

Judging according to Wisdom: *Sacra Doctrina* in the *Summa Theologiae*

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Flannery O'Connor once observed, "The Catholic novelist doesn't have to be a saint; he doesn't even have to be a Catholic; he does, unfortunately, have to be a novelist."¹ Can the same be said for the Catholic theologian? Must she be a Catholic? Put more precisely: is supernatural faith among the necessary conditions for the practice of Christian theology?² This paper explores Thomas Aquinas's explicit and implicit answers to this question in the *Summa Theologiae*, first examining the nature of *sacra doctrina* as a speculative science whose primary object is the highest form of "wisdom," namely the LORD. Next, I consider Aquinas's account of who is competent to practice *sacra doctrina*, concluding that while Aquinas acknowledges diverse means of knowing the LORD – by way of the intellectual virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the gratuitous graces – he reserves the practice of *sacra doctrina* to Christians empowered by gratuitous grace. And yet, I end by suggesting that Aquinas leaves open the possibility of a pagan's³ engaging in *sacra doctrina* by way of mention rather than use.

Sacra Doctrina's Material and Formal Objects

We can begin with Aquinas's account of Christian theology, particularly as it appears in the "Treatise on Sacred Doctrine," which opens the *Summa Theologiae* (I.1.1-10).⁴ Here is a summary, to be expounded at some length: for Aquinas, Christian theology is a

¹ Flannery O'Connor, "The Catholic Novelist Today," *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 172.

² Reinhard Huetter succinctly represents a venerable tradition in maintaining that it is indeed necessary: "No supernatural faith, no *lumen fidei*; no *lumen fidei*, no analogy of faith; no analogy of faith, no theological study of the sacred page; no theological study of the sacred page, no *sacra doctrina*" (*Dust Bound for Heaven* [(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012], 345).

³ "Pagan," as I use it here, simply means anyone who is neither a Christian, a Jew, nor a Christian heretic.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, in-line citations are from the *Summa Theologiae* (*Textum Leoninum Romae* 1895; ed. Roberto Busa SJ; <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/sth3045.html>; Accessed 5/18/2015), given by Part, Question, Article, and Sub-heading.

speculative science which takes the LORD as its primary object, and takes as its first principles and unsurpassable norms the complexly-related textual deposit of “the articles of faith” and holy Scripture.

Aquinas takes it that theology is a “*scientia speculativa*,” in the Aristotelian sense of an intellectual discipline that derives conclusions from undemonstrated (and, in the cases of the highest sciences, indemonstrable) premises.⁵ Like the science of music, which derives its first principles from the conclusions of (and so is subaltern to) the science of arithmetic, sacred doctrine derives its first principles from and is subaltern to the “*scientia Dei et beatorum*” (I.1.2.c.). These first principles are the revealed “articles of faith” (on their relation to Scripture, see below), which the theologian cannot demonstrate. However, faced with someone who rejects revelation altogether, he can show that objections against them fail (I.1.8.c.).

The unity of sacred doctrine can be construed both formally and materially. Sacred doctrine is one science, since it treats of everything – the LORD and all his creatures – under the formal aspect of revelation, just as sight treats many diverse things under the aspect of visibility (I.1.3.c.). This suffices to distinguish sacred doctrine from the theology that is native to metaphysics, which also treats of the LORD insofar as he can be known by reason (I.1.3.ad 2). But sacred doctrine’s unity is equally material, since it “*principaliter*” takes God as its object, and treats creatures only “*sub ratione Dei*,” as “*habent ordinem ad Deum, ut ad principium et finem*” (I.1.7.c., cf. I.1.3.ad 1).⁶ Sacred doctrine’s “theocentrism” explains why Aquinas is content for it, as a discipline, to be termed “*theologia*,” or “*sermo de Deo*” (I.1.7.sc.): since the doctrine of God is the material center of sacred doctrine, there is an important sense in which nothing is said in this discourse that is not in some way said about the LORD. As such, it concerns the the fundamental presuppositions and last end of all creaturely existence, and so Aquinas views theology as the paradigmatic form of wisdom, in the Aristotelian sense of a discipline that attains to first principles (I.1.6.c., cf. *Metaphysics* I.982a-b).⁷

For Aquinas, *sacra doctrina* does not merely treat of humanity’s ultimate beatitude; the very practice of it ought to be the grateful contemplation of “*divina*,” through which “*ordinatur homo ad perfectam Dei cognitionem, in qua aeterna beatitudo consistit*”

⁵ For discussion, cf. Bruce Marshall, “*Quod Scit Una Vetula*: Aquinas on the Nature of Theology,” in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (eds. Rik van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow; South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 7-11.

⁶ Cf. Fainché Ryan, *Formation in Holiness: Thomas Aquinas on Sacra doctrina* (Dudley, MA: Peters-Leuven, 2007), 116.

⁷ Cf. Thomas Joseph White, O.P., *Wisdom in the Face of Modernity: A Study in Thomistic Natural Theology* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia, 2009), 41.

(I.1.4.c.). Indeed, this discourse affords a partial participation in the LORD's self-knowledge, a participation that will be fully (though not comprehensively) realized in the beatific vision (I.1.2.c., cf. I.12.1.c.). It is thus no surprise that he insists elsewhere, "*de rebus altissimis etiam parva et debili consideratione aliquid posse inspicere iucundissimum est*" (ScG I.8.1).⁸ The theologian ought, then, to approach the work of speculative reflection on the LORD as a delight, indeed as a mode of sanctification.

The Norms of *Sacra Doctrina*

To this point, we have principally treated theology's object (the LORD and his creatures); we now should turn to its norms, its distinctive mode of engaging its objects, namely, under the aspect of divine revelation. In the "Treatise on Sacred Doctrine," Aquinas shifts between identifying theology's principal norm as the articles of faith and as holy Scripture: theology's indemonstrable first principles are the articles of faith (I.1.5.ad 1, I.1.7.c.), but yet *sacra Scriptura* is at times simply equivalent with *sacra doctrina* (e.g., "*sacra Scriptura seu doctrina*," I.1.2.ad 2, cf. also I.1.1.sc., c.). In this first question, Aquinas does not explicitly relate these two sources; for that, the reader has to turn to the "Treatise on Faith," in the *Secunda Secundae*.

First, the Treatise on Faith clarifies the content of the articles of faith, which is left unspecified in *ST* I.1: these articles are the collected body of authoritative church teaching, represented paradigmatically for Aquinas in the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds (cf. II-II.1.8, 9.ad 4, 10.ad 3). The articles explicitly given for the church's assent can, and in fact have been, be expanded in time; this, Aquinas recognizes, is one task of a general council of bishops convened under papal authority (II-II.1.10.sc.).

But how does the authority of these articles relate to the authority of Scripture? Treating whether it is proper for the object of faith to be subdivided into distinct articles, Aquinas considers the objection that faith is to be had in everything contained in Scripture, which cannot be reduced to certain articles, because of its multitude (II-II.1.6.1). He resolves this difficulty by clarifying that there are some *credenda* which concern faith directly, and others which concern faith only by their ordering to others.⁹ And below, he identifies a still more

⁸ The best kind of life, Aquinas maintains, is one spent in contemplation of "*intelligibilia*," the highest truths, the chief of which is the LORD, though he recognizes that "*secundum quid, et in casu, magis est eligenda vita activa, propter necessitatem praesentis vitae*" (II-II.182.1.c.).

⁹ "Fides principaliter est de his quae videnda speramus in patria . . . ideo per se ad fidem pertinent illa quae directe nos ordinant ad vitam aeternam, sicut sunt tres personae, omnipotentia Dei, mysterium incarnationis Christi . . . Quaedam vero proponuntur in sacra

central core to which all other *credenda* are ordered, namely, to the LORD's existence and to his providential governance of human life (II-II.1.7.c.).

The function of the articles is not to supplement or emend Scripture, but rather to provide a concise identification of Scripture's heart, namely, the identity of the triune LORD and humanity's path to communion with him. This truth, he recognizes, "*in sacra Scriptura diffuse continentur et variis modis, et in quibusdam obscure,*" so that drawing this truth from Scripture requires "*longum studium et exercitium, ad quod non possunt pervenire omnes illi quibus necessarium est cognoscere fidei veritatem*" (II-II.1.9.ad 1).¹⁰ Individual believers' exercise of private judgment regarding the LORD's word to them in Scripture will be adequate only haphazardly, with massive disagreement as its inevitable outcome. In Aquinas's view, then, "*Fuit necessarium ut ex sententiis sacrae Scripturae aliquid manifestum summarie colligeretur quod proponeretur omnibus ad credendum. Quod quidem non est additum sacrae Scripturae, sed potius ex sacra Scriptura assumptum*" (II-II.1.9.ad 1).

Finally, we should note that another norm is evident in Aquinas's theological reasoning, namely attention to the *sensus fidelium*, the life of the whole church (*consuetudo Ecclesiae*), particularly at worship, as an authoritative embodiment of the LORD's self-revelation.¹¹ While he does not highlight the *sensus fidelium* as a theological norm to the extent that (for instance) Newman later would,¹² it is clear that the canon "*lex orandi, lex credendi*" governed Aquinas's theological practice as well.

Given how Aquinas both theorizes and models the practice *sacra doctrina*, one engaged in it surely must begin and end by carefully reading Scripture in relation to the articles of faith. She must also engage the theological authorities (i.e., Augustine, Damascene, Peter Lombard, i.a.) whose prior attempts at ordering and expounding the faith command a measure of deference from their heirs, and must attend as well to the ways in which that scriptural deposit is authoritatively actualized in the *consuetudo Ecclesiae*. Finally,

Scriptura ut credenda non quasi principaliter intenta [sicut quod Abraham habuit duos filios] ... quae narrantur in sacra Scriptura in ordine ad manifestationem divinae maiestatis vel incarnationis Christi" (II-II.1.6.ad 1).

¹⁰ We have here a complement to Aquinas's argument for the need for revelation as a sure guide to the knowledge even of the *praeambula fidei* (I.1.1.c.); just as reason requires the hermeneutical focus of revelation, so too revelation requires the hermeneutical focus of authoritative church teaching, on pain of its salvific purposes being frustrated altogether.

¹¹ For his defense of various aspects of the Eucharistic liturgy along these lines, cf. *ST* III.73.4.sc., III.75.2.c., and III.83.5.sc. For further discussion, see David Berger, *Aquinas and the Liturgy* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press).

¹² Esp. in his *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine* (*Rambler*, July 1859; <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/rambler/consulting.html>; Accessed 5/18/2015).

she ought to engage seriously with pagan thinkers, who furnish theologians with a conceptual apparatus for the thinking internal to theology (cf. Aquinas's application of the Aristotelian theory of causes to Eucharistic theology, III.75.2-6), and whose reflections on the LORD can provide a complementary mode of rendering some Christian doctrines (i.e., the *praeambula fidei*) intelligible (cf. the Treatise *De Deo Uno*, I.2-26).

Judgment according to Wisdom: Three Modes of Theologizing

The one who practices *sacra doctrina* will come to know the highest cause of all things, and so will be able to judge in accord with the highest wisdom (I.1.6.c.). And yet, this fact alerts Aquinas to a problem that occasions his first attempt in the *Summa* at defining who is competent to theologize, and why. He considers an objection to the claim that *sacra doctrina* might be considered "*sapientia*," since the latter "*per infusionem habetur*," and is numbered among the gifts of the Holy Spirit (I.1.6.3).

In response, he notes that judgment can be exercised in two ways:

Uno modo per modum inclinationis, sicut qui habet habitum virtutis, recte iudicat de his quae sunt secundum virtutem agenda, inquantum ad illa inclinatur; unde et in X Ethic. dicitur quod virtuosus est mensura et regula actuum humanorum. Primus igitur modus iudicandi de rebus divinis, pertinet ad sapientiam quae ponitur donum spiritus sancti secundum illud I Cor. II, spiritualis homo iudicat omnia, etc., et Dionysius dicit, II cap. de divinis nominibus, Hierotheus doctus est non solum discens, sed et patiens divina." (I.1.6.ad 3)

Aquinas's proof-texts already tell us a great deal: the one who judges *per modum inclinationis* does so under the impulse of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 2:10-15), and so necessarily forms these judgments passively, finding them impressed upon his mind and affections, "*patiens divina*." The one who judges "*per modum inclinationis*," however, is also like one who has been habituated to judge rightly about human action pre-reflectively, by virtue of his delight in the good and aversion to the evil. Such judgment must in one sense be fully the gift of the Spirit ("*patiens*"), and yet the inclinations in which that judgment is carried are no less the saint's for being from the LORD ("*ad illa inclinatur*").

By contrast, Aquinas insists that one might also judge "*per modum cognitionis, sicut aliquis instructus in scientia morali, posset iudicare de actibus virtutis, etiam si virtutem non haberet. . . Secundus modus iudicandi pertinet ad hanc doctrinam, secundum quod per studium habetur; licet eius principia ex revelatione habeantur*" (I.1.6.ad 3.). Here again, this compact statement speaks volumes: *sacra doctrina* is in one sense a "*scientia*," on analogy with the science of morals,

such that one can practice it “from the outside,” without experiential or first-person knowledge of the subject treated.¹³ Moreover, this mode of judgment manifests an internal tension that in a sense parallels the one above: the theologian’s knowledge is acquired “*per studium*,” by means of careful scholarship made possible by an intellectual formation only available to those with the right capacities, and yet (*licet*) the starting point for this discipline is not itself the product of study, but rather given by the LORD in revelation. It should already be clear that it is the latter form of judgment, *per modum cognitionis*, which Aquinas identifies with the *sacra doctrina* in which his *Summa Theologiae* consists – the wisdom made available therein is not connatural and affective, but discursive and intellective, acquired “*per studium*,” though only if one accepts the vantage of faith as her starting point.

Much later in the *Summa*, Aquinas returns to this contrast between two modes of judgment, this time in terms of a contrast between intellectual virtue and the gifts of the Holy Spirit (II-II.45.2.c.). Once again, the question concerns the relation between two forms of wisdom, as gift of the Holy Spirit and as “intellectual virtue.” Aquinas’s treatment here of wisdom as gift fills out his earlier discussion: such wisdom is given by the Holy Spirit to those who possess the infused virtue of charity,¹⁴ which, Aquinas suggests, “is the friendship of man for God,” a relationship of mutual delight in the other for his own sake (II-II.23.1.c.).

At this point, we should pause for a brief introduction to the theological virtues and the gifts in Aquinas. To the intellectual and moral virtues known to the pagans, he adds “theological virtues.” While the former two classes of virtue are proportionate to humanity’s natural end as a rational animal, the theological virtues are divine gifts that elevate the human mind and will to our supernatural end of communion with the LORD (I-II.62.1.c.). Because of their disproportion with human nature as such, these virtues cannot be acquired; no (even unfallen) human being can by her own acts attain loving communion

¹³ Ryan insists that Aquinas’s use of the “non solum...sed” formulation, both in his quotation from Dionysius and in his own voice in this paragraph, indicates that “the two routes to the wisdom that pertains to *sacra doctrina* seem to be inextricably intertwined” (*Formation in Holiness*, 126), i.e., they have distinct senses, but an identical reference. While grammatically possible, this interpretation flies in the face of Aquinas’s use of this distinction here, which is to demonstrate that there are paradigmatically different modes of judging in accord with wisdom: just as “someone instructed in moral science, can judge about virtuous acts, *even if he should not have virtue*,” so too someone instructed in divine science can judge about the LORD and his creatures even apart from a connatural knowledge of the LORD, if he subjects his judgment to the “*principia [quae] ex revelatione habentur*” (I.1.6.ad 3).

¹⁴ cf. Pinsent, “Gifts and Fruits,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas* (eds. Brian Davies & Eleanor Stump; New York: Oxford University, 2012), 475-490, here 477.

with the LORD. Rather, the theological virtues must be directly “infused” into believers by the Holy Spirit (Ibid., cf. also I-II.110.3).

Moreover, Aquinas inherited from medieval tradition the task of discussing of the gifts of the Holy Spirit named in Isaiah 11:2,¹⁵ and he distinguishes them from infused virtues by arguing that the gifts allow man to be receptive to “divine inspiration” for supernatural acts of intellect and will (I-II.68.1.c.).¹⁶ As Garrigou-Lagrange puts it, “Gifts are to the soul what sails are to a vessel. The vessel can travel by being rowed; but oarsmen can never equal in advantage the benefit of full-blown sails propelled by currents of air.”¹⁷ Like the infused virtues, however, the Gifts consist in “*habitus permanentes*” – the believer is not merely ventriloquized by the Holy Spirit, but given capacities that contribute to her intellectual and affective life (I-II.6.8.3.c.).¹⁸

Aquinas argues that the Holy Spirit’s gift of wisdom flows out of charity. Following Augustine, he insists that charity is a virtue, because it unites us to God in friendship (II-II.23.3.c.), insofar as “*caritas Dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum*” (II-II.24.2.sc., cf. Rom 5:5). Indeed, “*sapientia quae est donum est excellentior quam sapientia quae est virtus intellectualis, utpote magis de propinquo Deum attingens, per quandam scilicet unionem animae ad ipsum*” (II-II.45.3.ad 1).¹⁹ United directly by love with the highest wisdom, the one infused with charity is thus made wise in his very soul (II-II.45.1.c.), and so enabled to judge aright about *divina* by virtue of his “connaturality” with them (II-II.45.2.c., again citing Hierotheus as an instance).²⁰ The one who judges *divina per modum inclinationis* has a knowledge that runs deeper than the mind’s

¹⁵ Ulrich Horst argues that, while there was precedent for this teaching already in patristic theology (e.g., Ambrose’s *De Spiritu Sancto*), Aquinas’s treatment is heavily indebted to Lombard’s (who first divided the discussion of the doctrine into the Gifts’ relation to the virtues, presence in Christ, and permanence in heaven), as it was subsequently developed by William of Auxerre, Philipp the Chancellor, Albert the Great, and Bonaventure, among others (*Die Gaben des Heiligen Geistes nach Thomas von Aquin* (Berlin: Akademie, 2001), 24–40).

¹⁶ Horst refers to the Gifts as “die Krönung der Tugendkonzeption des Aquinaten,” the unifying head without which his “Moraltheologie” remains only “ein Torso” (*Die Gaben des Heiligen Geistes*, 19).

¹⁷ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *The Theological Virtues, Vol. 1: On Faith* (trans. Thomas a Kempis Reilly, O.P.; St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1965), 368.

¹⁸ Cf. Horst, *Die Gaben des Heiligen Geistes*, 84.

¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 20.

²⁰ The one who judges *divina per modum inclinationis* in a sense conforms to the patristic sense of the term “theology,” which, insists J.L. Illanes, “es más un modo de vida que un conocimiento; o un conocimiento transformado en vida hasta hacer de la existencia entera una ‘mística teología’” (“La Sabiduría Teológica,” in *Veritas et Sapientia* [eds. Juan J. Rodríguez Rosado & Pedro Rodríguez García; Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, S.A., 1975], 196).

intellection, a knowledge born of love and written on the very soul of the lover.²¹ Aquinas might have said, with Pascal, that for the spiritual man, “*le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connait point.*”²²

In II-II.45.2, Aquinas distinguishes this gift from another mode of wisdom, the homonymous intellectual virtue. On its face, this discussion seems to recapitulate that found in I.1.6: while the gift of wisdom is infused by the Holy Spirit, the intellectual virtue “is acquired by human effort” (II-II.45.1.ad 2, cf. “*per studium*” in I.1.6.ad 3), and is to the gift as the one educated in the science of morals is to the one habituated to love chastity. Here again, the gift of wisdom appears to be contrasted with a mode of wisdom that proceeds through study, in dependence on a particular intellectual formation.

And yet, the differences between I.1.6 and II-II.45.2 are striking as well, and call for further consideration. Most importantly, in the latter Aquinas identifies this second mode of judgment as dependent on the intellectual virtue of wisdom; that virtue is not mentioned in I.1.6. Moreover, Aquinas does not advert in II-II.45.2 to the dependence of this form of judgment on divine revelation for its principles; here, wisdom as intellectual virtue makes its judgment about *divina* “*ex rationis inquisitione,*” after reason’s inquiry.

If we consider Aquinas’s statements elsewhere regarding the intellectual virtue of wisdom,²³ these differences begin to appear more

²¹ For the one who judges *per modum cognitionis*, “zu seinen Kennzeichen ist das Suchen zu rechnen, in das, soll das Nachdenken zu einem Resultat führen, Zeit und Bemühungen investiert werden müssen. Anders verhält es sich mit dem, der eben den *habitus castitatis* hat [cf. II-II.45.2.c. for this example]. Er urteilt aufgrund einer Verwandtschaft mit dem zur Keuschheit Gehörenden” (Horst, *Die Gaben des Heiligen Geistes*, 132).

²² Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, in *Oeuvres Complètes* (Louis Lafuma (ed.), Paris: Éditions duSeuil, 1963) §424.

²³ Broadly speaking, an intellectual virtue is only analogically a virtue, since Aquinas follows Augustine in defining virtue as “*bona qualitas mentis, qua recte vivitur, qua nullus male utitur,*” and, in the case of infused virtues, “*quam Deus in nobis sine nobis operatur*” (I-II.55.4, cf. *De Lib. Arb.* 2.19). The intellectual virtues, however, are so-called “*inquantum faciunt facultatem bonae operationis, quae est consideratio veri (hoc enim est bonum opus intellectus), non tamen dicuntur virtutes secundo modo, quasi facientes bene uti potentia seu habitu*” (I-II.57.1.c.). Someone who has the intellectual virtue of “*scientia speculativa*” is thereby equipped “*speculari verum in his quorum habet scientiam; sed quod utatur scientia habita, hoc est movente voluntate*” (Ibid.). The intellectual virtues are “imperfect” in that they do not automatically render their possessors flourishing, praiseworthy human beings, but only skillful practitioners of their art. Garrigou-Lagrange comments, “In a partial degree, intellectual virtues may develop good health in a man, or turn him into a good artist, or refine his skill as a good mechanic. In spite of all this, the man may persist as a well-known pervert. It is quite the contrary with virtues simply and properly so styled. Prudence and justice, for example, make the man simply good” (*The Theological Virtues*, xii).

pronounced yet. Aquinas clearly delimits the intellectual virtue's scope, as follows: "*sapientia quae a philosopho ponitur intellectualis virtus, considerat divina secundum quod sunt investigabilia ratione humana. Sed theologica virtus est circa ea secundum quod rationem humanam excedunt*" (I-II.62.2.ad 2). Here, then, the intellectual virtue of wisdom clearly pertains only to "natural theology," to the reasoned exploration of the *praeambula fidei*; to explore *divina* as divinely-revealed pertains to "theological virtue." And this is why he can insist soon after, "*sapientia dicitur intellectualis virtus, secundum quod procedit ex iudicio rationis, dicitur autem donum, secundum quod operatur ex instinctu divino*" (I-II.68.1.ad 4).

If we take Aquinas's account of intellectual virtue to have remained consistent from the *Prima Secundae* to the *Secunda Secundae*, we must conclude that the wisdom contrasted with the Holy Spirit's gift in I.1.6 is not the intellectual virtue of wisdom described in II-II.45.2, despite their undeniable similarities in operation. It appears that Tobias Hoffmann is right:

Wisdom as an intellectual virtue concerns God as he is knowable by natural human reason, that is, as he is investigated in the science of metaphysics. In the supernatural order, wisdom can either be identified with 'sacred doctrine' (that is, with theology as a science of God based on divine revelation) or with wisdom as a gift of the Holy Spirit (that is, a connatural familiarity with divine matters, by which one is able to evaluate and order things according to a divine standard)."²⁴

The crucial difference between the first two wisdoms appears to lie in the fact that the wisdom proper to *sacra doctrina*, unlike the homonymous intellectual virtue, takes its starting point from faith in divine revelation.²⁵ To better understand this difference, then, we need to consider more carefully the role of faith in the practice of *sacra doctrina* "*per modum cognitionis*" (I.1.6.ad 3).

First among the theological virtues – in the order of generation, though not in the order of merit – is faith, the possession of which is a necessary condition for possessing the theological virtues of hope and charity (I-II.62.2.c.). As a species of belief, faith can broadly be defined as "*cum assensione cogitare*" (II-II.2.1.c.), though it is distinguished by its material and formal aspects. Aquinas's definition of faith parallels his earlier definition of sacred doctrine: in its material aspect, faith concerns the LORD, and his creatures in relation to him (distinguished into discrete articles, as befits

²⁴ "The Intellectual Virtues," 330.

²⁵ "Although those things which are beyond man's knowledge may not be sought for by man through his reason, nevertheless, once they are revealed by God, they must be accepted by faith" (I.1.1.ad 1; cf. also I.1.8.c.).

the discursive and propositional character of human knowing, cf. II-II.1.6), while in its formal aspect, faith is distinguished from other modes of knowing in its assent to claims under the aspect of “*prima veritas*,” namely, as they are divinely revealed (II-II.1.1.c.). Thus the believer, by virtue of her primary assent to the LORD as *prima veritas*, knows the articles of faith in a qualitatively different manner than does someone who merely assents to them as probable (cf. II-II.5.3.c.), or who apprehends them without assent.²⁶

Aquinas also takes it that the infused virtue of faith induces in believers some grasp of the articles of faith, by way of the Holy Spirit’s gifts of knowledge and understanding (II-II.8-9). Indeed, Aquinas argues that the gift of understanding is necessary for salvation, since by it the Holy Spirit so illuminates the believer’s mind that she is able to apprehend the articles assented to (II-II.8.1.c.).²⁷ By contrast, the gift of knowledge ensures that the believer accurately assents to truths of the faith rather than their simulacra (II-II.9.1.c.).²⁸ Nonetheless, he recognizes that “*multi habentes gratiam adhuc patiuntur mentis hebetudinem*” (II-II.8.4.1), and so cautions that the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to all believers only insofar as they are preserved from error in matters necessary for salvation (II-II.8.4.ad 1): the simple *vetula*’s confession of the Apostle’s Creed as a guide for a life of prayer is made possible by the Holy Spirit’s gift of understanding.²⁹ She is granted, by the Holy Spirit, an inchoate participation in the LORD’s simple self-understanding, though this participation is not available for discursive, linguistic arrangement

²⁶ Faith is also a virtue of the will, which is transformed by grace so as to press the intellect to submit to revelation (I-II.113.3-4). Cf. Joseph Bobik: “Faith resides both in the intellect and in the will, but immediately and properly in the intellect, since truth is the object of faith, and truth is the object of the intellect. Faith resides in the intellect as assenting to truth, in the will as commanding the intellect to its assent” (*Veritas Divina: Aquinas on Divine Truth* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2001), 51).

²⁷ The gifts of understanding and knowledge seems to be a simple corollary of insisting that belief in the articles of faith as divinely-revealed is a gift of grace. Since belief is not merely assent, but rather “*cum assensione cogitare*” (II-II.2.1), it includes at least a modest degree of apprehension (I can neither believe nor disbelieve Carroll’s, “‘Twas brillig, and the slithy toves did gyre and gimble in the wabe”). Thus, if the faith in the Gospel to which the Spirit moves us is truly to be *ours*, it must be exercised in and through a faculty of understanding somehow adequate to its contents. The Holy Spirit guarantees, Aquinas takes it, that all believers will be able to impose sufficient sense upon the articles of faith to be able to hold them as true.

²⁸ Possession of this gift accounts for the impossibility of anything false coming under faith (II-II.1.3.c.) – though, of course, stipulating this surely only means that discovering that something apparently believed on faith was false would indicate that it had not in fact been true faith doing the believing, but only faith’s simulacrum.

²⁹ *Expositio in Symbolum Apostolorum* (ed. Roberto Busa; Turin, 1954; <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/csv.html>; 5/18/2015), proemium. Cf. Marshall, “Quod Scit,” 1-3.

and embellishment, as it is for the practitioner of *sacra doctrina* as speculative science (cf. II-II.8.1.ad 2).³⁰

We can thus begin to see the connection Aquinas envisages between the infused virtue of faith and the practice of *sacra doctrina*: even the theologian who judges *divina per modum cognitionis* begins, Aquinas insists, by assenting to the articles of faith and to Scripture as her divinely-revealed starting point. But knowing Scripture and the articles of faith as divinely revealed is linked with believing them to be so in the same way that knowing a particular woman as your mother is linked with believing her to be so; the only knowledge of supernatural truths or of most past contingents available to human beings is by way of assent to testimony.³¹ And Aquinas takes the clear teaching of Scripture to be that every assent to the articles of faith as divinely revealed is given by the infusion of grace (I-II.113.3-4, cf. Jn 6:45).

The Gratuitous Grace of Wisdom

Aquinas has thus distinguished the wisdom proper to *sacra doctrina* (a discursive knowledge acquired through reflection on Scripture and the *articula fidei*) from wisdom as gift of the Holy Spirit (a connatural, experiential knowledge infused directly by the Holy Spirit) and from wisdom as intellectual virtue (a knowledge won by reason alone, both as to its premises and its conclusions). And yet in the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas distinguishes another form of wisdom which we have not yet considered, namely, as a gratuitous grace. How might it relate to the wisdom proper to *sacra doctrina*?

³⁰ Garrigou-Lagrange contrasts them thus: “The gift of knowledge differs from human science [in that] it is not discursive; it is direct and simple, being by origin a participation of knowledge that is divine. . . . The gift of knowledge is not to be confused with acquired theology or the competence of men, however degreed. . . . Acquired theology is a thoroughly discursive science – not so the infused gift of knowledge” (394). Cf. also Horst: “Die Einsicht, wie sie hier verstanden werden soll, meint die ‘Vorzuglichkeit einer Erkenntnis, die in das Innere eindringt’ – und zwar auf nichtdiskursive Weise. Ihr eignet deshalb Spontaneität, da sie auf langwierige Reflexionen, wie sie zum Geschäft der Theologie gehören, nicht angewiesen ist” (*Die Gaben des Heiligen Geistes*, 113). And as Steven Pinsent observes, “The Gift of Knowledge enables a ‘participated likeness’ of God’s knowledge, knowledge that is absolute and simple rather than discursive, as for the homonymous intellectual virtue” (Pinsent, “Gifts and Fruits,” 478).

³¹ In the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas devotes little effort to offering reasons in defense of believers’ assent to Scripture as *verbum Dei*. In the *Summa contra Gentiles* (whose very title indicates an apologetic, *extra muros* orientation), however, he lists such reasons at some length. “Sapientia divina,” he argues, “ad confirmandum ea quae naturalem cognitionem excedunt, opera visibiliter ostendit quae totius naturae superant facultatem; videlicet in mirabili curatione languorum, mortuorum suscitatione, caelestium corporum mirabili immutatione; et, quod est mirabilius, humanarum mentium inspiratione” (I.6.1). Cf. Bruno Niederbacher, S.J., “The Relation of Faith to Reason,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas* (eds. Brian Davies & Eleanor Stump; New York: Oxford University, 2012), 337-347, here 342.

In addition to being products of acquired intellectual virtue, wisdom and understanding are also instances for Aquinas of “gratuitous grace (*gratia gratis data*),” what Paul refers to as “*χαρίσματα*” (1 Cor 12:1-11, cf. I-II.111.1.c.). The gratuitous graces are related to the work of theology, insofar as they are given that one might be able “*alios instruere et contradicentes revincere*” (I-II.111.4.ad 4.). Aquinas takes pains to distinguish the gratuitous grace of wisdom from the homonymous gift: the gift is possessed by all Christians who are not in a state of mortal sin, though the measure of “*iudicium rectum*” that it affords is only what is “*necessarium ad salutem*” (II-II.45.5.c.). There is a sense, then, in which Aquinas will grant that wisdom as a gratuitous grace is actually “higher” than wisdom as gift, since it is given only to a few, and allows them either to know “*altiora quaedam mysteria . . . et aliis manifestare possunt*” (Ibid.).

These descriptions of gratuitous grace suggest that we are drawing near to the mode of wisdom proper to *sacra doctrina* which Aquinas discusses in I.1.6.ad 3, since they closely parallel his explanation of the *Summa Theologiae* itself: “*propositum nostrae intentionis in hoc opere est, ea quae ad Christianam religionem pertinent, eo modo tradere, secundum quod congruit ad eruditionem incipientium*” (ST proemium). And closer still is his explanatory comment regarding the *Summa contra Gentiles*: “*propositum nostrae intentionis est veritatem quam fides Catholica profitetur, pro nostro modulo manifestare, errores eliminando contrarios*” (ScG I.2.2). It seems reasonable to conclude, then, that Aquinas interpreted his interpretive and exegetical labors in both *Summas* as enabled by gratuitous grace.

Unsurprisingly, then, his account of the work of gratuitous grace links up significantly with his description of judgment “*per modum cognitionis*” in I.1.6.ad 3. So, the work of churchly teaching, as in any science, requires, first that one be certain of *sacra doctrina*’s first principles, which pertains to faith. But equally, “*oportet quod doctor recte se habeat circa principales conclusiones scientiae*,” and so the teacher is given the gratuitous grace of wisdom, “*quae est cognitio divinorum*” (I-II.111.4.c.). And finally, “*abundet exemplis et cognitione effectuum, per quos interdum oportet manifestare causas*,” which is brought about by the gratuitous grace of knowledge (Ibid.). The one equipped by gratuitous grace, like the practitioner of *sacra doctrina*, is equipped to argue persuasively for the truths of the faith.

Nonetheless, there are important differences between these two accounts that frustrate any neat synthesis. Aquinas goes on to note that “*non omnia beneficia quae nobis divinitus conceduntur, gratiae gratis datae dicuntur, sed solum illa quae excedunt facultatem*

naturae, sicut quod piscator abundet sermone sapientiae et scientiae et aliis huiusmodi” (I-II.111.4.ad 1). By gratuitous grace, the LORD “makes eloquent the tongues of infants”;³² by the same grace, he can instill in the ignorant and ill-equipped a supernatural knowledge of himself.³³ Strikingly, there is no mention here of the wisdom which is won “*per studium*,” and which is analogous to the knowledge of the “*instructi in scientia morali*” (I.1.6.ad 3). Instead, the gratuitous grace of wisdom is a purely supernatural gift, whose paradigm case is the Spirit’s empowering the “illiterate” Peter to silence the learned members of the Sanhedrin (cf. Acts 4:13).

It appears, then, that the threefold typology of “wisdom” – as intellectual virtue, gratuitous grace, and gift of the Holy Spirit – which we adapted earlier from Hoffman must at minimum be finessed, for, if Aquinas’s own practice of *sacra doctrina* is an instance of gratuitous grace at work, it would seem that we must recognize (at least?) two distinct modes of gratuitous grace. On the one hand, there is the LORD’s granting someone knowledge or eloquence that exceeds anything he could have mustered apart from direct inspiration. But conversely, there is the gratuitous grace manifested in and through the *Summa Theologiae* itself, in which a naturally brilliant man is granted faith in the LORD’s self-revelation, and reasons from it to its implicit entailments, or renders it intelligible by the deft deployment of distinctions. This form of wisdom is not given immediately to one whose natural capacities bear no relation to it, but rather is won laboriously, “*per studium*” of a largely textual deposit as part of an extended tradition of reflection and debate.

Why then does Aquinas describe his work of *sacra doctrina* in terms of gratuitous grace? We might simply say that, insofar as the theologian’s intellectual labors are made an instrument of the *ordo salutis*, by which sinners are brought to new life in Christ (cf. Rom 10:14-15), we must construe them as divinely superintended by gratuitous grace, since no human being has it in his native capacities to bring another to faith (cf. I-II.111.4.c.). But this is still unsatisfying, since it provides no lexicon for highlighting the distinction between the Spirit’s gift of words to Peter and Aquinas’s own patient intellectual labors.

Aquinas might have done better to introduce a twofold distinction here, grouping acts of theologizing according to purpose, but also according to the capacities that produce them. On the one hand, we

³² Thomas Aquinas, “Prayer Before Study,” *The Aquinas Prayer Book: The Prayers and Hymns of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute, 2000), 43.

³³ This does not mean, for Aquinas, that all Christians are candidates for receiving such grace – the gratuitous graces related to ecclesiastical teaching (and the “gift of words” which is necessary for their functioning) are particularly suited for “prelates,” and are absolutely denied to women (II-II.177.2.c., citing 1 Tim 2:10-11).

might group acts of speech about the LORD according to the extent that they are disposed – whether by the speaker, by the LORD, or by both – to bring about instruction for believers or conversion for unbelievers. Aquinas’s and Peter’s theological performances both clearly belong to this category, and insofar as they are made vessels of grace, might be thought of as divinely superintended.

On the other hand, however, we might group theological performances according to how they are produced, and here Peter and Aquinas clearly do not belong together. Peter, as Aquinas notes, is given words directly by the Holy Spirit, words that he had no inkling of beforehand (cf. Lk 12:12). Aquinas, on the other hand, while equally dependent as Peter on the LORD’s self-revelation, grows in apprehension of this textual deposit gradually and, in accord with his inborn faculties, “*per studium*” (I.1.6.ad 3).³⁴ The most obvious label in the *Summa Theologiae* for what enables this growing apprehension and literary embellishment of the LORD’s revelation is “intellectual virtue” – this is why the “wisdoms” opposed to the Holy Spirit’s gift in I.1.6. and II-II.45.2 appear to be so similar. As already noted, someone who has the intellectual virtue of “*scientia speculativa*” is thereby equipped “*speculari verum in his quorum habet scientiam*” (I-II.57.1.c.); in this case, the *scientia* in question is *sacra doctrina*, whose practitioners embroider the LORD’s self-revelation with detailed exegesis and technical argument.

This distinction between the means by and the ends for which one engages in *sacra doctrina* is perhaps best thought of in terms of the difference between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts: a single illocutionary act (making an assertion about the LORD) can be performed with an eye to many different perlocutionary acts (persuading other theologians to adopt one’s view, converting the unbelieving crowds to saving faith, or even getting tenure). Garrigou-Lagrange implicitly recognizes this distinction when he writes, “Acquired theology, the seminary brand, may be made encouragingly practical by *gratis datae* graces, for the instruction of others and for the quieting of adversaries.”³⁵

Notional and Real Apprehension of *Divina*

At last, then, we have some measure of clarity regarding the two modes of judgment according to wisdom with which we began this discussion of *sacra doctrina*’s practitioners (cf. I.1.6.ad 3): the one who judges “*per modum inclinationis*” does so connaturally, by

³⁴ This is not to dismiss out of hand the importance that contemplation, and indeed direct inspiration, might have had for Aquinas’s intellectual labors; but it is surely uncontroversial to observe that well-honed natural gifts played a much greater role in his writing and teaching than in that of Peter as he is depicted in the Gospels and in Acts.

³⁵ *The Theological Virtues*, 395.

means of the Holy Spirit's inspiration, while the one who judges "*per modum cognitionis*" does so, Aquinas implies, by means of a gratuitous grace, albeit a highly odd one according to his own definition, one of wisdom not infused directly by the Spirit, but rather won "*per studium*." We might, however, be able to further clarify Aquinas's distinction of these two modes of judgment in light of John Henry Newman's distinction of notional from real apprehension.

Apprehension, for Newman, is the imposition of sense on the predicate of a proposition.³⁶ This can be accomplished in two modes, "real" and "notional," which, while compossible, and ordinarily intermingled in much human knowing,³⁷ are conceptually distinct in a number of ways. For Newman, to apprehend a proposition as real is to treat its terms as "things," as units external to the knower,³⁸ toward which the knower strains longingly, asymptotically approaching apprehension of the thing in itself.³⁹ "The informations of sense and sensation are the initial basis of both" real and notional apprehension; "but in the one we take hold of objects from within them, and in the other we view them from outside of them."⁴⁰ Newman applies this distinction directly to the work of theology: "The formula, which embodies a dogma for the theologian, readily suggests an object for the worshipper."⁴¹

Perhaps we might say that the theologian, insofar as she exercises judgment about *divina per modum cognitionis*, and so knows them from without (in the manner of the immoral moralist of I.I.6.ad 3), has a notional apprehension of her subject matter.⁴² In the textual deposit of Scripture and its creedal, magisterial, and theological reception, she finds a lexicon and syntax to govern speech about the LORD and his creatures, conceptual tools that she deploys in developing technical arguments for or against propositions, some of them exceedingly abstract, such as Thomas's argument that the LORD has no "real relations" to creatures (I.13.7.c.), or that the divine processions ought to

³⁶ John Henry Newman, *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1st ed. 1870; <http://www.newmanreader.org/works/grammar/#titlepage>; Accessed 5/18/2015), 14.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 10, 34.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 121.

⁴² The possibility of practicing *sacra doctrina* "from the outside," as propositions apprehended notionally, does not, of course, mean that Aquinas sees no connection between this speculative science and sanctity (for which, vide supra). And yet empirically, many practice sacred doctrine in such a way as to divorce its "speculative" and "contemplative" dimensions. On its face, this is no more surprising, in a fallen world, than the fact that my ability to leap onto my kitchen table tells me nothing about whether I ought to do so when the Dean is over for dinner: our capacity for an act and that act's propriety simply do not map neatly onto one another.

be understood on analogy with “intelligible emanations” (I.27.1.c.). By contrast, the one who judges *divina per modum inclinationis* (there is nothing to prevent this being the very same theologian) has a real apprehension of them, grasping them affectively, pressing beyond the notions that veil the LORD to suffer a mode of union with him (*patiens divina*) that by definition exceeds the mastery of speech.

Conclusion: Can a Pagan Practice *Sacra Doctrina*

In the *Summa Theologiae*, we have discovered three modes of judging in accordance with *sacra doctrina* as supreme wisdom: the Holy Spirit’s gift of wisdom, the pure inspiration of gratuitous grace, and gratuitous grace exercised “*per studium*,” the last of which closely resembles Aquinas’s actual practice in the *Summa Theologiae* (a fourth mode, dependent on the intellectual virtue, is foreign to *sacra doctrina* as Aquinas defines it). So far as I know, he takes these three modes to be exhaustive – anyone who judges rightly about *sacra doctrina* will do so in accord with (at least) one of them. However, Aquinas’s acknowledgement of the possibility of the theologian’s notional apprehension “*per modum cognitionis*” opens up a possibility which he seems not to have considered, namely, that of a pagan’s practicing *sacra doctrina* under the aspect of mention, rather than use.

Imagine, that is, a pagan – a Buddhist, say – who intelligently studies the largely textual deposit which, for Aquinas, is grist for the theologian’s mill.⁴³ Immersed in Scripture, magisterial texts, the liturgical life of the church, and the broad theological tradition (*inter alia*), she is thereby equipped to judge well and fluently about the contents and entailments of Christian doctrine. Of course, she does so only, as it were, subjunctively, for instance by way of apprehending the following: “If the Virgin Mary were immaculately conceived, then it would fittingly follow that she would have been assumed, body and soul, into heaven.” Her Buddhism entails that she would never assent to either half of this conditional, nor can she know its contents *per modum inclinationis*, because such knowledge is graven on the heart by the Holy Spirit, who is poured out to those who believe (cf. 2 Cor 3:3, Rom 5:5). And yet, in terms of the conditional judgments she is equipped to make *per modum cognitionis*, there is a sense in which her articulate, notional apprehension of the LORD far exceeds that of the pious charwoman at her prayers.

Can Aquinas’s account of *sacra doctrina* as a speculative science of reflection *per modum cognitionis* on the LORD’s self-revelation

⁴³ For a more extensive application of the use/mention distinction to Christian theology, cf. my “Saying and Praying: Christian Holiness and the Practice of Theology,” *Pro Ecclesia* Summer 2015, Vol. XXIV No. 3, p. 289-307.

can be extended analogically to a pagan's practice of *sacra doctrina* under the aspect of mention rather than use? Is there room in Thomas for the thesis that pagans can practice Christian theology?

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