

## GRACE TASTED DEATH FOR ALL

THOMAS AQUINAS ON HEBREWS 2:9

Lee Gatiss

### Summary

*This article examines the biblical interpretation of Thomas Aquinas, which has until recently been relatively neglected amongst the many works of this leading medieval theologian. Looking particularly at ‘by the grace of God Christ tasted death for all’ (Hebrews 2:9), a key phrase which throws up several exegetical and theological puzzles, it concludes that Aquinas’s approach to it is a prime example of medieval commentating both at its best and its worst. It shows how his lack of knowledge of Greek led him astray, notes his neglect of textual criticism, and examines his reliance on tradition, especially the Hebrews commentary of Peter Lombard. It places his use of the theological formula ‘sufficient for all, efficacious for the elect alone’ when expounding the words ‘for all’ into historical context, surveying exegetical discussion of the extent of the atonement from Origen to Gottschalk to John Owen. Aquinas’s use of the scholastic ‘division of the text’ methodology to identify a melodic line centring on this verse’s theme of ‘grace’ within both Hebrews and Paul (the assumed author) is uncovered, along with other interpretative tactics and a reflective piety which jar against the presuppositions of modern academic biblical studies.*

### 1. Thomas Aquinas’s Commentary on Hebrews

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was one of the foremost theologians and philosophers of the Middle Ages. Known since the Fifteenth Century as Doctor Angelicus, he was a Dominican priest from Aquino, about 125 miles south of Rome. Fifty years after his death he was canonised as a saint, and in the Sixteenth Century he was officially proclaimed by

the Roman Catholic Church as a ‘Doctor of the Universal Church’. His unfinished masterpiece, the *Summa Theologiae* written between 1265 and 1274, continues to exert a powerful influence over theologians today, both within and outside Roman Catholicism. His influence has been felt particularly since the 1879 Papal encyclical *Aeterni Patris* which vigorously reintroduced Thomism into Roman Catholic philosophical teaching.

Aquinas wrote several commentaries on the works of Aristotle but it is only recently that ‘scholars have begun to insist on the importance of studying his biblical commentaries’.<sup>1</sup> He wrote ten detailed commentaries on books of the Bible, yet the relative neglect of them may be understandable when we discover that they were considered by some ‘too advanced’ for many of his contemporaries.<sup>2</sup> As Fergus Kerr points out, ‘It is, as yet, only among specialists that these works are much studied ... the general reader is unlikely to make headway.’<sup>3</sup>

Frederick Farrar concluded that Thomas ‘with all his nobleness and greatness, profound as a thinker, incomparable as a theologian, is least successful in the interpretation of Scripture’.<sup>4</sup> It is our contention, however, that as Karlfried Froehlich declares, ‘In his biblical commentaries and his exegetical writings, Thomas undoubtedly represented the best of contemporary biblical scholarship.’ We will demonstrate below how he uses the techniques of medieval interpretation in his exposition of one particular verse of the New Testament, a verse which throughout the history of interpretation has thrown up a number of textual, grammatical, and theological puzzles. Froehlich goes on to say that ‘He was not, however, an innovator on this turf.’<sup>5</sup> In other words, Aquinas in some ways represents the best and the worst of medieval exegesis, particularly when his work is compared with later humanist advances. This will become apparent in some of the details of his approach to these puzzles.

Christopher Ocker recently lamented that, ‘The vast majority of late medieval commentaries on the Bible have never been edited and must

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<sup>1</sup> F. Kerr, *Thomas Aquinas: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): ix.

<sup>2</sup> B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983): 275.

<sup>3</sup> Kerr, *Thomas Aquinas*, 20.

<sup>4</sup> F. Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (London: Macmillan, 1886): 269.

<sup>5</sup> K. Froehlich, ‘Aquinas, Thomas’ in *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. D. K. McKim (Leicester: IVP, 1998): 89.

be examined in manuscript.<sup>6</sup> With Aquinas, however, we are fortunate to have a number of his commentaries in both Latin and English printed editions.<sup>7</sup> The commentary on Hebrews which is our especial focus here dates from lectures he gave on the epistle between 1265 and 1268,<sup>8</sup> around the time he was beginning the *Summa*, and consists of notes (*reportationes*) taken down by his secretary Reginald of Piperno.<sup>9</sup> The commentaries he wrote around this time certainly influenced the direction of his more systematic *Summa*, according to Matthew Levering.<sup>10</sup> We shall be looking at what Thomas says about grace tasting death, and grace is an important theme in both the letter itself and in the commentary. Hebrews was written, according to Aquinas, ‘against the errors of some who, having converted from Judaism to the faith of Christ, wanted to keep the legal observances along with the Gospel, as if the grace of Christ did not suffice unto salvation.’<sup>11</sup> This intentionality of Hebrews itself, in exalting God’s grace, is ‘the hermeneutical guide’ to Aquinas’s commentary according to Thomas Weinandy.<sup>12</sup> This is in accord with the common medieval ideal that the *scopus textus*, that is, the aim of the whole epistle, should be used to control, restrain, and fix the proper interpretation of a given passage.

So as we come to sample the commentary itself, it is fitting to examine a verse which not only exalts God’s grace but does so with a

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<sup>6</sup> C. Ocker, ‘Scholastic Interpretation of the Bible’ in *A History of Biblical Interpretation. Volume 2: The Medieval and Reformation Periods*, ed. A. J. Hauser & D. F. Watson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009): 272. A particularly valuable study of the exegesis of a near contemporary of Aquinas whose commentaries have never previously appeared in print, was recently published as Timothy F. Bellamah, *The Biblical Interpretation of William of Alton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> The modern standard edition of the Latin text of the commentaries on Paul’s epistles (including Hebrews) is R. Cai, ed., *S. Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Super Epistolas S. Pauli Lectura* (2 Vols.; Turin, 1953). There is an English translation in *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 2006, tr. by C. Baer).

<sup>8</sup> J.-P. Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas. Volume 1: The Person and His Work* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996): 340.

<sup>9</sup> K. Froehlich, ‘Paul and the Late Middle Ages’ in *Companion to Paul in the Reformation*, ed. R. W. Holder (Leiden: Brill, 2009): 12. However, J. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas d’Aquino: His Life, Thought and Works* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1983): 373 thinks Aquinas was more directly involved in writing the commentary.

<sup>10</sup> M. Levering, *Christ’s Fulfilment of Torah and Temple: Salvation According to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame: NDUP, 2002): 8.

<sup>11</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 8.

<sup>12</sup> T. G. Weinandy, ‘The Supremacy of Christ: Aquinas’ Commentary on Hebrews’ in *Aquinas on Scripture*, ed. T. G. Weinandy et al. (London: T&T Clark, 2005): 225.

focus on the centrepiece of salvation, the death of Christ. Hebrews 2:9 says that by the grace of God, Christ tasted death for all. Aquinas tells us, in suitably scholastic vein, that this describes Christ's passion from three viewpoints: 'first, from its cause, when it says *ut gratia Dei* [so that by the grace of God]; secondly, from its utility, when he says it was *pro omnibus* [for all]; thirdly from the manner, when it says *gustaret* [that he might taste]'. We will examine his exposition of these three points, to uncover what for him was the significance of this 'taste of death' which Christ endured and experienced. We will see in the process that Aquinas's commentary on this verse is an excellent example of medieval biblical interpretation, with all its strengths and weaknesses.

## 2. Grace Alone: The Cause of Christ's Passion

Thomas begins by explaining that the cause of Christ's passion, his tasting the bitterness of death, was God's grace alone (*sola gratia Dei*). God the Father gave his only begotten Son entirely out of grace and mercy. The Latin word *gratia* can, according to Lewis and Short,<sup>13</sup> have the sense of 'a mark of favour shown for a service rendered', but there is no sense here (or in the Epistle to the Hebrews itself) that God's salvific action is remunerative of our service to him. He is not motivated to redeem people by their prior worship of him or obedience to him. Thomas makes it clear that he reads *gratia* this way as kindness, mercy, or undeserved love by his citation of John 3:16, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son' and Romans 5:8, 'it was while we were still sinners that Christ died for us'. Christ, he says, was 'given freely' (*est gratis datus*), citing Isaiah 9:6, 'a Son is given to us'.

This is by no means an entirely original thought, of course.<sup>14</sup> However, an alternative translation and interpretation which Thomas suggests does indeed have a tang of novelty about it, and illustrates Aquinas's limitations. In the original Greek of the New Testament, χάριτι, from χάρις (grace) is dative and can only be dative, and means

<sup>13</sup> *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896): 825 *gratia* II.B.

<sup>14</sup> Chrysostom makes the same point that invoking God's grace means he did not owe us anything, in his homily on Hebrews 2. See P. Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (First Series; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999): 14: 383.

‘by grace’ or perhaps ‘in/with grace’.<sup>15</sup> In the Latin Vulgate translation, however, the equivalent word *gratia* in *gratia Dei* can be ablative, ‘by the grace of God’ (the equivalent here of the Greek dative), but it could also be construed as nominative ‘the grace of God’. This would give the sense of *ipse Christus, qui est gratia Dei*, ‘Christ himself, who is the Grace of God [might taste death for all]’.

This is an impossible reading of the original Greek of the New Testament epistle itself. It would certainly be rejected by later interpreters especially after the humanist turn *ad fontes* during the Renaissance.<sup>16</sup> It was a weakness of medieval biblical studies generally that not enough attention was given to the languages in which Scripture was originally written. The English scholar Bishop Robert Grosseteste (1175–1253) stands out as one exception, but Thomas, along with most of his contemporaries, ‘never leaned Greek, let alone Hebrew’.<sup>17</sup> It is instructive to see, then, the basis on which he gives credence to this now obviously invalid interpretation, as it reveals something about the nature of medieval interpretation more widely.

Thomas serves up this exegetical option on two grounds. First, we can say that ‘grace tasted death’ because Christ *is* grace and the *auctor gratiae*, the author of grace. This idea is seasoned with a quotation from John’s Gospel where the apostle says ‘Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ’ (John 1:17). Thomas thus uses Scripture to interpret Scripture, in accordance with the *analogia fidei* or analogy of faith. A clear passage from elsewhere is used to validate an exegetical option under debate, ensuring that the alternatives all line up as theologically orthodox. While this standard and widespread technique ensures the spiritually edifying nature of the resulting reading (or at least prevents

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<sup>15</sup> The word χάριτι occurs 24 times in the New Testament, and is usually translated ‘by grace’, as in Ephesians 2:8, ‘For *by grace* you have been saved, through faith’; ‘being justified *by his grace* we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life’ (Titus 3:7); and ‘*by the grace of God* I am what I am’ (1 Corinthians 15:10).

<sup>16</sup> E.g. John Owen, *Exercitations upon the Epistle to the Hebrews concerning the Priesthood of Christ* (London, 1674): 320 comments on Aquinas here that “Such woful mistakes do men, otherwise wise and learned, fall into, who undertake to expound the Scriptures without consulting the original, or an ability so to do.”

<sup>17</sup> Kerr, *Thomas Aquinas*, 8. For some other places where his lack of Greek shows in the Hebrews commentary, see D. Keating, ‘Thomas Aquinas and the Epistle to the Hebrews: “The Excellence of Christ”’ in *Christology, Hermeneutics, and Hebrews: Profiles from the History of Interpretation*, ed. J. C. Laansma & D. J. Treier (London: T&T Clark, 2012): 91 n. 29, 96.

the introduction of pernicious heresy), it does not of course necessarily lead to the most historically faithful rendering of a text.

Aquinas's other reason for mentioning this peculiarly Latin misreading of the Greek New Testament is that it is supposedly from *Glossa Augustini*, a Gloss of Augustine. The great Patristic 'authorities' such as Augustine, Jerome, and Chrysostom, were treated reverentially by medieval interpreters, including Thomas Aquinas. Respect for tradition is one thing, but as C. S. Lewis noted, commenting on this common feature of medieval literature, 'It was apparently difficult to believe that anything in the books—so costly, fetched from so far, so old, often so lovely to the eye and hand, was just plumb wrong.' The medieval mind suffered from 'an inability to say, "Bosh."<sup>18</sup> Here, Aquinas gets into a certain amount of trouble. We have no commentary on Hebrews from St. Augustine, and the *Patrologia Latina* edition of his works contains no pertinent references to Hebrews 2:9 or the relevant words here. Augustine does once refer to Christ as *Veritas* (Truth), making a specific point about the nominative case,<sup>19</sup> but not to Christ as *Gratia*. Aquinas refers to Augustine more than twenty-five times in his commentary on Hebrews, but none of the sources mentioned in his more specific citations yield the requisite interpretation of Hebrews 2:9.

Medieval footnoting standards were not, of course, as rigorous as those of twenty-first-century academia. As Ian Levy says, 'we should not expect the medieval exegetes to cite their sources with anything like the accuracy that modern scholarship requires.'<sup>20</sup> All the same, it can be startling to leaf through the pages of, for example, a recent translation of Peter Lombard's classic medieval theology textbook *The Sentences* and find that the modern editor has on many occasions discovered errors in Lombard's claims about his sources, and that he even cites the arch-heretic Pelagius, thinking he is using orthodox writers.<sup>21</sup> It is not surprising that Lombard, whose work is saturated

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<sup>18</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966): 45.

<sup>19</sup> See Augustine's gloss on John 8:21-25 in Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*, 7: 221.

<sup>20</sup> I. C. Levy, *The Letter to the Galatians* (The Bible in Medieval Tradition; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011): 14.

<sup>21</sup> E.g. in P. Lombard, *The Sentences Book 3: On the Incarnation of the Word* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2008; tr. by G. Silano): 6, 16 he claims to be quoting Jerome but editor Giulio Silano has identified his source as

with Augustine because of the high regard in which the ancient Bishop of Hippo was held, also regularly misidentifies Augustine as his source for a particular view.<sup>22</sup> Ironically, on this occasion, it is to Lombard that we must turn to find the source of Aquinas's nominative reading of *gratia Dei*. For in Lombard's commentary on Hebrews 2:9 he writes, 'And this is so that the grace of God, that is to say, that he himself who is the grace of God (because he freely gives, or because he is freely given to us), might taste death.'<sup>23</sup> Lombard may rightly be called Augustinian, but Aquinas's source here is probably more correctly termed a *Glossa Lombardi* than a *Glossa Augustini*.

So, says Aquinas, by grace alone, Grace himself tasted death. Whether the Lombardian nominative reading was correct or not, Aquinas does not stop to argue either way. John Boyle commented recently that, 'Medieval interpreters of scripture are strikingly comfortable with differing literal interpretations of a given passage.'<sup>24</sup> Yet Beryl Smalley said of Aquinas that, 'In his exegesis he generally avoids long lists of alternative explanations, such as his predecessors were accustomed to give; and this suggests that he preferred only one literal meaning.'<sup>25</sup> Aquinas has certainly not given a long list of alternatives on this occasion, though he has suggested a pious rendering of the clause, not entirely incompatible with the literal sense of the original, which is certainly more restrained than some commentators, medieval or otherwise, might be. It is striking by modern standards that he does not comment on the fact that the nominative reading cannot be an accurate rendering of the original Greek text, but this is understandable in his own time since his base

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Pelagius. Indeed, according to Levy, *Galatians*, 24, Pelagius' commentaries often circulated under Jerome's name.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Augustine is wrongly identified as a source in Lombard, *Sentences Book 3*, 19, 27, 31, 33, 91, 95, 128, 131. Like other medieval commentators, Lombard also makes use of the prologues to various biblical books first written by that other arch-heretic, Marcion.

<sup>23</sup> 'Et hoc ideo ut gratia Dei, id est ipse qui est gratia Dei, quia gratis dat, vel quia gratis datus est nobis, gustaret mortem'. *Patrologia Latina* 192:236 [Col.0419A].

<sup>24</sup> J. F. Boyle, 'The Theological Character of the Scholastic "Division of the Text" with Particular Reference to the Commentaries of Saint Thomas Aquinas' in *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. J. D. McAuliffe, B. Walfish & J. W. Goering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): 279. See also Healy, 'Introduction' in Weinandy et al., *Aquinas on Scripture*, 17.

<sup>25</sup> Smalley, *Study of the Bible*, 300-301 n. 3.

text for the commentary was the Latin version, which would be read at mass and used in the study.<sup>26</sup>

Aquinas does not appear to be aware of another difficult issue in the interpretation of this verse, which was perhaps more worthy of comment. A large number of both Eastern and Western Fathers, and some later manuscripts, read  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma$   $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  (apart from/except God) instead of  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\tau\iota$   $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  (by the grace of God).<sup>27</sup> The previous verse (Hebrews 2:8) speaks of everything being in subjection to Jesus, so it is possible that a marginal gloss on this, explaining that God himself is not made subject to Christ, could have made its way into the text. Alternatively,  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\tau\iota$  may simply have been replaced with  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma$  through a scribal lapse.<sup>28</sup> Patristic interpreters wrestled with this variant and came to differing conclusions about the internal evidence, even ascribing heretical theological motives to those who disagreed with them.<sup>29</sup> Thomas, however, was either unaware of this variant, unconcerned by it, or eager to avoid getting involved in the intricacies of textual criticism. This again is a limitation in his exposition.

Behold, says Aquinas, Christ tasted death for us not because he had to, but because he is the personification of grace, mercy, and love. This reading of the verse is in accordance with the *analogia fidei* and not unedifying spiritually, but it must be said that on certain interpretative issues and his citation of previous tradition, Aquinas's comments exhibit classic medieval traits which can make it appear a little curious to twenty-first century readers.

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<sup>26</sup> A contemporary of Augustine, Ephrem the Syrian (303-373), writing in Syriac, also speaks of "that Grace which stooped low... Grace clothed itself in [man's] likeness." See *Hymns on Paradise* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990; tr. by Sebastian Brock): 156.

<sup>27</sup>  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma$   $\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  is found in Ambrose, *Exposition of the Christian Faith*, ch. 8, section 108 in P. Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. Second Series* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999): 10: 297 for example, and is reflected in some Vulgate manuscripts and the important tenth-century Greek manuscripts known as 0243 and 1739.

<sup>28</sup> See B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994): 594 which suggests 1 Corinthians 15:27 as a possible background to explain such interference from marginalia.

<sup>29</sup> See for example the differing approaches of Oecumenius and Theodore of Mopsuestia in *Pauluskommentare aus der Griechischen Kirche: Aus Katenhandschriften Gesammelt und Herausgegeben*, ed. K. Staab (NT Abhandlungen 15; Münster: Aschendorff, 1933): 462, 204.

### 3. For All: Behold the Usefulness!

Grace tasted death ὑπὲρ παντός, *pro omnibus*, for all, says Hebrews 2:9. So, Aquinas continues, *ecce utilitas* ‘behold the usefulness of it!’ There is, however, a slippery theological problem concealed within the shell of this small phrase. Thomas’ handling of it shows him again to be indebted, for good or ill, to Peter Lombard both in exegetical and theological work, and to have benefited from a long stream of patristic and medieval discussion.

Some interpreters read the word παντός (all) in the verse as neuter (every thing) rather than masculine (every person). One such is the early biblical scholar Origen (185–254), who writes of Jesus that

He is a great High-Priest, having offered Himself as the sacrifice which is offered once for all, and not for men only but for every rational creature. For without God He tasted death for every one ... He died not for men only but for all other intellectual beings too ... It would surely be absurd to say that He tasted death for human sins and not for any other being besides man which had fallen into sin, as for example for the stars. For not even the stars are clean in the eyes of God, as we read in Job ‘The stars are not clean in His sight,’ [Job 25:5] unless this is to be regarded as a hyperbole. Hence he is a great High-Priest, since He restores all things to His Father’s kingdom, and arranges that whatever defects exist in each part of creation shall be filled up so as to be full of the glory of the Father.<sup>30</sup>

Many early Christian references to Hebrews 2:9 are devoted to issues of Christology, since the verse mentions Jesus being made ‘a little lower than the angels’ which rather lends itself to meditation on the incarnation. Origen, however, along with Ambrose and Gradianum, observes something of the soteriological implications here too. Given the notion that Christ’s death is somehow related to a divine plan to restore the world and correct the corruptions which entered through the rebellion of humanity against God, what was the precise goal of that sacrifice? For whom precisely did Christ die? Hebrews seems clear elsewhere that through his suffering, Christ became ‘the source of salvation’ not to all without exception but ‘to all those who obey him’ (Hebrews 5:9). Through the priestly offering of himself, he has ‘perfected forever’ not every single individual but ‘the ones who are

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<sup>30</sup> See P. Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999): 9, 318-319.

being sanctified' (Hebrews 10:14).<sup>31</sup> So it seems likely that in Hebrews 2:9 the writer means to convey that Jesus tastes death for those who keep his word, so that they need never taste it themselves (cf. John 8:52).

Origen read πάντως (all) in the verse as neuter, so as to promote the idea that Christ's taste of death was somehow effective for the restoration not just of all humanity, but also for fallen angels and even stars which have become corrupt. Ambrose was more circumspect in his famous declaration, 'If Christ died for all, yet he suffered particularly for us, because he suffered for the church.'<sup>32</sup> Although there is a huge distance hermeneutically between them, Origen, Ambrose, and others who read the verse differently all shared the idea that the death of Christ has a truly cosmic scope and is related to God's plan 'to bring all things together under one head, things in heaven and things on earth, in Christ' (Ephesians 1:10). Nevertheless, Aquinas has no taste for speculations of astro-redemption. Indeed, he sees the Nicene Creed as denying such a view when it says 'For us, and for our salvation, he came down from heaven.'<sup>33</sup> Indeed, he assumes that salvation is only for creatures with intellect and will, those who are capable of knowing God, and is not for non-rational beings.<sup>34</sup> As Aquinas scholar Brian Davies humorously remarks, 'We might like to meet our goldfish in heaven. But beatified goldfish seem not to be included in Aquinas's reckoning.'<sup>35</sup>

Aquinas seeks to focus in on the meaning of 'for all' in Hebrews 2:9 via another route. The scholastic 'division of the text' methodology which became popular in the Thirteenth Century, sought to articulate the principal theme of a body of material, providing (or discovering) its

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<sup>31</sup> On the important theme of priesthood, in Hebrews and Aquinas, see Gilles Berceville, 'Le sacerdoce du Christ dans le *Commentaire de L'Épître aux Hébreux* de saint Thomas d'Aquin', *Revue Thomiste* 99 (1999): 143-158.

<sup>32</sup> 'Etsi Christus pro omnibus mortuus est, tamen specialiter pro nobis passus est, quia pro Ecclesia passus est'. *Expositio Evangelii Secundum Lucam*, 6.25 in *Patrologia Latina* 15, col. 1675A. See also his *De Fide ad Gratianum Augustum*, 4.2 in *Patrologia Latina* 16, cols. 620B, 621D-622A.

<sup>33</sup> T. Aquinas, *Compendium of Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009; tr. by R. J. Regan): 177 (Section 220). See also Jerome's letter 124 to Avitus in *Patrologia Latina* 22:1070.

<sup>34</sup> See *Summa Theologiae* 1a. Q. 23. Art. 1 AD.2.

<sup>35</sup> B. Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993): 169. See also Levering, *Christ's Fulfilment of Torah and Temple*, 136 who adds his own *sed contra*.

conceptual unity, and then relating each subdivision of the material to what we might call its ‘melodic line’.<sup>36</sup> In Thomas’ outline of Scripture, the Pauline epistles as a corpus (of which Hebrews was then usually considered a part, contrary to most modern scholarship) were classified as being about ‘the power of the grace of Christ’ in relation to the ‘mystical body,’ that is, the church. Hebrews fits in, indeed, is mentioned first in Thomas’ list of Pauline epistles, as expounding the power of the grace of Christ ‘as head of the mystical body.’<sup>37</sup> This is related to the issue here in Hebrews 2:9, which we again see is a key verse. We have already noted above how Thomas considered Hebrews to be particularly concerned with exalting God’s grace, but this wider context adds an extra dimension to his understanding of this verse and ‘hovers over his exegesis as a constant guide’.<sup>38</sup>

In essence, drawing on his grasp of Hebrews and Paul as a whole, Thomas shows that Christ’s grace in tasting death is powerful and effective specifically for those who have been predestined by God, in actually achieving their salvation, and theirs only. Using this scholastic method, the purpose of Hebrews within the canon of Scripture as a whole, particularly within the Pauline epistles, may help to determine the meaning of a specific verse. From a modern perspective, says Froehlich, ‘we may find this method of *diairesis*, the relentless pursuit of a coherent pattern, totally inappropriate in dealing with a disparate body of letters’.<sup>39</sup> Indeed Farrar dismisses this approach somewhat contemptuously saying, ‘It would be difficult to conceive anything more ingeniously misleading, more historically groundless, more essentially partial, inadequate, and mistaken, than this celebrated scheme of the Epistles in which every critical and historical consideration, as well as every human element in the origin of the Epistles is fatally ignored in order that they may be symmetrically arranged into an artificial diagram of abstract doctrines.’<sup>40</sup> Yet it is not

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<sup>36</sup> See the very helpful Boyle, ‘The Theological Character of the Scholastic “Division of the Text”’, 276-83. See Keating, ‘Thomas Aquinas and the Epistle to the Hebrews’, 87-88 on Aquinas’s typical use of a verse outside of Hebrews to sum up the theme of Hebrews.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas’ outline of the whole of Scripture, *De Commendatione et Partitione Sacrae Scripturae*, can be found in *Opuscula Theologica* 1:435-439 and is translated by Baer in *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1-3.

<sup>38</sup> Keating, ‘Thomas Aquinas and the Epistle to the Hebrews’, 85.

<sup>39</sup> Froehlich, ‘Paul and the Late Middle Ages’, 13.

<sup>40</sup> Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, 271.

uncommon amongst medieval scholastics; ‘for Thomas and his colleagues, part of the genius of the inspired texts was that everything is important and hangs together’, says Froehlich.<sup>41</sup>

Modern biblical scholarship does not always share this presupposition. Neither would it make the kinds of scholastic distinctions which Aquinas makes. For example, ‘for all’ can be understood in two different ways, writes Thomas. First it may be an accommodated distribution (*distributio accommodata*), that is, *pro omnibus praedestinatis, pro istis etiam tantum habet efficaciam*, ‘for all the predestined, since it is for them alone it has efficacy’. This is his principal assertion. He follows this, as he often does with *vel* (‘and/or’) and a secondary interpretative possibility: on the other hand, it may be considered absolutely for all in terms of *sufficienciam*, sufficiency, since in itself it is sufficient for everyone, whether predestined or not. As Thomas says elsewhere, in his *Compendium of Theology*, ‘his grace is enough not only for the salvation of some human beings but for the salvation of human beings of the whole world. Just so 1 John 2:2 says, “He himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.” And we can add “of many worlds”, if there were to be any.’<sup>42</sup> Indeed, ‘any suffering of his, howsoever little, was sufficient to redeem the human race if one were to consider the dignity of the person’.<sup>43</sup> The same thought is repeated when Thomas comes to comment on Hebrews 9:28, ‘the death of Christ even if it is sufficient for all, has no efficacy except for those who are to be saved’.<sup>44</sup>

Again we can see here how Thomas is drawing on the previous work of the Master of the Sentences, Peter Lombard, and making a careful scholastic distinction. Lombard’s definition of the sufficiency-efficiency distinction with regards to the atonement became a commonplace in works of theology and biblical exegesis. In *Sentences* Book 3, Distinction 20, Chapter 5, Peter affirms that, ‘Christ is the

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<sup>41</sup> Froehlich, ‘Paul and the Late Middle Ages’, 13.

<sup>42</sup> *Compendium of Theology*, 170 (Section 215).

<sup>43</sup> *Compendium of Theology*, 190 (Section 231).

<sup>44</sup> See also *Summa Theologiae* 3. Q. 8. Art. 3 where Aquinas regards all people as potentially united to Christ because his power is sufficient for the salvation of the whole human race, and yet only the divinely predestined will reduce this potentiality to act, by having faith. Similarly, in *Summa Theologiae* 3. Q. 36. Art. 3 he concludes that no ‘condition of men’ (male or female, slave or free, etc.) is excluded from Christ’s redemption.

priest, as he is also the victim and the price of our reconciliation. He offered himself on the altar of the cross not to the devil, but to the triune God, and he did so for all with regard to the sufficiency of the price, but only for the elect with regard to its efficacy, because he brought about salvation only for the predestined.<sup>45</sup>

In making such distinctions, medieval interpreters sought to be cognisant of heated debates over this issue, like that between the monk Gottschalk of Orbais (808–867) and Hincmar, Archbishop of Reims (806–882), which led to no fewer than six synods between 849 and 860, but without a finally decisive result.<sup>46</sup> Gottschalk was supported in his ‘Carolingian Calvinism’ by contemporaries such as Lupus of Ferrieres, Ratramnus of Corbie, and Remigius of Lyon. Lupus, for example, wrote that Christ ‘took the form of a servant, so that he might shed blood for the world, though he did not say ‘to give his life a ransom for all’, but ‘for many’, that is, for those who are willing to believe’.<sup>47</sup> Remigius defended Gottschalk, who, it was said, taught that, ‘God does not will all men to be saved, but only those who are saved’, adding that, ‘Christ did not come to save all, or to suffer for all, but only on behalf of those who are saved by the mystery of his suffering.’<sup>48</sup> Remigius expounded this idea with a string of verses about Christ dying for his sheep, the many, his people, adding a note about how ‘all’ or ‘whole world’ in disputed verses (including Hebrews 2:9) must be understood in context.<sup>49</sup> His conclusion is that Christ died *pro*

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<sup>45</sup> Lombard, *The Sentences Book 3*, 86. See also 132 (*Sentences* 3.31.3.2) where he writes that ‘Christ loved the elect alone like himself and desired their salvation.’

<sup>46</sup> See e.g. Hincmarus Rhemensis, *Hincmari Archiepiscopi Rhemensis De Praedestinatione Dei et Libero Arbitrio Posterior dissertatio Adversus Gothescalcum et caeteros Praedestinianos* in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, 125, esp. Chapter 33 concerning how *generaliter Christum fuisse passum pro omnibus* (‘Christ suffered generally for all’). On Gottschalk, who is less well known in England than on the continent, see D. E. Nineham, ‘Gottschalk of Orbais: Reactionary or Precursor of the Reformation?’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 40 (1989): 1-18 especially 5 where Nineham points out that some of Hincmar’s apparent quotations from Augustine against Gottschalk were actually from Pelagius. An English translation of several works by Gottschalk can be found in V. Genke and F. Gumerlock, eds., *Gottschalk and a Medieval Predestination Controversy* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> Lupus Ferrariensis, *Epistola CXXVIII* in *Patrologia Latina* 119:604c-d.

<sup>48</sup> Remigius Lugdunensis, *De Tribus Epistolis Liber* in *Patrologia Latina* 121:988a-b. ‘Christus non venit ut omnes salvaret, nec passus est pro omnibus, nisi solummodo pro his qui passionis ejus salvantur mysterio.’

<sup>49</sup> *De Tribus Epistolis Liber, Caput XIV*, Col. 1010d-1012a; *Caput XVI*, Col.1015A. On Hebrews 2:9 his contention is that the following verses define and narrow what

*solis fidelibus*, for the faithful alone; Christ came to help all the elect with the price of his blood, but did not come to help the reprobate.<sup>50</sup>

The Lombardian formula—sufficient for all but efficacious only for the elect—became the classic solution to the problem of relating universal and particular elements in the doctrine of the atonement. After Aquinas, it was utilised by Protestant theologians as diverse as John Calvin (1509–1564) and James Arminius (1559–1609),<sup>51</sup> whose names became attached to the warring groups of Calvinists and Arminians in the Seventeenth Century. An international Synod of the Reformed churches held at the Dutch city of Dort in 1618–1619 to address their conflict on this and other points was compelled to make some very careful statements specifically with regards to nuancing this distinction.<sup>52</sup> Thomas, however, appears content to stand on Peter Lombard’s shoulders and not to push the distinction any further or consider the extent of the atonement in the light of God’s will and intention the way later Calvinists would.

It is well worth noting that Aquinas’s comments on Hebrews 2:9 in this regard closely follow Lombard’s, not just in his *Sentences* but in his own Hebrews commentary. When commenting on Christ’s taste of death, Lombard says, ‘He might taste, I say, for all, that is, for the predestined who by his death are redeemed and saved.’ His taste of death was efficacious only for the elect who are actually saved by it. But he also adds, ‘And/or he died generally for all men, because the price was sufficient for all.’<sup>53</sup> So we see that this distinction between sufficiency and efficiency was felt by both Lombard and Aquinas to be

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‘all’ means there, i.e. Christ tasted death for all the many children who are brought to glory.

<sup>50</sup> *De Tribus Epistolis Liber*, chapters 20 and 47.

<sup>51</sup> *Calvin’s Commentaries Volume XXII* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993): 173 (in a commentary on 1 John 2:2); *The Writings of James Arminius* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956), 3:345 (in a polemical, dogmatic work).

<sup>52</sup> See my *For Us and For Our Salvation: ‘Limited Atonement’ in the Bible, Doctrine, History, and Ministry* (London: Latimer Trust, 2012): 75-90. One of the points carefully delineated at Dort was that faith itself was an efficacious gift from God to the elect, on the basis of the atonement. Weinandy, ‘The Supremacy of Christ: Aquinas’ Commentary on Hebrews’, 241 summarises Thomas’s similar view when he writes that for him ‘the efficacy of such responses [faith and baptism] ... resides solely within that efficacious sacrificial, and so salvific, death.’

<sup>53</sup> ‘Gustaret, dico, pro omnibus, scilicet praedestinatibus qui per ejus mortem redempti sunt et salvati. Vel pro omnibus hominibus, generaliter mortuus est, quia omnibus pretium sufficit’. Lombard’s commentary in *Patrologia Latina* 192:236 [Col.0419B] on Hebrews 2:9.

necessary *exegetically*, to properly explain this key text in Hebrews, and not just in their dogmatic systems. They both, as it happens, also immediately quote John Chrysostom (349–407), the golden-mouthed Archbishop of Constantinople: *Et si omnes non credunt, ipse tamen quod suum est implevit*, ‘And if all do not believe, [Christ] nevertheless has fulfilled his own part.’<sup>54</sup> Yet it is not simply the tradition or a pastoral question which made them so careful here, but their meditation on the text of Scripture itself.

Behold, says Aquinas, Christ tasted death so that any human being who believes in him might be truly and efficaciously saved from tasting it eternally. Again we see that he is indebted to Lombard both as theologian and exegete as he seeks to explore how the text before him speaks into medieval debates about the doctrines of grace (specifically the atonement). He also uses classic scholastic terminology to examine different interpretative possibilities, while trying to ensure that his exposition is in line with both the purpose of Hebrews within the canon and also the Nicene Creed. This can appear somewhat presumptuous from a modern perspective, and certainly begs many questions. Yet it is very much in keeping with pre-critical norms and standard medieval practice.<sup>55</sup>

#### 4. He Truly Tasted Death

Finally, says Thomas, *ecce modus*, ‘behold the manner of Christ’s passion’: he tasted death. Despite the well known penchant amongst

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<sup>54</sup> For an English translation, see Schaff, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. First Series, 14: 383. Compare this with the assertion of the *Synod of Dort* in *Acta Synodi Nationalis ... Dordrechtii Habitae* (Leiden, 1620), 1.252 (Canon 2.6) that ‘*Quod autem multi per Evangelium vocati non resipiscunt, nec in Christum credunt, sed in infidelitate pereunt, non sit hostiae Christi in cruce oblatae defectu, vel insufficientia, sed propria ipsorum culpa*’—‘although many who are called by the gospel do not repent nor believe in Christ, but perish in unbelief, this is not because of any defect in the sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross, or indeed any insufficiency in it, but is their own particular fault’.

<sup>55</sup> Some modern commentators, it must be confessed, are not so careful or considered when discussing this point. For example, B. Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Nottingham: Apollos, 2007): 144 does not argue on the theological issue at all but merely asserts without exegetical warrant that ‘There can be little doubt that our author, like the author of the Pastorals, wants to stress that Jesus died ‘for everyone’, not just some elect group’. He then quotes Chrysostom, just as Lombard and Aquinas did, but in support of his own view.

medieval interpreters to spiritualise the text or look for four levels of meaning, for Thomas, metaphors and images like this were considered part of the *literal* sense, which he privileged in his biblical and theological work.<sup>56</sup> Nicholas of Lyra (1270–1349) famously wrote that *Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria* ‘the letter teaches events; allegory what you should believe.’<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, Aquinas was also more than able to extract theological dogma from the literal meaning of the text, in a way that later commentators would certainly not indulge in but which was acceptable practice at the time.<sup>58</sup>

Christ’s *tasting* of death Thomas contrasts with eating or drinking much, although the metaphor suggests to him the idea of drinking more than it does pressing with the teeth. Christ did not gulp down draught upon draught of ice cold death for all eternity, but *statim surrexit* ‘he rose at once’. This again is a detail Thomas borrows from Chrysostom.<sup>59</sup> Alluding to Psalm 110:7, a messianic Psalm which Jesus himself identified as being about him (Luke 20:41-44) and which is vital to the argument of Hebrews itself, death is pictured by Aquinas as a torrent or waterfall, from which Christ drank *as he was passing*. He hurried through it to the other side, he says, tasting it, but not lingering.<sup>60</sup> Martin Luther takes a similar line, and indeed echoes Chrysostom further when he adds that ‘because all men fear death, the

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<sup>56</sup> Froehlich, ‘Aquinas, Thomas’, 88. Froehlich, ‘Paul and the Late Middle Ages’, 14.

<sup>57</sup> See Ocker, ‘Scholastic Interpretation’, 265.

<sup>58</sup> See *Summa Theologiae* 1. Q. 1. Art. 10 for Thomas’s understanding of the threefold spiritual sense of Scripture (allegorical, moral, and anagogical). Cf. Levering, *Christ’s Fulfilment of Torah and Temple*, 156 n. 25; W. G. B. M. Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God: Place and Function of Holy Scripture in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000); T. McGuckin, ‘Saint Thomas Aquinas and Theological Exegesis of Sacred Scripture’, *Lowain Studies* 16 (1991): 99-120.

<sup>59</sup> See Chrysostom’s same point in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. First Series*, 14, 384.

<sup>60</sup> Similarly, John Owen (1616–1683), who wrote the largest commentary on Hebrews ever published, calls this ‘a *through* taste’ of death—‘he neither was, nor could be detained under the power of it’. This yields a consistent meaning for the word γεύομαι (taste) in its three occurrences in Hebrews: a full and true, but brief and not final acquaintance with something. Owen’s eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editors perhaps did not appreciate the subtlety of what he was saying here, and so in e.g. *The Works of John Owen*, ed. W. H. Goold (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850–1855): 20:359 the text is amended to read ‘a thorough taste’, which is possible given the meanings of ‘through’ at the time, but makes a slightly different point.

Lord though under no compulsion to do so, tasted death himself, to persuade men to face death in confidence'.<sup>61</sup>

Yet there is even more meat in this enigmatic phrase 'he tasted death' as far as Thomas is concerned. In typically medieval fashion, he is able to squeeze more theological mileage out of the metaphor, rather more than most modern commentators would be comfortable with. Christ's 'taste' of death is not merely a pointer to the resurrection after death: taste is also about discerning flavour: *qui gustat magis discernit quam qui bibit*, 'the one who tastes discerns more than the one who drinks'. This is an important theological point, since it leads him to contrast the orthodox doctrine with that of Manichaeus and Apollinaris. Christ really did experience death and pain. This was not *phantastica*, imaginary, or illusory. Aquinas condemns those who allege that Christ did not truly experience human emotions or sensations or was not fully human, since this does not fit the evidence of Hebrews 2:9. Manichaeus, for example, taught that Christ had imaginary, not real, human flesh, blood, tongue, and taste buds, and so could not have truly tasted death or the pain associated with it.<sup>62</sup> On the contrary, asserts Aquinas, he knew at first hand the sorrow and agony of dying. He did more than lightly sip its melancholic poison.

A further theological point which Thomas makes from this verse relates to Christ's will, and the voluntary nature of the cross. *Gustare vel non gustare est in potestate gustantis*, he says, 'tasting or not tasting lie in the power of the taster'. In the same way, *sic et passio Christi fuit voluntaria*, 'the Passion / suffering of Christ was voluntary'. This is a powerful point, and emphasises the deity of the crucified one. He gave himself up to death. He was not forced into it. It was not the will of the Jews, the crowd, or Pontius Pilate, ultimately,

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<sup>61</sup> See his comment on Hebrews 2:9 in *Luther: Early Theological Works* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1962; tr. by James Atkinson): 54. Luther read Chrysostom's homilies on Hebrews early in his career, as well as the exegetical work of Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine; see his 'On the Councils and the Churches' in *Luther's Works, Volume 41: Church and Ministry II*, ed. E. W. Gritsch & C. M. Jacobs (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966): 19-20 (WA 50:519.18-520.10). He was also familiar, though less impressed, with the monumental medieval work of biblical scholarship known as the *Glossa Ordinaria*; K. Froehlich, 'Martin Luther and the Glossa Ordinaria', *Lutheran Quarterly* 23 (2009): 29-48. He had only 'grudging respect' for Aquinas, according to Denis R. Janz, *Luther on Thomas Aquinas: The Angelic Doctor in the Thought of the Reformer* (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz, 140; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989): 114.

<sup>62</sup> See Aquinas, *Compendium of Theology*, 154-55 (Section 205) on Apollinaris, and 156-57 (Section 207) on Manichaeus.

but the will of Christ alone who said, 'I have the power to lay down my life' (John 10:18). As Davies rightly says, 'In Aquinas's view, Christ embraced his sufferings willingly. So they can always be viewed as voluntary.'<sup>63</sup> It was not weakness that led Christ to Calvary but strength, voluntarily relinquishing itself.

This is bittersweet, considering that it was no ordinary or painless death that he died. Aquinas here quotes the Old Testament book of Lamentations 1:12, 'Is it nothing to you all who are crossing over the road? Look and see if there is any pain like my pain, which was thrust upon me, which the LORD inflicted on the day of his fierce anger.' He unpacks this idea elsewhere, when he speaks of why Christ willed to die such a shameful death: 'he suffered for us the things that we by the sin of our first parent merited to suffer, the chief of which is death ... he without sin assumed the punishment due us, he delivered us from the penalty of death, as one is freed from the debt of punishment when another undergoes the punishment in one's stead'.<sup>64</sup> Mixing this theological perspective with the pathos of 'Is it nothing to you...?' from Lamentations nicely introduces a note of crucicentric medieval piety into Thomas's commentary at this point.

Finally, Aquinas says that Christ persevered in death only for a while because of a prophecy in the Old Testament. Psalm 16:10 expresses the confidence of the Messiah in the face of death. He will not be shaken, 'For you (the LORD) will not leave my soul to Sheol; nor will you allow your Faithful One to experience corruption.' Instead, he will sit at God's right hand and enjoy pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11). He tasted death, but now he dines in luxury at the right hand of God, having swallowed it up forever (Isaiah 25:8). Thus Aquinas links the mention of Christ's 'taste' of death to the whole plan of God from Old Testament to New, from prophecy to fulfilment to consummation.

Behold, says Aquinas, Christ truly experienced death, and resurrection, not as an unwilling victim but as the perfect, faithful sacrifice, bearing God's anger. He fires off several theologically

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<sup>63</sup> Davies, *Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 319. Cf. Levering, *Christ's Fulfilment of Torah and Temple*, 78.

<sup>64</sup> Aquinas, *Compendium of Theology*, 186 (Section 227). On the next page (Section 228) he adds that just as the first human plucked and tasted forbidden fruit from a tree against God's command, so 'Christ permitted himself to be affixed to the wood of a tree in order to pay for things he did not steal'. For the note of substitution in Aquinas's doctrine, see Davies, *Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 328-29.

weighty salvos against various classical heresies from the metaphor of Christ tasting death, using several parts of Scripture, including the Old Testament, to flesh out and interpret what Hebrews means. He also introduces a note of reflective piety, in keeping with the purpose of his commentary to edify believers. Few commentators today would see so much in this clause, and as Eleonore Stump rightly says of Aquinas's commentaries more generally, 'Sometimes, of course, one finds medievalisms that will strike many contemporary readers as inappropriate or even absurd.'<sup>65</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

As historian of biblical interpretation Karlfried Froehlich has commented, 'Thomas the exegete has not attracted much attention until quite recently.'<sup>66</sup> It is appropriate to correct this imbalance in the study of one who, after all, held the post of *magister sacra pagina*, Professor of the Sacred Page. In our examination of his exposition of a significant verse containing a number of potential challenges for the exegete, we have discovered that Aquinas is a great example of medieval interpretation at its best but also at its worst. He did not introduce novel new methods,<sup>67</sup> but was an exemplary practitioner of the medieval art of biblical commentary. Farrar rejected medieval scholastic exegesis as 'defective in fundamental principles, and rife on every page of it with all sorts of erroneous details'.<sup>68</sup> On the single page of Thomas that we have examined here, in terms of language, philology, and his use of 'authorities' his work may fall below the standards of later centuries. Many of his pre-critical assumptions about Scripture which enabled him to utilise the concepts of *analogia fidei* and *scopus Scripturae* in his interpretation are no longer shared by the academic guild. The easy moves he makes between text and dogma have been almost impossible for scholars since at least the Eighteenth

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<sup>65</sup> E. Stump, 'Biblical Commentary and Philosophy' in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. N. Kretzmann and E. Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 359. See also her 'Atonement According to Aquinas' in *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988): 61-91.

<sup>66</sup> Froehlich, 'Aquinas, Thomas', 90.

<sup>67</sup> Froehlich, 'Paul and the Late Middle Ages', 14.

<sup>68</sup> Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, 302.

Century. He was a man of his time. Yet that also made him a careful and reverent student of the words before him, clearly concerned to meditate on the details of the text and its connections to the rest of Scripture and orthodox Christian theology. As Matthew Levering says, 'Even though Aquinas is a medieval Christian theologian, therefore, his work remains capable of being brought into dialogue with the work of modern scholars.'<sup>69</sup> This, along with his exalted reputation as a philosopher and theologian, ensures that Aquinas's commentaries should continue to find a place in the Christian exegetical tradition.

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<sup>69</sup> Levering, *Christ's Fulfilment of Torah and Temple*, 91. Cf. 87, 'As a medieval theologian, Aquinas does not consider the text from a historical-critical perspective', though this does not mean (90) that he had no interest in history.