

Presentation

Biblical Thomism. Its actuality and approaches

The scholarly interest in Aquinas' theological profile, which had long been rather overshadowed by his philosophical genius, keeps growing. The admiration for the richness of his metaphysical gifts put to a side what was fundamental and crucial for him: the understanding of the Sacred Scripture. When building his synthesis, Saint Thomas does not treat the Word of God as an additional or decorative element for his theological reflection, but as its foundation. For him the Word of God ensures the right theological *ordo*. That is the reason why the past years have seen a notable increase of studies on Aquinas' biblical commentaries, which previously had remained in the shadow of the *Summa theologiae*.

The purpose of the burgeoning number of scholarly studies on Aquinas' biblical commentaries is not merely a *material* one –to pay attention to some neglected texts– but is also *formal*, because through the commentaries we discover a theological method that avoids two extremes, namely restricting oneself to the biblical data or following the path of pure rational reflection. The scholarly studies that belong to this development seek to unite the two elements: rational investigation and Revelation witnessed in the Sacred Scripture.

From this perspective, Biblical Thomism aims to offer an integral proposal. It does not endeavor to recover something lost in a nostalgic way, but to cultivate theology as Saint Thomas understood it—namely as *sacra doctrina*, which is ultimately the art of integrating Scripture, Tradition, and metaphysical reflection, through both analysis and synthesis.

Biblical Thomism –a term coined by Matthew Levering under the inspiration of Servais Pinckaers– embraces a variety of approaches. It reaches from the exploration of biblical themes in the systematic works, and the understanding of the literal and spiritual senses, to the analysis of theological concepts in the biblical commentaries for the purpose of ascertaining the achievements of Aquinas' biblical exegesis within the context of patristic and medieval exegesis. Biblical Thomism thus contributes to the recovery of an image of Aquinas that is truer to what is implied by his standing as a *magister in Sacra Pagina*, the medieval title given to professors of theology.

This issue of *Studium* reflects the various main lines within Biblical Thomism, offering a map for future studies. The reader will find contributions from authors who represent the latest work in the domain of Biblical Thomism.

Piotr Roszak's article introduces the general framework of the relation between exegesis and theology. It indicates the different ways the Sacred Scripture is present in Aquinas' texts. In this light one can understand how Saint Thomas perceives theology itself, keeping a balance between biblical terminology and systematic reflection.

Professor Alarcón's contribution shows that digital humanities, in particular data mining, can be applied to biblical commentaries to great avail. This project is being at present carried out in the Polish edition and translation of Aquinas' commentaries on the *Corpus Paulinum* at the Nicolaus Copernicus University (Toruń, Poland).

Albert Marie Surmanski OP analyzes the issue of the senses of Scripture, comparing Albert the Great's attitude with Aquinas's to show the latter's contribution in the field. In the same line, Ignacio Manresa's article covers the plurality of the literal sense according to Saint Thomas, indicating the need for an adequate theoretical framework –the divine authorship of Sacred Scripture– as a basis for understanding Thomas' concept.

From another angle, but with the same focus on the senses of Scripture, Gilbert Dahan deals with the understanding of the allegorical sense in Saint Thomas. After analyzing Quodl. VII (with attention to Galatians 4), he proposes that the four senses schema does not have as much relevance for Aquinas as does the Augustinian distinction between *res* and *voces*. Aquinas shows some reservations towards allegory. He still uses it, but he often does so by quoting it from other authors and not as his own contribution. All this confirms Aquinas' preference for the literal sense, understood, however, in his own manner rather than necessarily along the lines of today.

Matthew Levering delves into Christology based on references to Joshua as type of Christ. With his characteristic approach, he puts together contemporary theology and a simultaneously systematic and biblical study of Aquinas' work, applied on this occasion to the *Commentaries on the Gospels of John* and *of Matthew* and the *Letter to the Hebrews*. He shows that Aquinas' Christology opens up to a deeper biblical perspective that reveals Aquinas' exegetical style.

David Torrijos focuses his contribution on the *Commentary on the Gospel of John* and on the Word's action in the history of salvation. The Word's

revealing power indicates the centrality of the mediation of Christ, with his humanity functioning as the instrument of his divinity.

Catalina Vial's and Ignacio Serrano's co-authored article compares Luther's and Aquinas' exegeses of Rom 5,5, showing the contrasting ways these two figures treat God's gift: man's passivity in Luther and the transformation of man as a fruit of salvation in Aquinas, which allows the Christian to respond with love to what he has received from God's love.

Focusing on the *Commentary on the Psalms*, the last commentary dictated by Aquinas, Jörgen Vijgen proposes that this work provides the reader with a privileged access to the mind of a Dominican friar in work and prayer. He illustrates his claim by attention to four central areas of the life of a friar of the order of preachers: 1) prayer and liturgy; 2) Christ, Mary and the Church; 3) sin and mercy; and 4) contemplation and preaching.

The scriptural foundation of the systematic works offers an interesting perspective from which to interpret Aquinas' doctrinal teachings. Following this line, Aaron Canty's article analyzes the references to Paul's letters in passages of the *Summa theologiae* dealing with the mysteries of Christ's public life.

The reception and effects of the Eucharist are studied by Shawn Colberg, who compares the approach taken by Aquinas' systematic work with that taken by his biblical commentaries. The relation between Aquinas' two kinds of works is a mutually enriching one. Colberg argues that the three-fold analysis of the Eucharist in the *Summa theologiae* provides the key to Aquinas' interpretation of the relevant biblical passages.

We are grateful for the opportunity to edit this issue of *Studium*, and we hope that by presenting Biblical Thomism from diverse angles, these articles will convey what should be at the heart of understanding Aquinas' theology: his love of and his dedication to the study of Sacred Scripture as expressive of divine Revelation, without which there can be no theology as *sacra doctrina*.

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