

*THOMAS LATINUS - THOMAS GRAECUS*

Ο ΘΩΜΑΣ ΑΚΥΙΝΑΤΗΣ  
ΚΑΙ Η ΠΡΟΣΛΗΨΗ ΤΟΥ ΣΤΟ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΟ

THOMAS AQUINAS  
AND HIS RECEPTION IN BYZANTIUM

ΕΠΙΜΕΛΕΙΑ  
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## ΧΑΙΡΕΤΙΣΜΟΣ

Ἀποτελεῖ στιγμὴ ξεχωριστῆς χαρᾶς γιὰ τὸν Ἅρτο Ζωῆς ἡ ἔκδοση τῶν εἰσηγήσεων τοῦ διεθνοῦς συνεδρίου «Thomas Latinus – Thomas Graecus: Ὁ Θωμάς Ἀκρινάτης καὶ ἡ πρόσληψή του στὸ Βυζάντιο», πού συνδιοργανώθηκε ἀπὸ τὴν Ἐθνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη τῆς Ἑλλάδος, τὸ Πανεπιστήμιο Πατρῶν καὶ τὸ Hellenic Institute τοῦ Royal Holloway τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου τοῦ Λονδίνου. Τὸ συνέδριο πραγματοποιήθηκε στὶς 15-16 Δεκεμβρίου 2017, στὶς νέες τότε ἐγκαταστάσεις τῆς Ἐθνικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης τῆς Ἑλλάδος, στὸ Κέντρο Πολιτισμοῦ Ἰδρυμα Σταῦρος Νιάρχος, καὶ εἶχε γιὰ κύριο σκοπὸ τοῦ νὰ παρουσιάσει ἀναλυτικὰ καὶ νὰ συζητήσει κριτικὰ τὸ ἐρευνητικὸ πρόγραμμα «Thomas de Aquino Byzantinus». Ὁ Ἅρτος Ζωῆς συνδέεται ἀπὸ τὸ 2016 μὲ τὸ πρόγραμμα αὐτό, ὅταν ἡ διετῆς χρηματοδότηση τοῦ προγράμματος ἀπὸ τὸ Ἰδρυμα Σταῦρος Νιάρχος πραγματοποιήθηκε μὲ τὴ διαχειριστικὴ μεσολάβησή του. Στόχος τοῦ προγράμματος εἶναι ἡ κριτικὴ ἔκδοση δεκαῖξι μεταφράσεων ἔργων τοῦ Θωμᾶ πού ἐκπονήθηκαν στὸ ὕστερο Βυζάντιο, καθὼς καὶ πραγματειῶν πού γράφονται τὴν ἴδια ἐποχὴ, ἄλλες ὑπὲρ τοῦ Θωμᾶ, ἄλλες ἐναντίον του καὶ ἄλλες τηρώντας ἐκλεκτικὴ στάση. Τὰ ἔργα αὐτά

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### *Thomas Aquinas' Exegesis and Hermeneutics*

Exegesis and Hermeneutics are two broad fields of studies, and it is not easy to give a concise overall view of Aquinas' thought in these areas. This is because if we talk about Exegesis, the study of the word and grammar of texts, our modern categories for this field of Biblical studies are far removed from those of the Middle Ages and therefore it is necessary to frame correctly the circumstances that conditioned Thomas' exegetical thinking. If we talk about Hermeneutics, which deals with written, verbal and non-verbal communication, this field had still not developed as a separate discipline in Thomas' times and in order to offer a global picture of his understanding of human communication it is necessary to dig out the relevant elements wide and deep throughout his more than a hundred works. I will devote the first part of this paper to Aquinas' work as an exegete, and the second part to his contribution to the part of Hermeneutics related to the study of the Bible.

#### 1. Aquinas as an Exegete

Nowadays we have a very different understanding about the work of an exegete from that which was common in the

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Middle Ages, namely much more lexically and grammatically oriented. Exegetical works left less room for original contributions than theological and philosophical treatises. This has caused Aquinas' contribution to the field of Biblical exegesis to be sometimes neglected in our times, or even dismissed as having little relevance. In addition to that, he had such a massive contribution to Latin systematic theology and medieval philosophy that this has also somewhat shadowed his input in the area of Bible studies.

However, Heinrich Denifle (1844-1905) noted already in 1894 that Thomas' official textbook in his various posts as a teacher was always the Bible.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Sacred Scripture is the most quoted authority in his overall literary production. By way of example, his two *Summae* include 38,000 explicit quotes. 25,000 are from the Bible, 8,000 from Christian authors (most of them Fathers of the Church), and 5,000 are from pagan authors (4,300 of them from Aristotle). This has naturally left a significant trace in his scholarly work, also in the non-exegetical part of it. This was not uncommon in his time, because the study of the Bible was always the starting point for those active in 13th-century Faculties of Theology. Most of the great Latin biblical commentaries of the 13th century are in fact records of the teaching activity of theology masters during their university careers.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For more information on Aquinas' theological sources, see H. Denifle, "Quel livre servait de base à l'enseignement des Maîtres en Théologie dans l'Université de Paris?", *Revue Thomiste* 2 (1894), pp. 129-161.

<sup>2</sup> C. Spicq, *Esquisse d'une histoire de l'exégèse latine au Moyen Âge* (Bibliothèque Thomiste, XXVI), Vrin, Paris 1944, p. 142.

As is well known, someone aspiring to become a master in Theology would begin his career by commenting on the Bible. Among secular masters, this lecturer was called *baccalaureus cursorius* (cursory bachelor); among the mendicant orders he was known as *Biblicus ordinarius*. As *Biblicus ordinarius*, Thomas had to read and comment on one book of the Old Testament and on another from the New Testament throughout the academic year, for two years in a row. As a student, he had already attended these commented biblical readings for six years.

After commenting on the Bible for two years, the hopeful candidate to a professorship became *baccalaureus sententiaris* and spent the next two years reading and commenting on the four Books of *Sentences* by Peter Lombard. This work was the first attempt at a systematic organization of Biblical texts and those of Fathers of the Church and other biblical authorities according to theological topics, and it was the standard Theology textbook at the university from the end of the 12th century until the 16th century.

Finally, the candidate master in Theology proceeded to carry out disputations on theological matters according to a logical-dialectical method in use at the time. This activity of theological disputation was considered the goal and final destination for all those wishing to become established theology masters. As a result of this course of studies, the work of biblical commentators became for most scholars secondary. It was considered a discipline ancillary to theology, usually just an academic requirement to begin a theological career.

But the plan of studies that I briefly described above shows that the foundation for all theological activity was an

extensive and in-depth knowledge of the Bible and of its commentators. Thomas Aquinas is a good example of this. Quotations from the Bible and from authoritative exegetical writers are always present in his disputations. He intersperses them among the various questions to illustrate or support his position in the various matters under discussion, and they can be found in all his systematic theological and philosophical works. A correct interpretation of the biblical text was considered key to solving dogmatic or moral problems, and all the related disciplines in use (grammar, philology, patristics and exegesis) were used in order to elucidate these problems.

## 2. Aquinas' Exegetical Source Texts

In addition to the biblical text, Aquinas' Latin exegetical sources include St Jerome, St Augustine, St Gregory the Great and other Fathers of the Church. From the Greek tradition he often quotes St John Chrysostom, whose works had been partially translated into Latin in the 12th century.<sup>3</sup> Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, the anonymous Greek neo-Platonist theologian who was considered highly authoritative during Thomas' time, also left a deep influence in his understanding of Biblical texts. In addition, Thomas availed himself of other revered Latin exegetes of a more recent past such as those of the school of St Victor.

<sup>3</sup> J. Verger, "L'exégèse de l'Université", in: P. Riché and G. Lobrichon (eds.), *Le Moyen Âge et la Bible*, vol. 4, Beauchesne, Paris 1998, pp. 199-232, at p. 201. Cf. J. T. Muckle, "Greek Works Translated into Greek before 1350", *Mediaeval Studies* 4 (1942), pp. 33-42; 5 (1943), pp. 102-104.

The exegesis of Thomas is in line with that of his contemporaries and with those who preceded him in that he did not attempt to be original, but rather faithful to the canonical interpretations. As Gilbert Dahan has noted, two lines characterize medieval exegesis of the Bible: it falls within a tradition of reception of the divine Word, and it views its reading as an infinite progress. The Fathers of the Church represent the foundation of this exegetical tradition, and they themselves take part in a sacred Scripture tradition which goes beyond the canon of biblical texts.<sup>4</sup>

However, the mention of a canon should be nuanced, because another characteristic of this period's scholarly production was the fact that there was no established canon of Biblical texts. Variations of St Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible, the Vulgate, had proliferated throughout the Middle Ages and were used indistinctly. These variations originated in reading and writing errors introduced by generations of copyists, and by the gradual addition to the body of the biblical text of glosses originally written in the margins of manuscripts. The beginning of the 13th century is marked by an effort to establish a Latin reference text. The University of Paris—at the time the center of learning for the Latin world and home to a significant part of Aquinas' learning and teaching activity—leads the effort with the work of Stephen Langton. Langton organizes the books of the Old Testament for the first time in a way that combines the Hebrew and Greek canons, and divides the text into

<sup>4</sup> G. Dahan, "Les Pères dans l'exégèse médiévale de la Bible", *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 91/1 (2007), pp. 109-127.

regular chapters so as to facilitate cross-references. After that, Thomas Gallus, the last great exegete of the school of St Victor, subdivided the chapters into paragraphs. This edition would be known as the "Bible of the University of Paris" and was widely used in Aquinas' time.<sup>5</sup>

However, the text of the Vulgate that formed the basis for the Bible of the University of Paris was still quite corrupted and this was common knowledge among scholars. Shortly after this first attempt at establishing a canonical text, Dominican exegetes from the convent of St James in Paris began to compose verbal Concordances of the Bible and a *Correctorium*, which put together a number of variants of the Vulgate Latin translation considered preferable to the text of the University of Paris. This had a bearing on Aquinas' exegetical work, because he uses indistinctly the Paris text and the versions included in the Dominican *Correctorium*, and often uses the various readings together without preference, extracting a variety of useful teachings from each one of them.

All this evidence shows that the instruments available to Thomas as an exegete were the various versions of the Latin Vulgate, which he checked against the various *Cor-*

<sup>5</sup> G. Dahan ("Les éditions des commentaires bibliques de saint Thomas d'Aquin. Leur apport à la connaissance du texte de la Bible au XIIIe siècle", *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 89/1 (2005), pp. 9-15) has drawn attention to the remarkable quality of the introductions to the editions of St Thomas' biblical commentaries (on *Job* and *Isaiah*) showing how they can assist us in our knowledge of the 13th century's Vulgate text of common use (the so-called 'Paris text'). He also raises the question of St Thomas' usage of Hugh of St Cher's *Correctorium* and the 'Bible of St Jacques'.

*rectoria*, Concordances and Glosses, with the occasional help of Hebrew and Greek glossaries.

### 3. Aquinas' Exegetical Production

What is the place of exegetical work in Thomas' career? As I mentioned above (p. 122), in addition to profusely quoting the Bible and biblical commentators in his theological works, Aquinas also commented on books of the Bible *cursorie*, as it was customary for master candidates. His Biblical commentaries have reached us in the form of *Expositiones*, which were notes taken by his students that he himself revised for accuracy, and *Reportationes* (transcriptions, usually unrevised). We have his commentaries on four Old Testament books: the first 54 Psalms (*Postilla super "Psalms"*), Job (*Expositio super "Job" ad litteram*), Isaiah (*Expositio super "Isaiam"*), Jeremiah (*Postilla super "Jeremiam"*) (unfinished at his death); and *reportationes* of his commentaries on the Gospels of St Matthew (*Super "Evangelium S. Matthaei" lectura*) and St. John (*Super "Evangelium S. Ioannis" lectura*) and on the Epistles of St. Paul. In addition to these there are two inaugural lectures, one based on a verse from Psalm 103 and another focusing on a division of the books of Scripture. A *postilla* on *Lamentations* (*Postilla super "Threnos"*) was attributed to him, but its authenticity is doubtful. Some early catalogues also include a commentary on the *Song of Songs*, but if he indeed produced one, it is now lost.<sup>6</sup>

Besides these commentaries, Aquinas also produced a

<sup>6</sup> S. Tugwell, *Albert and Thomas. Selected Writings* (The Classics of Western Spirituality), Mahwah, N. J. 1988, p. 248. For instance, such a commentary is mentioned in cod. *Praha, Knihovna metropolitni kapituly* 28 A.XVII.2 (dated ca. 1297), fol. 111r.

*glossa* on the Gospels called *Catena Aurea*. This was a commentary made up entirely of a chain of texts from the four Gospels with quotes from earlier biblical exegetes on each text, particularly Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church. Aquinas included the name of the author quoted and slightly edited the various quotations so that they formed a continuous commentary. Unlike the others, this work was not a result of his teaching activities at the university. He composed it upon request from Pope Urban IV, who wanted to use it in support of his efforts for the reunification of the Eastern and Western Churches.<sup>7</sup>

In spite of this significant exegetical production, there is still a widespread assessment in Thomistic circles that Aquinas was more a theologian or a philosopher than an exegete. If we do a quick search in the *Index Thomisticus* for word count, we see that the three largest portions of the theological part of his Corpus are, in ascending order, Commentaries on Scripture, the required *Commentary on the "Sentences" of Peter Lombard*, and the *Summa Theologiae* which, as Mark D. Jordan has insightfully said, can be considered as a pedagogically motivated re-thinking of the topics of the *Sentences*. Scriptural Commentaries amount to 1,170,000 words (13.5% of the Corpus), the *Commentary on the Sentences* is 1,498,000 words (17.2%), and the *Summa Theologiae* amounts to 1,573,000 words (18.1%). These

<sup>7</sup> The New Testament commentaries and the *Catena Aurea* are available in the Marietti edition. The *Job* and the *Isaiah* commentaries have been published in the Leonine edition (vols. 26 and 28). The rest of the Old Testament commentaries can be found in the Parma and Vivès editions.



three textual blocks make up just about half of Aquinas' entire literary production. The other half is made of his philosophical commentaries, recapitulations, polemics, and letters. His commentaries on Aristotle come to 1,165,000 words (just over 13% of the Corpus).<sup>8</sup>

Christopher Baglow noted that Thomas' exegetical works have often been relegated to the status of secondary works, useful only as doctrinal mines, partly because they are the smaller part of his theological production and partly because most of these works are cursory comments. Many otherwise relevant studies on Aquinas' exegetical writings show lack of appreciation for the organic unity of these works and tend to dismiss their contribution to theological development. Earlier scholars have also manifested disregard for Thomas as an exegete, as we can gather from the fact that the number of extant manuscripts of his works of systematic theology and from his philosophical commentaries is far larger than that of his Biblical commentaries.<sup>9</sup> But lesser number of exegetical works does not necessarily mean lesser contribution.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> M. D. Jordan, "Theology and Philosophy", in: N. Kretzmann and E. Stump (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993, pp. 232-251, at p. 248, note 2.

<sup>9</sup> J. Verger ("L'exégèse de l'Université..."; see *supra*, n. 3) has identified fifty-nine manuscripts of his *Exposition on Job*, thirty-three of that on *John*, and two on the *Lamentations* (probably not authentic), as opposed to hundreds of manuscripts preserved that contain Aquinas' other theological works.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ch. T. Baglow, "Sacred Scripture and Sacred Doctrine in Saint Thomas Aquinas", in: T. Weinandy, D. Keating and J. Yocum (eds.), *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, T. & T. Clark (a Continuum imprint), London 2004, pp. 1-26, at pp. 2-3: "Thomas sees

In fact, it is worth noting that Aquinas' exegetical production spans his entire life, from the beginning of his academic career in 1256 until his death in 1274. This shows that he did not consider biblical commentary as just another academic requirement in his career as was customary among many theology masters. Scholars have acknowledged this fact in recent times, and this has led to renewed attention to Aquinas' exegesis and to more research into the biblical dimensions of the theology of Thomas. Many of them conclude that his biblical exegesis is key to understand his theological thinking.

In Aquinas' mind, Sacred Scripture and theological science are indissolubly intertwined, because theological science proceeds from the articles of the faith, and these are revealed to human beings in the Bible together with everything that is necessary for human salvation. Moreover, theological science is also intrinsically dependent on philosophical thinking because, as he says, "a master who resolves a theological

Sacred Scripture and sacred doctrine as unified, being themselves phases of a broader dynamism of revelation. This dynamism includes both Scripture and later doctrinal formulations in such an interpenetrating way that it seems to defeat any pat analogy, such as the 'acorn and tree' comparison. In Thomas' view Scripture is as incorporative of mature and developed instruction as any later doctrinal formulation or theological understanding; in fact, it even includes theological argumentation. [...] The fact that Thomas moves from articles dealing with issues of sacred doctrine to articles regarding Sacred Scripture without beginning a new *quaestio* may be the most compelling proof of their unity. Even God's knowledge and God's will get distinct *quaestiones* in the *Summa*, yet not so Sacred Scripture and sacred doctrine. Perhaps this is because the distinction between the two is much less important for Thomas than the fact that the two are derivative of the true centre and source of all revelation – the divine Son of God".

question exclusively on the basis of an authority and not on the grounds of rational argumentation makes no contribution to knowledge and sends his audience away empty".<sup>11</sup>

#### 4. Aquinas' Hermeneutical Principles and Methodology

I will now offer some elements of the hermeneutical principles and methodology that guided Thomas in his reading of the biblical text, as going deep into his specific hermeneutical practice would go beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>12</sup>

The Church Fathers had coined the division of the four senses of Scripture as a tool for analyzing the various types of literary texts found in the Bible. By the 13th century it

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones de quolibet* IV, qu. 9, art. 3, Resp.: "Quaedam vero disputatio est magistralis in scholis non ad removendum errorem, sed ad instruendum auditores ut inducantur ad intellectum veritatis quam intendit: et tunc oportet rationibus inniti investigantibus veritatis radicem, et facientibus scire quomodo sit verum quod dicitur: alioquin si nudis auctoritatibus magister quaestionem determinet, certificabitur quidem auditor quod ita est, sed nihil scientiae vel intellectus acquirat et vacuus abscedet".

<sup>12</sup> Christopher Baglow has noted that research in this field of Thomistic scholarship has been hampered by an approach that has often isolated Thomas' exegetical principles and techniques from the in-depth exploration of his actual exegetical practice. Consequently, much of the unique value of Thomas' biblical commentaries has yet to be appreciated. We could say that this dimension of Aquinas' scholarly activity is still uncharted territory for the most part. For more on this perspective, see Ch. T. Baglow, "Modus et Forma": A New Approach to the Exegesis of Saint Thomas Aquinas with an Application to the "Lectura super Epistolam ad Ephesios", Pontificio Istituto Biblico, Rome 2002.

was commonly accepted that Scripture had both a literal or historical sense, and a spiritual one, which could in turn be divided into allegorical (as foreshadowing future events), moral (including some teaching about Christian life), and anagogical (introducing elements related to the afterlife).

The exegesis of Thomas follows this universally accepted categorization, with the peculiarity that he endorses the literal sense of Scripture as foundation for all the others. As we know, this was not his original contribution. St Albert the Great, his master and mentor, had already commented in Paris and Cologne on all the books of the Bible between the years 1240 and 1260 and had firmly asserted the absolute primacy of the literal sense over the uncertainties of allegorical interpretations of the sacred texts. This was also the line among scholars from the school of St Victor.

Up to Thomas' time, most exegetes often used the four Senses of Scripture indistinctly and with no clear criteria beyond their personal preference. He contributes decisively to making sense of this classification in the *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, q. 1, a. 10, where he creates a hierarchy that clarifies the relations among them. He roots this hierarchy in the nature of God and in that of human intellectual power. He asserts that the author of Sacred Scripture is God. Like man, God has the power to accommodate words to a certain meaning. But unlike man, He can also infuse meaning in things, since He is their Creator. Biblical exegesis, therefore, involves finding the exact meaning that God intended for the words and things narrated in the Bible. These things also have a meaning of their own, which in God's plan is the foundation for the others.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, qu. 1, art. 10, Resp.:

According to Aquinas, the meaning of words that signify things belongs to the first sense, which is the literal one. The meaning by which words signify things that in their turn signify or point to other things belongs to the spiritual sense. This sense is founded upon the literal one and presupposes it.<sup>14</sup> For instance, the serpent that Moses put on a staff so that everyone bitten by a snake who looked at it would be cured (literal sense), is a sign of Christ crucified and of the salvific power of the Cross (spiritual allegorical sense).<sup>15</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. Et ideo, cum in omnibus scientiis voces significant, hoc habet proprium ista scientia, quod ipsae res significatae per voces, etiam significant aliquid".

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*: "Illa ergo prima significatio, qua voces significant res, pertinet ad primum sensum, qui est sensus historicus vel litteralis. Illa vero significatio qua res significatae per voces, iterum res alias significant, dicitur sensus spiritualis; qui super litteralem fundatur, et eum supponit".

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Super "Evangelium S. Joannis" lectura* III, 2: "Hic ponit mysterium passionis, cuius virtute baptismus efficaciam habet; Rom. 6:3: 'Quicumque baptizati sumus in Christo Jesu, in morte ipsius baptizati sumus'. Et circa hoc tria facit: primo namque proponit passionis figuram; secundo passionis modum; tertio passionis fructum. Figuram quidem assumit de veteri lege, ut reducat ad intellectum Nicodemum; unde dicit; 'sicut Moyses exaltavit serpentem in deserto' etc., quod quidem habetur Num. 21:5, quoniam Dominus, populo Judaeorum dicenti: 'Nauseat anima nostra super hoc cibo levissimo', in ultionem misit serpentes, et postea concurrente populo ad Moysen et ipso clamante ad Dominum, mandavit Dominus in remedium fieri serpentem aeneum, qui quidem fuit et in remedium contra illos serpentes et in figuram passionis Dominicae. Unde et dicitur: 'in signum posuit eum'". Cf. also Aquinas' *Scriptum super "Sententiis"*, lib. IV, dist. 1, qu. 1, art. 1 qc. 1, arg. 3.

Thomas says that the spiritual sense can be subdivided into three types, because:

1) What is contained in the Old Testament prefigures what is narrated in the New and this is the allegorical sense;

2) Christ's actions narrated in the New Testament are signs of how Christians should behave, and this is the moral sense of the text;

3) What is contained in the New Testament prefigures the future glory of those who will be saved, and this is the anagogical sense (Thomas quotes Dionysius Areopagite in this point).

In Thomas' opinion the intention of the author of Sacred Scripture is always the literal one, but since God's knowledge encompasses everything, it is not contradictory for us to speak about various senses of Sacred Scripture because all the others are contained in the literal sense.<sup>16</sup> Thomas understands Sacred Scripture as a work in progress, in which

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, qu. 1, art. 10, Resp.: "Hic autem sensus spiritualis trifariam dividitur. Sicut enim dicit apostolus, *Ad Hebr.* VII, lex vetus figura est novae legis, et ipsa nova lex, ut dicit Dionysius in *Ecclesiastica hierarchia* (V, 1), est figura futurae gloriae, in nova etiam lege, ea quae in capite sunt gesta, sunt signa eorum quae nos agere debemus. Secundum ergo quod ea quae sunt veteris legis significant ea quae sunt novae legis, est sensus allegoricus; secundum vero quod ea quae in Christo sunt facta vel in his quae Christum significant sunt signa eorum quae nos agere debemus, est sensus moralis; prout vero significant ea quae sunt in aeterna gloria, est sensus anagogicus. Quia vero sensus litteralis est quem auctor intendit, auctor autem sacrae Scripturae Deus est, qui omnia simul suo intellectu comprehendit, non est inconveniens, ut dicit Augustinus *XII Confessionum* (XII, 18-19), si etiam secundum litteralem sensum in una littera Scripturae plures sint sensus".

what comes chronologically after is signified by that which precedes it, and when we understand the full meaning of earlier events in light of subsequent ones we are grasping the earlier events' spiritual meaning.<sup>17</sup>

He also finds a justification for the use of metaphors and for a spiritual reading of the biblical text, explaining that it is a requirement of human nature to start from the knowledge of sensorial things in order to attain knowledge of spiritual ones. As Dionysius Areopagite says, the highest truths are veiled to us and particularly to the unlearned, and it was convenient for the truths that are necessary to salvation to be revealed in a way accessible to all.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, metaphors and corporeal images are far removed from divine realities and they are more convenient for revealing these realities than sublime ones, since they are less likely to induce some into erroneously thinking that these images adequately describe the realities they point to.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones de quolibet*, qu. 6, art. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, qu. 1, art. 9, Resp.: "Respondeo dicendum quod conveniens est sacrae Scripturae divina et spiritualia sub similitudine corporalium tradere. Deus enim omnibus providet secundum quod competit eorum naturae. Est autem naturale homini ut per sensibilia ad intelligibilia veniat, quia omnis nostra cognitio a sensu initium habet. Unde convenienter in sacra Scriptura traduntur nobis spiritualia sub metaphoris corporalium. Et hoc est quod dicit Dionysius, I cap. *Caelestis hierarchiae*, 'impossibile est nobis aliter lucere divinum radium nisi varietate sacrorum velaminum circumvelatum' (I, 2). Convenit etiam sacrae Scripturae, quae communiter omnibus proponitur (secundum illud *Ad Rom. I*; 'sapientibus et insipientibus debitor sum') (Rm. 1:14), ut spiritualia sub similitudinibus corporalium proponantur, ut saltem vel sic rudes eam capiant, qui ad intelligibilia secundum se capienda non sunt idonei".

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, ad 3um: "Sicut docet Dionysius, cap. II *Caelestis hierarchiae*

Thomas adds that acknowledging multiple senses does not mean that we are speaking about equivocal terms, because Scripture's various meanings do not belong to the same word. The various meanings stem from the fact that a thing signified by a word can in its turn be a sign of another thing. But he is adamant in asserting that there is nothing necessary for the faith found in the Bible by way of allegory that has not been expressed also literally.<sup>20</sup>

All this meant that he saw the need to be familiar with Hebrew and Greek words. However, he was never trained

(II, 2), magis est conveniens quod divina in Scripturis tradantur sub figuris vilium corporum quam corporum nobilium. Et hoc propter tria. Primo, quia per hoc magis liberatur humanus animus ab errore. Manifestum enim apparet quod haec secundum proprietatem non dicuntur de divinis, quod posset esse dubium, si sub figuris nobilium corporum describerentur divina; maxime apud illos qui nihil aliud a corporibus nobilium excogitare noverunt. Secundo, quia hic modus convenientior est cognitioni quam de Deo habemus in hac vita; magis enim manifestatur nobis de ipso quid non est, quam quid est, et ideo similitudines illarum rerum quae magis elongantur a Deo veriore nobis faciunt aestimationem quod sit supra illud quod de Deo dicimus vel cogitamus. Tertio, quia per huiusmodi divina magis occultantur indignis".

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, qu. 1, art. 10, ad 1um: "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod multiplicitas horum sensuum non facit aequivocationem aut aliam speciem multiplicatis, quia, sicut jam dictum est, sensus isti non multiplicantur propter hoc quod una vox multa significet, sed quia ipsae res significatae per voces aliarum rerum possunt esse signa. Et ita etiam nulla confusio sequitur in sacra Scriptura, cum omnes sensus fundentur super unum, scilicet litteralem [...]. Non tamen ex hoc aliquid deperit sacrae Scripturae, quia nihil sub spirituali sensu continetur fidei necessarium, quod Scriptura per litteralem sensum alicubi manifeste non tradat".

in biblical languages. In this period, it was common for scholars to learn the original languages of the Bible for apologetic reasons, particularly for discussions with the Jews and in the context of ecumenical dialogue with the Eastern Churches. Aquinas was not directly involved in any of these in a significant way and he had to rely on the work of other scholars for his grammatical and philological analysis of the texts. For instance, he ordered extensive translations from Greek Fathers and from the Greek biblical text for his *Catena Aurea*.

Overall, his works include little textual critique. When he refers to the original Greek or Hebrew he usually introduces these variations with the expression "secundum aliam litteram", or "ut habetur in graeco". However, he is remarkably attentive to verifying the quotations of the Old Testament that are found in the New, and seems to be aware that St Paul was quoting the Old Testament according to the Septuagint.<sup>21</sup>

Aquinas shows a good instinct for choosing the most reasonable interpretations by earlier authors when they identify faulty translations from the Greek in the Vulgate, as is the case with Origen, who noted that *praedestinatus* was a bad translation of "ὁρισθέντος" (Rom. 1:4). Thomas agrees with him that the word should have been translated as *destinatus*.<sup>22</sup> He often chooses the readings of Greek

<sup>21</sup> Cf. C. Spicq, *Esquisse d'une histoire...* (see *supra*, n. 2), p. 199.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Super "Epistolam ad Romanos"* I, 3: "Propter hoc igitur Origenes dicit quod littera non debet esse: 'qui praedestinatus est', sed: 'qui destinatus est filius Dei in virtute', ut nulla antecessio designetur. Et secundum hoc planus est sensus; quia

exegetes over those of Latin ones, acknowledging their better knowledge of the source text, and he quotes St John Chrysostom most among them.<sup>23</sup> All in all, Aquinas' exegetical endeavors seem to have been directed towards clarifying the interpretations of the Fathers and of other authoritative sources, justifying them according to reason, and protecting them from the abuse of allegory.

So far I have focused on Aquinas' approach to the Bible from a textual perspective. I will now sketch some ideas about his understanding of the way communication takes place in the context of Revelation, and will attempt to show the Aristotelian background of Aquinas' Hermeneutics.

### 5. Aquinas' Theory of Signs

Augustine asserts at the beginning of the *De Doctrina Christiana* that all instruction is either about things or about signs.<sup>24</sup> Peter Lombard had structured his Four Books of Sentences around this principle, and Thomas attributes

Christus destinatus, id est, missus est a Deo Patre in mundum, tamquam verus filius Dei in virtute divina. Sed quia communiter omnes libri Latini habent 'qui praedestinatus', aliter alii hoc exponere voluerunt secundum consuetudinem Scripturae". See also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, qu. 24, art. 1 Resp.

<sup>23</sup> E.g., when he comments on the various readings of Joh. 1:3 caused by changes in punctuation: "Quia apud Graecos Chrysostomus est tantae auctoritatis in suis expositionibus, quod ubi ipse aliquid exposuit in sacra Scriptura, nullam aliam expositionem admittant; ideo in omnibus libris graecis invenitur sic punctatum, sicut punctat Chrysostomus, scilicet hoc modo: 'Sine ipso factum est nihil quod factum est'" (cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Super "Evangelium S. Joannis"* I, 2).

<sup>24</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *De Doctrina Christiana* I, ch. 2.

great importance to it. He uses this principle to explain that –unlike other disciplines– theological science draws knowledge from everything that God has revealed, which includes things (such as events) and words. Both events and words are endowed with meaning, and it is upon the exegete to find it and interpret it.

When Thomas explains the opening passage of the Prologue of St John, “In the beginning was the Word”, he asks what a word is and quotes (in Latin) Aristotle, who had written in the *De Interpretatione*: “Ἔστι μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παθημάτων σύμβολα, καὶ τὰ γραφόμενα τῶν ἐν τῇ φωνῇ. Καὶ ὡσπερ οὐδὲ γράμματα πᾶσι τὰ αὐτά, οὐδὲ φωναὶ αἱ αὐταί· ὧν μέντοι ταῦτα σημεῖα πρώτως, ταῦτα πᾶσι παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς, καὶ ὧν ταῦτα ὁμοιώματα, πράγματα ἤδη ταῦτά.”<sup>25</sup> By “words”, Thomas says, we mean not only their physical expression in voice or in writing, but their meaning as well. This leads him to an extensive reflection on the “inner word”, the formation of which he describes as the *terminus* of the intellectual operation.<sup>26</sup> Spoken words and their written expression are signs of this inner word. In the case of the words of Scripture,

<sup>25</sup> Aristotle, *De Interpretatione* 1, 16a3-8. R. A. Markus (“St. Augustine on Signs”, *Phronesis* 2/1, 1957, pp. 60-83; reprinted in: R. A. Markus (ed.), *Augustine. A Collection of Critical Essays*, Garden City, New York 1972, pp. 61-91 and in: R. A. Markus, *Sacred and Secular: Studies on Augustine and Late Christianity*, Variorum Collected Studies Series 465, Aldershot 1994, Part XIV) suggests that in defining words as σύμβολα, Aristotle may have been concerned with avoiding the term σημεῖον because he was using the latter as a technical word in his discussion of inference.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Super “S. Ioannis Evangelium” lectura* I, 1.

understanding their literal meaning and their spiritual one is the first step for acknowledging and accepting the tenets of the Faith, which are the foundation of theological science and of Christian life as a whole. The interpretation of any text involves therefore analyzing propositions, because the interpretation of language is the interpretation of thought.<sup>27</sup> All of Aquinas' biblical hermeneutics is based on this principle.<sup>28</sup>

According to Aristotle, understanding takes place by apprehending the speaker's intention.<sup>29</sup> Since God is the Author of Sacred Scripture, Aquinas explains, and the biblical text is about God communicating with human beings through words and actions, understanding this text's

<sup>27</sup> Cf. T. F. Torrance, “Scientific Hermeneutics according to St. Thomas Aquinas”, *Journal of Theological Studies* 13/2 (1962), pp. 259-289, at p. 260.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Ch. T. Baglow, “Sacred Scripture and Sacred Doctrine...”, p. 4: “Thomas' epistemology offers us, at least in part, the rationale for this position. In understanding, the thing understood itself comes to the present in the one understanding, not simply its conceptual representation. Therefore, narratives of encounters and events demand a response from the believer, since they are now part of the believer's understanding. To doctrinalize is simply part-and-parcel of a response to the encounter with God that reading Scripture entails, a response that, when correct, bears the authority of Scripture itself, ‘since the whole science of Scripture/sacred doctrine is contained virtually in its principles’ (‘cum tota scientia virtute contineatur in principiis’). Cf. also L. J. Elders, “Aquinas on Holy Scripture as the Medium of Divine Revelation”, in: L. J. Elders (ed.), *La doctrine de la révélation divine de saint Thomas d'Aquin. Actes du Symposium sur la pensée de saint Thomas d'Aquin tenu à Rolduc, les 4 et 5 novembre 1989* (Studi tomistici, 37), Pontificia Accademia di S. Tommaso - Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 1990, pp. 132-152, at p. 135.

<sup>29</sup> Aristotle, *De Interpretatione* 1, 16b20-21.

literal sense in single sentences and also as a whole is essential, because all of it and all its parts are signs of God's thoughts and convey God's intentions for mankind.<sup>30</sup> The words and actions expressed in the Bible are signs of God, just as human words and actions are signs of the thoughts and intentions of the one who produces them.

But what is a sign? As Aristotle defines it, "οὐ γὰρ ὄντος ἔστιν ἢ οὐ γενομένου πρότερον ἢ ὕστερον γέγονε τὸ πρᾶγμα, τοῦτο σημεῖόν ἐστι τοῦ γεγονέναι ἢ εἶναι" – that is, "That which coexists with something else, or before or after whose happening something else has happened, is a sign of that something's having happened or being".<sup>31</sup> This definition sets signs apart from any other gnoseological notion, because no other thing involves in its being the being of something else, and no other created being seems to transcend time as sign does.<sup>32</sup>

As pointed above, words always have a literal meaning, naturally understood by man, even when it is possible to discover in them a spiritual meaning too. In the case of things or events narrated in the Bible, Aquinas attributes to God the capacity and the will to endow them with a meaning that is not merely external or conventional, because

<sup>30</sup> Ch. T. Baglow, "Sacred Scripture..." (see *supra*, n. 10), pp. 4-5.

<sup>31</sup> Aristotle, *Prior Analytics* II, 27, 70a7-10; tr. H. Tredennick, in: *Aristotle in Twenty-Three Volumes*, vol. I, Harvard University Press: London, Cambridge (Mass.) 1967, p. 525.

<sup>32</sup> Aristotle did not elaborate on the peculiar nature of signs and does not seem to have noticed the consequences that this unique notion has for understanding the category of relation, but discussing this matter would lead us too far from the purpose of this study.

God can make this meaning become one with the thing. By God's will, the thing becomes a sign pointing to transcendental realities that are essential for salvation, and it is up to men to discover the sign and its meaning. These truths are otherwise inaccessible to mankind's natural knowledge and that is why signs are essential for the biblical narrative.

For Thomas, the paradigm of what God can do by endowing something with meaning are the Sacraments, because –by God's power– each one not only signifies something but brings about literally what it signifies.<sup>33</sup> But in Aquinas' view signs are not confined to the supernatural realm; they pervade the human intellectual capacity and the whole creation. Human beings are immersed in a network of signs and use them for expressing themselves and for relating to the environment they live in.

To sum up, Thomas Aquinas was a son of his time in everything related to the means for carrying out biblical exegesis and strived to defend the established interpretations of Scripture from possible abuses, out of respect for the tradition and of a sense of service to the Church's inspired

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIIa, qu. 55, art. 5, Resp.: "Christus non probavit discipulis suam resurrectionem per argumenta. Probavit autem eis resurrectionem suam per auctoritatem sacrae Scripturae, quae est fidei fundamentum, cum dixit; 'oportet impleri omnia quae scripta sunt in lege et Psalmis et prophetis de me', ut habetur *Luc. ult.* (*Lc. 24:44*). Si autem accipiatur secundo modo 'argumentum', sic Christus dicitur suam resurrectionem argumentis declarasse, in quantum per quaedam evidentissima signa se vere resurrexisse ostendit. Unde et in Graeco, ubi nos habemus 'in multis argumentis' (*Act. 1:3*), loco argumenti ponitur 'tekmerium', quod est signum evidens ad probandum".

Word. However, he made the most out of the exegetical sources at hand and contributed decisively to systematizing the traditional analytical scheme of the four Senses of Scripture, including the literal and the spiritual, allegorical, moral and anagogical senses. In addition, he was among the first to discover the value of Aristotle's theory of knowledge for explaining the channels through which God communicates with rational creatures through the revealed text, by respecting the natural human processes of truth apprehension. He also identified the relevance of signs in the process of human communication and examined their peculiar nature in various parts of his works. Research in this last aspect of Thomistic teaching is still in its initial stages, and it has the potential to uncover new perspectives of Aquinas' contribution to philosophical and theological thought, and to deepen our understanding of the inner connection of these two disciplines in Thomas' epistemology.

#### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Mercedes Rubio

#### *Ἐξήγηση τῆς Γραφῆς καί Ἑρμηνευτική στόν Θωμά Ἀκρινάτη*

**Ἡ** Ἐξηγητική ἐστιάζει στό γράμμα καί τή γραμματική τῶν κειμένων, ἐνῶ ἡ Ἑρμηνευτική περιλαμβάνει τή γραπτή, τήν προφορική καί τή μή λεκτική ἐπικοινωνία. Ἡ μελέτη αὐτή ἀποτελεῖ μιά συνοπτική ἐπισκόπηση τοῦ

ἐξηγητικοῦ ἔργου τοῦ Θωμᾶ Ἀκρινάτη καί τῆς συμβολῆς του στήν ἐρμηνευτική τῶν βιβλικῶν κειμένων.

Καθώς ἐπιχειρεῖ κανεῖς νά ἀποτιμήσει τή συμβολή τοῦ Θωμᾶ σέ αὐτό τό πεδίο, πρέπει νά λάβει ὑπ' ὄψιν ὅτι ἡ σκέψη του προσδιορίστηκε σέ μεγάλο βαθμό ἀπό τίς συνθήκες τῆς ἐποχῆς του, οἱ ὁποῖες ἀπέχουν πάρα πολύ ἀπό τόν τρόπο μέ τόν ὁποῖο νοοῦμε ἐμεῖς σήμερα τήν Ἐξηγητική καί τήν Ἑρμηνευτική. Κατά τό δεύτερο μισό τοῦ 13ου αἰώνα, ὁποῖος ἐπιθυμοῦσε νά γίνει καθηγητής Θεολογίας ἔπρεπε νά παρακολουθήσει γιά τέσσερα χρόνια παραδόσεις πάνω στή Βίβλο, οἱ ὁποῖες περιλάμβαναν σχολιασμένη ἀνάγνωση τοῦ ἱεροῦ κειμένου, καί μετά νά σχολιάσει ὁ ἴδιος τήν Παλαιά καί τήν Καινή Διαθήκη γιά δύο χρόνια. Ἡ διαδικασία αὐτή ἔχει ἀφήσει ὁρατά τά σημάδια της στά σχετικά ἔργα τοῦ Θωμᾶ. Ἐκτός δέ ἀπό τή μελέτη τῆς Βίβλου ὡς προαπαιτούμενο γιά τή σταδιοδρομία του ὡς καθηγητῆ Θεολογίας, ὁ Θωμάς χρησιμοποιοῦσε τή Βίβλο ὡς βασικό ἐργαλεῖο καθ' ὅλη τή διάρκεια τῆς ζωῆς του, εἴτε δίδασκε θέματα θεολογικά εἴτε θέματα φιλοσοφικά. Αὐτό τό μαρτυρεῖ τό γεγονός ὅτι στό ἔργο του ἐν ὄλῳ ἡ Βίβλος εἶναι ἡ *auctoritas* πού χρησιμοποιεῖται περισσότερο ἀπό κάθε ἄλλη, μέ δεύτερη τούς πῖό γνωστούς τήν ἐποχή ἐκείνη Ἑλληνας καί Λατίνους ὑπομνηματιστές της, κυρίως Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας.

Τό ἐξηγητικό ἔργο τοῦ Θωμᾶ χαρακτηρίζεται ἐπίσης ἀπό τό γεγονός ὅτι τήν ἐποχή ἐκείνη δέν ὑπῆρχε ἓνας συγκεκριμένος κανόνας ἀγίας Γραφῆς. Ἡ Βουλγάτα, ἡ λατινική μετάφραση πού ὀφείλεται σέ μεγάλο βαθμό στόν Ἱερώνυμο, κυκλοφοροῦσε σέ διάφορες παραλλαγές, λόγω ἀναγνωστικῶν καί ἀντιγραφικῶν σφαλμάτων πού εἶχαν σωρεύσει γενιές καί γενιές γραφέων, ἀλλά καί



λόγω τῆς σταδιακῆς ἐνσωμάτωσης σχολίων (πού στήν ἀρχή γράφονταν στό περιθώριο) (*glossae*) τοῦ βιβλικοῦ κειμένου. Οἱ λόγιοι τῆς ἐποχῆς γνώριζαν τό πρόβλημα καί προσπαθοῦσαν νά συγκροτήσουν διορθωμένες ἐκδόσεις τῆς Βίβλου, βασιζόμενοι περισσότερο στό ἑβραϊκό καί τό ἑλληνικό κείμενο. Παρ' ὅλα αὐτά, δέν εἶχε ἐπιτευχθεῖ ὁμοφωνία γιά τό ποιό εἶναι τό κανονικό λατινικό κείμενο. Ἔτσι, ὁ Θωμάς χρησιμοποιοῦσε διάφορες παραλλαγές τοῦ βιβλικοῦ κειμένου ἀποδεκτές στήν ἐποχή του, καί ἐν συνεχείᾳ τίς ἀντέβαλλε μέ ἑβραϊκά καί ἑλληνικά γλωσσάρια καί τίς συνέκρινε μέ τίς ἐρμηνεῖες Ἑλλήνων καί Λατίνων Πατέρων τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ἀντλώντας ἀπό αὐτούς ὅ,τι θεωροῦσε ὀρθότερο καί χρήσιμο.

Παραδοσιακά, ὁ Θωμάς ἐκτιμᾶται περισσότερο ὡς θεολόγος καί φιλόσοφος παρά ὡς ἐξηγητής. Σέ αὐτό συνέβαλε μεταξύ ἄλλων τό γεγονός ὅτι τά ἐξηγητικά του ἔργα ἀποτελοῦν ἓνα συγκριτικά μικρό μέρος τῆς ὅλης συγγραφικῆς του παραγωγῆς, καθώς καί τό ὅτι τά περισσότερα ἀπό τά ἔργα αὐτά παρακολουθοῦν τό ἐκάστοτε σχολιαζόμενο βιβλικό κείμενο ἀπό κοντά, ἐξηγώντας το ἐδάφιο πρὸς ἐδάφιο, ὅπως συνηθίζοταν στήν ἐποχή του, πρακτική ἢ ὁποῖα ἄφηγε ἐξ ἀντικειμένου λιγότερα περιθώρια γιά πρωτότυπη συμβολή ἀπό ὅσο οἱ πιά συστηματικές θεολογικές καί φιλοσοφικές πραγματεῖες. Ὡστόσο, ἡ πρόσφατη ἔρευνα ἔδειξε ὅτι ἡ μελέτη τῆς Βίβλου ἔπαιξε κομβικό ρόλο στό σύνολο τοῦ ἔργου τοῦ Θωμᾶ, παρατηρεῖται δέ σήμερα μιά αὔξηση τοῦ ἐνδιαφέροντος τῶν μελετητῶν γιά τά βιβλικά Ὑπομνήματά του, τά ὁποῖα μέχρι σήμερα ἀποτελοῦσαν τά λιγότερο γνωστά ἔργα του.

Οἱ ἐρμηνευτικές ἀρχές πού ἀκολουθεῖ ὁ Θωμάς καθὼς μελετᾶ τό βιβλικό κείμενο συνίστανται στήν ἀναζήτηση

τῶν τεσσάρων εἰδῶν νοήματος τῆς Γραφῆς, τά ὁποῖα εἶχαν καθιερώσει οἱ Πατέρες τῆς Ἐκκλησίας: α) κυριολεκτικό (ἢ ἱστορικό) καί β) πνευματικό, τό ὁποῖο συνήθως διακρινόταν σέ: i) ἀλληγορικό, ii) ἠθικό καί iii) ἀναγωγικό. Ὁ Θωμάς ὑποστηρίζει ὅτι τό κυριολεκτικό νόημα ἀποτελεῖ τό θεμέλιο γιά ὅλα τά ἄλλα, μέ βάση τό ἐπιχείρημα ὅτι τά πράγματα ἀποτελοῦν φορεῖς νοήματος καθ' ἑαυτά, νοήματος πού τοὺς ἔχει δώσει ὁ Θεός ὡς δημιουργός τους, ἀλλά καί πρόσθετου νοήματος, δηλαδή νοήματος πού ὁ Θεός μπορεῖ νά τοὺς δώσει ἐκ τῶν ὑστέρων, προκειμένου νά μᾶς διδάξει ἀλήθειες ὑψηλότερες. Ἐρμηνεύω, λοιπόν, τό κείμενο τῆς Βίβλου σημαίνει κατανοῶ τά ἱστορικά γεγονότα, ἀλλά καί τήν πρόθεση τοῦ Θεοῦ πού ἐνυπάρχει σέ αὐτά ὅπως μᾶς τά γνωστοποιεῖ ἢ βιβλική διήγηση.

Μέσω αὐτῆς τῆς προσέγγισης ὁ Ἀκυινάτης ἐπιχειρεῖ νά προασπίσει τίς καθιερωμένες ἐρμηνεῖες Γραφικῶν χωρίων ἀπέναντι σέ παραχρήσεις ὑπομνηματιστῶν ἐπιρρεπῶν σέ ἀλληγορικές ἐξηγήσεις, οἱ ὁποῖες συχνά ὀδηγοῦσαν πολύ μακριά ἀπό τό γράμμα τοῦ θεόπνευστου κειμένου καί ἀπό τίς διδασκαλίες πού ὄντως περιέχονται σέ αὐτό.

Ὁ Θωμάς προσεγγίζει τήν ἀγία Γραφή ὡς ἔργο ἐν ἐξελίξει: αὐτό πού ἔπεται χρονολογικῶς «σημαίνεται» ἀπό αὐτό πού προηγεῖται, πράγμα πού σημαίνει πῶς, ἂν κατανοήσουμε τό πλήρες νόημα αὐτοῦ πού προηγεῖται ὑπό τό φῶς αὐτοῦ πού ἔπεται, θά συλλάβουμε τό «πνευματικό» νόημα αὐτῶν πού προηγοῦνται.

Ὅσον ἀφορᾷ στή χρήση τῶν μεταφορῶν, οἱ ὁποῖες μποροῦν νά ἀποβοῦν προβληματικές ὅταν ἀναφέρονται στόν Θεό καί τά θεῖα ἐν γένει, ὁ Θωμάς ἐξηγεῖ τήν ὑπαρξή τους λέγοντας ὅτι εἶναι ἢ ἴδια ἢ ἀνθρώπινη φύση πού ἔχει ἀνάγκη νά ξεκινᾷ ἀπό τή γνώση τῶν αἰσθητῶν

πραγμάτων προκειμένου να μπορέσει να φτάσει στη γνώση των πνευματικών. Οι μεταφορές και οι σωματικές εικόνες απέχουν πολύ από τη θεία πραγματικότητα· εντούτοις είναι πιο κατάλληλες για να τήν εκφράσουν από όσο εικόνες ανώτερες, διότι αυτές, ακριβώς επειδή είναι κατώτερες, δεν υπάρχει περίπτωση να κάνει κάποιος τό λάθος να τις εκλάβει ως επαρκείς αποδόσεις της πραγματικότητας στην οποία αναφέρονται.

Μία από τις αρχές της θωμικής προσέγγισης του βιβλικού κειμένου είναι η θέση του Αύγουστίνου στο κλασικό του έργο *De doctrina christiana* (I, 2) ότι κάθε διδασκαλία αφορά ή σε πράγματα ή σε σημεία. Ο Θωμάς χρησιμοποιεί αυτή την αρχή, για να δείξει ότι η θεολογική επιστήμη συνάγει γνώση από όλα όσα μᾶς έχει αποκαλύψει ο Θεός: τόσο από πράγματα (όπως γεγονότα) όσο και από λόγια. Γεγονότα και λόγια είναι φορείς νοήματος, και η δουλειά του εξηγητή είναι να βρει αυτό τό νόημα και να τό έρμηνεύσει.

Ο Άκβινάτης, προκειμένου να δείξει τόν τρόπο μέ τόν οποίο συλλαμβάνουν οι άνθρωποι τις ανώτερες αλήθειες, αναπτύσσει μιά θεωρία περί «σημείων». Πρός τούτο υιοθετεί κομβικά στοιχεία του *Περί έρμηνείας* και των *Αναλυτικών προτέρων* του Άριστοτέλη, τά όποια, μαζί μέ τήν παραπάνω αρχή του Αύγουστίνου, αποτελούν τή βάση της βιβλικής έρμηνευτικής του.

Στήν αρχή του *Περί έρμηνείας* ο Άριστοτέλης λέει: «Έστι μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παθημάτων σύμβολα, καί τὰ γραφόμενα τῶν ἐν τῇ φωνῇ» (16a3-4). «Φωνή» ἐδῶ δέν σημαίνει μόνο τόν ἦχο ἢ τή γραπτή μορφή μιᾶς λέξης, ἀλλά καί τό νόημά της. Πρίν ἀπό τόν ἦχο καί τή γραπτή μορφή, ὑπάρχει ὁ ἔνδον λόγος, πού

είναι ὁ σκοπός τῆς διανοητικῆς λειτουργίας· ὁ ἦχος καί ἡ γραπτή μορφή εἶναι ἀπλῶς τά ἐξωτερικά σημεῖα τοῦ ἔνδον λόγου. Στήν περίπτωση τῶν λόγων τοῦ ἱεροῦ κειμένου, ἡ κατανόηση τοῦ γράμματός του καί τοῦ πνεύματός του ἀποτελεῖ προϋπόθεση γιά νά κατανοήσει καί νά δεχθεῖ κανείς τό περιεχόμενο τῆς πίστεως, πράγμα πού εἶναι μέ τή σειρά του τό θεμέλιο τῆς θεολογικῆς ἐπιστήμης καί τῆς χριστιανικῆς ζωῆς ἐν γενεῖ. Ἔτσι, ἐρμηνεύω τή βιβλική γλώσσα σημαίνει ἐρμηνεύω αὐτό πού σκέφτεται καί θέλει ὁ Θεός γιά τόν ἄνθρωπο.

Ἀπό τά Ἀναλυτικά πρότερα, τώρα, ὁ Θωμάς υιοθετεῖ τόν ἀριστοτελικό ὀρισμό τοῦ σημείου: «Οὐ γάρ ὄντος ἔστιν ἢ οὐ γενομένου πρότερον ἢ ὕστερον γέγονε τό πρᾶγμα, τοῦτο σημεῖόν ἐστι τοῦ γεγονέναι ἢ εἶναι» («αὐτό πού, ἔταν ὑπάρχει τό ἴδιο, ὑπάρχει καί κάτι ἄλλο, ἢ αὐτό πρίν ἢ μετά τήν ὑπαρξή τοῦ ὁποίου ὑπάρχει καί κάτι ἄλλο, αὐτό εἶναι σημείο τοῦ ὅτι ὑπῆρξε ἢ ὅτι ὑπάρχει καί κάτι ἄλλο» (70a6-9). Ὁ Θωμάς ἀποδίδει στόν Θεό τήν ἰκανότητα καί τή θέληση νά καθιστᾶ τά λόγια καί τά γεγονότα «σημεῖα», προκίζοντάς τα μέ νόημα πού ὑπερβαίνει τήν κυριολεξία, προκειμένου νά φανερώσει αλήθειες ανώτερες, οἱ ὁποῖες εἶναι ἀναγκαῖες γιά τή σωτηρία μας. Τίς αλήθειες αὐτές ὁ ἄνθρωπος δέν μπορεῖ νά τις βρεῖ μέ τίς δικές του δυνάμεις, καί γι' αὐτό ἀκριβῶς τά «σημεῖα» αὐτά ἔχουν μεγάλη ἀξία μέσα στή βιβλική διήγηση.

Μέ τό ἐξηγητικό καί ἐρμηνευτικό του ἔργο ὁ Άκβινάτης προσπάθησε νά ὑπερασπίσει τίς καθιερωμένες ἐρμηνείες τῆς Γραφῆς ἀπέναντι σέ αὐθαίρετες ἀλληγορήσεις, δεχόμενος τήν προτεραιότητα τοῦ γράμματος τῆς Γραφῆς. Ἐπιπρόσθετα, ἐφάρμοσε στοιχεία τῆς ἀριστοτελικῆς γνωσιολογίας καί φιλοσοφίας τῆς γλώσσας σέ αὐτό τό

γόνιμο έδαφος και συνέθεσε μιά θεωρία περί σημείων ή όποία ύπερβαίνει τά εύρήματα του Άριστοτέλη. Αυτό τό πεδίο έρευνας είναι ακόμα σε αρχικά στάδια και ύπόσχεται πολλά, τόσο από φιλοσοφική άποψη όσο και από θεολογική.

## B' ΜΕΡΟΣ

## PART II

THOMAS DE AQUINO BYZANTINUS