

JEAN-PIERRE TORRELL'S RESEARCH ON THOMAS AQUINAS

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*[In the 20th century while Thomas Aquinas was being rediscovered, the work of scholars such as Marie-Dominique Chenu and Étienne Gilson, Bernard Lonergan and Yves Congar explored the Middle Ages which expanded our knowledge of the theological depths of Aquinas. Since the 700th anniversary (1974) of Aquinas's death, an abundance of studies have appeared. Torrell's *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin*, is a kind of crown to all this research in the past century. Torrell has written other valuable studies on Aquinas; the goal of this note is to make known the breadth of Torrell's writings on Aquinas, few of which are translated into English.]*

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY was a century that rediscovered Thomas Aquinas. The era was a time not only of various neo-Thomisms but of persons and schools whose labor and courage offered a deeper understanding of the medieval theologian's ideas and perspectives. The work of scholars as diverse as Marie-Dominique Chenu and Étienne Gilson, Bernard Lonergan and Yves Congar gave us extensive historical study of the Middle Ages while at the same time expanding our knowledge of the theological depths of Aquinas. Theological applications, whether to the psychology of faith or the reality of sacrament, have built on this century of research reaching from Martin Grabmann, Thomas Gilby, and Adolf Hofmann to Leonard Boyle, Ulrich Horst, Serge-Thomas Bonino, and the subject of this brief study, Jean-Pierre Torrell.

Many of the theologians of Vatican II such as Chenu, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Karl Rahner enhanced the theological comprehension of Aquinas. The council brought a rapid decline of interest in Thomism by admitting biblical, patristic, and modern theologies as its sources and thus ending the monopoly of neo-Scholasticism in the Roman Catholic Church from 1860 to 1960.¹ In the years since the 700th anniversary in 1974 of

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¹ Yves Congar spoke of "the manuals of the early part of the century referring less to the broad perspectives of St. Thomas and more to his authority affirmed only in a material way" ("Introduction," *Thomas d'Aquin: Sa vision de théologie et de l'Église* [London: Variorum, 1984] ii).

Aquinas's death, an abundance of new studies have appeared. Otto Hermann Pesch speaks of books and articles on Aquinas "sprouting up like mushrooms" in recent years. One thinks of Pesch's own publications, essays by Walter Principe and Edouard-Henri Wéber, and the many volumes from congresses, particularly the more than 50 volumes of the *Studi tomistici* and the special issues of the *Revue thomiste*. Richard Ingardia's bibliography of two recent decades, *Thomas Aquinas: International Bibliography, 1977–1990*, lists over 4,000 entries.²

TORRELL'S RECENT ACHIEVEMENT

Jean-Pierre Torrell's two-volume study, *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin*, is a kind of crown to all this research into Aquinas in the 20th century. Torrell, however, has written other valuable studies of Aquinas, and so the goal of this brief note is to make the breadth of Torrell's writings known, for only the *Initiation's* first volume, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work*, is currently available to the English reader. Torrell has been present in French scholarly journals and collections drawn from symposia in Europe, but, at least in the United States, he has been generally unknown before the publication of his synthetic work on Thomas Aquinas's life, writings, and theology.

Born in 1927, Torrell is a priest of the Dominican province of Toulouse and holds doctorates from Le Saulchoir in Paris and the Institut d'études médiévales in Montréal. In the late 1970s he taught at the Gregorian University in Rome and since 1981 has been professor at Fribourg (Switzerland) where he is now emeritus. He has also been a member of the Leonine Commission preparing the critical text of the writings of Aquinas. A bibliography of his writings up through 1992 cites over 60 critical texts, books, and articles; a second list from 1993 to 1999 presents 30 more.³ Along with some recent overviews of Catholicism and Catholic theology, Torrell in the 1960s and afterwards⁴ published a dozen articles on ecclesiological ques-

² Richard Ingardia, *Thomas Aquinas: International Bibliography, 1977–1990* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Philosophy Documentation Center, 1993).

³ A bibliography of Torrell's writings into 1992 has been published by Gilles Emery for a *Festschrift*. See, Carlos-Josaphat Pinto de Oliveira, ed., *Ordo sapientiae et amoris: Image et message de Saint Thomas d'Aquin à travers les récentes études historiques, herméneutiques et doctrinales* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1993).

⁴ See the survey of theology in its sources, subject, and method in *La théologie catholique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994) and a recent book of personal meditations, *Dieu qui es-tu? Un homme et son Dieu* (Paris: Cerf, 1999). A selection of texts from Aquinas and an introduction gives Torrell's anthropological perspective in summary: Thomas d'Aquin, *L'homme chrétien*, ed. A.-I. Mennessier and J.-P. Torrell (Paris: Cerf, 1998).

tions such as the nature of the episcopacy and church authority⁵ as well as important studies in other areas of medieval studies such as Peter the Venerable, Hugh of Saint-Cher, and the medieval understanding of prophecy.⁶ I want to focus on his study of Aquinas, however.

Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work, the first volume of Torrell's magisterial study, is, as he describes it, a guide to the person and the work. Hundreds of technical problems of chronology, context, and purpose for Aquinas's many writings are evaluated in order to provide a biographical tour of life and theology. Torrell gives more time to Aquinas's theology and career in the midst of medieval religion than did James Athanasius Weisheipl in his *Friar Thomas d'Aquino* (1974; 1983), the perspective of which was the history and philosophy of science. Torrell's book is the result of a special career that includes both work with the Leonine Commission and teaching at a university; it is the creation of a scholar who is interested in meticulous discussions of dating as well as in the human side of Aquinas's years of intense labor as theology reached into public ministry. If this work incorporates recent and perduring research into Aquinas from Pierre-Marie Gy on the Feast of Corpus Christi, P.-M. Gils on Aquinas's writing of texts, Leonard Boyle on the origins of the *Summa theologiae*, and René Antoine Gauthier on the *Summa contra gentiles*, Torrell gives his own insights and resolutions from the perspectives of historian and theologian.

In the first volume of *Initiation* which treats Thomas's life and works, Torrell's main chapters are followed by two concluding ones on the controversies in the years after Aquinas's death and the process leading to canonization. A chronology leads to two addenda written by Gilles Emery: a catalogue of all the writings of Aquinas (including those designated as inauthentic) listing the manuscript witnesses, published texts in Latin, and French translations; a bibliography that can lay claim to being international.

Indicative of the extent of the areas treated is the seventh chapter of *St. Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work*. Set between the complex history of the *Summa contra gentiles* and the inception of the *Summa*

⁵ For instance, in terms of ecclesiastical authority and Aquinas, see "Autorités théologiques et liberté du théologien: L'exemple de saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Les Echos de Saint-Maurice* 18 (1988) 7–24.

⁶ Among writings in these three areas are: *Théorie de la prophétie de la connaissance aux environs de 1230: La contribution d'Hugues de Saint-Cher* (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1977); *Pierre le Vénérable, Abbé de Cluny: Le courage de la mesure* (Chambray-lès-Tours: C.L.D., 1988); *Pierre le Vénérable et sa vision du monde* (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1986); *Recherches sur la théorie de la prophétie au moyen âge, XIIe–XIVe siècles: études et textes* (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1992).

theologiae in Rome is a treatment of the “Sojourn at Orvieto” in which we learn about Aquinas’s involvement in provincial meetings and his activity as a prioral lector. Also in Orvieto he commented on Job and composed the study requested by Pope Urban IV concerning certain ecumenical issues dividing the Christian West from the Christian East. Interesting minor works on philosophy and canon law are considered thoroughly, and then space is given to two idiosyncratic works: the liturgical office for the Feast of Corpus Christi, and the Gospel commentary drawn from patristic sources, the *Catena aurea*.

In a further section typically rich in information, “The Commentator on Aristotle,” Torrell notes how Aquinas wrote a succession of Aristotelian commentaries after 1268, an interest begun in Rome and continued in Paris. Aquinas intended to explain the Greek philosopher in such a way that his thought is open to new extensions and directions. “These commentaries were not courses he would have given to his students. They are rather the equivalent of a personal reading made with pen in hand to constrain himself to penetrate the text of Aristotle in order to prepare himself for the composition of the moral part of the *Summa theologiae*.”⁷ Torrell moves energetically to Aquinas’s secretaries and then in the next chapter to the difficult issue of the chronology and manuscript genres resulting from Aquinas’s activity of commenting on the letters of St. Paul. He summarizes effortlessly the timing of certain writings, Aquinas’s purpose for them and their cultural and intellectual milieu as well as the philosophical and theological issues surrounding important themes.

The second volume of Torrell’s main study on Aquinas has the subheading, “Spiritual Master.”⁸ He made the decision to present Aquinas’s theology, the material of this second volume, in the format of what we understand today as a spirituality.⁹ A spirituality is not quite the same as a theological system, and whether Torrell’s approach places limits upon an exposition of Aquinas’s theology can be pondered. Regardless, the purpose is to let a Scholastic theology assume some vitality not through polemics or linguistic analysis but through theological re-expression. While showing

⁷ *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1996) 228; the work has appeared in German (Herder) as *Magister Thomas*.

⁸ *Saint Thomas d’Aquin: Maître Spirituel [Initiation 2]* Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P. (Paris: Cerf, 1996); for his own summary, see Torrell, “Thomas d’Aquin,” in *Dictionnaire critique de théologie*, ed. Jean-Yves Lacoste (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998) 1138–41; see the review by Lawrence Cunningham of the *Initiation*, “A Trinitarian Vision,” *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 5:1 (1997) 29 f.

⁹ A summary of this area of the second volume can be found in “Thomas d’Aquin,” *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 15 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1990) cols. 718–73; and an overview is “Saint Thomas d’Aquin: Maître de vie spirituelle,” *Revue des sciences religieuses* 71 (1997) 440–57.

how Aquinas's theology is unusual in its synthesis of biblical material in both systematic and disputational works, Torrell offers sections, perhaps unique in Thomism, on how commentaries and synthetic works include the New Testament ideas of John and Paul. Such biblical research is helpful in understanding the mounting dynamic of the *Secunda Pars* of the *Summa theologiae* where personality and virtue find a climax in a somewhat Pauline motif of the new, interior law of the Holy Spirit called grace. *Saint Thomas d'Aquin: Maître Spirituel* has two sections, "A Trinitarian Spirituality" and "The Human Person in the World and before God." Both show how the theology of God in the *Prima Pars* is a propaedeutic to the revealed Trinity, and how the climactic question on the missions of Word and Spirit moves outward to touch, as Aquinas put it, that "horizon between the material and spiritual," the human being, the image of God called to, and endowed with, grace. The first part, after showing the limits of our knowledge of the God beyond all, discusses God and the world, the human image of God and its future happiness, the way and image which is Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is presented in its life, in the grace at the heart of the Church, and in that grace as it becomes the individual's guide to the Christian life. The second part looks at the same process but from a more intimate perspective: the human being related to God within creation and the world, human life, a human society of friends and laws and charisms, conscience and the ways that truly lead to God.

Torrell considers not only the traditional topics of Thomistic spirituality such as the gifts but also aspects of ecclesiology. There is a creative interplay as creation and politics are treated, while interestingly the Church is considered in both parts of his book. The trinitarian section discusses human beings as the images of God fulfilled in eschatological happiness as well as the motifs of way and journey. Thus Torrell's thoughtful pattern is itself insight and exposition, an exposition of Aquinas's theology and contemporary theology.

A psychological and pneumatic understanding of Christian discipleship is never far away. Both the individual of modernity and the Trinity of Eastern Christian theologies have their resonance here. "In the spiritual theology of the school of St. Thomas the person finds in his or her self the norm of activity. Although the Spirit dwells within, the personality of human nature is a proper law for its life. Ultimately, seeing advice and informing itself, the individual person decides. If there is a place in Thomist spirituality for the counsel of a spiritual master, the central role of a director of conscience, a figure who will have a determining place in other spiritualities, is not found there."¹⁰

In a review of Torrell's books, Gy speaks of how this work insures a

¹⁰ *Saint Thomas d'Aquin: Maître Spirituel* [Initiation 2] 511.

mature intellectual and spiritual contact with Aquinas: "Certainly a person could begin with points of chronological location and with one or two lines of a text . . . enabling some discovery of a few profound facts of Aquinas's thought, but soon and from then on it is necessary to be acquainted well with questions concerning the biography and historical situation of the writings of Thomas."¹¹ Gy places Torrell's book in the line of Chenu, Albert Patfoort, and Weisheipl, mentioning its lack of apologetic or combative tone. The engaging style permits the reader to learn from Torrell's wealth of data and judgment without the reader's losing his or her own perspective. Gy observes Aquinas's rapid spiritual and intellectual development, his moving from one place to another during his adulthood, his desire to escape ecclesiastical offices, his ability to work successfully in different genres in teaching and writing. This is "a book which those who study St. Thomas in a profound way will want to have at hand."¹²

SUBSEQUENT PUBLICATIONS

After publishing the *Initiation* Torrell wrote an introduction of less than 200 pages, *La "Somme" de théologie de saint Thomas d'Aquin*, which treats Aquinas's life and writings, the structure of the *Summa theologiae* with its Christian and non-Christian sources, and other kinds of writings by Aquinas. Two chapters on the history of the interpretation of the *Summa theologiae* (the second solely on the hermeneutics of the 20th century) complete a fine introduction that deserves an English translation.¹³

Since the completion of his overview of Aquinas in two volumes, Torrell has also published a two-volume study on Aquinas's presentation in the Tertia Pars of the *Summa theologiae* of the events or mysteries of Jesus Christ's life, *Le Christ en ses mystères: La vie et l'oeuvre de Jésus selon saint Thomas d'Aquin*.¹⁴ This is a detailed exposition of a section of the *Summa* often neglected and yet one that stands out among writings by other authors of the 13th century in its length and concreteness. Torrell offers the medieval theology on its own merits; he does not argue that this is an alternative to modern biblical criticism or to a speculative Christology. His first volume covers the events from the sanctification of the Blessed Virgin through the Transfiguration, that is, from the first entry of the special grace of the Incarnation to the climactic mystery of Christ's life (but not of his

¹¹ Gy, review of *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin* in *Revue Thomiste* 98 (1998) 307–9.

¹² *Ibid.* 309.

¹³ *La "Somme" de théologie de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Cerf, 1998).

¹⁴ *Le Christ en ses mystères: La vie et l'oeuvre de Jésus selon saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Desclée, 1999–2000). A selection of texts from this area is available: *Saint Thomas d'Aquin: Le mystère du Christ* (Paris: Cerf, 1999).

work); the second volume treats the Passion, Resurrection and Exit (Ascension) of the Redeemer. Torrell does not try to hide the curious medieval issues—he refers to their “strangeness”¹⁵—but shows that much of the theology is instructive.

What is Torrell’s mode of presenting the *Summa theologiae* here and elsewhere? To begin, the background of each question is pondered historically and structurally. “In paying attention to the plan proposed by its author we will have a framework for a synthetic exposition which permits a better understanding of its design. While everything leads me to situate Aquinas in the history of thought, my goal is not to fashion a reading of pure medieval science, something archeological. I want to make this useful for today, and without hiding its limitations, draw some interest from our time to this effort. Its richness consists above all in a renewed attention given to the person of Jesus . . . , (and also) to the repercussions of this for the Christian life.”¹⁶ The goal is twofold: to set out formally and materially the insights of Aquinas, and then to show how they can contribute to today’s theology.

In looking at Aquinas’s life of Jesus, Torrell sees a marked presence of the Gospels according to Matthew and John—the medieval professor was commenting on them in a class for university students at the time he was writing the sections on Christ in the *Summa*—as well as influence from the Greek Fathers such as John Chrysostom. “Among the evangelists,” Aquinas wrote, “Matthew is distinguished by his attention to the humanity of Christ. . . . Indeed it is by his humanity that Christ entered into the world, that he lived in it, and that he left it.”¹⁷ Thomas sought a wide range of theological sources and interprets them in light of his understanding and plan.¹⁸ What structures are at work? The theme of “*exitus-regressus*” flowing through the entire *Summa* is present in the Birth and Ascension of Jesus Christ. A theology of Christ illustrates the interplay of the tracts and clusters of questions and topics in the span of the *Summa* where, in the totality of the great work, major themes are present in each part.¹⁹ Key questions echo or forecast other areas. “As with many other places in the *Summa*, and here particularly so, this question [on the priesthood of Christ; III, 22] is a real intersection; it presupposes certain areas to be already known (for instance, the section on religion and the definition of sacrifice)

¹⁵ “Introduction,” *Le Christ en ses mystères* 1.19.

¹⁶ “Avant-propos,” *Le Christ en ses mystères* 1.11; “Introduction,” *Le Christ en ses mystères* 1.38 (my translations).

¹⁷ Aquinas, *Super S. Matthaei lectura* 1, lect. 1. #11.

¹⁸ For instance, Aquinas’s plan makes no separation between Mary and Jesus, and has no separate section on her: “If he speaks of the Virgin Mary it is because she is the mother of the savior” (“Introduction,” *Le Christ en ses mystères* 1.20).

¹⁹ “Introduction,” *Le Christ en ses mystères* 1.33.

and opens immediately on to others (that of redemption primarily but also those of the Eucharist and Orders).”²⁰ Jesus’ priesthood presupposes a human nature and the hypostatic union; his priesthood is one of Calvarian mediation grounded in incarnational exchange and not a Jewish or Christian ecclesiastical priesthood.

Torrell’s studies on Jesus Christ include not only these two volumes on the events of Jesus’ life but also essays on the knowledge, ministry, and priesthood of Christ, as well as forays into contemporary Christology. For a conference held on “Christ among the Medieval Dominicans,” he joins Christ to spirituality. The article’s opening tackles one of the thorniest questions in the interpretation of the *Summa theologiae*, namely: Why is Jesus Christ placed after the graced human life? This issue is disturbing to some, two or three of whom recently have sought to resolve it by making Aquinas somewhat Barthian. In fact the Incarnate Word is mentioned several times in the *Summa theologiae* prior to the theology of the Tertia Pars on Jesus as the mission, way and model, although these occasional background references do not give the work a Christological format. Christ is to be illuminating and interpretative not simply in one tract but in important areas of theology. The prior theology of the human being as the image of God and the receiver of grace discloses aspects of a trinitarian theology, one active in Christology and pneumatology. If Christ is the way, that way begins with the Trinity and with the creation of images of God and continues in Word and Spirit leading men and women to divine fulfillment.²¹ In the events of the life of Jesus, Torrell finds “Christ’s exemplarity.” This is not a tedious biblical pageant or a compulsive imitation of some gesture in Galilee but a life of events whose mystery consists both in their ontological grounding in the divine presence and in their pedagogical meaning for life. The exemplary actions and teachings of Jesus are ethically instructive even as they are grounded in the salvific actions of the Savior. Conformity, discipleship, and imitation flow to men and women from the power of an individual’s grace that has come from the Risen head to all the members. This dual exemplarity, an ethical psychology within grace, is

²⁰ “Le sacerdoce du Christ dans la *Somme de théologie*,” *Saint Thomas d’Aquin et le Sacerdoce, Revue Thomiste* 99 (1999) 97. Torrell prepared the introduction and notes for the Christological section in a new French edition of the *Summa theologiae*: “Le Mystère de l’Incarnation,” in Thomas d’Aquin, *Somme théologique* 4 (Paris: Cerf, 1986) 13 ff.; see also “Le thomisme dans le débat christologique contemporain,” and “Saint Thomas d’Aquin et la science du Christ: Une relecture des questions 9–12 de la Tertia Pars de la Somme théologique,” in *Saint Thomas au XXe siècle: Colloque du centenaire de la “Revue thomiste” (1893–1992)* (Paris: Saint-Paul, 1994) 379–409.

²¹ Torrell, “Le Christ dans la ‘spiritualité’ de saint Thomas,” in *Christ among the Medieval Dominicans* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1998) 198–202.

likewise an example of how words come from realities. In Aquinas's plan there are subtle relationships of what is explicit in Jesus to the varied presences of the unseen Spirit in human life. Thereby Jesus shares and expresses the entire human journey of moving in life's history toward the eschaton.²²

Recently, the distinguished Paris publisher J. Vrin brought out a collection of articles by Torrell, together with an introduction to and a critical text of Aquinas's sermons on the Ten Commandments. That text, the *Collationes de decem preceptis*, is a guide to the preaching of the medieval Friar Preacher.²³ *Recherches Thomasiennes* contains essays treating theological knowledge (Torrell argues that there is still room, after Chenu, Patfoort, and Congar for pondering the meaning of *sacra doctrina*), the vision of God and the knowledge of Christ, the causality of the Resurrection, and the interpretation of Isaiah. There follow six essays on spirituality, pastoral ministry, and preaching. I pass over the sermons and the essays on the nature of theology in order to look at two areas in Aquinas where Torrell is a pioneer, areas bringing together teaching and pastoral life, theory and praxis.

The first views Aquinas as a minister in medieval pastoral life, as a preacher. We can introduce this area of church life by Torrell's study of Aquinas's role in the ecclesiology of Yves Congar. He observes the number of studies on Aquinas written over four decades where Congar expressed the fundamental dynamic of Aquinas's theology as the economy of salvation, this at a time when a static Dionysian metaphysical pyramid pretended to be Aristotle's thought. The *Summa theologiae* owns a modest historicity progressing from creation to Incarnation, from the inner law of the Spirit to the sacraments, "a properly 'economic' and 'historical' way of the wisdom of God."²⁴ Congar developed the theme of the Mystical Body of Christ in its medieval and contemporary meanings to support the ecclesiology of communion, the gathering of graced men and women in the Church. The language of both Congar and Aquinas is sometimes direct and sometimes ambiguous; they present a visible ecclesial body which is the

²² Ibid, 202–5.

²³ "L'Édition critique du *De Decem Praeceptis*," *Recherches Thomasiennes* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2000) 47. Both the French "Thomasien" and the German "Thomanisch" (in contrast to "Thomist" and "Thomistisch") offer an adjectival form lacking in English for the thought of and research into Aquinas. In English "Thomist" can mean the thought of Aquinas, although it can also mean, perhaps too readily, the interpretative thought of a figure or school, one more or less faithful to him or one containing some overtones of sterile rigidity.

²⁴ Congar, "Le sens de 'l'économie' salutaire dans la 'théologie' de S. Thomas d'Aquin (*Somme théologique*)," *Festgabe Joseph Lortz*, ed. Erwin Iserloh (Baden-Baden: Grimm, 1957) 2.118.

Church on earth but which is too the interior place of the grace of the Spirit of Christ. Essays on the visibility of the Church and the jurisdiction of bishops are practical examples of this theology of the Church. "A reading of Congar's major works," Torrell concludes, "in light of what they owe to the inspiration of Thomas can bring an interesting illumination and a better understanding even of passages in St. Thomas. . . . He remains in the history of theology one of the most intelligent readers of Aquinas in the twentieth century."²⁵

To enter properly into Aquinas's views on pastoral areas is to meet the second area, the university teacher as a preacher. For instance, he found in the temptations of Jesus a special significance for those preaching the Gospel: Jesus disciplines himself "for no one should assume the office of being a preacher before being purified and becoming schooled in virtue" (III, 41, 3, 1). Moreover, the preacher does not preach for display. "Thomas announced a law of preaching for all times and places; to all he repeats ceaselessly that the first quality of the one sent is transparency: preaching means not to focus attention on oneself but to direct it toward the One who sent him."²⁶ To look at Aquinas as preacher requires the laborious task of discerning the authentic sermons, and only after that does Torrell note the characteristics of the preaching and the themes of the sermons.²⁷ Several characteristics stand out. There is an ordinariness, an attention to daily life, and there is a prominent role of Scripture. To show how the Scripture interprets and enlightens human life Aquinas gently guided his hearers away from the miraculous and bizarre margins of religion; he drew his examples from medieval daily life and from the life of Jesus. He was a kind of psychologist as he observed the effect of emotions in people or the importance of good judgment. He even cites the example of someone intoxicated to illustrate the joys of heaven. Not immune from social prejudices, he speaks of Jews as tending to be avaricious but also as exemplary in their study of Scripture; he presumes that the male is the dominant figure in the society around him.²⁸ He is indignant at the injustices perpetrated by cheating shopkeepers or unjust rulers on the poor and on average citizens.

²⁵ "Yves Congar et l'ecclésiologie de S. Thomas," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 82 (1998) 241.

²⁶ "Avant-Propos," *Recherches Thomasiennes* 15.

²⁷ "La pratique pastorale d'un théologien du XIII^e siècle," *Recherches Thomasiennes* 291.

²⁸ In a recent study Torrell, with the help of the *Index Thomisticus*, looked at Aquinas's attitude toward the Jews, and finds a combination of some prejudices of his time with a high place for them in salvation-history. While those Jewish leaders conscious of what they were doing were culpable of killing in a qualified way the Son of God, the entire people are not; they are blessed by God, saved by a kind of justice and marked for glory by the inscription above the cross; they have a common faith with Christians; "*Ecclesia iudaeorum*—quelques jugements positifs de Saint

Thomas does not preach Aristotelianism but the Scripture, and frequently the Scripture within the liturgy; he sees a connection between the inspired Word proclaimed and the Word of the Trinity. Aquinas's themes for sermons are instructive: first comes what is essential in the Gospel, not odd apocryphal information but his own theological perspective on what is basic in Christ like grace, love, or faith. The imitation of Christ too is mentioned. Christ is a supreme example, not just as a record of past moral attitudes, but because Christ's actions effected redemption and grace for people, restoring the image of God in men and women. These two themes summon forth at times the Holy Spirit, and surprisingly the Church with the accent not on a hierarchical pyramid but on "the communion of persons living the definition of the church as a congregation of the faithful."²⁹

AQUINAS'S SPIRITUALITY

The practical and pastoral also appear in Torrell's writings on Aquinas's "spirituality," a word in such widespread usage today.³⁰ Torrell struggles to show that by treating a "spirituality" in Aquinas he is not talking about devotional attitudes or methods of prayer; they are not present and would be foreign to Dominican spirituality in its forms through the centuries. His article for the *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (expanded in the second volume of *Initiation*) sketches the characteristics of a Thomasian spirituality. Its sources are the Bible, liturgy, past great theologians like Augustine, and "ancient wisdom." This spirituality is trinitarian because the missions of Word and Spirit lead women and men to a life of grace, a deification. Second, it is objective, for God as creator and as final destiny has a primacy. Third, it is realistic in its affirmation of the world in act and finds the human spirit living in bodily and cosmic realms. Fourth, it is a spirituality of human expansion, lacking fear and servitude, full of joy and love, open to the divine life, although it is not about methods or states of prayer but about human virtue and sin and freedom. Finally, it is an ecclesial spiritu-

Thomas d'Aquin à l'égard des juifs et du judaïsme," in *Les philosophies morales et politiques au Moyen Âge*, ed. Bernardo C. Bazán (New York: Legas, 1996) 3.1732–41.

²⁹ "La pratique pastorale d'un théologien du XIII^e siècle" 306. Further essays on preaching in *Recherches Thomasiennes* are "Jean-Baptiste, figure du prêcheur chez Thomas d'Aquin," 336–56, and "Le semeur est sorti pour semer: L'image du Christ prêcheur chez frère Thomas d'Aquin," 357–66; and, "Frère Thomas d'Aquin prédicateur," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 28 (1982) 175–88.

³⁰ The word *spiritualitas* in Aquinas is treated in "Spiritualitas chez S. Thomas d'Aquin. Contribution à l'histoire d'un mot," *Recherches Thomasiennes* 315–24.

ality in that graced people belong to the body of Christ which is the Church, a congregation formed by the liturgy where each man and woman is “not a piece but a member.”³¹ The spiritual life is “Christic,” owning that “double Christic exemplarity; ontological and moral”³² mentioned above. Torrell refers to Aquinas’s spirituality as *théologique* not because it is rigidly fixed on a metaphysical God but because it is infused by the triune God. He shows how Aquinas’s works of maturity are related to Christ in mission and inner evangelical law, and how structurally in the *Summa theologiae* the work of Christ presupposes and expresses the Spirit.³³

In Christian life theology leads to action. Aquinas emphasizes an interplay of the practical and the speculative in all the genres of sacred teaching. “For theology Thomas does not define only its speculative goal but . . . in a Quodlibet Question the university professor defined his own work of being a theologian as similar to that of an architect who teaches others, like the different levels of manual workers, how they should work to build a church. Thomas certainly had a very high awareness of his own vocation but he could not underline it more than by putting in relief its pastoral finality.”³⁴ For what can be a dry and particularly opaque section of the *Summa theologiae* Torrell shows that the questions at the end of the Secunda Pars concern three areas: charisms given to different people for the good of the community, different forms of religious life for men and women, and a diversity of states and actions related to ministry. In terms of the section on prophecy (Torrell’s specialty), Aquinas paid more attention than did his contemporaries to the psychology of inspiration and prophecy; he both drew on Aristotle’s realistic psychology and devoted “extraordinary attention to the data of Scripture concerning prophetic experience,” offering four or five times more biblical citations than Albert of Lauingen or Hugh of Saint-Cher. “Aquinas integrates fully the prophetic charism

³¹ “Thomas d’Aquin,” *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 15 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1990) 771; those ideas are developed in *Initiation* 2, chaps. 5 and 6. On the important but frequently overlooked depth and ramification of grace and love as divine life and friendship, see Torrell, “La charité comme amitié chez S. Thomas,” *La Vie Spirituelle* 155 (2001) 265–83.

³² “Avant-propos,” *Le Christ en ses mystères* 1.15; see too “La philosophie morale de Thomas d’Aquin,” in M. Canto-Sperberg, ed., *Dictionnaire d’éthique et de la philosophie morale* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996) 1517–23.

³³ Torrell, “Saint Thomas d’Aquin, Maître de vie spirituelle,” *Revue des sciences religieuses* 71 (1997) 444. A recent essay studies nature and grace in Aquinas, not from the usual perspective of the active interplay of grace and human personality but in terms of grace in the origins of the human being and as lost by sin (“Nature et grâce chez Thomas d’Aquin,” *Revue thomiste* 101 [2001] 167–202).

³⁴ “Lire Saint Thomas autrement,” an introduction to a collection of the essays of Leonard E. Boyle, *Facing History: A Different Thomas Aquinas* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d’Études Médiévales, 2000) xv.

into the history of revelation, something which is not at all evident in reading theological expositions in the thirteenth century.”³⁵

CONCLUSION

Jean-Pierre Torrell’s scholarship as it presents the world and thought-forms of Thomas Aquinas has a unifying perspective and framework, for he inherits and continues Catholic, French, Dominican, and Leonine traditions of theological and historical research in the 20th century. C.-J. Pinto de Oliveira wrote in the introduction to the *Festschrift* dedicated to Torrell: “Comprehension, practical experience, being a teacher of this theology, knowledge and wisdom marked extensively by the inspiration of fundamental research, a rigorous systematic reflection full of attention to detail and yet open to understanding these doctrines in their historical development and in their hermeneutical disclosure—these are some of the traits of a work in full maturity.”³⁶

First, there is history. The scholar of medieval texts and conclusions is a researcher of the historical context of Aquinas’s writings and ideas—he recalls that it was a struggle of some years for Chenu to convince so many Thomists of the value of what we now take for granted, the value of knowing the historical world of Aquinas.³⁷ Data and historical context as well as the personal creativity of Aquinas frame each topic whether it be Christ’s knowledge or the influence of Aristotle.³⁸ Torrell meticulously goes through every writing of Aquinas noting the date and purpose, reviewing past scholarship and offering some precise corrections, and discussing more deeply aspects like the relationship of Thomas and William of Moerbeke. He can ponder carefully the conclusions of Chenu, Weisheipl, and Boyle but also differ with or go beyond them. Torrell pays special attention to where Aquinas stands apart from his contemporaries when treating an issue they omit or where he gives different ideas or a different orientation to a topic.³⁹ This research joined to reflection aids the reader in finding a medieval Aquinas who remains original and insightful, “a different St. Thomas.”⁴⁰

Second, there is the overall theological context, one whose Christian

³⁵ “Les Charismes au service de la révélation,” Thomas d’Aquin, *Somme théologique* (Paris: Cerf, 1985) 3.963 f.

³⁶ “Avant-Propos,” *Ordo sapientiae et amoris* 11.

³⁷ “Lire Saint Thomas autrement” ix.

³⁸ “Saint Thomas d’Aquin et la science du Christ,” *Recherches Thomasiennes* 212f.

³⁹ “Le sacerdoce du Christ dans la *Somme de théologie*,” *Saint Thomas d’Aquin et le Sacerdoce, Revue Thomiste* 99 (1999) 76 f.

⁴⁰ “Lire Saint Thomas autrement” xxxiv.

theological source and purpose are trinitarian and biblical but also pastoral. "There are different stances one can take toward Master Aquinas. Usually one thinks of his importance in the history of thought, theological and philosophical, and this is in fact the point of view [of these essays]." ⁴¹ If Aquinas is very clearly a theologian, unfortunately the new rise of interest in Aquinas in some regions is narrowly or ideologically philosophical. "One of the reviewers of my *Initiation* somewhat humorously mentioned to his readers that they might be astonished to learn that Thomas Aquinas was also a theologian." ⁴² Theology not only expresses the teaching of Christ but implies a commensurate evangelical activity toward people. The opening "Présentation" of the volumes on Aquinas's questions on the life of Jesus illustrates this approach: it begins with Chenu noting the disappearance of this Christology from Thomist writings through the centuries and with lines from Rahner bemoaning the division between exegesis and systematic theology. ⁴³ "The double concern to express the truth of Thomas as close as possible to what he wants to say but in the language of today's culture" means paying attention to nature, people, and human experience today. "This gives Thomas' own view of the universe of creation, his resolutely positive thought with regard to the emergence of everything real from the hands of God." ⁴⁴ Just as one must keep in mind the theological form and goal of his thinking, "one shouldn't pass up any occasion to underline: friar Thomas Aquinas was not only a lofty thinker but was also a commentator on the Bible, a preaching friar, and a man of prayer." ⁴⁵

In Aquinas's theology what later became the traditional characteristics of Dominican theology and spirituality emerge: a universe in act, the value of creatures, the supernatural order of grace, and human dignity. Torrell shows forgotten ways in which the Trinity, Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit in the *Summa theologiae* draw the human image of God to the graced journey. Not a logic of divisions but the economic dynamics of Greek patristics informs the mentality of Aquinas, and history has shown his theology can speak to other ages. ⁴⁶

The interest in Thomas Aquinas today is not everywhere a salutary event. As Torrell points out, the old philosophical neo-Aristotelianism has returned among a very few minds whose style is apologetic, a-historical, logical, or Protestant. "A polemical and defensive Thomism . . . continues

⁴¹ "Avant-Propos," *Recherches Thomasiennes* 11.

⁴² Review of Thomas F. O'Meara, *Thomas Aquinas Theologian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1998) in *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 45 (1998) 315.

⁴³ "Avant-propos," *Le Christ en ses mystères* 1.9.

⁴⁴ Review of *Thomas Aquinas Theologian* 317.

⁴⁵ "Avant-Propos," *Recherches Thomasiennes* 11.

⁴⁶ Torrell, "Saint Thomas d'Aquin, Maître de vie spirituelle" 446.

to be practiced in many areas despite everything and ignores the enormously positive results obtained by historical and critical works."⁴⁷ There seems to be a number of random figures, inevitably English-speaking, who pursue their new avocation of writing about Aquinas without learning from secondary literature, from their historical and theological riches and so resemble those neo-Thomism of 60 years past. A prominent advocate of Aquinas's psychology of virtue and tradition seems unaware of the historical traditions and schools of interpretation; writers on epistemology or law often find reviews of their publications pointing out that a particular passage cited in English does not hold in the larger context of Aquinas's theology the meaning it has been given, a meaning in the past is found inaccurate. One recent writer finds too many who are often unable to transcend a piecemeal appropriation of texts and who lack the tools to find the historical context or the complex structure of Thomas's pedagogy, while another finds the future in British "analytic Thomism" and dismisses all other approaches to Aquinas curiously as "neo-Scholastic." Torrell's writings are a plea for tradition and interpretation, historical context and theological goal. Without reading and appropriating figures such as Torrell one risks the danger of being transported back to the boring lectures and dusty halls of that widespread but superficial neo-Scholasticism (often not a neo-Thomism) from the first half of the 20th century.

Part of the problem is language or rather the ignorance of other languages. Until 1850 the course of the interpretation of Aquinas was expressed in Latin, but since then in French and German, Spanish, Italian, and Dutch. To follow Aquinas's writings and thought requires more than finding some stimulating texts in translation and studying them apart from a vast amount of insightful research. Often that fragmentary and technical Thomism expounds issues and controversies that were resolved decades or centuries ago.

Jean-Pierre Torrell's writings give a worthy conclusion for a century, beginning with Martin Grabmann and A. G. Sertillanges which, like wisdom itself, brought forth what was old and neglected or what was present but unnoticed. It is startling to think of all that has been learned about the historical Thomas Aquinas whose writings remain so insightful. The medieval Dominican interpreted the treasure from which one draws forth new and old (Matthew 13:52) as the sacred doctrine of revelation and theology. A false religion like that of the Manichees had only the old to offer, while Christ holds a living and fruitful newness of wisdom and grace for each present moment and for an eschatological fulfillment.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Review of *Thomas Aquinas Theologian* 318.

⁴⁸ Aquinas, *Super S. Matthaei lectura* 1, lect. 4, #1205–7.