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What Place Does Scripture Have in Thomas Aquinas's Reasoning?¹

Abstract: This paper emphasises the coexistence of biblical theology and systematic theology in the works of Thomas Aquinas. For this purpose, it draws on the study of biblical Thomism. It then shows how the Bible is linked to theological speculation in the opening questions of the Theological Summa, in which the author characterises the *sacra doctrina*. Aquinas's *modus operandi* in his discussion with adversaries who do not recognise the authority of Scripture, as well as his apology for the authority of *sacra Scriptura*, is then presented. A sample polemic with Christians conducted on the basis of inspired texts is demonstrated further on. The paper closes with conclusions regarding the place and function of Scripture in Thomas's argumentation, which depend firstly on the addressees of Thomas's works and secondly on the types of statements made by the Angelic Doctor.

Keywords: Thomas Aquinas, justification of faith, *De rationibus fidei*, place of Scripture in argumentation, biblical Thomism, *sacra doctrina*

Gilbert Keith Chesterton once wrote that there must have been something “many-sided about Christ if so many smaller Christs can be carved out of him.”² *Toutes proportions gardées*, something similar could also be said about the multi-sidedness of St Thomas Aquinas, which meant that many smaller Thomases could be carved out of him: a philosopher, theologian, exegete. The one who for a long time “seems to be known only for his philosophy,” is nevertheless “also first and foremost a theologian, a commentator on Sacred Scripture, an attentive student of the Fathers of the Church,

¹ Translated from Polish by Maciej Górnicki.

² Chesterton, *Everlasting Man*, 240 (Chesterton, *Wiekuiasty człowiek*, 310).

and a man concerned about the spiritual and pastoral repercussions of his teaching,” writes Jean-Pierre Torrell in the preface to a book on Thomas.³ Perhaps scholars of Aquinas’s legacy found it difficult to “get a mind on the scale of Thomas’s into your head,”⁴ which is why they have not been able to see his broad, also biblical, horizons. Denys Turner hints at the need for a way “of getting your mind into his, wherein yours has room to expand and grow, and explore the worlds his contains.”⁵ That non-Christians might regard Thomas primarily as a philosopher can still be understood; but from his co-believers, as Bruce D. Marshall has astutely pointed out, Aquinas “would expect to be interested most of all in his theology, since it deals with truths they also accept”⁶ (as will become clear in the course of the article when I show Thomas’s method of discussion based on shared beliefs).

In the present article, published to commemorate the 800th anniversary of Thomas’s birth (AD 1224 or 1225), the exploration of these Thomasian worlds is intended to lead to an answer to the question contained in the title. In order not to “re-discover America,” it is necessary to first draw on the conclusions reached by scholars from the so-called school of biblical Thomism. I will do so in the first section by emphasising the co-existence of the two poles, biblical and systematic,⁷ in the work of Thomas Aquinas. I will then refer to the example of this link between the Bible and theology that Aquinas – *magister in sacra pagina* – provided at the beginning of the *Summa Theologica*, in the “methodological prolegomenon,”⁸ where he explained the need for *sacra doctrina* and characterised it. In the second section, I will show the indispensability of divine revelation, also in those matters that remain cognisable by reason. This will be necessary in order to understand the *modus operandi*

³ Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas, I, Spiritual Master* (Torrell, *Święty Tomasz*, 7).

⁴ Turner, *Thomas Aquinas* (Turner, *Tomasz z Akwinu*, 12).

⁵ Turner, *Thomas Aquinas* (Turner, *Tomasz z Akwinu*, 12).

⁶ Marshall, “Aquinas as Scriptural Theologian,” 90.

⁷ As regards the study of the role of Scripture in Thomas’s theological argumentation, still unrivalled is the publication: Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*. I will discuss the author’s main conclusions in the third point of section one.

⁸ Cf. Williams, *The Ground of Union*, 39.

of the Universal Doctor outlined in the third section in the discussion with those adversaries who do not recognise the authority of Scripture. The content of the final section will be the exemplary apologia made by the Dominican based on Scripture in his polemic against Christians who do not recognise the doctrine of Purgatory.

1. The Biblical and Speculative Poles in the Work of St Thomas

In addressing the issue of the importance of Scripture in the argumentation of Thomas Aquinas, it is necessary first to pay tribute to biblical Thomism, which, as Tracey Rowland writes, has given due attention to the importance of the study of Scripture and the Church Fathers in Thomas's theological output.⁹ Amidst the research of many scholars who have done a *ressourcement* and uncovered Thomas as a theologian and exegete, the work of the Polish representative of biblical Thomism, Piotr Roszak, in particular, proves helpful in highlighting the connection between the Angelic Doctor's argumentation and Scripture, which is important for the issue addressed in this article. Although Thomas distributes the emphasis differently, Scripture plays a fundamental role not only in biblical commentaries but also in theological *Summae*.

1.1. The Biblical Foundation in the Catena of Thomas's Thought

Robert Woźniak notes that the golden age of medieval thought (the thirteenth century) emphasised integrity and synthesis, and among the methodological premises adopted at the time, the theologian points above all to a scriptural foundation. Reliable biblical studies preceded the emergence of the great systematic treatises of scholasticism, in which argument from Scripture formed the core of the reasoning. Systematic works cannot be understood without biblical commentaries. Woźniak considers the second

⁹ Cf. Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith*, 26–27, 149. Cf. also Roszak, “Text, Method, or Goal?,” 2; Roszak, “Tomizm biblijny,” 121, n. 10; Hütter – Levering, *Ressourcement Thomism*; Berkman – Steven Titus, *Pinckaers Reader*.

element of the scholastic method to be the critical dialogue with the theological tradition, with authorities. In this way, the scholastics, on the one hand, maintained the continuity of the interpretation of the faith and, on the other hand, far from having a “museum mentality,” made it deeper, more precise and up to date.¹⁰ Scholastic “dogmatics is both traditional and innovative,” writes Woźniak.¹¹ In the third place, the Polish dogmatist mentions the use of reason, especially philosophical reason, related to this “innovativeness” in order to deepen the understanding of the message of the sacred texts.¹²

According to Piotr Roszak, biblical Thomism constitutes more than “a project to recover the biblical dimension of Aquinas’s theology,” it also wants to reach “a method of practising *sacra doctrina* in which biblical rootedness proves crucial.”¹³ To draw attention to Thomas’s *modus operandi* is at the same time to draw attention to what he contemplated, and thus to the revelation-attesting Scripture as the source of Thomas’s thought.¹⁴ What is important, the *Doctor communis* read Scripture in the current of Tradition¹⁵ and in creative dialogue with the Fathers of the Church, to whom he sometimes contrasted his own exegesis. The *auctoritas* of the Fathers was connected with the fact that for him they were participants

¹⁰ Cf. Woźniak, *Praca nad dogmatem*, 156–158.

¹¹ Woźniak, *Praca nad dogmatem*, 158. On the lasting tension between *traditio* and *progressio* in theology, cf. Roszak, *Odkupiciel i Przyjaciel*, 137.

¹² Cf. Woźniak, *Praca nad dogmatem*, 158.

¹³ Roszak, “Tomizm biblijny,” 119, 121. Ultimately, it is about contemporary *sacra doctrina*, about “getting out of a situation where biblical scholars do not do theology, deprecating the extra-scriptural cognitive context, and theologians build their syntheses in abstraction from the Bible.” – Roszak, “Tomizm biblijny,” 121. Cf. Roszak, “Text, Method, or Goal?,” 2.

¹⁴ Cf. Roszak, “Text, Method, or Goal?,” 9. On the relationship of revelation and Scripture in Aquinas, cf. Roszak, “Revelation and Scripture.” Cf. also the chapter “Revelation” in Nichols, *Discovering Aquinas*, 21–36, as well as the chapter “Revelatio and *Sacra doctrina*” in Persson, *Sacra doctrina*, 19–90.

¹⁵ Cf. Blankenhorn, “Locating a Theology,” 60–61.

in the transmission of Tradition, and a certain model for practising theology.¹⁶

Roszak writes that, in Thomas's view, *sacra doctrina* constitutes a "link" that remains in life-giving contact with other branches of knowledge. Theology was not a queen that, isolated from the rest, spun unrealistic meditations, but was one that "subordinated" other discourses, incorporating invoked earlier authorities into the questions being constructed.¹⁷ The Polish theologian calls this the logic of catena (from Latin *catena*), a chain in which each link plays its part on the way to truth.¹⁸ This means that Thomas's arguments should be seen as successive links in this chain, which, even if not in each individual link, as a whole will be significantly linked to Scripture, either in the *sacra doctrina* itself or through a closer or further connection with it.

Roszak focused his attention on one more important point. Thomas's method of "integrating" everything within a single theological culture is an expression of rejecting the temptation of a deistic understanding of revelation, reducing it to merely past events.¹⁹ Referring back to later thought, one could speak of an emphasis being placed not only on the "only once" (Gr. *ephapax*) of revelation related

¹⁶ Cf. Torrell, *Wprowadzenie*, 210; Roszak, "Tomizm biblijny," 123, 127. Cf. also Roszak, "Text, Method, or Goal?," 5: "Thomas does not consider the Church Fathers to be a separate source in relation to Scripture; instead, he believes that their works make possible a correct understanding of the biblical text," which is to result "from the presence of the same Spirit who fills the hagiographers and the Fathers, acting upon both intellect and will, although the inspiration is obviously different in the two cases."

¹⁷ Roszak, "Tomizm biblijny," 122.

¹⁸ Cf. Roszak, "Tomizm biblijny," 122; Roszak, *Odkupiciel i Przyjaciel*, 138. Cf. also an interesting transposition of this superiority of theology to a more contemporary context is made by Woźniak, who writes about one multilevel ordering of the truth about the world, which can be perceived from various levels of existence (ontological thinking) and degrees of complication (categories of the exact sciences). Arriving at a more complete knowledge of the world presupposes movements of ordering and hierarchisation, and it is only in this sense that one can speak of the superiority of theology without disregarding the scientific perspective (mutual service of theology and the detailed sciences) – cf. Woźniak, *Praca nad dogmatem*, 138–140.

¹⁹ Cf. Roszak, "Text, Method, or Goal?," 5, 9.

to the historical salvific-revelatory events and their witness in the inspired writings, but also on the continuity of revelation, which, if it is to remain the same, must be received and expressed again and again.²⁰ This conclusion may prove important for the appreciation of the actualising [i.e. making it relevant] dimension of exegesis, especially in an age of the historical-critical method that examines past texts and leaves them in the past, with the resultant problem of how to read their message in a way applicable for the present.²¹ St Thomas would rather propose a path of actualisation already in exegesis itself.²² Marie-Dominique Chenu recalled that the mastery of the *sacra pagina* involved preaching, that is, the transmission of a message. This is why exegesis, dogmatics and pastoral theology were linked, since the understanding of the Gospel is fully realised in no other way than by participating in the currently present action of the Word. Within this Word received in faith, theology is born and develops, hence *Doctor Angelicus* teaches on the basis of biblical

²⁰ Joseph Ratzinger pointed out this issue – cf. Zatwardnicki, *Od teologii objawienia*, 210–227. This topic is also taken up by me in Zatwardnicki, *Chrystologiczne*.

²¹ Cf. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu*, 123. The Pontifical Biblical Commission stresses that the purpose of exegesis is to clarify the meaning of the biblical text as the actual word of God – cf. Pontifical Biblical Commission, *Interpretation*, III, C, 1. Cf. also: Roszak, *Odkupiciel i Przyjaciel*, 43, 127.

²² For Aquinas, speculative theology belongs to and flows from exegesis – cf. Levering, *Pismo Święte i metafizyka*, 307. But what about philosophy, which Thomas does not hesitate to use in biblical exegesis? In this regard, see the interesting remark made by Brevard Childs in his publication: *Biblical Theology*, 41–42: “[...] Thomas has been largely dismissed by biblical theologians because of his consistent use of Aristotle’s philosophical categories. It is unlikely that any modern biblical scholar would be tempted to imitate Thomas’s appropriation of Aristotle. Yet the basic hermeneutical issue at stake turns on the fact that no modern biblical theologian can function without some other conceptual framework. Much of the modern search for the recovery of only internal biblical categories has been extremely naive. Rather the crucial hermeneutical issue turns on how well one can hear and understand the biblical witness even through the time-conditioned human categories which each interpreter has inherited or adopted. A study of Thomas is invaluable in seeing to what extent the author was able to adjust his philosophical perspective to the uniquely biblical message and in the process, cause his own alien categories actually to serve toward the illumination of the biblical text” (Piotr Roszak turned my attention to this fragment).

texts, and his *Theological Summa* is a living emanation of which the *sacra pagina* is the source.²³

In the fundamentally biblical speculative theology, and even in the biblical commentaries themselves, it is no coincidence that philosophical problems and terminology are also found in Thomas. Philosophy is not a “foreign body” in exegesis. Thanks to metaphysical concepts, as Roszak believes, the biblical message gains a universalist dimension and exegesis acquires an academic character. Metaphysics also constitutes “a warning against the conceptual idolatry of biblical language.”²⁴ It can therefore be said that the Universal Doctor performs an inculturation of faith into the academic world of the time.²⁵

1.2. The Meaning of the Terms *Sacra Pagina* and *Sacra Doctrina*

As Janusz Pyda emphasises, *sacra doctrina* is “a concept broader in scope than that of *sacra pagina*, or exegesis of Scripture, although it is in Scripture that the fundamental and most essential expression of *sacra doctrina* is to be found.”²⁶ Matthew Levering states that the basis of sacred doctrine is the truth of God himself (*Veritas*

²³ Cf. Chenu, *Święty Tomasz*, 37.

²⁴ Cf. Roszak, “Text, Method, or Goal?” 4. Cf. Levering, *Pismo Święte i metafizyka*, 19: “Metaphysical analysis sustains the believer’s ability to express, both within Scripture and in Christian theologies that interpret Scripture as a channel of divine Revelation, the Holy Trinity’s radical and mysterious presence.” In his monograph, Levering questions “the alleged opposition between metaphysical analysis and scriptural exegesis,” and analyses, “how Aquinas’s use of metaphysics illumines the meaning of scriptural revelation” – cf. Levering, *Pismo Święte i metafizyka*, 25. Levering, moreover, also writes that intellectual inquiry in the search for an understanding of faith are to “dispel intellectual idolatry” (Levering, *Pismo Święte i metafizyka*, 80), and “Aquinas places metaphysics in service of God’s command to Israel to avoid all forms of idolatry” (Levering, *Pismo Święte i metafizyka*, 276).

²⁵ Both John Paul II and his successor pointed out that one aspect of inculturation of the faith in a world that values scientific research is exegetical knowledge standing at a sufficiently high level – cf. John Paul II, “Discorso” (23.04.1993), no. 16; Benedict XVI, “Address to the Participants.”

²⁶ Pyda, “Współczesne reminiscencje,” 27. The author defines *sacra pagina* as knowledge based “primarily on the reading, analysis, commentary and preaching

Prima), the *articuli fidei* and the canonical Scriptures as the three modes of one revelation through which God teaches true doctrine.²⁷ The *sacra pagina*, however, departs from today's understanding of exegesis, for Thomas's commentaries on Scripture themselves are already the fruit of an approach to the text structured according to the scholastic method.²⁸ *Sacra doctrina*, on the other hand, is a much richer term than the modern concept of theology, as Jean-Pierre Torrell, among others, has pointed out. From the point of view of the object of study, it refers to the entire corpus of Christian doctrine, from Scripture to theology, while from the point of view of the activity of teaching, *sacra doctrina* encompasses all acts that make Christian truth accessible to man: from revelation through Tradition, the teaching of the Church to the teaching of theology in its polymorphous service to God (commentaries on Scripture, theological *summae*, minor works, etc.).²⁹

In other words: reflective theology served the same intention as positive theology, and biblical theology alone could not achieve the goal that speculative theology helped it to achieve. A rational reading of the word of God makes it possible to fathom it, to discover the connections between the various elements and to build

of the Bible" – Pyda, "Współczesne reminiscencje," 18. On the relationship between *Sacra doctrina* and *Sacra Scriptura*, see Persson, *Sacra doctrina*, 71–90.

²⁷ Cf. Levering, *Pismo Święte i metafizyka*, 70. Cf. Levering, *Pismo Święte i metafizyka*, 50: "Scripture's meaning cannot be conveyed solely by more stories in addition to the stories of Scripture." The importance of canonical Scripture for sacred doctrine is demonstrated by the fact that the holy Doctor sometimes treats the two terms, *sacra doctrina* and *sacra scriptura*, interchangeably in some respects (but they cannot be considered synonymous) – cf. Martin, "Sacra Doctrina," 93–94; Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 9.

²⁸ Roszak sees this as the result of Aquinas's adoption of a scientific understanding of theology – cf. Roszak, "Text, Method, or Goal?," 7.

²⁹ Cf. Torrell, *Święty Tomasz*, 11–13. Cf. also Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 8–10; Pyda, "Współczesne reminiscencje," 27, and a valuable observation of Turner: "[...] some scholar ought to make the case in full some day that pretty much the whole of Thomas's theology could be taught from a fourth completely different genre of writing, his *Reportatio* on the Gospel of John" – Turner, *Tomasz z Akwinu*, 39.

a synthesis, thus revealing unity in the sequence of events.³⁰ St Thomas thus links what is revealed with systematic reflection, and the *sacra doctrina* is the junction between the Bible and science, since the task of the theologian is to express biblical truth in an academic way.³¹

For Thomas Aquinas, the *sacra doctrina*, although it deals with various issues (including those belonging to philosophy), constitutes one knowledge because of one formal object. The sacred doctrine sees everything from the point of view of God as the beginning and purpose of all creation, and the source of the revelation of all truths.³² As Torrell writes, the Angelic Doctor makes use of the distinction between the object and the subject of science (Latin *subiectum*, meaning the “substratum” of what can be known about personal being, not in the sense of the subjective centre of consciousness). The object of science is the conclusions that science arrives at in relation to its subject, so the object has an instrumental function in relation to the goal of knowledge.³³ In sacred science God Himself is the subject,³⁴ and *sacra doctrina* is a kind of reflection of divine knowledge,³⁵ insofar as in the intellect the structure of reality is

³⁰ Cf. Roszak, “Text, Method, or Goal?,” 3–4. Cf. also Chenu, *Święty Tomasz*, 170.

³¹ Cf. Roszak, “Text, Method, or Goal?,” 2, 4.

³² Cf. *STh* I, q. 1, a. 3, resp. as well as ad. 1 and ad. 2; *STh* I, q. 1, a. 4, resp.; *STh* I, q. 1, a. 7, ad. 2; Turner, *Tomasz z Akwinu*, 126–127. The theologian considers creatures differently from the philosopher, in a different aspect and by virtue of different principles – cf. *ScG*, lib. 2, cap. 4 (Polish ed.: *Summa contra gentiles*, 265–266 [further on page numbers refer to this edition]).

³³ Cf. Torrell, *Święty Tomasz*, 22 (together with note no. 25) and 23.

³⁴ Cf. *STh* I, q. 1, a. 7, resp.; Torrell, *Święty Tomasz*, 22.

³⁵ “So that in this way, sacred doctrine is, as it were, the stamp of the divine science, which is one and simple yet extends to all things (*ut sic sacra doctrina sit velut quaedam impressio divinae scientiae, quae est una et simplex omnium*)” (*STh* I, q. 1, a. 3, ad. 2), “as God, by one and the same science, knows both Himself and His works (*sicut et Deus eadem scientia se cognoscit, et ea quae facit*)” (*STh* I, q. 1, a. 4, resp.). All quotations from *opera omnia* of Thomas Aquinas are given after the website: <https://aquinas.cc>. Cf. also Martin, “Sacra Doctrina,” 87; International Theological Commission, *Theology Today*, no. 67.

reconstructed according to the *ordinatio aggregatio* of the concepts of existing things.³⁶ As Levering explains:

[...] Aquinas recognizes that *sacra doctrina* involves human knowing (created participation in divine Wisdom) that has been supernaturally elevated to participate far more deeply in divine Wisdom by the grace of the Holy Spirit, without ceasing to be profoundly limited human knowing (acquired by study).³⁷

Roszak sees the integration of Tradition with a speculative approach as a characteristic feature of Thomas's work. The aim of such an endeavour would be scripturistic contemplation, the reception of revelation and the believer's participation in the cognition of God himself.³⁸ At the origin of *sacra doctrina*, Roszak argues, lies the attempt to systematise and structure revelation.³⁹ What is important, however, is the goal that should be achieved in this way. Thomas did not agree that Christ, redemption or the Church should be the object of theology. Although sacred doctrine multiplies conclusions about the object of its knowledge, the aim of this science is to know and love its subject, the living God of salvation history; therefore *sacra doctrina* is a contemplative science.⁴⁰ In order to achieve such an ambitious goal, it is necessary, according to Aquinas, to connect the revealed truths in a network of relations forming from them a synthesis, and in this way to reproduce the intrinsic intelligibility of what is revealed (and at the same time the intrinsic coherence

³⁶ Cf. *ScG*, lib. 1, cap. 56 (p. 153); cf. Torrell, *Święty Tomasz*, 26, 31.

³⁷ Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics* (Levering, *Pismo Święte i metafizyka*, 74). According to Levering, the *Summa Theologica* participates in the biblical word in two ways: firstly, it teaches the content of Scripture's teaching on a given topic; secondly, it is the fulfilment of Scripture's promise to share in Divine Wisdom – cf. Levering, "A Note on Scripture," 658.

³⁸ Cf. Roszak, "Text, Method, or Goal?," 3; *STh* I, q. 1, a. 2, resp.

³⁹ Cf. Roszak, "Text, Method, or Goal?," 3.

⁴⁰ Cf. Torrell, *Święty Tomasz z Akwinu*, 23–25. The International Theological Commission writes in this connection of "intellectual contemplation" flowing from the rational work of the theologian explaining everything in manner of wisdom in the light of the highest truths of revelation – cf. *Theology Today*, no. 91.

of the divine salvific plan). In this way it is possible to arrive at an understanding not only of the work, but also of its author – God as the subject of *sacra doctrina*.⁴¹

1.3. The Connection of Biblical Theology with the Systematic One

Torrell emphasises the “undivided unity” of the three main currents of *sacra doctrina*: (i) the speculative (it is about the contemplation of God known and loved), which involves an effort to understand what is believed (*intellectus fidei*); (ii) the historical-positive, in which Scripture, the statements of the Fathers of the Church and synodal and conciliar affirmations are used; (iii) the “mystical” which refers to the practical character of theology (today’s “moral theology”).⁴² If it is true, as Torrell claims, that *Doctor Angelicus* “ignores the division of labour between positive theology and reflexive theology. It is one and the same *sacra doctrina* that encompasses everything,”⁴³ it is also a fact, which Roszak in turn stresses, that Thomas made a distinction between speculative theology and theology based on biblical revelation. While maintaining

⁴¹ Cf. Torrell, *Święty Tomasz*, 30–31. Cf. Torrell, *Święty Tomasz*, 29: “We immediately recognize here the ancient distinction of the Greek Fathers between *theologia*, that part of theology that interests itself directly in the intimate life of God (the Trinity of the persons), and *oikonomia*, that which he has done in time to save us, salvation history.”

⁴² Cf. Torrell, *Święty Tomasz*, 13–14, 26 and 33: “That is what is meant when we speak of theology as «speculative» knowledge; in Thomistic language, that word, so devalued today, means nothing more than «contemplative.»” As Torrell stresses, according to the Dominican, the ultimate goal of the *sacra doctrina* is to contemplate the first principle in the heavenly homeland, but it already provides a “foretaste” of God’s goods – cf. Torrell, *Święty Tomasz*, 33; International Theological Commission, *Theology Today*, no. 17. Cf. also: Torrell, *Wprowadzenie*, 234–235 and Thomas’s reservation in *STh* I, q. 1, a. 4, resp.: “Still, it is more speculative than practical because it is more concerned with divine things than with human acts; though it does treat even of these latter, inasmuch as man is ordained by them to the perfect knowledge of God in which consists eternal bliss.”

⁴³ Cf. Torrell, *Święty Tomasz*, 27.

the distinctiveness of the two perspectives, Aquinas nevertheless held the two to be mutually related.⁴⁴

Gilbert Dahan notes that in the years between 1230 and 1260 a distinction was made between theology as a science and exegesis, one positive side effect of which was also the development of exegesis itself. Theology was understood as both the word of God and human discourse on the word. Dahan points to the dissociation that took place, into a discourse about God (theology as speaking about God in terms of human reason) and a discourse about the word of God (exegesis analysing the divine word using the methods provided by human sciences).⁴⁵ Aware of the danger of fragmentation, Thomas postulated a mutual nourishment of theological science and exegetical science. He saw their relationship in such a way that biblical exegesis would be concerned with God's descent to humanity and theology would be a return to God and this return had to be nourished by this divine gift.⁴⁶

Chenu derived this development of theology conceived as something more than mere exegesis from the logic of the Incarnation of the Word of God in human words; theology, according to the Dominican, draws confidence in the coherence of faith and reason from the theandric mystery of the Word made flesh. Without practising apologetic tricks, writes Chenu, and at the same time without adding anything to the divine light, faith makes use of rational cognition.⁴⁷ According to Denys Turner, for Aquinas as a mature theologian, *sacra doctrina* is our speaking of God in response to God's speaking of God. "Conversation" in the womb of the Trinity became, through the Incarnation, a speech addressed to human beings, the Word-Christ. Theology is to be the reception of the Word of God and the human response to it, that is, the human speaking of God's speaking of God. In this way, the Christian can participate in the conversation that is God himself.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Cf. Roszak, "Tomizm biblijny," 120.

⁴⁵ Cf. Dahan, "Thomas Aquinas," 45.

⁴⁶ Cf. Dahan, "Thomas Aquinas," 45–46. Cf. also: Martin, "Sacra Doctrina."

⁴⁷ Cf. Chenu, *Święty Tomasz*, 46–47, 51.

⁴⁸ Cf. Turner, *Tomasz z Akwinu*, 127–128. Cf. also Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 6.

Roszak vigorously highlights the fact that biblical commentaries are deeply connected to the systematic forms of theological expression of Thomas's thought, especially to the *Summa Theologiae*. So much so that, according to the Polish theologian, it is even legitimate to ask whether the *Summa* was written for the commentaries or the commentaries for the *Summa*. Deep reflection on Scripture formed the basis of the systematic argumentation, while the *Summa*, which is the fruit of thought passing through the word of God, also allows for a better understanding of his commentaries. It is significant that Thomas often cites quotations in the *Summa* that he does not elaborate on; these quotations are not embellishments or "proofs from Scripture," but a necessary element for reconstructing his thought and understanding the force of his argumentation, in which priority and precedence is exercised at all times by revelation. To treat the systematic works as "self-sufficient" would be incompatible with the Thomasian concept of *sacra doctrina*. It is only by reading one and the other in "feedback" that one can grasp their full richness.⁴⁹

The conclusions of the research contained in the excellent monograph *Words of the Living God. Place and Function of Holy Scripture in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* can be a confirmation and, at the same time, a supplement to this image. The author of the monograph, Wilhelmus G.B.M. [Pim] Valkenberg, has shown that in the theological work of the Angelic Doctor, Scripture occupies the highest place in the whole process of theological reasoning, which starts from Scripture and is guided by it at all times.⁵⁰ In his monograph, the theologian introduced the terms *place* and *function* of Scripture. The former refers to the quantitative and the latter to the qualitative analysis of the role of Scripture; *place* makes it possible to discover how scriptural texts influence the superficial structure of a work, and *function* how Scripture influences the deep

⁴⁹ Cf. Roszak, "Tomizm biblijny," 125–127; Roszak, "Text, Method, or Goal?," 2, 6; Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 47–48.

⁵⁰ Cf. Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 10. Marshal writes similarly in "Aquinas as Scriptural Theologian," 101–104 (on p. 104 an important remark: "Thomas's submission to Scripture shapes non only what he is concerned to teach, but how he reaches it").

structure of the text, without excluding the influence of Scripture even before the creation of the work itself.⁵¹

Valkenberg's meticulous research on the Christological questions of the *Theological Summa* made it possible to detail the various functions of Scripture. The source of the *quaestiones* undertaken by Thomas lies in the reading of the *sacra pagina*, even if Aquinas does not explicitly indicate this; the references to Scripture define the object of the *quaestio* (they delimit the theological problem and its content) and ensure that the theological reasoning maintains contact with divine revelation; the presence of biblical quotations (often in abbreviated form, because Thomas assumes that it is obvious that the quotation is the background of the issue) in *sed contra* arguments, presupposing the *auctoritas Scripturae*, is clearly evident; these same quotations also set the stage for the solution to the problem, and they often occupy a central position in the section in which Thomas gives an answer to the question posed; and finally, the biblical *auctoritas* is also a confirmation of the solution he proposes, and is therefore the most important element of his answer, in which, therefore, a theological explanation of this *auctoritas* can be seen. In this way, the correspondence between divine revelation (the word of God) and human knowledge (theological reasoning) is highlighted.⁵²

Valkenberg showed in the next chapter that the conclusions derived from the strictly theological issues of the *summa* can be applied to a large extent to Thomasian theology, but some clarifications are necessary. Firstly, the place and function of Scripture vary according to the literary genre: most references to Scripture are evident in the *expositio* (biblical commentaries, sermons), somewhat less in the *quaestio*, and least in the *disputatio* (both of which are used, for example, in Aquinas's systematic theological texts). Secondly, the place of Scripture depends on the subject matter of the text

⁵¹ Cf. Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 2, 9, 19, 44. Levering's attempt to show the role of Scripture in the *Theological Summa* is also important, although limited only to a study of the first four issues concerning the virtue of faith – cf. Levering, "A Note on Scripture," 658.

⁵² Cf. Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 136, 138.

(it is more important in texts that speak of salvation history than of the conditions for the possibility of the existence of such history). However, when it comes to the function of Scripture, it is always the normative source and the framework of all theological argumentation, both in the case of the *expositio* and the *quaestio*, which incidentally finds its genesis in *sacra pagina*.⁵³

Everything that has been said up to this point leads to the conclusion that *sacra doctrina* is characterised by the interaction of two poles, the positive and the speculative, and Thomas's activity in both, although different, nevertheless always remains in relation to the second pole. These two poles could be considered "*the supporting structures* of that practice of theology which never grows old,"⁵⁴ and both the exegetical and theological procedures used by the Universal Doctor should be seen from the perspective of this binarity. A suitably modified metaphor proposed by Roszak may prove useful for our further argumentation: he writes of "seeing with two eyes" the commentaries and systematic works of Thomas in their interconnectedness and commonality of the scriptural root. It is not a question of "adding" one part to another or of material supplements, but of noticing their interpenetration and at the same time resulting from one another on the basis of a "chain of thought" (*catena*).⁵⁵

I would suggest a different metaphor, not least because a pair of eyes can only point towards one of the poles at a time. Perhaps a camera metaphor would be more appropriate: focusing on one object makes the others appear less sharply. Similarly, Thomas acts either as a theologian or as an exegete, but never ceases to be both. As a camera operator, Aquinas may bring the perceived image so close that one pole almost dominates the entire shot, but even in this case this does not mean that the other pole falls completely out of frame – it always remains at least as a background for reflection.

⁵³ Cf. Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 207–208.

⁵⁴ Roszak, "Tomizm biblijny," 122. Cf. John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, no. 43–44 about "enduring originality" (*perennis novitas*) of Thomas's thought.

⁵⁵ Cf. Roszak, "Tomizm biblijny," 127. In his monograph, Roszak writes that commentaries are key to understanding theological thought not only for the "material" but also the "formal" reason – cf. Roszak, *Odkupiciel i Przyjaciel*, 38.

Valkenberg's analyses show that bipolarity does not only mean the relationship between commentaries and systematic works, but it can also be seen within the theological treatises themselves (emphasis on the *expositio* or *quaestio*).⁵⁶ It can also be expected that even Thomas the philosopher does not cease to be a Christian, and will practise philosophical reflection according to certain presuppositions resulting from revelation, and in accordance with the nature of the apostolate.⁵⁷

2. The Bible in Explaining the Need for Sacra Doctrina

Already in the explanations of sacred doctrine that begin the *Theological Summa*, there are references to Scripture that are essential to Thomas Aquinas's reasoning. Therefore, together with presenting the main theses of the author of the theological treatise, I am at the same time attempting to draw conclusions from his use of Scripture in matters in which he discusses and justifies sacred doctrine. I am guided by the assumption (which, of course, has to be proven or verified later) that what is characteristic of Aquinas's entire work already finds expression here.

2.1. The Necessity of the Sacred Doctrine and Its Source in the Revelation

The author of the *Summa Theologica* asks at the very beginning: "Whether, besides philosophy, any further doctrine is required?"⁵⁸ Biblical quotations appear both in the *videtur quod* (Sir 3:22),⁵⁹ and in the section refuting the objection (Sir 3:25). In reconciling the two statements of the inspired author, St Thomas writes that, although man should not venture to do what is beyond his reason, when it

⁵⁶ Cf. Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 154.

⁵⁷ Cf. Torrell, *Wprowadzenie*, 254, 337 and valuable remarks on Thomas's treatment of philosophy in accordance with 2 Cor 10:5, as the submission of the mind to the obedience of Christ, in Marshall, "Aquinas as Scriptural Theologian," 98–99.

⁵⁸ *STh* I, q. 1, a. 1. According to Thomas, divine revelation is necessary for the salvation of man – cf. Blankenhorn, "Locating a Theology," 56.

⁵⁹ Of course, the Universal Doctor uses the Vulgate here.

is revealed by God it should be accepted by faith.⁶⁰ In the section *sed contra*, on the other hand, there is a passage intended to testify to the usefulness of the *sacra doctrina*: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for persuasion, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16).⁶¹

The citation of precisely this fragment will only become clearer after reading Thomas's commentary on the cited letter. In demonstrating the usefulness of Scripture, Aquinas there refers to other *loci biblici*, which he arranges in such a way as to draw systematic conclusions from them. Scripture is shown to be the way to salvation by virtue of three reasons: 1. its source; 2. its positive effects and 3. the final fruit and progress.⁶² As concerns the first reason, the most important for us, Scripture “has a special place above all writings, because others are given through human reason, while Sacred Scripture is divine [*sacra autem Scriptura est divina*].” Therefore, the inspired author, as the Dominican explains, writes that “Scripture is inspired of God” [*ideo dicit Scriptura divinitus inspirata*] (cf. cited by the commentator: 2 Pet 1:21 and Job 32:8).⁶³ Other writings, on the other hand, are not inspired of God.⁶⁴ For God, Aquinas ex-

⁶⁰ Cf. *STh* I, q. 1, a. 1, ad. 1.

⁶¹ *Omnis Scriptura divinitus inspirata utilis est ad docendum, ad arguendum, ad corripiendum, et erudiendum in iustitia – In II Tim.*, cap. 3, lect. 3 (Polish ed.: *Wykład Drugiego Listu do Tymoteusza*, 182 [the following pages in brackets refer to this edition]). It should be stressed that the biblical citations in *sed contra* usually form the basis of the doctrinal elaboration contained in the body of the article – cf. Elders, “Structure et function”; Levering, *Pismo Święte i metafizyka*, 125, n. 42; Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 129 (“Scripture is often quoted in every phase of the *quaestio*; it is the unique source for the arguments *sed contra* in the *Summa*”) and 136 (“The quotation in the argument *sed contra* often occupies a central place in the *quaestio*: it is not only the source of the problem and the conclusion of the first phase, but the same quotation from Scripture also gives the direction for the solution to the problem: it is the key quotation for the entire theological investigation”).

⁶² *In II Tim.*, cap. 3, lect. 3, § 124 (p. 191).

⁶³ *In II Tim.*, cap. 3, lect. 3, § 125 (p. 190–191).

⁶⁴ *In II Tim.*, cap. 3, lect. 3, § 126 (p. 193). Cf. *In Heb.*, cap. 5, lect. 2, § 267 (Polish ed.: *Wykład Listu do Hebrajczyków*, 399): “Therefore, it should be noted that sacred doctrine (*doctrina sacra*) is, as it were, the food of the soul [...]. Sacred doctrine, therefore, is food and drink, because it nourishes the soul. For the other sciences (*scientiae*) only enlighten the intellect, but this one enlightens the soul [...].”

plains, can perform something through the agency of lower causes (natural works – cf. Job 10:8), or “immediately, as his own work, when he works miracles.” The difference between inspired and un-inspired literature consists in the fact that the human mind is shaped “immediately by the Sacred Writings” (*immediate per sacras litteras*), but “mediately by other writings” (*mediate per alias scripturas*).⁶⁵

Returning to the *Summa*: its author refutes the objection that other knowledge, since it is based on principles beyond doubt, is more certain than sacred science based on articles of faith.⁶⁶ Sacred doctrine is certain “because other sciences derive their certitude from the natural light of human reason, which can err; whereas this derives its certitude from the light of divine knowledge, which cannot be misled.”⁶⁷ Although the *sacra doctrina* refers to the authorities, when the arguments based on this are the weakest, this does not detract from the authority of the sacred doctrine, since “the argument from authority based on divine revelation is the strongest.” Man “ought to believe on the authority of those to whom the revelation has been made” (*oportet quod credatur auctoritati eorum quibus revelatio*

Cf. also: Roszak, *Odkupiciel i Przyjaciel*, 38; Martin, “Sacra Doctrina,” 96 and 101: “The authoring quality of that written dimension of the word of God is such that it has a unique sacramental ability to impress immediately upon the soul of the believers the manifold action of God by which he saves us by joining us to himself now and by leading us to eternal beatitude.”

⁶⁵ *In II Tim.*, cap. 3, lect. 3, § 126 (p. 192–193). Cf. Martin, “Sacra Doctrina,” 95–96.

⁶⁶ Cf. *STh* I, q. 1, a. 5, *videtur quod*. For Thomas, faith plays a parallel role in theology to the fitness of first principles in natural cognition. Faith, as God’s gift, abides in man in the form of a fitness (*habitus*), that is, a certain perfection that elevates the natural capacity of cognition to the height of God himself and of divine matters. Faith is the form that grace takes in the human mind, and like grace, faith also participates in the life of God Himself and creates between Him and man a correspondence (*connaturalitas*) enabling a spontaneous understanding of what belongs to God (*sensus fidei*), just as friends understand each other. Faith as fitness makes it possible to grasp the principles of theology; among these „first truths” Aquinas includes the articles of the Creed, which can be reduced to two absolutely first truths: God exists and God loves us (cf. Heb 11:6) – cf. Torrell, *Święty Tomasz*, 27–28.

⁶⁷ *STh* I, q. 1, a. 5, *resp.* Cf. Torrell, *Święty Tomasz*, 28, n. 32.

facta est)⁶⁸ and “through whom the divine revelation, on which this sacred scripture or doctrine is based, has come down to us” (*per quos ad nos revelatio divina processit, super quam fundatur sacra Scriptura seu doctrina*).⁶⁹

Also in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, there is a similar explanation of why God gives for us to believe truths superior to reason. The reason is that the mind desires and strives for spiritual and eternal good, superior to temporal goods.⁷⁰ In addition, man is thereby strengthened in the conviction that God is above all things, and is thus freed from the mother of error – conceit.⁷¹ Here, too, Thomas refers to Sir 3:23 (“more than human reason can bear, it has been revealed to you”), but he also adds 1 Cor 2:10–11 (“the divine is known to no one but the Spirit of God. And to us it has been revealed by God through the Spirit” – Thomas changes the order of the verses).⁷² The Thomas's commentary on this passage from

⁶⁸ *STh* I, q. 1, a. 8, ad. 2. Cf. Marshall, “Aquinas as Scriptural Theologian,” 98; Niederbacher, “The Relation of Reason,” 341; Torrell, *Wprowadzenie*, 186: “only the books of Scripture are absolute authorities for Thomas” (quotations from this work after: Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, I).

⁶⁹ *STh* I, q. 1, a. 2, ad. 2. Also in the prologue to the Psalms, he portrays Scripture as superior to human science because of the divine inspiration of the inspired authors, whose language is like that of a child repeating the words dictated to it – cf. Dahan, “Thomas Aquinas,” 48–49.

⁷⁰ Cf. *ScG*, lib. 1, cap. 5 (p. 26).

⁷¹ Cf. *ScG*, lib. 1, cap. 5 (p. 27–28) and *STh* I, q. 3, *prologus*: “Now, because we cannot know what God is, but rather what He is not, we have no means for considering how God is, but rather how He is not.” On the balance of the cataphatic and apophatic in Thomas's thought concerning the knowledge of God – cf. Blankenhorn, “Locating a Theology,” 68–71. In this respect Torrell stresses that “a discourse is not possible except on the basis of what God Himself has given us in revelation, but it is possible [...]” – Torrell, *Wprowadzenie*, 178. Cf. also: Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible*. A brief but successful exposition of the similarities and differences between the views on the knowledge of God in Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas – cf. Paluch, “Wschód i Zachód,” 253–256. However, I find it difficult to agree with the explanation given there of the genesis of the different emphases of the two thinkers – cf. Paluch, “Wschód i Zachód,” 257. Cf. also: O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius*; te Velde, *Aquinas on God*, 72–77.

⁷² Cf. *ScG*, lib. 1, cap. 5 (p. 28); *In I Cor.*, cap. 2, lect. 1, § 86 (Polish ed. *Wykład Pierwszego Listu do Koryntian*, 157 [further on page numbers refer to this work]).

Paul's letter will shed additional light on the reasoning of the author of the *Summa*, the more so as the *Doctor communis* refers to the wider context⁷³ (v. 10–12: “For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God” NASB).

To the faithful (“we have received”), the wisdom of God has been granted by the Spirit (for “the Spirit penetrates/searches...”). The verse “for to us God revealed them through the Spirit” is, according to Thomas, the realisation of the announcement of the sending of the Spirit by Christ (cf. John 14:26). As the Son sent by the Father makes Him known (cf. Matt 11:27), so the Spirit of Truth coming from the Son as the truth of the Father makes the truth known to those to whom He is sent.⁷⁴ That “the Holy Spirit effects this” and that “he effected this in Christ’s disciples” would be indicated by verse 12 (“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God”).⁷⁵ The Holy Spirit, who “penetrates/searches all things, even the depths of God,” does not investigate, but already knows the secrets of all things, like Wisdom (cf. Wis 7:22–25), who knows what is hidden in God.⁷⁶

It is noteworthy that the holy Doctor by “the depths” understands what is hidden and not what is known about God through creatures (cf. Wis 13:5).⁷⁷ This passage is important insofar as it provides a good understanding of Thomas’s thought as expressed in the two *summae*, theological and against the gentiles. If human reason is able to gain some knowledge of the Creator from creatures, it is

⁷³ Aquinas was interested in the “minor” and “major” contexts – cf. Roszak, *Odkupiciel i Przyjaciel*, 133–134.

⁷⁴ Cf. *In I Cor.*, cap. 2, lect. 2, § 100 (p. 169).

⁷⁵ *In I Cor.*, cap. 2, lect. 2, § 101 (p. 169–171). It seems to me that this explanation could provide a starting point for developing a Thomasian doctrine of inspiration.

⁷⁶ Cf. *In I Cor.*, cap. 2, lect. 2, § 102 (p. 171).

⁷⁷ Cf. *In I Cor.*, cap. 2, lect. 2, § 102 (p. 169).

nevertheless a “superficial” knowledge, not reaching what is hidden in God. This is confirmed by a further argument of the author of the commentary, in which he points out a comparison between what is hidden in man and what is hidden in God: the former cannot be seen, since, as being within, it can only be known by the human spirit, i.e. the intellect (v. 11a: “For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?”), and by God knowing the secrets of the human heart (cf. Jer 17:9; Job 16:20; 1 Sam 16:7), while the latter is known only by the Spirit of God (v. 11b: “Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God”), whose knowledge exceeds human cognition (cf. Job 36:26).⁷⁸

Although the divine things can also be known from the effects accessible to the senses (cf. Wis 13:5),⁷⁹ this kind of knowledge does not reach the mystery of the Godhead. Only “the Holy Spirit who is in God himself, being consubstantial with the Father and the Son, sees the secrets of the godhead by himself, *for in her*, i.e., in God’s wisdom, *is the Spirit of understanding*, holy, having all power, overseeing all things (Wis 7:22).” This knowledge, inaccessible to men, can only be known to them as a result of being filled by the Holy Spirit: “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God” (1 Cor 2:12). The spirit of the world stimulates one to do the things of the world, while the Holy Spirit illuminates and inflamed the hearts of the apostles with the love of God (cf. John 14:26 and Num 14:24).⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Cf. *In I Cor.*, cap. 2, lect. 2, § 103 (p. 171, 173).

⁷⁹ Cf. *In I Cor.*, cap. 2, lect. 2, § 105 (p. 173). Cf. *STh* I, q. 2, a. 2, ad. 2.

⁸⁰ Cf. *In I Cor.*, cap. 2, lect. 2–3, § 106 (p. 173, 175). Elsewhere, Thomas will point out that just as the origins of the Son and the Spirit are of a different nature, so also their messages produce different effects, which, however, like the Divine Persons themselves, must not be separated. The invisible sending of the Son has the effect of illuminating reason, and the invisible sending of the Spirit of inflaming love and sanctifying in it – cf. *STh* I, q. 43, a. 5, 3 and ad. 3; Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine*, 41–42. Cf. Nichols, *Discovering Aquinas*, 27: “[...] apostles enjoy a crucial status in Thomas’s account of revelation”; This is a result of their special role in passing on what they have received from Christ (*primus et principalis doctor*)

Knowing the gifts from God according to Thomas means cognition “*that we may know the things that are given us from God, i.e., that we may know to what extent God has given divine things to each of us: grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift (Eph 4:7).*”⁸¹ A no one knows the Father except the Son and the one to whom the Son reveals Him, “so no one knows the things of the Father and of the Son but the Holy Spirit and he who has received him (Matt 11:27). This is so, because just as the Son is consubstantial with the Father, so the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son.”⁸²

2.2. The Appropriateness of the Revelation of Truths Available to Reason

St Thomas Aquinas distinguishes between two kinds of knowledge: the first based on principles learned by the natural light of reason, the second on principles learned by the light of superior knowledge (*sacra doctrina* is such knowledge).⁸³ The Universal Doctor maintains that the truths of faith and the truths of reason cannot contradict each other (for only falsehood can contradict truth). The same God who is the creator of human nature does not grant views or beliefs contrary to natural cognition; they may appear to be so because they are superior to reason, Thomas argues, quoting the words of Scripture in this context: “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” – that is, the word of faith which we are preaching” (Rom 10:8).⁸⁴ Benedict XVI recognises that “the trust with which St Thomas endows these two instruments of knowledge faith and reason may be traced back to the conviction that both stem

and of the greater grace received by them on the day of Pentecost – cf. Nichols, *Discovering Aquinas*, 27.

⁸¹ *In I Cor.*, cap. 2, lect. 3, § 106 (p. 175).

⁸² Cf. *In I Cor.*, cap. 2, lect. 3, § 107 (p. 175).

⁸³ *STh* I, q. 1, a. 2, resp.

⁸⁴ Cf. *ScG*, lib. 1, cap. 7 (p. 31–32); *STh* I, q. 1, a. 5, ad. 1: “Hence the fact that some happen to doubt about articles of faith is not due to the uncertain nature of the truths, but to the weakness of human intelligence [...]” Cf. also Niederbacher, “The Relation of Reason,” 340.

from the one source of all truth, the divine *Logos*, which is active in both contexts, that of Creation and that of redemption.”⁸⁵

Aquinas expressed in the *Summa Theologica* the conviction that revelation also instructs about truths accessible to human reason, but attainable only by a few, as a result of a long search and not without a modicum of error.⁸⁶ Similarly, in the *Summa against the Gentiles*, he maintains that man is also given to believe truths about divine things accessible to rational examination. Otherwise, three inconveniences would arise: few people would be able to possess the knowledge of God; it would take a long time to arrive at the truth about God; falsehood mixed with the inquiries of reason would result in many people being left in doubt. In order for people to have unshakable certainty, it was necessary, Thomas believes, that the truth about divine things be shown by way of faith.⁸⁷ In conclusion:

Therefore, the divine clemency helpfully provides that even some things which reason is able to investigate are held by faith, so that all may share in the knowledge of God easily, and without doubt or error. Thus it is written, *you must no longer live as the gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; they are darkened in their understanding* (Eph 4:17–18), and: *all your sons shall be taught by the Lord* (Isa 54:13).⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Benedict XVI, General audience *Saint Thomas Aquinas* (2) (16.06.2010) (Benedykt XVI, *Mistrzowie*, 84).

⁸⁶ Cf. *STh* I, q. 1, a. 1, resp; *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 5 (Polish ed.: „Jak uzasadniać wiarę?”, 337 [further on in the text page numbers refer to this translation]). Cf. Chesterton, *Św. Tomasz z Akwinu*, 106: “If you argue honestly, as St. Thomas always did, you will find that the subject sometimes seems as if it would never end. He was strongly conscious of this fact, as appears in many places; for instance, his argument that most men must have a revealed religion, because they have not time to argue. No time, that is, to argue fairly. There is always time to argue unfairly; not least in a time like ours.”

⁸⁷ Cf. *ScG*, lib. 1, cap. 4 (p. 24–25).

⁸⁸ *ScG*, lib. 1, cap. 4 (p. 26).

It appears that also in the justification of the need of revelation in matters accessible to reason Thomas invokes the authority of Scripture. Here, too, it is necessary to reach for Thomas's commentary in order to understand the rationale for invoking this particular passage from Paul's epistle, and to trace the author's reasoning from the Bible reflected upon to the conclusion expressed in the two *Summae*.

According to Aquinas, St Paul's intention was to lead the addressees of the epistle away from their old habits (or even pagan perversity) and to encourage them to accept Christ and His teaching. The apostle would be describing the pagan way of life in relation to the inner spirit (cf. Eph 4:18) and the outward conduct (v. 19).⁸⁹ Thomas explains that for spiritual development (by this he means good and meritorious conduct) there is a need for the ordering and direction of three norms, which are: reason judging the act; the perception of universal principles (synderesis); the divine law, that is, God.⁹⁰ Action should be "in accord with the judgment of reason, and this reason judges according to true understanding, or synderesis; and this synderesis is, in turn, directed by the divine law."⁹¹ In all three aspects, the life of the Gentiles fails: instead of judging reason, they act according to the futility of the senses (thoughts); they are not guided by an illuminated intellect, and their understanding is darkened (cf. Rom 1:21; Ps 82:5); and the reason for this is "not sharing in the divine light, or not being enlightened and directed by the divine law" (*non sunt participes divini luminis, seu legis divinae illuminantis et regulantis*).⁹²

In explaining what this detachment from the divine life consists in (cf. Eph 4:18), Thomas allows for several possibilities: alienation from either God as the life of the soul (cf. John 14:6), or from love and spiritual grace (cf. Rom 6:23; Wis 2:22), or from a life lived by

⁸⁹ Cf. *In Eph.*, cap. 4, lect. 6, § 230 (Polish ed.: *Wykład Listu do Efezjan*, 323 [hereafter, page numbers in brackets refer to this work]).

⁹⁰ Cf. *In Eph.*, cap. 4, lect. 6, § 232 (p. 325); Cf. *STh* II–II, q. 47, a. 1–3; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1778.

⁹¹ *In Eph.*, cap. 4, lect. 6, § 232 (p. 325).

⁹² *In Eph.*, cap. 4, lect. 6, § 233 (p. 327 as concerns the quote and the paraphrase). Cf. also Salij, *Dziela wybrane*, 49.

faith in a holy manner (cf. Gal 2:20; Rom 1:17), or from a life lived thanks to love (cf. 1 John 3:14). What seems most important here is the statement of the Angelic Doctor that this kind of alienation comes from ignorance of the divine nature (cf. 1 Cor 15:33), the reason for the ignorance of God being the Gentiles themselves, who, due to blindness of heart, have not come to know the Creator from the creatures (cf. Rom 1:19; Wis 2:21).⁹³

3. The Method of Discussion with Those Who Do Not Recognize the Authority of Scripture

To find the answer to the question of the place of Scripture in Thomas Aquinas's argumentation, it is necessary to show his method of debating with his adversaries on the basis of commonly shared beliefs. However, even when Aquinas does not directly invoke the authority of Scripture, he does not cease to be a Christian and he does not forget about Scripture. This is easily demonstrated, above all, by the work *De rationibus fidei*, in which the master of the *sacra pagina* weaves biblical quotations into his argumentation in appropriate places and deliberately refrains from using them in others, without, however, ceasing to defend the truths of faith known from revelation.

3.1. Reasoning Based on a Common Foundation

In a small work *How to Justify Faith (De rationibus fidei)*, Thomas Aquinas's conviction that the authority of Scripture cannot be referred to in discussions with those who reject that authority is evident. This was explicitly expressed in the answer the author gave to a Syriac missionary:

On these questions you ask for moral and philosophical reasons which the Muslims can accept. For it would be useless to quote passages of Scripture against those who do not accept this authority. I wish to satisfy your request, which seems to arise from

⁹³ Cf. *In Eph.*, cap. 4, lect. 6, § 233–234 (p. 327).

pious desire, so that you may be prepared with apostolic doctrine to satisfy anyone who asks you for an explanation. On these questions I will make some explanations as easy as the subjects allow, since I have written more amply about them elsewhere.⁹⁴

What Thomas means is conducting a discussion on the “grounds” of the adversary. *Doctor Angelicus* presents and explains a similar *modus operandi* in the *Summa Theologica*. First, he reminds us that just as the secular sciences forge their conclusions on the basis of initial principles, so the philosophical sciences leave the demonstration of the validity of their initial principles to the metaphysics, which defends these principles on the basis of an at least partially convergent position.⁹⁵ Sacred science, on the other hand, for which the articles of faith are the starting point, having no science superior to itself, undertakes the defence of its starting principles itself. Thomas explains:

Hence Sacred Scripture, since it has no science above itself, can dispute with one who denies its principles only if the opponent admits some at least of the truths obtained through divine revelation; thus we can argue with heretics from texts in Holy Writ, and against those who deny one article of faith, we can argue from another. If our opponent believes nothing of divine revelation, there is no longer any means of proving the articles of faith by reasoning, but only of answering his objections – if he has any – against faith.⁹⁶

Also in the *Summa contra Gentiles* the same motif appears:

[...] some of them, like the Mohammedans and pagans, do not agree with us as to the authority of any Scripture by which they

⁹⁴ *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 1 (p. 330). Cf. Salij, *Dziela wybrane*, 139.

⁹⁵ Cf. *STh* I, q. 1, a. 8, resp. Cf. Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 15.

⁹⁶ *STh* I, q. 1, a. 8, resp. Cf. Chesterton, *Św. Tomasz z Akwinu*, 77: “After the great example of St. Thomas, the principle stands, or ought always to have stood established; that we must either not argue with a man at all, or we must argue on his grounds and not ours.”

may be convinced in the same way as we are able to dispute with the Jews by means of the Old Testament, and with heretics by means of the New (*contra Iudaeos disputare possumus per vetus testamentum, contra haereticos per novum*). But the former accept neither. Thus we need to have recourse to natural reason, to which all are compelled to assent. And yet this is deficient in the things of God.⁹⁷

St Thomas considers that this way of proceeding on the basis of the “common denominator” fulfils the call of the inspired author made in what is perhaps the most important biblical passage for fundamental theologians:⁹⁸ “But have the Lord Christ in your hearts as a Holy One, and be ready at all times to defend yourselves against anyone who asks you to justify the hope that is in you” (1 Pet 3:15).⁹⁹ This having Christ in one’s heart as the Holy One is realised through constancy of faith, and whoever lays such a foundation in his heart will be safe in the face of accusations and mockery from unbelievers. And then, adds the holy Doctor, he will also be ready to “make satisfaction to anyone who demands of you the justification of that hope

⁹⁷ *ScG*, lib. 1, cap. 2 (p. 20). Cf. *Quodlibet* IV, q. 9, a. 3, resp.: “Quaedam enim disputatio ordinatur ad removendum dubitationem an ita sit, et in tali disputatione theologica maxime utendum est auctoritatibus quas recipiant illi cum quibus disputatur. Puta, si cum Iudaeis disputetur, oportet inducere auctoritates Veteris Testamenti; si cum Manicheis, qui Vetus Testamentum respuunt, oportet uti solum auctoritatibus Novi Testamenti; si autem cum scismaticis, qui recipiunt Vetus et Novum Testamentum, non autem doctrinam sanctorum nostrorum, sicut sunt Graeci, oportet cum eis disputare ex auctoritatibus Novi vel Veteris Testamenti et illorum doctorum quos recipiunt; si autem nullam auctoritatem recipiunt, oportet ad eos convincendos ad rationes naturales confugere.” Cf. also Torrell, *Wprowadzenie*, 195; Chenu, *Święty Tomasz*, 95. Unlike today’s suspicious-eyed followers of various religions, the *Doctor Communis* respectfully engaged in dialogues with pagan philosophers, Jewish rabbis, Muslim sages and Christian heretics, as Robert Barron, who often refers to Thomas in his apologia, points out in *Vibrant Paradoxes*, 48.

⁹⁸ Cf. John Paul II, *Fides et ratio*, no. 67; Seweryniak, *Teologia fundamentalna*, 32.

⁹⁹ Cf. *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 1. Here, as he does in many places, the author does not give the full wording; he assumes the reader’s knowledge of the biblical text. The Polish edition erroneously states that it is verse 14 (p. 329, n. 1).

and faith which is in you.”¹⁰⁰ Christian faith consists in confessing the Trinity and having pride in the Cross of the Lord (cf. Gal 6:14; 1 Cor 1:18), and hope in the expectation both of life after death and of God’s support on the way to glory.¹⁰¹

It is precisely against these truths that the cutting edge of the criticism formulated by non-Christian believers in God – the first group to which Thomas refers in *De rationibus fidei* – is directed. The second group – Greeks and Armenians, and therefore Christians – profess an erroneous doctrine as to the state of souls after death and cite the Gospel in support (cf. John 14:2). The Saracens and other peoples are included in the third group of those who attribute to human acts a necessity (*necessitatem*), which is supposed to derive from prior divine knowledge or divine ordination (*praescientia vel ordinatione divina*).¹⁰² The method of argumentation adopted by Aquinas is roughly matched by the number of biblical texts¹⁰³ cited in those sections of the work in which he refers to each of these groups. In justifying Christian doctrine to non-Christians (group one), as a rule, he does not make use of the authority of Scripture.¹⁰⁴ Nor does he make use of inspired texts in refuting the objections formulated by those belonging to group three and in explaining the relationship

¹⁰⁰ *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 1 (p. 329). “In the original Greek: *pros apologian*, ‘to the answer’; the Greek apologia means ‘answer’ rather than ‘defence.’ In the Vulgate translation quoted by St Thomas: *ad satisfactionem*, ‘making satisfaction’” – p. 330, n. 8. Cf. Popowski, “Apologia,” 65.

¹⁰¹ Cf. *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 1 (p. 329). Cf. also Thomas de Aquino, *De articulis fidei*, Prooemium: “In primis igitur vos scire oportet quod tota fides Christiana circa divinitatem et humanitatem Christi versatur” (Polish ed.: Tomasz z Akwinu, “O artykułach wiary,” 37).

¹⁰² Cf. *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 1 (p. 329–330). Chapter ten speaks of “Divine Predestination” (*praedestinatio divina*) – cf. p. 353. Torrell pointed out that in *Contra errores Graecorum* Thomas draws his exegetical arguments from the Greek Fathers (so, in line with his own method) – cf. Torrell, *Wprowadzenie*, 195.

¹⁰³ Of course, such quantitative analysis is neither sufficient nor the most important; much more important, as Valkenberg has convincingly shown, is the qualitative analysis.

¹⁰⁴ This is the case in chapters 3–6 and 8, the exception being chapter 7, in which Aquinas explains how to understand the sentence “Word of God suffered and died” – here as much as 6 quotes appear.

of prior divine knowledge and human freedom (chap. 10). On the other hand, in the apology of the doctrine of Purgatory in chapter nine (which concerns group two), as many as twenty-six *loci biblici* can be distinguished.¹⁰⁵

This difference of developing reasoning depending on the audience can also be seen in Thomas's argumentation for the rational inconclusiveness of whether the world was created in time or exists eternally. In the work *On the Eternity of the World*, the "common denominator" will be the Christian faith, for although Aquinas dissociates himself in this work from "the heresy of the Averroists, his main criticism is directed against Franciscan theologians."¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the author of the work will begin as follows: "We accept, in accordance with the Catholic faith, that the world had a beginning in time. The question still arises whether the world could have always existed [...] (*Supposito secundum fidem Catholicam quod mundus durationis initium habuit, dubitatio mota est, utrum potuerit semper fuisse*)."¹⁰⁷ And then he will attempt to prove that, from the perspective of reason, nothing prevents one from acknowledging the eternal existence of the world and at the same time not denying its being created by God.

In the *Summa contra Gentiles*, on the other hand, Thomas will demonstrate the non-necessity of the eternity of the world assumed by non-believers. "Since, however, many have held that the world has been always and of necessity, and have endeavoured to prove this, it remains for us to give their arguments, so as to show that they do not necessarily prove the eternity of the world (*Sed quia multorum positio fuit quod mundus semper et ex necessitate fuerit, et hoc demonstrare conati sunt, restat rationes eorum ponere, ut ostendatur quod non de necessitate concludunt mundi*

¹⁰⁵ If one considers as separate sigla the passages quoted verse by verse in different places and those which the Polish editor indicates as merely allusive references by Thomas.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Salij, *Dziela wybrane*, 26.

¹⁰⁷ *De aeternitate mundi* (Polish ed.: Tomasz z Akwinu, "O wieczności świata," 473). Cf. Pokulniewicz, "Geneza oraz problematyka," 175: "Following Moses Maimonides, Thomas always distinguished between the fact of creation known by philosophical reasoning and 'creation in time,' a fact known only from Revelation."

sempiternitatem).¹⁰⁸ Only then will he also start questioning the efforts of those adherents of the Catholic faith who have tried to prove that the world cannot be eternal.¹⁰⁹

3.2. Defending Rather Than Proving Christian Faith

The truths of faith, though superior to reason, are not contrary to rational cognition. It appears to Aquinas as a matter of course that “whatever arguments are alleged against the teachings of faith, they do not rightly proceed from the first self-evident principles instilled by nature.” Therefore, “they lack the force of demonstration, and are either probable or sophistical arguments, and consequently it is possible to solve them”¹¹⁰ – he asserts in the *Summa against the Gentiles*. Also in the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas writes on the arguments put forward against faith; they are never strict proofs convincing in a necessary way, so there is always a way to refute them.¹¹¹

In chapter 2 of *De rationibus fidei*, entitled *How to discuss with unbelievers*, before even starting the apologia, Thomas sets out the basic convictions that should accompany the one entering into the discussion. He admonishes the addressee of the work:

in disputations with unbelievers about articles of the faith, you should not try to prove the faith by necessary reasons. This would belittle the sublimity of the faith (*Hoc enim sublimitati fidei derogaret*), whose truth exceeds not only human minds

¹⁰⁸ *ScG*, lib. 2, cap. 32 (p. 330). Cf. Thomas de Aquino, *De articulis fidei*, I, a. 3: “Tertius est error Aristotelis, qui posuit mundum a Deo factum sed ab aeterno; contra quem dicitur Gen. I, 1 *In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram.*”

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *ScG*, lib. 2, cap. 38 (p. 349–350). Cf. Torrell, *Wprowadzenie*, 179: “Faitiful to the teaching of the first chapters of Genesis, which speak of a beginning, he rejects the philosophical notion of an eternally existing world, but he raises himself with the same vigor against the Christian teachers who claim to be able to prove rationally that the world truly had a beginning. This point we cannot hold except by faith.”

¹¹⁰ *ScG*, lib. 1, cap. 7 (p. 32). Cf. Valkenberg, “How to Talk to Strangers,” 32.

¹¹¹ *STh* I, q. 1, a. 8, resp.

but also those of angels; we believe in them only because they are revealed by God (*nobis autem creduntur quasi ab ipso Deo revelata*). Yet whatever come from the supreme truth cannot be false, and what is not false cannot be repudiated by any necessary reason. Just as our faith cannot be proved by necessary reasons, because it exceeds the human mind, so because of its truth it cannot be refuted by any necessary reason.¹¹²

In the *Summa contra Gentiles* the Universal Doctor's position on the impossibility of proving truths superior to reason (i.e., the revealed ones) also resounds strongly. "But, since there are no such arguments in support of the second kind of truth, our intention must be not to convince our opponent by our arguments, but to solve the arguments which he brings against the truth, because [...] natural reason cannot be opposed to the truth of faith."¹¹³ When one

¹¹² *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 2 (p. 330). Cf. Torrell, *Wprowadzenie*, 196–197; Salij, *Dziela wybrane*, 140. Similarly, in *STh* I, q. 1, a. 8, ad. 1 and ad. 2 ("But sacred doctrine makes use even of human reason, not, indeed, to prove faith (for thereby the merit of faith would come to an end), but to make clear other things that are put forward in this doctrine"). For example, the view that the world does not exist eternally can, according to Aquinas, be accepted only on the basis of faith, just as the mystery of the Trinity cannot be proved by strict reasoning – cf. *STh* I, q. 46, a. 2, corp. About Thomas's understanding of the relationship between reason and faith – cf. Niederbacher, "The Relation of Reason."

¹¹³ *ScG*, lib. 1, cap. 9 (p. 34). This is also how one should look at the proofs for the existence of God. A Dominican does not base his faith on them; rather, they serve him to debate with non-believers. If it is possible to prove the existence of God by reason, then it is also possible to justify the Christian faith and to show plausible, albeit insufficient, reasons. Otherwise, one would only be left with the option of accepting truths concerning God from revelation as completely inaccessible to reason – cf. *ScG*, lib. 1, cap. 9 (p. 35). In rebutting the views of those who claim that the existence of God is believed and cannot be demonstrated, Aquinas, in addition to reason, also invokes the authority of Scripture (cf. Rom 1:20) – cf. *ScG*, lib. 1, cap. 12 (p. 40). The existence of God, although provable, was nevertheless revealed because of the effects of original sin making it difficult for humans to maintain the speculative *habitus* necessary to prove God's existence – cf. Levering, *Pismo Święte i metafizyka*, 124. Cf. also Turner, *Tomasz z Akwinu*, 142: "As a result, three elements are at play in Thomas's doctrine of God: the possibility of philosophical proofs of the existence of God which, appealing only to reason, are

takes into account that the work *De rationibus fidei* has a similar function to that of the *Summa contra Gentiles*,¹¹⁴ it is not surprising that in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, Thomas puts forward a similar method. In the case of truths accessible to reason and, concurrently, revealed, this consists of using rational proofs and additional arguments considered only probable (first three books). On the other hand, in the case of the revealed mysteries of God and therefore beyond the capacity of reason (book four), it is necessary to combat the arguments of one's opponents and explain the truths of faith with probable arguments (realising, however, their inadequacy) and with authoritative statements.¹¹⁵

In a special way, the opponent of this kind of truth may be convinced by the authority of Scripture confirmed by God with

in principle available to all—Christians, Muslims, Jews, even pagans; the doctrine of the divine oneness and simplicity shared in common with Islam and Judaism; and the Trinitarian faith that is distinctively Christian.” In *Summa contra Gentiles* an interesting thought appears: “the most effective way to prove God’s existence is from the supposition of the eternity of the world [...]” – *ScG*, lib. 1, cap. 13 (p. 51). The point is that Thomas finds that a more convincing explanation is the one that was more difficult to defend.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Valkenberg, “How to Talk to Strangers,” 35. Cf. also Turner, *Tomasz z Akwinu*, 39: “The *Summa contra Gentiles* is principally a work of apologetics, designed to equip Dominican preachers with the sort of arguments and persuasions they would need in conversation with heretical Christian and non-Christian disputants.” Analysing the debates on the nature of *Summa Against the Gentiles*, Valkenberg takes a stand: “It is my opinion that Aquinas gives the apologetic side of systematic theology a special place in his *Liber de veritate Catholicae fidei contra errores infidelium*. The term ‘infidels’ suggests that he considers all sorts of errors by those who do not adhere to the Christian faith, but mainly the errors of the Greek and Islamic worldview, and not so much the errors of the Jews or the heretics. Because he wants to discuss the opinions of those who do not share any Scriptural authority with the ones confessing the true faith, the mode of communication has to be determined first of all by rational considerations, and only secondarily by Scriptural authorities” – Valkenberg, “How to Talk to Strangers,” 29. The heated debates among scholars about what *Summa contra Gentiles* is and for whom Thomas wrote it are summarized by Torrell (*Wprowadzenie*, 167–170).

¹¹⁵ Cf. *ScG*, lib. 1, cap. 3 (p. 21–22); *ScG*, lib. 1, cap. 9 (p. 33–34). Cf. Torrell, *Wprowadzenie*, 173.

miracles, since we do not believe what is above human reason unless God has revealed it (*Singularis vero modus convincendi adversarium contra huiusmodi veritatem est ex auctoritate Scripturae divinitus confirmata miraculis: quae enim supra rationem humanam sunt, non credimus nisi Deo revelante*). In support, however, of this kind of truth, certain probable arguments must be adduced for the practice and help of the faithful, but not for the conviction of our opponents, because the very insufficiency of these arguments would rather confirm them in their error if they thought that we assented to the truth of faith on account of such weak reasonings.¹¹⁶

In all these statements, there appears a certain “meta-assumption” of Thomas about the supremacy of revelation (or rather God revealing Himself) and the faith that accepts it over what reason can arrive at by its own efforts. He will consistently argue that “any Christian disputing about the articles of the faith should not try to prove the faith, but defend the faith.” This is confirmed again in 1 Pet 3:15, in which the Apostle Peter, according to the Angelic Doctor, does not recommend being ready to carry out proof, but to make satisfaction (*ad satisfactionem*), to give an answer, i.e. to demonstrate on the path of reason, “that what the Catholic faith holds is not false.”¹¹⁷ Challenging the beliefs of opponents of the faith

¹¹⁶ *ScG*, lib. 1, cap. 9 (p. 34). Torrell, *Wprowadzenie*, 172: “But we remain here within the same framework, which is at the same time resolute confidence about the use of reason in theology and clear awareness of what we cannot ask of reason.” Torrell (cf. *Wprowadzenie*, 172–173) cites, as examples of both the limitations of reason and the importance of revealed data, the following statements by Thomas on the truths of faith – the Incarnation (*STh* III, q. 1, a. 3, corp.) and the Holy Trinity (*STh* I, q. 32, a. 1, resp.). Chenu wrote that already natural realities remain unknown in most of their properties, let alone divine realities, so that too easy explanations could be perceived by an unbeliever as ridiculous – cf. Chenu, *Święty Tomasz*, 94–95.

¹¹⁷ *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 2 (p. 330). Cf. Salij, *Dziela wybrane*, 28: “Let us note that reason, which, wishing to serve faith, usurps the possibility of proving the mystery of faith, thereby neglects the possibility of rendering to faith those favours which it can and ought to render to it.” Cf. also the beautiful summary of Thomas’s “apologetics” recently given by Roszak – cf. Roszak, “Wiara i perswazja,” 610:

is at the same time opening up the possibility of presenting the truths of the faith, which can be perceived differently in this situation than before. This is also the right moment to introduce the authority of Scripture.¹¹⁸

3.3. The Gravity of Scripture and the Rationale for Its Reliability

Pim Valkenberg draws attention to the distinction between aspects of truth accessible to reason and those beyond its capacity, a distinction that determines Thomas's argument:

In this realm of faith, the use of rational arguments is not as important as the role of the authority of Scripture, because the testimony of Scripture confirmed by miracles is the only way to convince the opponent. [...] Aquinas expounds his rules for properly defending the truth of faith in front of outsiders. He distinguishes between aspects of this truth that are accessible to human reason, and aspects that transcend this rational capacity of human beings. In the first case, rational argumentation plays

“Aquinas’ apologetics is governed by the basic rule that the task of the theologian (today we would add fundamentalist) is to remove obstacles to the path of faith and to prevent *irrisio infidelium*, i.e. the taunting of unbelieving Christians on the grounds that they have recently justified their faith in an inadequate manner. But alongside these two tasks, Thomas points to the necessity of reflecting on persuasion, which is not one of the techniques for winning new believers, but – and this is characteristic of Aquinas’ theology as a whole – the imitation of God, who, when he wants something, puts some ‘reasons’ behind that want.” Jean-Pierre Torrell writes of Thomasian theology as *ostensive* and *exhortative* – cf. Torrell, *Wprowadzenie*, 376.

¹¹⁸ For example, on the question of whether the world eternally exists, “in showing the age of the universe to be rationally undecidable, the option is left open to the evidence, whether dogmatically theological or empirically cosmological” – Turner, *Tomasz z Akwinu*, 233. In the *Summa against the Gentiles*, the author, having questioned the rational arguments “proving” the necessity of the eternal existence of the world, states: “It is, therefore, evident that nothing prevents our asserting that the world has not been always, and this is affirmed by the Catholic faith: *in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth* (Gen 1:1); and it is said of God: *before anything was made, from the beginning* (Prov 8:22)” – ScG, lib. 2, cap. 37 (p. 349).

the main part in defending the truth of Christian faith. In the second case, the major part is played by arguments from revelation, and human reason has a secondary function only.¹¹⁹

The passage from the *Summa against the Gentiles* I quoted above makes it necessary to verify the thesis that Scripture should not be invoked at all in discourse with those who reject the authority of Scripture. Yes, this is the case in this phase of demonstrating the non-contradiction of revealed truths with reason, or in justifying them by reason and refuting misconceptions. The point is more to refer to Scripture at the appropriate “moment” and to be ready also to defend the credibility of revealed doctrine.

In this context, it is worth pointing out the reasons given by Thomas Aquinas in *De rationibus fidei* for the Incarnation related, among other things, to the necessity of transmitting the true doctrine. Aquinas writes that it is necessary for human beings to act well (to avoid sin then) and to know the truth (in order to avoid error). Therefore, “the only-begotten Word of God who assumed a human nature should ground people in truth by a sure knowledge of it.” If “truth taught by men is not so firmly believed, because man can deceive,” then “only by God can knowledge of the truth be confirmed without any doubt.” For this reason, the Son, who became man, “had to propose the teaching of divine truth to men, showing them that it came from God and not from man” and to convince them “that it is Divine teaching, not human.” According to the author of the work, it was the greatness of the miracles possible only to God that Christ performed that confirmed the need to believe in the teaching about God; for He acted and spoke by the same divine power.¹²⁰

Divine wisdom also took care to convince those who could not witness miracles directly. Christ chose what was rejected by the world and weak, His disciples were illiterate and people of low origin,

¹¹⁹ Valkenberg, “How to Talk to Strangers,” 33–34.

¹²⁰ Cf. *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 7 (p. 344 as concerns quotations and paraphrases). It is important to note that also in the case of miracles, Thomas sought to preserve the “gratuity of faith,” therefore “he understood that miracles can offer one or multiple arguments of probability for the truth of faith and help to show its reasonableness” – cf. Blankenhorn, “Locating a Theology,” 79.

persecuted like their Master (cf. John 15:2), and “this made it apparent that his miracles and teaching were not received because of human power, but should be attributed to divine power,” the fruit of which is that the world turned to Christ. Thomas believes that such a sign of credibility should suffice.¹²¹ Chenu argues that, for the Angelic Doctor, the supreme sign of the credibility of the Gospel is the fact that the world, under the influence of simple people, begins to believe in difficult truth, to place its hope in exalted reality and to lead an austere life.¹²² That the “few, simple and poor” by preaching led to the situation that “many wise, noble and rich people converted very soon after hearing their preaching” is, says Benedict XVI in his catechesis on the Dominican master, “a miraculous phenomenon of history, to which it is far from easy to give a convincing answer other than that of the Apostle’s encounter with the Risen Lord.”¹²³

Thomas does not stop being a Christian, a master of *sacra pagina* and *sacra doctrina*, when he defends the faith without citing inspired texts. After all, he remains a Dominican all the time – a preacher-theologian practising sacred doctrine “on the street.”¹²⁴ It is noteworthy that even the refraining from referencing Scripture does not mean that the authority of Scripture (or revelation in Scripture) or, more broadly, the teaching of the Church is left aside. In those parts of the work *How to Justify the Faith* in which the author responds to the carnal Saracens, who “can think only of what is flesh and blood”¹²⁵ and therefore mock the truths of faith inaccessible to reason, he constantly makes an apologia for the Christian faith.¹²⁶ This is most evident in chapters six and

¹²¹ Cf. *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 7 (p. 344–345, quote from p. 344); Valkenberg, “How to Talk to Strangers,” 31.

¹²² Cf. Chenu, *Święty Tomasz*, 95. Similarly in Salij, *Dziela wybrane*, 144, 147.

¹²³ Benedict XVI, General audience *Saint Thomas Aquinas* (3) (23.06.2010) (Benedykt XVI, *Mistrzowie*, 97).

¹²⁴ I refer here to Turner’s metaphor; it is about orienting theology towards the goal of *contemplata aliis tradere* – cf. Turner, *Tomasz z Akwinu*, 46.

¹²⁵ Cf. *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 3 (p. 331).

¹²⁶ Cf. Chapters 3 and 4 respectively on the divine birth and origin of the Holy Spirit, chapters 5 and 6 on the incarnation of the Son of God, chapter 7 on his passion and death, and chapter 8 on the Eucharist.

seven, in which the reasoning (philosophical) course is accompanied all the time by the memory of the Church Creed¹²⁷ and conciliar pronouncements¹²⁸ (e.g. Chalcedon's "the Christological *lingua franca* of his times"¹²⁹). The author of the *opusculum* therefore still relies on the authority of Scripture, and it being understood in accordance with the Tradition of the Church.¹³⁰

The Angelic Doctor conducts his lecture in such a way as to be able to demonstrate "adequacy" or "appropriateness" (instead of the rejected "necessity"); this purpose is also served by examples taken from the world to provide some kind of echo of God's "incomprehensible and ineffable" way of acting.¹³¹ The world of theology, Turner explained, is full of truths that cannot necessarily be deduced from the self-evident truths of reason, but have their genesis in the free decision of the Creator who reveals them. On the one hand, St Thomas recognised the truths of faith professed

¹²⁷ Cf., e.g., *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 7 (p. 342): "The foregoing shows that there is no contradiction in our professing that the only-begotten Word of God suffered and died." Thomas argued that the truth of the faith was scattered in the Scriptures, and extracting it required study and practice unavailable to most people, so it was necessary to draw from it and express in summary form the content available to all believers – cf. Nichols, *Discovering Aquinas*, 29.

¹²⁸ Cf. Nichols, *Discovering Aquinas*, 31: "Also worth noting here is his conviction that the general Councils of the Church are authoritative interpreters of Scripture. Illumined by the Holy Spirit, the Fathers – in the sense, this time, of the bishops assembled in Council – explained infallibly the meaning of the sacred text."

¹²⁹ Turner, *Tomasz z Akwinu*, 255. On the other hand, in chapter 9, where he will already be discussing Christians, Eutyches and Nestorius will be explicitly cited as representatives of erroneous Christological views – cf. *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 9 (p. 348).

¹³⁰ Cf. understanding of the Eucharist in cap. 8. Cf. also Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 11 (the author writes about "intertwining of Scripture and Tradition"). What the authority of Scripture consists of was already explained by Thomas in his inaugural lecture – cf. Tomasz z Akwinu, "Wykład inauguracyjny," 25–26.

¹³¹ "Since God is said to be more or less united to a creature according to the amount of power he exercises in it, it is clear that, since the strength of divine power cannot be comprehended by the human intellect, God can be united to a creature in a higher way than the human intellect can grasp" – *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 6 (p. 339).

by Christians as contingent, true due not to necessity but to the will of God, but on the other hand he regarded theology as *scientia*. This was because the events of salvation history, although they could not be related to each other by means of a relation of necessity, were related to each other not merely based on contingency. They are not things that had to happen, but it is also possible to find certain reasons for their occurrence that remained related to the nature of God and as such were not something arbitrary. Therefore, Aquinas used the term *conveniens*, which can be translated variously: appropriate, adequate, convenient, fitting, skilful.¹³²

By proceeding in this way while justifying Christian faith, Aquinas was able to demonstrate the conformity of the conclusions derived by reason with Scripture,¹³³ without treating the claims of the hagiographers as “proof,” and without imposing the authority of Scripture on non-Christian adversaries. We may observe, following Turner, that the same Thomas who in the first three books of the *Summa against the Gentiles* “rarely appeals to anything but rational arguments in support of Christian beliefs,” in the last book nevertheless shows “how the conclusions of those arguments square with revealed biblical truth as Christians know it.”¹³⁴ In the work in question, *How to Justify the Faith*, the rational consideration of a certain truth known from revelation can even lead, according

¹³² Cf. Turner, *Tomasz z Akwinu*, 237–238, 242, 244, 246–248, 253; Torrell, *Wprowadzenie*, 233, 375; Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 51, 226; Valkenberg, “How to Talk to Strangers,” 39 and 38 (where Valkenberg writes that Thomas “Aquinas uses *rationes probabiles* or *verisimiles*”); McGinn, *Thomas*, 65; International Theological Commission, *Theology Today*, no. 67. For example, in *STh* III, q. 1, a. 1 Aquinas asks if it was fitting that God has incarnated. In view of the fact that the Incarnation was an expression of the Divine will, the event could not have been foreseen unless, as in the case of the psalmists and prophets, by special Divine revelation – cf. Turner, *Tomasz z Akwinu*, 249. Thomas believed that the matter of the Book of Psalms was Christ and the Church – cf. Torrell, *Wprowadzenie*, 76.

¹³³ Cf. np. *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 7 (p. 344): “Thus it was fitting that the Son of God made man should suffer and by his example provoke men to virtue, so as to verify what Peter said (1 Pet 2:21): *Christ suffered for you, and left an example for you to follow in his steps.*”

¹³⁴ Turner, *Tomasz z Akwinu*, 39. Cf. Tomasz z Akwinu, “Wykład inauguracyjny,” 26: *Veritas Scripturae huius doctrinae est immutabilis et aeterna.*

to the Universal Doctor, to the acknowledgment of what is known from biblical revelation.

Therefore if someone considers with a pious intention the fittingness of the suffering and death of Christ [*Si quis ergo convenientiam passionis et mortis Christi pia intentione consideret*], he will find such a depth of knowledge that any time he thinks about it he will find more and greater things, so that he can experience as true what the Apostle says (1 Cor 1:23–24): *We are preaching a crucified Christ: to the Jews an obstacle they cannot get over, to the gentiles foolishness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is both the power of God and the wisdom of God.* He continues (v. 25): *God's folly is wiser than human wisdom.*¹³⁵

In other words, even if it is not possible to prove the truth of the faith, Thomas believes that the rational search for “fairness” / fittingness should be taken seriously, and he demands this of his opponents. The objector “ought to observe that in God’s deeds we must consider what was the most fitting way of acting (*quod in factis Dei considerandum est quid convenienter fieri potuit*), even if he could have acted otherwise.”¹³⁶ For otherwise, if fairness were to be rejected in favour of a search for necessity, everything could be contested.

4. Scripture in Apology on the Example of the Doctrine of the Purgatory

Chapter nine of *How to Justify the Faith* can be seen as a good example of Thomas’s use of Scripture in his discussion with Christians. All the more so because it is difficult to find an explicitly expressed truth about Purgatory in the Bible, and yet Thomas would rely on the testimony of Scripture in his discussion with the Greeks and Armenians, with whom he shared the same pious attitude

¹³⁵ *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 7 (p. 343).

¹³⁶ *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 7 (p. 343).

to the inspired texts. Aquinas's reasoning can be reduced to two steps: to prove that immediately after death, and not only on the day of universal judgment, the saint receives eternal reward; to explain that one who dies in venial sins must be purified before entering heavenly glory.

4.1. The Eternal Reward after Death ("Clear Texts")

The prior assumption of God's compassion ("God's acts of compassion are above all his works"),¹³⁷ taken from nowhere else but from revelation, permits Thomas to identify concrete fragments concerning the good news about eternal reward received immediately after death:

those who die without stain receive immediately the reward due to them for eternity. This is proven by clear texts (*Et hoc quidem evidentibus auctoritatibus manifeste probatur*); with reference to the sufferings of the saints, the Apostle says (2 Cor 5:1): *We are well aware that when the tent that houses us on earth is folded up, there is a house for us from God, not made by human hands but everlasting, in the heavens.*¹³⁸

The quoted words of the apostle (2 Cor 5:1) "at first sight" (*prima facie inspectis*) would, according to the Dominican, imply that "as soon as the mortal body is dissolved man is clothed with heavenly glory," but to make this sense evident the author recommends

¹³⁷ Cf. *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 9 (p. 349).

¹³⁸ *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 9 (p. 349). Internal quote from 2 Cor 5:1; NASB: "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Cf. also Thomas de Aquino, *De articulis fidei*, I, a. 6: "Quartus est error dicentium animas malorum non statim post mortem descendere ad infernum, nec aliquas sanctorum animas paradysum intrare ante diem iudicii; contra quos dicitur Luce XVI, 22 quod *mortuus est dives et sepultus est in infernum*, et II Cor. V, 1 dicitur *Si terrestris domus nostra huius habitationis dissolvatur, domum habemus non manufactam conservatam in caelis.*"

to “examine the following verses (*sequentia pertractemus*).”¹³⁹ The next verse,¹⁴⁰ according to Aquinas, speaks about the believer’s longing for the heavenly dwelling, which he/she wishes to put on like a robe.¹⁴¹ The commentator points out that by the difference between the two kinds of donning (cloth – v. 2, and put on – v. 3¹⁴²): “If the soul puts on an eternal dwelling without taking off its earthly dwelling, the acquisition of that dwelling is being clothed over. But because the earthly dwelling must be taken off in order to put on the heavenly one, we cannot speak simply of being clothed over.”¹⁴³

Doctor Communis then summarises the apostle’s thought expressed in verses four¹⁴⁴ and five.¹⁴⁵ According to natural desire, we would expect to pass into immortal life without experiencing death. In contrast, the desire to be clothed in a heavenly dwelling comes from God giving the pledge of the Holy Spirit and together with it the certainty of attaining the goal. These two desires, one of nature and the other of grace, cannot be fulfilled at the same time – there is the need to leave the earthly dwelling to attain the heavenly one, so the Christian places the desire for grace above the desire for nature.¹⁴⁶

The analysis of verses six through eight¹⁴⁷ leads Thomas to the conclusion: “It is now clear that the Apostle meant

¹³⁹ *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 9 (p. 349).

¹⁴⁰ NASB: “longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven.”

¹⁴¹ Cf. *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 9 (p. 349).

¹⁴² NASB: “inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked.”

¹⁴³ *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 9 (p. 350); *In II Cor.*, cap. 5, lect. 1, par. 157 (Polish ed.: *Wykład Drugiego Listu do Koryntian*, 231 [in the following, page numbers in brackets refer to this work]).

¹⁴⁴ NASB: “For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.”

¹⁴⁵ Cf. v. 5 in NASB: “Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.”

¹⁴⁶ Cf. *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 9 (p. 350).

¹⁴⁷ NASB: Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord – for we walk by faith, not by sight – we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.”

the corruptible body by the term the tent that houses us on earth; this body is like a garment to the soul.” In turn, the eternally lasting dwelling in heaven “is God himself, whom men put on or dwell in, when they are present to him face to face, that is, seeing him as he is.”¹⁴⁸ Already the very longing to “put on” God, experienced by the believers, that is a desire that the soul separated from the body through death should be situated close to the Lord, is enough to form the view that glory consisting in seeing God is not delayed till the day one receives one’s body on the day of Judgment.¹⁴⁹

The commentary on this epistle passage may provide additional light. According to the *Glossa*, a house not made by human hands (2 Cor 5:1) would be an indestructible body resulting from divine action (cf. Phil 3:21).¹⁵⁰ Such an explanation, Aquinas argues, “does not agree with the Apostle’s meaning, nor with what preceded and what follows.” Paul wished to show that the present life of the saints is destroyed by tribulations, and this results “in obtaining glory at once, and not a glorified body, as the Gloss says.” It is the certainty of receiving the heavenly dwelling foretold by Jesus (cf. John 14:2), not a glorified body, that motivates them to endure tribulations. The house is said not to have been made with human hands, for the eternal glory received immediately after death is the eternal God himself (cf. Ps 31:2).¹⁵¹

The soul desires to be unified with the body and therefore death is a punishment for it,¹⁵² and the attainment of glory associated with getting rid of the body is contrary to the natural desire; therefore, we would prefer life to consume what is mortal (v. 4), that is, that glory should take away the corruption from the body without destroying it (cf. 1 Cor 15:54).¹⁵³ Ultimately, however, “the desire

¹⁴⁸ *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 9 (p. 350–351).

¹⁴⁹ Cf. *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 9 (p. 351). To realise the significance of these statements, it is important to realise that Thomas was an advocate of hylemorphism in the relationship between soul and body – cf. for example Torrell, *Wprowadzenie*, 180.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. *In II Cor.*, cap. 5, lect. 1, par. 153 (p. 227).

¹⁵¹ Cf. *In II Cor.*, cap. 5, lect. 1, par. 154 (p. 229).

¹⁵² Cf. *In II Cor.*, cap. 5, lect. 1, par. 158–159 (p. 233).

¹⁵³ Cf. *In II Cor.*, cap. 5, lect. 1, par. 159 (p. 233).

of grace overcomes the desire of nature,"¹⁵⁴ and the fervour of this desire (v. 2) even proves [having] a dwelling not made with hands, "because if the desire of nature is not in vain, much less is the desire of grace in vain."¹⁵⁵

Returning to *De rationibus fidei*, to confirm that the glory of beholding God is available to the soul before it receives the body, Thomas cites other further biblical testimonies: the Lord's promise to the penitent thief (Lk 23:43: "Today you will be with me in paradise"), the Lord's assurance of the Father's house in which there are many dwellings (cf. John 14:2), and the Apostle's words addressed to the Philippians in which he expresses his desire to depart and be with Christ (cf. Phil 1:23). From Paul's words "this is also clear" that "the souls of the saints, [after death], are therefore with Christ in heaven," for "this desire would be frustrated if, after his body was dissolved, he was not with Christ, who is in heaven."¹⁵⁶

In the Epistle to the Philippians, the Apostle writes about the twofold urge he experiences: on the one hand, he would like to stay and live in the flesh, on the other hand, to leave and be with Christ (cf. Phil 1:22–23).¹⁵⁷ In his commentary to the letter, the holy Doctor explains that "there are two impulses in man, the impulse of nature and that of grace." The first one, "not to die" (cf. 2 Cor 5:5; John 21:18), and the second one, "the impulse of grace, which charity follows, is to love God and neighbour." The desire moving to love God is identified with the desire to be with Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:8). At this point Thomas adds significant words providing a link between the commentary and *De rationibus fidei*: "this shows the error in the opinion of the Greeks that the souls of the saints are not with Christ immediately after death."¹⁵⁸

If being with Christ is better (cf. Phil 1:23; cf. Ps 73:25–26; 84:11), love of neighbour is nevertheless the motive for remaining on earth for the benefit of those entrusted to somebody (cf. 2 Cor 5:13). For

¹⁵⁴ *In II Cor.*, cap. 5, lect. 1, par. 155 (p. 229).

¹⁵⁵ *In II Cor.*, cap. 5, lect. 1, par. 156 (p. 231).

¹⁵⁶ *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 9 (p. 351 as concerns the quote and the paraphrase).

¹⁵⁷ Cf. *In Phil.*, cap. 1, lect. 3, par. 33 (Polish ed. *Wykład Listu do Filipian*, 101 [henceforth numbers of pages in brackets refer to this work]).

¹⁵⁸ *In Phil.*, cap. 1, lect. 3, par. 35 (p. 103).

perfect love consists in placing the glory of God above the pleasure of taking delight in Him. The perfectly loving apostle was ready to deprive himself of seeing God for the sake of serving his brothers (cf. Rom 8:38; 9:3).¹⁵⁹

4.2. Confirmation of the Existence of Purgatory ("Many Passages of Scripture")

The existence of Purgatory of souls after death is related to the fact that immediately after death one can behold God since "many passages of Scripture clearly say that no one can enter heavenly glory with any stain (*ex multis enim sacrae Scripturae auctoritatibus manifeste habetur quod ad illam caelestem gloriam nullus pervenire potest cum macula*)."¹⁶⁰ Those blemished by venial sins do not immediately enter eternal happiness, but the delaying of glory cannot be postponed until the day of judgment, for, as Thomas Aquinas observes, we would then have a disproportion between punishment and sin. God's justice therefore demands punishment and purification after this life, but before the judgment.¹⁶¹

Aquinas refers here to 1 Cor 3:13–15: "each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire."¹⁶² In Scripture, fire is associated with the day of the Lord, and the day of the Lord is referred to, in the commentator's view, either as the day of the Lord's coming (cf. 1 Thess 5:2) or as the day of man's death, on which Christ comes with reward or punishment (cf. John 14:3; Rev 2:5). So also the day of judgment after death will be revealed in the fire that cleanses the good and condemns

¹⁵⁹ Cf. *In Phil.*, cap. 1, lect. 3, par. 35–36 (p. 103, 105). Cf. also Płotka, *Tomasz z Akwinu*.

¹⁶⁰ *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 9 (p. 351). Thomas quotes: Wis 7:25, Isa 35:8 and Rev 21:27.

¹⁶¹ Cf. *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 9 (p. 352).

¹⁶² So in the ASV translation.

the ungodly.¹⁶³ “Therefore it is clear that there is a purgatory after death (*Sic ergo patet Purgatorium esse post mortem*)”¹⁶⁴ – this conclusion of Thomas, if it is not to be considered stretching the Scripture to a preconceived thesis, requires reference to his biblical commentary.

Explaining 1 Cor 3:12 (“Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw” ASV) in the light of other statements in Scripture, the commentator concludes that venial rather than mortal sins are to be compared to wood, grass and straw. Firstly, because mortal sin is a dead and not a living deed (cf. Heb 9:14; 1 Pet 2:5), which destroys rather than builds up (cf. 1 Cor 3:17). Secondly, because mortal sins, “heavy” sins like iron, lead or stone, are not destroyed by fire, while venial sins as “light” sins can be cleansed by fire (after all, it burns wood, grass and straw).¹⁶⁵ Thirdly, because mortal sins close the way to salvation. Admittedly, from the apostle’s words it seems to follow, “that a person who dies in mortal sin, as long as he keeps the faith, will finally attain to salvation after undergoing punishment,”¹⁶⁶ since Paul writes in verse fifteen that the one “whose work is burned up will suffer harm: he himself will be saved, but as though by fire.” But, as Thomas judges, this would contradict the Apostle’s other statements:

For he continues: *if any man’s work burns, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire*, which is obviously contrary to the Apostle’s statement below: *neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers ... shall possess the kingdom of God*

¹⁶³ Cf. *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 9 (p. 353).

¹⁶⁴ *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 9 (p. 353).

¹⁶⁵ Cf. *In I Cor.*, cap. 3, lect. 2, § 155 (p. 216–217, quote on p. 217). Cf. also Thomas de Aquino, *De articulis fidei*, I, a. 6: “Quintus est error dicentium non esse purgatorium animarum post mortem, eorum scilicet qui in caritate decedentes aliquid purgabile habent; contra quos dicitur I Cor. III, 12 *Si quis aedificaverit supra fundamentum* – scilicet fidei per dilectionem operantis – *lignum, foenum, stipulam, detrimentum patietur, ipse tamen salvus erit, sic tamen quasi per ignem*. Et contra hos errores dicitur in Symbolo *Vitam aeternam. Amen, vel Vitam futuri saeculi.*”

¹⁶⁶ *In I Cor.*, cap. 3, lect. 2, § 155 (p. 217).

(1 Cor 6:9–10), and to the Galatians: *those who do such things shall not possess the kingdom of God* (Gal 5:21). But one possesses salvation only in the kingdom of God; for everyone excluded from it is sent into eternal fire (Matt 25:41).¹⁶⁷

The Angelic Doctor therefore interprets Paul's statement in the light of the apostle's other statements in order to reject the erroneous one and adopt the correct interpretation on this basis. And finally, fourthly, if Christ dwells in the Christian through the faith, Christ also referred to by the apostle as the foundation, this is not the case with a faith not based on love (cf. Eph 3:17; 1 John 14:16; 1 Cor 13:4), i.e., an unformed faith. As Thomas writes, "persons who commit mortal sins do not have formed faith, and so do not have the foundation," so that "it is necessary to suppose that the person who builds upon the foundation *gold, silver and precious stones*, as well as one who builds upon it *wood, hay, stubble*, avoids mortal sin."¹⁶⁸ At this moment, Thomas's commentary reveals the principle he used to apply: *Sacra Scriptura sui ipsius interpres*.

The Master of the *sacra pagina* points out that the diversity of works will be manifested on the Day of the Lord (cf. 1 Cor 3:13) in a diverse reward.¹⁶⁹ Concerning the question of Purgatory, the Saint Doctor's explanation that, depending on the three types of divine judgements, the Day of the Lord can be understood in three senses appears most important.¹⁷⁰ Firstly, it refers to the universal judgement which will take place on the last day over all men and which will reveal differences of merit (cf. Matt 12:41; 2 Thess 2:2; Rom 2:16). In second place, Thomas distinguishes the judgment taking place in the death of every man, when the Lord coming like a thief after the night will unveil the merits of the dead (cf. Luke 16:22; 1 Thess 5:2; Prov 11:7; 14:32). And the third type of the day of the Lord is the judgement that takes place already in this life, when God testing

¹⁶⁷ *In I Cor.*, cap. 3, lect. 2, § 155 (p. 217).

¹⁶⁸ *In I Cor.*, cap. 3, lect. 2, § 155 (p. 217).

¹⁶⁹ Cf. *In I Cor.*, cap. 3, lect. 2, § 153 (p. 216).

¹⁷⁰ Cf. *In I Cor.*, cap. 3, lect. 2, § 162 (p. 225).

through the temporary tribulations of this life (cf. 1 Cor 11:32; Zeph 1:14) reveals human affections (cf. Sir 27:5).¹⁷¹

It is fire that is the means by which the day of the Lord will reveal all things (cf. 1 Cor 3:13). This fire coming before the Judge on the day of judgment will burn up the wicked and purify the righteous (cf. Ps 97:3).¹⁷² From Job 23:10 (“when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold”¹⁷³) it can be inferred, in Aquinas’s view, that the day of the Lord accomplished in death will be manifested by the fire of purgatory purifying that which requires such purification. The third kind of the day of the Lord, the day of tribulation, on the other hand, will be revealed in the fire of tribulation (cf. Sir 2:5). By means of these three kinds of fire, man’s merits or faults will be proved (cf. Ps 17:3), and consequently there will also be a disclosure of the difference between the works of men.¹⁷⁴

Commenting on 1 Cor 3:15 (“If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire”), Thomas writes, with reference to Isa 45:17, that whoever does evil deeds will suffer harm, but will not be condemned – he will be saved “as if by fire” (cf. Ps 66:12; Isa 43:2). This fire reaches a person either in this life or at the end of life or of the world.¹⁷⁵ The Holy Doctor explains that someone can be “afflicted by the fire of tribulation on account of the immoderate attachment he has to earthly things and by the fire of purgatory or by the fire which goes before the face of the judge on account of venial sins, which he committed by caring for temporal things or even by the frivolous and vain things he taught.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ Cf. *In I Cor.*, cap. 3, lect. 2, § 163 (p. 227).

¹⁷² Cf. *In I Cor.*, cap. 3, lect. 2, § 164 (p. 227).

¹⁷³ Such translation in NASB.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. *In I Cor.*, cap. 3, lect. 2, § 164 (p. 227, 229).

¹⁷⁵ Cf. *In I Cor.*, cap. 3, lect. 2, § 168 (p. 231).

¹⁷⁶ *In I Cor.*, cap. 3, lect. 2, § 169 (p. 231). Cf. similar thought appearing in justifying the Incarnation in *De rationibus fidei*, cap. 7 (p. 343): “The sin of man consists in cleaving to bodily things and neglecting spiritual goods. Therefore the Son of God in his human nature fittingly showed by what he did and suffered that men should consider temporal goods or evils as nothing, lest a disordered love for them impede them from being dedicated to spiritual things.”

As can be seen, it was only by turning to the commentaries that it became apparent that the references to Scripture in the defence of the doctrine of Purgatory made in *De rationibus fidei* were not incidental and indeed support the argumentation in this work, insufficiently clear without the content of the commentaries.

Conclusions

1. Scripture in *Sacra Doctrina*

In the concept of *sacra doctrina*, it is necessary to emphasise both the unity of the speculative (contemplative) and historical-positive currents as well as the distinction between speculative theology and biblical theology. If in His word God descends to humanity, theology in turn allows a return to Him insofar as it is nourished on inspired texts at all times. *Sacra doctrina* is always situated in the area marked out by the gift of Scripture (and in this sense one must even concede the superiority of commentaries over theological *summae*), a gift that would not be fully received if one were to stop there. It is precisely the authority of Scripture and reverence for the word of God that make Thomas take Scripture so seriously that it cannot remain Scripture alone. Human reason – of which, after all, Scripture also testifies that it was created by God – must set all its powers in motion to deal with the word of God in its own proper way. God's speech about God does not suffice; human speech about God's speech about God is also needed. Revelation demands theology. This is what Thomas seems to think.

For Aquinas, the purpose of rational study of the biblical word is to reconstruct the intrinsic intelligibility of what is revealed and to build a synthesis revealing unity in the sequence of salvific-revelatory events, making perceptible the coherence of the divine plan of salvation. For the Universal Doctor, the object of science has an instrumental function in relation to the goal of knowledge, whose subject (*subiectum*) is God Himself; ultimately, it is about knowing and loving God, that is contemplation. The *sacra doctrina* becomes some kind of reflection of divine knowledge, so that the believer can participate in the knowledge of God himself. Scripture alone could

not do what is possible through *sacra doctrina*. In turn, sacred doctrine draws its certainty from the light of God's knowledge, unerring and certain as it has been revealed.

Sacra doctrina encompasses more than exegesis of Scripture, and *sacra pagina* is a broader concept than exegesis as we understand the word today. The bipolarity of biblical and speculative theology marks the entire work of Thomas. Already in his commentaries, the *Doctor Angelicus* follows the scholastic method and systematizes the biblical message, which distinguishes his approach from contemporary exegesis. However, biblical theology alone does not suffice to achieve his goal – the second link in the chain, speculative theology, is necessary. The first step taken at the stage of biblical theology makes it possible to move naturally to the next one; in turn, *sacra doctrina* never detaches itself from *sacra pagina*. They remain at all times in a mutual relationship: the interpenetration and outcome of the second from the first as successive links in a single chain. In his approach, Thomas resembles a camera operator who decides himself where to focus the image, at the same time leaving everything else in the background, but not out of frame. In this way, the chain (*catena*) of Aquinas's thought, even if not in every link, as a whole is significantly linked to Scripture.

Treating systematic works without regard to the scriptural root and commentaries as the fruit of reflection on the word of God is incompatible with the Thomas's concept of *sacra doctrina* and actually makes it impossible to understand the argumentation contained in the *summae*. Without commentaries, the biblical quotations in Aquinas's other works give the impression of being, at best, "proof from Scripture" intended to confirm the speculation carried out.

2. Scripture in the Debate with Non-Christians

In Thomas Aquinas's constantly held conviction, the following procedure is to be followed: when the opposing side acknowledges something of revelation, one uses the method of positive reasoning (in polemics with the Jews one refers to the Old Testament, when dealing with heretics to the New Testament), when the adversary

does not acknowledge anything of divine revelation (like the Gentiles) or does not accept the authority of Scripture (like the Mohammedans, for example), one should content oneself with refuting the objections, resolving the difficulties raised against the faith or, possibly, giving credibility to the truths of the faith, all on the basis of natural reason, common to all. *De rationibus fidei* is an example of the application of this model of procedure, as evidenced by the quantitative analysis of the biblical texts used in this *opusculum*.

It must be added, however, that in his work *How to Justify the Faith*, in those chapters in which he responds to those who mock the truths of the faith inaccessible to reason without invoking the authority of Scripture, the Doctor communis does, after all, at all times perform an apology for the Christian faith, which is based on Scripture and Tradition. And consequently, he still remains within the orbit of Scripture read in accordance with the Tradition of the Church, the Creed and the statements of the Councils. This is important: proceeding on the common ground of natural reason does not mean that Thomas only practises an apology for those truths that natural reason could reach.

The truths of faith do not contradict rational knowledge but surpass it. Aquinas repeatedly emphasises that the arguments put forward against faith are never strict proofs, convincing in a compelling manner, but are at best plausible arguments, hence there is always the possibility of refuting them. The search for a common denominator does not mean reduction to a common denominator. Arguing on the grounds of the interlocutor who rejects the Christian faith is not Thomas's last word, but his first. Without risking the accusation of exaggeration, it can be said that his argument is evangelistic in spirit, for the defence of a correct understanding of the truths of the faith at the same time opens up the possibility of challenging the convictions of non-believers, which in turn opens the way for their new perception of the arguments of believers; in other words, it also allows the authority of Scripture to be introduced at the right moment. Incidentally, it is at the same time a struggle for reason itself, which must be protected – and, as it turns out, this is ultimately what faith does – from opting for a rationally non-provable solution.

Thomas justifies the *modus operandi* he has adopted with the apostolic call to defence (satisfaction) towards everyone (cf. 1 Pet 3:15), so that even when he argues in the area proper to natural reason, he remains a Christian faithful to the message of Scripture. A key passage for fundamental theologians serves the Dominican to demonstrate that the truths of faith are not to be proved, but to develop their apology, justify (make credible) and show on the rational path they are not false. Aquinas's categorical opposition to attempts at proving by reason the doctrine known from revelation, which can be seen for example in the work *On the Eternity of the World* (and in a more toned down but no less explicit manner also expressed in the *Summa against the Gentiles* and in *How to Justify the Faith*), was precisely due to the serious treatment and recognition of the primacy of revealed doctrine (known thanks to the testimony of Scripture) and the (as Thomas writes) faith over reason, which accepts this doctrine.

3. Scripture in the Apology of Scripture

Once one has proved the non-contradiction of revealed doctrine with reason and convinced one's opponent that his's rationale is not strictly evidence either, Thomas allows one to be persuaded by the authority of Scripture. This necessarily means that one must be able to provide an apology for the credibility of Scripture itself.

In the Holy Doctor's conviction, the miracles performed by Jesus prove that he was communicating God's teaching. As can be seen, Thomas treats the testimonies of the Evangelists with complete confidence that they truly describe the *gesta et verba Iesu*. Christ's teaching, as preached by uneducated and persecuted disciples, was received not through human but through divine power by those who turned to Christ. In this way also those unable to witness miracles receive a sufficient sign of the credibility of the Gospel.

Thomas argues that Scripture, being inspired from God, is divine; through Scripture God acts directly, unlike, therefore, other kinds of literature (including religious literature). Aquinas maintains that the authority of those entrusted with revelation is to be believed.

The Spirit of Truth was sent to Christ's disciples, enlightened and inflamed the hearts of the apostles with divine love.

In explaining the need for *sacra doctrina*, Thomas refers in the *Theological Summa* to 2 Tim 3:16, and the systematised conclusions of the various *loci biblici* found in his commentary on this letter help to explain the superiority of Scripture. According to the Angelic Doctor, through the inspired texts, God forms the human mind directly – this is God's own work, as opposed to what he does at the natural level through lower causes.

Also in the *Summa against the Gentiles*, Thomas justifies the need for the revelation of truths superior to reason by what is revealed in Scripture. The passage in the apostle's letter (1 Cor 2:10–11), which is only comprehensible thanks to its commentary, indicates that only the Holy Spirit penetrates the depths of God, and that knowledge of God through creation (from effect to cause) does not reach the mystery of the Godhead.

4. *Praeambula Scripturae*

The Universal Doctor underscores the legitimacy of the revelation of certain truths of faith already available to natural reason, and derives this view from revelation (there is one Creator and Saviour-Revelator) and Scripture (or confirms it through Scripture). This is also the case with the conviction that the truths of reason and the truths of faith superior to reason are not contradictory. The need to make known also those truths about divine things to which the long search of reason could lead at least a few, in the *Summa against the Gentiles* itself, is not sufficiently justified biblically; recourse to a biblical commentary is required.

From the fact that the truths at which reason could arrive have nevertheless been, by God's saving grace, revealed, it follows that the scopes of the truths of faith and the truths of reason partly overlap. This opens up the possibility for Aquinas to argue from reason also on those matters which belong to the doctrine revealed in Scripture. This is why, in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, Thomas writes about the possibility of, admittedly, not proving, but still some kind of authentication/making plausible of the truths of faith

(probable arguments instead of necessary arguments) or even recognises the value of authoritative statements in discussions with non-Christians. In a particular way, maintains the Universal Doctor, one can convince an opponent of revealed truth with the authority of Scripture confirmed by God himself.

The truths of faith, since they find their genesis in God's will, cannot be deduced in a necessary manner from the truths of reason. However, the events of salvation history are not something arbitrary and are not merely contingently related. One can look for certain *rationes* of their occurrence in the nature of God. Thomas rendered this conviction with the word *conveniens*, and from his adversaries demanded precisely the search for "fairness" or "appropriateness" instead of necessity. Without introducing an artificial "proof from Scripture," the Dominican was able to appeal at the appropriate moment to the correspondence of those conclusions reached by reason with the claims of Scripture, thus inviting entry into the territory of revealed doctrine.

5. Scripture in Polemics with Believers

The discussion with the Greeks and Armenians on the subject of Purgatory may be an example not only of a Thomas's argumentation towards Christians, but also of a multi-level interpretation of Scripture. In this case, the conclusions drawn from the Bible demand the simultaneous (even if the argumentation cannot do without chronological succession) perception of two things: that the saints will receive the eternal reward immediately after death, and that no one defiled can enter into glory. Taken together, the biblical testimonies pointing to both these facts provide evidence for the existence of Purgatory. A reflective reading of Scripture is accompanied by the assumption of mercy as the supreme work of God, which is, incidentally, also derived from revealed teaching. It should be added that Aquinas's argumentation in this passage of *De rationibus fidei* necessarily demands reaching for his commentaries, without which the Scripture quotations alone in this *opusculum* lose their persuasive force; it is only when juxtaposed with others and with Thomas's interpretation in the commentaries that they become suggestive.

Thomas's characteristic exegetical method is to some extent revealed in the samples analysed. The *magister in sacra pagina*, despite claiming that the truth of the faith he defends "is proven by clear texts" and that it already follows "at first sight" from the sacred texts, then carefully "examines" them. He analyses individual lexemes, treating them as non-accidental (inspiration!), illuminates biblical words and themes with other biblical places in which they occur, explaining in the process an unclear message or reconciling apparent intra-biblical contradictions. He can be said to apply the principle of *Scriptura sui ipsius interpres*, but not in the spirit that the Reformers would impart to it. Thomas reads Scripture in the light of Tradition and in its canonical unity (an echo of the Symbol of Faith?), invoking the authority of the Church Fathers, although he is also able to be critical of the history of interpretation (e.g., the commentaries in the *Glossa*). Aquinas takes the inspired author seriously, whose *intentio auctoris* he seeks by taking into account the overall context of the hagiographer's statements. To prove the truth of the faith, he examines the numerous testimonies of Scripture, subjecting them to solid reflection (sometimes also philosophical), which shows that he does not understand the sufficiency of Scripture in such a way that doctrine would be explicitly expressed in the *sacra pagina*.

The method of the Angelic Doctor makes it possible to appreciate the two poles of revelation: the past and the present ("only once" and "once for all"). If today we are inclined to accentuate the pole of the once-and-only-once even more strongly than he did and, as a consequence, have difficulty in reading the present message, Aquinas already during the exegesis of Scripture makes the message relevant, in the very act of reading the sacred texts in this way and not in any other one. Perhaps this should be attributed to a less historical view of revelation than our contemporaries are inclined to assume; the Angelic Doctor conceives of Scripture dynamically as being inscribed within the still happening economy of revelation. If Scripture is to be the present action of God's word, it is not so without theology. Within the word of God received in faith, Thomas develops *sacra doctrina*, and theological reflection is accompanied by the use of philosophical reason. It is therefore simultaneously

an inculturation of the word of God into the world of science of the time.

Jakie miejsce w argumentacji Tomasza z Akwinu zajmuje Pismo Święte?

Abstrakt: W artykule zaakcentowano współlistnienie teologii biblijnej i teologii systematycznej w twórczości Tomasza z Akwinu; w tym celu skorzystano z badań tomizmu biblijnego. Następnie ukazano, w jaki sposób Biblia wiąże się ze spekulacją teologiczną w początkowych kwestiach *Sumy teologicznej*, w których autor charakteryzuje *sacra doctrina*. Kolejno przedstawiono *modus operandi* Akwinaty w dyskusji z adwersarzami nieuznającymi autorytetu Pisma Świętego oraz jego apologię autorytetu *sacra Scriptura*. Dalej zademonstrowano przykładową polemikę z chrześcijanami prowadzoną w oparciu o teksty natchnione. W zakończeniu zebrano wnioski dotyczące miejsca i funkcji Pisma Świętego w argumentacji Tomasza, które zależą po pierwsze od adresatów dzieł Tomasza, a po drugie od rodzajów wypowiedzi Doktora Anielskiego.

Słowa kluczowe: Tomasz z Akwinu, uzasadnianie wiary, *De rationibus fidei*, miejsce Pisma w argumentacji, tomizm biblijny, *sacra doctrina*

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