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978-0-521-02961-2 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 53 - The Life of Christ,  
(3a. 38-45)

Samuel Parsons O.P. and Albert Pinheiro O.P.

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The Summa Theologiæ ranks among the greatest documents of the Christian Church, and is a landmark of medieval western thought. It provides the framework for Catholic studies in systematic theology and for a classical Christian philosophy, and is regularly consulted by scholars of all faiths and none, across a range of academic disciplines. This paperback reissue of the classic Latin/English edition first published by the English Dominicans in the 1960s and 1970s, in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, has been undertaken in response to regular requests from readers and librarians around the world for the entire series of 61 volumes to be made available again. The original text is unchanged, except for the correction of a small number of typographical errors.

The original aim of this edition was not narrowly ecclesiastical. It sought to make this treasure of the Christian intellectual heritage available to theologians and philosophers of all backgrounds, including those who, without claiming to be believers themselves, appreciate a religious integrity which embodies hardbitten rationalism and who recognise in Thomas Aquinas a master of that perennial philosophy which forms the bedrock of European civilisation. Because of this the editors worked under specific instructions to bear in mind not only the professional theologian, but also the general reader with an interest in the 'reason' in Christianity. The parallel English and Latin texts can be used successfully by anybody with a basic knowledge of Latin, while the presence of the Latin text has allowed the translators a degree of freedom in adapting their English version for modern readers. Each volume contains a glossary of technical terms and is designed to be complete in itself to serve for private study or as a course text.

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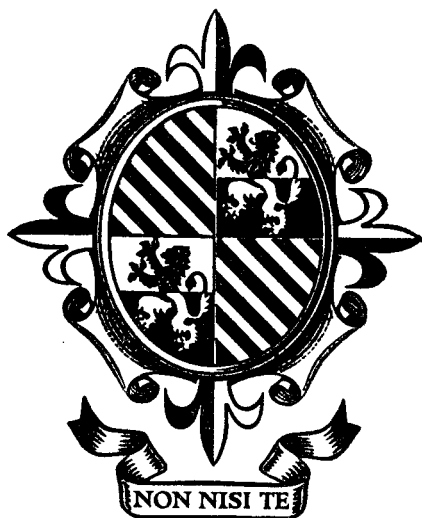
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SUMMA  
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Latin text and English translation,  
Introductions, Notes, Appendices  
and Glossaries



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IN AN AUDIENCE, 13 December 1963, to a group representing the Dominican Editors and the combined Publishers of the New English *Summa*, His Holiness Pope Paul VI warmly welcomed and encouraged their undertaking. A letter from His Eminence Cardinal Cicognani, Cardinal Secretary of State, 6 February 1968, expresses the continued interest of the Holy Father in the progress of the work, 'which does honour to the Dominican Order, and the Publishers, and is to be considered without doubt as greatly contributing to the growth and spread of a genuinely Catholic culture', and communicates his particular Apostolic Blessing.

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QUÆ PERTINENT AD PROGRESSUM IPSIUS IN MUNDO']

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## EDITORIAL NOTES

THE LATIN text strikes a compromise between that of the Piana and of the Leonine editions, if the phrase be not too strong for a section where the differences are few and of no great moment. A few of the variations have been noted. The translation follows the order of the sentences, but, though close, has sought to avoid the crabbed effect in English of matching the original word for word.

Biblical references are to the Vulgate. Patristic references are to Migne (PG, Greek Fathers; PL, Latin Fathers). Abbreviations to St Thomas's works are as follows:

*Summa Theologiae*, without title. Part, question, article, reply; e.g. Ia, 3, 2 ad 3. 1a2æ. 17, 6. 2a2æ. 180, 10. 3a. 35, 8.

*Summa Contra Gentiles*, CG. Book, chapter; e.g. CG 1, 28.

*Scriptum in IV Libros Sententiarum*, *Sent.* Book, distinction, question, article, solution or *quæstioncula*, reply; e.g. III *Sent.* 25, 2, 3, ii ad 3.

*Compendium Theologiae*, *Compend. Theol.*

Philosophical commentaries: On Aristotle's *De Anima*, *In De an.*; on his *Metaphysics*, *In Meta.*; on the Dionysian *De divinis nominibus*, *In De div. nom.*

*Quæstiones de Anima*, *Q. de anima.*

*Quæstiones quodlibetales (de quolibet)*, *Quodl.*

References to the commentaries of Albert and Bonaventure on the *Sentences* take the same form as the references to Thomas's commentary. Commentaries on the *De anima* by Albert, Averroes and Themistius are given as *In De an.* The Halesian *Summa* is given as *Summa theol.*

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## INTRODUCTION

IN THE PROLOGUE to the *Tertia Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* there is a single citation from Scripture—Christ came to save his people from their sins (*Matthew* 1, 21). It is under this soteriological aspect that St Thomas offers his study of the work of Christ in human history.

Yet it must be remembered that this was done according to the method and needs of his own time, the 13th century. Prior to this the Fathers of the Church had a profound awareness of the fundamental meaning of salvation history: God revealed himself and spoke to his people in time and space. This revelation culminated in the person and mission of Jesus Christ, and it was continued and deepened in the Church which was the very living, spiritual body of Christ, the sacrament of Christ's presence in history. The Church lived in the mystery of Christ. Hence the divine-human dialogue had to be continued in the life of the Sacramental Christ, the Church. The Fathers, as leading figures of the Church, were convinced that God still spoke to his people in history. His word was preserved in the sacred writings of the Old and New Testaments and in the unwritten life of the Church and its tradition. Together both preserved and manifested the word of the living God. The Fathers were men of faith who constantly sought to make this word as revealed in and through Christ relevant to the age in which they lived.

To do this they undertook a deeper investigation of the meaning of the sacred text. They recognized the fact that the word of God as found in Scripture had a meaning in its own context, one which was given to those who first heard it. But the word of God as found in the sacred text and proclaimed in a living tradition had to speak to the faithful of all ages—to the Church which was awaiting Christ's return in glory. Accordingly the words had a deeper meaning which was both Christological and ecclesiological, and which was to be addressed to the Church in time and space. Hence the Fathers developed a basic twofold meaning, the *literal sense* and the *spiritual sense*.

The literal sense was the meaning found in the words as they were given and understood when first proclaimed in the life of the people of God, the meaning of the text in the historical situation in which it was formed. The Fathers recognized the necessity of understanding this meaning; it lay at the foundation of the divine self-revelation within salvation history. Indeed, the School of Antioch did much to assert the obligation and value of grasping the word of God in its own context. But in many ways this was seen to be inadequate and insufficient to those who sought to intensify their faith in Christ. Men wished to see how the entire Old Testament

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pointed to Christ and his community by way of promise; they wished to see how the Old and the New Testaments still spoke to them in their own time. The word of God had to be applied to the life and guidance of the Church in history. The spiritual sense was the meaning of the sacred text in relation to Christ's Church living in time and space. The School of Alexandria fostered the study of this spiritual sense and, constantly reassessing and reapplying God's message to new situations, made use of *analogy*; Scripture was seen to offer numerous parallels to the contemporary historical and sacramental setting. The rules of grammar, logic and rhetoric were employed to determine the literal sense; allegory and typology were the hermeneutical tools used to show how God was still speaking to his people.

The medievals were heirs of the Fathers. There was no abrupt break with the past. The desire of the men of faith was to have the sacred text speak to them in their own lives. Certainly the literal sense of Scripture was not disdained, and the more critical works of Jerome and Augustine were valued for their balance and erudition. Nevertheless, the spiritual sense was always the main interest of research and reflection. Much of the knowledge of the history of Israel had been lost, and the leaders of the Greek- and Latin-speaking Church had little understanding of the Hebrew and Judaistic mind. The literal sense was obscure and had little meaning for the faithful of the early Middle Ages. Rather God seemed to speak to them in their lives through the spiritual sense of Sacred Scripture and in the spiritual life of the Church. Great reverence was shown to the spiritual interpretations of Jerome and Augustine, Hilary and Ambrose; the influence of Origen and the School of Alexandria was predominant. A passage from the Old or New Testament would be read, and commented on with abundant parallels to the spiritual life and practice of the Church; the *Lectio Divina* and the *Homilies* of the great Fathers were ways to make the revelation of God a living reality to an age of faith. With the repetition of this process there was a reluctance to depart from established procedures.

Certain changes began to take place during the 12th and especially the 13th centuries, when men's minds became ever more impressed with the philosophical systems of classical Greece, particularly those of Plato and Aristotle. Greek philosophical thought was seen to provide a systematic non-historical understanding of man and the cosmos. Human life and conduct were based on the operations of nature and the dictates of reason rather than on the demands of God as revealed in the contingent events of history. Platonism and Aristoteleanism provided a full world-view quite independent of revelation in history. Such systems had their own natural principles based on the perceptions of a physical and metaphysical order;

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they had their own solutions to the problems of man and his world. Some churchmen found this growing interest in Greek philosophy pernicious and dangerous, but others saw here no threat to faith, but rather a challenge to be faced and resolved. They sought to understand, expound and interpret the revelation of God made in salvation history and preserved in the life of Christ and his Church in terms of this non-historical, philosophical way of thought. Hence once the philosophical system was accepted it provided the thinkers of that age with certain *questiones* which could and should be asked of the word of God as revealed in history and contained in faith. Indeed, reason was seen to be a hermeneutic of faith, able to explain and interpret faith up to a point. It was the task of the great theologians of the 12th and 13th centuries to explain whenever possible the supernatural faith of the Church in terms of natural reason.

What did this mean with respect to the study of the word of God as found in Sacred Scripture and witnessed in the tradition of the Church? On the one hand it became subject to a new mode of analysis. The medieval doctors did not interrogate the word of God in what was taken to be the historical order of the texts. Rather, their questions were posed in the context of the system in a non-historical manner. Faith in God and his self-revelation in cosmic and human history remained the controlling factor, but the meaning of this revelation was determined by reference to a non-historical hermeneutic—the philosophical system. This development stimulated a renewed interest in the literal sense, since it was only the historical or religious situation itself—the salvation event—which was being interpreted, not its influence and significance in subsequent generations. Thus, the medieval doctors attempted to acquire more accurate texts of the Old and New Testaments and if possible to consult them in their original Hebrew and Greek. So too they stressed the study of logic and grammar as well as the proper and improper senses of words and phrases. Given the limitations of the time and the lack of source material, their efforts were praiseworthy even if not always successful.

On the other hand they did not wish to break with the older understanding and interpretation of God and his self-revelation in history. Hence they made a constant effort to connect their exposition of the word of God with the past—with the tradition of the Church as they understood it, and with the authority of its great doctors and saints. In this way they sought to preserve a continuity with the past, and an integration of the soteriological and Christological interpretation of the Bible as based on faith with the philosophical interpretation of the text as based on reason. This was a delicate balance and often difficult to preserve. Yet it was one of the crowning achievements of the high Middle Ages that the revealed word of God was co-ordinated and exposed to the philosophical mind of man as

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expressed in the thought of classical Greece. Systematic theology attained great insights into the meaning of the sacred text and the divine-human dialogue it recorded; revelation and reason were brought into a vast and lasting synthesis of faith and knowledge.

St Thomas Aquinas lived and died during this intellectual renaissance of the 13th century, and his work has remained as a supreme expression of its accomplishments. On the one hand he preserved continuity with the past in his mode of treating the sacred text, and certainly with respect to his presentation and exposition of the life and mission of Jesus Christ. His commentary *Super Evangelium Sancti Matthæi* (c. 1256–1259) and his commentary *Super Evangelium Sancti Joannis* (c. 1269–1272) are both traditional pieces of exegetical work in general line with the *Lectio Divina* of his age. Thus the text of the Gospel is given in whole or in part, depending upon the particular passage under consideration. Often there follows a series of remarks about the text and its structure, as well as some observations concerning the historical or religious situation described there. There is added a number of theological or spiritual reflections on the point at issue, with copious citations from both the Old and New Testaments. When appropriate, reference is made to the writings and thoughts of various distinguished Fathers of the Church, and even on occasion to theological problems or errors which might have arisen regarding a particular passage or idea found there. In this way St Thomas follows the traditional way of explaining the Gospels. He recognizes that there can be a literal and spiritual sense and both are valuable (cf 1a. 1, 10, Vol. 1 of this series). However he prefers the literal sense so far as it can best be determined, and he avoids all forms of allegorical or mystical fancy so popular in the medieval Church. To the contrary he declares that historical truth must always lie at the foundation of any spiritual interpretation of the Bible (cf 1a. 102, 1). His sobriety is evident as he comments on the life and work of Christ as recorded in the Gospel. A vast wealth of traditional and personal erudition is brought to bear on his interpretation of the word of God. In this he holds a distinguished place in the ranks of Christian exegetes.

On the other hand St Thomas was also prepared to face the challenge of his age. The faith of the Church had to be interpreted and situated in the context of a philosophical world-view which was non-historical and non-Christian. He was not the first of his age to undertake this task. Yet, in his *Summa Theologiæ* there is an impressive presentation of the confession of faith in a systematic rational whole. Reason must minister to faith, to elucidate its mystery, not to compromise or destroy it (cf 1a. 1, 8 ad 2). Accordingly, when treating of the person and mission of Christ, the point of departure remains the conviction of *faith*—that Jesus Christ is the Son

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of God, the Second Person of the Trinity; he is a truly divine person who became man at a given moment of time in accordance with the will of God the Father. He lived and died as a man for the salvation of all men and he was raised from the dead and exalted into a new life of eternal glory with God; he is the supreme mediator of God in cosmic and human history. Such faith is that of the primitive Church itself; it is found in the Pauline tradition, especially as represented in *Ephesians* and *Hebrews*, and in the Johannine tradition according to the witness of the Fourth Gospel.

Hence St Thomas poses certain *Quaestiones* about the meaning of the Incarnation of God as a man (3a. 1-26). Various concepts of divinity and humanity are explored, both as proclaimed by faith and clarified by reason. Then he speaks of Christ's coming into the world (3a. 27-34), his birth and childhood (3a. 35-37), his public mission (3a. 38-45), his Passion and death (3a. 46-52), his resurrection, glorification and universal judgment (3a. 53-59). Again, the mode of presentation is that of a divine figure moving into the fullness of human history and human events.

In this context, of the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ, St Thomas sees his activity as that of a divine-human figure who has come into the world to reveal the works and words of God in order to save man (3a. 44, 3). He treats John the Baptist and his ministry as a prophetic preparation and witness to the superior mission of Christ (3a. 38); the baptism of Christ as the first public manifestation of his divine sonship, one confirmed by the Father's voice and the presence of the Spirit (3a. 39); Christ's way of life from the point of view of a divine figure leading an extraordinarily humble, austere, poor human life for the sake of others (3a. 40); the temptation of Christ as an ordeal which the Son of God undergoes for the benefit of men (3a. 41); the teaching of Christ as that of a divine figure speaking to all men, Jew and Gentile alike, the salvific words of God (3a. 42); the wondrous works of Christ as showing divine power present and active in the Son of God and revealed to help and save men (3a. 43-44); and the transfiguration of Christ as yet another revelation of the divine sonship of Jesus, but one made so that his closest disciples could see the promise of their own future glorification as sons of God (3a. 45). Abundant citations from the sacred text and the writings of the Fathers support the insights which St Thomas himself had both as a man of faith and a man of reason.

Granted the overall world-view reflected here by St Thomas, his study of the human life and mission of Jesus Christ occupies a restricted position in the total presentation of his Christology. St Thomas did not wish to investigate the humanity of Christ in isolation from his divinity. Rather he writes of the divine person's activity as a man. Many features of Christ's true human character are discussed, but his divine sonship is the main



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underlying interest. Hence there is no effort made to trace the psychological growth of the humanity of Jesus; or to review the sociological and ethical aspects of his human mission; or to determine any precise chronological pattern for Jesus' historical ministry; or to connect his work with the history of Israel and the soteriological and eschatological hopes of contemporary Judaism. Rather he seeks to present to the inquiring minds of his age the figure of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, as the revelation of God's grace of salvation. The Son of God has entered into cosmic and human history to restore and reconcile all things to the Father. In this he remains faithful to the tradition of the Church and the Gospel itself. The evangelical and kerygmatic witness of the primitive Church reflect much the same conviction of faith. He understands the meaning of salvation history: he goes to great lengths to show that Jesus Christ was the fulfilment of God's promises to Israel as preserved in the Old Testament—and he goes on to show that Jesus Christ is still alive and active in his Church through the sacraments. However, this is expressed in a context in which the confession of faith found in the Church may be co-ordinated to the insights of men of reason. This has made the work of St Thomas a gift to posterity. The results of contemporary biblical and theological scholarship show how many of his thoughts are as vital to this as to his own age.

S. P.