

Scripture: God may at times be teaching through the human words in a way that can be understood most fully only by those who have the eyes of faith. Fourth, Aquinas employs the doctrinal determinations of the Church, as well as the errors that the Church has excluded (e.g., Arianism, Pelagianism), as guideposts for interpretation, since these doctrinal judgments, guided by the Holy Spirit who inspired Scripture, indicate the true content of God's teaching and expose where interpreters can go astray. Fifth, Aquinas includes philosophical analysis within his exegesis, although without making philosophical analysis the sole ground of particular interpretations. He seeks insight into divine teaching by means of the tools of human wisdom, which itself is a created participation in the divine mind.<sup>77</sup> Sixth, in parsing the meaning of the biblical words, Aquinas often does not identify a definitive interpretation, but instead presents various options that are consistent with the faith without deciding among them, in order to respect the biblical text's capacity to contain various meanings. Seventh and lastly, Aquinas' exegesis exhibits his ability to think together the mysteries of faith, and thereby to attain balanced insight into the whole. In the midst of his exegesis he often pauses upon a passage in order to explore complex and difficult theological problems that arise from the biblical text and that cannot, as modern exegesis has proven despite itself, be elided. As Gilles Emery has eloquently put it, 'Biblical exegesis is speculative as Holy Scripture is speculative; it leads one to the contemplation of truth, because such is the aim of Scripture itself.'<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> On this point see also David B. Burrell, 'Act of Creation with Its Theological Consequences', in *Aquinas on Doctrine*, pp. 27–44; Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

<sup>78</sup> Emery, *Trinity in Aquinas*, p. 314.

## AQUINAS ON 1 AND 2 CORINTHIANS: THE SACRAMENTS AND THEIR MINISTERS

Daniel A. Keating

Aquinas' commentaries on First and Second Corinthians, rich in theological content, present us with special textual difficulties. An exegetical 'fault-line' runs through the extant manuscript (i.e. an early and late edition appear to be combined), and a significant strata of text is simply missing (commentary on 1 Cor. 7.15–10.33). The leading hypothesis for this state of affairs is the following: Aquinas appears to have commented on the Pauline epistles early in his career (either from 1259–65 or 1265–68). Then towards the close of his life (either at the end of his time in Paris, 1271–72, or during his period in Naples, 1272–73), he undertook a revision of his commentary on Paul's letters, but only completed Romans through 1 Corinthians chapter 10. Finally, in the process of the collecting and handing on of his commentaries, the portion from 1 Cor. 7.15–10.33 was lost, and a commentary on these verses from Peter of Tarentaise was inserted as a substitute in order to complete the commentary.<sup>1</sup> On this account, what we now possess is a more developed *expositio*

<sup>1</sup> For recent treatments of the dating of Thomas' commentaries on the Pauline epistles, see Eleonore Stump, 'Biblical Commentary and Philosophy', in N. Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 254–55; Christopher T. Baglow, 'Modus et Forma': *A New Approach to the Exegesis of Saint Thomas Aquinas with an Application to the Lectura super Epistolam ad Ephesios* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2002), pp. 115–17; and Gilbert Dahan, 'Introduction', in Thomas Aquinas, *Commentaire de la première épître aux Corinthiens* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2002), pp. xii–xiii. Dahan presents the two leading hypotheses on the dating of the Pauline commentaries, the first from Weisheipl (building on the thesis of Mandonnet), and the second from Torrell: J.A. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D'Aquino. His Life, Thought and Works* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1974), pp. 246–49; Jean-Pierre Torrell, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1: *The Person and his Work* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), pp. 327–29, 337–41. Though the two accounts differ respecting the precise date of the original series on the Pauline commentaries, both argue for an initial set of commentaries in the 1260s, and then a more detailed redaction of Romans (and part of 1 Corinthians) late in Aquinas' career.

for 1 Cor. 1.1–7.14, probably revised by Thomas himself toward the end of his life, and a slightly less developed *reportatio* for 1 Cor. 11.1–2 Cor. from an earlier point in his career, and a lacuna in the commentary from 1 Cor. 7.15–10.33.<sup>2</sup>

Despite these textual difficulties, and despite a measure of uncertainty about how the parts of the commentary relate to each other within the span of Aquinas' career, it seems clear that Aquinas never wavered in his overall estimate of Paul's epistles and the place of the Corinthian correspondence within them. If indeed the Prologue to the Romans commentary – where Thomas offers his outline of the Pauline letters in some detail – dates from the very end of his life, and if the commentary on 1 Cor. 11 through 2 Corinthians comes from his early years of lecturing in Rome, then we have very strong evidence that he remained firm from first to last concerning the place of 1 and 2 Corinthians within the Pauline corpus. His statements on theme, outline and development found in 1 Cor. 11–2 Cor. coincide exactly with those found in 1 Cor. 1–7.10b, and in this sense there is a seamless perspective that runs through the commentaries on both letters.

Confident of this, I will consider these commentaries within the one overarching framework that Thomas himself provides, and read them as exhibiting in two redactions a single, consistent perspective on Paul's letters to the Corinthians.<sup>3</sup> For each epistle, I will ask and attempt to answer two questions: (1) What is for Thomas the central theme and the macro-outline of the letter? (2) How does he expand and develop the key themes within the letter? In addition, I will point to other potentially significant or interesting features of the commentaries (most of which cannot be investigated here), and I will attempt along the way to link his topical discussions in these

<sup>2</sup>For the distinction between *reportatio* and *expositio* in Aquinas' biblical commentaries, see Terence McGuckin, 'Saint Thomas Aquinas and Theological Exegesis of Sacred Scripture', *New Blackfriars*, 74 (1993), pp. 202–4; and Donald K. McKim, 'Aquinas, Thomas', *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters* (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1998), pp. 86–87. For the probable origin of the *reportatio* in medieval practice, see Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2nd edn, 1964), pp. 200–8.

<sup>3</sup>Given that we do not possess the early *reportatio* of Thomas on 1 Cor. 1–7, which presumably was disposed of in favour of the new redaction, it is impossible to determine whether and where Thomas altered his judgment on particular points of exegesis. But it is clear that his overall view of the letters remained the same in both versions.

commentaries with similar treatments in the *Summa Theologiae*, in the hope that the two accounts may be mutually illuminating.<sup>4</sup>

### *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*

#### Theme and Outline

The overarching framework that Thomas supplies for the Pauline epistles appears in the Prologue to his *Commentary on Romans*. The fourteen letters (Hebrews is included by Aquinas) present teaching that 'bears entirely on Christ's grace':<sup>5</sup> first, as grace appears in the Head who is Christ (Hebrews); second, as it appears in its principal members (1–2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon); and finally, as it appears in the mystical body, the Church (the remainder of the letters). Within this last category, Christ's grace is 'susceptible of a triple consideration': grace in itself (Romans); the sacraments of grace (1–2 Corinthians, Galatians); and the work of unity that grace realizes in the Church (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1–2 Thessalonians). Notably, he further subdivides the two epistles to the Corinthians: 'the first treats of the sacraments themselves and the second of the dignity of their ministers'.<sup>6</sup>

It is just this thematic schema that reappears in the Prologue to his *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*. Following the pattern of mediaeval exegesis in general, Aquinas employs a key text from elsewhere in the Scripture to describe the dominant theme of a biblical book.<sup>7</sup> The text he chooses for 1 Corinthians is Wis. 6.24 (Vulgate): 'I will not hide from you the mysteries (sacramenta) of God, but will seek her out from the beginning of her birth, and bring the knowledge of her to light, and will not pass over the truth.' He provides this further comment:

Thus the above text discloses to us the subject matter of this epistle, in which the Apostle treats of the sacraments of the Church. For since in the epistle to the Romans he had discussed God's grace, which works in the seven sacraments, here in the first epistle to the Corinthians he treats

<sup>4</sup>Aquinas makes ample use of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the *Summa*. He cites the former approximately 400 times and the latter approximately 130 times. And though certain chapters are quoted most frequently (e.g. 1 Cor. 12, 13 and 15), quotations can be found from every chapter of both letters.

<sup>5</sup>Translation by Baglow, '*Modus et Forma*', pp. 124–25. Dahan, 'Introduction', p. ix, observes that no author before the end of the thirteenth century composed a commentary on 1 Corinthians in isolation – in every case it was part of a series of commentaries on Paul's epistles taken together.

<sup>6</sup>Baglow, '*Modus et Forma*', pp. 124–25.

<sup>7</sup>For the scholastic practice of employing a scriptural text to define the subject matter of a biblical book, as part of an overall introduction called the *accessus*, see Dahan, 'Introduction', pp. x, xxvi–xxvii.

of the sacraments themselves, and in the second epistle to the Corinthians the ministers of the sacraments.<sup>8</sup>

By identifying an overarching theme, Aquinas is following (whether consciously or not) in the Greek Patristic tradition of identifying the *skopos* of a biblical book as a prerequisite for line-by-line commentary.<sup>9</sup>

Aquinas provides us with the macro-outline of the letter as he begins his commentary on the main body of the letter in 1.10, and he is unerringly faithful to this outline throughout the commentary.<sup>10</sup> In keeping with the concentric ordering of texts common in the scholastic period, he first divides the text between a general teaching pertaining to all concerning the sacraments (chapters 1–15) and a special and particular teaching aimed at the Corinthians themselves (chapter 16). The topic of the sacraments is then subdivided into three parts: (1) the sacraments themselves (chapters 1–11); (2) the reality signified and contained in the sacraments, namely, grace (chapters 12–14); and (3) the reality signified in the sacraments, but *not* contained, that is, the glory of the resurrection (chapter 15). Finally, he divides the section on the sacraments into a discussion of baptism (chapters 1–4), matrimony (chapters 5–7), and the Eucharist (chapters 8–11). Placed in schematic format, the outline appears as follows:<sup>11</sup>

- I. General teaching on the sacraments (chaps. 1–15)
  - A. The sacraments themselves (chaps. 1–11)
    - 1. Baptism (chaps. 1–4)
    - 2. Matrimony (chaps. 5–7)
    - 3. Eucharist (chaps. 8–11)
  - B. The reality contained and signified: grace (chaps. 12–14)

<sup>8</sup> *In 1 Cor.*, prol. [1–2]. It is clear that Aquinas was giving lectures on the Pauline epistles in succession, because at the beginning of the commentary on 1 Corinthians he refers to what he had said earlier in treating Romans (*In 1 Cor.* 1.1–9 [4]). Translations of Aquinas' commentaries on 1 and 2 Corinthians are taken from an unpublished translation by Fabian Larcher, modified and adjusted by the author. The number in brackets refers to the paragraph number in the Marietti edition of the commentaries: *Super Epistolas S. Pauli Lectura* 2 vols, 8th edn; ed. Raphaelis Cai (Rome: Marietti, 1953).

<sup>9</sup> For the notion of *skopos* (aim or intent) in the Greek Fathers, see Frances Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 21–27; and Robert W. Wilken, 'Cyril of Alexandria as Interpreter of the Old Testament', in Thomas G. Weinandy and Daniel A. Keating (eds.), *The Theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria* (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2003), pp. 14–19.

<sup>10</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 1.10–17a [19].

<sup>11</sup> For a minutely detailed outline of the commentary, see Stroobant de Saint-Éloy, *Commentaire de la première épître aux Corinthiens*, pp. 49–70.

- C. The reality signified, but not contained: the resurrection (chap. 15)
- II. Particular teaching for the Corinthians (chap. 16)

We may well ask: Isn't this a rather forced outline, a structure artificially imposed upon the whole letter? It appears that Aquinas was not the first to identify the sacraments as the central theme of 1 Corinthians; he is probably building on an exegetical tradition that he accepted and developed.<sup>12</sup> It may be admitted that there is a certain artificiality in this way of conceiving the whole of the letter. It is doubtful that Paul understood himself as providing a treatise on the sacraments. He was responding to a set of questions and issues put to him by the Church (or parties within it), several of which pertained to the sacraments. But once this is admitted, there is a certain genius in Thomas' way of depicting the letter. It is a framework that does shed light on the content of the letter, and helps to position the various parts in relation to each other.

We should also recognize that 'the sacraments' function primarily for Thomas as a kind of formal outline for the whole, giving it order and perspective. But he does not attempt to relate every topic explicitly to the sacraments, and he frequently handles exegetical issues on their own terms with no reference to the sacraments.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the theme and macro-outline provide a helpful framework for the whole commentary, but they are not overly invasive, and there is no attempt at the conclusion of the commentary to summarize the whole in terms of the theme and its parts.

### The Sacraments

As might be expected in his careful line-by-line study of the text, Thomas does not provide an extended treatment of the sacraments in general, but instead offers brief comments here and there in the text. I will begin by drawing attention to two of his more significant comments about the sacraments in general and their interrelation, and then go on to examine what he says about each of the three

<sup>12</sup> Dahan, 'Introduction', p. xii: 'Beaucoup de commentateurs du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle mettent, tout comme Thomas d'Aquin, l'accent sur les questions liées au sacrement.' He cites John of La Rochelle (d. 1246) as one example of a thirteenth-century author who identifies the sacraments as the pivotal theme of 1 Corinthians.

<sup>13</sup> McGuckin, 'Saint Thomas Aquinas and Theological Exegesis of Sacred Scripture', p. 210, observes: 'Even though in the general introduction to his exegesis of St. Paul, St. Thomas suggests a basic systematic approach to the Pauline commentaries in relation to the theology of grace, many of the deeper questions emerge here and there, without obvious organization, on the prompting of a word or phrase from Sacred Scripture.'

sacraments featured in 1 Corinthians: baptism, matrimony, and the Eucharist.

In a comment on the eucharistic prayer in 1 Cor. 11.23-24, Aquinas gives us his own explanation for why the sacraments were instituted in the first place:

So it should be noted that the sacraments were instituted on account of a need in the spiritual life. And because bodily things are likenesses of spiritual things, it is fitting that the sacrament be proportionate to things which are necessary to bodily life, in which generation comes first, to which baptism is proportionate and through which one is reborn into spiritual life. Secondly, for bodily life is required growth, by which one is brought to perfect size and power. To this is proportionate the sacrament of Confirmation, in which the Holy Spirit is given for strength. Thirdly, for the spiritual life food is required, by which man's body is sustained, and likewise the spiritual life is fed by the sacrament of the Eucharist.<sup>14</sup>

The sacraments are instituted by Christ for the purpose of spiritual life, and notably, this spiritual life follows the pattern of bodily, natural life: generation (baptism); growth (confirmation); food (Eucharist).<sup>15</sup> These are, for Thomas, the 'sacraments of faith' that together effect and strengthen in us the very life of God.<sup>16</sup>

The second text to consider on the sacraments in general is Aquinas' commentary on 1 Cor. 5.7, 'For Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed.' Here we see his biblical typology at work, displaying the relation between the sacraments of the Old Law and those of the New. The Passover, for Thomas, is 'the most excellent sacrament of the Old Law'.<sup>17</sup> The lamb is a figure of Christ, the innocent 'lamb of God' (Jn 1.36); the passing through the Red Sea is a type of our baptism; and the unleavened bread is a type of the Eucharist. The entire event of the exodus and deliverance from Egypt is a type of the 'sacraments of faith' by which we are reborn and strengthened in true spiritual life. And importantly, Thomas concludes by calling his readers to 'celebrate the feast', not only sacramentally through partaking of the Eucharist, but 'also

<sup>14</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 11.23-24 [650]

<sup>15</sup> In the *Summa* (III, 65, 1), Thomas offers this exact explanation of the ordering of the sacraments and their conformity to the bodily pattern of growth. The likeness between bodily and spiritual growth is a characteristic feature of his theology of grace: for this likeness applied to growth in charity, see *ST*, II-II, 24, 9; for its application to daily reception of the Eucharist, see *ST*, III, 80, 10.

<sup>16</sup> For references to the 'sacrament(s) of faith', see *In 1 Cor.* 5.9-13 [263]; *In 1 Cor.* 6.1-6 [265], see also *In 1 Cor.* 4.1-5 [186] where Thomas speaks of 'the sacraments of the Church, in which divine power secretly works salvation', and *In 1 Cor.* 6.7-13a [285] for baptism and Eucharist as the sacraments by which we are saved.

<sup>17</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 5.6-8 [246]. For Aquinas' exposition of this verse in the *Summa*, see III, 73, 6

spiritually by relishing his wisdom'.<sup>18</sup> Aquinas' commentary on this key verse shows us how he unites a typological exegesis with a description of the sacramental economy, maintaining throughout his emphasis on the impartation of, and growth in, true spiritual life.

*Baptism.*<sup>19</sup> As noted above, the sacrament of baptism serves as the formal heading for chapters 1-4, but it is noteworthy that once he begins the commentary itself, Thomas immediately joins baptism with catechetical teaching as defining these opening chapters: 'In the first part the Apostle deals with doctrine along with baptism; thus he follows the example of the Lord, who gave the disciples the injunction to teach and to baptize in one command (Matt. 28:19)'. By joining baptism to teaching about the Gospel and treating them together, Aquinas specifies the subject matter in a way much more in keeping with the actual content of chapters 1-4, and at the same time shows the intrinsic connection between the sacrament of baptism and teaching about the faith.

The dominant concern regarding baptism that Thomas returns to at several points in the commentary arises directly from the text of 1 Corinthians itself: What is the relation between Christ and the ministers of baptism? The sharp demarcation that Paul makes in 1 Cor. 1 between Christ and the minister of baptism affords Thomas the opportunity to underscore the unique role of Christ. It is 'the grace of Christ alone' that works in baptism, and not the virtue of the minister.<sup>20</sup> This is why, Aquinas tells us, Paul is so insistent that we belong to Christ, and not to Apollos, Peter, or Paul himself (1 Cor. 1.12). He goes on to say that there are two powers proper to Christ in baptism: one is the divine power (by which the triune God cleanses us inwardly) and the other is the power proper to his human nature. The divine power cannot be communicated to any creature. The second power, the excellence proper to his human nature, could *in principle* be communicated to others, but in fact Thomas claims that it is not. Here is his description of this power proper to Christ's human nature:

The other is the power proper to His human nature, which is the power of excellence in the sacraments and consists of four things: one is that He instituted the sacraments; the second is that He can produce the effect of the sacraments without the sacraments; the third is that the merit of His passion works in baptism and the other sacraments; the fourth is that the

<sup>18</sup> For the distinction between partaking of the Eucharist sacramentally or spiritually, see also *In 1 Cor.* 11.27-34 [698]. Thomas develops this distinction extensively in his commentary on the Gospel of John, *In Io.* 6.53-60 [969-976]; 6.61-72 [992], and in the *Summa* (III, 80, 1-4).

<sup>19</sup> For baptism in the *Summa*, see III, 66-71.

<sup>20</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 1.10-17a [24]. *ST*, III, 64.

sacraments are conferred by calling on His name. Now he could have shared this power of excellence with His ministers and particularly the fourth, namely, that baptism be consecrated in their names, but He reserved it for Himself; otherwise schism would arise in the Church, for people would suppose that there are as many baptisms as baptizers.<sup>21</sup>

Aquinas concludes this section of commentary with a striking statement about the sole sufficiency of Christ for salvation as effected in baptism:

Therefore, if the sufferings of Christ alone [*si solius Christi passio*], if the name of Christ alone [*si solius Christi nomen*], confers the power to be saved on the baptized, then it is from Christ specially [*verum est proprium esse Christo*] that baptism has the power to sanctify. Consequently, anyone who attributes this to others divides Christ into many parts.<sup>22</sup>

If such is the case with baptism, this principle does not hold for the effectiveness of preaching and teaching. Though the two activities – baptism and teaching/preaching – are for Thomas essentially linked, they do not operate identically. The particular and personal virtue of the preacher does contribute significantly to the effectiveness of his words:

The diligence or virtue of the baptizer contributes nothing in baptism, for it is indifferent whether baptism be given by a greater or lesser personage. But in the preaching of the gospel the wisdom and virtue of the preacher contributes a great deal; consequently, the apostles, being better qualified, exercised the office of preaching in person. In the same way it is said of Christ . . .<sup>23</sup>

*Matrimony.*<sup>24</sup> Just as he expanded the topic area of baptism to include teaching and preaching, so here Aquinas understands chapters 5–7 to be concerned, not just with matrimony *per se*, but with fornication, matrimony and virginity – which indeed are the main subjects Paul raises in these chapters. In Thomas' reading, Paul first attacks the sin which is contrary to marriage, namely fornication (chapters 5–6),<sup>25</sup> and then modifies with wisdom the zeal of those who, because of their detestation of fornication, concluded that marriage itself was a sin (chapter 7).<sup>26</sup> In the context of showing

<sup>21</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 1:10–17a [29].

<sup>22</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 1:10–17a [34].

<sup>23</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 1:10–17a [39].

<sup>24</sup> Aquinas' teaching on matrimony appears in *ST*, suppl., 41–68. This was compiled and edited by one of his pupils from his early *Commentary on the Sentences*, written at the beginning of his career. For a later treatment of the sacraments in Thomas, see *St.G.*, IV, 78.

<sup>25</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 5:1–5 [228].

<sup>26</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 7:1–9 [313].

the fundamental goodness of marriage, he provides a summary of the purposes for marriage as ordained by God.

Thus, therefore, matrimony has three goods. The first is that it is a function of nature in the sense that it is ordered to the production and education of offspring; and this good is the good of offspring. The second good is that it is a remedy for desire, which is restricted to a definite person; and this good is called fidelity, which a man preserves toward his wife, by not going to another woman, and similarly the wife toward the husband. The third good is called the sacrament, inasmuch as it signifies the union of Christ and the Church, as it says in Ephesians (5:32).<sup>27</sup>

In the comments immediately following, Thomas states the fundamental equality of husband and wife with respect to conjugal rights, offering a spiritual interpretation of the creation of woman from man in Gen. 2.21.

Hence the woman was not formed from the feet of the man as a servant, nor from the head as lording it over her husband, but from the side as a companion, as it says in Genesis (2:21). Hence, they must pay the debt to one another according to what it says in Romans (13:7).<sup>28</sup>

Though constraints of space do not allow for a full discussion, Aquinas' statement here on the equality of husband and wife respecting conjugal rights should be read together with his exegesis of 1 Cor. 11.3ff., where Paul states that 'the head of a woman is her husband', and that a woman ought to veil herself in church because the man 'is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man'. In brief, Aquinas distinguishes the sense in which man and woman are equally the image of God (Gen. 1.27; Gal. 3.28), from the sense in which the man is the principal glory of God because of the order of creation (Gen. 2.23). The woman is fully the image of God in dignity, but because she was 'taken out of man', she is in a special sense 'the glory of man'.<sup>29</sup>

Because of the section of commentary that is missing, beginning with 1 Cor. 7.15, we unfortunately do not have access to Thomas' full treatment of the relationship between marriage and virginity. What we do possess shows us that he follows the traditional understanding that virginity is the greater good (though not

<sup>27</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 7:1–9 [318].

<sup>28</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 7:1–9 [321]. In the *Summa* (I, 92, 3), he offers the very same exegesis of Eve being taken from Adam's side.

<sup>29</sup> His treatment of this question in the *Summa* (I, 92–93) is entirely consistent with his handling of the issue here in the *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*.

commanded), and marriage the lesser good (though not prohibited or sinful in itself).

*Eucharist.*<sup>30</sup> We lack Thomas' commentary on chapters 8–10, and so possess commentary on only one chapter concerned with the Eucharist (chapter 11). But from his topic statement at the beginning of chapter 11, it is clear that up to this point he has been concerned primarily with a practice contrary to the Eucharist (namely, partaking of food offered to idols); now he is going to take up Paul's instruction on the Eucharist *per se* (which in fact he does beginning with v. 17).

Aquinas' commentary on the Eucharist is difficult to summarize but makes for very interesting reading. Once again, he follows the text carefully and offers shorter or longer comments on each verse. Among the various topics he addresses are: the need for fasting before the Eucharist;<sup>31</sup> a recommended penance before receiving the sacrament;<sup>32</sup> how one can become inebriated from the consecrated wine when the substance of wine no longer remains;<sup>33</sup> and how the Eucharist may serve as a sacrifice for those who do not receive it.<sup>34</sup> The most developed section of his commentary treats the presence of Christ in the Eucharist (thus, transubstantiation) and the various issues that arise from this understanding of what it means when Christ says, 'This is my body . . . this is my blood.'<sup>35</sup>

Among the many possible points of interest concerning Aquinas' teaching on the Eucharist here, I will identify three for special mention. The first is his account of why the Eucharist is given under two species (bread and wine; body and blood). He offers three reasons. First, since the Eucharist is designed for the perfection of our spiritual growth, it is fitting that it be given in the form of both food and drink — this is appropriately parallel to the means we have for bodily growth. Again we see the way Aquinas views the sacraments as accomplishing in the spiritual realm what physical food and drink accomplish in the bodily realm. Second, the two species are suited to the Passion of Christ which they signify. Just as Christ's blood was separated from his body on the cross, so in the sacrament the blood is offered separately from the body. Third, the two species correspond to our dual constitution of body and soul. The body of Christ is offered for the health of our bodies; the blood is offered for the health of our souls. Thomas invokes Lev. 17.11,

<sup>30</sup> For the Eucharist in the *Summa*, see III, 73–83.

<sup>31</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 11.17.22 [631–32].

<sup>32</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 11.27–34 [690]. For a short treatise on the sacrament of Penance, see *In 2 Cor.* 7.9b.11 [269].

<sup>33</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 11.17.22 [640–43].

<sup>34</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 11.25–26 [682].

<sup>35</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 11.25–26 [662–85]. *ST*, III, 75–77.

'For the soul of the flesh is in the blood', in order to show the relation between blood and the soul.<sup>36</sup>

The second point of interest is how Thomas presents the relationship between the Eucharist and the other sacraments (especially baptism). We have already seen how he regards the sacraments as providing a divine means of spiritual birth, growth and maturity in Christ. Immediately following this ordering of the sacraments, he adds:

It should be understood that the cause of generation is not joined according to its substance to the one generated, but only according to its power; but food is joined according to its substance to those who are fed. Hence in the sacrament of baptism, by which Christ regenerates us to salvation, it is not Christ according to His substance but only according to His power. But in the sacrament of this Eucharist, which is spiritual food, Christ is there according to His substance.<sup>37</sup>

In the other sacraments, the consecrated matter (water, oil, chrism) needs to be put to effective use if the sacrament is to effect the work of grace. But in the case of the Eucharist it is different: 'This sacrament is completed in the very consecration of the matter, in which Christ himself is contained, who is the end of all sanctifying grace.'<sup>38</sup> The special quality of the Eucharist for Thomas is the manner in which Christ is substantially contained in it. This being said, it is still the case that Thomas understands the Eucharist to have its proper effect in us only if we partake of it worthily, that is, spiritually and with faith.

This brings us directly to the third point for special mention, namely, Aquinas' pastoral approach to the Eucharist as a means of spiritual refreshment and growth. This pastoral concern arises from 1 Cor. 11.27–34, where Paul speaks about worthy and unworthy ways to receive the Eucharist, and asserts that it is possible for one 'to eat and drink judgement upon himself'. Consistent with his treatment throughout, Thomas identifies 'the fruit of this sacrament' as 'spiritual refreshment'. We can sin against proper reverence for the Eucharist venially by approaching it with a mind distracted by worldly concerns. This for Aquinas impedes the actual spiritual refreshment we gain by partaking. But we can also sin mortally if we show contempt for the sacrament or approach with the intention of

<sup>36</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 11.23–24 [653]. In the *Summa* (III, 74, 1), Thomas offers just these three reasons for the use of the two species, and adds a fourth, namely, that the bread and wine each demonstrate that the Church is made up of many members (many grains make the bread, many grapes make the wine).

<sup>37</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 11.23–24 [651].

<sup>38</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 11.23–24 [660].

sinning mortally.<sup>39</sup> It is in this way that we eat or drink judgment upon ourselves. The goal, then, is to partake of the Eucharist, not just sacramentally, but sacramentally and spiritually. By this we receive the *res* of the sacrament, which is charity.<sup>40</sup>

Aquinas concludes by addressing the question of frequency of reception. Some, he says, are drawn to receive the Eucharist frequently because they acquire spiritual life from it. Others, through fear of receiving it unworthily, partake more rarely. 'Both are commendable', Thomas concludes, because the one case exhibits charity and the other honour and reverence towards Christ. In his closing comment, Aquinas shows at once his profound appreciation for the Eucharist as daily life-giving nourishment and his sensitivity to the pastoral needs of those who receive:

But because of themselves love is preferred to fear, it seems more commendable to receive more frequently rather than more rarely. Yet because something more choiceworthy in itself can be less choiceworthy in regard to this or that person, each one should consider in himself which effect the frequent reception of this sacrament would have in him. For if someone feels that it helps him make progress to the fervour of his love of Christ and in his strength to resist sins, he ought to receive frequently. But if someone feels in himself less reverence for this sacrament by receiving it frequently, he should be advised to receive it rarely.<sup>41</sup>

#### A temple of the Holy Spirit

There are many potentially interesting topics within Aquinas' *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* that readers may wish to explore: for example, the contrast between human and divine wisdom (1 Cor. 1.17-2.16);<sup>42</sup> the relationship between male and female in Christ (1 Cor. 11.1-16);<sup>43</sup> the place of spiritual gifts and their relation to charity (1 Cor. 12.14);<sup>44</sup> or Paul's magnificent treatment of the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15.1-58).<sup>45</sup> Given limitations of

<sup>39</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 11.27-34 [687-89].

<sup>40</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 11.27-34 [698].

<sup>41</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 11.27-34 [699]. In the *Summa* (III, 80, 10), Thomas offers the same explanation for frequency of reception: it is praiseworthy and recommended to receive daily, but each should receive according to the frequency that serves his spiritual good. The account in the *Summa*, however, appears to place greater weight on daily reception. If indeed his commentary on 1 Cor. 11 predates the *Summa*, it is at least possible that Thomas came to place greater emphasis on daily reception of the Eucharist late in his life.

<sup>42</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 1.17b-2.16 [40-121].

<sup>43</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 11.1-16 [582-620].

<sup>44</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 12.14 [709-887]. *ST*, I-II, 68; II-II, 171-78.

<sup>45</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 15.1-58 [888-1023]. *ST*, suppl., 69-99.

space, I have selected just one subject to sketch out in brief: Aquinas' treatment of the Christian as a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3.16-23; 1 Cor. 6.19).

The text that prompts Thomas' discussion of the Christian as a temple of the Holy Spirit is 1 Cor. 3.16: 'Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?' He begins by stating a general principle: 'Everything in which God dwells can be called a temple.'<sup>46</sup> He then identifies three senses in the Scripture in which a temple is understood as God's dwelling place. First, in the sense that God dwells within himself (Rev. 21.22, 'Its temple is the Lord God'). Second, in the sense that God dwells in a building consecrated by the worship offered to him there (Ps. 5.7, 'I will worship toward your holy temple'). Finally, in the sense that God dwells in us by faith working through love (Eph. 3.17, 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith'). The reference to the Spirit dwelling in us (v. 16b) only proves that the Spirit indeed is God: 'This shows that the Spirit is God, by whose indwelling [*inhabitationem*] the faithful are called God's temple, for only God's indwelling [*inhabitatio*] makes a thing God's temple.'<sup>47</sup>

Thomas goes on to specify what it means to say that God dwells in us as in a temple. We know, Thomas reminds us, that God exists in all things by means of his essence, power, and presence, but his indwelling as in a temple is distinct from this manner of presence.

God is said to dwell spiritually as in a family dwelling in the saints, whose mind is capable of God by knowledge and love, even though they may not be actually thinking of Him or loving Him, provided that by grace they possess the habit of faith and charity, as is the case with baptized infants. However, knowledge without love does not suffice for God's indwelling [*inhabitationem Dei*] ... That is why many persons know God either by natural knowledge or by unformed faith, yet God's Spirit does not dwell in [*inhabitatio*] them.<sup>48</sup>

For Thomas, then, the indwelling of the Spirit is the prerequisite and ongoing condition for the operative habit of faith formed by love in the Christian.

Further on in the commentary, when considering 1 Cor. 6.19, 'Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?', Aquinas links the idea of the temple of the Holy Spirit explicitly with Rom. 5.5, thus demonstrating the link between the indwelling of the Spirit and charity:

<sup>46</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 3.16-23 [172].

<sup>47</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 3.16-23 [172].

<sup>48</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 3.16-23 [173].

God's house is called a temple. Therefore, because the Holy Spirit is God, it is correct to say that anyone in whom the Holy Spirit exists is called a temple of God. But the Holy Spirit is chiefly in the hearts of men, in whom the love of God is poured out by the Holy Spirit, as it says in Rom. 5:5. But secondarily, He is also in the bodily members, inasmuch as they perform acts of charity.<sup>49</sup>

It may be useful to compare this discussion of the indwelling of God through the Holy Spirit with Aquinas' commentary on 2 Cor. 6.16, 'For we are the temple of the living God.' If the proposed dating of the commentaries is correct, then his commentary on this text actually predates by several years his discussion of 1 Cor. 3.16 and 6.19. Though the details of the exegesis differ, Aquinas states in all three texts the same basic understanding of what it means to say that God dwells in us as in a temple.

He begins his discussion of 2 Cor. 6.16 by identifying the reason for the use of temple imagery: 'For the use of a temple is that God dwell in it, because a temple is a place consecrated for God to dwell in.'<sup>50</sup> Then in a neat piece of intertextual commentary, Thomas interprets the dwelling of God in us through the words of Lev. 26.11-12, taking each phrase in turn: 'I will place my dwelling [*tabernaculum*] in your midst . . . , I will walk among you, I will be your God, you shall be my people.' The first phrase, Thomas tells us, pertains to 'operating grace', which refers to God being in someone by grace.

For although God is said to be in all things by his presence, power, and essence, he is not said to dwell in [*inhabitare*] them, but only in the saints through grace; the reason being that God is in all things by his activity, inasmuch as he joins himself to them as giving being and conserving them in being, but in the saints by the activity [*operationem*] of the saints themselves, by which they attain to God and in a way comprehend him, which is to love and to know. For those who know and those who love have within themselves the thing known and loved.<sup>51</sup>

Aquinas makes here the same distinction he made above between God existing in all things by his presence, power, and essence on the one hand, and his indwelling in the saints by grace on the other. But there is a noteworthy addition: the indwelling of God as in a temple causes us to act in faith and love, enabling us to know and love God *because* he dwells within us. The indwelling of God through the Holy Spirit in the saints is not a passive presence; on the contrary,

<sup>49</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 6.13b.20 [309]

<sup>50</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 6.11.18 [240]

<sup>51</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 6.11.18 [240] For a parallel text in the *Summa* on God dwelling in us as in a temple, see I, 43, 3.

for Thomas it is the active principle by which we know and love God.

The second phrase from Lev. 26.11-12, 'I will walk among them', is applied by Thomas to 'co-operating grace' which enables us to make progress with God's help:

I will promote them from virtue to virtue, for this progress is impossible without the grace of God: 'By the grace of God I am what I am' (1 Cor. 15:10). For just as operating grace makes us to be something in the being [*esse*] of justice, so co-operating grace makes us progress in that being [*esse*].<sup>52</sup>

The third phrase, 'I will be their God', is referred to the providential protection of God or to the reward awaiting the saints, which is nothing other than God himself. Finally, the last phrase, 'they shall be my people', applies to the worship and service that the faithful give to God.

From this simple text in which the Christian people are identified as the temple of the living God, Aquinas develops a very full picture of what it means to have God dwelling in us. We are given grace to know and love God and to progress from virtue to virtue in the new life given to us; we are granted the reward of having God as our recompense, and are enabled to worship him rightly in Spirit and truth. All this because God has come to dwell effectively in us through the Holy Spirit.

Aquinas has sometimes been faulted for having an instrumental doctrine of grace that minimizes the indwelling of God through the Holy Spirit, and it has been noted that his treatise on grace in the *Summa* appears to eschew the language of indwelling.<sup>53</sup> But here in his biblical commentaries we find a rich account of the Christian as a temple of the living God and of the indwelling of the Spirit producing in us all the fruits of faith and love. This is entirely

<sup>52</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 6.11-18 [240].

<sup>53</sup> For this latter observation, see A.N. Williams, *The Ground of Union: Deification in Thomas Aquinas and Gregory Palamas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 81. In the entire *Summa*, Aquinas only twice cites these texts on our being temples of the Holy Spirit: 1 Cor. 3.16 (*ST*, I-II, 109, 9, ad 2); 1 Cor. 6.19 (*ST*, I, 27, 1). But for an account of the centrality of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Aquinas' theology, see my article, 'Justification, Sanctification and Divinization in Thomas Aquinas', in Thomas G. Weinandy, Daniel Keating, and John Yocum (eds.), *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction* (London/New York: T & T Clark, 2004), pp. 148-51.



consistent with his constantly repeated principle that the gift of the Holy Spirit is the chief mark of the New Covenant in Christ.<sup>54</sup>

### *Commentary on 2 Corinthians*

#### Theme and Outline

As the theme verse for 2 Corinthians, Aquinas chooses Isa. 61.6, 'Men shall speak of you as ministers [*ministri*] of our God.'<sup>55</sup> This verse admirably suits his purpose because, as he reminds us, 'In the first epistle the Apostle discussed the sacraments, in this one he discusses the ministers, both good and bad, of these sacraments.' He then expands on the purpose and theme of this letter:

The reason he wrote this epistle was that he had preached to the Corinthians, but they had welcomed certain false apostles, whom they preferred to the Apostle. Therefore he writes them this epistle, in which he commends the apostles and the dignity of the true apostles, and discloses and reproves the falseness of the false apostles.<sup>56</sup>

Again, this may seem to us an overly narrow estimation of what Paul is doing in this letter, but Thomas immediately widens the subject by defining the role of God's ministers as threefold: (1) they dispense the sacraments (1 Cor. 4.1, 'Stewards of the mysteries of God' [*dispensatores mysteriorum Dei*]); (2) they govern the people of God (Wis. 6.4); and (3) they labour for the salvation of all through the preaching of the gospel (1 Cor. 3.5).<sup>57</sup> By means of this elaboration of what a minister of God is, Thomas broadens the theme of the letter to include not only the dispensation of the mysteries, but the governing of God's people and the ministry of the gospel. Seen from this broadened vantage point, Aquinas' definition of the theme very nicely captures the heart of 2 Corinthians, namely, Paul's extended defence of his ministry of the gospel in the face of criticism levelled against him by the so-called false apostles and by the Corinthians themselves.

Thomas outlines the epistle according to his stated theme. Following introductory material (chapters 1–2), the first main section concerns the dignity of the ministers of the New Covenant

<sup>54</sup> Aquinas makes this point explicitly in his commentary on the New Covenant, *In 2 Cor.* 3.6–11 [90]: 'So it is clear that the Old Law is a covenant of words, but the New Covenant is a covenant of the Holy Spirit, by whom the love of God is poured out in our hearts, as it says in Rom. 5.5. Consequently, when the Holy Spirit produces charity in us, which is the fulness of the Law, it is a New Covenant.' See also *ST*, I–II, 106, 1–3.

<sup>55</sup> *In 2 Cor.*, Prol. [1].

<sup>56</sup> *In 2 Cor.*, Prol. [1].

<sup>57</sup> *In 2 Cor.*, Prol. [2].

(chapters 3–9), and the second main section the guilt of the evil and false apostles who distort the gospel (chapters 10–13). This fundamental division is then further delineated by Thomas in the following way:<sup>58</sup>

- I. Introduction (chapters 1–2):
  - A. The comfort shown to God's ministers (1.1–14)
  - B. Paul's explanation for not visiting the Corinthians (1.15–2.17)
- II. The dignity of the good ministers of the New Covenant (chaps. 3–9)
  - A. The ministry of the New Covenant (chaps. 3–5)
    1. The dignity of ministry in the New Covenant (chap. 3)
    2. The exercise of ministry in the New Covenant (chap. 4)
    3. The reward for ministry in the New Covenant (chap. 5)
  - B. The carrying out of this ministry by the Apostle (chaps. 6–9)
    1. Commendation for the Corinthians (chap. 7)
    2. Exhortation to almsgiving (chaps. 8–9)
- III. The guilt of false ministers (chaps. 10–13)

#### Ministers of Christ

Aquinas' teaching on Christ's ministers appears intermittently in the text, like rare and precious gems. Here we find no systematic treatment, but rather brief discussions on this point or that, as the biblical text prompts him and provides occasion for comment. For example, faced with Paul's claim to be 'an apostle of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor. 1.1), Thomas tells us that the apostles are succeeded principally by the bishops, while priests are the successors to the 72 disciples. By addressing Timothy as his 'brother', Paul demonstrates that the bishops are brothers to one another, and this is why 'the Pope calls all bishops brothers'.<sup>59</sup> Or again, to justify Paul's escape by night from his enemies in Damascus (2 Cor. 11.32–33), Aquinas offers the following judgment on what leaders should do when persecuted. First, they should take advantage of any human help offered, and not tempt God by scorning it. Second, if the leader alone is sought, he ought to flee and save himself for the benefit of the people (which is what Paul did). But if both the leader and his people together are sought, the leader should remain with his people, preferring their good to his own.<sup>60</sup>

One thread that runs throughout the commentary is Thomas' depiction of the fundamental task of the Christian preacher and

<sup>58</sup> For the primary texts that give the thematic outline of the letter, see *In 2 Cor.* 3.1–5 [78]; 6.1–5 [203]; 7.1–3 [245]; 8.1–8 [280]; 10.1–6 [343].

<sup>59</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 1.1–2 [4–5]. For Aquinas' treatment of bishops and prelates in the *Summa*, see II–II, 184, 5–6; 185.

<sup>60</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 11.27–33 [439]. He offers the very same explanation in *ST*, II–II, 185, 5.

governor. As a foil, it may be useful to examine Thomas' depiction of a Christian leader by first seeing how he identifies and characterizes the false apostles who are opposing Paul. According to most contemporary scholarly accounts, Paul faces two different sets of opponents in 1 and 2 Corinthians respectively.<sup>61</sup> Those he opposes in 1 Corinthians are the so-called *pneumatikoi*, a set of Christian teachers, possibly representing a Wisdom tradition within Hellenistic Judaism, who boasted of a claim to superior wisdom and preached a highly realized eschatology. In contrast, the 'false apostles' that Paul faces in 2 Corinthians (named in 11.13) are teaching that the Law of Moses must be kept along with the gospel. They are Judaizers who claim authority from the 'superlative apostles' (2 Cor. 11.5) for their insistence on the ongoing role of the Law.

Aquinas merges these two sets of opponents together, calling them all 'false apostles'. In the context of 1 Corinthians, he identifies them as distorting the gospel by appeal to traditions of human wisdom, and as denying the future resurrection of the dead.<sup>62</sup> In the context of 2 Corinthians, he views them as insisting on the legal observance of the Law along with the gospel, and as despoiling the Corinthians by exacting payment for their services.<sup>63</sup> Thomas in fact suggests that Peter and John themselves regarded Paul as inferior because he had not been with Christ as they had been, and he defends Paul against what he considers to be their error in thinking this way.<sup>64</sup> But the chief fault of the false apostles, for Aquinas, is that they fail to serve for the good of their subjects; instead of feeding them with the truth, they oppress them for their own gain.<sup>65</sup> Commenting on the text, 'What we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake' (2 Cor. 4.5), Aquinas presents the primary task of the Christian leader:

We preach Jesus as Lord, but ourselves as servants, the reason being that we principally seek the praise of Christ and not our own. For a servant is one who exists for the profit of the master. That is why a minister of the Church, who does not seek the honour of God and the welfare of his subjects, is not a true ruler, but a tyrant. For whoever rules well should be as a servant seeking the honour and profit of his subjects.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> See e.g. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 7–15; Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, Word Biblical Commentary vol. 40 (Dallas: Word, 1986), pp. xxx–xxxiii, liii–lxiii.

<sup>62</sup> *In 1 Cor.* 1.17b–25 [40]; 4.6–13 [206]; 15.53–58 [1023].

<sup>63</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 2.12–17 [76]; 6.11–18 [231]; 10.7–12 [358]; 11.1–3 [379].

<sup>64</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 11.4–8 [384]; 12.11–13 [489].

<sup>65</sup> For a catalogue of the five ways that the false apostles oppressed the Corinthians, see *In 2 Cor.* 11.16–21a [416].

<sup>66</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 4.3–6 [128].

This basic description is repeated and enlarged upon at several points in the commentary. Speaking of Paul's role in spreading the gospel (2 Cor. 2.14), Thomas says that the twofold task of a preacher is to exhort the faithful in sacred doctrine (*in doctrina sacra*) and to refute those who contradict it.<sup>67</sup> Later in the commentary, he draws from Paul's words, 'I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls', a threefold charge for Christian leaders: 'feed them by word, feed them by example, feed them by temporal subsidies'.<sup>68</sup> Plainly, Thomas takes seriously the overarching theme of the letter that he has identified, namely, the ministers of Christ, especially in their role as preachers of the gospel and servants of God's people.

### Paul's Pastoral Strategy

There are also many potentially interesting topics within Aquinas' *Commentary on 2 Corinthians* that readers may wish to explore: for example, the relationship between the Old and New Covenants (2 Cor. 3);<sup>69</sup> the transformation of our mortal nature (2 Cor. 4–5);<sup>70</sup> the Christological exegesis of Christ becoming poor that we might become rich (2 Cor. 8.9);<sup>71</sup> and the nature of Paul's visions (2 Cor. 12.1–6).<sup>72</sup> In keeping with the dominant theme of the letter, however, I have chosen for particular development Aquinas' treatment of Paul as Pastor.

One of the more striking features of the *Commentary on 2 Corinthians* is the way that Thomas uses Paul's defence of his own ministry to guide and shape pastoral strategy for Christian leaders. If one sat through all of Thomas' lectures on this epistle – which his hearers presumably did – one would come away with something like a pastoral handbook for leading and shepherding God's people, especially those who are most recalcitrant and shallow in their faith. Here we see one of the clear advantages of reading Aquinas' biblical commentaries alongside the *Summa*: the rich pastoral wisdom that he draws from this epistle does not appear in anything like the same depth in the *Summa* itself.

In order to gain an appreciation of the depth and consistency of Thomas' pastoral strategy, I will stitch together several texts from

<sup>67</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 2.12–17 [72].

<sup>68</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 12.14–19 [500]. See also *In 2 Cor.* 11.27–33 [432].

<sup>69</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 3.1–18 [78–115]; *ST*, I–II, 106–8.

<sup>70</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 4.1–5.21 [116–202].

<sup>71</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 8.9–15 [294–95]. Curiously, Thomas cites this text once only in the *Summa* (III, 40, 3) in the context of defending Christ's bodily poverty. He makes no further Christological use of it.

<sup>72</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 12.1–6 [440–70].

disparate parts of the commentary. This is by no means an artificial procedure or unfaithful to the epistle: Paul himself scatters his apologies for his actions throughout the letter, and Thomas follows suit by offering comment whenever appropriate. For instance, when Paul says that 'it was to spare you that I refrained from coming to Corinth' (2 Cor. 1.23), Aquinas explains it thus:

He knew that they were incorrigible. Hence, if he had gone then, he would either have punished them, and they perhaps would have left the faith altogether, or he would not have punished them, and then he would have been giving them occasion to sin more.<sup>73</sup>

When Paul defended his failure to come on the grounds that he wanted to spare them another painful visit, Thomas likens his action to that of Christ:

The reason he did not wish to grieve them is the same one whereby the Lord did not wish his disciples to fast, namely, in order that they be drawn to Christ and be joined to him not by fear but by love. For the Lord wished to strengthen and nourish them in the faith in all sweetness and heartfelt desire, so that, being thus established in love, they would not easily turn away from him because of tribulations.<sup>74</sup>

Thomas considers that Paul is being appropriately lenient in 2 Cor. 2.6 when he calls on the Corinthians to forgive the one who has caused pain to all. This was 'expedient for the time and the person. For it is better to observe such a spirit of leniency in correcting, so that the fruit of correction follow on the penance, than to correct so harshly that the sinner despairs and falls into worse sin.'<sup>75</sup> For Thomas it is the *fruit* of correction that the Christian leader must always seek above all. The hallmark of his pastoral counsel as presented in this commentary is the appeal to mercy and forbearance for the sake of leading God's people to mature faith.

Thomas' penetrating understanding of sin, grief and sorrow enables him to recognize the pastoral strategy needed to correct those who are on the brink of despair.

For some are sometimes so steeped in sorrow because of sin and punishment of sin, that they are overcome, when they have no one to comfort them; and this is bad, because it does not result in the hope for

<sup>73</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 1.15-24 [47].

<sup>74</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 2.1-4 [48].

<sup>75</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 2.5-11 [59].

the fruit of repentance, namely reformation, but in despair he delivers himself over to all sins.<sup>76</sup>

The 'advantage over us' that Satan seeks to gain (2 Cor. 2.11) is not only to lead us into sin; additionally 'he destroys those he already has by the severity of prelates who drive to despair by not correcting them in a compassionate way'.<sup>77</sup> Because the Corinthians were both weak in faith and stubborn in their disobedience, Paul was humble and gentle towards them in order to win them.<sup>78</sup> For Aquinas, Paul is a spiritual physician who rejoices, not in the bitterness of the medicine, but in the eventual effect of the medicine which is spiritual health.<sup>79</sup> He is even willing to 'play the madman' in order to humble the false apostles and shame the Corinthians. His apparently foolish talk (2 Cor. 11.21) was in reality deep pastoral wisdom, according to Thomas. In a striking example of flexible pastoral application, Aquinas concludes that 'subjects frequently compel their prelates to do things which seem unwise to do, although considering the time and place, they were done wisely'.<sup>80</sup>

In two moving passages, Thomas points to the root and cause of this pastoral concern in Paul. When Paul says, 'I feel a divine jealousy for you', he is acting as the groomsman who espouses the Corinthians to Christ through faith and love.

Now a person is sometimes jealous for his wife, to keep her for himself. This is the way the Apostle was jealous on behalf of his people, whom he saw prepared for a fall and, although espoused to Christ, wished to be prostituted to the devil. Consequently, he would not permit Christ, the true spouse, to suffer their being shared with the devil; hence he says, 'a divine jealousy'.<sup>81</sup>

And finally, Thomas shows that Paul's ministry is grounded in the love of God and neighbour. In a surprising and delightful exegesis of 2 Cor. 5.13, 'If we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you', Thomas shows the essential link between experiential prayer and sober governance of the people of God. With this extended citation we close in a fitting way this brief examination of Thomas Aquinas' commentaries on 1-2 Corinthians, as a study of the sacraments and their ministers.

<sup>76</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 2.5-11 [62]. In the *Summa* (II-II, 20, 4, ad 2; 35, 1; III, 9, 9, ad 3), Thomas draws the same conclusion (citing 2 Cor. 2.7) regarding sorrow leading to despair.

<sup>77</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 2.5-11 [66].

<sup>78</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 10.7-12 [362].

<sup>79</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 7.4-9a [264].

<sup>80</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 12.11-13 [485].

<sup>81</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 11.1-3 [375-76].

Hence it should be noted that the apostles were midway between God and the people: 'While I stood between the Lord and you at that time' (Deut. 5:5). Therefore, they were required to draw from God whatever they poured out upon the people. Hence it was necessary that sometimes they raised themselves to God by contemplation to obtain heavenly things, and sometimes conformed themselves to the people to deliver what they had received from God; and all this tended to their profit. Hence he says, 'for if we are beside ourselves' i.e., raised to the state of receiving gifts of graces, and this in order to be united to God, which is done by means of temporal things: 'I said in my vision' (Ps. 116:11, Vulgate); Dionysius: 'Divine love causes ecstasy.' 'If we are in our right mind', i.e., adapt ourselves to you by delivering God's precepts, 'it is for you', i.e., for your benefit. This sobriety is not opposed to inebriation in wine, which brings wars on earth, but to that inebriation which is from the Holy Spirit and draws men to divine things and about which Song of Songs (5:1) says: 'Eat, O friends, and drink: drink deeply, O lovers!' For that sobriety is for the benefit of our neighbour, but the inebriation is for the love of God.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>82</sup> *In 2 Cor.* 5.11-15 [179].

## AQUINAS ON EPHESIANS AND COLOSSIANS<sup>1</sup>

Mark Edwards

The century preceding the birth of Aquinas in 1225 is often regarded as an age of resurgent vigour and curiosity, in which the Church played little part except when it inadvertently promoted the fertilization of the European mind through universities at home and crusades abroad. Insolent, sceptical, scientific and ruthlessly concupiscent – a man, in short, who would not have read the fourth chapter of Ephesians with much patience – the Emperor Frederick Hohenstaufen consummates the 'renaissance of the twelfth century' for the eminent historian Charles Homer Haskins.<sup>2</sup> Modern European thought, however, perhaps owes less to this great infidel than to one of his nominal subjects – one, moreover, who was no poet but a philosopher, no layman but a friar, not even a turbulent Franciscan but a studious Dominican, fully orthodox by conviction and by temperament as much of a humanist as a friar could be in an age when the classical spirit flowered in the vernacular and the best Latin was no longer classical.

In the commentaries of Aquinas on Ephesians and Colossians we see at once a vindication and a critique of humanism. While they borrow the instruments of philology, and do not disdain the study of created things (*scientia*), both commentaries share Paul's belief in the primacy of *sapientia*, the knowledge of things eternal, over all the fruits of human curiosity.<sup>3</sup> The questions to be resolved by *sapientia* are primarily metaphysical: Who is Christ? Whence comes the Spirit? Is the government of the natural world by angels a devolution or a usurpation of the divine prerogative? To deny oneself the world without denying its creator is more, perhaps, than

<sup>1</sup> All citations taken from the internet version of the *Textum Taurini* (1953), typed by R. Busa and edited by E. Alarcon.

For Ephesians: <<http://www.corpusthomicum.org/cep.html>>.

For Colossians: <<http://www.corpusthomicum.org/ccl.html>>.

<sup>2</sup> See especially C.H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927, reprinted Cleveland, OH: World Publishing Co., 1957), p. 248.

<sup>3</sup> For the distinction see *In Col.*, cap. 2, lect. 1.

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# AQUINAS ON SCRIPTURE

*An Introduction to his Biblical Commentaries*

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