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### Thomas Aquinas' Concept of the Word in his Contemporary on First Corinthians

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THOMAS AQUINAS' CONCEPT OF THE WORD  
IN HIS COMMENTARY ON FIRST CORINTHIANS

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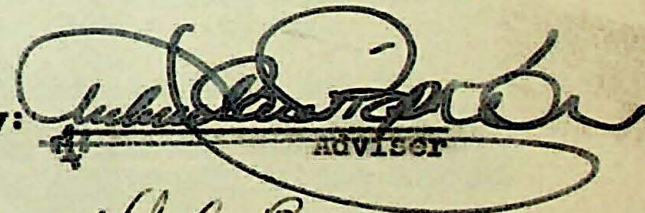
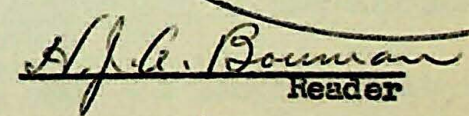
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by  
Robert Scharlemann  
June 1955

Approved by:   
ADVISER  
  
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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM

Saint Thomas Aquinas was called by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical, Providentissimus Deus, the foremost exegete of Holy Scripture among the theologians of the thirteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Santiago Ramirez,<sup>2</sup> indeed, leaves little doubt that Saint Thomas is still one of the foremost theologians of the Roman Catholic Church. That his synthesis of Aristotelianism, tinged with Platonism,<sup>3</sup> and Christian revelation is impressive is attested by the energetic, albeit small, revival of it in the movement of Neo-Thomism which began with the papal encyclical, Aeterni Patris, of 1879, in which Leo XIII urged a return to "those pure waters of wisdom that pour forth from the works of Saint Thomas Aquinas"; which found one of its early and ablest exponents

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<sup>1</sup>J. van der Floeg, "The Place of Holy Scriptures in the Theology of Saint Thomas," The Thomist, X (1936), 398.

<sup>2</sup>"The Authority of Saint Thomas Aquinas," The Thomist, XV (1952), 1-109. The article is primarily a collection of papal utterances supporting the scientific, canonical, and general doctrinal authority of Thomas Aquinas.

<sup>3</sup>"Where there is a clash between Aristotle and the doctrine of the Church, Aquinas shows that in certain fundamentals he is more Platonic than Aristotelian." S. J. Curtis, A Short History of Western Philosophy in the Middle Ages (London: Macdonald and Co., Ltd., 1950), p. 136. Thomas had to depart from Aristotle, for example, in the doctrines of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body.



in Cardinal Mercier (d. 1926);<sup>4</sup> and which is capably represented today by Jacques Maritain. This is not to say that Saint Thomas has found protagonists only within the Roman Catholic Church. From the philosophical standpoint there is Mortimer Adler of the University of Chicago, who regards Aristotle and Aquinas as the most eloquent and satisfactory philosophers in European history.<sup>5</sup> From the theological standpoint there is Karl Barth, who has decisively rejected the Roman Catholic principle and yet announces that he regards "the rejection of the analogy of being, central in Thomistic analysis, as the only valid reason for refusing to accept the claims of Roman Catholic authority."<sup>6</sup>

Yet in the Thomistic synthesis, which has so strong an appeal as a philosophical structure, the Holy Scriptures are, according to Thomas, to be accorded the highest place.<sup>7</sup> The question, therefore, arises as to the exact manner in which the Scriptures take their place. Or, to

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<sup>4</sup>See, e. g., Mercier, A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1928).

<sup>5</sup>"Problems for Thomists," The Thomist, I (1938), 82. The articles were revised and printed in book form by Sheed and Ward, New York, 1940.

<sup>6</sup>Niels C. Nielsen, "Protestant Faith and Catholic Unity," America, XCI (August 14, 1954).

<sup>7</sup>J. van der Ploeg, op. cit., p. 421.



put the question in a broader framework, in what manner does the Word of God, that is, the intelligible revelation of God, fit into the Thomistic structure? Is Thomas' philosophical and theological structure really complete without that Word? That in a certain sense it is not complete without it is clear.<sup>8</sup> Still in a certain sense it is complete. Hawkins, for example, notes that

Aquinas puts the objection to himself that "nature is not lacking in what is necessary." But nothing is so necessary to man as that through which he reaches his last end. Therefore, this is not lacking to human nature.<sup>9</sup> Hence man can by his natural powers reach beatitude.

And it is in seeming answer to this that Pierre Roussetot warns, "A first acquaintance with Thomism does not give the impression of the depth of spiritual life which his system contains."<sup>10</sup> Where revelation fits, then, is not entirely clear. But there is trustworthy evidence that revelation is provided by God, as far as Aquinas is concerned, because man has not the leisure or the training or the time to discover by his natural powers that which revelation gives as necessary for his ultimate happiness.

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<sup>8</sup>See, e.g., the bibliography in Jose de Wolf, La Justification de la Foi chez Thomas d'Aquin et le Pere Roussetot (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer et Cie, 1946).

<sup>9</sup>A Sketch of Medieval Philosophy (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1949), p. 110.

<sup>10</sup>The Intellectualism of Saint Thomas, translated by Father James E. O'Mahony (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1935), p. 217.



"Very few men are metaphysicians whereas all men need to be saved."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>E. Gilson, Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 82. W. H. Kane, "Introduction to Philosophy," The Thomist, I (1938), 193 ff., summarizes the place of revelation thus: "1. Life itself is fundamental and prior to every perfection that we can attain because we must first be before we can act. But we are not content merely with life. We all desire more perfect knowledge and happiness . . . . 2. Nature is not deficient in what is necessary for the survival of the human race. By the ordinary use of our natural powers we attain a knowledge of the basic truths on which our continued existence depends, for example, that something is not nothing, that half a loaf is better than no bread, that what is desirable is to be sought after, and what is undesirable is to be avoided . . . . Nature does not supply us with all that is required for the perfection of our knowledge and happiness, and hence nature is not sufficient for all our natural needs, because of the magnitude and difficulty of the task, the weakness of our intellects, and shortness of time, and the necessity of other occupations, we do not obtain perfection in knowledge without special effort and without special aid . . . . 4. Some of the truths which we can obtain by the use of our natural powers are required not only for the perfection of our knowledge but also for the intelligent direction of our life to the end for which we exist. These truths are contained in divine revelation, along with other truths not naturally knowable to us because they are so important and not all attained otherwise, especially not by children and uneducated people, and because, since these truths chiefly concern God, they are attained more certainly and more fittingly by way of divine revelation than in any other way . . . ." Or again in Etienne Gilson's words, "Even among those who humbly seek after truth, very few find it by means of reason alone, not only because few have the intelligence, the leisure, or the courage to undertake such a task, but above all because those who wish to undergo such a labor for the mere love of knowledge are few, even though God has inserted into the minds of men a natural appetite for knowledge. Intellectual life, then, is 'intellectual' because it is knowledge, but it is 'life' because it is love." Wisdom and Love in Saint Thomas Aquinas (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1951), pp. 36-39.



While it is possible to find many references by commentators on Thomas to this place of revelation in the system,<sup>12</sup> not much has been written on the meaning and function of the Word of God more specifically as written Word, spoken Word, and Incarnate Word in the structure of revelation; nor, again, on the question of where Jesus the Christ, as the Incarnate Word, fits into the plan of man's reaching beatitude. It is not difficult to be left with the impression, as the quotation from Father Rousselot indicates, that Christ is left in a place somewhat off-center, granted that this may not at all have been Thomas' intention, for Etienne Gilson<sup>13</sup> is probably accurately reflecting Saint Thomas' intention when he insists, "Wisdom was not philosophy; it was not even theology; in its only perfect form wisdom was Christ" for Thomas.

One answer is offered by M.-J. Congar, thus:

The virtues of Christ and all He achieved and suffered

<sup>12</sup>"A partial statement of his doctrine as officially proclaimed by the Vatican reads: 'First, reason alone is not enough to guide men; they need revelation . . . . Secondly, reason and revelation, though distinct, are not opposed to each other. Thirdly, faith preserves reason from error; reason should do service in the cause of faith. Fourthly . . . a) reason should . . . prove the truths which faith presupposes . . . b) reason should explain and develop the truths of faith and should propose them in scientific form.'" Robert L. Cooke, Philosophy, Education and Certainty (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1940), p. 97.

<sup>13</sup>Wisdom and Love in St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 25.



in the flesh, during the time of His sojourn among us . . . are what constitute His life redemptive, meritorious, efficacious. These are the things whereby He is set up as our exemplar and pattern to be contemplated as the measure and standard of our own fashioning, becoming like unto Him in the movement of our return towards God, the return analysed in the Secunda Pars [of the Summa Contra Gentiles] and filled in with the Tertia Pars in those elements which explain the birth and growth of the Church, the new creation that is in Christ Jesus.<sup>14</sup>

Expressed in that way the role of Jesus Christ in the plan of salvation leaves something wanting to a theological approach which regards Him as the center and sole cause of salvation. Is this how Thomas regarded the work of Christ? Was this His understanding of the Incarnate Word when he wrote, "It is behooving that grace, on the one hand, flow upon us from the Incarnate Word by means of sensible signs, and, on the other hand, that external sensible effects proceed from the internal grace through which the flesh is subordinated to spirit"<sup>15</sup> Or is the key to be sought in a word of Jacques Maritain: "When we meditate upon theological truths, it is we who do the meditating but when we meditate upon the Gospels, it is the Gospels which are speaking to us"<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>"The Idea of the Church in Saint Thomas Aquinas," The Thomist, I (1938), 345-46.

<sup>15</sup>S. Th., I-II, q. 108, a. 1. Quoted by Martin Grabmann, Thomas Aquinas, His Personality and Thought, translated by Virgil Michel (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928), p. 174.

<sup>16</sup>The Range of Reason (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 8.



To help in finding an answer to these questions is the purpose of this paper. For the Word of God in this sense of His intelligible self-revelation is a crucial point in Christianity as such and in the distinction between Christian thought and philosophy. It would, however, be beyond the reach of a thesis of this kind to examine all of the writings of Saint Thomas. It was necessary, therefore, to restrict the material examined, and for this reason the Commentary on First Corinthians is being used as the chief source of material. There are three reasons why I chose this commentary. First, it seemed wiser to select a commentary in preference to a section of the Summa Theologica because a commentary, in its very implications, necessitates either a direct or indirect treatment of the Word of God; because, if there is to be an inconsistency found between Thomas' philosophy as such and his Scriptural theology as such, it would very probably be indicated in a work of this kind;<sup>17</sup> and because, finally, little has been written on his commentaries. Secondly, it seemed wiser, since it was also beyond the reach of this thesis to have taken all of the commentaries, to take one whole commentary rather than to select pertinent passages from

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<sup>17</sup>J. van der Ploeg, op. cit., p. 418, hints that there may be an inconsistency not between Thomas' philosophy and theology but between Thomas' view of the Scriptures and that of the Council of Trent.



all of the commentaries for the reason that revealing information is often given incidentally and by indirection instead of pointedly and by intention and that the whole of a commentary might indicate something which selected parts could not. Thirdly, I chose the commentary on First Corinthians<sup>18</sup> in preference to some other one because the epistle itself treats explicitly of the sacraments (and they would seem to play a significant part in any discussion of the Word) as well as of such things as speaking with words of men's wisdom; because the commentary is long enough to provide a just amount of material; and because it was among the last things that Saint Thomas wrote.<sup>19</sup>

Since, however, it would be impractical, to say nothing of unfair, to treat anything said in the commentary apart from the larger context of Aquinas' whole synthesis, I have felt it necessary to begin with a sketch of Saint Thomas' life and thought. Accordingly, I have handled the topic in two larger divisions: I. His Life and Thought; II. An Examination of the Commentary on First Corinthians.

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<sup>18</sup>The edition I have used is Super Epistolas S. Pauli Lectura, editio VIII revisa, cura P. Raphaelis Cai, O. P. (Rome: Marietti, 1953), I, 233-425. A lectura was taken down by a student, an expositio was written by the professor himself. "Between the lectura and expositio of Saint Thomas there is hardly any difference of style." J. van der Floeg, op. cit., p. 401.

<sup>19</sup>Van der Floeg, op. cit., pp. 400-401. Martin Grabmann, op. cit., p. 27, places it into the years 1269 to 1273.



## CHAPTER II

### THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF THOMAS AQUINAS<sup>1</sup>

#### A. His Life

Thomas was born about the year 1225 at Roccasecca, not far from Naples. The seventh son, he had illustrious family background on both sides; his mother of Norman stock, his father of the Lombard nobility and nephew of Frederick Barbarossa.

In St. Thomas, therefore, North and South met, and their influence is visible both in his personal appearance and in his character and thought. He does not correspond at all with the conventional picture of an Italian. He is too big and heavy, too motionless. Yet the keenness of his mind and of his vision reminds one constantly of the clear-cut colors of his native landscape.<sup>2</sup>

When he was five he studied at Monte Cassino "and learnt the blessing of that Benedictine pax which he was never to forget."<sup>3</sup> At fourteen or fifteen he was removed from the monastery by his father because of the renewed attacks on it by Frederick Barbarossa. He was sent then to Naples to continue his studies there in the Faculty

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<sup>1</sup>These sections are condensations, extractions, and restatements of M. C. D'Arcy, Thomas Aquinas (Oxford, 1930), pp. 33 ff. Hereafter I shall refer to the book simply as D'Arcy.

<sup>2</sup>D'Arcy, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



of Arts.<sup>4</sup> Here in 1244 he became a member of the Dominican Order--an act which caused a furor among his aristocratic relatives; but their attempts at dissuasion, even through Pope Innocent IV, were unsuccessful. On his way to Paris, for reasons not clear,<sup>5</sup> he was waylaid by his parents and kept at home for a year. When he still persisted in his vocation as a Dominican, his mother supported his wishes and he returned to Naples. From there he went to the house of St. Jacques in Paris to study under Albertus Magnus, who at the time was engaged in the endeavor to win over current opinion to his Aristotelianism.

In 1248 he went with Albert to Cologne and remained there until 1252, growing in the Aristotelianism of Albert. In 1252 he returned to Paris as bachelor teacher and at thirty-one (1256) was made a master in theology. It was during these years that he wrote his significant De Ente et Essentia, in which appears the famous distinction between essence and existence.<sup>6</sup>

A word on his methods of study is of interest. He told a novice:

<sup>4</sup>That is, mathematics, astronomy, music, dialectic, some classical authors like Caesar, Cicero, and Seneca.

<sup>5</sup>Whether because of his intellectual promise or because of pressure from the family is not known.

<sup>6</sup>See below for a definition of essence and existence.



Since you have asked me in Christ, dear John, to tell you how you must study to attain a treasury of knowledge, I shall mention the following points of advice. Prefer to arrive at knowledge over small streamlets, and do not plunge immediately into the ocean, since progress must go from the easier to the more difficult. That is my admonition and your instruction. I exhort you to be chary of speech, and to go into the conversation room sparingly. Take great heed of the purity of your conscience. Never cease the practice of prayer. Love to be diligent in your cell, if you would be led to the wine cellar of wisdom . . . . Make an effort thoroughly to understand whatever you read and hear. In all doubt seek to penetrate to the truth. Try always to store away as much as possible in the chambers of your mind . . . .

That Thomas produced thirty large volumes on the most difficult of subjects in forty-eight years would indicate that he himself wasted little time.<sup>8</sup>

He lived a rather quiet life these years, though his fame grew to such a degree that he was even summoned by King Louis to dinner,<sup>9</sup> was asked for advice by the King of Cyprus, the Duchess of Brabant, and many others of lesser significance. He was also summoned to aid in drawing up new constitutions of houses of studies. While doing this work, he had his attention drawn to Spain and the relations of Christians to the Moors. This prompted

<sup>7</sup>Quoted by D'Arcy, pp. 37-38.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>It was here that, lost in thought, he suddenly exclaimed, "Ha! That settles the Manichees." In reply Louis called his secretary to take down the thought lest it escape. D'Arcy, p. 39.



his Summa contra Gentiles, "the nearest in scope to a modern philosophical treatise that he ever attempted."<sup>10</sup>

From 1259 until 1268 he was in Italy, where he wrote his Catena Aurea, Office of Corpus Christi, Compendium Theologiae, and some commentaries on the Scriptures. His Summa Theologica he began in 1267 and finished in 1273.

In 1268 he was recalled to Paris to defend his and Albert's Aristotelianism against a new form that was rearing its head, the Averrhoist form, which had been some years already in the making and was gaining considerable currency. Thomas was apparently rather successful in his attack on the Averrhoists, for their influence subsequently declined.

In 1272 he returned to Naples. In 1274 he died, en route to the Council of Lyons at the request of Gregory X, and although there was a temporary reaction to his system, it was already secure in the thought of the Roman Catholic Church. Two years before his death, however, he had ceased writing because of a vision given him in Naples of things so grand that to write more on earth was impossible. "Raynalde, non possum: quia omnia quae scripsi videntur mihi paleae."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>D'Arcy, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup>Quoted by Pierre Rousselot, The Intellectualism of St. Thomas (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1935), p. 223.



## B. Thomas' Thought

### A Sketch of the Significant Points of His System<sup>12</sup>

#### 1. Principles of Knowledge

Let us look first at Thomas' principles of knowledge. However, it should be said that Thomas did not regard it necessary, as does most modern philosophy, to begin with epistemology. For him experience, the world, and a distinction between thought and that world were self-evidently valid. Even his admonition to "John" to seek the truth<sup>13</sup> "in all doubt" should be understood in the sense only of critically examining the foundation of all truths. To Thomas the fact that we can know means that we know reality.<sup>14</sup>

In this knowledge of reality the principle of contradiction and identity plays a major part. No one "can assent to the thought that he does not exist; for in the very act of thinking he perceives that he exists."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>D'Arcy, pp. 75-250.

<sup>13</sup>"Saint Thomas is fully aware of both the limitations and value of human reason and, therefore, he makes his philosophical approach to the supreme question of the existence and mode of existence of God in a spirit of profound humility combined with assured confidence in the validity of human thinking." Hilary J. Carpenter, "The Philosophical Approach to God in Thomism," The Thomist, I (1938), 45.

<sup>14</sup>D'Arcy's vindication of this against Kant is not entirely convincing.

<sup>15</sup>Quoted by D'Arcy, p. 77.



This is to say that the intellect knows "being" (it knows that a stone is something and not nothing; it knows that I am something and not nothing); what it says of being is true (it knows reality as such); and the first laws of being are found in the principle of identity and contradiction (the intellect knows that "this" is a "pencil"--identity--and that it cannot be a "stone" at the same time --contradiction). An observation of Jacques Maritain is Thomistic:

If positivism, old and new, and Kantianism do not understand that metaphysics and philosophy are authentically sciences, that is to say, fields of knowledge capable of certitude which is demonstrable, universal, and necessary, it is because they do not understand that the intellect sees. (For instance, the intellect sees the primary principles--principles of identity, of non-contradiction, of causality, etc., because the intellect brings out from sense experience intelligible contents--first of all that intelligible object, Being--which exist in things but are not perceived by the senses.) In the eyes of the Kantians and Positivists, the senses alone are intuitive, the intellect serving only to connect and unify.<sup>16</sup>

But if the intellect knows "being," then wherein is the difference between a tree and a stone, both of which "are," i. e., have being? Is everything unity without diversity? Thomas says there is a diversity exhibited in the unity. (The problem is, it should be said, metaphysical and not logical.) "All the objects of our know-

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<sup>16</sup>The Range of Reason (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 8.



ledge have to be rigorously co-ordinated with the help of the first principles, into a system of being and becoming, essence and existence, substance, accident and relation."<sup>17</sup> (For clarity it should be remembered that being is not a genus, to which existence is related as a species.)

We speak of the objects of our knowledge. How do we know reality--by direct intuition? Thomas says not. Our knowledge of objects is direct but, nevertheless, by means of concepts.

It is immediately that one sees, for example, a stone, though it is thanks to the internal power of the mind and the determining aspect of the thing that one is enabled to see. Sight is not concerned with the conditions of its seeing, as if they themselves were visible things, but by means of these intermediaries, thanks to these conditions, it is concerned immediately with the visible thing which is before the eye.<sup>18</sup>

When I reflect,<sup>19</sup> I know that I have judged "this" to be a "stone," but I know also that this conforms with reality, Thomas would say.<sup>20</sup> What is known to a common,

<sup>17</sup>D'Arcy, p. 69.

<sup>18</sup>Quoted by D'Arcy, p. 82.

<sup>19</sup>There is a difference of opinion among Thomistic commentators on the meaning of "reflection." See D'Arcy, p. 83, for a discussion.

<sup>20</sup>"A fundamental truth of the Thomistic theory of being is the conviction of the reality of substance." M. Grabmann, Thomas Aquinas: His Personality and Thought, translated by Virgil Michel (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1928), p. 79. Common sense is not, for Thomas,



illiterate man, who is unhesitatingly certain that the stone he sees is real, is known also to a literate philosopher, who is likewise certain of the stone's reality, for "it is in so far as the intellect reflects upon itself that it realizes its truth."<sup>21</sup> Truth is not known by the correspondence between the real world and the content of our mind but in "reflection," the power of the mind to know that it knows reality.

But if the intellect can know reality, then why the intermediaries of sense and concept? The sense organs, Thomas answers, give us by intuition the content of our sensation;<sup>22</sup> but the mind wants to know essences. The senses give us the data of green-ness, brown-ness, height, etc., that we call "tree," but our intellect wants to

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an unreliable criterion and Jacques Maritain, op. cit., p. 32, is not in opposition to Thomistic principles when he makes an appeal to a kind of common sense in this way: "We have a feeling that there is a mysterious unity of the world, that the whole of mankind suffers from the iniquities which each one undergoes and is helped by the generosity and love which each one displays in his individual life. Somehow this feeling must be true." (Emphasis is mine.) Or again, "natural intelligence, the kind which is to be found in common sense, is spontaneously focused on being, as philosophy is in a systematic and premeditated way." Op. cit., p. 210.

<sup>21</sup>Quoted from De Veritate by D'Arcy, p. 83.

<sup>22</sup>"In sense perception a sense organ and a medium are required--e. g., in hearing, the ear is the sense organ and the air, in which certain vibrations are set up, is the medium . . . Aquinas considers the imagination a sense, for he attributes a bodily organ to it, namely, that part of the brain situated behind the frontal lobes."



know "tree-ness," the whatever-it-is (substance, essence, nature) that makes this object a tree and not a stone or an automobile. Only by joining these concepts and sensations into synthetic judgments can one know real things or persons.<sup>23</sup> The intellect knows, in this way, the object "tree," not as species but as "this" tree. The species is only the "instrument by which we know the object (quo intelligitur)."<sup>24</sup>

In accordance with this theory of reality and the knowledge of it, Thomas places truth formally in the judgment and not in sensations or concepts, although these latter are separables which are inherent in the one act of judging and are not antecedent bits of knowledge. Every judgment, that is to say, is for Thomas a synthetic and not an analytic judgment. Even a judgment of identity ("this" is a "stone") is synthetic. This fact accounts for the fallibility of reason, for it may make a wrong synthesis.

A few words should be inserted here about what Thomas

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S. J. Curtis, A Short History of Western Philosophy in the Middle Ages (London: Macdonald and Co., Ltd., 1950), pp. 141 f.

<sup>23</sup>The difference between this and Kant's view is that Kant places the "forms of sensibility" in the structure of the mind while Thomas places them in the things themselves.

<sup>24</sup>S. J. Curtis, op. cit., p. 162.



means by the term, "concept." "By the word concept he means something more like generation than image or copy."<sup>25</sup>

Concept, related to the word "conception," is not a static but an evolving process; and "knowledge is a life."<sup>26</sup>

My knowing that "this" is a "stone" is in some way a living process; somehow the stone and I are united in the process of knowing; my knowing is basically an immanent act.

Knowing consists neither in receiving an impression nor in producing an image; it is something much more intimate and much more profound. To know is to become; to become the non-I . . . . To know, therefore, consists of immaterially becoming another, insofar as it is another, aliud in quantum aliud.<sup>27</sup>

It might be pictured as the flowering of a plant which takes over elements for its life from the sunshine and air around it, but the picture must have limitations: 1) the plant absorbs and takes into itself the external and the external no longer remains an object; 2) the plant is not self-conscious. While the mind in knowing does somehow become one with the object, yet the object remains real and remains "out there." Thomas is no rigid idealist. (Truth, remember, is for him the "recognized conformity of the mind with its object.")<sup>28</sup> "The coincidence of the

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<sup>25</sup>D'Arcy, p. 88.

<sup>26</sup>Quoted by D'Arcy, p. 90.

<sup>27</sup>J. Maritain, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>28</sup>D'Arcy, p. 92.



knower and the known, of the subject and the object in the identity of one act, here is the whole metaphysical secret of knowledge as such."<sup>29</sup> In other terms: the human mind is potentiality while God is pure act. Act is the factor in a being "which makes it a being of such or such perfection; actuation is the communication of the act to the potency, or correlatively, a reception of that act in the potency. It is a self-donation, a union."<sup>30</sup> Water is ice potentially, ice is ice actually; human mind is perfect, immanent knowledge potentially, God is such actually.

Consequently, man's knowing is a growth, a process from potentiality (potency) to actuality (act). In this process the mind needs assistance of the senses. They provide, however, only the outward guise of nature and not its essence. With regard to these sense impressions the mind is passive, but with regard to its own immanent act it is active--i. e., it converts the sense data into its own life. The senses provide the specific data, the mind the universal concept, and the two are united into a synthetic judgment. Moreover (and this is the paradoxical in Thomas' theory of knowledge), "the intelligible being

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., quoting J. Marechal.

<sup>30</sup>Thomas U. Mullany, "The Incarnation: De la Taille vs. Thomistic Tradition," The Thomist, XVII (1954), 3.



understood is knowledge."<sup>31</sup> The more I know myself, the more I know that this or that object is not I; in one act I know myself and other things for what they are. Accordingly, since pure being is also pure act, and since self-consciousness increases as one ascends the ladder of being, God, the perfect Being, is also absolutely self-conscious; He is such that in knowing Himself knows all; He is pure subject.

## 2. The Nature of Reality

To understand how it is that the more I know myself,<sup>32</sup> the more I know things for themselves, it will be necessary to examine Thomas' understanding of the nature of reality. Being is for him of prime importance, as can be seen in the following handy list of definitions of Thomistic terms. (Note that they all center around the idea of being.)

Essence is what a being is;

Existence is the act by which a being is;

Potency is that which can be, or the capacity for being;

Act is that which exists;

Substance is that which has existence in itself;

Accident is that which has no autonomous existence;

God is the Being that exists and cannot not exist;

Cause is that by which being begins to be;

Effect is that which exists by virtue of another being;

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<sup>31</sup>D'Arcy, p. 96.

<sup>32</sup>"The knower in the act of knowing is the known itself in the act of being known." Maritain, op. cit., p. 14.



End is the reason for the existence of being;  
The true is being insofar as it is known;  
The good is being insofar as it is desired;  
Becoming is the passage from non-being to being;  
Matter and form are the elements of substantial being,  
 which is created and corporeal.<sup>33</sup>

How, then, does Thomas regard being in itself? Being is the aspect under which all reality is known; it is "what the intellect conceives first as something best known, and it is to being that it reduces all other knowledge."<sup>34</sup> The least we can say of this stone is that it is something and not nothing (i. e., it has being); the most we can say of it is that it is such-and-such a being. Consequently, metaphysical study must begin and end with a study of being, with ontology; for unless some kind of structure can be found in being itself, we really know nothing.

Hence the question, "What are the necessary conditions for objects to be real and to be thought of as real?"

Thomas proceeds from data of experience<sup>35</sup> and notes

<sup>33</sup>Francesco Olgiati, The Key to the Study of Saint Thomas, translated by John S. Zyburka (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1925), p. 43.

<sup>34</sup>De Veritate, quoted by D'Arcy, p. 99. Cf. also Olgiati, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>35</sup>Remember that Thomas is no idealist; sense experience, and not concepts, is the beginning of knowledge. Nor, on the other hand, is he a materialist. "Sense . . . is not a material faculty; it receives the form of an external object without its matter. Aquinas is a definite opponent of materialism." S. J. Curtis, op. cit., p. 140.



that according to the law of contradiction a thing (a being)<sup>36</sup> cannot both be and not be; if it "is," then it does not "not-be." Therefore, to use his example, if cold water becomes hot water, there must be something more than coldness in the water. This something is what Thomas, following the standard medieval adaptation of Aristotle, calls the potency (potentiality) to be something else in act (actuality). To the extent that a being is in act, it is pure being; to the extent that it is only potency, it is defective being. All objects of our experience, which are not pure act (God is that), are in some way composite. And yet their being is only one, despite the fact that their composites are separable in thought and in reality; i. e., potency is not simply an aspect of act, for non-being and being cannot be aspects of each other, but they are both, potency and act, realities.

Further, as a kind of sub-division of potency and act,<sup>37</sup> Thomas makes use of the distinction between matter and form. This is the second distinction. Just as water is steam (or ice) in potency but water in act, so, with regard to extension, bodies have indivisibility in act

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<sup>36</sup>"Being" expresses the act of being (existence), while "thing" expresses the essence. D'Arcy, p. 120. Grabmann, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>37</sup>To call it a sub-division, as D'Arcy does, would not meet with approval of all commentators. D'Arcy, p. 110.



(and that is their form) but divisibility in potency (and that is their matter); they have, that is to say, pure multiplicity and pure unity at the same time. Every object is one in act (a window pane, for instance) and multiple in potency (a smashed window pane); there may be a thousand fragments (multiplicity) to a window pane broken or there may be a thousand trees, but the fragments are still fragments of the window pane (unity) and the thousand trees are still all exhibitions of tree-ness. In Aquinas' words, "the principle of individuation is not the common nature . . . ; it must be the materia signata quantitate --matter as marked or determined by quantity."<sup>38</sup>

Thomas' third distinction in being is that between essence and existence, a distinction probably Neo-Platonic in origin, passed on to Thomas through Avicenna<sup>39</sup> and William of Auvergne. It was left to Thomas, however, to attach to it "a profound importance."<sup>40</sup> With this distinction Saint Thomas was able to make a clear-cut division between God and contingent beings; in Him essence and existence are identical,<sup>41</sup> in all else there is a real

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<sup>38</sup>Olgiate, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>39</sup>D'Arcy, p. 111.

<sup>40</sup>F. C. Coplestone, Medieval Philosophy (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), p. 89.

<sup>41</sup>On the term "existence" Hilary Carpenter, op. cit., p. 54, has this to say. "Used substantively the word esse



distinction between the two. That is to say, God alone necessarily (essentially) "is," while creatures "are" only contingently; the essence of man, for example, requires something besides itself to exist; it is not his nature (or essence) necessarily to exist; he could not exist; his nature is intelligible even when he is dead. One might say, then, that man's essence is the potency of his act of existence, where existence is act par excellence.

Potency cannot realize itself (else it would be act-- a contradiction); there is no such "thing" as "becoming," there are only things which become. Yet potency is something real, though never apart from act; it is that which preserves distinction in being and which leads to the ontological hierarchy in which the highest degree of being is act, the next is essence which is pure form (i. e., which is in potency to existence), and the next, essence which is not pure form but matter and form (in potency to existence and to matter). Man is the highest among the beings of this last degree because, though made of matter and form, he is able to reflect and to know reality.<sup>42</sup>

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implies far more than the mere fact of existence; it is synonymous with 'actual perfection.' . . . The esse of Peter, for example, signifies every actual perfection of this man and not merely the fact that he exists."

<sup>42</sup>For Thomas' chain of being in chart form see S. J. Curtis, op. cit., p. 180.



Thomas speaks further of a twofold mode of being, the substantial and the actual. When we think of a tree we cannot help thinking of it as a subject around which are clustered<sup>43</sup> the attributes of color, size, etc. For Thomas, therefore, this necessity of thought means that substance (subject) necessarily is, it is an intelligible (not a sensible) reality. The tree-ness of the tree is its substance; the color, etc., are its accidents. "Substance is a thing whose essence it is not to have its being in another thing."<sup>44</sup> It is a mode (quo) of existence that is due to certain natures and not to others.<sup>45</sup> And the two, substance and accident, are joined in Thomas' distinction of matter and form as the principle responsible for both the identity and the change in accidents. The substance changes by its accidents.

But how is one being related to another--a tree to a stone or a horse to a man? There is a unity (both are "beings") and there is a diversity (a tree is not a stone),

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<sup>43</sup>They are not to be pictured, however, as satellites of a planet, for they lead us to the true nature of the thing.

<sup>44</sup>Quoted by D'Arcy, p. 122.

<sup>45</sup>"Generally Saint Thomas employs the word essence to express what the thing is, nature to express the essence as the principle of activity, and substance for its mode of existence." D'Arcy, p. 122. "He uses the word subsistence, or hypostasis (suppositum), for a material substance which exists incommunicably and person for a similar kind of being which is rational." Ibid.



but how explain it? Thomas uses the doctrine of analogy to solve the problem of the one and the many in being. Things which are analogous are partly the same and partly different; "analogous" is mid-way between "univocal" and "equivocal." To speak of infinite God as being and of finite creatures as being is to use the term "being" analogously; it is not to identify infinite and finite. While other universals, such as animal-ness, are univocal (*i. e.*, their differences lie outside the notion itself), this is not true of being (which, remember, is not a genus). Then wherein is the unity and wherein the diversity in analogy?<sup>46</sup>

Aquinas speaks of two kinds of analogy: proportion (attribution) and proportionality. Analogy of proportion regards the meaning of being as a unity with only relative differences; analogy of proportionality regards the meaning as a diversity with only relative unity. The relation of substance to accident or absolute to contingent would be an analogy of proportion. Analogy of proportionality (which D'Arcy and, according to him, most modern Thomists believe was Saint Thomas' intention with the doctrine of analogy)<sup>47</sup> means that a common meaning is attributed to

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<sup>46</sup> Thomists differ on interpretation here. I am offering mainly D'Arcy's exposition.

<sup>47</sup> "Father D'Arcy suggests that Aquinas was feeling his way towards a final statement [on proportion and



several things owing to a resemblance existing between two sets of relations or proportions. One can speak of six and four having this in common that as six is the double of three, so four is the double of two. This is Thomas' example. Accordingly, when we speak of God's knowledge, we mean (by analogy of proportionality) that as our knowledge is to our contingent being, so God's knowledge is to His absolute Being; we do not mean that our knowledge is to His knowledge as accident is to substance. And as the mode of existence of an accident is in proportion to its being, so is that of substance to its being.<sup>48</sup> This is, in a limited way, an agnosticism. If the only knowledge, let us say, that we have of six and of three is what we can know from four and two, then in a sense we cannot know six and three at all; but only in a sense is that so, for Thomas insists that analogy does really tell us something meaningful about that which we cannot know except by analogy.

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proportionality]. On this theory we should expect him to hold to the analogy of proportion in his earlier works and then, later, to adopt proportionality. This is precisely what Saint Thomas does not do. He appeals in turn to proportion or proportionality, so that one can only admit that he has not given his attention to a definite theory of analogy but suits his terminology to the particular problem he has in hand." S. J. Curtis, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

<sup>48</sup>The difference from Kant is again that Thomas regards the analogy as a part of the real world of existence and essence while Kant regards it simply as a category.



In other words, in the following analogy of proportionality:<sup>49</sup>

$$\frac{\text{God}}{\text{His Being}} = \frac{\text{created object}}{\text{its being}}$$

there are not two unknowns (God and His Being) but only one (His Being). We can know God by the five proofs (section three below) and, therefore, we can know also His Being from this analogy. Or, again, in the following analogy:

$$\frac{\text{contingent being}}{\text{its being}} = \frac{\text{First Cause}}{\text{His Being}}$$

the two terms on the left we know by direct experience; the third term we know indirectly by causality; and, therefore, we can also know the fourth term, His Being, by proportionality.

In general, then, "the doctrine of analogy is nothing more than a restatement of act and potency in the light of concept and predication."<sup>50</sup>

As substance and accident are modes of being in our experience, so, at the top of the ontological ladder, being has three transcendental attributes, or modes (i. e., ways of being regarded): unity (unum), truth (verum), and goodness (bonum). (Beauty is significantly omitted.)<sup>51</sup> As such modes of being, these three characteris-

<sup>49</sup>S. J. Curtis, op. cit., p. 162.

<sup>50</sup>D'Arcy, p. 133.

<sup>51</sup>See D'Arcy, pp. 140 ff.



tics are present in varying degrees in all beings. Everything has something in it of unity, of truth, and of goodness. Evil, therefore, in a substance consists in its lack of something which it is naturally apt and ought to have--a man without an ear, for example.<sup>52</sup> It has no meaning save in reference to an existing good, and it cannot be caused except by what is good.

Analogy, then, preserves, it explains the unity and diversity of being, but in substances composed of form and matter, the diversity (the principle of individuation) is in the matter and the unity in the form. The form of tree is universal; that there are trees is due to the matter, "matter as quantified" (materia signata quantitate). Remember that for Thomas matter is not intelligible, only form is; it is, therefore, matter that individuates, that adds nothing to our knowledge of the essence of a tree<sup>53</sup> and yet makes this tree different from that

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<sup>52</sup>Quoted by D'Arcy, p. 142.

<sup>53</sup>This presents a slight difficulty in man. If matter (body) is the principle of individuation, then the soul after death will have no individuality. So Thomas regarded the body and soul more closely knit: the soul was not a substance residing in, hampered by, and waiting to be freed from body. Rather body and soul are one human being; the soul "informs" the whole body. Moreover, the soul, in contrast to other forms, is not only intelligible but intelligent: the form can free itself from the particularity of its matter. From this Thomas deduces its immortality. See Jacques Maritain, The Range of Reason, pp. 59 ff.



tree. If one asks what the relation between this tree and that is, Thomas answers that relation itself is a reality, a unique kind of entity. There are three sorts: a) a relation real from one side only (e. g., that between knower and known); b) relation purely rationis (e. g., in identity: "man" is a "rational animal"); or, negatively: a loaf of bread is better than nothing; c) a relation of species to genera, which is real from both sides. Relation has reality, it is a thing; but, just as accident has reality only in relation to substance, so relation has reality only in terms of something else. We may, for instance, have all the sense data, the facts, about a thing without seeing their inner connection: without knowing, that is to say, the reality of relation.

The fundamental character of this theory of being will be apparent in our next three sections: God, the Universe, Man, and Ethics.

### 3. The Existence and Nature of God

With regard to the existence of God, Thomas, in accord with his whole system, rejects any Anselmic ontological argument but proceeds from experience. He does not argue from the concept to the existence of God but from human experience to the reality of God. The five arguments are well known: the argument from motion, from efficient causality, from the possible and necessary being,



from the gradation of things, from the subjection of things to guidance (this last also called the argument from design).<sup>54</sup>

Of the nature of God it can be said that He is perfection, goodness, wisdom, life, intelligence, and all other such qualities that contain in them no imperfection (reason is able to determine what they are). By saying this, we are saying something different from the assertion that He is pure Being. Because of analogy, it does mean something to us to attribute qualities to Him. St. Thomas was not interested in retaining the remoteness and withdrawn self-sufficiency of Aristotle's god; he, therefore, attempted to avoid it by the doctrine of analogy and by the insistence that God does know all creatures individually by name, though "how He does so must be in great part, at least, his own secret."<sup>55</sup>

#### 4. God and the Universe

God is, for Thomas, transcendent; He is "in all things by essence, but by His own essence."<sup>56</sup> The universe is the outcome of His goodness, "a finite subsistent partici-

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<sup>54</sup>D'Arcy, pp. 154 ff., has an extensive and lucid defense of these arguments.

<sup>55</sup>D'Arcy, pp. 174 ff.

<sup>56</sup>S. Th., Ia., q. 18, a. 3. Quoted by D'Arcy, p. 177.



pation with an order in it based on the degree of resemblance to the divine prototype,"<sup>57</sup> a creation which leaves the Creator unchanged (actio est in passo); creation is not a change but a relation to being itself which includes also conservation. Whether creation were in time or ab aeterno could not be proved, Thomas thought, by reason: creation means only that beings in creation are contingent on the Creator; as far as reason is concerned, the contingency could be finite or infinite either in number or duration or in both.<sup>58</sup>

#### 5. Nature and Man

The world is made up of bodies composed of matter and form. The presence of matter is shown by passivity, divisibility, a readiness to suffer change; form is responsible for the distinctness and determinateness and activities of bodies. Man is

one being, composed of matter and form: there can be only one form in a substance, as it is the form which determines the subject to be what it is. The soul in man is the form of the body, determining it to be a human body; but the soul has an activity which intrinsically is immaterial . . . . Therefore the soul itself, the subject of this activity, must be immaterial and subsistent.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>D'Arcy, p. 179.

<sup>58</sup>Grabmann, op. cit., p. 112.

<sup>59</sup>D'Arcy, p. 211. Our soul, unlike our body, is not limited by time and space. It is, therefore, an immaterial substance and not subject to end. See note 53 above.



## 6. Ethics

Finally, a word about Thomas' ethics. His

general standpoint can be easily summed up as follows: man is composed of matter and spirit. Having such a nature he also has a definite end or good, and that will be good for him which is in accordance with the law of his nature and tends to its perfection. But being spirit, with the immanent activity of a spirit, he is conscious of himself to some extent and of the law of his being; again, being spirit, he is aware of objective truth and objective goodness; in other words, he is aware of an absolute standard. He must bow to truth and follow goodness as duty. It is his reason which is his specific characteristic, and it is reason which gives him absolute standards. Therefore, he must act according to right reason, and he must regulate the various tendencies in him by this criterion. All that tends to the perfection of his manhood will be good because it is natural; but as this nature is revealed to him in consciousness in his reason, he must develop his body, his sensitive powers, his instincts, his social, mental and artistic inclinations, not irresponsibly, but by the rule revealed to him in consciousness, which is for him as fundamental as the first principles of being and truth.<sup>60</sup>

Ultimate happiness is this that one knows even as one is known, that one has the Beatific Vision, that one knows God's Essence.

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<sup>60</sup>D'Arcy, pp. 321 f.



### CHAPTER III

#### THE WORD IN THE COMMENTARY ON FIRST CORINTHIANS

Keeping this philosophical structure in mind, we turn to what Saint Thomas says in his commentary on First Corinthians with regard to the Word of God. The subject will be treated under the following seven headings:

The Word in its: a) preaching-teaching function; b) normative function; c) salutary function; d) relation to natural knowledge; e) relation to the Incarnate Word; f) relation to the Church; g) relation to love and faith.

Two preliminary observations are in order. First, the "Word of God," treated in this way, is to be understood, as I have already stated, in its general sense of intelligible revelation of the supernatural, that which cannot be attained by human reason without revelation, though it can (and should) be "proved and defined against those who deny it."<sup>1</sup> It includes the spoken Word, the written Word, and the Incarnate Word, but as a general term implies no distinction. Secondly, that revelation is without error and without contradiction for Thomas hardly needs proof; such was the general assumption of his

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<sup>1</sup>J. van der Ploeg, "The Place of Holy Scriptures in the Theology of Saint Thomas," The Thomist, X (1947), 398-422. F. Oiglati, The Key to the Study of Saint Thomas, translated by John S. Zybura (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1925).



time and there are abundant indications of it in the First Corinthians commentary.<sup>2</sup>

#### A. Preaching-Teaching Function

Saint Thomas recognizes a necessity for the admonition that Paul as apostle gives the Corinthians.<sup>3</sup> It is necessary to speak the Word of God; it is necessary to preach. In preaching, furthermore, the wisdom and the power of the preacher make a difference in the effect of the Word.

. . . Christ sent apostles for both [preaching and baptizing], in such a way, however, that they would do the preaching themselves in person (per seipsos), as they themselves said in Acts 6:2 . . . . He would baptize, however, through the lesser ministers, and this is due to the fact that in baptism the sincerity or the virtus of the baptizer effects nothing: for it is of no import whether the baptism is given through a greater or lesser minister; but in the preaching of the Gospel the wisdom and virtus

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<sup>2</sup>"One single error in the Bible or in the dogmatic teaching of the Church would be sufficient to undermine the whole of religion." Pierre Rousselot, The Intellectualism of St. Thomas, translated by Fr. James O'Mahony (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1953), p. 72 (note). A distinction is to be made, however, in locating an error. "When we know from revelation that Christ is man, or that man must serve God, the idea 'man' has become the object of revelation. Therefore, Saint Thomas analyzes it and many other ideas in order that we might better understand the sense of revealed truth. This understanding is, of course, human, fallible, and not to be identified with faith. It is the product of theological thinking." J. van der Ploeg, op. cit., p. 413.

<sup>3</sup>Super Epistolas S. Pauli Lectura, ed. viii revisa, cura P. Raphaelis, O. P. (Rome: Marietti, 1953), I, Section 21. The location of the quotations will be indicated henceforth by a simple numeral, usually in parentheses



of the preacher have much effect, and so the office of preaching the apostles, as the greater ministers, exercised, just as it is said of Christ Himself, John 4:2, that He did not baptize but His disciples did.  
(39)

The most effective preaching is that done by the wisest preacher, that is, the preacher who knows most of the things of God, and by the most "virtuous" preacher, that is, the preacher who has most of the power of God.<sup>4</sup> Is the wisest and most powerful preaching the most effective because it hinders less the Spirit--and the perfect sermon would be the perfect channel of the Spirit--or does it have a more positive function, apart from the Spirit working through it? Saint Thomas has more to say on the subject when he writes of sapientia and its use. He says, relative to Paul's not preaching with the wisdom of man (non in sapientia verbi, 1 Cor. 1:17), that a distinction must be made between teaching in sapientia verbi and using sapientia verbi in teaching.

He teaches with wisdom of word who takes the wisdom of the word as the principal root of his doctrine, in such a way, namely, that he accepts only those

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following the quotation or reference, the numeral referring to the section of the commentary. With regard to citation I have followed this practice: Quotations occurring in the text of this thesis I have translated as literally as possible (and, therefore, often crudely) into English. Those occurring in the footnotes I have retained in the original Latin.

<sup>4</sup>This is a conjecture as to the exact meaning of virtus here.



things which contain wisdom of word and rejects those things which do not have wisdom of word; and this tends to corrupt faith. He, on the other hand, uses wisdom of the word who, having accepted the fundamentals of the true faith (suppositis verae fidei fundamentis), uses in the service of the faith anything that he may find of truth in the teachings of the philosophers. (43)<sup>5</sup>

For whoever

leans principally on teaching with wisdom of word as such makes the cross of Christ in vain (evacuat). Therefore, to teach with wisdom of word is not a proper manner for Christian faith. This is why [Paul] says, "lest the cross of Christ be made of none effect," that is, lest, if I should want to preach with wisdom of words, faith be removed from the power of the cross of Christ. (45)

And this is a violation of the root of Christian teaching, viz., salvation through the cross of Christ.<sup>6</sup> The word of the cross, that is, the proclamation of the cross of Christ,<sup>7</sup> is, therefore, central to Christian teaching and preaching.<sup>8</sup>

So it seems that theology is justified in using philosophy and preaching in using oratory, a distinction being made between teaching with wisdom of words and using wisdom

<sup>5</sup>Cf. also 77: "Ut scilicet supra dixit quod non fuit intentionis quod sua praedicatio niteretur philosophicis rationibus, ita nunc dicit non fuisse suae intentionis niti rhetoricis persuasionibus."

<sup>6</sup>"Principale . . . autem in doctrina fidei christiana est salus per crucem Christi facta." 45.

<sup>7</sup>"Verbum crucis, id est annuntiatio crucis Christi . . . ." 47.

<sup>8</sup>Apollos showed from the Scriptures Jesus as Christ. 135.



of words in teaching, the latter being permissible. In other words, the principalis radix is not sapientia but is, rather, the presuppositions of faith: what determines the truth of a thing is not whether it is understandable but whether it is a part of revelation. To the presuppositions of faith is added in obsequium fidei whatever in the teachings of the philosophers is true. But how does one discover what are the vera in these teachings? Or from where do the supposita fundamenta fidei derive? Thomas does not say explicitly. However, one might conjecture<sup>9</sup> that the believer can judge what is true, since the cross is foolishness only because of a defectus sapientiae which is the characteristic of non-believers. The defect is removed: Paul

shows how God removes (supplet) the stated defects [of wisdom, of power, and of righteousness] in His preachers through Christ. First as to the defect of wisdom, when He says, "who," namely Christ, "is made unto us" preachers of faith, and, through us, to all the faithful, "wisdom," because we are made wise by clinging to Him, Who is the wisdom of God, and by participating in Him through grace . . . . Christ is said, moreover, to have been made our righteousness inasmuch as through faith in Him we are justified. . . . We are sanctified through Christ, inasmuch as through Him we are joined to God, in Whom is true nobilitas. (71)

Preaching does in some way remove the defect in man.

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<sup>9</sup> . . . Considerandum quod id quod est in se bonum, non potest alicui stultum videri, nisi propter defectum sapientiae. Haec est ergo causa quare verbum crucis quod est salutiferum credentibus, quibusdam videtur stultitia, quia sunt ipsi sapientia privati." 49.



Through faith in Christ, by whom we are joined to God, we acquire wisdom. Apparently faith is, then, the acceptance of what revelation says as true without understanding the rationale of it: an acceptance of the fundamenta fidei which is not based on the "wisdom of word" inherent in them. Wisdom consists in not letting human vanity prevent the acceptance of those fundamenta by faith. But the faith that brings Christ into the heart is caritate<sup>10</sup> formata;<sup>11</sup> it not only accepts as true what revelation says but desires the Revealer.<sup>12</sup> It is vanity too, apparently, which rejects caritas. For Saint Thomas says of vanity:

As a disciple comes to know the wisdom of his teacher through the words which he hears from him, so man was able to come to knowledge of the wisdom of God through the creatures made by Him . . . . But man, because of the vanity of his heart, strayed from a right knowledge of God (rectitudine divine cognitionis) . . . and so God leads the faithful to a saving knowledge of Him through other things, which are not found in the structure (ratio) of the creatures themselves because they are regarded as foolish by worldly men, who consider only the structure of human things. And of this kind are the teachings (documenta) of faith. It is as though a teacher, noting that his meaning is not understood by the hearers

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<sup>10</sup>Caritas: "a love given entirely to God." Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, translated by Philip S. Watson (London: S. P. C. K., 1953), p. 622.

<sup>11</sup>155.

<sup>12</sup>Nygren, op. cit., pp. 626 ff., believes that Protestant objections to the scholastic idea of grace and of salvation miss the point in not centering around the mistaken notion of love in scholasticism. See also pp. 642 ff.



in the words that he has used, seeks to use other words through which to make clear, what he has in his heart. (55)

Because man in his vanity<sup>13</sup> had strayed from a knowledge of God, God had to "get through" to him by different methods. Divine wisdom (*i. e.*, knowledge of Who He is and how He acts) is no longer grasped by man. Therefore, God uses the cross. It is as though I should explain to someone in words who and what I am; that someone does not understand what I am trying to say; consequently, I show it by action. Mankind is similarly deaf to the words of God and so has to turn to the cross which it can see. Presumably, then, God has revealed His essence in the Old Testament<sup>14</sup> (and through philosophy?), but most people miss the point because of their vanity. Ergo the Son is born and is crucified. Though man is deaf to God's words, he can see with his physical eyes God's wisdom and God's power in the cross.<sup>15</sup>

And yet what he sees seems foolishness to man.

On account of the defect of sapientia [men] think it impossible that God be made man, to suffer death according to His human nature; on account of a defect of prudencia, however, they consider it improper

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<sup>13</sup>This would seem to make man's estrangement from God moral rather than epistemological.

<sup>14</sup>See Etienne Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1936).

<sup>15</sup>Note: the word of the cross is stultitia.



(inconveniens) that a man would bear a cross, "despising the shame," as is said in Hebrews 12:2. (49)

He continues:

It seems to be against the nature (ratio) of human wisdom that God should die and that a just and wise man should voluntarily expose himself to the most ignominious death. (58)

In what sense is it foolishness to man? As a logical contradiction? A contradiction to everyday experience? A contradiction to what man's vanity would dictate--that is to say, one who has power (God) would never give it up by death, and one who is wise (i. e., who lives according to his own best interests), if he is also just (i. e., is not a criminal),<sup>16</sup> would not voluntarily die? Does the world misunderstand iustus, therefore, also? If so, to what does vanity pervert its meaning? The wisdom of God is such knowledge as leads to God (179); is the foolishness of man, in contrast, that which leads away from God? Thomas does not give a full answer in this commentary, but he hints at it. Take another passage:

. . . God is in all creatures--in which He is by His essence, power, and presence--, filling all things with His goodness (bonitates) . . . . But spiritually God is said to live in the saints--as one lives in a home--whose mind can grasp God (capax est Dei) through knowledge and love (amor), even though they themselves may not know and love (diligere) in act, until they have the habitus of faith and love (charitas) by grace, as is plain concerning baptized children. And knowledge without

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<sup>16</sup>Or does iustus here mean "faithful"?



love (dilectio) is not enough for the indwelling of God, according to 1 John 4:16: "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him." So it is that many know God either through natural knowledge or through inform faith in whom, nevertheless, the Spirit of God does not live. (173)<sup>17</sup>

As such a house, or temple, of God man can be corrupted either by false doctrine or by mortal sin (174); that is to say, he can be corrupted either by word or by work. The temple of God is where He lives as saving God, or in which He dwells as Spirit. It can be defiled by false teaching, when something is said of God which is not in accord with Him as He really is,<sup>18</sup> or by mortal sin, when something is brought into the temple that does not befit God.

I may know God, let us say, as first cause (by natural knowledge) or as pure being (by metaphysical knowledge or inform faith accepting the revelation of "I am that I am"), but that is not saving knowledge if it is not known in love. I may know, for example, that my father supports the family, but if I do not love<sup>19</sup> the father who does it, my knowledge will not make me a real part of the family. Now, wherein is man's sin? He can have knowledge of God

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<sup>17</sup>The quotation from John, where love is caritas, indicates that Thomas uses caritas and dilectio interchangeably. Cf. also 155.

<sup>18</sup>We can know God as He really is to a limited extent. See above, pp. 25 ff.

<sup>19</sup>I. e., strive for ontological union with the object.



without its being a saving knowledge; his vanitas, presumably, prevents his knowing and loving. And what kind of knowledge is it? Thomas would answer that it is propositional, expressed in judgments; knowledge that recognizes true statements about God. Fides informis accepts the knowledge as true but has no love of the Truth itself. By way of illustration, let us say that I know Peter is in a dark room. I may know it by cognitio if I know that the main light switch in the building has been thrown. Or I may know it by faith if he has told me (and I believe him) that at this time of the evening he always sits in a dark room. By either way I am certain of what I know. But I may have no desire to sit in the dark myself, no desire to approach, as it were, the level of Peter: then I have no "love" for him. So it is possible to have knowledge of God by fides informis without having a desire to be joined to Him, to reach His level. If I do reach His level, that is the same as having the Holy Spirit dwelling in me in a saving way. The question of what it is that prevents me from loving Him, whether that is the result of a perverse will that is my heritage as a child of Adam, is not answered in the commentary on First Corinthians, although the fact that I do love Him is clearly ascribed to grace alone.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Cf. J. Maritain, The Range of Reason (New York:



Again, preaching has a persuading function;<sup>21</sup> it is a vehicle by which the Holy Spirit is given<sup>22</sup> and is confirmed by miracles.

. . . To the believers the Holy Spirit was given by

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Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 71 (note): "Grace has a twofold action: it heals nature which original sin had prevented from loving God efficaciously above all things; and it grafts in nature a supernatural life which is an actual participation in the very life of God. Insofar as it is sanctifying grace, and the very principle of supernatural life, it enables man to love God with the supernatural love of charity, and to ordain himself to the only true end existentially given of human life, *i. e.*, God as ultimate supernatural end. Insofar as it is gratia sanans, it restores to nature its ability to love God above all things as the Creator of the universe--natural love virtually contained in the supernatural love of charity--and to ordain itself to God as its natural end, an ordainment virtually contained in the ordainment to God as ultimate supernatural end." Cf. also M.-J. Congar, "The Idea of the Church in Saint Thomas Aquinas," The Thomist, I (1938), pp. 341 f., where grace is related to Christ. He writes, ". . . In the soul of Christ there was a fulness of all grace, a fulness 'intensive' as well as extensive, qualitative as well as quantitative, embracing all we can attribute to a man flowing from the created grace of God, whether sanctifying grace . . . or graces gratis datae. Thus, in the world of grace, a kind of Platonism is valid, for Christ contains in Himself the fulness of the species grace, in a way similar to that in which the archetype of Man, in Plato, contains the fulness of human species. So that, if other individuals are to receive grace too, they may only do so in dependence on Christ and if these be men, whose unique Savior is the God-given Christ, they may only receive it from Christ and in virtue of sharing, participating in His own grace."

<sup>21</sup>"Et . . . dicitur alii quidem per spiritum datur . . . sermo sapientiae, ut possit persuadere ea quae ad cognitionem divinorum pertinent." 727. And on the subject of persuasion: "Ad facultatem persuadendi . . . requiritur quod homo habeat peritiam conclusionum et certitudinem principiorum, circa ea in quibus debemus persuadere." Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>At least that is true of the apostles.



his [Paul's] preaching, according to Acts 10:44: "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." Likewise he also confirmed his preaching with miracles according to Mark 16:20: " . . . confirming the word with signs following." (78)<sup>23</sup>

At another place Saint Thomas calls it the seed by which the Apostle begot Christ in the hearts of the believers:

. . . Giving a reason for what he had said [in 4:14: "as my beloved sons I warn you"], he adds, "for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel." Now, generation is a coming forth to life, and man lives in Christ through faith. Gal. 2:20: "And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." Faith, furthermore, as is said in Romans 10:17, comes by hearing, and hearing through the Word. Consequently, the Word of God is the seed, by which the apostle begot them in Christ. Whence James 1:18: "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth." (222)

To paraphrase that thought: Giving birth is giving life; life in Christ is life by faith; therefore, giving birth in Christ is giving life by faith. But without the Word there is no hearing and without hearing there is no faith; therefore, without the Word there is no life in Christ. For that reason the Word is the semen, the generative power in the new birth. Does Saint Thomas mean that the Word is, in other terminology, a channel of grace, or a means of grace? Apparently so.

On 1 Corinthians 7:14 ("the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife and the unbelieving wife is sanc-

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<sup>23</sup>Cf. also 755 on the three functions of the greater ministry: to govern, to teach, and to confirm.



tified by the husband") he elaborates:

The one is converted by the other to the faith and so is sanctified . . . and similarly the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, namely through his admonition and teaching (doctrina). (345)<sup>24</sup>

In sum: for Thomas it is necessary that preaching and teaching be done, for by it faith and life are generated.

### B. Regulative Function

In matters of truth the Word, as revelation, is normative; the Word is a revelation of truths. Thomas notes, for example, on the question of whether the effect of baptism is proportionate to the greatness of the baptizer that "patet esse falsum per id quod dicitur Eph. iv, 5: Unus Dominus, una fides, unum baptisma." (28.) Again, the error of Nestorius is refuted by what Paul says in the second chapter, the eighth verse.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Emphasis is mine.

<sup>25</sup>92. The pertinent verse from the First Corinthians epistle is this: ". . . They would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." It would be more accurate to say here that the error of Nestorius, who had ascribed only one nature to Christ, is refuted by Thomas' exegesis of Paul, or by Thomas' metaphysics, rather than by the direct words of Paul. That, however, does not affect the point made here that the Scriptures are considered statements of truths. On the question of resisting error Etienne Gilson, Wisdom and Love in Saint Thomas Aquinas (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1951), p. 32, has this to say: "For a true disciple of Thomas the only way to destroy error is to see through it, that is, once more, to 'understand' it precisely qua error." Cf. also J. van



The authority of revelation stems, furthermore, from Christ and His apostles:<sup>26</sup> the fact that what Paul writes here in the fifteenth chapter is what he and the apostles had earlier preached<sup>27</sup>--the authority of their preaching having been derived, it seems, from the authority of Christ as the sole infallible rule of truth<sup>28</sup>--is what makes the content of it true. It appears that even the Old Testament Scriptures in some way derive their authority from Christ.

One might also suspect (*alia suspicio est*) that the death of Christ were accidental (*casualis*) or due to the violence of the Jews. This Paul excludes when he says, "According to the Scriptures," namely, of the Old and New Testament; and so, significantly, he specifically says, "According to the Scriptures." Is. 53:7: "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter." Jeremiah 11:19: "I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter." Matthew 20:18: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." (895)<sup>29</sup>

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der Floeg, *op. cit.*, p. 413: ". . . We find in Holy Scripture the principles of sacred doctrine, that is, the articles of faith, which are short summaries of revealed truths; we find in it argumentations and reasonings and the refutation of errors."

<sup>26</sup>"In hoc apparet auctoritas huius doctrinae, quia a Christo, a Paulo, et ab aliis Apostolis, Hebr. 11, 3." 889.

<sup>27</sup>"Illud quod praedicavi vobis de Christo, notum facio vobis, id est reduco vobis ad memoriam, quas non sint nova ea quae scribo." 889. Emphasis is mine.

<sup>28</sup>"In hoc subditi solum praelatos imitari debent, in quo ipsi Christum imitantur, qui est infallibilis regula veritatis; unde seipsum Apostolis in exemplum posuit." 223.

<sup>29</sup>895. Note how the Old Testament passages are used.



Whatever the derivation of their authority, however, the Scriptures, as the vehicle of revelation, are regulative in truth; that is to say, truth can be proved<sup>30</sup> from Scriptures,<sup>31</sup> and the "very Word of the Gospel" strengthens against temptation.<sup>32</sup>

### C. Salutory Function

The Word, as has already become clear, has a role in man's salvation. Salvation is centered around the cross of Christ,<sup>33</sup> and conversion is to be attributed to God, Who works from grace, and not to man.<sup>34</sup> Preaching is above all a demonstration of the power of Christ, as Saint Thomas says:

For this it was not necessary that Paul show

<sup>30</sup>In whatever sense the probare is to be taken.

<sup>31</sup>E. g., 991. And passim.

<sup>32</sup>J. Maritain, op. cit., p. 146. Cf. J. van der Ploeg, op. cit., p. 413, quoted above in note 2. Cf. also Sister Theresa Benedicta a Cruce, "Ways to Know God," The Thomist, IX (1946), 402: "The words of God's messengers, His prophets and apostles, directed in His name at those who are called to faith, are also Divine Word and address; this is true, first of all, of the Scriptures." (This article is prefixed with a note of the translator, p. 379, thus: "The reader acquainted with Husserl's phenomenology will recognize his influence in the present article.")

<sup>33</sup>" . . . Ad fidem Christi vocati sunt, qui in cruce Christi recognoscunt Dei virtutem." 60.

<sup>34</sup>70. Cf. 714: No caritas is possible without grace, no salvation is possible without caritas.



wisdom but that he demonstrate power, as 2 Corinthians 4:5 says: "For we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord." And so he used only those things which served to demonstrate the power of Christ, considering himself as knowing nothing save Jesus Christ. (75)

It appears, then, that apart from any explanation of how, the Word preached and the Word written (and the two are not distinctly separated by Thomas)<sup>35</sup> are central in the way of salvation inasmuch as they show Christ.<sup>36</sup>

#### D. Relation to Natural Knowledge

Revelation is a disclosure of that which is above man's wisdom, which surpasses his sensus.<sup>37</sup>

Something divine seems to be foolish not because it is a departure from wisdom (deficiat a sapientia) but because it exceeds human wisdom. For some men have been accustomed to regard as foolish whatever exceeds their sense. (62)<sup>38</sup>

In fact, in some way Thomas seems to regard man's wisdom for this very reason as defective;<sup>39</sup> for that which is good in itself cannot seem foolish except to a defect of wisdom.

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<sup>35</sup>See note 29 above.

<sup>36</sup>See note 8 above.

<sup>37</sup>See Chapter II, note 35.

<sup>38</sup>Cf. also 75: "Attenditur autem sublimitas sapientiae in consideratione aliquorum sublimium et elevatorum supra rationem et sensum hominum. Eccli. xxiv, 7."

<sup>39</sup>But it is not likely that the defect is considered per se immoral. Cf. 89: "Saeculares enim principes hanc sapientiam non cognoverunt, quia excedit rationem humani regiminis . . . Philosophi etiam eam non cognoverunt, quia excedit rationem humanam."



This [lack of wisdom] is, therefore, the cause why the Word of the cross, which brings salvation to believers, to some seems foolishness, because they are themselves bereft of wisdom . . . . Wisdom is knowledge of divine things . . . ; prudence is knowledge of human things. (49)

But the defect is eliminated by participation in Christ through grace,<sup>40</sup> and wisdom is "inspired" by the Holy Spirit.

Because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, inasmuch as proceeding from the Son, who is the Truth of the Father, He "inspires" truth in those to whom He is sent, just as also the Son, sent by the Father, witnesses to (notificat) the Father, as Matthew 11:27 says: "Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. (100)

The Spirit thus "illumines" the hearts of men.<sup>41</sup> In one place Saint Thomas indicates the content of revelation as such purely intelligible things as the purpose of objects in nature. Thus he says in reference to 1 Cor. 6:12

("Now the body is not for fornication but for the Lord"):

[Some argue that] whoever commits fornication is using his body for a use instituted by God. But [Paul] excludes this when he says that food is for the belly and the belly for food; man's body, however, is not

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40"Participando Ipsum per gratiam sapientes facti sumus." 71. Cf. also 81: "Perfecti intellectu illi, quorum mens elevata est super omnia carnalia et sensibilia, quia spiritualia et intelligibilia capere possunt."

41"Receperunt Spiritum Sanctum, quo corda eorum illuminata sunt et inflammata ad amorem Dei"; and "ex divino . . . Spiritu eius consecuti sumus . . . ut sciamus de rebus divinis quantum unicuique Deus donavit." 106. On the meaning of "illumine" cf. 196: "Illuminabat abscondita terrarum, id est, faciet esse lucida et manifesta ea quae occulte in tenebris facta sunt."



for fornication, that is, it has not been ordained to committing fornication, but for God, that is, to this it has been ordained that it belong to Jesus Christ, our Lord and the Master of our body; that is to say, the Lord Jesus Christ has been given to men for this purpose that He might conform human bodies to his glory, Phil. 3:21. (298)

Although one might be able to advance a certain argument for fornication, yet this is not in accord with the will of God. One might say that one purpose of the body is procreation; and, therefore, whoever does fornication is simply fulfilling that purpose, in the same way that the stomach has been ordained for food, and whoever uses food is fulfilling one purpose of the stomach (299). But that only seems to be so.<sup>42</sup> In reality all things find their end in God and so the body ought also be subject to Him. Here, then, if what Paul writes is revelation (and there is no doubt that Thomas regarded it so), the Word discloses what is man's final cause.<sup>43</sup> If the disclosure does not seem to be of anything uniquely "supra-sensory," it is still true that Saint Thomas places the content of saving revelation beyond human reason.

Those things which pertain to the doctrine of salvation cannot be confirmed or proved by reason, because they exceed human reason . . . . They are confirmed or proved by a divine sign; so also Moses, about to be sent to the people of God, received a

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<sup>42</sup>To natural reason or to careless reason? Probably to the latter. See 299 and 308 which speak of fornication as a use of the body "praeter usum rationis."

<sup>43</sup>Could this be known by reason?



sign from God, through which were confirmed those things that he said as of God (ex parte Dei), as is clear in Exodus 4:1-9. (728)

A sign can be known to be of God either because it is that "quod solus Deus facere potest, sicut sunt miracula," or because it is that "quod solus Deus cognoscere potest," such as foretelling future events or knowing people's hearts. In illustration of the former, some people are persuaded by miracles because of their greatness and others because of their kindness. A miracle of healing can "persuade" because the healed recognizes that only God can be so kind. Miracles of "size" persuade because the one who sees recognizes that only God can be so great. Both of these kinds of persuasion, however, must rest, it seems, on the presupposition that God is pure essence. For the persuasion has a decidedly intellectual emphasis,<sup>44</sup> and the persuasion of a miracle of healing is not so much that it causes the healed to say, "He has helped me and I will cling to Him," but rather that it causes him to acknowledge, "It follows from the nature of God that only He could be so kind." Likewise the persuasion of a miracle known for its magnitude is not so much that it arouses awe in the beholder but that it forces the acknowledgement, "It follows from the nature of God that only He could be

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<sup>44</sup>Cf. 727 and 729.



so great."<sup>45</sup>

Accordingly, the things of salvation are proved by signs and not by the number of people who believe them. For belief of a thing is in no way an indication of its truth. If someone should object

that even the law of Mahomet has been received by many, it should be said that the case is not similar [to the law of Christ] because he subjugated them by oppression and force of arms while the apostles led others to faith by dying and performing signs and wonders themselves. He, moreover, advocated some things that are directed to pleasures and wantonness, but Christ and the apostles advocated contempt of the earthly. (890)

Falsehood has power if it is imposed by force or if it appeals to the sensuous. But truth has the power in itself to lead to faith. We may conclude, then, that if what is taught can be imposed only by force, it is falsehood; if it has power of attraction without force, it is truth.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Yet it should be remembered that for Thomas, at least according to his modern interpreters, the intellectual is not so cold a thing as one is sometimes wont to regard it. Cf., e. g., J. Maritain, *op. cit.*, p. 87: "What is needed is a rediscovery of Being and by the same token a rediscovery of love." Again, p. 207: "The way the intelligence works is not through 'crystallization in the sign' but through a 'transition to the reality signified'--as when knowing that my friend has lost his father I truly see into his grief, I truly understand that my friend is in sorrow. 'Faith,' says Saint Thomas *S. Th.* II-II, 1, 2, ad 2 'does not stop at statements, at conceptual signs; its object is nothing less than reality itself attained by means of these signs'--in other words, the actual mystery of the Godhead communicating Himself to us."

<sup>46</sup>Thomas would probably not waste much time speculating whether Mahomet himself recognized his lex as falsehood but would be rather certain that he did.



Put into a somewhat different light, it can be said

that falsehood does not have the power of purging. Yet it is agreed that faith purges sin. Acts 15:9. If, therefore, our faith should be in vain, as it would be if Christ did not rise, because such is your faith--namely, that He did rise--your sins have not been forgiven you . . . . (921)

Since faith purges sin and since falsehood has no power of purging, our faith is truth. That faith does purge sin is known from the Scriptures. Hence the Scriptures become the criterion of truth. "'Sed scriptum est,' etc., Hic probat propositum" (991).<sup>47</sup> And Scriptural proof<sup>48</sup> consists in bringing forth a statement from Scripture and clarifying it.

Again, prophecy is revelation. It brings to light the hidden things of God. Prophecy is that "per quam divinitus occulta revelantur" (764), whether this is in the form of explaining visions or of interpreting the Scriptures.<sup>49</sup> Without prophecy, or perhaps we should say,

<sup>47</sup> Emphasis is in the original.

<sup>48</sup> "There are two kinds of demonstration, says Saint Thomas, which it is important to distinguish, especially in theology. The first ends in a judgment of fact (quia est), the second shows how and why a thing is what it is (propter quid est). The arguments for the existence of God are of the first kind, and they are justified in the eyes of Saint Thomas because they infer from existent, limited being that being 'without spot or wrinkle' must also exist, and it is easy to show that it must be a se and esse subsistens." M. C. D'Arcy, Thomas Aquinas (Oxford, 1930), p. 166.

<sup>49</sup> "Qui prophetat . . . . id est, explanat visiones seu scripturas . . . ." 818.



without revelation, it is possible to a limited extent to know God. Saint Thomas explains this in a rather extensive passage (800), in which he maintains that Paul, writing of our vision of God "through a glass darkly," means we cannot see God in His essence until we reach the beyond (the fatherland) save only by virtue of our reason, by analogy.<sup>56</sup> Of interest on just this point is a later elaboration by Thomas of the relationship between Christ's resurrection and our resurrection. Because Christ is risen, we shall also rise; that was Paul's argument in the fifteenth chapter. Now, Thomas says, this may not seem like sound argumentation. For it cannot be shown from the fact that Christ's body was resurrected "specialiter ex virtute divinitatis suae" that our bodies, lacking the divinitas, will rise. It cannot be shown, that is to say, if the argument is taken as a maiori. But the point is, some assert, that it is not argument a maiori; it is argument a simili,

for to die and to rise is befitting Christ according to His human nature; and they say a similar argument would be if I should say, "The soul of So-and-so is immortal; therefore, all--namely, all human souls--are immortal." (913)

Better than that, however, Saint Thomas believes, is to say that it is an argument from cause.

It seems that one would better say that it is a locus

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<sup>50</sup>800-801. See above, pp. 26 ff.



a causa, because the resurrection of Christ is the cause of our resurrection . . . , the efficient and exemplary cause . . . , the instrumental cause. (913. 915)

Consequently, also on the meaning of the resurrection we see "through a glass darkly"; it is not a spontaneous "vision" of our reason by which we behold the relation between Christ's resurrection and ours. It may be seen as a kind of analogy--though Thomas rejects this; or it may be seen as a causal relationship--Thomas accepts this. Human wisdom, we may say, remains wisdom on this issue too only as long as it is subjected to divine wisdom, to revelation.<sup>51</sup>

The whole question of the relation of revelation to natural knowledge can be summarized in the words of Jacques Maritain. Man "is made for truth, capable of knowing God as the Cause of Being, by his reason, and of knowing Him in His intimate life, by the gift of faith."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>"Causa autem quare dicit 'insipiens,' est quia haec obiectio contra resurrectionem procedit ex principiis humanae sapientiae, quae tamdiu est sapientia, quamdiu est subiecta sapientiae divinae; sed quando recedit a Deo, tunc vertitur in insipientiam; unde cum contradicat sapientiae divinae, vocat eam insipientem. Quasi dicat: 'Insipiens,' nonne quotidie experiris tu, quia 'quod seminas,' in terra, 'non vivificatur,' id est vegetatur, 'nisi prius moriatur, id est putrescat?' Io. xli, 24: Nisi granum frumenti, etc." 968.

<sup>52</sup>Op. cit., p. 195. Also the quotation given by him, p. 209, from Thomas, Ioann. IV, lect., 5, a. 2: "There are three things which lead us to the faith of Christ: natural reason, the testimony of the Law and the Prophets, the preaching of the apostles and their successors. But when



## E. Relation to the Incarnate Word

What is the relationship of God as the Incarnate Word to the spoken-written Word of revelation? Though there is no clear distinction between the written and spoken Word for him, Saint Thomas does give an edge in importance to the spoken Word (Section B, above). On Christ as the Incarnate Word he comments, relative to 1 Corinthians 1:17 ("Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God"): He is

the power insofar as the Father works everything through Him. John 1:3: "All things were made by Him"; but He is wisdom insofar that the Word itself, which is the Son, is nothing else than wisdom born or conceived. Eccli. 24:5: "I issued from the mouth of the Most High, the first-born of all creatures." (61)<sup>53</sup>

Again, the Incarnate Word is in some sense author of the spoken-written words. Either they are a record of what He said to His disciples and apostles by His own mouth or they are the record of what He has said by

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a man has thus been led as it were by the hand to the Faith, then he can say that he believes for none of the preceding motives; not because of natural reason, nor the witness of the Law, nor because of the preaching of men, but only because of the First Truth itself . . . . It is from the light which God infuses that faith derives its certitude."

<sup>53</sup> Eccli. 24:5 in J. M. Powis Smith and Edgar J. Goodspeed, The Complete Bible: An American Translation (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), reads: "I issued from the mouth of the Most High and covered the earth like a mist" (Eccli. 24:3).



inspiration,<sup>54</sup> for He is the infallible rule of truth (223). To Him the Scriptures point (135). More specifically, the relation of the Incarnate to the spoken-written Word is that Christ is the wisdom of God in the sense that He is the alia verba (above, Section B) which God as Teacher has used to "make clear what He has in His heart." In this sense also He is the power of God; through Him God visibly works all things. Though this seems to make Christ a kind of afterthought, Saint Thomas would not, I believe, want it so understood. The Incarnate Word may have come after the spoken-written Word in time but not in importance.

To the question of whether Saint Thomas held Sacred Tradition as equally authoritative with the Sacred Scriptures there is no clearly defined answer in the commentary on First Corinthians. The single and indirect reference is a remark quoted in Section F, below, on the Church and the Word. J. van der Floeg,<sup>55</sup> however, acknowledges that,

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<sup>54</sup>360. This paragraph is from the section put into writing by Niccolai de Gorram. See also 374: "Consilium autem do . . . , consilium mihi a Spiritu Sancto inspiratum," and 342: "Dico ego . . . non Dominus . . . proprio ore."

<sup>55</sup>"One gets the impression that . . . Saint Thomas considers Holy Scripture the only source of revelation . . . . Is not this the Protestant doctrine of the perspicuitas of Holy Scripture, and does not this practically exclude tradition as a source of revelation? One must concede that Saint Thomas rarely mentions tradition as a separate source of revelation. But this does not mean at all that he did not know it . . . . In his commentary on II Thes. 2:15 he writes: 'So it is clear that much has been written



to say the very least, Sacred Tradition did not play a significant part in Thomas and that the Scriptures are to an extent sui ipsius interpretes.<sup>56</sup>

#### F. Relation to the Church

The Word is related to the Church. The apostles,

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in the Church which has been taught by the apostles and which, therefore, must be observed (servanda) because, according to the judgment of the apostles, it was better to hide much, as Dionysius says . . . . But in spite of all this, Holy Scripture was for him by far the principal source of faith, especially with regard to the more speculative doctrines." Op. cit., p. 418. Again: sacra doctrina, sacra scriptura, scientia divinitus inspirata, divina revelatio are used by Thomas "apparently indiscriminately" in the Summa Th. on the question of the nature of theology. "It cannot be doubted. Holy Scripture contains, or rather is, sacra doctrina and a science [for Thomas]." Van der Floeg, op. cit., pp. 411 f. And again: "As a matter of fact, Saint Thomas does not expressly mention the Traditions (or Tradition [the words are synonymous]) as a source of his theological doctrine." G. Geenan, "The Place of Tradition in the Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas," The Thomist, XV (1952), p. 112. "Moreover . . . it seems rather clear that for him the Fathers were not a source of revelation, since he teaches that the use of their 'authorities' in theology is different from that of the 'authorities' of Scripture, precisely because they were not authors to whom revelation has been made. We might add that the great Scholastic does not appear to be acquainted with 'unanimous consent of the Fathers,' nor the 'consent of the bishops' as an argument to prove apodictically that such or such doctrine belongs to the deposit of revelation." Ibid., p. 120. But he concludes that, therefore, "in the last analysis, it is to the Church, i. e., to the Pope as head of the universal Church, that we must have recourse in order to know what is revealed doctrine, for it is his Teaching Authority which is the authentic and definitive norm." Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>56</sup>Op. cit., p. 415. On the metaphysics of the Incarnation see Thomas U. Mullaney, "The Incarnation: De la



representatives of the Church,<sup>57</sup> are ministers of Christ, that is, mediators between Christ and the faithful,<sup>58</sup> and it is necessary that they be recognized as such by the people.

This regard (aestimatio) for the prelates of the Church is necessary for the salvation of the faithful; for unless they recognized them as ministers of Christ, they would not obey them in the way that they would obey Christ, as Galatians 4:14 has it: "Ye received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." Again, if they would not recognize them as ministers

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Taille versus Thomistic Tradition," The Thomist, XVII (1954), 1-42, and Father Rickaby's annotated translation of the Summa Contra Gentiles (Westminster, Md.: The Carroll Press, 1950), p. 347.

<sup>57</sup>M.-J. Congar, "The Idea of the Church in Saint Thomas Aquinas," The Thomist, I (1938), 331 ff. E. g., "for Saint Thomas the Church in its outward unity--Church as society--in other words as a Body organized under a hierarchy for the differentiation of labor, is not a different reality from the living Body of the new life in Christ, whose soul is the living Spirit, the Holy Ghost. The latter is the inward mode of that which appears outwardly beneath the organizing and ruling span of the hierarchy." Pp. 350 f. And: "The Church is contemplated as a Spirit-moved, Spirit-known, and Spirit-defined reality, as the Body whose living Soul is the Spirit of Life. The Church is contemplated in Christ, as Christ is contemplated in the Church. And the inward Church is not separated from the outward Church, which is its sacramental veil and vehicle. I think no one will deny this to be the ecclesiology of the Fathers. And I hope that I may have proved it to be that of Saint Thomas Aquinas." P. 359.

<sup>58</sup>"Dicit [Paulus] primo: Dixi quod nullus vestrum debet gloriari de hominibus, tamen quilibet vestrum debet cognoscere auctoritatem officii nostri, ad quos pertinet quod sumus mediatores inter Christum cui servimus, ad quos pertinet quod dicit 'sic nos existimet homo ut ministros Christi,' . . . et inter membra eius, quae sunt fideles Ecclesiae, quibus dona Christi dispensant, ad quos pertinet quod subditur 'et dispensatores mysteriorum Dei,' id est, secretorum eius . . . ." 186. Emphasis is mine.



(dispensatores), they would be unwilling to receive gifts from them, contrary to that which the same apostle says in 2 Corinthians 2:10: "For if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ (quod si donavi, si quid donavi, propter vos in persona Christi donavi)." (187)

As mediators, then, the apostles<sup>59</sup> are those to whom the people give assent as to Christ Himself; that is their "mediator-ship." In a sense they could be called externally what the sacraments, "in which divine power secretly works salvation" (186), are internally.

Between the usus of the Church and the Scriptures a conformity is presupposed; for Thomas takes time to explain an apparent discrepancy between ecclesiastical usage, according to which the Bread in the Sacrament is first consecrated and then broken, and the evangelists' record, according to which the Bread is first broken and then consecrated. It cannot be a discrepancy

because the priest, when he consecrates, does not speak those words as of his own person but as of the person of Christ who consecrates (Christi consecrantis). From this it is manifest that Christ also consecrated with the same words with which we consecrate. (657)<sup>60</sup>

Notice the sequence. The priest does not speak words of

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<sup>59</sup>Whether Saint Thomas would apply this to the whole clergy is not clear from this passage. But cf. 594, 755, and 946. See also above, note 55.

<sup>60</sup>Thomas' solution is that the evangelists' words do not indicate a sequence, as though Christ's words came after the action, but they indicate concomitance. Cf. 680.



consecration as of himself but as of Christ; therefore, it is manifest that Christ consecrated with the same words as we. This seems to say the following: Such is the Church's practice; the record of the Gospels appears to be different; some have said that for this reason there must have been a prior act of Christ; this is impossible because the Church (in its priests) does not offer it as such a prior action. The exact nature of the conformity here presupposed between Church and Scripture is described by Thomas as he speaks of the form of the words of consecration (680). Any form, he says, that is of words scripta in canone is enough for consecration. And then he adds the thought that more probably it should be said consecration is accomplished by those words which the Church uses in accordance with apostolic tradition. Why? Because the evangelists wrote history and not a Church manual (for in the early Church the sacraments were in secret). The historical is not necessarily the ecclesiastical. The evangelists told the sequence, but that chronological sequence is not determinative of ecclesiastical usage. The Church may use another form non-historical (in the sense of departing from the actual chronology of the original event) but, presumably, better designed for purposes of consecration or, better, for purposes of preaching (681). For to the question of whether should be added "novi et aeterni Testamenti, etc.," Thomas answers Yes, because



those words are "quaedam determinatio praedicandi." Briefly, then, the evangelists were historians<sup>61</sup> in this case, the Church is preacher and administratrix of the Sacrament; hence the difference in the words of consecration.

So then, what is the relation of the Church to the Word? The Church works salvation: by the apostles as "mediators" of Christ and by the Sacraments as "secret mediators," so to speak, of the same Christ. Jacques Maritain defines that role in these words:

When it comes to faith I myself vouch for the veracity of what has been told me. I am more certain of it than of my own existence, since the Prime Truth itself has told me through the intermediary of the Church, who here is but an instrumental cause, an instrument for the transmission of the revealed, and is herself an object of faith: "id quod et quo creditur."<sup>62</sup>

#### G. Relation to Love and Faith

Finally, a few words should be said about the relation of revelation to love (caritas) and faith. Faith is that which accepts as true what God has said. Faith

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<sup>61</sup>I am using the term "historian" in a broad sense that includes also the idea of one who sets down the history which is a part of the revelation of God.

<sup>62</sup>Op. cit., p. 209. Again: "'The sacraments form a main element in the Thomistic view of life; through them the ecclesiastical system acquires a mystical background and religious significance.'" Martin Grabmann, Thomas Aquinas: His Personality and Thought, translated by Virgil Michel (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929), p. 174, quoting R. Eucken.



formed in love (caritate formata) is that through which Christ enters the heart.<sup>63</sup> It is possible to know God by faith; that is to say, it is possible to accept what the Word says as true, and to accept it so on faith, without understanding, because the source is reliable,<sup>64</sup> and yet to be without the indwelling Spirit.<sup>65</sup> For faith, in that case, makes me to know who God is; but it is only through love that I can want to be united with this God, this Good.<sup>66</sup> To have saving faith, i. e., to have accepted

<sup>63</sup>"Unde quod dicitur Eph. iiii, 17, habitare Christum per fidem in cordibus nostris, oportet intelligi de fide per charitatem formata, cum scriptum sit I Io. iv, 16: Qui manet in charitate, in Deo manet, et Deus in eo." 155. "Habitat etiam Deus in hominibus per fidem, quae per dilectionem operatur." 171. "Et cognitio sine dilectione non sufficit ad inhabitationem Dei." 173.

<sup>64</sup>Francesco Olgiati, op. cit., p. 151. Etienne Gilson, Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 72: "To have faith is to assent to something because it is revealed by God . . . . To have science . . . is to assent to something which we perceive as true in the natural light of reason . . . . I know by reason that something is true because I see that it is true; but I believe that something is true because God has said it"; and, p. 76: "Faith itself is an assent to the Word of God accepted as the Word of God."

<sup>65</sup>"Inde est quod multi cognoscunt Deum, vel per naturalem cognitionem, vel per fidem informem, quos tamen non inhabitat spiritus Dei." 173. It is further possible that the Spirit works in a man in a non-sanctifying way (e. g., in Caiaphas at his prophecy of the One to die for the many). See 414, 718, 725, and 767.

<sup>66</sup>" . . . charitatis, ad quem cognitum bonum diligere pertinet." 795. "Charity itself is the theological virtue which supernaturalizes all that properly belongs to the love of God. It is the effective volition of the last end sought in communion. As such it is primarily a love



the Word by faith with love (fides caritate formata), means "to live in such a manner that life could not possibly be lived if God did not exist."<sup>67</sup>

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of well-wishing and surrender to the friend. But it is as necessarily, though subordinately, a love of desire, the desire to attain God the final Goal, or the wish of a Friend's presence. This union with God is of necessity an enrichment for the lover; yet it is essentially theological, the last end being sought for its own sake." P. de Letter, "Hope and Charity in Saint Thomas," The Thomist, XIII (1930), p. 351.

<sup>67</sup>J. Maritain, op. cit., p. 100.



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