SCHOLASTIC ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

GREGORY M. REICHBERG

Peace Research Institute Oslo
Oslo, Norway

R ELIGIOUS FREEDOM is increasingly a topic of debate within academic and political circles. Two important historical works on this theme appeared in 2019.[1] Twice in the last two years, the U.S. State Department has organized a Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, and in June 2020 President Trump issued an executive order "On Advancing International Religious Freedom." Within the Catholic orbit, a debate has been ongoing as to whether the Declaration on Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*) of the Second Vatican Council is consistent with earlier papal and conciliar pronouncements on the topic.[2] And the International Theological Commission has recently issued a document that updates *Dignitatis Humanae* in light of political, social, and theological developments of the last fifty years.[3]

---

[1] Robert Louis Wilken, *Liberty in the Things of God: The Christian Origins of Religious Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019); Noel D. Johnson and Mark Koyama, *Persecution and Toleration: The Long Road to Religious Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[2] See Martin Rhonheimer, "Benedict XVI's 'Hermeneutic of Reform' and Religious Freedom," *Nova et vetera* (Eng. ed.) 9 (2011): 1029-54; Thomas Pink, "The Interpretation of *Dignitatis Humanae:* A Reply to Martin Rhonheimer, *Nova et vetera* (Eng. ed.) 11 (2013): 79-123.

[3] *Religious Freedom for the Good of All: A Theological Approach to Contemporary Challenges*, International Theological Commission (Vatican City, 2019). Text available in French and Italian at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_index-doc-pubbl_en.html.

Many of these discussions refer in one way or another to the seminal influence of St. Thomas Aquinas. His emphatic statement in the *Summa theologiae* (*STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8) that "under no condition may unbelievers be compelled to the faith" appears to provide a solid foundation for religious freedom. And insofar as the assent of faith is encompassed within his wider teaching on conscience, this too would seem to support a robust affirmation of religious freedom. From his assertion that the dictates of one's conscience should always be adhered to, even when they objectively err,[4] it is natural to infer that adhesion to religious truths should never be compelled, nor should anyone be forced to abandon a religious conviction that others deem patently false.

Other statements by Aquinas reveal a countervailing tendency to restrict the application of religious freedom within a narrow band. For instance, the prohibition against compelling others to the faith (quoted above) applies *solely* to persons who are raised outside of the Christian community. Those who become members of the community through baptism are not allowed to leave even should they wish to do so—a position Aquinas likewise affirms in question 10, article 8 of the *Secunda secundae*.

The same dichotomy—affirmations of religious freedom on the one hand, tight restrictions on the other—can readily be found in the writings of Aquinas's Scholastic disciples. Both Cajetan and Vitoria, for instance, deny that Christianity can rightly be spread by dint of war; forcible conversion they unequivocally rule out. "We would sin very gravely should we seek to spread the faith of Christ in such a way,"[5] Cajetan writes, and in a similar vein Suarez says, "However probably and sufficiently the [Christian] faith may have been announced to the barbarians and rejected by them, this is still no reason to

---

[4] See *De Verit.*, q. 17, a. 4; *STh* I-II, q. 19, a. 5, and *Quodl.* III, q. 12, aa. 1-2.

[5] Cajetan, commentary to *STh* II-II, q. 66, a. 8; translation in G. Reichberg and H. Syse, *Religion, War, and Ethics: A Sourcebook of Textual Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 95.

declare war on them and despoil them of their goods."[6] The latter likewise emphasizes that someone's refusal to accept revealed truths—withholding assent to the supernatural teaching of God—does not justify a forcible response of the part of Christians.[7] Examples could readily be multiplied by reference to other authors. Nonetheless, in line with Aquinas and indeed the wider Latin tradition that stems from St. Augustine, medieval and early modern Scholastics were highly selective in their appeals to religious freedom: affirming some of its modalities and denying others.

In what follows, I begin with a survey of Aquinas's thought on religious freedom and then consider how Vitoria and Suarez approach this topic. The last two stand apart from other Scholastics insofar as they engage in systematic reflection on the varying situations in which individuals or even whole communities can be subject to religious coercion (in contrast to others—Duns Scotus[8] or Durandus of St. Porçain,[9] for instance—who restrict their inquiry to special cases such as forcible child baptism) or be considered immune to it. Vitoria and Suarez think that such coercion is permitted by appeal to sound moral and theological principles: they likewise seek to demarcate the zone where coercion can not legitimately intrude. They recognize, however, that the boundaries of licit religious coercion are not entirely set within Catholic teaching, and therefore they take care to situate their own viewpoints within the broader spectrum of theological positions on this topic. In this way they provide good access to the *status quaestionis* on religious freedom within early-modern Scholasticism.

Understanding how these Scholastics conceptualize religious coercion, its *raison d'être* and scope can provide valuable background for today's discussions about the theological

---

[6] Vitoria, *De Indis*, q. 2, a. 4; translation in Francisco de Vitoria, *Political Writings*, ed. A. Pagden and J. Lawrance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 271.

[7] Suarez, *De Fide*, 18.4.2-7.

[8] Ioannes Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* IV, d. 4, p. 4, q. 3 (*Opera omnia* 11 [ed. B. Hechich et al. (Vatican: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 2008)], 274-77).

[9] Durandus de Sancto Porcano, *Commentarium in libros Sententiarum* IV, d. 4, q. 6, 300va-301rb (Paris, 1571).

foundations of religious freedom. Whether these thinkers were progenitors of religious freedom as it is often conceptualized today—a *right* to noninterference in religious belief, affiliation, and practice—or opponents of it, has been assessed in various, even contrasting ways. After reviewing these assessments (section 1), in sections 2-4 I examine the respective positions taken by Aquinas, Vitoria, and Suarez on freedom (i) to embrace faith, (ii) to remain in the faith, and (iii) to use force in aiding coreligionists who suffer from persecution or other restraints on their religious practice. In the conclusion, I briefly consider whether Aquinas's strong affirmation of the inherent freedom of belief can be detached from elements in his teaching that would undercut this affirmation in our contemporary context.

I. Assessments of Support from Aquinas, Vitoria, and Suarez for the Modern Notion of Religious Freedom

On the affirmative side, Robert Wilken cites Aquinas and Vitoria's confrère Las Casas as having played a crucial role in transmitting to modernity the early Christian emphasis (originating largely with Tertullian) on the voluntariness of faith and the inviolability of conscience.[10] Wilken accords prominence to Aquinas's formula "to believe depends on the will"[11] and quotes Las Casas to the effect that the native Americans "are free to accept or refuse baptism on the basis of their 'natural right of freedom [*naturale ius libertatis*]'." Vitoria's similar statements in *De Indiis*[12] would have served equally well in this connection.

On the opposite, negative side of the spectrum, Mary Keys expresses consternation over "the undeniable excesses of Aquinas's position on the political repression of heresy."[13]

---

[10] Wilken, *Liberty in the Things of God*, 38-39 (on Aquinas) and 42-44 (on Vitoria).

[11] It appears as an epigram to the second chapter of his book (Wilken, *Liberty in the Things of God*, 24).

[12] Summed up in q. 2, a. 4, "Fourth unjust title [for war], that they [the Indians] refuse to accept the faith of Christ" (Vitoria, *Political Writings*, 265).

[13] Mary M. Keys, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 227.

Suggesting that these "uncharacteristically immoderate articulations by Aquinas" might spring from an "insufficiently checked indignation against those who would use their intellectual and social preeminence to assault common goods," she concludes that the "harsh nature" of Aquinas's teaching on the punishment due for "breached faith commitments" is inconsistent with the overall tenor of his moral/political theory and must be rejected by those who would appeal to him today.[14] Martin Rhonheimer likewise deems Aquinas's assertion of the inherent freedom of faith as regrettably tarred by the "traditional" medieval assumption that "the Church has the right to use coercion to protect Catholics from apostasy, with the help of legal-punitive state measures."[15] For this reason, he concludes that religious freedom as Aquinas and his successors understood it (a viewpoint assumed into the teaching of nineteenth-century popes) is ultimately incompatible with contemporary articulations of a right to religious freedom, as expressed most notably in *Dignitatis Humanae.*

Melvin Endy mounts a similar criticism against Vitoria. Countering his reputation as a full-throated proponent of religious freedom, Endy maintains that despite Vitoria's opposition to the forcible conversion of unbelievers, the founder of the School of Salamanca nonetheless supported "a robust view of papal authority for war when necessary for the defense of the church against heretics, schismatics, and pagans."[16] Proffering much the same judgment against Suarez, Endy explains how for him "the most important and easily justifiable Christian use of war was for the defense of Christianity against its enemies and completion of its mandate to spread throughout the world."[17] On a related matter—the imposition of capital punishment on heretics—Charles Journet took strong issue with Suarez's

---

[14] Ibid., 227.

[15] Rhonheimer, "Benedict XVI and Religious Freedom," 1035.

[16] Melvin Endy, "Francisco de Vitoria and Francisco Suárez on Religious Authority and Cause for Justified War: The Centrality of Religious War in the Christian Just War Tradition," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 46 (2018): 289-331, quoting from the abstract on 289.

[17] Ibid., 293.

position that this penalty is to be carried out under the primary
initiative of the Church, as thus endowed with a divine mandate
(even though the execution itself would be performed by civil
authorities).[18] On similar grounds, Arthur Vermeersch ques-
tioned whether Suarezian political theology should be deemed
an authentic development in the Catholic tradition.[19] On the
opposite side of the coin, Thomas Pink maintains that Suarez
gave canonical formulation to the Catholic doctrine of religious
freedom[20]—a formulation that *Dignitatis Humanae* did not
negate, and which is still applicable today.[21] On Pink's reading,
the Church continues to assert its coercive power over its
recalcitrant members, although the modalities of its exercise will
vary from time to time.[22]

What accounts for these contrasting assessments?[23] Several
factors come into play. First and most obviously, the label
"religious freedom" can refer to different liberties.[24] Those like
Wilken who assign a formative role to the Scholastics in the
elaboration of our modern right to religious freedom are most
focused on change of religion: no one should be compelled to
adopt a new faith, to *enter* a religion. Insofar as this embrace
requires inward freedom, the act must be held immune from
external interference. Those like Keys and Rhonheimer who
emphasize a discontinuity of the modern right with the
narrower outlook of the Scholastics focus, by contrast, on the

---

[18] Journet (*Church of the Word Incarnate,* vol. 1, *The Apostolic Hierarchy*, trans. A.
H. C. Downes [New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955 (original French edition, 1941)], 253
n. 2) cites Suarez, *De Fide*, 23.1.2; see Gregory M. Reichberg, "Journet and the
Impossibility of Christian Holy War," *Nova et vetera* (Eng. ed.) 16 (2018): 511-41, at
527 n. 51.

[19] A. Vermeersch, *La Tolérance* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1912), 71-74.

[20] Pink, "Interpretation of *Dignitatis Humanae,*" 85.

[21] Ibid., 106-14.

[22] Ibid., 116-18.

[23] A similar review of contrasting assessments of Aquinas's thought, but with a focus
on toleration rather than religious freedom, may be found in Manfred Svensson, "A
Defensible Conception of Tolerance in Aquinas?" *The Thomist* 75 (2011): 291-308.

[24] In what follows I draw on the typology that appears in Paul M. Taylor, *Freedom
of Religion: UN and European Human Rights Law and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press 2005).

freedom to *leave* a religion—with the moderns claiming that this choice must be inviolate, while the Scholastics hold the opposite. Some, furthermore, argue that religious freedom implies a unitary *forum internum*, such that a distinction between change and maintenance of religion is incompatible with the modern right. In this perspective, Keys warns that Aquinas's sharp distinction between these two modes of religious freedom (affirming the freedom to enter the Christian religion and denying the freedom to leave Christianity) risks invalidating in the eyes of modern readers his wider social and political thought. Because he advocated "political punitive aid in enforcing ecclesial faith commitments,"[25] Aquinas can appear "to justify our contemporary suspicion . . . that virtue and common good theories in the political and legal spheres must ultimately be religious theories paving the way to severe theoretical-political problems."[26]

Alongside these controversies on the *forum internum*, another factor that accounts for assertions of incompatibility between modern and Scholastic conceptions of religious freedom is the high priority that the latter placed on defending individuals or communities whose religious liberties were compromised by the aggressive action of others. Because staying within the Christian faith tradition was thought to be of fundamental importance, and hence an obligation, any action by others to dissuade from that obligation, or worse, to prevent or impede its fulfillment, was deemed a serious violation of religious rights and could rightly be countered by forcible action, including, if necessary, resort to war. In this way, defense of others whose religious freedoms were denied was itself placed within the category of religious freedom, a freedom that, importantly, applied unilaterally to Christians.[27] Because

---

[25] Keys, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good*, 229.

[26] Ibid., 226-27. For a recent expression of this suspicion (directed principally against Evangelical Christians), see Katherine Stewart, *The Power Worshippers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

[27] As we shall see below, an exception was made for other monotheistic religions when the worship of God was denied by pagan rulers.

Christianity was taken to be the "true" (i.e., most complete)[28] religion, holders of temporal authority were authorized by the Church to use armed force against those who would suppress its practice and the effort of missionaries to communicate the Christian message to outsiders. Violations, if sufficiently egregious, were deemed a *casus belli* and defense of true religion became an integral aspect of just-war theory. This was the chief ground that Aquinas advanced in favor of crusading action in the Holy Land.[29]

Aquinas (as well as Vitoria and Suarez) assigned broad scope to the forcible protection of coreligionists. It could entail punitive action against members of other religions who proselytized Christians, engaged in speech critical of the Christian message, or worshipped in an overly public way, thereby inducing Christians to apostasy. Dissident Christians could likewise be punished on the same defensive rationale, namely, that they might induce other believers to stray into heresy.

The Scholastic assertion of a right to defend by force the interests of Christianity is incompatible with the conception of religious freedom that is part and parcel of the modern human-rights regime.[30] This incompatibility is unsurprising and requires no lengthy documentation. Open to debate, however, is whether this Scholastic teaching is detachable from other

---

[28] On Aquinas's teaching regarding the (incomplete) truth value of non-Christian religions, see Serge-Thomas Bonino, "'Toute vérité, quel que soit celui qui la dit, vient de l'Esprit-Saint': Autour d'une citation de l'Ambrosiaster dans le corpus thomasien," *Revue thomiste* 106 (2006): 101-47.

[29] See *STh* II-II, q. 188, a. 3, on religious orders that engage in military affairs. Aquinas affirms that such orders have for their purpose "the defense of divine worship and the public welfare [*defensionem divini cultus et publicae salutis*], and moreover for the protection of the poor and oppressed." These military tasks are undertaken (ibid., ad 3) in the service of God [*propter Dei obsequium*], as done, for instance, by "those who fight for the relief of the Holy Land [*in subsidium Terrae Sanctae*]."

[30] This conception of religious freedom is given canonical expression in the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, art. 18: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance" (https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/).

teachings (especially the inherent freedom of the act of faith) that are advanced as providing a positive foundation for the modern right of religious freedom. Authors such as Endy and Pink suggest (albeit for different reasons and with contrasting normative assessments) that these elements are not detachable.[31] Other authors, such as Journet and Keys, maintain the opposing viewpoint.[32]

---

[31] Against what he terms "the standard account" (which interprets Vitoria and Suarez as having advanced secularized theories of just war, i.e., grounded in natural law rather than positive divine revelation), Endy writes that "religious authority for and cause of war were a prominent part of the thought on war of Vitoria and Suarez, as they had been in the Christian tradition for centuries before them" ("Francisco de Vitoria and Francisco Suárez on Religious Authority and Cause for Justified War," 292 n. 5). The two authors were, Endy argues, commited to extensive limitations on the religious rights of pagans who might seek to oppose Christian missionary activity or to establish jurisdiction over Christians. Although his analysis is largely historical, Endy express in the article's conclusion an adverse judgment on this use of force for religious ends (ibid., 324-26). Pink, for his part, opting for a narrow interpretation of *Dignitatis Humanae* (i.e., as not representing an innovation vis-à-vis previous Church teaching on licit religious coercion) maintains that it is for good reason that a conception of the Church as "a sovereign and coercive ecclesial authority and jurisdiction, based on baptism and directed to supernatural ends, far from being abandoned at Vatican II, remains fundamental to the Church's doctrinal and canonical self-understanding" ("Interpretation of *Dignitatis Humanae*," 119). Pink leaves unaddressed whether the restrictions that the Church (acting through Christian temporal authorities within the sphere of Christendom) placed on Jewish, pagan, and gentile religious practices are still applicable today under the teaching of Vatican II.

[32] Journet explains how, during the Middle Ages, alongside the Church's canonical power (essential to its spiritual mission and which remains constant over time), it also exercised, through the popes, a temporal power by which it provided unity to the political structures of Christendom. By virtue of this temporal power, the popes served as protectors (*tuteurs*) of last resort for Christendom, and in this capacity they authorized the adoption of coercive measures vis-à-vis unbelievers and dissident Christians who were thought to endanger the Christian character of temporal society (*Church of the Word Incarnate*, 328-29). Under today's conditions, the Church no longer seeks to exercise this temporal tutelage, and has abandoned the coercive measures it had previously adopted to pursue that end (ibid., 302-3). Adopting a very different approach, Keys argues that Aquinas was inconsistent with his own principles when he endorsed the application of capital punishment and related sanctions against heretics (*Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good*, esp. 226-38).

II. Aquinas

The *locus classicus* for Aquinas's discussion of religious freedom is question 10, article 8 of the *Secunda secundae,* "Whether unbelievers should be compelled to the faith."[33] The *articulus* is set within a *quaestio* on unbelief (*infidelitas*). After examining the sinfulness of unbelief (aa. 1 and 3), its seat in the intellect as moved by the will (a. 2), its impact on wider moral action (a 4), and its different kinds (aa. 5 and 6), Aquinas considers whether unbelievers can be induced to abandon their wrongful state of mind. On the one hand (a. 7), believers could debate with them, not so much to persuade them about the inherent truth of faith (an impossible task as faith transcends reason), as to refute misconceptions about the faith, thereby removing obstacles that impede unbelievers' reception of faith through grace. On the other hand, believers could use threats and even outright force to compel unbelievers to relinquish their denials and false beliefs about God. In a famous canon ("the Church must compel the wicked to the good"),[34] Gratian reproduces a passage from Augustine's *Epistle* 185 to Boniface, where the holy bishop explains (referring to St. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus, when Saul was forced to the ground and blinded by a bright light) how coercion can beneficially put unbelievers on the path to faith. Given the canon's prominence and its basis in Holy Scripture (Acts 9:7), Aquinas (who cites the relevant passage from Augustine in ad 3 of the present *articulus*) needs to weigh the allegedly positive role that force might have in leading us to faith. In this connection, he could not fail to recognize that other authoritative passages from Church Fathers (Augustine included) and synods would seem to prohibit coercion in matters of faith.

To sort out the apparent contradiction of authoritative sources on this issue, Aquinas arranges the prohibitive

---

[33] The article's title was affixed by an early editor of the *Summa theologiae*, based on Aquinas's statement, "Videtur quod infideles nullo modo compellendi sint ad fidem," which introduces the opening objections.

[34] *Decretum*, p. 2, causa 23, q. 6, can. 1 (English trans. in G. Reichberg, H. Syse, and E. Begby, *The Ethics of War* [Oxford: Blackwell, 2006], 121-22).

statements in the opening series of objections, while the statements approving such coercion he places in the parallel replies to objections. In so doing, he does not seem to be presuming in favor of one position or the other, as both are energetically affirmed in the *responsio* (albeit by reference to two different sorts of unbelievers: those external to Christianity, i.e., Jews and pagans, and those drawn from within its ranks, i.e., apostates and heretics). That said, the prominent *sed contra* slot is reserved for a statement that approves of religious coercion, perhaps because Aquinas could find a scriptural passage that (according to the standard exegesis of his day) directly affirms this position (Luke 14:23, the story of the wedding feast when the master said "compel them to come in"), while no scriptural passage could be found that unambiguously supports the opposing prohibition. Indeed, the two scriptural verses that appear as objections to the thesis that coercion to the faith is justified are less than straightforward. Objection 1 cites the parable of the tares (Matt 13:28) to indicate how compulsion should be avoided in view of its undesirable side-effects. Objection 4 cites Ezekiel 18:23, "I do not want the death of the sinner," to illustrate how one particularly egregious form of religious coercion—capital punishment—should be ruled out.

Against this background, particularly the dearth of scriptural verses affirming religious freedom, it is striking that Aquinas begins his *responsio* with a very strong statement in favor of such freedom, not on grounds of the lesser evil (avoidance of side-effect harm), but because he deems deliberate action to impede this freedom as wrong in itself, as though it would involve the violation of a right:[35] "*under no condition* may [unbelievers] be compelled to the faith, so that they might believe [in what the faith teaches]—because [the act of]

---

[35] The word "right" (*ius*) is not specifically used in this context, but later in the *Secunda secundae* (q. 40, a. 1), Aquinas does speak of *ius* in the sense of a right one can claim in the event of its violation.

believing pertains to the will."[36] His antecedent statement makes clear that this freedom applies solely to individuals who are faced with a choice to embrace a faith not yet possessed (entry into a religion).[37] These unbelievers *ad extra* (external to Christianity) he equates with Jews and gentiles. Other unbelievers, those who had once received the faith but wished to reject it (what above I termed "departure from a religion"), to his mind enjoy no right to religious freedom. They can legitimately be coerced. These unbelievers *ad intra* (internal to Christianity) he equates with heretics and apostates.[38] This contrast between the two sorts of unbelief, internal and external to Christianity, is neatly summed up a few questions later (*STh* II-II, q. 12, a. 2):

The Church does not have a mandate to punish unbelief [*ad Ecclesiam non pertinent punire infidelitatem*] in those who have never received the faith, according to the saying of the Apostle (1 Cor. 5:12: "What is it for me to judge them that are without?"). A sentence of punishment can however be passed on the unbelief of those who have received the faith.

On what theological grounds does Aquinas base this twofold claim, the one favoring religious freedom, the other rejecting it? The first ground he cites in objection 3, "there are many things one can do unwillingly, but to believe [in God] happens only when one so wills"; it is taken from Augustine's exposition on John 6:44, "No one can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him [*nisi pater traxerit eum*]." The second appears in Aquinas's reply to the same objection and is taken from a gloss ("making a vow is a matter of will, keeping it is a matter of

---

[36] *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8: "Infidelium . . . nullo modo sunt ad fidem compellendi, ut ipsi credant: quia credere voluntatis est."

[37] As noted above, "entry into a religion" is the term used in contemporary legal discussions on religious freedom, where no religion is singled out; all are in principle covered. When Aquinas, by contrast, speaks of an entitlement not to be compelled "into the faith," he is referring specifically to the Christian faith. Whether it would be wrong to compel someone into adherence to another religious "law" (as he puts it) is not directly considered, although his comment about Islam in *ScG* I, c. 6 (see below) would seem to rule this out also.

[38] *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 5 distinguishes the different categories of unbelievers.

necessity," i.e., an obligation) on psalm 76, verse 11: "Make vows to the Lord and keep them."[39]

Aquinas reaffirms these two claims in his *responsio*: the first by the phrase "under no condition," whereby religious freedom is affirmed; and the second (whereby religious freedom is denied) in a sentence that explains how among those unbelievers who once received the faith, but later renounced it, force can rightly be applied to compel their adherence to the commitment previously made. Within this *responsio* a third claim is also advanced, namely, that the faithful are entitled to use force (even to the point of waging war) against unbelievers *ad extra*, when the latter, by their words or actions, oppose the Christian faith. In this instance, Aquinas affirms one mode of religious freedom (a right to defend coreligionists who are under attack) while denying another mode (a right to counter Christianity in words or to proselytize on behalf of another religion).

A) Belief Requires "libertas"

In *Tractate* 26 on the Gospel of John, Augustine interprets "no one comes to me unless the Father draws him" as affirming that belief in God entails voluntariness: "to believe is indeed not possible," Augustine writes, "unless one does so willingly [*credere vero non potest nisi volens*]."[40] Acknowledging that a man could be taken to a church unwillingly, dragged to the altar and made to partake of a sacrament against his will, he denies that one could receive Christ's teaching in faith without being inclined to do so by an uninhibited motion of his heart. If belief were a motion of the body, it could indeed be subject to external violence, and thus "men might be made to believe against

---

[39] *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8, ad 3: "Vovere est voluntatis, reddere autem est necessitates." The Leonine version of the *Summa theologiae* (8:89) attributes this to the *Glossa Lombardi;* the verse is numbered 75:12 in the Vulgate ("vovete et reddite Domino Deo vestro") and corresponds to 76:11 in modern Bible translations.

[40] Cited in *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8, obj. 3; see Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Church*, vol. 7, ed. P. Schaff (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eeerdmans, 1956), 168.

their will."[41] Eager to emphasize the voluntariness of belief, Augustine explains how if it is truly by an inclination of the heart that we draw near to Christ, then assent to his word in faith must also exclude any internal pressure, even as effected in us by God himself. The inclination to believe must arise freely through love, when we are "drawn to Christ by delighting in his truth, his righteousness, his everlasting life and all that he is."[42]

Aquinas's reference to Augustine in objection 3 therefore sets a high standard for the voluntariness of faith. The full *obiectio* reads as follows:

Moreover, St. Augustine says that "although many things can be done by us unwillingly, to believe [God][43] happens only when one so wills." But the will cannot be forced. It seems then that unbelievers should not be compelled to the faith.[44]

In his contemporaneous exposition on John,[45] Aquinas discusses at greater length why faith requires a high standard of voluntariness. Commenting, apropos of verse 6:44, that "no one believes unless he wills to do so [*credere autem nullus potest nisi volens*]," he adds that to be drawn by the Father in this fashion, namely, through one's own will, cannot result from violence (*violentiam*); it is not the sort of act that can be forced

---

[41] *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura*, based on lectures given 1270-72, around the same time as Aquinas was writing the *Summa*'s *quaestiones* on faith.

[42] *Tractate* 26 (*Homilies on the Gospel of John*, 169).

[43] In *STh* II-II, q. 2, a. 2 Aquinas explains how the infinitive *credere* (to believe) can signify our faith in God in three different manners: *credere Deo* (to believe God as revealer of divine truth), *credere Deum* (to believe what God has revealed about himself), *and credere in Deum* (to trust in God's truth as our last end). He explains that the first sense, *credere Deo*, is most formal to faith, as it is on this account that everything else pertaining to faith is believed, hence this is what is primarily signified when he speaks of *credere* in q. 10, a. 8, although the other two senses are involved as well, particularly the third, by which the will is motivated to seek out divine truth and to move the intellect in this direction.

[44] *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 7, obj. 3: "Praeterea, Augustinus dicit quod cetera potest homo nolens, 'credere non nisi volens.' Sed voluntas cogi non potest, Ergo videtur quod infideles non sint ad fidem cogenti."

[45] *Super Evangelium Ioannem S. Ioannis Lectura,* ed. P. Raphaelis Cai (Rome: Marietti, 1951).

(*cogitur*).[46] He thereby excludes from the assent of faith not only the application of brute force, but also the conditional violence of coercion, when by threats of harm one person induces another to choose a course of action that he or she would otherwise avoid. Or to put the same point positively, faith involves not only freedom of choice (*libero arbitrium*), but freedom of desire (*libertas*)[47] as well.

Aquinas explains[48] how constraint (*violentia* or *coactio*) can be imposed in two different ways. In one way, a person's ability to choose is entirely removed; one becomes the passive recipient of action that originates wholly from an external agent. This he terms *violentum simpliciter*, "being forced unqualifiedly." In another way, a person's ability to choose is adversely affected, but not removed, as when someone selects an undesirable course of action in order to avoid an evil that is perceived as even greater; this Aquinas terms *violentum secundum quid*, a topic he had discussed under the heading of the "mixed voluntary."[49] Medieval canon lawyers similarly drew a contrast between "absolute" and "conditional" constraint

---

[46] *Super Ioan.* 6:44 (Marietti ed., 176 [no. 935]).

[47] Aquinas speaks of *libertate credere* in *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8, apropos of unbelievers *ad extra* who have been captured by Christians in war. These unbelievers retain their liberty to believe, despite their jurisdiction under Christian rule. In *STh* II-II, q. 88, a. 4, obj. 1 and ad 1, he discusses *libertas* in relation to vows and alludes to the difference between choice and liberty. For elaboration on these two modalities of freedom, see Jacques Maritain, "The Thomist Idea of Freedom," chap. 5 of *Scholasticism and Politics* (New York: MacMillan, 1940), 118-43.

[48] Aquinas draws a contrast between the two modalities of violence, *simpliciter* and *secundum quid*, in *STh* I-II, q. 6, a. 5, ad 3 (referring to natural versus unnatural animal motion) and in III *Nic. Ethic.*, lect. 1 (*Sententia Libri Ethicorum* [Leonine ed., 47:119, ll. 80-85]), with reference to the free action of human beings.

[49] This is the term Aquinas employs in III *Nic. Ethic.*, lect. 1, apropos of Aristotle's famous example (*Nic. Ethic.* 3.1.1110a1-4) of sailors who throw their cargo overboard to prevent their ship from capsizing in a storm. Aristotle comments that an action of this kind (he also mentions the case of someone who commits a base deed at the command of a tyrant in order to save his parents from grave harm) is of mixed nature insofar as it comprises elements that are both involuntary and voluntary. He concludes, however, that it is more voluntary than involuntary.

(*coactio*).[50] In contemporary philosophical discussions the first is ordinarily termed "compulsion," while the second is named "coercion."[51]

The assent of faith, itself an act of the intellect, results from a motion of the will[52] oriented toward divine truth as one's supreme good.[53] Affection for this highest truth is the motivating reason for the assent of faith. If this assent were to occur for a motive other than love of God, the underlying rationale for faith would be missing, and the resulting act would not qualify as theological faith. Thus, I read Aquinas as asserting that theological faith requires voluntariness in the strong sense of the term:[54] In choosing to believe God my heart must be directed to the reason motivating faith—divine truth as source of my beatitude—*for its own sake*.[55] Should my heart be

---

[50] Kenneth Pennington ("Gratian and the Jews," *Bulletin of Medieval Canon Law* 31 [2014]: 111-24) cites Huguccio's use of this distinction in connection with forced baptism. Tying someone down and pouring water over him (while saying the requisite words) would count as *coactio absoluta*; by contrast, threatening to beat someone unless he is baptized would be *coactio conditionalis* (ibid., 118).

[51] The contrast between "compulsion" and "coercion" is standard in contemporary treatments of freedom; see David A. Hoekema, *Rights and Wrongs: Coercion, Punishment, and the State* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1986), 18-41. The contrast was originally drawn by Aristotle in *Nic. Ethic.* 3.1.1110a1-18. Should a man be carried by the wind in a direction he did not want to go, he would suffer compulsion; should he perform an action through fear of a greater evil, he would suffer coercion. Aquinas discusses compulsion under the heading of "violentum simpliciter" which, he notes, causes involuntariness (*STh* I-II, q. 6, a. 5), while coercion he considers under the concept of "violentum secundum quid" or "mixed voluntary" (action done out of fear), as in *STh* I-II, q. 6, a. 6, where he explains how fear lessens voluntariness but nonetheless leaves it intact (*simpliciter voluntarium est*). The two modes of influence on the will are compared in ibid., ad 1.

[52] *STh* II-II, q. 4, a. 2, ad 1: "actu fidei, qui dicitur [by Augustine] consistere in credentium voluntate inquantum ex imperio voluntatis intellectus credibilibus assentit."

[53] In *De Verit.*, q. 14, a. 2, ad 10 (Leonine ed., 22:444, ll. 396-401), Aquinas writes that "the beginning of faith . . . is in the affections, insofar as the will determines the intellect to assent to matters of faith. But this willing consists neither in an act of charity nor of hope, but a kind of desire for the promised good [*quidam appetitus boni repromissi*]."

[54] The difference between these two senses of "voluntariness [*voluntarium*]", strong and weak, is elucidated in *STh* I-II, q. 6, a. 6, ad 1.

[55] Cajetan sums this up well when he explains (in *STh* II-II, q. 17, a. 5, no. 8) how in theological hope (although his comment obtains as well for the love that impels

directed for some other reason, say to evade a penalty or to secure a temporal benefit, God's truth will be assented to not as an end, but for the sake of something else, and thereby will be loved only as a means.[56] The condition *sine qua non* for theological faith will be absent.[57] On this reasoning, coercion is antithetical to the very nature of faith. Its employment to motivate others into adopting the faith must consequently be ruled out.[58] In this respect, Aquinas supports a strong doctrine of religious freedom, one that affirms the inherent *liberty* of the embrace of faith. "No one can be led to the faith by violence [*ad credendum vim inferre*]; it is only willingly [*volentes*], not despite ourselves [*inviti*], that we are saved," he affirms, citing the canon *De Iudaeis* from the Fourth Council of Toledo (633).[59]

B) *Compelling a Return to Faith or Preventing Departure*

As I have already noted, the contrary position is highlighted in the *sed contra* of article 8, with reference to Luke 14:23:

---

theological faith) "I will God to be mine [as perfecting me by his beatitude], but not for me [*volo Deum mihi, non propter me*]," i.e., as subordinated to myself as a means to an end.

[56] Aquinas mentions (*STh* II-II, q. 5, a. 2) the fallen angels as giving an assent to the divine truth (thus a modality of faith) that does not rise to the level of theological faith. Their assent to this truth is motivated by love of themselves, namely, to overcome a lack of knowledge. But as soon as they assent to this truth, they reject it as incompatible with their self-love, which establishes their own being as absolute. The fallen angels thus live in a condition of inner contradiction, assenting to a truth they detest.

[57] For an analysis of Aquinas's understanding of the will's role in the assent of faith, see Michel Labourdette, O.P., *Cours de théologie morale*, vol. 2, *Morale spéciale* (Paris: Éditions parole et silence, 2012), 136-40.

[58] Coercion can take two different forms: threatening some harm unless compliance is given or withholding a benefit under the same rationale (see Alan Werthheimer, *Coercion* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988], 202-17). As an example of the latter, consider the case of a Jewish girl who was fleeing the Nazis in wartime Lemberg. Arriving at a convent, the nuns promised her refuge under condition that she undergo baptism, which she did, reluctantly (recounted in Philippe Sands, *East West Street* [London: W&N, 2016], 104).

[59] *STh* III, q. 68, a. 10, s.c. Another line from the same canon appears in *STh* II-II, q. 10, a 8, obj. 2.

It is written "Go out on the highways and hedges; and compel them to come in." Now people enter the house of God, i.e., the Holy Church, by faith. Therefore, some ought to be compelled to the faith.[60]

As becomes apparent in the replies, only those people who have abandoned the faith are the intended referent of the parable (apostate baptized Jews are mentioned in ad 2 and heretics in ad 3). It is they who are forced back into the Church or are prevented from leaving. Based on what seemed the unquestionable authority of Scripture, numerous medieval legal rulings asserted that recalcitrant Christians could rightly be coerced to remain in the faith they had sought to leave or forced back to the faith they had abandoned.[61] Canon lawyers considered this teaching definitive and it was impossible for Aquinas to ignore it. *Prima facie*, however, it runs counter to his settled view that the assent of faith must remain free of coercion. To show how these two assertions, (i) "under no condition may unbelievers [*infideles*] be compelled to the faith" and (ii) "some [*aliqui*] ought to be compelled to the faith" are not contradictory, he offers the following explanation:

There are those who at some time have accepted the faith, and professed it, such as heretics and all apostates. These unbelievers should be made to undergo even bodily compulsion, that they may fulfill what they have promised, and hold what they at one time received.[62]

Key to this brief explanation is the notion of *promise*. Aquinas's supposition is that becoming a Christian entails an irrevocable commitment to remain in the faith. Apostates and heretics have reneged on this promise to God. Due to this voluntary fault (renunciation of the faith commitment), an act that was

---

[60] *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8: "Sed contra est quod dicitur Luc. XIV: 'Exi in vias et saepes et compelle intrare, ut impleatur domus mea.' Sed homines in domum Dei, idest in Ecclesiam, intrant per fidem. Ergo aliqui sunt compellendi ad fidem."

[61] For discussion of some canonical texts (especially with reference to relapsed Jewish converts), see Pennington, "Gratian and the Jews."

[62] *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8: "Alii vero sunt infideles qui quandoque fidem susceperunt et eam profitentur: sicut haeretici vel quicumque apostatae. Et tales sunt etiam corporaliter compellendi ut impleant quod promiserunt et teneat quod semel susceperunt."

originally free (assent to God in faith) may now be induced through coercion, including threats of physical harm. Aquinas leaves the explanation at that; nowhere else to my knowledge does he return to this precise issue, so it is up to us to reconstruct the steps in his reasoning.

A clue lies in the distinction between "acceptance" of the faith and its "profession." The first involves an interior act of the mind (the topic of *STh* II-II, q. 2, "De actu interiori fidei") that is not scrutable to the outward eye; a promise made at this level would not be known to others and its violation could not be made subject to external penalties. Profession, however, involves the communication of one' thought, including promises made, by means of gestures, words, and other outward signs. This topic Aquinas discusses in question 3 of the *Secunda secundae*, "De exteriori actu fidei," where he calls the act in question *confessio*; it consists, he says, "in giving outward expression to the things we hold inwardly in faith."[63] At this juncture, he makes no mention of any promise made in faith. However, in a subsequent discussion of vows ("De voto," in *STh* II-II, q. 88, a. 2, ad 1), we find him establishing a connection between faith in God, the promise (*promissio*) that accompanies it, and its outward profession. The setting for this linkage is baptism, for it is then, he says, that those receiving the sacrament (or parents on behalf of their children) make a vow (i.e., a promise to God)[64] to renounce the devil's pomps and maintain faith in Christ ("fidem Christi servare").[65] Significantly, for our purposes, in the corresponding objection Aquinas reverts again to Psalm 76:11 ("Make vows to the Lord God and keep them"),[66] which he had earlier referenced (*STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8, ad 3) to explain why heretics, having abandoned their promise to God, can rightly be coerced back to the faith ("compellendi ut fidem teneant"). Reading these two passages

---

[63] *STh* II-II, q. 3, a. 1: "Conceptus interior eorum quae sunt fidei est proprie fidei actus, ita etiam et exterior confession."

[64] *STh* II-II, q. 88, a. 1.

[65] *STh* II-II, q. 88, a. 2, ad 1.

[66] *STh* II-II, q. 88, a. 2, obj. 1: "Vovete et reddite Domino Deo vestro."

together, we can infer that the precise object of the said constraint is the outward profession of faith that is incumbent on us by virtue of our baptism.[67] Aquinas alludes to this linkage in his treatment of apostasy in question 12 of the *Secunda secundae*. Defining "apostasy" as the act whereby a person withdraws from the faith, he adds (in a. 1, ad 2), that the withdrawal in question covers not only what is "believed in the heart" ("credulitas cordis"), but "the external words and deeds by which we bear witness to this inward profession of faith." In article 2, he explains that it is within the competency of the Church "to pass a sentence of punishment on the unbelief of those who have received the faith." He thereby implies that a failure to fulfill the obligations incumbent on one's faith, or engagement in external acts directly contrary to those obligations,[68] is what the Church thus punishes.

At baptism we receive an indelible character that makes us permanent members of Christ's Church.[69] Vowing ourselves to permanent fidelity, and publicly declaring such (baptism being an external, public act), we are expected to renew this commitment by similarly public acts. Should we refuse to do so, the Church would be entitled to enforce, by the administration of coercive penalties, compliance with commitments we had expressed in our baptismal vow. It is not the internal faith act that would be coerced; rather, the precise target of this coercive action would be faith's expression (the "confessio" or "protestatio fidei") in external acts, acts that would presumably (Aquinas does not provide the details) include submitting

[67] *STh* III, q. 66, a. 1, "Baptism is a kind of proclamation of faith [*quaedam fidei proclamatio*]; thus it is said to be the 'sacrament of faith' [*fidei sacramentum*]."

[68] In *STh* II-II, q. 12, a. 1, obj. 2, Aquinas mentions (i) having oneself circumcised or (ii) worshiping (*adoraret*) at the tomb of Mohammad, as acts contrary to the external profession of faith.

[69] *STh* III, q. 66, a. 9: "Baptism imprints a character that is indelible [*baptismus imprimit characterem, qui est indelebilis*]"; see also q. 63, a. 5. Aquinas had earlier asserted the indelibility of the baptismal character in, e.g., IV *Sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 3, q. 4. That baptism confers membership in the Church is expressed, e.g., in *STh* III, q. 69, a. 4 "baptism has for effect to incorporate the baptized to Christ as his members" ("incorporation in Christ" is equivalent for Aquinas to membership in the Church qua "mystical body of Christ" [*STh* III, q. 8, a. 3]).

oneself to the sacrament of penance, presenting one's children for baptism, and so forth. On this reasoning, there is no direct contradiction in asserting that external unbelievers should never be coerced to the faith while at the same time affirming this may justifiably be done to internal unbelievers—because the first assertion bears on the interior faith act and the second on its outward profession and the promise expressed therein.[70]

C) Can a Coerced Baptism Be Valid?

Aquinas contrasts two effects of baptism:[71] the character and grace (the "ultimate effect"). "Rectified faith" (*recta fides,* faith informed by charity) is the condition *sine qua non* for reception of the latter, while the former can be given even should such faith be missing. What we receive by way of grace must be free from all coercion;[72] this is the conclusion Aquinas draws from his meditation (via Augustine) on John 6:44. The same does not necessarily hold for the baptismal character. Whether it could be received into a subject who was coerced into accepting baptism (either from fear of some penalty or the prospect of a temporal reward) is not a question Aquinas directly addresses. Even apropos the special case of children baptized against the will of their parents—a practice he expressly opposes because it constitutes a violation of parental natural right[73]—he does not say whether the baptismal character would be conferred in such a circumstance, for example, should someone baptize a Jewish

---

[70] In Aquinas's day, there was an abundant literature on compelled conversion, a topic that was commonly taken up by the canon lawyers in connection with baptism; see Jennifer Hart Weed, "Aquinas on the Forced Conversion of Jews: Belief, Will, and Toleration," in Kristine T. Utterback and Merrall L. Price, eds., *Jews in Medieval Christendom* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 129-46.

[71] *STh* III, q. 68, a. 8.

[72] See Jennifer Hart Weed, "Faith, Salvation, and the Sacraments in Aquinas: A Puzzle concerning Forced Baptisms," *Philosophy, Culture and Traditions* 10 (2014): 95-110.

[73] *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 12; and III, q. 68, a. 10; see Matthew A. Tapie, "*Spiritualis uterus:* The Question of Forced Baptism and Thomas Aquinas's Defense of Jewish Parental Rights," *Bulletin of Medieval Canon Law* 35 (2018): 289-329.

child who was in danger of imminent death.[74] Given this
silence, it is difficult to determine how Aquinas assesses the
sacramental effect of a coerced baptism.

On the one hand, the weight of his doctrine—as presented
above—would suggest that God would never infuse the
baptismal character into the soul of someone who was coerced
into receiving the sacrament, because in such a circumstance the
condition *sine qua non* of grace-given theological faith would be
absent.[75] Indeed, in discussing the intention that is requite on
the part of individuals undergoing baptism (*STh* III, q. 68, a. 7),
Aquinas says that they must intend what the Church itself
intends in conferring baptism, namely, spiritual regeneration (a
"new life" in Christ). Someone lacking that intention, as would
appear to be the case should one's acceptance of baptism be
coerced, could not be said to have received the sacrament with a
necessary condition; thus the baptism would not be valid and
the character would not be imprinted on the recipient's soul.
Consequently, such a person could not be bound to observe the
obligations resulting from a baptismal vow that was not validly
made.

---

[74] Aquinas makes clear, however, that even when there is a high risk of death it
would be wrong to baptize a child against the will of his or her parents (*STh* III, q. 68,
a. 1, ad 1). It was subsequently maintained (e.g., during the Mortara affair) that despite
the questionable liceity of such a baptism, if the proper form was followed and the one
baptizing had the correct intent, the baptism would be valid, i.e., a character would be
conferred (a footnote to a French translation of the *Summa* [*Somme Théologique* (Paris:
Cerf, 1986), 4:511 n. 6] traces this position to Benedict XIV [1747]). While in these
discussions appeal is made to his principles, Aquinas does not himself pronounce on this
issue; thus, caution must be shown in making such an inference. Based on the same
principles, but read with a different order of priority, the opposing conclusion might
very well obtain. See Matthew Tapie, "The 'Mortara Affair' and the Question of
Thomas Aquinas's Teaching against Forced Baptism," *Studies in Christian-Jewish
Relations* 14 (2019): 1-18.

[75] Jennifer Hart Weed argues for this interpretation; see especially her conclusion
("Aquinas on the Forced Conversion of Jews," 145): "It is reasonable to conclude that
Aquinas does not believe that forced converts should be compelled to keep to their
conversion, since he would view forced conversions as something other than an actual
conversion. A forced convert cannot be expected to retain the faith he or she does not
have."

On the other hand, based on the Toledan canon *De Iudaeis*, medieval canon lawyers generally held that a coerced baptism could be valid, such that the recipient would be considered a Christian and held accountable for the attendant obligations. We thus read in Gratian's *Decretum* that

Jews are not to be forced into the faith [*ad fidem cogendi*]; although even if they accept it unwillingly [*quam tamen si inuiti susceperint*], they must be forced to retain it [*cogendi sunt retinere*]. Whence in the Fourth Toledan Council it was enacted: Just as Jews are not forced into the faith [*ad fidem cogendi*], so too once converted, they are not permitted to withdraw.[76]

Continued profession of faith could thus be forced on recalcitrant Christians by the relevant authorities. Taken at face value, this canon seems contradictory, insofar as it both denies and affirms the validity of coerced conversion (although this inconsistency is somewhat concealed by the use of two different terms, *cogendi* and *inuiti*). However, contradiction would formally be obviated if *cogendi* is understood as referring to compulsion and *inuiti* to coercion. The sense would then be that anyone physically forced into baptism, such that his free will was entirely removed, would be *compelled*, and in this case the baptism would be invalid and no obligations would flow from it. By contrast, someone induced to baptism by fear of a temporal penalty (or prospect of a reward) would not thereby lose his capacity for free choice, although his liberty would be reduced. Such a baptism would be valid and the requisite obligations would obtain. This was how some canon lawyers interpreted this passage.[77] Undoubtedly aware of this legal determination on the validity of coerced (in contrast to

---

[76] *Decretum*, p. I, d. 45, can. 5 "De Iudaeis"; English trans. in Robert Chazan, *Church, State, and Jew in the Middle Ages* (West Orange, N.J.: Behrman House, 1980), 20-21 (cited in Weed, "Aquinas on the Forced Conversion of Jews," 129-30).

[77] Huguccio, for instance, emphasizes that a baptism carried out under coercion will be valid, because it does not entirely exclude the free will of the one baptized: "If I say [to someone] I will beat, rob, kill, or injure you, unless you are baptized, he can be forced to hold the faith . . . because [a] coerced choice is a choice and makes consent" (cited in Pennington, "Gratian and the Jews," 118).

physically compelled) baptism,[78] Aquinas would have had to take it into account; he generally recognized that Church practice, including influential legal rulings, provide a framework for theological inquiry and set boundaries on what can be theologically affirmed.

As we have seen, Aquinas rejects the supposition that embrace of the Christian faith is compatible with coercion, insofar as he deems not just free will, but *libertas* also, essential to the act of faith. In his eyes, would this implication obtain for the reception of baptism as well? Jennifer Hart Weed maintains that it does. As evidence, she notes how Aquinas, when referring to *De Iudaeis* (in *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8, ad 2), omits inclusion of the phrase "quam . . . si inuiti susceperint" ("even if they accept it unwillingly") and instead retains the general point that Jews who at one time had embraced the faith would be bound to keep it.[79] Nonetheless, to my mind, this omission does not entirely settle the question at hand: in this passage of the *Summa* Aquinas is explaining the inner act of theological faith; baptism he addresses later in the *Tertia pars*. At the relevant juncture (*STh* III, q. 68, aa. 8-9), we find him opening a space between the condition needed for valid reception of the sacrament (which would imply an imprint of the baptismal character) and the prerequisite for donation of salvific grace via baptism. As to the first, receiving the sacrament with the intent of procuring spiritual renovation would be sufficient; for the second, formed faith (*recta fides*) is required. Could the first be compatible with some measure of fear- (or reward-)induced pressure, while the second obviously would not? If one adopts a minimal reading of "intending what the Church intends in

---

[78] Inter alia, Aquinas's confrère Raymond of Peñafort re-affirms the position of Huguccio (ibid., 119).

[79] Weed, "Aquinas on the Forced Conversion of Jews," 143-45. Weed confuses matters when she supposes that for Aquinas acts done from fear are involuntary, with the implication that a conversion induced by fear would likewise be involuntary. As I have indicated above, Aquinas situates coercion (actions chosen from fear, i.e., to avoid future harm) within the category of the mixed-voluntary. Thus, when he argues that embrace of the faith cannot be coerced, the basis would have to be something other than the simple involuntariness (elimination of free choice); hence he focuses on the lack of *libertas* as the key condition that would preclude authentic conversion.

baptizing," on a par with the way Aquinas describes the intention needed for administering the sacrament (*in extremis* even an unbaptized person could validly perform the baptismal rite [*STh* III, q. 67, a. 5]), then its reception would not be wholly incompatible with coercion, and the sacrament would be validly (but perhaps not licitly) conferred.

During Aquinas's second Parisian regency, King Louis IX of France "ordered the attendance of Jews at evangelistic sermons preached by Pablo Christiani, a Dominican and former Jew."[80] Had some conversions followed, it would not be correct to say they happened wholly without coercion. It is difficult to parse Aquinas's settled view on this matter of coerced (versus compelled) baptism. I read him as fundamentally opposing such a practice (in its different forms), as it is incompatible with the view he had formed of theological faith. But inversely, he could not overtly reject the Church practice (reflected in the position of mainstream canon lawyers) that allowed for the validity of coerced baptisms. This, I conjecture, led him to introduce (in *STh* III, q. 68, aa. 8-9) the distinction between reception of the character, on the one hand, and reception of salvific grace, on the other, so as to create a small (albeit reluctant) opening for the prevailing practice, which enjoyed the support of ecclesial law.

Finally, and apropos of forced evangelizing (e.g., compulsory attendance at sermons), Aquinas does show some reserve toward Augustine's view that such coercion can have a salutary effect on unbelievers by breaking down barriers that impede the interior assent of faith.[81] For Augustine, it is not that fear itself will elicit in us divine belief (based on John 6:24, Augustine admits this is impossible). Rather, under the fear of threatened harm, our dispositions for error are eroded so that subsequently we become able—presuming God's light is offered—"to hold

---

[80] Ibid., 130, drawing from the account given by Robert Chazan, *Daggers of Faith* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 44-45.

[81] See R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 133-53.

willingly what one formerly denied."[82] Aquinas alludes to this conception (in *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8, ad 3, citing Augustine's *Letter* 185 to Boniface):[83] "They [the Donatists] should remember that Christ at first compelled Paul and afterwards taught him." But he makes no reference to this supposedly beneficial impact of fear in the corresponding *responsio*. Instead, returning to this issue later in the same *quaestio*, he cautions against this procedure as employed not only against pagans but against heretics as well. It is better, he suggests, to let them perform their rites, "so that [left unmolested] they might gradually be converted to the faith."[84] Later, speaking about schismatics, he similarly comments that "coercive penalties of the secular arm [*coercionem branchi saecularis*]" should be employed against them only as a last resort, after other, less repressive measures (excommunication is mentioned) have been tried but failed.[85]

D) Freedom to Defend Christians Whose Faith Is under Attack

Thus far, I have examined how Aquinas conceptualizes the freedom unbelievers *ad extra* enjoy in entering the Christian faith and the freedom denied unbelievers *ad intra* who wish to depart from it. The *responsio* to article 8 alludes, in addition, to a third mode of freedom, namely, an entitlement—possessed by Christians—to defend the practice of their faith against unbelievers who would actively oppose it. Aquinas presents this entitlement immediately after the first sentence of the *responsio*, where he affirms that coercing external unbelievers into the faith is wholly impermissible. Having said this, he proceeds to explain how these same unbelievers may nonetheless

---

[82] *Letter* 93 to Vincentius (St. Augustine, *Letters*, vol. 2, trans. W. Parsons [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953], 72).

[83] St. Augustine, *Letters*, vol. 4, trans. W. Parsons (Washington, D.C. The Catholic University of America Press, 1955), 161.

[84] *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 11.

[85] *STh* II-II, q. 39, a. 4, ad 3.

be compelled by the faithful, if it be possible to do so, that they do not impede [*impediant*] the faith by their blasphemies [*blasphemiis*], evil persuasions [*malis persuasionibus*], or open persecutions [*apertis persecutionibus*]. It is for this reason that Christ's faithful often wage war on unbelievers [*contra infideles bellum movent*], not indeed for the purpose of forcing them to believe [*ad credendum cogant*], because even if they were to conquer them and take them prisoner, their liberty to believe [*libertate . . . credere*] would remain, if that is what they desire; rather [such war is waged] in order to constrain them from impeding the faith of Christ [*eos compellent ne fidem Christi impediant*].[86]

This passage includes an affirmation and a denial. Aquinas *affirms* that Christians are entitled to wage war against external unbelievers[87] for three reasons: (i) to repel physical attacks that they direct against Christians, (ii) to curtail derogatory speech about Christianity, and (iii) to counter attempts at getting Christians to abandon their faith and adopt a new one. He underscores how this justified warfare against unbelievers is defensive in character. He consequently *denies* that its purpose is to convert pagans to Christianity. As evidence that such warfare is not animated by proselytizing zeal, he notes that unbelievers will be allowed to retain their religious practices ("freedom of belief") in the event they are taken captive. He underscores, nonetheless, that this warfare has a religious purpose: to prevent unbelievers from actively undermining adherence to and promulgation of the Christian religion. Aat this juncture no mention is made of just war (*bellum iustum*) to

---

[86] *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8.

[87] From the context of this paragraph, it is manifest that the warfare in question was to be waged against pagans and other unbelievers (Muslims in particular). Warfare against heretics is not mentioned in this connection, despite the armed conflict against Albigensians that was underway in southern France several decades prior (1209-29). This lack of mention (Aquinas would have been aware of the conflict due to the involvment of St. Dominic and other members of his order) is probably attributable to the special meaning Aquinas attached to the term "bellum": a military campaign waged by one independent prince against another. As he would have considered the Albigensians to be a subordinate political community under a Christian king (Phillip II of France), he would not call the military offensive against them "bellum"; rather it would be described as the enforcement of order against a sedition (see Reichberg, *Aquinas on War and Peace*, 32-33).

defend the civil polity from attack.[88] Although Muslim rulers are not here named, the passage appears to be directed against them; it was a widespread conviction among Latin Christians that these rulers were aggressively seeking to expand the scope of their faith community, especially in the Levant, by compelling vulnerable Christians to embrace Islam.[89]

One author has objected to the "almost unlimited permission to fight infidels"[90] that is implied by the conception of defensive warfare that Aquinas outlines in the passage above. Indeed, beyond asserting that Christians can come to the aid of their brethren who suffer from the armed onslaught of unbelievers, he also makes provision for warfare against unbelievers who blaspheme against Christianity or proselytize on behalf of their own religious law. Regarding the first, in a related quodlibetal question[91] he cites the story of Jesus and Beelzebul ("blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven" [Matt 12:22-32]) to explain that although Jesus did not resist injury to his humanity (Matt 5:39), he refused to tolerate verbal or symbolic offenses directed against his divinity—with the implication that gospel teaching allows and even requires Christians to counter, by arms if necessary, speech deemed injurious to God's transcendence. Regarding proselytization on behalf of another religion, Aquinas cautions that unbelievers should be prohibited from regular interaction with uneducated Christian folk (*simplices*, whose faith he describes as "feeble" [*infirmi in fide*]) precisely to guard against such an eventuality. Close friendship between unbelievers and these *simplices* was thought by Aquinas

---

[88] This is the express topic of *STh* II-II, q. 40, a. 1.

[89] In *ScG* I, c. 6, Aquinas evinces concern over the practice of forced conversion, leading him to state ironically that Mohammad had sought confirmation that he was sent by God, not by means of miracles as Jesus had done, but by the "power of his arms [*in armorum potentia*]," and thus, through violence, had "compelled adherence to his law [*violentia in suam legem coegit*]."

[90] Kurt Villads Jensen, "War against Muslims according to Benedict of Alignano, OFM," *Archivum Franciscanum* 89 (1996): 181-95, at 187 (describing Aquinas's position in *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8). For a similar argument in even stronger terms, see Thomaž Mastnak, *Crusading Peace: Christendom, the Muslim World, and Western Political Order* (Berkely: University of California Press, 2002), 212-16.

[91] *Quodl*. XII, q. 13, a. 1 (Leonine ed., 25:393, ll. 46-64).

to be especially dangerous, as the latter might easily succumb to the false teachings of the former (*STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 9).[92]

Judged from the perspective of contemporary human rights law, Aquinas's endorsement of restrictions on the speech of non-Christians and the corresponding liberty of Christians to counter—even to the point of using armed force—perceived violations of these restrictions cannot but seem excessive.[93] A related flaw would be the unilateral character of the penalties involved: Christians (presumably persons in authority, though Aquinas does not elaborate) were entitled to repress the blasphemies and proselytizing of their non-Christian counterparts, but the reverse would not hold. For instance, should an unbeliever acquire dominium or other authority over Christians, he would not be entitled to proselytize them or to repress their speech in the event he deemed it blasphemous vis-à-vis his religious law. Indeed, it was to prevent proselytization on behalf of alien faiths that the medieval Church forbade unbelievers to *acquire* authority over the Christian faithful.[94] Even when the dominium of unbelievers over the Christian faithful was pre-existing of long date, and thus allowable by natural right, it could still be overturned by Church decree if the faith of Christians was thought to be at risk. Aquinas's rationale is this: "dominium [*dominium*] and authority [*praelatio*] are of human

---

[92] Commenting on 1 Cor 5:12-13 ("For what is it to me to judge them that are without? Do you not judge them that are within?"), Aquinas explains that the Church has no spiritual authority (*spiritualem potestatem*) over unbelievers who live wholly outside its jurisdiction (*qui sunt omnino extra*); such power pertains solely to those who have submitted to the faith. Indirectly however (*indirecte tamen*), the Church has power over external unbelievers insofar as, by reason of their fault (*propter eorum culpam*, presumably this is a reference to their sin of unbelief), the faithful are prohibited from having relations (*communicant*) with them (*Super primam Epistolam ad Corinthios lectura*, in *Super Epistolas S. Pauli lectura*, vol. 1, ed. R. Cai, 8th ed. [Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1953]).

[93] See Taylor, *Freedom of Religion*, 82-102, on challenges to blasphemy restrictions; ibid., 102-14 cover the rejection of restrictions on proselytizing.

[94] *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 10: Establishing for the first time ("de novo instituenda") an authority of unbelievers over the faithful "should by no means be permitted [*nullo modo permitti debet*], since it would provoke scandal and endanger the faith. . . . Moreover, unbelievers hold the faith in contempt."

right [*ex iure humano*], while the distinction between believers and unbelievers [*fidelium et infidelium*] is of divine right [*ex iure divino*]."[95] Should a conflict emerge between these two orders of law, divine right must take precedence. On this basis, vis-à-vis unbelievers residing in Christian polities, there would be a strong presumption against letting them exercise authority over the faithful. Decrees canceling such authority would be the norm. *De jure*, in areas lying outside the temporal jurisdiction of the Church, such decrees could still be issued but given the scandal that would likely result (and presumably the difficulty in exercising such a right), Aquinas concedes this should rarely be done.[96]

III. VITORIA

Francisco de Victoria's most-cited treatment of religious coercion is undoubtedly his *De Indiis* ("On the American Indians") which he prepared for the academic year 1537-38 (but did not deliver until early 1539). Written apropos of question 10, article 12 of the *Secunda secundae* ("whether the children of Jews and other unbelievers are to be baptized against the wishes of their parents"), it is this *relectio* that mainly accounts for Vitoria's reputation as a staunch advocate for freedom of religion. Hypothetically, he speculates, should it

---

[95] Ibid. The same point is repeated in *STh* II-II, q. 12, a. 2, where Aquinas adds that as *dominium* is a human right pertaining to the *ius gentium* it will not automatically be annulled by divine right. This does not however preclude that restrictions might be placed on the exercise of *dominium*, by reason of its subordination to divine right (for instance, if an unbelieving prince were to endanger the faith of his subjects).

[96] In *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 10, Aquinas distinguishes unbelievers who are "subject to the temporal jurisdiction of the Church and its members" (*temporali subiectione subiiciuntur Ecclesiae et membris*) from unbelievers who live outside of this jurisdiction (*qui temporaliter Ecclesiae vel eius membris non subiacent*). In this passage, Aquinas defines what jurists of the period termed "Christianitas" (Christendom), namely, a geographic sphere in which Christian law and customs prevail. This sphere was linked to but not simply identical with the *Ecclesia*. See Jean Ropp, *L'idée de chrétienté dans la pensée pontificale des Origines à Innocent III* (Paris: Presses Modernes, 1939), 127: "In the *strict sense*, Christendom is the temporal society of Christians (in contrast to the Church, spiritual society of Christians) insofar as they pursue a temporal end, as members of temporal society."

be demonstrated that the Christian faith had adequately been proposed to the native Americans, and they manifested obstinacy (mortal sin) in rejecting it, even then, on this ground alone, there would be no just cause to use force against them. In support, Vitoria repeats Aquinas's assertion that "belief is a matter of the will." Aristotle's point that fear diminishes voluntariness is further advanced to explain how coercion (not just compulsion) is incompatible with faith: "To come to the mysteries and sacraments of Christ merely out of servile fear would be sacrilege." "War," he adds for emphasis, "is no argument for the Christian faith," for, should it be waged for this purpose, the infidels would be moved not "to believe, but only to pretend that they believe and accept the Christian faith." This, he concludes, "would be monstrous and sacrilegious."[97] "Difference of religion cannot be a cause of war" is how Vitoria famously sums up this line of argumentation in his companion *relectio* on the law of war (*De iure belli*).[98]

If we turn, however, to Vitoria's earlier lectures on this question of the *Summa*, delivered in the academic year 1534-35,[99] a somewhat different picture emerges. Commenting on article 8, "Whether unbelievers should be compelled to the

---

[97] These citations from *De Indiis* are taken from Vitoria's discussion of the fourth unjust title "that they refuse to believe the faith of Christ, although they have been told about it and insistently pressed to believe it," and its sixth conclusion "that, however probably and sufficiently the faith may have been announced to the barbarians and then rejected by them, *this is still no reason to declare war on them and despoil them of their goods*" (*Relectio de Indis*, ed. L. Pereña and J. M. Perez Prendes [Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones cientificas, 1967], 65-67, no. 20); *Political Writings*, 271-72, § 39.

[98] "Causa iusti belli non est diversitas religionis" (*Relectio de iure belli o paz dinamica*, ed. Pereña et al. [Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones cientificas, 1981], 122, no. 1; *Political Writings*, 302, §10; "What are the permissible reasons and causes of a just war?").

[99] There exist several *reportata* of these lectures; I cite here from the version retained in Vincente Beltrán de Heredia, ed., *Los manuscritos del maestro fray Francisco de Vitoria* (Madrid: Biblioteca de tomistas espanoles, 1928), 196; English translation (occasionally emended) in *Political Writings*, appendix B, "Lecture on the Evangelization of Unbelievers," 341). In subsequent references, the pagination is given first according to the Latin text as established by Beltrán de Heredia and afterwards according to the translation of Pagden and Lawrence.

faith," Vitoria does not limit himself to the special case of Jews and gentiles (including Muslims) in Africa, America, or other remote places far from Christendom; he also examines the problem of forcible conversion of unbelievers residing on Christian lands.

Vitoria opens his investigation with the proposition, inherited from Church teaching, that Jews and gentiles may not be coerced into the faith. He begins by observing that the New Testament offers little direct guidance on this question:

> By what law is it prohibited to forcibly convert unbelievers [*quo iure sit prohibitum compellere infideles ad fidem*]? . . . I conclude that it is prohibited by divine law. [But] a doubt arises as to where the prohibition may be found. Not in Scripture, because if it were there St. Thomas would have cited it among his authorities, being a most careful researcher in this respect. I reply that this is not stated clearly in the authoritative sources . . . although there are some passages from which this prohibition may perhaps be inferred [*elicitor*].[100]

In the absence of an unequivocal scriptural statement prohibiting forced conversion, Vitoria asks whether this practice should be ruled out principally by reason of its negative consequences, chiefly the social unrest and dissimulation it would provoke. But as arguments based solely on side-effect harms are rarely decisive, he proceeds to list some plausible counterarguments justifying such coercion. Scotus's discussion of forcible child baptism is cited in this connection, as it provides Vitoria with a well-known foil for the elucidation of his own position.[101] Referring to Sisebut (king of the Visigoths from 612 until his death), popularly regarded as "a most pious prince," who had ordered the conversion of the Jews under threat of the lash, Scotus maintains that despite the Toledan

---

[100] Vitoria does not indicate what passages he has in mind. Suarez later suggested that a norm of religious freedom could be inferred from Luke 9:54-55 (see below). Vitoria fails to mention 1 Cor 5:12 ("For what is it to me to judge them that are without"), which Aquinas had earlier cited as indicating that Jews and Gentiles should be immune from coercion in matters of belief.

[101] Vitoria observes that among the arguments for and against the practice of forcible child baptism, Scotus considered those in favor "the more probable [*probabilius*]" (lecture on *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8 [197/342]).

council's subsequent revocation of the king's decree, it should not thereby be inferred that all use of force to compel conversion is inherently wrong. The prohibition of *De Iudaeis* was framed, he suggests, in view of the negative consequences that ordinarily issue from attempts at compelling conversion. If a way could be found to eliminate these side-effect harms, say by introducing precautionary measures, then the manifest good of bringing someone to the faith, thereby saving him from spiritual suicide, would justify an imposition of moderate force to that end. A doctor does no harm in compelling a patient to take medicine for his own good; ignorant of its beneficial effect, the patient might not want the medicine at first, in this sense his reception of it is involuntary, but because he more fundamentally desires health, ultimately his reception of the medicine must be counted as voluntary. In matters of faith, the prince has a function parallel to that of a physician.[102] Like the pious king Sisebut, Christian princes have authority to enact laws for the common good even with respect to religious observances (*materia religionis*). Thus, Scotus concludes, Christian princes may licitly compel acceptance of the faith, provided one can foresee that feigned conversions and similar wrongs do not result. Far from being wrong, the practice would then be licit and even desirable.[103]

Having presented Scotus's position, Vitoria advances his own determination on the liceity of religious coercion. He begins by distinguishing unbelievers who live in a Christian commonwealth and are subjects of its prince, from unbelievers who live outside of its boundaries.[104] Fear and threats, Vitoria argues, may not be used against unbelievers *residing on their own lands*, as an application of the said coercion will be illicit in the absence of any proper jurisdiction. A Christian king would have no more authority to compel these unbelievers to religious

---

[102] Lecture on *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8 (197/342-43).
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid. (197/344).

observance than a private citizen would have over his own compatriots.[105]

To the claim that refusal to accept the Christian faith, itself a mortal sin, is necessarily opposed to natural law, Vitoria replies that while this is *de jure* true, it nonetheless does not follow that a Christian prince, or even the pope, would be entitled to punish such a violation.[106] Only those sins against nature that directly cause harm to innocent human beings (e.g., cannibalism, or euthanasia of the old and senile) may be sanctioned by whomsoever is able; but disbelief in the Christian message is not of this sort. In and of itself this disbelief causes injury solely to the unbeliever (and to those who are an extension of himself, namely, his offspring).[107] To the claim that God used force in converting St. Paul (casting him to the ground and blinding him), and therefore we Christians should likewise do this to pagan unbelievers for their own good, Vitoria responds: "it is not licit for us to do all that God is permitted to do, because we are not masters of humankind as Christ is. . . . He could have left this power to the Church but he did not." At any event, Vitoria affirms that the antecedent is false; it was not intimidation (*terroribus*) that made Paul believe but divine inspiration (*inspiratione divina*), something we are powerless to effect in another.[108] Finally, to the contention that unbelievers "blaspheme continually" (i.e., in professing a religious law that is incompatible with Christianity), and hence even unbelievers who live abroad must be compelled to abandon religious practices that contradict the Christian faith, Vitoria explains that forcible measures are justifiable as defense only when the said blasphemies cause us actual harm, for example, "if they [infidel blasphemers] were to send us a letter full of injuries." "But," he continues, "if they keep their blasphemies to themselves, we cannot use this alone as grounds for declaring war against them."[109] In sum, the prohibition

---

[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid. (199/346).
[107] Ibid. (199/347).
[108] Ibid. (201/350).
[109] Ibid. (201/349-50).

against using force to compel conversion holds unqualifiedly vis-à-vis unbelievers who live on their own lands outside of Christian jurisdiction. At the limit, Vitoria acknowledges that their idols may in principle be destroyed, but the chief object of this cannot be to make them convert.[110]

By contrast, regarding those unbelievers who *reside within the confines of Christendom* (for instance Muslims remaining in Spain after the Reconquista, or Jews before their expulsion), Vitoria shows how the received teaching on permissible religious coercion is considerably more relaxed. This, he indicates, was the context for Scotus's discussion of the forcible baptism of children. Vitoria's argument is oriented around two main claims.

First, he denies that it is inherently wrong (*intrinsice malum*) for princes to coerce unbelievers who are *their own subjects*. Unlike perjuring an oath, which is always prohibited, bringing pressure to bear on unbelievers so they are induced to accept the faith "is not so evil that it cannot sometimes be a good deed."[111] In other words, "it is not by definition so evil as to involve an inevitable breach of charity towards God or one's neighbor."[112] The accretion of new members to the Church clearly serves God's interest, and likewise this is beneficial to the neighbor, who is given access to the sacraments and a pathway to eternal life. In sum, "to compel these unbelievers to the faith is itself licit, or at the very least is not illicit"[113]—hence the burden of proof rests with those who would maintain otherwise. In this respect Vitoria agrees with Scotus. Vitoria thereby argues that various forms of indirect coercion (*indirecte compelli infideles*) will, in principle, be justifiable, such as the

---

[110] Ibid. (200/347). After the pagans have heard Christian preaching, it would not be inherently wrong ("de se non est malum") to destroy their idols; no injury is thereby done to them or to God ("non est contra honorem Dei nec contra bonum proximi") for the good reason that these idols are false representations of the divinity. Vitoria does, however, caution against doing this on prudential grounds, and he shows even more reticence vis-à-vis the destruction of pagan temples.

[111] Ibid. (197/344).

[112] Ibid. (197-98/344).

[113] Ibid. (198/344).

imposition of "taxes and levies by which [as a beneficial side-effect] they may be encouraged to become converts to the faith."[114] Forcible exile is likewise mentioned, if Saracens for instance "pose a probable threat of subverting the faithful . . . [for in this case] even if [the king] knows that it may induce them to be converted to the faith, they are not thereby forced to convert," [115] as they remain free to opt for exile.

Second, Vitoria argues that even if indirect coercion in matters of faith is not evil per se, it nonetheless can be expected to generate negative side-effects. He has in mind here the sort of preparatory coercion that had been discussed approvingly by Augustine. On this understanding, coercion can indirectly foster belief by removing earthly attachments (for instance attachment to one's social group) that, left in place, might disincentivize the embrace of faith. Following Aquinas, Vitoria seems to think that the imposition of these and similar coercive strategies, even by legitimate rulers over their own subjects, will usually backfire. The negative consequences will ordinarily outweigh the positive benefits. Feigned conversions will result, and even worse, hearts will be hardened against the Christian faith. This happens not inevitably, but all too often does.[116] For Vitoria, these "undesirable consequences (*inconvenientia*) . . . are confirmed by experience . . . [as] Saracens never become Christians."[117]

It is at this juncture that Vitoria disagrees with Scotus. The latter (like Augustine before him) seemed more sanguine that

---

[114] Ibid. (200/348).

[115] Ibid. Indirect coercion is taken up by Vitoria in the form of a *dubia*. His main point here is to argue that such coercion will be permissible only when the hardship in question is imposed for a reason other than to induce conversion (i.e., rectification or prevention of some wrong apart from unbelief), and the person administering the hardship has proper jurisdiction to do so (thus such coercion cannot be directed against unbelievers who live outside of Christendom). In other words, the conversion, if it happens, will flow as the beneficial outcome of an act that proximately aimed at something else.

[116] On the special mode of evil represented by the foreseeable negative consequences that predictably flow from what we have done, see *STh* I-II, q. 20, a. 5. These negative side-effects (*eventus sequens*) represent a circumstance that can render morally bad an otherwise good or indifferent act (*STh* I-II, q. 18, a. 10).

[117] Lecture on *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8 (198/344).

the negative consequences of coercive stratagems in favor of faith could be avoided, so that the positive impacts would predominate. Taking his lead from Aquinas, Vitoria views this prospect as both uncertain and unlikely, and believes that there is a presumption against it: "The rule which Scotus sets up against St. Thomas is, if you like, the exception to St. Thomas' rule,"[118] and as confirmation Vitoria notes how Church practice from its earliest days militates in favor of the viewpoint endorsed by Aquinas. This notwithstanding, Vitoria is willing to concede that should an effective method be found to circumvent the said *inconvenientia*, "it will be licit" to adopt these coercive stratagems, "as Scotus says."[119] In the last analysis, then, Vitoria offers only a pragmatic, not a principled, argument against their usage. Here we do not encounter an unalienable right to religious freedom, as it is usually understood today.

It remains to be explained why Vitoria thinks unbelievers within Christendom can allowably be made targets of religious coercion in a way that unbelievers on the outside cannot. Why should this distinction be relevant to the matter at hand? The main reason, which Vitoria shares with his theological contemporaries and virtually all medieval thinkers before them, is that civil society should not be conceptualized as existing in an order apart from faith. Temporal authority might be of a different kind than spiritual authority, princes should be differentiated from bishops, the emperor from the pope, but where Christians live together they form one body, a body that maintains its essential unity amid the diversity of functions:

The civil and spiritual commonweaths [*respublicae*] cannot be made into two bodies, but only one. . . . In a single body everything is connected and subordinated to one another, the less noble parts existing for the more noble. So too in the Christian commonwealth, all offices, purposes, and powers are subordinated and interconnected. . . . Temporal things exist for spiritual ones, and depend on them.[120]

---

[118] Ibid. (198/345).

[119] Ibid.

[120] "On the Power of the Church," relectio delivered in 1532; translation in *Political Writings*, 91.

On this picture, when Christians form a majority in a land they constitute a Christian nation, and such a nation must be organized with a shared faith at its core. To contest this faith, or not to participate in it publicly, imperils the unity of the social body. Unbelievers represent an ever-present danger to that unity; thus, whenever feasible, measures should be adopted to draw them into the faith, under the premise that it is a condition *sine qua non* of civic unity.[121] It is for this reason, Vitoria concludes, that

Christian princes may compel their own subjects not only in civil matters [*materia civili*], but also in religious [*materia religionis*] ones; in these matters the commonwealth [*respublica*] holds authority over its own subjects by natural right, and the prince has the same authority over his subjects, be they pagans or not.[122]

On this account, opposition to Christianity would constitute a sin, not only against theological faith and charity, but also against the unity of temporal polity and the obligations of natural justice we bear in its regard. When Christian faith is considered integral to the temporal order, opposition to it is tantamount to sedition.

IV. Suarez

Writing at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Francisco Suarez[123] adopted Aquinas's tripartite distinction

---

[121] In *Persecution and Toleration: The Long Road to Religious Freedom*, Johnson and Koyama explain how belief in a necessary connection between shared faith and civic unity was pervasive in premodern cultures. It can be found equally among Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims. Thus, the view to which Vitoria gives voice in the passage just quoted is far from distinctive to him or to Scholastic theology more generally. It was an assumption that few would overtly question before the nineteenth century and in some places remains influential even today.

[122] Lecture on *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8 (198/343).

[123] Suarez deals with issues relating to religion, coercion, and war in his disputations (1621) on the theological virtues of faith (disp.18, "On means for the conversion of unbelievers") and charity (disp. 13 "On war"); in Suarez, *Selections from Three Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1944), vol. 1, Latin text, vol, 2, English translation by Gwladys L. Williams, 467/739-795, and 797-825/799-865 (translation occasionally

(discussed above) between (i) unbelievers raised in families that had never received the Christian faith but showed it no hostility, (ii) unbelievers who sought to impede Christian belief and practice, and (iii) Christian apostates and heretics. Suarez endeavors to explain how force can be applied for religious ends, most narrowly in relation to unbelievers in the first category, with considerably broader scope vis-à-vis unbelievers in the second, and with widest impunity vis-à-vis those in the third. This last category is relatively unproblematic for Suarez because he views it along the lines of Aquinas as reducible to enforcement of the moral and legal obligation to keep one's baptismal promises and the membership in Christ's Church this is thought to entail. If an entire community abandons this commitment, as Catholics judged had happened in the early days of the Reformation, it could become the target of justified war.[124]

Regarding unbelievers who live outside the confines of Christendom, no force should be used to compel them into the faith.[125] This restriction holds even if these infidels have been adequately exposed, through missionary preaching, to the tenets of Christianity. Nor, for that matter, should they be forced to give Christianity a hearing, for example by being compelled to attend sessions in which missionaries would instruct them in the basics of the faith. Against some theologians (John Major [1469-1550] is cited) who had argued that as Jesus said "teach ye all nations" (Matt 28:19), the Church is entitled to back up this precept by force, Suarez maintains that the Church has

---

emended). In what follows the textual divisions are numbered according to the disputation, section, and paragraph, followed by the respective page numbers of Suarez, 1944.

[124] See *Defense of the Catholic and Apostolic Faith* III, c. 23 (*Selections from Three Works* [333-40/685-702]), where Suarez advances theoretical and scriptural justifications for the papacy's use of coercive force to depose heretical and apostate kings.

[125] As scriptural support, Suarez (*Disp.* 18.2.2 [473/750]) cites Luke 9:54-55, where it is recounted how, after the Samaritans refused to receive Jesus, his disciples proposed he command fire from heaven to sanction this refusal, an initiative that Jesus firmly rejected: "You know not of what Spirit you are," and the Evangelist narrates how Jesus had the disciples peacefully withdraw.

jurisdiction solely over those who have already accepted (by their own free volition or that of their parents) the faith, and by this manner alone can they become its subjects. The unbaptized living on their own lands may thus ignore the preaching of missionaries without incurring any penalty. Even should they lend an ear to gospel preaching, but subsequently refuse to heed its message, their hardness of heart, while counted a sin (and a grave one at that) should nonetheless not fall under civil sanction.[126]

By the same token, infidels living in their own polities can not justifiably be forced to give up their religious rituals, even if these are manifestly idolatrous.[127] Likewise against John Major who had argued that "offense to God" would warrant the suppression of pagan rites,[128] Suarez asserts that such jurisdiction is lacking on the part of Christian rulers. The one exception would be a situation in which the rites in question would involve manifest harm done to innocent members of the pagan community, as for instance the practice of human sacrifice. This can be stopped by Christian outsiders, not because it is opposed to true religion, but solely on grounds of justice.[129] Under such an eventuality, "it is allowable to use force in order that [those carrying out such rites] may be prevented from sacrificing infants to their gods."[130] Enunciating an early version of what today is called "humanitarian intervention," Suarez affirms that engaging in such a just war is not only "permissible in the order of charity," but is a "positive duty" (*preceptum est*) for those princes able to carry it out.[131]

---

[126] "God has not given men the power of punishing all the evil deeds of mankind; since he has reserved some of these deeds for his own tribunal. . . . And among these sins which God has reserved for his own judgment, is the sin of unbelief, in those who have not professed the faith through baptism" (*Disp.* 18.3.12 [480/766]).

[127] *Disp.* 18.4.3 (481/769).

[128] *Disp.* 18.4.2 (481/768).

[129] *Disp.* 18.4.4 (482/770-71).

[130] Ibid.

[131] Ibid. Suarez returns to this theme in *Disputatio* 13 (*Selections from Three Works*, 807-9/823-27), where (§6) he explains that war cannot rightly be waged on the basis of a revealed truth; only violations of justice that are accessible to reason (thus in principle knowable to Christians and non-Christians alike) may justify resort to armed force, in

Unbelievers living outside of Christendom are immune from religious interference, provided they refrain from impeding the religious activities of Christians who reside in their midst. Should infidel rulers prohibit Christian missionary activity, for instance, this could justify armed intervention by Christian princes, themselves acting under the behest of the pope, the spiritual leader of Christendom.[132] Similarly, if an infidel ruler actively seeks to dissuade Christians living in his polity from adhering to their beliefs ("dragging them into error or compelling them to desert their faith"), or prevents them from practicing their rituals, a Christian ruler is entitled to intervene (have "just ground for war") on their behalf.[133] Suarez does not, however, believe that this rationale for armed intervention is equally available to infidel rulers who wish to protect their coreligionists from similar restrictions in foreign lands. To cite his example, a Turkish emir would not have a right to wage war against a pagan ruler who refused to let his subjects convert to Islam. Suarez explains himself thus: "to prevent the acceptance of the law of Christ does indeed involve grievous injustice and harm, whereas there is no injury at all in prohibiting the acceptance of another [religious] law."[134] The harm in question is directed at a vital function of the Catholic Church, namely, to spread the gospel message through the whole world.[135] Suarez

---

the interests of protecting the innocent (*iusta defensio innocentum*), for instance. Thus (§7) even non-Christian princes (*principi non fidelis*) may have title to wage just war (*iustus titulus belli*) in aide of a foreign people who wish to practice monotheism but are forcibly impeded from doing so by their own ruler.

[132] As preaching the gospel is a primary function of the Church (*Disp*. 18.1.7 [471/746]), the defense of this right, including by coercion and war, falls within the jurisdiction of the supreme pontiff alone, insofar as it is his duty to defend the universal rights of the Church (*universalia iura Ecclesiae defendere*). While the actual fighting must be undertaken by lay soldiers (for ecclesiastical persons can have no direct part in killing or the shedding of blood), Suarez makes clear that the first initiative for such warfare lies with the pope (ibid. [471/747]).

[133] *Disp*. 18.4.4 (482/770).

[134] *Disp*. 13.5.7 (809/826-27).

[135] In this connection (*Disp*. 13.1.6 [470/745]) Suarez cites John 21:17 "feed my sheep." On the linkage between missionary activity and just war, see Endy, "Francisco de Vitoria and Francisco Suarez on Religious Authority and Cause for Justified War."

takes as a given that the Church is a supernatural society directly mandated by God; for this reason, the Church is uniquely entitled—indeed "has a right [*habet ius*]"—to receive the armed protection of Christian princes.[136] This is a religious prerogative not possessed by other communities of believers and their leaders. In this respect Suarez articulates a Christian exceptionalism.

Regarding unbelievers who dwell *within* Christian polities, Suarez thinks that some measure of religious coercion will be apposite.[137] He takes care to explain that this intrusion must be justified on political rather than religious grounds, for, as we have seen, neither the popes and bishops, nor by extension Christian princes, have any spiritual jurisdiction over unbelievers. Whatever jurisdiction the former might have over the latter must be grounded in something other than the unbelievers' condition of unbelief. This jurisdiction Suarez locates in the special role of Christian princes, who have among their chief tasks the maintenance of peace and security within their kingdoms. Such peace and security will be maintained only when virtue is fostered within the populace. But this in turn requires that due homage be paid to God, as recognition of God's rulership over humanity is the chief source of virtue. On this basis Suarez argues that in every human polity that is well governed, care must be taken to enable the subjects to choose the true religion and the worship of God.[138] This task is not inherently spiritual; rather, it proceeds from the temporal power of princes and as such is directed to a natural (not

---

[136] *Disp.* 18.1.4 (469/743). Against the expansive claims made by John Major, Suarez (*Disp.* 18.1.8 [471-72/747]) places some restrictions on the Church's right of self-defense. For instance, before any harm has been done to preachers, it is not permitted for soldiers to be sent out with them as a precautionary (*preueniendo*) or preventive (*per anticipatam*) measure. Nor do Christian princes have just title to occupy the kingdom of a gentile prince (*principis gentilis*) in order that the gospel may there be preached there with greater ease or security.

[137] In this respect, he argues (*Disp.* 18.2.2 [473/750-51]) against those theologians (Valentia and Salmerón are cited) who deny that coercion can ever justifiably be directed against pagan or gentile unbelievers, even when they are subjects of Christian princes.

[138] *Disp.* 18.2.4 (474/752-53).

supernatural) end: "preserving the peace of the polity, natural justice, and the goodness appropriate to it."[139]

Having postulated this principle, Suarez deduces four implications.

First, although unbelievers living in a Christian polity can never directly be compelled to adopt the Christian faith, they can nonetheless be forced (*cogere*) to give this faith a hearing.[140] Attending instructional sessions taught by Christian preachers can be made mandatory, with civil penalties imposed for refusal.

Second, although no one can directly be forced to embrace the faith upon hearing it adequately presented, as members of a civil polity (*membra reipublicae civilis*) that is governed by a Christian prince, unbelievers may justifiably be subjected to indirect forms of coercion (*coactione indirecta*). Coercion is indirect when a burden or penalty is imposed for one reason, but with the awareness that a beneficial side-effect will likely follow.[141] Suarez notes, for instance, that a Christian prince has the authority to expel unbelievers from his kingdom if their presence is deemed dangerous to the faithful (similarly, unbelievers conquered in a just war and whose lands are annexed may rightly be punished by exile).[142] By the same token, burdens such as proportionately higher taxes can be levied against resident unbelievers.[143] In either case, the burden or penalty could rightly be waived should the unbeliever agree to convert. While hoping for this beneficial outcome, the prince is not entitled to impose the said burden solely in view of it; to be justifiable the burden must be imposed for a reason other than promotion of the unbeliever's conversion. In Suarez's eyes,

---

[139] *Disp.* 18.3.7 (479/763).

[140] *Disp.* 18.2.3 (473/751).

[141] A definition of indirect coercion is given in *Disp.* 18.3.8 (479/764): "Coercion is indirect when a right [assignment of a burden] or punishment that is imposed under one particular title or on account of a given offense is secondarily directed by the one exercising [the right or inflicting the punishment] to the end of inducing another to exercise some act of the will . . . which is itself virtuous."

[142] *Disp.* 18.3.9 (479-80/764-65).

[143] See ibid. (479/764).

this indirect coercion will be warranted only when the one exercising the coercion (i.e., the prince) has jurisdiction to impose the said burden, the burden is applied within the bounds of justice (not to excess), and precautions are taken so that feigned conversions do not result.[144]

Third, when it is a matter no longer of internal belief, but of external religious practice, Suarez maintains that various restrictions can justifiably be imposed on unbelievers living within a Christian polity. The prince can legitimately outlaw pagan rites, especially when they involve the public worship of idols. Suarez cites in this connection the practice of illustrious rulers such as the emperors Constantine and Theodosius, who ordered the closure or destruction of pagan temples.[145] Suarez adds that only princes are entitled to exercise such coercion; private individuals lack the proper jurisdiction.[146]

Fourth, Suarez explains how a special status must be accorded to the rites of Jews and Muslims. Even though these rites are contrary to the Christian faith, they should nonetheless be allowed within a Christian commonwealth due to their monotheistic orientation, which is in keeping with the moral content of the natural law.[147] Given this foundation in natural law, Jewish and Muslim rites cannot be assessed as inherently wrongful (in contrast to the idolatry of pagans), and Christian princes have no legitimate authority to exclude these rites from the commonwealth. Any such attempt would amount to impermissible direct coercion. But because these rites are inconsistent with fundamental Christian doctrine (for instance, Jewish rituals that signify a messiah who is still to come),[148] in a

---

[144] Ibid. (479-80/764-65). Suarez admits that Christian princes lack jurisdiction to impose such burdens or penalties upon unbelievers living outside of Christendom; however, it is within the purview of these princes to withhold gratuitous benefits from them, with an eye toward drawing them to the faith (the said benefits would be conferred should they convert). This would constitute a form of indirect coercion; it would be "permissible, because no jurisdiction or superior power is required to deprive any one of such benefits (*Disp.* 18.3.11 [480/765]).

[145] *Disp.* 18.4.6 (482/771).

[146] *Disp.* 18.4.8 (483/774).

[147] *Disp.* 18.4.10 (484/775).

[148] Ibid.

Christian polity restrictions ought to be placed on them. Suarez mentions how no new synagogues (or mosques, presumably) are to be built, none should be located in close proximity to Christian churches, any such edifices that have been converted to churches should not be restored to their previous use (and if an injustice has occurred the loss must be made good in some other way), and that major celebrations such as the Passover feast must be held in private, so as not to diminish the honor of the Christian religion. And "Jews may be required to wear an outward sign so that they are externally distinguished from the Christian faithful."[149]

CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages I have sought to show how Aquinas's strong affirmation of religious freedom—with respect to the inner act of believing, where *libertas* is unconditionally required—was limited to a narrow band of application. Individuals who wished to depart from the Christian faith (after having previously embraced it) were prohibited from doing so. Those who chose to remain outside of that faith—pagans, Jews, and Muslims—could adhere to their own religious practices solely if they observed a set of restrictions. Christians enjoyed a correspondingly wide freedom in opposing perceived violations, especially vis-à-vis those unbelievers who lived within the boundaries of Christendom. Vitoria and Suarez outlined these restrictions in abundant detail and were not shy in explaining the forcible measures that Christian rulers could undertake against transgressions.

Aquinas's contemporary disciples accordingly face a quandary. If we seek support in his teaching for a right of religious freedom—along the lines of *Dignitatis Humanae*—we can either downplay the aspects of his teaching that cut against it or offer some account of how the affirmation of this right can be detached from the restrictions he placed on it. Thomas Pink provides an example of the former approach. Arguing for the

---

[149] *Disp.* 18.4.11 (484-85/776).

applicability today of "the underlying doctrinal basis for the Church's previous use of the coercive services of the state"[150] as had been theorized by Suarez, Pink focuses on measures of "soft" coercion (excommunication, removal from office, restrictions on movement, etc.).[151] By the same token he downplays the harsher measures, including capital punishment of heretics, forced exile, the placement of restrictions on public worship by Judaism and other "practitioners of false religions,"[152] the punishment of "disrespect shown by non-Christians for Christ,"[153] and war for the protection of mission-aries, all measures that, as we have seen, were actively promoted by Suarez for the defense of faith.[154] Pink mentions (some of) these measures in passing as though they were regrettable exceptions of a benign policy to "protect the public space of the Christian religion."[155] He speaks as though these measures were only contingently related to Suarez's theory of Church-directed coercion but offers no explanation as to why this might be so.

Mary Keys takes the opposite tack in arguing that Aquinas's acceptance of coercive measures—against heretics and others who deviate from the true path of faith—was inconsistent with his wider teaching and should have been rejected by him. She attributes this failure not so much to a lack of objective resources, as to an uncharacteristic lack of intellectual humility. Aquinas's understanding of the special epistemic status of faith should have enabled him to realize that given the subjective uncertainty of faith as assent to supernatural mysteries transcending the capacity of the human mind, "it would be most incongruous to employ human law and authority in punishing lapses of faith."[156] Instead, he gave way to an "unchecked spiritedness" that led him "to endorse in unusually immoderate

---

[150] Pink, "Interpretation of *Dignitatis Humanae*," 82.

[151] Ibid., 94.

[152] Ibid., 104.

[153] Ibid., 94.

[154] Pink does not mention war to defend against or punish unbelief in "Interpretation of *Dignitatis Humanae*."

[155] Ibid., 104.

[156] Keys, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good*, 236.

terms an unjust and unwise ecclesial-political policy."[157] However, rather than follow this conclusion, it would be more accurate to say that given the epistemic status of theological faith—objectively most certain as it is directly rooted in God's self-revelation, but subjectively uncertain, because no created mind can naturally know (thus have direct evidence of) supernatural truths[158]—Aquinas was led to endorse coercive measures as a means to protect the ordinary faithful from the vulnerabilities attendant upon this epistemic condition. On this reasoning, contact with unbelievers could easily foment doubt on matters of belief: thus the precaution of quarantining these unbelievers, and when necessary purging them from the society of Christian believers. Had Aquinas lived in an age such as ours, when education (including religious instruction) is vastly more accessible than in previous periods, he might have entertained alternative routes toward protecting faith from the corrosive impact of ambient error.

Instead of speculating about the subjective dimensions of Aquinas's thought on coercion, Charles Journet proposed a structural explanation for the restrictions that Aquinas (and by extension his Scholastic followers) had placed on his otherwise strong affirmation of religious freedom. In an address given at Vatican II in the closing debates on *Dignitatis Humanae*,[159] Journet explained how, from the time of Constantine and for many centuries forward, Church leaders reverted to the "secular arm" in order to assure religious conformity. Heavy means of coercion, including war, were utilized to this end. This was done under the rationale that shared faith is inherent to the

---

[157] Ibid., 234.

[158] The contrast between the objective and subjective certitude of faith is drawn by Aquinas in *STh* II-II, q. 4, a. 8 (cited in Keys, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good*, 236); earlier (q. 1, a. 5) Aquinas explains that faith provides access to supernatural truths for which evidence (*agnitio*), whether immediate or inferential, is unavailable to us, due to the natural limitations of our created minds (q. 2, a. 3).

[159] The Latin text, "Declaratio de libertate religiosa," was originally published in *Acta Conc. Vatican II*, vol. 4.1 (Vatican City, 1976), and has been reedited, along with a French version, in Charles Journet and Jacques Maritain, *Correspondance*, vol. 6, *1965-1973* (Saint-Maurice, Switzerland: Éditions Saint-Augustin, 2008), 73-76.

unity of the temporal order, whenever Christians live together in organized political communities. Deviation in matters of faith is an existential threat to civic peace and has to be suppressed accordingly, or the dissolution of temporal society will inevitably result. This linkage between shared faith and civic order was an unquestioned assumption throughout the medieval period and beyond. It was only in late modernity that Catholic theology started to conceptualize other possible foundations for civic order, and with them new ways of bringing faith to bear in the temporal order. Faith is still required for the right direction of society, but on this new conception it is no longer deemed a prerequisite for unity in the civic sphere, nor *a fortiori* a condition for full membership in the temporal polity. Freed of its constitutive political role, faith no longer requires the support of coercive means as supplied by the state. Christians must still oppose error in matters of faith and morals, but henceforth they must do so by persuasion, using "arms of light," not "arms of war."[160]

Space constraints do not allow for further elaboration on Journet's account of the limitations that were placed on religious freedom within the context of "sacral Christendom," or his explanation as to why these limitations can be shed today without endangering the "subordination of temporal to spiritual affairs," under the guidance of the Church.[161] This is a promising line of analysis that merits closer examination.[162]

Finally, if we assess Aquinas's endorsement of special restrictions on unbelievers by reference to the law applicable in his own day, it will appear in a much more moderate light. His

---

[160] "Declaratio de libertate religiosa," in *Correspondance*, 74.

[161] "Sacral Christendom" was a term Journet borrowed from Maritain to describe the political structuring of the temporal sphere in premodern Christian societies. For further details, see Journet, *Church of the Word Incarnate*, 241-62; Reichberg, "Journet on the Impossibility of Christian Holy War," 531-36.

[162] Including the sometimes vociferous objections (to my mind unfounded) that have been raised against it, inter alia by Julio Meinvielle (*De Lamennais à Maritain: Du mythe du progrès et l'utopie de la "nouvelle chrétienté"* [Paris: Éditions Dominique Martin Morin, 2001 [original Spanish edition, 1945], and Thomas Pink ("Jacques Maritain and the Problem of Church and State," *The Thomist* 79 [2015]: 1-42).

writing on this topic closely reflects the teaching of Pope Innocent IV (1243-54), who had sought to undercut the view, later defended by his student Henry of Susa (better known by the nickname "Hostiensis," who lived 1200-1271), that the exercise of dominium flows from the Christian faith in such a way that unbelievers possess no entitlement to self-rule or ownership of land. On the Hostinian account, a Christian prince is thus entitled to wage war against unbelievers, not because of any specific wrong they have committed, but simply to counter their condition of unbelief. By contrast, acknowledging that "infidels should not be forced to accept the faith, since everyone's free will is to be respected," Innocent argued that by natural right "dominium and jurisdiction is permitted to infidels," hence Christians are prohibited from waging war on them except in instances where unbelievers have unjustly done prior harm to Christians. Only under circumstances of "extreme necessity" can these infidel rulers be lawfully removed from their dominium over Christians; short of "extreme danger to Christians" or "great offense" done by these unbelievers, "the pope ought to put up with them insofar as he can." Alongside physical attacks on Christian faithful, the offenses in question would include refusal to admit preachers of the gospel or other actions that might otherwise impede the practice and expression of the faith. Innocent nonetheless denied that a condition of positive reciprocity with Muslims should hold: the pope, he wrote, should not be willing to "accept those who want to preach the law of Mohammad . . . for they are in error and we follow the path of truth."[163]

Writing as a theologian, Aquinas did not take it as his task to frame laws relevant to the Church's exercise of jurisdiction over (and on behalf of) the faithful. In this domain he sought merely to select the most reliable sources (hence his preference for

---

[163] These citations from Innocent IV are taken from his text "On Vows" (*Quod super his*, in *Decretals,* III, 34, 8; English trans. in Reichberg et al., *Ethics of War*, 153-55). Aquinas does not cite from *Quod super his* in *STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8; he does however reference a related decretal, *Ad abolendam,* in the subsequent q. 12, a. 2, s.c.

Innocent IV over Hostiensis)[164] and to explore the theological implications. It would be an anachronism to expect otherwise of him, as though—on matters such as punishment of heresy or restrictions on non-Christians—he could operate wholly outside the legal framework of his day. By the same token, were he writing today, he would surely amend the social and political aspects of his theology to fit the new expectations of our age and the underlying legal codes, civil and ecclesial, that have accordingly emerged.[165]

---

[164] See Reichberg, *Thomas Aquinas on War and Peace*, 27-33. For the relevant comments by Hostiensis on the perpetual enmity and resulting warfare between Christians and unbelievers, see "On Truce and Peace" (from *Summa aurea*, Decretals, bk. 1, tit. 34), trans. in Reichberg et al., *Ethics of War*, 161-68. On the contrasting positions of Innocent and Hostiensis—and their antecedents—see James Muldoon, *Popes, Lawyers, and Infidels* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 5-18.

[165] Avery Cardinal Dulles wisely observed that "doctrine of a social or political character does not follow exactly the same course of development as pure dogma. It is not simply spun out of the original deposit of faith, but emerges with a certain irregularity according to the vicissitudes of history. . . . [T]he social teaching of the magisterium is under continual revision insofar as the unchanging principles of the gospel need to be upheld in varying social situations. The fundamental principles are constant, but the judgments and adaptations are new" ("Religious Freedom: Innovation and Development," *First Things*, December 2001 [accessed online at www.firstthings.com/article/2001/12/religious-freedom-innovation-and-development]).

HUMBERT OF ROMANS ON THE PAPACY BEFORE LYONS II (1274): A STUDY IN COMPARISON WITH THOMAS AQUINAS AND POPE GREGORY X'S *EXTRACTIONES*

ANDREW HOFER, O.P.

Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception
Washington, D.C.

THOMAS AQUINAS'S understanding of papal power has been the subject of close theological scrutiny. It has often been compared to the thought of other Scholastics of the thirteenth century and to medieval canonists. It has been studied in the contexts of the mendicant controversies and efforts at reunion with the East, and evoked in questions about the papacy's role in the faith, sacraments, and the unity of the Church. In studies of developments in ecclesiology, Thomas often draws attention for his articulations of the papal preservation from error when canonizing saints and the pope's *plenitudo potestatis*. Special attention has been given to Thomas's influence on subsequent theological and doctrinal formulations regarding the papacy's jurisdiction vis-à-vis local bishops and state governments, as well as on papal teaching authority over the universal Church.[1]

---

[1] See esp. Donald S. Prudlo, *Certain Saints: Canonization and the Origins of Papal Infallibility in the Medieval Church* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2015), 122-30; Matthew Levering, *Christ and the Catholic Priesthood: Ecclesial Hierarchy and the Pattern of the Trinity* (Chicago: Hillenbrand Books, 2010), 205-24; Jürgen Miethke, *De potestate papae: Die päpstliche Amtskompetenz im Widerstreit der politischen Theorie von Thomas Aquin bis Wilhelm von Ockham*, Spätmittelalter und Reformation Neue Reihe 16 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); Christopher Ryan, "The Theology of Papal Primacy in Thomas Aquinas," in *The Religious Roles of the Papacy: Ideals and Realities, 1150-1300*, ed. Christopher Ryan, Papers in Medieval Studies 8 (Toronto: Pontifical

By contrast, there has been little study in ecclesiology of Humbert of Romans, the fifth Master (1254-63) of the Order of Preachers to which Thomas belonged. Humbert's views on the papacy are known better by historians specializing in the thirteenth century than by theologians today.[2] Humbert wrote a *consilium* in preparation for the Second Council of Lyons

Institute of Medieval Studies, 1989), 193-228; Karlfried Froehlich, "Saint Peter, Papal Primacy and the Exegetical Tradition, 1150-1300," in Ryan, ed., *The Religious Roles of the Papacy*, 3-44; George Sabra, *Thomas Aquinas' Vision of the Church: Fundamentals of an Ecumenical Ecclesiology*, Tübinger Theologische Studien 27 (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1987); Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P., "La place du pape dans l'Église selon saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue thomiste* 86 (1986): 392-422; Gregory Rocca, O.P., "St. Thomas Aquinas on Papal Authority," *Angelicum* 62 (1985): 472-84; Charles Abraham Zuckerman, "Dominican Theories of the Papal Primacy 1250-1320," (Ph.D. diss. Cornell University, 1971), 26-92; Charles Zuckerman, "Aquinas' Conception of the Papal Primacy in Ecclesiastical Government," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 40 (1973): 97-134; and Walter Ullmann, *The Medieval Papacy: St. Thomas and Beyond* (London: Aquin Press, 1960). Scholars after the 1960s commonly respond to the classic study of Yves Congar, O.P., "Aspects ecclésiologiques de la querelle entre mendiants et séculiers dans la seconde moitié du XIIIᵉ siècle et le début du XIVᵉ," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 36 (1961): 35-151, and work by Ulrich Horst, O.P., such as his "Das Wesen der 'potestas clavium' nach Thomas von Aquin," *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 11 (1960): 191-201. For examples of further work by Congar and Horst on Thomas and the papacy, see Yves Congar, O.P., "St. Thomas and the Infallibility of the Papal Magisterium," *The Thomist* 38 (1974): 81-105; and Ulrich Horst, O.P., *The Dominicans and the Pope: Papal Teaching in the Medieval and Early Modern Thomist Tradition*, trans. James D. Mixson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

[2] For an overview, see Edward Tracy Brett, *Humbert of Romans: His Life and Views of Thirteenth-Century Society*, Studies and Texts 67 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984). Unfortunately, Brett does not alert readers to some significant differences between Humbert's *Opus tripartitum* and the *Extractiones*, discussed below. For pertinent secondary literature and the manuscripts extant of Humbert's writings, see Thomas Kaeppeli, O.P., *Scriptores ordinis praedicatorum medii aevi*, vol. 2 (Rome: Santa Sabina, 1975), 283-95 (s.v. Humbertus de Romanis). For a brief overview (translated into French) of Humbert, see Simon Tugwell, O.P., "Humbert de Romans," *Mémoire Dominicaine: Histoire, documents, et vie dominicaine* 2 (1993): 21-32. For an impressively detailed treatment of select writings, see Tugwell's *Humberti de Romanis Legendae Sancti Dominici*, Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica, vol. 30 (Rome: Institutum Historicum Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum, 2008). For Tugwell on the *Opus tripartitum*, see ibid., 407-22.

(1274),[3] which he offered probably at the personal request of Pope Gregory X, as Simon Tugwell argues, rather than as a response to one of two general letters preparing for the council.[4] Of all extant reports that prepare for the council, Humbert's *Opus* (or *Opusculum*) *tripartitum* is by far the most thorough.[5] As its name suggests, it is divided into three parts to meet the three needs of the Church that would be discussed at

[3] No manuscript of the *Opus tripartitum* is extant. See Kaeppeli, *Scriptores ordinis praedicatorum medii aevi*, 2, no. 2015. The text was printed in the *Concilia omnia tam generalia, quam particularia*, 2 in 1551 in Cologne (967-1003). This was reprinted as *Appendix ad fasciculum rerum expetendarum et fugiendarum sive tomus secundus*, ed. Edward Brown (London: Richard Chiswell, 1690), 185-228, which I am using. Given the text's importance, it is unfortunate that the *Opus* was last published in 1690 and no translation in any vernacular is published.

[4] Tugwell, *Humberti de Romanis Legendae Sancti Dominici*, 407-9. On this point, Tugwell cites his agreement with Karl Michel, *Das Opus tripartitum des Humbertus de Romanis O.P.* (Graz: Verlagsbuchhandlung Styria, 1926), 17-32. Tugwell, following Michel, argues that neither Gregory's *Salvator noster* (Gregory X Reg. no. 160 [March 31, 1272]) nor his *Dudum super generalis* (Gregory X Reg. no. 220 [March 11, 1273]) would be an adequate explanation for Humbert's work. See Gregory's letters in *Les registres de Grégoire X (1272-1276)*, ed. Jean Guiraud (Paris: Thorin et Fils, 1892). Michel's hypothesis on the dating, which arose from his doctoral work at the University of Fribourg, was criticized by, among others, Fritz Heintke, *Humbert von Romans, der fünfte Ordensmeister der Dominikaner* (Berlin: Dr. Emil Ebering, 1933), 118; and in the book review of F. Callaey in *Revue d'histoire ecclesiastique* 18 (1922): 367-68.

[5] For a study of Humbert's *Opus* that follows brief overviews of the *Relatio* of Bruno, bishop of Olmutz and the highly interesting *Collectio de scandalis ecclesiae* by Franciscan Gilbert of Tournai, see Burkhard Roberg, *Das Zweite Konzil von Lyon (1274)* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1990), 106-26. Roberg introduces the text as the most comprehensive and substantially meaningful proposal in preparation for Lyons II (ibid., 106). According to a more recent book, "It could be argued that Humbert's treatise was perhaps the most influential of those submitted in shaping the agenda of the Second Council of Lyons" (*Crusade and Christendom: Annotated Documents in Translation from Innocent III to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291*, ed. Jessalynn Bird, Edward Peters, and James M. Powell [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013], 456). For the reports as they pertain to the concern of the crusade, with the foci of Gilbert of Tournai's *Collectio de scandalis ecclesiae*, Bruno of Olmutz's memoir, William of Tripoli's *De statu saracenorum*, and especially Humbert of Romans, see Palmer A. Throop, *Criticism of the Crusade: A Study of Public Opinion and Crusade Propaganda* (Amsterdam: N.V. Swets and Zeitlinger, 1940). For a very brief consideration of the reports of Gilbert of Tournai, William of Tripoli, and Humbert of Romans, see Brett Edward Whalen, *Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 195-98.

Lyons: crusade, union with Greeks, and reform in the Church.[6] Especially remarkable is the *Secunda pars*, the most comprehensive extant medieval analysis of the schism written by either a Latin or a Greek. Composed in a clear Scholastic style, the consilium addresses political, theological, social, psychological, linguistic, and philosophical matters that are required in order for reunion to become a reality. Humbert is, as Burkhard Roberg says, an independent thinker.[7] Humbert writes this plan under the aspect of advising the pope on what he should do and why he should do it in light of the *ad hoc* needs of the Church. While scholarship has given attention to Humbert's proposal (although its effort for Christian unity is still not as well known as it deserves), no study has been devoted *per se* to his understanding of the pope as laid out in this treatise.[8]

The following study compares Humbert's view of the pope with that of Thomas. While there is no evidence that Humbert borrowed from Thomas's teaching on the papacy, studies of the two together can be mutually illuminative—especially for an audience much more familiar with Thomas's teachings on the Church.[9] While Humbert does not rival Thomas in genius, he

---

[6] For studies on Lyons II, see especially Roberg, *Das Zweite Konzil von Lyon*; and the over thousand-page conference collection *1274: Année charnière mutations et continuités*, Colloques Internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique 558 (Paris: Éditions du centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1977).

[7] Burkhard Roberg, *Die Union zwischen der griechischen und der lateinischen Kirche auf dem II. Konzil von Lyon (1274)*, Bonner Historische Forschungen, vol. 24 (Bonn: Ludwig Röhrscheid, 1964), 91.

[8] For an application of Humbert's work to efforts for Christian unity in the early twentieth century, see H.-J. Omez, "À propos de l'unité chrétienne de l'Orient et de l'Occident: Un opuscule du Bx. Humbert de Romans (1273)," *Les documents de la vie intellectuelle* 1 (1929): 196-211. Claude Carozzi comments that the entire treatise was composed to affirm the sovereign authority of the pope, placed at the summit of a strongly unified Church. See Carozzi, "Humbert de Romans et l'Histoire" in *1274: Année charnière mutations et continuités*, 849-62, at 850.

[9] For a very brief comparison to show the profile of each in his Dominican context, see Karl Brunner, "Theorie als Praxis, Praxis als Theorie: Humbert von Romans und Thomas von Aquin," in *Bettelorden in Mitteleuropa: Geschichte, Kunst, Spiritualität* (St. Pölten, Austria: Diözesanarchiv, 2008), 656-62. Brunner observes that Humbert is known outside the Order only by a circle of specialists (656), and concentrates on sketching the importance of the work of each great Dominican in his cultural setting.

offers additional practical insight and frank criticism for understanding the papacy, not found in Thomas.[10] The two friars wrote in different genres and contexts, with different literary emphases and perspectives: Humbert, as a highly respected retired head of the Dominicans and prolific writer for his Order; and Thomas, as a renowned master of the sacred page with several scattered treatments of the papacy in academic disputes. Some scholars, such as Leonard Boyle and Paul Murray, have shown how Thomas was likely influenced by Humbert in his own writing.[11] While Humbert's proposal for

---

Brunner concludes that cultural history and theology do not stand in conflict with one another (662).

[10] Thomas, as well as Bonaventure, steered clear of criticizing the papacy and promoted the papacy's authority in various ways, such as extolling the inerrancy of canonizing saints. In his *Certain Saints*, Donald Prudlo writes that Bonaventure "was the first church thinker to make an implicit argument in favor of infallibility in canonization" (126). Prudlo argues against Brian Tierney's inadequate attention to canonizations and his focus on the Franciscan poverty disputes as the locus for the medieval articulations of papal infallibility. For Tierney on Bonaventure, see Brian Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility, 1150-1350: A Study on the Concepts of Infallibility, Sovereignty and Tradition in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 82-92. Thomas gave further theological reasoning for inerrancy in canonization. For Thomas, as Prudlo summarizes, "the pope is unable to err in canonization for three reasons: (1) he makes a thorough investigation into holiness of life, (2) this is confirmed by the testimony of miracles, and (3) the Holy Spirit leads him (for Thomas, the clincher)" (128). See *Quodl*. IX, q. 8. Not mentioned by Prudlo in this analysis, Thomas's use in this question of Caiaphas as someone evil, but prophesying as high priest (John 11:51), might suggest that a pope could be evil but still speak the truth needed for his office. Thomas does not explicitly address, however, the possibility of an evil pope or of a pope needing correction. Explaining the lack of papal criticism by Thomas (and Bonaventure) in terms of mendicant reliance on the papacy does not sufficiently address mendicant criticism of the papacy that can be found in someone of Humbert's stature, writing at the same time as Thomas.

[11] Leonard E. Boyle, O.P. "The Setting of the *Summa theologiae* of Saint Thomas," reprint from 1982 in *Facing History: A Different Thomas Aquinas* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 65-91, at 78-82; Paul Murray, O.P., "Four Prayers: The Influence of Humbert of Romans," in *Aquinas at Prayer: The Bible, Mysticism and Poetry* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 31-79. Murray comments, "Should it prove to be the case that Aquinas did, in fact, allow himself to be influenced by Blessed Humbert in the composition of the prayers under consideration, then what we have, in the four Dominican prayers before us, are documents of the rarest kind: prayers not merely composed with considerable artistry and care by the Angelic Doctor, but work actually based on an earlier

Pope Gregory X seems to have been composed too late (March/April–December 1272) to have influenced Thomas's writing on the papacy,[12] it can illuminate what Thomas wrote, and did not write, on the papacy. Examining Humbert's text against the backdrop of Thomas's theology can also shed some light on Humbert's own distinctiveness. Certainly, neither is sufficient to explain the other. Yet, putting Humbert alongside Thomas—two of the most influential friars in the thirteenth century—can provide an interesting angle on the papacy.[13]

In addition, this study considers the heavy hand of an editor who developed *Extractiones* that, *inter alia*, altered those formulations of Humbert that seemed to be offensive against the prerogatives of the pope.[14] Tugwell has shown that the

---

Dominican text, an *Epistola* composed by one of the Order's greatest leaders and saints, St. Thomas's older contemporary, Blessed Humbert of Romans" (79).

[12] For this date of Humbert's composition, see Tugwell, *Humberti de Romanis Legendae Sancti Dominici*, 422. Thomas famously stopped writing his *Summa* after his experience on December 6, 1273, and we do not know if he ever read what Humbert submitted to Pope Gregory. Thomas was obeying the papal summons to go to Lyons for the council when he died on March 7, 1274.

[13] Thomas and Bonaventure are most commonly paired as points of reference for commonality and difference in Scholastic study. But it should be recalled that Bonaventure was not only a master of the sacred page, but was also Franciscan minister general (1257-74) whose counterpart in the Order of Preachers as master was, for a time, Humbert of Romans.

[14] That text is found in J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* (Florence: 1759-98), 24:109-32. It is reprinted from the 1733 *Veterum scriptorum et monumentorum historicum* by Martène and Durand. These *Extractiones* have usually been numbered among the products of Bernard Gui, the famous Dominican historian and inquisitor at the beginning of the fourteenth century. See s.v. Bernardus Guidonis, in Kaeppeli, *Scriptores ordinis praedicatorum medii aevi*, vol. 1 (Rome: Santa Sabina, 1970), no. 211. Other examples of continuing this acceptance of Gui as responsible for the *Extractiones* include Brett, *Humbert of Romans*, 176 n. 3; Roberg, *Das zweite Konzil von Lyon*, 107; and William Hinnebusch, O.P., *The History of the Dominican Order*; vol. 2: *Intellectual and Cultural Life to 1500* (New York: Alba House, 1973), 328. José Sánchez Vaquero notes that many modern authors are ignorant of Humbert's complete text, as found in Brown's 1690 edition. See José Sánchez Vaquero, "Causas y remedios del Cisma griego según los Latinos, antes de la Unión de Lyon," *Salmanticensis* 2.2 (1955): 350-401, at 351-52 n. 2. One recent example of a scholar not seeing the substantive difference, at times, between the *Opus* and its *Extractiones*, is Brett Whalen's distinction of "excerpts" and "additional passages" in the 1690 edition by Brown. Whalen uses the "excerpts." See Whalen, *Dominion of God*,

person likely responsible for writing the *Extractiones* is none other than Pope Gregory X himself.[15] After reviewing select discrepancies between the *Opus* and the *Extractiones*, circumstances of Gregory X involving Humbert around the time of Lyons II, and the manuscript tradition, Tugwell concludes:

> All told, it seems to me that there is a strong case for believing that the *Opus tripartitum* was written in response to a personal request from Gregory X, that Gregory held Humbert in high esteem, and that the *Extractiones* are his own working notes on the *Opus*.[16]

Tugwell's persuasive case makes Humbert's treatise of even greater value for scholars than was previously recognized, and Gregory's authorship is accepted in this present study. Andrea Riedl's helpful study on the *Secunda pars* of the *Opus* as a conciliar peace plan, although it cites Tugwell's scholarship on Pope Gregory's request for Humbert's work, does not explore his proposal that Gregory is responsible for the *Extractiones*.[17] Ludovico Gatto's older study of Gregory's pontificate, although it cites Humbert's authentic text, does not even cite its highly

---

300 n. 66. For his more recent overview of the medieval papacy, see Brett Edward Whalen, *The Medieval Papacy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

   [15] Tugwell, *Humberti de Romanis Legendae Sancti Dominici*, 407-22. Tugwell writes about the *Extractiones*: "Their true nature has not been appreciated; scholars have surprisingly failed to observe the kinship between the *Extractiones* and the kind of notes we ourselves make on what we read when we are already looking ahead to something we are due to write or some talk we must give" (410).

   [16] Ibid., 420.

   [17] Andrea Riedl, "Humbert von Romans und sein 'konziliarer Friedensplan' für das Zweite Konzil von Lyon (1274)," *Annuarium Historiae Conciliorum* 48 (2016/2017): 175-91. Riedl underscores Pope Gregory X's desire for *pax et unio* (peace and union), as evidenced in his letters to Emperor Michael VIII (October 24, 1272) and the Greek Patriarch Joseph I (November 1, 1272) (ibid., 180; cf. 190). In linking the *Secunda pars* with Pope Gregory's wish for peace and union, Riedl could have more explicitly shown Humbert's use of *pax*. For example, in chapter 17 of the *Secunda pars*, Humbert writes: of solemn nuncios who "would have spoken about peace" ("locuti fuissent de pace" [Brown, ed., 220]); of spies concerned "about impediments to peace and about the powerful opportunities for peace" ("de impedimentis pacis, et de valentibus ad pacem" [ibid., 221]); and of Latins who scandalize Greeks, who in turn "remove themselves from peace" ("elongant se a pace" [ibid.]).

original *Secunda pars*.[18] Gatto evinces no awareness of the possibility that Gregory is responsible for the *Extractiones*, and the *Extractiones* can supplement our sources for Gregory's pontificate. An investigation of the bearing Gregory's authorship has on understanding Humbert's particular contribution regarding the papacy, and so how Humbert's thinking differs in significant ways at times from Gregory's, can continue the work that Tugwell has pioneered.

With Thomas and Gregory's *Extractiones* as primary reference points, and with additional sources adduced for historical context, we find that Humbert's thoughts on the papacy offer a perspective that deserves consideration.[19] Humbert distinctively elaborates on the contemporary problems identified by Gregory X for the council's agenda. He interprets history, including the events recorded in the sacred Scriptures, to understand how the Church came to be in its contemporary situation. In advising the pope, Humbert, in fact, warns him that God will punish him if he should be negligent. This call, while not unique in the thirteenth century, contrasts with a contemporary attitude about the pope's actions: "There is no one who dares to say to him: why do you do this?"[20] Humbert dares to inform, motivate, and, at times, admonish the pope

---

[18] Ludovico Gatto, *Il pontificato di Gregorio X (1271 - 1276)* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1959).

[19] There are other possible ways of setting Humbert's *Opus* in context, such as giving a detailed comparison with the papal theory found in the influential canonist Hostiensis, as Henry of Segusio was known after becoming cardinal bishop of Ostia. An extensive comparison with Hostiensis would be beyond the scope of this limited project.

[20] Aegidius de Fuscarariis, *Ordo iudiciarius*, ed. Ludwig Wahrmund (Innsbruck, 1916), 260: "nemo est, qui audeat dicere: cur ita facis" (in Kenneth Pennington, *Pope and Bishops: The Papal Monarchy in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984], 74). Aegidius started teaching in Bologna in 1252 and died in 1289. Cf. Constant Van de Wiel, *History of Canon Law* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1990), 123. Earlier than Aegidius, we have the witness of Laurentius Hispanus (ca. 1215), writing on Innocent III's decretal *Quanto personam*: "And there is no one in the world who would say to him, 'Why do you do this?'" (in Kenneth Pennington, *The Prince and the Law, 1200-1600: Sovereignty and Rights in the Western Legal Tradition* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993], 47). Variations of this question were common in the thirteenth century.

concerning his unique responsibility of watching over the Church.

I. THE PAPACY IN THE *PRIMA PARS* OF THE *OPUS TRIPARTITUM*

Humbert begins his *Opus* by casting it as a document concerning the responsibilities of the pope as shepherd. Chapter 1 is introduced with the words, "It is shown that it pertains to the pope to watch over the Christian people diligently."[21] Humbert's work falls within a tradition of advising a leader on how to rule through a *speculum principum* (a mirror of princes, known also by the German term *Fürstenspiegel*).[22] Thomas composed such works, broadly speaking, for the King of Cyprus (the unfinished *De regno*) and, more particularly, for Margaret, Countess of Flanders (concerning ruling over Jews).[23] Bernard of Clairvaux, at the request of Eugene III, offered the most famous medieval counsel to the pope on how to rule; similarities (but not direct quotations) can be detected in

---

[21] "Ostenditur quod summi Pontificis sit vigilare diligenter super populum Christianum" (*Opus Tri*. 1.1 [Brown, ed., 185]).

[22] Riedl rightly situates Humbert's work within this genre of the *Fürstenspiegel*. See Riedl, "Humbert von Romans," 177. Karl Michel emphasizes that the work is a "Reformschrift," which is not false. The focus is certainly on letting the pope see the need for action. See Michel's *Das Opus tripartitum*, passim. For documentation from one prominent churchman and writer five years after the First Council of Lyons (1245), more in the style of *Reformschrift* than *Fürstenspiegel*, see Servus Gieben, O.F.M. Cap., "Robert Grosseteste at the Papal Curia, Lyons 1250. Editions of the Documents," *Collectanea Franciscana* 41 (1971): 340-93. These have been summarized in an appendix in W. A. Pantin, "Grosseteste's Relations with the Papacy and the Crown," in *Robert Grosseteste, Scholar and Bishop: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventh Centenary of his Death*, ed. D. A. Callus (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 178-215 (with appendix at 209-15). Humbert does not show any dependence on Grosseteste.

[23] Leonard Boyle argues convincingly that the letter known as being addressed to the duchess of Brabant has Margaret of Flanders as its recipient. See Leonard E. Boyle, O.P., "Thomas Aquinas and the Duchess of Brabant" (repr., *Facing History*, 107-21). For texts by Thomas that address the pope, see his prologue to the *Catena on Matthew* and *Contra errores graecorum*, both written for Pope Urban IV, but they do not advise him on how to rule.

Humbert's counsel.[24] Humbert twice cites Bernard's work to Pope Eugene III in his sermon notes when preaching to the Roman curia.[25] Humbert's fellow relator of the Church's condition before Lyons II, Gilbert of Tournai, explicitly reminds Gregory of Bernard's *De consideratione* at the beginning of his *Collectio de scandalis ecclesiae*.[26] It must be kept in mind that Gregory X called for a council to treat matters of a crusade to recapture the Holy Land, union with the Greeks, and reform in the Church.[27] Rather than addressing the responsibilities of the council, Humbert speaks of the pope's own duties.[28] His work offers a papal-centric view of the Church, situating the most pressing needs of the Church in terms of the responsibilities of the pope as a mirror for him to see.

[24] See his *De consideratione ad Eugenium papam tertiam libri quinque*, in *S. Bernardi opera*, ed. J. Leclercq et H.M. Rochais, vol. 3 (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1963), 393-493; English translation: *Five Books on Consideration: Advice to a Pope*, trans. John D. Anderson and Elizabeth T. Kennan (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1976). Humbert's debt to Bernard has been observed by Palmer A. Throop in his *Criticism of the Crusade: A Study of Public Opinion and Crusade Propaganda* (Amsterdam: N.V. Swets and Zeitlinger, 1940), 172, 180-81. Throop's chapter 6 is dedicated to Humbert's *Opus* and his earlier work of the *De praedicatione crucis* in reporting anti-crusade sentiment (see 147-83); chapter 7 analyzes Humbert's advice on arousing zeal for a perpetual crusade (see 184-213).

[25] *De eruditione praedicatorum*, book 1, sermon 85, TT 3verso, p. 498, col. B, sections C and D in *Maxima bibliotheca veterum patrum et antiquorum scriptorum ecclesiasticorum*, vol. 25 (Lyons, 1677).

[26] See Autbertus Stroick, O.F.M., ed., "Collectio de scandalis ecclesiae: Nova editio," *Archivum franciscanum historicum* 24 (1931): 33-62. For an example of Gilbert's criticisms, which cover even farmers, sailors, servants, and last of all beguines, he writes of four areas where prelates lack: life (in terms of morals), knowledge, teaching, and diligence. Palmer Throop calls the Collectio the "most caustic of the memoirs submitted to Gregory X" (Throop, *Criticism of the Crusade*, 69).

[27] For Gregory's pontificate and the crusades, see Philip B. Baldwin, *Pope Gregory X and the Crusades*, Studies in the Medieval History of Religion, vol. 41 (Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell Press, 2014). Baldwin's book does not take into account the *Extractiones* of Humbert's *Opus* and Tugwell's thesis that Gregory himself is responsible for that revision.

[28] Given the development of questions concerning distinctions between papal authority and conciliar authority, this point is worth noting. Baldwin's *Pope Gregory X and the Crusades* (see, e.g., 1-12) argues that too much emphasis has been placed on Lyons II (1274) as the turning point in crusading theory; rather, one should specifically look at the pontificate of Gregory X, who was elected in September 1271.

When Humbert gives his notes for preaching at councils, however, he has a very different approach. This comes as the first model of one hundred situations in book 2 that follow his one hundred audiences in book 1 of his *De eruditione praedicatorum*.[29] He writes only once of the "Roman church"—referring to the legates of the Roman church—but never directly of the pope (who often did not attend councils in person). As a preacher, Humbert communicates based on the need at hand for a particular audience, and his audience in the *Opus* is Gregory X. In *De eruditione praedicatorum*, he writes for fellow preachers. In the notes for preaching at a council, he cites several nonscriptural sources, in addition to numerous scriptural verses. For example, after Gratian's *Decretum*, he cites the eleventh-century lexicographer Papias concerning the etymology of *concilium*, drawing upon the word *cilium*, an eyelash, to emphasize that all at a council are to have the observation and intention of the heart toward unity in the things of God, based on the example of the primitive Church. He also cites the Gloss, the philosopher Diogenes, St. Benedict, St. Isidore of Seville, and St. Bernard. Unfortunately, for those interested in what texts Humbert was drawing from in writing the *Opus*, he does not cite nonscriptural sources as frequently there. Also of special note from the model for preaching at councils, he says that councils have a threefold basis of celebration: God, the Old Testament, and the primitive Church. God is said to have the angels in his presence for a council, as in Isaiah 6. In the Old Testament, there is the witness of Numbers 16, which Humbert understands as the basis of a synagogue, a kind of council. He then says that in the primitive Church there were many councils to treat many matters. He writes of three in the Acts of the Apostles: Acts 1 under Peter for the election of an apostle, Acts 15 under James for the cessation of laws, and Acts 20 under Paul about the rule of the Church. We will see

---

[29] For his model on councils, see *De eruditione predicatorum*, book 2, sermon model 1, 506B-508A (The printer's bottom page signature for further identifications is off, but it is within the V series of quires.)

similar interest in councils, but in the context of a direct focus on the pope, in the *Secunda pars* of the *Opus*.

In this first chapter of the *Prima pars*, Humbert offers three cases in particular where the shepherd must be extra careful: when the flock is many, when the flock is in danger, and when there will be a great reward. Humbert says that all three conditions pertain to the pope's responsibilities, for he has care over the entire Christian people, with many dangers from enemies and demons, "and for this, he has a great reward, which he expects in heaven, namely the rule over all the earth."[30] What does Humbert mean by this rule over all the earth? The reference to what is expected in heaven means that it may very well be an allusion to the eschatological apostolic authority of Matthew 19:28. Humbert's ambiguity is resolved in the *Extractiones*. Gregory X says that the pope has "a great reward, not only eternal, but also temporal, because he is the lord of all."[31] Clearly for the *Extractiones*, there are two things, the eternal and the temporal, and the pope rules as *dominus universorum*.[32] For Thomas, *Dominus universorum* is a divine title, given to Christ's human nature, and nowhere applied to the pope.[33] However, Thomas considers the pope to be the apex of both spiritual and temporal powers, and temporal rulers are subject to him.[34] For certain legal theorists, the emperor was *dominus mundi*.[35]

---

[30] "Et pro quo magnam habet mercedem, propter eam quam in coelo expectat, videlicet totius mundi dominium" (*Opus tri*. 1.1 [Brown, ed., 185]).

[31] "quia habet maximam mercedem, non solum aeternam, sed etiam temporalem, quia Dominus universorum est" (*Extr*. 1.1 [Mansi, ed., 24:110]).

[32] For an older survey of the contemporary canonist tradition on papal claims over the political order, see John A. Watt, *The Theory of Papal Monarchy in the Thirteenth Century: The Contribution of the Canonists* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1965). For the developments concerning papal power vis-à-vis that of bishops, see especially Pennington, *Pope and Bishops*.

[33] See *ScG* III, c. 119; *STh* I-II, q. 94, a. 5, ad 2; *In Hebr*. 1, lect. 1.

[34] See II *Sent*., d. 44, *exp. text.*; and *De regno ad regem Cypri* 1.15.

[35] Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (d. 1190) was said to have asked if he was the *dominus mundi*, and various legal theories followed. See chap. 1, "The Emperor is Lord of the World," in Pennington, *The Prince and the Law*, 8-37. For a more recent, far-

Humbert gives two other arguments in the first chapter for Pope Gregory's special attention. First, he paraphrases Christ's words to Simon Peter in the garden. Showing that Jesus addressed Peter alone while the other apostles were also sleeping, Humbert has Jesus ask, "'Simon, are you sleeping' (Mark 14:37), to whom I have committed all my sheep?"[36] Humbert then recalls that the pope took the name of Gregory, meaning "watchful" in Greek, the same name as Gregory the Great, who was "justly called Gregory, because he kept watch."[37] Thus, Humbert advises his pope to be true to the name that he chose, and imitate Gregory I.[38]

Humbert sees the Church of his time experiencing the same threefold disaster that befell Israel in the Old Testament, revealing both his sense of history and his openness to scriptural allegory. Like Israel's many enemies—including the Canaanites, Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Philistines—the Saracens are now fighting against the Church. Also, just as there was division between Israel and Judah during the time of Rehoboam, Greeks and Latins have a grave division among themselves. Humbert says that the Greeks and Latins "are contesting in the womb of the Church, just as formerly Esau and Jacob were in their mother Rebecca" (an image repeated in

---

ranging discussion of the title, see Pier Giuseppe Monateri, *Dominus Mundi: Political Sublime and the World Order* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2018).

[36] "Simon, dormis, tu videlicet, cui commisi omnes oves meas?" (*Opus tri.* 1.1 [Brown, ed., 185]).

[37] "juste dictus est Gregorius, quia vigilavit" (*Opus tri. 1.*1 [Brown, ed., 185).

[38] Humbert closes chapter 1 by saying that every prelate is to keep watch over the flock, but especially the pope, and how much more so when the pope is named Gregory. Lest we think that what Humbert says is something of only historical, and not of continuing theological interest, consider the following. In conclusion to a study on the papacy, a leading Catholic ecumenist and ecclesiologist after the Second Vatican Council wrote: "The bishop of Rome is the sentinel who 'watches' over the people of God, which is his true function; but he often prefers to act as if he were the only one in charge, instead of alerting the bishops as authentic pastors in the Church of God" (J. M. R. Tillard, O.P., *The Bishop of Rome* [Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983], 193). For several reasons, including his *Book of Pastoral Rule*, Gregory I was the most authoritative holy exemplar, after St. Peter, for the medieval popes. For Bernard's invocations of Gregory I to Eugene III, see *De consideratione* 1.12 and 3.4.

Opus tri. 2.11 and 14).[39] He furthermore recalls Luke 11:17, that every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste—a verse of terrible consequence when applied to the Church; this is omitted in the *Extractiones*.[40] Finally, regarding moral reform, Humbert continues with the example of the division between Israel and Judah. He writes, "Likewise, that part which adhered more to the Lord, namely Judah, exposed itself to greater crimes. For the adversary Israel justified her life in comparison to Judah in her prevarications."[41] The implication is clear: Judah represents the Latins, who, although not in schism, sin more than the Greeks do in morals.

Following this, Humbert affirms, "it pertains to the supreme pastor according to his power to apply the remedies against these three misfortunes."[42] His favorite image for the pope continues to be the shepherd. The third chapter is taken up wholly with pastoral applications from the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel 34 first describes wicked shepherds and then describes the Lord as a good shepherd; it was featured in Augustine's influential *sermo* 46, "On Pastors." Casting the papacy within this framework, Humbert continues a prophetic tradition of showing the extremes available to the pope—acts of wickedness or acts of divinity—in the three matters of crusade, union, and reform. Such a contrast finds no place in the *Extractiones*,

---

[39] "qui scilicet in ventre Ecclesiae intus colliduntur, sicut olim Esau et Jacob in ventre matris Rebeccae" (*Opus tri.* 1.2 [Brown, ed., 186]). The *Extractiones* omit this image here. This example of Esau and Jacob from Humbert is given by Orazio Condorelli to illustrate the thought at the time of the Latin and the Greek as twins within "Mother Church." See Orazio Condorelli, *Unum corpus, diversa capita: Modelli di organizzazione e cura pastorale per una "varietas ecclesiarum" (secoli XI-XV)*, Collana I Libri di Erice 29 (Rome: Il Cigno Edizioni, 2002), 85 n. 31. Condorelli refers to Alberigo, "L'oecuménisme au Moyen Age," *1274: Année charnière mutations et continuités*, 319-39, at 326. Alberigo gives the wry comment that Humbert uses this image without flattery. See also Alberigo's helpful corresponding note at 338 n. 39.

[40] The biblical context is, of course, Jesus' application of the adage to Satan's kingdom.

[41] "Item pars illa quae magis adhaesit Domino, scilicet Juda, majoribus se sceleribus exposuit. Justificavit enim animam suam adversatrix Israel comparatione praevaricatricis Juda" (*Opus tri.* 1.2 [Brown, ed., 185]).

[42] "quod ad summum Pontificem pertinet contra haec tria incommoda pro posse suo apponere remedia" (*Opus tri.* 1.3 [Brown, ed., 185]).

which admits only a line from the description of the Lord as the good shepherd.[43] Humbert writes:

The Lord speaking through Ezekiel to the evil shepherds and complaining loudly about them says: "my flocks have been given over to pillage" and this pertains to the first matter; "you did not bring back the lost" and this pertains to the second matter; and "you did not heal the sick" and this pertains to the third. Contrarily, about the one who is the good shepherd, the Lord says in the same place: "The fat and strong I will protect,"[44] namely, from the wolf, and this pertains to the first; and again, "The lost I will bring back," and this pertains to the second. Again, "the weak I will strengthen," and this pertains to the third. Therefore, it is clear from the aforesaid, that it pertains to the supreme pastor to apply the remedies against the enemies of the Church on the outside, and against the internal dispersion so as to reunite the Church, and against the infirmities of vices which proliferate in clinging to the sheep.[45]

Here Humbert shows the two ways open to Gregory, following the Lord's command to be a good shepherd or being like the evil shepherds.

In his model for preaching on the Church's solemn deposition of secular magnates, Humbert gives an *a fortiori* argument about how a king may be deposed by a pope. His premise concerns the deposition of a pope. He writes, "The pope, who is over all, can be deposed on occasion by the Church, whose totality subsists in him. Therefore, how much more strongly can any king be deposed by a pope under whom

---

[43] Ezek 34:16 in *Extr.* 1.3 (Mansi, ed., 24:110).

[44] Humbert understands this verse as referring to protection, as indicated by the context "from the wolf," rather than a condemnation from the Lord as shepherd, "But the fat and strong I will destroy."

[45] "Hinc est, quod Dominus per Ezechielem loquens malis pastoribus, et de illis conquerens, dicit: Facti sunt greges mei in rapinam, et hoc quoad primum: et iterum, Quod abjectum est non reduxistis, et hoc quoad secundum: et iterum, Quod aegrotum non sanastis, et hoc quoad tertium. Econtrario vero de se, qui est bonus pastor, dicit ibidem: Quod pingue et forte custodiam, scilicet a lupis, et hoc quoad primum: et iterum Quod abjectum fuerat reducam et hoc quoad secundum: et iterum, Quod infirmum fuerat consolidabo, et hoc quoad tertium. Patet ergo ex praedictis, quod ad summum pastorem pertinet apponere remedia contra hostes Ecclesiae forinsecos, et contra dispersionem intrinsecam readunandam, et contra vitiorum infirmitates quae abundant in ovibus sibi adhaerentibus" (*Opus tri.* 1.3 [Brown, ed., 186]).

are all people."[46] This phenomenon of the pope having the Church within him, and yet being subject to the Church in a particular judicial case, can be seen within the theory of the king's "two bodies."[47] One body is private, physical, susceptible to error, and under the law; the other is public, immortal, inerrant, and above the law. Papal theory can be seen, in part, within that medieval political theology, and Humbert's writing displays this common tension.[48]

In his study on the papacy in medieval sermons, Jacques Guy Bougerol misleadingly gives a unique place to Humbert: "If one finds in the sermons of Innocent III certain formulas that became standard, no one after him, except Humbert of Romans, would dare to say what we read in the sermon for his consecration."[49] Bougerol quotes from Innocent's consecration sermon about the necessity of the pope's having faith, lest he be judged by the Church: "For the one who does not believe, is already judged."[50] He then gives a more explicit statement from

---

[46] "Praeterea, Papa, qui est super omnes potest deponi ab Ecclesia, quae tota subest, super omnes potest deponi ab Ecclesia, quae tota subest, ei, in casu, ergo multo forties quicumque Rex deponi potest a Papa cui omnes subsunt." Taken from *De eruditione predicatorum*, Book 2, sermon model 70. The printer's pagination is faulty in the edition I am consulting. The quotation appears on p. 550, but that follows p. 559. The page's signature is ZZ 5 verso, with quotation found in column A, section C. See *Maxima bibliotheca veterum patrum et antiquorum scriptorum ecclesiasticorum*, vol. 25. Cf. Jacques Guy Bougerol, O.F.M., "La papauté dans les sermons médiévaux français et italiens," in Ryan, ed., *Religious Roles of the Papacy*, 247-75, at 254 n. 25.

[47] See Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957 [repr. 1981]).

[48] For Kantorowicz on the *corpus ecclesiae mysticum*, with the basis of theologies of Christ's body in the Eucharist and in the Church, see *The King's Two Bodies*, 194-206. Kenneth Pennington takes Kantorowicz's thesis to begin his magisterial consideration of the papal monarchy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. See Pennington, *Pope and Bishops*, 1. Pennington summarizes the perspectives of the canonists of the period on the papacy: "On the one hand, they placed the pope firmly at the apex of Christian society. . . . No one but God could judge him in most matters, and no one could question his judgments, except in matters of faith. On the other hand, the canonists stopped short of granting the pope unbridled authority" (190).

[49] Bougerol, "La papauté dans les sermons médiévaux français et italiens," 271.

[50] Bougerol (ibid., 271 n. 85) cites Innocent III, *Serm. 2 in consecr. Pont.* (PL 217:656): "In tantum enim fides mihi necessaria est, ut cum de caeteris peccatis solum

an anniversary sermon, in which Innocent says that on account of spiritual fornication (i.e., doctrinal infidelity) the Roman church can dismiss the Roman pontiff.[51] Innocent did not think that God would ever abandon the pope, given Jesus' prayer, "I have prayed for you, Peter" (Luke 22:32).[52] But the question of a pope who falls into heresy was a lively canonical question. Some decades before Innocent, Gratian's *Decretum* says that a pope is to be judged by no one, *except* if he be found deviating from the faith (*Dist*. 40, c. 6).[53] Humbert repeats what is commonly said by canonists. In the *Opus*, he certainly does not threaten a deposition against Gregory X, whom he wants to support and motivate. Thomas, by contrast, never entertains the possibility of a heretical pope, nor suggests that a pope may be deposed. But this does not mean that Thomas is silent on limitations to papal power. He speaks, at times, of what the pope cannot do. For example, Thomas writes: "The pope cannot make a professed religious to be not a religious, although certain canonists ignorantly say the contrary."[54]

After his general introduction in the *Opus*, Humbert dedicates the remaining of the *Prima pars* to the crusade. He

---

peccatum quod in fide committitur possem ab Ecclesia iudicari. Nam qui non credit, iam iudicatus est."

[51] Bougerol ("La papauté dans les sermons médiévaux français et italiens," 271 n. 86) cites Innocent III, *In consecr. Pont. Max.* (*PL* 217:664D-665A): "Propter causam vero fornicationis Ecclesia Romana posset dimittere Romanum pontificem. Fornicationem non dico carnalem, sed spiritualem: quia non est carnale, sed spirituale coniugium, id est, proper infidelitatis errorem."

[52] Bougerol ("La papauté dans les sermons médiévaux français et italiens," 271 n. 87) cites Innocent III, *Serm. 4 in consecr. Pont.* (*PL* 217:670A-671A).

[53] Cf. Brian Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory: The Contributions of the Medieval Canonists from Gratian to the Great Schism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955 [repr. 1968]), 56-67; and Christian D. Washburn, "Three Sixteenth-Century Thomist Solutions to the Problem of a Heretical Pope: Cajetan, Cano, and Bellarmine," *The Thomist* 83 (2019): 547-88, esp. 548-52. Like the 1917 Code of Canon Law, the 1983 Code of Canon Law retains the principle that the first see is judged by no one and does not mention the exceptional case of a pope deviating from the faith (can. 1404).

[54] *STh* II-II, q. 88, a. 11: "Papa non potest facere quod ille qui est professus religionem non sit religiosus, licet quidam juristiae ignoranter contrarium dicant." Cf. Rocca, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Papal Authority," 480-81.

speaks of the crusade primarily as a war between the Church and her enemies, just as Israel was harassed by seven races of enemies in the Old Testament. For Humbert, the Saracens are the only enemies of the Church of his time. The previous six—the Jews, the idolaters, the philosophers, the heretics, emperors, and barbarians—no longer pose a threat. Only the *pessimi Saraceni* remain. He describes Mohammed as "their seducer who gave them the law especially to destroy Christianity. For he said that he was the Prophet from God to expound and correct the law of Christians and the law of Jews."[55]

After many lengthy arguments, Humbert dedicates chapters 22 to 24 to the pope's role in the crusade. He says that there is no greater task in the Church than the task of the faith (*negotium fidei*). He then quotes Christ's words to Peter, "that your faith may not fail" (Luke 22:32), a text of great importance for medieval articulations of the Church's indefectibility. Humbert will maintain (in the second part) that those gospel words pertain to the pope when it comes to healing the schism. Here, he applies this passage to the crusade:

The Church's task against the Saracens is the greatest task of the faith, because the Saracens intend to drive the worship of the Christian faith out of the world. Therefore, since formerly many councils and great gatherings occurred to declare one or a few articles of faith, how much more important for the supreme pontiff to do this and other things for this task, which is not of one or of a few articles of the faith, but of the entire Christian faith?[56]

---

[55] "seductor eorum Mahumetus dedit legem specialiter ad destruendam Christianitatem. Dixit enim quod missus erat Propheta a Deo ad expondendum et corrigendum legem Christianorum et legem Judaeorum" (*Opus tri*. 1.4 [Brown, ed., 187]).

[56] "Negotium autem quod habet Ecclesia contra Saracenos est maximum fidei negotium: quia Saraceni cultum fidei Christianae intendunt fugare de mundo. Cum ergo olim concilia multa et magna congregata fuerint pro uno, vel etiam paucis fidei articulis declarandis: quanto magis summus Pontifex haec et alia debet facere pro hoc negotio, quod non est unius vel paucorum articulorum, sed totius fidei Christianae?" (*Opus tri*. 1.22 [Brown, ed., 202]). In Brown's edition, an editor writes various marginalia that give his opinion. Alongside this passage, he writes, "ridicule maxime" (extremely ridiculous).

While scholars have mined this and other texts of Humbert for arguments in favor of the crusades, as well as evidence of resistance to the movement in the West, our present point is that Humbert sets this as the priority of the pope. Indeed, it fits Gregory X's agenda for his papacy and what Lyons II would decree. For Gregory, the crusade was certainly the most important reason for the council. He dedicated his pontificate to it, memorably captured by his application of the psalm verse "If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand wither" (Ps 135:7).[57] Roberg rightly sums up Gregory's council as fundamentally a crusade council—not even a real first attempt at healing the division between New and Old Rome.[58] By comparison, Thomas speaks comparatively little of the crusade, yet he does make it a matter of faith in the *Secunda secundae* (*STh* II-II, q. 10, a. 8).[59] Even though Thomas does not think that one may force another to believe, he says that Christ's faithful often wage war against infidels in order to prevent them from hindering the faith of Christ.[60]

Palmer Throop finds that Gregory X, "it seems, followed the excellent advice offered by Humbert of Romans" about a crusade, in various respects.[61] For example, Gregory arrived seven months early in Lyons and asked in a letter for all archbishops, each with a suffragan, to meet him *before* the council. Throop notes: "They were asked to bring their counsel

---

[57] For the story of this psalm verse guiding Gregory's pontificate, see Baldwin, *Pope Gregory X and the Crusades*, 39.

[58] Roberg, *Das zweite Konzil von Lyons*, 3.

[59] For Thomas's development of a theology of indulgences in the context of the crusades, see Romanus Cessario, O.P., "St. Thomas Aquinas on Satisfaction, Indulgences, and Crusades," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 2 (1992): 74-96.

[60] See *STh* II-II q. 10, a. 8. After mentioning popular beliefs of the thirteenth century, including taking up arms in a crusade against Muslims, David Burrell writes, "Aquinas may have shared these sentiments, for all we know." See David B. Burrell, C.S.C., "Thomas Aquinas and Islam," *Modern Theology* 20 (2004): 71-89, at 71. We know that Thomas shared the sentiments—although certainly not to the extent of many others, including Humbert of Romans, a leader in crusader propaganda at the time. For Thomas's treatment of (mostly) Muslim objections to the Catholic faith, see his *De rationibus fidei contra saracenos, graecos, et armenos ad cantorem antiochenum*.

[61] Throop, *Criticism of the Crusade*, 214.

'especially for means of aiding the Holy Land'. The healing of the Greek schism and the reform of the clergy, the two other questions to be considered, were not mentioned."[62] Even though the *Secunda pars* of the *Opus* may have greater interest to theologians today, the *Prima pars* deals with Gregory's greatest priority.

II. THE PAPACY IN THE *SECUNDA PARS* OF THE *OPUS TRIPARTITUM*

Humbert dedicates the *Secunda pars* of his treatise to dealing with the schism of the Greeks. He divides this part into nineteen chapters and fills the first nine chapters with arguments concerning the Church's unity, subdivided into three topics of three chapters each. In Scholastic fashion, the first chapter of each topic proposes an argument; the second offers objections; the third responds to the objections. The text provides us with a fascinating window onto a theory of medieval Christian unity that has not been sufficiently studied. It can be studied in comparison with Thomas, whose doctrinal approach does not take into account the multifaceted dimensions identified by Humbert as necessary for Christian unity.[63] The omissions and changes of the *Extractiones*, on the other hand, provide at times a provocative counterpoint to Humbert's work.

Humbert begins with an explanation of the necessity of building a treatment of the schism on the basis of the Church's unity: "In order to understand more fully these things that are useful to know concerning the schism of the Greeks, it must

---

[62] Ibid., 215, noting *Registres de Grégoire X*, App. I, no. 662, p. 292.

[63] For example, Brett calls chapters 1-9 "a rather traditional *apologia* for papal supremacy" and a "rather stereotyped but nonetheless vital case for papal supremacy." See his *Humbert of Romans*, 187. Holstein's study is unreliable as he bases his *Opus* work on the *Extractiones*. See Hans Wolter, S.J., and Henri Holstein, S.J., *Lyon I et Lyon II*, Histoire des conciles oecuméniques 7 (Paris: Éditions de l'orante, 1966), 151-58. From her perspective of Byzantine history, Joan Hussey does note that Humbert discussed "the practical and historical as well as the dogmatic reasons for this [papal] primacy which was unusual as the Latins usually kept to the argument from apostolicity and Christ's commission to St. Peter" (*The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986], 234).

first be noted that the Church of Christ both is and must be only one."[64] He immediately supports his assertion with five authorities. The first is Scripture, as Humbert wants his argument to be grounded in biblical authority. He calls upon the Old Testament and the New Testament for their support in Song of Songs 6:8, "One is my dove, my perfect one," and the singularity of Church in Matthew 16:18, "Upon this rock I will build my Church." Second, he cites the authority of the holy commentators of Scripture. For this, he gives Augustine's comment on 2 Corinthians 11:2—"I have promised you to one man, as a chaste virgin presented to Christ"—that all are one virgin, meaning that all are the singular, virginal Church. Humbert evokes the Nicene Creed for his next authority, but quotes it as saying "I believe in one holy Church."[65] His fourth authority is "through reason," namely, from monogamous relationships. Since Christ is husband of the Church, it would be utterly inappropriate for him to be bigamous or trigamous in having as many wives as Churches. Therefore, according to this tradition that Humbert follows, every bishop has only one Church, for Paul calls a bishop in 1 Timothy 3:2, "a husband of one wife." For the fifth reason, Humbert compares the unity of Jews with the still greater unity needed among Christians.

Humbert dedicates the next two chapters to objections to the oneness of the Church and responses to those objections, which can here be noted together. The objections are largely based on three points: Scripture, such as Psalms 25 and 88 and Revelation 1:4; the common usage of speaking of Churches in the plural (e.g., the French and English Churches); and

---

[64] "Ad intelligendam plenius de eis quae scire expedit circa schisma Graecorum, notandum est primo, quod Ecclesia Christi et est, et esse debet unica" (*Opus tri.* 2.1 [Brown, ed., 207]).

[65] The *Extractiones* offer another formulation, not specifically citing the Nicene Creed, but closer to it than is Humbert's text: "Item in symbolo fidei: *Unam sanctam ecclesiam catholicam*" (*Extr.* 2.1 [Mansi, ed., 24:120]). Fluidity in the understanding of creedal descriptions of the Church in the thirteenth century is an interesting topic. See, for another example, Thomas's *Collationes in symbolum apostolorum*. Thomas comments on the Apostles' Creed, but identifies the four *conditiones* as one, holy, catholic, and strong (*fortis*) or firm (*firma*).

historical development, differentiating the primitive Church from the modern Church. He concludes the objections by referring to the claim that if the people are many, there is not only one person. In response, he draws a distinction, allowing for both diversity and unity but with a stronger emphasis on oneness. He says that the Church is "many in the particular, but only one in the universal."[66] He then shows that all correct uses of the word "Church" in the plural denote the particular, which does not deny that the universal Church is one. Humbert develops here a mereological view of the Church; he differentiates between wholes and parts, offering the examples of a human being and a number. No part of a human being is a human being, but the parts of numbers are also numbers. Humbert writes, "Just as twelve is a number, so its many parts are also numbers. The Church is likewise such a case. For there are many parts in the universal Church, of which any one is a Church."[67] Humbert's explicit preference for the number model rather than the human model for the Church will be balanced later by the anthropological imagery of head and body.

Thomas differs somewhat from Humbert in his explanation of the Church's unity. In his *Collationes in symbolum apostolorum*,[68] Thomas compares the Church to one human, who has one body and one soul, and says that the Catholic Church too has one body and different members. His point here is not about headship.[69] Rather, he links this article with the previous article in the Creed by stating that the Holy Spirit vivifies this body. Therefore, the first unity emphasized is an anthropological unity that gives priority to the Holy Spirit who

---

[66] "plures in particulari, sed unica in universali" (*Opus tri.* 2.3 [Brown, ed., 208]).

[67] "Sicut enim duodenarius, est numerus, ita multae partes eius sunt numerus, et tale quid est Ecclesia. In Ecclesia enim universali sunt multae partes, quarum quaelibet est Ecclesia" (*Opus tri.* 2.3 [Brown, ed., 209]).

[68] Text and English translation found in Nicholas Ayo, C.S.C., *The Sermon-Conferences of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Apostles' Creed* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).

[69] Indeed, Thomas speaks of Peter's unique role under the fourth *conditio*, but he calls Peter the *uertex Ecclesiae*, not *caput Ecclesiae*. Interestingly, Thomas speaks of Peter's Church in this description, but does not explicitly mention the pope.

gives life, like the one soul of the one body. When studying the first *conditio* of the Church, unity, he, like Humbert, draws upon Song of Songs 6:8. It must be said that the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity dominate Thomas's presentation here. But before labeling his treatment as an exclusively "spiritual ecclesiology," one must realize that he draws out organizational/visible consequences.[70] For example, under the virtue of faith, Thomas says, "Moreover, note that no one ought to contemn being thrown out of this Church, because this is the only Church in which people are saved, just as no one could be saved outside the ark of Noah."[71]

Returning to Humbert's *Opus*, we find that chapters 4-6 offer arguments concerning how the universal Church must have one man as the supreme pontiff. This will prepare the way for the discussion of chapters 7-9, which says that the supreme pontiff is the Roman pontiff. Only the most pertinent arguments will be analyzed here.

Humbert quotes Romans 12:5 about how all are members as one body in Christ, and draws a conclusion about headship. Only something monstrous has more than one head.[72] Therefore, the universal Church must have one supreme pontiff, just as particular Churches of dioceses have single bishops, and bishops must be under one archbishop, and many archbishops are under a patriarch. Humbert concludes,

---

[70] Congar emphasizes that Thomas's originality in teachings on the Church is to have recognized not only union with God over all the visible means but also the community of the society, for the two are joined as sacrament and its spiritual fruit. See Yves Congar, O.P., "Orientations de Bonaventure et surtout de Thomas d'Aquin dans leur vision de l'Église et celle de l'État," in *1274: Année charnière mutations et continuités*, 691-711 at 703.

[71] "Nota autem quod nullus debet contemnere abici ab ista Ecclesia, quia non est nisi una Ecclesia in qua homines saluantur, sicut nec extra arcam Noe nullus potuit saluari" (*Sermon-Conferences*, 126; my translation).

[72] Cf. Lateran IV, can. 9. See Norman Tanner, S.J., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1: Nicaea I–Lateran V (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 239. For discussion of this canon about the unity of each local Church, and of only one bishop in a city, while considering a diversity of rites celebrated in that locality, see Condorelli, *Unum corpus, diversa capita*, esp. 7-45.

"Therefore, by the same reason all patriarchs must be under one supreme man who is the only holy pope over the others."[73]

Humbert considers the objections concerning angels and the Church triumphant. Although it is true that the celestial hierarchies do not have a single head other than God, the Church militant is different. Those who are still in the army have need of a leader. When they are victorious, they will not need one. Similarly, prelates are given because of the infirmity of the flock, so as to drive people from evil and lead them to the good.

Some of the most interesting objections concern Peter. Paul held an apostolic office directly from God, and he was not under Peter. Why cannot a patriarch similarly not be under the successor of Peter? Apostles did many things without referring to the authority of Peter. It seems that their successors should be heads by themselves, like their predecessors, and not have recourse to Peter's successor. Moreover, the keys of the kingdom given to Peter concerned binding and loosing, a power given to all the apostles in John 20:23.

Humbert answers these objections with historical argumentation (which is simply absent from Thomas) on the powers of the papacy. He reasons on the basis of what could be called the development of doctrine. While Thomas does have an understanding of development in the *explicatio fidei*, he does not apply this to the increasing authority of the pope in history as Humbert does.[74] Humbert first recognizes a special character for the time of the apostles themselves. Christ and the Holy Spirit sent them, a notable emphasis on the two Trinitarian

---

[73] "ergo eadem ratione omnes patriarchae debent subesse uni summo super se s[anctae] papae unico" (*Opus tri.* 2.4 [Brown, ed., 209]).

[74] Cf. appendix 9, "Doctrinal Development," in *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 1: 1a 1, ed. Thomas Gilby, O.P. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 102-23. For a sense of Thomas's attention to history that is broader and deeper than many suppose, see Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., "Saint Thomas et l'histoire: État de la question et pistes de recherches," *Revue thomiste* 105 (2005): 355-409. Matthew Ramage's translation of this article will appear in a volume of Torrell's essays forthcoming from The Catholic University of America Press. Torrell's study of Thomas does not mention the historical growth of the papacy.

persons sent who now send the apostles. Moreover, the Spirit was sent to them for many purposes and it was by his authority that they spoke and worked. Humbert continues:

Then, it was not necessary that they have recourse to Peter, nor was this possible at that time, because of the places in which they were dispersed, the distances, and the necessity of urgently preaching and converting the world. And so it was also for their successors by the authority of the Church in a later time, until it was the time by that same authority and by the ordination of the Holy Spirit that subjection and obedience to the successor of Peter was ordained in this way—just as the form of many sacraments and confession must be performed in the modern way, and many other things which were not given from the beginning, but afterwards it is believed to have been ordained through the Holy Spirit and through the Fathers.[75]

This passage should be read in tandem with Humbert's final statement rebutting arguments against the one head who succeeds Peter. After the apostles, Humbert writes,

through the councils and the common ordaining of the Church, and with the authority of the Holy Spirit (as it is believed), it was ordained that the universal power over the entire Church should rest on the successor of Peter, with the strongest reasons and greatest benefit for souls, and with the Christian faith requiring this.[76]

---

[75] "Unde non oportebat quod recurrerent ad Petrum: nec etiam erat hoc possibile tunc temporis, propter locorum in quibus erant dispersi, distantias, et necessitatem instandi praedicationi et conversioni mundi. Et sic etiam fuit in eorum successoribus authoritate Ecclesiae tempore aliquanto, quousque fuit tempus quod authoritate eadem, et Spiritus Sancti ordinatione ordinaretur de huiusmodi subjectione et obedientia ad successorem Petri, sicut et de forma multorum sacramentorum et confessione modo moderno facienda, et aliis multis non fuit a principio traditum, quod post per Spiritum Sanctum per partes creditur ordinatum" (*Opus tri*. 2.6 [Brown, ed., 211]).

[76] "postquam per concilia et per ordinationem communem Ecclesiae, et authoritate Spiritus Sancti (ut creditur) ordinatum est, quod apud Petri sucessorem resideat universalis potestas super totam Ecclesiam rationibus fortissimis, et utilitate animarum maxima, et fide Christiana, hoc exigentibus" (ibid.). One should note how Humbert repeatedly refers to the Holy Spirit in his argumentation about the development of the practice of papal authority. Thomas emphasizes the Holy Spirit more for the pope's role in the Church's life of grace, the sacraments, and faith. For one study on Thomas, see John Mahoney, S.J. "'The Church of the Holy Spirit' in Aquinas," *Heythrop Journal* 15 (1974): 18-36.

This reply to the objections concerning Peter is reduced in the *Extractiones* to read: "the apostles and their immediate successors did many things by a special privilege which would not be licit now for others."[77] Claude Carozzi, who lists the historical accounts that Humbert cites in two works other than the *Opus tripartitum*, finds that none of them would give Humbert the idea of institutional development, which we see here in the *Opus*. For Carozzi, this emphasis on development is the most original aspect of Humbert's conception of history.[78]

For another point of contrast, we can consider how Thomas treats in the *Summa contra gentiles* of "the episcopal power and that therein one is the highest."[79] He locates this discussion within a treatment of the sacraments, and how the episcopal power offers the chief direction of the faithful. Now just as a specific congregation of one Church is headed by one bishop, "so in the entire Christian people it is required that there be one head of the whole Church."[80] Humbert, as we have seen, gives other comparisons between that of bishop/local Church and pope/universal Church, namely, archbishop/bishops and patriarch/archbishops. Since these two intermediate examples demonstrate very different canonical and theological sets of relationships, one should not presume that Thomas, Humbert's contemporary, intends to make the universal Church a diocese of the bishop of Rome. In fact, Thomas does something similar to Humbert when, in introducing chapter 26 of his *Contra errores graecorum*, he says, "Also it is clear that he [the Roman

---

[77] "multa fecerunt apostoli et immediati successores de privilegio speciali, quae modo aliis non licerent" (*Extr.* 2.6 [Mansi, ed., 24:123]).

[78] Carozzi, "Humbert de Romans et l'histoire," 859. Carozzi lists from Humbert's *De praedicatione crucis*: Cassiodorus, *Historia tripartita*; Bede, *Historia anglorum*; Gregory of Tours, *Historia francorum*, *De speculo ecclesiae augustini* (?); Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, *Gesta caroli in hispania*, and *Historia antiochena*; Jacques de Vitry, *Historia transmarina*, *Liber Calisti papae*, *Vitae patrum*, and legends of saints. Humbert, in his preface to Gerard de Frachet's *Vitae fratrum*, mentions Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*; the *Book of Barlaam and Josaphat*, attributed to John Damascene; Cassian, *Conferences*; Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*; and martyrologies.

[79] *ScG* IV, c. 76.

[80] "ita in toto populo Christiano requiritur quod unus sit totius Ecclesiae caput" (ibid.).

pontiff] is the prelate for other patriarchs."[81] Thomas is ada-
mant about the unity needed in the Church for matters of faith.
In the *Summa theologiae* (*STh* II-II, q. 1, a. 10), the pope is
named as the one who has authority to draw up a symbol of the
faith; in the *Summa contra gentiles* (*ScG* IV, c. 76), Thomas
states that a diversity of pronouncements on faith would divide
the Church. Therefore, one must be at the head of the Church
to pronounce in matters of faith.

Thomas also gives a number of other reasons for the
primacy. For example, government by one is the best form of
government. Also, since the Church triumphant is the exemplar
of the Church militant, the Church on earth must have one
leader, for the Church triumphant has God as its one leader.
Likewise, the gospel continues the prophecy of Hosea 1:11 in
the words, "There shall be one fold and one shepherd" (John
10:16). Thomas counters the argument that Christ himself is
sufficient for the unity of headship by first considering the
sacramental theology of ministry. Christ perfects all the
sacraments, as he is the true priest, but he also chooses ministers
to dispense the sacraments to the faithful. Similarly, Christ
chose Peter to serve in his place on earth, and that power flows
to others in the Church. In fact, Thomas and Humbert both
interpret Matthew 28:20 to be a promise for the continuous
succession of ministerial power in the Church: "Behold I am
with you all days even to the consummation of the world."

Turning back to Humbert, we see that chapters 7-9 give
arguments, objections, and replies concerning whether the
supreme pontiff must be the Roman pontiff. Not surprisingly,
Humbert refers back to Peter again. He adduces a number of
scriptural texts, including John 1:42, Matthew 16:18-19, John
21:17, and Luke 22:32. Humbert's connection with Thomas's
unusual interpretation of Luke 22:32 should be noted. Ulrich
Horst comments:

---

[81] "Patet etiam quod ipse aliis patriarchis praelatus existat" (*Contra Graec.* II, c. 37).
Thomas continues with quotations that he believes are from Cyril and Chrysostom,
besides Luke 22:32.

Thomas takes Christ's prayer (Luke 22:32) to have been directed at Peter, and thereby diverges sharply from the interpretation that influential canonists had given the passage. Huguccio [the most important late twelfth-century canonist], for example, said that Christ had prayed for Peter *in figura ecclesiae*. More commonly, this had been interpreted as a prayer addressed through Peter to all Christ's followers for final perseverance in the faith.[82]

Humbert, who is writing about Peter in order to consider the pope's authority, says "it is noted [in Christ's prayer for Peter] that it was proper to him [Peter] to care for the universal faith, since it is said, *your* [faith]."[83]

In these chapters, Humbert also refers to Peter's first position in the lists of the apostles and his special role in Acts, such as at the election of Matthias (Acts 1:15-22) and in making speeches including the first at the council in Jerusalem. However, Humbert goes significantly beyond these Petrine arguments for the Roman pontiff's headship in the Church. He provides arguments drawn from geography, relations with the emperor, conciliar acts, the martyrdoms of early popes, the lack of any comparable claim by another see, and the good of the Church. The following analyzes a few important points concerning the pope as head.

Humbert writes,

Many necessities require that recourse to the supreme pontiff from all Christendom be frequently sought. Therefore it is beneficial for him to be in such a place to which recourse can be easily sought both from the East, where for some time there was the greatest concentration of Christians, and from the West.[84]

He observes, "It is not, moreover, just any ordinary place, but a common and more accessible place from all others, as is evident

---

[82] Horst, *Dominicans and the Pope*, 20.

[83] "In quo notatur, quod ipsius erat proprie curare de fide universali, dum dicitur, tua" (*Opus tri.* 2.7 [Brown, ed., 211]).

[84] "Iterum necessitates multae requirunt, quod ab omni Christianitate frequenter recurratur ad summum pontificem: et ideo expedit eum esse in tali loco, ad quem facilius recurri possit tam ab Orientalibus, apud quos fuit aliquando maxima Christianitas, quam ab Occidentalibus" (ibid.).

through a map of the world."[85] Humbert was not above finding a providential reason in geography even for the location of Rome.

Perhaps the most provocative argument for the headship of the pope comes when Humbert discusses the pope's relationship with the emperor. Humbert thinks it beneficial that the spiritual lord of the whole should be where the temporal lord of the world is, so that by cooperation the world is more beneficially governed. This is a strange statement given the conflict of interest between the spiritual and temporal rulers before the peace of Constantine, as well as Constantine's move of the imperial capital to Constantinople. The infamous forgery known as Constantine's Donation cites his move of the capital to the East to coincide with his gift to Pope Sylvester and his successors. Humbert states: "Thus Constantine highly raised the Roman Church and ordained that all Churches should be under the Roman Church."[86] The *Extractiones* modify this by stating: "Constantine, at God's nod, ordained that all Churches should be under the Roman Church; just as David ordained that all priests should be under the high priest."[87] Gregory X writes more guardedly considering the political implications of Constantine's Donation.[88] Neither Humbert's nor Gregory's formulation is identical with the thought of Innocent IV, who died in 1254, which was repeated by many papal theorists. They interpreted the Donation of Constantine not as a donation, but as a restitution of what the papacy had previously by right.[89] In

---

[85] "Non est autem aliquis locus solennis, magis ad hoc communis et magis accessibilis ab omnibus istis, sicut patet per mappam mundi" (ibid.).

[86] "Unde Constantinus summe Romanam Ecclesiam sublimavit, et ordinavit quod Ecclesiae omnes subessent Ecclesiae Romanae" (*Opus tri.* 2.7 [Brown, ed., 212]).

[87] "Constantinus ordinavit Dei nutu, quod omnes ecclesiae subessent Romanae; sicut David, quod omnes sacerdotes subessent summo sacerdoti" (*Extr.* 2.7 [Mansi, ed., 24:123]).

[88] The Donation of Constantine is studied today more for its claims for papal authority in secular matters in the city of Rome, Italy, and throughout the West than for its claims for papal authority over all the Churches of the world.

[89] For abundant references, see William D. McCready, "Papal *plenitudo potestatis* and the Source of Temporal Authority in Late Medieval Papal Hierocratic Theory,"

other words, whereas Gregory X removes Humbert's emphasis on Constantine's act of highly raising the Roman Church, Innocent IV had circumvented the concern regarding imperial authority over the Roman Church by making the so-called Donation simply a return to what was originally the case.

Humbert offers a distinctive treatment of the development of the *plenitudo potestatis*.[90] He recognizes that when James made the judgment at the Jerusalem council, "the supremacy of Peter over the other apostles and his *plenitudo potestatis* over all Churches had not yet been fully ordained."[91] Moreover, when

---

Speculum 48 (1973): 654-74, at 655 n. 7. McCready credits Domenico Maffei, *La Donazione di Constantino nei giuristi medievali* (Milan: Giuffè, 1964).

[90] The meaning and use of the term *plenitudo potestatis* has a long and varied history. It was first used by Pope Leo I in reference to himself when writing to his legate Anastatius of Thessalonica, who, in contradistinction to Leo's *plenitudo potestatis*, had only "in partem . . . sollicitudinis" (Leo the Great, *Ep.* 14.1 [*PL* 54:671B]; translation in *St. Leo the Great: Letters*, trans. Edmund Hunt, C.S.C., Fathers of the Church 34 [New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1957], 58-67, at 61). For two studies on the evolution of this Leonine formulation, see Jean Rivière, "In partem sollicitudinis: Évolution d'une formule pontificale," *Revue des sciences religiouses* 5 (1925): 210-31; and Robert Benson, "Plenitudo potestatis: Evolution of a Formula from Gregory IV to Gratian," *Studia Gratiana* 14 (1967): 193-207. For the formula's appearances in the thirteenth century, see Yves Congar, "Papes et canonistes, théoriciens du pouvoir pontifical comme 'plenitudo potestatis,'" in idem, *L'Église de saint Augustin à l'époque moderne* (Paris: Cerf, 1970), 252-63; Watt, *Theory of Papal Monarchy in the Thirteenth Century*, esp. 75-79; and Pennington, *Pope and Bishops*, 13-74. See also *Plenitude of Power: The Doctrines and Exercise of Authority in the Middle Ages: Essays in Memory of Robert Louis Benson*, ed. Robert C. Figueira (New York: Routledge, 2016) reprinted from 2006 publication by Ashgate. See also the helpful analysis in Paul McPartlan, *A Service of Love: Papal Primacy, the Eucharist and Church Unity* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 29-35. It should be noted that Leo says in this same letter (*Ep.* 14.11), "For even among the blessed Apostles, alike in honor, there was a certain distinction in power (quaedam distinctio potestatis)." For an overview of Leo's pontificate, see Susan Wessel, *Leo the Great and the Spiritual Rebuilding of a Universal Rome*, Vigiliae Christianae Supplements (Leiden: Brill, 2008). For Wessel's summary of Leo's relationship with Constantinople, see Susan Wessel, "Religious Doctrine and Ecclesiastical Change in Leo the Great," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Attila*, ed. Michael Mass (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 327-43, at 339-41.

[91] "quando Jacobus tulit sententiam supradictam, nondum erat ordinatum plene de praecellentia Petri super alios Apostolos, et de plenitudine potestatis eius super omnes

Peter moved from Antioch to Rome he carried that portion (*pars*) given to him by the Lord over the earth. "Therefore," Humbert concludes,

the one succeeding him in Antioch while Peter was still alive did not have the *plenitudo potestatis*, nor his successors. By in fact dying in Rome, Peter did not bear in another age the power over the earth given to him alone, and so it has successively remained in his successors for the benefit of the whole world.[92]

Furthermore, Humbert expounds upon Peter's succession in describing the difference between spiritual and bodily succession. Whereas bodily succession from a certain predecessor diminishes from generation to generation, spiritual succession does not suffer such diminishment, because it is from divine ordering:

Therefore the spiritual successor, as long as he has the power, has it from God and not from a human, unlike bodily succession. Since by the same reason of the spiritual successor having the same power as was in his predecessor for the benefit of the Church, so such a successor must always have that same power.[93]

Humbert's treatment of the *plenitudo potestatis* shows some important historical nuance lacking in some contemporary theological treatments, such as that of Thomas.

In the *Secunda pars*, Humbert provides a notable objection from conciliar history to the Roman pontiff being the head of

---

Ecclesias" (*Opus tri*. 2.9 [Brown, ed., 213]). The *Extractiones* read, "nondum erat determinatum de praeminentia Petri" (*Extr*. 2.9 [Mansi, ed., 24:124]).

[92] "Ad quartum dicendum est, quod quando Petrus transit de Antiochia Romam, transtulit secum illam partem quae sibi erat data a Domino super terram: et ideo succedens ei in Antiochia adhuc ipso vivente, non habuit huiusmodi plenitudinem potestatis nec successores eius. Romae vero moriens, non portavit in alio seculo huiusmodi potestatem sibi solum super terram datam: et ideo remansit in successoribus suis successive propter utilitatem totius mundi" (*Opus tri*. 2.9 [Brown, ed., 213]).

[93] "Quia ergo successor spiritualis quod habet potestatis, habet a Deo, et non ab homine, et econtrario est in successione carnali, cum fit eadem ratio habendi eandem potestatem in successore spirituali quae fuit in antecessore suo, utilitas scilicet Ecclesiae eadem, debet talis successor semper habere potestatem eandem" (ibid.).

the Church. Paraphrasing Gregory the Great without acknowledgement, Humbert says that the first four general councils were received as the four Gospels.[94] Humbert then lists them to show their Greek origins—Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon. Moreover, Humbert properly names by placement the fifth through seventh councils (Constantinople II, Constantinople III, and Nicaea II), and says that they were also held of great authority. This suggests a strong awareness of not only the first four councils, but of the first seven councils as being privileged councils of special authority—something missing even from Thomas's deeply learned account of the ancient councils.[95] But why were they held in the East? Humbert counters arguments that detract from papal authority. He says that the first councils were celebrated in the East for a number of reasons. The throne of the emperors was in the East. Most Christians were in the East where there was greater peace. Humbert even alludes to chance, and finishes with a statement that there were many other reasons. However, these councils were "never without the authority of the supreme pontiff, who always sent someone in his place, as the histories record. Thus,

[94] See Gregory I, *Registrum epistularum* 1.24 (to John of Constantinople, Eulogius of Alexandria, Gregory of Antioch, John of Jerusalem, and Anastasius, ex-patriarch of Antioch, February 591). Translated in *The Letters of Gregory the Great*, vol. 1, trans. John R. C. Martyn, Medieval Sources in Translation 40 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2004), 135-46, at 146.

[95] Humbert complains later, concerning knowledge in the Church, that the records of the ancient councils and even subsequent ones can scarcely be found (*Opus tri.* 3.10 [Brown, ed., 227]). For Thomas's remarkable use of the councils, see Martin Morard, "Thomas d'Aquin lecteur des conciles," *Archivum franciscanum historicum* 98 (2005): 211-365. Thomas has only one explicit mention of Nicaea II (787), which he rightly calls the seventh synod, but he never makes reference to that council for its primary purpose of icon veneration. See his *Quodlibet* IX, q. 7, a. 2, arg. 2 with analysis in Morard, "Thomas d'Aquin lecteur des conciles," 317. For a brilliant comparison of Aquinas and Nicaea II, see John Sehorn, "Worshiping the Incarnate God: Thomas Aquinas on *latria* and the Icon of Christ," in *Thomas Aquinas and the Greek Fathers* (Ave Maria, Fla.: Sapientia Press, 2019), 221-43. Humbert shows evidence, absent in Thomas, that the first seven have a collective significance. The Catholic Church numbers as the eighth ecumenical council the Council of Constantinople IV (869-70), which deposed Photius as Patriarch of Constantinople, but this is not recognized by the Eastern Orthodox.

this attests to the supreme authority and excellence of the Roman pontiff."[96] According to Humbert, the conciliar history points to the prerogatives of Rome. He says, "Not only Constantine, but also different councils of the fathers ordained that the Roman Church be the head of all Churches, and they issued many laws on this matter."[97]

At the beginning of chapter 10, Humbert indicates a break in his work: "Having noted these things in approaching the proper subject, it must be seen why the Greeks, rather than the Latins, are called schismatics."[98] He provides the most perceptive, sensitive, and comprehensive Latin analysis of the Greek-Latin schism in this era—especially as he demands that the pope take the initiative to heal the schism.[99] His understanding of the papacy is expressed, in part, through his awareness of the dismal state of Latin-Greek relations.

It comes as no surprise that Humbert's treatment of the Church's unity under the pope provides him with the argument

---

[96] "Nec umquam sine authoritate summi Pontificis, qui aliquem loco sui mittebat semper, ut dicunt historiae. Quod summae attestatur authoritati et excellentiae Romani Pontificis" (*Opus tri.* 2.9 [Brown, ed., 213]).

[97] "Praeterea non solum Constantinus, sed et diversa concilia patrum ordinaverunt, quod Ecclesia Romana esset caput omnium Ecclesiarum, et jura multa super hoc emanaverunt" (*Opus tri.* 2.7 [Brown, ed., 212]). The *Extractiones* simply state, "De hac etiam subjectione extant multa concilia patrum" (*Extr.* 2.7 [Mansi, ed., 24:123]).

[98] "His praenotatis, ad materiam propriam accedendo, videndum est, quare Graeci, dicuntur schismatici potius quam Latini" (*Opus tri.* 2.10 [Brown, ed., 214]).

[99] Congar notes the similarity between Humbert's analysis of how and when the schism occurred and the views of many twentieth-century scholars (Yves Congar, O.P., *After Nine Hundred Years* [New York: Fordham University Press, 1959], 93 n. 1). Roberg writes that Humbert put the problem of the schism on a new foundation and his call that the papacy should take the initiative is a sign of a new perspective on the schism (Roberg, *Das zweite Konzil von Lyon*, 119). See a similar attitude by renowned Yale historian Deno Geanakoplos, *Byzantine East and Latin West: Two Worlds of Christendom in Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), 3. Also, see Charles Mark Elliott, "The Schism and Its Elimination in Humbert of Roman's [*sic*] *Opusculum tripartitum*," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 34 (1989): 71-83. Elliott summarizes that Humbert's "comments on the schism, and his proposals to end it, are particularly unique when one considers the manner in which they are presented. The acute sensitivity he displays toward the negative effects of the Latin occupation and previous East/West relations is quite rare for his time, as has been often noted" (ibid., 83).

that the Greeks, rather than the Latins, are schismatic. Taking his definition from Isidore, that a schism is named from a splitting, Humbert finds that the Greeks are guilty of this in three ways:[100] they are disruptive; they rebel against their head; and they wish to create another as their own head, their patriarch. This definition differs from Thomas's classic treatment of the meaning of schism by adding this third aspect of creating another head.[101] Humbert notes the Greek argument that schismatics are those who separate themselves from the ancient ways of the Church. He finds that this is not sufficient. If it were, then all Christians would be called schismatics, because they removed many observances of the Jews and Gentiles. Yes, the Greeks are fathers to the Latins in giving many goods to them of old, but the Greeks should not be considered fathers of the prelates. Humbert sets down a principle that could very well be read in terms of subsequent debates concerning magisterium and tradition (between present Church authority and the Church authority of the past): It is departure from obedience to a prelate that makes a schismatic, not departure from the one conferring a gift. Humbert himself then clearly labels the Greeks "schismatics," but refuses to call them "heretics." Thomas does the same. The *Extractiones*, however, which usually abridge with modifications, have this significant addition very unlike Humbert's authentic voice:

A seventh argument may be added in that the Greeks, who were once schismatics, have gradually fallen through the successive ages into different errors and heresies to which they obstinately cling. And so in modern times they must not only be considered schismatics, but also manifest heretics. They are nurtured and stained very greatly in these errors and heresies by them whom they call their "calogeri" [monks: from the Greek meaning "good old

---

[100] Isidore of Seville, s.v. "De haeresi et schismate," *Etymologiae* 8.3 in *Isidori hispalensis episcopi Etymologarum sive originum libri XX*, ed. W. M. Lindsay, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 1:306-7; translated in *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, translated, with introduction and notes, by Stephen A. Barney, et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 174.

[101] Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 39, a. 1, which falls within Thomas's treatment of the consequences of charity.

men"]. Moreover, the aforesaid errors have been noted and collected elsewhere.[102]

Humbert expounds upon the schism later in a way that continues to shed light on his understanding of the pope and the Roman Church. For example, he writes that schismatics who enter the ecclesiastical dignities are thieves and robbers, because "they do not enter through the gate, i.e. through the ordination of the Roman church."[103] Here, we see an emphasis on the necessity of Rome for proper access to clerical offices, as

---

[102] *Extr.* 2.11 (Mansi, ed., 24:126): "Septima potest addi quia Graeci quondam schismatici, successivis temporibus paulatim prolapsi sunt in diversos errores et haereses, quibus pertinaciter inhearent. Itaque modernis temporibus non tantum schismatici sunt censendi, sed etiam haeretici manifesti: in quibus erroribus et haeresibus nutriuntur et imbuuntur maxime per illos, quos vocant suos calogeros. Praedicti autem errores alibi notati sunt et collecti." Humbert says that the Greeks can be compared to heretics in *Opus tri.* 2.11, and that they might become heretics in *Opus tri.* 2.13—because they are, in fact, not heretics but Christians just as the Latins are, as Humbert writes in *Opus tri.* 2.15. Scholars reliant upon the text of the *Extractiones* in Mansi fail to see this important distinction. Roberg notes that it is found only in the *Extractiones*. See Roberg, *Die Union zwischen der griechischen und der lateinischen Kirche*, 90 n. 7. But the eminent twentieth-century Jesuit historian of medieval attempts for Christian unity, Joseph Gill, thought Humbert considered the Greeks to be heretics. See his *Byzantium and the Papacy*, 1198-1400 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1979), 124. Tugwell insightfully comments that the errors and heresies collected elsewhere may be the letter to Gregory, probably in 1273, of the Franciscan Jerome of Ascoli, Gregory's envoy to Emperor Michael VIII. See Tugwell, *Humberti de Romanis Legendae Sancti Dominici*, 415, noting the edition in Roberg, *Die Union zwischen der griechischen und der lateinischen Kirche*, 229-31. My own reading agrees with Tugwell's. The first error Jerome cites is the reported Greek understanding that the pope and all Latins were automatically excommunicated for inserting the *filioque* into the creed, against the Council of Nicaea, because the pope cannot do this without the four Eastern patriarchs. After mention of the pope, Jerome continues that Greeks do not consider fornication to be a mortal sin, nor do they believe in purgatory, and they think that the souls of the holy ones and of baptized children are not in heaven until the day of judgment. After this Jerome repeats the error of the Greeks concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son, and emphasizes that they do not generally believe the ecclesiastical sacraments of the Latins have any efficacy. The sacramental differences, Jerome describes, are extensive and cover all seven sacraments, including that the Greeks do not have confirmation or extreme unction.

[103] "non intrant per ostium, scilicet per ordinationem Ecclesiae Romanae" (*Opus tri.* 2.13 [Brown, ed., 217]).

it is only the Roman church's ordination which is the door. This is reminiscent of Thomas's sacramental concern in the *Summa contra gentiles* (*ScG* IV, c. 76).

In his introduction, Humbert compares the Greek schism to the separation of the ten tribes of Israel during the time of Rehoboam. In chapter 11, he quotes Rehoboam's threat to the children of Israel: "My father beat you with whips, but I shall strike you with scorpions" (1 Kgs 12:11; 2 Chron 10:11). He situates this in terms of Latin oppression against the Greeks, including the injustices committed by the papacy. He writes, "The Roman Church exercises itself over its subjects in many ways that people often think are grave, for example, some of the exactions, the sending of legates and many nuncios, many statutes and penalties for transgressors."[104] Moreover, he refers back to these as the "oppressions of the Roman Church."[105] Rehoboam thus serves as a figure of an unjust pope. Humbert further likens the Greeks with the people of Jeroboam during Rehoboam's reign, as they too were led by their ruler in a political schism. Humbert returns to the example of the sin of the leader: "That fault was not only on the part of the people, but also on Rehoboam's part."[106] Indeed, this incident from Rehoboam's reign is Humbert's favorite biblical scene in this treatise.[107] Continuing this biblical theme, he says, "Schismatics

[104] "Item Ecclesia Romana in suis subditis multa exercet, quae homines reputant multum gravia, sicut sunt exactiones aliquae, missio legatorum et nunciorum multorum, statuta multa et poenae in transgressoribus" (*Opus tri.* 2.11 [Brown, ed., 215]). The *Extractiones* offer similar criticism in *Extr.* 2.11 (Mansi, ed., 24:125).

[105] "gravamina Ecclesiae Romanae" (*Opus tri.* 2.11 [Brown, ed., 215]).

[106] "Et ista culpa non solum fuit ex parte populi, sed etiam ex parte Roboam" (*Opus tri.* 2.14 [Brown, ed., 218]).

[107] Humbert is certainly not unique in adducing the precedent of ten tribes falling away from the house of David for the schism. Yet, it can be said that his attention to Rehoboam's blame has a special significance. As two points of contrast, consider the following from Thomas and Bonaventure. Thomas uses the Old Testament precedent of the ten tribes that left the rule of David, but does not consider the fault of Rehoboam, in *STh* II-II, q. 39, a. 2. Bonaventure mentions the story in his *Collations on the Hexaëmeron*, delivered in 1273, a year before he died at Lyons II. For Bonaventure, just as the ten tribes fell from the House of David, so did these Churches [the Greeks] fall and break away from Peter, to whom the Lord said, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom" (Matt 16:19). Bonaventure then says that they succumbed to the wolves. See

devise plans against the Roman Church so that they might turn people from loyalty to her, just as Jeroboam made idols of bull calves to turn the people from Jerusalem."[108]

Humbert knows that the Roman Church favored the "Roman emperor" against the "emperor of the Greeks" after Charlemagne's crowning (Christmas Day 800).[109] Humbert mentions conflicts in the West: "Just as today many nations readily rebel against the Church, if their king were to do this."[110] Indeed, a few lines later Humbert mentions the division between the pro-papal Guelphs and the pro-imperial Ghibellines (who quarrel simply because of the custom handed down by their ancestors). Humbert says the dispute about the Empire is greater than all other things.[111] Yet, he also gives an example of a Greek emperor who favored Rome over the claims of Constantinople's patriarch. He posits that

it is read in the chronicles that the Church of Constantinople made itself be called the first of all Churches, since the throne of the Empire was at that

---

Hex. 16.28. Again, according to this passage from Bonaventure, the Greeks saw that the Church of Rome was exalted, as was David, and they fell into the heresy of Eutyches during the time of Emperor Heraclius, whom Bonaventure reckons as the last emperor in the East.

[108] "Item schismatici adinveniunt adinventiones contra Romanam Ecclesiam, ut avertant homines ab eius devotione, sicut Jeroboam fecit vitulos, ut averteret populum ab Hierusalem" (*Opus tri.* 2.13 [Brown, ed., 218]).

[109] Alberigo notes that one of the most realistic aspects of the *Opus* concerns the Empire, as one of the major causes of the schism was the crowning of Charlemagne (*Opus tri.* 2.11; cf. *Opus tri.* 2.18). See Alberigo, "L'oecuménisme au Moyen Age," 339 n. 50.

[110] "Sicut et hodie multae nationes de facili rebellarent eidem Ecclesiae, si Rex suus hoc faceret" (*Opus tri.* 2.11 [Brown, ed., 215]).

[111] Although Humbert identifies many causes for the schism, he lays the greatest blame on disputes concerning the Empire. Placing the schism in 1054, whose excommunications Humbert never mentions, is a postmedieval historical reconstruction of what happened that year. Humbert names the *filioque* as one of several causes that disposed the Greeks to a schism. Brett's summary with its "Finally, when the Latins added to the Creed the statement concerning the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son, without obtaining the consent of the Eastern part of the Church . . ." may make the *filioque* seem more definitive for the schism than it is in Humbert's analysis. See Brett, *Humbert of Romans*, 188. For Humbert's treatment of the *filioque*, see *Opus tri.* 2.11 (Brown, ed., 215); cf. *Opus tri.* 2.18 (Brown, ed., 222).

place. But during the reign of Pope Boniface, it was ordained by Emperor Phocas that the Roman Church should be the head of all Churches."[112]

This statement is considerably nuanced in the *Extractiones*, which read: "But during the reign of Pope Boniface, it was ordained by Emperor Phocas that the Roman Church, just as it was, should also be called head of all [Churches]."[113] The ambiguity in Humbert's expression is clarified to show that the emperor simply recognized the previous authority of the Roman Church.

Chapter 12 is completely devoted to summarizing a work by the twelfth-century Pisan Leo Tuscus concerning "the causes of the schism with the pope."[114] All twelve causes from Tuscus mention the pope or the Roman Church in historical conflicts with the Greeks. Humbert gives no comparable summary of any other text within his *Opus*; here we see him as a "compilator."[115] Humbert's use of Leo Tuscus can be compared with

[112] "Unde legitur in Chronicis, quod Constantinopolitana Ecclesia faciebat se vocari primam omnium Ecclesiarum, cum apud locum illum sedes imperii. Sed per Phocam Imperatorem, procurante Bonifacio Papa, ordinatum est, quod Romana Ecclesia esset caput omnium Ecclesiarum" (*Opus tri.* 2.11 [Brown, ed., 216]).

[113] "sed per Phocam imperatorem, procurante Bonifacio Papa, ordinatum fuit, quod Romana ecclesia, sicut erat, sic et diceretur Caput omnium" (*Extr.* 2.11 [Mansi, ed., 24:125]).

[114] Leo Tuscus deserves more study for historians to have a better understanding of twelfth-century relations between Constantinople and the West. This Pisan and his brother Hugo are the subject of Antoine Dondaine, O.P., "Hughes Éthérien et Léon Toscan," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen age* 27 (1952): 67-134, which includes short edited selections of texts. Humbert's brief resume of Leo's causes for the schism is derived from the second part of Leo's *De haeresibus et praevaricationibus graecorum*, preserved in a manuscript in Seville. Dondaine edits a portion from Colombina 5.1.24, fol. 87va-88rb. Calling the summary most interesting, he comments that one would not guess its value from what was given by Humbert (117). The brothers Leo and Hugh served in the imperial court of Manuel I Komnenos. See Paul Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 90-94.

[115] Humbert commonly omits apocryphal material and more obvious points when compiling information that others may not have in their libraries. See Simon Tugwell, O.P., "Humbert of Romans, 'Compilator,'" in *Lector et compilator: Vincent de Beauvais, frère prêcheur, un intellectual et son milieu au XIIIe siècle* (Grâne, France: Editions Créaphis, 1997), 47-76, at 55.

Thomas's use of a *libellus* that purported to be quotations from Greek Fathers on matters concerning the *filioque*, papal primacy, the matter of Eucharistic bread, and purgatory.[116] While this infamous *libellus* has been proven to be mostly forgeries of theological positions, Leo Tuscus's document records historical actions with greater (albeit not complete) accuracy. It should be noted that Humbert and Thomas borrowed collections that aimed to situate their contemporary circumstances within the precedents of ancient authority. It so happens that Humbert's source has much greater worth. Moreover, given its importance for Humbert's own thinking, attention should be given to particular characteristics of the incidents concerning papal authority in its history with the East.

The twelve reasons stretch from the dispute between Flavian and Paulinus over the see of Antioch following the death of Meletius in 381 through the conflict between Pope Alexander III (1159-81) and Emperor Manuel Komnenos (1143-80), during Tuscus's own time. The infamous incident of 1054 is not mentioned among the twelve reasons. Because of space limitations, only three reasons are analyzed (briefly) here for their contribution concerning the papacy. The first is quoted in full.

Third, under Emperor Marcian, Pope Leo wrote the bishop of Constantinople, that he should cease from attacking the pontiff whom he was said to be attacking. Since this admonishment accomplished nothing, the Constantinopolitan pontiffs have not ceased from that time to contend for equality with the Roman pontiffs.[117]

While this description is rather vague, the text alludes to the controversy over the twenty-eighth canon of the Council of

---

[116] For H. F. Dondaine's preface and the critical edition of the *Contra errores graecorum*, see *Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia* 40 (Rome: Santa Sabina, 1969), A 1-105; the edition of the libellus *Liber de fide Trinitatis* follows at A 107-51.

[117] "Tertia ex hoc quod sub Martiano Imperatore scripsit Leo Papa praesuli sedis Constantinopolitanae, quod cessaret ab invasione Pontificii quod invadere dicebatur. Huiusmodi autem monitione nihil proficiente, extunc non cessaverunt Pontifices Constantinopolitani de pari contendere cum Pontificibus Romanis" (*Opus tri.* 2.12 [Brown, ed., 216]).

Chalcedon (451).[118] Pope Leo the Great was furious over this addition to the council. For example, he wrote a letter to Emperor Marcian protesting this violation of the Nicene Council's canons that safeguarded the traditional order of the sees.[119] Moreover, Leo also wrote Patriarch Anatolius of Constantinople, reprimanding him for his presumption against Alexandria, the see of Peter's disciple Mark, and Antioch, Peter's first see.[120] This canon indeed continued to trouble relations between East and West in understanding the authorities of the major sees of Christianity.

The fourth and fifth causes in the list both deal with the Acacian Schism. This breach occurred between Rome and Constantinople between 484 and 519 and touched upon the doctrine of Chalcedon and policies toward non-Chalcedonians in the Empire. Humbert's list includes the mutual excommunications between the papacy and Acacius, bishop of Constantinople. He furthermore speaks of Emperor Anastasius's subsequent support of the dead Acacius's position and his refusal to meet with Roman legates. These incidents certainly form a chapter in the Christological controversy of the age; they also pertain very much to the role of the papacy in the Church.[121]

Moving on in the *Opus*, we find that chapter 16 is entitled, "That this care most greatly falls upon the supreme pontiff, that

---

[118] See text and brief bibliography on this issue in Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1.75-76 and 99-100.

[119] See Leo's *Ep*. 104, to Marcian Augustus (*PL* 54.991A-997B), trans. in Hunt, *Letters*, 177-82.

[120] See Leo's *Ep*. 106, to Anatolius (*PL* 54.1001A-1009B), trans. Hunt, *Letters*, 182-88.

[121] The name of Pope Anastasius II, whose papacy (496-98) was sometimes regarded in the Middle Ages as a betrayal of the Church, does not appear here. As an example of this pope's reputation, Gratian's *Decretum*, D. 19 c. 9 has "Anastasius, reproved by God, was smitten by divine command." See translation and context in Gratian, *The Treatise on Laws (Decretum DD. 1 - 20) with the Ordinary Gloss*, trans. Augustine Thompson, O.P. (*The Treatise on Laws*), and James Gordley (*Ordinary Gloss*), intro. Katherine Christensen, *Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Canon Law*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993), 83.

is the Roman pontiff."[122] Humbert gives a list of papal titles, frequently citing scriptural references for support, and applies each one to the pope's duties toward the Greeks.[123] As vicar of Christ, the pope is in the place of Christ on earth and so it greatly pertains to him to do the things Christ did. Humbert then urges something that did not occur until 2001, during the pontificate of John Paul II: the pope should go to Greece. Humbert writes,

Christ himself descended from heaven for this: so that he would make both (namely the Jews and Gentiles) one and there would be one flock from these and from those. Therefore, his vicar must not decline to descend into Greece, if it should be necessary and if there should be hope that by doing this the Greeks and Latins could unite.[124]

As father, the pope ought to care for both the devoted son and the rebellious son, as was the father of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32).[125] Gregory seems to have been influenced by Humbert's proposal here. As Tugwell points out, Humbert's invocation of the image of the pope as the father of the prodigal son who goes out is not abbreviated, but elaborated upon in the *Extractiones*. Gregory also wrote to Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus in precisely the language of a father welcoming back the prodigal son, even invoking the Platonic phrase "regio dissimilitudinis" used in Augustine's *Confessions* to expound the waywardness of the prodigal son.[126] Following protocol, the

---

[122] "Quod haec cura maxime incumbat Pontifici summo, scilicet Romano" (*Opus tri.* 2.16 [Brown, ed., 219]).

[123] Which titles are not used is also significant. For example, Humbert does not use the title of "teacher," which will be used in the Council of Florence's *Laetentur Caeli* (July 6, 1439): "the head of the whole church and the father and teacher of all Christians" (Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1.*528).

[124] "Ipse autem Christus ad hoc descendit de coelo, ut faceret utraque (scilicet Judaeos et Gentiles) unum, et unum ovile de his et de illis. Et ideo non deberet renuere vicarius eius, si esset necesse, descendere etiam in Graeciam, si spes esset, quod per hoc posset Graecos et Latinos unire" (*Opus tri.* 2.16 [Brown, ed., 219-20]).

[125] For Humbert's use of the language of "father" for the pope in his sermons, see Bougerol, "La papauté dans les sermons médiévaux français et italiens," 253-55.

[126] Tugwell, *Humberti de Romanis Legendae Sancti Dominici*, 414. Tugwell cites A. L. Tautu, ed., *Acta Urbani IV, Clementis IV, Gregorii X*, Pont. Comm. Ad redigendum

Emperor, for his part, acknowledged Gregory in corres-
pondence as "the most holy and blessed lord Pope, supreme
pontiff of older Rome and of the universal Church, successor of
the apostolic see, his most reverend father."[127] Yet it was also
common for the pope, in communicating with bishops, to
invoke the image of brothers. For example, Thomas, com-
menting on the Apostle Paul's naming of Timothy as "a
brother" in the faith, cites Matthew 23:8, "you are all
brothers," and concludes, "And this is why the pope calls all
bishops brothers."[128]

Also in chapter 16, Humbert calls the pope a shepherd, and
says that he ought to be like that good shepherd who left the
ninety-nine to care for the one that strayed (Luke 15:4-7). As
the bridegroom of the universal church, he ought to suffer and
care for the bride in whose womb the Greek and the Latin are
fighting, like Jacob and Esau in the womb of Rebecca (Gen
25:22-23). As the common judge,[129] he must be like Moses who
cared for the disputing Hebrews (Exod 2:11-15) in settling the
contention between the Greek and Latin. As captain of the ship,
he must induce the people to live in "one body and one spirit,
just as you are called in one hope of your vocation" (Eph
4:4).[130]

---

codicem iuris canonici orientalis, Fontes III.v.1 (Vatican City, 1953), 138. Cf. Luke
15:11-32; Plato, *Politicus* 273d; Plotinus, *Ennead* 1.8.13; Augustine, *Confessions*
7.10.16.

[127] "Sanctissimo et beatissimo domino pape veteris Rome ac universalis ecclesie
summo pontifici, et sedis apostolice successori, reverendissimo patri suo." See the
examples of Emperor Michael's letters *Multa sunt* and *Qualiter et quantum* to Gregory
X, given as nos. 313 and 314 in *Les Registres de Grégoire X*, 119-123, from 1273, but
not dated.

[128] *In II Cor.* 1, lect. 1. Of course this was the common practice, which Gregory X
continued.

[129] "Iudex communis" (*Opus tri.* 2.16 [Brown, ed., 220]). Cf. "Iudex ordinarius," a
technical term for a judge of first instance, with authority that is by his own right rather
than by delegation, associated with *plenitudo potestatis*. See Watt, *Theory of Papal
Monarchy in the Thirteenth Century*, 92-105.

[130] Papal titles can help us think about what is, and is not, said of the pope's identity
and authority. As a point of comparison, consider the titles given in Bernard's *De
consideratione* 4.23: one of the bishops (not their lord), brother of those who love God
and companion of those who fear him, model of justice, mirror of holiness, exemplar of

Humbert concludes this section by saying that the task is so great that no one else has the power to accomplish it. Without the pope, whatever would be done about these matters would be entirely futile. Thus, Humbert ends this section with a divine threat:

> Therefore he would have much to fear, if he were negligent about this lest God demand particularly that evil from him. For the necessity falls upon him to exemplify Christ who says, "I am the good shepherd," (John 10:11, 14) and afterwards, "I have other sheep, and it is necessary for me to lead them, so that there may be one flock" (John 10:16).[131]

This remarkable passage, therefore, illustrates not only the papal titles, but also the responsibilities that, if not fulfilled, will render the pope subject to God's justice against him. Gregory's *Extractiones* omit the divine threat, and no threat upon the pope can be found in Thomas.

Chapter 17 gives a remarkably detailed to-do list of ten items for the pope in the healing of the schism. Gregory's *Extractiones* give very brief summaries, and combine one and two (which are related) for a sequence of nine. The following is a summary of what Humbert says must be done, with occasional points of comparison with Thomas noted.

(1) *Knowledge of the Greek language*. Studying Greek is of great importance. But even in the Roman curia can there

---

piety, preacher of truth, defender of faith, teacher of the nations, leader of Christians, friend of the Bridegroom, an attendant of the bride, director of the clergy, shepherd of the people, instructor of the foolish, refuge of the oppressed, advocate of the poor, hope of the unfortunate, protector of orphans, judge of widows, eye of the blind, tongue of the mute, support of the aged, avenger of crimes, terror of evil men, glory of the good, staff of the powerful, hammer of tyrants, father of kings, moderator of laws, dispenser of canons, salt of the earth, light of the world, priest of the Most High, vicar of Christ, anointed of the Lord, and god of Pharaoh. To take one contrast with Humbert, Bernard sees the pope as friend of the Bridegroom and not bridegroom of the universal Church.

[131] "Propter hoc igitur potest sibi multum timere, si circa hoc fuerit negligens, ne Deus requirat ab eo specialiter malum istud. Incumbit enim ei necessitas ad exemplum Christi, qui dicit: Ego sum pastor bonus. Et post: Alias oves habeo, et illas oportet me adducere, et fiet unum ovile" (*Opus tri.* 2.16 [Brown, ed., 220]).

scarcely be found someone who can translate what the Greeks send. Are the translators reliable? Humbert has his doubts.[132]

(2) *Latins should have an abundance of Greek books (and not concentrate on bodily weapons)*. Humbert gives a list of genres of Greek books in need: theological books, commentaries, books of their councils, statutes, ecclesiastical offices, and histories. Just as Latins argue from the Old Testament with the Jews, so they should do so from Greek books with Greek Christians.[133] Humbert bemoans how much care is taken regarding philosophy and law, but not about what pertains to salvation and the good of souls. Invoking 2 Corinthians 10:4, that our weapons are not bodily, but the power of God, Humbert complains that the Latin weapons are bodily.[134] Latins do not care about the *spiritual* weapons regarding Saracen, Jew, or Greek.

(3) *Frequent sending of nuncios*. Humbert wants the Roman Church to send out virtuous and prudent men more frequently, just as the Lord sent great prophets to Israel. Humbert realizes that some complain that the nuncios would not be safe due to the pride of the Greeks. He thinks that the Greeks still have reverence for the Roman Church, even if they do not obey in all matters. Perhaps their pride could be broken by Latin humility.[135] Besides, just as a doctor or orator should not give

---

[132] Although Thomas never learned Greek, he personally ordered translations of Greek texts for his Catena, as he announces in the preface to the *Catena on Mark*. Moreover, Thomas gives an important principle of translation in his *Contra Graec.* I, prol. Robert Grosseteste knew Greek and translated texts, but his documentation of 1250 (mentioned in n. 22 above) does not complain about the inadequacy of Greek knowledge in the West. He has other concerns. For an overview of his translation work, see Kathryn D. Hill, "Robert Grosseteste and His Work of Greek Translation," *Studies in Church History* 13 (1976): 213-22.

[133] See *ScG* I, c. 2. Thomas lays down the principle that one argues from common ground with an interlocutor, including the example of arguing from the Old Testament with the Jews.

[134] For a beautiful exposition of 2 Cor 10:4, see *In II Cor.* 10, lect. 1. Thomas writes about how such spiritual weapons are used for the rebellious, the conversion of unbelievers, and the correction of sinners.

[135] Thomas says that humility expels pride in *STh* II-II, q. 161, a. 5, ad 2.

up his duty on account of some contingency, so too should emissaries of the Church work at the job given to them.

(4) *Send spies*. These spies, under the appearance of carrying out other business (e.g., that of soldiers, merchants, or religious), could carry back reports about impediments to peace and opportunities for peace, moving freely among the Greeks.[136]

(5) *Show reverence to Greek nuncios*. The Greeks love ceremonial honor, and Latin respect for their nuncios could dispose them to better things.[137]

(6) *Have wise Greeks stay with Latins*. Greek experts whose loyalty is not in doubt could greatly assist Latins by living with them.[138]

(7) *Stop scandalizing Greeks*. Latins who have gone to live in Greek lands have done terrible things to provoke the Greeks to hate Latins even more.[139]

(8) *Show charitable service to Greek magnates*. If the Latin kings and even the pope would give the service of gifts to the Greeks, this would mollify the situation and prepare for friendship.[140]

(9) *Translate Latin doctors into Greek*. Just as Greek books should be translated into Latin, so some of the writings of the Latin doctors should be translated into Greek. This reciprocity would assist much in discussions about the truth.[141]

(10) *Remove Latin distrust of the Greek*. Before he says that there are many other things that should be diligently investigated, Humbert advises the tearing down of distrust that many

---

[136] While Thomas is famous for his absolute prohibition against lying, he does leave some room for spying, because we are not bound to declare our purpose or meaning to others. See *STh* II-II, q. 40, a. 3. But see also *STh* II-II, q. 111, on dissimulation and hypocrisy.

[137] For Thomas on the virtue of observance, see *STh* II-II, q. 102.

[138] For Thomas on counsel within the parts of prudence, see *STh* II-II, q. 48, a. 1.

[139] For Thomas on the sin of scandal, see *STh* II-II, q. 43.

[140] For Thomas on performing acts to prepare for friendship, see his treatment of affability in *STh* II-II, q. 114, but against flattery in *STh* II-II, q. 115.

[141] For Thomas's emphasis that Constantinople II (553) claims to follow Latin doctors, with Greek doctors, in everything, see *ScG* IV, c. 24.

Latins have about the return of the Greeks. The alternative is to abandon hope forever.[142]

Humbert identifies three matters of concern and gives various remedies: the Empire of Constantinople, faith (especially on account of the Greek accusation of Latin heresy over the *filioque*), and obedience to the pope. We see again the eminent practicality of the Empire for Christian unity, something missing from Thomas's emphasis in the *Contra errores graecorum* and elsewhere in his writings. Humbert's last remedy deserves to be quoted in full:[143]

It must be noted that it does not seem that the Roman Church ought to plunge itself into requiring a fullness of obedience from the Greeks, as long as their patriarch would be confirmed by the authority of the Roman Church, and the Church of the Greeks would receive the legates of the Roman Church with honor.[144]

The mention of a *plenitudo obedientiae*, and a caution against requiring it, is highly interesting, and Humbert's contribution deserves to be better known in discussions on the papal *plenitudo potestatis*.[145] The idea bears some resemblance to Hostiensis's application of the *potestas absoluta*, in tandem with the *potestas ordinata* (a distinction learned from thirteenth-century theologians regarding God) or with the power to

---

[142] For Thomas on despair, see *STh* II-II, q. 20.

[143] For discussion of Humbert's treatment of the difference of liturgical rites in *Opus tri.* 2.19, see Georgij Avvakumov, *Die Entstehung des Unionsgedankens: Die lateinische Theologie des Hochmittelalters in der Auseinandersetzung mit dem Ritus der Ostkirche* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), 297.

[144] "quod non videtur, quod Ecclesia Romana profundare se deberet in requirendo plenitudinem obedientiae a Graecis, dummodo eorum patriarcha authoritate Ecclesiae Romanae confirmaretur, et Ecclesia Graecorum legatos Ecclesiae Romanae reciperet cum honore" (*Opus tri.* 2.19 [Brown, ed., 223]). Deno Geanakoplos seems to mislead in writing that Humbert "even maintained that the pope should not *at once* [original emphasis] insist on complete obedience." See his "Bonaventura, the Two Mendicant Orders and the Greeks at the Council of Lyons (1274)," in idem, *Constantinople and the West* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 208. Presumably, the same condition of Rome not pressing full obedience from the Greeks would continue after the desired union.

[145] I have found only rare occurrences of the phrase "plenitudo ob(o)edientiae" in early and medieval Christian texts, and none that fits this case.

dispense, to the pope.[146] For Humbert, an invocation of the *plenitudo obedientiae* provides a pastoral balance to the *plenitudo potestatis* with an admonition not to press the Eastern Church into a full obedience to Rome.

Only two things are asked in this accommodation. First, Humbert wishes for papal confirmation of Constantinople's patriarch, which differs considerably from papal appointment. After the Fourth Crusade usurped the patriarchal throne of Constantinople, Innocent III had exercised an authority of appointing *and* confirming Thomas Morosini as patriarch of Constantinople, as well as demanding an oath to Morosini and himself from Greek prelates who wished to continue to serve in their stations.[147] For Humbert, on the contrary, the papacy should abandon its domination of the patriarchate of Constantinople and be satisfied with a confirmation of the Greek appointment.[148] Second, he desires that the Greeks receive Roman legates with honor, as this would considerably improve diplomatic relations and be within the best tradition of protocol.[149] Gregory's *Extractiones* keep this emphasis on not

---

[146] For an excellent overview of Hostiensis on papal absolute power, including the power to dispense, see Pennington, *The Prince and the Law*, 48-75.

[147] An all-Venetian chapter of Constantinople elected Thomas Morosini as patriarch. Invalidating the chapter's action as uncanonical, Innocent himself appointed and confirmed Morosini. Reg. VII, Let. 203 (*PL* 215:516).

[148] Even a confirmation of the patriarch of Constantinople by the bishop of Rome would have been contrary to the customs of the Byzantine Church. However, one might be tempted to speculate "what if" since the emperor held the prerogative in the process of patriarchal election. The emperor always had much from which to benefit in an amicable relationship with Rome in the later Middle Ages. See Joseph Gill, S.J., "Eleven Emperors of Byzantium Seek Union with the Church of Rome," in *Church Union: Rome and Byzantium (1204-1453)* (London: Variorum, 1979), 72-84.

[149] Cf. the overview of the early developments of papal legates by Kriston R. Rennie, *The Foundations of Medieval Papal Legations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). For the development from the *apocrisarius* to *legatus ad causam*, see ibid., 55-64. The honorable reception of papal legates should not be taken for granted. The most severe disrespect shown to a Roman legate within one hundred years of Humbert's writing occurred during the Latin massacre of 1182 in Constantinople. Both the Latin archbishop William of Tyre and the Greek archbishop Eustathios of Thessaloniki condemned the killing of the papal legate John whom the frenzied citizens of Constantinople decapitated, fastening his severed head "to the tail of a filthy dog as an

requiring a *plenitudo obedientiae*, but singing the *filioque* three times at the June 29 Mass during the Second Council of Lyons, with the three Greek representatives joining in the singing, hardly implements Humbert's advice.[150]

Humbert closes this second part by invoking the role of the papacy in salvation.[151] Thomas more famously writes: "It is necessary for salvation to be under the Roman pontiff."[152] Both men were outstanding members of a religious order founded for preaching the gospel and the salvation of souls. Both considered the papacy to be required for this saving mission. Humbert himself had made union with the Greeks a priority for the Dominican Order near the beginning of his service as Master of the Order of Preachers. In 1255, the year after he was elected master, Humbert wrote to his confreres in an encyclical:

Not the least of my heart's desires is that through the ministry of our order schismatic Christians should be recalled to ecclesiastical unity, and the name of Jesus Christ be taken to the faithless Jews, to the Saracens—so long deceived by their pseudo-prophet—to the pagan idolaters, barbarians, and all peoples so that we are his witnesses to bring salvation to all peoples to the ends of the earth.[153]

The *Secunda pars* expresses Humbert's abiding zeal for his order's mission for ecclesiastical unity.

---

insult to the church." *William of Tyre's Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, vol. 2, trans. E. A. Babcock and A.C. Krey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 464-65; and *Eustathios of Thessaloniki: The Capture of Thessaloniki*, trans. John R. Melville Jones (Canberra: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1988), 35.

[150] Mansi, ed., 24:129. For a description of the Mass of Saints Peter and Paul during the council, see Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571)*, vol. 1, *The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1976 [repr. 1991]), 114-15. The Greeks sang the *filioque* five times at the council, all told. See ibid., 115 n. 42.

[151] Humbert's last sentence in the *Secunda pars* reads: "May the Author of salvation inspire those discussing this matter, which benefits the salvation of souls" (*Opus tri.* 2.19 [Brown, ed., 223]). This is omitted in the *Extractiones*.

[152] *Contra Graec.* I, c. 38.

[153] Excerpt translated in C. H. Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact of the Early Mendicant Movement on Western Society* (London: Longman, 1994), 202.

III. The Papacy in the *Tertia pars* of the *Opus tripartitum*

Humbert's treatment of moral reform in the third part is the shortest of the three in the *Opus*, comprising only six pages in Brown's printed text. However, he is here at his most vociferous.[154] After beginning with abuses in divine worship, Humbert turns his attention to the Roman Church. He attacks the three-year vacancy before Pope Gregory X's election in which the cardinals did not distinguish themselves. That vacancy lasted from November 29, 1268, to the election on September 1, 1271, and it took Gregory several more months to be crowned, since he was in Acre on crusade. That vacancy occurred, not coincidentally, at roughly the same time as the second mendicant controversy, during which Thomas was defending mendicant life against the attacks of Gerard of Abbeville. Without the existence of a pope, the mendicants suffered greatly. Humbert complains:

Because no one dares to open his mouth in the Roman Church,[155] how greatly fitting it would be so that the lord pope himself and the lord cardinals attend diligently to correct matters in the Roman Church, and these things would begin by them so that the correction of others, which highly pertains to them, would have greater efficacy. For behold what damnable and disastrous thing has sounded through the whole world (as if one should be silent about them) during the vacancy of the papacy, which occurred in our days, and about the great treasury of the pope, which the cardinals are said to have consumed by their mouth, during their dissension (I know not with what conscience), since lower colleges are not said to have the power of this sort in the goods of ordinaries during the vacancies in the Churches. It seems that it would be very profitable to consider the aforesaid vacancy and to apply a remedy.[156]

---

[154] Roberg says of Humbert's *Tertia pars* that all these prescriptions are in view of *ecclesia semper reformanda* (*Das zweite Konzil von Lyon*, 112). Gregory himself uses *reformatio* language in his call for the council, but nowhere does Humbert or Gregory, to my knowledge, give the phrase *ecclesia semper reformanda*.

[155] See above, n. 20.

[156] "Quia nemo inferior audit ponere os in Ecclesiam Romanam, tanto magis deceret ut ipse dominus Papa et domini Cardinales attenderent corrigenda in Ecclesia Romana, et inciperent ab illis, ut correctio aliorum quae ad eos summe pertinet, majorem haberet efficaciam. Ecce enim quantum damnum et quantum scandalum emanavit per totum mundum, ut de aliis taceatur, in tantis vacationibus papatus, quae contigerunt in diebus

The comment that "no one dares to open his mouth" includes the cardinals, not just the pope. The *Extractiones* omit that observation, but still communicate the need for change.[157] Of course criticism against the cardinals was not rare in the thirteenth century—even though one cannot find it in Thomas's writings. In his 1250 memorandum for the papal curia, Grosseteste says that the cause, font, and origin of the evil afflicting the Church is this curia.[158]

Lyons II would go on to produce lengthy, detailed legislation about the election of a new pope in its decree *Zelus fidei*. In response to just such criticism against cardinals eating the papal treasury, the council in 1274 stated that after three days of a conclave with no shepherd elected, the cardinals are to be given only one dish at dinner and supper for five days. "If these days also pass without the election of a pope, henceforth only bread, wine and water are to be served to the cardinals until they do provide a pope. While the election is in process, the cardinals are to receive nothing from the papal treasury."[159]

Humbert himself was perhaps present at the Council of Lyons, but we cannot know for sure.[160] Certainly, he does not place much trust in prelates, including those who would attend the council. The last statement in his text displays his ardent

---

nostris, et de thesauro magno Papae, quem dicuntur Cardinales consumpsisse pro ore suo, durante dissensione, nescio cum qua conscientia, cum inferiora collegia non dicuntur habere huiusmodi potestatem in bonis ordinariorum vacantibus Ecclesiis. Videtur, quod multum expediret, quod contra supradictam vacationem excogitaretur et apponeretur remedium" (*Opus tri.* 3.2 [Brown, ed., 224]).

[157] Mansi, ed., 24:132.

[158] Grosseteste, *Memorandum* 10 (Gieben, "Robert Grosseteste at the Papal Curia, Lyons, 1250," 355).

[159] "Quibus provisione non facta decursis, extunc tantummodo panis, vinum et aqua ministrentur eisdem, donec eadem provisio subsequatur. Provisionis quoque huiusmodi pendente negotio, dicti cardinales nihil de camera papae recipient" (trans. in Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1.*315).

[160] See Louis Carolus-Barré, "Essay de reconstitution d'une liste nominative des Pères du IIe Concile de Lyon," *1274: Année charnière mutations et continuités*, 393-423, at 417, calling his presence very likely. Tugwell thinks that Humbert's presence in the Dominican priory of Lyons in 1274 is quite probable but not definite, let alone that he was present at the council meeting in that city. See Tugwell, *Humberti de Romanis Legendae Sancti Dominici*, 420 nn. 50-51.

desire for the pope's action, in spite of and not along with the many other prelates in the Church. In biting criticism, Humbert concludes:

> Oh what a cause for sorrow that there are so many prelates! They are lukewarm about the things of God, even set against nearly every good. There does not seem another way to proceed, since the pope can proceed about these matters without them, when he has a treatise regarding them. But before the council or after, he ought to proceed in these matters without them, and especially about the things pertaining to morals.[161]

The *Extractiones* temper the tone.[162] Whether before the council or after, the pope ought to perform the tasks of the good shepherd, watching over the flock. This overwhelming focus on the pope is not rare in the thirteenth century. *Zelus fidei* itself is written from the perspective of the pope.

CONCLUSION

Humbert offers a broad range of arguments for papal authority, primarily understood as a pastoral role. The pope is the shepherd who must keep watch over the flock. For Humbert, this means that the pope should direct crusades against Muslims to fulfill Luke 22:32, that the faith of Peter (and his Church) would not fail. The pope must preserve the faith in a war against Islam, which Humbert considered to be founded to destroy Christianity. As shepherd, the pope must do everything in his power to heal the schism with the Greeks, or he will have much to fear from God. Humbert suggests that Rehoboam is a figure for the pope, demanding too much from the Greeks who go into schism. Furthermore, the pope must be concerned about reforming his own curia, as the cardinals who

---

[161] "Quia plurimi praelati proh dolor! Sunt tepidi circa ea quae Dei sunt, imo etiam contrarii fere omni bono, non videtur modo aliquo expedire, quod de illis quae Papa potest sine eis expedire, cum eis habeat tractatum: sed ante concilium vel post, illa expediat sine ipsis, et maxime de pertinentibus ad mores" (*Opus tri.* 3.12 [Brown, ed., 228]).

[162] Mansi, ed., 24:132.

surrounded the pope were infamous for their corruption. In this matter of moral reform and in all other aspects of importance, the responsibility is particularly that of the pope. The pope should always strive to imitate Christ the Good Shepherd, even laying down his life for his sheep.

Thomas may offer a more balanced theological treatment, but he attends less to history in this area, and displays a more cautious reserve about any criticism of the papacy. Humbert's arguments from historical development and his criticisms, indeed, were too much for the editor of the *Extractiones*—none other than Pope Gregory X, if Simon Tugwell's sagacious insight is true. Humbert incorporates developments concerning Peter's own lifetime, the various decisions of the emperors, conciliar acts, the particular needs of the Church in different lands and times, and historical incidents of conflict. By studying Humbert alongside Thomas, a pragmatic master of the Dominican order next to a speculative Dominican Scholastic genius, as well as within the context of Pope Gregory's reception of Humbert's work in the *Extractiones*, theologians and historians can better understand the complexity of arguments concerning the papal office on the eve of the Second Council of Lyons, and so contribute, in some very small part, to a better understanding of the papacy both in its historical development and in its exercise today.[163]

USING MODELS FOR THE HYPOSTATIC UNION: LESSONS FROM AQUINAS AND SCOTUS[1]

MICHAEL GORMAN

The Catholic University of America
Washington, D.C.

A T THE HEART of Christianity is belief in the hypostatic union: The second person of the Trinity, the Son or the Word, took a human nature to himself in such a way that divinity and humanity are united in one person or hypostasis, that hypostasis being none other than the second person himself. To say this is one thing, to understand it is another, and the theology of the hypostatic union is the attempt to understand it. There is an important sense, of course, in which this cannot be done: the hypostatic union, like other theological mysteries, is beyond human comprehension. On the other hand, even if it cannot fully be grasped, it can be understood to a certain degree.

When trying to understand the hypostatic union, or to explain it to others, theologians often compare it to something else. That they do this is obvious enough, but what is perhaps less obvious is what is really going on when they do it, and what should be going on. One might think at first that a comparison is a mere decoration, a way to liven up our otherwise boring scientific accounts, but there may be more at stake than that. Consider, for example, how Richard Cross assesses Aquinas's use, as a model for the hypostatic union, of the union of a concrete part and the whole to which it belongs. On Cross's understanding, Aquinas thinks that whole and part make a good model because concrete parts do not contribute any *esse*, any existence, to the wholes to

---

which they belong, even as the assumed human nature does not contribute any *esse* to Christ.[2] But the reason concrete parts contribute no *esse*, says Cross, is that they belong to the essence of their wholes. Therefore, use of this model leads to the view that Christ's assumed humanity belongs to his divine essence, which is another way of saying that use of this model leads to Monophysitism, a view condemned by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Now of course Cross knows that Aquinas is against Monophysitism, so his view in the end seems to be that Aquinas lands not in heresy but in inconsistency.[3] I think Cross's criticism of Aquinas grows out of a misunderstanding of how Aquinas uses models, and out of a misunderstanding of how models ought to be used.

As the reader may have noticed, I slid, over the course of the preceding paragraph, from the language of "comparison" to the language of "model." Although I do not have any sharp distinction in mind, I think it is probably more natural to say "comparison" or "similitude" when something loose and undeveloped is at issue. For example, if someone casually says that the Word took on human nature the way you or I might put on a coat, and then quickly moves on to another topic, it would seem pretentious to call this a "model." But if someone makes a comparison and then discusses it at some length, highlighting various aspects and using it to bring out important points, then the comparison is, we might say, no mere comparison, but a model.

In this article, I look at some writings of Thomas Aquinas and also at some writings of John Duns Scotus, focusing on two comparisons that seem sophisticated enough to merit the title "model" and that are, at any rate, labelled as such in the literature: the whole-part model, and the subject-accident model. Speaking in a somewhat historical mode, I try to make clear how Aquinas and Scotus deal with the two models just mentioned. I

---

[2] Richard Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation: Thomas Aquinas to Duns Scotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 52.

[3] Ibid., 57-58, 60.

then switch into a more systematic register and discuss how models ought to be used in discussions of theological topics.

I. NARROWING THE FOCUS

Aquinas compares the hypostatic union to quite a number of things. Sometimes he is explicit, and other times less so. The following is an incomplete list, drawn mostly from the *Summa theologiae*. Aquinas compares the hypostatic union to

- the union of soul and body;[4]
- the union between a human being and a garment he is wearing;[5]
- the union between a human being and his sensitive powers;[6]
- the union between the soul and the resurrected body;[7]
- the relationship between God and those who are sons of God by grace;[8]
- the union of several accidental natures in some creature;[9]
- the union of the members of a body to the body;[10] relatedly, he compares the assumed nature to a member of a body;[11]
- the union between an accident and a subject, such as Socrates and his wisdom.[12]

Scotus, by contrast, seems to be less inclined to use comparisons. In his writings on the hypostatic union, I find only one. Scotus compares the relationship between the assumed human nature and the Word to the relation between an accident and its subject, and in fact he says, "The only union similar to the union of a

---

[4] *STh* III, q. 2, a. 1, ad 2 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita*, tt. 4-12 [Rome, 1882-]).

[5] *STh* III, q. 2, a. 6, ad 1.

[6] *STh* III, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2.; *STh* III q. 2, a. 5, ad 1; see also *ScG* IV, c. 49 (*Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera omnis iussu Leonis XIII P. M. edita*, t. 13-15 [Rome: Typis Riccardi Garroni, 1918, 1926]).

[7] *STh* III, q. 2, a. 6, ad 2.

[8] *STh* III, q. 3, a. 1, ad 1.

[9] *STh* III, q. 3, a. 1, ad 2.

[10] *STh* III, q. 2, a. 3, ad 2.

[11] *STh* III, q. 2, a. 2, ad 3.

[12] *STh* III, q. 2, a. 2; see also *De Unione*, a. 1, in *Thomas Von Aquin: Quaestio Disputata De unione Verbi incarnati*, ed. W. Senner, B. Bartocci, and K. Obenauer (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2011).

nature to a person of another nature is the union of accident to subject."[13]

As I have already mentioned, I shall focus on two of these comparisons or models: the subject-accident model and the whole-part model. I have three reasons for this. The first is rooted in the fact that some comparisons seem to be closer to the thing that they are comparisons for, and others less close. It might seem obvious that the ones that are closer are better, but perhaps the issue is more complicated. In an interesting remark, Pseudo-Dionysius says that there is an advantage to comparing God to things that God cannot possibly be like: we are less likely to be thrown off by such comparisons.[14] To use some of Pseudo-Dionysius's own examples, someone might fall into thinking that God is a gleaming man, but no one would think that God has hooves. It is easy enough to see how this point would apply in the case of the incarnation. No one will think that the relation between the assumed human nature and the Word of God is just like the relationship between a garment and a human wearer. But it would not be altogether crazy for someone to think that the relationship between the assumed human nature and the Word is just like that between a part and a whole or just like that between an accident and a subject. In short, the models under discussion in this article are of the sort that can easily be misunderstood and misused; that makes them particularly suitable for attention.

Second, as can be seen from the lists given above, some comparisons or models for the incarnation involve perceptible realities: for example, the assumed nature being likened to a garment. Aquinas discusses the use of sensible images in theology in the very first question of the *Summa theologiae* (a. 9). He says

---

[13] "Ideo non invenitur aliqua unio similis unioni nature ad personam alterius nature nisi unio accidentis ad subjectum" (*Lectura* III, d. 1, q. 1, §20 [*B. Ioannis Duns Scoti Opera Omnia*, ed. Barnaba Hechich et al., vol. 20 (Vatican City, 2003)]); see also *Reportatio* III, d. 1, q. 1, §9 (*Joannis Duns Scoti Opera Omnia*, ed. Vivès [Paris, 1894], vol. 23). Echoing his language here, I will call this model the "subject-accident" model rather than what it is usually called in the literature, namely, the "substance-accident" model.

[14] *The Celestial Hierarchy* 2, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1987). Aquinas picks up on this remark in *STh* I, q. 1, a. 9.

that it is fitting for Scripture to use sensible or perceptible images to present theological mysteries because such a mode of presentation is appropriate for the target audience: humans, who learn through their senses. The accident-subject model and the part-whole model, however, are not exactly sensible models: the relation between accident and subject, and the relation between part and whole, are, it would seem, available more to thought than to sensation. Models like these, then, represent an additional kind of aid for those who would aspire to an understanding (however limited) of divine mysteries. If theology sometimes gives sensible models for what is beyond the senses, at other times it gives rational models for what is beyond reason. Our two models, then, exemplify a rarified version of a general phenomenon, a version that merits special attention.

A third reason for focusing on these two models is that they have been central in the recent literature, where there has been a tendency to associate Aquinas with the whole-part model and Scotus with the subject-accident model.[15] As we shall see, Aquinas's and Scotus's attitudes towards these models are considerably more complicated than that suggests.

In what follows, then, I focus only on these two models. But first I must address a point that might seem to make that focus inadvisable. In at least two places, Aquinas says that the best model is the union of soul and body.[16] When he discusses the hypostatic union in the *Summa theologiae*, however, he does not seem to give this model much more importance than any other.[17] If my goal were to give a complete analysis of Aquinas on Christological models, I would obviously have to spend time on this model, but since my goal instead is to compare Aquinas and Scotus, and to draw some broader lessons, the body-soul model can be safely set aside.

---

[15] Above all, I have in mind Cross, *Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*; and Marilyn McCord Adams, "The Metaphysics of the Incarnation in Some Fourteenth-Century Franciscans," in *Essays Honoring Allan B. Wolter,* ed. William A. Frank and Girard J. Etzkorn (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1985), 21-57.

[16] *ScG* IV, c. 41; *De Unione,* a. 1.

[17] See for example *STh* III, q. 2, a. 1, ad 2.

II. Some Historical Background

Before discussion of how the models play out in Aquinas and Scotus, a few words about their historical provenance are in order. As Cross points out, the whole-part model finds medieval antecedents in the Christological analyses of Peter Abelard and his followers. Cross also suggests that the "graft" model of the incarnation, according to which the human nature's being joined to the Word is likened to a branch of one tree being grafted on to another, can be seen as a version of the whole-part model.[18] Later, in some thirteenth-century theologians who flourished before Aquinas, we find discussion of the question of whether Christ should be thought of as a whole with parts, and also discussion of the related question of whether Christ is a *hypostasis composita*, a composite hypostasis. As Walter Principe tells the story in his classic four-part study, William of Auxerre was open to the language of parts and wholes with respect to Christ, while not using the expression *hypostasis composita*. By contrast, Alexander of Hales, Hugh of Saint-Cher, and Philip the Chancellor, while comfortable with the language of *hypostasis composita*, are quite wary of the language of parts and wholes— as is Aquinas himself, as we will see presently.[19] As chronicled by Corey Barnes, discussion of the issue continued throughout the thirteenth century, often coming to focus on the relationship

---

[18] See Cross, *Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, 60-61. Lydia Schumacher is not convinced of this association of the graft model with the whole-part model; see her *Early Franciscan Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 200-201. For discussion of Abelard's Christology, see Lauge Olaf Nielsen, *Theology and Philosophy in the Twelfth Century* (Lieden: Brill, 1982), 214-20; Anna Marmodoro and Jonathan Hill, "Peter Abelard's Metaphysics of the Incarnation," *Philosophy and Theology* 22 (2010): 27-48. It is worth observing that Marmodoro and Hill, by their own admission (ibid., 43 n. 12), use the language of parts rather freely—more freely, it seems, than Abelard does himself.

[19] See Walter H. Principe, *William of Auxerre's Theology of the Hypostatic Union* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1963), 87-93; *Alexander of Hales' Theology of the Hypostatic Union* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1967), 126-33; *Hugh of Saint-Cher's Theology of the Hypostatic Union* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1970), 73-78; *Philip the Chancellor's Theology of the Hypostatic Union* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1975), 97-105.

between composition and Christ's *esse* (a relationship I will downplay in my presentation of Aquinas below).[20]

There are antecedents for the use of the subject-accident model as well. Whatever he meant by doing so, William of Auxerre takes on the language of accidents in a surprisingly strong way, even saying that the assumed humanity "degenerates" into an accident—a way of thinking from which both Aquinas and Scotus wish to distance themselves. By contrast, the other authors studied by Principe are significantly more circumspect.[21] Also more cautious were the explorations of this model that arose in the Franciscan tradition; this model seems to have taken on special importance among the Franciscans, perhaps through its prominence in the *Summa halensis*.[22]

Given the ultimate focus of this article—using Aquinas and Scotus to shed light on how models ought to be used—further discussion of the historical background would lead us afield. That said, I will briefly return to the question of historical context later, because, at least in the case of Scotus, it does provide a possible explanation for something that might otherwise be puzzling.

III. AQUINAS, SCOTUS, AND THE WHOLE-PART MODEL

Let us begin with what Aquinas says about the whole-part model. The idea, roughly, is that Christ is like a whole, and the assumed nature is like one of his parts, making the case of Christ and his assumed nature similar to that of Socrates and one of his hands. As mentioned already, Cross presents this as being tied to the question of whether there is in Christ more than one existence, more than one *esse*;[23] Marilyn McCord Adams does so

---

[20] See Corey L. Barnes, "Christological Composition in Thirteenth-Century Debates," *The Thomist* 75 (2011): 173-205.

[21] See Principe, *William of Auxerre's Theology of the Hypostatic Union*, 93-100; *Alexander of Hales' Theology of the Hypostatic Union*, 99-102; *Hugh of Saint-Cher's Theology of the Hypostatic Union*, 100-103; *Philip the Chancellor's Theology of the Hypostatic Union*, 93.

[22] See Schumacher, *Early Franciscan Theology*, chap. 9, esp. pp. 190-91, 197-99.

[23] Cross, *Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, 51-60.

as well.[24] Indeed, when Adams says that Scotus does not accept this model, the reason she gives is precisely that Scotus has a more general disagreement with Aquinas on the question of *esse*.[25]

The part-whole model in Aquinas is not always tied to the (famously disputed) question of how many *esse* there are in Christ. Even when this model is related to questions of existence, and even to the existence of Christ, it is still not always the case that the model turns on *how many* existences there are in Christ.[26] Prescinding for the moment from this question, then,

---

[24] Adams, "The Metaphysics of the Incarnation in Some Fourteenth-Century Franciscans," 26-28.

[25] Ibid., 29-30.

[26] Consider, for example, the following two texts: "As Damascene says, 'The Word of God did not assume human nature in general, but in an atom,' that is, in an individual; otherwise it would have to fall to every human being to be the Word of God, as it fell to Christ. Nevertheless, it should be known that not just any individual in the genus of substance, even in a rational nature, has the character of a person, but only what exists through itself—not what exists in something other and more perfect. Whence Socrates's hand, although it is an individual, is nevertheless not a person, because it does not exist through itself, but in some more perfect thing, namely, in its whole. And this can also be shown from the fact that a person is said to be an individual substance; for a hand is not a complete substance, but a part of a substance. Therefore, although a human nature is an individual in the genus of substance, still, because it does not exist separately through itself, but in some more perfect thing, namely, in the person of the Word of God, it follows that it does not have its own personhood" ("Ad tertium dicendum quod *Dei Verbum non assumpsit naturam humanam in universali, sed in atomo*, idest in individuo, sicut Damascenus dicit, alioquin oporteret quod cuilibet homini conveniret esse Dei Verbum, sicut convenit Christo. Sciendum est tamen quod non quodlibet individuum in genere substantiae, etiam in rationali natura, habet rationem personae, sed solum illud quod per se existit, non autem illud quod existit in alio perfectiori. Unde manus Socratis, quamvis sit quoddam individuum, non est tamen persona, quia non per se existit, sed in quodam perfectiori, scilicet in suo toto. Et hoc etiam potest significari in hoc quod persona dicitur substantia individua, non enim manus est substantia completa, sed pars substantiae. Licet igitur humana natura sit individuum quoddam in genere substantiae, quia tamen non per se separatim existit, sed in quodam perfectiori, scilicet in persona Dei Verbi, consequens est quod non habeat personalitatem propriam" [*STh* III, q. 2, a. 2, ad 3]); "To the second objection it must be said that 'hypostasis' signifies a particular substance not in just any way, but as it exists in what makes it complete. But insofar as it comes into union with something more complete, it is not called a hypostasis, as in the case of a hand or a foot. And in a similar way, the human nature in Christ, although it is a particular substance, nevertheless comes into union with something complete, namely, with the whole Christ as he is God and man, and for that reason it cannot be called a

we may make the general observation that on the most basic level, the model works as follows: in both the case of Socrates's hand and the case of Christ's assumed humanity, we have something that is less than some whole. There is more to Socrates than his hand, and likewise there is more to Christ than his human nature.

On this basis, one might think that the relation of whole and part is not a mere model, but in fact an altogether sober description: the complete Christ, God and man, is a whole of which the assumed human nature is a part. But Aquinas would not want to put it this way.[27] This does not mean that it is wrong to discuss the whole-part model in connection with Aquinas. Even if he is reluctant to use the Latin word *pars* in this context, the word "part" in contemporary English does not seem particularly problematic.[28] And even if it is, the point can be put without the language of parts, by speaking, for example, of "constituents": Just as Socrates's hand is one of his constituents, we might say, so too Christ's human nature is one of his

hypostasis or supposit; instead, that complete thing to which it comes is called a hypostasis or supposit" ("Ad secundum dicendum quod hypostasis significat substantiam particularem non quocumque modo, sed prout est in suo complemento. Secundum vero quod venit in unionem alicuius magis completi, non dicitur hypostasis, sicut manus aut pes. Et similiter humana natura in Christo, quamvis sit substantia particularis, quia tamen venit in unionem cuiusdam completi, scilicet totius Christi prout est Deus et homo, non potest dici hypostasis vel suppositum, sed illud completum ad quod concurrit, dicitur esse hypostasis vel suppositum" [*STh* III, q. 2, a. 3, ad 2]).

[27] See III *Sent.* d. 6, q. 2, a. 3, ad 4 (*Scriptum super libros Sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi*, ed. M. F. Moos [Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1956]); and *STh* III, q. 2, a. 4, obj. 2 and ad 2. For a reading of that text from the third book of the *Sentences* commentary that I no longer find entirely convincing, see my *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 43-44; see also Bernard Bro, "La notion métaphysique de tout et son application au problème théologique de l'union hypostatique," *Revue thomiste* 67 (1967): part 1 (29-62), part 2 (561-83); *Revue thomiste* 68 (1968): part 1 (181-97), part 2 (357-80), esp. (1968): 194-96. Pawl and Spencer's remark that the notion of part and whole applies only analogously here is helpful, even if much else in their understanding of Aquinas's Christology has problems (in my view); see Timothy Pawl and Mark K. Spencer, "Christologically Inspired, Empirically Motivated Hylomorphism," *Res philosophica* 93 (2016): 137-160, at 149.

[28] Indeed, Aquinas himself can be flexible on the point, as when he says (III *Sent.*, d. 6, q. 3, a. 2, ad 3), of Christ's human nature, that although it is not a part properly speaking, it has a certain similarity with a part ("quamvis non proprie possit dici pars, tamen aliquid habet de ratione partis").

constituents. The upshot is that the whole-part model retains importance even if "part" is not the best word in a Thomistic context.

The model offers two further points of similarity with the incarnation. First, both the hand and the human nature belong, in some sense, to the genus of substance. Second, despite this, neither of them is a free-standing substance, that is, neither is a subsisting hypostasis or person.

The second point, that neither is a subsisting hypostasis, seems clear enough. But the first point, that hand and humanity belong to the genus of substance, needs explanation and indeed qualification. For Aquinas, both the hand and the humanity are principles in virtue of which substances exist, and this makes them similar to accidents. However, accidents are principles in virtue of which substances have a relatively superficial sort of existence, whereas the existence that substances have in virtue of substantial natures (like humanity) or integral parts (like hands) is not superficial at all. That is why they belong to the genus of substance. But they are not themselves substances in the proper sense: they do not exist per se. For that reason, they belong to the genus of substance only *per reductionem*.[29]

Should we say that the relationship between Socrates and his hand is exactly like the relationship between Christ and his humanity? No. Even though both the hand and the humanity belong to the genus of substance, there is a very important difference between them. Christ's human nature does not ground a human person, but it is the sort of principle that could do so. That makes it very different from Socrates's hand, which not only does not ground a human person, but also cannot ground a human person. This is closely related to the following. There is nothing unusual going on when Socrates's hand is joined to him; on the contrary, there is something unusual going on when it is not. By contrast, there is nothing unusual going on when a human

---

[29] For a good recent discussion of how Aquinas allows for certain nonsubstances to be called "subsistent" in a loose way, see Kendall A. Fisher, "Operation and Actuality in St. Thomas Aquinas's Argument for the Subsistence of the Rational Soul," *The Thomist* 83 (2019): 185-211, at 190-94. For the language of *per reductionem*, see *Q. D. De Anima*, q. 1, a. 1; *De Verit.*, q. 27, a. 1, ad 8; *De ente et essentia*, c. 6.

nature is not hypostatically joined to a divine person, but there is most definitely something unusual going on when a human nature is so joined.

In sum, even if "part" is not the right word to use here, there is a similarity between the hand-Socrates relation and the humanity-Christ relation, inasmuch as each is a case of a relation that holds between a constituent and the larger composite that it helps to constitute. Further, in both cases, the constituents belong—by reduction—to the genus of substance. At the same time, however, there is an important difference between the cases. In only one of them is the constituent the sort of thing that could have grounded an independent person.

Of course, as noted already, Aquinas also uses the part-whole model when discussing the number of Christ's *esse*; in particular, he does so in passages where he is arguing that Christ has only one *esse*. The number-of-*esse* question is far more complicated than is usually realized, and settling it here is entirely out of the question.[30] Setting as much of it aside as possible, we may say the following. When Aquinas says that Christ only has one *esse*, his main concern is to say that Christ has only one subsistence, one existence-as-an-independent-hypostasis. If that is right, then when he says that the relation of Socrates's hand to Socrates is like the relation of Christ's humanity to Christ, and when he explains the similarity in terms of the fact that neither constituent contributes *esse* to its respective whole, he need not mean anything more than the following: neither the hand nor the humanity serves as a principle in virtue of which Christ is a subsisting person. Aquinas need not mean that the hand-Socrates relation and the humanity-Christ relation are alike in every respect; in particular, he need not mean that just as the hand is joined to Socrates in a union of nature, so too is the humanity joined to Christ in a union of nature. The question of union in nature might in fact be a way in which the model is unlike the thing it is a model for. Cross's thought that using this model is flirting with Monophysitism makes sense only on the assumption

[30] I discuss it at length in Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, chap. 5.

that Aquinas thinks the model and the modeled are very much the same, and perhaps even exactly the same. But that is a very large assumption.

It is also a false assumption. For Aquinas, one should expect that a model is not only like the thing it is a model for, but also unlike it. Therefore, one should expect a model and what it models to share only some characteristics, and not all.[31] One might object that this is cheating, that one cannot use a model and then, when a point of dissimilarity arises, say something like "Oh, but I don't mean it *that* way." Such an objection is reminiscent of the *bon mot* one sometimes hears, that an argument is not like a bus you can get off of any time you want: unlike a bus, an argument must be taken all the way to the end. That is clever and true but, unfortunately for the objector, it is irrelevant, because a model is not an argument. A model is a model, and it is in the nature of a model that it will be partly like the thing it models, and partly unlike it. In fact, Aquinas says, if a model is not at least somewhat different from the thing it is a model for, it would not be a model at all.[32]

To conclude this discussion of Aquinas and the part-whole model: even when Aquinas uses the model to discuss the number of Christ's *esse*, there is no good reason to pin on him the view that the reason why the assumed nature contributes no *esse* is

---

[31] Although Aquinas is speaking of a different model, the passages that I have italicized in the following seem relevant: "In each of us, a double unity is constituted from body and soul: unity of nature and unity of person. A unity of nature is constituted insofar as soul is united to body, formally perfecting it, so that one nature might come to be from two, as from act and potency, or matter and form. *And in this respect the similitude should not be attended to,* because the divine nature cannot be the form of a body, as was proved in the First Part. But a unity of person is constituted from them insofar as there is one person subsisting in flesh and soul. *And in this respect the similitude should be attended to*, for one Christ subsists in divine and human nature" ("Ad secundum dicendum quod ex anima et corpore constituitur in unoquoque nostrum duplex unitas, naturae, et personae. Naturae quidem, secundum quod anima unitur corpori, formaliter perficiens ipsum, ut ex duabus fiat una natura, sicut ex actu et potentia, vel materia et forma. *Et quantum ad hoc non attenditur similitudo*, quia natura divina non potest esse corporis forma, ut in primo probatum est. Unitas vero personae constituitur ex eis inquantum est unus aliquis subsistens in carne et anima. *Et quantum ad hoc attenditur similitudo*, unus enim Christus subsistit in divina natura et humana" [*STh* III, q. 2, a. 1, ad 2]).

[32] *STh* III, q. 2, a. 6, ad 1, where he is quoting John of Damascus; see n. 51 below.

that, like the hand, it is one in nature with what it is joined to. The idea that a part is one in nature with the whole can be, and of course needs to be, counted as one of the ways in which the model is dissimilar to the modeled. To saddle Aquinas with Monophysitism on the basis of the fact that he uses the whole-part model is to misunderstand how models work.[33]

Turning to Scotus, it is correct to say that he does not use the whole-part model for the hypostatic union; indeed, as we saw above, he says that the subject-accident model is the only good one. But it is questionable whether Scotus should have said that. I see no reason why he could not, in principle, also use the whole-part model. Insofar as the model is not tied up with the question of Christ's *esse*, its point is only that the assumed humanity is like a hand insofar as it is a constituent that is less than the whole. Scotus could agree to that, as long as we do not literally say (as Aquinas too would not literally say) that the assumed nature is a part rather than a nature.[34]

But what about the times when Aquinas uses the model in conjunction with the discussion of Christ's *esse*? Does that not show that the model is tied to a non-Scotistic understanding of *esse*? Adams, for example, thinks that there is a problem in principle with Scotus using the model, because for Aquinas all the constituents of a substance share in one *esse*, whereas for Scotus each constituent has its own *esse*.[35] But Aquinas, and therefore "his" model, is more flexible than this picture might suggest. He would certainly agree that all the substantial constituents of a substance share in the same *subsistence*, but he is not entirely

---

[33] Cross does allow that the model is "only" a model, but he follows up by saying that "the less the natures are seen as parts, the less Aquinas is able to give an obviously coherent account of the hypostatic union" (Cross, *Metaphysics of the Incarnation,* 55 n. 17). Unfortunately, he does not explain how close a model needs to be, nor why closeness is needed in the first place. As will become clear, models help not by being close, but by giving us an organized way to think about what the modeled reality is and is not like. Closeness and distance are equally illuminating.

[34] For discussion of Scotus on this, see my "On a Thomistic Worry about Scotus's Doctrine of the *Esse Christi*," *Antonianum* 84 (2009): 719-33, at 725.

[35] Adams, "Metaphysics of the Incarnation in Some Fourteenth-Century Franciscans," 29.

resistant to saying that constituents have their own existence in some secondary sense of that word.[36]

To say, as I have done, that there is no reason in principle for Scotus to avoid this model is not to say that his doing so is inexplicable. As noted above, Schumacher's account of the earlier Franciscan tradition puts emphasis on the centrality of the subject-accident model in that tradition; this would make it unsurprising for Scotus to have a kind of partiality to that model, and a corresponding lack of interest in developing the whole-part model.[37]

IV. Scotus, Aquinas, and the Subject-Accident Model

The basic idea of the accident-subject model is that the relation between the Word and the assumed human nature is akin to the relation between the subject of an accident and that accident. Adams and Cross treat this as Scotus's favorite model, and since, as we have already seen, Scotus himself endorses this model very strongly, it makes sense to let Scotus speak first this time. Scotus discusses this model in no fewer than four places: the *Reportatio Parisiensis*, the *Ordinatio*, the *Lectura*, and *Quodlibet* 19.[38] There are small differences between these texts: but while these differences are not without interest, they are not important here. What is important instead is the following composite sketch. Scotus says that in the case of an accident and its subject there are two elements: a causal relation, according to which the subject is the cause of the accident; and a dependence relation, according to which the accident depends on the subject. These two happen together (*Lectura*: *concurrunt*), but they are

---

[36] See Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 18-19, 102-8.

[37] Schumacher suggests (*Early Franciscan Theology*, 210-11) that the model is especially consistent with the Franciscan emphasis on God's gratuitous and unmerited love that sustains all creatures in every respect. This I find a bit under-argued—after all, Aquinas believes in all-encompassing divine activity too (see *STh* I, q. 105, a. 5).

[38] *Quodl*. 19, esp. §§12-13, §23 (*Joannis Duns Scoti Opera Omnia*, ed. Vivès [Paris, 1895], vol. 26); *Reportatio* III, d. 1, q. 1, §9; *Ordinatio* III, d. 1, part 1, q. 1, §§14-15 (*B. Ioannis Duns Scoti Opera Omnia*, ed. Barnaba Hechich, et al., vol. 9 [Vatican City, 2006]); *Lectura* III, d. 1, q. 1, §§21-22.

still different from one another. What is more, the dependence relation is prior to, or more fundamental than, the causal relation, which means that, at least in theory, the dependence relation could exist without the causal relation. This is in fact what we have in the case of the hypostatic union: the assumed human nature depends on the Word, but the hypostatic union is not a causal relation. It is not a relation of material causality, because a divine person cannot possibly be the material cause of anything,[39] and it is not a relation of efficient causality, because the efficient cause of the assumed nature is not the Word alone but the three divine persons acting as creator.[40] So, does Scotus think that the accident-subject relation is a good model for the hypostatic union? It depends on what that question means. If it means, "Does he think that the two unions are similar in one way and dissimilar in another?", then yes. But it is equally clear that he would reject any suggestion that that the two are alike in every way.[41]

Aquinas, who allegedly rejects this model, does not discuss it very much, and most of what he says is in his *Sentences* commentary (although see n. 12). There are two important respects in which, for Aquinas, the hypostatic union is not like the union of accident and subject. First, God cannot have accidents, so he cannot be related to the assumed nature in the

---

[39] *Reportatio* III, d. 1, q. 1, §9; *Lectura* III, d. 1, q. 1, §21; *Ordinatio* III, d. 1, p. 1, q. 1, §15; *Quodl.* 19, §§12-13.

[40] See *Quodl.* 19, §2; *Ordinatio* III, d. 1, part 1, q. 1, §14; *Reportatio* III, d. 1, q. 1, §9; see also *Lectura* III, d. 1, q. 1, §22, although Scotus does not make the Trinitarian point there.

[41] Cross and Adams say both that Scotus deploys the subject-accident model and that he still sees a difference between subject-accident union and the hypostatic union. In this way, they see the way in which, for Scotus, the model is both similar and dissimilar to the hypostatic union. See Cross, *Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, 124-28; Adams, "Metaphysics of the Incarnation in Some Fourteenth-Century Franciscans," 30, 32-35. Vos says that Scotus uses the "accident model" but also that Scotus "distances himself" from it. On the assumption that not distancing oneself from that model would mean holding that the hypostatic union is exactly like the subject-accident relation, this is right; however, if one thinks that using a model is consistent with thinking that there is a difference between the model and the modeled, then there is no reason to worry about any possible need for "distancing." See Antoine Vos, *The Theology of John Duns Scotus* (Boston: Brill, 2018), 117.

way that a subject is related to an accident. Second, a human nature is a substantial nature, not an accidental nature, so the assumed nature cannot be related to God in the way that an accident is related to a subject. Even so, it would not be right to say that Aquinas rejects this model altogether. At least in the *Sentences* commentary, he says that the assumed nature is similar to an accident, and it is safe to infer that he would agree, on that basis, that the relation between the Word and that assumed nature is similar to (but not altogether the same as) the relation between a subject and such an accident.

Aquinas mentions three points of similarity.[42] First, the assumed nature, like an accident, is posterior to the establishment or constitution of that to which it belongs. Just as Socrates's wisdom, or any other accident of his, is posterior to his very existence, so the Word's being human is posterior to his very existence. As Aquinas puts it, accidents, and the assumed humanity, come after the relevant hypostases have their "complete existence" (*esse completum*).[43] Second, beyond this general similarity of the hypostatic union to any subject-accident relation, there is a more specific similarity to the accidental category of *habitus*: unlike in the usual case of an accident, where the accident is something inhering in the subject, in the case of *habitus* we have what amounts to a substantial being (like a

---

[42] "Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod humana natura in Christo habet aliquam similitudinem cum accidente, et praecipue cum habitu, quantum ad tria. Primo, quia advenit personae divinae post esse completum, sicut habitus, et omnia alia accidentia. Secundo, quia est in se substantia, et advenit alteri, sicut vestis homini. Tertio, quia melioratur ex unione ad Verbum, et non mutat Verbum; sicut vestis formatur secundum formam vestientis, et non mutat vestientem. Unde antiqui dixerunt, quod vergit in accidens; et quidam propter hoc addiderunt, quod degenerat in accidens: quod tamen non ita proprie dicitur; quia natura humana in Christo non degenerat, immo magis nobilitatur" (III *Sent.*, d. 6, q. 3, a. 2, ad 1). See also: "Ad quintum dicendum, quod humana natura habet similitudinem cum accidente in Christo, inquantum advenit divinae naturae post esse completum" (III *Sent.*, d. 7, q. 2, a. 1, ad 5); "Ad quintum dicendum, quod in aliis suppositis quae sunt supposita tantum unius naturae, sequitur quod si incipiunt esse in aliqua specie, incipiunt esse simpliciter; sed non est ita in proposito; unde quantum ad hoc similitudinem habet humana natura in Christo cum accidente" (III *Sent.*, d. 12, q. 1, a. 1, ad 5).

[43] III *Sent.*, d. 6, q. 3, a. 2, ad 1; d. 7, q. 2, a. 1, ad 5.

garment) that is related to the subject. Think of Socrates wearing his chiton: this wearing-a-chiton accident comes from a relation between Socrates and the chiton. And third, the similarity goes a bit further: the chiton is modified, and elevated, by being taken on by Socrates, even as the human nature is modified and elevated by being taken on by Christ.

Of course, the human nature is not *just like* a chiton, because the chiton is something along the lines of a free-standing substance,[44] whereas the human nature is not—it belongs to the category of substance only *per reductionem*, as noted earlier. Another difference between the human nature and the chiton is that although Christ, in virtue of the incarnation, does not come to subsist, he does come to have a nature in virtue of which something could subsist. By contrast, when Socrates puts on his chiton, he thereby neither comes to subsist nor even to have a nature in virtue of which something could subsist. *Nothing* can subsist in virtue of wearing clothing; in this crucial sense, clothes do not make the man.

So Aquinas, like Scotus, thinks that the union between accident and subject is like the hypostatic union in some ways but not in others. They do not mention all the same points of similarity and difference, but there seems to be no reason to believe they could not agree on them all.

Scotus mentions two dissimilarities: that the hypostatic union does not involve an actualization of a potency in the Word, and that the assumed nature is not efficiently caused only by the person to which it is joined. Aquinas, it is clear, would accept both of these.[45] He himself mentions two points of dissimilarity: that the hypostatic union does not involve an actualization of anything in the Word, and that the human nature is not an

---

[44] I am hedging on whether the chiton is really a substance because of the doubt, common enough among Thomists, as to whether an artifact is a substance or is instead a tight unity of smaller substances.

[45] For divine impassibility, see *ScG* I, c. 16; *STh* I, q. 3. For the thought that it is all three persons together that bring about the hypostatic union, see *STh* III, q. 3, a. 4.

accidental type of nature. Scotus would accept both of these points.[46]

With respect to similarities, Scotus mentions one: the assumed nature depends on the Word. I am not aware of Aquinas's using this language when talking about the accident model, but I think he would agree with the content: for example, he holds that the human nature, once assumed into a unity of person with the Son, cannot be removed from that union,[47] and he clearly thinks that the assumed nature is the junior partner in the union. Those seem sufficient for dependence. Aquinas mentions a number of points of similarity, discussed above, of which two are worth repeating here: first, the assumed nature and accidents are both posterior to the complete being of that to which they belong; second, the union of assumed nature to Word is, like the case of a garment to a man, a case in which something substantial is joined to a pre-existing substance. Scotus mentions neither of these points when talking about the accident model, but things we have seen already make it clear that he would accept them.

In sum, Aquinas and Scotus agree that the subject-accident model has some similarity to the case of the hypostatic union, and that there is some dissimilarity involved. Their lists of similarities and differences overlap, and in no case are the items on their lists incompatible.

Schumacher cautions against overstating the opposition be-tween the two models. On her account, each one makes sense in its own metaphysical setting: for example, the Franciscan thinkers gave more ontological weight to accidents, in a way that allowed them to depict the assumed human nature as (like) an accident, whereas Aquinas downplayed the ontological status of accidents in a way that made the accident model more objectionable to him. "[P]roponents of the two different models who detect heretical tendencies in the work of their opponents only do so as a result of misinterpreting them. When each of the two accounts is assessed within its own frame of reference, both

---

[46] As for the first, he says it himself in this very context. As for the second, see Gorman, "On a Thomistic Worry about Scotus's Doctrine of the *Esse Christi*," 729-33.

[47] See Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 81-83.

emerge as equally valid, albeit distinct, ways of defending the subsistence theory, or Lombard's second opinion."[48]

I very much agree that it is problematic to interpret or assess a theological proposal without due attention to its presuppositions, even if I am not persuaded by Schumacher's account of the presuppositions at play in these particular developments.[49] However, I do not think the real problem has to do with contrasting presuppositions. On my view, what makes the two models seem more opposed than they really are is not inattention to the metaphysics behind them, but a failure to understand their status as models. Neither Scotus nor Aquinas thinks the assumed nature is literally an accident, and neither thinks it is literally a part, and the root cause of this is that neither thinks the hypostatic union is literally the same as any other union. Rather than seeing Scotus as the theologian who adopts the subject-accident model and Aquinas as the theologian who adopts the whole-part model, it is better to see each thinker as able to endorse each model, at least in principle, where endorsement means acknowledgement of both similarities and differences between model and modeled. For these purposes, Aquinas and Scotus diverge only in details, in ways that are likely to be matters more of happenstance—of what points they happened to have made in the writings that we happen to have—than of philosophical or theological principle. And indeed, there is something to be said for making use of both models. The accident model directs our attention to the fact that the assumed human nature does not give rise to a new person. This model helps us to focus on the unity of Christ's person. Meanwhile, the whole-part model, at least insofar as it mentions parts that come from the genus of substance, directs our attention to the fact that Christ's becoming human is an event on the level of the substantial, not on the level of the accidental. This model helps us to focus on the

---

[48] Schumacher, *Early Franciscan Theology*, 65-67, 191-93, 206, with the quotation at 210.

[49] In particular, I am unconvinced by her account of Aquinas's ontology of substance and accident (ibid., 67, 192-93). I set out what I take to be a more accurate (if still quite streamlined) account of such matters in my *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, chap. 1.

full integrity of Christ's humanity. The first model helps us to avoid Nestorianism, and the second helps us to avoid Monophysitism.[50]

V. LESSONS ON THE USE OF MODELS

For the rest of this article, I want to switch from the historical mode to what theologians call (somewhat oddly) the systematic mode, that is, the speculative mode. I want to make claims not about how certain historical figures have used theological models, but about how theological models ought to be used. I will, to be sure, build on what we find in Scotus and Aquinas, because I find their approach very helpful.

Models cannot give us the content of a theological doctrine. Indeed, the content of a doctrine has to be known before one can judge how to use a model correctly. This is precisely because a model is only partly similar to what it is a model of. It is hard to do better than to quote a remark about theological models from John of Damascus. In a discussion of the incarnation, after using some very nonobvious models that involve cutting a sunlit tree with an axe and pouring water on flaming steel, he says:

[O]ne must not take the models [*paradeigmata*] too absolutely and strictly: indeed, in the models, one must consider both what is the same and what is altered—otherwise it would not be a model. For, if they were the same in all respects, they would be identities, and not models, and all the more so in dealing with divine matters.[51]

---

[50] Focusing on Bernard of Trilia and Giles of Rome, Barnes makes clear that the different models can be compatible; see Corey L. Barnes, "Thomas Aquinas's Chalcedonian Christology and its Influence on Later Scholastics," *The Thomist* 78 (2014): 189-217, esp. 204-6. For a similar attitude toward these models, focused on Aquinas in particular, see Bro, "La notion métaphysique de tout et son application au problème théologique de l'union hypostatique" (1968), pt. 1; and Marie-Vincent Leroy, "L'union selon l'hypostase d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue thomiste* 74 (1974): 205-43, at 218-26.

[51] John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* 3.26 (in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 9, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994], 71; translation slightly modified). As noted earlier, Aquinas quotes the passage at *STh* III, q. 2, a. 6, ad 1. For discussion of the Platonic

The incarnation is unique. Something exactly like it would just be the incarnation all over again, and not a model for it. For this reason, the idea of fully assimilating the incarnation to anything else is a nonstarter. If someone uses a certain model for a theological mystery, but his full account of that mystery ends up deviating from that model, this is no reason for saying that his account has failed. In fact, it is a necessary condition of his account's having succeeded.

There are, on the other hand, things that one can do with a model. First, one can use it to make a doctrine clearer as one works through the comparisons and the contrasts.[52] For example, comparing the hypostatic union to a created reality such as the union of subject and accident requires thinking through the ways in which they are similar and the ways in which they are different. With an organized set of questions to ask, one can more easily arrive at a clearer, sharper, less vague understanding of the mystery one is trying to understand. *Pace* Aquinas's remark that there are aspects of a model to which one should not pay attention,[53] the points of dissimilarity are not just noise that we need to filter out, in order to get to the signal of similarity. It is all signal: the way in which the hypostatic union is like the union of subject and accident is signal, and so too is the way in which it is not. The dissimilarities shed light just as much as the similarities do, because thinking through the dissimilarities is also a way of understanding.

A further use of models is not in theological reflection proper, but in teaching. A teacher may be supposed to understand the doctrine in question (keeping in mind that no one ever *comprehends* the doctrine), while the student, just because he is a student, can be assumed not to understand it well, or even at all. In a situation like this, the teacher can use a model to bring the

---

background, see Cristina Ionescu, "The Language of Images and Paradigms in Plato's *Sophist* and *Statesman*," forthcoming in *Ancient Philosophy* 40 (2020).

[52] This procedure might count as an example of what the medievals called "declarative theology"; see Stephen F. Brown, "Declarative and Deductive Theology in the Early Fourteenth Century," in *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter?*, Miscellanea Mediaevalia 26, ed. Jan A. Aertsen and Andreas Speer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 648-55.

[53] See the italicized language in n. 31 above.

student closer to where he needs to be. The teacher might say, "Socrates can acquire a sunburn while remaining the person he was before, right? Well, the Son of God can acquire humanity while remaining the person he was before. It's a little bit like that." If the student understands what it means to acquire a sunburn, then the teacher will have gotten him to engage in a mental operation somewhat similar to the one he would have to engage in to understand the incarnation. Now when using a model in this way, the main focus is on the similarities; it takes a prudent teacher to know when also talking about the dissimilarities will be helpful—when such talk will be more signal, and when it will just be noise that confuses the student. It requires a judgment call based above all on the student's level of understanding. Giving students more can be a way of giving them less. More light makes things more visible, but only to a point. On the other hand, if one does not mention the dissimilarities, one might be setting a time-bomb; the student may later draw inferences the teacher did not want him to draw.

For one last point, a small one perhaps, I want to say that similarities can play the following role in theological thinking: they can serve as pro-examples that demonstrate the possibility of satisfying a certain necessary condition of a theological mystery's being true. For example, the incarnation is true only if it is possible for something to be joined to a pre-existing person in a unity of person, while not being joined to that person in a unity of nature. That is a necessary condition of the mystery's being true. If we can find, outside the theology of the incarnation, an example of this happening, then we will have shown that one necessary condition has been satisfied. In fact, it is easy: a color, or a bit of knowledge, can be added to a person in a unity of person, without being added to him in a unity of nature. So pointing to a case of a subject-accident union shows that one necessary condition of the hypostatic union's being true can, in fact, be satisfied. For another example, a necessary condition of the incarnation's being true is that it is possible for something from the genus of substance to be joined to a person in a unity of person. It is easy to find an example: a kidney or a hand can be added to someone in a unity of person. Again, to see this is to see

that a necessary condition can be satisfied. It is to see that the theological mystery is possible at least in some respect, and that it is not *wholly* dissimilar to things we are already familiar with. Of course, to show that a necessary condition of something's being true can be satisfied is not to show that that something is true—after all, a necessary condition is only a necessary condition, and not a sufficient condition. And the ways in which these models show conditions that are not sufficient are precisely the ways in which these models are dissimilar from the thing of which they are models. So this use of models does not get us very far. But it is better than nowhere, and in theology, "not very far" is, generally speaking, as far as one can get.

I have discussed how Aquinas and Scotus use models in their discussions of the hypostatic union, and I have indicated how we ought to do so. Much of what I have said could be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to other theological mysteries. John of Damascus may be allowed the last word: models are models, not identities.

THE CHRISTOLOGICAL CHARACTER OF THE BEATIFIC VISION: HANS BOERSMA'S *SEEING GOD*[1]

MICHAEL ROOT

The Catholic University of America
Washington, D.C.

W E LIVE TODAY in a universe vastly larger than that imagined by our ancient and medieval forebears in its spatial and temporal reach, but oddly shrunken in its metaphysical complexity. Not only have angels and incorruptible heavenly bodies disappeared from the functional ontology of Western society, but also more mundane realities have often ceased to play more than an ornamental role in secular thought: essences, transcendental truths, ends (whether natural or super-natural). For many, what you see is what you get, and all you will ever get.

Such views inevitably creep into Christian attitudes. Our horizon narrows; our faith too often focuses on our present life. That the nature and purpose of our present life might be determined by an end, a goal or *telos*, beyond the limits of this life becomes a thought that crosses the mind now and then, but too often fails to take root. The faith becomes constrained within Charles Taylor's "immanent frame."[2] Heaven, resurrection, eternal union with God and the saints are not denied, but they fade from significance.

---

[2] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 539-93.

Hans Boersma will have none of this in *Seeing God*. The loss
of a sense of a *telos* inherent within things is a fundamental
impoverishment of modern thought (20-22). The Christian life,
in particular, is determined by the end set before us; our "identity
lies in the future; we are what we become" (20). Boersma is not
afraid to name that end; it is "seeing God," the beatific vision.
On the first page of the book, he asks why we should believe that
"seeing God is the purpose of our life" (1), and he then lays out
an argument affirming that belief. This affirmation must be
applauded, even if some aspects of his conclusions are
problematic.[3]

<div align="center">I</div>

The structure of the book is straightforward. An extended
Introduction and opening chapter lay out why the beatific vision
is important, tendencies in modern culture and theology that
have undercut the significance of the beatific vision, and the
background metaphysical commitments that Boersma believes
are needed for a vigorous reassertion of the vision's centrality.
The bulk of the book is a consideration of, as the subtitle
promises, "the beatific vision in Christian tradition," beginning
with Plotinus and running chronologically as far as recent Dutch
Reformed theologians, with major attention given along the way
to Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Gregory
Palamas, Dante, John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards. The
chapter on Edwards and the concluding chapter of the book lay
out Boersma's own proposal for understanding the vision.

The historical survey is selective rather than comprehensive.
The most significant chapters focus on figures and texts
apparently chosen and interpreted with an eye toward Boersma's
larger argument about the nature of the vision. Some gaps in
coverage are inevitable. The third of the book's four parts is
entitled "Beatific Vision in Protestant Theology," but the figures

---

[3] For a recent, far-reaching exploration of the orientation of human and, above all,
Christian life to beatitude and the beatific vision, see Reinhard Hütter, *Bound for
Beatitude: A Thomistic Study in Eschatology and Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic
University of America Press, 2019).

discussed are all Reformed; Lutherans and other non-Reformed Protestants make no appearance. More significantly, the Western Scholastic tradition of debate and teaching on the beatific vision, conflicted between 1235 and 1335 and then largely unified on doctrinal questions with variation on theological details, is represented only by Thomas Aquinas. The other medieval and Catholic figures considered (Bonaventure, Dante, Nicholas of Cusa, John of the Cross) are each treated only in relation to devotional or poetic texts. The theological consideration of such texts is certainly praiseworthy, but neglect of the explicit theological discussion of the topic is not. This tilt away from the Scholastic discussion distorts Boersma's presentation. The views of individual authors are misrepresented[4] and Aquinas's significance for the Western tradition is both underestimated (his view on basic questions is not so much his alone, but the consensus of Catholic theology, embodied in doctrine)[5] and overestimated (his

---

[4] This problem is particularly acute in relation to Bonaventure. To claim, as Boersma does (363), that Bonaventure is to be counted among those for whom Christ is "the central object of the beatific vision" on the basis of the *Itinerarium* alone not only begs the question whether the closing sections of the *Itinerarium* are about the heavenly beatific vision, but also ignores what Bonaventure says elsewhere. In his earlier *Commentary on the Sentences* (II *Sent.*, d. 23, q. 2, a. 3), Bonaventure says that God is seen *immediate et in sua substantia* (Quaracchi ed., 2:545a) and labels the denial of the immediate vision of God *haeretica et reprobata* (Quaracchi ed., 2:543b). In his later *Breviloquium* (7.7), Bonaventure affirms that the heavenly vision of God will be *nude et sine velamine* (Quaracchi ed., 5:289a). His understanding of beatitude is complex and at points at odds with that of Aquinas, but his use of the terms *haeretica* and *reprobata* show that he is fully in accord with the 1241 decision by the bishop and university masters of Paris that the beatific vision is of God in his essence. On Bonaventure's views on the vision, see Christian Trottmann, *La vision béatifique: Des disputes scolastiques à sa définition par Benoît XII* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1995), 197-208. On specific aspects of Bonaventure's understanding, see the series of discussions on individual topics in Nikolaus Wicki, *Die Lehre von der himmlischen Seligkeit in der mittelalterlichen Scholastik von Petrus Lombardus bis Thomas von Aquin* (Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag, 1954).

[5] A view of the beatific vision along the lines affirmed by Aquinas is also common among the Lutheran Scholastics, e.g., Johann Gerhard (*Loci theologici*, locus 31, ch. 3, §34); Johann Wilhelm Baier (*Compendium theologiae positivae*, I, ch. 6, §3); Johann Andreas Quenstedt and David Hollaz (both quoted in Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal*

detailed views are not the only option available in line with the basic commitments he shares with other Scholastics).

Boersma's historical discussions lay bare what he thinks are significant problems in the way the vision is often discussed, paving the way for his solution. The problems and the solutions develop together as the book moves forward. Foundational for the argument is a "sacramental ontology" which

> closely links nature and the supernatural, earthly and heavenly realities, reason and faith, Old Testament Scriptures and gospel truth. In each of these doublets, the former participates in the latter, and the latter is really (or sacramentally) present within the former. (10)

The creature's relation to God is real, but mediated through the sacramental nature of all things, a sacramental nature not imposed on things, but of their very being. The climax and *telos* of this sacramental ontology is Christ, the incarnate Lord, the one in whom "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Col 1:19).

Boersma's fundamental complaint about the Western tradition for which Aquinas stands as a rather isolated paradigm is that this fundamental sacramental and Christological structure seems to disappear when we come to the *telos* of all things in the beatific vision. Mediation is replaced by immediacy; seeing God "face to face" (1 Cor 13:12) is taken to mean seeing God "as he is" (1 John 3:2), the divine essence itself. In this life we see God most clearly as incarnate in the created humanity of Christ, but for Aquinas and those who follow him no created reality, not even Christ's humanity, can convey what God is, which

Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, 3d ed., trans. Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961], 661). Reformed Scholastics were apparently less uniform on the question. Besides the English-language Reformed discussed by Boersma, who tended toward a view of Christ as the object of the vision, Francis Turretin of Geneva contended that Scripture does not reveal whether we will see the divine essence or only the divine glory, but that the latter is more probable (*Institutio theologiae elencticae,* locus 20, q. 8, §14). Heinrich Heppe's summary of the Reformed Scholastics notes in passing various views held on the beatific vision (Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics: Set Out and Illustrated from the Sources*, trans. G. T. Thomson [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978], 695, 707).

transcends any creaturely image. The beatific vision lifts us above all such created images to the immediate intuition of God. What then is Christ's role in this vision? Is Christ simply the means, the path to this vision, the one who merits this gift for us, but not an essential feature of the vision itself? Does Christ's mediatorial role end when sin and its agents are all overcome and Christ "delivers the kingdom to God the Father" (1 Cor 15:24)? With the exception of John Calvin (271-73), few went so far to as to affirm a simple end to Christ's mediatorial role, but for Boersma the "Christological deficit" which he identifies in Aquinas (159) is already the decisive mistake.

Aquinas's various discussions of the beatific vision in the *Summa theologiae*[6] (most importantly I, q. 12; I-II, q. 3, a. 8; II-II, q. 175; III, q. 10) have been skillfully defended against Boersma's criticisms by Simon Francis Gaine.[7] The Scholastic method of the *quaestio* focused on the question posed and did not seek a comprehensive discussion of the general topic touched upon. The structure of the *Summa*, Gaine argues, deliberately avoided introducing the Christological framework into the first two parts unless necessary to the precise point being addressed in a specific article. That the plan of the *Summa* included eschatology *within* the Christological part III indicates the likelihood that the role of Christ in the vision of the blessed

---

[6] Texts of Aquinas are cited from http://www.corpusthomisticum.org/iopera.html. Various translation have been consulted for the English given here, but often altered to bring them closer to the Latin. In the case of the *Commentary on John*, Marietti numbers have been added, though they are not present in the Corpus Thomisticum text.

[7] See the give-and-take between Gaine and Boersma in the journal *TheoLogica* (Simon Francis Gaine, "The Beatific Vision and the Heavenly Mediation of Christ," *TheoLogica* 2, no. 2 [2018]: 116-28; Hans Boersma, "Thomas Aquinas on the Beatific Vision: A Christological Deficit," *TheoLogica* 2, no. 2 [2018]: 129-47; Simon Francis Gaine, "Thomas Aquinas, the Beatific Vision and the Role of Christ: A Reply to Hans Boersma," *TheoLogica* 2, no. 2 [2018]: 148-67). Gaine had discussed these issues earlier in his "Thomas Aquinas and John Owen on the Beatific Vision: A Reply to Suzanne McDonald," *New Blackfriars* 97 (2016): 432-46. While Gaine's response does not entirely eliminate the problem Boersma identifies, it is a model of reasoned, objective, and charitable analysis and disputation.

would have been addressed if Aquinas had lived to complete his master work, just as a similar "Christological deficit" one might find in the discussions of grace in the *Prima secundae* (*STh* I-II, qq. 109-14), is made up for in the grounding of grace in Christ in the *Tertia pars* (*STh* III, q. 8).[8]

Boersma's critique and Gaine's response, however, focus too narrowly on the *Summa theologiae*. Aquinas discusses the beatific vision, sometimes at length, in other works: the *Scriptum*, *De veritate*, some *Quodlibetal Questions*, the *Summa contra gentiles*, the *Commentary on John*, and part II of the *Compendium*.[9] In these works, the same Christological deficit that Boersma identifies in the *Summa theologiae* can be found. Again, at times the *quaestio* being addressed can account for the absence of any reference to Christ.[10] In the *Summa contra gentiles*, book III, chapters 51-63, the beatific vision is discussed in the context of God's providential ordering of all things to their end and does not reappear as a separate topic in the eschatology of book IV. In general, Aquinas's discussions of the beatific vision throughout his career tend to be concerned with showing why the vision is the only adequate ultimate end for human beings and solving the obvious epistemological problem of how a created mind can see the essence of God. Placing the vision in a Christological context does not arise as an issue to be addressed. The resources Gaine notes for a more adequately Christological understanding are present in Aquinas's thought, but he nowhere develops them. Boersma is correct, I believe, that there is at least a "Christo-

---

[8] Gaine makes this argument in detail in "Role of Christ," 151-58; and more briefly in "Heavenly Mediation," 125-26; and in "Aquinas and Owen," 434-35.

[9] IV *Sent.*, d. 49, a. 2; *De Verit.*, q. 8, aa. 1-4; q. 10, a. 11; q. 13; q. 18, a. 1; q. 20, a. 2; *Quodl.* I, q. 1, a. 1; VII, q. 1, a. 1; IX, q. 9, a. 2; X, q. 8, a. 1; *ScG* III, cc. 47, 49-63; *Super Ioan.*, c. 1, lect. 11 (§§210-14); *Comp. Theol.*, II, c. 9.

[10] For example, the discussion in question 8 of *De veritate* deals with the beatific vision of the angels. In general, discussions in Paris leading up to the condemnation of 1241, mentioned below, concerned whether any created intellect, angelic or human, could know the essence of God. The question was thus one of a highly general epistemology. On this context, see H.-F. Dondaine, "L'Objet et le 'medium' de la vision béatifique chez les théologiens du XIIIᵉ siécle," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 19 (1952): 60-130.

logical deficit" in the way Aquinas presents the beatific vision in his various treatments of the topic.

This Christological deficit is a problem not simply in Aquinas. Christ plays little obvious role in the beatific vision as presented in two of the most important discussions of the topic in the following generation, those of Henry of Ghent and John Duns Scotus,[11] nor in the later discussion by Francisco Suárez.[12] Karl Rahner could thus complain in the mid-twentieth century:

> Let us take a look at an average theological treatise on the Last Things, on eternal happiness. Does such a treatise mention even a single word about the Lord become man? Is not rather everything swallowed up by the *visio beatifica*, the beatific vision, the direct relationship to the very essence of God which is indeed determined historically by a past event—namely the event of Christ—but which is not *now* mediated by Jesus Christ?[13]

What is Boersma's solution to this Christological deficit? The key, he claims, lies in the sacramental ontology he outlines early in the book.[14] Created things exist only as they participate in God and, to the eye of faith, witness to their source. God presents himself to us sacramentally through all things, but especially in the Church's sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist.[15] God's

---

[11] See John Duns Scotus, *Ordinatio* IV, d. 49; and Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibeta* II, 7; III, 1; IV, 8-9; VII, 4-6; XII, 5-6; XIII, 1; XIV, 4; XV, 9. On the latter, see Richard Cross, "Scholastic Debaters on Beatific Union with God: Henry of Ghent (c.1217-1293) and His Interlocutors," *Traditio* (forthcoming). In both cases, Gaine's general point about Scholastic method holds: their discussions of the beatific vision are directed at specific, often technical questions about the nature of the beatific vision for which its relation to Christ does not arise.

[12] Francisco Suárez, "De ultimo fine hominis," in *Opera Omnia*, v. 4, ed. M. Andrë (Paris: Vives, 1856), 1-156.

[13] Karl Rahner, "The Eternal Significance of the Humanity of Jesus for Our Relationship with God," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 3, trans. Karl H. Kruger and Boniface Kruger (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967), 37f.

[14] He refers the reader to his own fuller discussion of such an approach to reality in Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2011).

[15] "Christ's sacramental presence in the Eucharist was, we might say, an intensification of this sacrmental presence in the world" (Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 26).

presence to humanity is always sacramental or theophanic, through created realities. This truth applies to the beatific vision:

> A sacramental understanding of the beatific vision acknowledges that everything we see with the eyes of the body today is a theophany of God in Jesus Christ, and that everything we will ever see with the eyes of the soul is also a theophany of God in Jesus Christ. (384)

The created reality in which we will see God is Christ's humanity: "in the hereafter we will see Christ's divinity in and through his humanity in the beatific vision" (134).

At times (e.g., 51), Boersma presents a binary, either-or opposition: either a vision of the divine essence or a vision of God in Christ.[16] At other times, however, he describes the beatific vision as a true seeing of the divine essence in the humanity of Christ in a way not now possible. Thus, although the sacramental ontology is itself not transcended in the beatific vision, the movement toward beatitude is a "journey from sacrament (*sacramentum*) to reality (*res*)" (388). There is no need, he says, to avoid speaking of "seeing the divine essence" (419), if we are clear that the divine essence is seen in and through the humanity of Christ. Nevertheless, the eschatological vision is not to be seen as different in kind from the vision of God in this life. Such a this-worldly vision of God's essence is not, as it was for the Scholastics and Augustine,[17] only a matter of the special moments of rapture of such men as Moses and Paul. "If God's essence is his character of love, then to see him in and through various creaturely modes is truly to see him—his being or οὐσία" (391). Old Testament theophanies were sacramental appearances of God "as he really is" (419). When in the Gospel of John, Philip asks Jesus to "show us the Father" (14:8), Jesus replies that "he who has seen me has seen the Father" (14:9). This interchange is "the key to

---

[16] For example, in his 2018 response to Gaine, Boersma entitles a section of his essay "Deficit 2: The Object of the Beatific Vision—Divine Essence or Christ" (Boersma, "Aquinas on Beatific Vision," 136).

[17] Augustine, *Letter 147*, 13.31-32; Aquinas, IV *Sent.*, d. 49, q. 2, a. 7, ad 4 and 5; *STh* I, q. 12, a. 11, ad. 2; II-II, q. 175, a. 3.

understanding the beatific vision" (411).[18] The beatific vision will differ from Philip's seeing the earthly Jesus not in what is shown, but in the one who sees. We can surmise that "the souls of the blessed are so changed that they are rendered capable of seeing God in Christ in a way that they could not during their earthly existence" (418). Boersma is reticent to say much about the nature of such a transformation, connecting it, without giving details, to eschatological deification and unity with Christ (419). Perhaps the eyes of the "spiritual bodies" of the resurrection will be able to see God, so that the beatific vision will be both spiritual and physical (422-24). Yet however the seer changes, what is seen remains unchanged. We will see God presented in the humanity of Christ.

The binary choice "divine essence or Christ" is misleading, however, in a more fundamental way. The affirmation that we will see the divine essence immediately need not exclude that in the Kingdom we will also enjoy a much clearer vision of God manifested in the humanity of Christ (and, to a lessser degree, in all created things).[19] If the beatific vision is understood as the immediate vision of the divine essence, then such a vision of God manifested in Christ might not itself be the beatific vision, but it would certainly be an aspect of the full joy of beatitude. One might say that even if it is not of the essence of beatitude, it is a necessary concomitant of beatitude and completes beatitude.[20]

---

[18] Boersma's insistence that we already see God "as he really is" (1 Jn 3:2) raises complex questions about the relation between God's eternal and immutable being and, not only what we can see in the incarnate Christ, but the entire economy of creation, redemption, and glorification. Does Boersma's argument imply an identity *simpliciter* between "God as he is," that is, God's essence, and "God incarnate in Christ," so that the incarnation becomes itself constitutive of God's essence? Does Boersma's proposal imply an understanding of the Trinity close to that which Bruce McCormack derives, rightly or wrongly, from Karl Barth (see, e.g., Bruce L. McCormack, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008], 183-200)?

[19] *Quodl.* VIII, q. 9, a. 2.

[20] Aquinas asserts something like such a necessary concomitance in the relation of the will's delight to the intellect's vision of God: "This delight, which belongs to the will,

The choice then is better described as between "a vision of the divine essence in the humanity of Christ, which is the beatific vision" (Boersma) and "an immediate vision of the divine essence, which is the beatific vision, and also a vision of God manifest in all things, but above all in the humanity of Christ" (Aquinas).[21]

II

This book is thus an argument for a particular proposal about the nature of the beatific vision as a vision of God in and through the humanity of Christ. Is the argument adequate? Should Boersma's conclusions be affirmed? In this essay, the more precise question will be: Should the Catholic theologian affirm his proposal?

An immediate problem arises for the Catholic theologian. What Boersma is proposing seems to be exactly what is condemned by the papal constitution *Benedictus Deus* of 1336.[22] The catalyzing event for this constitution was the debate during the 1330s over whether the beatific vision is enjoyed already by separated souls in heaven or is only enjoyed after the general resurrection, when souls are again joined to bodies. The constitution is the culmination, however, of over a century of at times intense theological debate over the object and nature of the vision.[23] Already in 1241, the bishop of Paris, William of

---

formally [*formaliter*] completes beatitude. Thus vision is the origin of our ultimate beatitude, but enjoyment [*fruitione*] is its completion" (*Quodl.* VIII, q. 9, a. 1).

[21] If the nature of the issue is thus clarified, Boersma's recruitment of Nicholas of Cusa to his side of debate (363) becomes less convincing. Cusa in *De visione Dei* does say much about communion with Christ in Paradise, but he also says: "Just as every man is united to you, Jesus, by the human nature common to himself and to you, so every man need also be united to you in one spirit, so that in this way he can . . . approach unto God the Father, who is in Paradise. Therefore, to see God the Father and you who are Jesus, his Son, is to be present in Paradise and in everlasting glory" (c. 21, sect. 92). This passage sounds far more like the alternative to Boersma presented below than like Boersma's limitation of the vision to the humanity of Christ.

[22] Heinrich Denzinger and Peter Hünermann, eds., *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, 43rd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), para. 1000-1002. I have altered the English translation to bring it closer to the Latin.

[23] This debate is comprehensively surveyed in Trottmann, *La vision béatifique*.

Auvergne, in union with the theological masters of the University of Paris, had condemned the teaching that "the divine essence in itself will be seen neither by man nor angel."[24] The issue in the debate leading up to the 1241 condemnation was whether the immediate object of the vision is a created reality or the divine essence itself. The condemnation is presumably the background of Aquinas's assertion that those who deny that God can be seen "through his essence" (*per essentiam*) by a created intellect, angelic or human, are not just wrong, but "heretical,"[25] not a term Aquinas uses lightly. *Benedictus Deus* amplifies the earlier Parisian statement. In the beatific vision, the blessed see the divine essence "immediately manifesting itself to them, plainly, clearly, and openly" (*immediate se nude, clare et aperte eis ostendente*). This vision has "no mediating creature in the sense of an object seen" (*nulla mediate creatura in ratione obiecti visi*). What is excluded is a particular kind of mediation, mediation by means of some created reality which is itself the object of vision and in which God is then seen. A discontinuity is posited between earthly and beatific vision: now we see only mediately, through created images ("in a glass darkly"); then we will see God immediately, without any created reality in the role of a mediating object ("face to face"). What is ruled out certainly seems to be just what Boersma affirms, that the beatific vision is not immediate, but is mediated *in ratione obiecti visi* by a created reality, the humanity of Christ.

Benedictus Deus cannot be easily dismissed by the Catholic theologian. The constitution opens: "By this constitution to remain in force forever, we define by apostolic authority" (*Hac in perpetuum valitura Constitutione auctoritate apostolica*

---

[24] "Quod divina essentia in se nec ab homine nec ab angelo videbitur." The text is given in Heinrich Denifle and Emil Chatelaine, eds., *Chartularium universitatis parisiensis,* vol. 1 (Paris: Delalain Frères, 1889), no. 128. The history leading up to this condemnation is described in Trottmann, *La vision béatifique*, 115-86; and in Dondaine, "L'Objet et le 'medium'."

[25] *De Verit.*, q. 8, a. 1; *Super Ioan.*, c. 1, lect. 11 (§212). Similar language from Bonaventure is noted above.

diffinimus). The intent of Benedict XII in issuing it was clearly to settle a disputed question permanently, definitively, and by apostolic authority, and it has been received accordingly. The conditions for such a teaching to qualify as infallible would seem to be met and have been judged so in recent studies by Klaus Schatz,[26] Francis Sullivan,[27] and Avery Dulles.[28] Whether or not it falls into that category, *Benedictus Deus* certainly carries high authority and would seem to make Boersma's proposal not an option a Catholic theologian can accept.

An appeal to the magisterium cannot, of course, settle a discussion that crosses confessional borders. In addition, it is the duty of the theologian not only to indicate that a certain affirmation is Catholic teaching, but also, as far as possible, to explain *why* it is Catholic teaching so that the teaching is not just accepted, but understood. An argument must be given.

Boersma's proposal is meant to solve a difficulty, a Christological deficit at least in the way the beatific vision has been presented in much of the Western tradition. What he does not do is to consider alternative solutions—and there is, in fact, an alternative. Boersma's proposal is to insert the phrase "in Christ" into the sentence "we will see God." The phrase can be inserted, however, at two different places. The revised sentence can read "We will see God-in-Christ," so that the *object* of the vision is Christ (Boersma's proposal). Or, the sentence can read "We-in-Christ will see God," so that the *subject* of the vision is Christologically determined (an alternative Boersma does not consider). This second option, I will argue, is conceptually coherent, consistent with and in fact implicit within much of the tradition, and preferable in decisive respects to Boersma's

---

[26] Klaus Schatz, "Welche bisherigen päpstlichen Lehrentscheidungen sind 'ex cathedra'? Historische und theologische Überlegungen," in *Dogmengeschichte und katholische Theologie*, ed. Werner Löser, Karl Lehmann, and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann (Würzburg: Echter, 1985), 404-22.

[27] Francis A. Sullivan, *Creative Fidelity: Weighing and Interpreting Documents of the Magisterium* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 84-86.

[28] Avery Dulles, *Magisterium: Teacher and Guardian of the Faith* (Naples, Fla.: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2007), 71.

proposal. For the Catholic, it also has the not inconsiderable advantage of being consistent with magisterial teaching.

Fortunately, much of the work of elaborating such an alternative proposal has already been done by Simon Francis Gaine, both in his exchanges with Boersma and Suzanne McDonald referred to above and in his study of Christ's own beatific vision.[29] For the sake of simplicity and efficiency, I will draw extensively on Gaine's work. Following Gaine, my discussion will thus look to Aquinas for guidance, but I have less interest than Gaine in arguing about what Aquinas would or could have said (though I think Gaine is correct in his estimate of what is implicit in Aquinas). My interest is more simply in arguing for an understanding of the vision that is more theologically adequate than that offered by Boersma. While this understanding will be presented along lines close to those of Aquinas, I do not think the position is in any restrictive sense "Thomist." In fact, I think a full expansion of this alternative would significantly profit from an examination and appropriation of elements of the Franciscan tradition on beatitude, with its more balanced integration of will and intellect, and of *visio, caritas,* and *fruitio*.[30]

[29] Simon Francis Gaine, *Did the Saviour See the Father? Christ, Salvation, and the Vision of God* (London: T & T Clark, 2015). Gaine's suggestions are by no means unprecedented. As Boersma himself notes, Edwards, at least at times, spoke similarly (373). A particularly detailed version of a "we-in-Christ" understanding of the vision, with close attention also given to the role of the Holy Spirit, is elaborated in G.-J. Waffelaert, "Disquisitio dogmatica de unione justorum cum Deo tum in hac vita tum in vita aeternum beata," *Collationes brugensis* 16 (1911): 161-79, 241-55, 313-20. A brief English summary of Waffelaert's presentation is in Francis A. P. Solá and Joseph F. Sagüés, *Sacrae Theologiae Summa: IVB: On Holy Orders and Matrimony, On the Last Things*, trans. Kenneth Baker (n.p.: Keep the Faith, 2016), 329.

[30] On Bonaventure, see references above in note 4. For the Franciscan tradition on the vision after Bonaventure through Duns Scotus, see Christian Trottmann, "La vision béatifique dans la second école franciscaine: de Matthieu d'Aquasparata à Duns Scot," *Collectanea franciscana* 64 (1994): 127-80. Michael Waddell suggests that as the self becomes more deiform in beatitude and thus more conformed to the divine simplicity in which will and intellect are identical, we should expect will and intellect to become more integrated in the beatified (see Michael M. Waddell, "Aquinas on the Light of Glory," *Tópicos. Revista de Filosofía* 41 [2011]: 126). Boersma (195) makes a similar suggestion.

Here only a brief sketch can be offered of such an alternative. Decisive is a basic assertion about beatitude: beatitude is centered on our unity with and participation in God through our unity with and participation in Christ, our brother and God incarnate. In his brief *Collationes* on the Creed, originally delivered in the vernacular for a less exclusively academic audience, Aquinas makes the central point: "In eternal life, the first thing is that in it man is intimately conjoined to God" (*in vita eterna primum est quod in ea homo intime Deo conjungitur*).[31] What role do Christ and the beatific vision play in the promised conjoining to God?

A path to an answer lies in the doctrine of grace. Beatitude is, after all, the supreme gift of grace, a radically free gift fitting to our nature, but far beyond human capacities without supernatural elevation.[32] Grace is a particularly useful entry point for our specific topic since, as noted above, here Aquinas's initial discussion of grace in the *Summa theologiae* can also be thought to suffer a certain Christological deficit. The detailed discussion of grace in an anthropological context in questions 109-14 of the *Prima secundae*, like that of the beatific vision in parts I and II of the *Summa*, has remarkably little to say about the connection between grace and Christ. The connection is asserted, but not elaborated.[33] Unlike the beatific vision, however, grace is then discussed in a Christological context in part III, in two questions addressing Christ's grace as an individual (q. 7) and his grace as

---

[31] *Collationes in Symbolum Apostolorum*, a. 12. As Nicholas Ayo notes in the Introduction to his English translation of the *Collationes* that, while they may not give us the *ipsissima verba* of Aquinas, they give us his general point (Thomas Aquinas, *The Sermon-Conferences of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Apostles' Creed*, trans. Nicholas Ayo [Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988], 5).

[32] Eternal life is also merited, but merit is itself "an effect of cooperative grace" (*STh* I-II, q.114, pro.).

[33] References to Christ in the treatise on grace are of the sort Gaine describes in relation to the beatific vision; Christ enters the discussion when a particular problem requires such a reference, e.g., in q. 109, a. 7 (Can we rise from sin without grace? No, for in that case, Christ would have died in vain.); q. 113, a. 4, ad 3 (What article of faith is required for justification? Faith that God justifies man through Christ.); q. 114, a. 6 (Can someone merit first grace for another condignly? No, with the exception of Christ.).

head of the Church (q. 8).[34] In addition, the Christological character of grace is developed in Aquinas's *Commentary on the Gospel of John,* especially in relation to the decisive verse: "And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace" (John 1:16).[35]

In the example of Christ, Aquinas draws a distinction among the grace of union (by which the Word takes on human nature, effecting the incarnation), personal grace (by which Christ's humanity is perfected and elevated), and capital grace or grace of headship (by which grace flows from Christ to others as from head to members).[36] Aquinas develops this topic in strict accordance with the Chalcedonian tradition as it evolved from Nicea through the Monothelite controversy and the Third Council of Constantinople: the single divine person has both a human and a divine nature, unconfused and unseparated. The divine person acts though both natures in their distinct modes of operation. The human intellect and will of Christ thus function in genuinely human ways. As human, they needed the perfection and elevation of grace both on account of Christ's own relation to God and on account of Christ's relation to the human race (*ad genus humanum*) as mediator from whom grace overflows to others (q. 7, a. 1; Aquinas cites John 1:16). This personal, habitual grace is given to Christ "without measure," in all the fullness possible for a human nature (q. 7, a. 9; see also *Super Ioan.*, c. 3, lect. 6 [§544]). Christ receives the fullness of grace

---

[34] Aquinas had developed the central principles of this discussion earlier, in *De Verit.*, q. 29. References to the discussion of Christ's grace in the *Tertia pars* will be given in the text parenthetically by question and article.

[35] References to this commentary will be given parenthetically in the text. The translation is generally dependent on Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: Chapters 1-5*, trans. Fabian Larcher and James A. Weisheipl (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), but sometimes changed to bring it closer to the Latin.

[36] These three graces are one in essence, but distinct in their *rationes* (*STh* III, q. 8, a. 5, ad 3). The grace of union is discussed in *STh* III, q. 2, a. 10; Christ's personal grace in q. 7; and the grace of headship in q. 8. The same distinctions are drawn in *Super Ioan.*, c. 1, lect. 8 (§§188-90).

precisely so that such grace might overflow from him to others: "For the soul of Christ received grace in this way [i.e., in its fullness] so that it might in some way be poured out from Christ's soul into others" (*Sic enim recipiebat anima Christi gratiam ut ex ea quodammodo transfunderetur in alios* [q. 7, a. 9]). Grace is bestowed on Christ as on a universal principal (*tamquam cuidam universali principio*) for all who receive grace (ibid.).[37] Christ is the "originative fountain" (*fontalem originem*) of every spiritual grace (*Super Ioan.*, c. 1, lect. 10 [§200]).

Christ is thus not a merely extrinsic efficient or meritorious cause of the grace received by others. Our grace is a participation in his perfect grace: "we participate through him in some portion of his fullness; and this according to the measure which God grants to each. 'Grace has been given to each of us according to the degree to which Christ gives it' (Eph. 4:7)" (ibid. [§202]). That our grace is a participation in his is emphasized by Aquinas in his assertion that the personal grace that sanctifies Christ and the grace that sanctifies the members of his ecclesial Body are identical: "with respect to its essence, the personal grace, whereby the soul of Christ is justified, is the same as his grace whereby he is head of the Church and justifies others" (q. 8, a. 5).

The connection between grace and the beatific vision lies in the *lumen gloriae*, the light of glory which makes the beatific vision possible. How can a created intellect see God "as he is"? The problem is both theological and philosophical. Theologically, how can the infinite gap between creator and creature be bridged? Philosophically, on Aristotelian terms, what image or similitude in the mind, by which the mind knows, could be remotely adequate to the divine essence?[38] Aquinas's solution to both sides of the problem is the same: union with God, the "first

---

[37] Gaine, "Heavenly Mediation," 122-23, discusses Aquinas's "principle of the maximum," whereby imperfect realizations of some reality participate in its complete realization in the perfect.

[38] As Dondaine makes clear (Dondaine, "L'Objet et le 'medium'," 92-99) part of the ferment in relation to the beatific vision in the first half of the thirteenth century was related to the specific difficulties presented for a conception of the vision by the role played in an Aristotelian epistemology by a similitude in the mind, a similitude which can only be a created reality, with all the attendant limitations.

thing" in understanding eternal life. Most prominently in Aquinas's discussions, God's essence can only be known though the divine essence itself, which is the way God knows himself.[39] The divine essence must itself function as the form or intelligible species of the knowledge of God in the beatific vision. The vision is thus a creaturely participation in the divine self-knowledge, the union of the intellect in act with God.[40]

The *lumen gloriae* is central to this union. Beatitude itself must be an operation, an act (*STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 2). The beatific vision, the act of seeing God as he is through the divine essence itself, is the act at the core of beatitude (*STh* I-II, q. 3, a. 8). To perform such an act, "it is necessary that some supernatural disposition be added to the intellect in order that it might be elevated to such sublimity." This supernatural disposition is an illumination of the intellect by the light of glory (Aquinas cites Rev 21:23 on the New Jerusalem: "The glory of the Lord is its light" [Vulg.: "*claritas Dei illuminavit eam*"]), which comes by divine grace (*STh* I, q. 12, a. 5). This light functions as a habit by which the intellect is made capable (*fiat potens*) of seeing God (*STh* I, q. 12, a. 5, ad 1). Since the act is one of participation in God, the disposition needed for such an act of the intellect is an elevated conformity of the intellect to God. Thus, by the light of glory, the blessed

---

[39] On this aspect of Aquinas's understanding of the beatific vision, see especially Hütter, *Bound for Beatitude*, 397-409.

[40] That the intelligible species or form of our knowledge of God in the beatific vision is the essence of God himself is stressed by Aquinas from the *Scriptum* through the *Compendium*. In the *Scriptum* (IV *Sent.*, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1), he is clear that he is appropriating ideas of Averroës and Alexander of Aphrodisias on the knowledge of separated substances and applying them to the vision of God (although Aquinas is noncommittal on whether he accepts their view as explaining how we can know separated substances) The reference to Averroës and Alexander disappears from Aquinas's later discussions of the beatific vision and he prefaces his discussion of the vision in the *Summa contra gentiles* III with a vigorous rejection of their positions on the knowledge of separated substances (cc. 42-43).

"are made deiform, that is, like to God" (*efficiuntur deiformes, idest Deo similes* [*STh* I, q. 12, a. 5]).[41]

Like all grace, the light of glory comes through Christ. As noted, Aquinas identifies the light of glory with the glory of the Lord which illumines the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:23). That verse continues: "and its lamp is the Lamb," that is, Christ. "The vision of the divine essence is granted to all the blessed according to a participation in the light shed upon them from the fountain of the Word of God," that is, the divine person of Christ, to which his human nature is joined (*STh* III, q. 10, a. 4). Christ mediates this light to the blessed. Though the blessed in heaven are not dependent on any further expiation of their sins by Christ (since they are beyond all sinning), "they will need [*indigebunt*] consummation through Christ Himself, on whom their glory depends, as is written: 'the glory of God has illumined it," i.e., the city of the saints, 'and the Lamb is its lamp'" (*STh* III, q. 22, a. 5, ad 1).

As noted, grace—and thus the light of glory—is mediated to the saints as a participation in Christ's fullness of grace.[42] As Gaine puts it: "One cannot see God without being 'in Christ,' actually related to him as member to Head, and ever in dependence on him for that light under which the Blessed Trinity is seen."[43] In his study of Christ's beatific vision, he is more forceful:

The members of Christ's Body in heaven enjoy the beatific vision by way of sharing derivatively in Christ's own vision of the Father, which is again present

---

[41] On deiformity as central to the light of glory, see Daria Spezzano, *The Glory of God's Grace: Deification according to St. Thomas Aquinas* (Ave Maria, Fla.: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2015), 37.

[42] The participatory dependence of the blessed on Christ does not imply that there is not a genuine act on the part of the blessed, an act of vision that is theirs. A Catholic understanding of grace insists on this. Christ's all-sufficient merit does not eliminate our merit, but is the basis of our merit in which our deeds participate (Council of Trent, Decree on Justification, chap. 16, in Denzinger and Hünermann, eds., *Enchiridion*, para. 1546).

[43] Gaine, "Aquinas and Owen," 639.

in his humanity. It is as though the saints were to see the Father with Christ's own eyes through their union with him.[44]

It is helpful here to think of the agents of the beatific vision not as an aggregate of individual blessed saints, but as the *totus Christus,* the heavenly city, internally structured by the difference and dependence distinguishing and linking the head and members. So Gaine adds: "United to Christ in heaven, the saints gaze on the Father as one Son."[45]

According to such an understanding, the beatific vision is most definitely mediated by Christ. There is no beatific vision of the saints apart from their union with Christ and his vision of the Father.[46] There is here no obvious Christological deficit. The object of the vision is not Christ, however, functioning *in ratione obiecti visi* in the sense rejected by *Benedictus Deus.* The object is the divine essence, God as he is. Christ does mediate the vision, however, in another sense. In the *Scriptum*, Aquinas distinguishes three sorts of possible mediation (*medium*) of the beatific vision: mediation *by which* (*quo*), that is, through the form in the mind by which one identifies the known; mediation *in which* (*in quo*), that is, by an object in which what is know is seen; and mediation *under which* (*sub quo*), as light is the medium under which things are seen. The first two forms of mediation are excluded from the beatific vision: God will be seen face to face, not through some other object, and not through a finite form in the mind. The third form of mediation, the light elevating our mind, however, is a medium that does not "fall between the knower and the known" (*non cadit inter cognoscentem et rem cognitam* [IV *Sent.*, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1, ad 15]). Aquinas regularly returns to this threefold

---

[44] Gaine, *Did the Saviour See the Father?*, 87.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Space does not allow taking up the difficult question of the relation of Christ to the beatific vision of the angels, a topic on which there has been significant disagreement in the tradition. On these questions, see Serge-Thomas Bonino, *Angels and Demons: A Catholic Introduction*, trans. Michael J. Miller (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016), 187-91, 221-30.

distinction in his discussions of the vision.[47] There is a sense in which the beatific vision is mediated by the light of glory, but not in a way that hinders the immediacy of the vision. When it is remembered that the light of glory received by the saints is a participation in the light of glory enjoyed by Christ in his human nature, a strong sense of Christological mediation of the vision is evident. The contention between this understanding of the vision and that of Boersma is not over *whether* Christ mediates the vision, but *in what sense* Christ mediates the vision.

One can then find in the Catholic tradition as exemplified by Aquinas an understanding of the beatific vision that is not Christologically deficient, but that does not abandon the promise that we will see God immediately, face to face, "as he is" in the sense of seeing the divine essence. We will see God in our unity with Christ and his vision of the Father. As was said at the outset of this sketch, beatitude is, above all, unity with God through union with Christ. The sketch simply explores how such unity might work in the case of the beatific vision.

<div align="center">III</div>

We thus have two alternative models for understanding the beatific vision, both of which stress the role of Christ. One, Boersma's proposal, stresses Christ in his humanity as the immediate object of the beatific vision, in whom we will see God. For brevity's sake, I will call this the object understanding or model. The other, implicit in, but not sufficiently elaborated by, the Catholic tradition, stresses our unity with Christ, with whom we will see God. For brevity's sake, I will call this the unity understanding or model.[48]

---

[47] *Quodl.* VII, q. 1, a. 1; *De Verit.*, q. 18, a. 1, ad 1; *STh* I, q. 12, a. 5, ad 2. In the latter case, Aquinas only contrasts mediation *in quo* and *sub quo*, the issue at stake in the discussion with Boersma.

[48] At isolated points in *Seeing God*, esp. 411-13, however, Boersma seems to approach something like a unity understanding. For example, he says: "We see God himself—the divine essence—when we indwell the incarnate tabernacle of God through union and communion with Jesus" (411). He does not follow up these suggestions, however.

Is one understanding preferable to the other? Are there any relatively neutral grounds on which one might argue for one proposal rather than the other? I would briefly note three such grounds which indicate the significant advantages of the unity understanding.

First, the unity understanding is closer to the language of the New Testament. Boersma himself cites Jesus in John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me," noting that "it would seem from this that the Father is the destination, while Jesus is the means through which one arrives at it" (409). As Gaine notes, the early Church followed this line of reasoning: "Scripture and the Fathers tend to speak primarily of the Father as the object of the beatific vision, even if not to the exclusion of Son and Spirit."[49] For the unity understanding, if we see the divine essence in any of the Trinitarian persons, it will be in the Father, in unity with Jesus' vision of the one he addressed as Father.[50]

Second, important problems arise for the object understanding precisely in relation to what is claimed as its strength, Christology. These problems relate both to Christ himself and to our relation to Christ. If the immediate object of our beatific vision will be the humanity of Christ, in whom we will see God, then does Christ, in his human mode of knowing, enjoy the beatific vision?[51] The question is not whether he had the beatific vision during his earthly life, but whether he has the beatific vision in his heavenly glory, the site of our beatific vision. If he has a vision similar to ours, it could only be a kind of self-knowledge, a sense of God within his own humanity. Such self-knowledge as substitute for vision has been posited by some for

---

[49] Gaine, *Did the Saviour See the Father?*, 83. Earlier in the book (28-30), Gaine discusses the general New Testament orientation to the Father.

[50] This assertion will necessarily involve a sense of appropriation to the person of the Father, but, as Gaine notes (ibid., 90-91), such appropriation should not be seen as an empty form of words.

[51] Gaine raises this question in relation to John Owen, to whom Boersma appeals (Gaine, "Aquinas and Owen," 446).

Jesus during his earthly life,[52] but to say that the glorified Christ knows his Father by knowing himself seems to suggest that Christ in his human mode of knowing is oddly external to God and even to the knowledge of God presumably possessed by himself in his own divine mode of knowing.

If Christ has a beatific vision essentially unlike ours, then our relation to Christ becomes overly external. He will see God directly, but we will not. Even if his vision is like ours, it will be a form of self-knowledge and thus, even if it has the same object as our vision, will be dissimilar in the way it is known. To a degree, I know myself by observation, but more fundamentally, I possess a certain immediate self-presence. My knowledge of myself is structurally different from the knowledge others may have of me. Other persons (e.g., my wife) may know me in many ways better than I know myself, but they do not know me in the way I know myself. Boersma stresses that our vision of God in Christ is linked to unity with Christ (413), but, on his understanding, our vision and his cannot but be different. Communion with Christ and his vision is more fundamental for the unity understanding than it can be for the object understanding.

Third, the object understanding suffers from what one might call a deification deficit. Boersma wishes to affirm the concept of deification (e.g., 393f.), but the object model limits that affirmation. The unity model understands the beatific vision as a participation in God's self-knowledge. We will know God through the divine essence, as God knows himself. It will thus be true that "then I shall know even as also I am known" (1 Cor 13:12 [KJV]).[53] Our vision of God will in a sense not be external to God, but internal. As Matthew Levering puts it: "The blessed will share in God's own Trinitarian communion not as onlookers, but as real participants, caught up into God's life rather than being observers who watch God moment to moment."[54] Herein

---

[52] Karl Rahner, "Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-Consciousness of Christ," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5, trans. K.-H. Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), 193-215.

[53] On this point, see Gaine, *Did the Saviour See the Father?*, 95.

[54] Matthew Levering, *Jesus and the Demise of Death: Resurrection, Afterlife, and the Fate of the Christian* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2012), 113.

lies the crucial implication of deification for the intellect, as Aquinas makes clear in his explanation of the effect of the light of glory as the deiformity of our intellect, as noted above. This creaturely participation in the divine self-knowledge is precisely what the object understanding of the vision cannot affirm. As our vision remains to a degree external to Christ for the object understanding, even more does that vision remain external to God.

These are at least relatively neutral grounds on which one might argue the advantages of one or the other of the two understandings of the vision under discussion. Beneath them, however, lies a basic question regarding the eschatological promise that is the object of our hope. Is anything less than something like the immediate vision of God, mediated by no created reality as object, a plausible fulfillment of the promise that we will see God "as he is," "face to face," a fulfillment that will form the *telos* of human existence in which we finally can rest? I think not, but that judgment is more a function of a general sense of God, humanity, and the gospel than of specific arguments.

One final point should be made, however, which might cast some light on the wider issues. Boersma brings to his study of the beatific vision a set of commitments that shape his elaboration of and preference for the object understanding. In earlier works, he has argued for a strong continuity of nature and grace, drawing on the work of Henri de Lubac and his colleagues within the *nouvelle théologie*.[55] In *Seeing God,* this understanding of nature and grace shows up in sacramental ontology, in which the world is naturally sacramental, and in an emphasis on an essential continuity between how we experience and grasp God now and how we will experience and grasp God eternally (e.g., 376, 378, 389, 420). For Boersma, the unity model sketched above, however, depicts the beatific vision as transcending rather than

---

[55] Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*; Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

exemplifying the sacramental mediation of God (e.g., 165), is bound up with nature-grace distinctions which have led to the impoverished world of modern secularism (e.g., 21, 98, 280), and portrays the beatific vision, beholding God through God, as discontinuous with our present experience of God (e.g., 133, 164).

There is not space here to explore the complicated question of how to understand nature, grace, and their continuities and discontinuities. The question can be asked, however, whether Boersma's strong continuity between nature and grace requires that both grace and nature be compromised. On the one hand, grace cannot elevate humanity to participation in God's self-knowledge, for such an elevation lifts us beyond the mediated, sacramental character of our knowledge of God in this life. Nature, on the other hand, must correspondingly be lifted up to make even the limited vision described possible. Drawing on Jonathan Edwards, Boersma affirms, tentatively to be sure, an "immaterialist or idealist metaphysics," similar to that of Berkeley, in which no material substance undergirds appearances. The only substance, properly speaking, is God; his perceiving gaze gives what he sees a sort of participation in his being, but no substance of its own (355, 399-401). Materiality is simply appearance, sustained only by minds. Our risen bodies then will have no matter which must be "spiritualized." They only need their essentially spiritual nature to be developed. When that occurs, we can think of seeing God not only with the intellect, but with the eyes of the risen body (425).[56] The sense in which the integrity of nature is here preserved is, I would think, a genuine question. Has Boersma's version of a nature-grace continuity become a Procrustean bed, requiring that the faith be truncated at top and bottom?

<center>* * *</center>

---

[56] Boersma seems to entertain seriously, though not explicitly affirm, Gregory of Nyssa's affirmation that even sexual differentiation will disappear from risen bodies (425-28).

Hans Boersma focuses theology on a topic that has been neglected in recent years, our eschatological destiny as the most intimate communion with God, and does so in an informed and thoughtful manner. Along the way, he rightly challenges the limits of the modern secular outlook, and lays bare a genuine problem in the tradition, a tendency to carry forward the discussion of the beatific vision with little attention to Christ as central to the vision. One may still judge, however, as I do, that in constructing his solution Boersma takes a significantly wrong turn, a turn with deleterious theological effects, and one which the Catholic theologian cannot affirm. Fortunately, there are in the tradition at the center of his criticism the resources for an alternative that addresses his problem in what I believe is a more fruitful manner. Boersma's study is a powerful spur to a more careful analysis of the end for which we hope, but not the answer to the important question he asks.

BOOK REVIEWS

Understanding the Diaconate: Historical, Theological, and Sociological Foundations. By W. Shawn McKnight. Foreword by David W. Fagerberg. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018. Pp. xviii + 309. $29.95 (paper). ISBN: 978-0-8132-3035-1.

W. Shawn McKnight, bishop of the Diocese of Jefferson City, Missouri, has written what should by all rights become the comprehensive treatment of the diaconate with which all future discussions must wrestle. Combining scriptural exegesis, historical inquiry, dogmatic exposition, sociological theory, and theological reflection, McKnight has provided a kind of *summa* of the diaconate that draws together most of the relevant theological engagements with the diaconate since its renewal in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. Even if one disagrees with McKnight's approach to the topic, his framing of the question of the nature of the diaconate cannot be ignored or dismissed.

The book is divided into four sections. Part 1 examines the theological foundations of the diaconate, focusing on the biblical sources as well as the teachings of Vatican II. In examining the biblical material, McKnight's perspective is shaped by the work of the Australian exegete John N. Collins, who has argued at considerable length and in great detail that the Greek term *diakonia* does not, as has been claimed since the early twentieth century, imply humble or menial service, but is instead a term implying a rather exalted status as an emissary of some noble person. As McKnight puts it, not a "waiter" but a "go-between" (7). He argues that it is, moreover, a Christological term (to engage in *diakonia* is to emulate Christ's obedience as the emissary of the Father), a pneumatological term (*diakonia* is one of the Spirit's gifts), and an ecclesiological term (the work of *diakonia*, as the Letter to the Ephesians notes, is for "the building up of the body of Christ"). In looking at the actual office of deacon in the New Testament (primarily 1 Timothy), McKnight acknowledges that "the scriptures raise more questions than answers" (26), apart from suggesting a close but subordinate relationship to the *episkopos*.

Looking at Vatican II, McKnight focuses primarily on *Lumen Gentium*, which called for the restoration of the diaconate as an office permanently exercised, and in particular its statement, drawn from the early Christian text known as *The Apostolic Tradition*, that deacons are ordained "not to the priesthood but to the ministry" (*LG* 29). He shows how *Lumen Gentium*

establishes ordination to the diaconate as a genuine participation in the sacrament of order that is, at the same time, nonpriestly in character. He also shows how this teaching is affirmed by Pope Benedict XVI's October 26, 2009 *motu proprio* amending the *Code of Canon Law*. The Church's law now clearly distinguishes between episcopal and presbyteral ordination on the one hand, which empowers the recipient to act *in persona Christi Capitis*, and diaconal ordination on the other, which confers sacramental character for *diakonia*. McKnight also compares the teaching on the diaconate in *Lumen Gentium* with that found in *Ad Gentes*, suggesting that one can only truly understand the diaconate if one attends to both documents. The latter not only focuses, as might be expected, less on the intraecclesial and more on the extraecclesial ministry of the deacon, but also reflects, as *Lumen Gentium* does not, Karl Rahner's view that ordination to the diaconate is a confirmation and sacramentalization of a diaconal *charism* that is already present and being exercised, "though in an anonymous way" (57, citing Rahner's "The Theology for the Restoration of the Diaconate"). Finally, McKnight looks at Paul VI's 1972 apostolic letter *Ad Pascendum*, one of a series of documents restoring the diaconate as a permanent office, and in particular his description of the diaconate as an "intermediate order" (*medius ordo*) between the hierarchy and the people of God.

McKnight sees in this notion of the diaconate as a *medius ordo* an echo of Collins's understanding of *diakonia* as service as an emissary or go-between, and he explores this further in part 2. This section focuses less explicitly on the diaconate, but rather develops the notion of "social mediation" and shows how it functions in the Church. Drawing on a variety of social theorists, McKnight defines a social intermediary as "an institution in which roles have been entrusted (and therefore knowledge, power, and authority to perform these roles) to facilitate the distribution of power, authority, and resources throughout the social body" (86). He sees the deacon as a social intermediary in both relating the laity to the bishop and in relating the Church as a whole to those outside the Church to whom the Church ministers. This notion of social mediation is central to McKnight's proposal for how the office of deacon is to be understood and exercised; it is the missing piece that unites the scriptural understanding of *diakonos* as go-between, the teaching of the Church as articulated at Vatican II, and the actual exercise of diaconal ministry in history, particularly in what he calls the "Golden Age" of the diaconate in the pre-Nicene Church (111).

It is this history to which McKnight turns in part 3. The story he tells is a familiar one to those who study the diaconate: a flowering of the diaconate in the early Church, when "deacons collegially served the church as a whole with presbyters and bishops" (143). This collegiality is what distinguishes the early Golden Age from the gradual post-Nicene decline of the diaconate. This decline resulted from a complex of factors, but chief among them was simply the growth in size of the Church after Constantine, which led to an increasing

delegation of episcopal duties (such as liturgical presidency and pastoral rule) to presbyters, and the consequent subordination and eventual eclipse of the diaconate. The Council of Nicaea itself was the "formal turning point of the diaconate from development into decline" (147) with its decree that "deacons must remain within their own limits, knowing that they are the ministers of the bishop and subordinate to the presbyters" (canon 18). As diaconal identity was obscured, the diaconate eventually degenerated into an almost wholly liturgical role and a final step in the *cursus honorum* by which one ascended to the exalted height of priesthood. This is underscored by Scholastic theology, which understood the sacrament of order as rooted in the power to consecrate the Eucharist, making the sacramentality of diaconal ordination questionable in some minds. A vestige of the diaconate held on in the form of the medieval archdeacon, an office that was increasingly exercised by presbyters and became something like a sub-bishop: rather than mediating between the hierarchy and the laity, archdeacons came to mediate between the bishop and his presbyters. Though there remained some notable deacons after the Golden Age, such as Alcuin of York and Francis of Assisi, these were mere vestiges of a once robust office.

Part 4 offers McKnight's proposals for reinvigorating the diaconate today. He begins by an analysis of the deacon's role in the liturgy, viewed through the concept of *communitas* derived from the anthropologist Victor Turner, which McKnight describes as "society experienced or perceived as a relatively undifferentiated communion of equal individuals," comparing it to "the breaks between sessions at a professional conference when participants get to know each other" (183). McKnight argues that, though the Mass is highly structured, one sees in the specifically diaconal roles—proclaiming the gospel, leading the intercessions, inviting the exchange of the sign of peace—structure meeting anti-structure, which allows people to find in the liturgy not simply a hierarchical pageant but an experience of *communitas*. Having grounded the diaconate as *medius ordo* in the liturgy, McKnight goes on to discuss practical suggestions for reconceiving the diaconate. Here he shows himself to have a thorough knowledge of the structures of the Church and to have thought deeply about how the deacon relates to those structures. So, for example, McKnight argues that, while numerous positions in a diocesan chancery might be open to a deacon, only some of them might be appropriate: "the more an office entails decisionmaking authority, the more problematic it is for the intermediate character of diaconal ministry" (214). He notes in particular that though a deacon can, canonically speaking, fulfill the role of clerical-judge in tribunal procedures, this places him over and against the people of God as a ruler rather than standing between them and the authorities of the Church, presenting their concerns to those authorities. McKnight sees deacons as more appropriately exercising their ministry in parish settings or, perhaps even more appropriately, in institutional setting such as prisons, hospitals, and charitable endeavors, where they mediate not only between laity and hierarchy, but between the

world and the Church. This is a particularly interesting proposal, though perhaps not as novel as McKnight presents it. In recent years a number of dioceses (including my own, Baltimore) have given newly ordained deacons both a parochial and an institutional assignment, with some having their institutional assignment be primary. Of course, this simply serves as evidence that McKnight is correct, or at least not alone, in thinking that deacons need to be recentered in the space between the Church and the needs of the world.

There are a number of specific points on which I might take issue with McKnight's approach or conclusions. For example, I am very suspicious of "Golden Age" historiography. Certainly *ressourcement* is an indispensable part of theological reflection, but there seems something arbitrary about drawing the line at the pre-Nicene Church. Historians of the early Church are more inclined these days to downplay the importance of the "Constantinian shift," noting that in significant ways the fundamental character of church life did not dramatically change for many decades after Constantine. At its worst, such a historiographical approach runs the risk of becoming question-begging: the pre-Nicene age is a Golden Age because the diaconate in that era possessed certain features that we judge to be exemplary, and we judge them to be exemplary because they were present in the pre-Nicene Church, which was a Golden Age. Such an approach also can lead to such things as a too-easy dismissal of medieval views of the diaconate, and the sacrament of order in general, simply by labeling them "Scholastic." Are there not Scholastic concepts, such as Thomas Aquinas's subtle account of sacramental character, that might offer salutary resources not found in the Golden Age?

Similarly, despite his very insightful chapter on the deacon's liturgical role, and the way in which he grounds the diaconate as *medius ordo* in that role, there is to my mind an excessive worry about deacons being merely liturgical functionaries. First, in my experience (which, admittedly, is only *my* experience), it is a rare Latin Rite deacon who only serves by fulfilling a liturgical function; almost all are involved to some degree in catechetical and formational work as well as the work of charity. Second, should we think of the deacon's liturgical role as *merely* liturgical? Is serving the people of God in their worship of God *merely* anything? Though an exclusively liturgical role for the deacon, as found in some of the Eastern Churches, might seem truncated by contemporary Latin Rite standards, might this simply say more about the rationalistic and pragmatic bent of modern Western thinking than it does about the nature of the diaconate? At the very least, attention to the diaconate in the Churches of the East would have given greater richness and complexity to McKnight's overall discussion.

More broadly, I am not fully convinced by the central place that McKnight gives to the idea of the diaconate as a *medius ordo*. While I think this notion picks out *a* significant aspect of the diaconate, oftentimes McKnight treats it as the key that unlocks the whole of the diaconate. This can lead to the kind of *a priori* judgments I have mentioned previously: the pre-Nicene Church

represents the Golden Age because it is there that we see the diaconate functioning as *medius ordo*; Scholastic theology is inadequate because there is no recognition of the diaconate as *medius ordo*; the liturgical role of the deacon is important because it shows us the nature of the diaconate as *medius ordo*; roles for which a deacon is canonically eligible are nevertheless inappropriate if they do not conform to the diaconate as *medius ordo*. While McKnight clearly offers us a genuine insight into the diaconate, we might be better served by a more *a posteriori* approach that looks at what deacons have done throughout history and are doing now in ministry, seeking to derive from that the nature of the diaconate. (It is worth noting that McKnight engages many social theorists, but few sociologists examining the contemporary diaconate.) Even if one ends up agreeing with many of McKnight's judgments, as I am inclined to do, a more empirical, less theory-driven approach might lead to more tentative conclusions, which could be a good thing when dealing with a still-emerging phenomenon such as the contemporary diaconate.

FREDERICK C. BAUERSCHMIDT

Loyola University Maryland
Baltimore, Maryland

A Theology of the Christian Bible: Revelation, Inspiration, Canon. By DENIS FARKASFALVY, O. CIST. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018. Pp. xii + 239. $34.95 (paper). ISBN: 978-0-8132-3029-0.

Denis Farkasfalvy, Hungarian Cistercian, displaced from the monastery of Zirc and longtime abbot of Our Lady of Dallas, mathematician, expert on Bernard of Clairvaux, translator of the Psalms and member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission for more than a decade (2002-13), was already in ill health when he died of Covid-19 on May 20, 2020. His passing interrupted work on one final, monumental project on the Gospel of Matthew. It is the theology of sacred Scripture, however, where his legacy is most assured. This final book, with the all-embracing, yet targeted subtitle, "Revelation, Inspiration, Canon," caps a lifetime of reflection and personal engagement around these central theological themes. Out of this engagement comes Farkasfalvy's considerable frustration over a standing ecclesial inability to enunciate the correct doctrine on these matters, as he sees it. This weariness blurs in these pages with a more systematic and detached account, and the book wavers among being a primer, a history of the conciliar era, and a kind of personal theological memoire.

While the dustjacket blurbs are true to form ("remarkable work," "epochal," "crowning achievement," "brilliantly luminous"), Richard Ounsworth has captured another quite valid response in his entertaining and appreciative, yet sharp review in *New Blackfriars*. "This book is simultaneously excellent and rather frustrating, fascinating and puzzling, even at times infuriating, but nevertheless a must-read for anyone seeking to engage with the Bible as sacred scripture." Farkasfalvy's deep personal investment in his theme, and his equally deep disappointment at its travesty in modern Catholic thought, "seems to have caused him to lose the thread of his argument through large parts of the book." "The structure of the book is opaque, the titles of the chapters offering very little clue as to where the argument is going." In the end, the book is "very clear about what Farkasfalvy thinks is the *wrong* understanding of biblical inspiration, far less about what he thought was right." The complaints are not without warrant.

What Ounsworth fails to observe in all this is that this book is, in fact, in many ways a more tangled version of and sequel to Farkasfalvy's earlier, somewhat more disciplined effort, *Inspiration and Interpretation: A Theological Introduction to Sacred Scripture* (CUA Press, 2010). The present text is, accordingly, perhaps best read as a supplement to that initial work, almost in the form of a family of essays: a circular thinker's imperfectly polished (practically) posthumous manuscript. The keys ideas and major insights, in any case, are very much the same in both these works. The fundamental error remains a misunderstanding of the double authorship of the sacred text, illuminated by Rahner's *Urheber*/*Verfasser* distinction. God is not a literary author, we are repeatedly told. His action in the generation of the Scriptures is not to be plotted on the same level as the human *veri auctores*, for, if it were, every error and deficiency in the text would be charged to God's account. The result would be either the collapse of the divine meaning of the Scriptures, or else a willful blindness to the genuine problems (both of which responses are today championed in various quarters).

Neo-Scholasticism, notably in the persons of Augustine Bea and Pierre Benoit, does not fare at all well in this account. Briefly, the model of inspiration advanced by these figures, which became at the time of the Second Vatican Council the *doctrina communis*—a view based on instrumental causality, joined to the *Summa*'s treatise of prophecy, and applied not only to prophets but to all scriptural authors or "hagiographers"—is, for Farkasfalvy, in large measure responsible for our present woes. "We must here repeat: Rahner's succinct critique of the Neo-Thomistic concept of dual authorship is philosophically correct" (50). The abbot goes on to add, however, that "it may not apply so obviously to St. Thomas' texts" (51). It also does not apply to the patristic sources that Bea erroneously marshalled in favor of a divine literary author.

This much is clear in both volumes (however unclear it often also is in both). What emerges with new perspicuity, or at least what attains a new prominence in this new rendition, are two things above all.

First, the Christological character and *telos* of the unified Christian Bible, rooted in God's divine work as originator (*Urheber*) of the text, is intoned and explored with more sustained attention. *Inspiration and Interpretation* ended with the remark that the "'incarnational model' still needs thorough probing and research." This refers to an analogy between the *Schriftwerdung* and *Menschwerdung*, endorsed in *Dei Verbum* and by Benedict XVI in *Verbum Domini*, by which a different Christological paradigm for the divine and human in the Scriptures is sought. *A Theology of the Christian Bible* appears to be Farkasfalvy's concentrated attempt to advance this perspective. Several chapters are nominally devoted to the theme ("Inspiration and Incarnation," "Pursuing the Analogy," "Inspiration and Truth in the Context of Divine Condescension," "Christ, the Ultimate Meaning of the Christian Bible").

What emerges is another way of saying what Rahner said is wrong, that is, a Christological spin on the error that Rahner saw. The two great heresies of Nestorianism and Monophysitism, specifically, map onto two coordinate hermeneutical misunderstandings, two extremes that in a certain way meet: "the danger of collapsing scripture into a one-layer reality: either by identifying it with the literal meaning, identified with the human author's historically verifiable intent (the Nestorian option) or with the spiritual meaning that transmits divine meaning without true human mediation (the Monophysite approach)" (70).

The second point where Farkasfalvy's *Theology of the Christian Bible* takes a notable step forward is in the high significance given to the canon as an integral part of the theology of inspiration. Again, this is present already in the earlier work, but here its role becomes more evident and expansive. Briefly, the outlook is this: God's origination of the Bible is not terminated with the energizing of individual literary authors and scribal communities in the production of individual books. The Christian Bible is rather the result of a divine and human process, binding up revelation through inspiration and passing all the way to the creation of the unified canon. It is for this reason that Brevard Childs's vision of canon criticism is for Farkasfalvy of special interest. Contrary to many false presentations, Childs's proposal is not simply a synchronic interest in the final form, but rather a diachronic interest in the whole historical trail from composition to stabilization to inclusion in the canon. In this regard, the historical account of actual canon formation up to Irenaeus is very similar in this text and in *Inspiration and Interpretation*. The basic data here have not essentially changed; nor has Farkasfalvy adjusted his clever theory on, for example, the accord between Anicetus and Polycarp in 151 that sealed the tetraform Gospel. Still, chapters nine and ten of the present book are worth highlighting, if merely for their effort to show how inspiration and canon are interiorly bound together.

In the final analysis, this robust canonical turn in the framing of the issue might be the most lasting dimension of Farkasfalvy's theology of inspiration. Inspiration is not strictly reducible to the problem of providence, but it does

essentially belong on this same high order of salvation-historical reflection. Resolutely viewing God as *Urheber*, that is as Originator of the Bible (avoiding all danger of equivocation on the word "author"), does indeed give the whole tractate a new and very different spin. In a way, Farkasfalvy plots what has become a stray apologetic topos back within the great *nexus mysteriorum*.

Just here, however, in the divine governance implicated in the whole affair, it becomes hard to sort out precisely why instrumental causality should be so categorically misplaced. Distaste for Benoit's prurient gaze on the psychological mechanics of hagiographers' inspired authorial judgment certainly plays a part. This is simply too narrow a field of theological vision and bound up with an outdated model of propositional revelation. It also privileges a constricted view of the complex social processes at work in ancient authorship. To follow Farkasfalvy, we must broaden the horizon and think about a Trinitarian self-manifestation culminating in Christ, even if *Dei Verbum* itself failed to assert this breakthrough with thoroughgoing consistency—notably in application to *DV* 11 and the theme of Scripture's truthfulness. It is this foreign neo-Scholastic body in the text of *Dei Verbum* that Farkasfalvy repeatedly points to as a major stumbling stone. Completing the work begun at the Council therefore means running this text through a grammatical grinder and reading the result with eyes illumined by *nouvelle théologie*. In Farkasfalvy's version, the answer to a lot of old and lingering questions accordingly becomes: try asking that again. Inerrancy, in a special way, as an outsized effect of inspiration is a bugbear stuck in a cul-de-sac. Here he is certainly correct. Although neo-Thomistic attempts to come at the issue were still operating with another model of revelation, however, the real theological problem is not Scholastic conceptions such as instrumental causality. Nor is pulling back the focus to take in the whole salvation historical panorama adequate for the conceptual fine tuning that must inevitably come.

In its own proper scriptural form, the problem of inerrancy is a species of the problem of evil—or if we prefer to stay within the Christological frame, it resembles the problem of suffering. How close can we let the revelatory gesture of divine condescension (*synkatabasis*) come to touching human error? How can we guard God from such a taint? The analogy of the incarnation obviously has its strengths, but it has it weaknesses as well, the most obvious of which is that in the case of Scripture the human instrument is imperfect in a way it is not in Christ. Of course, part of the question is what the real *organon* in question is: is it the prophets and apostles, in their living encounters with God's self-disclosure, or is it the resulting written text in its sacral (ultimately liturgical, not just canonical) mediation—or is it both in ways still waiting to be properly distinguished? We are free, in any case, to probe the written biblical corpus with an impunity hardly allowed to the apostle Thomas; and this gives us a positive body of theological data from which speculative dogmatics must start, not terminate its reflections. Meanwhile, the question for the doubting doctors of the law is not whether they can find this or that in the Scriptures that seems to

be broken, but whether they can somehow discern in such gashes and bruises the faith-filling wonder of glorified scars. Origen (together with Irenaeus) earns a prominent place in Farkasfalvy's theological construction of the Christian Bible. Perhaps the Alexandrian's agile allegorical leaps at what he called scripture's *adynata*, "impossibilities," are in Farkasfalvy's vision an essential exegetical instinct to recover. *Adynaton* was, after all, an ancient rhetorical technique. In the *synkatabasis* of the divine *Logos*—*synkatabasis* being a rhetorical, not just a patristic theological term—might God have stooped so low as to speak his own rhetorically intentional "impossibilities" through the *veri auctores*' very unintentional errors? With him all things are possible.

ANTHONY GIAMBRONE, O.P.

École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem
Jerusalem, Israel

God and Creation in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth. By TYLER R. WITTMAN. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. xiv + 315. ISBN: 978-1-108-47067-4 (cloth).

Wittman's guiding question is the following: "Does it suffice to articulate God's perfection as set forth in God's works, or must we confess something about God's perfection as logically antecedent to and possibly obtaining without those acts that ground created reality?" (12). Both Aquinas and Barth, he argues, hold that "questions about God's relation to creation are bound up with questions about divine act and being" (15). Yet, Aquinas and Barth disagree about how to formulate God's perfection. Wittman summarizes their different approaches: "Aquinas maintains that God's external acts correspond to God's internal being, whereas Barth maintains that God's external acts correspond to God's internal acts" (16).

The first section of the book focuses upon Aquinas's theological account of God's being and activity. Wittman argues that Aquinas's five ways for demonstrating the existence of God belong to the properly theological project of reckoning with "the things that have been made" and determining how God has therein clearly manifested "his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity" (Rom 1:20). Wittman reminds us that "pure act" is not a definition of God: the human mind cannot comprehend infinite actuality. At all times, Aquinas is keenly aware that to speak of the "causality" of infinite actuality is to speak analogously: God cannot be placed under any genus, including that of "cause." Wittman emphasizes that divine "simplicity" is a negative doctrine

whose purpose is to ensure that we do not reduce God to a thing among other things.

According to Aquinas, God is efficient cause of finite actuality and also exemplar cause of finite actuality, in the sense that creatures are finite similitudes of divine actuality. God is also final cause of finite actuality. God's goodness means that he creates all things so that they are ordered to share, in diverse modes and to differing degrees, in his goodness. Humans are ordered, by grace but in a manner that takes up and fulfills human nature, to share in the goodness of God's own beatitude.

Given that goodness is self-diffusive, would not perfect goodness be compelled to create or compelled to become incarnate? Wittman answers that the self-diffusion involved here has to do not with efficient causality but with final causality. Considered in himself, God's infinite goodness "is his own end" and does not need any further diffusion in order to be perfectly fulfilled (64).

As a result, God is perfectly Lord in his acts. He is impeded by nothing, depends upon nothing, and stands to gain nothing. This does not mean that he is "unmoved" in the sense of not caring about anything but himself. On the contrary, it means that in his creative (and redemptive) acts, the infinitely blessed and perfect God works, and he works with utmost mercy and love rather than neediness or frustration. Whereas creatures simply are existing modes of relation (or dependency) upon God, God has no "real relation" with creation—which simply means that God is not in a relation of dependency, because God's beatitude is the source of creation, not the fruit of creation. The fact that God has no neediness is what enables him to be perfectly immanent and freely active in creation.

Given that God creates in infinite wisdom and love, what does this mean for our apprehension of God's "intellect" and "will"? Continuing his survey of Aquinas, Wittman notes that we know that God has these perfections (see Eph 1:11), but we are speaking analogously rather than univocally. Abstracting the reality signified from any finite mode of signification, Aquinas delves into the reality of divine will. On the one hand, there is no "free will" in God willing himself: this must be "necessary," because God cannot fail to love his own goodness. But there is "free will" with regard to anything that is not God. Admittedly, anything that God freely wills to do, he nontemporally (eternally) wills to do—and in this sense creation is necessary because God eternally wills it. But creation is not necessary in the strict sense that God had to will it. Furthermore, Aquinas points out that this discourse cannot be taken univocally: God is not part of our finite order of necessity versus contingency.

Wittman observes that Aquinas does not stop at the level of pure actuality, but rather sees creation as a Trinitarian action. Wittman cautions against certain kinds of overblown usages of the psychological analogy: "the psychological model does not suggest that the Son and Spirit proceed from the divine intellect and will, respectively. Rather the analogy to the intellectual procession of an interior word and the volitional procession of love in rational creatures provides

a means for disclosing the rationality of the procession of the Son and Spirit, after the analogy of the Word and Love" (94). Once this is grasped, we can perceive that the Son's generation as Word is the exemplary pattern of the divine speaking of creatures into being. Likewise, the spiration of the Spirit as Love grounds the divine love by which he bestows gifts (including the gift of being) upon creatures and wills to unite them to himself. In love, God mercifully communicates a share in his goodness; and this work is primarily attributed to the Spirit, as we find in Scripture as well.

Turning to Barth, Wittman says that his key principle is "the irreducible correlation between God and his self-determination" to be God for us in Christ (135). In everything, God is faithful to his "electing self-determination" (141). We can say nothing about God that abstracts from what we know in Christ of this electing self-determination, which ultimately is the Trinitarian event constitutive of the divine being, God's "decision . . . to be God" in the way that he has chosen and no other—namely freely to be God for us (149). Thus, for example, God's goodness just is Jesus Christ, God's eternal decision in our favor. There is no "being" or ontological "actuality" behind God's free "act."

In insisting upon this point, Barth has Aquinas in view, but perhaps even more his concern is with the nineteenth-century liberal Protestant Albrecht Ritschl. Barth emphasizes that everything depends upon God's free self-determination to be for us. God is therefore absolutely Lord over his perfections, so as freely to be what he determines to be in Christ; yet, at the same time, Barth equally wants to insist that "God's inner life" makes this love intelligible rather than merely arbitrary (162). The key, however, is that what we know about God we know only on the basis of Christ.

Barth rejects (as "semi-nominalism") the notion that the divine attributes are diverse in our understanding but simple in God. He fears that otherwise we undermine the import of God's diverse acts, as though the diversity we perceive has no real basis in God. Fundamentally, he is concerned to affirm that all that we find in Christ reveals God's own dynamic inner life: his love, his freedom, his holiness, his obedience, and so on. God is "simple" because he is never self-contradictory and because he is utterly unique, as we see in Christ.

Barth adjusts the Protestant Scholastic view of the "decree of election" and the "covenant of redemption," so that in each case Christ is the agent as well as the content (205). Nothing can be antecedent in God to his self-determination to be for us in Christ; and this self-determination must be a real event in God's inner life, "a real, irrevocable turning and movement in God's essence itself" (213). What we see in Christ corresponds to God's inner life, including God's constancy in being *for us* both in creation and in redemption. Thus there is no purely intra-Trinitarian life or event that excludes Christ.

A difficult issue for Barth is how the grace and mercy embodied by Christ are enacted in the Trinitarian life: does the Father have mercy on Christ, or give grace to the Spirit? Ultimately, Barth reduces them to God's love. Wittman suggests that here we can perceive a telling incoherence in Barth's insistence

that all God's acts in Christ can be correlated with acts within the inner life of God (232-33). If God *could* have done otherwise than he has done in Christ, furthermore, it follows that God's self-determination in Christ cannot be the ground beyond which nothing further can be said. Rather, "God's internal act of self-determination must itself be an act self-consistent with God's essence and perfections" (239). Wittman suggests that Barth might have done better to follow the Protestant Scholastics who affirmed God's ontological perfection while holding that, in accord with his nature even if freely, "God posits himself in a genuine relation to creation through his self-determination" (247).

In his conclusion, Wittman notes (indebted to Kenneth Schmitz's critique of Hegel) that actuality can either be conceived as the principle of all things, inexhaustible plenitude, or as "the totality or result of being and its self-realization" (261). When actuality is conceived in the latter way, no wonder that God's "nature" is conceived as Barth (as well as contemporary theologians such as Robert Jenson) conceives it. Wittman favors Aquinas's understanding of God as "a radical principle of plenitude that subsists prior to and apart from any determination or movement toward creatures" (266). In his "plenitude," God is self-subsistent; as principle, God acts toward creatures out of his plenitude, which is his beatitude and perfection. Wittman explains, "Aquinas's construal of theology's principal material object understands God's actuality as plenitude, while the formal orientation of his inquiry understands God's actuality as principle" (268). Otherwise put, in the order of knowing, theology reflects upon God on the basis of his creative and redemptive works, but this inquiry exposes truths about God that enable "the thought of God absolutely and thus without creation according to the order of being" (268). By contrast, Barth has no room for the latter, although at points (as in his reflections on whether God had to create) it comes in anyway.

In light of Exodus 3—God's self-revelation to Moses—Wittman denies that "Scripture only speaks to God's being by witnessing to God's eternal acts" (276-77). Of course, no divine name can be understood outside of, or in sharp separation from, the economy of salvation. But a focus simply on the historical drama (God as the "totality" of his actions) would miss what Christ is actually revealing about his divine plenitude. Wittman points us toward a deeper contemplation of the divine names as the solution to the historicism of "strictly correlationalist inquiry into divine being and activity" (280). Directing attention to Exodus 3:14, Wittman urges that we first hear God's proclamation of his name as "I am who I am" (plenitude) and only secondly God's proclamation of his works: "Say this to the sons of Israel, 'I am has sent me to you'" (principle). In this way we are prepared for Jesus' revelation in John 8:58 that he himself is plenitude and principle.

Wittman's book is a major step forward. It enables us to perceive more fully how Aquinas's apophatic caution, analogous discourse, and metaphysical distinctions do not move us away from the biblical revelation of God or from the God revealed in Jesus Christ. On the contrary, Aquinas's approach enables

us to appreciate this God not only as "principle" of creation and redemption, but also as plenitude, as perfection and beatitude in himself. Furthermore, the charity with which Wittman engages Barth, and Wittman's attention to the Reformed Scholastics, should instruct contemporary Thomistic dogmatics.

MATTHEW LEVERING

Mundelein Seminary
    Mundelein, Illinois

Aquinas, Original Sin, and the Challenge of Evolution. By DANIEL W. HOUCK. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. ix + 284. $99.99, £75.00 (hardback). ISBN: 978-1-108-49369-7.

This book opens and closes with Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*— specifically, his account of Tess giving birth to an illegitimate son, Sorrow, whose death as an infant was doubly traumatic for her. There was the sorrow of death itself, but that sorrow was amplified by Tess's fear that, having not been baptized by a priest, and because of the illegitimacy of his birth, Sorrow would be condemned to a tortuous hell. This opens up an account of different readings of original sin. A reader would be mistaken, however, to suppose that storytelling or literary images of original sin are integral to this book. Instead, Houck tries to navigate an in-depth conversation with very different potential audiences, from evangelical Protestants to traditional Roman Catholics and Thomist scholars. He also engages with evolutionary theory and other objections to classical accounts of original sin and the Fall.

As the title suggests, Thomas Aquinas is Houck's main and consistent classic source, though, coming from an evangelical starting point, he also pays close attention to scriptural interpretation, specifically St. Paul's account of sin in Romans. Not only does he engage in an in-depth analysis of Thomistic sources, but he also, to a degree, adopts Aquinas's method, tracing carefully all the possible objections to his argument and one by one trying to convince the reader of the cogency of his own specific position. The argument in a nutshell is the following. First, Houck argues for a retrieval of aspects of a Thomistic account of original sin and the Fall, moving from a Thomistic notion of original justice to the idea of original sin as a deprivation of supernatural grace, a position which he names "New Thomism." Second, he argues that this is compatible with both traditional theological views of human origins and the Fall and with those theological positions which seek to accommodate accounts of evolution.

Against the backdrop of Sorrow's plight, Houck raises all the possible objections to the idea of original sin as inherited guilt: (a) its lack of explicit

foundation in a correct exegesis of Romans 5:12; (b) alternative classic views, such as that of Gregory of Nyssa, who believed the kingdom of heaven was the natural end of humanity; (c) that original sin is pernicious; or even (d) that it does not make sense within modern culture informed by the sciences, particularly the evolutionary sciences. Houck argues that such objections do not really grapple sufficiently with the complexity of the origin of the idea of original sin, debates about the historicity of the Fall, and how it can still be construed in a way that makes sense, even for those who are prepared to accept evolutionary ideas. For Houck, a denial of original sin obscures the universal need of redemption, and affirming original sin without an account of the Fall seems to compromise the belief that creation is fundamentally good. He compares his modified Thomistic approach on original sin, which stresses the lack of sanctifying grace, with alternative modified views of original sin, such as that it is a disposition to sin, or that it means being born into a sinful condition, or that it is personal sin.

The first chapter delves into an Augustinian approach to original sin, drawing on both primary sources and medieval debates. The second chapter is particularly significant, as it shows a development in Thomistic thought on original sin, from an earlier position which distinguishes between the role of the human will in the state of original justice and the work of supernatural grace, to later writings where Aquinas implies that the formal cause of original justice is sanctifying grace. Houck argues that Aquinas's mature view suggests that the disposition to original justice could not have been sexually transmitted, since by definition sanctifying grace is supernatural. The third chapter develops the consequences of such an idea further by exploring Aquinas's engagement with Augustine's concept of the corruption of nature by the Fall. For Aquinas this corruption is a loss of original justice, but not the loss of an orientation to God. In chapter 4 Houck deals with the Thomistic idea of the guilt of an infant by analogy, in so far as an infant fails to receive sanctifying grace. He rejects the Thomistic view, arguing that the infant suffers the *effect* of original sin, but without any increase in guilt. This position differs from Schleiermacher's understanding of sin as a context into which an individual is born, since Houck still puts emphasis on the voluntary nature of Adam's sin. Chapter 5 tackles arguments against a historical Fall from Kant to Barth, Schleiermacher, and Schoonenberg.

Chapter 6 covers evolutionary objections to the Fall and original sin. First is the presupposition of gradual evolution, which would automatically challenge any possible notion that a single act of the will could distort subsequent human nature. A second objection relates to the idea that evolutionary history implies a predisposition to sin, which is incompatible with an ordering to an original righteousness. A third objection relates to evidence from genetic and other material sciences showing that the human population could not possibly have come from a single pair anywhere in prehistory. Chapter 7 develops the most constructive aspect of the book: a retrieval of the idea of sin as a lack of right

relationship with God, rather than the inheritance of personal guilt or corruption. Rejecting Aquinas's theory of the inherited nature of sin as logically incompatible with the notion of original justice, Houck argues that the New Thomistic approach is compatible with theories that either accept or deny the historicity of the Fall.

Overall, this book is a lively contribution to current debates on evolution and the Fall and a significant retrieval of a neglected aspect of Thomism, modified in the light of contemporary concerns. Time and time again Houck presses his point home, exploring all the potential objections and counter arguments in a quest for analytical and logical consistency. At times the prose is very dense and hard to digest, most likely the result of its origin as a doctoral thesis. Nonetheless, the scholarship represented here is strong, and while not all readers will be fully convinced by the arguments presented, they are certainly worth taking seriously. The book is written for theologians or possibly philosophers, rather than scientists; evolutionary theory is largely confined to a single chapter out of the eight. Given Houck's intention to reach more conservative Protestant audiences, evangelical scholars may be disappointed by his relative lack of attention to biblical exegesis, though he states, towards the close of his volume, that this will be developed in future work.

There are also some misleading comments concerning the evolutionary literature, such as that evolutionary pressure has selected for selfishness (4). It is more accurate to refer to conservation of genes, in spite of the public impression of evolution and nature "red in tooth and claw," bent on self-interest. An evolutionary account includes such tendencies, but it also includes an equally strong emphasis on cooperation and altruism. Further, there is relatively little attempt to envisage how early humanity might have experienced original righteousness or the supernatural gift of grace, even if, as Houck points out, this would not necessarily be confined to a single individual. Any proposal that humanity was in some sense prepared to receive divine grace is not discussed, though he does touch on a Thomistic idea of a natural disposition to God. The distinction between nature and creation does not really concern the author, since it is the nature/grace distinction that is his concern. This relation between nature and grace is also integral to his anxiety that his proposal might be rejected by those who envisage him as proposing a two-tiered nature-grace understanding of human nature. While he largely avoids a dualistic view, an evolutionary approach would, in general, take rather more account of a natural disposition to grace than one finds here, with the emphasis on a supernatural gift that is presumably (at least in infants or those who do not yet acknowledge monotheism) unconsciously mediated through Christ. The point is that there are complex biological as well as cultural aspects to evolution that are also integral to an evolutionary account.

Having made an argument for a retrieval of a modified Thomistic position, Houck is correct to position his view within the theological spectrum of possibilities as one that is, at least in many respects, easier than many to render

intelligible in the view of modern science. He offers a fresh perspective on this topic that deserves to be widely read and discussed.

CELIA DEANE-DRUMMOND

Campion Hall, University of Oxford
Oxford, United Kingdom

Thomistic Existentialism and Cosmological Reasoning. By JOHN F. X. KNASAS. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019. Pp. 327. $65.00 (hardback). ISBN: 978-0-8132-3185-3.

This study offers an interpretation of Aquinas's philosophical contribution to demonstrations of God's existence by reviewing the argument of *De ente et essentia* and its significance as a version of a cosmological argument. Its larger agenda is to defend Thomistic "realism" and specifically a distinctive "existentialist" approach to Thomism. Its targets of criticism therefore include other Thomists as well as early modern and analytic thinkers.

The first half of the book (part 1: "Aquinas's *De ente* Reasoning and the Cosmological Argument") argues that Aquinas's understanding of existence as *actus essendi* allows for a version of a cosmological argument that is immune to Kant's critique of Leibniz's "remarkably shallow" (3) understanding of existence. The first chapter reviews Leibniz's cosmological reasoning and Kant's critique thereof, and prepares the way for considering existence not as a "determinate property" (granting some insight to Kant) but as an "act or perfection of a thing" (as in Aquinas). Chapter 2 reviews the *De ente* proof, focusing on the notion of *esse* and giving particular attention to how *esse* is grasped by the second operation of the intellect. Chapter 3 reviews neo-Thomist interpretations of the *De ente* proof, engaging Gilson and Maurer, Wippel and MacDonald, Dewan and Calahan. Chapter 4 continues to highlight the importance of *actus essendi* by engaging "Analytic Thomist" treatments of *De ente* (including those offered by Peter Geach, Brian Davies, and Anthony Kenny). Chapter 5 considers some non-Thomist objections to *De ente*'s cosmological reasoning (including those from Kant and analytic philosophers and ending with Heideggerian objections to "ontotheology").

The second half of the book (part 2: "The *De ente* Reasoning and Aquinas's Proofs for God") argues that Aquinas's use of this notion of *actus essendi* in the *De ente* argument sheds light on what his cosmological arguments—any arguments from existing effects to God as their cause, including all the *viae* one finds in the *Summae* and elsewhere—are meant to demonstrate. Chapter 6, "Aquinas's Metaphysics and Our Knowledge of God's Existence," is primarily

concerned with arguing that natural philosophy cannot prove the existence of God, advancing the interpretation in the rest of part 2 that the other less explicitly metaphysical *viae* are still examples of "*De Ente* reasoning in different guises" (173). Chapter 7, "A More Robust Version of the *De Ente* Reasoning," continues the argument that the reasoning of *De ente*, insofar as it explicitly draws on the proper object of metaphysics (*ens inquantum ens*), must be integrated into any proofs for the existence of God. This is followed by three chapters interpreting the more commonly discussed other proofs in light of *De ente* reasoning: on *viae* in the *Summa contra gentiles* (chap. 8); in the *Summa theologiae* and the *Compendium theologiae* (chap. 9); and "other possible *viae*" in the commentary on the *Sentences* (I *Sent.*, d. 3; II *Sent.*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 1), *De potentia* (q. 3, a. 5), the prologue to the John commentary, and chapter 15 of the first part of the *Summa contra gentiles* (chap. 10). Rounding out the second half of the book, chapter 11 ("Questions and Replies"), responds to some questions raised by Knasas's interpretation: Why would Aquinas "camouflage" metaphysical principles in other versions of a cosmological argument? Why does Aquinas ask about the distinction of essence and existence in God after formulating other versions? And are less explicitly metaphysical cosmological proofs still only comprehensible to metaphysically advanced philosophers?

As Knasas reminds us throughout the volume, and in a short concluding chapter, one of the goals of his interpretation is to display and defend a philosophical approach named in the first half of his title: Existential Thomism or "Thomistic Existentialism," characterized by its particular emphasis on being as *actus essendi*, an act that is distinct from that which it actualizes, the substance which in itself is "existence neutral." Critique of "analytic" approaches, as too inclined to reduce being to the "fact of existence" without attending to its active cause, is a recurring theme, and this also explains why Kant's objection is dialectically significant for the book.

Knasas is surely right to focus on the philosophical insight of *esse* as act, which is both more than the fact of existing, and the cause of that fact; it is not this focus alone but the "existential Thomist" articulation of it that makes it important for Knasas to establish that physics is not able to conclude to God's existence, that cognition of being deserves phenomenological attention in terms of "sense realism," and that all cosmological argument is somehow a disguised version of the *De ente* reasoning. In defense of these views Knasas relies on a characterization of *esse* that not only analytic philosophers, but also some historically minded philosophers, would find impressionistic and even misleading. In language that is at once his most enthusiastic but also his least Thomistic, Knasas describes *esse* as the "core" around which a thing "revolves" (36, as well as the front book jacket illustration supplied by the author); he describes *esse* as distinct from the thing, "both accidental and essential," and even compares it to the hole of a donut. *Esse*, he says, is like an accident, but unlike other accidents it is prior to the subject it actualizes; the radical priority of *esse* places it "in the thing."

On the one hand, Knasas seems to read Aquinas's history of the advance of metaphysics in question 44, article 2 of the *Prima pars* as more than an account of intellectual ascent to more actual and universal causes, as if it points to "being" as the most hidden inner element in the constitution of physical things. On the other hand, Knasas seems aware that he is adopting a language quite distant from Aquinas, to express what he regards and embraces as a matter of deep "paradox." As a result, his idiosyncratic attempt to evoke the *actus essendi* as some mysteriously intimate "core" leaves one wondering why Aquinas would say, at the beginning of *De ente et essentia*, that *being* is more familiar to us, because composite, and thus the starting point for us to learn about the more simple and difficult to understand *essence*.

The "existential" perspective also gives the book an epistemological emphasis that might not otherwise seem essential in a study of Aquinas's metaphysics and cosmological reasoning. Knasas finds it crucial to articulate what it means that *esse* is grasped by the second act of intellect. This in turn is part of a general defense of "sense realism" (a priority going back to Gilson) against early modern assumptions about necessary *a posteriori* knowledge, which might be considered Knasas's real priority: articulating a "phenomenology" of sensible objects.

In this way, much of the book seems haunted by Descartes. More so than Aquinas (in any of his proofs for the existence of God), Knasas is particularly concerned to address the general question of how we know whether things *other* than God—especially sensible objects—exist. *That* we know something (usually a physical thing) exists is crucial to any cosmological argument; *how* we know that would seem to have become a preoccupation only after Aquinas. This seems particularly out of place in an interpretation of *De ente* reasoning, which on the face of it does not seem to depend in any way on knowledge of sensible objects: the argument appears in the chapter on immaterial beings, and Aquinas famously mentions a potentially sensible being (the phoenix) that we don't know exists. In principle, the proof would seem to work even after Cartesian doubt leaves one only with the solipsistic awareness of one's own existence as a thinking thing.

With its preoccupations and interlocutors, the book seems primarily intended for those invested in disputes within Thomism over the past eighty years. One could consider the volume a personal homage to Knasas's teacher Joseph Owens, with whom Knasas sides in particular interpretive differences with Gilson, Maurer, Wippel, Dewan, and others. A reader new to Thomism would probably get lost, and for help specifically understanding the *De ente* demonstration of *esse subsistens* (and Aquinas's cosmological argumentation in general) would want more direct discussion of some basic metaphysical topics mostly neglected here: causality (efficient and formal causality and how they are related; *per se* vs. *per accidens* and particular vs. universal); act and potency; definition (nominal and real); participation and modes of being. Even what

Aquinas means by essences gets very little attention (as does the related, very relevant epistemological question of how we know essences).

Also notably underdeveloped is the topic of creaturely *esse*'s real distinction from *essentia*. Most regard this distinction as the key to the *De ente* argument for God's existence but Knasas (again following Owens) holds that the distinction is merely conceptual in the proof, not established as real until after God's existence is demonstrated (84-85). Even so, it is not clear what Knasas thinks a real distinction is. He describes a thing's "existence neutrality" as being like coffee that can be either hot or cold, which suggests that the test for a real distinction is actual separability, or "independence in reality," that is, one being able to exist without the other. That seems to be Knasas's standard for a real distinction in his characterization of matter's relation to form (81). On Aquinas's account, in any actual case, matter and form are not in fact separable: matter gets its being from the form which actualizes it, and the form only has its being in the matter it actualizes. Likewise Knasas says rationality and animality are only conceptually distinct because they "merge" in an individual human being, but are still not "the same" in reality (83). Aquinas holds by contrast (by the doctrine of the unicity of substantial form) that "animal" and "rational" in fact do signify the same one reality in (viz., the substantial form of) the individual human being.

A related idiosyncrasy is that Knasas mostly avoids speaking of a distinction (real or conceptual) between being and *essence*. He tends instead to discuss a distinction between *esse* and "the thing," the individual or subject or substance (81-85). A footnote (50 n. 34, responding to a particular objection by Kenny) makes clear that he understands this "individual" to be identical with the "individual essence" (a position also taken by Owens). Talk of individual essences is defensible (and "not using the language of Saint Thomas" is a hallmark of existentialism even confessed by Gilson in the second edition of *Being and Some Philosophers*), but this is another case of distractingly non-Thomistic language, and in the context of the *De ente* reasoning it is an especially confusing imprecision. If this is Aquinas's most metaphysical version of a cosmological argument, one would expect more attention to what Aquinas thinks an essence (as common nature) is, how we can cognize it (as opposed to the sensible individual), and why we should think it is really distinct from being in at least some existing creatures.

One would also need help understanding how this leads to the realization that, if there is anything in which being and essence are not distinct, there can only be one such being; and finally, how this leads us to know that such a unique being must exist if anything else exists. Again, while Aquinas typically starts with sensibles, the immediate context of the *De ente* argument is the essences of immaterial beings, which (if they exist) must still exhibit a composition of (because there would still be a distinction between) their being and essence. Aquinas arrives at an act/potency relationship of being/essence by analogy with form/matter, with a notoriously surprising reversal of essence from the active

to the passive role. At stake are metaphysical principles of substantial wholes. It is not the separability or independence of being and essence, then—nor a "thing" having "neutrality" with respect to the attribute or accident or inner core of being—that makes it possible to conclude to a simple self-subsistent *esse* from the fact that it must be the source of all those other things in which essence and existence are really distinct.

Overall the book can be commended for drawing attention to the crucial notion of *actus essendi*, but despite its reverence for the *De ente*'s "cosmological reasoning" it does not explain the relationship between being and essence and is not likely to help new philosophers appreciate how the notion of being as act can lead us to ascend to grasp the existence of a first, universal cause, a simple unqualifiedly actual substance who is the source of the being of creatures. Instead, by employing creative metaphysical interpretation in defense of "sense realism," Knasas carries the torch for existential Thomism—especially in its epistemological focus—with ardent zeal. In its range of engagement and forcefulness of argument, the book is a manifesto. Will it be remembered as a melancholy swan song, or prove to re-energize the "existential" school? Or— something in between—will it invite further dialectical development of modern Thomism? In any case, this volume is a profound expression of an imaginative hermeneutic, and a testament to the vitality of Thomistic scholars contending with each other in response to the challenges of modern philosophy.

JOSHUA P. HOCHSCHILD

Mount St. Mary's University
Emmitsburg, Maryland