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The Theological and Pastoral Purposes of Aquinas's Biblical Commentaries*

Teologiczne i pastoralne cele komentarzy biblijnych Akwinaty

Abstract. This article examines how St. Thomas Aquinas developed rich theological insights to be used ultimately in his preaching ministry as a thirteenth century *magister in sacra pagina*. His exegetical approach deploys a careful *divisio textus* to arrive at the literal meaning and doctrinal sense of the scriptural passage. The ambiguities of difficult passages are examined dialectically by short logical disputations that uncover the riches of the text. The fruits of these labors were then brought together in the master's university sermon for the conversion and perfection of souls. Thus, the three duties of the medieval master codified in the statutes of the University of Paris – namely, to teach, to dispute, and to preach – contextualize the task of the medieval theologian, rooting him in the revealed Word of God and requiring him to care for the souls of his students and colleagues in his preaching by announcing and explaining the sense and practical import of *sacra doctrina*. This article also examines the proximate historical source for these three duties as the practice of *lectio divina* was brought out of the monasteries and into the public sphere of the academies in the great cities of medieval Europe. There is much we could learn today from recovering this robustly ecclesial and pastoral way of pursuing biblical theology.

Streszczenie. Artykuł analizuje, w jaki sposób bogaty dorobek teologiczny św. Tomasza z Akwinu jest wykorzystywany w jego praktyce kaznodziejskiej jako XIII-wiecznego "magister in sacra pagina". Jego egzegetyczne podejście wyraża się w ostrożnym "divisio textus", aby dotrzeć do dosłownego i doktrynalnego sensu danego tekstu biblijnego. Ambiwalentne interpretacje trudnych tekstów są dialektycznie analizowane za pomocą krótkich, logicznych dysput odkrywających bogactwo tekstu. Owoce tej pracy były niejako zbierane w kazaniu średniowiecznego mistrza ukierunkowanym na nawrócenie

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i doskonalenie dusz. Trzy obowiązki średniowiecznego mistrza wyrażone w statutach Uniwersytetu Paryskiego – nauczanie, prowadzenie dysput oraz kaznodziejstwo – wskazują na zadania średniowiecznego teologa, zakorzeniając go w objawionym Słowie Boga i wymagając od niego troski o dusze swoich studentów i kolegów wyrażane w głoszenie sensu i praktycznych implikacji sacra doctrina. W artykule przeanalizowano także zródła historyczne dotyczące wspomnianych trzech obowiązków takie jak "lectio divina" przeprowadzana poza klasztorami, w publicznej sferze akademii w największych miastach Europy. Ten model eklezjalnej i pastoralnie ukierunkowanej teologii biblijnej może stanowić również wzór dla współczesnej jej kontynuatorki.

Keywords: Aquinas, St. Thomas, biblical commentary, biblical theology, dialectics, disputation, medieval theology, preaching, University of Paris.

Słowa kluczowe: Tomasz z Akwinu, komentarze biblijne, teologia biblijna, dialektyka, dysputa, teologia średniowieczna, kaznodziejstwo, Uniwersytet Paryski.

Biblical Thomism has a great relevance for contemporary theology. The way that theology was conducted in the thirteenth century can serve as a beacon or a model for us to imitate, approximate, recover in the process of *ressorcement* precisely because it was ecclesial, that is, not severed from or set against the Church and her teaching. It was Christological, spiritual, prayerful, and eschatological insofar as theology was understood and conducted as a peculiar participation in the salvific mission of Christ and His mystical body the Church, namely, to bring about the knowledge of Christ by faith, an increase of holiness, and ultimately everlasting life consisting in the vision of the Triune God. This was achieved principally by a substantive and thorough study of Scripture aided by the dialectics of disputed questions that arose in the masters' Scripture commentaries and finally arriving at treasures of doctrine through this contemplation and bringing the divine mysteries contemplated to the faithful by preaching for their conversion, sanctification, and salvation. As such, biblical Thomism has much to offer to the contemporary Catholic theologian and, indeed, to the Church.

Thomas Aquinas was, by profession, a biblical commentator. Lecturing on Scripture was the chief occupation of his academic life. Heinrich Denifle demonstrated that the primary theology textbook used by Aquinas and the other thirteenth-century *magistri* at the University of Paris was the Bible.[1] John Boyle

[1] Heinrich Denifle, "Quel livre servait de base à l'enseignment des Maîtres en Théologie dans l'Université de Paris?," *Revue Thomiste* 2 (1894): 129–61.

underscores this fact, noting that two of the principal duties of a thirteenth-century master of theology were

> to hold periodic public disputations throughout the course of the academic term and to lecture on sacred Scripture. Although Thomas wrote a dozen commentaries on various works of Aristotle, he never taught Aristotle in the classroom. Likewise, the two great summas, the *Summa contra gentiles* and the *Summa theologiae*, were private works of the study; Thomas never taught them. What Thomas taught in his classroom as a master of theology was Scripture.[2]

Aquinas's official title during his two regencies at the University of Paris was *Magister in Sacra Pagina*. Throughout his entire career, he expressed a keen awareness of the privileged place of Scripture in the theological discipline. On receiving their office, newly-minted Parisian *magistri* delivered an inaugural lecture, setting the tone for their entire regency. In his inaugural lecture, *De Commendatione Sacrae Scripturae*, Aquinas shows that the foundation of the master's teaching is the *sacra doctrina* revealed in the canonical Scriptures.[3] Likewise, in his mature work, he claims that in the science of theology the authority of Scripture alone provides *proper* arguments from authority furnishing *necessary* conclusions (*STh* I, q. 1, a. 8, ad 2). In this text, Thomas contrasts scriptural authority with arguments from authority appealing to philosophical sources that remain extrinsic to theology and therefore cannot provide *proper*, but only *probable*, argumentation for theology.[4] In this same article of *STh*, he argues that the articles of faith, revealed in Scripture, constitute the first principles of the science of theology. These principles are self-evident to God and the blessed but accepted by the faith of the Church on earth. In practice, Thomas

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[2] John F. Boyle, "St. Thomas Aquinas and Sacred Scripture," *Pro Ecclesia* 4 (1996), 94.

[3] Thomas's *De Commendatione Sacrae Scripturae* is the *Breve Principium*, that is, the shorter second part of his *Principia*, or inaugural lectures. It may be found in *Opuscula theologica*, ed. Spiazzi, 1:441–43 (see esp. 442).

[4] "Sacra doctrina huiusmodi [viz., philosophical] auctoritatibus utitur quasi extraneis argumentis, et probabilibus. Auctoritatibus autem canonicae Scripturae utitur proprie, ex necessitate argumentando" (Sacred doctrine uses authorities of this kind as extrinsic and probable arguments. But it properly uses the authority of the canonical Scriptures as an argument from necessity). Aquinas, *STh* I, q. 1, a. 8, ad 2. Thomas is not saying that philosophical arguments *as such* cannot conclude with necessity in theology; he is merely saying that philosophical arguments *from authority* cannot be used in this way. In this assertion, Thomas argues for the privileged place of the canonical Scriptures in scientific theology. For a basic study of the role of Scripture in Thomas's theology, see P. E. Persson, *Sacra Doctrina: Reason and Revelation in Aquinas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970).

devoted his academic career to the interpretation and explanation of Scripture as the means by which *sacra doctrina* is revealed and understood.

The medieval theological approach to the exegesis of Scripture did not obviate, but rather mandated ascertaining the literal sense of the text. Medieval historian Beryl Smalley (1905–84) underscored the importance of this mandate for Aquinas.[5] However, Aquinas sought the literal sense of the text in order to discern its deeper meaning or doctrine – to attain a theological insight. The Dominican biblical scholar Ceslas Spicq observes: "If he applies himself to drawing out the true literal sense, this is only to the degree that these efforts are necessary and fruitful in order to elaborate a biblical theology as a source for his scholastic theology. A master of theology, commenting on Scripture, Saint Thomas perceived exegesis as a science subordinate to theology."[6]

Aquinas's ultimate aim in commenting on Scripture was not merely to discover its literal sense but to arrive at a theological understanding of the literal meaning of revealed doctrine and, ultimately, to provide the fruits of these insights as material for preaching. The literal sense of the text was the foundation for the edifice of Aquinas's theology, for he understood that Scripture itself is theological and that it provides the basis for further theological argumentation and elaboration. In his treatment of the nature and extent of sacred doctrine in the *prima pars* of his *STh*, Thomas argues that Scripture provides the first principles, or sources, of scientific theology, and he insists that all theological argumentation must be drawn from the literal sense of Scripture.[7] In the commentary tradition of the medieval schools that he inherited, we see a firm correlation between the interpretation of the sacred page and the theological inquiry and pastoral preaching that emerge in the very process of discovering its literal meaning.

The theological aim of medieval exegesis was pursued by systematically probing the text to uncover its presuppositions and to develop its further implications, conclusions, or moral imperatives – including even those about which

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[5] Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 300. However, she later came to appreciate the importance of the spiritual senses for Aquinas. See her book *The Gospels in the Schools* (London: Hambledon Press, 1985), 265–66.

[6] "S'il s'applique à dégager le vrai sens littéral, c'est uniquement dans la mesure où ces efforts sont nécessaires et féconds pour élaborer une théologie biblique source de sa théologie scholastique. Maître en théologie, commentant l'Écriture, saint Thomas voit dans l'exégèse une science annexe de la théologie." Ceslas Spicq, "Saint Thomas d'Aquin Exégète," in *DTC* 15.1, col. 718.

[7] See Aquinas, *STh* I, q. 1, aa. 2–3 and 8, where Thomas argues that Scripture provides the first principles of the science of theology, and a. 10, ad 1, on the literal sense of Scripture as the basis for all theological argumentation.

the human author, it would seem, could not have been aware. This systematic examination most often took the form of *quaestiones*: dialectical questioning and rational demonstration used by the master to penetrate the biblical text, producing commentaries that are distinctively theological in tone and purpose. With few exceptions, in the thirteenth century hard divisions between the various branches of theology had not yet developed, so this activity – freely moving between literal exegesis and theological argumentation – enjoyed an unfettered expression in the scriptural commentaries of this period.[8]

An example of this type of theological commentary may be found in St. Thomas's remarks on 1 Timothy 1:1, where Paul greets Timothy with wishes for "grace, mercy, and peace." Thomas asks why three gifts are mentioned here, while in his other epistles Paul only wishes two gifts to the recipients, namely, grace and peace. Why would Paul wish Timothy mercy as well? Thomas answers simply that, due to the grave demands of their office, "prelates need more."[9] He then proceeds to interpret "grace" and "mercy" in terms of the needs of bishops and their flocks, providing two alternate theological elaborations. First, *mercy* could signify the remission of the bishop's personal sins and *grace* "the gift of graces that prelates need" to minister to the faithful.[10] Alternately, *grace* could signify sanctifying grace personally needed by the bishop, and *mercy*, "the divine office that raises him to spiritual charisms."[11] In this short theological amplification, Thomas suggests that the greeting in 1 Timothy reveals the greater needs of prelates. A bishop – represented in this passage by Timothy, bishop of Ephesus – personally needs the divine gifts of the forgiveness of his sins and sanctifying grace so that he may be enabled to minister to the faithful by means of spiritual charisms.

There is a contemporary perspective that would view scriptural interpretations like this as overstepping the bounds of legitimate exegesis by assuming presuppositions and drawing conclusions not directly found in the words of the scriptural text itself. To address this concern, it is necessary to understand the historical development of the thirteenth-century theological lecture on

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[8] The most notable exception to the absence of distinct branches of specialization in theology is the somewhat autonomous development of the study of ecclesial law and its magisterial interpretation by medieval canonists such as Gratian. Yet even their undertakings were not envisaged as entirely distinct from the task of the medieval theologians.

[9] "Praelati pluribus indigent." Aquinas, *In 1 Tim*, cap. 1, lect. 1, [6], 2:213.

[10] "Gratia vero pro munere gratiarum, quo indigent praelati." Aquinas, *In 1 Tim*, cap. 1, lect. 1, [6], 2:213.

[11] "Munere divino in spiritualibus charismatibus exaltante." Aquinas, *In 1 Tim*, cap. 1, lect. 1, [6], 2:213.

Scripture.[12] As masters of Scripture, Thomas and his colleagues at Paris were strictly bound by university statute to perform three primary and interrelated duties: *legere*, *disputare*, and *praedicare* – to read, to dispute, and to preach.[13] *Legere* meant more than merely "to read" a given text. It signified a sequential, line-by-line reading of a biblical text accompanied by the careful, magisterial commentary of the lecturer. Torrell writes, " 'to read' Scripture was the first task for the master in theology, and therefore also for Thomas."[14] The charter of the University of Paris makes it clear that the magisterial lecture on Scripture was the first and, by far, the most important lecture of the day.[15]

These three magisterial duties at Paris – to lecture, to dispute, and to preach – resulted from the transformation in the twelfth century of the monastic *lectio divina*, a prayerful reading of Scripture aimed at promoting spiritual growth. Smalley traces the reception and development of *lectio divina* by the Victorines, especially Hugh of St. Victor (1096–1141), who was greatly influenced by the rules enumerated by Augustine in *De doctrina christiana* for interpreting and teaching Scripture.[16] In his *Didascalicon*, Hugh of St. Victor designs a program of scriptural hermeneutics that entails ascertaining the "letter," its meaning, and its *sententia* – that is, its deeper meaning or doctrine.[17] The Dominican theologian Otto H. Pesch summarizes this heuristic model:

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[12] The studies of Denifle and Smalley, among others, facilitated the appreciation of the historical context of Aquinas's theology and stimulated research on Thomas's scriptural commentaries and his use of Scripture in his theological syntheses. See also Glorieux, "Essai sur les commentaires"; T. Domanyi, *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Thomas von Aquin* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1979); Wilhelmus G. B. M. Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God. Place and Function of Holy Scripture in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

[13] These three labors of the master in theology "were announced at the end of the twelfth century by Peter Cantor and later confirmed in the statutes of the theology faculty [of the University of Paris]." Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work*, 54.

[14] Torrell, *Saint Thomas*, 55. *Legere* may also be construed as "to lecture."

[15] Denifle cites this charter in "Quel livre," 150. See also James R. Ginther, "There is a Text in this Classroom: The Bible and Theology in the Medieval University," in *Essays in Medieval Philosophy and Theology in Memory of Walter H. Principe, C.S.B.: Fortresses and Launching Pads*, ed. J. R. Ginther and C. N. Still (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 31–51.

[16] Smalley, *The Study*, 196. M.-D. Chenu also describes the evolution of exegetical methodology from the twelfth century to the thirteenth in *Toward Understanding St. Thomas*, trans. A. M. Landry and D. Hughes (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1964), 58–69 and 249–59.

[17] Hugh of St. Victor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor*, trans. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 6, 8–12, and 147–50.

> An exposition contains three things: letter, meaning, doctrine. The letter means the fitting order of the words, which we also call construction. The meaning is the obvious and open significance which the letter evidences outwardly. The doctrine is the more profound insight, which is only found through exposition and interpretation. In these three things there is an order, following which first of all the letter, then the meaning, and then the doctrine should be investigated; when that is done, the exposition is completed.[18]

To discover first the "letter" or "construction" of the text, the commentator "divides" or analyzes it into its constituent parts. By means of this *divisio textus*, he clarifies the mutual relations of the parts, thus uncovering the "literal sense" – that is, the sense or meaning directly signified by the letter. This often spontaneously leads him to uncover the reasons behind what is said in the text and to discover the conclusions that follow from the text. To achieve this purpose, the medieval commentator would integrate *quaestiones* or small systematic chapters into his biblical commentary.[19] By this method, a doctrinal reformulation of the text is produced in which the literal sense is not abandoned, but is elaborated and built upon by an identification of its presuppositions and further implications.

Hugh's approach to scriptural interpretation was further refined and transmitted by the great twelfth-century Parisian masters: Peter Comestor (d. 1178), Peter the Chanter (d. 1197), and Stephen Langton (1155/56–1228). These three masters established the agenda of medieval scholastic biblical commentary: *legere*, *disputare*, and *praedicare*. This program found its definitive historical form in the academic life of the theologates in the thirteenth century. Thus was standardized the dialectical and logical *disputatio*, following upon the *lectio*, as the ordinary means to arrive at the deeper meaning of a text. By means of the disputation, the text is worked over with questions until it yields its meaning and the doctrine is discerned. Retaining and amplifying the spiritual purpose of the monastic *lectio divina*, the scriptural doctrine discovered by the *disputatio* must then be applied pastorally for spiritual growth through *praedicatio*, preaching, which was considered an integral task of exposition or academic biblical study. The duty of preaching has become somewhat foreign to contemporary academic theology; but it was an essential component that crowned and completed the work of the theologian in the thirteenth-century academy. Thus, the interpretation of divine revelation was both an academic and an ecclesial

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[18] Otto Herman Pesch, "Paul as Professor of Theology: The Image of the Apostle in St. Thomas' Theology," *The Thomist* 38 (1974): 591.

[19] Ibid., 592–93.

task directed toward a pastoral end for the good of souls. In his *Verbum abbreviatum*, Peter the Chanter employs the image of constructing an edifice of study in order to describe the interrelation of the commentator's three labors: *lectio*, *disputatio*, and *praedicatio*:

> The practice of Bible study consists in three things: reading, disputation, preaching. . . . Reading is, as it were, the foundation and basement for what follows, for through it the rest is achieved. Disputation is the wall in this building of study, for nothing is fully understood or faithfully preached if it is not first chewed by the tooth of disputation. Preaching, which is supported by the former, is the roof, sheltering the faithful from the heat and from the whirlwind of vices. We should preach after, not before, the reading of Holy Scripture and the investigation of doubtful matters by disputation.[20]

The action of "chewing" the text by scholarly disputation exemplifies the Chanter's transformation of the monastic *lectio divina's* "mastication" – repeatedly turning over the text of Scripture in the mind to discern its deeper meaning – into a twelfth-century academic endeavor. Disputation analyzes the text by means of questions posed in such a way as to extract the frequently hidden substance. For Peter, the text itself provokes these questions and thus the disputation emerges naturally and organically in the course of a commentary.

Despite the fundamental continuity in this historical development from private monastic contemplation to public academic disputation, several significant monastics – most famously St. Bernard of Clairvaux – strongly resisted the use of scholastic disputation in biblical commentary. Yet Peter the Chanter and the other twelfth-century masters did their part to preserve the medieval academy from an excessive rationalism. These masters viewed human arts and

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[20] Cited and translated by Smalley, *The Study*, 208: "In tribus igitur consistit exercitium sacrae Scripturae: circa lectionem, disputationem et praedicationem. . . . Lectio autem est quasi fundamentum, et substratorium sequentium; quia per eam caeterae utilitates comparantur. Disputatio quasi paries est in hoc exercitio et aedificio; quia nihil plene intelligitur, fideliterve praedicatur, nisi prius dente disputationis frangatur. Praedicatio vero, cui subserviunt priora, quasi tectum est tegens fideles ab aestu, et a turbine vitiorum. Post lectionem igitur sacrae Scripturae, et dubitabilium, per disputationem, inquisitionem, et non prius, praedicandum est." Peter the Chanter, *Verbum abbreviatum*, *PL* 205, col. 25, A–B. Note that the metaphor of "chewing" (a means of breaking down) does not, in this instance, signify the destruction of the edifice (i.e., the biblical text); rather, it indicates that distinctions are made by way of analysis ultimately for the sake of organic growth into a unified understanding of divine revelation. The purpose of making distinctions is not to separate the components of the biblical text, but rather to discern their unity and meaning in order to foster growth to spiritual maturity.

sciences as ordered to knowing Christ, worshiping him, and leading others to the same knowledge and love. Thus, they proposed a scholastic, systematic, and dialectical approach to the interpretation of Scripture with the theological end of arriving at its meaning and doctrine. But they subordinated this theological end to a pastoral one, namely, communicating what has been understood to others by preaching and teaching. The *ratio* of the Dominican order itself reflects this aim. The order has been called "apostolic" since its charism is to bring the fruits of contemplation to others through preaching – hence, the Order of Preachers.

St. Thomas Aquinas and his contemporaries inherited this exegetical approach, and thus they sought to develop a systematic, theological understanding of the biblical text with the explicit purpose of preaching for the salvation of souls and the glory of God. The tasks of the lecture, the disputation, and the university sermon were eventually standardized as official academic duties by the theology faculty at the University of Paris in their statutes.[21] In his inaugural address, *De Commendatione Sacrae Scripturae*, St. Thomas correlates the university mandate of these duties with the command in Titus 1:9 to instruct in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict it.[22] Although these three obligations were not always viewed as distinct in the twelfth century, by the thirteenth century, they were clarified and distinguished. The theological disputations that were formerly incorporated into the lectures on Scripture were shortened, since at that time the disputations themselves began to take on a life of their own in the newly-emerging genres of the *quaestiones disputatae* and the *quaestiones de quolibet*.[23] Smalley writes, "After this change in the syllabus, questions in the lecture [on Scripture] are short and arise directly from the

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[21] Torrell cites the charter of the University of Paris to this effect (*Chartul*. II, no. 1185) in *Saint Thomas*, 54.

[22] Aquinas, *De Commendatione Sacrae Scripturae* (also called his *Breve Principium*) in *Opuscula theologica*, [1213], 1:442.

[23] Pesch notes, "The ordinary professor, the so-called 'magister,' was alone concerned with continuous commentary on the Holy Scriptures. Only in public debate, the so-called 'quaestiones disputatae,' did the magister teach as systematician. And these 'quaestiones disputatae' had also been developed from the commentary on the Scriptures, both as an academic exercise and as literary form. For in the text of the biblical commentary it had long been customary to deal with 'questions' which arose in the context of the text in the form of a systematic excursus. Thus, the 'magister in sacra theologia' has been produced by the 'magister in sacra pagina,' and not vice versa. . . . But, except for the debates, his daily courses were concerned with the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures." Pesch, "Paul as Professor," 587–88.

text."[24] The *quaestiones* that continued to be incorporated into the lecture represent a *via media* between literal exegesis on the one hand and the various forms of extended disputation more or less remote from the biblical text on the other.[25] Having a distinct and independent venue for extended disputations, the thirteenth-century biblical commentator was at liberty to keep his *quaestiones* directly focused on the biblical passage in his lectures, producing integrated disputations that did not stray too far from the text itself.[26]

The integration of these medieval disputations into the biblical commentary developed organically as the ordinary means of achieving a deeper understanding of Scripture for spiritual edification. Fr. Torrell describes them as "active pedagogy where one proceeded by objections and responses on a given theme."[27] In fact, as with an article in an independent collection of disputed questions or in a theological synthesis like *STh*, they were often distinguished by the standard phrases: "*videtur quod*," "*sed contra*," and "*respondeo quod*." Raising and responding to the difficulties elicited by the text itself, the disputations frequently developed argumentation with scriptural premises and theological conclusions. Such disputations or, as Pesch calls them, "short systematical chapters" are incorporated throughout Aquinas's biblical commentaries.[28] By thus systematically scrutinizing the biblical text, Thomas consistently develops a theology – or a set of theological reflections – in the course of his scriptural commentaries.[29]

Biblical scholar C. Clifton Black discovers in Aquinas's biblical writings "a thoroughgoing theological commentary . . . an exegesis whose motive power

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[24] Smalley, *The Study*, 209–10.

[25] See Torrell, *Saint Thomas*, 60.

[26] Theologian Thomas Ryan notes that, besides theological *quaestiones*, Aquinas also includes in his commentaries historical questions and even conundrums regarding apparent scriptural contradictions in *Thomas Aquinas as Reader of the Psalms* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 27.

[27] Torrell, *Saint Thomas*, 59.

[28] Pesch, "Paul as Professor," 592–93. Conversely, short biblical commentaries are found in portions of his systematic works, for example, in his *STh* see I, qq. 65–74, on the six days of creation; I–II, qq. 98–105, on the Mosaic law; and III, qq. 27–59, on the life of Christ narrated in the Gospels.

[29] A. Paretsky notes that the medieval theological examination of the biblical text aimed at doctrinal formulations: "The twelfth and thirteenth centuries reveal the growing tendency of Scripture commentators to insert theological questions into their commentaries, the chief purpose being to extract from the text those teachings relevant to . . . theology." Paretsky, "The Influence of Thomas the Exegete on Thomas the Theologian: The Tract on Law (Ia-IIae, qq. 98–108) as a Test Case," *Angelicum* 71 (1994): 549.

is *fides quaerens intellectum*."[30] This motive imbues the medieval biblical commentary with a distinctively theological character. It also distinguishes the medieval commentary from contemporary exegesis since the medieval heuristic goal proceeds well beyond uncovering the human author's immediate intention and thus is not limited merely to an interpretation of the direct meaning of the words, even while it is inclusive of it. Though Aquinas moves beyond the text, uncovering its presuppositions and developing further conclusions, he intends to do so without violating the literal meaning. When executed correctly, this procedure in fact illuminates the literal sense.[31] Thus, to appreciate properly Aquinas's biblical commentaries, they should be seen as the *union* of exegesis and theological reflection. Theologian Christopher Baglow sees this fusion as "an extremely valuable exegetical trademark of St. Thomas Aquinas."[32] He likens Thomas to a molder "who works with a pre-existing frame or mesh upon which final materials (such as plaster . . .) are applied. . . . A new model (in the case of Thomas, a new theological model) has emerged from the molder's labors, one which arises out of the fusion of the work of the two artisans. We can therefore speak of the theology of a particular Thomistic commentary as distinct from Thomas' theology in general."[33] Thus, Thomas's biblical commentaries can and should be examined for their own theological value independent of their possible role as a basis and support for his systematic works.[34] As such, they constitute an indispensable theological source and investigations of his theological work that fail to consider them remain incomplete.

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[30] C. Clifton Black, "St. Thomas' Commentary on the Johannine Prologue: Some Reflections on Its Character and Implications," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986): 694.

[31] Brevard Childs explains the enduring value of Aquinas's Scripture commentaries: "As a master theologian, Thomas struggled in his way with most of the major problems which still confront a serious theological reflection on the Bible." Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1992), 41.

[32] Christopher T. Baglow, *"Modus Et Forma": A New Approach to the Exegesis of Saint Thomas Aquinas with an Application to the Lectura Super Epistolam Ad Ephesios* (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 2002), 112.

[33] Ibid., 69.

[34] See Pesch, "Paul as Professor," 599, and Baglow, *"Modus Et Forma,"* 78.

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