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978-0-521-02953-7 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 45 - Prophecy and other Charisms, (2a2ae. 171-178)

Roland Potter O.P.

Excerpt

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## SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 2a2ae. 171-8

POSTQUAM DICTUM EST de singulis virtutibus et vitiis, quæ pertinent ad omnium hominum condiciones et status, nunc considerandum est de his quæ specialiter ad aliquos homines pertinent.

Invenitur autem differentia inter homines secundum ea quæ ad habitus et actus animæ rationalis pertinent, tripliciter.

Uno quidem modo secundum diversas gratias gratis datas, quia, ut dicitur,<sup>1</sup> *divisiones gratiarum sunt: et alii datur per spiritum sermo sapienti, alii sermo scientiæ, etc.*

Alia vero differentia est secundum diversas vitas, activam scilicet et contemplativam, quæ accipitur secundum diversa operationum studia: unde et ibidem dicitur quod *divisiones operationum sunt.*<sup>2</sup> Aliud enim est studium operationis in Martha, quæ *sollicita erat, et laborabat circa frequens ministerium*, quod pertinet ad vitam activam; aliud autem est in Maria, quæ *sedens secus pedes Domini audiebat verbum illius*, quod pertinet ad contemplativam, ut habetur.<sup>3</sup>

Tertio modo, secundum diversitatem officiorum et statuum, prout dicitur,<sup>4</sup> *Et ipse dedit quosdam cuidem apostolos, quosdam autem prophetas, alios vero evangelistas, alios autem pastores et doctores*, quod pertinet ad diversa ministeria, de quibus dicitur, *Divisiones ministracionum sunt.*<sup>5</sup>

Est autem attendendum circa gratias gratis datas, de quibus occurrit consideratio prima, quod quædam earum pertinent ad cognitionem, quædam vero ad locutionem, quædam vero ad operationem. Omnia vero quæ ad cognitionem pertinent, sub *prophetia* comprehendi possunt. Nam prophetica revelatio se extendit non solum ad futuros hominum eventus, sed etiam ad res divinas, et quantum ad ea quæ proponuntur omnibus credenda, quæ pertinent ad *fidem* et quantum ad altiora mysteria, quæ sunt perfectorum, quæ pertinent ad *sapientiam*. Est etiam prophetica revelatio de his quæ pertinent ad spirituales substantias, a quibus vel ad bonum vel ad malum inducimur; quod pertinet ad discretionem spirituum. Extendit etiam se ad directionem humanorum actuum, quod pertinet ad scientiam, ut infra patebit.<sup>6</sup> Et ideo primo occurrit considerandum de prophetia et de raptu, qui est quidam prophetiæ gradus.

De prophetia autem quadruplex consideratio occurrit: quarum prima est de essentia ejus; secunda de causa ipsius; tertia de modo prophetiæ cognitionis; quarta de divisione prophetiæ.

<sup>1</sup>*1 Corinthians 12, 4*<sup>2</sup>*ibid 6*<sup>3</sup>*Luke 10, 39*

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#### PROPHECY AND OTHER CHARISMS

HAVING TREATED of particular virtues and vices which relate to all men generally in every condition and walk of life, we must now consider what relates to some only and specially.

Men differ in three ways as regards the lasting dispositions and activities of a rational being.

The first is by reason of charisms or gratuitous graces, because *there are diversities of graces, and to one is given through the Spirit a word of wisdom, to another a word of knowledge, and so forth.*<sup>1</sup>

A second arises from the difference between active and contemplative lives. This is gauged in terms of a differing bent of activity. So in the same text we read *there are varieties of working.*<sup>2</sup> One thing is the zeal for activity in Martha who was *anxious and troubled about many things*, which is characteristic of the active life, another is that of Mary *who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching*,<sup>3</sup> which is characteristic of the contemplative life.

A third arises from differences in offices and states; thus *his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.*<sup>4</sup> Such are the *varieties of service* of which St Paul speaks.<sup>5</sup>

Charisms or gratuitous graces are our present concern. Some of these relate to knowledge (171-5), others to speech (176-7), others again to action (179). All the gifts relating to knowledge can be listed under the heading of *prophecy*. Prophetic revelation not only ranges out to future happenings among men, but also to divine realities, both with respect to what is proposed for the belief of all, which constitutes *faith*; and also with respect to higher mysteries, an appanage of the perfect, and constituting *wisdom*. Prophetic revelation also deals with spiritual substances as inclining us to good or evil, and this constitutes *discernment of spirits*. Finally, prophetic revelation extends to the direction of human acts: here we have the gift of *knowledge*, as we shall see later.<sup>6</sup> So our first reflections will be about prophecy, and then about ecstasy, which is a kind of grade of prophecy (175).

Prophecy calls for four considerations, the nature of prophecy (171), its causality (172), the mode of prophetic knowledge (173), the divisions of prophecy (174).

<sup>4</sup>*Ephesians* 4, 11

<sup>5</sup>*I Corinthians* 12, 5

<sup>6</sup>2a2ae. 177, 1

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## Quaestio 171. de prophetia

Circa primum quaeruntur sex:

1. utrum prophetia pertineat ad cognitionem;
2. utrum sit habitus;
3. utrum sit solum futurorum contingentium;
4. utrum propheta cognoscat omnia prophetabilia;
5. utrum propheta discernat ea quae divinitus percipit, ab eis quae proprio spiritu videt;
6. utrum prophetiae possit subesse falsum.

*articulus 1. utrum prophetia pertineat ad cognitionem*

AD PRIMUM sic proceditur:<sup>1</sup> 1. Videtur quod prophetia non pertineat ad cognitionem. Dicitur enim<sup>2</sup> quod *corpus Elisaei mortuum prophetavit*; et infra dicitur<sup>3</sup> de Joseph quod *ossa ipsius visitata sunt, et post mortem prophetaverunt*. Sed in corpore vel in ossibus post mortem non remanet aliqua cognitio. Ergo prophetia non pertinet ad cognitionem.

2. Præterea, dicitur,<sup>4</sup> *Qui prophetat, hominibus loquitur ad ædificationem*. Sed locutio est effectus cognitionis, non est autem ipsa cognitio. Ergo videtur quod prophetia non pertineat ad cognitionem.

3. Præterea, omnis cognoscitiva perfectio excludit stultitiam et insaniam. Sed hæc simul possunt esse cum prophetia; dicitur enim,<sup>5</sup> *Scitote, Israel, stultum prophetam et insanum*. Ergo prophetia non est cognoscitiva perfectio.

4. Præterea, sicut revelatio pertinet ad intellectum, ita inspiratio videtur pertinere ad affectum, eo quod importat motionem quamdam. Sed prophetia dicitur esse *inspiratio* vel *revelatio*, secundum Cassiodorum.<sup>6</sup> Ergo videtur quod prophetia non magis pertineat ad intellectum quam ad affectum.

SED CONTRA est quod dicitur,<sup>7</sup> *Qui enim Propheta dicitur hodie, olim vocabatur Videns*. Sed visio pertinet ad cognitionem. Ergo prophetia ad cognitionem pertinet.

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod prophetia primo et principaliter consistit in cognitione, quia videlicet prophetæ cognoscunt ea quae sunt procul et remota ab hominum cognitione. Unde possunt dici prophetæ a *pro*, quod est *procul*, *phanos*, quod est *apparitio*, quia scilicet eis aliqua quae sunt

<sup>1</sup>cf 3a. 7, 8. *De veritate* XII, 1. *In Isaiam* 1. *In 1 Cor.* 14, *lect.* 1. *In Hebr.* 11, *lect.* 7<sup>2</sup>*Ecclesiasticus* 48, 13

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THE NATURE OF PROPHECY

Question 171. the nature of prophecy

Here there are six points of inquiry:

1. is prophecy a matter of knowledge?
2. is it a steady disposition?
3. is it only concerned with future contingents?
4. does a prophet know all that can be prophetically conveyed?
5. can a prophet distinguish what is divinely revealed from what he grasps by his own mental capacity?
6. can error beset prophecy?

*article 1. is prophecy a matter of knowledge?*

THE FIRST POINT:<sup>1</sup> 1. Prophecy is apparently not a form of knowledge, for we read of Elisha, *when he was dead his body prophesied*,<sup>2</sup> and a little further on it is said of Joseph, *his bones were visited and they prophesied*.<sup>3</sup> But after death neither bones nor bodies are capable of knowledge.

2. St Paul says that *he who prophesies speaks to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation*.<sup>4</sup> But speech is an effect of knowledge and not knowledge itself. Neither then is prophecy a form of knowledge.

3. All perfection of knowledge excludes foolishness and insanity. Yet foolishness and insanity are at times associated with prophecy: *Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the man of spirit is mad*.<sup>5</sup> Thus prophecy is not a perfection in the order of knowledge.

4. Since revelation relates to the intelligence, inspiration would seem to relate to an affective impulse, for it implies some sort of motion. Now Cassiodorus tells us that prophecy is an *inspiration* or a *revelation*.<sup>6</sup> Thus prophecy no more belongs to the intelligence than to the will.

ON THE OTHER HAND I *Samuel*<sup>7</sup> tells us that he who *is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer*. Now vision is an act of knowledge; thus prophecy is of an intellectual order.

REPLY: Prophecy is firstly and principally a knowledge; prophets in fact know realities which are remote from the knowledge of men. Perhaps we can say that they are called prophets from *pro* for *procul*, far off, and *phanos*, appearance, because some realities which are far away appear

<sup>1</sup>ibid 49, 18

<sup>4</sup>1 *Corinthians* 14, 3

<sup>5</sup>*Hosea* 9, 7

<sup>6</sup>*Expositio in Psalterium*, prol. PL 70, 12

<sup>7</sup>1 *Samuel* 9, 9

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procul apparent. Et propter hoc, ut Isidorus dicit,<sup>8</sup> *in veteri Testamento appellabant Videntes, quia videbant ea quæ cæteri non videbant, et prospiciebant quæ in mysterio abscondita erant.* Unde et gentilitas eos appellabat *Vates a vi mentis, ut ibidem præmittit.*<sup>9</sup>

Sed quia, ut dicitur ad *Cor.*,<sup>10</sup> *Unicuique datur manifestatio spiritus ad utilitatem;* et infra, dicitur,<sup>11</sup> *Ad ædificationem Ecclesiæ quærite ut abundetis;* inde est quod prophetia secundario consistit in locutione, prout prophetæ ea quæ divinitus edocti cognoscunt, ad ædificationem aliorum annuntiant, secundum illud *Isa.*,<sup>12</sup> *Quæ audivi Domino exercituum, Deo Israel, annuntiavi vobis.* Et secundum hoc, ut Isidorus dicit,<sup>13</sup> possunt dici *Prophetæ*, quasi *Præfatores*, eo quod porro fantur, idest a remotis fantur, et de futuris vera prædicunt.

Ea autem quæ supra humanam cognitionem divinitus revelantur, non possunt confirmari ratione humana quam excedunt, sed operatione virtutis divinæ, secundum illud,<sup>14</sup> *Prædicaverunt ubique, Domino cooperante, et sermonem confirmante sequentibus signis.* Unde tertio ad prophetiam pertinet operatio miraculorum, quasi confirmatio quædam propheticæ enuntiationis. Unde dicitur,<sup>15</sup> *Non surrexit Propheta ulta in Israel sicut Moyses, quem nosset Dominus facie ad faciem in omnibus signis atque portentis.*

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod auctoritates illæ loquuntur de prophetia quantum ad hoc tertium, quod assumitur ut prophetiæ argumentum.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod Apostolus ibi loquitur quantum ad propheticam enuntiationem.

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod illi qui dicuntur prophetæ insani et stulti non sunt veri prophetæ, sed falsi: de quibus dicitur,<sup>16</sup> *Nolite audire verba prophetarum, qui prophetant vobis, et decipiunt vos: visionem cordis sui loquuntur, non de ore Domini;* et,<sup>17</sup> *Hæc dicit Dominus, Væ prophetis insipientibus, qui sequuntur spiritum suum, et nihil vident.*

4. Ad quartum dicendum quod in prophetia requiritur quod intentio mentis elevetur ad percipienda divina. Unde dicitur,<sup>18</sup> *Fili hominis, sta super pedes tuos, et loquar tecum.* Hæc autem elevatio intentionis fit Spiritu Sancto movente: unde ibidem subditur, *Et ingressus est in me spiritus, et statuit me super pedem meum.*<sup>19</sup> Postquam autem intentio mentis elevata est ad superna, percipit divina: unde subditur ibidem, *Et audivi loquentem*

<sup>8</sup>*Etymologies* VII, 8. PL 82, 283<sup>9</sup>ibid VIII, 7. PL 82, 308<sup>10</sup>1 *Corinthians* 12, 7<sup>11</sup>ibid 14, 12<sup>12</sup>*Isaiah* 21, 10<sup>13</sup>loc cit note 9<sup>14</sup>*Mark* 16, 20<sup>15</sup>*Deuteronomy* 34, 10<sup>16</sup>*Jeremiah* 23, 16<sup>17</sup>*Ezekiel* 13, 3<sup>18</sup>ibid 2, 1<sup>19</sup>ibid 2, 2<sup>20</sup>Quasi fore-speakers. St Thomas borrows his definition from Isidore of Seville, but is misled by his authority, and makes the word prophet *prophētēs* derive from a

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close to them. That is why Isidore writes,<sup>8</sup> *In the Old Testament they were termed seers because they perceived what others could not perceive, and grasped what was shrouded in mystery.* In the pagan world prophets were called *diviners* because of their *power of mind*.<sup>9</sup>

But because I *Corinthians* says,<sup>10</sup> *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good,* and,<sup>11</sup> *strive to excel for the building up of the Church,* it follows that prophecy secondarily consists of utterance or speech, in so far as the prophets know what they have been divinely taught, and they proclaim this knowledge for the edification of others; as is said in *Isaiah*,<sup>12</sup> *What I have heard from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, I announce to you.* In this way, as Isidore says, prophets can be termed *quasi fore-speakers*, since they proclaim what is remote, and speak truly of what is future.<sup>13a</sup>

Those truths which surpass all human knowledge and which are revealed from God cannot find confirmation in that human reasoning which they transcend, but only in the working of divine power, as is said,<sup>14</sup> *They went forth and preached everywhere while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it.* We also read in *Deuteronomy*,<sup>15</sup> *And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses whom the Lord knew face to face . . . for all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent him to do.*

Hence 1. The authorities cited refer to prophecy in the third sense just mentioned, which regards the proof of prophecy.

2. St Paul is referring here to the proclamation of the prophetic message.

3. Those who are called raving or mad prophets are not true prophets but false. Jeremiah speaks of them:<sup>16</sup> *Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes: they speak of visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the Lord.* And Ezekiel writes,<sup>17</sup> *Thus says the Lord, Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing.*

4. In prophecy it is needed that the capacity of a mind should be raised to the point of perceiving divine truth, as is said,<sup>18</sup> *Son of man stand on your feet and I will speak with you.* This raising of a mind's capacity is brought about by a movement of the Holy Spirit: thus we read, *The Spirit entered into me and set me upon my feet.*<sup>19</sup> After the capacity of mind was raised to things above, he perceived divine truths, hence, *I heard him*

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Greek *porro* which is impossible. The real derivation is from *pro* in place of, instead of, etc; and the rest of the word is not from *phainein* = appear, but from *phemi*, *phanai* = speak or say. The prophet is one who speaks on behalf of or for another. Etymologically there is no suggestion of futurity; and in fact a prophet does not necessarily predict the future. He is more often 'man of God' revealing God's very present will for the people of God.

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*ad me.* Sic igitur ad prophetiam requiritur inspiratio quantum ad mentis elevationem, secundum illud,<sup>20</sup> *Inspiratio Omnipotentis dat intelligentiam*; revelatio autem quantum ad ipsam perceptionem divinorum, in quo perficitur prophetia, et per ipsam removetur obscuritatis et ignorantiae velamen, secundum illud,<sup>21</sup> *Qui revelat profunda de tenebris.*

*articulus 2. utrum prophetia sit habitus*

AD SECUNDUM sic proceditur:<sup>1</sup> 1. Videtur quod prophetia sit habitus, quia, ut dicitur in *Ethic.*,<sup>2</sup> *tria sunt in anima, potentia, passio et habitus.*<sup>3</sup> Sed prophetia non est potentia, quia sic inesset omnibus hominibus, quibus potentiae animae sunt communes. Similiter etiam non est passio, quia passiones pertinent ad vim appetitivam, ut supra habitum est;<sup>3</sup> prophetia autem pertinet principaliter ad cognitionem, ut dictum est.<sup>4</sup> Ergo prophetia est habitus.

2. Præterea, omnis perfectio animae quæ non semper est in actu est habitus. Sed prophetia est quædam animae perfectio, non autem semper est in actu; alioquin non diceretur dormiens propheta. Ergo videtur quod prophetia sit habitus.

3. Præterea, prophetia computatur inter gratias gratis datas. Sed gratia est habituale quoddam in anima, ut supra habitum est.<sup>5</sup> Ergo prophetia est habitus.

SED CONTRA, *habitus est quo quis agit cum voluerit*, ut dicit Commentator.<sup>6</sup> Sed aliquis non potest uti prophetia, cum voluerit; sicut patet de Elisæo,<sup>7</sup> *quem cum Josaphat de futuris requireret, et prophetiae spiritus ei deesset, psaltem fecit applicari, ut prophetiae ad hunc spiritus per laudem psalmodiae descenderet, alque ejus animum de venturis repletur*, ut Gregorius dicit.<sup>8</sup> Ergo prophetia non est habitus.

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod, sicut Apostolus dicit,<sup>9</sup> *Omne quod manifestatur, lumen est*, quia videlicet sicut manifestatio corporalis visionis fit per lumen corporale, ita etiam manifestatio visionis intellectualis fit per

<sup>20</sup>Job 32, 8

<sup>21</sup>ibid 12, 22

<sup>1</sup>cf 1a2ae. 68, 3 ad 3; 2a2ae. 176, 2 ad 3. *De veritate* XII, 1. CG III, 154. *De potentia* VI, 4. *Quodl.* XII, 17, 1. *In I Cor.* 14, lect. 6

<sup>2</sup>*Ethics* II, 5. 1105b20

<sup>3</sup>1a2ae. 22, 2

<sup>4</sup>above art. 1

<sup>5</sup>1a2ae. 109, 6 & 9; 110, 2

<sup>6</sup>Commentary on *De Anima* 18

<sup>7</sup>II Kings 3, 15

<sup>8</sup>*On Ezekiel* 1, 1. PL 76, 793

<sup>9</sup>*Ephesians* 5, 13

<sup>8</sup>'Steady disposition', a rendering of St Thomas's *habitus*, Aristotle's *hexis*, and for which there is no exact equivalent in English. *Habitus* is a lasting quality in an ability or power whereby this acts naturally, promptly, firmly and pleasurably.



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*speaking to me.* And so prophecy calls for an inspiration that will raise a mind's capacities, as is said in *Job*,<sup>20</sup> *But it is the breath of the Almighty that makes him understand*; and prophecy calls for revelation as regards the actual perception of divine truths. This is a high point in prophecy, since revelation brings about the removal of the veils of ignorance and obscurity. It is God *who uncovers the deeps out of darkness, and brings deep darkness to light.*<sup>21</sup>

#### *article 2. is prophecy a steady disposition?*

THE SECOND POINT:<sup>1</sup> 1. It is suggested that prophecy is a steady disposition. Aristotle tells us<sup>2</sup> of three things in the soul, potency, emotion, and steady disposition.<sup>3</sup> But prophecy is not a potency, because if it were it would be in all men, for potencies of the soul are common to all. Nor is it emotion, because emotions relate to affective qualities, as we have seen.<sup>3</sup> But prophecy is primarily a matter of knowledge, as we have agreed.<sup>4</sup> Thus prophecy is a steady disposition.

2. All perfections of a soul which are not constantly actualized are steady dispositions. But prophecy is a sort of perfection of soul, and is not constantly actualized—otherwise we could never say that a prophet sleeps. So it seems that prophecy is a lasting disposition.

3. Prophecy is reckoned among the charisms, or gratuitous graces. But grace is something habitually in the soul.<sup>5</sup> So prophecy is a lasting disposition.

ON THE OTHER HAND, a steady disposition, *habitus*, is that by which a person acts when he wishes to, as Averroes says.<sup>6</sup> Now none can take to prophecy when he wills, as is clear from the story of Elisha;<sup>7</sup> as Gregory puts it,<sup>8</sup> *When Jehoshaphat inquired about future happenings, and the spirit of prophecy gave out in Elishah, Jehoshaphat caused a harp to be played, so that the spirit of prophecy might come down upon him and fill his mind with future realities.* Thus prophecy is not a lasting disposition.

REPLY: As St Paul says,<sup>9</sup> *When anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything which becomes is light*, because, for instance, just as material light makes for the manifestation of material vision, so too intellectual light makes for the manifestation of intellectual vision. Accordingly

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He who has a *habitus* uses it when he wills and as he wills; thus if he knows something thoroughly well, he has knowledge of it 'producible at will'. He has in fact a *habitus* of that knowledge.

For a tractate on *habitus* cf 1a2æ. 49-54, Vol. 22 of this series.



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lumen intellectuale. Oportet ergo quod manifestatio proportionetur lumini per quod fit, sicut effectus proportionatur suæ causæ.

Cum ergo prophetia pertineat ad cognitionem quæ supra naturalem rationem existit, ut dictum est,<sup>10</sup> consequens est quod ad prophetiam requiratur quoddam lumen intellectuale excedens lumen naturalis rationis. Unde *Mich.*,<sup>11</sup> *Cum sedero in tenebris, Dominus lux mea est.*

Lumen autem dupliciter alicui inesse potest: uno modo per modum formæ permanentis, sicut lumen corporale est in sole et in igne; alio modo per modum cuiusdam passionis, sive impressionis transeuntis, sicut lumen est in aëre. Lumen autem propheticum non inest intellectui prophetæ per modum formæ permanentis; alias oporteret quod semper prophetæ adesset facultas prophetandi: quod patet esse falsum. Dicit enim Gregorius,<sup>12</sup> *Aliquando prophetiæ spiritus deest prophetis, nec semper eorum mentibus præsto est, quatenus cum hunc non habent, se hunc cognoscant ex dono habere, cum habent.* Unde Elisæus dixit de muliere Sunamite,<sup>13</sup> *Anima ejus in amaritudine est, et Dominus celavit a me, et non indicavit mihi.*

Et hujus ratio est, quia lumen intellectuale in aliquo existens per modum formæ permanentis et perfectæ perficit intellectum principaliter ad cognoscendum principium illorum quæ per illud lumen manifestantur; sicut per lumen intellectus agentis præcipue intellectus cognoscit prima principia omnium illorum quæ naturaliter cognoscuntur. Principium autem eorum quæ ad supernaturalem cognitionem pertinent, quæ per prophetiam manifestantur, est ipse Deus, qui per essentiam a prophetis non videtur; videtur autem a beatis in patria, in quibus hujusmodi lumen inest per modum cuiusdam formæ permanentis et perfectæ, secundum illud,<sup>14</sup> *In lumine tuo videbimus lumen.*

Relinquitur ergo quod lumen propheticum insit animæ prophetæ per modum cuiusdam passionis vel impressionis transeuntis; et hoc significatur *Exod.*,<sup>15</sup> *Cumque transibit gloria mea, ponam te in foramine petræ,* etc.; et *Reg.*, dicitur ad Eliam,<sup>16</sup> *Egredere, et sta in monte coram Domino; et ecce Dominus transit,* etc. Et inde est quod sicut aër semper indiget nova illuminatione ita etiam mens prophetæ semper indiget nova revelatione, sicut discipulus, qui nondum est adeptus principia artis, indiget ut de singulis instruat. Unde et *Isa.* dicitur,<sup>17</sup> *Mane erigit mihi aurem, ut audiam quasi magistrum.* Et hoc etiam ipse modus loquendi prophetiam designat, secundum quod dicitur quod locutus est Dominus ad talem vel talem prophetam; aut quod factum est verbum Domini, sive manus Domini super eum.

<sup>10</sup>above art. 1<sup>11</sup>*Micah* 7, 8<sup>12</sup>loc cit note 8. PL 76, 792

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there must be a proportion between the light and what the light makes visible, as between a cause and its effect.

Now as prophecy pertains to a knowledge which surpasses natural reason,<sup>10</sup> it follows that prophecy calls for a certain light which surpasses the light of natural reason. Hence we read,<sup>11</sup> *When I sit in darkness the Lord will be a light to me.*

Light can inhere in a being in two ways, either by way of a permanent form, as material light is in the sun or in a fire, or by way of a kind of transient passion or impression, as light is in the air. Now prophetic light does not inhere in the mind of a prophet as a permanent form—for then the prophet would always have the faculty of prophesying, which is patently false. As Gregory says,<sup>12</sup> *Sometimes the spirit of prophecy fails the prophets, and is not at all times present to them. So much so that when they do not have the gift they are brought to acknowledge that it is a sheer gift when they do have it.* So too Elishah said of the Sunamite woman,<sup>13</sup> *She is in bitter distress and the Lord has hidden it from me and has not told me.*

The reason for this is that an intellectual light, inhering in someone as a permanent and perfect form, adds perfection to the intellect, chiefly leading it to know the principle of all the truths manifested by that light: just as by the light of active intellect the mind chiefly knows the first principles of all that is naturally knowable. But the principle of all that relates to supernatural knowledge and of all that is manifested by prophecy, is God himself, who in his essence cannot be known by the prophets. Yet God will be seen by the blessed in heaven, because in these the light inheres by way of a permanent and perfected form: *In thy light we shall see light.*<sup>14</sup>

It remains then that prophetic light inheres in the soul of a prophet by way of a transient passion or impression. This is shown in *Exodus*,<sup>15</sup> *While my glory passes by, I will put you in the cleft of a rock*, and in *Kings* we read,<sup>16</sup> *Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord, and behold the Lord passed by.* So too just as the atmosphere ever needs to be newly lighted up, so too the prophet's mind ever needs new revelation, just as a pupil who has not mastered the principles of his art needs instruction about each single point. *Isaiah* says,<sup>17</sup> *Morning by morning he awakens . . . he awakens my ear.* So too the very wording of Scripture is descriptive of prophecy, as when we read 'the Lord has spoken' to one or other prophet, or that the 'word of the Lord' was heard, or that 'the hand of the Lord was upon him'.

<sup>10</sup>*I Kings* 4, 27<sup>15</sup>*Exodus* 33, 22<sup>17</sup>*Isaiah* 50, 4<sup>14</sup>*Psalms* 35, 10<sup>16</sup>*I Kings* 19, 11