elsewhere that this immediate vision of God is necessary in some real sense for the accomplishment of Christ's earthly mission as Savior. See Thomas Joseph White, "The Voluntary Action of the Earthly Christ and the Necessity of the Beatific Vision," *The Thomist* 69 (2005): 497-534.

How is this relevant to the question of the free gift of his life in the event of the passion? Love follows upon knowledge, because we can only love what we already in some way know.[54] Nowhere are the repercussions of this doctrine so important as when we consider the relation between Christ's human freedom and his free embrace of the event of the passion in obedience to the Father, for the sake of our salvation. Following Anselm, Aquinas holds that Jesus gave his life freely in loving obedience as an all-sufficient atonement (*satisfactio*) for human sin.[55] If we consider this idea in light of that explored in the previous paragraph (extraordinary self-knowledge + self-offering originating from love), then we can unite the two principles safely to derive a third: Christ can choose to redeem the world freely in love only because he knows of the value of his sacrifice, and its meaning. His act of free self-offering requires not only that he know that he has been sent by the Father for our salvation, but also that he know who he himself is who is making the offering.

This idea is advanced implicitly in Aquinas's discussion of sacrifice.[56] Following Augustine, he thinks that to know the value of a sacrifice, knowledge of four things is required: what is being offered, who is making the offer, for whom it is made, and why it is offered. But who makes the offer of this sacrifice, if not the Son incarnate, and is it not he himself who is offered, for us? It follows from Aquinas's reasoning that if Jesus does not know who he is as the Son, he cannot truly offer his life for the salvation of the world.[57] Within this purview, Christ's knowledge of who he is conditions all of his free actions, precisely those actions of Jesus crucified that reveal his personal identity as the Son who is one with the Father ("Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" [Luke 23:34]) and the presence in him of a divine life that is saving the world. It is necessary, therefore, that Christ understand in some real sense the significance of his own *self-*

[54] *STh* I-II, q. 9, a. 1.

[55] *STh* III, q. 48, a. 2.

[56] *STh* III, q. 48, a. 3. Aquinas refers here to Augustine, *De Trin.* 4.14, as well as *De civ. Dei* 10.20.

[57] See *STh* III, q. 22, a. 4, s.c., where Aquinas affirms that the denial that Christ intended explicitly to give his life for others is contrary to the orthodox faith.

offering going into his passion. For only in doing so does he thereby merit our salvation through love.

The argument that Christ knew humanly who he was, however, is only a prerequisite for the second idea mentioned above. Christ not only knew who we was, but also gave himself over to the passion *freely*. This does not mean only that he accepted a situation that was foisted upon him, but that he chose freely to allow this event to occur, and this not only as God (because he is one with the Father and is Lord of all things), but also as man.[58] This is not a notion foreign to the Gospels but is in fact advanced forcefully there in manifold ways. Christ is able to avoid stoning or physical violence prior to the appropriate time of his foreseen death (Luke 4:29-30; John 10:30-39). He is able to avoid suffering even in the Garden of Gethsemane should he wish (Matt 26:53-54; John 18:4-11). The event of his physical death itself is in fact ultimately the result of a choice (Luke 23:46; John 19:30, 32-34). Are these passages simply to be read as post-Paschal theologoumena? Aquinas appeals to the unity of the personal acts of Christ as the Son made man, who wills simultaneously as the Wisdom of the Father (in his divine will) and freely as man (in his human will). "Christ delivered Himself up to death by the same will and action as that by which the Father delivered Him up [as God]; but as man He gave Himself up by a will inspired of the Father. Consequently there is no contradiction in the Father delivering Him up and in Christ delivering himself up."[59]

In effect, for Aquinas, Christ's human will—the kind of human freedom that he shares with us as true man—is lived out in concord with his divine will, the will that he shares perfectly with the Father, as true God. This is a necessary repercussion of the Incarnation. Christ acts in his human operations of willing in ways consistent with his divine actions and operations. He can freely reach out his human hand to the man who is blind, and by the divine power of charity inhabiting him he can heal the man through his human touch.[60] This is simultaneously a divine and a

[58] *STh* III, q. 47, a. 1.

[59] *STh* III, q. 47, a. 3, ad 2 (trans. slightly modified).

[60] *STh* III, q. 19, a. 1, corp. and ad 5.

human act.[61] But due to the same harmony he can also will freely as man what he can accomplish or prohibit as God, only by virtue of his deity.

Among such objects of the divine will are included the will of God that the Son suffer at the hands of sinful humanity. Christ *as man,* therefore, because he is God, can choose whether or not to give his life freely for the salvation of the world. Otherwise stated, for Aquinas, the Gospels are revealing something historical that is of noteworthy realism: *just* because this man is God and only because he is, can he also *as man* decide freely whether he wishes to be subject to the vicissitudes of human suffering, and embrace the passion. It is in this sense that Christ, as the God-man, gives himself freely over to death in a way no one else could. This is due to the power of the deity of Christ crucified. So Aquinas comments upon John 10:18 ("No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again"):

> He adds something about his power when he says, "I have power to lay it down." Apropos of this it should be noted that since the union of the soul and body is natural, their separation is natural. And although the cause of this separation and death can be voluntary, yet among human beings death is always natural. Now nature is not subject to the will of any mere human, since nature, as well as the will, are from God. Therefore, the death of any mere human person must be natural. But in Christ, his own nature and every other nature are subject to his will, just like artifacts are subject to the will of the artisan. Thus, according to the pleasure of his will, he could lay down his life when he willed, and he could take it up again; no mere human being can do this, although he could voluntarily use some instrument to kill himself. This explains why the centurion, seeing that Christ did not die by a natural necessity, but by his own [will]—since "Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit" (Matt. 27:50)—recognized a divine power in him, and said: "Truly, this was the Son of God" (Matt. 27:54). Again, the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians (1:18): "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God," that is, his great power was revealed in the very death of Christ.[62]

[61] *STh* III, q. 19, a. 11: the notion of "theandric action" stems from Dionysius (*Ep.* 4 *Ad Caium; Div. Nom.* 2.6).

[62] *In Ioan.* c. 10, lect. 4 (Marietti ed., 1425). Translation by Fabian R. Larcher, O.P., *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, vol. 2 (Petersham, Mass.: St. Bede's Press, 2000). See also the clear comments of *STh* III, q. 47, a. 1, corp. and ad 1-3.

The soteriological consequences of this idea are weighty. If Christ is to give his life for us freely as the means of our salvation, Christ as man must not be entirely unaware of his divine identity. In this case, however, he necessarily must be able as man freely to give his life in a way others cannot. The ideas are interrelated. Thus, if we claim that Christ does not have this unique privilege as man, then we should also be committed logically to the conclusion that either he does not know of his identity as the Son made man, or that he does not intend to offer his suffering to God as a means of atoning for human sin. But in either case, the classical Anselmian idea that Christ knowingly gave his life out of love in reparation for human sinfulness is also undermined.

B) The Power of Christ as God Is Operative in and through His Passion

Second, according to Aquinas, the power of the Son as God is not only present at the origins of his free acceptance of the passion, but is also active in Christ crucified even during the time of his human suffering, and mortal expiration. It is significant to note in this respect that in his analysis of the Paschal mystery in the *Summa Theologiae,* Aquinas on numerous occasions makes a fundamental distinction between Christ's meritorious acts of will and his activities as man that are "effective" of our salvation.[63] The former category pertains to the atoning work of Christ in his acts of human righteousness before God on our behalf, while the latter concept denotes the way Christ *as man* through his human actions causes our salvation effectively. Subsequent interpreters have sometimes alluded to this distinction in terms of an ascending (impetrative) and descending (instrumental) mediation: Christ can intercede for us or can act upon us.[64] The latter as well as the former transpires in the crucifixion: God the Son acts as man with divine power even as he also endures physical and mental agony, as well as death.

[63] *STh* III, q. 48, a. 6, corp. and ad 1-3; q. 49, a. 1, corp. and ad 1-5; q. 50, a. 6, corp. and ad 1-3; q. 56, a. 1, ad 3 and 4; q. 57, a. 6, ad 1; q. 64, a. 3.

[64] See, for example, Charles Journet, *L'Église du Verbe incarné*, vol. 2 (repr.: Paris: Saint Augustin, 1999), 359-62.

How does the power of God operate in one who is crucified? Aquinas does not diminish the reality of Christ's human suffering and weakness. Rather, in the tradition of Western medieval Catholic piety, he describes it vividly.[65] Simultaneously, however, he invokes a principle that follows from the Incarnation: the instrumentality of the human nature of Christ. The human acts of Christ from the cross are the acts of the Word made flesh. Even amidst weakness and suffering, they can communicate effects of divine power, as Aquinas argues in question 48, article 6 of the *Tertia Pars*. Quoting St. Paul, he writes:

"The word of the cross to them that are saved . . . is the power of God." (I Cor. 1:18) But God's power brings about our salvation efficiently. Therefore Christ's Passion on the cross accomplished our salvation efficiently. [Now] there is a twofold efficient agency, namely, principal and instrumental. The principal efficient cause of man's salvation is God. But since Christ's humanity is the instrument of the Godhead, therefore *all Christ's actions and sufferings operated instrumentally* in virtue of His Godhead for the salvation of men. Consequently, then, Christ's passion accomplishes man's salvation efficiently.[66]

Responding to the objection that Christ was crucified in human weakness and therefore could not act on the cross by divine power, Aquinas says:

Christ's passion in relation to His flesh is consistent with the infirmity which he took upon himself [as man], but in relation to the Godhead it draws infinite might from it, according to I Cor. 1:25: "The weakness of God is stronger than men"; because Christ's weakness, inasmuch as He is God, has a might exceeding all human power.[67]

It is because of this unity of the divinity and the humanity of Christ crucified that he is able at Golgotha effectively to rule over the powers of the world and to vanquish the power of sin. Commenting on 1 Corinthians 1:18, Aquinas writes:

He says, therefore: The reason I have said that the cross of Christ is made void, if the teachings of the faith are presented in eloquent wisdom is that the word of the cross, i.e., the announcing of Christ's cross is folly, i.e., it appears foolish, to

[65] *STh* III, q. 46, aa. 5-7.

[66] *STh* III, q. 48, a. 6 (emphasis added).

[67] *STh* III, q. 48, a. 6, ad 1.

them that are perishing, i.e., to unbelievers, who consider themselves wise according to the world, for the preaching of the cross of Christ contains something which to worldly wisdom seems impossible; for example, that God should die or that Omnipotence should suffer at the hands of violent men. Furthermore, that a person not avoid shame when he can, and other things of this sort, are matters which seem contrary to the prudence of this world. Consequently, when Paul was preaching such things, Festus said: "Paul, you are beside yourself: much learning makes you mad" (Acts 26:24). And Paul himself says below that the word of the cross actually does contain foolishness, [for] he adds: but to us that are being saved (namely, Christ's faithful who are saved by Him: "He will save his people from their sins" [Matt 1:21]), it is the power of God, because they [the faithful] recognize in the cross of Christ God's power, by which He overcame the devil and the world: "The Lion of the tribe of Judah, has conquered" (Rev. 5:5).[68]

This idea is also underscored briefly by Aquinas in an original way when he comments upon the "kingship" of Christ in his commentary on the Fourth Gospel. He notes that, for St. John, Christ is the "king" of humanity on the cross, vanquishing by the power of the Godhead within him the angelic and worldly powers of sin that rule over man so as to reestablish the kingship of God.

Although this seems extremely bizarre to the irreligious and to unbelievers, it is a great mystery for believers and the devout: "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor 1:18). Christ bore his cross as a king does his scepter; his cross is the sign of his glory, which is his universal dominion over all things: "The Lord will reign from the wood" (Ps 95:9); "The government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called 'Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace'" (Is 9:6). He carried his cross as a victor carries the trophy of his victory: "He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in himself" (Col 2:15). Again, he carried his cross as a teacher his candelabrum, as a support for the light of his teaching, because for believers the message of the cross is the power of God: "No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a bushel but on a stand, that those who enter may see the light (Lk 11:33)."[69]

This leads us to a second idea: Because of the power of the deity of Christ (what Aquinas calls the *virtus divinitatis* or *virtus spiritualis*) the humanly contingent, historically situated acts of

[68] *In I Cor*. c. 1, lect. 3 (Marietti ed., 47) (trans. Fabian Larcher, O.P., unpublished manuscript.)

[69] *In Ioan*. c. 19, lect. 3 (Marietti ed., 2414).

Jesus in the Paschal event can have contact with human beings at all times and places.[70] Christ's passion can affect all of human history as an efficient cause of salvation, and this is by virtue of his deity. In accord with this notion, Aquinas posits that the past event of the crucifixion, while no longer a contemporary reality, is still acting instrumentally upon human beings who come after Christ to effectuate their salvation.[71] He says the same even about the dead cadaver of Christ (!), the historical event of his resurrection (two days after the crucifixion), and the time of his ascension (forty days after the resurrection).[72] While no longer in existence, these past mysteries were the instrumental causes of the grace we now receive. Consequently they continue to effectuate change in our lives.[73] "For God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor 5:19).

Can this really be the case? In what sense? Aquinas considers an objection to this idea:[74] the past events of the life of Christ exist no longer and therefore they cannot come into physical contact with us now (*contactum corporalem*). It follows that there is no possibility of the events of the Paschal mystery affecting our lives now as *instrumental efficient* causes. One might hold that the merits of Christ's passion still affect us, and that the living, resurrected humanity of Christ is a living instrument of our salvation, but not that the past mysteries are present causes of grace.

Aquinas acknowledges that the causality we are speaking of is not by way of physical contact (by way of an extension of now terminated events somehow preserved in the life of God, as Odo

[70] *STh* III, q. 48, a. 6, ad 2: "passio Christi, licet sit corporalis, sortitur tamen quandam spiritualem virtutem ex divinitate, cuius caro ei unita est instrumentum. Secundum quam quidem virtutem passio Christi est causa remissionis peccatorum." See also *STh* III, q. 49, a. 1, ad 2; q. 56, a. 1, ad 3.

[71] *STh* III, q. 49, a. 1, ad 1-5; q. 79, a. 1.

[72] *STh* III, q. 50, a. 6; 56, a. 1, esp. ad 3; q. 57, a. 6, ad 1. Regarding the resurrection of Christ, it is clear from q. 56, a. 1, obj. 3 that Aquinas is referring principally to the historical "Christus resurgens" and not to the now living glorified humanity of Christ.

[73] This idea has been explored by modern Thomistic commentators such as Charles Journet, Jean-Hervé Nicolas, and Jean-Pierre Torrell. See on this Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Le Christ en ses mysteres: La vie et 1'oeuvre de Jesus selon saint Thomas d'Aquin,* vol. 2 (Paris: Desclée, 1999), 637-43.

[74] *STh* III, q. 56, a. 1, obj. 3.

Casel problematically posited). He specifies, rather, that it is a spiritual contact (*contactum spiritualem*) that is facilitated by the divinity of Christ itself.[75] In other words, because Jesus Christ is God, his human acts in history (all the *acta et passa* of his life, but particularly the events of his redemption) can have an instrumental effect subordinate to the work of his divinity. In this way, the event of the redemption acts as a true efficient cause upon all subsequent human beings. The medium by which the past events of the passion now act upon us is the deity of God working both then and now, through and in light of the passion. By the power of the Godhead, the Paschal mystery is the source of our grace, such that our supernatural faith, hope, and charity, our sacramental graces, and so on, come to us by virtue of what Christ did and underwent for us in and through his crucifixion and resurrection.

Evidently, this soteriology ties in with the Athanasian theme of divinization which is also prevalent in Aquinas's work: God became man so that man might become God, or be united to the divine life.[76] The effective salvation realized in and through the power of the cross, therefore, also has an exemplary dimension.[77] God has united himself to us amidst death so that we might be united to God in life. Aquinas notes how Christ patterns himself after the "First Adam" so that we in turn might be patterned after him as the "New Adam."[78] On the one hand, suffering results from Adam's fall into sin, and Christ who was himself fully human endured suffering not as a punishment from God, but virtuously out of love.[79] He did so while maintaining an internal harmony of sense and reason that was truly Adamic, like that originally

[75] *STh* III, q. 48, a. 6, ad 2: "Christ's Passion, although corporeal, has yet a spiritual effect from the Godhead united: and therefore it secures its efficacy by spiritual contact [*spiritualem contactum*]—namely by faith and the sacraments of faith, as the Apostle says (Rom. 3:25): 'Whom God has proposed to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood.'" See also *STh* III q. 56, a. 1, obj. 3.

[76] *STh* III, q. 1, a. 2.

[77] *STh* III, q. 56, a. 1, corp. and ad. 3.

[78] *STh* III, q. 14, a. 1; q. 15, a. 1.

[79] *STh* III, q. 14, aa. 2-3. See the study by Rik van Nieuwenhove, "'Bearing the Marks of Christ's Death': Aquinas' Soteriology," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas,* ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 277-302.

intended in paradise. In him the human passions were subordinate to reason and reason was perfectly subordinate to God.[80] The cross, then, is a new tree of life in which the harmony of man in paradise is reestablished, albeit in a crucified form, endured even unto death. The death of Adam is adopted, as it were, by the Son made man, in view of the redemption from death that is the resurrection.[81] Believers can follow Christ by virtue of his grace, being conformed to this re-creation that his passion effectuates in us by the power of God. In this life internal graces received by virtue of the mysteries of Christ permit the soul to be subordinate to God in love.[82] Perfect submission of the passions to reason and of the body to the soul is promised only eschatologically, as believers are called to undergo physical death and resurrection in dependence upon the grace of Christ.[83] Otherwise stated, the events that save us effectively also conform us to themselves to save us: we are invited to pass through death in solidarity with Christ as a way into the mystery of the resurrection.

C) The Son of God Raised Himself from the Dead

Lastly we can speak briefly about the cause of the resurrection. If Christ is God who suffers out of love in his free will as man, and if God is present in Christ actively triumphing over the powers of the world, restoring order to a fallen world, then, for Aquinas, Christ as God is also the origin of his own resurrection. By resurrection Aquinas is referring to the glorification of the body and soul of Christ that took place after his death. The body that lay in the tomb was restored to life and reunited to the soul, but it was also radically transformed so as to acquire new properties of physical matter more proximate to the divine nature.[84] The glorified body of Christ—which is physical—is now spiritually agile and dynamic, transparent to the radiance and glory of God in a way that it was not in its historical, pre-Paschal state.

[80] *STh* III, q. 15, aa. 2-4.
[81] *STh* III, q. 50, a. 1.
[82] *STh* III, q. 56, a. 2.
[83] *STh* III, q. 69, aa. 3-4.
[84] *STh* III, q. 54, aa. 1-4.

In his article in the *Summa Theologiae* treating of this question (*STh* III, q. 53, a. 4: "Whether Christ was the cause of his own resurrection?"), Aquinas first notes that Christ claims explicitly in the Gospel of John to be able to raise himself up from the dead by the power of God: "No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down, and I have the power to take it again" (John 10:18). In the corpus of the article he then correlates this Johannine text with a Pauline verse that speaks of Christ being raised from the dead by the power of God: "For although he was crucified through our weakness, yet He lives by the power of God" (2 Cor 13:4). He then makes a logical conclusion: the divine power of God that raised Jesus from the dead truly resides in the Word made flesh, throughout his life, death, and resurrection. This is the case even on Holy Saturday, the day on which the soul and body of Christ are separated due to physical death.

> Therefore, *according to the virtue of the Godhead united to it*, the body took back again the soul which it had laid aside, and the soul took back again the body which it had abandoned: and thus Christ rose by His own power. . . . But if we consider the body and soul of the dead Christ according to the power of created nature, they could not thus be reunited, but it was necessary for Christ to be raised up by God.[85]

Aquinas is saying that if we consider Christ as man, we may say that God raised Christ from the dead, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians, but if we consider Christ as God, we must also say that Christ raised himself from the dead as is said in John. There is no incongruity here:

> The Divine power is the same thing as the operation of the Father and the Son [which both possess identically]; accordingly these two things are mutually consequent, that Christ was raised up by the Divine power of the Father, and by His own power.[86]

It is worth bearing in mind that the deeper point here for Aquinas is Trinitarian: the event of the resurrection reveals the unity of the Father and the Son amidst their personal distinction and their personal distinction amidst unity. It reveals the divine

[85] *STh* III, q. 53, a. 4 (emphasis added).
[86] Ibid., ad 1.

unity precisely because what the Father does, the Son does as well, but this undivided operation also manifests the personal distinction of the Son from the Father, for what the Son does with the Father, he also does precisely as Son, that is to say, as one who proceeds eternally from the Father. Commenting upon John 5:21 ("For just as the Father raises the dead and grants life, so the Son grants life to those to whom he wishes") Aquinas underscores this point:

> Hilary calls our attention to the remarkable relationship of the passages so that the errors concerning eternal generation can be refuted. Two heresies have arisen concerning this eternal generation. One was that of Arius, who said that the Son is less than the Father; and this is contrary to their equality and unity. The other was that of Sabellius, who said that that there is no distinction of persons in the divinity; and this is contrary to their origin. So, whenever he mentions the unity and equality [of the Father and Son], he immediately also adds their distinction as persons according to origin, and conversely. Thus, because he mentions the origin of the persons when he says, "the Son cannot do anything of himself, but only what he sees the Father doing" (5:19), then, so we do not think this involves inequality, he at once adds: "for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise." Conversely, when he states their equality by saying: "For just as the Father raises the dead and grants life, so the Son grants life to those to whom he wishes," then, so that we do not deny that the Son has an origin and is begotten, he adds, "the Father himself judges no one, but he has given all judgment to the Son."[87]

If the Son is with the Father, then, he is so as one who receives from the Father all that he has and is. We can speak in this respect of a filial mode of the Son's being God. This mode of being God as one who is eternally begotten affects as well the mode in which the Son is "the Resurrection and the Life" (John 11:25). We must say that the Father raised Christ and that Christ as God raised up his own human life, but we must also qualify this: the Son acted in the resurrection in a distinctly filial mode, as one who receives all that he has from the Father. The raising of the Son as man, therefore, also reveals the divinity of the Son, but shows forth the primacy of the Father as he who gives to the Son all that he receives, not only as man, but also as God. The Father gives us to know, through the death and resurrection of the Son, the reality

[87] *In Ioan*. c. 5, lec.t 4 (Marietti ed., 769).

of the Son's identity. He does this also in giving the Son as God to be the source of resurrected life not only on the day of Easter, but also eschatologically for all mankind. Commenting again on John, chapter 5, Aquinas notes:

> although Christ had the complete fullness of power from eternity (because "whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise"), he still speaks of this power as being given to him after the resurrection, not because he was then receiving it for the first time, but because it was through the glory of the resurrection that it became most known. In this interpretation, then, he says that power is given to him insofar as he exercises it in some work. As if to say: "he will show him even greater works than these," i.e., he will show by his works what has been given to him. And this will come about when you are amazed, i.e., when the one who seems to you to be a mere man is revealed to be a person of divine power and as God.[88]

III. Classical versus Kenotic Soteriology

Clearly the three above-mentioned points differ from the views encountered in modern kenotic Christology as the latter is typically articulated. In the last section of this article I would like briefly to allude to three characteristic kenotic views encountered among Catholic and Protestant thinkers alike, each of which contrasts in important ways with what has just been described. In discussing the viewpoints mentioned below, I do not intend to give an extensive representation of them, but only to note important points of contrast between them and Aquinas. The goal thereby is to identify what is at stake soteriologically in the classical versus the kenotic representations of redemption.

A) Jesus' Free Acceptance of His Own Death

Consider first a typical modern understanding of Christ's free acceptance of his own death. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century historical-critical scholars since Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer have often attempted, of course, to argue that the Jesus of history understood himself primarily as an apocalyptic preacher or teacher, standing on the cusp of and possibly inaugurating the

[88] *In Ioan*. c. 5, lect. 4 (Marietti ed., 760).

end times. Their hypothetical portraits have suggested that the real Jesus of history did not intend his death to have a universal significance or enduring salvific import, but rather that his death came as a disappointment in the face of a failed apocalypticism.[89] This point of interpretation has moved Christian scholars in turn to make use of the historical-critical study of the Scriptures "apologetically" as it were, to ward off such interpretations. Pannenberg, for example, is careful to defend a number of valid theological points in the face of historical-critical studies: that the New Testament provides rational warrant for the affirmation that the historical Jesus truly intended to inaugurate the kingdom of God, that he correspondingly believed himself to have the unique authority to do so, and that he expressed this conviction in the language and theological idioms of the thought-world of his times. Ultimately, he foresaw his death and accepted it in light of his eschatological expectation. Due to Jesus' fidelity to God, his death implicitly had a salvific value for all human beings, one that was made perfectly manifest, however, only in the resurrection.[90]

This approach has many advantages. It takes historical reasoning seriously, defends the rationality of Christian faith in the face of modern historical studies, and attempts to think realistically about the humanity of God the Son in his life among us. What is distinct about it, however, in comparison with the classical views considered above, is that it emphasizes virtually exclusively the human character of Christ's suffering and death (understood primarily by reference to its historical context), divesting from this event any apparent activity of the divinity of the Son in and through the event of the passion. Given the self-awareness of Jesus that is presumed, the Son made man must attempt to discern the divine will amidst the contingent circumstances of history, and to be faithful to it in ways analogous to that

[89] This was, for example, the view of Willi Marxsen, "Erwägungen zum Problem des verkündigten Kreuzes," in *De Exeget als Theologe: Vorträge zum Neuen Testament* (Gütersloh: Mohn 1968), 160-70. This line of thought runs back through Schweitzer and Weiss, as far back as Reimarus.

[90] Pannenberg, *Jesus-God and Man,* 225-58; *Systematic Theology,* 2:325-63. A similar approach is found in Kasper, *Jesus the Christ,* 65-123.

of other believers, as a person of his age.[91] On this view, prophetic graces need not be invoked as the cause of Christ's self-awareness and intentions. Rather, Christ's foreknowledge and free acceptance of his passion can be seen merely as the result of his natural capacities of historical estimation in the face of persecution and the threat of execution, events that he interpreted eschatologically as a first-century Jew.[92] To this epistemology there corresponds an ontology. What is absent is not only the notion of prophetic light, but also that of divine willing present in the Son made man himself. We are no longer allowed to think that Jesus acted in two wills as both God and man: classical dyotheletism is problematic. Rather, the personal Sonship of Christ is revealed through his human obedience.[93] Of course, this point of view is deliberately related to a reconsideration of the notion of God as such. Invoking the heritage of kenotic theology, Pannenberg suggests that Jesus' human cognitive limitations tell us theologically something about *what God is,* and invite us to revise our classical conceptions of God in accord with the nature of the deity made known in the New Testament.[94] The kenosis of the

[91] On the faith of Christ, see *Systematic Theology* II, 337-79. Pannenberg appeals here to Ritschl as the historical forebear of the soteriological interpretation he is offering. On Jesus' historical consciousness, see *Jesus-God and Man*, 325-34. P. 332-33: "Jesus knew himself to be related to the God whose future, consummated with the coming Son of Man, would have to decide the rightness or wrongness of his own activity….As an awareness of the not yet decided future, the knowledge of one's own ignorance is a condition of human openness and freedom. It is to be understood in the sense that Jesus' lack of knowledge was apparently not only related to the Day of Judgment, but thereby to his own person as well. Precisely this fact of Jesus' perfection in dedication to the God of the eschatological future reaches its consummation. This lack of knowledge is actually the condition of Jesus' unity with this God."

[92] *Systematic Theology* II, 334-35, 337. *Jesus- God and Man*, 239-43. P. 242: "The mere process of historical time makes every attitude that can be assumed today different from Jesus' imminent expectation [of the kingdom]. Thus we can no longer share Jesus' imminent expectation. We can, however, live and think in continuity with it and thus with Jesus' activity if we recognize Jesus' imminent expectation…as having been previously fulfilled in Jesus' own resurrection."

[93] *Jesus-God and Man*, 294: "The tendency of the two-natures doctrine to destroy the unity of Jesus Christ became especially clear in the condemnations of Monotheletism, because the basis for affirming Jesus' divinity lies precisely in his unity of will with the Father in the execution of his mission....The decision about Jesus' own divinity as the Son can be made only indirectly, through his unity of obedience and mission with the Father."

[94] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology,* 2:375.

Son's knowledge as man is an expression of the divine solidarity with us, in which God empties himself of divine prerogatives (or expresses himself in distance from himself) out of concern for solidarity with us in a life of faith and obedience lived in love.[95]

What has been eclipsed in such a viewpoint, if we compare it with that of Aquinas, is the presence of the divinity of Christ in Christ's decision to give his life for our sake. For Pannenberg, the Son *as man* confides himself to the Father in faith and in trust. But we no longer can say that Jesus—knowing who he is—*freely lays down his life as the God-man,* for us, for the salvation of human beings. The theology of theandric activity is obscured. More specifically, we can no longer speak of a freedom to accept death that is unique to Christ as man because he is God. These differences raise important Christological and soteriological questions. Most notably: Is the act of Jesus' meritorious sacrifice specifically the same in either case, or do the two conceptions in fact implicitly lead us to attribute two distinct objects or intentions to Christ in his historical death? It is one thing to intend to be faithful to the God of Israel in order to bring in the eschatological kingdom of God; it is quite another to intend to give one's life as Son of God on behalf of sinful humanity. Likewise if Christ has both a human and a divine will, how is the divine human agency still the action of one agent if our Christology gives no account of the divine will of Christ operative in his human activity? Is the unity of the person sufficiently maintained? One might ask if such a view (for all its genuine historical value) tends in fact toward a kind of soteriological Nestorianism, where a man dies trusting God the Father will save him, even as in another, parallel way, his being is one with the Father who raises him up. He is both God and man, but the personal unity of the two in the event of the passion is inadequately expressed. On this view, it seems that

[95] Ibid., 2:377: "In his form of life as Jesus, on the path of his obedience to God, the eternal Son appeared as a human being. The relation of the Son to the Father is characterized in eternity by the subordination to the Father, by the self-distinction from the majesty of the Father, which took historical form in the human relation of Jesus to God. This self-distinction of the eternal Son from the Father may be understood as the basis of all creaturely existence in its distinction from God, and therefore as the basis of the human existence of Jesus, which gave adequate embodiment in its course to the self-emptying of the Son in service to the rule of the Father."

Christ as man hopes to be delivered and saved by God in his passion, thereby inaugurating the eschatological kingdom of God. Yet he does this in accord with a transcendent divine will for his and for our salvation that is *extrinsic to his own personal, human act*.

What we see emerge, then, is a consistency in Pannenberg between his understanding of Christ's epistemological kenosis and his penal substitution theory. Christ's dereliction is the expression not primarily of his intrinsic righteousness (though his human innocence is of course maintained) but of his solidarity with us as one coming under the judgment of God. He is condemned in our stead so that we can be forgiven.[96] Whereas Anselm and Aquinas underscore the intrinsic righteousness of the human Christ in his passion, this account of the redemption turns to the extrinsic attribution of the guilt of humanity to the Son. What happens, then, to the saving merit of Christ's human acts of obedience accomplished in charity? Can Christ as man truly intend to give his life for our sake if he is not explicitly aware of the value of his life as the God-man, and of the soteriological efficacy of his death? Aquinas's affirmation of the divinity of Christ at work in Jesus' saving knowledge and human choices in the face of death clearly has crucial soteriological repercussions. Correspondingly, the obscuring of the presence of the deity of the Son in Jesus' personal act of decision to embrace the cross threatens to render unintelligible Anselm's atonement theology of the passion. This is to render theologically inaccessible (or conceptually unintelligible) the very love of charity with which Christ as man willingly laid down his life for us in his earthly life.[97]

Behind all this stands a question of methodology. There is a certain kind of approach to soteriology that wants to unite the

[96] Ibid., 2:421-29.

[97] Although this is my claim, it should be noted that this is other than the intention of Pannenberg, who sees the Incarnation as a kenotic expression of divine love (ibid., 2:379) and who defends his understanding of penal substitution theory as compatible in some sense with Anselm's views (ibid., 2:429-37). However, the obedient love of God in the passion is thus transferred from the humanity of Christ as mediator between God and men to the deity of God in his mode of being as Son, and the righteousness of the Son is found not in his human love and obedience per se but in his divine ontological identification with us in our "distance" from God.

Catholic creed and historical-critical research but that does not want to speak about the divine action of Christ prior to or during the crucifixion, because we do not have any historical-critical access to it. If historical-critical methodology is allowed to construe things thus, the classical instrumentality of Christ's humanity is necessarily ignored. One might say, "Before the resurrection, all hail the historical-critical method which considers the humanity of Christ alone. After the resurrection, all hail the Nicene Creed—for his divinity is retrieved." By contrast, if Aquinas is saying something essential to the faith, the methodological use of the historical-critical method on a point like this, however valid, has to be carefully reconsidered in its extension and purposes. We know as a matter of revealed faith that before the death of Christ he acts as man instrumentally in the service of the divine will and this instrumentality is reflected in his human knowledge and willing. Historical-critical reflection on the Gospels might be able to defend rationally the historicity of this mystery or to discuss its cultural context and circumstances. It cannot procure, however, the basis itself for belief in the mystery, because this is given to us only supernaturally—through faith in the portrayal of Christ given by the New Testament, which we know *by faith* to correspond to the historical Jesus himself.[98]

B) The Kenosis of God Crucified

These reflections lead organically to the second point discussed above, pertaining to the power of Christ that is present in his passion, working even through his human weakness and suffering to restore order to a fallen world. Here the contrast with classic soteriology is more vivid. We find in a host of modern theologians—we can take Eberhard Jüngel as a typical example—a doctrine of divine kenosis in the passion, in which there exists as a moment within God the embrace of a seeming contrary to the

[98] Cf. Vatican I, *Dei Filius* (1870), which affirmed in the wake of nineteenth-century Catholic rationalism the distinction of objects of supernatural faith and natural reason. The distinction is also necessarily operative in the consideration of the relationship and possible harmony between supernatural faith in the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God (as revealed in the New Testament) and historical-critical considerations regarding Jesus in his cultural context.

power of God.[99] The powerlessness or self-emptying of God the Son on the cross even unto death pertains not only to the human nature of Christ, but in fact to God's own deity or divine essence. This idea is common to other kenotic thinkers. In the death of Christ, there enters into the very being of God as God either ontological separation (of the Son from the Father), or suffering (an intrinsic alteration in the being of God due to a wound of love that God is subject to), or death and nothingness (the negation of God's very being).[100] This theme of diremptive becoming within the life of God is expressed in various ways. The common idea, however, is that God assumes into his divine life and essence something seemingly contradictory to omnipotence (be it alienation, suffering, or death) in order to be in solidarity with human beings, and in order to overcome that which he assumes.[101] This is accomplished, however, at the expense of a doctrine of divine simplicity, power, and transcendence, since historical change and passion, or ontological separation, are introduced into the very life of God. The larger point for our purposes is that this represents a very different soteriological conception of the divinity of Christ as it is present in his passion than the one we have been considering. Aquinas underscores not the kenosis of the divine attributes of the Son in his passion, but rather the importance of their inalienable presence. If God the Son were to forfeit his divine unity with the Father in the crucifixion, his capacity to save us would not only be compromised, but in fact forfeited. His oneness with his Father in their unity of operation from the cross is the

[99] Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World,* 363-64: "In this sense, God's identification with the dead Jesus implies self-differentiation on God's part. The being of this dead man defines God's own being in such a way that one must speak of a differentiation between God and God. But it must immediately be added that it is an act of God himself who effects his identity with the dead Jesus and as its precondition the differentiation of God and God. . . . And for that reason it must be said that *God defines himself* when he identifies himself with the dead Jesus. At the same time he defines the man Jesus as the Son of God."

[100] See Emery, "The Immutability of the God of Love and the Problem of Language Concerning the 'Suffering of God,'" for an analysis of this theme in Balthasar, Bulgakov, and Moltmann.

[101] Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World,* 344: "In that the living God in his deity bears the death of Jesus, in that he burdens the eternity of his being with the crucifixion of Jesus, he demonstrates his divine being as a *living* unity of life and death. . . . The faith . . . proclaims and tells the tension which defines the being of God itself, the tension between eternal life and temporal death, as the story of Jesus Christ."

basis for the victory of God's wisdom and goodness even through the event of the passion. For Aquinas God can make use of any evil, even the worst, in order to manifest the power of divine goodness. Even intense human suffering can contribute to the triumph of Christ over the powers of sin and death precisely because of the union of human suffering with the divine nature in the person of the Son (who does not cease to be one with the Father). Jesus' human crucifixion and death operate effectively (by a *contactum spiritualem*) to touch the lives human beings in all times and places. But this is only possible because of the *virtus divinitatis* of the Godhead of Christ that works instrumentally in and through Christ's humanity. If, instead, God overcomes suffering by adopting it into his own deity so as to forfeit his power (for instance, in his mode of being as Son), then this whole order of salvation collapses. The cross loses its universal instrumental power. What is more, has God then truly overcome the power of evil, or has he rather united himself with it for eternity? Are his goodness and wisdom vindicated by this exercise of power, or is the expression of his goodness and wisdom now inherently and necessarily related to a history of evil, a history that has entered into God himself?[102]

C) The Resurrection of the Son by the Father

Last, and most briefly, let us consider the resurrection. Who raised Jesus from the dead? Following Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar has articulated a modern kenotic theology that stresses the obedience of Christ in his dereliction on the cross. This obedience is seen as expressive not only of his human submission to the Father's will, but also of his divine identity as the Son.[103] In

[102] For developments of this last criticism, see Marshall, "The Dereliction of Christ and the Impassibility of God."

[103] Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* 4:325-26, 329-30: "The Father, in uttering and surrendering himself without reserve, does not lose himself. . . . For in this self-surrender, he *is* the whole divine essence. Here we see both God's infinite power and his powerlessness; he cannot be God in any other way but in this 'kenosis' within the Godhead itself. . . . It follows that the Son, for his part, cannot *be* and *possess* the absolute nature of God except in the mode of receptivity: he receives the unity of omnipotence and powerlessness from the Father. This receptivity simultaneously includes the Son's self-givenness. . . . For the Son, following truth

other words, there is an obedience in God that is characteristic of the person of the Son as God, who is eternally responsive or obedient to the Father. In Balthasar's theology a central motif is the descent of the Son into hell on Holy Saturday, experienced as a separation from the Father.[104] This occurs prior to his being raised by the Father.[105] Such moments in the life of Christ are subsequent expressions of the Son's obedience. They are also expressions, then, of the mystery of the inner life of God: of obedience as separation and reunion that is characteristic of the very generation of the Son from the Father, and of his unity with the Father in love, by virtue of the Holy Spirit.[106] On this account, the Son in his divinity evidently cannot raise himself from the dead, because his human receptivity on Holy Saturday is expressive of an ever-deeper divine receptivity of the Son in his eternal obedience to the Father.

What is clear even from a brief comparison of this form of thought with that of Aquinas is that the latter's Christology offers a distinctly different conception of the unity of will of the Father and the Son from that of Balthasar, and this particularly on Holy Saturday, and even in the resurrection of Christ. According to Aquinas, the Son raises himself up even as he is also raised by the Father, and this is due to the unity of will, the identity of operation, shared eternally by the Father and the Son, with the

to the end means making a fitting response to the Father's total gift of himself by freely and thankfully allowing himself to be poured forth by the Father, a response that is made in absolute spontaneity and in absolute 'obedience' to the Father."

[104] Ibid. 4:335: "Here the God-man drama reaches its acme: perverse finite freedom casts all its guilt onto God, making him the sole accused, the scapegoat, while God allows himself to be thoroughly affected by this, not only in the humanity of Christ but also in Christ's trinitarian mission. The omnipotent powerlessness of God's love shines forth in the mystery of darkness and alienation between God and the sin-bearing Son."

[105] Like Bulgakov, Balthasar places the pre-existent condition for the historical God-forsakenness of Christ in the eternal processions of the persons. Ibid. 4:333: "If Jesus can be forsaken by the Father, the conditions for this 'forsaking' must lie within the Trinity, in the absolute distance/distinction between the Hypostasis who surrenders the Godhead and the Hypostasis who receives it."

[106] Ibid. 4:361-67, at 362: "Within the Son's absolute, loving obedience (which persists in the realm of the immanent Trinity), according to which he walks into an utter forsakenness that surpasses the sinner's isolation, we find the most radical change from eternal death to eternal life, from the absolute night of the Spirit to the Spirit's absolute light, from total alienation and remoteness to an unimaginable closeness."

Holy Spirit, as the one God. Each undertakes this unique action in a way that is distinctive to him, yet the action is single. What would happen if we were to posit a distinction of commandment and obedience within the very divine life of the Father and the Son, a distinction that also distinguishes them as persons in their reciprocal relationship? How would this affect the unity of the will of the Father and Son, and therefore their ontological unity, as the one God? From a Thomist point of view, it is fair to question if the idea of obedience in God in fact compromises the right understanding of the divine unity and simplicity, thus risking implicitly to undermine the monotheistic character of Trinitarian faith. Yet whatever we say about the speculative question, there are clearly also soteriological consequences to the Balthasarian proposals. The Athanasian soteriological tenet is that God can save us in Christ because he unites our humanity to his divinity. However, this presupposes that even in the Incarnation he retains within himself the power and life of God.[107] Christ who is "the Resurrection and the Life" (John 11:25) can only overcome the power of death actively as God because he is fully one with the Father in will and operation, as well as in substance and divine power. His unity with the Father, even in death, is what saves us from death, just as his unity with the Father in the activity of the resurrection allows him to be the source of resurrection for other human beings. If the Son is understood by kenosis to forfeit this active power to give eternal life—even in his human death, and especially in his resurrection—then how can the Son be understood as the active source of divine life by whom human beings are eternally united to God? The Son would then be dependent upon another (the Father) to effectuate the reconciliation with God that is characteristic of the resurrection. He would not possess the unity of the divine life with the Father in an absolutely simple way, such as is in fact characteristic of the divine nature. It would seem that the modern kenotic tradition renders obscure the unity of the Son with the Father in the act of the resurrection of the humanity of Christ. It thereby risks, however unwittingly, to undermine the intelligibility of a central

[107] Aquinas follows Athanasius in arguing against Arius that this implies necessarily that there is no obedience or subordination of the Son to the Father. See *ScG* IV, c. 8.

tenet of classical soteriology: God became man so that he could save us by uniting us with divine life.

IV. Conclusion: The Promise of Classical Christology

The modern kenotic tradition has sought to solve modern Christological conundrums, but it has thereby also introduced soteriological problems into modern Christology that would seem to require correction. A return to the classical tradition seems advisable, then, at least under certain aspects. Nevertheless, we might also say that there are positive concerns of the kenotic tradition that need to be taken into consideration, or at least rearticulated in continuity with the classical tradition. For instance, it is fitting to underscore the truth of faith that the historical Christ did possess some extraordinary knowledge of his own identity and could foresee his death prophetically. He was able to lay down his life knowingly and freely, with a freedom that was uniquely both human and divine. At the same time, however, Jesus of Nazareth was a first-century Jew of the Second Temple period. He did articulate his saving knowledge and intentions within the idioms and cultural-linguistic context of the Judaism of his time. This is consistent with his having an acquired knowledge similar to that of all the other human beings of his age. Theology can rightly aspire, then, to see in an integrated fashion the simultaneously prophetic and historically situated character of Christ's self understanding. It was both naturally and supernaturally that the Incarnate Word communicated his identity as the Son of God.

It must also be underscored that Christ as God retained the power effectively to save human beings even in and through the mystery of the cross, and that the Paschal mystery itself is applied to our lives by the power of God in order to save us. At the same time, however, one can underscore the radical solidarity of the divine freedom with our human condition of suffering. This is done not by arguing that the deity of God is free to divest itself of its own inalienable perfection, or mode of being in sovereignty, to embrace uniquely in Christ a mode of being in lowliness. Rather, it is highlighted by noting that God, because he is the immutable

author of all that is, is also free to be present in all that exists in dependence upon him, even in love and out of solidarity with suffering human beings. Consequently, God, without ceasing to be God, can show forth for us the depths of his love and mercy more powerfully by personally suffering crucifixion, and by being active even in his very deity in and through his own human suffering and death. The contrary conditions not of God but of human nature are the diverse "places" in which God expresses himself: in human lowliness and in human exaltation, in suffering and in glorification, in passivity and in instrumental activity. There is no dialectical movement in God, but there is rather a mystery of the wisdom of God's mercy, as he employs even his own human agony and death as a means to restore us to life.

Finally, it is the case that all works of the triune God *ad extra* are works of the three distinct persons acting in their identical unity of being. Thus, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit equally raised up the sacred humanity of Christ (body and soul) to a new, glorified life. We can also say, however, that the Paschal mystery does manifest for us, in and through the human agony, death, and resurrection of Christ, the relations of the persons and the processions of the Son and Holy Spirit from the Father. The human obedience of the Son in his passion is proper to his created nature alone, but it is also expressive of his personal intentions and willing. Therefore even Jesus' human acts of obedience reveal to us something of his personal relation to the Father, a relation that is constitutive of his divine identity. The Son as God is given to us to save us, judge us, and raise us from the dead, insofar as he proceeds from the Father and receives all that he has from the Father.[108] Consequently, even in his own divine action of saving us from the cross, or of glorifying his body and soul as God in the resurrection, he is personally manifest as the Son who is relative to the Father, who receives all he is from the Father. The transposition from the Paschal mystery to the consideration of the immanent life of the triune God is legitimate and necessary. It has to be done in twofold respect. One must avoid the extreme of reducing the immanent life of the Trinity to that of a historical life

[108] See *ScG* IV, c. 8; and Gilles Emery, O.P., "The Personal Mode of Trinitarian Action in St. Thomas Aquinas," *The Thomist* 69 (2005): 31-77.

among us (based upon an anthropomorphism derived from the human character of the cross event), and one must avoid severing all connection between the cross and the revelation of the inner life of the triune God, so as to fall into a kind of practical Sabellianism. Kenotic theology tends toward the first extreme, but it also serves as a warning to classical Trinitarian thought to avoid the danger of the latter.

By the very shape of the arguments offered above, I have sketched out a set of evident tensions or interesting contrasts between the thought of Aquinas and themes found in a number of modern Christological thinkers. In presenting the ideas of the latter I have indicated only very succinctly some ways that I think Aquinas's approach to the mystery of the cross is advantageous. An underlying theme is the following: whether we adopt Aquinas's views or not has significant soteriological consequences. How we understand the presence of Christ's divinity in his Paschal mystery will in turn greatly affect how we think that Jesus Christ saves us through his passion, death, and resurrection. All this is based upon a more fundamental point—something simpler, and more profound. Aquinas's theology of the cross is utterly accepting of the most fundamental teaching of the New Testament: that this man Jesus—who was crucified, died, and was buried—is truly God. His thought, as a prototypical expression of the classical Christological tradition, can help us today to recover a sense of the divinity of Christ, even in his Paschal mystery, or especially in his Paschal mystery.

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AQUINAS ON THE VICE OF SLOTH: THREE INTERPRETIVE ISSUES

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DEFINING THE CAPITAL VICE of sloth (*acedia*) is a difficult business in Thomas Aquinas and in the Christian tradition of thought from which he draws his account.

In this article, I will raise three problems for interpreting Aquinas's account of sloth. They are all related, as are the resolutions to them I will offer. The three problems can be framed as questions: How, on Aquinas's account, can sloth consistently be categorized as, first, a capital vice and, second, a spiritual vice? These two questions lead to a third, namely, how is the condition of sloth possible, given Aquinas's moral psychology and the nature of the will?

The resolution of these interpretive issues can help do two things. It can help explain the apparent inconsistency between traditional (ancient and medieval) and contemporary conceptions of this vice, and—if Aquinas's account is right—it can help us diagnose contemporary moral and spiritual maladies that may either go unnoticed or be confused with distinctively modern "virtues" like diligence and industriousness.[1]

I. THE FIRST INTERPRETIVE ISSUE: SLOTH AS A CAPITAL VICE

[1] I argue this point in considerably greater detail in "The Vice of Sloth: Some Historical Reflections on Laziness, Effort, and Resistance to the Demands of Love," in *Virtues and Their Vices,* ed. Craig Boyd and Kevin Timpe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). An earlier version was published by *The Other Journal* 10 (November 2007) and can be found online at http://theotherjournal.com/2007/11/15/.

Aquinas's account of the vice of sloth is generally consistent with the tradition before him on this subject—both in naming it a capital vice and in diagnosing it as a spiritual vice.[2]

Gregory the Great, with his usual rhetorical flourish, describes the capital vices as commanders of a great army of vices, under the ultimate direction of their general, pride.

> For the tempting vices, which fight against us in invisible contest in behalf of the pride which reigns over them, some of them go first, like captains, others follow, after the manner of an army. . . . For when pride, the queen of sins, has fully possessed a conquered heart, she surrenders it immediately to seven principal sins, as if to some of her generals, to lay it waste. And an army in truth follows these generals, because, doubtless, there spring up from them importunate hosts of sins. Which we set forth the better, if we specially bring forward in enumeration, as we are able, the leaders themselves and their army. For pride is the root of all evil, of which it is said, as Scripture bears witness; *Pride is the beginning of all sin.* [Ecclus. 10, 1] But seven principal vices, as its first progeny, spring doubtless from this poisonous root, namely, vain glory, envy, anger, melancholy, avarice, gluttony, lust. . . . Because, therefore, seven principal vices produce from themselves so great a multitude of vices, when they reach the heart, they bring, as it were, the bands of an army after them. But of these seven, five namely are spiritual, and two are carnal. [3]

[2] As consistent as the tradition itself, that is: Gregory combines sloth and sorrow under the name *tristitia,* while Evagrius of Pontus (*Praktikos*) and John Cassian (*Institutes, Conference* 5) regard *acedia* and *tristitia* as distinct vices. Aquinas combines sorrow and sloth under the name *acedia,* but defines sloth as a type of sorrow.

[3] Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob* 31.45.87-88 (*PL* 76:0620C-0621D) (trans. John Henry Parker [London: J. G. F. and J. Rivington, 1844]). Gregory continues by correlating each capital vice with its characteristic offspring (based on lists found already in Cassian's *Conference* 5): "But these several sins have each their army against us. For from vain glory there arise disobedience, boasting, hypocrisy, contentions, obstinacies, discords, and the presumptions of novelties. From envy there spring hatred, whispering, detraction, exultation at the misfortunes of a neighbour, and affliction at his prosperity. From anger are produced strifes, swelling of mind, insults, clamour, indignation, blasphemies. From melancholy there arise malice, rancour, cowardice, despair, slothfulness in fulfilling the commands, and a wandering of the mind on unlawful objects. From avarice there spring treachery, fraud, deceit, perjury, restlessness, violence, and hardnesses of heart against compassion. From gluttony are propagated foolish mirth, scurrility, uncleanness, babbling, dulness of sense in understanding. From lust are generated blindness of mind, inconsiderateness, inconstancy, precipitation, self-love, hatred of God, affection for this present world, but dread or despair of that which is to come" (ibid.).

Aquinas formalizes Gregory's description of the capital vices in terms of final causality. A capital vice is defined as one for the sake of which other sins are committed on account of its very desirable end.[4] This very desirable end—as the object or good that defines the capital vice in question—plays its role as final cause on account of its affinity with happiness (*beatitudo*), the ultimate end of human action.[5] The teleological role of the capital vices in directing action gives them enormous motivating power and influence in initiating other sins, which are committed for its sake or to achieve their ends.[6] Hence in the *Summa Theologiae* and the *Disputed Questions on Evil* Aquinas glosses the relevant meaning of "capital" as "source" sin or vice.[7]

> It is not in this sense [*i.e.* capital punishment] that we are now speaking of capital sins, but in another sense, in which the term 'capital' is derived from head [*caput*], taken metaphorically for a principle or director of others. In this way a capital vice is one from which other vices arise, chiefly by being their final cause, which origin is formal, as stated above (IaIIae.76.2). Wherefore a capital vice is not only the principle of others, but is also their director and, in a way, their leader, because the art or habit, to which the end belongs, is always the principle and the commander in matters concerning the means. Hence Gregory (*Mor.* 31.17) compares these capital vices to the "leaders of an army."[8]

> We are now speaking about capital sins as we speak of head meaning source. And so Gregory calls capital sins fonts of sin. And so we call sins capital in this way of originating, to which the third meaning of head also consequently belongs. For a ruler evidently directs his subjects to attain his objective, as, for example, a commander deploys his army to attain his objective, as the *Metaphysics* says. As

[4] *STh* I-II q. 84, aa. 3-4; *De Malo,* q. 8, a. 1. Unless otherwise noted, quotations of the *Summa Theologiae* are from the translation of the English Fathers of the Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros., 1948, repr. Christian Classics, 1981); quotations of *The Disputed Questions on Evil* are from Richard Regan, trans., *On Evil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[5] Augustine, too, makes this point, describing the "specious vices" as having "a flawed reflection of beauty" and enumerating the ways in which each of the vices offer simulacra of the happiness we can only have in God (*Confessions* 2.7).

[6] In some cases, the "offspring vices" are the effects of such pursuit (e.g., "restlessness" for avarice).

[7] Thus this designation is not to be confused with the alternate label for the list of seven, the "seven deadly sins." Aquinas thinks that most of the seven capital vices can occur in a venial as well as in a mortal form.

[8] *STh* I-II q. 84, a. 3; see also I-II, q. 84, a. 4.

so capital sins are commanders, and the sins arising from capital sins the army, as it were, as Gregory says.

Therefore, those sins are capital that have ends chiefly desirable as such, so that other sins are subordinated to such ends.[9]

For example, consider the capital vice of avarice or greed. It is a sin whose end is very desirable—for while money itself is literally only a means, symbolically or representationally money promises self-sufficiency. As we know already from Aristotle's ethics, self-sufficiency is end-like and happiness-like enough to stir up great desire and to motivate us to do all else—in this case, commit many other sins—in pursuit of it. So the progeny or offspring vices of avarice include fraud, robbery, insensibility to mercy, and treachery, among others.[10] In similar fashion, the capital vices of lust and gluttony promise pleasure, which also has the nature of an end and is easily mistaken for happiness. Their offspring name the typical dispositional effects of making bodily pleasure one's ultimate end, and so on for the rest of the seven.[11]

However, the "final cause" pattern only appears to work for the capital vices that are characterized by excessive desires for end-like goods, for the sake of which other sins are committed. Unfortunately, neither of the capital vices of sloth and envy seem to fit this pattern or the explanation of their capital nature that goes with it. Both sloth and envy are defined in Aquinas as forms of "sorrow" or "aversion" to a perceived evil rather than excessive desire or love for some good. In fact, for Aquinas, sloth is characterized by the movement of the will which is the *opposite* of love or desire. Nor does he mention any positive object or good end sought as a happiness-substitute in the account of either vice. Leaving envy aside here, how then can sloth count as one of the seven capital vices?

[9] *De Malo,* q. 8, a. 1.

[10] *De Malo,* q. 8, a. 3; *STh* II-II, q. 118, a. 8. Note that lists of offspring vices are meant to offer connections between vices that hold generally and for the most part, not to offer an exhaustive list of possible offspring vices or imply that they necessarily follow in all cases.

[11] After Gregory, pride is usually not numbered as one of the seven, but stands as their root.

Both in the treatise on the passions and in his descriptions of human action involving the will, Aquinas emphasizes that all movements of the human person—whether in action or in passion—arise from love as their root. The first principle of action is a desire for happiness, a good the will loves by necessity of its nature. So love has priority in the movements of the will. In the treatise on the passions, Aquinas says that love is the most basic or fundamental passion, in the sense that it is the explanatory root of all other movements of the sense appetite. Our aversions, fears, and responses of anger stem more basically from what we love.[12] "And if we wish to know the order of all the passions in the way of generation, love and hatred are first . . . yet so that love precedes hatred."[13] For example, in the questions on fear and the treatise on courage—the virtue that moderates fear according to right reason—Aquinas quotes Augustine many times over to the effect that "fear is born of love." That is, what we fear is explained by some loved good that we find threatened. The same is true on the level of action and the movement of the will.

The first principle of practical reason is Aquinas's guide, then, for the natural counterpart of loving some good and pursuing it is to avoid and shun the opposite evil.[14] These are not two principles, but different manifestations of the same thing—pursuit of some good and avoidance of some evil that threatens it are, in moral psychological terms, two sides of the same coin.

> We should note that it belongs to the same consideration that one pursues a good and shuns the contrary evil. For example, a glutton seeks pleasure in food and shuns the distress that results from the absence of food, and it is likewise regarding other sins. And so we can appropriately distinguish capital sins by different goods and evils, namely, so that one capital sin is distinguished from others whenever there is a particular aspect of desirability or avoidance.[15]

[12] *STh* I-II q. 10, a. 2; and I-II, q. 25, a. 2. What we love is what is akin to our nature or fitting to it (*STh* I-II, q. 27, a. 1) and something to which we desire to be united (*STh* II-II, q. 27, a. 2).

[13] *STh* I-II q. 25, a. 4.

[14] *STh* I-II q. 94, a. 2.

[15] *De Malo,* q. 8, a. 1.

We do not distinguish sins by the difference of good and evil, since the same sin concerns a good and its contrary evil, as I have said [in the response].[16]

Since he describes sloth and envy as aversions or avoidances, this implies attachment to some loved good which stands contrary to an opposing evil. This evil the agent then avoids or opposes.

In short, the avoidance of evil can be a goal; it can operate as a final cause. As I have argued elsewhere, psychologically speaking, sloth itself is better characterized as the impulse to escape something burdensome than as something good one desires as a convenient escape or diversion.[17] Nonetheless, what always does the ultimate explanatory work for Aquinas is the underlying attachment to a good which prompts one to avoid a particular evil. The question for the vice of sloth is, then, what exactly *is* the good that underlies the slothful person's aversion and avoidance? Moreover, is the good loved and pursued and the evil avoided in Aquinas's analysis of this vice the right sort of object for sloth to qualify as a *capital* vice? That is, in moral psychological terms, are they happiness-substitutes and final causes? I will return to these questions after laying out in more detail what Aquinas thinks sloth's object is.

II. The Second Interpretive Issue: Sloth as a Spiritual Vice

In the Christian tradition before Aquinas, sloth was consistently categorized as a spiritual vice.[18] Only *vana gloria* and *superbia* supercede it on the spiritual end of Cassian's and Gregory's continua of vices, lists in which the vices are ordered from carnal (lust, gluttony) to spiritual (pride).[19] The earliest

[16] *De Malo,* q. 8, a. 1, ad 12.

[17] Slothful aversion can take the form of open resistance or denial and escapism. See my account in "The Roots of Despair," in R. E. Houser, ed., *Aquinas and the Virtues: Hope* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, forthcoming). One can imagine the slothful person's state of desire as oriented toward "*anything* but this."

[18] This did not necessarily or frequently translate into conceptions of sloth that were popular at the time.

[19] G-L-A-I-T-I-A-V-S is a cumbersome acronym, but gets the point across: the list of vices progresses from carnal temptations to spiritual ones: *gula, luxuria, avaritia, ira, trististia, invidia, acedia, vana gloria, superbia.*

Christian thinkers to give a written account of *acedia,* Evagrius of Pontus and John Cassian, describe the vice as disposing the monk not only to leave his cell or monastery but to abandon his spiritual vocation altogether. For both of them, the target of sloth is nothing less than the religious life and one's commitment to it:

> The demon of *acedia* . . . instills in [the monk] a dislike for the place and for his state of life itself. . . . [The demon] joins to these suggestions the memory of [the monk's] close relations and of his former life; he depicts for him the long course of his lifetime, while bringing the burdens of asceticism before his eyes; and, as the saying has it, he deploys every device in order to have the monk leave his cell and flee the stadium.[20]

> Once this [vice] has seized possession of a wretched mind it makes a person horrified at where he is, disgusted with his cell, and also disdainful and contemptuous of the brothers who live with him . . . until he is gradually drawn out of his cell and begins to forget the reason for his profession.[21]

Whether to designate sloth as a carnal or as a spiritual vice is another interpretive puzzle in Aquinas. In his introductions to the capital vices in both *De Malo* and the *Summa Theologiae* he initially describes sloth as an aversion to the divine or spiritual good "on account of the attendant bodily labor"[22] or as apathy about a spiritual good "that prevents a bodily good" such as "tranquility or bodily pleasure."[23]

Moreover, he seems to agree with Augustine's answer to a question about whether the demons can have the vices.[24] Augustine says the demons can have spiritual vices like pride and envy, which appear to require only an act of will; however, he denies that purely spiritual creatures like demons can have sloth or any other carnal vices such as lust and gluttony. In answer to the question, "Whether only the sin of pride and envy can exist in an angel?" Aquinas responds,

[20] Evagrius of Pontus, *Praktikos* 6.12 (R Sinkewicz, trans., *Evagrius of Pontus,* Oxford Early Christian Studies [Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003]).

[21] John Cassian, *Institutes* 10.2 and 3 (trans. B. Ramsey, Ancient Christian Writers 58 [Mahwah, N.J.: Newman Press, 2000]).

[22] *STh* I-II, q. 84, a. 4.

[23] *De Malo,* q. 8, a. 1.

[24] *STh* I, q. 63, a. 2.

[A]s to affection, only those sins can be in the demons which can belong to a spiritual nature. Now a spiritual nature cannot be affected by such pleasure as pertain to bodies, but only by such as are in keeping with spiritual things. . . .

Sloth is a kind of sadness, where one becomes sluggish in spiritual exercises because they weary the body; which does not apply to the demons. So it is evident that pride and envy are the only spiritual sins which can be found in demons; yet so that envy is not taken for a passion, but for a will resisting the good of another.[25]

We can gather two things from this first run of textual evidence: First, sloth appears to require a body, for it seems to be related somehow to bodily labor and rest, physical comfort, or other bodily goods. Second, sloth appears to be a vice with a carnal object, since these texts describe the slothful person as averse to the divine good on account of or for the sake of the bodily good which she makes her end instead. On this description, sloth should count as a carnal vice, because it has a carnal object. Physical comfort or pleasure is the good the slothful person has in view.

Complications for this interpretation quickly arise, however, when we see that Aquinas explicitly denies that sloth is a carnal vice, both on Gregory's authority and for his own reasons. He makes this denial in the two articles (one in *De Malo* and one in the *Summa*) in which he explicitly addresses the definition and object of the vice of sloth. In response to an objection claiming that sloth is "sadness over a spiritual good in a particular respect, namely, inasmuch as [sloth] prevents bodily rest"[26]—a feature that would make it a carnal sin—Aquinas replies:

In order for [sloth] to be designated a special sin, we need to say that there is sadness about a spiritual good in a particular respect. And we cannot say that there is a particular respect insofar as the sadness prevents a bodily good, since

[25] *STh* I, q. 63, a. 2, corp. and ad 2.

[26] The full objection reads: "People have said that [sloth] is sadness over a spiritual good in a particular respect, namely, inasmuch as sloth prevents bodily rest. But to desire bodily rest belongs to carnal sins. And to desire something and to be sad at its prevention belong to the same consideration. Therefore, if sloth is a special kind of sin only because it prevents bodily rest, then sloth would be a sin of the flesh, although Gregory lists sloth with spiritual sins, as his work *Moralia* makes clear" (*De Malo,* q. 11, a. 2, obj. 3).

[sloth] accordingly would not be a sin distinct from the sin that concerns the bodily good[27]

—which it *is* distinct from, so the passage implies. The desire for bodily rest can cause us to sorrow over spiritual goods, but this is not what defines sloth as a distinct species of sin. In the *Summa* he is even clearer:

Again, it cannot be said that sloth is a special vice, insofar as it shuns spiritual good as toilsome or troublesome to the body, or as a hindrance to the body's pleasure, for this again would not sever sloth from carnal vices, where a person seeks bodily comfort and pleasure.[28]

Further, Aquinas sets sloth in opposition to the virtue of charity. Both the virtue of charity and the capital vices opposed to it—sloth and envy—are located in the will, the appetite whose proper object is a rationally apprehended (spiritual) good. In order to set sloth up as a disposition to feel sorrow over the same object charity disposes us to enjoy, Aquinas needs to do some additional work on our common notion of "sorrow." Although we might expect sloth to be found in the concupiscible appetite as its subject because Aquinas describes it as a type of "sadness" or "sorrow," it becomes clear in *De Malo* that he extends passions of the sensory appetite by way of analogy to the will.

And so all the movements of the irascible and concupiscible powers accompanied by emotions, such as emotions of love, joy, hope, and the like, can belong to the will but without emotion.[29]

But we should note that we can consider [sloth] in two ways, since it is a sadness: in one way as the act of a sense appetite; in the second way as the act of the intellectual appetite, that is, the will. . . . And so sloth, if it should designate an act of the will avoiding an internal and spiritual good, can have the complete nature of sin. [30]

[27] *De Malo,* q. 11, a. 2.
[28] *STh* II-II, q. 35, a. 2.
[29] *De Malo,* q. 8, a. 3.
[30] *De Malo,* q. 11, a. 1.

Since he takes care to apply his description of slothful sorrow explicitly beyond the range of the sense appetite and designates this form of sorrow as sinful, I take him to be thinking of sloth primarily as an aversion of the will, that is, an aversion to an intelligible or spiritual good paralleling the reaction of sorrow in the concupiscible appetite, where sorrow's object is a present (sensible) evil.

If Aquinas insists on aligning his view with the tradition in making sloth a spiritual vice on account of its spiritual object, as he seems to do, then we have several questions left to answer to resolve the interpretive puzzles we have raised so far. Concerning the second puzzle, what is the object that defines sloth in such a way that it counts as a spiritual vice? And how is sloth opposed then—if at all—to bodily labor or comfort, but *not* in a way that defines it as carnal? Concerning the first interpretive puzzle, moreover, how is this object a happiness-imitator and final cause, such that sloth should count as a capital vice?

It is clear by now that the first two interpretive issues arise from a puzzle about what the object of sloth is.[31] Once this basic puzzle is sorted out, we will understand how sloth is related to happiness—answering our first interpretive question about sloth's status as a capital vice—and also why it should count as a spiritual vice, our second interpretive question. Unfortunately, the resolution of the first two interpretive issues brings with it a further question. Aquinas's view about the object of *acedia* appears to make sloth psychologically impossible on his own account of the nature of the human will. In the last two sections of the paper, I will treat the object of sloth, and then turn to address this last interpretive issue.

III. The Object of Acedia

Aquinas defines sloth as "sorrow over the divine good in us" (*STh*) or "sorrow over the "interior and divine good" (*bonum*

[31] For a more extended exposition of this point, see Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung,, "Resistance to the Demands of Love: Aquinas on the Vice of *Acedia*," *The Thomist* 68 (April 2004): 173-204.

divinum) that is the special object of the theological virtue of charity (*De Malo*).[32]

> Therefore we should say that to be saddened over the special good that is the interior and divine good causes [sloth] to be a special kind of sin, as loving this good causes charity to be a special virtue.[33]

> Sorrow in the Divine good about which charity rejoices belongs to a special vice, which is called sloth.[34]

Its opposition to charity goes a long way toward accounting for both the spiritual and the serious nature of this vice. That much thus looks promising for aligning Aquinas's account with the Christian tradition before him. But we still have to explain what Aquinas might mean by the "interior, divine good," or "the divine good in us."

Charity, for Aquinas, is our habitual participation in the divine nature by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is a theological virtue infused by grace that enables the will to be oriented toward beatitude or supernatural happiness, which is perfect union of the human person with God. According to Aquinas's definition,

> Charity is a friendship of human beings for God, founded upon the fellowship of everlasting happiness. Now this fellowship is due to not natural powers but a gift of grace (as according to Romans 6:23), so charity surpasses our natural capacities. . . . Therefore charity cannot be in us naturally, nor is it something we acquire by human natural powers; it can only be in us by the infusion of the Holy Spirit, Who is the Love of the Father and the Son. *Created charity just is this participation of the Holy Spirit in us.*[35]

Charity is a new and improved "second nature" acquired not by a process of habituation, but by infusion. Our new nature—which is nothing short of participation in the divine nature—is a gift of

[32] Technically, slothful sorrow is opposed to joy, the first interior effect of charity (*STh* II-II, q. 28).

[33] *De Malo,* q. 11, a. 2.

[34] *STh* II-II, q. 35, a. 2.

[35] *STh* II-II, q. 24, a. 2 (my translation; emphasis added); see also II-II, q. 23, a.3, ad 3: "charity is superior to the soul, inasmuch as it is a *participation in the Holy Spirit*" (emphasis added).

the Holy Spirit.[36] By charity we become like-natured to God[37] and are enabled to achieve union with God, who is our ultimate end. In question. 23 of the *Secunda Secundae,* Aquinas describes charity in terms of friendship, where the friend is "another self," loved on account of his or her likeness of nature. (Aquinas's account of charity is, therefore, an unlikely mixture of Aris-totelian virtue friendship, albeit of unequal parties, made possible by Platonic participation in the divine nature, a participation now described as the work of grace and the Holy Spirit.) The upshot for our discussion here is simply that the spiritual good that is charity—understood as our participation in the divine nature—is the "interior, divine good" to which sloth is an aversion.

With respect to our first two interpretive puzzles, then, Aquinas now has what he needs: sloth's object is a spiritual good—the good of our participation in the divine nature. This good, moreover, not only imitates happiness, but *is* happiness, since becoming like-natured to God is how human nature achieves its perfection. So we have found an object that can satisfactorily explain sloth's status as a spiritual vice and a capital vice.

But this causes an acute problem in its turn: If the slothful person is averse to the "interior divine good" of charity, is she then averse to her own flourishing? How can we sorrow over the presence of the divine nature in us, since union with God is our perfect good? Doesn't the will by necessity of its nature desire perfect happiness? Joy, not sorrow, is the natural reaction of the presence of a loved good, and if this good is that in which our happiness consists, how can the will sorrow over and resist it? In short, according to his own metaphysical commitments, has Aquinas made sloth a psychologically impossible vice?

[36] Not coincidentally, Aquinas closely aligns the virtue of charity with the New Law, "which consists chiefly in the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is shown forth through faith which works through love" (*STh* I-II, q. 108, a. 1) and which is "like an interior habit bestowed on us . . . inclining us to act aright . . . [and] mak[ing] us do freely those things which are becoming to grace, and shun[ning] what is opposed to it" (*STh* I-II, q. 108, a. 1, ad 2).

[37] *STh* I-II, q. 62, a. 1: "The other is a happiness surpassing human nature which we can obtain by the power of God alone, by a kind of participation of the Godhead, about which it is written (2 Peter 1:4) that by Christ we are made 'partakers in the Divine nature.'"

IV. The Third Interpretive Issue: An Aversion to Happiness?

To resolve this last interpretive puzzle, we need to understand what could possibly make the slothful agent view the interior divine good of charity as an apparent evil.

Aquinas's answer is that this is possible "on account of the opposition of the flesh to the spirit," quoting Paul in Galatians 5:17.

> So, too, the movement of sloth is sometimes in the sensitive appetite alone, by reason of the opposition of the flesh to the spirit, and then it is a venial sin; whereas sometimes it reaches to the reason, which consents in the dislike, horror, and detestation of the Divine good, on account of the flesh utterly prevailing over the spirit. In this case it is evident that sloth is a mortal sin.[38]

> And this divine good is a source of sadness for human beings because of the contrariety of the spirit to the flesh, since "the flesh lusts against the spirit," as the Apostle says in Gal. 5:17. And so when desire of the flesh is dominant in human beings, they have distaste for spiritual good as contrary to their good.[39]

The flesh-spirit opposition is not to be understood as making sloth preoccupied with "carnal" goods again, lest we be tempted back into mistaking it for a carnal vice with a carnal object; this is a move Aquinas has already pre-empted. What then does Paul, and Aquinas following him, mean by invoking this distinction?

The answer to this question is more complicated than my earlier work on the vice of sloth suggested.[40] First, we need to turn to Aquinas's Scripture commentaries—one on Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians and one on his Epistle to the Galatians. In Paul's writings, the flesh/spirit distinction parallels the old self/new self distinction, an opposition Paul uses to mark off sinful human nature from redeemed, regenerated human nature. In the Ephesians commentary, the sinful nature includes both the body

[38] *STh* II-II, q. 35, a. 3.

[39] *De Malo,* q. 11, a. 3.

[40] See in particular, DeYoung, "Resistance to the Demands of Love"; and chapter 4 of Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, *Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and Their Remedies* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2009).

and the soul or "inner man," and the regenerate nature includes both as well. In Paul's thinking overall, the flesh/spirit distinction and the old self/new self distinction do not indicate a body-soul split. Rather, "flesh/spirit" and "old self/new self" talk signals the difference between a life and character dominated by sinful desires, habits, and actions on the one hand, and the way that that old life and sinful nature becomes transformed by grace into a person's new life in Christ, with its new desires, habits, and actions on the other. In Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and Colossians 3—to name a few Pauline texts on this theme—Paul contrasts the sinful nature to one's new life in Christ in just these sorts of terms. Aquinas's Ephesians commentary tracks Paul closely on this issue, acknowledging that the battle between flesh and spirit is not a battle between bodily desires and spiritual ones, but a battle between the sinful, fallen self and the new self redeemed by Christ and transformed by his Spirit.

This picture of what's going on in Paul's texts—and in a parallel way in Aquinas's understanding of sloth—supports Aquinas's claim that sloth is essentially a spiritual vice with a spiritual object. For what the slothful person resists is the whole "new self" (not just the soul), that is, becoming a person transformed by the Spirit of Christ. She resists it on grounds of her residual attachment to the whole "old self" (not just the body), that is, all her habits and desires that are rooted in rebellion toward God and prideful attempts at autonomy.[41]

Conflict between the old and new is possible because the transformation between being sinful and becoming redeemed is not instantaneous. This is equally key to understanding sloth as a vice. The infusion of charity orients the will to its supernatural telos and enables the will to reach that end. But this requires a long process of rehabituation and transformation, a process that requires human cooperation and consent. Infused virtue does not automatically or initially make action in compliance with charity

[41] This sort of rebellion is illustrated, paradigmatically, in St. Augustine's theft of the pears (*Confessions* 2.4-10).

pleasant or easy.[42] Rather, this long, arduous process involves the discipline of dying to the old self and resisting its inclinations. There is much effort involved in this daily commitment to transformation. Love takes work.

My reading of Aquinas concludes that this ongoing transformation—with the struggle it often brings to the surface between old and new habits and desires—is the object of the slothful person's resistance and aversion. So Aquinas summarizes his definition of sloth by saying, "And so when desire of the flesh is dominant in human beings, they have distaste for [this interior divine] spiritual good *as contrary to themselves* [*sibi contrarium*]."[43]

Hence there *is* aversion to effort and a desire to remain comfortable and undisturbed involved in the vice of sloth. The effort shunned and the comfort sought, however, are not most accurately described merely in bodily, physical terms. In fact, Aquinas, following the tradition before him, notes that one of sloth's main symptoms is investing great effort in diversionary activities, activities that might well require much physical effort. By remaining preoccupied with these activities, the slothful one avoids accepting the demands made by divine love, demands directed toward the regeneration of one's nature.

This explains why restlessness (false activity)[44] and inertia (false rest)[45]——are the twin marks of a slothful character. When the apparent evil feels escapable, a person will go to almost any length to avoid facing up to her identity as a friend of God and the attendant demands of this relationship. This avoidance can show itself in restless activity, diversion-seeking, and even physical

[42] See Aquinas's interesting discussion of the different effects of the acquired and infused virtues in the *Disputed Questions on the Virtues,* q. 1, a. 10, ad 14 and 15, a passage in which he also cites Gal 5:17.

[43] *De Malo,* q. 11, a. 2, emphasis added.

[44] The activity is false because it is only apparently aimed at one's good. Its pointlessness points to the shunning of one's true *telos:* one is in motion, but moving nowhere.

[45] The rest is false because it names the state of having nothing to do because one cares about nothing or has resigned oneself to doing nothing. This contrasts with true rest, which is a kind of delight in a good attained (or, alternately, true refreshment for the sake of further purposeful activity).

restlessness (talking too much, nervous fidgeting, etc.).[46] To avoid misunderstanding the vice, however, these physical manifestations should be understood as slothful only insofar as they are symptoms of inner resistance, as Cassian's slothful monks shunned prayer and manual labor *because* these were exercises required by their commitment to the religious life—activities designed to affirm and strengthen their willingness to share in the vocation of the religious community.[47]

On the other extreme, when the apparent evil of our participation in the divine nature feels inescapable, sloth shows itself as inertia, oppressive sorrow, and even despair.[48] The slothful person cannot bear to give up on happiness but she also cannot bear to endure what true happiness requires of her. The person who cannot be at rest with God's presence in her, a presence which calls her to live out her new identity and shed the old self, therefore tends to one or the other of these two extremes—restlessness or false rest.

In Aquinas's Galatians commentary, his take on the "flesh vs. spirit" distinction gets a slightly different nuance. "The flesh" again is the name of sinful concupiscence, the desires of the sinful nature. But when original justice was lost after the fall, the natural order of the human person—in which reason directs and commands sensory appetite—was lost and replaced by disorder. In our sinful, disordered state, then, concupiscible desires dominate—"concupiscible" here meaning the whole sensory appetite not ruled by (right) reason. In a state where the sensory appetite follows its own way without reason's rule, the good of the individual is framed in terms of goods apprehensible by the sensory appetite. These goods are particular material goods, in contrast to the intelligible goods that reason can apprehend. The conception of one's own perfection—from the point of view of the sinful self disordered by conscupiscence, our "fleshly" state—is indeed a good immediately apprehensible by sense (not a good

[46] *STh* II-II, q. 35, a. 4, ad 3.

[47] See Cassian, *Institutes* 10.

[48] Despair is one of the offspring vices of sloth. I argue that it is sloth's natural *telos* in "Roots of Despair."

apprehensible by reason), that is, a carnal, temporal good. This explains how and why the slothful person has a truncated and distorted view of her own perfection, and why her escapist diversions typically take the form they do. Relationships of love and friendship, spiritual discipline and virtue, or any other spiritual or intelligible goods, are not objects apprehensible by sense. When the fleshly perspective dominates, therefore, "the interior divine good" looks like nothing but a hindrance to the good of the selfish, sinful self.

V. Solving the Interpretive Puzzles

We began with three interpretive issues in Aquinas's texts on the vice of sloth. First, How can sloth be a capital vice, when it is defined as sorrow or sadness over a present evil rather than excessive love for some good that simulates happiness and functions as a final cause for other vices and sins? Second, How can slothful sorrow be "on account of the attendant bodily labor" and not possible for purely spiritual creatures such as the demons when Aquinas and the tradition consistently categorize it as a spiritual vice? And last, If sloth really is resistance to our participation in the divine nature and the attendant demands of charity, how is it possible for the will to resist its own perfection, rather than rejoice in it?

The definition of sloth in terms of the old-self/new-self distinction helps resolve the first two puzzles. Sloth can be a capital vice because it springs from an excessive love for a happiness-like end—the sinful nature and its definition of fulfillment and flourishing. On Aquinas's view, "love and pursue good" and "avoid [the] evil[s opposed to it]" are motivational mirror images. Slothful aversion to the divine nature and resistance to its transformational demands is the flip-side of attachment to the sinful nature and a desire for the ultimate good of the "old self." Nothing less than happiness itself—based on what one identifies as one's true nature and its *telos*—is at stake in sloth. Sloth thus fits the pattern of the capital vices, whose greatly desirable, happiness-like ends spur us on to a range of other

vices.[49] In this resolution of the first interpretive puzzle, not only does Aquinas's account maintain internal consistency on the nature of the capital vices, but it also offers a powerful reason to include sloth among the list of seven "source" sins—a reason often lacking in popular conceptions of sloth in his own time, and certainly lacking in most contemporary portraits.

As for the second puzzle—whether sloth is a spiritual or a carnal vice on account of its object—we can see now that Aquinas can satisfactorily explain why sloth counts as a spiritual vice. Its excessive attachment to the sinful nature, or old self, is the ground of its aversion to the divine interior good that is the new self, the self that participates in the divine nature. From the perspective of disordered concupiscence, the divine, spiritual good can indeed look like an apparent evil to be resisted and avoided. Nonetheless, sloth's object of love is not itself something carnal, such as physical comfort or bodily rest; rather, the slothful one resists the effort of shedding her sinful habits and living in a way more consistent with her regenerate nature.

As if to confirm this point, Aquinas notes that because sloth symptomatically involves significant physical activity (whether work related or recreational) that is designed to divert the person's attention from the transformation to which she is called by charity, it cannot be physical effort *per se* that she resists nor physical comfort or rest that she seeks above all. Rather, the slothful person is averse to any effort—whether physical or spiritual or both—that is required to accept and live out her new "divine" nature. This emphasis is needed to keep from confusing sloth with laziness or resistance to merely physical effort, and also to keep from misreading St. Paul on the definition of the "flesh."

But an important caveat is needed here. Because human nature—both sinful and sanctified—is *embodied* rationality, all human activity here on earth will involve some physical activity,

[49] The slothful person, on Aquinas's account, comes out looking like an Augustinian divided self, torn between loves and ultimate ends: the slothful person sees the demands of new self, but still deep down wants to remain firmly attached to the old self (see Augustine, *Confessions* 8.10-11). I would argue that this is a point in favor of my interpretation, since Aquinas typically relies heavily on Augustine in his texts on love.

or involve the body at some level. There is a sense in which no vice is "purely" spiritual for a human being. Even prayer and contemplation use and involve the body. In fact, in his discussion of prayer Aquinas recommends the involvement of bodily movements and material objects, not only because this holds our attention better but also because it accords with our nature as human beings.[50] Sloth was first identified and analyzed by the Desert Fathers—extreme ascetics whose efforts at spiritual discipline often taxed the body to its very limits. But no spiritual discipline, however moderate, exempts the body. Hence, the vice of sloth—while centered on which "self" or nature the will ultimately accepts and loves, and defined by an object or spiritual good only reason can recognize—will always involve physical effort and the body in some way.

What about the demons, then? It remains true that the demons do not have bodies and Aquinas agrees with Augustine that they cannot have sloth. If, however, sloth is really about the will and our participation in the divine nature via charity, it is not immediately clear why the demons would not be susceptible to this vice. Again, we can return to Aquinas's definition of sloth in terms of the object of charity to resolve this puzzle.

It is not sloth's possible bodily manifestations—for example, the shunning of physical effort—that make it impossible for the demons to have the vice, but rather the manner in which human nature is regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The human will (being less ontologically perfect than the will of a purely spiritual creature such as an angel) requires a long process of repeated action and habituation for the transformation from old self to new to be completed.[51] For human beings, Aquinas describes charity as having a "now and not yet" character—we have the virtue and partake in the divine nature via the Holy Spirit now, already, but still have to act on that virtue and intensify and deepen it for

[50] *STh* II-II, q. 83, a. 13.

[51] Among rational beings, human beings are the lowest intellects and thus also the slowest learners. See for example, Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, Colleen McCluskey, and Christina Van Dyke, *Aquinas's Ethics: Metaphysical Foundations, Moral Theory, and Theological Context* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 23 and 50-51.

charity to be fully perfected. Aquinas describes it as "a beginning of glory in us" (see *STh* II-II, q. 24, aa. 4-9, on the increase of charity). Like any friendship, which is real and present now yet grows to perfection over time and with continual effort, charity needs daily discipline and commitment over time to be perfected. The demons do not have sloth, not merely because they do not have bodies, but because the orientation of their nature against God took place in a single act of will, rather than the long, temporal process of transformation through habituation that humans must undergo.[52] For us, it is the day-after-day-after-day character of our commitment, the thousand small denials of selfish inclination, and the wearisomeness of persevering in the good that give sloth a potential foothold.[53]

This interpretation also makes sense of the remedy the Desert Fathers advocated for sloth: *stabilitas loci*—staying in place, rather than fleeing one's monastic cell (bodily) or giving in to escapist fantasies (mentally). Evagrius counsels the monks, "You must not abandon the cell in the time of temptations, fashioning excuses that seem reasonable. Rather, you must remain seated in-side [and] exercise perseverance."[54] Staying in one place bodily for an extended period of time (even a lifetime) was meant to tutor the soul to find its corresponding rest against temptations to flee love's demands for the work of regeneration. Exercising perseverance and endurance—virtues involving persistence over time—were the ways monks in their desert cells fought the "noonday demon" of sloth. Aquinas echoes their recommendations:

> Now Cassian says, "Experience shows that the onslaught of sloth is not to be evaded by flight but to be conquered by resistance."[55]

> Sin is ever to be shunned, but the assaults of sin should be overcome sometimes by flight, and sometimes by resistance; by flight when a continued thought increases the incentive to sin, as in lust; for which reason it is written (I Cor.

[52] Both reasons are obviously grounded in the ontological status and nature of their being spiritual creatures, but the main point here is that sloth does not have to do with bodily labor, comfort, and the like.

[53] See Kathleen Norris, *Quotidian Mysteries* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1998), 53.

[54] Evagrius of Pontus, *Praktikos* 6.28.

[55] *STh* II-II, q. 35, a. 1, obj. 4.

6:18) "Flee fornication"; by resistance, when perseverance in the thought diminishes the incentive to sin, which incentive arises from some incidental consideration. This is the case with sloth, because the more we think about spiritual goods, the more pleasing they become to us, and soon enough sloth dies away.[56]

On the last, perhaps most important interpretive puzzle—that of the psychological possibility of sloth—we can conclude that the slothful person is (as all people entrenched in vice are) in the grip of an apparent good, mistaking false happiness for true. She chooses the vision of happiness she can see *when in the grip of the old self and its sinful inclinations* over and against the true perfection of her nature. Like Kierkegaard's portrait of the self in *Sickness unto Death,* she chooses not to become herself, and must spend the rest of her life trying to avoid facing up to the inevitable outcome of her choice—despair.[57]

Aquinas's account thus masterfully incorporates the tradition before him on the vices—from Evagrius and Cassian to Gregory—integrating it with Scripture and avoiding easy conflations of sloth with mere laziness or apathy. In so doing, he provides a consistent and convincing account of sloth's place among the seven capital vices. I have argued that the three interpretive puzzles raised by his account are resolvable by a careful understanding of sloth's object, its relation to charity and happiness, and the uniquely human dynamics of regeneration over time.

Besides deepening our understanding of Aquinas and confirming the internal coherence of his account of the vices and virtues, this interpretation yields insights into contemporary (mis)understandings of sloth as well, on the assumption that Aquinas is right about this vice. His account of sloth shows us that as resistance to effort—which accounts for the continuity between ancient and contemporary conceptions of the vice—it is not to be confused with resistance to physical effort *per se*. Aquinas teaches us that slothful flight from our own true self and the demands of

[56] *STh* II-II, q. 35, a. 1, ad 4.

[57] For a fuller analysis of the slide from sloth to despair, see DeYoung, "The Roots of Despair."

our divine calling can often take the form of restless activity and busyness, while stability, perseverance in one's commitments, and endurance—even true *rest*—are its unlikely remedies.[58] Finally, for Aquinas, sloth has much more to do with our aversion to the long, slow process of sanctification than it does to effort or physical work generically speaking. And yet his account, like the desert remedy of *stabilitas,* does not let us forget that all of our works of love or resistance to love are embodied and will involve the whole person, lest we are tempted to overspiritualize or wholly internalize the struggle to put to death the sinful nature.

In all of these ways, Aquinas's account of sloth offers a satisfactory explanation of sloth's perennial importance as a vice, one found wanting in most contemporary accounts and one that vindicates the Christian tradition's inclusion of it on the list of seven capital vices.[59]

[58] Again, these themes are treated in more detail in DeYoung, "The Vice of Sloth."

[59] I am grateful to members of the philosophy department at Calvin College and to the participants of the Cornell Summer Colloquium in Medieval Philosophy for their helpful comments on previous versions of this article.

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PRIMUS DOCTOR IUDAEORUM: MOSES AS THEOLOGICAL MASTER IN THE *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE* OF THOMAS AQUINAS

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IN THE SPRING OF 1256, having recently been licensed to teach at the University of Paris as a master in theology, Thomas Aquinas delivered his inaugural lecture or *principium* as part of the installation ceremonies of a new doctor.[1] Alle-gorizing the words of Psalm 103:13, "Watering the mountains from your higher places, the earth will be filled from the fruit of your work," Thomas explains that the minds of learned teachers are watered from the heights of divine wisdom. Subsequently, through the ministry of the human teacher, the light of divine wisdom runs down to the minds of learners.[2] Near the end of his *principium,* the newly minted master makes clear that whereas God communicates wisdom by his own power, the human teacher does so only as a minister.[3] In a second complementary lecture or *resumptio,* Thomas commends Sacred Scripture for, among other

[1] See Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas,* vol. 1: *The Person and His Work,* rev. ed., trans. Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 50-53; and James A. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Work* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1974), 96-110.

[2] *Rigans montes de superioribus suis*, prooemium: "Similiter, de supernis divinae sapientiae rigantur mentes doctorum, qui per montes significantur, quorum ministerio lumen divinae sapientiae usque ad mentes audientium derivatur" (*S. Thomae Aquinatis Opuscula Theologica* vol. 1, *De re dogmatica et morali,* ed. Raymund A. Verardo [Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1954], 441).

[3] *Rigans montes de superioribus suis* 4: "Deus propria virtute sapientiam communicat. . . . Sed doctores sapientiam non communicant nisi per ministerium" (Marietti ed., 443).

things, its usefulness in leading the student to life.[4] The first way Scripture fulfills this purpose is through the commandments of the Old Testament Law. Because "it was not suitable" (*non erat idoneus*) that the ancient Israelites should receive the Law immediately from God, Thomas maintains, Moses served as mediator. The giving of the Law, then, constituted a twofold process: first it was conveyed from the Lord to Moses, then from Moses to the people.[5]

These initial reflections of Thomas as a newly incepted theological master are noteworthy not only for what they reveal about his understanding of the teaching office, but also for what they presage concerning the role of Moses in the thought and work of the great Dominican theologian. In spite of the fact that lecturing on Scripture was the principal duty of the thirteenth-century master of theology—as his official title, *magister in sacra pagina,* suggests—Thomas never produced a commentary on the Pentateuch.[6] Nevertheless, Moses stands as a seminal figure in his systematic works, appearing over 250 times in the *Summa Theologiae* alone.

The present article aims at an analysis of the figure and work of Moses in Thomas's masterpiece of mature theology.[7] I will

[4] *Hic est liber mandatorum Dei* (Marietti ed., 435-36). On this lecture as a *resumptio,* see Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D'Aquino,* 103-4.

[5] *Hic est liber mandatorum Dei* (Marietti ed., 437).

[6] For an overview of his exegetical writings and method, see Thomas Prügl, "Thomas Aquinas as Interpreter of Scripture," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas,* ed. Rik van Niewenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 386-415. See also *Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to his Biblical Commentaries,* ed. Thomas G. Weinandy, Daniel A. Keating, and John P. Yocum (London: T&T Clark, 2005). Although both the "biblical bachelor" (*baccalaureus biblicus*) and the master were required to lecture on Scripture, each bachelor and master was free to decide on which book of the sacred text he would lecture at any particular time. It is not known with certainty why Thomas chose to lecture on such Old Testament books as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Job and not on the Pentateuch, but we must assume that he made this decision in light of what he perceived as the pressing needs of his Dominican brothers and students training for their vocations as preachers (see Joseph Wawrykow, "Aquinas on Isaiah," in Weinandy, Keating, and Yocum, eds., *Aquinas on Scripture,* 43-71, esp. 45; and Prügl, "Thomas Aquinas as Interpreter of Scripture," esp. 404).

[7] On the significance and influence of the *Summa Theologiae,* see Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D'Aquino,* 222. For an overview of Thomas's mature work of theology, see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Aquinas's* Summa*: Background, Structure, & Reception,* trans. Benedict M. Guevin

argue that in the *Summa Theologiae* Thomas portrays Moses as a great theological master who, having obtained a certain excellence in the knowledge of God, wisely teaches the ancient Israelites various (Christian) doctrines. More specifically, Thomas presents Moses as *primus doctor Iudaeorum,* the first teacher of the Jews, who accommodates his knowledge concerning the triune God, creation, and Christ to his disciples' ability to understand. This portrait of Moses roughly corresponds to Thomas's own self-understanding and purpose in the *Summa,* namely, as a "teacher of Catholic truth" (*catholicae veritatis doctor*) who seeks "to convey the things that belong to the Christian religion in a way suitable for the instruction of beginners."[8] As we will see, however, there are important differences between Moses and Thomas as practitioners of sacred doctrine, with regard to both their acquisition of the truths necessary for salvation and the authority with which they hand on these saving mysteries. Indeed, it is precisely Moses' distinctive status as scriptural author that enables Thomas as Scholastic theologian to use "the first teacher of the Jews" as a source and model for his own theological and didactic work in the *Summa*.

I. "Simply the Greatest of All": Moses' Excellence in the Knowledge of God

As his inaugural lectures and his very career conspicuously attest, Thomas Aquinas believed that a human being really could teach others in divine things that surpass reason, albeit secondarily and instrumentally vis-à-vis God as teacher. As part of his treatment at the end of the *Prima Pars* of how humans can move or change other things, for example, Thomas maintains that one person can teach another exteriorly, whereas the principal cause

(Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

[8] *STh* I, *prologus* (*S. Thomae Aquinatis Summa Theologiae*, 3 vols., ed. P. Caramello [Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1952 and 1956], 1:1. All subsequent references to the Latin will be to the Marietti edition. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the *Summa* will be my own. For a complete English translation see *St. Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologica,* 5 vols., trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros., 1948; repr. Notre Dame, Ind.: Christian Classics, 1981).

of knowledge is the interior light of the intellect.[9] In his earlier commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, Thomas similarly explains that learning—like visual apprehension—requires both the presentation of the object to be apprehended and the provision of light in which it is apprehended. Whereas only God (and angels, though extrinsically) can provide the illumination whereby an intelligible thing is understood, human teachers can present their students with the object itself. Thus, humans teach by presenting intelligible objects in one of two fundamental ways: either by setting before their students something that is intelligible to any person once it has been proposed for consideration, or by leading students from something already known to the thing that is neither known nor immediately knowable.[10]

As intimated in the *Scriptum,* at the heart of Thomas's view of teaching is the notion that the teacher knows a thing unknown to his students and presents it to his students as an object to be apprehended. Thomas makes this explicit in his discussion of gratuitous grace (*gratia gratis data*) in the *Summa* when he maintains that the first necessity for the teacher of divine truth is that he possesses "the fullness of knowledge of divine things" (*plenitudinem cognitionis divinorum*) out of which he is able to instruct others.[11] The teacher also must be able to confirm or prove what he knows before presenting it fittingly to his hearers (*possit convenienter auditoribus proferre*).[12] The ability to possess the knowledge of divine things and convey them appropriately is,

[9] *STh* I, q. 117, a. 1, corp. and ad 1.

[10] II *Sent.,* d. 9, q. 1, a. 2, ad 4 (*S. Thomae Aquinatis Scriptum super Libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi,* vol. 2, ed. R. P. Mandonnet [Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1929], 231-32). For fuller treatments of Thomas's understanding of teaching, see Vivian Boland, "Truth, Knowledge and Communication: Thomas Aquinas on the Mystery of Teaching," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 19 (2006): 287-304; Patrick Quinn, "Aquinas's Views on Teaching," *New Blackfriars* 81 (2001): 108-20; and Michael Sherwin, "Christ the Teacher in St. Thomas's *Commentary on the Gospel of John*," in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology*, ed. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 173-93.

[11] *STh* I-II, q. 111, a. 4.

[12] Ibid.

according to Thomas, a grace that God freely bestows on some humans so that they can lead others to God.[13]

It is significant for the *Summa*'s portrayal of Moses that these brief reflections on the teacher appear in the context of gratuitous grace near the end of the *Prima Secundae* (which concerns the movement to God by human acts generally) in the middle of Thomas's treatment of grace as an extrinsic principle of human action. According to Thomas, gratuitous grace is so called precisely because it is a divine gift given beyond natural ability and personal merit.[14] As we will see, in anticipation of his roles as scriptural author and prophet, Moses' knowledge of God comes by gratuitous grace. It is revealed to him. By contrast, the acquisition of divine knowledge by means of the study of authoritative texts (viz., Scripture and the Church Fathers)—that is, by natural ability and merit—is precisely what defines the theologian qua theologian, according to Thomas.[15] This represents the first significant distinction between Thomas's Moses and Thomas himself as teachers of sacred doctrine.

In light of his basic understanding of the teaching office, Thomas's first task in portraying Moses as an effective master of sacred doctrine seems to be to demonstrate that the leader of the ancient Israelites possessed, by virtue of gratuitous grace, a extraordinary understanding of the divine. As early as question 12 of the *Prima Pars,* Thomas notes that Moses "obtained a certain excellence" (*excellentiam quandam obtinuit*) in the knowledge of God on account of grace.[16] He further defines the nature of this "excellence" in the subsequent question, observing that Moses was the human being to whom God first revealed his most proper name, *Who Is* (Exod 3:13-14).[17]

[13] Ibid.

[14] *ShT* I-II, q. 111, a. 1: "Huiusmodi autem donum vocatur *gratia gratis data,* quia supra facultatem naturae, et supra meritum personae."

[15] See *STh* I, q. 1, a. 6, ad 3, where Thomas explains that the wisdom associated with the science of sacred doctrine is attained through study, even though its principles are obtained by revelation.

[16] *STh* I, q. 12, a. 13, obj. 1.

[17] *STh* I, q. 13, a. 11, sc.

Furthermore, a number of times throughout the *Summa* and in widely divergent contexts, Thomas grapples with the reality that Moses had a very special knowledge of God by virtue of the fact that God spoke to him face to face (Exod 33:11; Num 12:8; Deut 34:10). In treating prophecy as a gratuitous grace pertaining to certain humans near the end of the *Secunda Secundae,* Aquinas maintains that Moses was, among prophets, "simply the greatest of all."[18] Moses surpassed all other prophets in four fundamental ways: (1) in intellectual vision or knowledge, as "he saw the very essence of God" (*vidit ipsam Dei essentiam*); (2) in imaginary vision, as God spoke to him *face to face* (Exod 33:11) while he was awake; (3) in injunction or declaration, because he set forth a new law on God's behalf to a whole people (whereas other prophets merely sought to induce the people to return to the observance of the Law of Moses); and (4) in his performance of confirming miracles, which "he worked for an entire nation of unfaithful people" (*fecit toti uni populo infidelium*).[19] In reply to the objection that David was a more excellent prophet than Moses, Thomas admits that the prophecy of the great king approached the vision of Moses but concludes that the original Israelite leader had a more excellent knowledge of the Godhead.[20]

In his consideration of the Old Law in the *Prima Secundae,* by contrast, Thomas is considerably less certain about Moses' immediate vision of the divine essence. Indeed, replying to the objection that Moses received the Old Law immediately when God spoke to him face to face, Aquinas draws on Augustine's interpretation of Exodus 33:12-23 (which passage has Moses asking to see God's glory and God replying that no human can see

[18] *STh* II-II, q. 174, a. 4.

[19] Ibid. It should be remembered—and it is significant for Thomas's presentation of Moses as theological master who accommodates his learning to the Jewish ability to comprehend—that the word *infideli,* as it was used by medieval Christian writers, denoted principally people who did not focus on unseen spiritual realities, rather than "unbelievers" in the modern sense. See John Van Engen, "Faith as a Concept of Order in Medieval Christendom," in *Belief in History: Innovative Approaches to European and American Religion,* ed. Thomas Kselman (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 19-67, esp. 21-22.

[20] *STh* II-II, q. 174, a. 4, ad 1: "Visio tamen Moysi fuit excellentior quantum ad cognitionem divinitatis."

his face and live) explicitly to deny that Moses saw the very essence of God.[21] Thomas goes on to explain that when Scripture affirms that God spoke to Moses *face to face* (Exod 33:11), it relates the opinion of the people who imagined that their leader was speaking to God face to face when actually God appeared and spoke to him through an angel and a cloud. This mediated encounter constituted "a certain notable and intimate viewing, but lower than a vision of the divine essence."[22]

How might we account for the radical divergence of these positions on the nature of Moses' vision or knowledge of God? Perhaps more importantly, are Thomas's views reconcilable and, if so, how? The dissimilar conclusions Thomas draws are attributable to his differing emphases and approaches in distinct parts of the *Summa*.[23] In question 98 of the *Prima Secundae*, he aims to underscore the initiative of God as lawgiver and the mediated nature of the Old Law, presumably in comparison to the New. Question 174 of the *Secunda Secundae*, by contrast, emphasizes God's gratuitous grace given to Moses for the sake of others; here, we read that the Israelite leader sees the divine essence. In both questions, Thomas seeks to safeguard and highlight the primacy of God's action in Moses' vision of the divine. Indeed, in yet a third question in another part of the *Summa*, Aquinas's emphasis on the graceful initiative of God provides the nexus between these seemingly irreconcilable conclusions. In question 12, article 11 of the *Prima Pars*, Thomas asks whether anyone in this life can see the essence of God. Over against the objection that Moses seems to have seen the divine essence (according to Num 12:8, he spoke to God *face to face and plainly*), Thomas emphatically denies that a human in this life—given his or her natural sensory ways of knowing—is able to

[21] *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 3, ad 2: "Non ergo videbat ipsam Dei essentiam."

[22] Ibid.: "Vel per visionem faciei intelligitur quaedam eminens contemplatio et familiaris, infra essentiae divinae visionem."

[23] It is significant that, in spite of Aquinas's own aim to provide beginning students with an introduction to the whole of theology, the parts of the *Summa* circulated in manuscripts and were used pedagogically in the Middle Ages as independent units. See Leonard E. Boyle, *The Setting of the* Summa theologiae *of Saint Thomas* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1982), esp. 23-30.

see God's essence.[24] And yet, God is able miraculously to raise the minds of some humans beyond the use of the senses to the supernatural vision of his very essence, as he has done in the case of Moses, "the teacher of the Jews" (*magister Iudaeorum*), and Paul, "the teacher of the Gentiles" (*magister Gentium*).[25] In his treatment of the gratuitous grace of rapture in the *Secunda Secundae,* Thomas further observes that God's miraculous elevation of Moses and Paul to the vision of divine essence was altogether appropriate in light of their respective roles as *primus doctor Iudaeorum* and *primus doctor Gentium*.[26]

According to Thomas, then, Moses obtained a certain excellence in the knowledge of God by means of a divine miracle which elevated him above his nature to see the very essence of God. He was granted this special revelation of the divine on account of his divinely appointed office as "the first teacher of the Jews," which, as we will see, he chiefly carries out as an author of Sacred Scripture. Furthermore, God revealed the divine truths that are necessary for salvation—that is, the content of sacred doctrine—to Moses in such a way that he, as a human scriptural author, could not be mistaken.[27] As a teacher of sacred doctrine, then, Moses' authority is proper (i.e., intrinsic to saving truth) and certain because he shares in the very authority of God, who is the principal author of Scripture.[28]

[24] *STh* I, q. 12, a. 11.

[25] Ibid., ad 2. See also Thomas's opening lecture on chapter 3 of Hebrews, where the scriptural author (whom Thomas takes to be St. Paul, of course) discusses Moses' faithfulness to God and compares it to the faithfulness of Christ. Here Thomas notes that St. Paul's affirmation of Moses' faithfulness in Heb. 3:2 "is based on what is said in Num. 12:7, where the Lord revealed His excellence to Moses" (*S. Thomae Aquinatis Super Epistolas S. Pauli Lectura,* 2 vols., ed. P. Raphael Cai [Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1953], 2:372 [no. 159]). Thomas's exegesis here not only emphasizes God's initiative in revealing himself to Moses, but also links Moses' particular faithfulness as a divine servant to the direct, face-to-face way in which God chose to make himself known to the Israelite leader (Num 12:6-8). Nevertheless, the faithfulness of Christ exceeded that of Moses by virtue of the fact that Christ was the very Son, rather than merely the servant, of God.

[26] *STh* II-II, q. 175, a. 3, ad 1: "Tertio, ut contempletur eam in sua essentia. Et talis fuit raptus Pauli: et etiam Moysi. Et satis congruenter: nam sicut Moses fuit primus Doctor Iudaeorum, ita Paulus fuit primus Doctor Gentium."

[27] *STh* I, q. 1, a. 9, ad 2.

[28] *STh* I, q. 1, a. 8, ad 2.

Thomas clearly distinguishes the authority of scriptural authors from that of the doctors of the Church, which is also proper to sacred doctrine but merely probable.[29] The authority of the doctors is probable rather than certain primarily because their knowledge of sacred doctrine was humanly acquired rather than divinely given. That is, the doctors learned and taught divine truths by studying and commenting on the words of Moses and other human authors of Scripture. Their views have been tested and approved by the Church, but they are not infallible. Although Thomas includes neither those ancient theologians not officially recognized as *doctores* nor subsequent theologians like himself among the authorities used in sacred doctrine, they may be incorporated into his scheme as also probable, though perhaps less probable than the doctors. Far from having divine truths miraculously and infallibly revealed to them, Scholastic theologians like Thomas acquired them by diligently applying their minds to scriptural revelation. Thus, his relationship to saving theological truths was fundamentally different from that of Moses, on whose certain authority he relied to fulfill his own vocation as "master of the sacred page."

Having received such a profound, fail-safe knowledge of God and the things of God directly from God himself, Moses was prepared to present these divine truths to his students in accordance with their capacity to understand.

II. The "Fitting" Presentation of Intelligible Objects

The reader of the *Summa* first meets Moses as a masterful teacher of the doctrine of the triune God. One of the primary ways that Thomas, throughout his great work, presents Moses as an effective theological pedagogue is in his capacity as author of the Torah. This is illustrated well in Thomas's portrait of Moses as a teacher of the Trinity in question 32, article 1 of the *Prima Pars*. Here Thomas inquires "whether the Trinity of divine persons

[29] Ibid. For a full explication of Thomas's "hierarchy of authorities," see Joseph P. Wawrykow, *The Westminster Handbook to Thomas Aquinas* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 13-16, on which the following summary relies.

can be known by natural reason." He answers by explaining that humans are able by natural reason to know those things that pertain to the unity of God's essence, but not those pertaining to the distinction of persons. Humankind's natural capacity to apprehend the oneness of God is a consequence of reason's ability to know, by working from visible effects back to the invisible cause, that God is creator.[30] By virtue of the fact that God's creative power is common to the whole Trinity, it pertains to the unity of the divine essence rather than to the distinction of persons.[31] The divine threeness (i.e., the Trinity), by contrast, can only be known by revelation and apprehended by faith. Because of this, Christians should not attempt to prove the Trinity "except by authorities, and to those who accept the authorities."[32]

As Thomas intimates here, Moses is preeminent among the authorities through whom God revealed his threeness.[33] In the opening chapter of Genesis, according to Thomas's reading, Moses clearly taught the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as distinct divine persons. After he had written, "In the beginning God created the heaven and earth" (v. 1), Thomas explains, Moses added "God said, Let there be light" (v. 3) in order to reveal the divine Word. Afterward, Moses wrote "God saw the light, that it was good" (v. 4) to make clear his approval of the divine love (i.e., the procession of love that is the Holy Spirit).[34] Thomas underscores the significance of Moses as teacher of the doctrine of the triune God when he explains that "the knowledge of the divine persons was necessary for us for two reasons," namely, so that we would "think rightly" about both the creation of things and—more importantly—the salvation of humankind.[35] That God created all things by his Word and out of love excludes the error

[30] Cf. *STh* I, q. 12, a. 12.

[31] *STh* I, q. 32, a. 1.

[32] Ibid.: "Quae igitur fidei sunt, non sunt tentanda probare nisi per auctoritates, his qui auctoritates suscipiunt." Cf. *STh* I, q. 1, a. 8, corp., ad 1, and ad 2.

[33] *STh* I, q. 32, a. 1, ad 3.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.: "Dicendum quod cognition divinarum Personarum fuit necessaria nobis dupliciter. Uno modo, ad recte sentiendum de creatione rerum. . . . Alio modo, et principalius, ad recte sentiendum de salute generis humani."

of those who claim that God created by some necessity. Similarly, Moses' instruction concerning the divine persons enabled his learners to understand that salvation would be accomplished by the incarnate Son and the gift of the Holy Spirit.[36]

It is noteworthy that Thomas's explanation of the twofold necessity of knowledge of the Trinity here (*STh* I, q. 32, a. 1, ad 3) provides the palette for the portrait of Moses as teacher that he paints throughout the remainder of the *Summa*. Indeed, in the Dominican master's view, Moses' role as teacher of the doctrine of the Trinity necessarily flows out into and comes to fruition in his teaching concerning creation, on the one hand, and Christ as the means of salvation, on the other. It may be noted to begin with that Thomas's resolution of the question "whether the Trinity of divine persons can be known by natural reason" recalls the first article of the opening question of the *Prima Pars,* which concerns the necessity of sacred doctrine. Thomas here maintains that because humans are ordained toward God as an end that exceeds the grasp of reason and because humans must know this divine end toward which they are to direct their lives, it was necessary for human salvation that certain supernatural truths— namely, the articles of faith (e.g., Trinity, incarnation)—be divinely revealed. Furthermore, it was necessary that the truths about God at which human reason could arrive—namely, the preambles of faith (e.g., God's existence and oneness)—also be revealed in order that all people might understand them more quickly and more perfectly.[37] Viewed in this light, Moses, as human author of the Torah and teacher of Trinity, creation, and Christ, occupies a central position not only in the comprehensive theological enterprise of Thomas Aquinas, but also in the divinely ordained plan of *exitus-reditus* that the *Summa* aims to elucidate.[38]

[36] Ibid. On *STh* I, q. 32, a. 1 as pivotal to Aquinas's doctrine of creation, see David B. Burrell, "Creation in St. Thomas Aquinas's *Super Evangelium S. Joannis Lectura*," in Levering and Dauphinais, eds., *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas,* 115-26.

[37] *STh* I, q. 1, a. 1. On the two kinds of revealed truth, see also *ScG* I, c. 3; I, c. 4; and I, c. 5.

[38] It is noteworthy that Thomas's presentation of Moses as teacher of the triune God, of creation, and of Christ figuratively through the giving of the Old Law corresponds generally to the Scholastic's own ordering and treatment of theological topics in the *Prima Pars,* the

We may first consider Moses as an effective teacher of the *exitus* of creatures from God. Like his presentation of Moses as an instructor concerning the triune God, Thomas's portrait of the Israelite leader as a master of the doctrine of creation is firmly rooted in the latter's role as author of the Torah. Human reason can naturally know that God is the principal cause of all things, but divine creation in time is, according to Thomas, an article of faith.[39] That the world had a beginning is, like the Trinity, neither accessible to nor demonstrable by human reason. Therefore, in writing "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1), Moses revealed both that the world began and that God is the efficient cause of its beginning.[40]

Moving from a consideration of the production of creatures in question 46 of the *Prima Pars* to the distinction among creatures in question 47, Thomas continues to use Moses' words in Genesis 1 as his primary *auctoritas*.[41] He answers the question "whether the multitude and distinction of things is from God" affirmatively, maintaining that the divine wisdom in particular is their cause. Moses taught that things are made distinct by the word or wisdom of God when he wrote, "God said, Let there be light . . . And He divided the light from the darkness" (Gen 1:3-4).[42] Thomas

*Prima Secundae,*and the *Tertia Pars*. On *exitus-reditus* as the implicit organizing principle of the *Summa,* see M.-D. Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Montreal: Institut d'études médiévales, 1950), 266-76; Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D'Aquino,* 70-71 and 219; Vernon J. Bourke, *Aquinas' Search for Wisdom* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1965), 199-200; Torrell, *Aquinas's Summa,* 27-29, 48-50, and 52; and Wawrykow, *Westminster Handbook,* 53-54. By virtue of the fact that Thomas himself does not explicitly describe the organizing principle of the *Summa* as "*exitus-reditus*," other modern scholars have pointed to salvation history as set forth in Scripture as providing the basic structure of the work. On this "heilsgeschichtlich-christologischen Interpretation," see, e.g., Andreas Speer, "Die *Summa theologiae* lessen – eine Einführung," in *Thomas von Aquin: Die "Summa theologiae." Werkinterpretationen,* ed. Andreas Speer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 1-28, esp. 13-14; Otto-Hermann Pesch, "Um den Plan der Summa Theologiae des hl. Thomas von Aquin," *Münchener theologische Zeitschrift* 16 (1965): 128-37; and Otto-Hermann Pesch, *Thomas von Aquin: Grenze und Größe mittelalterlicher Theologie. Eine Einführung* (Mainz: Matthias Grünewald, 1988), 381-400.

[39] *STh* I, q. 46, a. 2.

[40] Ibid., sc.

[41] *STh* I.47.1 sc.

[42] *STh* I.47.1c. On the identification of the Word or Wisdom of God with the light of Genesis 1, see I.32.1 ad 3 and our brief discussion of it above.

explains that Moses here explicitly determined that the distinction and multitude of things originate in the purpose of God, who willed that his goodness be communicated to and displayed through them.[43] In his careful and nuanced teaching, according to Thomas, Moses not only affirmed the truth concerning the etiology of creaturely distinction but also anticipated and excluded the erroneous thinking of such philosophers as Democritus, Anaxagoras, and Avicenna.[44] It is noteworthy that here Thomas presents Moses as a wise man (*sapiens*) *par excellence*—that is, as one who fulfills the twofold office of (1) meditating on the truth concerning God as first principle and conveying it to others and (2) attacking opposing falsehoods.[45] He similarly portrays Moses, in his composition of the opening chapter of Genesis, as a wise purveyor of divine truth and enemy of error concerning God's immediate production of corporeal creatures.[46]

Throughout his consideration of the procession of spiritual and corporeal creatures from God, Thomas offers Moses as an erudite pedagogue who skillfully accommodates his teaching to his less learned audience. A prominent example occurs in the opening article of question 61, which inquires whether the angels have a cause of their existence. The first objection avers, based on the absence of angels in the creation account of Genesis 1, that God did not create these spiritual beings.[47] In reply, Thomas cites Augustine's view that Moses did not omit angels from his narrative but rather designated these incorporeal creatures by the names of corporeal things such as "heavens" and "light." He proceeds to explain that Moses either passed over the angels altogether or designated them corporeally because he was addressing "an ignorant people" (*rudi populo*) incapable of comprehending an incorporeal nature.[48] He taught in this way out of a concern, according to Thomas, not to provide the Jews with an occasion for idolatry, "toward which they were inclined and from which Moses

[43] *STh* I.47.1c.
[44] *STh* I.47.1c.
[45] *ScG* I.1.3-4.
[46] *STh* I.65.3c and I.65.4c.
[47] *STh* I.61.1 obj 1.
[48] *STh* I, q. 61, a. 1, ad 1.

especially was aiming to recall them."[49] In Thomas's reading, scriptural passages such as Deuteronomy 4:19 ("And when you look up to the heavens and see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, do not be led astray and bow down to them and serve them, things that the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples everywhere under heaven") attest not only the ancient Israelite tendency toward idolatry, but also Moses' particular pedagogical concern to preserve his pupils from this grave danger.[50]

In presenting Moses as a deft teacher of creation, Thomas provides several other significant examples of Moses' accommodation to his less capable Jewish learners. The first of these occurs in Thomas's consideration of whether formlessness of matter temporally preceded its formation (*STh* I, q. 66, a. 1). The first objection notes that Genesis 1:2, "The earth was formless and void," seems to suggest that formlessness did precede in time the formation of matter.[51] Following Augustine, Thomas replies that in Genesis 1:2 Moses used the words "earth" and "water" (words normally used to denote formed matter) to signify prime or unformed matter, which does not temporally precede its formation. "For Moses was not able to represent prime matter to an ignorant people except under the likeness of things well-known to them."[52] In this affirmation, Aquinas explicitly presents Moses as a master who effectively teaches his pupils according to the first of the pedagogical methods set forth in the opening article of question 117 of the *Prima Pars,* namely, by leading them from things known by way of similitudes to knowledge of the unknown.[53]

[49] Ibid.: "[E]t si eis fuisset expressum aliquas res esse super omnem naturam corpoream, fuisset eis occasio idololatriae, ad quam proni erant, et a qua Moyses eos praecipue revocare intendebat."

[50] See *STh* I, q. 67, a. 4, which suggests the influence of Chrysostom on Thomas's thought on this point.

[51] *STh* I, q. 66, a. 1, obj. 1.

[52] *STh* I, q. 66, a. 1, ad 1: "Non enim poterat Moyses rudi populo primam materiam exprimere, nisi sub similitudine rerum eis notarum."

[53] *STh* I, q. 117, a. 1.

Thomas's consideration of whether the firmament divides waters from waters (*STh* I, q. 68, a. 3) provides another example of how Moses accommodates his teaching—indeed, his very language—to his particular audience. In the previous article, while inquiring whether there are waters above the firmament, Thomas answers affirmatively based on the authority of Genesis 1:7.[54] He asserts, however, that different thinkers define the exact nature of these waters differently based on divergent views of the firmament itself (whether, e.g., it is understood as the starry heaven or the part of the air wherein clouds form).[55] When he comes to article 3, Thomas seems concerned to explain why Moses wrote that God made a firmament in the midst of the waters rather than in the air (Gen 1:6).[56] In the corpus, he writes:

> But it must be considered that Moses was speaking to an ignorant people and, stooping to their intellectual weakness, he proposed to them only those things that are conspicuously clear to sense. For all people, no matter how ignorant, can apprehend by sense that earth and water are corporeal. That air is a body, however, is not perceived by all. . . . And, therefore, Moses makes express mention of water and earth but not air so as not to propose to ignorant people something unknown. In order, however, to express the truth to the capable, he provides a place for air to be understood by signifying it as contiguous with the water when he writes that *Darkness was upon the face of the deep* [Gen 1:2].[57]

Here Moses teaches the intellectually infirm Jews very differently from the competent, whom Thomas leaves unidentified. Once again, we might understand Thomas's description of Moses' pedagogical approach in terms of the master (see *STh* I, q. 117, a. 1) who aims to lead his learners from things known to things

[54] *STh* I, q. 68, a. 2, sc.

[55] *STh* I, q. 68, a. 2.

[56] *STh* I, q. 68, a. 3, sc.

[57] *STh* I, q. 68, a. 3: "Sed considerandum est quod Moyses rudi populo loquebatur, quorum imbecillitati condescendens, illa solum eis proposuit, quae manifeste sensui apparent. Omnes autem, quantumcumque rudes, terram et aquam esse corpora sensu deprehendunt. Aer autem non percipitur ab omnibus esse corpus. . . . Et ideo Moyses de aqua et terra mentionem facit expressam: aerem autem non expresse nominat, ne rudibus quoddam ignotum proponeret. Ut tamen capacibus veritatem exprimeret, dat locum intelligendi aerem, significans ipsum quasi aquae annexum, cum dicit quod tenebrae erant super faciem abyssi." Cf. ibid., ad 3, where Thomas cites the invisibility of air as the reason Moses explicitly mentioned only water.

unknown by proposing sensible examples. Interestingly, however, in article 3 Moses seems content simply to propose in Genesis 1:6 the sensible reality of water, apparently unconcerned to lead his Jewish students beyond this to a deeper understanding of the firmament as airy. While his pedagogical approach may betray his belief that the Jews are altogether incompetent to learn unseen realities, the more probable explanation—particularly in light of the previous article—is that, in Moses' view, there simply is no single definitive teaching on the nature of the firmament at which all must arrive and to which all must adhere. And, to come full circle, there is no single view for Thomas precisely because Moses, the human instrument of divine revelation in Genesis 1, teaches differently to students with differing capacities for learning.

Thomas provides a third example of Moses teaching the Jews in an appropriately accommodating way in question 70, article 1, which inquires whether the lights ought to have been created on the fourth day. The third objection observes that the lights ought to have been produced on the second day by virtue of the fact that the firmament, in which God set them (Gen. 1:17), was created on that day.[58] Thomas replies to the objection by invoking Aristotle who affirms that although the stars are fixed in the spheres and move as the spheres move, human sense perceives the movement of the stars in particular and not that of the spheres more generally.[59] Thus, Thomas concludes, in teaching that the stars were produced and placed in the firmament on the fourth day (Gen 1:14-19), "Moses, stooping to an ignorant people, was observing what is apparent to the senses."[60]

Article 2 of question 70 similarly asks whether the cause of the creation of the lights is "fittingly described" (*utrum convenienter . . . describatur*) in Scripture. Again the question concerns whether Moses, in penning Genesis 1:14-15, taught the doctrine of creation reasonably or well given his particular audience. Earlier in his consideration of creation (*STh* I, q. 65, a. 2), Thomas explains that a corporeal creature can be said to have been made

[58] *STh* I, q. 70, a. 1, obj. 3.

[59] *STh* I, q. 70, a. 1, ad 3.

[60] Ibid.: "Moyses autem, rudi populo condescendens, secutus est quae sensibiliter apparent."

for four reasons, namely, for the sake of its proper act, for other creatures, for the whole universe, and for the glory of God. In elucidating the second of these reasons, he notes that those creatures that are less noble (*creaturae ignobiliores*) than humans exist for the sake of humans.[61] This provides important groundwork on which he builds in question 70, article 2, where he affirms that Moses mentioned only that cause according to which the lights were created for the utility of humankind "in order to recall the people from idolatry."[62] Moses points out three ways, Thomas explains, in which the lights are useful for humans. First, in writing "let them shine in the firmament and illuminate the earth" (Gen 1:15), Moses teaches that the lights enable humans to see objects and, as such, direct them in their work. Secondly, Moses shows that the lights determine the changes of time—which prevent weariness, preserve health, and enable humans to find adequate food—when he writes, "let them be for seasons and days and years" (Gen 1:14). Finally, in affirming "let them be for signs" (Gen 1:14), Moses makes clear that the lights indicate favorable times for business or labor inasmuch as they signify either clear or inclement weather.[63] In sum, Thomas aims to show that Moses described the cause of the creation of the lights very "fittingly" indeed, given his idolatry-prone pupils. By emphasizing the second reason of their creation—that is, for the sake of other creatures—Moses sought definitively to characterize the luminaries as corporeal creatures inferior to the humans whom they were produced to serve. Thomas's view of the anthropocentricity of creation and of Moses' primary pedagogical purpose—to lead his students away from idolatry and toward the worship of the one true God—dovetail nicely in the Dominican's presentation of Moses as an effective teacher of the doctrine of Christ.

The *Summa*'s portrait of Moses as "the first teacher of the Jews" undergoes a significant shift as Thomas moves from a consideration of God and the *exitus* of creatures from God in the

[61] *STh* I, q. 65, a. 2.

[62] *STh* I, q. 70, a. 2: "Sed Moyses, ut populum ab idololatria revocaret, illam solam causam tetigit, secundum quod sunt facta ad utilitatem hominum."

[63] Ibid.

Prima Pars to the *reditus* to God by human acts and by Christ in the *Secunda Pars* and the *Tertia Pars,* respectively. Specifically, in the second and third parts of his great theological work, and particularly in the *Prima Secundae,* Thomas presents Moses as a wise teacher of the doctrine of Christ. As we will see, the treatise on the Old Law (*STh* I-II, qq. 98-105) provides a particularly apt canvas on which Thomas paints Moses as a lawgiver who variously teaches Christ by way of prefiguration.

Thomas begins his consideration of the Old Law by establishing that it was, in fact, good, though imperfectly so. In describing it as imperfectly good, he understands the Old Law as in accordance with reason yet unable to confer the grace necessary to bring humans to the end for which the divine law was ordained, namely, everlasting beatitude.[64] This grace would have to await the advent of Christ. Quoting John 1:17, Thomas notes that whereas Moses gave the Law, grace and truth came through Christ.[65] From the outset of the treatise on the Old Law, then, Thomas makes two points that will be crucial both for his subsequent treatment of the Law and for his depiction of Moses as a teacher of the doctrine of Christ, namely, (1) that Moses is the human giver of the Law; and (2) that Moses' work as lawgiver is imperfect relative to the work of Christ, toward which it points.[66]

Having established Moses as giver of the good Law, Thomas asks (*STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 2) whether the Old Law was from God.

[64] *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 1. On the Old Law in Thomas, see Stephen J. Casselli, "The Threefold Division of the Law in the Thought of Aquinas," *Westminster Theological Journal* 61 (1999): 175-207; Pamela M. Hall, "The Old Law and the New Law (Ia IIae, qq. 98-108)," in *The Ethics of Aquinas,* ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 194-206; and Beryl Smalley, "William of Auvergne, John of La Rochelle and St. Thomas Aquinas on the Old Law," in *Saint Thomas Aquinas, 1274-1974: Commemorative Studies* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 11-71. In discussing the ways in which Thomas's treatment of the Old Law reflects the various considerations and debates of his Christian predecessors, Smalley highlights the acquired or learned character of the Scholastic theologian's work, which, as noted above, serves to distinguish Thomas's relationship to sacred doctrine from that of Moses.

[65] *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 1.

[66] Cf. *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 2, ad 2. On the relationship between the Old Law and Christ in the thought of Aquinas, see Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation according to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 15-79.

That "the Old Law was given by the good God, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is evidenced, for Thomas, by the fact that it ordained humans to Christ in two ways (*homines ordinabat ad Christum dupliciter*), namely, (1) by bearing witness to or prophesying the savior; and (2) by drawing humans away from idolatry and disposing them to the worship of one God, from whom salvation would come through Christ.[67] The first objection maintains that the Old Law cannot have been from God by virtue of the fact that the works of God are perfect, yet—as demonstrated in article 1 of question 98—the Law is clearly imperfect.[68] In reply, Thomas explains that whereas the precepts of the Old Law are not perfect simply or absolutely (*simpliciter*), they are perfect relative to the time and the condition of that people to whom they were given (*secundum temporis conditionem*). Invoking Galatians 3:24, "The Law was our pedagogue in Christ," he provides the analogy of a boy and the precepts given to him. Neither the child nor the instruction he receives are perfect absolutely, but both are perfect according to time and developmental stage.[69] In article 2, then, Thomas presents Moses as the human mediator of a law given by God that is perfect relative to the childlike intellectual and spiritual aptitude of its Jewish learners. Furthermore, the Old Law's relative perfection is presumably (at least in part) a function of Moses' pedagogical prowess, that is, his aptitude in accommodating the divine wisdom he has received to his less learned listeners.

The relative perfection of the Old Law also depends on whether it was "fittingly" (*convenienter*) given at the time of Moses. Thomas takes up this question in article 6 of question 98. The first objection argues that it was not fitting that Moses gave the Law: The Old Law ordered (*disponebat*) humans toward the salvation that was to come through Christ, but humans needed a remedy for sin immediately after the first sin. Thus, the Old Law was simply given too late.[70] The principal authority that Thomas

[67] *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 2.
[68] Ibid., obj 1.
[69] *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 2, ad 1.
[70] *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 6, obj. 1.

uses to resolve this question is Galatians 3:18: "The Law was established on account of transgression until the seed to whom he [i.e., God] had made the promise should come, having been ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator."[71] This final phrase is the important one for Thomas. Drawing on the *Glossa ordinaria,* he explains that "ordained" (*ordinata*) means "given in an orderly way" (*ordinabiliter data*).[72] Thomas concludes his explanation of why it was "most fitting" (*convenientissime*) that the Old Law was given at the time of Moses by maintaining that this help was bestowed on humans in an "orderly manner" (*ordine*)—that is, temporally between the natural law and grace—so that they might be led from imperfection to perfection.[73]

Though neither stated explicitly nor developed here, Moses' role as mediator of divine teaching is implied in Thomas's use of Galatians 3:19. In his *Lectures on Galatians,* however, Aquinas reads the Apostle's words "ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" as referring to Moses and Aaron as ministers of God's Law.[74] The Dominican exegete understands Moses in particular as the representative of the divine mediator, that is, the one who made Christ known (*significatus est*) in and through the giving of the Law.[75] Moses is presented, then, as the human mediator who, in giving the Law at a fitting time and in an ordered way, ordained humankind to the human and divine mediator, Jesus Christ, who would bring grace and salvation. Thus, Moses is the wise teacher who orders all things well. It is noteworthy that Thomas, in his lecture on Galatians 3:19, points out that Moses gave the Law "in the power of Christ" (*in potestate Christi*).[76] This affirmation serves to confirm Moses as a theological master as described by Aquinas in his *principium*. It is God alone who communicates wisdom by his own power, whereas the human teacher does so only as a minister of the divine power.[77]

[71] My translation of the Vulgate text given in *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 6, sc.
[72] Ibid.
[73] *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 6.
[74] *In Gal.* c. 3, lect. 7 (Marietti ed., 167).
[75] Ibid. (Marietti ed., 168).
[76] Ibid. (Marietti ed., 168).
[77] *Rigans montes de superioribus suis* IV (Marietti ed., 443).

Thomas further develops this fundamental distinction between God as principal teacher and Moses as pedagogical minister in his treatment of the moral precepts of the Old Law in question 100 of the *Prima Secundae*. In article 3 (which asks whether all the moral precepts of the Law are reducible to the Decalogue), Thomas draws a crucial distinction between the Ten Commandments and other precepts of the Law, namely, whereas God himself gave the precepts of the Decalogue, he proposed the other precepts to the people through Moses.[78] Why God taught some precepts immediately and others through human mediation is a function of the threefold classification of moral precepts that Aquinas elucidates in article 11. The first class consists of those "most certain" (*certissima*) precepts of which every person is naturally aware and, as such, do not require promulgation (e.g., love of God and neighbor). The second class includes the more defined (*magis determinata*) precepts of the Decalogue. Even the unlearned can easily understand these, but they are nevertheless set forth for the few who would otherwise stray from the virtuous path. In the third class are those precepts whose reason is not apparent to everyone, but rather only to the wise. These are the moral precepts that were added to the Decalogue and given through the ministry of Moses.[79] It is through the diligent investigation of the wise that these precepts are shown to accord with reason, and through their teaching that God gives them to the people.[80]

In question 100 of the *Prima Secundae,* then, Thomas portrays Moses as the wise master who teaches his less-learned pupils in both of the ways described in question 117, article 1 of the *Prima Pars*. First, in adding less universal precepts to the more universal ones of the Decalogue and in proposing sensible examples, Moses provides aids or tools (*auxilia vel instrumenta*) for the acquisition

[78] *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 3.

[79] *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 11.

[80] *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 3: "et iterum illa quae per diligentem inquisitionem sapientum inveniuntur rationi convenire, haec enim proveniunt a Deo ad populum mediante disciplina sapientum."

of knowledge.[81] Second, in offering these less axiomatic precepts, Moses illustrates for his Jewish students how conclusions are to be drawn from principles.[82] We must also note, if only in passing, that Thomas's threefold classification of moral precepts (in *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 11) can be easily mapped onto his understanding (in *STh* I, q. 117, a. 1) of the acquisition of knowledge by means of both an interior and an exterior principle.

In his treatment of the ceremonial law (*STh* I-II, qq. 101-3), Thomas depicts Moses as a teacher of Christ by way of prefiguration. In article 2 of question 101, Thomas asks whether the ceremonial precepts of the Old Law are figurative. According to the first objection, it seems "unfitting" (*inconvenienter*) that Moses would have delivered the ceremonial precepts as figures of other things without further explanation. After all, as Augustine indicates in *De doctrina christiana,* it pertains to the office of teacher to express oneself in an easily understandable way.[83] Thomas responds that the precepts governing the external worship of the Old Law needed to be figurative by virtue of the fact that Christ, who is the way leading to the beatific vision of divine truth, had not yet appeared to the Jewish people. The ceremonial precepts, then, foreshadowed the advent and salvific work of Christ.[84] In replying to the first objection, Thomas concludes that Moses "more effectively" (*utilius*) taught the divine mysteries to an ignorant people (*rudi populo*) "under a certain veil of figures" (*sub quodam figurarum velamine*).[85] By teaching Christ figuratively, Moses fulfilled the teaching office for his Jewish pupils, whose nescience prevented them from comprehending divine truths explicitly. He also aligned his teaching ministry with the way in which God, the principal teacher, reveals things to humans, namely, according to their capacity to comprehend.[86]

[81] *STh* I, q. 117, a. 1. Thomas provides some of Moses' supplementary precepts and examples in *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 11.

[82] *STh* I, q. 117, a. 1. Cf. *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 3.

[83] *STh* I-II, q. 101, a. 2, obj. 1: "Pertinet enim ad officium cuiuslibet doctoris ut sic pronunciet ut de facili intelligi possit."

[84] *STh* I-II, q. 101, a. 2.

[85] Ibid., ad 1.

[86] Ibid.: "divina non sunt revelanda hominibus nisi secundum eorum capacitatem."

Thomas illustrates the fittingness of Moses' method of teaching the ceremonial precepts as prefiguring Christ in question 102, which concerns the causes of these precepts. In article 5, for example, Aquinas concludes that all the sacraments of the Old Law had "fitting" (*conveniens*) causes, both literal, insofar as they were ordained to the worship of God at that time, and figurative, insofar as they were ordained to prefigure Christ.[87] The reply to the fifth objection elucidates the twofold fittingness of Moses' instruction concerning the expiatory ritual of the heifer in Numbers 19:1-10. On the fitting literal cause, Thomas writes:

> For it is commanded there by the Lord [through Moses] that they take a red cow, in memory of the sin that they had committed in worshiping the calf. . . . And in solemn execration of the sin of idolatry, it was sacrificed outside the camp. . . . Furthermore, even the very sprinkling of blood pertained to the execration of idolatry, in which the blood of the sacrifice was not poured out but rather brought together, and around it people ate in honor of idols. It was consumed, moreover, by fire, either because God appeared to Moses in a fire and the Law was given from a fire, or because through this it was signified that idolatry and all that pertained to idolatry was to be completely eradicated.[88]

This description fills out Thomas's portrait of Moses as a teacher whose pedagogy aims at drawing his Jewish students away from idolatry and toward the worship of the one true God.[89] Whereas the literal causes seem to correspond to the first part of this dual movement, the figurative causes relate to the second by virtue of their Christological significations. Thomas explains the figurative reasons for Moses' implementation of the heifer ritual thus: that the cow was female signified the human weakness of Christ, that it was red designated his passion, and that the heifer was without blemish and had never been yoked signified Christ's innocence.[90] He goes on to note the figurative cause or significance of nearly every aspect of Moses' teaching concerning this sacrament.

In the preceding article of the same question, Thomas establishes the "figurative reason" (*figuralis ratio*) for Moses' institution

[87] *STh* I-II, q. 102, a. 5.
[88] Ibid., ad 5.
[89] Cf. *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 2.
[90] *STh* I-II, q. 102, a. 5, ad 5.

of the temporal festivals that the Jewish people were to observe.[91] The continual sacrifice of the lamb at Passover foreshadowed the perpetuity of Christ, the Lamb of God. The Sabbath prefigured the spiritual rest "given to us" (*nobis data*) by Christ. The New Moon signified the enlightenment of the early Church by Christ's preaching and miracles. Pentecost adumbrated the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, and Trumpets the apostolic preaching. The cleansing of Christians from their sins was presaged by the feast of Atonement, and their earthly pilgrimage—on which they travel by making progress in the virtues—was prefigured by Tabernacles. Finally, the feast of Harvest portended the gathering of the faithful in the kingdom of heaven.[92] By virtue of the fact that the Old Law was instituted to prefigure the mystery of Christ (*ad figurandum mysterium Christi*), Thomas can conclude that there is "sufficient reason" (*sufficiens ratio*) for Moses' manner of teaching regarding divine worship.[93]

The use of such "fittingness" language and argumentation throughout the treatise on the Old Law plays a central role in Thomas's presentation of Moses as a wise teacher of the doctrine of Christ. Indeed, Thomas uses arguments for fittingness throughout the *Summa* to make clear the coherence, wisdom, and beauty of the particular ways that God has acted throughout history.[94] As the foregoing analysis demonstrates, Thomas variously invokes fittingness in questions 98-102 of the *Prima Secundae* to highlight the pivotal ministerial role that Moses, as "the first teacher of the Jews," plays in the divine logic of the revelation of the Old Law. Through figurative instruction, in particular, Moses most appropriately foreshadowed the mysteries of Christ, which constitute the end of the Law. Finally, we should note that the use of arguments from fittingness in this portrayal of Moses recalls

[91] *STh* I-II, q. 102, a. 4, ad 10.

[92] Ibid.

[93] See the corpus of *STh* I-II, q. 102, a. 4, which asks "utrum assignari possit sufficiens ratio caeremoniarum quae ad sacra pertinent."

[94] On the notion of "fittingness" in Thomas, see Wawrykow, *Westminster Handbook,* 57-60; and Paul Gondreau, "The Humanity of Christ, the Incarnate Word," in Niewenhove and Wawrykow, eds., *Theology of Thomas Aquinas,* 252-76, esp. 258-59.

and reinforces Thomas's basic understanding of teaching as originating in God's wisdom and mediated by human masters.

By means of arguments from fittingness, Thomas continues to develop his portrait of Moses as an apt teacher of the person and work of Christ in the *Tertia Pars*. That Thomas is principally concerned to show the coherence and wisdom of the particular salvific plan that God established and accomplished is made manifest in the opening article of the first question, which treats the "fittingness of the incarnation" (*de convenientia incarnationis*). After explaining why it was *conveniens* that God became incarnate Thomas inquires (q. 1, a. 2) whether the incarnation of the divine Word was "necessary" (*necessarium*) for the restoration of humankind. Here he explains that something is said to be "necessary" for a certain end in two ways. First, a thing is absolutely necessary when the end is unable to be achieved without it, as food is necessary for the preservation of human life. Second, a thing is necessary relatively when it enables the end to be achieved "better and more fittingly" (*melius et convenientius*), as a horse is necessary for a journey. With God's absolute power and freedom of will in view, Thomas concludes that the incarnation was necessary for human salvation only in the second sense.[95]

He similarly begins his consideration of the Incarnate Word's departure from the world (*STh* III, qq. 46-52) by asking whether it was "necessary" (*necessarium*) for Christ to suffer for the deliverance of the human race.[96] Explicitly invoking Aristotle's teaching that "necessary" can have multiple meanings, Thomas here draws the basic distinction between internal or natural necessity and external necessity. External necessity can be further divided into the "necessity of constraint" (*necessitatem coactionis*)—as, for example, when someone cannot escape on account of the strength of the one detaining him—and the "necessity of an end presupposed" (*necessarium ex suppositione finis*). If an end (rather than a cause) is the external reality inducing necessity, then a thing is necessary when it either cannot

[95] *STh* III, q. 1, a. 2.
[96] *STh* III, q. 46, a. 1.

be at all or "cannot be fittingly" (*non potest esse convenienter*) unless this end be presupposed.[97] These two categories correspond to the absolute and relative necessity, respectively, of question 1 article 2, where the end presupposed was human salvation. The passion of Christ was in no way a necessity of constraint, according to Thomas, either on God's part or on the part of Christ. It was necessary, however, based on a threefold presupposed end. First, Christ had to suffer given the end of human salvation. Second, the passion was necessary in light of the end of his own glorious exaltation. Third, and most important for our purposes, Christ's suffering was necessary on account of God's eternal determination (*definitio*), which was "foretold in Scripture and prefigured in the observances of the Old Testament."[98] The resurrected Christ referenced this presupposed end of eternal predetermination, according to Thomas, when he affirmed, "It was necessary that everything written in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms concerning me be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44).[99]

Here Thomas presents Moses, by virtue of his dual role as lawgiver and author of the Pentateuch, as a teacher of Christ's salvific suffering. It is particularly by way of a temporally appropriate prefigurative pedagogy, Thomas intimates, that Moses instructs on this indispensable theological point. Furthermore, in teaching the passion of Christ in this way, Moses again acts as a human minister of God's own self-revelation. Indeed, Thomas argues that it was "necessary" or "fitting" that Christ should suffer for the salvation of the human race based on the presupposed end of divine decree, which Moses made clear through his verbal and written tutelage.

Moses taught Christ's passion not only with words, whether orally or in writing, however. He also prefigured the cross by means of various symbolic actions, as Thomas explains (*STh* III, q.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Ibid.: "Tertio, ex parte Dei, cuius definitio est circa passionem Christi praenuntiatam in Scripturis et praefiguratam in observantia veteris Testamenti." Cf. *STh* III, q. 62, a. 6, ad 2, where Thomas affirms that the rite of the Old Law was "wholly ordained to the foreshadowing of Christ's passion" (*totus ordinabatur ad figurandum passionem Christi*).

[99] *STh* III, q. 46, a. 1.

46, a. 4). Here Thomas provides seven reasons why it was "most fitting" (*convenientissimum*) that Christ should suffer on a cross. The seventh and final reason is that death on a cross "corresponds to many figures" (*plurimis figuris respondet*) in the Old Testament.[100] Significantly, nearly all of the figures of the life-giving wood of the cross that he sets forth here are taken from the life and work of Moses. For example, with a wooden rod the Israelite leader divided the sea and saved God's people from slavery in Egypt (Exod 14:16, 22ff.). Moses also dipped his staff into the water, changing it from bitter to sweet (Exod 15:25). He provided water to refresh the people by striking his staff on a "spiritual rock" (Exod 17:5-6). Furthermore, Israel defeated Amalek only because Moses kept his arms outstretched with rod in hand (Exod 17:9-13). Finally, the Law of God was entrusted to the Ark of the Covenant, which was made of wood (Exod 25:10, 16). Thomas concludes the corpus by intimating that through these symbolic actions, Moses aimed at gradually leading his Jewish learners to the wood of the cross.[101] He taught the cross of Christ prefiguratively in these very corporeal, sensibly perceptible ways presumably because his unlearned and unfaithful disciples would have been utterly unable to comprehend strictly verbal and literal instruction concerning this ultimately unfathomable mystery of faith. Thus, Moses taught this most fitting truth most fittingly.

Conclusion

From his inception at Paris in the spring of 1256 until he stopped writing in Naples on 6 December 1273, Thomas Aquinas was—above all else—a teacher of sacred doctrine, a master of theology.[102] On 8 September 1265, not quite a decade into his teaching career, Thomas was charged by his Dominican provincial chapter at Anagni, "for the remission of his sins," with establishing and directing a *studium* at Rome for the education of select

[100] *STh* III, q. 46, a. 4.

[101] Ibid.: "ut his omnibus ad lignum crucis, quasi per quosdam gradus, veniatur."

[102] Josef Pieper, *Guide to Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 89-102.

friars.[103] Having served the previous four years as conventual lector at Orvieto where he was responsible for the pastoral formation of the *fratres communes,* Thomas had by this time become quite well aware of the deficiencies then characterizing Dominican education, particularly its narrow emphasis on applied and moral theology.[104] As head of his own *studium* at Santa Sabina in Rome, Master Thomas took terrific advantage of the opportunity to devise a new, more comprehensive theological curriculum for his young Dominican students by beginning to compose, and presumably to teach, the *Summa Theologiae*.[105]

In constructing a broader scaffolding for the traditional practical Dominican education, Thomas sought to introduce his young confreres to sacred doctrine, the science of theology, as the *Summa*'s prologue makes clear. He maintains that previous works of theology have hindered novices on account of their multiplication of useless questions, articles, and arguments, their frequent repetition, and their failure to convey necessary truths *secundum ordinem disciplinae*—that is, according to the order of teaching and learning or according to the order of the science.[106] The order of theology or sacred doctrine, as it developed as a science in the twelfth and thirteenth century, was determined by the order of salvation history as recounted in scriptural revelation. Indeed, according to M.-D. Chenu, "The development of *summae* in the thirteenth century illustrates well the great problem of transforming sacred history into an organized science."[107] If

[103] Boyle, *The Setting of the* Summa theologiae, 8-15; Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas* 1, 142-59; and M. Michèle Mulchahey, *"First the Bow is Bent in Study…." Dominican Education before 1350* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1998), 278-306.

[104] Mulchahey, *"First the Bow is Bent in Study…."*, 184-203; Boyle, *The Setting of the* Summa theologiae, 1-8; and Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas* 1, 117-20.

[105] Boyle, *The Setting of the* Summa theologiae.

[106] *STh* I, *prol*. Although the Latin word *disciplina* means "discipline" or "science" and is most often rendered as such in English translations of the prologue, that Thomas here contrasts the order *disciplinae* with the order of reading, or exposition and the order of questions or disputation, suggests his intention (also) to convey the primary meaning of the word, viz., teaching and learning. Furthermore, this rendering aligns with and highlights the ultimate pedagogical purpose of a medieval *summa* (see the discussion of the genre in Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude,* 255-58).

[107] Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude*, 258-265, at 258.

Thomas's *Summa Theologiae* illustrates this major problem, it also serves to solve it by systematically presenting the entire body of truths necessary for salvation in an order roughly determined by Scripture, the sacred writings in and through which these truths have been divinely revealed.

Thomas's first and most important task as theologian, then, was to read scriptural texts.[108] He not only expounded them in his daily university lectures, but he used them as certain and proper authorities in systematically propounding sacred doctrine in his *Summa Theologiae*. Furthermore, in presenting divine truths according the mode of going out from and returning to God (*exitus et reditus*), Thomas reproduced in a simplified form the overarching biblical narrative of creation and redemption. In so doing, he used the scriptural order of salvation history to guide his own order of teaching. Viewed from the perspective of the putative purpose of the *Summa Theologiae,* the central role of Moses in Thomas's great work appears less surprising than it otherwise might. In reflecting on the nature of God, creation, and the person and salvific work of Christ, and in setting forth these theological themes "in a way suitable for the instruction of beginners," Thomas was instructed well by Moses, "the first teacher of the Jews," from whom he drew considerable inspiration. Indeed, it is more than coincidental that the three significant sections of the *Summa* that most directly represent elaborations of Scripture are the treatise on creation (*STh* I, qq. 65-74), the treatise on the Old Law (*STh* I-II, qq. 98-105), and the treatise on the life of Christ (*STh* III, qq. 27-59).[109]

I have sought to show that in the *Summa Theologiae* Thomas understands Moses as a great theological master who, having been elevated to a supernatural knowledge of God, fittingly taught the ancient Israelites the doctrines of Trinity, creation, and Christ. More precisely, in his dual role as author of the Pentateuch and giver of the Law, Moses presented divine truths in ways that were appropriate to his less learned students. In so doing, he served as an effective minister of God's self-revelation for human salvation.

[108] Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas,* 1:54-59.
[109] Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude,* 221-23.

And as a Scholastic theologian whose principal task was to reflect on the truths of sacred doctrine as revealed in authoritative scriptural texts and set them forth in an orderly way, Thomas Aquinas sought to teach his own beginners according to the wise and fitting example of the *primus doctor Iudaeorum*.

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WHAT THE OLD LAW REVEALS ABOUT THE NATURAL LAW ACCORDING TO THOMAS AQUINAS

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WHAT *DOES* THE OLD LAW have to tell us about the natural law? For some, this question is tantamount to asking, "What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem?"[1] since it seems clear that the natural law is a category drawn from Greek, particularly Stoic, philosophy,[2] while the Old Law refers the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament Hebrew people. If Athens represents the natural law and Jerusalem the Old Law, then what *do* they have to do with one another? For some, the answer would clearly be "nothing."[3] For Thomas Aquinas, however, as I hope to show, they have quite a lot to do with one another. Indeed, the goal of this article is to reveal how material in Thomas's discussion

[1] The quotation is originally Tertullian's ("Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?"); cf. *De praescriptione haereticorum,* c. 7.

[2] For a good, short introduction to the classical roots of the natural law tradition, see J. Rufus Fears, "Natural Law: The Legacy of Greece and Rome," in *Common Truths: New Perspectives of Natural Law,* ed. E. B. McLean (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2000), 19-56.

[3] The best-known Christian critic of the natural law tradition from a religious-biblical perspective in the past century was undoubtedly the Protestant theologian Karl Barth. See esp. his *Church Dogmatics,* 2:2 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1957). Among contemporary thinkers, the most influential is perhaps Stanley Hauerwas; see esp. his *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), esp. 50-71. There has traditionally been suspicion of the natural law tradition among Jewish rabbinic scholars as well. For testimony to this fact and for a good defense of the natural law tradition from the Jewish perspective, see David Novak, *Natural Law in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). And for an excellent defense of the notion that the natural law occurs within the Old Testament itself, see John Barton, *Ethics and the Old Testament* (Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press, 1998), esp. chap. 4, "Divine Commands or Natural Law?" and ch. 5, "Why Should We Be Moral?," 58-97.

of the Old Law can help us to adjudicate and resolve a number of centuries-old debates about the precepts of the natural law.

I. The Debate Concerning the Primary and Secondary Precepts of the Natural Law

The debate over the precepts of the natural law has raged for many centuries, with no signs of abating. Although the precepts of the natural law are supposed to be "naturally known" to all persons, fundamental differences remain between the commentators over such basic matters as whether the natural law consists in a few, basic precepts, or whether it includes a complex series of commandments; whether it is invariable in all cases for all persons, or whether its commands must be tempered by prudence. Indeed, so many and so varied are the positions that we will need an effective way of sorting through them all. To this end, I propose making use of a schema first suggested by R. J. Armstrong in *The Primary and Secondary Precepts in Thomistic Natural Law Teaching*.[4]

Armstrong notes that there are four seminal factors in the debate over the precepts of the natural law: the *generality* or *specificity* of the precepts, and their *variability* or *invariability*. Given these four, we can generate eight possible positions regarding the precepts of the natural law. The natural law might consist of:

1. general, invariable precepts only
2. general, variable precepts only
3. general and specific invariable precepts
4. general and specific variable precepts
5. general, invariable and specific, variable precepts
6. general, variable and specific, invariable precepts

[4] R. A. Armstrong, *Primary and Secondary Precepts in Thomistic Natural Law Teaching* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), esp. 2-5. Martin Rhonheimer says of this work that it is still "the standard work" on the precepts of the natural law, adding: "This very circumspect and comprehensive study has not won the attention it deserves from many scholars of St. Thomas" (Martin Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason: A Thomist View of Moral Autonomy,* trans. Gerald Malsbary [New York: Fordham University Press, 2000], 292 n. 24.

7. specific, variable precepts only
8. specific, invariable precepts.[5]

These are the positions that are *logically* possible, but only some of them have actually been held by Thomistic scholars. Since all agree that the natural law must contain at least *some* general precepts, positions 7 and 8 can be excluded. And since none of the commentators allows for the possibility of *variability* among the *general* precepts, positions 2, 4, and 6 can likewise be eliminated. By process of elimination, therefore, we need really only consider positions 1, 3, and 5.

There are, then, it seems, three possible positions. The natural law might consist in (1) a few very general, self -evident principles and nothing more; or (2) a few general, self-evident principles along with a certain number of more specific precepts. The specific precepts, then, might be either (a) *invariable,* because they are like the primary precepts from which they are derived, or (b) *variable,* because they deal with more particular and contingent matters. For our purposes, then, we can label these three positions as follows:[6]

Position 1:	general, invariable precepts only
Position 2:	general invariable precepts, and specific invariable precepts
Position 3:	general invariable precepts, and specific variable precepts

By using these categories, we can more easily catalogue the vast array of commentators on the natural law. For example, as examples of those who advocate Position 1 (that the natural law consists of a small number of general, invariable precepts only) Armstrong lists scholars such as Viktor Cathrein, Henri Capitant,

[5] Armstrong, *Primary and Secondary Precepts,* 2.

[6] Cf. ibid., 2-3 (although the reader will note that my numbering at this point differs from Armstrong's).

Edgar Janssens, and Louis Le Fur.[7] There is some disagreement, however, even among these as to what constitute the primary, invariable precepts. Examples range from the famous "Do good and avoid evil" (which many consider to be the sole precept of the natural law) to Cathrein's "You should observe the order which is fitting for you as a rational being, in your relations with God, your fellow men and yourself," to Le Fur's, "one ought to pay compensation for damage unjustly inflicted on another person," to one of Armstrong's own suggestions: "the sexual relationship requires some form of regulation."[8] Numbered among those who hold Position 2 (that the natural law consists of both general *and* specific precepts, both of which are *invariable*) we find scholars such as Jacques Leclerq, Georges Renard, Paul Van Overbeke, and Jacques Maritain.[9] In the last category (those who claim that the natural law consists of invariable general precepts and specific precepts that may be variable), one finds luminaries such as Antonin Sertillanges, Régis Jolivet, Dom Odon Lottin, and Heinrich Rommen.[10] In each category, we can find a number of

[7] See Viktor Cathrein, *Recht, Naturrecht und Positives Recht* (Freiburg: Herder, 1909); Henri Capitant, *Introduction à l'étude du droit civil* (Paris, 1923); Edgar Janssens, *Cours de morale générale* (Louvain: Bibliotheque de l'Institut superieur de Philosophie, 1926); C. Martyniak, *Le fondement objectif du droit d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1931); Louis Le Fur, *Les grands problèmes du droit* (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1937).

[8] See Armstrong, *Primary and Secondary Precepts,* 3-4, 7, and 126.

[9] See Jacques Leclercq, *La notion précise du droit naturel* (Brussels: Institut Saint-Louis, 1923); and *Le fondement du droit et le la société,* vol. 1 in *Leçons de droit naturel* (Louvain: Namur, 1957); Georges Renard, *Le droit, l'ordre et la raison* (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1927); Jean Dabin, *La philosophie de l'ordre juridique positif spécialement dans les rapports de droit privé* (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1929); idem, *Théorie générale du droit* (Bruxelles: Bruylant, 1944); J. Messner, *Social Ethics, Natural Law in the Modern World,* trans. F. F. Doherty (St. Louis: Herder, 1949); Paul Van Overbeke, "La loi naturelle et le droit naturel chez saint Thomas," *Revue Thomiste* 57 (1957): 450-95; Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1951); idem, *The Rights of Man and Natural Law,* trans. D. C. Anson (New York: Scribners, 1943); and Philippe Delhaye, *Permamence du droit naturel* (Louvain: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1960).

[10] See Michael Cronin, *The Science of Ethics,* vol. 1 (Dublin: Longmans, 1909); A. D. Sertillanges, *La philosophie morale de Saint Thomas d'Aquin,* 9th ed. (Paris: Aubier, 1946); Régis Jolivet, *Morale,* vol. 4 in *Traité de philosophie* (Lyon: E. Vitte, 1963-66); Dom Odon Lottin, *Le droit naturel chez saint Thomas et ses prédécesseurs* (Bruges: C. Beyaert, 1931); idem, *Morale fondamentale* (Tournai: Desclee, 1954); and Heinrich Rommen, *The Natural Law* (St. Louis: Herder, 1947).

the preeminent natural law thinkers in the first half of the twentieth century. And yet, there seems to be no one position that all of them can agree upon.

Nor has time and the progress of scholarship brought about the desired consensus. If we consider more recent scholars of the natural law, we could perhaps divide them once again into three major camps, roughly speaking (here listed chronologically). The first group begins with the basic principle that "good is to be done and evil avoided," and then distinguishes other precepts of the natural law according to the basic human inclinations listed in question 94, article 2 of the *Prima Secundae* of Thomas's *Summa Theologiae*. We could include in this group the eminent historian of medieval philosophy, Etienne Gilson, as well as D. E. Luscombe, author of the article on the natural law in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*.[11] For example, Gilson claims that, for a man to know what the natural law demands of him, he "has only to observe himself attentively in order to discover it," because "the inclination which draws us toward certain ends is the unmistakable mark of what eternal law demands of us."[12] The first and most universal prescription of this law is the command to "do good and avoid evil." Once we have granted this, says Gilson, it is clear that "the precepts of natural law correspond exactly with our natural inclinations and that their order is the same."[13] Accordingly, Gilson identifies three basic prescriptions of the natural law and describes them as follows:

> (1) To tend to persevere in being is . . . the first precept of natural law to which man is subject.
> (2) [The second is] To reproduce himself, to raise his children, and other similar natural obligations.

[11] See Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas,* trans. L. K. Shook (New York: Random House, 1956); D. E. Luscombe, "Natural Morality and Natural Law," in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy,* ed. N. Kretzmann et. al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 705-19, esp. 709-12.

[12] Gilson, *Christian Philosophy,* 266.

[13] Ibid., 266.

(3) [The third is] To live in society, to seek truth about the natural sciences and the highest principle, God; not to injure those with whom we live, to avoid ignorance and to do what we can to dissipate it.[14]

Since we can presume that Gilson does not mean to suggest that these very general precepts are always and everywhere binding (for to do so would mean that no martyr could sacrifice his life for the faith—a violation of precept 1—or that no friar, such as Thomas Aquinas, could refuse to "reproduce himself" and "raise children" —a violation of precept 2), it follows that for him (and similarly for Luscombe, whose elucidation of the subject matter is similar), the natural law must contain both a primary precept that is invariable ("do good and avoid evil") and secondary precepts that are subject to variation. These authors could be numbered, therefore, among those who hold Position 3—that the natural law consists of general, invariable precepts and specific precepts that may be variable.

There is another contemporary group of scholars, however, who have been concerned that a position such as Gilson's would make Thomas seem to be deriving an "ought" from an "is." This second group, whose leading advocates are Germain Grisez and John Finnis, would distinguish the precepts of the natural law according to a list of "fundamental human goods" that are known intuitively. To be morally good, each human act must be directed ultimately to one of these fundamental human goods. Now since, on their account, the fundamental human goods are incommensurate, and thus one can never be sacrificed for another (for to justify that, the second good or goods would have to be commensurately superior to the first), both Grisez and Finnis hold that it can never be licit to do an act that is directly opposed to a fundamental human good.[15] For this reason, I suggest regarding

[14] See ibid., 267.

[15] See in particular the first three volumes of Grisez's multi-volume treatment of the Christian moral life: Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus,* vol. 1, *Christian Moral Principles* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1983); vol. 2, *Living a Christian Life* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1993); vol. 3, *Difficult Moral Questions* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1997); along with the following: Germain Grisez, *Fulfillment in Christ: A Summary of Christian Moral Principles* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991); and idem, *Contraception and the Natural Law* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1964). On Finnis,

Grisez and Finnis as advocates of something like Position 2: that the natural law consists of invariable primary precepts (the "fundamental human goods") and at least some invariable secondary precepts (acts directly opposed to a fundamental good).

More recently, a third group of contemporary scholars has arisen, stressing the priority of prudence in Thomas's moral philosophy. They wish to minimize what they see as the "legal prescriptivism" of the other groups. Their tendency, accordingly, is to de-emphasize the role of particular norms or rules in natural law ethics and focus rather on the role of prudence in particular situations that call for a moral judgment. Although these thinkers accept as a first principle of practical rationality the statement that "good is to be done and evil avoided," they do not believe that any particular moral norms can be derived from it. Characteristic in this regard is the following statement in a recent article on the natural law by Ludger Honnefelder:

> If one is not to misunderstand the scope of the first practical principle [says Honnefelder], one must consider what it does and does not entail. Arrived at by way of reduction, it turns out to be the formal structure of all concrete practical judgment, not, however, their source. No concrete sentence which guides action is possible without implying this principle, but none can be directly deduced from it either. As regards material content, the principle is tautological and empty.[16]

As for the natural inclinations from which Gilson and Luscombe derived the secondary precepts of the natural law, Honnefelder claims that,

the reader might consult the following: John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); idem, *Fundamentals of Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1983); idem, *Moral Absolutes: Tradition, Revision, and Truth* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991); and idem, *Aquinas: Moral, Political and Legal Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). J. Finnis, J. Boyle, and G. Grisez, *Nuclear Deterrence, Morality and Realism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) contains a selected bibliography of pertinent writings by these three authors at the end. See also Robert George, ed., *Natural Law and Moral Inquiry: Ethics, Metaphysics and Politics in the Work of Germain Grisez* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1998), which contains relevant discussions and critiques of the Grisez et al. project.

[16] Ludger Honnefelder, "Rationalization and the Natural Law: Max Weber's and Ernst Troeltsch's Interpretation of the Medieval Doctrine of Natural Law," *Review of Metaphysics* 49 (1995): 282-83.

no concrete norms can be derived from or read out of them. They have a meta-normative character and form . . . a non-arbitrary, open teleological system . . . from which only the most general prohibitions can be gleaned (which set natural boundaries to the field of action) but not, however, concrete and positive guides to action.[17]

What is required, instead, according to these thinkers, is an act of "complex practical deliberation,"[18] such as is made possible by the virtue of prudence. Thus, as Daniel Mark Nelson suggest in *The Priority of Prudence:*

the naturally known principles from which practical reasoning proceeds . . . do not help us know what to do. The first principles of natural law are too general and abstract to guide action, and the secondary principles are experientially derived to a much greater degree, reflecting the judgments of prudence.[19]

There are important differences between the thinkers in this group—this is more of a "tendency" rather than an actual "school of thought," as could be argued is the case with either the Gilsonian or Finnis-Grisez schools described above—so we would probably have to list these thinkers either as advocates of Position 3 (that the natural law consists of one general, invariable precept, namely, that "good is to be done and evil avoided" and several, more specific, variable precepts) or, in some cases, as advocates of Position 1 (that the natural law consists of one general, invariable precept only and no other generally applicable specific precepts). In this group, we might include such recent authors as Daniel Mark Nelson, Daniel Westberg, and Anthony Lisska.[20]

From our brief survey, then, it would appear that, not only are the uneducated (the *rudes*) unclear about the precepts of the natural law, even the majority of the twentieth century's finest and

[17] Ibid., 283.

[18] See ibid.

[19] Daniel Mark Nelson, *The Priority of Prudence: Virtue and Natural Law in Thomas Aquinas and the Implications for Modern Ethics* (University Park, Penn.: Penn State University Press, 1992), 114.

[20] See Nelson, *Priority of Prudence;* Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); and Anthony Lisska, *Aquinas's Theory of Natural Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

most dedicated natural law scholars can not agree on the precepts of the natural law. One might be forgiven for wondering whether there are any two ethicists anywhere who agree on what the natural law is. Indeed, so hopelessly muddled and confused have we become about what the term "natural law" might mean, in fact, that the late political philosopher Gerhart Niemeyer once advised that, "we would do well to use the concept of natural law reluctantly, if at all."[21]

In short, the dispute over the content of the natural law has raged for generations among scholars with no decisive resolution. Why so much disagreement? Particularly considering the fact that many, if not most, of these scholars all trace their work back to pretty much the same texts in the *Summa Theologiae*?

Perhaps this is part of the problem. Perhaps the problem arises because scholars have so often attempted to articulate the entire content of the natural law from scraps of evidence they find among Thomas's ruminations about the question, "Does the natural law contain one precept or many?" in the *Summa* (*STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2).[22] (The simple answer to that question is that the

[21] See Gerhardt Niemeyer, "What Price 'Natural Law'?" *The American Journal of Jurisprudence* 27 (1982): 1. In conversations over the years, I have found this to be not an uncommon view, even among those who would otherwise be sympathetic to the natural law. The general consensus seems to be—and this is Neimeyer's thesis as well—that the modern sense of the term "nature" is simply too "thin" (or at least too different from that of our classical and medieval predecessors) for the term "natural law" to become meaningful for any contemporary audience. For a good treatment on the relationship between *nomos* and *physis* in the thought of fifth-century B.C. Greece, see W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 55-104. For another view of why the natural law fails among our contemporaries, see Alasdair MacIntyre, "Theories of Natural Law in the Culture of Advanced Modernity," in E. B. McLean, ed., *Common Truths: New Perspectives on Natural Law* (Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2000), 91-115.

[22] The literature on this one article is vast, and it would be impossible to give anything like an adequate bibliography relating to it in any one journal article; there would be room for nothing else. To get a sense of the on-going debate, however, such as it has been carried on even within just the last twenty years, the reader might consult the following useful secondary literature (listed alphabetically by author): K. Flannery, *Acts Amid Precepts: The Aristotelian Logical Structure of Thomas Aquinas's Moral Theory* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), esp. 25-83; A. Gómez-Lobo, "Natural Law and Naturalism," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 59 (1985): 232-49; J. Finnis, *Aquinas: Moral, Political and Legal Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), esp. 79-94; G. Grisez, "The First Principle of Practical Reason: A Commentary on the *Summa theologiae*, 1-2, Question 94, Article 2," *Natural Law Forum* 10 (1965): 168-201;

natural law contains many [*plura*] precepts, but all of them have to do with seeking after that which is good, and thus most fulfilling, for the human person.) It may be that this one article cannot bear as much weight as we are accustomed to place on it. If we were to read a mere four questions further on in the *Prima Secundae,* however, we would find a large amount of important information about the natural law in Thomas's discussion of the Old Law,[23] information that will prove useful in resolving many of

idem, "The Structures of Practical Reason: Some Comments and Clarifications," *The Thomist* 52 (1998): 269-91; R. Hittinger, *A Critique of the New Natural Law Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), esp. 30-48; B. V. Johnstone, "The Structures of Practical Reason: Traditional Theories and Contemporary Questions," *The Thomist* 50 (1986): 417-46; P. Lee, "Is Thomas a Natural Law Theory Naturalist?" *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71 (1997): 567-87; R. McInerny, "The Principles of Natural Law," *American Journal of Jurisprudence* 25 (1980): 1-15; idem, *Ethica Thomistica: The Moral Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1982); M. Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason: A Thomist View of Moral Autonomy,* trans. G. Malsbary (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), esp. 58-145; J. Schultz, "Is-Ought: Prescribing and a Present Controversy," *The Thomist* 49 (1985): 1-23; idem, "The Ontological Status of Value Revisited," *Modern Schoolman* 63 (1986): 133-37; idem, "'Ought'-Judgments: A Descriptive Analysis from a Thomistic Perspective," *New Scholasticism* 61 (1987): 400-426; idem, "St. Thomas on Necessary Moral Principles," *New Scholasticism* 62 (1988): 150-78; idem, "Thomistic Metaethics and a Present Controversy," *The Thomist* 52 (1988): 40-62. For what is still the most useful resource on the background to Thomas's treatment of the natural law, see esp. O. Lottin's, *Psychologie et morale aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles,* 6 vols. (Louvain: Abbaye du Mont-César; Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1942-60) and the shorter, and in some ways more useful idem, *Le droit naturel chez saint Thomas d'Aquin et ses prédécesseurs,* 2d ed. (Bruges: Beyart, 1931).

[23] The secondary literature dealing with Thomas's treatment of the Old Law is not anywhere near so vast as that dealing with the discussion in *STh* I-II,q. 94, a. 2 (see n. 20 above). Indeed, one of the only articles that deals explicitly with the material on the Old Law is an excellent historical study by Beryl Smalley, "William of Auvergne, John of La Rochelle, and St. Thomas Aquinas on the Old Law," in *St. Thomas Aquinas, 1274-1974: Commemorative Studies* (Toronto: P.I.M.S., 1974), 2:11-72. Smalley's interest is primarily historical, not philosophical, and she makes nothing of the relationship between the Old Law and the natural law. Scholars are just now beginning to take *some* account of this material. Noteworthy in this regard is especially Jean Porter's recent *Natural Law and Divine Law: Reclaiming the Tradition for Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdman's, 1999); see esp. chap. 3, "Scripture and the Natural Law," 121-77. One finds passing mention of the moral precepts of the Old Law in two recent works on the natural law—Flannery's *Acts Amid Precepts* and Rhonheimer's *Natural Law and Practical Reason*—but neither develops the implications of the relationship, nor do they take seriously using the moral precepts as a guide to the natural law.

these on-going debates about the number and character of the precepts of the natural law.

In the next part of this article, therefore, I will examine why and in what way the Old Law reveals the natural law to us. In the following section, I will attempt to indicate how these reflections on the Old Law help us to resolve some of these centuries-old disputes about the precepts of the natural law.

II. The Old Law as a Written Articulation of the Natural Law

Thomas tells the reader of the *Prima Secundae* that "the Old Law shows forth the precepts of the natural law."[24] In order to understand exactly how this relationship works, however, we must begin by recognizing a key distinction within the Law of the Old Testament.[25]

Thomas distinguishes three basic types of precept that make up the Old Law: moral precepts (*moralia*), ceremonial precepts (*cæremonialia*), and judicial precepts (*judicialia*).[26] It is only the first of these, the moral precepts, that relates directly to the natural law. The latter two, the ceremonial and judicial precepts, are essentially positive law precepts given by God to the Jewish

[24] *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 5. English translations are largely my own, though throughout I have been guided by the 1949 English translation of The Fathers of the English Dominican Province, *Summa Theologica* (repr.: Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1981); and by the modification of that translation done by Anton Pegis in his *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Random House, 1945). In most cases, where relevant, I have provided the Latin text for the reader's own reference. The Latin text of the *Summa* used was that of Thomas Gilby, et al., trans., *Summa Theologiae,* 60 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964-1973).

[25] Matthew Levering has done excellent work on this entire topic. See in particular Matthew Levering, *Biblical Natural Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), chap. 4; idem, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), chap. 1; idem, "God and Natural Law," *Modern Theology* 22 (2008): 151-77; and idem, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Life of Wisdom* (New York: Continuum, 2010), chap. 4, in which he engages with the work of Jewish author David Novak, especially the latter's fascinating study of the topic from a contemporary Jewish perspective, *Natural Law in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). I am much indebted to Professor Levering for these references.

[26] See *STh* I-II, q. 99, aa. 2-4.

people to deal with their particular needs during the historical circumstances of the Old Testament period. Though related to the natural law, they represent more specific "determinations" of the natural law. These precepts, says Thomas, were explicitly binding only on the Jewish people and only until the coming of Christ.[27]

When it comes to the moral precepts, on the other hand, they are said to be binding on all people at all times because, according to Thomas, they "belong to the law of nature" (*de lege naturae*).[28] Indeed, the identity between the moral precepts of the Old Law and the natural law is expressed in particularly strong terms. In question 99, article 4 of the *Prima Secundae,* for example, Thomas says that the moral precepts refer to the *dictamen* of the natural law (*ad dictamen legis naturae, ad quod referuntur moralia praecepta*). He uses the same term when he distinguishes the moral precepts from the judicial and ceremonial precepts in question 104, article 1. He says there of the moral precepts that they "derive their binding force from the *dictamen* of reason itself" (*habent vim obligandi ex ipso dictamine rationis*).[29]

The term *dictamen* carries strong connotations in Latin which we have trouble capturing with any single English term. Often, the English terms "utterance," "statement," or "dictum" are forced into service.[30] In the Latin Middle Ages, however, the term *dictamen* referred primarily to a written dictation, taken down by a scribe, which represented in writing an authoritative statement,

[27] See esp. *STh* I-II,q. 99, a. 4: "We must therefore distinguish three kinds of precept in the Old Law, viz., *moral* precepts, which are dictated by [*dictamen* of] the natural law; *ceremonial* precepts, which are determinations of [the general principles of the natural law that apply to] the divine worship; and *judicial* precepts, which are determinations of [the general principles of the natural law that apply to] the justice to be maintained among men." Needless to say, such a distinction among the precepts would make a Jewish scholar such as David Novak relatively unhappy. Novak himself, however, rather than looking to the covenant law on Sinai for the natural law, associates it rather with the Noahide Law. On this, cf. Novak, *Natural Law in Judaism,* esp. 149ff. More specifically on the Noahide Law, see also his earlier essay: "Noahide Law: A Foundation for Jewish Philosophy," in *Tradition in the Public Square: A David Novak Reader,* ed. Randi Rashkover and Martin Kavka (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 113-44.

[28] See *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 5; *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 1.

[29] *STh* I-II, q. 104, a. 1.

[30] On this, see for example the definitions of *dictamen* given by R. J. Deferrari in his *Latin-English Dictionary of St. Thomas Aquinas* (St. Paul: Daughters of St. Paul, 1960; repr. 1986).

usually from a superior to his subordinates.[31] The scribal art of taking dictation was, in fact, called the *ars dictaminis*. In Lewis and Short's Oxford Latin Dictionary, we find under the entry for *dictamen* the following: "late Latin for *dictum*, *praescriptum*," and most tellingly, "*praeceptum*." Why would a *dictamen,* a dictation, come to be understood as a "prescript" or, more to the point, a "precept"? Because a *dictamen,* in addition to being a precise written account of someone's words (their *dicta,* as it were), carries with it a clear authority of command—the authority of the one whose words have been so scrupulously recorded—and thus constitutes for those under his authority a "precept" or a "command." I suggest that we can say of the moral precepts of the Old Law, therefore, that they are a written articulation of what the natural law expresses in an unwritten way, just as a medieval *dictamen* was a written dictation of a command that was expressed originally in an unwritten way.

To state the working premise of this article more precisely, then, let us say that, for Thomas, the moral precepts of the Old Law articulate in a written way what the natural law expresses in an unwritten way. Or to express the same point in another way, we might say that the moral precepts of the Old Law express

[31] The *ars dictaminis,* the art of letter writing, became a very precise and valued art during the Middle Ages. Scribes trained in the art of letter writing were invaluable at court. The treatises on the "art" of letter writing applied Ciceronian rhetorical principles to the actual mechanics of writing a letter. As a result, a five-part letter format was developed and systematized. The art became so systematized, in fact, that collections of formularies and model letters (*dictamina*) began to circulate for verbatim copying by those unable or unwilling to compose letters of their own. The association of *dictamina* with form letters need not concern us at present, although I believe it strengthens my case that the word *dictamen* was frequently associated with the notion of verbatim copying. The literature on the *ars dictaminis* is vast, but there is a useful introduction to the development of the practice in James J. Murphy, "*Ars dictaminis*: The Art of Letter-Writing," in idem, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1974; repr. 1981). For annotated guides to the bibliography, see Murphy's "Letter Writing: *Ars dictaminis*," chap. 4 in idem, *Medieval Rhetoric: A Select Bibliography*, 2d ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 76-103; and Luke Reinsma, "The Middle Ages," in *Historical Rhetoric: An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Sources in English,* ed. Winifred Bryan Horner (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980), 43-108. An account of more recent scholarship can be found in Martin Camargo, *Ars dictaminis, ars dictandi* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991). Camargo has a bibliography of current scholarship, but only those not listed in either Murphy or Reinsma.

materially—that is, in a certain *materia*, namely, in the words recorded by the writers of the Old Testament—the essential teaching (the *doctrina*) of the natural law. On Thomas's account, the source of the unity between the natural law and the moral precepts of the Old Law lies in the fact that they are two expressions of God's single will. For it is the one God, who is Author of both the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture, who has revealed the fundamental precepts of the natural law in a written way in the moral precepts of the Old Law.

III. Man's Corrupted Nature and the Need for a Revealed Articulation of the Precepts of the Natural Law

Why, however, would there even be a need for a special, revealed articulation of the precepts of the natural law, since the whole point of the natural law is that it can be known "naturally"? Are these not precepts which, as Aristotle says in the *Rhetoric*, "appear to be universally recognized"?[32] Thomas himself says of

[32] Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.10.1368b7-10 (Aristotle, *The "Art" of Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975], 107). I am aware, as the reader should be, that to say that the natural can be known "naturally" does not necessarily imply that it is known by everyone equally. There are a number of different alternative logical possibilities. First, one might mean by the "natural law" a law whose precepts derive from nature in general and/or human nature in particular. If there are such precepts, they might or might not be easily or generally accessible to human reason. For example, the so-called "laws of nature" (what we often call the laws of chemistry or physics) are certainly "natural," but they are not known without a great deal of effort and application of scientific study and expertise. But even if we were to admit that the natural law precepts are "naturally known"—or as Aristotle suggests, "universally recognized"—we still wouldn't necessarily have to conclude that such precepts are known easily and by all. For example, when we say that something is "universally recognized," we might be implying merely that something is recognized across national and cultural boundaries, as when we say that it is "universally recognized" that visiting foreign ambassadors are not to be killed, or that noncombatants should not be targeted in warfare. These principles are so broadly recognized by different countries and nationalities that we might indeed claim that they are "universally recognized"; not in the sense that every single citizen of every country understands them, but that every country generally or for the most part recognizes them.

And yet, while these remain *logical* possibilities, we might say two things. First, there is in the history of the natural law teaching a long tradition claiming that the precepts of the natural law are "universally recognized" not only by different peoples in different nations, but also by most people for the most part. (Whether they must be recognized by *all* people at *all*

the natural law that it pertains to "the light of natural reason" (*lumen rationis naturalis*).[33] He also describes the natural law as "the light of our intellect whereby we know what we ought to do" (*lumen intellectus per quod nota sunt nobis agenda*) and says of it that "God gave this light and law to man in the creation" (*hoc lumen et hanc legem dedit Deus homini in creatione*).[34] If human reason, operating by its own lights, is a sufficient guide to what is good and what is evil, then isn't a revealed written law merely superfluous?

Thomas answers this very objection in question 99, article 2 of the *Prima Secundae.* The article's second objection asserts that man's reason is sufficient for grasping moral precepts, therefore there is no need for the Old Law to contain any moral precepts. Thomas's response is that divine revelation comes to man's assistance not only in matters where his reason is insufficient, such as in matters of faith, but also in those matters where his reason may have been impeded or obscured.[35] In this regard, the moral precepts are like the *praeambula fidei* that Thomas describes at the beginning of the *Summa:* God must reveal them, otherwise the knowledge of these truths upon which man's whole salvation depends "would be known only by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors."[36] For human

times—whether, in fact, they cannot *not* be known—remains in question.) Second, however, as we shall see, Thomas himself claims that the natural law can be known by the light of natural reason and that there are certain precepts that cannot fail to be known by all human persons. Given this fact, along with the nearly universal Christian association of the natural law with the verse in Rom 2:14 which speaks of the Gentiles, who "though they do not have the law, do by nature the things required by the law" (and thus are guilty of immorality when they do not obey this law), the question we are treating remains valid: why *reveal* the precepts of the natural law if they can be and are known by reason alone?

[33] *STh* I-II, q. 91, a. 2..

[34] Thomas Aquinas, *The Commandments of God: Sermon Conferences on the Two Precepts of Charity and the Ten Commandments,* trans. Laurence Shapcoate (London: Burns Oates, 1937), section 1; Latin text: *In duo praecepta caritatis et in decem legis praecepta expositio*, in *Opuscula Theologica,* vol. 2 (Turin: Marietti, 1954).

[35] *STh* I-II, q. 99, a. 2, ad 2.

[36] *STh* I, q. 1, a. 1. Cf. in particular *STh* I, q. 2, a. 2, ad 1. See also Thomas's exposition of Boethius's *De Trinitate,* q. 2, a. 3. For a longer discussion of the relationship between the truths known by faith and the truths known by reason, see *Summa contra Gentiles* I, cc. 3-8, and in particular c. 4: "Beneficially, therefore, did the divine Mercy provide that it should

reason, says Thomas, through being habituated to sin, "became darkened as to what ought to be done" and "went astray, to the extent of judging to be lawful things that are evil in themselves."[37]

But how did this happen? How did we become habituated to error and the natural power of our intellects thus darkened to what is good and evil? The answer is that our natural powers have been corrupted by sin, especially original sin. As Thomas often explains, one must consider human nature in two ways. In the first way, we can think of human nature in its full integrity or wholeness (*in sui integritate*), as it was in the first man before he sinned. Secondly, however, we must consider human nature as it exists in us now, corrupted due to original sin (*corrupta in nobis post peccatum primi parentis*).[38] At his creation, before the fall, man was able to act in accord with the natural law. It was at that point, says Thomas, "according to his proper natural condition that [man] should act in accordance with reason"; indeed, "this law was so effective in man's first state, that nothing either outside or against reason could take man unawares." After man turned away from God, however, "he fell under the influence of his sensual impulses," which began to rule him as though they themselves were a kind of law. This law—what Thomas calls in the *Summa* the law of the *fomes,* and what he calls elsewhere, more simply, "the law of concupiscence"—is "a deviation from the law of reason." The more man fell under its sway, the more he "departed from the path of reason"—so much so that Thomas proclaims starkly that, "the law of nature was destroyed by the law of concupiscence."[39]

The result, according to Thomas, is that in his present fallen state, man is largely *not* able—that is, no longer able—to do the good proportioned to his nature.[40]

instruct us to hold by faith even those truths that the human reason is able to investigate. In this way, all men would easily be able to have a share in the knowledge of God, and this without uncertainty and error."

[37] *STh* I-II, q. 99, a. 2, ad2.

[38] On this, cf., for example, *STh* I-II, q. 109, a. 2.

[39] *In duo praecepta caritatis,* prol. (*The Commandments of God,* 2).

[40] *STh* I-II.q.109, a. 2.

For Thomas, therefore, as for the medieval Christian tradition of which he is a part, the operations of human nature since the fall of man are not at all the workings of a well-oiled and efficient machine. Human nature has been so corrupted by the effects of sin that what was characteristic of or "natural" for man in that time when his nature was healthy and uncorrupted is no longer so. Man's acts and dispositions are the result of severely weakened capacities. Thus, when we talk about the natural law and, correspondingly, about the capacities of man's "natural" reason to arrive at independent moral judgments, we must remember that, for the actual world of living moral agents, what has become "natural" for us, according to Thomas, are the moral judgments that follow upon a wounded, corrupted nature, not those that depend upon an integral and uncorrupted nature that human beings no longer actually possess.

Thus it precisely *not* the case, as the Jesuit scholar R. J. Henle claims in his commentary on Thomas's *Treatise on Law,* that:

> If [man] were left to his natural powers, he could, by these powers alone, achieve some degree of happiness proportionate to his nature. In this case, the Natural Law and Human Law would be adequate to guide him in his human acts.[41]

Quite the contrary: Thomas makes clear that if man were left to his natural powers, he would, by these powers alone, not be very happy at all. We know this because we have a record of the results. According to Thomas, man's chief defect since the fall has been pride, and men are proud of two things: knowledge and power. In order that man's pride might be overcome, says Thomas, "man was left to the guidance of his reason alone without the help of a written law."[42] Indeed, Thomas even calls this "the age of the natural law."[43] Far from showing, as Henle claims, that "the Natural Law alone would be adequate to guide man in his human acts," the age of the natural law showed man how

[41] Thomas Aquinas, *The Treatise on Law,* trans. with commentary by R. J. Henle, S.J. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 166.

[42] *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 6.

[43] Ibid.

desperately inadequate his knowledge had become. The result, according to Thomas, was that "man fell headlong into idolatry and the most shameful vices." Knowledge of the natural law was obscured or obliterated so great was the "exuberance of sin." And yet, because of this, says Thomas, "man was able to learn from experience"–-indeed, painful experience—"that his reason was deficient."[44] God, then, out of his infinite mercy and love, responded to man in his need by providing him with the Old Law "as a remedy for human ignorance" (*in remedium humanae ignorantiae*),[45] so that he might be instructed in the principles of the natural law, which he should know, were his nature not corrupted by sin.[46] Dom Odon Lottin has accurately described the theology of history lying behind this view:

> The school of Anselm of Lâon spread, on the subject of the natural law, a conception which exercised a profound influence. Before the epoch of the Mosaic Law, humanity was subject to the reign of the natural law, which *naturalis ratio* dictated to him. It was condensed into this principle: Do not do to another that which you would not want for him to do to you. [We will see this in Thomas as well.] But this natural reason was soon obfuscated by sin, to the point that few men remained faithful to the true God. The Mosaic Law, thus, became necessary to revive the natural law in the heart of man.[47]

What Thomas saw perhaps more clearly than any of his contemporaries,[48] however, was that if the moral precepts of the

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] *In duo praecepta caritatis,* prol. (*The Commandments of God,* 2).

[47] Lottin, *Le droit naturel,* 27: "L'école d'Anselme de Laon a répandu, au sujet de la loi naturelle, une conception qui a exercé une profonde influence. Avant l'époque de la Loi mosaïque, l'humanité était soumise au règne de la loi naturelle que lui dictait la *ratio naturalis*. Elle se condensait en ce principe: Ne fais pas à autrui ce que tu ne voudrais pas qu'on te fît. Mais cette raison naturelle fut bientôt obnubilée par le péché, au point que peu d'hommes restèrent fidèles au vrai Dieu. La Loi mosaïque devenait ainsi nécessaire pour faire revivre la loi naturelle au coeur de l'homme."

[48] Thomas is particularly insistent on the literal meaning of all the precepts of the Old Law, and he goes to great lengths to defend many of the most obscure precepts in the Old Testament books of Numbers, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. On Thomas's understanding of the literal meaning of the Old Law and the views of some of his predecessors, see Smalley, "William of Auvergne, John of La Rochelle, and St. Thomas Aquinas on the Old Law."

Old Law stand as a privileged revelation from God of the *dictamen* of the natural law, given to man as a salutary aid in light of his fallen state, then we should be able to use the moral precepts of the Old Law as an authoritative guide to the content of the natural law. It was for this exact reason, after all, that they were given to us by God.

IV. Thomas's Threefold Hierarchy of Precepts

The hierarchy that obtains among the moral precepts of the Old Law is laid out in question 100, article one of the *Prima Secundae,* and then repeated almost verbatim in two subsequent articles (*STh* I-II, q. 100, aa. 3 and 11). In each article, Thomas identifies three "levels" (*gradus*) among the moral precepts of the Old Law, distinguishing them according to their degree of universality or particularity and thus according to their accessibility to human reason. The whole presentation, in fact, is based upon an ongoing comparison between speculative and practical thinking.

As every judgment of the speculative reason proceeds from the natural knowledge of first principles, likewise every judgment of the practical reason proceeds, says Thomas, "from certain naturally known principles" (*ex quibusdam principiis naturaliter cognitis*).[49] These principles of practical rationality are what Thomas calls the "first and common precepts of the natural law" (*prima et communia praecepta legis naturae*), which are "self-evident" (*per se nota*) to human reason.[50] As *per se nota,* these precepts need not (and indeed cannot) be deduced from prior principles.

Although (as mentioned above) there has been much debate among scholars about which precepts are the *primary* precepts of the natural law, the articles in question 100 show that Thomas leaves no doubt as to what he, at least, thinks they are. For example, in article 3 he says of the two great commandments to

[49] *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 1.

[50] See, for example, *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 3, ad 1.

"love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind," and to "love your neighbor as yourself," that "these two precepts are the first and common precepts of the natural law, which are self-evident to human reason" (*illa duo praecepta sunt prima et communia praecepta legis naturae, quae sunt per se nota rationi humanae*).[51] As he makes clear elsewhere, there are also several alternative forms of the second commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself": the positive injunction to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you"; the negative injunction "do *not* do to others what would not want them to do to you"; and the most simple form: "do harm to no one."[52] Such commandments constitute for Thomas the primary precepts of the natural law.

The second- and third-level precepts are derived from the first and are related to them "as conclusions to common principles" (*sicut conclusiones ad principia communia*).[53] Thomas distinguishes between the second- and third-level precepts on the basis of the degree of "consideration" necessary to reach the conclusion. Second-level precepts concern matters "so evident" (*adeo explicita*), that "at once, after very little consideration" (*statim, cum modica consideratione*), "anyone" is able to approve or disapprove of them by means of these common first principles.[54] Such precepts involve relatively simple and straightforward moral judgments, which everyone, insists Thomas, even the uneducated, are capable of making.[55] Unlike the precepts of the first level, however, concerning which no one can be in error, the second-level precepts need to be promulgated in the Law because human judgment can be led astray (*iudicium humanum perverti*) concerning matters even as simple as these. As examples of

[51] Ibid.

[52] One can find examples of this throughout Thomas's discussion in *STh* I-II, q. 100, aa.1-11.

[53] For a good contemporary discussion of the derivation of the "secondary" precepts from the primary precepts, see Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason*, esp. 275 ff. on "The Extension of the Natural Law: Its Discursive Explication by the *Ratio Naturalis* and 'Secondary Precepts.'"

[54] *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 1.

[55] See *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 11.

second-level precepts—those which "the natural reason of every man of its own accord and at once, judges ought to be done or not done" (*quae statim per se ratio naturalis cujuslibet hominis dijudicat esse facienda vel non facienda*)—Thomas lists, "Honor your father and mother," "Thou shalt not kill," and "Thou shalt not steal."[56]

Third-level precepts, finally, are those that require more complex moral reasoning. They require not a "slight consideration" (*modica consideratione*) as do the precepts of the second level, but "much consideration" (*multa consideratio*) of the various circumstances. Not all are able to do this carefully, says Thomas, "but only those who are wise; just as it is not possible for all to know the particular conclusions of the sciences, but only for those who are philosophers."[57] Precepts of this third level—those "which are judged by the wise to be done after a more subtle consideration of reason" (*quae subtiliori consideratione rationis a sapientibus judicantur esse observanda*)—include relatively simple moral norms, such as "Rise up before the hoary head, and honor the person of the aged man," and "Don't commit acts of prostitution," as well as relatively more sophisticated moral judgments such as "Don't evade the truth by giving in to the judgment of the majority" (cf. Exod 23:2: "Neither shall you yield in judgment to the opinion of the majority, to stray from the truth") and "Don't use false weights on a scale" (cf. Deut 25:13: "You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a large and a small").[58] Thomas insists that even the precepts of this third level "belong to the law of nature" (*de lege naturae*), but they are such

[56] *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 1. With regard to the first and second levels of moral precept mentioned above, Jean Porter says, "Nearly every canonist and theologian I have examined cites the Golden Rule as one of the possible meanings of the natural law, and most of them add the Decalogue as well" (Porter, *Natural and Divine Law,* 180 n. 26). My research over much the same material has yielded the same result. By Thomas's time, it has become a medieval commonplace. In this sense, there really should be no question as to what Thomas would list as the basic precepts of the natural law. Every other medieval theologian would list the same: the Golden Rule (either "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," or "Love your neighbor as yourself") and the Ten Commandments of the Decalogue. On this, as I have said, there should be no debate.

[57] *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 1.

[58] Ibid.

that "they need to be taught, the wiser giving instruction to the less wise" (*indigeant disciplina, qua minores a sapientioribus instruantur*).[59]

The judgment that allows one to move from moral norms of the second level to those of the third is not easy or automatic. We are far from anything like a "practical syllogism" that moves by means of synthetic deduction from premises to a particular act as its conclusion. Rather, what allows one to move from the basic moral principles (such as those on the first and second levels) to the conclusions of those principles (such as those that are revealed by the third-level precepts) is prudence. Indeed, in one of his questions on the virtue of prudence later in the *Summa,* Thomas says specifically that the role of prudence is "applying universal principles to particular conclusions of practical matters."[60] Moving from the simple and very basic moral judgments of the natural law, in other words, such as those that are revealed in the Ten Commandments, to the moral judgments that can be derived from them, such as those that are revealed by the moral precepts of the third level, requires the intellectual and moral virtue of prudence—a virtue that might be infused, but generally requires years of training and experience. Not all are able to do this, says Thomas, but "only those who are wise."[61]

Because of their importance, Thomas reviews the essential elements of his threefold hierarchy in article 11 of question 100, identifying clearly the precepts that correspond to each level of moral consideration.

> The moral precepts derive their efficacy from the very dictate of natural reason. . . . Now of these there are three levels.
>
> (1) For some are *most certain*, and so evident as to *need no promulgation* [*adeo manifesta quod editione non indigent*], as for example the commandments dealing with the love of God and neighbor, and others of this type, as was stated above, which are, as it were, the ends of the commandments [*fines praceptorum*]; hence no one can make an erroneous judgment of reason about them.
>
> (2) Other precepts, then, are *more paticular, the reason for which anyone, even an uneducated person, can see immediately* [*magis determinata, quorum*

[59] Ibid.

[60] *STh* II-II, q. 47, a. 6.

[61] *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 11.

rationem statim quilibet, etiam popularis, potest de facili videre]. Nevertheless precepts of this sort need to be promulgated, because in a few instances it may happen that human judgment can be led astray concerning them. These are the precepts of the decalogue.

(3) Again, there are some precepts *the reason for which is not so evident to everyone, but only to the wise* [*quorum ratio non est adeo cuilibet manifesta, sed solum sapientibus*]; and such are the moral precepts added to the decalogue, and given by God through Moses and Aaron.[62]

V. Writing the Law on Human Hearts: The Natural Law and the New Law

It is important to note, however, that for Thomas the instruction that comes from the Old Law is merely the first part of a twofold plan of moral reform that corresponds to man's twofold sinful condition. As Thomas says in his introduction to the final section of the *Prima Secundae*, after God "instructs us by means of his Law," it remains for him to "help us by means of his Grace."[63] After the fall, says Thomas, man became proud of two things: his knowledge and power. Because he took pride in his knowledge, "as though his natural reason could suffice to bring him salvation" (*quasi ratio naturalis ei posset sufficere ad salutem*), God left man under the guidance of his own reason "without the support of the written law" (*absque adminiculo legis scriptae*), so that he could learn from experience that he suffered from a defect of reason (*quod patiebatur rationis defectum*). That is why the written law had to be given: to make up for the deficiencies of human ignorance (*in remedium humanae ignorantiae*). Along with pride over his (supposed) knowledge, however, man gained pride over his power. And so, says Thomas, "after man had been in-structed by the Law, his pride stood convicted of weakness [*convicta est ejus superbia de infirmitate*], since he was still unable to fulfill what he knew."[64] Therefore, "it was right," says Thomas elsewhere, "that man should first be left to himself under the

[62] Ibid.

[63] Prologue ("*de lege*") to *STh* I-II, q. 90. An author who is particularly good on this issue is Matthew Levering. See his *Jewish-Christian Dialogue and the Life of Wisdom,* esp. 107-14; and *Biblical Natural Law,* esp. chap.4: "Natural Law and the Order of Charity," 189ff.

[64] *STh* I-II, q. 98, a. 6.

regime of the Old Law, in order that by falling into sin and coming to know his own weakness, he should recognize his need for grace."[65]

As Thomas well understood, following the insights of St. Augustine and St. Paul before him, even after the basic precepts of the moral law are revealed to us—written down for us to see and to know—this revelation of itself does not succeed in enabling us to *do* the good. We still often fail to do the good we have been taught we ought to do. Why? Because, according to Thomas, we have suffered a tragic alienation of the will from the intellect due to the corruption of our integral human nature. No longer does the will obey "naturally" the conclusions regarding what reason has judged to be good. And indeed the intellect, clouded by sin, has itself lost the knowledge it once had of its ultimate good.[66] That is why we often find we *know* in a certain sense the right thing to do, but are still not able to *do* it, and certainly not able to do it promptly and freely. If we manage to do the good act, we usually do it under duress or because we fear punishment.

[65] *STh* I-II, q. 106, a. 3.

[66] This topic would require a great deal more discussion, but the problem seems to be that our knowledge of our ultimate good—which is found only in God—is not complete. In other words, we do not know our ultimate good *as* ultimate. We "know" it (not in the sense of a *scientia,* but rather in the sense of a *cognitio*) as just another particular good among others. And *that* is why it is possible for us to choose other particular goods—say, the good of pleasure, or the good of power—over things that are "purportedly" (that, at least, is what our teachers and elders tell us) more in accord with our ultimate good. As John Henry Newman has suggested in *The Grammar of Assent,* it is one thing to give a "notional assent" to those things about which one has merely a "notional apprehension," and quite another to give a "real assent" to something about which one has a "real apprehension" (Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent,* esp. chap. 4, on "Notional and Real Assent.") We can know (have a "cognition") that something is the "right" thing to do in a particular situation—that it is supposed to lead us to our ultimate good and flourishing in the long run. But that is the long run. The good of pleasure or the good of having money, however, is available to us now. The good of the beatific vision, which could be ours ultimately, is known only abstractly, and attaining it may involve difficulty, patience, and discipline. Given the balance of those scales, we sometimes opt for the lesser good, although we don't necessarily judge it to be the "lesser" of the two at the time. We judge the more limited good to be the "greater" because we know that we can have it now. The other good is too far away and abstract and may not ever be attained. What we need, then, is greater wisdom about the good, a more powerful love of it, and an abiding hope that we can attain it, along with greater discipline of the will to keep our attention focused on the true goods that will fulfill us more completely.

The fact is that, even after the moral law has been "written on our minds," it needs to be written on our hearts as well. We should recall in this regard that the natural law was traditionally conceived of specifically as an *unwritten* law, a law "written on our hearts." Indeed, by the Middle Ages, that classic trope about the natural law as an unwritten law was being correlated with Paul's reference in Romans 2:15 to the "law written on men's hearts."[67] And it was understood to be the promise of the prophets such as Ezekiel and Jeremiah that the law—the law which had been obscured due to the blindness and incapacities brought on by sin—would be written anew (a "New Law," as Thomas calls it): written in this new age not on tablets of stone, but on the fleshy tablets of the human heart.[68] So, for example, in his very first article on the New Law, we find Thomas quoting the famous verse in Jeremiah (31:33) where God says he will "put My law within them and on their heart I will write it."[69] Later in the same article, we find Thomas quoting Augustine, who says that, "as the law of works was written on tablets of stone, so the law of faith is written in the hearts of the faithful." Again, quoting from Augustine: "What are the laws of God written by God himself in our hearts, if not the very presence of the Holy Spirit?"[70]

Just as the moral precepts of the Old Law are, of themselves, imperfect—incomplete—until and unless they are perfected by the virtues and the grace of the Holy Spirit, so too we can say that any written articulation of the natural law will suffer from the same defect. It is not enough merely for the natural law to command *externally;* it must also move the will *internally*. This is why it is

[67] See, for example, the marginal gloss on Rom 2:15 in the medieval *Glossa ordinaria*. In the margins beside the phrase *qui ostendunt opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis*, one finds this simple gloss: "*id est lex naturae*." See *Biblia Latina cum glossa ordinaria : Facsimile Reprint of the editio Princeps Adolph Rusch of Strassburg 1480/81*, introduction by Karlfried Froehlich and Margaret T. Gibson (Brepols: Turnhout, 1992).

[68] Along with the text from Jer 31:33 discussed below, see also, for example, Ezek 11:19-20, where God promises through the prophet: "And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God."

[69] *STh* I-II, q. 106, a. 1, sc.

[70] *STh* I-II, q. 106, a. 1.

important to remember that the natural law is actually an *unwritten law*. It is supposed to be a "law written on men's hearts." What the corruption of man's nature has done, however, is to make it possible for the law to be written on our minds, but not in our hearts. We can *know* what we ought to do, and still not have the *will*, as it were, to do it. In such circumstances, our tendency is to view the law, not as a gift of wise counsel from a loving and concerned Father, but rather as burden of arbitrary decrees from an uncaring and unremitting Lawgiver. God becomes, not Father, but only Lawgiver and Judge.

It is only by the gift of the New Law, then, which is the gift of God's own Holy Spirit, by which "charity is spread abroad in our hearts," that the natural law can be fulfilled. Indeed, as Thomas makes clear, without the gift of God's grace, we can make the natural law into an occasion of sin, just as the written law of the Old Testament, though good of itself, became an "opportunity" for sin: "this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me." When the natural law is written only on our minds and not on our hearts, then it too can become a burden or a goad to greater sin. The promise of the prophets such as Ezekiel and Jeremiah, on the other hand, is that the law will be written anew on the hearts of the faithful. Thus, as Thomas tells us in the famous prologue to question 90 of the *Prima Secundae,* after God "instructs us by means of his Law," it remains for him to "assist us by means of his grace." The second part of God's plan of moral renewal, therefore, involves the work of the Holy Spirit, who will, as the prophets foretold, give us a new heart and a new spirit, so that we may walk in the Lord's commandments and keep them (Ezek 36:26-27). The natural law is revealed in a written way in the moral precepts of the Old Law, but it is only fully realized finally with the gift of the New Law and the development of the virtues, both acquired and infused.

While more needs to be said on this topic, that discussion would involve us in an analysis of the role of the virtues in the moral life as a process of "writing" those moral laws on our hearts.

Instead, we must turn to a consideration of how this material on the Old Law helps us to resolve the classic debates about the precepts of the natural law.

VI. Questions about the Primary and Secondary Precepts of the Natural Law

Analyzing the logically possible positions regarding the precepts of the natural law, we reduced them to the following three:

Position 1:	The natural law contains general, invariable precepts only
Position 2:	The natural law contains certain general, invariable precepts, along with specific precepts that are also invariable
Position 3:	The natural law contains general, invariable precepts, and specific precepts that are variable

A question we did not examine in detail above, however, is why this disagreement arose in the first place. Why three positions instead of one? As we will see, the controversy seems to have arisen because of the small differences in wording that occur in Thomas's description of a key analogy between the principles of speculative reasoning and what he calls "the principles of practical reasoning," the latter term being one he uses to help describe the role of the precepts of the natural law.

For example, in question 94, article 2 of the *Prima Secundae,* Thomas suggests that "the precepts of the natural law stand in relation to practical reason as the first principles of demonstrations do to the speculative reason: both are self-evident principles" (*principia per se nota*).[71] Earlier (*STh* I-II, q. 91, a. 3), he lays out the analogy in even more detail:

> A law is a kind of dictate of the practical reason. Now the processes of the theoretic and practical reasons are similar; for each proceeds from principles to conclusions, as we stated earlier. Accordingly we must say that, just as in

[71] *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2.

speculative reasoning, the conclusions of the various sciences are produced from indemonstrable principles naturally known, the knowledge of which is not imparted to us naturally, but discovered through the industry of human reason, so also from the precepts of the natural law, as from common and indemonstrable principles, human reason needs to proceed to some things more particularly arranged. And such particular arrangements, arrived at according to human reason, are called human laws.[72]

These two texts have suggested to a number of commentators that *all* of the conclusions of the common and indemonstrable principles of the natural law are, by definition, to be considered human law. Indeed, from these two texts alone it would be very easy to conclude that the natural law consists of a few, general, self-evident, and indemonstrable first principles, and nothing more (Position 1). All other precepts derived from the in-demonstrable first principles and dealing with "more particular arrangements" would be, by default, precepts of the human law, and not other precepts of the natural law at all.

The problems for this interpretation arise, however, when we get to later articles in the same section (specifically *STh* I-II, q. 94, aa. 4, 5, and 6), articles that deal in turn with whether the natural law is the same for all (a. 4), whether it can be changed (a. 5), and whether it can be "deleted from the human heart" (a. 6). Whereas in previous articles Thomas was interested in using the analogy between the principles of speculative and practical reasoning to help elucidate the role of the precepts of the natural law, in these later articles he emphasizes the important *dis-analogies* that remain between speculative and practical reasoning. That is to say, while the precepts of the natural law act something like the principles of speculative reasoning, the similarity diminishes the more one proceeds from principles to conclusions.

For example, in article 4 we find Thomas affirming that "the natural law, as to the first common principles, is the same for all, both as to rectitude and as to knowledge," yet he also grants that

as to the proper principles, which are something like conclusions of the common principles, it is the same for all in the majority of cases, both as to rectitude and

[72] *STh* I-II, q. 91, a. 3.

as to knowledge, but in some few cases it may fail, both as to rectitude, because of some particular impediments . . . and as to knowledge, because some persons have had their reason perverted by passion, or by evil custom, or by an evil disposition of nature.[73]

When we reach this text, the viability of Position 1 seems to crumble. Although it had seemed before as though the natural law might consist only in self-evident first principles—and all the conclusions derived from these first principles would be considered precepts of human law, not natural law—in this text, Thomas clearly seems to be suggesting that at least some of the precepts derived from the "first common principles" are indeed precepts of the natural law. This implication turns into a very clear statement to that effect in the two subsequent articles.

In article 5, for example, Thomas continues his discussion of the ways in which the natural law may or may not be changeable and begins his analysis with the same analogy between practical and speculative reasoning we have seen before. In commenting on whether something that was once forbidden by the natural law can ever cease to be prohibited, Thomas says this:

As to the first principles of the natural law, the natural law is altogether unchangeable. But as to its secondary precepts [*secunda praecepta*], which, as we have said, are something like certain proper conclusions close to the first principles [*quasi proprinquas primis principiis*], the natural law is not changed so that what the natural law holds to be right in most cases is not. Nevertheless it may be changed in some particular and rare cases, because of some special causes hindering the observance of these precepts.[74]

This is the first place Thomas explicitly uses the term "secondary precepts" (*secunda praecepta*) to describe the class of precepts derived from the primary, first and common, self-evident, and indemonstrable principles of the natural law. In this text, these "secondary" precepts appear also to be natural law precepts, and not precepts of human law. In the very next article, Thomas says explicitly that "*there belong to the natural law,* first, certain most common precepts which are known by all; and secondly, certain

[73] *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 4.
[74] *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 5.

secondary, more proper precepts, which are something like conclusions following closely from first principles" (emphasis added). These three articles in question 94 have caused some scholars to reject Position 1, that the natural law consists of general, invariable principles *only,* and to opt for Positions 2 or 3 instead. But notice, once the issue has been framed in terms of natural law precepts that are "primary" and others that are "secondary," arguments have arisen quite naturally over the status and character of these "secondary" precepts: whether they are actually part of the natural law properly speaking, and if so, whether they are variable or not. Instead of belaboring the point by showing *how* the various interpretations might follow from the different combinations and permutations of these texts, I will discuss rather what light might be shed on the question by incorporating evidence from Thomas's discussion of the moral precepts of the Old Law.

VII. How the Old Law Resolves the Questions about the Primary and Secondary Precepts of the Natural Law

Given what we have seen, we can now safely eliminate Position 1: the natural law includes more than just a few, very general moral principles and nothing more. It is clear from the material in question 100 (which helps us to clarify Thomas's comments in question 94) that there is at least a second class of precepts related to the first "as conclusions to first and common principles." We also know from the questions on the Old Law that the "first and common precepts of the natural law" (*prima et communia praecepta legis naturae*), which are "self-evident" (*per se nota*) to human reason can be expressed by the two great commandments to love God and to love one's neighbor as oneself, while the second-level precepts, those derived as "conclusions to the first and common principles," can be summed up in the Ten Commandments.

In the *sed contra* of question 94, article 2, therefore, when Thomas speaks of the precepts of the natural law "standing in relation to operable matters as first principles do to matters of

demonstration," and again in question 91, article 1, when he says that human law is derived from the natural law "as from certain common and indemonstrable principles," he is speaking more broadly than he will in later articles of the *Summa*. It is clear from the articles in question 100 that, in actual fact, only the first-level moral precepts are "first and common" and entirely self-evident principles of the natural law. The second-level precepts, however, which are summed up in the Decalogue, can also serve as principles from which conclusions can be drawn, although they are not "first and common" nor "self-evident." It remains to be seen whether the third-level precepts can similarly serve as principles for further conclusions. I will discuss this possibility in more detail below. What is important to see now, however, is that Thomas becomes *more precise* as he moves into later articles and adds important distinctions that he had not felt it necessary to introduce earlier. These later distinctions do not negate his earlier comments, they merely refine them.

If one is not aware of these later distinctions, it is easy to misread the earlier material. Thomas speaks in a sort of "shorthand" in question 94, article 2, and question 91, article 3, making reference only to the "precepts of the natural law" which serve as indemonstrable first principles without the distinctions introduced in question 100, which help us to understand more precisely the various ways in which they operate as first principles from which conclusions can be drawn. This "shorthand" has led some commentators to conclude, as mentioned above, that the natural law contains *only* general, invariable precepts and nothing more. All other derivations from these first and common, indemonstrable primary principles are then considered, on this view, to be precepts of *human law,* not natural law. Knowledge of the material in question 100, however, makes Thomas's comments in questions 91 and 94 clearer.

What about the "secondary" precepts? What does the material on the Old Law tell us about them? Our analysis shows that there are in fact two kinds of "secondary" precepts of the natural law: "those that with but slight reflection can be gathered at once from the first common principles," summed up in the Decalogue, and

"those things which the wise judge ought to be done after a more careful consideration of reason."[75] In these later questions on the Old Law, Thomas is simply more explicit than he had been earlier in his more general treatment of the different types of law, and he specifies three levels (*gradus*)of precept rather than merely two. And just as the precepts of the Decalogue can be derived from the first and common, self-evident precepts of the first level as "conclusions from principles,"so also the precepts of the third level can be derived from those on the second level as "conclusions from principles."[76] Thus, when we come to what commentators generally call the "secondary" precepts of the natural law, we must again realize that Thomas speaks more broadly in question 94 than he does in question 100.

Among the doubts that might still be lingering, however, is whether all three levels of the moral precepts identified in question 100 are, in fact, natural law precepts, or whether only the precepts of the first and second levels are. There are several reasons for claiming that all of the moral precepts on all three levels are natural law precepts and not, for example, human law or positive law precepts. First, Thomas identifies all three levels as moral precepts (*moralia)*, and all the moral precepts are distinguished from the ceremonial and judicial precepts precisely by being *dictamen* of the natural law. Nowhere does Thomas specify a substantial distinction among them and in no place does he suggest that the precepts of the second or third levels operate as positive law precepts—in fact, quite the opposite. Another key distinction between the moral precepts and the ceremonial and judicial precepts is that the moral precepts are binding on all people at all times, while the ceremonial and judicial precepts were binding only on the Jewish people in the historical circumstances of the Old Testament. When we look at the precepts of the second level—don't kill, don't steal, don't commit adultery—as well as those of the third level—honor the aged, don't fornicate, don't engage in sex with a prostitute, don't give in to the opinion of the majority—both appear (at least *prima*

[75] *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 11.
[76] See *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 3.

facie) to be norms binding on all people at all times. The judicial precepts, on the other hand—such as those that dealt with the relationship between Moses and the Elders, or those that specified how long a foreigner must live among the Jews before he or she could become a citizen[77]—seem to be, on the contrary, precepts that are related to the more particular circumstances of the Jewish people during the time of their wandering in the wilderness. While the judicial and ceremonial precepts are not entirely unrelated to the natural law—they are, in fact, applications of it to particular circumstances—they are not generally applicable norms that cover various times and circumstances in the way that even the moral precepts of the third level do. In other words, although the judicial and ceremonial precepts are positive law precepts, the third-level moral precepts are not. By contrasting the judicial precepts with the third-level moral precepts, Thomas makes clear that all of the moral precepts—including those of the third level—are natural law precepts and not mere positive law.

Thus far we have learned that, along with certain general precepts, the natural law also contains a number of more specific precepts—in fact, two classes of more specific precepts: one involving a simple judgment without conditioning circumstances, a judgment of which even the unlearned are capable; and a second class involving a more complex consideration of circumstances of which only the wise are capable. Having come to these conclusions concerning the *generality* and *specificity* of the precepts of the natural law, we must now turn to the other major factor involved in the debate over the natural law, namely, the *variability* and *invariability* of the precepts. This will allow us to adjudicate between Position 2 (that the natural law consists of general invariable precepts and specific precepts that are *invariable*) and Position 3 (that the natural law consists of general invariable precepts and specific precepts that are *variable*).

VIII. Variability and Invariability Among the

[77] On the relationship between Moses and other Jewish officials, including priests, elders, and judges, see *STh* I-II, q. 105, a. 1. On how long a foreigner should be required to live among the Jews before becoming a citizen, see *STh* I-II, q. 105, a. 3.

Precepts of the Natural Law: Defects of Rectitude vs. Defects of Knowledge

If we ask whether the "secondary" precepts (using the term broadly)—those derived from the first and common principles—are variable or invariable, we must be careful to distinguish. Thomas identifies two potential defects that can arise when moving from moral principles to the conclusions derived from those principles: defects of *rectitude* and defects of *knowledge*.[78] When we ask about the variability of the precepts of the natural law, then, we must first clarify whether the rectitude of the precept is variable, so that what was once prohibited by the natural law is no longer prohibited; or whether the knowledge of the precept is variable, so that what is known by one person to be right or wrong might not be known by another. In other words, do the "secondary" precepts (whether of the second or the third levels) enunciate moral norms that are invariably right or wrong (that, for example, it is never right to do X), and are they such that they are invariably known to be right or wrong?

Thomas first lays out these basic distinctions in question 94, article 4 of the *Prima Secundae,* where he makes clear that in matters directly related to the first and common principles of moral action rectitude is the same for all and is equally known by all. In practical reason as in speculative reason, says Thomas, "there is necessity in the common principles."[79] In article 5 of the same question, he asks whether the natural law can be changed. If by "change" we mean that what previously was in accord with the natural law ceases at a later time to be so, Thomas insists unequivocally that "the natural law is altogether unchangeable in its first principles."[80] And again in article 6, Thomas says of our knowledge of the natural law that, "As to the common principles, the natural law, in its universal meaning, cannot in any way be blotted out from men's hearts."[81]

[78] See the discussion in *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 4.
[79] Ibid.
[80] *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 5.
[81] *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 6.

Significantly, Thomas reiterates these same points in the articles of question 100 that deal with the first grade of moral precept. In article 3, for example, he says that with regard to the first and common principles, "they need no further promulgation after being once imprinted on the natural reason to which they are self-evident."[82] In article 11, he says of the first grade of precept that they are "most certain, and so evident as to need no promulgation," thus "no one can have an erroneous judgment about them." These texts indicate clearly that the natural law must be founded upon certain general precepts which are *invariable,* both as to rectitude and as to knowledge.

What, then, about the secondary precepts? As Thomas makes clear in question 94, article 4, the more one moves away from the common principles and descends into proper conclusions, the more one is liable to encounter defects of either rectitude or knowledge. Our question, then, is where among the "secondary" precepts do these defects of rectitude and knowledge enter in? In the same article, after affirming that the "first and common" precepts are the same for all with regard to both rectitude and knowledge (i.e., they are always true, and it is impossible for a person not to know them), Thomas declares that "as for certain proper aspects, which are something like conclusions of the common principles," the secondary precepts are the same for all in the majority of cases (*in pluribus*), with regard to both rectitude and knowledge, but in a small number of cases (*in paucioribus*) it may fail, with regard to both rectitude and knowledge. What does this mean concretely?

As we have seen, Thomas's comments throughout question 94 remain rather broad and do not include specifications he includes only in later discussions. It will help, therefore, if we distinguish, as we did before, between the "secondary" precepts that are derived from the first and common precepts as conclusions from principles "at once after little consideration" (the precepts of the second level in *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 11) and those that are derived "after much consideration" by the wise (the precepts of the third level). Given the terms of the discussion, the following

[82] *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 3.

combinations would be logically possible. The second-level precepts (the precepts of the Decalogue) could be:

(a) *not* liable to defects of either rectitude or knowledge;
(b) liable to defects of rectitude but *not* of knowledge;
(c) *not* liable to defects of rectitude, but liable to defects of knowledge; or
(d) liable to defects of both rectitude and knowledge.

The same would be true of the third-level precepts (the moral precepts added to the Decalogue).

In order to sort through these possibilities, it will be necessary to consider defects of rectitude and defects of knowledge each in turn. Let us consider first whether the precepts of the second level—those summed up in the Ten Commandments—can fail either in rectitude or in our knowledge of them.

With regard to *rectitude,* Thomas argues in question 100, article 8 that the Ten Commandments "contain the very intention of the lawgiver, Who is God," and thus they "contain the very preservation of the common good," and "the very order of justice and virtue." He concludes that "the precepts of the decalogue admit of no dispensation whatsoever" (*et ideo praecepta decalogi sunt omnino indispensabilia*).[83] We can say, then, that the Ten Commandments are invariable as to rectitude. What about our *knowledge* of them?

It will be helpful to remember what sort of precepts we are dealing with here. Thomas's own examples of the precepts of the second level, those things which "the natural reason of every man, of its own accord and at once, judges to be done or not to be done," are, "Honor your father and mother," "Thou shalt not kill," and "Thou shalt not steal" (cf. Exod 20:12, 13, 15). These three precepts are obviously meant to represent all of the commandments of the Decalogue,[84] but the reference to stealing is particularly noteworthy, because stealing is what is at stake in a

[83] *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 8.

[84] Thomas makes this plain, as we have seen, in *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 11, where he says explicitly of the second-level precepts that "these are the precepts of the decalogue."

famous example of a defect in the knowledge of the natural law, namely, that "theft, although it is expressly contrary to the natural law, was not considered wrong among the Germans."[85] Thomas mentions the possibility of having defects in our knowledge even of precepts such as those in the Decalogue later in question 100 as well. He says explicitly that, even among those precepts "the reason for which anyone, even an uneducated person, can see immediately" (that is, the precepts of the Decalogue), it is possible for there to be failures in knowledge, because "in a few instances it may happen that human judgment can be led astray concerning them."[86]

The conclusion we can draw from the evidence, I would suggest, is that while there can be no defect in the rectitude of the Commandments, in the sense that what was once wrong is so no longer, there may yet be defects in our knowledge even of these very basic moral judgments. For the most part, men understand the fundamental moral principles embodied in the Commandments. It is possible, however, that evil persuasions and evil passions may cause one to lose sight of these moral principles for a short time; and evil customs or a vicious nature might, in some rare or extreme circumstances, blot out the principle almost entirely, as in the case of Caesar's Germans or, closer to our own day, Hitler's Nazis.[87]

Since, as we have seen, there can be no defects of rectitude in either the first or the second levels of the moral precepts, and yet it is clear from what Thomas has said in question 94, article 4 that

[85] *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 4; cf. Caesar, *The Gallic Wars* 6.23.

[86] *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 11.

[87] Thomas may be putting too much faith in the testimony of an authority. While it may be the case in certain "primitive" societies that theft is tolerated, or even encouraged, when it is perpetrated on strangers or enemies, it would be hard to imagine a society that valued theft even among its own people in any and all circumstances. It may well be that Thomas needed a more sophisticated cultural analysis of the relationship between one's own tribe (those who qualify as full-fledged "people") and foreigners or aliens (those who do not so qualify. Would it vitiate Thomas's thesis concerning the natural law if we allowed the further provision that, at times, certain groups can become insulated in such a way that they come to view other groups as not merely other, but as something subhuman, and that in such cases the usual canons of "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" are thought not to apply?

defects of rectitude enter in somewhere as we move from principles to conclusions, where do defects of rectitude enter in? The logic of Thomas's presentation leads to the conclusion that such defects enter in at the third level, with those precepts that require a judgment based on "much consideration of the various circumstances" (*multa consideratio diversarum circumstantiarum*). Indeed, this interpretation of the evidence is in accord with what Thomas says earlier in question 94, article 4 about defects, namely, that "the principle will be found to fail the more, according as we descend further towards the particular [*quanto magis ad particularia descenditur*] . . . because the greater the number of conditions added [*quanto enim plures conditiones particulares apponuntur*], the greater the number of ways in which the principle may fail [*tanto pluribus modis poterit deficere*]."[88]

To understand what this means concretely, however, we must attend closely to the example Thomas offers in the same place of an act whose rectitude is open to question. The outlines of this case are these. It follows from reason, says Thomas, "as a proper conclusion," that goods entrusted to another should be restored to their owner. It may happen in a particular case, however, that it would be injurious, and therefore unreasonable, to restore the goods of another, as, for example, if they are being claimed for the purpose of injuring one's own country.[89] In other words, although it is *usually* right to restore goods entrusted to one by their owner, it might not *always* be right, depending upon the circumstances. Indeed, the more complex the circumstances, the more often the principle "restore goods entrusted to you by their owner" will not be the right thing to do, as in the case of a drunk and angry man demanding his sword back so that he can kill one with it.

But is the precept "One ought to return goods entrusted to one by their owner" a precept of the second level or of the third level? It is certainly not one of the Ten Commandments, so it must be a precept of the third level. But note the complexity. Many commentators who have in mind *only* the perspective of "primary" and "secondary" precepts will say, with some

[88] *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 4.
[89] See ibid.

justification, that failure to return goods entrusted to one by their owner is a violation of the commandment "You should not steal." This is certainly true. To keep goods entrusted to one by another would seem to be a kind of theft. If someone lends me his car, and I refuse to give it back, that is a kind of theft. As Thomas makes clear elsewhere, hiring a worker to do a job for an agreed-upon wage and then refusing to pay can also be a kind of stealing.[90] But the problem arises not at the second level of generality—with the commandment "You shall not steal"—but at the third level of generality. It is always wrong to steal; whether refusing to return goods entrusted to one by their owner is *in these particular circumstances* a case of stealing can, however, be subject to disagreement. Such decisions require the judgment of the wise.

To come at it from another direction, we consider this: Does failure to return goods entrusted to one amount to stealing? In most cases, yes. If, however, circumstances are such that the goods are being claimed for the purposes of doing harm to others, then returning the sword *in that circumstance* would violate an even more fundamental commandment—one from which the commandment against stealing is itself derived "as a conclusion from a first and common principle"— namely, the commandment not to harm others and to "love one's neighbor as oneself," precepts that Thomas calls "the ends" (*fines*) of all the other precepts."[91] And yet, even if one is not bound to return a dangerous sword immediately, or upon request, to its original owner due to certain circumstances (the man is drunk, or it is clear that he intends to do some very obvious evil with it)—indeed, given certain circumstances, one might be bound *not* to return the sword—this does not mean that one can simply keep the weapon for oneself in perpetuity. One is still bound by the fundamental commandment not to steal. Given that fundamental obligation, it may be that one should decide to hold the sword in trust for a certain length of time until the one for whom one is keeping it is no longer drunk or until the evil passions have subsided or until he can be convinced no longer to pursue his evil intentions. If the

[90] See *STh* I-II, q. 105, a. 2.
[91] See *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 11.

owner cannot be persuaded within any *reasonable* length of time—and this too would be a judgment requiring the wisdom of prudence—perhaps the sword should be sold and the money dedicated to the common welfare or to the Church.[92] To keep the sword for oneself, however, even if there are good reasons for not returning it to its owner, would be a kind of theft, and therefore prohibited by the commandment against stealing. Such precepts, it should be noted—those that "cannot be the subject of judgment without much consideration of the various circumstances" and "the reason for which is not so evident to everyone, but only to

[92] An interesting historical example may serve to corroborate the point. In a letter often mis-identified as being written to "the Duchess of Brabant" (even by the Leonine editors), Thomas provides an interesting reply to a query from Margaret II, Countess of Flanders, also known as Margaret of Constantinople because she was the daughter of Baldwin I of Constantinople. (On this, see Leonard E. Boyle, "Thomas Aquinas and the Duchess of Brabant," *Proceedings of the Patristic, Mediaeval and Renaissance Conference* 8 [1983]: 25-35; or idem, *Facing History: A Different Thomas Aquinas* [Louvain: FIDEM, 2000], 105-121. Fr. Torrell accepts Boyle's attribution in his biography of St. Thomas: see J.-P. Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work* [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996], 355.) The Countess of Flanders, a wealthy and fairly substantial benefactor of the Dominicans, who asked whether it would be permissible for her to seize money from Jewish money-lenders who had obtained it through usury. Recall that for Thomas, usury (if these were, in fact, cases of usury) would have been a violation of the seventh commandment against stealing. Thomas's very careful answer is that, in some instances, money recovered from Jewish money-lenders who obtained it illegitimately through usurious means *might* be seized, but every effort must be made to find and return the money thus recovered to those from whom it had been "stolen." If the original owners could not be found, then the money was to be deposited for the "benefit of the common good" or for the Church. It was certainly *not* permissible, however, replies Thomas, given these circumstances, to keep the money for oneself. In other words, taking money away from people who had ostensibly "stolen" it from others would be permissible, but keeping that money for oneself would not, because that would itself be an act of stealing. If we presume that the Countess would have only wanted the money in order to enrich her own coffers and would not, in addition, have been particularly pleased to discover that, should she seize the "stolen" funds, she would then become personally responsible for locating each and every debtor to restore their loss, Thomas's reply was probably something of a bitter pill. See H. F. Dondaine, ed., *Epistola ad ducissam Brabantiae,* in *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia iussa Leonis XIII P.M. edita* (Rome, 1976) 42:357-78, esp. ll. 55-61 and 105-7. For a fuller discussion of the context and contents of this letter, see the excellent article by Michael B. Lukens, "St. Thomas' Letter on the Jews," in *Conflict and Community: New Studies in Thomistic Thought,* ed. Michael B. Lukens (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), 165-201. Lukens' thesis is that the letter is actually an inducement *not* to seize the money from the Jewish money-lenders, even if gotten usuriously. This article also contains a useful English translation of Thomas's letter.

the wise"—correspond to the moral precepts of the *third* level, not the first or second.

We can summarize Thomas's teaching on the various precepts of the natural law as follows. The natural law is grounded in two general, invariable precepts, which are invariable with respect to both rectitude and knowledge: to love God and to love one's neighbor as oneself. The natural law also contains a series of more specific precepts derived from these first-level, general, invariable precepts. There is a second level of precepts that are invariable with regard to rectitude, but not invariable with regard to knowledge. And there is a third level of precepts that are variable with regard to both rectitude and knowledge. This information is summarized in the diagram below.

Types of precepts of the nstural law	Corresponding grades of moral precept	Variability as to rectitude and knowledge	Example
Primary: general, invariable precepts	first grade	*rectitude*: "wholly immutable" *knowledge*: "first and common" "cannot be blotted out from men's hearts"	"Love your neighbor as yourself'"
Secondary (type 1): less general, more specific, invariable precepts	second grade	*rectitude*: "cannot be dispensed" *knowledge*: "may suffer defects in knowledge, but not in rectitude"	"You shall not steal"
Secondary (type 2): less general, more specific, variable precepts	third grade	*rectitude*: "may suffer defects both in knowledge and in rectitude" "depend upon the multitude of diverse circumstances" *knowledge*: "require the judgment of the wise"	"Return things lent to you"

IX. Questions Still to Be Considered

In the present article, I have attempted to do one thing alone: to explain how Thomas's comments on the Old Law can help us to solve long-standing debates about the precepts of the natural law. In doing so, I am aware, as many readers undoubtedly are, of the many elements missing and the many questions left unanswered. I wish to indicate just a few of the more salient issues that still need to be considered.

(1) No discussion of the natural law is complete without an adequate account of the role of the New Law in fulfilling the natural law. If, as Thomas says, the precepts of the natural law can ultimately be reduced to the two first and common precepts, to love God and to love one's neighbor as oneself, then any account of the natural law must take account of the role of charity in fulfilling the law.

(2) Some readers of Thomas, knowledgeable about aspects of the natural law, will want to know about the principle that "good is to be done and evil avoided" (*STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2). Isn't *this* the first principle of the natural law? The short answer is yes and no. "Do good and avoid evil" is the first principle of practical reasoning in the same sense that the principle "The same thing cannot be affirmed and denied" is the first principle of speculative reasoning. To claim that "Do good and avoid evil" is a first principle in that sense, however, is not necessarily to say that it is the first principle in terms of the substantive *content* of the natural law, any more than the principle "The same thing cannot be affirmed and denied" is the ultimate first principle in terms of content of all the natural sciences. In both cases, we are talking about a principle that grounds the basic "logic" of the system. There is no sense in which all other precepts of the natural law are meant to be derived from the principle "Do good and avoid evil," any more than all the conclusions of biology or geology are meant to be derived from the principle "The same thing cannot be affirmed or denied." Biology and geology have their own, proper first principles, from which all the other principles and conclusions

of these particular sciences can be derived. So too with the first principles of the natural law: the "first and common" principles from which actual, substantive moral content can be derived are, as Thomas states very clearly, the precepts to love God and to love one's neighbor as oneself. Staking out this position adequately, however, would entail a closer reading of the text (in particular *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 2) as well as a more substantial consideration of Thomas's understanding and use of "first principles," both of practical and of speculative reasoning.

(3) Other readers of Thomas acquainted with any of the abundant secondary literature on article 2 of question 94 will undoubtedly want to know what has happened to the three inclinations discussed in the second part of that article. Don't *they* specify, as Gilson claimed, the content of the natural law? In brief, I would argue that the inclinations that are especially relevant to the natural law as it applies to human beings are those on the third level: those that deal with "the knowledge of God" and "living in society." I suggest that there is a rough correlation between the *inclinations* "to know God" and "to live in society" and the *commandments* to "to love God" and "to love one's neighbor as oneself" as the necessary conditions for realizing those inclinations. That correlation, however, would need to be argued for and not merely stated.

(4) Another issue that would require more extensive treatment involves the status of those two self-evident (*per se nota*) principles of the natural law: to love God and to love one's neighbor as oneself. An especially vexing question involves how the precept to love God can be a *per se nota* principle. In this instance in particular, I have simplified Thomas's discussion in an important way. What Thomas goes on to say in question 100, article 11 of the *Prima Secundae* about these two precepts is that they are the "first and common precepts of the natural law, which are *per se nota* to reason, *either through nature or faith*" (emphasis added).[93] Earlier in the same question (*STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 1), after listing the precepts that "the natural reason of every person judges at once ought to be done or not done, such as *Honor your father and*

[93] *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 3, ad1.

mother, Thou shalt not kill, and *Thou shalt not steal*"; and the precepts "which are judged by the wise ought to be done after a more careful consideration of reason, such as *Rise up before the hoary head, and honor the person of the aged man* and the like"; Thomas says: "Lastly, there are certain actions to judge of which human reason needs divine instruction [*quaedam vero ad quae judicanda ratio humana indiget instructione divina*], which teaches us about the things of God: for instance, *Thou shalt not make for yourself a graven thing, nor the likeness of anything*; *Thou shalt not take the name of your God in vain*."[94] Thus, although the precept to love God with all your heart, mind, and spirit is, like the precept to love your neighbor as yourself, said to be *per se nota* to human reason, it is *per se nota* to human reason by faith, not necessarily by nature. The principle is *per se nota,* but it is a *per se nota* principle that requires "divine instruction" in order to be understood fully. Clearly, this is a notion of *per se nota* that defies many people's usual expectations. When we say that something is *per se nota,* we usually mean that it can be known by reason alone, *apart* from revelation or faith. To understand Thomas's position fully, we would need to make this point clear.

(5) Finally, it would undoubtedly be important to say something more about the judgment that moves one from the second-level precepts to those of the third level and the relationship between these "judgments" and the cardinal virtues—especially those of prudence and justice—but also, since these judgments seem to involve the commandment to love God, the relationship between them and the virtues of faith, hope, and love.

My hope here has been, quite simply, to advance the discussion about the precepts of the natural law, or at least to encourage it, by showing the relevance and value of the questions on the moral precepts of the Old Law.

[94] *STh* I-II, q. 100, a. 1.

BOOK REVIEWS

Ressourcement Thomism: Sacred Doctrine, the Sacraments, and the Moral Life. Essays in Honor of Romanus Cessario, O.P. Edited by REINHARD HÜTTER and MATTHEW LEVERING. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010. Pp. xviii + 409. $64.95 (cloth). ISBN 978-0-8132-1785-7.

The title of this volume expresses the conviction of its contributors that immersion in the fonts of theology and Thomism are not alternative theological programs but call for one another. The contributors are also animated by the sort of "theological realism" of the distinguished theologian the volume honors, Fr. Romanus Cessario, O.P., according to which, as Archbishop J. Augustine Di Noia puts it, theology is not terminally a discourse about discourse or about texts or traditions but rather a discourse that relies on texts and Tradition to talk about God. These two common convictions are responsible for the timeliness of the contributions. Introductory essays by Mary Ann Glendon and Guy Bedouelle, in addition to that of Di Noia, help the reader understand the contributions of Fr. Cessario to contemporary theological culture, and in the Introduction Reinhard Hütter and Matthew Levering provide an orientation to some of his most important work, paying special attention to his word in moral theology.

Hütter's own essay presents St. Thomas's theology of the Eucharist as a model of how theology can be done. The first act of this theology is to hear revelation in Scripture, the liturgy, and the Church, and its second is to attain some imperfect understanding of what has been heard with the aid of a metaphysical articulation of being. Hütter deftly shows the necessity of invoking the category of substance and of distinguishing the first and second formal effects of quantity for dealing with what the Tradition says of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. He shows how the relevant distinctions are rightly to be appreciated as ones achieved within the content of faith itself—or, in short, that they represent an authentic *intellectus fidei*. In addition to giving a good presentation of St. Thomas on transubstantiation, Hütter succeeds admirably in bringing forth this theology as a perspicuous example of St. Thomas's theological achievement, an example whose use of metaphysics is both bold and subordinated to the careful hearing of the fonts of revelation.

Levering's short piece on St. Thomas's inaugural lectures at Paris might seem to be merely a matter of reportage, but it is not. Levering wants us to see the

possibility of a properly systematic ordering of the material of the Bible, one that takes into account Scripture's purpose: to be an instrument of God moving us to our end precisely by teaching us. Levering also wants us to see St. Thomas's use of the Old Testament, and he wants us to think about our teaching in relation to the divine teaching.

Thomas Joseph White's essay on modern Dominican theology is especially important. He makes the history of theology illustrate its nature, and St. Thomas's speculative grasp of its nature shed light on its twentieth-century past and twenty-first century prospects. The point of departure is a contrast between the theological style of M.-D. Chenu, which so privileges the historical constitution of human thought and language that it becomes difficult to defend revelation in its various forms of Scripture and Church doctrine as conveying a true word of God, and that of R. Garrigou-Lagrange, which makes of both doctrine and theology timeless realities viciously abstract from the concrete human condition of hearing the word of God. "In one we have history without sufficient recourse to dogma, while in the other we have dogma without sufficient recourse to history." Both end up in a sort of perspectivalism, Chenu more openly by dissolving theology into a *series* of perspectives, Garrigou-Lagrange more surreptitiously by restricting theology to *one* perspective, its last premodern, Baroque moment. White explores the radicalizing of Chenu's position in E. Schillebeeckx and C. Geffré, and makes the case that neither extreme successfully negotiated "the divide between classical dogma and ontology versus modern historical studies." White next takes up the pertinence of St. Thomas's understanding of *sacra doctrina* as a wisdom that does not substitute for inferior disciplines but nonetheless judges their conclusions. Chenu has refused to judge historical-critical conclusions in the light of faith; Garrigou-Lagrange has acted as if ontology substitutes for history. In fact, White argues, we cannot have a dogmatic theology that engages us without locating other forms of discourse, including history, in relation to it. On the one hand, just as the ability to hear revelation and so articulate doctrine supposes a natural openness of the human mind to the transcendent, so historical studies suppose an openness to ontology since there can be no narrative of change that does not bank on the continuities of substances and natural kinds. On the other hand, historical studies illuminate ontology. "The lesser sciences are in no way extrinsic to theology, even if they are 'distinct' from it," White writes. "Rather, they 'participate' in its mission, each at its own level and with its degree of dignity." Without the lesser sciences, an ontologically informed theology cannot be sufficiently illustrated and can get no traction for our concrete purposes, especially that purpose which is within *our* history to make progress to our supernatural end. White's essay is an example of the mutual illumination of history and theology that it calls for, and he closes by naming three areas where we are especially in need of determining the relationship of dogma and history. The first is "the relationship between the modern scientific worldview and the classical metaphysics of creation." Here, it is history in the form of the evolutionary construal of world process that is in play, and White discusses the failures on the side of both theologians (Teilhard

de Chardin and Rahner) and scientists (who as Intelligent Design theorists set themselves up as philosophical and theological cosmologists). Second, there is Christology, where the history of Christ and the classical ontological apprehension of Christ call for each other. Last, there is the conception of the human person, whose transcendent aspirations and capacities postmodernism dissolves in ever-more-thorough reaching accounts according to which everything is historically constituted by our own activity and nothing given by a Creator. White suggests that it is not only straightforward rebuttal of modern materialism that is needed, but the display of a better way of being a human being, by way of a demonstration of the virtuous life both natural and Christian. All will value this judicious appreciation of the last seventy-five years of theology, its history, its wider cultural context, its failures, and its opportunities.

Benoît-Dominique de la Soujeole opens the section on the sacraments by explaining St. Thomas's definition of the Christian sacraments as signs whose distinctive mark is efficaciousness. As instrumental causes, the sacraments of the New Law *can* be signs (tools are signs of their effect). Since they are signs of the Christ who works our salvation, and since they are the successors of the miracles of Christ, it is understandable that they be efficacious in their own order. And in this light, rather than saying merely that they are efficacious signs, it is better to say they are signs of efficaciousness, the efficaciousness of Christ, working through them. Still, why is it good to make "signs" the genus? The answer is that in this way the whole economy of salvation can be understood to be sacramental, both for the time before Christ, and even now, for people whose status is still pre-Christian in that they have not yet heard the gospel. This last issue takes up Charles Journet's distinction of *tempus* and *status* within the economy of salvation. Whoever is saved can be thought to be saved by whatever sacramental protestation of (implicit) faith in Christ is available to him, the causality of which protestation relative to the grace of Christ will be, not indeed efficient (that is proper to *Christian* sacraments) but moral.

Bernhard Blankenhorn examines the influential charge of Louis-Marie Chauvet that St. Thomas's account of sacramental causality ignores history, the history of salvation, and remains exclusively metaphysical. To the contrary, St. Thomas lets the data of the Christian dispensation considerably expand the capabilities of the Aristotelian account of the causes. Romans 6, understood within the framework of a Cyrillian Christology where the humanity of Christ is the instrument of the Logos, plays a decisive role in St. Thomas's account of sacramental causality: it is because the sacraments display the death of the Lord that the grace of justification and sanctification, won on the cross, are communicated to us. History is recalled through the form of the sacraments, and only in that way do the sacraments cause grace.

Thomas Weinandy shows us the connection between Jesus' human acts, especially those of his passion—by which the Son of God, through the conjoined instrument of his human nature, achieves his perfection and glory as a man, so making him Head and consummating his high-priestly function—and those same acts as achieving our perfection. Their efficacy is made present for us and for our

salvation through the action of that same Head and Priest in the sacraments whose sign value recalls them.

Richard Schenk undertakes an ambitious reshaping of the way in which we can think about sacrifice. He shows the difficulties in the contemporary theology of sacrifice by bringing forward, first, the reform scruples of Eberhard Jüngel, for whom the Catholic view of the sacrificial character of the Mass remains tied to an unacceptable view of justification as including human merit, and second, the negative ethical assessment of sacrifice of R. Girard. Schenk shows that overly negative (R. Fishacre) and overly positive (R. Kilwardby) assessments of sacrifice were alive and well in the thirteenth century just as they are today, with Rahner taking up an overly negative and Balthasar an overly positive view (the latter making sacrifice and suffering a part of the divine). Schenk wants to point a way forward by directing us to what he calls the "studied ambivalence" toward sacrifice of St. Thomas, who appreciates suffering and sacrifice and the death of Christ first as evils and only secondly as goods when endured with charity, as well as to the thought of John Paul II on the Eucharist. Schenk's engagement with Jüngel is very worthwhile.

In the third section of the collection, on morals, Lawrence Dewan offers us a meditation on St. Thomas's teaching on the common good not only of the city but of the universe, whose ultimate common good is God. He takes us from Greek political theory to St. Thomas's radical Christianization of the same, wherein the Greek appreciation of nature survives intact as the necessary foundation for the appreciation of things human in both the natural and the graced order. It may seem that Dewan's article, especially toward the end, is largely a stitching together of sometimes lengthy quotations from St. Thomas, and it is—exactly the right ones that Dewan's previous exposition enable us to appreciate in all their depth.

Stephen Brock wants to show that the primacy of the common good is itself a precept of the natural law. He makes the connection by noting that, for St. Thomas, the *last* end is the *common* good; therefore, the common good must have the status of a first precept. Steven Long's contribution on the moral object of human acts is characteristically rich in analysis and persuasive in presentation. The analysis is marshaled to a concluding consideration of M. Rhonheimer's proposal regarding contraception and AIDS prevention.

A graduate student who had four months to bone up on natural law would want to read first of all Joseph Koterski's "Reading Guide for Natural Law Ethics." He situates natural law theory in its historical contexts—ancient, medieval, and contemporary. He directs us to the ancient fonts and to the best contemporary summations and guides. Along the way, he notes the chief objections to natural law theory, and provides the sketch of a rejoinder. He especially emphasizes the theological and metaphysical foundations of traditional natural law theory. Thus, while he notes with some praise the "New Natural Law" theorists (G. Grisez et al.), he leaves us with his considered judgment that it is the traditional form of the theory that is most viable. His extended comment on *Gaudium et spes* is noteworthy.

Matthew Lamb wants to show that B. Lonergan gives us the tools with which to express exactly and fully the "interiority" of which S. Pinckaers and R. Cessario speak. Lamb draws welcome attention to the continued importance of metaphysics for Lonergan, and to what he really means by "method." Craig Steven Titus marshals St. Thomas's elaborate and many-leveled appreciation of the stages of moral development in order to make sense of the difficulty the unity of the virtues poses for recognizing "flawed saints." The article is valuable in correcting some of Jean Porter's readings of St. Thomas. Graham McAleer addresses the uses of vanity in maintaining liberal market economies, the ones that have the greatest success in feeding the poor. Does the role of vanity—by which he means the spirit of comparison with the other, showing one's excellence, striving to be best—mean that such economies are intrinsically evil, inflaming sinful appetite? The answer is no, and refuge for Whig Catholics can be found in St. Thomas's *De malo*.

Alasdair MacIntyre's "Postscript" is a perfect contribution to a *Festschrift*. MacIntyre thanks Fr. Cessario for his work, and in doing so builds on it, in order to illuminate an issue that is important in itself, namely, the difference between graced and natural human goodness, the difference between what is accomplished with the infused virtues and what is accomplished with the acquired virtues. The essay begins by noticing that saints do not look like any philosopher's picture of a good man, including Aristotle's. MacIntyre tracks down three causes for this. First, there is the charity with which the saints' moral actions are instinct, which changes them even as natural performances. Second, grace brings with it the knowledge of our true, supernatural end, according to which merely naturally virtuous acts that contribute to imperfect happiness must take second place to actions that, viewed purely naturally, may seem extreme and excessive. The difference between the courage of a soldier and that of a martyr illustrates this. Last, the infused moral virtues give a steadiness to holy moral action that is altogether removed from the conflicts within natural prudence produced by momentarily disordered appetite and differing circumstances. The essay concludes with the observation that natural goods are enjoyed more by the saints, who know their relative value, than by naturally good men. MacIntyre makes of his essay a short demonstration, as it were, of the worth and importance of Fr. Cessario's work.

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Phenomenology of the Human Person. By ROBERT SOKOLOWSKI. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. 345. $26.99 (paper). ISBN 978-0-521-71766-3.

The concept of the person has had an illustrious career in twentieth-century phenomenology, with major contributions from the likes of Max Scheler, Edith Stein, and Karol Wojtyla. The recent study by Robert Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person,* is a substantive addition to this literature. Sokolowski systematically progresses from careful language analysis, through a novel account of cognition, to fascinating phenomenological descriptions of bodily agency and volition, in order to demonstrate, against current trends in philosophy, that the human being is more than a genetic automaton or a clever ape; the human being, Sokolowski insists, is a person, an immaterial center of thought and agency driven by an interior hunger for truth. Sokolowski mediates between intellectualist and dialogical personalisms, the former stemming from the Boethian notion of the person as "an individual substance of a rational nature" and surfacing in contemporary thinkers like Maritain and Lonergan, the latter deriving from Hegel and twentieth-century Jewish thought (Rosenzweig, Buber, Levinas). With the intellectualist school, Sokolowski makes the act of knowing definitive of the person: the person is an "agent of truth," a "dative of manifestation," essentially defined by his or her impulse towards knowledge of an extramental reality, and bearing a unique role in the economy of being, to serve as the site for the disclosure of the intelligibility of things. But, Sokolowski adds, this disclosure does not happen in some private sphere of subjectivity, to be then translated into common intersubjective terms; the disclosure is from the beginning mediated by language and structured by syntax, which, for Sokolowski, means that it is originally communal. "When we are conscious we are aware with someone" (233). While Sokolowski's departure point is Husserl's study of intersubjectively constituted objectivity, he in fact goes further than Husserl, breaking with the latter's residual Cartesianism and inscribing the discourse of the community into the origin of thought. This not only draws Sokolowski into the orbit of dialogical personalism; it also goes some distance towards meeting the greatest threat to personalism in recent philosophy, the structuralist/poststructuralist de-centering of the modern subject by language.

Sokolowski belongs to a particular approach to phenomenology, one no longer popular in the countries where phenomenology first took root (France and Germany): phenomenological realism. Husserl's revolution took two directions: empirical-scientific phenomenology, which emphasizes the search for apodictic foundations and clear description, motivated by the ideal of phenomenological "evidence" and invariant results; and literary-hermeneutic phenomenology, which rejects the possibility of apodictic foundations and insists on the elusiveness of "facticity," the differentiations of history, and the disturbances of the unconscious. Phenomenologists of the former type commit themselves to Husserl's ambitious project of phenomenology as a "rigorous science"; those of the latter type deny the possibility of natural scientific precision in

phenomenology and, in the absence of apodictic evidence, turn toward literature, indirect communication, and poetic description, endeavoring to evoke (rather than define) the living sense of things. By and large, the most influential contributions to phenomenology have come from the literary-hermeneutical schools: Heidegger of course, but also Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, and Ricoeur, and more recently Marion and Henry. Not all of these align themselves with Heidegger's "hermeneutical turn," but they all agree with Heidegger that phenomenology could never be scientific and collaborative in the ways that Husserl had hoped; language is too inescapably equivocal and the "essences" of things, if we can even speak of them at all, are historical through and through. By contrast, phenomenological realists believe that, however difficult the task, a clear description of "the things themselves" yielding invariant results is possible, and thus phenomenology can progress insofar as collaborative research akin to the collaboration that fuels the steady advance of the natural sciences is to some degree also obtainable in phenomenology. The literary-hermeneutical phenomenologists tend to write about each other, not because they are not up to the task of turning "to the things themselves," but because, as Heidegger put it, the first thing we "see" when we approach a topic with the phenomenological attitude is not an eternal essence but a sedimented historical opinion, instituted by the very language with which we initially speak of it. A previous work by Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology,* recounts his frustration with this approach. Recalling a conversation with a colleague in the "hard sciences" Sokolowski notes that these sciences do not begin with a historical-critical retrieval of what has been said on the topic; they rather go directly to the issue. The history of the science is always secondary to the results of current research. Why can't phenomenology be like this, Sokolowski asks? Why must it endlessly reflect upon itself and bog down in meta-discussion, instead of shooting for the kind of straightforward rigorous description that Husserl installed as phenomenology's distinctive method?

This direct approach characterizes Sokolowski's method in *Phenomenology of the Human Person.* Historical and contextual references are few. Sokolowski rarely refers to the many famous phenomenological descriptions that already exist on the various topics he treats. Rather, he goes directly to the issue itself in as clear and comprehensible language as possible. Other authors, mostly Anglo-American philosophers of language and science, are occasionally brought in, but only if their contributions significantly qualify the point Sokolowski is making. Few card-carrying phenomenologists other than Husserl are consulted.

The book is far too wide-ranging to permit any kind of summary in the space of a review. Instead I will touch upon a few of Sokolowski's more interesting points.

On Declaratives. Sokolowski dedicates a good portion of the text to the analysis of first-person pronouns, directly challenging the view of some cognitive theorists (e.g., Paul Churchland) that the "I" in language does not reference a distinctive order of existence, but is merely a grammatical convention, one that will be dispensed with in the brave new world that awaits us, when natural

science will ostensibly triumph over our everyday understanding of ourselves. Sokolowski argues that we testify to ourselves as persons (i.e., agents of truth) in some but not all of the ways we use the first-person pronoun. The "I" might be used in a purely informational way, for example, when I predicate something of myself as I would of any object, (e.g., "I am six feet tall"). Distinct from this is the "declarative" use of the "I," in which I do not predicate anything particular of myself but rather invest myself in what I say about something else (e.g., "I *will* finish this book review on time"), where more than a matter of fact is indicated, namely, a promise. The structure is the same in less obvious declaratives, such as, "I know that it is snowing in St. John's right now." The latter contains a statement of a matter of fact, that it is snowing in St. John's, nested in a second statement, which is not a mere matter of fact, the claim that *I know* that it is snowing in St. John's. "The declarative appropriates, whereas the informational reports" (11). Nothing new is said about the world, but something new is said "in another dimension on the margin of the world" (14). Whereas the person is always manifesting the world in his language, he does something more in declaratives: he manifests himself as a dative of manifestation. The overlooking of this distinction between informational and declarative uses of the first-person pronoun, Sokolowski contends, leads to the eclipse of the order of personal being, as in Churchland's philosophy of science, in which all first-person accounts are to be replaced by third-person reports on states of affairs (i.e., not, "I feel pain," but "my neurological system is responding in pain to certain stimuli").

Syntax. On this point, more than on any other, Sokolowski concedes some significant points to the literary-hermeneutic schools of phenomenology (although he never admits it) by showing through a painstaking analysis of speech acts that language is not simply the naming and expressing activity of a solitary mind. Language is knit together by grammatical forms that allow us to do more than name and express intentions; they permit participation in "conversations." Building on largely unexplored resources in Husserl's early notion of categorical intuition, Sokolowski proves that there is nothing private or solitary about speaking. Syntax allows us to symbolize thought for others to consider. The little words that link nouns and verbs, "a," "some," "many," "few," "is," "not," "which," "and," "or," carry us well beyond the lexical signalling that higher animals can also be trained to do. Syntax does not signify things but links together the parts of speech into wholes, allowing us to transcend our immediate environment through symbolization and to say things about things in nested contexts of significance. Thus far, Sokolowski follows Husserl. He departs from Husserl, however, on the psychological genesis of categorical intuition. Husserl maintained that syntax arises from perception: we perceive the one object from one of its sides, and one of the sides of the one object from one of its innumerable aspects and profiles—not only seeing x but seeing x as y—and thereby become empowered to predicate things of things in various tenses and contexts. For Husserl this activity in its most fundamental form is the conscious reflection of a subject upon the stream of its lived experience. Sokolowski, by

contrast, argues that categorical intuition arises first and foremost *between* interlocutors: we use syntax to say something *to* someone, and the imperative to converse brings the categorical aspects of the things first into manifestation. "The formal structures of logic arise between two (or more) persons, not primarily in the mind of a single person by himself" (59). Or yet more precisely: "Logical form arises not only between the mind and the object but also between two (or more) people who articulate the object in common" (59). These claims lead to Sokolowski's decisive blow against Cartesianism and empiricism, and his significant concession to dialogical personalism, the reversal of the traditional empiricist understanding of the relation of public speech and private thought: "We do not go from solitude and interiority to publicness. Any private thinking, any personal and solitary insight—and obviously such things do exist—is the derivation from or the rehearsal for a public performance. It is the shadow of what we do in public. Solitary thinking is internalized conversation . . . the public performance is the dominant and paradigmatic one; it is not the symptom of something done wholly within ourselves" (62).

Here structuralism and hermeneutics raise their heads, but Sokolowski chooses to ignore them. This is unfortunate because he has something to say to both of these dominant postphenomenological movements (and they have something to say to him). If "the intelligibility of things shows up in public, not in the silent processing of our brains" (100), how far can we be from Saussure's hugely influential contention that significance is a function of the constitutive relation between a conventional signifier and a signified, which is not a thing but a concept determined by its differential relations in a system of symbols? On the hermeneutic side, a related question arises: if publicly constituted grammar shapes not only thought but even perception, why does the history of thinking not also play a determinative role in what can and cannot become manifest for us? Sokolowski refuses to go in either direction, insisting that the public quality of thought does not sunder the relation of the mind to real things, and, by his silence on the topic of historicity, maintaining the early Husserl's ahistoricism on metaphysical matters.

Representationalism. Some of Sokolowski's most penetrating remarks surround the problem of mental images, which not only dogs moderns like Descartes and Hobbes, but also threatens the realism of medieval thinkers such as Aquinas, whom Sokolowski suggests, in an excellent appendix on *verbum interius,* is implicated in the problem with his multiplication of *similitudines* mediating the intellect and the thing. The problem is simple enough to articulate: if the mind only knows things via the mental images of them which it produces, how does it know that it knows? Would it not need another representation that could display the adequacy of its first representation to the thing represented? The hall of mirrors of representations that opens up here is a central feature of modern antirealisms, from empiricism to Kant, from rationalism to German idealism, from structuralism to poststructuralism and hermeneutics. Sokolowski's solution is elegant if not entirely satisfying: through a phenomenological analysis

of pictures, he shows how mental images are not like pictures at all; they are rather memories of the act of perceiving, however this is to be conceived. Here, Sokolowski argues, neurobiology has something to say: it is not images that we remember but the neurophysiological act of seeing. When we repeat acts of perceiving in memory, we experience vague and fleeting imagery, but the images are secondary to the memory itself, which is not imaginal or pictorial but neurophysiological. "When we visually remember or imagine, we may think we are viewing an inner picture, but in fact what we are doing is more like seeing the object itself again (not a picture of the object), but seeing it through a new medium. When I remember or imagine, I do not perceive something that is a picture of the object; I seem to see the object itself. . . . And what is the new medium through which I seem to see the object? It is the brain and nervous system, with their electromagnetic activity, which are able to replay some of the neural processes that occurred when I actually experienced the square" (229).

Sokolowski's second objection to representationalism is more problematic. The apparatus of perception, he argues, is not a blank screen on which the image is impressed but more like a lens which focuses the intellect on the thing in various ways. Granted the empiricist's *tabula rasa* is a dead end, does the lens metaphor solve the problem? The problem of representationalism is not only a question of mental imagery but the assumption that knowing is *looking* at already intelligible things. Lonergan would argue that the lens metaphor, far from correcting the problem of representation, more trenchantly installs into cognitional theory the false model of "knowing as looking" and thereby compounds the forgetting of insight, the identity of the knower and the known in the act of knowing, at the root of representationalism. Sokolowski claims he wishes to demonstrate phenomenologically (give evidence for), the common Aristotelian-Thomistic claim that knowledge is by identity. He contends that most defenders of the claim do not demonstrate it but rather assert it in ways that raise more questions. If the mind is identical with the thing known, why speak of phantasms at all, Sokolowski asks, since they are not the thing but "similitudes"? He notes that phantasms are necessary for reflecting upon the thing in the absence of physical perception, but they are also necessary because the knowing of the thing is not a direct seeing of the essence of the thing external to the mind but the act of insight, which grasps an intelligibility that is identical in the external thing, in the phantasm, and in the mind knowing. The phantasm allows the intellect to distinguish the intelligibility of the thing from its external form, and thereby "illuminate" its latent intelligibility.

The *illuminatio* by agent intellect, which Aristotle and Aquinas posit at the origin of the experience of intelligibility, is, Sokolowski argues, not without syntax: language frames what we "see" and highlights features in various ways. Without language, apparently, the illumination could not occur. But the linguistically expressed concept, the *verbum interius,* is not what is known; *the thing* is known and the concept is the expression of the way it is known. As a physical thing is one in all of its sides, aspects, and profiles, so an intelligible

essence is one through all of the various concepts through which it is made manifest. The concept is not a picture of the thing in the head, but the "understandable look" of the thing, focussed in the mind, through the use of its neurocognitive lens (179).

Once again, this close association of language and thought draws Sokolowski close to structuralism and antirealism but his only response to structuralism is a fleeting sentence on page 171: "Thinking does not occur in structures or texts but in their use, and in order for the use to occur there must be a user of language or a dative of manifestation, an agent of truth." But surely the structuralist point is not that there are no speakers; it is rather that meaning is not the product of insights internal to a subject, but of the purely external relation of signifiers to one another in a system of symbols constituted and regulated by public use. Lonergan, for example, like Husserl, only avoids the structuralist dilemma by insisting on the origin of language in "interiority," in a preverbal and, for the most part, solitary experience of the intelligibility of things, disclosed in illuminated phantasms. It is not so clear that Sokolowski's insistence on the publicly mediated nature of thought does not issue into the structuralist thesis that meaning is a function of the socially constituted relation of signifiers to one another. In any case, I would like to have seen a more direct engagement with this problem.

A related problem concerns a school of thought that is more intimately bound up with phenomenology than structuralism (indeed, for many "continentalists" it is the true heir of phenomenology): the philosophical hermeneutics inaugurated by Heidegger and developed by Gadamer and Ricoeur. Heidegger's name is conspicuously absent from Sokolowski's text and the hermeneutical turn in phenomenology, the "discovery" that what Husserl describes as immediate experience is wholly mediated not merely by language, but by history, appears never to have happened. How can Sokolowski keep the history of discourse out of primordial experience if he is willing to concede that discourse structures thought, going so far as to make claims that sound downright Heideggerian, for example, that "the power of propositional reflection penetrates downward into our perceptions" (214). Surely syntax is not eternal, a universal grammar undergirding the unchanging essences of thinking and being, but historical, reflective of judgments and attitudes made by communities of speakers. Because language is sedimented with historical understanding, Heidegger argues, phenomenology must begin with a "destruction" of the history of interpreting a given phenomenon. And yet, Sokolowski insists on an ahistorical discussion of language and experience.

Of course, it is also a central thesis of hermeneutics that no one ever has the last word on a subject. One cannot do everything in a phenomenological treatise, and perhaps one should not try. Sokolowski's book is the work of a master phenomenologist at the top of his game, and a breath of fresh air in a philosophical climate increasingly hostile to notions of immaterial being, philosophical truth, and personhood.

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The Creative Retrieval of St. Thomas Aquinas: Essays in Thomistic Philosophy, New and Old. By W. NORRIS CLARKE, S.J., New York: Fordham University Press, 2009. Pp. 250 $50.00 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-8232-2928-4.

This final volume of essays from one of North America's best-known philosophers in the Thomistic tradition aptly bears as its title Clarke's wonted description of his philosophical project, which is constructive rather than strictly exegetical in its relation to Thomas Aquinas. These sixteen selections, twelve of them previously published, represent, in Clarke's own estimate, "the most significant" of his many articles (vii), and recapitulate, by way of epilogue, the leading themes of his intellectual work.

The book has signal virtues for teachers, students, and philosophers. Students will be grateful for Clarke's straightforward and unadorned style. He takes no pains to conceal his tracks; both the origin and the development of his thought lie in plain view. More importantly, Clarke's long apprenticeship to St. Thomas bears distinctive and liberating fruit. He presents difficult ideas with an unforbidding freshness, free from quote-and-argue servility. Clarke has a knack for alighting on interesting questions, connecting traditional themes to new problems and currents of thought, and finding a path through vast jungles in the history of philosophy. His wide learning helps him anticipate potential objections, which he acknowledges with laudable candor. If his conclusions are not always persuasive, stimulating questions are a worthy achievement in their own right, and Clarke is not afraid to explore.

There is something autobiographical in the exercise of selecting one's "most significant" work. Fittingly enough, therefore, this volume opens with "The Philosophical Importance of Doing One's Autobiography." Clarke ruminates autobiographically upon those experiences and influences most decisive for his philosophic development, and readers curious about his trajectory may be glad of the light shed on it. If the terms of his suggestive title are perhaps thereby vindicated, the reader may yet feel its promise unfulfilled. The paper has a premise, not a thesis. The premise is that it is properly and distinctively human deliberately to "take conscious self-possession of one's own being" as a unity over time (6). It happens that Clarke's reflections center on his philosophic development, but it is less clear why the autobiographical exercise, as such, is philosophically important. Is "doing one's autobiography" philosophically important only if one happens to be a philosopher?

The relationship between Thomistic metaphysics and modern natural science is a focal point for several essays. In "Causality and Time," Clarke defends the Aristotelian identity (and therefore simultaneity) of action and passion. He traces to Ockham the tendency to mistake the *causa cognoscendi* for the *causa essendi* of causal dependence, and hence to attribute the temporal sequence characteristic of the former to the nature of the latter, so conceiving causality as "a two-event process linked in time" (32). The two-event conception is mired in serious metaphysical problems (e.g., is "action . . . some kind of entity" passing through space-time [34]?). The balance of the essay attempts to relate the Aristotelian metaphysical account to the prevailing scientific conception of a "causal relation" understood as a "regular sequence of antecedent-consequent according to law" (37). If I might venture a suggestion upon this point, it would be to eliminate the semantic difficulties: what modern natural science investigates are classical, statistical, and genetic correlations, not causes in any Aristotelian sense.

Clarke explored the interconnectedness of contingent being in *The One and the Many* (2001), and here he takes up a related theme in "System: A New Category of Being." Modern science has focused attention upon the dynamic systems that condition the emergence and survival of contingent beings at every level of complexity. These systems, as Clarke emphasizes, are real in being and not merely in intention. As, then, we posit substantial and accidental potency, form, and act, so we may take Clarke's invitation to ask (though he does not put it quite this way) whether there is a 'systemic' potency, form, and act found in the group. It is a question of great moment, for order is as really distinct from its component individuals as a vibrant ecology is from a healthy buck. Clarke contends that St. Thomas did not sufficiently analyze "the *immanent* ontological status of order within the ordered members themselves" (43). What do we know when we understand order or system? Clarke proposes 'system' as "a kind of superaccident, if you will, inhering in many substances at once" (45) and relating each individual to the group. But I am not sure why it is insufficient to say that we know a complex or, in Clarke's own apt phrase (40), "a network or pattern" of real relations (cf., e.g., *STh* I, q. 28, a. 1; I, q. 42, a. 3). Clarke is thinking of conspicuous examples, like beehives and anthills, when he says that some "groups of individuals" are "linked . . . in such a way that they form a single objectively existing and recognizable order, a single intelligible network or pattern of relations forming a whole . . . a system" (40-41, emphasis omitted) so that each individual is a "function of the unity of the system as a whole" (41, emphasis omitted). I am inclined to find this a meet description of the whole universe, which is not a Noah's Ark of independent pieces, but an intelligible unity (cf., e.g., *STh* I, q. 15, a. 2; *ScG* II, c. 42). Evolutionary theory also seems to conceive the matter this way, though with rather more emphasis on the dynamics than on the teleology of order.

The previously unpublished "The Immediate Creation of the Human Soul by God and Some Contemporary Challenges" also addresses challenges stemming from science. Clarke defends the immateriality of the soul on philosophical and theological grounds, mainly against "non-reductive physicalism," an intellectual

movement within Christian thought that seeks to reconceive the soul as a (merely) material integration in the name of reconciliation with natural science. Philosophically, Clarke appeals to natural proportion to argue that immaterial operations require an immaterial substance. Theologically, he argues that only an immaterial soul coherently explains the continuity of personal identity through death and resurrection. His presentation of the philosophic tradition and its critics is clear, accessible, and generally sound. Other essays on metaphysical themes include "The Problem of the Reality and Multiplicity of Divine Ideas in Christian Neoplatonism," and "Living on the Edge: The Human Person as 'Frontier Being' and Microcosm," both of which trace a lucid and accessible path through enormous quantities of material.

One of Clarke's signature projects, well represented by many of the present essays, was the creative integration of personalist and phenomenological insights into a metaphysical perspective inspired by St. Thomas. Clarke's argument in "What Cannot Be Said in Saint Thomas's Essence-Existence Doctrine" is underpinned by an appeal to the dynamism of the mind: "the core of Saint Thomas's teaching on the nature of God [as *ipsum esse*] is something that cannot be directly said at all. This does not prevent language from being used in a way that summons the living thrust of the mind to transcend in a leap of insight the limitations of its own linguistic product, and in that very act somehow to know what it is doing and why, though it cannot further express what it knowingly intends" (122). Similarly, in "A Curious Blind-Spot in the Anglo-American Tradition of Antitheistic Argument," Clarke traces a persistent and surprisingly jejune oversight which mistakes the premise of cosmological arguments for God to be that everything has a cause, which, as Russell pointed out, would mean that God too must have a cause (49). The salient principle, Clarke argues, is rather that of sufficient reason or complete intelligibility. Vindicating this principle would be a different and presumably far larger undertaking; here Clarke is content to sketch his basic concurrence with Lonergan's position that complete intelligibility is implicit in the dynamism of the mind.

Clarke argues against various forms of Kantianism in "Interpersonal Dialogue: Key to Realism," by pointing out how interpersonal dialogue presupposes the possibility of achieving a shared community of meaning with others, and thus a real capacity to receive ideas from them. The fact of successful interpersonal dialogue thus breaks down the Kantian principle that all formal structures are innate. The Kantian may reply that this is just how it seems to us, whereupon Clarke rightly takes his stand on retortion: is the Kantian addressing anyone? The point is important and Clarke's concreteness is refreshing. His case here might be strengthened by a more detailed exposition of an actual opponent; the reader may feel the generalized 'Kantian' is a simulacrum.

Three shorter essays on matters ethical likewise bear the stamp of personalism. "Conscience and the Person" links a phenomenological to a teleological account of conscience and freedom, in contradistinction to the voluntarism that tends to conceive freedom as empty autonomy. In "Democracy, Ethics, and Religion," Clarke advances the claim that democracy depends upon a normative code of

ethics, which in turn depends upon a religious sanction to be accepted by most citizens. The prevailing tendency in American culture and jurisprudence to privatize religion erodes the foundations of a vibrant democratic order. Perhaps the most interesting of these three essays is also the shortest. In "Is the Ethical Eudaimonism of Saint Thomas Too Self-Centered?" Clarke argues, briskly, for an expansion of St. Thomas's teleological ethics to incorporate phenomenological insights. He begins with a reassertion of (1) the communal nature of beatitude, (2) the self-transcending and so self-displacing nature of intelligence, (3) the ordination of the will toward God as the center of the moral order, and (4) the dynamic character of growth beyond one's present reality into the image and likeness of God. Clarke seeks to synthesize these renewed emphases with a phenomenology of the will disclosing that, in our response to the good, affective appreciation is (at least normatively) prior to possessive or unitive desire. Clarke thinks this requires us to "restructure [Thomas's] general metaphysics of the good and the will's relation to it" (94), but I suggest reappropriating the theme of *complacentia boni* already present, if underdeveloped, in St. Thomas's thought (cf., e.g., *STh* I, q. 74, a. 3, ad 3; also F. Crowe, "Complacency and Concern in the Thought of St Thomas," in idem, *Three Thomist Studies* [Boston: Lonergan Institute, 2000]). Incidentally, Clarke misquotes St. Thomas as positing in us a "natural desire for the beatific vision" (91, citing *STh* I, q. 12, a. 1); what ST. Thomas asserts is rather a natural desire to know God, which is not precisely the same.

Several essays touch upon aesthetics. In "The Metaphysics of Religious Art," Clarke parallels the pattern of "(1) comparison, (2) remotion, (3) élan toward the transcendent" (159) in the philosophical ascent to God to the structure of religious symbolization. The parallel is highly suggestive, but (as Clarke readily acknowledges) it is not clear how it could be verified. I am left uncertain whether Clarke thinks art, if it is genuinely religious, conforms to some kind of classical law, and I wonder whether an analysis of the structure of religious thought is ultimately an apt instrument for analyzing the artistic evocation of religious feeling.

There is also a pair of previously unpublished essays on "The Creative Imagination." In the first, Clarke proposes that "creative imagination" uniquely expresses our distinctive being as incarnate spirits, and explores in a mode more phenomenological than theoretic how creative imagination functions in insight, communication, and practical and moral projects. In the second, on the historical question, Clarke notes how modern thinkers came virtually to identify creative imagination with freedom, and the postmodern reaction which dissolves creativity and freedom into a "pastiche or collage of elements coming from outside the self" (223). A downside lies in his tendency to treat "creative imagination" almost as if it were a distinct faculty, rather than to subject the functional system formed by intelligence and sensitive integration to rigorous analysis.

This is an eminently readable collection from a learned and lively mind.

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The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism. By EDWARD FESER. South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2008. Pp. xi + 299. $27.00 (cloth). ISBN 978-1-58731-451-3.

In the preface to this marvelous book, Feser makes clear that he is seeking to reach a general audience with a simple thesis: the modern rejection of Aristotelian philosophy was a grave mistake whose consequences continue to escalate. After a first chapter documenting contemporary ignorance of theistic arguments, Feser undertakes in his second chapter a thumbnail sketch of Greek philosophy from the pre-Socratics through Aristotle. Once the pre-Socratics had raised the key issues of change and permanence, the one and the many, and how we know truth, Plato took up these issues through his theory of forms. We do not need to accept Plato's theory, observes Feser, to accept some version of the view that universals, numbers, and propositional truths are distinct from any particular mind or particular material instantiation. Feser favors Aristotle's version of realism, according to which universals do not exist in their own realm, but only in things and in minds. He ably reviews and defends Aristotle's distinctions between actuality and potentiality, form and matter, and the four causes.

In the third and fourth chapters, Feser examines Aquinas's appropriation of Aristotle so as to show why Aquinas thinks that the existence of God, the immateriality of the soul, and natural law are knowable by reason. These chapters are the constructive center of the book. The third chapter begins with some pages on the New Atheists. As Feser shows, Richard Dawkins mistakes Aquinas's metaphysical arguments for empirical ones of the kind that William Paley and contemporary Intelligent Design theorists employ. Pace Dawkins, Aquinas is not trying to show that everything has a cause, that the universe has a temporal beginning, or that God fills some gap in scientific explanation. Instead, like Aristotle, Aquinas is making a metaphysical argument. In his "first way," for example, he begins with the existence of something that is changing. Change is a movement from potentiality to actuality, and no potentiality can actualize itself. For any change to be possible, the changing thing must be actualized by another, which must be actualized by another, and so forth (in a series of simultaneous causes) up to a first cause that needs no actualizing because it is pure actuality.

Feser also describes the second way (from efficient causality) and the fifth way (from the order of the universe). Drawing upon Elizabeth Anscombe, he responds nicely to David Hume's criticisms of the principle "that *what does not have*

existence on its own must have a cause" (104). He also makes clear that the fifth way is not Paley's argument from design, let alone a rejection of evolution, but rather builds its case upon natural regularities existing in the universe that display unconscious end-directedness (final causality). Were there no governing intelligence, there would be no ends.

In chapter 4, Feser treats the human soul, understood as the form of the body. He gives a splendid defense of the immateriality of the soul. When the intellect grasps an immaterial form or universal (such as "triangularity), the intellect receives this form into itself. If the intellect were a material thing, however, the form "triangularity" would be wedded to the intellect's matter, thereby forming a particular triangular entity rather than the universal "triangularity." Similarly, we grasp "triangularity" as a determinate concept, but any material triangle—including a material process in the brain—could only approximate this determinate concept. Morevoer, if the concept "triangularity" were a particular pattern of neural firing, then the concept would be simply a physical representation of triangularity and could not be the universal "triangularity." Feser goes on to explain the implications of the fact that humans possess an immaterial soul. He sheds light on how the soul relates to the body as its form and thus as a "formal-cum-final" cause in acts of knowing and willing, with the neurological system as the material cause.

Turning to natural law, Feser observes that human rationality is perfected by knowing truth and choosing the good. Given the interconnectedness of formal and final causes (i.e., our flourishing flows from our form), Hume's influential view that an "ought" cannot be derived from an "is" lacks cogency. Addressing sexual morality in particular, Feser notes that the purpose of human sexual organs, as can be seen from their structure, is procreation. In this section of his argument, the appeal to the teleology of the bodily organs could be more strongly joined to an appeal to human teleology as a whole. But Feser's inclusion of the bodily action within the moral object is sound, and his rejection of abortion and sodomy is well argued. He also shows that natural law theory needs God, although he thinks that "knowledge of the *grounds* and content of that law can largely be had without reference to Him" (152, emphasis added).

Feser next takes up faith in Jesus' Resurrection, which as he points out is more plausible given the "preambles of faith" (including the existence of God and the immateriality of the soul). He argues that reason knows on the basis of overwhelming historical evidence that Jesus was raised from the dead. Jesus' Resurrection, furthermore, serves as rational proof of his divinity. Since Jesus was distinct from the Father and the Spirit, reason also shows that the doctrine of the Trinity is true. Feser considers that faith is consists in "belief in what God has revealed because if God has revealed it it cannot be in error; but where the claim that He revealed it is itself something known on the basis of reason" (157). It seems to me that Feser overestimates the claims of reason with respect to faith. Reason has a role that should not be neglected (one thinks of N. T. Wright's valuable defense of the historicity of the Resurrection), but reason cannot by itself

attain to the certitude that would compel our assent to God revealing and to what is revealed.

More nuance is also needed when Feser writes, "Establish that the resurrection really occurred, and you will have proven that Christianity is true" (161). This phrase both suggests that faith's knowledge can be rationally proven, and neglects the differences among Christians regarding the content of "Christianity" (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant). Feser's discussion of the problem of evil also strikes me as insufficiently attuned to potential difficulties. He states that "since human beings have immortal souls, so that our lives in the here-and-now are but a trivial blink of the eye compared to the eternity we are to enter, there is no limit to the good result that might be made in the next life out of even the worst evils we suffer in this one" (162). I certainly agree, but the problem of evil goes deeper than he seems to recognize, because God does not need evil to accomplish good.

In chapter 5 Feser returns to his strong suit, metaphysics and philosophy of nature. His account of the rise of mechanistic modern philosophy—the rejection of formal and final causality (and thus also of efficient causality linked with final causality)—is a tour de force. He begins with William of Ockham's conceptualist denial both that things have natures and that we can demonstrate causal connections between things. When Aristotelian language is interpreted in a conceptualist manner, it loses its force. Feser's point is not so much to blame Ockham as to argue that Aristotelian metaphysics and philosophy of nature were not rejected by modern philosophers because of debate with Aristotle himself or discoveries in empirical science. Rather, claims Feser, modern philosophers rejected Aristotle because they made a conscious decision to turn away from the other-worldly religious orientation of the medieval social order, and instead to seek mastery over nature and new forms of individual freedom.

Whether or not this historical claim is true—Feser does not defend it much here—the key point is that a truly philosophical debate about Aristotelian philosophy still needs to take place. In this regard his discussions of René Descartes, John Locke, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant are rich indeed. He explores in detail six areas in which the rejection of Aristotelian metaphysics and philosophy of nature logically entails the philosophical conundrums that puzzle contemporary philosophers: the alleged gap between the mind and reality (relativism), the view that inferences based on how things are in the present are invalid, the issue of the continuity of personal identity despite constant material change, the problem of free will, the loss of grounds for natural moral law and natural rights, and the loss of a real basis for morality itself (since humans have no nature and no teleology). In a nutshell, mechanistic philosophy has led contemporary philosophy into irrationality.

The sixth and final chapter subjects to a withering and wonderful critique the view that modern science has outmoded formal and final causality. Feser begins with "eliminative materialism" and its view that what we call human thoughts, feelings, and moods do not exist, but rather all that exists is neuron-firings and chemicals. Such a view cannot claim to be "true" because truth requires a concept

of mental intentionality that the eliminative materialist does not grant. Arguing that the same problem holds for any materialist view, Feser states, "The conception of matter that modern materialism inherited from the Mechanical Philosophy, since it strips of matter anything that might smack of Aristotelian form and final causes, necessarily strips from it also anything like qualia and intentionality, and thus anything that could possibly count as mental" (236). He then shows that scientists and philosophers of science, including Dawkins and Daniel Dennett, unconsciously import formal and final causality into their language in order to speak coherently about empirical things.

Regarding consciousness, for instance, Dennett and others have argued that thoughts are nothing more than distinct neural firing patterns that function as symbols (or algorithms, etc). Without an interpreting intellect, however, how could the neural patterns, which are themselves certainly not like what they symbolize, be connected with particular things so as to symbolize them? If one supposes that particular neural patterns are triggered by particular chains of causes and effects, one faces the problem that, absent interpretation, "there is just the ongoing causal flux" (242). To solve problems of these kinds, scientists appeal unconsciously to final causality by supposing that some neural patterns are "directed toward" producing specific other ones (245). Feser concludes by showing in detail that final causality is at the heart of scientific language about biological phenomena (not least of all DNA), complex inorganic systems such as the water cycle, and basic laws of nature regarding the powers and tendencies of things. Indeed, as he points out, many philosophers of science advocate a "new essentialism" whose principles are none other than formal and final causality, although these philosophers are often unconscious of this fact.

This book places Feser at the forefront of contemporary philosophy. He is the author of books on Locke, philosophy of mind, and Aquinas that are notable for their clarity and largely neutral tone; here he adopts a combative tone in hopes of getting his bold message out to a popular audience. It is the message, however, that truly captures attention. Could it be that the anti-Aristotelian emperor has no clothes (or at best is wearing scraps of Aristotle's clothing)? With a brilliant grasp of the salient points of ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary philosophy, and with clear and lively prose, Feser argues that it is so. Given faith's urgent need for its preambles, his arrival on the scene is a cause for rejoicing.

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Speaking of God: Theology, Language, and Truth. By D. STEPHEN LONG. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009. Pp. 341 + ix. $32.00 (paper). ISBN: 978-0-8028-4572-6.

D. Stephen Long is a Methodist theologian who has taught at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary and who now teaches systematic theology at Marquette University. The present volume appears in the Eerdmans Ekklesia Series, which identifies itself as associated with the Ekklesia Project, "a network of persons for whom 'being a Christian' is seen to be the primary identity and allegiance," superseding and ordering all other claims by contemporary social and cultural forces.

In this book, Long's argument is that to be a Christian properly, to take seriously the robust truth claims that Christianity makes, requires a turn to metaphysics. With this insistent argument, Long separates himself from a good deal of contemporary theology. Recent theological thinking, as everyone knows, has generally disdained metaphysics in favor of a postmetaphysical, post-transcendental thought, with metaphysics supplanted (particularly in Catholic theology) by some species of hermeneutical or neo-pragmatic philosophy.

Long resists this trend, arguing that metaphysical thinking is essential if we are to explain how we speak of God truthfully within our circumscribed social, cultural, and (particularly) linguistic milieux. At the outset of the book, he offers a helpful taxonomy delineating five uses of the term "metaphysics," identifying both proper and improper understandings (9). Of course, he wishes to avoid any use of the term that might be appropriately labeled as "onto-theology," meaning by this slippery word a notion of being that is a totalizing discourse unto itself, seeking to enslave biblical truth within an allegedly "wider" horizon or principle. But, Long argues, since revelation is the structuring narrative of the world, a use of metaphysics *within* that narrative means that metaphysics cannot be naively equated with onto-theology. On the contrary, he agrees with those who rebut the assertion that we should "refuse ever to use God and being in the same sentence" (52).

Long's plea for a renewed metaphysics may be somewhat surprising insofar as he identifies Barth, Balthasar, and Wittgenstein as the main influences on his thought (10-12). Of these three, only Balthasar can be credited with a (unique) metaphysical approach. Barth and Wittgenstein are generally regarded as vitriolic opponents of speculative philosophy. For Barth, such an approach involves acquiescing in the philosophical policing of revelation, with alien prolegomena determining the Word of God; for Wittgenstein, metaphysics is the preeminent example of language "on holiday," deeply severed from meaningful, contextual use. But Long tries to weave a way of thinking (for the most part successful) that does not violate the well-known strictures of either Barth or Wittgenstein.

Long argues that there have been several causes for the contemporary demise of metaphysics. One reason is what an earlier generation called "separated philosophy." Here he discusses de Lubac's work at length (along with that of Milbank, Hauerwas, Preller, and others), reviewing central elements of the well-known nature-grace debate, all in service to his thesis that a separation of the natural and supernatural orders—and a consequent separated philosophy—has

played into modernity's wily hands, leading to the marginalization and privatization of religion.

Another reason for the collapse of metaphysics, particularly in Protestant theology, has been the influence of the "hellenization thesis." Long rightly observes that the rejection of metaphysics creates a division between faith and reason, a yawning abyss between the God of philosophy and the God of the Bible. He is a strong opponent of the claim that there exists an essential chasm between philosophy and revelation, arguing that the positing of this gulf (and the opposing of faith and reason generally) is a direct result of the belief that metaphysics necessarily constitutes an alien philosophical intrusion on the purity of Scripture.

One notion of metaphysics that Long defends is "the inevitable opening of a sign that exceeds its context" (9). He repeats: a proper metaphysics "opens language up," allowing it to point beyond itself (150, 234). This definition is a clue to the title of the book. For only if sign can be predicated on the transcendental level is it possible to speak of God. Long argues, legitimately, that in the predication of divine names Aquinas begins with the Church's faith, inquiring how it may be possible to attribute finite, creaturely names to the Godhead (164-65).

Like several recent thinkers, Long contends for an Aquinas, and a metaphysics in general, that can learn from Barth and Wittgenstein. From the former is learned the necessity of the theological disciplining of philosophy (something Aquinas fully understood); from the latter, philosophy's (particularly modernity's) proper limits. Indeed, Long hopes to controvert the claim that Thomism is "incapable of receiving anything from Protestantism because it is a priori dismissed as fideistic" (209). This statement indicates the middle ground that he is seeking. He thinks "postliberal (Protestant) theology is tempted to eschew metaphysics for biblical narrative" while Catholic theology "is often tempted to divide metaphysics from theology" (258). Long himself seeks to provide a salubrious *via media* wherein metaphysics is essential to theology, but theology is always fully in control of speculative philosophy.

One of Long's most interesting chapters is dedicated to a spirited defense of the importance of Wittgenstein for proper metaphysical thinking. The Viennese thinker has often received a chilly reception in Catholic theology precisely because he is thought to regard reason as entirely determined by sociocultural contexts, regulative paradigms, and particular forms of life. If warrants for truth are answerable only to the forms of life hegemonic within a particular community, how does this avoid a stark fideism? Long is convinced that Wittgenstein does not teach that truth is simply the product of a community's language or form of life and he is at pains to defend the philosopher against the charge of "methodological nominalism" (253). Inasmuch as Long intends to overthrow rationalistic metaphysics, his employment of Wittgenstein's marked accent on the intrinsic relationship between knowledge and practice is

understandable. In any case, his ardent recasting of Wittgenstein as (at least) not opposed to (a certain) metaphysics deserves consideration.

Despite my general agreement with Long's comprehensive work, I must note a few important reservations.

Although Long defends analogical language, and insists on the crucial nature of Aquinas's well-known *res significata/modus significandi* distinction, the book would have been significantly strengthened at just this point by invoking the important work of Bernard Montagnes, Cornelio Fabro, W. Norris Clarke, and John Wippel on the participationist metaphysics at the root of analogical language. Of course, Long's work is not simply a study of Aquinas on God-language. But consideration of these thinkers would have enabled him to offer a richer account of how one may explain, in the philosophical order, the predication of names to God *formaliter et substantialiter*. One suspects that his reluctance to adduce some of the most significant Thomist philosophers (with Preller's Wittgensteinian-influenced Thomism predominating) is for a critical reason. Long is very hesitant to speak of metaphysics apart from its theological source. Indeed, he makes clear that metaphysics must always be deeply related to the Incarnation and to the Christian narrative generally; we cannot cling to a metaphysical objectivism unconnected with Christology (146).

Long rejects the kind of Catholic thought that divides metaphysics from theology "too thoroughly," making "the former the foundation for the latter" (65, 258). He is similarly concerned about a natural theology "where nature becomes the basis for what we know of God independent from faith" (80-81). Precisely here, of course, a significant issue emerges. One detects in Long's thought a palpable anxiety about any kind of metaphysical thinking which occurs "outside" of the structuring Christian narrative and, in fact, a deep unease with the entire concept of a "natural order." This uneasiness, I think, is often a weakness of theologians who otherwise rightly oppose the dominative rationality of modernity (Hauerwas and Lindbeck, for example).

Now Long is entirely right that philosophy must be theologically disciplined; we must be wary of anything remotely like Habermas's "public redemption" of religious claims. One can also concur with Barth against the anthropomorphizing of theology or the justification of Christian teachings before the bar of an alien philosophy. These are Long's major points and they are unimpeachable theological principles.

Nevertheless, I would ask Long to consider Balthasar's subtle response to Barth on the relationship of philosophy to theology, of nature to grace. It is true that Balthasar, with de Lubac, insisted upon the priority and overarching horizon of the *unicus ordo realis supernaturalis*. There is only one (supernatural) telos for concrete human nature which *de facto* participates in revelation. Precisely because of this, Balthasar insisted that the deeply Aristotelian term "nature" could only be invoked analogically in theological discourse and he coined the phrase *aliter non alter* to express the paradoxical effect of the nature/grace relationship.

At the same time, Balthasar insisted on the *relative but real autonomy* of the philosophical order. There is a certain stability and integrity in the natural estate itself, even if it is always transformed and irradiated by revelation. A good illustration of just this point may be found in the exegesis of the *Proslogion* offered by Balthasar and Henri Bouillard in response to Barth's well-known book on the subject. The *nouveaux théologiens* sought to establish a via media between Barth's failure to recognize philosophy's relative autonomy (and so the possibility of an integral argument for God's existence) and a certain neo-Scholastic failure to acknowledge the deeply Augustinian moment (*nisi credideritis, non intelligetis*) found, for example, in Anselm's *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi* (which casts the Benedictine's work in a somewhat different light). Neither a flaccid fideism nor an insidious rationalism constituted the proper response. Both theologians argued that while "proofs" for God's existence are generally elaborated within faith and are the result of the *fides quaerens intellectum*, the arguments nonetheless possess a certain independence, a legitimate integrity, in the philosophical domain. This admission does not for a moment displace the priority of faith and revelation; it shows, however, that there exists a comparative autonomy to the natural order, disallowing the theological swallowing of philosophy. This is why in the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, John Paul II spoke of the "autonomy" of philosophy, an autonomy of which philosophy is "rightly jealous" (no. 13). It is just this autonomy with which Long is concerned, no doubt because precisely here one finds the soil in which secularizing modernity's domination began to take root, something that Long himself hints at (152). Nonetheless, attending to Balthasar's and Bouillard's careful framing of this matter would not at all necessitate that Long abandon either his fundamental thesis on the hegemony of revelation or his accent on a metaphysics that must, in the last analysis, be performatively disciplined by faith.

Despite these reservations, it must be clearly stated that Long has written a significant book. He defends metaphysics, unmasks the hellenization thesis, insists that faith and reason must be conjoined, challenges those who argue that the linguistic turn signals the demise of metaphysical thinking, argues that modern philosophy cannot police theology, makes clear that the traditional divine attributes of immutability and impassibility are affirmed by both Scripture and reason, rebuts the claim that the classical exegesis of Exodus 3.14 leads to a "static divine being," maintains that truth inexorably has metaphysical dimensions (refuting pragmatic theories), and contends that liberal democracy cannot require the privatization of strong Christian beliefs. All of these issues, centrally important to Catholic theology, are deftly handled by Long who confronts difficult questions thoughtfully, surveying significant swaths of contemporary theology in the process. Long's book, thorough and wide-ranging, at least in some measure concurs with John Paul II's statement in *Fides et Ratio* that any philosophy which shuns metaphysics is "radically unsuited to the task of mediation in the understanding of Revelation" (no. 83). As such, it is warmly recommended.

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Biblical Natural Law: A Theocentric and Teleological Approach. By MATTHEW LEVERING. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. Pp. 288. $97.00 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-19-953529-3.

Tracey Rowland, in her book *Raztinger's Faith,* calls Matthew Levering a leading Anglophone "*Ressourcement* Thomist" or "Biblical Thomist." Rowland characterizes this form of Thomism as an attempt to let the study of Scripture "set the tone" for the inquiry as opposed to a strict adherence to Thomas's ordering, as well as an "insistent critique" of the nominalist shifts of Scotus and Ockham. This is a fitting description of Levering's approach in *Biblical Natural Law*. Levering shows his *biblical* Thomism by rooting his reflection on natural law in the scriptural witness, and he shows his biblical *Thomism* by appropriating Aquinas to explicate the biblical witness in theocentric and teleological terms. (Scotus and nominalism will appear below.) Overall, Levering's book marks a unique and refreshing turn in contemporary natural law discourse. Levering combines an articulation of natural law that is theocentric, thereby placing natural law within a *theological* (rather than an anthropocentric) framework; teleological, thereby claiming that natural law already orients us, before our self-constructing choices are involved, in a predetermined direction toward a good common to all; and biblical, thereby crossing the line between the disciplines of theology and biblical exegesis to claim that this understanding of natural law best accounts for *Scripture's* witness to the topic. But before we can applaud, Levering must overcome a few obstacles.

For starters, the notion of a "biblical" natural law is problematic, as Levering is well aware. The Bible doesn't say much about "natural law," and what little it might say has been interpreted as unable to sustain a robust natural law ethic. Levering confronts this problem in chapter 1 by engaging two studies in Old Testament ethics (John Barton and David Novak) and two studies in New Testament ethics (Richard Hays and Allen Verhey). Those familiar with Levering's work will anticipate that his approach to Scripture will include a strong affirmation of the role of metaphysical speculation in biblical interpretation—a theme most thoroughly developed in his *Scripture and Metaphysics,* where he argues that "Theological and metaphysical 'reading into' biblical texts may largely be expected to *illuminate* the realities described in Scripture rather than obscure them." Thus, Levering criticizes Hays's focus on "biblical narrative particularity" in Christian ethics, noting, "Hays would appear

to reject the speculative investigation into the moral life that integrates biblical texts and metaphysical anthropology," opting instead for metaphorical and imaginative reflection based on the belief that the biblical stories are themselves largely metaphorical and imaginative. Levering observes, however, "The 'metaphorical paradigms' offered by biblical stories read within the Christian community (cf. Hauerwas, Frei, and Lindbeck) are insufficient outside metaphysical questioning that arises from serious attention to the Old Testament theologies of law." When subjected to sophisticated metaphysical questioning, the Decalogue, although it is externally revealed at Sinai, is also understood as being internally embodied as a constitutive aspect of human nature in the form of the principles of natural law. For Levering, there is no need to create a sharp disjunction between natural law and divine revelation, since "what is 'natural' is not, in the disordered condition of human sinfulness, what comes naturally or mere common sense." Attentiveness to Genesis 1-2—a thoroughly theocentric account of God's creative providence—also reveals that human beings have certain natural inclinations for goods that are constitutive for human flourishing. These natural human inclinations disclose the teleological character of natural law within a theocentric account of God's creative providence. Levering also draws on the Book of Wisdom to show that law is not first and foremost an aspect of human nature; rather, it is a reflection of the wisdom of God. It is, in other words, thoroughly theocentric in origin and end. Lastly, the gift of the Holy Spirit in the form of the "New Law" does not negate but rather fulfills the law's precepts.

But even if the Bible reveals such things, we as *modern* thinkers seem to have discovered a way beyond this form of natural law. Modern approaches to natural law, as Levering describes them, have managed to shift their accounts away from a theocentric and teleological framework to a purely anthropocentric one. These accounts see humans no longer as discovering meaning in the cosmos but instead as giving meaning to the cosmos, no longer patterning their own self-giving after the divine *ecstasis* reflected in natural law but instead involving themselves in self-construction and self-assertion. Levering spends most of chapter 2 engaging a cast of characters that have contributed to this anthropocentric turn: Descartes, Hobbs, Locke, Hume, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche. For Levering, the chief culprit, the thinker that gets the modern ball rolling, is John Duns Scotus. (This is not the first work in which Levering pinpoints Scotus as marking a problematic shift in thinking; see *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*.) For Levering, Scotus makes a "crucial step" toward the anthropocentric, nonteleological turn in natural law by separating the second table of the Decalogue from "natural law proper" and establishing a "realm of 'nature' lacking any intrinsic teleological unity with the movement of the will," thereby separating nature and freedom from nature and law. The problem is only exacerbated with the onset of nominalism, from which arises the modern cast of characters above. For Levering, the result is not human flourishing but rather Nietzsche's parodying of the true *ecstasis* of self-giving with a "distorted and tragic" *ecstasis* of self-assertion.

In order to describe a true human flourishing through a life patterned after the divine *ecstasis,* Levering seeks to recover a teleological and theocentric understanding of natural law—biblical natural law—and he elicits the help of Aquinas and a few contemporary Thomists to do so. Levering begins chapter 3 with the topic of natural inclinations, noting that one's understanding of natural law depends largely upon one's understanding of natural inclinations. Unlike the modern approach, Aquinas sees human beings as naturally inclined toward the good, understanding natural law as the precepts apprehended by reason that correspond to pursuing these inclinations—pursuing true freedom. Levering unfolds his vision through an engagement with three contemporary Thomistic viewpoints of natural law: Martin Rhonheimer, Servais Pinckaers, and Graham McAleer. Levering largely disagrees with Rhonheimer's approach, in which human beings in their radical freedom constitute natural law through practical reason's engagement with the data of human natural inclinations. For Levering, natural law is not constructed but is received from the Creator. Does this perspective undermine human freedom? No, claims Levering; rather, it enables human freedom. Pinckaers demonstrates how the fourteenth-century "revolution" of nominalism gave rise to contrasting freedom and nature with freedom and law; ethics became concerned with duty and obligation, in contrast to the ancient and patristic moral vision, which focused on happiness and *sequi naturam* ("conformity to nature"), that is, human nature as rational in its teleological longing for the enjoyment of truth and goodness. When the hylomorphic unity of the human person is grasped, natural inclinations are no longer seen as *merely* bodily inclinations that must then be humanized by the rational soul; rather, human natural inclinations "are already *human* and are fulfilled in the virtuous ordering of the person." Levering then draws on McAleer's account of human nature's natural *ecstasis,* which is also rooted in Aquinas's hylomorphic understanding of human persons, and shows that human *being,* as *good,* is characterized by a movement of self-diffusion. Thus, according to Levering, "Our created 'ends' . . . are joined to our ecstatic being so that we find the fulfillment of our inclinations solely through giving ourselves into the hands of others." Ultimately, this self-diffusion is a share in the ecstatic being of our Creator. Natural law is therefore understood not as "an autonomous zone" that threatens revelation, contra Hauerwas and Milbank, but rather as a participation in God's self-giving goodness and wisdom.

In chapter 4, Levering changes directions to consider the relationship between law and love in an effort to situate biblical natural law within the larger biblical "worldview." He begins by engaging Paul Kahn, who provides the love-against-law viewpoint. Admittedly, Levering could have used a number of thinkers for this position in contemporary theology (a few Radical Orthodoxy theologians come to mind). Kahn's account describes human beings in terms of "Lear's tragedy": caught in a necessary, unresolvable conflict between the demands of the order of law and the demands of the order of love. For Levering, Aquinas's theocentric and teleological explication of the *ordo caritatis,* which incorporates a participatory vision of natural, eternal, and divine law, provides an alternative

to Kahn's position. Aquinas maintains that the created order—an order reflecting the character of God's "eternal law" in which human beings have a rational participation—expresses an intelligible ordering to the fulfillment of each being, which occurs with the possession of the common good of universe, God himself. Therefore, given that God's wisdom and God's love are "absent nowhere," the union of love and law has a "cosmic reach"; in the biblical worldview, law and love exist in harmony.

Much more could be said about this most welcome contribution to the contemporary discussion on natural law. Yet I want to end by addressing one of the lingering—and unresolved—questions about Levering's biblical claims for natural law: the biblical account of sin. Levering says little about it throughout the work, spending only two pages on it in chapter 4. He acknowledges a "difficulty" that humans experience in applying natural law and formulating just human laws due to the darkening of reason by sin: virtue is required for rightly applying the precepts of natural law in particular cases. But he insists, as he does in an earlier footnote against Pamela Hall, that the primary precepts of the natural law "are known by all and cannot be effaced, although they can be misapplied and obscured." He concludes, without giving much more attention to sin, that knowledge and inclination corresponding to the good of natural law remain. It would have been helpful, I believe, if he had spent more time contrasting the positive proposal of natural law with the way we often experience day-to-day life: others harming our good, and we others', in a "natural" pursuit of self-gratification. Levering claims that wicked people remain under God's eternal law and thus are ordered to the good of his justice when they sin; the penalty of sin becomes intrinsic to the sin, so that sinners "suffer" when they forfeit their fulfillment through sinning. But this hardly seems to resonate with day-to-day experience, at least not without further explanation. Moreover, certain contemporary theological approaches appeal to sin, or the radical in-breaking of Christ, heavily qualify or dismiss all talk of natural law. Devoting more time to situating biblical natural law within the biblical account of sin would bolster the plausibility of Levering's claims.

Even so, Levering's positive assertions about biblical natural law are well argued, scripturally rooted, and provide a welcome challenge to modern anthropocentric construals of natural law. His account is all the more valuable because he is willing to make judgments on particular ethical issues (e.g., contraception and sexual practices) instead of comfortably hiding behind the veil of theoretical obscurity. Refreshingly, no one is left wondering where Levering's vision of natural law leads.

Biblical Natural Law stands out among the recent deluge of works on natural law not only because of Levering's controversial claims for biblical natural law but also because of his approach, his ability to wed scriptural interpretation and metaphysical speculation, his unwillingness to allow the disciplines of exegesis and theology to stay divided, and his creative *ressourcement* of Aquinas's thought in dialogue with contemporary perspectives. This, it seems to me, is cutting-edge

Thomism, and it is works like Levering's that will keep us all interested in what Aquinas has to say to us today.

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Nietzsche and Theology. By CRAIG HOVEY. New York: T & T Clark, 2008. Pp. x + 173. $21.95 (paper). ISBN 978-0-567-03152-5.

Craig Hovey's *Nietzsche and Theology* challenges the reader to rethink the wisdom of the Crucified in light of the Dionysian wisdom heralded by Nietzsche as a life-affirming response to the "death of God." Hovey's approach is Barthian in its desire to enlist and even assist Nietzsche in his destruction of idols, an effort integral to the work of Christian pre-evangelization in the postmodern age. Surpassing Barth, Hovey will claim Nietzsche as an "ally" in the theological quest for understanding (3) and affirm his "profoundly Christian" insights associated with the will to power (140). Readers should not expect this book to introduce Nietzsche's philosophy in a systematic or comprehensive way, or to trace the history of the reception of his thought in Christian theology. Hovey's distinctive contribution is to assume the risk of the *bricoleur* prepared to grapple, Jacob-like, with the God revealed in Christ when exposed to the full force of Nietzsche's uncompromising rejection of the Christian religion. The intellectual and at times elliptical adventure takes the reader through five distinct though interpenetrating aspects of Nietzsche's thought—epistemology, historical research, eternal recurrence, will to power, and the god of metaphysics—each of which occasions *ad hoc* departures into reflection upon corresponding Christian themes.

"Christianity has no particular stake in the idea of truth" (18). The Barthian aphorism, according to Hovey, subverts the modern epistemological turn to "truth" as the product of scientific mastery of its object (achieved through establishment of an investigative distance), and puts in its place the personal Witness, Jesus Christ, who invites hearers to risk being emplotted in his story of movement into life beyond the fear of death. Hovey's emphasis on the narrative quality of Christian theology is isomorphic (though on a higher plane) with Nietzsche's emphasis on the primacy of participation in Greek tragedy before it was corrupted by the omniscient narrator introduced by Euripides, and displaced altogether by Socratic dialectical inquiry (19f). Hence, "The ethically decisive aim of *The Birth of Tragedy* may be summarized by the insight that humanity can never tell stories that are grander than our own participation in them" (38). The primacy of tragedy in Nietzsche underscores both the centrality of lyric in human knowing and the "random chaos of absolute flux" (23) as the horizon within which the liberating "yes" to life in all its suffering can be spoken. Hovey

wonders here whether the disclosure of the interpersonal flux of Trinitarian life in the Crucified can envelop and elevate Nietzsche's basic religious insight, though he defers discussion of the Trinity to the penultimate chapter. Nietzsche's affirmation of a non-Trinitarian, impersonal flux brings with it the "truth that there is no truth," or, alternately, manifests that "truth" is parasitic upon the more primordial "will to power." Hovey is not inclined to reduce Nietzsche's doctrine to absurdity here. Rather, Nietzsche reduces Kant's transcendental inquiry to its basis in human willing, which in turn gives rise to a "Dionysian wisdom" and the primacy of the aesthetic and aphoristic modes of expression over dialectic. Emphasis upon Dionysian wisdom should be an occasion for Christians to rethink the place of parables in Jesus' own teaching strategy and in the life of the Church, not only to overcome the "Socratic corruption of the Dionysian spirit," but, further, to address the contemporary crisis discerned by the postmodern insight that "Socratic man has run its course" (43).

The latter insight is profoundly linked, for Hovey, to Nietzsche's criticism of scientific historical research as a means to promote a collective national or cultural identity on the basis of an anticipated future greatness that flows from collective memory of a distinctive past. For Nietzsche, this secularization of Christian "salvation-history" is no less an effort to escape the meaninglessness of the absolute flux than are its Platonic or Jewish variants. It is at root an escape from Zarathustra's moral imperative to "be true to the earth" and the embodied human condition (34), which commands *amor fati* or love of life itself apart from any and all self-deceptive, instrumental reliance upon teleological constructs which occasion the hope that the fullness of life exists "elsewhere" (74). Hovey introduces at this point a rather compelling discussion (by way of Aquinas's doctrine of "transubstantiation") of the identity-forming Eucharistic practice of memory and anticipation which not only conforms to Nietzsche's aesthetic rejection of truth as "correspondence" but also effectively commands love in and for the here and now of the embodied human condition. Again, an isomorphism: both Dionysius and the Crucified propose the fullness of life in a body which must encounter its own death, and eschew the retreat into the security of a "collective" which sets "us" against "them" through a self-deceptive deployment of historical reasoning.

Nietzsche's doctrine of "eternal recurrence" is the positive basis for both his attack on idols and his constructive account of true human liberation in joy. Hovey adopts the view that the doctrine is primarily heuristic, and functions especially in the moral domain as a kind of categorical imperative: to live fully is "to long for nothing more fervently" than to live this very life "innumerable times again" (69). Nietzsche calls for an agonistic intensification of desire to live rather than a resigned cessation of willing—not that eternal recurrence itself can be overcome (this is the tragic limit), but rather so that humanity might triumph over the deadly effects of death (guilt, resentment, and retreat into the herd mentality especially) on the embodied person. Hovey explores a problem here that Milbank and Hart target in their criticism of Nietzsche: how is the oppressive reality of human striving against opposition—an interpersonal striving described in "violent" terms by Nietzsche and his critics alike—itself overcome

through more intensely willing it (85)? Hovey does not explicitly oppose Milbank's rejection of postmodernism generally as grounded in "an ontology of violence," but he tends to think the judgment a bit premature and wants, with the reader, to explore further interpretive possibilities. On the one hand, Hovey gestures toward a Christian reinterpretation of the Nietzschean agon, inspired by Josef Pieper, as a spiritual exercise conducted in the interval between the Trinitarian life and the *nihil* in which creation is suspended by the divine will (80). The "nothing" against which one must struggle on this account has no positive or enduring reality. Alternately, Hovey wants to suggest that the paradox of struggle ("motion") and rest ("joy") is somehow resolved in the mystery of the Trinitarian life, though he does not suggest, as some might, that the Trinity somehow "contains" such struggle within its own interpersonal eternity. The two interpretive strategies converge in Hovey's suggestion that the ongoing creativity of the living God alone can overcome the violence that flows from idolatrous relations to dead gods. Hovey's sympathetic reading of Nietzsche's "death of God" theology—nihilism as "a divine way of thinking" (87)—invites consideration of Nietzsche's faith in the "anti-Christ" through the lens of his failure to grasp authentic human creativity as a theandric reality. The question of whether Nietzsche's criticism of modernity offers a genuinely new possibility for theological thinking launches Hovey's effort to discern the positive content of Nietzsche's "will to power" and its metaphysical significance for a common life.

Hovey dismisses the charge that Nietzsche's "will to power" is aimed at the promotion of an antimodern fascist state, though he leaves open the question of whether Nietzsche's imprudent Dionysian style permits a complete absolution of him for later political misuse of the doctrine (92). The primary evidence for the nonfascist reading lies in Nietzsche's own attack upon the new idol of the modern nation-state created to fill the vacuum left by the death of God (94). "Nietzsche's Zarathustra preached a communal gospel in which the common ambition to produce the *Übermensch* elicits the best qualities of a people" (99), who live without a state and "beyond good and evil" (that is, beyond Christian "slave morality"—Nietzsche's well-known concept of a reactive system of value arising from a repressed *ressentiment* and self-loathing—but also beyond the modern moral programs of Kantian resignation and the utilitarian pursuit of happiness). This political order is a *novum* created by the "suprahistorical" will (46) of the *Übermensch* and represents the positive content of Nietzsche's doctrine of "will to power." Hovey proceeds to correlate this interpretation of Nietzsche's political conception with Aquinas's political and moral doctrines in a manner that I found to be one of the less convincing portions of the text. He concludes his reflection on the good by returning to the question of forgiveness which he broached earlier in his discussion of historical memory, and situates now within a discussion of the confession of sin in light of the confession of Jesus' incarnate divinity (115). He notes in each place that Nietzsche's morality substitutes a kind of Olympian indifference to injury for what the Christian calls the act of forgiveness (67), and concludes by sounding Nietzsche's challenge to recall the past honestly in light of the Eucharistic imperative to remember the

death of Jesus upon the cross. Hovey misses an opportunity here to borrow a page from Barth and in a single stroke put the so-called slave morality and the distinctive quality of Christian community in a new light. Claiming that only solidarity in the need for forgiveness can yield the depth of solidarity Christians enjoy with one another in Christ, Barth goes on to state that "The need for the forgiveness of sin might in fact be regarded as a Dionysiac enthusiasm, were it not that it can be placed in no such human category" (*The Epistle to the Romans,* trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns [London: Oxford University Press, 1933], 101).

For Nietzsche, the death of the god who presides over the knowledge of good and evil is more significant than the death of the god constructed as the causal explanation of the world, the god of "ontotheology." Furthermore, Nietzsche's correlative doctrines of eternal recurrence and will to power are themselves metaphysical, though Hovey prefers to emphasize the primacy of their moral significance for Nietzsche. Borrowing from J.-L. Marion's analysis, Hovey concedes that Nietzsche's creative reflection upon the will to power yields yet another idol, albeit one of especially dazzling brilliance. Nevertheless, he discerns a final isomorphism in the relation between the form of political life to be brought into existence by the *Übermensch* and the life of the Church which lives through the indwelling of the Trinitarian persons. At the heart of Nietzsche's politics according to Hovey is a refusal to instrumentalize the goods of love and friendship, even in the context of suffering (that is, by way of theodic explanation), for the will to power "is a desire named by love that is only satisfied in its exercise rather than in the grasping of an object since love is not oriented to a thing" (138). Nietzsche's protoevangelical insight is completed for Hovey in the revelation of true life in God through Christ: "The Trinity is an eternal, mutual enactment of giving and receiving between the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit in reciprocal relations. These exchanges of love admit to no lack in God or fundamental need of creation, making all that exists a function of overabundance and grace, which is to say that creation exists by gift rather than necessity and hence it is inherently a reality of flux" (127).

I must confess that at the end of the book I was not completely clear what Hovey found "idolatrous" about Nietzsche's philosophy (143), given his discovery of rather strong anticipations of Christianity in his thought. Not every reader will be as sanguine as Hovey about the possibilities of renewal of the Christian life through encounter with Nietzsche, but his fresh and creative work is certain to stimulate the Dionysian muse of any reader interested in theology in the postmodern context.

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