

COMMENTARY on SAINT PAUL'S EPISTLE to the EPHESIANS

by
St. Thomas Aquinas

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INTRODUCTION

Saint Thomas Aquinas is a paradox. He was a mystic and a rigorously scientific theologian. His attachment to Judaeo-Christianity was strong enough for him to appreciate and appropriate pagan truths. An Aristotelian, he never ceased utilizing Platonic insights. In him a deep reverence for the Church Fathers was coupled with an astonishing zest for novelty.

All of these cross-currents were to show up in his biblical exegesis. He was neither an Alexandrian nor an Antiochene, perhaps because he was both. No one has successfully categorized his approach to the Bible. Advocates of allegory claim him as their own and defenders of strictly literal interpretation praise him for asserting the sufficiency of the letter. A noted Oxford historian admires the revolutionary quality of his exegetical principles and a prominent Jesuit theologian finds them simply traditional. 🗨️

Is St. Thomas' genius really so elusive? Or was he being eclectic at the expense of consistency?

Aquinas effected a real break-through towards system in the domains of Christian philosophy and theology. But what did he do in the area of exegesis? During the centuries when his disciples were eagerly commenting on his Summa and his other systematic works, his commentaries on Scripture gradually became enveloped in thick layers of dust. The dust has been vigorously removed during the past few decades, but not all of it has settled. Nor does the present obscurity on just how systematic theology is related to Scripture clarify the situation.

More than an Introduction would be necessary to come anywhere near an adequate treatment of the complex problems involved.

Nevertheless, a basic methodological distinction may go a long way in establishing St. Thomas' position in the history of Christian exegesis. That distinction is between a biblical exegete's presuppositions and his techniques. 🗨️

Both are operative in his exegesis, but in very different ways. Techniques are easy to identify; they pertain to the entire array of hermeneutical methods and sciences aimed at disclosing the human author's intended meaning. Their range embraces everything from ancient history and comparative religion down to philology and lexicography. Exegetical presuppositions are harder to describe since they lie so close to the origins of meaning and expression in man, thus requiring greater self-understanding. 🗨️

In the context of biblical exegesis, presuppositions have to do with what it means for the Bible to be both the Word of God and the words of men. This twofold meaning of the Bible corresponds to two fundamental presuppositions. Correlative to the Scriptures as the Word of God there is the faith of the exegete. Because the Word is mediated by men the exegete's

philosophical horizon is also a determining factor in his interpretations.

In the following pages I shall attempt to substantiate the thesis that , St. Thomas' specific contributions to biblical exegesis were in the realm of the last mentioned presupposition, while on the level of techniques he adhered closely to the conventions of his day. His lectures on Ephesians can then be read within a general framework of his approach to the Bible.

ST. THOMAS AND EXEGETICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

To understand the Bible more is needed than a good dose of hermeneutical techniques. They are an indispensable aid in determining the human author's intended meaning. But this meaning is what no human being could affirm as true on his own power. To understand the Scriptures as its authors meant them to be understood is to accept what they proclaim: the history of salvation culminating in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as revealing the ultimate meaning of human existence—a meaning only God could give it. A challenge to the religious conversion of faith is issued which no interpreter can explain away. Here St. Thomas is one with the entire Patristic tradition. Like an Irenaeus, an Origen, or an Augustine, Thomas had to respond to God's Word with an unreserved faith before he could even hope to understand something of that Word's meaning, and what it revealed about the meaning of his own existence.

More than faith is presupposed, however, to scriptural exegesis. Just as revelation is mediated by men, so the faith that responds to revelation does not replace the mind of the believer. Because God's Word is mediated by men a tradition is necessary to proclaim the Word and explain it to endlessly varying audiences down the ages. Without this continual re-expression, the original inspired expression would be of little help. What good would come of printing the Greek New Testament on the front page of the *New York Times*? Because faith does not replace the human mind, the operations and drives of human understanding are implicated in both the original expression and the tradition which re-expresses and interprets it. 🗨️

The exegete's task within the tradition, which he enters through faith, is to question the revealed message, not in doubt but in an effort to better understand it, and so contribute to its authentic transmission. What questions he asks, and how he answers them, will largely be determined by his philosophical horizon. Hence the presence of what contemporary German exegetes speak of as a *Begrifflichkeit*, the set of fundamental concepts employed by an interpreter in his questioning of God's Word. 🗨️

Here is where St. Thomas marked a notable transition in regard to the Fathers. Before him biblical exegesis in the West had relied mostly on concepts borrowed from a Middle or Neoplatonism. In the great Origenist and Augustinian schools the conceptual orientation was to exemplary and final causality. The visible world and human history were symbols of spiritual realities known through illumination. 🗨️

Aquinas' appropriation of Aristotle introduced a different perspective from which to question God's Word. For Thomas human knowing is impossible without sense and imagination. Efficient and formal causality receive greater recognition. The world and history take on their

own value, they are not just symbolic of a higher realm. Reason with its philosophies and sciences is clearly differentiated from faith with its mysteries. Once this differentiation had occurred biblical inspiration became a problem in a way it could not have before. This in turn affected Thomas' treatment of the senses of Scripture.

The contrast between St. Augustine and the newly recovered Aristotle, which aroused his strongest passions, upset or modified his most cherished notions about the universe and its Creator, was bound to have a disturbing effect on his study of the Creator's special book. Aristotle caused him to see Scripture as freshly as he saw all creation. 💬

Biblical Inspiration and the Prophetic Mission

Prior to St. Thomas no theologian had felt the necessity of analyzing the exact relationship between the divine and human authors of the Bible. Man's knowing, and the world he knew, were not thought of as spheres in their own right; hence there was hardly any need to determine how both God and man could author the same book. Following Athenagoras of Athens, the human authors were described as the harp strings played by the Holy Spirit to produce the melody of the Scriptures. 💬

For Origen, the Bible was inspired because it contained deep spiritual meanings; to accept only the literal or corporeal sense was tantamount to denying divine inspiration. 💬

St. Jerome was fond of portraying the individual personalities of the prophets but did not reflect on how to harmonize this with his claim that they were the pen used by God's hand in composing Scripture. 💬

To St. Augustine God's action may have enabled the human author to perceive all the truths which would be drawn from the words he wrote —the Bible was "a letter from our fatherland." 💬

St. Gregory felt it superfluous to inquire who had been the human author of the book of Job, the Holy Spirit himself was its author. 💬

From his lectures on Scripture, St. Thomas became increasingly interested in the psychological and theological structures operative in the transmission of revelation. His thorough analysis of ordinary human knowing demanded that the interplay of the divine and the human in mankind's growth in supernatural knowledge receive more attention than the scattered patristic references accorded it. Not that Aquinas ever wrote a separate treatise on biblical inspiration. He lived in an age when the Bible was still considered within the total context of the prophetic mission exercised by the people of God. 💬

Scripture was not seen as the end product of this mission but as a means of continuing it.

Prophecy, in Aquinas' thought, is a broad analogous term embracing all the charismatic graces related to supernatural knowledge. 💬

It covers everything from the majestic theophanies of Sinai or the high mystical experiences of the prophets strictly so called, through the sacred writers who transmitted and interpreted God's message, down to the inconspicuous task of a deacon chanting the gospel at a liturgical service. 🗨️

The wide diversity does not render prophecy equivocal. The same general purpose and structure can be found in all of its instances. The purpose of prophecy, dictated by its very nature as a charismatic grace, is to contribute to the good of the ecclesial community, to aid men in their return to God. 🗨️

The structure of prophecy always contains two relationships or moments. The first is the prophetic gift, the encounter of the prophet with God and his saving truth; a man-to-God relationship which issues in revelation. 🗨️

Revelation, like prophecy, is analogous. It applies to the overpowering experiences in which God reveals a great supernatural mystery, as well as to the more commonplace events of men receiving from God a strong inner conviction of the certainty of their faith so that they can convincingly proclaim it to others. 🗨️

Whatever the depth at which the Divine is confronted, its light never fails to affect the prophet-or sacred author. 🗨️

The other essential relationship in prophecy has to do with the use of the gift in prophetic communication. This is required by the very nature of the gift which is meant for the benefit of other men and not for the personal sanctification of the prophet. In the first relationship man receives passively from God; the "donum. prophetiae" is immediately caused by God. But in the prophet-to-men communication God's causality is not immediate:

The use of any prophecy is within the power of the prophet. . . Hence, one could prevent himself from using prophecy; the proper disposition is a necessary requirement for the correct use of prophecy since the use of prophecy proceeds from the created power of the prophet. Therefore, a determinate disposition is also pre-required. 🗨️

This does not destroy the instrumental nature of prophetic or biblical communication; it puts this theory in the perspective Aquinas understood it in.

Inspiration, a direct action of God, belongs to the prophetic encounter; it may reveal to the prophet what he is to communicate (the "acceptio rerum" of Aquinas), yet its essential element is the communication (by means of the "lumen propheticum") of a divine certitude that the prophet's judgment is true. But how he transmits his message, which literary forms and words he uses, is normally governed by God in an indirect or mediated manner. 🗨️

" Under unusual circumstances he could modify an individual's social and literary dispositions in a direct way when conferring the "donum." Regularly, however, these dispositions are provided for by that Providence with which the Divine Artisan plans and effectuates salvation-history. He disposed men and events precisely that they might communicate his word as they

did. 💬

Thus the emphasis is shifted from isolated individuals to God's control of the whole process in which the Bible was formed. The pre-required dispositions were arranged for within the scope of this special Providence; hence Aquinas clearly indicates that the personal traits of the prophets in no way depreciate the message they convey, instead, this message proceeds in harmony with such dispositions." 💬

St. Thomas could never regard the human authors as superfluous.

The exegetical presuppositions of the Angelic Doctor were able to incorporate the vivid awareness of the biblical personalities, distinctive of St. Jerome, within a theological analysis that accentuated their importance while preserving the divine initiative. At the same stroke it utilized the sense of sacred history which St. Augustine had bequeathed the Middle Ages. 💬

Revelation was not conceived as occurring within the vacuum of a Platonic heaven. It underwent an organic development, taking fully into account the capacities of those to whom it was imparted. The order of faith presupposes natural knowledge just as grace presupposes the nature it perfects. 💬

Instructing mankind through revelation, God respected its power of assimilation:

Progress in knowledge occurs... also on the part of the learner; so a master, who has perfect knowledge of an art, does not deliver it all at once to his student from the very outset, for he could not grasp it, instead, he condescends to the student's capacity and instructs him little by little. In such a way did men make progress in the knowledge of faith as time went on. 💬

St. Thomas was aware of a certain growth or development in the revelation of supernatural mysteries 💬

even though he could scarcely perceive the historical dimensions of such an evolution.

Any reflections on the Bible's inerrancy must take this development into account. Truth in God undergoes no change, but man's apprehension of the truth does. Scripture presents this growth in faith under the guiding hand of God and the presentation would be false if it did not also display the imperfections inherent in any growth. St. Thomas points out that in prophecy, no matter how profound it is, there is never question of leaving time to enter eternity but somehow of grasping eternity in time—the distinction is important. 💬

When discussing the truth of prophecy, St. Thomas reverts to the idea of teaching and its evolutive aspect:

Prophecy is a type of knowledge impressed on the prophet's intellect from a divine revelation, this happens after the manner of education. Now the truth of knowledge is the same in both the student and the teacher since the student's knowledge is a likeness of the teacher's knowledge, just as in natural matters the

form of what is generated is a certain likeness of the form of the generator. 🗨️

It is not surprising that for Aquinas Sacred Scripture and Sacred Teaching were equivalent. 🗨️

In this Sacred Teaching which revelation is, and which the Bible presents, there is truth and nothing but it; not a truth numerically identical with that present in God, 🗨️

but truth as it is assimilated by the prophets and apostles of the Old and New Covenants, and as it was incarnated in the historical situations where it developed. Such a perspective need offer no apologies for the rugged simplicity of the Bible; any apologetic function of allegory ceases. Instead, the exegete is directed to the text so that through it he might reach the mentality of the sacred author, the mind on which revelation impressed its message.

The Senses of Scripture

The second area in which St. Thomas rethought the traditional presuppositions of exegesis was the complex one of the scriptural senses. He could hardly have failed to recognize Platonic undertones in the patristic praise for the spiritual senses. Not that the Fathers dispensed with the literal sense—quite the contrary. Clement of Alexandria and Origen initiated a cycle of liberal and scientific studies to provide the Christian interpreter with an accurate grasp of the text and its historical meaning. Origen himself learnt Hebrew and undertook the first textual criticism of the Old Testament's Greek translations. 🗨️

St. Jerome's labors in producing the Vulgate gave the medieval exegetes their text, while St. Augustine, in the second book of *De Doctrina Christiana*, mapped out an entire program to aid in the understanding of the literal sense; it included Hebrew, Greek, Latin, history, natural science, dialectics and law. 🗨️

Yet none of the Fathers who were to influence medieval exegesis 🗨️

declared the sufficiency of the literal sense; nor did any of the commentators or theologians prior to St. Thomas. Several reasons account for this attitude. One was the grossly literal approach of those who insisted on taking figurative and metaphorical expressions in the Bible at their face value. Thus, Origen was convinced that an excessively literal interpretation lay at the roots of the Jew's rejection of Christ for not fulfilling the messianic promises to the letter, and the Gnostic rejection of the Old Testament for its anthropomorphic portraits of God. Origen countered both by affirming that nothing in the Holy Books is unworthy of God, provided they are understood spiritually rather than literally. 🗨️

St. Augustine made the same plea for an appreciation of the spiritual message of the Bible. 🗨️

" If Cassian paid little attention to the literal meaning, this was no doubt due in large measure to the fanatical adherence of the anthropomorphite monks in Egypt to the literal exposition of biblical metaphor. 🗨️

St. Gregory the Great could find little time amid the dissolution of Roman civilization for the literary and historical inquiry necessary to appreciate the literal sense; spiritual exegesis offered a ready tool to communicate his deep religious insights and to fulfill his pastoral obligations. 💬

In this aspect he is the link between the patristic and medieval monastic commentators. 💬

Beyond these apologetic and pastoral motivations, however, there existed a Platonic atmosphere in Christian thinking which disposed commentators to regard the biblical text as merely the necessary shell or veil that had to be pierced in order to get at the inner, nobler, spiritual message. Influenced by Philonic methods, Origen used his axiom, that nothing in the Bible is unworthy of God, to explain away obvious sins, such as Lot's incest, as allegories. "Everything in Scripture is a mystery" since "everything in Scripture has a spiritual meaning, but not all of it has a literal meaning." 💬

When Origen compares the literal sense to the body and the spiritual senses to the soul and spirit of man, it is not startling to hear one with his Platonic temperament referring to "the base, worthless letter ." 💬

The meaning of metaphor is placed in the realm of the spiritual since intelligibility must be sought, not in the letter or history, but above them.

St. Augustine furnished the groundwork for the proper relation between the literal and spiritual senses by distinguishing between signs and things. Conventional signs, such as words, refer to things; and in the case of Scripture these things themselves can be used by God to signify some further reality. 💬

His opinions on divine illumination, with their dependence on Platonic psychology, are evident in his castigations of those who understand metaphor literally:

For when what is said figuratively is taken as if it were said literally, it is understood in a carnal manner. And nothing is more fittingly called the death of the soul than when that in it which raises it above the brutes, the intelligence namely, is put in subjection to the flesh by adhering to the letter... Now it is surely a miserable slavery of the soul to take signs for things and to be unable to lift the eye of the mind above what is corporeal and created, that it may drink in eternal light. 💬

The presuppositions come out clearly in Augustine's definition of metaphor or figurative passages:

Whatever there is in the word of God that cannot, when taken literally, be referred either to purity of life or soundness of doctrine, you may set down as figurative. 💬

Since the end of Scripture is the love and knowledge of God, if an interpretation contributes to this end, while failing to grasp the meaning intended by the sacred author, it is similar to

reaching the desired goal by a detour instead of by the route intended. When a Christian is securely in possession of the reality he may even dispense with the Scriptures; the signs have served their purpose for him. 🗨️

The Augustinian assertion of the superiority of the spiritual senses was hardly questioned by medieval allegorists who seemed more interested in detours than in the intended route. Even Hugh of St. Victor, who chided them for claiming superior spiritual knowledge when they were ignorant of what the letter meant, did not doubt for a moment the superiority of spiritual exegesis. 🗨️

St. Thomas' unqualified adoption of the Aristotelian doctrine concerning the dependence of the human mind on the imagination threw a new light on the importance of the literal sense of Scripture. In this life, Christian contemplation, no matter how fully it attained to the reality, could never dispense with the imagined signs which guided it toward that reality. For St. Augustine, man was a soul and a body, the soul used the body; man's intellectual knowledge is not received from sense objects, even sensation is an act of the soul using the sense organs. 🗨️

For Aquinas, man is a body animated by an intellectual soul, the soul is the act of the body; he cannot acquire knowledge or think without the assistance of the imagination. Aquinas was fully aware of his divergence from Augustine on this point. 🗨️

This shift in psychological presuppositions was bound to make itself felt in exegetical principles. Greater stress was placed on the role of the imagination or phantasm in prophecy; even in the highest forms of prophetic encounter the phantasm has its role to play. 🗨️

Another effect was a change in attitude toward the literal sense. Nowhere in St. Thomas does one find any disparaging remarks about it. "The Holy Letters are a way to salvation. . . (God) instructs the human mind immediately through the Holy Letters." 🗨️

Not that the traditional doctrine of the four senses was ever abandoned far from it. He gave them a precise and transparent definition:

1) The literal or historical sense: That intended by the sacred author, the realities he signified through the words of Scripture. Since God not only can adapt words to convey meaning but also, by his providence, transmit meaning in the very events of life, the realities narrated in the Bible can in turn signify a further spiritual reality. Hence the spiritual senses:

2) The allegorical or typical sense: The realities of the Old Testament signify those of the New, Christ and his Church.

3) The moral or tropological sense: The events of Christ's life, and those who prefigured him, signify what Christians should do, how they should live.

4) The anagogical or eschatological sense: The New Testament realities signify those of the kingdom that is to come. 🗨️

An Aristotelian *Begrifflichkeit* sets these senses of Scripture in a new perspective. The Origenist and Augustinian view of physical and historical events, along with man's knowledge of them, as symbolic put the stress on the allegorical-anagogical meaning as revealing the Ultimate: God and Christ in glory. Christian interpretation must not remain on the level of literature and history; these are symbols whose transcendent finality must be unfolded. 🗨️

St. Thomas, however, opens the way for a closer analysis of the text and of history as expressing a divinely given meaning. Where the former concentrate on the plus-value of the symbol as pointing beyond itself, Aquinas directs attention to the salvific intelligibility of the sacred text and of history. With the Patristic tradition St. Thomas held that not all four senses could be found in every part of Scripture. 🗨️

Unlike many of the Fathers, for Thomas the one sense which is present in all the verses is the literal one. 🗨️

This "incarnation" of the spiritual senses was further promoted by recognizing metaphor as a literal sense. Since words, whether spoken or written, refer to things *only by means of the mental conceptions* of the one uttering or writing them, the exegete must interpret the literal meaning of the metaphorical text in accordance with what the author meant it to convey and not at its face value.

When Scripture speaks of the arm of God, the literal sense is not that he has a physical limb, but that he has what it signifies, namely, effective power. 🗨️

By far, the greatest service which St. Thomas performed in regard to exegetical presuppositions was to assert plainly the sufficiency of the literal meaning. The literal is the only sense on which theological arguments can be based; St. Augustine and others had counseled that arguments must be adduced from "plain testimonies" but never would they have dreamt of identifying these exclusively with the literal sense. 🗨️

The rise of speculative theology was already dampening enthusiasm for allegorical interpretation at the beginning of the thirteenth century. 🗨️

Aquinas went further still in implanting Christian faith in its literal biblical expression:

Consequently Holy Scripture sets up no confusion, since all meanings are based on one, namely, the literal sense. From this alone can arguments be drawn, and not, as St. Augustine mentions in his letter to Vincent the Donatist, from whatever is said according to allegory. Nor is anything lost from Sacred Scripture on this account, for nothing that is necessary to faith is contained under the spiritual sense which is not openly conveyed by the literal sense elsewhere. 🗨️

As he points out, this does not lessen the spiritual value of the Bible, it simply locates that value within the ambit of the literal meaning.

The exegetical presuppositions of St. Thomas provided the elements needed for the

theoretical justification of a Christian exegete applying himself wholeheartedly to the interpretation of the literal sense. He could do this without fearing an Origenist censure that he was denying biblical inspiration. For only when the things which the author intended to signify through words were known could the further question be determined of what further realities God was signifying through those things. The distinction between the prophetic encounter and its communication assured the believing exegete that the Bible's origin was both truly divine and really human. The Book was an object of both faith and scientific study. The affirmation of the sufficiency of the literal sense would allow him to appreciate the spiritual riches and salvific power of the inspired text itself. Finally, the identification of the literal meaning of the text and the intention of its authors fully warranted a study of the factors which shaped and influenced their mentality—their languages, cultures and historical contexts.

The elements for a theoretical justification of historical biblical studies, however, must not be confused with the studies themselves. St. Thomas' thirteenth century unawareness of history as we know it today meant that he could not grasp the implications of his own presuppositions. This is evident, for example, in his adoption of the Origenist-Augustinian notion that the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets—the elite whose duty it was to lead the people—had an explicit faith in the mysteries of the Holy Trinity and Christ. Since the mass of the people were not ready for this, their faith was implicit in their acceptance of the Old Law in which these mysteries were prefigured. 💬

This did not lead Aquinas to posit mysteries behind every word of the Old Testament, but it does explain why the messianic prophecies, such as Isaiah (7:14), can be taken as referring directly to Christ in their literal meaning. 💬

Another instance was his acceptance of the Augustinian teaching on the multiplicity of the literal sense. God might have enabled the prophet or sacred author to comprehend many of the diverse meanings which others would draw out of what had been written—even if the human instruments did not in fact know these diverse meanings, surely God did. 💬


It was more of a pragmatic norm designed to accommodate the wide diversity in patristic interpretations of particular passages when there could be little hope of reaching an agreement on just what the author had meant. 💬


This demonstrates that St. Thomas' exegetical presuppositions were in continuity with the old as well as open to the new. They were not delivered in the clear-cut, settled once and for all categories which theological manuals associate with Thomist thought. He was grappling with problems the implications of which are not yet fully comprehended today. One wonders whether the crises in Catholic interpretation of the Bible during the sixteenth and seventeenth, or the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, would have been so acute had theologians and exegetes assimilated, let alone advanced, the presuppositional positions of Aquinas.

ST. THOMAS AND EXEGETICAL TECHNIQUES


Samuel Johnson once defined true genius as "a mind of large general powers, accidentally

determined to some particular direction." None doubt that Thomas' laid in theoretical directions. He was not a pioneer forging new literary conventions or discovering unknown hermeneutical techniques. He picked up whatever tools were available and hurried on to his speculation.


Not that his labors in the field of exegetical presuppositions were left at the lecture room door when he began to comment on Scripture. Reading his lectures "against a background of modern exegesis, one naturally finds the medieval element in them startling; approaching them from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, one is more startled by their modernity." 

His declaration of the sufficiency of the literal sense showed up in the meagre contribution he made to allegorism in comparison with a St. Bernard, Richard of St. Victor or Stephen Langton. Yet, he did make a contribution, his exposition on the Psalms is clear proof of it. He should not be dressed up as some sort of Melchisedech in biblical interpretation, appearing mysteriously without antecedents. 


if his work on presuppositional positions made him a man for his times, his exegesis just as clearly indicated that he was a man of his times:

One is then justified in considering the commentaries of St. Thomas on St. John, and especially on St. Paul, as the maturest fruit and the most perfect realization of medieval scholastic exegesis. 

Texts, References and Lectures

The founding of the Dominican house of studies at Paris in 1231 put new life into the scriptural exegesis of the University. Led by Hugh St. Cher, who was instrumental in having the young Brother Thomas come to Paris for his baccalaureate studies, the friars of St. Jacques became famous for their cooperative efforts in producing biblical concordances, correctories and commentaries. 

No matter how fully its deficiencies were recognized, the Vulgate, as edited by Alcuin in 800, remained the quasi-official text for all the lectures at the University. Alcuin had no consistent policy in his divisions of the Text, and wide divergencies existed up to and including the twelfth century in the matter of citations. Stephen Langton seems to have worked out the present system of chapters near the end of his teaching career. They were not long in becoming standard and, with a few precisions possibly due to Hugh St. Cher, remain in use today. Partitioning chapters into verses was not introduced until the sixteenth century. This accounts for St. Thomas' custom of referring to passages by naming the book and chapter and then at least a few words of the text he had in mind.

Since Aquinas distinguished between authenticity and canonicity, he had no qualms on including the deuterocanonical books within the canon. Their authority was not derived from whoever wrote them but "from their acceptance by the Church." 

The books of the Old and New Testaments are termed canonical because, unlike any others, they constitute the norms for our faith:

Those who wrote the Scriptural canon, such as the Evangelists, Apostles and others like them, so firmly asserted the truth that they left nothing to be doubted. Thus it states: "And we know that his testimony is true," (Jn 21:24) and "If anyone preach to you a gospel, besides that which you have received, let him be anathema." (Gal. 1:9). The reason for this is that only the canonical Scriptures are normative for faith. Whereas others who write about the truth do so in such a way that they do not want to be believed unless what they affirm is true. 💬

This does not imply that St. Thomas advocated *sola scriptura*; he could not abstract the Book from its living environment within ecclesial tradition. The generations of Christians stretching from Apostolic times down to their own were not viewed by the medieval mind as *separating* them from the integral Christian message but far more as *uniting* them to it. The Church Fathers were the incomparable guides in this positive task of assimilating Christ and his meaning. They never could be rejected in an authentically Christian hermeneutic.

The many glosses facilitated recourse to them; to each passage of a given book the glosses would attach an excerpt from one or more of the Fathers which explained or exemplified the text. Two glosses became standard textbooks in medieval exegesis: the *Glossa Ordinaria* which most probably originated with Anselm of Laon and his school, and the *Magna Glossatura* of Peter Lombard on the Psalms and letters of St. Paul. During the twelfth century the Masters of the Sacred Page not only had to comment on the biblical text but also to read, and interpret, if necessary, many of its patristic glosses. The task was formidable and by Thomas' time it devolved on those contending for their baccalaureate to construe the text and its glosses. This left the master free to undertake the commentary proper.

Aquinas was not content with second-hand patristic sources, he often went back to the original works if they were available. When Urban IV requested him to compose a gloss on the four gospels, with particular attention to the Greek Fathers, St. Thomas included many quotations previously not given in the glosses; he even had translations of some Greek works made into Latin. When the *Expositio Continua*—or the *Catena Aurea* as it was popularly known—had been completed, it represented over twenty-two Latin Fathers and fifty-seven Greek Fathers. Critical scholars of the caliber of Erasmus had nothing but praise for it. 💬

Concordances and dictionaries were essential to thirteenth century reference works. St. Thomas probably had at his disposal some of the better known topical concordances, such as those of Rabanus Maurus or Thomas Gallus with their lists of subjects and the relevant scriptural passages. For verbal concordances he could check Hugh of St. Cher's, or the *Concordantia Sancti Jacobi* and *Concordantie Majores*, both the work of his confreres at St. Jacques. He might also refer to dictionaries, such as Alan of Lille's *Distinctiones Dictionum Theologicalium*, in which the words are illustrated by the literal and spiritual meanings they have in the Bible.

In philology and textual criticism St. Thomas was not the equal of some of his contemporaries. He has been reproached for not learning Greek and Hebrew when he certainly had the opportunity to do so at Paris or Naples. But by his time specialization in these areas had already begun. Besides, his biographies leave the impression that Brother Thomas' schedule was a tight one during his years as a student and professor—a fact

corroborated by the enormous volume of his writing. The little Greek he knew, and the less Hebrew, was gleaned almost entirely from patristic references and the correctoria. These latter, e.g., that of Hugh of St. Cher and the Dominicans of St. Jacques, offered variant readings and emendations to the Alcuin Vulgate text used at Paris. St. Thomas relied on these for his textual criticism, not on a direct study of the manuscripts. 🗨️

The Hebrew or Greek etymologies were obtained from patristic sources, Isidore's *Etymologiae*, or dictionaries like William Brito's *Vocabularium Bibliae*.

References to pagan authors are also found in St. Thomas' lectures on Scripture, though he was more hesitant in this practice than his contemporaries. Cicero, Ovid, Seneca, Plato, Democritus, the Stoics and others are interspersed in the commentaries. The one recurrent figure is, of course, Aristotle; his appearances nearly double all the rest put together. Aquinas was in the best Augustinian tradition when he affirmed that... the doctor of holy Scripture accepts the witness of truth no matter where he finds it."

Hence Augustine remarks in the second book of *De Doctrina Christiana* that if whatever the philosophers have stated is in harmony with our faith, not only should it not be mistrusted, it should be taken from them as though they were not its rightful owners and appropriated for our own use. 🗨️

St. Thomas wished to demonstrate that Aristotle was as much a witness and an unrightful owner as Plato.

Equipped with his text and reference material, the master was ready for his expositions. Aquinas must have lectured on Scripture anywhere from one to four times a week during the scholastic year. 🗨️

Due to the acclaim given to the *Summa Theologiae*, the *Summa Contra Gentiles* and his commentaries on Aristotle, it is generally not realized that they were never the subject of Aquinas' lectures. The bulk of his lectures were devoted to commenting on the Word of God in a systematic and continuous manner. To this teaching he set aside the freshest time of day, the hour of Prime. 🗨️

Each book was preceded by a prologue or introduction in which the authorship, subject matter and purpose of the writing was discussed with the aid of a scriptural quotation in which these were all supposed to be at least figuratively contained. From Gueric of St. Quentin Thomas adopted the custom of occasionally doing this within the framework of the four causes, formal and material, final and efficient. At other times he borrowed the introductory procedure of the grammarians and speaks of the matter, intention, and utility of the book. When he alluded to the author as the efficient cause, it is interesting to note that he never bothered to qualify the statement by adding "instrumental."

Next came the commentaries proper with their divisions of the text, explanations, questions and replies. The familiar austerity and no-nonsense quality of Scholastic Latin is heightened in many of the lectures that have been preserved. St. Thomas' commentaries fall into two groups. The first are expositiones, they were written by Aquinas himself or dictated outside

of classes. In this category belong his commentaries on Isaias, Job, Jeremias, and Lamentations, the letter to the Romans, the first five chapters of St. John's Gospel and the first seven on 1 Corinthians. The second group are termed *lecturae*, they are transcriptions or *reportationes* of the actual lectures he gave. With the exception of his very first commentary, that on St. Matthew, all the other *lecturae* were taken down by St. Thomas' intimate companion and friend, Reginald of Piperno. Here belong his commentaries on St. John and the Pauline letters, possibly also those on the Psalms. That his *lecturae* on Romans and 1 Corinthians (1-10) are missing suggest that he may have used the *reportationes* in composing his expositions.

The system of transcribing lectures was practiced throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. No pretence at style was made; quotations were usually abruptly recorded without introduction and the references were normally left for the master to fill in later. University statutes required that a master correct the reports personally before they were published. The Official Catalogue of St. Thomas' writings mentions that he corrected and approved of Reginald's transcription of his lectures on St. John, and the catalogues of Tolomeo of Lucca (perhaps the earliest catalogue of his writings) and Bernard Gui state that Thomas also corrected the transcriptions of his lectures on St. Paul's epistles. 🗨️

Characteristics of St. Thomas' Exegesis

In the field of spiritual exegesis Thomas Aquinas exhibits a marked restraint when compared to interpreters such as Richard of St. Victor or Stephen Langton, and, to a less extent, in comparison with Hugh of St. Cher or St. Bonaventure. Conformable to custom, he differentiated plainly between the literal and spiritual when he was going to offer more than a literal exegesis of the text. Normally, these two were designated as "literal" and "mystical" respectively—although it may be closer to his mind to translate his *mystice* by "symbolically." He was careful not to skip over the things which the words of Scripture immediately designate, the spiritual can only be constructed on a sound knowledge of the literal sense. Yet he had no guides as to when these things were actually used by God to signify some further reality. A result was that he frequently followed patristic sources and saw spiritual meanings in minor events.

For example, the fig tree under which Nathaniel slept (Jn. 1:48) may be symbolically understood with St. Augustine as sin, or with St. Gregory as the Old Covenant. Our Lord's words in John (11:7) "Let us go into Judea again," symbolically proclaim the final conversion of the Jews. The gold, frankincense and myrrh of the Magi symbolize three different aspects of faith, deeds, and contemplation respectively. 🗨️

With the Fathers, nevertheless, St. Thomas was able to attain deep theological insights, e.g., the feeding of the crowds in John (6) symbolically refers to mankind's spiritual nourishment on wisdom; the bread of life is both God's wisdom incarnate in Christ and the Eucharistic sacrament. 🗨️

This is a case where the sacred author himself intended more than one meaning. In what he wrote—the multiplicity of the literal sense has not been entirely rejected by modern scholarship. 🗨️

When reading St. Thomas' literal exegesis, especially of the Old Testament books, one must keep in mind his acceptance of Origen's and Augustine's teaching on the prophets and elders of Israel having an explicit faith in Christian mysteries. In his commentaries, Aquinas at least twice reproaches Theodore of Mopsuestia for supposedly denying that any Old Testament texts could refer literally to Christ or the Church:

Another [error] was that of Theodore who claimed that nothing brought forward in the Old Testament is literally applicable to Christ but only accommodated to him... Hence, "That it might be fulfilled" would have to be interpreted as though the evangelist had said "That it might be accommodated." 🗨️

Against this Thomas maintains that some passages have Christ alone as their literal meaning, e.g., Isaiah (7:14) and Psalms (21:2)—to deprive them of this unique reference would be heretical. Most references to Christ, however, relate directly to some Old Testament personage who is a figure of Christ, e.g., Solomon in Psalm (71:8). 🗨️

Occasions in which the literal sense had only a Christian mystery as its focal point were comparatively rare for the Angelic Doctor. He dismissed the notion, for instance, that the Old Covenant's ceremonial precepts were in large measure unintelligible except as allegories of New Covenant mysteries. On the contrary, they generally have literal, historical reasons which the Jewish people could appreciate. 🗨️

His insistence on the intention of the human author helped him to resolve, or bypass, discrepancies among the synoptics and St. John. "John himself preserved the historical sequence of events" finds a resonance in contemporary assertions on the fourth gospel's historicity. Following St. Augustine, he recognized that Matthew preferred to recapitulate events. 🗨️

He would discard any interpretation which did not seem to him to represent the mind of the author; he even brands one of John Chrysostom's opinions as "apparently ridiculous" for this reason. 🗨️

Aquinas was aware of the need for extreme pliability in the exegete; definitive solutions were few and far between. Thus he frequently will give more than one interpretation of a passage—his use of "either... or" to introduce them indicates that it is not a question of his opting for a multiplicity of literal senses in these situations. He presented them and would sometimes add that this one or that seemed better to him; at other times he left it up to his students to decide. Father Lagrange, O.P., who knew from experience how inflexible some exegetes could be, remarked on Aquinas' broadmindedness in exegesis. 🗨️

He would not resort to procrustean techniques to "solve" all difficulties. His dominating desire was to uncover the meanings intended by the human and divine authors. And his constant attribution of several possible ones to a passage brought out the avowedly hypothetical nature of his attempts.

The literary context must be accounted for in any interpretation. Both St. Augustine and Richard of St. Victor had counseled this. In his Prologue to the Psalms, Aquinas enumerates

some of the literary forms in the Bible: narration, admonition, commands, exhortation, prayer, praise, proverb and parable. Thus Matthew's gospel was intended for the Jews and conforms to their manner of speaking. John does not offer an exact repetition of our Lord's words but strives to bring out their deeper significance. 💬

Since "Scripture speaks according to the notions of the people" to whom it is addressed, the historical and cultural context must also be investigated. St. Thomas displays an interest in this aspect of exegesis although his historical horizon was narrow and his sources negligible. He probably consulted Peter Comestor's *Historica Scholastica* which had become a standard reference work. 💬

The dialectical cast of St. Thomas' interpretation of the literal sense runs through every page. Syllogisms are disclosed in St. Paul and the correct sequence of thoughts is commended in St. John. 💬

The chief ingredient of this approach to the Bible is the omnipresent divisions and subdivisions. Introduced by Hugh St. Cher, the method was utilized by both St. Albert and St. Bonaventure as well as St. Thomas. In the twelfth century, commentaries were content to take one verse at a time and attempt to exhaust its literal and spiritual significance; the students did not get a feel for the book as a whole. The dialectical procedure enabled Aquinas to define the main theme of a book and then relate each of its parts to this unifying center. The divisions could become as arbitrary as allegorism had been, but modern scholarship renders justice to many of Thomas'precisions. 💬

Finally, the dominant note in his exegesis is its theological import. The schoolmen could not study the Word of God passively. Unequipped with the requisite philological and historical knowledge, they questioned the sacred text with the conceptions available to them. Exposition merges with disputation as theological objections are proposed and answered within the commentary. To interpret the book of Job literally is to engage in a living dialogue with it concerning the problems of evil and predestination, of providence and retribution. The Bible was not an historical curiosity to be approached like an antiquated museum piece. The reported vision Aquinas had of Sts. Peter and Paul coming to aid him in interpreting a particular text demonstrates the vivid reality this Book and its authors had for him and his companions. 💬

A danger existed in St. Thomas' tendency to develop the literal sense rather than explain it. This was the price he had to pay in his efforts to demonstrate in his day that the speculative and scientific theology he was fathering owed its very existence and vitality to the Bible. As Father Chenu, O.P., has pointed out:

We are confronted with the fact that St. Thomas, a master in theology, took as the matter of his official course the text itself of Scripture, the Old and New Testaments... This is of major significance. Undoubtedly in the history of Thomism the *Summa Theologica* has monopolized all the attention... But it is precisely here that a grave problem arises, and the first condition for understanding and solving it is not to forget that the *Summa* is planted in the soil of the Scriptures, not merely by some species of devotion which gives its rational

systematization a pious aspect, but because of the very law of its genesis. The university education of the thirteenth century will produce disputations and *Summae* only within the framework of Scriptural teaching. This is an apt pedagogical expression of the law of theology: It cannot become a science except in communion with the Word of God, which is listened to first of all for itself alone. A tree cut from its roots dies, even though it remains standing. 🗨️

Despite the limitations of his time, St. Thomas succeeded more than many a later theologian in revealing the profound unity which fuses sacred doctrine with sacred Scripture.

THE LECTURES ON EPHESIANS

The Masters of the Sacred Page in thirteenth century Paris inherited from their predecessors a deep devotion to St. Paul. Thomas Aquinas made no secret of it. His commentaries on the Pauline letters practically double those on any other sacred author. He apparently intended to go over the letters a second time, converting the transcribed *lecturae* into expositions—some even hold that his redactions of Romans and 1 Corinthians were the result of an uncompleted second series of public lectures on Paul. 🗨️

If the Psalter and the letters of St. Paul are the two most frequently used writings in the Liturgy, it may well be because "in both nearly the whole of theological teaching is contained." Aquinas praises the Apostle to the Gentiles for the clarity of his wisdom and the strength of his love. Paul was full of the Christ whose mysteries he proclaimed to all men. 🗨️

Everyone agrees in situating the first series of lectures on St. Paul within Thomas' first teaching assignments in Italy, 1259 to 1268. Mandonnet and most other scholars prefer the earlier part of this period, from 1259 to 1265, as the most likely time of the lectures. This would mean that the majority of them were given while Thomas was teaching at the court of Urban IV in Orvieto, 1261 to 1264. 🗨️

Synave, however, dates them from 1265 to 1267 when St. Thomas was regent of the Dominican's provincial house of studies at Rome. 🗨️

Since we do not know how many lectures a week he was accustomed to give—it could range from one to four and possibly five—no probable dates for lectures on individual letters can be offered. If he followed the sequence of the letters which the Vulgate gives—he knew that it was not the chronological order—the letter to the Ephesians would have fallen in the middle of his course. Thus a *caeteris paribus* guess, which carries little weight in historical matters, would place his Ephesian lectures between 1261 to 1263 if Mandonnet is followed, or 1266 in Synave's scheme. 🗨️

In attempting to establish the *ordo doctrinae* 🗨️

to be followed in commenting on the Pauline corpus, St. Thomas saw the whole teaching of Paul's fourteen letters centering about the grace of Christ. The letter to the Hebrews, which Aquinas believed was written by Paul in Hebrew and translated by St. Luke into Greek, deals with Christ as the head and source of grace. 🗨️

Grace and its relation to the whole Mystical Body embraces most of the remaining letters. Romans deals with Christ's grace in itself; 1 Corinthians is concerned with the sacraments of grace; 2 Corinthians with the dignity of their ministers; and Galatians with the uselessness of Old Testament sacraments. This grace effects the unity of Christ's Body; Ephesians treats of the institution of ecclesial unity; Philippians with its strengthening and increase, while Colossians seeks to defend it against present persecution; and 1 and 2 Thessalonians against the dangers to come under Anti-Christ. Finally, 1 and 2 Timothy, with Titus, are to the prelates of the Church regarding spiritual matters; Philemon in reference to a temporal issue. 🗨️

When St. Thomas' more systematic works, such as the *Summa Theologiae*, are studied in isolation from the scriptural matrix they were meant to supplement, misunderstandings are inevitable. He is accused of forgetting the essentially Christian character of salvation, grace, and charity. 🗨️

It was not without reason that Pius XII, during the last year of his pontificate, reminded students of the indispensable role Aquinas' lectures on Scripture play in determining what his true thought is:


In the opinion of men of the finest judgment, the commentaries that St. Thomas wrote on the books of the Old and of the New Testament, and especially on the Epistles of St. Paul the Apostle, reflect such authority, such a keen insight and such diligence that they can be counted among his greatest theological works, and are considered in the nature of a biblical complement to these works, one to be held in the highest esteem. And thus if anyone should neglect them, he cannot be said to enjoy a clear and thoroughgoing acquaintance with the knowledge of the Angelic Doctor. 🗨️

In developing the main theme of his lectures on Ephesians, the unity of the faithful in Christ, Aquinas continually pointed out the central position of Christ in salvation-history. The whole of Chapter One pivots around the blessings which men have received in Christ. Through him we are chosen, predestined, and adopted as God's children, worthy to partake of eternal beatitude and bodily resurrection (Lect. 1). The Father loves us because he sees his own Son in us; only Christ can justify and save us (Lect. 2). The life-giving mystery revealed through the Apostles is the advent of God in Christ and the recapitulation of everything in Him (Lect. 3). The acceptance of this mystery in faith is dependent on Christ (Lect. 5).. As Christ is the model and form of our justice, so his exultation sets the pattern for mankind's resurrection (Lect. 7). In this exultation Christ exercises a supreme fullness of power over the entire universe (Lect. 8).


This sets the stage for Chapter Two in which St. Thomas comments on the effects of Christ's power. The slavery to sin in which Jew and pagan were plunged (Lect. 1) was destroyed by God's unique mercy, justifying us in Christ (Lect. 2). Only Christ can accomplish this salvation (Lect. 3). The alienation between Jew and pagan (Lect. 4) was completely annihilated by the overpowering unification of mankind effected by the God-man (Lect. 5). Now all the races of men have access by Christ, in the Spirit, to the Father (*ibid.*). A new community of men is formed whose foundation is Christ (Lect. 6).

In the lectures on Chapter Three the special role of the Apostles in disseminating knowledge of this mystery is discussed. The blessings outlined in Chapters One and Two are reiterated in the context of this apostolic mission. Christ is Lord of history (Lect. 3), and the essence of our faith consists in affirming his true divinity and humanity (Lect. 5). The moral exhortations and precepts of Chapters Four to Six are to assist the Ephesians in preserving the ecclesial unity Christ has established and strengthened by his gifts. St Thomas certainly cannot be accused of failing to impress on his students the profoundly Christological nature of mankind's return to God. If later Thomists are justly reprimanded for this, it is only insofar as they have failed to sink the roots of their theology as deeply into the Word of God as their master did.

The lectures on Ephesians exhibit all the characteristics of Thomas' exegesis. The Prologue considers the four causes of the letter while allegorizing on a verse from Psalm 74. Parallel passages from other parts of Scripture are generously sprinkled throughout the commentary. Since it is a transcription or *reportatio* by Reginald, these quotations are often jotted down without any introductory phrase linking them to the previous thought. Yet the connection is not difficult to perceive in the majority of cases since they merely substantiate or illustrate what preceded.

Aquinas' typically thirteenth century interest in the theological import of the biblical text is evident on every page. Though few in number, similarities to the twelfth century biblical-moral school of exegesis can also be detected. 

Thus, in Lecture 4 of Chapter One he describes how civil elections were performed at his time. A contemporary maxim is quoted in Lecture 6 of Chapter Five when Thomas assures his students that the caution St. Paul was recommending had nothing in common with that advised in the saying "si non caste, tamen caute." An echo of Stephen Langton's concern for reform can be heard in his categorical statement that bishops, the successors of the Apostles, are to leave temporal administration to deacons since their spiritual duties are a full time job (Ch. 4, Lect. 4). The observation must have met with a rather cool reception at the papal court in Orvieto where it was probably made.

Dialectical procedures are well represented. Objections and answers regarding the Apostle's thought are frequent, and in Chapter Five we are told how Paul demonstrated one of his minor (Lect. 3) and major premises (Lect. 5). The general lines of St. Thomas' divisions of the letter to the Ephesians are excellent; they compare well with those given by modern exegetes. 

Their only obvious defect is an excessive precision on every minor detail. 

The following is an outline of the main sections and their more prominent subdivisions as given by St. Thomas. The reader may find it helpful if he gets lost in the course of a lecture.

	Chapter and Verse	Lecture No.
THE GREETING	1:1-2	1
THE NARRATIVE: meant to fortify the Ephesians in good:		
I. By reason of Christ and his blessings	1:3-7	1-2
a. The blessings offered to all men		
b. The unique gifts given the Apostles	1:8-12	3-4
c. The blessings bestowed on the Ephesians	1:15- 16a	6
1. Paul's affection for them has grown		
2. He prays that they be blessed even more	1:16b- 19a	6
d. Christ, the form and exemplar of all blessings:	1:19b- 21	7
1. Especially in his Resurrection and Exaltation		
2. In which he has power over the universe and the Church	1:22-23	8
II. By reason of the Ephesians own past experience	2:1-10	1-3
a. Their sinful state and unmerited justification and salvation in Christ		
b. Their Gentile condition and Christ's goodness	2:11-13	4
1. In making them, with the Jews, one New Man in himself	2:14-18	5

<p>2. Now both share in God's blessings</p>	2:19-22	6
<p>III. By reason of Paul's solicitude for them and the special graces he has received</p> <p>a. The dignity of his mission because of</p> <p>1. His knowledge of divine mysteries</p>	3:3-6	1
<p>2. His part in carrying these mysteries into effect and their astonishing outcome</p>	3:7-12	2-3
<p>b. Paul's trials and his prayer that they remain strong in faith and love</p>	3:13-17	4
<p>c. If they do, a knowledge of divine mysteries will be granted to them also</p>	3:18-20	5
<p>d. A Thanksgiving to God for giving us Christ and the Church</p>	3:21	5
<p>AN EXHORTATION: urging them on to higher goods, especially unity</p> <p>I. An admonition to preserve ecclesial unity</p> <p>a. The admonition itself</p>	4:1-4	1
<p>b. The form of this ecclesial unity:</p> <p>1. That which is common to every member</p>	4:5-6	2
<p>2. What is particular to each individual:</p> <p>a) The source of these different gifts</p>	4:7-11	3-4
<p>b) The fruit of this diversity, Christ's body</p>	4:12-16	4-5

II. How they are to remain in Christian unity		
a. General norms for everyone:	4:17-21	6-7
1. Christ's teaching is contrary to pagan sins		
2. The conditions for knowing Christ's doctrine	4:22-24	7
b. General precepts applicable to everyone:	4:25-5:2	4:8-5:1
1. Avoid spiritual sins and follow Christ's example		
2. Avoid carnal sins; Paul speaks of their punishment and warns against them	5:3-14	2-5
3. Exhortation to newness of life and thanksgiving	5:15-21	6-7
c. Particular precepts for different groups	5:22-33	8-10
1. For husbands and wives, the mystery of Christ and the Church		
2. For children and parents	6:1-4	1
3. For slaves and their masters	6:5-9	2
THE CONCLUSION: indicating by whose power these precepts will be fulfilled:		
I. Trust in God, he will provide spiritual armour for the struggles Christians must undergo	6:10-17	3-4
II. A final prayer, farewells and doxology	6:18-24	5

St., Thomas once symbolized his attitude before the mysteries of God's Word in an allegory on Jacob and the angel. It reveals the paradox of Aquinas, the theologian's insatiable curiosity before mystery and the mystic's profound reverence before the Infinite. Here we glimpse the

restless spirit hidden beneath the unattractive and arid cadences of a school man's language and methods:

The whole night they wrestled, muscles straining, neither yielding; but at daybreak the angel disappeared, apparently leaving the field clear to his adversary. But Jacob then felt a violent pain in his thigh. He was left wounded and limping. It is thus that the theologian grapples with the mystery when God brings him face to face with it. He is taut, like a bent bow, grappling with human language; he struggles like a wrestler; he even seems to win the mastery. But then he feels a weakness, a weakness at once painful and consoling, for to be thus defeated is in fact the proof that his combat was divine. 🗨️

The commentary on Ephesians is one record of such an encounter, with its inevitable shortcomings and its hard-won achievements.

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No critical edition of St. Thomas Aquinas' scriptural commentaries has yet been undertaken. The present translation is based on the Parma edition of his complete works. 🗨️

I have also consulted the Piana edition as it has recently been revised by Raphael Cai, O.P., and noted where it varies significantly from the Parma. 🗨️

Quotations from the Bible and the text of St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians are taken from the Douay-Rheims translation of the Vulgate, except when textual variations or clarity called for a direct translation from Aquinas' version. An asterisk (*) after the verse number indicates these instances. Unless they are introduced by a word or phrase the biblical references are placed in parentheses: since a passage was cited only by book and chapter number, the verse numbers which have been added later are always enclosed in parentheses.

St. Thomas himself censured word for word translations, 🗨️

and the following makes no pretence at being one. At the beginning of each lecture, where the divisions of the text are given, the lack of any system of verse enumeration obliged Aquinas to quote the first few words of each of the passages pertaining to the subdivisions he was making. To avoid needless repetition I have substituted, in parentheses, the chapter and verse numbers of these quotations. The laconic abruptness of Reginald's transcription has been mitigated only to the extent of adding bracketed words or phrases, not found in the original, in order to form a complete sentence or clarify a hazy reference.

Technical Latin words are given in either notes or brackets whenever it seemed advisable to depart from the accustomed way of rendering them in English. At times, the ponderous and repetitive introductory phrases are shortened, for instance, "Concerning which it must be known that. . .," might read "Note that this. . ." Throughout the work my objective has been to produce as accurate and readable a translation as circumstances and ability permit.

The notes provide the references in the pagan, patristic and medieval authors whom St.

Thomas quotes or alludes to in his commentary. In them I have also explained, however briefly and inadequately, some points in Aquinas' teaching which he happens to illustrate or presuppose in the course of a lecture. These range from cosmology and psychology to metaphysics and speculative theology. Further developments of an insight have also been indicated, or how the results of his inquiry compare with those of more recent studies.

In conclusion, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Fathers Charles English, O.C.S.O., and Emmanuel Rodriguez, O.C.S.O., and Brother John Kohlreiser, O.C.S.O., for assisting me with the reference material. I am especially indebted to Father Pierre Conway, O.P., and Mr. Thomas A. Gallagher for their helpful suggestions and encouragement.

Matthew L. Lamb, O.C.S.O.

Abbreviations

- A.C.W. Ancient Christian Writers, edit. J. Quasten and J. C. Plumpe. Westminster, Md.
- A.E.R. *American Ecclesiastical Review*. Washington, D. C.
- A.N.F. Ante-Nicene Fathers. Buffalo and New York.
- C.B.Q. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*. Washington, D. C.
- De Ver. *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, by Thomas Aquinas. Translated by J. V. Mc Glynn, S.J. Chicago, 1953.
- D.T.C. *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*. Paris.
- F.C. The Fathers of the Church. New York.
- Meta. *In Duodecim Libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Expositio*, by Thomas Aquinas. Translated by J. P. Rowan, Chicago, 1961.
- N.P.N.F. The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, ed. by P. Schaff. Buffalo and New York.
- P.G. Patrologia Graeca. Paris.
- P.L. Patrologia Latina. Paris.
- R.S.R. *Revue des sciences religieuses*. Strasbourg and Paris.
- R.T.A.M. *Recherches de thologie ancienne et médiévale*. Louvain.
- S.C. Sources chrétiennes, ed. by H. de Lubac and J. Daniélou. Paris.

S.C.G. Summa Contra Gentiles seu de Veritate Catholicae Fidei, by Thomas Aquinas. New York.

S.D.B. Supplément au dictionnaire de la Bible, ed. L. Pirot. Paris.

S.T. Summa Theologiae, by Thomas Aquinas. New York.

Suppl. Supplementum Tertiae Partis Summae Theologiae, by Thomas Aquinas; extracts from his earlier *Scriptum in IV Libros Sententiarum*.

T.D.N.T. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by G. Kittel and G. W. Bromiley. Michigan and London.

T.S. Theological Studies. Baltimore.