

**“In hope he believed against hope” (Rom 4:18)
Faith and Hope, Two Pauline Motifs
as Interpreted by Aquinas:
A Re-lecture of Pope Benedict XVI’s
Encyclical Letter *Spe Salvi*¹**

REINHARD HÜTTER
*Duke University Divinity School
Durham, North Carolina*

Etiam si occiderit me in ipso sperabo.
—Iob 13:15

**Truth—Faith—Hope: Pope Benedict’s Dialogue
with a Modernity in Crisis**

SHAKING the very foundations of the global economy, last year’s financial implosions have been of an almost apocalyptic nature. Not the least of their many sobering effects is that we have acquired a renewed and deepened awareness of the fragility of all things human in general and more specifically, of all things modern. Such newly acquired keenness of view on

¹ Earlier versions of this essay were presented on March 27, 2009, as the annual Bishop Bernard J. Flanagan Lecture in the Ecumenical Institute at Assumption College, Worcester, MA, and on June 19, 2009, in the Vatican at the Ninth Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas on “St. Thomas’s Interpretation of St. Paul’s Doctrines.” An earlier version of this essay will appear in the 2010 volume of *Doctor Communis*, the annual Proceedings of the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas. This final version has profited greatly from numerous clarifying suggestions and criticisms that were magnanimously shared by the conference participants Stephen Brock, Romanus Cessario, O.P., J. Augustine DiNoia, O.P., Wojciech Giertych, O.P., Russ Hittinger, Charles Morerod, O.P., Michael Waldstein, and especially Jörgen Vijgen, as well as from the helpful comments offered in respect to various earlier versions by my Duke colleagues Paul Griffiths, Stanley Hauerwas, and Geoffrey Wainwright.

the fragility of human matters lends urgency to looking afresh at the very core of the Christian faith. For it is here that the fragility of human matters, due to human nature as well as sin, is addressed most profoundly—and surpassingly redeemed. Even the most cursory *re-lecture* of Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical letter *Spe Salvi* amply demonstrates the importance of a contemporary ressourcement in the very core of the Christian faith in order to face in true Christian hope what amounts to just one more upheaval in the long crisis of modernity. Just consider the opening lines:

“*SPE SALVI facti sumus*”—in hope we were saved, says Saint Paul to the Romans, and likewise to us (Rom 8:24). According to the Christian faith, “redemption”—salvation—is not simply a given. Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey. (§1)

To which goal does the present actually lead and how can we be sure of this goal? The current global economic crisis has put into question the familiar hopes that have arisen from an all too attractive and seemingly secure goal—the endless growth of profit margins. These hopes, though, did not arise just yesterday on Wall Street or in any of the financial markets around the world. Rather, the roots of these hopes reach way down into what constitutes the self-understanding of the modern world, indeed, of modernity itself.² Pope Benedict addresses the matter straightforwardly:

Again, we find ourselves facing the question: what may we hope? A self-critique of modernity is needed in dialogue with Christianity and its concept of hope. In this dialogue Christians too, in the context of their knowledge and experience, must learn anew in what their hope truly consists, what they have to offer to the world and what they cannot offer. Flowing into this self-critique of the modern age there also has to be a self-critique of modern Christianity, which must constantly renew its self-understanding setting out from its roots. (§22)

By beginning to ask again, what is the nature of Christian hope—in distinction from and contrast to all other human hopes—Christians have to turn to their own roots, and of these roots, the teaching of the apostle

² For a recent astute reconsideration of Thomas Aquinas's economic teachings as a critical contrast to the unexamined economic axioms entailed in the project of modernity, see Christopher A. Franks, *He Became Poor: The Poverty of Christ and Aquinas's Economic Teachings* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

Paul is unquestionably one of the most essential and sustaining. Additionally, such a turning to the roots, such a *ressourcement*, will contribute, first, to a dialogue between Christianity and a modernity that in light of an impending economic and subsequent social collapse might be increasingly open to submit its most cherished convictions to a sustained critique. Second, such a dialogue would also contribute to a parallel proper self-critique of modern Christianity, that is, a Christianity that has increasingly defined itself by way of the project of modernity and its characteristic hopes, in short, has come to see itself almost exclusively as the religious aspect of modernity and consequently has become oblivious and even resentful of the faith that comes from the apostles.

What would be the focus of such a self-critique of modernity and of modern Christianity in its midst? In *Spe Salvi*, Pope Benedict identifies two convictions most central to the self-understanding of modernity in its radical self-differentiation from all other epochs of history: first, *progress* guided by human reason, primarily understood as technological and managerial progress; and second, *freedom* as autonomous and rational self-determination. Due to modernity's ever increasing technological dominion over nature and a simultaneously ever-increasing autonomous self-realization, Pope Benedict sees as centrally related to the ideas of progress and freedom the respective faith and hope of modernity in an irreversible historical progress toward an ever better and brighter future.³ But what does progress *really* mean? What is *true* progress? Presupposing hypothetically the modern understanding of rational progress and freedom, Pope Benedict advances a subtle argument. Roughly adumbrated, it goes like this: If progress is to be true progress, human reason cannot be merely technological reason. Rather, human reason must be deeply informed by moral reasoning, a reasoning that truly guides human freedom. And such a morally informed and guided reason must necessarily be open to the differentiation between good and evil, which is, the Pope emphasizes, identical with reason's openness to the saving forces of faith. He states:

Only thus does reason become truly human. It becomes human only if it is capable of directing the will along the right path, and it is capable of this only if it looks beyond itself. Otherwise, man's situation, in view of the imbalance between his material capacity and the lack of judgment in

³ In one brief phrase Pope Benedict indicates what such a Christian dialogue with the self-critique of modernity might look like: "We have all witnessed the way in which progress, in the wrong hands, can become and has indeed become a terrifying progress in evil. If technical progress is not matched by corresponding progress in man's ethical formation, in man's inner growth (cf. Eph 3:16; 2 Cor 4:16), then it is not progress at all, but a threat for man and for the world" (§22).

his heart, becomes a threat for him and for creation. Thus where freedom is concerned, we must remember that human freedom always requires a convergence of various freedoms. Yet this convergence cannot succeed unless it is determined by a common intrinsic criterion of measurement, which is the foundation and goal of our freedom. Let us put it very simply: man needs God, otherwise he remains without hope. (§23)

In short, hope is only true hope if it is grounded in the truth. And it is here that Pope Benedict turns to the apostle Paul: “Paul reminds the Ephesians that before their encounter with Christ, they were ‘without hope and without God in the world’ (Eph 2:12)” (§2). What makes this apostolic statement radical is the explicit link between God and hope, that is, the claim that the only hope deserving the name is directed to attaining God, and such hope arises from the encounter with Christ. For only through Christ does eternal life with God become possible. And this surpassing good indeed gives rise to a hope—Christian hope—that infinitely transcends all ordinary human hopes. Because, however, Christ can only be received by way of faith, the relationship between faith and hope is paramount in order to understand the nature of true hope. But are not faith and hope actually almost the same, Pope Benedict asks; “‘Hope’, in fact, is a key word in Biblical faith—so much so that in several passages the words ‘faith’ and ‘hope’ seem interchangeable” (§2). Nevertheless: no. Faith and hope seem to be almost interchangeable because they are so intimately connected with each other. But while this is the case, they are still by no means simply interchangeable. For, as Pope Benedict emphasizes, “to come to know God—the true God—means to receive hope” (§3). To come to know God, the true God, in his personal identity comes about by no other way than by faith. It is by faith in the one true God that hope, the great hope, arises. For in faith we come to know the God of love whose face is Christ—a truth most eloquently expounded in Pope Benedict’s first encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*. Hence, the structure of this essay will emulate the theological grammar exemplified in *Spe Salvi*, first, by considering two constitutive aspects of faith; second, by analyzing the nature and structure of hope; and third, by attending to a saint of the modern period, Josephine Bakhita, in whose life Pope Benedict sees his hopeful pedagogy on hope realized: “In hope she believed against hope.” In the first two sections, on faith and hope, I shall advance a Thomist *re-lecture* of *Spe Salvi*, not in order to force the encyclical letter into a Procrustean bed. On the contrary, I wish to demonstrate, first, that *Spe Salvi* does its own *ressourcement* in the thought of Thomas Aquinas and, second, that reading the encyclical letter in light of Thomas’s theol-

ogy of grace and of the theological virtues allows for a more comprehensive reception of the encyclical's teaching on faith and hope.

Faith—Substance of Things Hoped For

There is no other access to Christian hope than by way of faith.⁴ Hence, in order to be able to elucidate the nature and scope of Christian hope, Pope Benedict has first to attend to the nature of faith. But has faith not become one of the most elusive and contested theological concepts, claimed and transmuted by the project of modernity itself? Where to turn in order to get a sure footing on this most central topic of Christian theology?

For an initial answer Pope Benedict does not turn immediately to the epistles of the apostle Paul but rather to an epistle that tradition for a long time—*pace* Origen—attributed to Paul, but that modern scholarly consensus now believes had another author: the Letter to the Hebrews.⁵ Pope Benedict approaches the teaching of the apostle Paul by way of a prior consideration of a central passage in the Letter to the Hebrews. I will argue that Pope Benedict's consideration of faith and hope according to Hebrews 11:1 is meant first and foremost to protect the ongoing reception of Paul's apostolic teaching from the subjectivist distortions and existentialist reductions of not a few modern Protestant, as well as Catholic, scholars who too uncritically embraced the project of modernity.

Faith as Habitus: The Objective Internal Principle or Substance of the Things Hoped For (Heb 11:1)

Consider how Pope Benedict interprets the letter's famous definition of faith-based hope in Hebrews 11:1. Because of the overall importance of this passage, I have to indulge your patience with a longer citation from the encyclical:

In the eleventh chapter of the *Letter to the Hebrews* (v. 1) we find a kind of definition of faith which closely links this virtue with hope. Ever since the Reformation there has been a dispute among exegetes over the

⁴ Thomas Aquinas argues this point quite explicitly. In order to hope, that is, to aspire to an arduous good in the future, a good difficult but possible to attain, one must first know that good and the way to attain it (*Summa theologiae* II–II, q. 17, a. 7). (All Latin citations from the *Summa theologiae* [ST] are taken from Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Theologiae*, 3rd ed. [Turin: Edizioni San Paolo, 1999]; the English citations are taken from the translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, originally published in 1911.)

⁵ For a helpful recent discussion of the authorship of *Hebrews*, see Anthony C. Thiselton, "Hebrews," in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1451.

central word of this phrase, but today a way towards a common interpretation seems to be opening up once more. For the time being I shall leave this central word untranslated. The sentence therefore reads as follows: “Faith is the *hypostasis* of things hoped for; the proof of things not seen.” For the Fathers and for the theologians of the Middle Ages, it was clear that the Greek word *hypostasis* was to be rendered in Latin with the term *substantia*. The Latin translation of the text produced at the time of the early Church therefore reads: *Est autem fides sperandarum substantia rerum, argumentum non apparentium*—faith is the “substance” of things hoped for; the proof of things not seen. (§7)

At this point, significantly, Pope Benedict turns to no other theological authority but that of the *doctor communis*, in order to elucidate the nature of faith:

Saint Thomas Aquinas, using the terminology of the philosophical tradition to which he belonged, explains it as follows: faith is a *habitus*, that is, a stable disposition of the spirit, through which eternal life takes root in us and reason is led to consent to what it does not see. The concept of “substance” is therefore modified in the sense that through faith, in a tentative way, or as we might say ‘in embryo’—and thus according to the ‘substance’—there are already present in us the things that are hoped for: a whole, true life. And precisely because the thing itself is already present, this presence of what is to come also creates certainty: this ‘thing’ which must come is not yet visible in the external world (it does not ‘appear’), but because of the fact that, as an initial and dynamic reality, we carry it within us, a certain perception of it has even now come into existence. (§7)

I regard the following sentence to be the very center of this crucial passage on faith: “‘In embryo’—and thus according to the ‘substance’—there are already present in us the things that are hoped for: a whole, true life.” Being a stable disposition of the spirit, faith is the beginning of eternal life in the believer. Significantly, at this important juncture of the encyclical, Pope Benedict draws heavily on Aquinas’s teaching in order to interpret the kind of definition of faith found in Hebrews 11:1.⁶ I shall limit myself here to highlighting what I regard to be three central elements of Thomas’s exposition of faith as echoed in *Spe Salvi*.

1. As a *habitus* (infused by habitual grace at justification), faith establishes in the believer a firm and continuous disposition to acts of

⁶ Thomas argues, in a way too complex to reproduce here in full, that Hebrews 11:1 proposes indeed a fitting (*conveniens*) definition of faith. For his full line of argumentation, see *ST* II–II, q. 4, a. 1 and *Ad Hebraeos*, c. xi, pp. 405–8 (Marietti).

faith. Through these acts of faith (*credere*) eternal life is begun in the believer “in embryo,” that is, according to its “substance,” and the intellect assents to what is non-apparent.⁷

2. What the intellect assents to, that is, embraces as true, is indeed the “substance” of eternal life. Pope Benedict indicates that Thomas in the context of interpreting Hebrews 11:1 understands “substance” in a modified sense, precisely along the lines that allow a notion of an objective embryonic presence of that which is hoped for in the believer by way of the supernatural, infused habit of faith. Thomas understands “substance” here analogically along the lines of something that is still to become or develop, but is already present in its principle. Thomas’s analogical use of substance in *ST* II–II, q. 4, a. 1, ad 1 seems to be the source of Pope Benedict’s expression “in embryo,” a contemporary metaphorical way of adopting Thomas’s technically more precise but also less accessible analogical use of substance: “in embryo—and thus according to the ‘substance’—there is already present in us the things that are hoped for” (§7).⁸
3. In his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*—which antedates the *secunda secundae pars* of the *Summa theologiae* by several years—we encounter verbatim the definition of faith found in *ST* II–II, q. 4, a. 1: “Faith is the habit of the mind by which eternal life is begun in us, making the intellect to assent to things which are not apparent.”⁹ Among various interpretations on *argumentum/elenchos* put forward in the tradition of interpreting Hebrews 11:1, Thomas leans toward understanding *argumentum* as “an arguing of the mind” (*arguens mentem*), such that the effect is taken for the cause, “since from the certitude of the thing it happens that the mind is forced to assent.”¹⁰

⁷ *ST* II–II, q. 4, a. 1: “[F]ides est habitus mentis, qua inchoatur vita aeterna in nobis, faciens intellectum assentire non apparentibus.”

⁸ *ST* II–II, q. 4, a. 1, ad 1: “Substance, here, does not stand for the supreme genus condivided with the other genera, but for that likeness to substance which is found in each genus, inasmuch as the first thing in a genus contains the others virtually and is said to be the substance thereof.” “[S]ubstantia non sumitur hic secundum quod est genus generalissimum contra alia genera divisum: sed secundum quod in quolibet genere invenitur quaedam similitudo substantiae, prout scilicet primum in quolibet genere, continens in se alia virtute, dicitur esse substantia illorum.”

⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, c. 11, lect. 1, trans. Chrysostom Baer, O. Praem. (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2006), 231; *Ad Hebraeos*, c. xi, l.1, p. 408 (Marietti): “[F]ides est habitus mentis qua inchoatur vita aeterna in nobis, faciens intellectum assentire non apparentibus.”

¹⁰ *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 230; *Ad Hebraeos*, c. xi, l.1, p. 408 (Marietti): “Vel si sequamur etymologiam nominis qua dicitur argumentum, quasi

Pope Benedict affirms this long-standing interpretation: the substance or principle of a new reality within us makes the intellect assent to it. He contrasts this objective sense of *argumentum* with an understanding that would take it as a disposition of the subject, as a conviction held by the believer. Thomas makes brief mention that this alternative reading has some followers, but says no more on the matter.¹¹ Less than three hundred years after Aquinas's death, a version of this other reading shall instantiate a powerful alternative tradition of interpreting the *argumentum* in Hebrews 11:1, a reading that in subsequent centuries, though arguably unintentionally, opened the floodgates for an eventual radical subjectivization of the faith. Significantly, Pope Benedict categorizes Martin Luther's position on this important matter in clear contradistinction to Thomas Aquinas's position:

To Luther, who was not particularly fond of the *Letter to the Hebrews*, the concept of 'substance', in the context of his view of faith, meant nothing. For this reason he understood the term *hypostasis/substance* not in the objective sense (of a reality present within us), but in the subjective sense, as an expression of an interior attitude, and so, naturally, he also had to understand the term *argumentum* as a disposition of the subject. In the twentieth century this interpretation became prevalent—at least in Germany—in Catholic exegesis too, so that the ecumenical translation into German of the New Testament, approved by the Bishops, reads as follows: *Glaube aber ist: Feststehen in dem, was man erhofft, Überzeugtsein von dem, was man nicht sieht* (faith is: standing firm in what one hopes, being convinced of what one does not see). This in itself is not incorrect, but it is not the meaning of the text, because the Greek term used (*elenchos*) does not have the subjective sense of 'conviction' but the objective sense of 'proof'.

arguens mentem, tunc accipit effectum pro causa, quia ex certitudine rei provenit, quod mens cogatur ad assentiendum."

- ¹¹ ST II–II, q. 4, a. 1 and *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 231: "For where we have *argument*, another reading has conviction, since by the divine authority the intellect is convinced to assent to those things which it does not see." *Ad Hebraeos*, c. xi, l.1, p. 408 (Marietti): "Ubi enim nos *argumentum* habemus, habet alia littera *convictio*, quia per auctoritatem divinam convicitur intellectus ad assentiendum his quae non videt" (my emphasis). In private correspondence Jörgen Vijgen has pointed out to me the noteworthy fact that Thomas seems to use the term "convictio" only four times in his whole corpus of writings, and three of these four times in order to indicate that others have proposed "convictio" where he prefers "argumentum." Next to the two instances familiar to us—ST II–II, q. 4, a. 1 and *Ad Heb.*, c. 11, l.1—there is also *De veritate*, q. 14, a. 2. The fourth place is II. *Ad Thessalonicenses*, c. 3, l.2, where "convictio" is yoked with "manifestatio." In short, it seems to be rather obvious that Thomas has no use whatsoever for "convictio" in a true understanding of the nature of faith.

Rightly, therefore, recent Protestant exegesis has arrived at a different interpretation. (§7)

And now follows what Pope Benedict would regard as the proper consensus between modern biblical scholarship and the traditional Catholic interpretation of Hebrews 11:1:

Faith is not merely a personal reaching out towards things to come that are still totally absent: [*faith*] gives us something. It gives us even now something of the reality we are waiting for, and this present reality constitutes for us a 'proof' of the things that are still unseen. Faith draws the future into the present, so that it is no longer simply a 'not yet'. The fact that this future exists changes the present; the present is touched by the future reality, and thus the things of the future spill over into those of the present and those of the present into those of the future. (§7; my emphasis)¹²

¹² Martin Luther dismisses the interpretation of "*argumentum/elenchos*" as "proof"—that is, as interior proof—in consequence of his prior, deeper, and theologically more detrimental rejection of faith as a supernatural, infused habit of sanctifying grace. Without presupposing such an infused habit, however, Luther must necessarily take the "proof" to be a merely external phenomenon of homiletical proclamation and theological discourse. On such an assumption, Luther, of course, has a hard time understanding how Adam or Abel could have ever been believers. And so it does not come as a surprise that Luther "could not be pleased" with the interpretation of "*argumentum/elenchos*" as "proof." What is, however, surprising is the ease with which Luther affords the omission of considering to any degree the arguments of the rejected tradition of interpretation, let alone of representing it correctly: "Here, however, they want 'argument' to be the 'proof,' the 'demonstration,' and, in general, what in dialectics is called the argument, so that there is some sure knowledge that certain things, that is, 'things invisible,' exist, namely, because this is how the patriarchs and other saints believed. This view does not please me, not only because from this opinion it would follow that Adam and Abel did not have faith—for, since they were the first believers, their faith was not certain for the reason that others had believed this way, but especially because it seems to be self-contradictory. For this way faith would be nothing else than one person's credulity of another person; and thus the apostle would be speaking not of the faith of all but only about a persuasion, and the proof would be passive, not active." *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen, vol. 29: *Lectures on Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1968), 229; cf. WA 57–53, 226–27. Drawing exclusively on the homilies of Chrysostom on Hebrews and appealing to one reference in Lombard's *Sentences*, Luther regards faith as an internal, natural, though surely "given" operation of the believing subject, a "clinging to the Word of God," (*Luther's Works*, vol. 29, 230) ("*adhaesio verbi Dei*," from which follows the "*possessio verbi Dei id est aeternorum bonorum*" [WA 57–53, 228]). The attempt to regard faith as a human operation given by God, but without God's antecedent gift of internal illumination and the correlative infused habit of faith, leads to notorious ambiguities, insuperable difficulties, and hence interminable

Arising from the principles of new life itself, the light of faith communicates this inchoate reality to the intellect to such a degree that the human will, presented with the surpassing good of this new life, commands the intellect to assent to this donation of the light of faith as a surpassing truth that renders certain things that are not apparent. Hence faith constitutes a stable disposition of the person—supernaturally given, not naturally acquired. This is the objective *internal* principle of faith. Human beings, however, are not angels. That is, human beings are essentially embodied and thus subject to the conditions of the material universe (space and time) and the respective intellectual configurations of such conditions: language, culture (family and society), and history. Integral to such a configuration is that truth can only be received, that is, understood, as well as communicated by way of propositions—irrespective of their narrative or discursive instantiation. Hence, in the case of human beings, the inner light of faith cannot deliver the truth without a corresponding external catechesis—the one as objective as the other—a linguistically configured and propositionally structured “form of teaching” by way of which the things hoped for are received as well as passed on. This indispensable external catechetical side of the faith is not simply a speculative theological stipulation based on the composite nature of the human being. It is, on the contrary, central to the apostle Paul’s understanding of faith, although modern exegesis has largely neglected, or at least gravely underrated, it—arguably a result of the consistent subjectivization of faith in liberal Protestantism, the seedbed of modern Pauline exegesis.

*Faith as Assent: The Corresponding Objective
External “Form of Teaching” (typos didaches) (Rom 6:17)*

In a nutshell, the “form of teaching” (*typos didaches*) is Paul’s answer to the question of how we receive and pass on what in the Letter to the Hebrews is called the substance of things hoped for. In the Letter to the Romans the new life of grace holds an exceedingly prominent place, for it constitutes the proximate terminus of the Christian existence: a life under a new obedience that begins in and with baptism. Becoming truly free is identical to being committed to the true Lord of the universe. This

disagreements about the nature of faith in Protestant theology. For while faith is circumscribed by way of many illustrative and well known metaphors, the nature of faith itself remains notoriously elusive. For a penetrating analysis of this problem at the very heart of the Protestant theology of justification by faith alone, see John Henry Newman’s *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification* from 1838, 3rd ed. (New York: Scribner, Welford, and Armstrong, 1874).

is what Paul has to say about the life of those who have been “buried . . . with [Christ] by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4, RSV):

What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to any one as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the *standard of teaching* to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.” (Rom 6:15–19; my emphasis)

What is this “standard” or “form of teaching” (in Greek *typos didaches*, and in the Vulgate *forma doctrinae*) to which the Roman Christians “were committed,” or, in some way more clearly, to which they “were given over”?

In order to offer at least the sketch of an answer to this complex question, I shall array three voices of the Catholic tradition of Biblical interpretation that give witness to a remarkable consonance of understanding. The most recent one is that of Heinrich Schlier, an eminent German New Testament scholar, who in the period right after World War II was one of Germany’s most famous Lutheran converts to the Roman Catholic Church. In his commentary on the Letter to the Romans, he interprets *typos didaches* the following way:

Typos is “form” or “shape,” *typos didaches* is the form of teaching in the sense of a doctrine present in a specific form, resonating perhaps with the fact that a *typos* represents a pattern or model. Concretely, one might imagine the *didache* in the form of a baptismal symbol or even as a catechetical formulation of doctrine in transmitted traditions. (cf. 1 Cor 11:23; 15:1ff)¹³

Schlier’s interpretation resonates in remarkable ways with the reading put forth 1600 years earlier by the Cappadocian bishop and theologian Basil the Great. In his treatise *On the Holy Spirit* from the year A.D. 375, Basil takes both the baptismal event and the baptismal doctrine to be related with regard to the *typos didaches*:

¹³ Heinrich Schlier, *Der Römerbrief* (Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, vol. 6), 2nd ed. (Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 1979), 209 (my translation).

What makes us Christians? Faith, one says. How are we saved? Obviously through being born again in the grace of baptism. For how else? After we have seen that this, our salvation, is effected through the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, will we betray what we have received as the “form of teaching” (Rom 6:17)? . . . Those who do not perpetually adhere to the confession we made at our initiation, when we came over from idols to the living God (cf. 1 Thess 1:9), and do not cling to it their entire lives as to a secure shelter—they will exclude themselves from God’s promises (cf. Eph 2:12) by setting themselves in opposition to that which they personally signed when they made the confession of faith.¹⁴

Let us finally turn to Thomas’s *Lectures on Romans*, which date most likely from the last years of his life, 1272–73, years he spent in Naples. He understands “the form of teaching to which you were committed” as being “given over” by God to the *doctrina catholicae fidei*, the teaching of the Catholic faith. Aquinas connects this “form of teaching” (in Latin *forma doctrinae*) with 2 Timothy 1:13: “Follow the pattern [the *forma*] of the sound words which you have heard from me.”¹⁵ To this *forma doctrinae* the catechumens were given over and to this they committed themselves completely. In Thomas’s interpretation, the interior baptismal equivalent to the exterior event of being given over or committed to the *forma doctrinae*, the *doctrina catholicae fidei*, is what Basil describes as the *paradosis*, the handing over of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to the baptized person such that the Holy Trinity indwells the person who in baptism has received sanctifying grace.¹⁶

It is not accidental that we concluded this all too brief exegetical excursus on Paul’s “form of teaching” with Thomas Aquinas. For accord-

¹⁴ Basil the Great of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto/Vom Heiligen Geist*, trans. and intro. by Hermann Josef Sieben, S.J., *Fontes Christiani*, vol. 12 (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1993), 147–49; English translation: *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980), 46f.

¹⁵ “[I]n eam formam doctrinae, idest in doctrinam catholicae fidei (*Formam habens sanorum verborum quae a me audisti* [2 Tim 1:13]), in quam traditi estis, id est, cui vos totaliter subdidistis (*Semetipsos dederunt primum Deo, deinde nobis per voluntatem Dei* [2 Cor 8]).” Aquinas, *Epistula ad Romanos*, c. VI, l. III, in *S. Thomae Aquinatis in omnes S. Pauli Apostoli epistolas commentaria*, vol. 1 (Turin: Marietti, 1929), 89.

¹⁶ ST I, q. 43, a. 3 and esp. a. 5: “The whole Trinity dwells in the mind by sanctifying grace, according to Job xiv. 23: *We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him.*” And ST III, q. 69, a. 4: “As Augustine says in the book on Infant Baptism (*De Pecc. Merit. et Remiss.* i), *the effect of Baptism is that the baptized are incorporated in Christ as His members.* Now the fullness of grace and virtues flows from Christ the Head to all His members, according to John i. 16: *Of His fulness we all have received.* Hence it is clear that man receives grace and virtues in Baptism.”

ing to Thomas, faith as the supernatural, infused *inchoatio* of eternal life, and fidelity to the Church's teaching are nothing but two sides of the same coin. One of the most instructive commentaries on the inherent correlation between these two aspects of faith, *inchoatio vitae aeternae* as well as fidelity, can be found in Thomas's discussion of the object of faith in *ST* II–II, q. 1. Here, in the course of a single question, Thomas moves from considering in the first article the contemplation of the First Truth, God, to considering in the tenth article "Whether it belongs to the Sovereign Pontiff to draw up a symbol of faith?" We do not go wrong in assuming that Thomas suggests a profound interrelationship between the first and the tenth article. Christians are given over to the First Truth by way of the *forma doctrinae*, the standard of teaching, and the infused *inchoatio* of eternal life, faith, takes its concrete form as an act of fidelity, a deep commitment (*obsequium religiosum*) to the Church's teaching, to the *doctrina catholicae fidei*. Consider the opening section of the response from *ST* II–II, q. 1, a. 9:

As the Apostle says (Heb. xi. 6), he that cometh to God, must believe that He is. Now a man cannot believe, unless the truth be proposed to him that he may believe it. Hence the need for the truth of faith to be collected together, so that it might the more easily be proposed to all, lest anyone might stray from the truth through ignorance of the faith.¹⁷

Hence, faith is *not* what it came to be in the wake of liberal Protestantism and a Catholic modernism eager to adopt such a notion, that is, faith as an existential, pre-conceptual act of trust, primordially and ineffably enacted in the depths of the religious subject and only subsequently expressed and confessed in community and in categories and expressions relative to the age, culture, and society in which they are made.¹⁸ It is

¹⁷ *ST* II–II, q. 1, a. 9: "[S]icut Apostolus dicit, *ad Heb.* 11, [6], *accedentem ad Deum oportet credere*. Credere autem non potest aliquis nisi ei veritas quam credat proponatur. Et ideo necessarium fuit veritatem fidei in unum colligi, ut facilius posset omnibus proponi, ne aliquis per ignorantiam a fidei veritate deficeret."

¹⁸ George Lindbeck's widely accepted descriptor "experiential-expressivist" encapsulates still the most apt characterization of an understanding of faith that liberal Protestantism and Catholic modernism share. See George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, 25th Anniversary Edition with a New Introduction by Bruce D. Marshall and a New Afterword by the Author (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2009), 17f. To be perfectly clear, the understanding of faith and religion largely shared by liberal Protestantism and Catholic modernism is not the understanding of faith held and defended by Luther and the subsequent generations of "Protestant orthodoxy." However, because of the notoriously elusive nature of faith that plagued

most likely in order to undercut from the outset this prevalent misunderstanding of faith in Paul that Pope Benedict turns to the Letter to the Hebrews before he turns to the apostle Paul. And by attending to an all too often neglected but crucial concept in Romans 6:17, we can better appreciate the profound consonance between faith as a supernatural, infused *habitus*, that is, as the objective *internal* principle or substance of the things hoped for, and the corresponding faith as assent to the *external* “form of teaching” in Paul.¹⁹ To administer Thomist conceptuality, the instrumental cause by way of which the intellect assents to what is to become a firm disposition of the human spirit, is nothing other than the “form of teaching” to which the faithful are given over, the apostolic *paradosis* as received in the Church’s symbols.²⁰ Hence the substance of things hoped for is only to be had, is only accessible, in and through the

Lutheran theology from early on (not to mention Luther’s strong embrace of “convictio” as the key to understanding faith), matters changed drastically with the modern turn to the subject in matters of religion, a turn that arguably was facilitated by Luther’s erroneous elevation—in matters of central truths of the Christian faith—of private judgment to prophetic judgment. Just consider the following telling remark of Luther’s in his 1535 *Lectures on Galatians*: “[I]t is the gift of prophecy and our own effort, together with inward and outward trials, that opens to us the meaning of Paul and of all the Scriptures.” *Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen, vol. 26: *Lectures on Galatians 1535, Chapters 1–4* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), 418. “Ideo donum prophetiae et studium nostrum una cum tentationibus internis et externis aperiunt nobis sensum Pauli et omnium scripturarum” (WA 40/I, 634). Based on what he regarded as an extraordinary, gratuitously granted fundamental insight or discovery, Luther claimed this gift of prophetic judgment for himself (and consequently also the entailed quasi-magisterial authority of advancing the true meaning of “Paul and all Scriptures”); however, the consequence of passing private judgment off as prophetic judgment was that every reader and hence interpreter of the Scriptures could with equally good reason claim for him- or herself what Luther should never have claimed for himself in the first place.

¹⁹ We must understand such a “symphonic” canonical reading of two distinct New Testament witnesses as the proper theological way of grasping the inner coherence of the apostolic *paradosis* across the New Testament, even and especially if instantiated in differing and even heterogeneous worlds of thought. On this important topic of theological exegesis and hermeneutics of Scripture, I took guidance from Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Jesus von Nazareth* (Freiburg: Herder, 2007), 15–20, as well as Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, “Biblical Interpretation in Crisis,” in *God’s Word: Scripture—Tradition—Office* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 91–126.

²⁰ *ST II–II*, q. 1, a. 7: “The articles of faith stand in the same relation to the doctrine of faith as self-evident principles to a teaching based on natural reason.” “[I]ta se habent in doctrina fidei articuli fidei sicut principia per se nota in doctrina quae per rationem naturalem habetur.”

Church's living faith,²¹ which passes on publicly—for all to hear and to have—the “form of teaching,” the *typos didaches*, to which one needs to be given over in baptism in order to receive in turn this new substance inwardly, the principle of the new life (the *inchoatio vitae aeternae*) that gives rise to the light of faith, an inner illumination which is the source of that certitude to which the intellect has to assent.²²

Hope

Its Foundation and Fulfillment in Christ

Having considered the objective internal, as well as the objective external, aspect of faith, we need to turn to one other aspect that marks the objective sense of the substance of things hoped for. For nowhere else but in baptism, as the apostle Paul explicitly stresses in Romans 6, does our future in Christ break into our lives, and “according to the substance—there are already present in us the things that are hoped for: the whole true life” (*Spe Salvi*, §7). As already observed above, *Spe Salvi* clearly echoes Thomas, who holds that through faith, being a theological virtue and as such an infused, supernatural *habitus mentis*, eternal life has begun in us.²³ This *inchoatio* of the eternal life, however, has a distinct christoform configuration:

²¹ ST II–II, q. 1, a. 9, ad 3: “The confession of faith is drawn up in a symbol, in the person, as it were, of the whole Church, which is united together by faith. Now the faith of the Church is living faith; since such is the faith to be found in all those who are of the Church not only outwardly but also by merit. Hence the confession of faith is expressed in a symbol, in a manner that is in keeping with living faith, so that even if some of the faithful lack living faith, they should endeavor to acquire it.” “[C]onfessio fidei traditur in symbolo quasi ex persona totius Ecclesiae, quae per fidem unitur. Fides autem Ecclesiae est fides formata: talis enim fides invenitur in omnibus illis qui sunt numero et merito de Ecclesia. Et ideo confessio fidei in symbolo traditur secundum quod convenit fidei formatae: ut etiam si qui fideles fidem formatam non habent, ad hanc formam pertingere studeant.”

²² The present discussion of faith should not obscure the fact that—because faith is a participation in the divine Truth—the proper object of faith is God. This is what makes faith “theological faith” in the precise sense of the term: “The virtue of faith is an infused *habitus* that enables the human person to attain the transcendent God who is the First Truth.” Romanus Cessario, O.P., *Christian Faith & the Theological Life* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 57. Thomas puts the matter very curtly in his *Commentary on Romans*: “Credere autem Deum demonstrat fidei materiam, secundum quod est virtus theologica, habens Deum pro objecto.” *In ep. ad Rom.*, c. IV, l.1, p. 58 (Marietti). On this complex topic, see the classical essay by Marie-Michel Labourdette, O.P., “La vie théologique selon saint Thomas: L’object de la foi,” *Revue Thomiste* 58 (1958): 597–622.

²³ ST II–II, q. 4, a. 1.

We were buried therefore with [Christ] by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of God the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. . . . So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Rom 6:4, 11)

And this whole true life present in the Christian is nothing but the life of Christ himself, or as Paul puts it in Colossians 1:27, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” *Christ himself, in us, is the real, objective foundation of hope.* And again the trajectory of Paul’s fundamental insight leads us back to the Letter to the Hebrews where we hear a faint, but distinct echo: “We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf” (Heb 6:19–20a). Thomas offers the following commentary: “In Him Who is now veiled from our eyes he wants the anchor of our hope to be fixed.”²⁴ The anchor of our hope can be fixed in Christ precisely because, in Pope Benedict’s words, faith “gives us even now something of the reality we are waiting for and this present reality constitutes for us a ‘proof’ of the things that are still unseen” (§7). Hope is stretched out between the fulfillment still veiled, on the one side, and on the other side, the very substance of the things hoped for, already infused in us as a new reality in an embryonic state, the *inchoatio vitae aeternae*. Hence the supernatural, infused habit of faith precedes and gives rise to supernatural hope, as Thomas argues in *ST* II–II, q. 17, a. 7:

Absolutely speaking, faith precedes hope. For the object of hope is a future good, arduous but possible to obtain. In order, therefore, that we may hope, it is necessary for this object of hope to be proposed to us as possible. Now the object of hope is, in one way, eternal happiness, and, in another way, the Divine assistance . . . and both of these are proposed to us by faith, whereby we come to know that we are able to obtain eternal life, and that for this purpose the Divine assistance is ready for us, according to Hebrews xi. 6: *He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him.* Therefore it is evident that faith precedes hope.²⁵

²⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, c. 6, lect. 4, 139. “In illo ergo vult quod figatur anchora spei nostrae, qui est modo velatus ab oculis nostris” (Marietti, 359).

²⁵ *ST* II–II, q. 17, a. 7: “[F]ides absolute praecedit spem. Obiectum enim spei est bonum futurum arduum possibile haberi. Ad hoc ergo quod aliquis speret, requiritur quod obiectum spei proponatur ei ut possibile. Sed obiectum spei est uno modo beatitudo aeterna, et alio modo divinum auxilium. . . . Et utrumque eorum proponitur nobis per fidem, per quam nobis innotescit quod ad vitam aeternam possumus pervenire, et quod ad hoc paratum est nobis divinum auxilium: secundum illud

Its Nature and Structure

Having considered the foundation and fulfillment of hope in Christ, we need to turn to the unique inner structure of this hope. In order to begin such a consideration we shall again take our basic orientation from Paul, this time from his presentation of the proto-type of faith-based hope in Romans 4. Let us turn directly to the section of greatest relevance for us:

In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told “so shall your descendants be.” He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. (Rom 4:18–21)

We immediately perceive the profound inner connection between faith and hope in this passage. God’s promise to Abraham constitutes the new substance of the things hoped for, an embryonic reality in him which is his faith. It is for this reason that “in hope he believed against hope.” Paul is not waxing paradoxically at this point. For the two occurrences of the word “hope” in this sentence (παρ’ ἐλπίδα ἐπὶ ἐλπίδι) have two different meanings and the difference between these meanings discloses the very nature and structure of Christian hope in contrast to what we might want to call “ordinary hope.”²⁶ For the hope against which Abraham believes in hope is the kind of ordinary hope we can find in all human beings to a smaller or larger degree.²⁷

Heb. 11, [6]: *Accedentem ad Deum oportet credere quia est, et quia inquirentibus se remunerator est. Unde manifestum est quod fides praecedit spem.*”

²⁶ Thomas Aquinas, in his *Commentary on Romans*, is quite explicit about the contrast between Christian hope and ordinary hope: “[S]pes importat certam expectationem boni futuri, quae quidem certitudo est quandoque ex causa humana sive naturali, secundum illud I. Cor. ix: *Debet in spe, qui arat, arare*: quandoque vero certitudo expectantis est ex causa divina, secundum illud Ps. xxx: *In te, Domine, speravi*, etc. Hoc ergo bonum quod Abraham fieret pater multarum gentium, certitudinem habebat ex parte Dei promittentis; sed contrarium apparebat ex causa naturali sive humana. Ideo dicit: Qui contra spem causae naturalis vel humanae, credidit in spem, scilicet divinae promissionis.” *In ep. ad Rom.*, c. iv, 1.3, pp. 64f. (Marietti).

²⁷ Chrysostom, in his commentary *In epistolam ad Romanos* shares this interpretation: “πῶς παρ’ ἐλπίδι ἐπ’ ἐλπίδα ἐπίστευσε; παρ’ ἐλπίδα τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην, ἐπ’ ἐλπίδι τῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ.” (I am indebted to Nathan Eubank for bringing to my attention this important passage in Chrysostom’s commentary.)

In order to differentiate between Christian hope and ordinary human hope, as well as to correlate the two kinds of hope, Pope Benedict draws upon conceptual resources developed most thoroughly by Aquinas. For Thomas distinguishes clearly between (1) the passion of hope, (2) those virtues that are correlative to the passion of hope—humility and magnanimity, and (3) the supernatural, infused virtue of hope, that is, Christian hope proper.²⁸

1. *The passion of hope.* Passions are instinctive drives, or in Thomas's terminology, "acts of the sensitive appetite" that originate in the body and pertain to the soul "per accidens," that is, insofar as the soul is united with the body. The passion of hope is most essential for human life, for

hope is a movement of the appetitive power ensuing from the apprehension of a future good, difficult but possible to obtain; namely, a stretching forth of the appetite to such a good.²⁹

The strength of the movement of this appetitive power is proportionate to our present capacities, as well as to the nature of the good we aim to attain. Such hope is common and indeed indispensable to the human condition. Hope moves us constantly toward all kinds of arduous goods not yet attained. In light of the realization by the human mind that a desirable good, difficult to obtain, is in principle in reach and with persistence and effort of will can be attained, hope moves us toward this good. Hence by way of the anticipation of the good and the subsequent determination of the will toward it, as well

²⁸ On the complex topic of hope in Aquinas's philosophical and theological thought, see Josef Pieper, *Über die Hoffnung* (Leipzig: Hegner, 1938); English edition: *On Hope*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986); Servais Pinckaers, O.P., "La nature vertueuse de l'espérance," *Revue Thomiste* 58 (1958): 405–42, 623–44; Marie-Michel Labourdette, O.P., *Cours de théologie morale*, vol. 9: *L'espérance* (Thomas d'Aquin: *Somme théologique II–II*, qq. 17–22) (Toulouse, 1959–1960); Ch.-A. Bernard, S.J., *Théologie de l'espérance selon saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1961); Albert Fries, C.S.S.R., "Hoffnung und Heilsgewißheit bei Thomas von Aquin," *Studia Moralia VII: Contributiones ad problema spei* (Rome: Desclée & Socii, 1969), 131–236; Eberhard Schockenhoff, *Bonum hominis: Die anthropologischen und theologischen Grundlagen des Tugendbegriffs bei Thomas von Aquin* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1987), 286–351, 418–75; Bernard Schumacher, *A Philosophy of Hope: Josef Pieper and the Contemporary Debate on Hope*, trans. D. C. Schindler (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003).

²⁹ *ST I–II*, q. 40, a. 2: "[S]pes est motus appetitivae virtutis consequens apprehensionem boni futuri ardui possibilis adipisci, scilicet extensio appetitus in huiusmodi obiectum."

as the appetitive movement toward it, our mind already participates in the good to be attained, whence arises confidence and a certain pleasure.³⁰ Remember, this is the kind of ordinary hope *against* which Abraham believed in hope. For such an ordinary hope arises solely from our specific capacities, skills, faculties, as well as experiences, and is consequently also limited by them.³¹

2. *The virtues correlative to the passion of hope: humility and magnanimity.* Remember, the object of the passion of hope is “a future good, difficult but possible to obtain,” and the passion of hope “a movement of the appetitive power,” “a stretching forth of the appetite to such a good.”³² Thomas characterizes this appetite as “irascible” (in contradistinction to a “concupiscible appetite”), because the former is directed to all kinds of goods that are hard to obtain and the obtaining of which might involve the overcoming of difficult obstacles. For the irascible appetite to be rightly governed by reason, namely, to be aiming at attaining the just mean, it must be informed by two specific moral virtues. Humility (rooted in the cardinal virtue of temperance) moderates the passion of hope and thus assists it in acting in conformity with the dictates of reason. Magnanimity (rooted in the cardinal virtue of courage) strengthens the passion of hope and directs attention to the subject of the moral act by aiming at the accomplishment of great deeds, as well as at the requisite honors that accompany the attainment of greatness.³³ Because of the central and sustaining role that magnanimity plays in governing the

³⁰ Pertaining to the confidence to which such hope gives rise, see *ST* I–II, q. 40, a. 2, ad 2: “When a man desires a thing and reckons that he can get it, he believes that he will get it; and from this belief which proceeds in the cognitive power, the ensuing movement in the appetite is called confidence.” “[I]llud quod homo desiderat, et aestimat se posse adipisci, credit se adepturum: et ex tali fide in cognitiva praecedente, motus sequens in appetitu fiducia nominatur.” Pertaining to the pleasure such hope gives, see *ST* I–II, q. 32, a. 3: “[Q]uia maior est coniunctio secundum rem quam secundum similitudinem, quae est coniunctio cognitionis; itemque maior est coniunctio rei in actu quam in potentia: ideo maxima est delectatio quae fit per sensum, qui requirit praesentiam rei sensibilis. Secundum autem gradum tenet delectatio spei, in qua non solum est delectabilis coniunctio secundum apprehensionem, set etiam secundum facultatem vel potestatem adipiscendi bonum quod delectat. Tertium autem gradum tenet delectatio memoriae, quae habet solam coniunctionem apprehensionis.” In contradistinction to the passion of hope, which gives rise to pleasure, the theological virtue of hope gives rise to joy—“rejoicing in hope” (Rom 12:12).

³¹ *ST* I–II, q. 40, a. 5.

³² *ST* I–II, q. 40, a. 2.

³³ *ST* II–II, q. 129, a. 1.

passion of hope, some interpreters of Aquinas have understood, with good reason, the natural virtue of magnanimity as the natural virtue of hope.³⁴ If indeed the passion of hope is intrinsic to human nature, there must be a proximate virtue that perfects human agency insofar as it is informed by the passion of hope. It is therefore precisely in regard to magnanimity as the quasi-natural virtue of hope that Thomas characterizes the distinctive feature of the theological virtue of hope. A theological virtue has God for its object³⁵ and theological hope therefore tends toward an arduous good “in reference to God as the last end, or as the first efficient cause.”³⁶ About the natural virtue of magnanimity, in contrast, Thomas states:

Magnanimity tends to something arduous in the hope of obtaining something that is within one's power, wherefore its proper object is the doing of great things. On the other hand, hope, as a theological virtue, regards something arduous, to be obtained by another's help.³⁷

3. *The supernatural, infused virtue of hope.* A good that completely transcends human faculties and experiences can never become the object of the appetitive power of hope. For such a good must first be communicated by the First Truth Himself, as the apostle Paul emphasizes in 1 Corinthians 2:9–10: “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those

³⁴ See R.-A. Gauthier, O.P., *Magnanimité: L'idéal de la grandeur dans la philosophie païenne et dans la théologie chrétienne* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1951), esp. 295–371. The text of Aquinas most centrally in support of understanding magnanimity as the natural virtue of hope is *In Sent.* III, d. 26, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4: “Sed tamen magnanimitas non est idem quod spes virtus; quia est circa arduum quod consistit in rebus humanis, non circa arduum quod est deus; unde non est virtus theologica, sed moralis, participans aliquid a spe” (my emphasis).

³⁵ *ST* I–II, q. 62, a. 1.

³⁶ *ST* II–II, q. 17, a. 5, ad 1: “in ordine ad Deum sicut ad ultimum finem et sicut ad primam causam efficientem.”

³⁷ *ST* II–II, q. 17, a. 5, ad 4: “[M]agnanimitas tendit in arduum sperans aliquid quod est suae potestatis. Unde proprie respicit operationem aliquorum magnorum. Sed spes, secundum quod est virtus theologica, respicit arduum alterius auxilio assequendum.” See also *ST* II–II, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1: “Nevertheless neither can anything false come under hope, for a man hopes to obtain eternal life, not by his own power (since this would be an act of presumption), but with the help of grace; and if he perseveres therein he will obtain eternal life surely and infallibly.” “Et tamen neque etiam spei subest falsum. Non enim aliquis sperat se habiturum vitam aeternam secundum propriam potestatem (hoc enim est praesumptionis), sed secundum auxilium gratiae: in qua si perseveraverit, omnino infallibiliter vitam aeternam consequetur.”

who love him, God has revealed to us through the Spirit.” The great hope against hope now, in which Abraham believed, is essentially a hope that arises from believing in the God who, as Paul so emphatically proclaims, “gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist” (Rom 4:17). Christian hope is nothing other than the most perfect instantiation of this Abrahamic hope. This hope is a virtue and not simply a passion, for “the virtue of a thing is that which makes its subject good, and its work good likewise.”³⁸ Every human act that attains its due rule, reason, or, surpassingly, God, is good. But the act of hope that is now considered does precisely this, it attains God:

[I]nsofar as we hope for anything as being possible to us by means of the Divine assistance, our hope attains God Himself, on Whose help it leans. It is therefore evident that hope is a virtue, since it causes a human act to be good and to attain its due rule.³⁹

This virtue is a supernatural, infused virtue, because the *habitus* of this virtue flows from grace alone.⁴⁰ For not only is the attaining of the arduous good to which Christian hope is directed completely dependent upon God’s initiating, accompanying, and completing causality (or agency). Rather, the arduous good is nothing short of eternal beatitude,⁴¹ that is, the eternal union with God’s own life of triune love, or as Pope Benedict puts it, “the supreme moment of satisfaction, in which totality embraces us and we embrace totality. . . . It would be

³⁸ *ST* II–II, q. 17, a. 1: “Virtus uniuscuiusque rei est quae bonum facit habentem et opus eius bonum reddit.” (Thomas cites the definition of a virtue offered by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106a15.)

³⁹ *ST* II–II, q. 17, a. 1: “Inquantum . . . speramus aliquid ut possibile nobis per divinum auxilium, spes nostra attingit ad ipsum Deum, cuius auxilio innititur. Et ideo patet quod spes est virtus: cum faciat actum hominis bonum et debitam regulam attingentem.”

⁴⁰ *ST* II–II, q. 17, a. 1, ad 2: “Ipse autem habitus spei, per quam aliquis expectat beatitudinem, non causatur ex meritis, sed pure ex gratia.”

⁴¹ *ST* II–II, q. 17, a. 2: “[T]he hope of which we speak now, attains God by leaning on His help in order to obtain the hoped for good. . . . Such a good is eternal life, which consists in the enjoyment of God Himself. For we should hope from Him nothing less than Himself, since His goodness, whereby He imparts good things to His creatures, is no less than His Essence. Therefore the proper and principal object of hope is eternal happiness.” “[S]pes de qua loquimur attingit Deum innitens eius auxilio ad consequendum bonum speratum. . . . Hoc autem bonum est vita aeterna, quae in fruitione ipsius Dei consistit: non enim minus aliquid ab eo sperandum est quam sit ipse, cum non sit minor eius bonitas, per quam bona creaturae communicat, quam eius essentia. Et ideo proprium et principale obiectum spei est beatitudo aeterna.”

like plunging into the ocean of infinite love, a moment in which time . . . no longer exists" (§12). Such an exceedingly extravagant and wild hope infinitely transcends the kinds of ordinary hopes we usually entertain on a daily basis:

Eternal happiness does not enter into the heart of man perfectly, i.e., so that it be possible for a wayfarer to know its nature and quality; yet, under the general notion of the perfect good, it is possible for it to be apprehended by a man, and it is in this way that the movement of hope towards it arises. Hence the Apostle says pointedly (Heb. vi. 19) that hope *enters in, even within the veil*, because that which we hope for is as yet veiled, so to speak.⁴²

Hence such a hope could not be entertained without it profoundly impacting all other ordinary hopes. And it must have such an effect, for without this hope our ordinary hopes would simply constitute the horizon of our hoping and thus squelch the great hope and consequently—and detrimentally—have Christian prayer be fueled by our ordinary hopes. But, as Thomas rightly insists against the dominant *Zeitgeist* to which not a few Catholics in the Western world have succumbed, it is solely the great hope that is to govern Christian prayer:

We ought not to pray God for any other goods, except in reference to eternal happiness. Hence hope regards eternal happiness chiefly, and other things, for which we pray God, it regards secondarily and as referred to eternal happiness.⁴³

Like Abraham, Christians, in entertaining the great hope, believe—at least initially—against these ordinary hopes. For the arduous goods to which the passion of hope is directed tend to be sensible goods. The arduous good to which the theological virtue of hope tends is, on the

⁴² ST II–II, q. 17, a. 2, ad 1: “[B]eatitude aeterna perfecte quidem in cor hominis non ascendit, ut scilicet cognosci possit ab homine viatore quae et qualis sit: sed secundum communem rationem, scilicet boni perfecti, cadere potest in apprehensione hominis. Et hoc modo motus spei in ipsam consurgit. Unde et signanter Apostolus dicit quod spes incedit *usque ad interiora velaminis*: quia id quod speramus est nobis adhuc velatum.”

⁴³ ST II–II, q. 17, a. 2, ad 2: “[Q]aecumque alia bona non debemus a Deo petere nisi in ordine ad beatitudinem aeternam. Unde et spes principaliter quidem respicit beatitudinem aeternam; alia vero quae petuntur a Deo respicit secundario, in ordine ad beatitudinem aeternam.” It is not at all accidental that in the second, incomplete part, *De spe*, of Thomas’s *Compendium theologiae*, prayer—and first and foremost the Lord’s Prayer—figures prominently in relationship to the theological virtue of hope. Consider the heading of chapter 3: “Quod conveniens fuit ad consummationem spei, ut nobis forma orandi traderetur a Christo.”

contrary, an essentially superintelligible good.⁴⁴ And much is at stake here, indeed. For not only is the great hope always a pure gift from above, but when this hope is genuinely embraced, it takes root in the Christian by becoming a firm disposition. And it is from this moment on that the relationship between the great hope and our small, ordinary hopes is able to change. For by becoming a firm disposition, the great hope is able eventually to perfect all our small, ordinary hopes:

[W]e need the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day. But these are not enough without the great hope, which must surpass everything else. This great hope can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain. The fact that it comes to us as a gift is actually part of hope. God is the foundation of hope: not any god, but the God who has a human face and who has loved us to the end, each one of us and humanity in its entirety. (*Spe Salvi*, §31)

The way Pope Benedict relates the ordinary human hopes to the great, transcendent hope echoes Thomas's famous axiom "gratia non tollit sed perficit naturam."⁴⁵ The great hope, having become a firm disposition in the believer, will eventually conform these ordinary hopes to itself, will make them moments of anticipation, always transparent to the great hope.⁴⁶ Again Paul gives us a profound description of such a conformation of hope to the great hope:

⁴⁴ *ST* II–II, q. 18, a. 1, ad 1: "[I]rascibilis obiectum est arduum sensibile. Obiectum autem virtutis spei est arduum intelligibile; vel potius supra intellectum existens."

⁴⁵ *ST* I, q. 1, a. 8, ad 2: "Cum enim gratia non tollat naturam, sed perficiat, oportet quod naturalis ratio subserviat fidei; sicut et naturalis inclinatio voluntatis obsequitur caritati." *ST* I, q. 2, a. 2, ad 1: "[S]ic enim fides praesupponit cognitionem naturalem, sicut gratia naturam, et ut perfectio perfectibile." Already in 1963, in a contribution to a Festschrift for his mentor Gottlieb Söhngen, did Pope Benedict XVI treat this topic—from an explicitly Bonaventurian angle, but open to and in sympathy with the tenets of what he then called a non-reductive Thomism, that is, a Thomism still in contact with its Augustinian roots. See Josef Ratzinger, "Gratia praesupponit naturam," in *Dogma und Verkündigung* (München/Freiburg:ewel, 1973), 161–81.

⁴⁶ In this regard, Thomas's all too brief, but very suggestive, remarks on the certainty of hope strike me as relevant for further consideration (*ST* II–II, q. 18, a. 4). Thomas would want to say that such conformation of our ordinary hopes to the great hope comes about first and foremost by way of the *infused* moral virtue of magnanimity. (On the infused moral virtues in distinction from the naturally acquired moral virtues, see Romanus Cessario, O.P., *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991], 102–25.) Thomas distinguishes between two kinds of moral virtue, one kind being naturally acquired through our own efforts, the other being supernaturally acquired by way of infusion. Faith, hope, and love are the most central of these infused

Through [Jesus Christ] we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing in the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. (Rom 5:2–5)⁴⁷

The link between the great hope and the ordinary hopes conformed to it is suffering, suffering for the sake of this great hope. And the hope that is born from suffering and produced by character does not disappoint us because it has its roots in the great hope of sharing in the glory of God. The “first installment” or “guarantee” (*arrabon/pignus*) of this hope is nothing other than the Holy Spirit, who is the love of God, dwelling in the hearts of the faithful (2 Cor 1:22).⁴⁸ Hence,

virtues, because they direct the human being completely to God by way of sanctifying grace, which is a participation in the divine life itself. While absolutely necessary for any human act pertaining to salvation, the infused theological virtues do not suffice. For, as Michael S. Sherwin, O.P., rightly stresses, “just as in our natural life the principles orienting us toward our natural end depend on the acquired cardinal virtues with regard to the means to that end, so too in the life of grace. Although the theological virtues orient us toward God as our ultimate end, we require other infused virtues—the infused cardinal virtues—in order to act rightly with regard to the means to that end. The analogy, therefore, is as follows: natural principles are to the acquired cardinal virtues as the theological virtues are to the infused cardinal virtues.” Sherwin, “Infused Virtue and the Effects of Acquired Vice: A Test Case for the Thomistic Theory of Infused Cardinal Virtues,” *The Thomist* 73 (2009): 29–52; 39. The infused cardinal virtues (and by analogy those other moral virtues rooted in them, as, for example, magnanimity) pertain to those actions necessary for salvation. Hence it is the task of the infused moral virtue of magnanimity to conform the ordinary hopes to the great hope, that is, not to sustain these hopes against the great hope, but rather to enhance them toward and in perspective of the great hope.

⁴⁷ For an illuminating commentary on this passage arising from the contemporary renaissance of Christian virtue ethics, see Stanley Hauerwas, “On Developing Hopeful Virtues,” in *Christians Among the Virtues: Theological Conversations with Ancient and Modern Ethics*, by Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 113–28.

⁴⁸ Regarding this *arrabon/pignus*, Thomas invites us to consider two things, the substance itself, the Holy Spirit, indeed, the triune God who is eternal life, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the very mode in which we have it as *pignus* only such that it causes hope but remains in this life an imperfect way of having: “In *pignore* duo sunt consideranda, sc. quod faciat spem habendae rei, et quod valeat tantum, quantum valet res, vel plus, et haec duo sunt in Spiritu Sancto, quia si consideremus substantiam Spiritus Sancti, sic valet tantum Spiritus Sanctus quantum vita aeterna, quae est ipse Deus, quia sc. valet quantum omnes tres personae.

suffering in love for Christ's sake, that is, also for the sake of truth and justice, is the great conformer of all our everyday hopes to the one great hope. Pope Benedict puts it most succinctly:

Certainly, in our many different sufferings and trials we always need the lesser and the greater hopes too—a kind visit, the healing of internal and external wounds, a favorable resolution of a crisis, and so on. In our lesser trials these kinds of hope may even be sufficient. But in truly great trials, where I must make a definitive decision to place the truth before my own welfare, career and possessions, I need the certitude of that true, great hope of which we have spoken here. . . . Let us say once again: the capacity to suffer for the sake of the truth is the measure of humanity. Yet this capacity to suffer depends on the type and extent of the hope that we bear within us and build upon. The saints were able to make the great journey of human existence in the way that Christ had done before them, because they were brimming with great hope. (§39)

Turning to the witness of a saint's life might therefore be the only apt way to offer a concrete narrative cap-stone to any theological discussion on faith and hope. As a matter of fact, Pope Benedict offers exactly such a narrative account, albeit not as a concluding cap-stone, but rather as the kind of cornerstone that is part of the very foundation on which the theological reflection comes to stand.⁴⁹

In Hope She Believed Against Hope: Pope Benedict's Hopeful Pedagogy on Hope

For a powerful modern, almost contemporary example of the liberating and transformative effect of Christian hope, Pope Benedict narrates the

Si vero consideretur modus habendi, sic facit spem, et non possessionem vitae aeternae, quia nondum perfecte habemus ipsum in vita ista. Et ideo non perfecte beati sumus, nisi quando perfecte habebimus in patria." *II Ad Corinthios*, c. I, l. 5, p. 425 (Marietti). Might one understand the created gift—sanctifying grace—of this *arabon/pignus*, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as the interior objective reality of the proof, the *argumentum*, of things not seen? One could pursue this question by drawing upon Thomas's reflections on the *nova lex* in *ST I-II*, q. 106, a. 1: "Id autem quod est potissimum in lege novi testamenti, et in quo tota virtus eius consistit, est gratia Spiritus Sancti, quae datur per fidem Christi. Et ideo principaliter lex nova est ipsa gratia Spiritus Sancti, quae datur Christi fidelibus."

⁴⁹ This move is indeed profoundly Bonaventurian in that holiness is the very foundation on which the edifice of any true theological reflection is to be erected. For a nuanced and enlightening discussion of this topic in Bonaventure, see Gregory LaNave, *Through Holiness to Wisdom: The Nature of Theology according to St. Bonaventure* (Rome: Istituto storico dei Cappuccini, 2005).

life story of the Sudanese former slave girl Josephine Bakhita, beatified by Pope John Paul II on May 17, 1992 and canonized by him on October 1, 2000. After many years of suffering humiliation and abuse at the hands of Sudanese slave masters and by a felicitous break in the seemingly endless cycle of being sold and bought and sold again, Josephine Bakhita ended up in Italy. There she encountered for the first time the good news of the living God, the God of Jesus Christ, and this good news was fundamentally life-changing for her. The encounter with the living God liberated her inwardly in a way that enabled her to take the bold step and refuse to return to Sudan. Instead she became a witness of Christ and eventually took the vows of a religious. Pope Benedict reads Josephine Bakhita's story as a salient reminder of what it means to encounter for the first time the love of the living God:

She was known and loved and she was awaited. What is more, this master had himself accepted the destiny of being flogged and now he was waiting for her "at the Father's right hand". Now she had "hope"—no longer simply the modest hope of finding masters who would be less cruel, but the great hope: "I am definitively loved and whatever happens to me—I am awaited by this Love. And so my life is good." Through the knowledge of this hope she was "redeemed", no longer a slave, but a free child of God. She understood what Paul meant when he reminded the Ephesians that previously they were without hope and without God in the world—without hope because without God. Hence, when she was about to be taken back to Sudan, Bakhita refused; she did not wish to be separated again from her "Paron". On 9 January 1890, she was baptized and confirmed and received her first Holy Communion from the hands of the Patriarch of Venice. On 8 December 1896, in Verona, she took her vows in the Congregation of the Canossian Sisters and from that time onwards, besides her work in the sacristy and in the porter's lodge at the convent, she made several journeys round Italy in order to promote the missions: the liberation that she had received through her encounter with the God of Jesus Christ, she felt she had to extend, it had to be handed on to others, to the greatest possible number of people. The hope born in her which had "redeemed" her she could not keep to herself; this hope had to reach many, to reach everybody. (§3)

From this example of the radical transformation of the life of a modern slave girl from the modest everyday hopes of life getting incrementally less bad and abusive in this or that regard to the great hope of living for eternity in union with the God who is love, Pope Benedict takes the readers of *Spe Salvi* back to Paul's Letter to Philemon, the apostolic admonition of a first-century Christian slave owner. It is in this epistle

where we encounter for the first time the fundamental Christological revolution between a Christian master and a Christian slave:

Those who, as far as their civil status is concerned, stand in relation to one another as masters and slaves, inasmuch as they are members of the one Church, have become brothers and sisters—this is how Christians addressed one another. By virtue of their Baptism they had been reborn, they had been given to drink of the same Spirit and they received the Body of the Lord together, alongside one another. Even if external structures remained unaltered, this changed society from within. (§4)

But there was not only a new great hope for those belonging to the lower social strata of the Roman Empire; there was also new hope for the educated classes, those disillusioned by a petrified pagan religious ritualism and by the recondite rationalism of the philosophical schools. “The Divine was seen in various ways in cosmic forces, but a God to whom one could pray did not exist” (§5). The Gospel of Christ opened up a completely new and utterly hopeful perspective on the universe:

It is not the elemental spirits of the universe, the laws of matter, which ultimately govern the world and mankind, but a personal God governs the stars, that is, the universe; it is not the laws of matter and of evolution that have the final say, but reason, will, love—a Person. And if we know this Person and he knows us, then truly the inexorable power of material elements no longer has the last word; we are not slaves of the universe and of its laws, we are free. (§5)

It is good—indeed indispensable—for Christians, in these latter days of a modernity imploding under the weight of hopeless skepticism and materialism, to be reminded again and again of the profoundly transformative and utterly liberating hope that fueled Christians from the days of the first martyrs and confessors right up to a Josephine Bakhita on the threshold of the twentieth century.

God, Faith, Hope—an Offer to a Modernity in Crisis

When Christians return to their roots, they rediscover that the Gospel that elicits the great hope is first and foremost performative, because Christian hope, the supernatural virtue of hope, ineluctably transforms life. Thus transformed, human life becomes transparent to the fundamental *conditio humana*, the *status viatoris* of all humanity, that is, humanity existentially, as well as historically, being “on the way” to a destination of surpassing truth, goodness, and beauty—the *status comprehensoris*, the gratuitous, irreversible, that is, eternal participation in God’s own life of

love. The theological virtues of faith and hope (together with the infused moral virtues) are meant to sustain human existence *in statu viatoris* and on the pilgrimage unite us already in a certain way with the goal of the journey. Only the theological virtue of charity already unites us as *viatores* already *simpliciter* with the goal with exactly the same charity in which the blessed are united with God as *comprehensores*.⁵⁰

Pope Benedict strongly affirms that the apostle Paul—echoed by the Letter to the Hebrews—remains our prime apostolic teacher for how to become a living dialogue partner to an increasingly hopeless modernity, a late and tired modernity that hovers on the edge of cynicism and despair. In the stark words of *Spe Salvi*: “Man needs God, otherwise he remains without hope” (§23). More than ever Christians are called to enter the school of the apostle Paul and witness anew that “hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). In the salient words of *Spe Salvi*: “In embryo—and thus according to the ‘substance’—there is already present in us the things that are hoped for: a whole true life” (§7). That this hope is not to be misunderstood as a romantic flirtation with a mode of religious enthusiasm Paul also adamantly maintains. The hope that does not disappoint has its exterior objective correspondence in the “form of teaching” to which we are given over at baptism. And the profound insight that the warrant for the truth of this faith is neither subjective sincerity or piety, nor a successful philosophical argument, but the authority of the apostolic Church, is well and alive in the first generation after the apostle Paul. Either Paul (according to the tradition) or one of his own very close disciples (according to modern critical consensus) characterized in 1 Timothy 3:15 the household of God as “the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.”⁵¹ Is it not a great consolation for all Christians that—in deep consonance with the *doctor communis*—the present successor of St. Peter, whose office it is to take care that the Church infallibly continues her mission as the “pillar and bulwark of the truth,” encourages all Christians to become in ever more

⁵⁰ Cf. Josef Pieper, *Über die Hoffnung*, 11–23: “Bemerkungen über den Begriff des status viatoris.”

⁵¹ In his *lectura* on 1 Timothy, Thomas leaves no doubt about the importance of this utterly fundamental claim about the *veritas ecclesiae*: “Naturale est enim homini ut desideret cognitionem veritatis, cum sit perfectio intellectus. Unde Augustinus dicit, quod beatitudo est finis hominis, quae nihil aliud est quam gaudium de veritate. Hoc innotuit philosophis per creaturas. Sed in hoc vacillabant, quia non habebant certitudinem veritatis, tum quia erant corrupti erroribus, tum quia vix invenitur apud eos, quod in veritate concordent. Sed in ecclesia est firma cognitio et veritas.” *I. Ad Timotheum*, c. iv, l. 3, p. 204 (Marietti).

fervent ways disciples of the apostle Paul, witnesses to the great hope that is in us—and in this way to become a gift of hope to a modernity without hope? For this great hope surpasses whatever hopes modernity can muster, and because this great hope cannot be shaken or destroyed by the crisis of modernity, it remains a genuine gift to modernity. For whatever are the true and legitimate hopes of modernity will not be destroyed, but saved, elevated, and thus perfected by Christian hope. **N-V**