

## The Literal Sense of Scripture in Albert and Aquinas's Eucharistic Theology Some Texts and Analysis

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*Abstract:* Both Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas place value on the literal sense of scripture. This paper compares their teaching and use of the literal sense in Eucharistic texts in regard to 1) their explicit teaching about the senses of Scripture, 2) their understanding of Old Testament Sacrifices, 3) selected passages of systematic Eucharistic theology where the familiarity of bread and wine imagery provides a temptation to overlook Old Testament context, and 4) the interpretation of the Eucharistic discourse in John 6. While their theology of the literal sense is similar, Albert is more influenced by the looser styles of earlier monastic theology, which results in a rich and imaginative but less precise reading than Aquinas.

*Keywords:* Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great, literal sense of Scripture, senses of Scripture, John 6, Eucharist

*Resumen:* Tanto Alberto Magno como Tomás de Aquino valoran el sentido literal de las Escrituras. Este artículo compara su enseñanza y el uso del sentido literal en los textos eucarísticos en lo que respecta a 1) su enseñanza explícita sobre los sentidos de la Escritura, 2) su comprensión de los sacrificios del Antiguo Testamento, 3) pasajes seleccionados de la teología eucarística sistemática en los que la familiaridad de las imágenes del pan y el vino proporciona una tentación de pasar por alto el contexto del Antiguo Testamento, y 4) la interpretación del discurso eucarístico en Juan 6. Aunque su teología del sentido literal es similar, Alberto está más influenciado por los estilos más libres de la teología monástica anterior, lo que da lugar a una lectura rica e imaginativa, pero menos precisa que la del Aquinate.

*Palabras clave:* Tomás de Aquino, Alberto Magno, sentido literal de la Escritura, sentido de la Escritura, Juan 6, eucaristía

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## Introduction and Patristic Backdrop

The Biblical Theology of Thomas Aquinas has been acclaimed for its attention to the literal sense of the text, often along with that of his mentor, Albert the Great. Within discussions about medieval exegesis, Albert and Thomas are often grouped together, even by those who disagree on their precise relation to those who come before them. There are two competing interpretations of the relation of Aquinas's understanding of the literal sense to his earlier predecessors which remain influential. Both of them are complimentary to Aquinas. The first one is found in Beryl Smalley's *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*. Smalley (1952) claims that Albert and Aquinas give a much greater weight to the literal sense than those who came before him (pp. 53-61). The judgment that a new emphasis on the literal sense arises around the time of Aquinas and in which he participates has been affirmed more recently by Mauricio Beuchot in *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics* (2005, pp. 28-30).

Matthew Lamb (1966) links Aquinas's new perspective to his Aristotelianism. Lamb writes that before Aquinas:

Biblical Exegesis 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. (p. 6)

In this reading, the adoption of Aristotle's focus on the sensible world as the starting point for human knowledge encouraged Aquinas to focus more intensely on the realities of the Biblical events themselves. These realities often have a further spiritual meaning, but they themselves are the primary and foundational meaning of the text.

The second perspective is put forward by Henri de Lubac (2000) in his *Medieval Exegesis*. De Lubac claims that most patristic and medieval authors valued the literal sense as the foundation for the spiritual senses (pp. 46-48). He agrees that Albert and Aquinas valued the literal sense, but sees them as in continuity with earlier exegetes. De Lubac reads claims by Origen that some parts of Scripture have no literal sense as a recognition of literary figures of speech in the text, for example, metaphor or hyperbole which cannot be read in a literalistic way (p. 56). He does admit that patristic and medieval authors may sometimes value the spiritual senses more than the literal. They also speak disparagingly of the *letter* of the Old Testament as read apart from its

fulfillment in Christ. This concern for separating the letter of the Old Testament from the spiritual fulfillment in Christ is often focuses on Old Testament sacrifices which cannot be practiced by Christians (p. 60).

Whether Thomas Aquinas is understood as innovative in his appreciation of the literal sense, or as in continuity with the thought that came before him, he offers his readers a consistent appreciation of the literal sense of Scripture. Further, although more Neo-Platonic (especially in his early thought) than Aquinas, Albert can be associated with Aquinas in this positive judgment (De Lubac, 2000, p. 38). Albert was a partner to Aquinas both in sifting the thought of Aristotle and emphasizing the literal sense of Scripture (Smalley, 1952, p. 299). Yet the thought of the two men does vary on interesting points.

This paper will study the interpretation of Scripture in Albert and Aquinas at several points where it intersects with their Eucharistic theology. Eucharistic theology is an area where devotional piety and liturgical practice exert strong pulls on exegesis, making it a fruitful *testing area* in which to investigate areas of strength (or weakness). As they work in this area, Aquinas and Albert explain and use the literal sense in slightly different ways. Albert's Eucharistic piety occasionally leads him away from a rigorous literal reading of a passage. Aquinas generally shows more care and restraint in his understanding of the literal sense in passages connected to sacrifice and the Eucharist.

The comparison of thought of the two Dominicans will move through four stages. The first three are directly concerned with the literal sense in contradistinction to the other senses: 1) A brief consideration of their teaching on the senses of scripture. 2) A consideration of how they handle the literal and spiritual senses of the Old Testament sacrifices. 3) A consideration of Eucharistic texts where strong Eucharistic piety threatens to distort the literal reading. A final stage in this paper will take up the question of the influence of Eucharistic piety on the reading of a text. This section will be: 4) a brief consideration of the structure of chapter 6 of John's Gospel in both authors. In each case we will first examine Albert's thought and then that of Aquinas.

### **Brief Overview of the Literal Sense in Albert and Aquinas**

The division of Scripture into the literal sense and three spiritual senses is ancient. It is found in the writings of Origen, from whom it was adopted by St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and in some form, made its way into the majority of medieval exegetes. It can be understood as a systematization of ways in which Jesus himself uses Scripture. Jesus refers to the actual Old Testament events too many times to count. This would be the literal sense. He points out that

his three days in the tomb were prefigured by Jonah in the whale in Matthew 12:37. This would be the allegorical or typological sense. In John 8:37 he calls upon Abraham as an example of holiness whom his listeners are not emulating. This belongs to the moral or tropological sense. Finally, by referring to heavenly communion as imaged by drinking wine in Matthew 26:29, he seems to indicate an eschatological/anagogical layer of meaning in the Last Supper.

In the writings of Origen, perhaps the most famous proponent of the four senses, the recognition of the spiritual senses is tied to divine authorship of Scripture. While Origen often begins his exegesis by asking about the literal sense, for him, it is the deeper spiritual meanings which testify to the divine origin of the text. For Origen, "to accept only the literal or corporeal sense was tantamount to denying divine inspiration" (Lamb, 1966, p. 7). In his *De Principiis*, Origen famously declared, "everything in Scripture has a spiritual meaning, but not all of it has a literal meaning" (p. 12). According to Lamb, Origen made this claim partly because the events described by the Biblical text were sometimes difficult to interpret, or sometimes seemed to connect unholy things to God. By denying a literal sense of difficult passages, the intelligibility and holiness of the text was preserved. As mentioned earlier, De Lubac gives an alternate interpretation of this quote of Origen, understanding it to teach that certain Biblical expressions should be read as figures of speech.

## Albert

Let us turn then to the theology of Albert the Great. Albert does not find the literal sense to be embarrassing or secondary to the spiritual senses –the unimportant body from which one can move swiftly to the more interesting soul. Rather, his definition of the senses outlines a relationship in which it would be impossible to have a text which did not have a literal sense. In his *Sentences Commentary*, Albert's most important work of systematic theology, written in the 1240's during his time of teaching in Paris, he gives two divisions of the senses of Scripture.

The first is based on the psychology of human knowledge. In this division, the literal sense is known by reflection on what is received by the senses. The spiritual senses are identified with three further interior aspects of knowledge, which go beyond simple apprehension and judgment. The allegorical sense corresponds to the habit of faith which illuminates the intellect to understand the truth given through Christ. The moral sense engages the practical intellect which considers what actions should be done in order

to move towards eternal life. The anagogical engages the intellect insofar as it considers the final goal of eternal life (*Sent.*1.1.5). In this division, the senses of Scripture fulfill the needs of the human mind of a person called to beatitude. It is notable that, as for Albert as an Aristotelian, knowledge primarily comes through the human senses, so the spiritual senses of Scripture depend on the literal (Ashley, 2013, p. 300). It seems that some part of the literal sense would be accessible to a reader without faith, but the three spiritual senses are clearly linked to the dynamism of a mind and will ordered to eternal life through living faith.

The explanation given in Albert's *Summa Theologiae*, a text left unfinished at the end of his life in 1280, is very similar to this first explanation from the *Sentences Commentary*. Albert's language has shifted slightly, so that in his *Summa* he identifies the three spiritual senses with three objects or motions of the intellect and affections rather than directly with three aspects of the intellect. These are the truths of the faith (allegorical), the desire for good works (the moral), and movement towards eternal beatitude (the anagogical). Albert connects these three senses to the good, the true, and the good together with the true respectively. Albert affirms that the three spiritual senses are founded on the literal (*Summa*, 1. tr. 1. q. 5. c. 4. ad 1). This organization suggests that the various senses of Scripture have been given by the wisdom of God to match human need, so that we may be led to eternal life. It fits well with Albert's well-known description of theology as a science *secundum pietatem* –both speculative and practical, but with an emphasis on its practical aspects (*Summa*, 1. tr. 1. q. 2). Albert's philosophy of beauty describes the beautiful as having reference to both the true and the good, so Albert may have the Platonic triad "the good, the true, and the beautiful" in his mind when describing the spiritual senses (Surmanski, 2019, pp. 750-751).

In his second explanation in his *Sentences Commentary*, Albert describes the authorship or efficient causality that brings about the four-fold senses of Scripture. He teaches that the literal or historical sense comes from the intention of the human author. Presumably the author writes about what he has experienced or understood either naturally or through prophetic insight. Albert teaches that the three spiritual senses come from the intention of the Holy Spirit. There is further division: when the Spirit intends that something be shown that has to do with our way on earth, it can either have to do with the truths of the faith (allegorical) or good works (moral). If the intention of the Spirit is to show something that has to do with our heavenly fatherland, it will yield the anagogical sense (*Sent.* 1.1.5).

Like his first, this explanation makes it impossible for there to be a passage with a spiritual sense without a literal sense. The Biblical authors must have intended something when they wrote. Therefore, every part of Scripture for Albert must have a literal sense. This articulation of Albert's theory is unclear on one point: by saying that the literal sense is that intended by the human author, it might seem that Albert is denying that the literal sense is also intended by God. This would not be possible, however, because the spiritual senses are reached through the literal. If the literal sense were not inspired, its words could not yield the spiritual senses. Presumably, Albert wants to include the literal sense under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, while emphasizing the greater connection of the spiritual senses to the power of God. It seems that the human author may not have known or intended the other senses. All human texts can have a literal sense; Scripture is unique in that, because of God's providential ordering of history, it also has spiritual senses.

That Albert understands the human authors to be inspired is affirmed by the fact that Albert teaches that, given divine illumination or prophetic insight, they sometimes prophesied about Christ or other future events in the literal sense. An example would be the Emmanuel prophecy of Isaiah 7:14-17. Here, King Ahaz is promised that his political difficulties will be resolved before the promised child brought forth by the virgin will be old enough to "eat curds and honey" (RSV v. 16). Albert understands the text as a direct prophecy of Christ. Before Christ appears, Ahaz will be given relief (*Super Isaiam* c. 7:14-17).

## Aquinas

Like Albert, Aquinas treats the literal sense as foundational for the other senses. He likewise takes it seriously. Where the literal events are difficult to reconcile with the holiness of God, Aquinas will devote serious attention to the moral questions raised, working through them rather than dismissing them as not literal. For example, Aquinas explains very carefully why it was just and not stealing for God to command the Israelites to take goods from the Egyptians (*ST* II-II 66.5 ad. 1).

The latest systematic work of Aquinas which treats the four senses of Scripture is his *Summa Theologiae* although he also considers the issue at length in his *Quodlibet* 7, and mentions it throughout his biblical commentaries. In contrast to Albert, Aquinas does not distinguish the four senses according to the human mind or to a difference in authorial intention in his *Summa*. Instead, they are founded in the power of God to shape both words and events. Aquinas writes, "The author of Holy Scripture is God, in whom is the power

to signify not only by words (as men can also do) but by things themselves" (ST I 1.10)<sup>1</sup>. Aquinas divides the senses according to whether God signifies by words or by events. The historical or literal sense is that in which the words of Scripture signify realities. The three spiritual senses come about when the events and people indicated by the text signify further realities through God's providential guidance of history. The allegorical sense comes about when things in the Old Testament signify those in the New Testament. In the moral sense, the events of the literal sense teach us how to act. In the allegorical sense, they signify eternal life (ST I 1.10). Christ, to know whom is eternal life, and who teaches us how to live, is the center of all the senses.

There is a difference in scholarly opinion over the significance of human authorial intention in Aquinas's understanding of the senses of scripture. Beuchot highlights it as a prominent element of Aquinas's Biblical exegesis. He links it to Aquinas's care to distinguish the "intention of Aristotle" in his philosophical works (2015, pp. 29-30). John Boyle (2005) argues that when Aquinas speaks about the "intention of the author" in regard to the Scriptures, Albert is referring to the overall purpose of the text (for example, to bring the readers to faith), not the content of a passage (pp. 7-8). In any case, the intention of the human author plays a much more important role in Albert's definition than Aquinas's.

Like Albert, Aquinas does understand the senses as wisely tailored to the human reader. He recognizes that, in leading us to Christ, they offer insight into the truths of faith, and moral example. He is, however, more clearly focused on the metaphysics of signification. Like Albert's explanations, Aquinas's requires every spiritual reading to be grounded in the literal. This is so because the spiritual meanings are not based directly on the text, but are based on the realities discerned in the literal sense. The text enables the readers to come in contact with the truth of people, events and teachings. Then, the spiritual sense it reached through these realities. Aquinas explicitly names God as the primary author of all senses. For Aquinas, the literal sense is also the most important source for doctrine. Aquinas affirms that "No confusion results from Holy Scripture, since all the senses are founded on one, the literal, from which alone arguments can be drawn, and not from those said in allegory" (ST I 1.10 ad 1)<sup>2</sup>. Theological teachings which are signified in the spiri-

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<sup>1</sup> Auctor sacrae Scripturae est Deus, in cuius potestate est ut non solum voces ad significandum accommodet (quod etiam homo facere potest), sed etiam res ipsas.

<sup>2</sup> Nulla confusio sequitur in sacra Scriptura, cum omnes sensus fundentur super unum, scilicet litteralem; ex quo solo potest trahi argumentum, non autem ex his quae secundum allegoriam dicuntur.



tual senses will be expressed more clearly in the literal sense. Aquinas makes an important point here – with the rise of scholastic theology, the *quaestio* had become a significant element in Biblical exposition. By underlining that the literal sense is the only source of argument, Aquinas recognizes its place at the forefront of the systematic study of the Scriptures<sup>3</sup>.

As with Albert, for Aquinas, most Old Testament references have a direct reference to an Old Testament personage, but some Old Testament texts do have Christ alone as their literal meaning; for example, Aquinas reads the Emmanuel prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 in the same way that Albert reads it. Aquinas also, famously reads the sufferings described in Psalm 22:2 as a direct prophecy of Christ<sup>4</sup>.

### Old Testament Sacrifices

The next point of comparison will be Albert's and Aquinas's teaching on the Old Testament sacrifices. Patristic thought emphasized the preparatory nature of these sacrifices, as well as their fulfillment in Christ. Even De Lubac (2000) admits that the Fathers spoke against a "carnal observance" of the Old Testament, a reading which remained at the level of valuing the Old Testament sacrifices as enough for salvation in themselves (p. 55). Here, the Church Fathers followed St. Paul, who, in 2 Corinthians 3:6 taught that "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (NRSV), when teaching that early Christians should follow the law of Christ and not the ritual observances of the law of Moses. The desire to understand the Old Testament rituals as fulfilled in Christ was a leading factor in a development of a rich tradition of commenting on the allegorical meanings of these sacrifices.

### Albert

The received tradition can be seen as a leading factor in Albert's discussion of the Old Testament sacrifices. He enthusiastically refers to Ambrose's judgment on the priority of the Eucharist in the mind of God because it was pre-figured in the sacrifice of Melchizedek (*De corp*, 5.1 referring to Ambrose *De mysteriis* 8).

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<sup>3</sup> For more on the spiritual senses in Aquinas, noting which parts of the Bible can and cannot have the various spiritual senses, see Michael M. Waldstein (1994, pp. 89-92).

<sup>4</sup> For an attempt to include a literal layer of a suffering Old Testament personage who then points to Christ, see Vall (2002).



Albert's own Eucharistic piety led him often to move quickly to an allegorical exegesis in considering the Old Testament rites. Following Albert's general understanding that every part of Scripture has a literal meaning, Albert accepts that there is value to the sacrifices of Mosaic Law, but he does not devote a significant section in any of his major works to the study of the Old Law and its rituals. Albert is more interested in the way that these sacrifices prefigure Christ, his sacrifice and the Eucharist.

In his *De bono*, an early writing on ethics, Albert considers the division of law into four kinds (natural law, the law of Moses, the law of grace and the sinful law of the members) (Anzulewicz, 2013, p. 38). Albert teaches that the Law of Moses is good. It is based in many ways on the natural law. It differs from the natural law both in that moral teachings are more precisely specified in the Mosaic law and because ceremonies were added in the Mosaic law to prefigure Christ more precisely than earlier sacrifices did (*De bono*, tr. 5, q. 2, a. 2). This understanding will continue throughout Albert's works. His teaching on the ceremonial laws consists of a general recognition that the sacrificial system served a valuable purpose in its time, combined with a detailed interest in Christological typology.

For example, in his *Commentary on Isaiah*, Albert reads the Lord's denunciation through the prophet, "When you came before my face, who asked these things from your hands?" as teaching that, while the moral law given to Moses was directly intended by God, the sacrifices were intended because of human weakness. They served to prevent the people from sacrificing to idols (which Albert considers a demonic practice), taught them about Christ's sacrifice, and enabled them to exercise faith and devotion (*Super Isaiam*, c. 1:12). Thus, the ceremonial law prevented sin and supported the practice of the moral precepts underlined in the Mosaic covenant. When Albert details the reasons for the various sacrifices, holocausts, sin offerings, and others, he reads a variety of allegorical pre-figurations of Christ (c. 1:11). Albert says some negative things about the Old Testament sacrifices here, but considering that the text of Isaiah denounces the people for offering useless sacrifices with unjust hearts, Albert's analysis is even-handed.

Albert offers a similar teaching in his *Commentary on the Sentences*. He affirms that the sacrifices of the Old Law were good in their particular circumstances because of the goodness of the action of offering to God (*Sent.* 4.1.8, 12). When informed by charity this expression of gratitude was not only naturally good but even supernaturally meritorious. While Albert shows little interest in the practicalities of Mosaic sacrifice, he does offer a symbolic reading on the literal level to some of the ritual actions. For example, Albert says that in the

holocaust, “the lamb was not burned so that it might be absorbed by the fire, but rather so that by the property of the fire the spiritual heat of devotion might be shown forth” (*Sent.* 4.1. 8.)<sup>5</sup>. This is a pedagogical reading for the time of the people of Israel, who were taught to live their lives in the same fire of devotion to the one God.

Most of the time, however, when Albert examines the details of the Old Testament sacrifices, it is to show how they prefigure Christ, not to explain their inner rationality. The allegorical reading is by far the most prominent reading in Albert’s thought. Nor does he devote a specific section to explaining the meaning of the Old Testament sacrifices, as Aquinas does. In fact, Albert does not go far beyond Lombard’s *Sentences*, which affirm that the Old Testament ceremonies did not themselves justify (4, d. 1 c. 4.), but signified Christ, whose death justified, and were occasions for the expression of faith (4, d. 2. c. 8). Albert’s principles regarding the literal sense accord with those that will be found in Aquinas, but Albert fell far short in trying to understand the details of the Old Testament sacrifices on literal grounds.

## Aquinas

Aquinas has been praised for the literal interpretation he gives to the rites of the Old Law in general and the sacrifices in particular (Lamb, 1966, p. 25). His fullest treatment is found in his *Summa*. Here, Aquinas treats the Old Testament ceremonies under his discussion of Law, considering the Old Law directly after human law and before the New Law (*ST I-II* 101-103).

Like Albert, Aquinas rejects the idea that the Old Law was not good. He understands that it was given by God for a particular people in a particular time in history. Aquinas agrees with his mentor that the Mosaic law affirmed the natural law, while adding certain precepts so as to prepare the people for Christ by leading the people towards holiness (*ST I-II* 98.5 co). Aquinas argues for a double spiritual signification in the Mosaic rites: they pre-figure Christ, but, like the sacraments of the new law, also signify eternal life (*ST I-II* 101.2 co). Aquinas argues that the ceremonial precepts have a very powerful literal purpose, given to them by divine wisdom. (*ST I-II* 102 1, 2). The rites of the Old Law enabled the people of Israel to worship God, helped them avoid idolatry, remember the divine blessings given to them, call to mind God’s excellence,

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<sup>5</sup> Non enim cremabatur ut absorberetur ab igne, sed potius ut proprietate ignis spiritualitas et calor devotionis ostenderetur.

and have appropriate dispositions of mind in different circumstances, such as repentance for sins or gratitude towards God (*ST I-II 102.2 co*).

An example of the literal meaning of specific rites can be seen in Aquinas's discussion of the animals offered in sacrifice. He explains that different animals were offered not merely to represent various qualities of Christ (although this is a dimension), but also because they had characteristics which made them appropriate to be sacrificed by the people of Israel. In some cases this was because of their natural qualities; in other cases it was because of their cultural significance. For example, Aquinas suggests that birds were offered because they were plentiful in the Promised Land and therefore easy to obtain (*ST I-II 102.3 ad 3*). He argues that God asked for sheep and oxen to be sacrificed because they were sacred to the Egyptians, among whom the people of Israel had sojourned for many years. Sacrificing these animals reminded the Israelites that they should not be worshipped (*ST I-II 102.3 ad 2*). Further, Thomas recognized the internal logistics of the Mosaic sacrificial system. Some sacrifices involved the animals being cooked so they could be eaten by the priests who needed to be fed (*ST I-II 102.3 ad 5*). Holocausts, which were entirely burnt up, did not materially sustain the priesthood, but taught that the human person should be wholly devoted to God and that all things are subject to God (*ST I-II 102.3 ad 8*).

On this topic, it is clear that Aquinas has gone further than Albert in his investigation of the literal sense of the Old Testament sacrifices. In addition to a robust typological theology (not explored here) Aquinas shows a deep insight into the wisdom of the system through which the Israelites worshipped God, supported their priesthood and kept their doctrine pure. Albert's exegetical principles and understanding of the value of the Old Law would not have prevented him from making the kind of study which Aquinas did, but neither did interest propel him to ask the questions that Aquinas asked.

### **Use of Old Testament in Eucharistic Theology**

#### **Albert**

Having seen then, that in practice, Aquinas gives more weight to the literal sense of the Old Testament sacrifices than Albert, we can turn our attention to more provocative difficulties in the engagement of Albert's Eucharistic theology with Scriptural citations. In his pastoral work *De corpore domini*, Albert frequently draws on Old Testament passages to explain the meaning of the Eucharist. Sometimes he does this with care, when, for example he compares manna to the Eucharist. In making this comparison, Albert takes his cue

from Christ's words in John 6 where Christ describes himself as bread of life come down from heaven. Following Christ's identification of the manna as a pre-figurement of the Eucharist, Albert combs through the Old Testament for descriptions of manna, collecting all those he can find to illuminate not only manna, but the Eucharist (*De corp.*, 3.1.1). In doing so, Albert acknowledges the manna's place within the history of the people of Israel, examining the relevant verses within their Old Testament context (which is in Exodus and Psalm 78).

Here, Albert uses a technique of scripture commenting on scripture. One version of this technique is the monastic technique of using *hook words* or a chain of related quotations connected by a shared word (Leclercq, 1961, p. 91). Alternately and especially in scholastic exegesis, the connection is made through a related idea (Roszak, 2015, p. 128). At its best, this technique evokes the intellectual, visual and affective content and context of the passages cited. It may support a claim made by the exegete, deepen the affective impact of teaching, or offer deep insight into the text being studied. If a series of verses are cited, they may outline a subtle theological argument.

### De-Contextualized Verses

In Albert's Eucharistic theology, there are places where Albert seems to use Old Testament quotations improperly. Here, Albert seems to pluck Old Testament citations out of their proper context to apply them to the Eucharist. Let us consider two examples.

The first example is from Hosea 7:14. The Biblical text (modified DR) reads "They ruminated over wheat and wine, they departed from me". The prophet Hosea, in the voice of the Lord, denounces the people for their preoccupation with material things. The people are ignoring the worship and just moral demands of the Lord because their satiety has given them a false sense of security. In *De corpore domini*, Albert extracts only the first part of this verse, "They ruminated over wheat and wine". He applies this in a positive sense to meditation on the Eucharist. Albert encourages Christians to imitate the people from the Hosea text, saying that wheat and wine, "should be frequently chewed over in renewed memory in the mouths of all the faithful in the sacrament" (*De corp.*, 3.2.1)<sup>6</sup>. Albert has turned a strict denunciation of gluttonous materialism into an endorsement of prayer. The original context and meaning of the passage is lost.

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<sup>6</sup> Haec enim duo ab omnium fidelium ore ruminanda frequentata memoria sunt in sacramento.

A slightly different example is found in Albert's reading of Lamentations 2:12. This text speaks about children dying of hunger during the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The Biblical text has: "They said to their mothers, 'Where is wheat and wine?' ... when they breathed out their souls". In *De corpore domini*, Albert interpolates the text to read, "Where is the wheat of the body of Christ and the wine of his blood, which sacrament alone is the pledge of eternal salvation?" (3.1.1.)<sup>7</sup>. He comments "They said this to the prelates ... at the time when, made destitute by famine, they were breathing forth their souls without viaticum ... since they had only the figure and not the reality" (3.11.)<sup>8</sup>. Albert begins by acknowledging that this text is about a famine in Old Testament times, but he conflates the literal cry of deadly hunger which is killing the people with a desire for the Eucharist. The literal death of famine *and* the spiritual yearning for the Eucharist are meshed together rather than one seen as the literal sense and the other as a spiritual interpretation of it.

### Old Testament Commentaries

Albert treats both these Hosea and Lamentations verses in his Old Testament commentaries. It is instructive to see how he handles these verses in expositions where he is primarily doing Biblical exegesis instead of teaching Eucharistic theology. In his *Commentary on Hosea*, Albert reads the verse about ruminating over grain and wine this way:

They are full, even to nausea...to so ruminate over is not to eat, since the hungry eat –but rather it signifies that they are so full that they are nauseated by wine and wheat. So the fathers were nauseated by the manna. And so we see the riches of this world glut both clerics and laypeople, who do not give their extra to the poor. (c 7:14)<sup>9</sup>

Here, Albert gives a literal reading –the people are so taken up with wine and wheat that they have stuffed themselves to capacity. They now think fondly of their meal, ruminating over it in a self-satisfied way. Glutted on

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<sup>7</sup> Ubi est triticum corporis Christi, et vinum sanguinis ejus, quod solum sacramentum est pignus salutis aeternae.

<sup>8</sup> Praelatis dixerunt [...] eo tempore, cum ex inedia destituti exhalarent animas suas vitatico carentes [...] quia non nisi figuram habebant et non veritatem.

<sup>9</sup> Repletorum usque ad nauseam [...] ruminare est et non comedere, esurientium autem comedere: et significat, quod ita pleni erant, quod nauseabant super tritico et vino, Sicut et patres eorum nauseabant super mannate. Et sicut videmus divites hujus mundi, clericos et laicos facere, nec tamen superflua pauperibus erogare.

food, they have no concern for the Lord. Building on the literal sense, Albert draws a moral lesson by pointing the finger at the greedy in his own day. This reading is different from the one given in *De corpore domini*. It does not lend itself to a comparison to the Eucharist except perhaps in the mention of the manna (which signifies a spiritual food which the glutton cannot appreciate).

In his *Commentary on Lamentations*, Albert also gives a clear literal reading. He says that the text asking where the wine and wheat are “describes the misery of these miserable people” (*Thren.*, c. 2:12)<sup>10</sup>. Then he gives an allegorical meaning. He compares the *mothers* of the text to *prelates* and says that the children of the Church, “ask for wheat, the refreshment of the word and of grace, and temporal help, and also the Eucharist”<sup>11</sup>. Albert does not conflate the literal and spiritual reading, but builds one on top of the other. Just as the dying people cried out for food in the siege of Jerusalem, so the members of the Church desire the Eucharist. Albert’s reading here uses the same language and imagery as his *De corpore domini* reading but more clearly distinguishes the two levels of the text.

It is important to note that the contradictory de-contextualization which happens in these two examples from *De corpore domini* is rarely found in Albert’s other theological works. The less rigorous, devotional style of *De corpore domini* lends to an imprecision not found often elsewhere. There are places in Albert’s *Sentences Commentary* where he will jump immediately from an Old Testament text to its allegorical New Testament fulfillment, but I have always found that the allegory is in harmony with the Old Testament context. For example, Albert quotes Psalm 78:25 “Man ate the bread of angels” to support the argument that the Eucharist nourishes men spiritually, reading “the bread of angels” directly as the Eucharist (*Sent.* 4.8.1.). Albert assumes that his readers know the literal sense, and can move with him to the spiritual. He does not do violence to the Old Testament context; he simply assumes it.

### Analysis

Having found then that Albert usually has respect for the Old Testament context of texts, how should we understand what happens in the passages put forward from *De corpore domini*? The first observation to make is that Albert’s purposes in *De corpore domini* are to teach Eucharistic theology in a way that arouses devotion. He draws on the Old Testament very

<sup>10</sup> Describit miseriam miserabilium personarum.

<sup>11</sup> Petunt triticum, refectorem verbi et gratiae, et temporalis subsidii, et etiam Eucharistiae.

frequently because of its authority and rich imaginative-affective content. Old Testament exegesis is not his main intention. The genre of *De corpore domini* is, in some places, more similar to the older, monastic style of Biblical exegesis than to a scholastic text<sup>12</sup>. This may be why Albert uses the *hook word* technique more carelessly in this text. The desire to *adorn* his text with Scripture quotes in the style of older monastic literature may be part of the reason for the occasional weakness of his Biblical readings.

Second, in Albert's overall vision, he sees the Christ-event, including the giving of the Eucharist, as at the center of God's revelation. Therefore, everything in the Old Testament has some relation to the Eucharist. So when Albert applies Old Testament references to the Eucharist, he is applying Augustine's axiom that the new is hidden in the old and the old is revealed in the new. He may not be precisely correct in *how* a particular Old Testament passage is related to Christ, but he is interpreting in accordance with his conviction that every passage is connected to Christ in some way. Albert jumps from both Old Testament images to the reality and goodness of the Eucharist. He draws a straight line where, perhaps, a more intricate shape is required, but nevertheless arrives at the target.

Third, I would like to suggest that Albert is not breaking these quotations as free from any Old Testament background as it first appears. He ignores the immediate context, but orients himself within a wider context. For example, when Albert talks about ruminating over wine and wheat as Eucharistic meditation he has truncated the phrase. Unfortunately, Albert has lost the immediate context of the verse, but he does interpret "wheat and wine" in a way consistent with usual meaning of these foods in the Old Testament. Albert is aware that it is very unusual for "wheat and wine" together be something negative. Bread is often used as symbol of strength and of the word of God, and wine of joy (as in Psalm 104). Most often, one in the Old Testament who recalls bread and wine is pondering God's gifts. By doing so he is preparing himself to embrace God's strength and joy –and so is, in a way beginning to be oriented towards the Eucharist. Thus, by connecting "wheat and wine" to the Eucharist, Albert has lost the immediate background of the passage, but has not abandoned awareness of the whole Old Testament context.

In regard to the Lamentations text, I would suggest that Albert has taken a slightly different turn. Here, he has not wandered away from the context,

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<sup>12</sup> See "Introduction" (Surmanski, 2017).



but collapsed the Old Testament and New Testament texts, although again with the wider symbolic value of bread in mind. As seen above, in his Lamentations commentary, Albert also says that the mothers who cannot nourish during the famine signify the prelates of the Church who fail in their teaching and example. Here, Albert gives a clear literal reading and then a clear allegorical reading. According to the Old Testament prophet, those who were suffering in the famine were actually being punished for a rejection of God's justice. Therefore, they are suffering from a spiritual lack as well as a physical one. Albert knows that hunger for bread is used in the Old Testament to express desire for the word of God, which ultimately is given in the Eucharistic Christ. In his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Albert will discuss the desire for God among those in the Old Testament as a general type of spiritual communion (*Sent.* 4.9.2)<sup>13</sup>. Albert does collapse the physical hunger of the famine into spiritual hunger for the Eucharist, but with awareness that in the Old Testament, hunger for bread often does symbolize hunger for God. In the Lamentation text, what has happened is less that Albert has *lost* the immediate Old Testament context, as that he has collapsed it. He may also be thinking the moment of physical death by hunger ought to be a moment of intensified spiritual desire for the food of God's will, hence his reference to viaticum.

## Aquinas

The two quotes just studied in Albert's works are not used by Aquinas in a Eucharistic way. Aquinas has no commentary on Hosea. In his *Commentary on Lamentations*, Aquinas gives a strong literal exposition of the starving children in Lamentations 2:12. He notes that the children sighing for wheat and wine are doubly miserable because their youth means that they can only express their suffering by crying (c. 2, l. 11; c 4, l. 4). Their desire for bread and wine is a natural hunger (c. 2, l. 11). Therefore, we will consider a few other places in Aquinas's theology for the purpose of comparison. We will consider examples from Eucharistic *areas* in both Aquinas's systematic theology and his biblical exegesis.

### *Summa Theologiae*

Aquinas's *Summa* has been described as "a particular pedagogical voice at the service of Scripture" (Waldstein, 1994, p. 75). Biblical citations are an essential element of the *Summa*, giving access to the revelation which the sys-

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<sup>13</sup> See Surmanski (2016, p. 230).

tematic work seeks to probe. Aquinas's *Summa* is like Albert's *Sentences Commentary* in that Aquinas is very deliberate in the use of his Old Testament quotes. He uses them in ways that are in harmony with the Old Testament context. Most often he explains the connection he is making between the Old Testament and the matter at hand, for example, explaining that wine is an appropriate material for the Eucharist because wine gives joy, as we are taught by Psalm 104:15 (*ST* III 74.5 co.). Here the Old Testament teaches us the symbolic value of wine. This symbolic value continues to inform Christians about the sign-value of wine in the sacrament.

There are cases in his *Summa* where Aquinas will immediately apply an Old Testament text to a New Testament reality in an allegorical way without explaining what he is doing. In many of these cases he does it following an authority. For example, in his teaching on the Eucharist Aquinas asks whether angels can receive the Eucharist. In answering this he brings forward an objection from a Biblical Gloss: since Psalm 78:25 speaks about "the bread of angels", angels must be able to receive the sacrament. The direct jump from the manna of the Old Testament to Eucharist was made by the objector of the Gloss (*ST* III 80.2 sc).

In other places, Aquinas immediately applies an Old Testament verse to the Eucharist to support an argument. For example, he will argue that the Eucharist preserves the recipient from sin, acting as spiritual medicine because "bread gives strength to man's heart" (Ps 104:15; *ST* III 79.6). Here, Aquinas assumes that the reader can move from the literal sense to the allegorical and will recognize the Eucharist as signified by the bread in the Psalm. It could be argued that Aquinas is compressing a longer argument which is parallel to what we saw about wine above: The Old Testament teaches us that bread gives strength; bread is used for the matter of the Eucharist; sacraments are signs that effect what they signify and therefore the Eucharist gives spiritual strength.

### **Biblical Commentaries**

Aquinas's Biblical commentaries share many of the characteristics found in Albert's, but there are subtle differences, even in commentaries on the same text. Aquinas's commentaries are too organized and intellectual to be considered monastic literature. He does use the technique of using scripture to comment on scripture, but in a generally precise, scholastic way<sup>14</sup>. For example,

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<sup>14</sup> For a systematic study of the ways in which Aquinas uses citation in his Biblical texts, as well as the phrases most commonly used to introduce them, see Roszak (2015).

commenting on the bread mentioned in the Our Father in Matthew 6:11 as expressing a sharing in God's life, Aquinas uses a set of citations which includes Luke 14:15, "Blessed is he who will eat bread in the kingdom of God" as well as the famous, "Man ate the bread of angels," from Psalm 78:25. This is a short set consisting of two carefully-chosen verses, one from the New Testament and one from the Old. They pinpoint bread as a symbol of the divine life because it is shared in the heavenly kingdom by both men and angels.

One example which illustrates Aquinas's attentiveness to Old Testament context is found in his *Psalm Commentary*. In his commentary on Psalm 4:7-8, Aquinas resists the pull to jump immediately from a mention of grain to the bread of the Eucharist or from wine to the Eucharistic cup. Here, he comments on the verses, "You have given gladness to my heart. By the fruit of their grain, their wine and oil, they are multiplied." These verses exhibit antithetical parallelism; they contrast the joy which God has given to the heart of the Psalmist with the joy which others find in natural goods. The verses are meant to highlight the superiority of the joy given by God over that which merely comes from a good harvest. Aquinas is sensitive to this nuance. He reads the "they" of the second part of the verse as "the wicked" (*In Psalmos*, 4:8). In doing so, he places these texts as part of the larger theme of the book which questions the prosperity of the wicked and finds consolation in God.

### Comparison to Albert

When Aquinas uses scripture to comment on scripture, he uses fewer, more carefully chosen verses than Albert does. An example be seen in a comparison of the two Dominicans' commentaries on Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew is said to be one of the books St. Dominic carried with him when he travelled; it is not surprising that both of these sons of Dominic wrote substantial commentaries on the book, both during their theological maturity. Let us consider Aquinas first: on the various words and phrases of Matthew 6:11, Aquinas quotes 15 passages from other books of Scripture: 8 New Testament passages and 7 Old Testament passages. The quotes make up around 10% of Aquinas's text. In contrast, on the single word "bread" from the same passage, Albert gives 54 Biblical quotes, 17 from the New Testament and 37 from the Old Testament. These quotes from over 25% of Albert's text.

The men handle the placement of the quotes slightly differently as well. Aquinas includes several sentences of his own commentary between his Old Testament quotes. He clarifies and guides the current of his exegesis. A current-day exegete may struggle with what seems to be the "brevity"

of Aquinas's own words, yet, in contrast to Albert, Aquinas offers ample guidance. Albert often only includes a few words of his own before entering another cluster of quotations.

While Aquinas often draws upon a single quote to enhance his own reading of the passage, Albert more often proposes an idea and then makes a significant amount of the commentary by a collection of scriptural quotes. Speaking of Albert's Biblical style, Ignatius Brady notes that Albert sometimes takes to an extreme Bonaventure's insight that "scripture is like a zither," each added passage adds a new harmonious resonance to the others (1953, pp. 212-214.) Albert wants to play chords with sometimes 8 or 10 notes. While still allowing the words of scripture to illuminate the Gospel, Aquinas works with more precision and clarity.

## John 6

The tendency to directly move into a Eucharistic reading as soon as bread is mentioned, which was seen in Albert's *De corpore domini* also influences his reading of the Bread of Life discourse in John 6. This Johannine text is one of the most important scriptural passages on the Eucharist. Comparing how Albert and Aquinas understand this discourse is not an inquiry into the relationship between the literal sense and the spiritual senses of Scripture. Instead, it is an investigation into the literal sense itself: exactly how the exegetes understand the literal sense to teach meaning in this passage. Despite both drawing on several of the same sources and holding very similar understandings of the Eucharist, Albert and Aquinas give surprisingly different readings of this text.

## John Chrysostom

Before studying the two Dominicans, it would be valuable to consider John Chrysostom's reading of the text. In their own commentaries, both Albert and Aquinas extensively reference Chrysostom's homilies on John. This is evident from quotations from Chrysostom found throughout their writings. In these sermons, originally preached at Antioch around 390, Chrysostom gives a dramatically nuanced reading of the bread of life discourse (Goffin, 2000, *Intro, Hom. in Io*, xv). His exegesis divides the discourse into two parts, spread over three sermons, numbers 45 to 47.

For John Chrysostom, the first major idea in the Bread of Life discourse is the Incarnation, through which the spiritual nourishment of the divine life

is brought to humanity. This theme is prominent in Chrysostom's 45<sup>th</sup> sermon on John, which treats John 6:28-40, and in the first part of his 46<sup>th</sup> sermon. Sermon 46 sermon covers vs 41-53, but the theme of the divine life brought to earth through the Incarnation is foremost in his preaching on the verses before verse 51. Commenting on v. 33, Chrysostom identifies the "bread of God... which comes down from heaven" (RSV) as the nourishment offered by faith in Christ's divinity. He writes, "First He spoke of his Godhead in the words: 'I am the Bread of life' (*Hom. in Io.*, p. 452). This understanding of the bread of life continues through the first part of the 46<sup>th</sup> sermon.

Chrysostom identifies a shift in focus in the middle of sermon 46 at vs. 51, at the words "And the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh". Here, Chrysostom understands that Christ begins speaking explicitly of the Eucharist. Recognizing that this is a deep and difficult mystery, Chrysostom notes that "someone might inquire whether this was a good time for him to say these words" (*Hom. in Io.*, p. 466). He explains that, since the people were demanding food, it was right of Christ to point them towards the spiritual food of the Eucharist. The latter part of this sermon considers other Old Testament pre-figurations of the Eucharist, as well as the death of Christ. In his 47<sup>th</sup> sermon, which covers vss. 54-72, Chrysostom dives more deeply into Eucharistic theology and the eternal life which the Eucharist brings.

Chrysostom's set of sermons reads John 6 according to a dynamic trajectory. This trajectory begins with the divinity made available to us in the incarnate Christ, who gives his Body for us in the passion and continues to be available to us through the Eucharist. It is a trajectory of descent bringing the divine life to the world, to the cross and into the liturgy, the original context of these sermons. This dynamic reading helps to show the nature of the Eucharist as a gift coming out of the gift of Christ's life in the Incarnation and passion.

### Contemporary Exegesis

Raymond Brown also reads v. 51 as the turning point of the discourse (1966, pp. 272-281). He divides the Eucharistic discourse into a preface, verses 25-34, and two main sections: a section dominated the theme of wisdom in verses 35-50, and sections focused on the Eucharist in verses 51-19. Brown emphasizes the distinction of the section to the point of speculating that the two main sections were not originally given as a single discourse. He would like to place the second section, with its strong Eucharistic teaching at the Last Supper. Here, it would partially answer the question why John's Gospel has

no institution narrative. Although Brown's desire to situate the second part of the Eucharistic discourse during the Last Supper has no parallel in Chrysostom, he places the turning point of the discourse in the same place.

## Albert

Albert the Great's commentary on the Gospel of John can be read in contrast to John Chrysostom and Raymond Brown. Albert had certainly read Chrysostom's text, and likely had it close by when composing his own. Albert's work is filled with quotations from John Chrysostom, yet he does not follow the trajectory of his reading. In comparison to Chrysostom, Albert's reading is a much *flatter*, less dynamic, and more immediately Eucharistic reading of the literal sense of this discourse.

Albert begins speaking about the Eucharist at the first mention of the bread of life in verse 32, "My Father gives you the true bread from heaven". Like Chrysostom, Albert understands that the Eucharist nourishes spiritually because of Christ's heavenly origin, but he almost immediately goes on to speak of the "bread of the Sacrament" (*Super Iohannem*, 6:32)<sup>15</sup>. Albert agrees with Chrysostom that the sacrament of the Eucharist is life-giving because of the divinity, but he does not read the text as including a gradual development of the subject. By verse 34, Albert has moved into what is essentially a catechesis on various effects and characteristics of the Eucharist. For example, he instructs his listeners that: "the growth given by this bread does not pass away, but endures unto eternal life" (6:34)<sup>16</sup>.

Albert's *divisio textus* of the passage similarly lacks development. He divides the discourse into two parts, both Eucharistic. First Christ teaches his doctrine about the Eucharist. Second, he fends off errors connected to it. Albert will mention the Incarnation, teaching and passion of Christ, as well as the necessity for faith, and various questions related to the interaction of divine and human will in his discussion of this section, but he fails to see a development in the text. These realities are all there together and connected from the beginning. The *flattened* reading of the text of John 6 is matched by the way in which Albert quotes John 6 in *De corpore domini*. Albert uses quotations from the first mention of the bread from heaven to support his theology of the Eucharist.

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<sup>15</sup> Panis Sacramenti.

<sup>16</sup> Panis [...] cujus vegetatio non transit, sed permanet in vitam aeternam

That Albert reads John 6 in a fairly flat way is mildly ironic in light of Albert's overall vision of the Gospel of John. In his introduction to his *Commentary on John*, Albert describes the movement of the Gospel in what is almost an *exitus-reditus* schema. He says that the subject of the Gospel is, the Incarnate Word who came to fulfill "the eternal commands of the Father" and "through the sacraments of the Word to bring man back to the light of the Word and to life" (*Super Io.*, prol.)<sup>17</sup>. His vision includes the downward trajectory which is the outpouring of divine life through Christ's death to the sacraments. Albert sees it in the Gospel as a whole, but does not trace it in the bread of life discourse.

Why is this? It may have stemmed from a pre-conceived sacramental agenda which Albert brought to his text. Albert is convinced that the Gospel is sacramental. Even many current-day scholars recognize the water of the Baptism and the blood of the Eucharist as key ideas in John's Gospel (Brown, 1966, pp. vii, xcvi). Albert goes further. In his prologue, he insists that all seven sacraments are found in the Gospel. The absolution of sins is found in the resurrection of Lazarus, holy orders in the conferring of power to celebrate the sacraments, extreme unction in Mary's anointing of Christ's feet, and a blessing of marriage in the wedding at Cana. Thus Albert begins his Biblical exposition with the sacraments already in mind. His intention to find sacraments in the Gospel may have meant that Albert latched on to the first verse which could be taken as mentioning the Eucharist. It is not that his Eucharistic piety was too great, but it was, perhaps not matched by the discipline to remain with the text as its literal sense moved towards the Eucharist.

Another answer might be that Albert's *Commentary on John* is generally understood to have been compiled from sermons preached to the papal court around 1256, although they may have been redacted later (Schwertner, 1932, p. 92). This means that his intention in the text may not have been to give the best literal interpretation of the movement of the text, but to arouse devotion and to instruct his listeners about the Eucharist. Then, when the text was redacted for publishing as a continuous commentary, Albert did not adjust his reading to follow the movement of the text more closely.

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<sup>17</sup> Ingressus enim Verbi sunt impletio mandatorum aeternorum Patris praedestinantis per Sacramenta Verbi, hominem reducere ad lumen Verbi et vitam.



## Aquinas

In contrast to Albert, Thomas Aquinas follows Chrysostom's trajectory in explaining the Eucharistic discourse in John 6. Aquinas gives a two-part exegesis, which also turns on v. 51. The first theme is the Incarnation, which brings divine wisdom to earth. Aquinas comments on Christ's mention of the bread which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world in v. 33, by saying "Thus Christ, the true bread, gives life to the world by reason of his divinity; and he descends from heaven by reason of his human nature" (*Super Ioannem*, c. 6, l. 4)<sup>18</sup>. The bread which is the Incarnate Christ is also the divine wisdom (Dauphinais, 2000, p. 316). Aquinas will mention the Eucharist when speaking about v. 33 which mentions the "bread of God", but only briefly, and as a further gift of the Incarnation. The majority of the discussion on this section of the discourse concerns the relation of the Son to the Father, the divine life brought to us from the Father and the faith by which we respond.

Aquinas's discussion remains focused on the Incarnation and faith until v. 51 "I am the living bread which came down from Heaven". Aquinas cuts this verse in half, explaining that the expression in 51a "pertained to the power of the Word" but, the second half of the verse and what follows "pertains to communion in his body, that is, the sacrament of the Eucharist (c. 6, l. 5)<sup>19</sup>. It is in the second half of this verse, "the bread that I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh" where he begins to speak about the Eucharist. It is only at this point that Aquinas will give his own Eucharistic catechesis, discussing the species, institution, reality and usefulness of the sacrament. Although this has only been a brief overview of Aquinas's text, it has been enough to show a more careful attentiveness to the dynamic trajectory apparently in the literal sense of the text of John 6.

## Conclusion

Although Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas both value the literal sense of scripture, they define and make use of this sense in slightly different ways. Albert distinguishes the literal and spiritual senses based on authorship

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<sup>18</sup> Christus verus panis, vitam dat mundo ratione suae divinitatis, et descendit de caelo ratione humanae naturae.

<sup>19</sup> Pertinet ad virtutem verbi... quod subdit pertinet ad communionem sui corporis, scilicet ad Eucharistiae sacramentum.

and intention, showing insight into God's wise fulfillment of human need. His connection of the literal sense to the intention of the human author may serve as a connection point to contemporary exegesis, which has great interest in discovering what an author meant by a text. Aquinas takes a more metaphysical approach, focusing on the relationship of words and realities to each other.

In regard to usage, there are many similarities between Albert and Thomas. Both men use the Old Testament to comment on the New. Both understand that Christ is at the heart of Scripture. The differences in usage between the both of them stem more from slight differences in interest than theoretical divergences. Albert's great interest in Eucharistic theology occasionally turns him away from what could be a deeper consideration of the literal sense of Old Testament realities to immediately engage with systematic Eucharistic questions. He prefers to discuss the allegorical value of Old Testament sacrifices rather than ask about their literal meaning. In a few places, he loses the Old Testament context when remembering quotations to express the beauty and value of the Eucharist. Yet his willingness boldly to search the Old Testament for images which connect to the Eucharist adds a certain imaginative color to his exegesis. His *Commentary on John* shines with a deep love of the Eucharist, despite a relatively flat reading of the Eucharistic discourse in John 6.

Aquinas gives a thoughtful reading of the literal rationale of the sacrifices of the Mosaic law, while still offering a robust allegorical reading. He generally uses fewer, more carefully chosen Scriptural citations to enrich his biblical commentaries. While Albert occasionally seems to be including an abundance of texts in order to adorn his exegesis, Aquinas is usually deploying a more careful argument. His exegesis of John 6 reveals the same dynamic Johannine trajectory seen by Chrysostom and Raymond Brown.

The theology of Albert and Thomas is rich and faithful. In their Scriptural theology, both men exhibit a robust sense of the unity of salvation history and a deep, faithful love for the tradition of the Church.

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