

St. Thomas Aquinas “Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth”: The Historical and Theological Contours of Thomas’s *Principia*

JOSEPH K. GORDON
Johnson University
Kissimmee, FL

LEO XIII’S COMMENDATION of the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas in *Aeterni Patris* (1879) created the exigency for the extensive scholarly engagement with Thomas’s philosophy that took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The modern efforts at retrieving and explaining his work that resulted from this engagement, for all of their value, risked obscuring the actual thirteenth-century Thomas to the extent that they neglected the scriptural dimensions of his thought. Before being a philosopher, Thomas was a religious and a theologian. It is unlikely that he would have recognized a sharp disciplinary distinction between philosophy as such and theology as such. He was certainly not a speculative philosophical theologian in the modern sense; if anything, he should be classified as a scriptural theologian.¹ Thomas’s religious vocation as a Dominican, literally “the order of preachers” (*ordinis praedicatorum*), and his academic profession, “master of the Sacred Page” (*magister in sacra pagina*), both attest to this fact. Thomas lived in an atmosphere saturated by Sacred Scripture.² Any

¹ See Henri de Lubac, “On an Old Distich: The Doctrine of the ‘Fourfold Sense’ in Scripture,” in *Theological Fragments*, trans. Rebecca Howell Balinski (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1989), 126.

² Thomas chanted the entire Psalter during the offices every week, and the Dominican *temporale* included lessons from almost all of Scripture; see William R. Bonniwell, *A History of the Dominican Liturgy 1215–1945*, 2nd ed. (New York: Joseph F. Wagner Inc., 1945), 134–140.

attempt to understand his theology or his philosophy apart from their scriptural moorings cannot help but be incomplete. Fr. Chenu notes:

It is true that in the history of Thomism the *Summa theologiae* has monopolized everyone's attention and commentaries; but therein precisely lies a grave problem, and to understand and solve it, the first condition is to avoid obliterating the fact that the *Summa* is embedded in *an evangelical soil*. . . . In the XIIIth century, the university institution produced disputed questions and *summas* only *within the framework of scriptural teaching*. In this pedagogical framework, theology found an apt expression of the law that rules over it since theology can become a science only inasmuch as it remains in communion with the word of God that has first to be heard for itself. A tree cut from its roots dies, even if it remains standing.³

The years that have elapsed since Chenu wrote have happily witnessed the beginnings of a large-scale investigation of the scriptural dimensions of Thomas's work and life.⁴ Studies devoted to Thomas's use of Scripture in his more "speculative" works have clearly demonstrated the scriptural character of even his most synthetic and abstract theological reflections.⁵ Scholars have also begun to give concentrated attention

³ Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, trans. A. M. Landy and D. Hughes (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), 233–234 (*italics mine for emphasis*).

⁴ For helpful introductions to Thomas on Scripture, see Christopher Baglow, "Sacred Scripture and Sacred Doctrine in Saint Thomas Aquinas," in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, eds. Thomas Weinandy, Daniel Keating, and John Yocum (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 1–26; John Boyle, "St. Thomas and Sacred Scripture," *Pro Ecclesia* 4, no.1 (1995): 92–104; Karlfried Froehlich, "Thomas Aquinas (1224/25–1274)," in *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald McKim (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006), 979–985; Nicholas Healy, "Introduction," in *Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to his Biblical Commentaries*, eds. Thomas Weinandy, Daniel Keating, and John Yocum (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 1–20; and Thomas Prügl, "Thomas Aquinas as Interpreter of Scripture," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 386–415. Amazingly, the *Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Elenore Stump (New York: Oxford, 2012), which examines almost all of the topics upon which Thomas wrote, does not include a single article on how Scripture influenced Thomas or on any of his biblical commentaries!

⁵ See especially Marc Aillet, *Lire la Bible avec S. Thomas: Le passage de la littera à la res dans la Somme théologique* (Freiburg: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg

to the theoretical and spiritual dimensions of Thomas's hermeneutics and to the place of the study of Scripture in his theological method.⁶ A number of studies have recently appeared that examine Thomas's commentaries on Sacred Scripture.⁷ Finally, several recent works investigate the contemporary relevance of Thomas's understanding of the

Suisse, 1993); Matthew Levering, "A Note on Scripture in the *Summa Theologiae*," *New Blackfriars* 90, no. 1030 (2009): 652–658; Eleanor Stump, "Biblical Commentary and Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, eds. Norman Kretzmann and Eleanor Stump (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 252–268; and Wilhelmus Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God: Place and Function of Holy Scripture in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

⁶ On his hermeneutics, see especially Gilbert Dahan, "Saint Thomas d'Aquin et la métaphore: Rhétorique et herméneutique," in *Lire le Bible au Moyen Âge: Essais d'hermeneutique medievale* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2009), 249–282; Mark Johnson, "Another Look at the Plurality of the Literal Sense," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 2 (1992): 117–141; and R. G. Kennedy, "Thomas Aquinas and the Literal Sense of Sacred Scripture" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1985); Eugene F. Rogers, "How the Virtues of the Interpreter Presuppose and Perfect Hermeneutics: The Case of Thomas Aquinas," *Journal of Religion* 76, no. 1 (1996): 64–81; and Rogers, "Selections from Thomas Aquinas's *Commentary on Romans*," in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Stephen Fowl (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), 320–338. On the place of Scripture in his theological method, see Leo J. Elders, "Aquinas on Holy Scripture as the Medium of Divine Revelation," in *La doctrine de la revelation divine de saint Thomas d'Aquin*, ed. Leo J. Elders, *Studi Tomistici* 37 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1990), 132–152; and Per Erik Persson, *Sacra Doctrina: Reason and Revelation in Aquinas*, trans. Ross Mackenzie (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970).

⁷ See Christopher T. Baglow, "Modus et Forma": *A New Approach to the Exegesis of Saint Thomas Aquinas with an Application to the Lectura super Epistolam ad Ephesios*, *Analecta Biblica* 149 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2002); C. Clifton Black, "St. Thomas's Commentary on the Johannine Prologue: Some Reflections on its Character and Implications," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986): 681–698; Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering, *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005); Franklin Harkins, "Docuit excellentissimae divinitatis mysteria: St. Paul in Thomas Aquinas," in *A Companion to St. Paul in the Middle Ages*, ed. Steven Cartwright (Boston: Brill, 2013), 235–263; Dauphinais and Levering, *Reading Romans with St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012); Thomas Ryan, *Thomas Aquinas as Reader of the Psalms* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000); and Weinandy, Keating, and Yocum, *Aquinas on Scripture*. For a helpful recent summary of Thomas's commentaries and a proposed chronology, see Prügl, "Thomas Aquinas," 387–391.

nature and purpose of Scripture and of his scriptural hermeneutics.⁸

Notwithstanding the burgeoning body of literature on the scriptural dimensions of Thomas's thought, more work remains. The sermon was the "natural habitat" of Scripture during Thomas's time.⁹ Despite this fact, relatively little research, especially in English, has appeared that examines the content and style of Thomas's extant sermons.¹⁰ His

⁸ See Peter Candler, *Theology, Rhetoric and Manuduction: Or Reading Scripture Together on the Path to God* (London: SCM Press, 2006); Stephen E. Fowl, "The Importance of a Multivoiced Literal Sense of Scripture: The Example of Thomas Aquinas," in A. K. M. Adam, Stephen E. Fowl, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, and Francis Watson, *Reading Scripture with the Church: Toward a Hermeneutic for Theological Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 25–50; Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis: A Theology of Biblical Interpretation* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008); Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004); Levering, "St. Thomas Aquinas and the Pontifical Biblical Commission," *Pro Ecclesia* 13 (2004): 25–38; Matthew Ramage, *Dark Passages of the Bible: Engaging Scripture with Benedict XVI and St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013); Matthew A. Tapie, *Aquinas on Israel and the Church: The Question of Supersessionism in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014); and David Williams, *Receiving the Bible in Faith* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 24–34.

⁹ I am indebted to Mark Johnson for the turn of phrase, "natural habitat." For an exposition of this judgment, see Louis-Jacques Bataillon, "Early Scholastic and Mendicant Preaching as Exegesis of Scripture," in *Ad Litteram: Authoritative Texts and Their Medieval Readers*, eds. Mark Jordan and Kent Emery, Jr. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 165–198.

¹⁰ Louis-Jacques Bataillon, who was editing the first volume of the Leonine edition of Thomas's sermons until his death in 2009, has done more than anyone else to draw attention to Thomas's preaching. After a number of delays, this volume has finally appeared. See Thomas d'Aquinas, *Sermones*, ed. Louis J. Bataillon et al., *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Opera Omnia* 44/1 (Rome-Paris: Leonine Commission du Cerf, 2014). As Adriano Oliva, current president of the Leonine commission, notes, "the richness of this volume is twofold. The first, in the most general sense, corresponds to the study of preaching, mainly in university contexts, in the Middle Ages: the general introduction of the volume studies all the collections of manuscripts that have transmitted the sermons of Thomas, authentic or only attributed, and thus represents a small introduction to this sort of preaching and the method with which it should be studied. The second contribution of the introduction, and also of the edition of the sermons itself, is to reveal an unedited Thomas: the *reportationes* of his homilies introduce us to his presence. It seems as though he were speaking directly to those who read the sermons today. On the other hand, the topics treated by Aquinas lead us to an encounter, sometimes with the teacher, at other times with the friar, and at other times with the *uir euangelicus*"; see *Anuario Filosófico* 39, no. 2 (2006): 497–520, at 509. Bataillon gives

two inception sermons at the University of Paris (1256) show the fundamental importance of Scripture in Thomas's thinking. As was customary, Thomas gave these inaugural sermons, or *principia*, at his commencement ceremony as *magister in sacra pagina* after receiving his license to teach theology.¹¹ Little concentrated and direct attention has been given to the place of these two *principia* in his hermeneutics and theology of Scripture in the secondary literature.¹² Part of the

a brief introduction to Thomas's preaching in *Sermones*, 11–13. For a recent article summarizing the history of studies on Thomas's sermons and medieval preaching, particularly with reference to Bataillon's contributions, see Nicole Bériou, "Le Père Bataillon et les 'maîtres de la parole': des sermons de Thomas d'Aquin à l'histoire de la prédication médiévale," *Medieval Sermon Studies* 54 (2010): 9–26. For two useful studies in English of the scriptural dimensions of Thomas's preaching, see Mark-Alan Hoogland, O.P., "Introduction," in *Thomas Aquinas: The Academic Sermons* (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 2010), 3–20; and Randall B. Smith, "How to Read a Sermon by St. Thomas," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 10, no. 3 (2012): 775–803. See also Jean-Pierre Torrell, "La pratique pastorale d'un théologien du XIII^e siècle: Thomas d'Aquin prédicateur," *Revue thomiste* 82 (1982): 213–245; this essay has been reprinted in Torrell's *Recherches Thomasiennes* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2000), 282–312. For bibliographic information for older studies of Thomas's preaching, see *ibid.*, 283n1.

¹¹ We will discuss their historical context in depth below. For a helpful recent discussion of the genre of *principia*, see Joshua Benson, "Identifying the Literary Genre of the *De reductione artium ad theologiam*: Bonaventure's Inaugural Lecture at Paris," *Franciscan Studies* 67 (2009): 149–178.

¹² Of the general introductions to the scriptural dimensions of Thomas's thought mentioned above (see note 4), Baglow quotes a couple of lines from Thomas's first *principium* without extensive comment, Froelich makes a brief passing mention of the *principia*, and Healy does not mention them at all. Boyle gives a more detailed treatment of Thomas's first lecture/sermon, but he does not mention the second. Only Prügl gives them more sustained attention. Valkenberg's excellent monograph does not give any attention to the *principia*. Inos Biffi has shown that the *principia* exhibit the same sapiential, Christocentric, and mystical understanding of *sacra doctrina* as Thomas's other works; see his *I misteri di Cristo in Tommaso d'Aquino*, vol. 1 (Milan: Jaca Books, 1994), 33–59. To my knowledge, the only essay or article in English devoted specifically to the inaugural lectures is Matthew Levering's "'Ordering Wisdom': Aquinas, the Old Testament, and *Sacra Doctrina*," in *Ressourcement Thomism: Sacred Doctrine, the Sacraments and the Moral Life*, ed. Reinhard Hüter and Matthew Levering (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 80–91. Levering offers a brief historical introduction to the lectures and then proceeds to summarize them, examining Thomas's division of the Old Testament and evaluating its relevance for contemporary theological reflection. Levering examines Thomas's second *principium*, or resumption *principium* first, and then examines his first *principium*, or *principium in aula* second, following

reason the *principia* have received so little attention is the late date (1912) of their discovery.¹³ No critical edition of the *principia* has been completed either, and like most of Thomas's scriptural works, the work of translating the *principia* has been late in coming.¹⁴ Perhaps scholars of Thomas have judged the *principia* to be merely academic exercises, with little relevance for helping us to understand Thomas's more substantive contributions. The *doyen* of medieval exegesis, Gilbert Dahan, has suggested that the inaugural sermons "contain almost nothing concerning [Thomas's] theory of exegesis."¹⁵

The general lack of attention given to these *principia* is lamentable, for these works, brief though they are, represent vitally important sources for understanding Thomas's thought on the nature and function of Scripture and its proper interpretation. This essay seeks to further the above-mentioned work of understanding Thomas's positions on the nature and value of Sacred Scripture through giving a thorough account of the historical context and theological character of Thomas's *principia*. Following an examination of the historical context of Thomas's *principia* in the thirteenth-century Parisian university system, this essay devotes special attention to the theological conceptuality

the order in which the sermons appear in Ralph McInerny's translation; see "The Inaugural Lectures," in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*, trans. Ralph McInerny (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1998), 5–17. McInerny's translation follows the order of the sermons in the Marietti edition of Thomas's works; see *Opuscula Theologica*, vol. 1 (Taurini: Marietti, 1954), 433–443. In his introduction to the *principia* in the Marietti edition, Raymundi Verardo suggests that Thomas gave the *principium* labeled *Sermo II* as a bachelor of the Bible, or *cursor biblicus*, in 1252 (see *ibid.*, 433). Verardo bases his assumption on the work of Pierre Mandonnet in "Chronologie des écrits scripturaires de S. Thomas d'Aquin: 3 Enseignement de la Bible 'selon l'usage de Paris,'" *Revue Thomiste* 34 (1929): 489–519. See also Thomas Aquinas, *S. Thomae Aquinatis opuscula omnia*, ed. Pierre Mandonnet (Paris: Lethielleux, 1927), 4:481. As we will see below, Mandonnet's judgment that the sermon on the divisions of Sacred Scripture is a bachelor *principium* and his consequent reversal of the order of the sermons is likely a mistake.

¹³ On the extant manuscripts of the *principia*, see note 44 below.

¹⁴ Neither of the *principia* appears in Leonine 44/1; they will appear alongside Thomas's *De decem praeceptis*, *Super Credo*, *Super Pater*, and *Super Ave Maria* in Leonine 44/2. Mark Johnson and I are beginning work on an edition and new translation for publication. The only published English translation of both inaugural sermons is McInerny's ("The Inaugural Lectures," 5–17). Simon Tugwell has offered a translation of Thomas's *Principium in aula* in *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings*, trans. and ed. Simon Tugwell, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 353–361.

¹⁵ Dahan, "Saint Thomas d'Aquin et la métaphore," 250–251n4 (my translation).

of Thomas's commendation and division of Scripture in his *principia*. These examinations of the historical context of these lectures and of their theological purpose will demonstrate the significance of Thomas's *principia* in his broader bibliology and their foundational relevance for his subsequent commentaries on Sacred Scripture.

The Historical Context and Content of Thomas's *Principia*

When Thomas arrived at Dominican *studium generale* in Cologne in 1248 at the age of twenty-three, he already had likely been studying theology formally for over eight years at Naples and Paris.¹⁶ He quickly distinguished himself as a gifted student at Cologne and caught the attention of the Dominican master Albert the Great.¹⁷ In Cologne, he likely lectured as a *cursor biblicus/baccalaureus biblicus* under Albert. The role of the *cursor biblicus* was to expound the literal sense of the text of Scripture expeditiously and without delving into disputed matters or deeper or more complex theological questions.¹⁸ Thomas's commentaries on Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Lamentations bear the characteristics of such cursory commentary and almost certainly date from the years preceding his magisterial inception.¹⁹ In 1251 or 1252, Thomas was summoned to the University of Paris, likely on the recommendation of Albert, for the next stage of his academic development.²⁰ As a *baccalaureus sententiarum* in Paris, Thomas would have aided his new master,

¹⁶ For biographical information, see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1: *The Person and His Work*, rev., ed., and trans. Robert Royal (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996; 2005), 27ff; and James A. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Work* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 45ff.

¹⁷ See Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, 41–46.

¹⁸ For more on *cursores*, see Nancy Spatz, “*Principia*: A Study and Edition of Inception Speeches Delivered before the Faculty of Theology at the University of Paris, ca. 1180–1286” (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1992), 29–34.

¹⁹ See Chenu, *Toward Understanding*, 242–243; and Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, 45 and 369–370. Weisheipl argues that the commentaries were written in Cologne (1248–1252) and notes that the authenticity of these three commentaries has been questioned because of their “*doctrinae sterilitas*.” Such “doctrinal sterility” likely reflects their cursory nature. Torrell argues that Thomas wrote them in Paris; see *Saint Thomas*, 27 and 411. Prügl observes that Thomas's comments on the first eleven chapters of Isaiah delve into matters typical of magisterial commentary of the time (“Thomas Aquinas,” 388). Joseph Wawrykow corroborates Prügl's judgment and offers a helpful brief overview of the debate about the historical context of the *Expositio super Isaiam ad litteram* in “Aquinas on Isaiah,” in Weinandy, Keating, and Yocum, *Aquinas on Scripture*, 43–72, here 44–45.

²⁰ So Torrell (*Saint Thomas*, 36), who makes reference to William of Tocco.

Elias Brunet, in disputations and would have written the required *scriptum* on the work of the Lombard.²¹ In February of 1256, prior to finishing his commentary on the *Sentences*, Thomas received the *licentia docendi* from the chancellor of the University Aimeric Veire and was commanded to prepare for his new magisterial responsibilities. In March, Pope Alexander IV wrote Aimeric to commend the chancellor for granting Thomas the *licentia*.²² At the age of only thirty-one, Thomas was four years younger than the required age for a new master.²³ He was quite apprehensive about the responsibilities of this new position, and the ongoing difficulties between the mendicant orders and the secular masters at Paris probably exacerbated his anxiety.²⁴ Though he protested on account of his age and inexperience, he had no choice but to obey and to prepare for the formal elements of his magisterial inception ceremony.²⁵

Unfortunately, much of our information concerning the precise contours of the inception ceremonies of new masters in theology at the University of Paris comes from the mid-fourteenth century, a hundred years after Thomas incepted. The statutes from the fourteenth-century regulations in the *Chartularium universitatis Parisiensis* indicate that theology students gave *principia* three times during their scholastic career: first upon assuming the role of *baccalaureus biblicus*, then when beginning the responsibilities of the *baccalaureus senten-*

²¹ Elias was the regent master in theology in the Dominican chair for “foreigners” (ibid., 39; and Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, 67). For more on the roles of the *baccalaureus sententiarum*, see Spatz, “*Principia*,” 34–39.

²² As Weisheipl puts it, he “was ordered to prepare for his inception, and for the grave responsibilities of a regent master in theology at the University of Paris. The initiative had come from the chancellor of the university, Aimeric de Veire, who granted the *licentia in theologiae facultate docendi*. In a special letter from the Lateran on March 3, 1256, Alexander IV commended Aimeric for having granted this license before his own letter on the subject had reached him” (Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, 95).

²³ See ibid., 101.

²⁴ For the details of the mendicant controversy, see ibid., 93–96. During the conflict between the secular masters and the mendicants, Pope Alexander IV solemnly commanded that the mendicants continue participating in the university, and specifically “intervened to allow Thomas Aquinas to incept. In his letter of March 3, 1256, to Aimeric de Veire, Chancellor of the University, the pope thanks Aimeric for having granted Thomas the license in theology (*‘licentiam in theologia facultate docendi’*) and urges that he have Thomas hold his *principium* as soon as possible (*‘cito facias regiminis habere principium’*)” (Spatz, “*Principia*,” 56).

²⁵ See Torrell, *Saint Thomas*, 50–51, and Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, 95.

tiarum, and finally upon their inception as a master.²⁶ These *principia*, Nancy Spatz explains, “mark[ed] the student’s entrance into new teaching positions.”²⁷ Despite the temporal distance between Thomas’s inception and the *Chartularium*, Spatz’s thorough investigation of the *principia* of other thirteenth-century masters demonstrates the high probability that Thomas’s inception ceremony would have included all of the major elements indicated in the later *Chartularium* in a simplified form.²⁸

Thomas’s inception ceremony as *magister in sacra pagina* would have likely spanned at least parts of three separate days.²⁹ The respective

²⁶ H. Denifle and E. Chatelain, *Chartularium universitatis Parisiensis* (Paris: Ex typis fratrum Delalain, 1889–1897). On the contents of the *Chartularium* on magisterial inception ceremonies, Spatz writes: “The two collections of statutes concerning the faculty are edited in the *Chartularium universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. 2; namely, document no. 1188 dating from a period after 1334 and before 1366, and document no. 1189 containing statutes from 1366 and from around 1383–89. Both documents are very succinct and assume a great deal of knowledge of traditional practices” (“*Principia*,” 26). I rely on Spatz’s interpretation of the statutes in what follows.

²⁷ Spatz, “*Principia*,” 3.

²⁸ Spatz and Athanasius Sulavik have undertaken invaluable investigations of published and unpublished *principia* from the period in question in order to shed light on the various components of magisterial inception ceremonies in theology in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The following summary relies heavily on their research. See Spatz, “*Principia*,” as well as her “Evidence of Inception Ceremonies in the Twelfth Century Schools of Paris,” in *History of Universities*, vol. 13, ed. Peter Denley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 6; Spatz, “Imagery in University Inception Sermons,” in *Medieval Sermons and Society: Cloister, City, University*, ed. J. Hamesse, B. M. Kienzle, D. L. Soudt, and A. T. Thayer (Louvain: Louvain-La-Neuve, 1998), 329–342; Athanasius Sulavik, “*Principia* and *Introitus* in Thirteenth Century Christian Biblical Exegesis with Related Texts,” in *La Bibbia del XIII Secolo: Storia del Testo, Storia dell’Esegesi*, ed. Giuseppe Cremonesi and Francesco Santi (Firenze: Sismel, 2004), 269–321; and Sulavik, “An Unedited *Principium Biblicum* Attributed to Petrus de Scala, O. P.,” *Angelicum* 79 (2002): 87–126.

²⁹ For concise summaries of what inception ceremonies would likely have included in the thirteenth century, see Spatz, “Evidence of Inception Ceremonies,” 6–7, and “Imagery in University Inception Sermons,” 331. As Spatz clarifies in her dissertation, it is important to note that “actual ceremonies [in the thirteenth century] sometimes deviated from the prescribed guidelines for inception ceremonies described in the fourteenth century statutes. In the early thirteenth century the ceremony was simpler, omitting the three-day sequence of formalities. Moreover, the precise terminology given in the statutes was not always adhered to: in texts of thirteenth century inception speeches often the discourses delivered by the new master were simply referred to by the generic term of *principium*, *sermo*, *lectio*, or *introitus*, rather than *reptitio* or *resumptio*. In

elements of thirteenth-century Parisian magisterial inception ceremonies could take place on any *dies legibilis*, which eliminated the long summer break (June 28–September 15), holy days, and days that had already been scheduled for other inceptions.³⁰ We can infer from the Papal correspondence mentioned above that all of the components of Thomas's own inception ceremony took place sometime between March 3 and June 17 of 1256.³¹ The inception ceremony would begin with *vesperies*, an evening service that included two disputations on questions of the incepting student's own choosing. The first was a general disputation between a senior master and the bachelors present in the audience. The second disputation took place between the incepting student and his master and was left unresolved. Following the disputations, the *vesperies* concluded with the master of the incepting student commending his pupil in a speech.³²

On the following morning at half tierce (just before 9:00 AM), classes were excused for a formal ceremony in which the incepting student received the teaching biretta from the presiding master and offered a lecture or sermon commending Sacred Scripture or the discipline of *Sacra doctrina*.³³ This speech was known as the *principium in aula* or simply *aula*, so named because it took place in the great hall (*aula*) of the university.³⁴ Thirteenth-century *principia in aula* typically began "with a brief passage from Scripture, a *prothema*, to which they refer repeatedly in what follows. . . . The scriptural quotation provides a structural basis from the *principium*."³⁵ The *aula* was to be brief, to the

addition, the term *principium* is often used ambiguously in the sources, referring to the ceremony and/or to the candidates discourse" ("*Principia*," 6). For more on the terminology in inception ceremonies in the thirteenth century, see Sulavik, "*Principia* and *Introitus*," 270, and "An Unedited *Principium*," 90–91.

³⁰ Spatz, "*Principia*," 40.

³¹ Torrell, *Saint Thomas*, 51; Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, 96–97.

³² My summary of the elements of the *vesperies* is dependent upon Spatz, "*Principia*," 40–42.

³³ *Ibid.*, 43.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 43–44. For a discussion of the *prothema* in medieval sermons, see Louis-Jacques Bataillon, "Approaches to the Study of Medieval Sermons," in *La prédication au XIIIe siècle en France et Italie* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1993), I, 28–29.

³⁵ Spatz, "*Principia*," 130. Sulavik prefers the term "*thema*" and offers a nice concise summary of the purpose of this Scripture verse: "the scripture scholar, like the preacher, had to select a suitable *thema*—meaning not a topic, but a verse of Scripture—as an interpretive key for establishing the sequence of the books of Scripture. Authors differed in their elaboration of the *thema*: some used it extensively, others hardly at all. The selection of a proper biblical

point, and partially open-ended.³⁶ We will discuss the general characteristics of the *principium in aula* and the uniqueness of Thomas's own *aula* speech below.³⁷

At the conclusion of the ceremonial components of the *vesperies* and the *aula*, the incepting student technically became a "fully-fledged" master. As James Weisheipl notes, however, "he was obligated to complement his inception by certain functions proper to his state as master."³⁸ On the first *dies legibilis* following his *aula*, the new master was expected to conclude his *principium in aula* speech and resolve the second and third disputations of his inception ceremony.³⁹ This final phase was appropriately called the *resumptio* or *reassumptio*. At this resumption, the new master gave a sermon that completed his *aula* and often contained a further commendation of Sacred Scripture. As Athanasius Sulavik notes, the new master's first sermon, "had to offer a simple, coherent structure and rationale for the ordering of the books of the Bible, one which students could easily commit to memory."⁴⁰ Following Spatz, we will refer to this discourse as a resumption *principium*.⁴¹

Though it is certain that Thomas would have gone through the normal procedures for inception as a master—and thus would have given a *principium in aula* and a resumption *principium*—modern scholarship had no evidence of these sermons until the beginning of

thema upon which to order the books of the Bible was more often than not a personal choice" (Sulavik, "*Principia* and *Introitus*," 277). See also Aquinas (ed. Bataillon), *Sermones*, 137.

³⁶ Spatz, "*Principia*," 44–45.

³⁷ Following the *principium in aula*, the master would participate in two more "elaborate" disputations on questions of his choosing. These final disputations involved the new master, his master, the chancellor of the university, and other junior and senior faculty members. The incepting master was expected to offer a magisterial resolution to the third question, but the fourth question would be left open-ended. Finally, the official inception ceremony would end with the new master genuflecting before the high altar and then being led home by the masters of his own order (ibid., 45).

³⁸ Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, 100.

³⁹ As Spatz notes, "According to the Bolognese statutes the new master was not to leave town before he gave his first lecture" ("*Principia*," 46).

⁴⁰ Sulavik, "An Unedited *Principium*," 93. "The central characteristic all these *resumption principia* share," Spatz explains, "is a meticulous division of the Old and New Testaments into their component books. This forms the core of all the resumption lectures, and so apparently was required or at least expected of all incoming masters" ("*Principia*," 152).

⁴¹ Spatz, "*Principia*," 145.

the twentieth century. In 1912, Francesco Salvatore published two of Thomas's sermons found in a sermon collection belonging to one of Thomas's students, Remigio de'Girolami.⁴² Girolami was *doctor* at the Dominican *studium generale* in Florence from his licensure by the Pope in 1305 until his death in 1319. The manuscript collection, labeled by Remigio as *Prologi super bibliam*, contains sixteen introductory lectures on the entire Bible and twenty introductions to individual books of Scripture. M. Michèle Mulchahey describes the contents of this collection as "a cycle of *principium* lectures from a Dominican *studium generale*."⁴³ Among the contents of the collection are two documents entitled *Sermo I. fratris Thome* and *Sermo II. fratris Thome*, respectively.⁴⁴ When the two *Sermones fratris Thome* were discovered, scholars immediately recognized *Sermo I* as Thomas's *principium in aula*.

This first sermon is an extended metaphorical interpretation of Ps 104:13: "You water the hills from your upper rooms, the earth is sated with the fruit of your works" (*Rigans montes de superioribus suis de fructu operum tuorum satiabitur terra*).⁴⁵ Celebrated renaissance painter Fra Angelico (1395–1455) depicts Thomas holding the first inaugural lecture in two separate works, the San Domenico Altarpiece (1420) and the San Pietro Martire Altarpiece (1427/28).⁴⁶ The former portrays

⁴² Francesco Salvatore, *Due sermoni inediti: di S. Tommaso D'Aquino* (Rome: Tipografia Editrice Nazionale, 1912).

⁴³ Marian Michèle Mulchahey, "First the Bow Is Bent in Study . . .": *Dominican Education Before 1350* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1998), 390–396, at 392.

⁴⁴ Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Conv. soppr. G.4.936. The first sermon, "*Rigans montes superioribus*," is found in fols. 268va–269va, and the second, "*Hic est liber*," in fols. 269va–270vb. As Sulavik notes, "*Rigans montes* has been identified in one other manuscript: München, Statbibl., Clm. 13501, ff. 10vb–11rb; cf. H. V. Schooner, *Codices manuscripti* . . . , t. II, p. 387 [1807]. *Hic est liber* has been identified in two manuscripts: London, British Museum, Harley 2808, ff. 429ra–430vb; cf. H. V. Schooner, *idem*, p. 239[1505]; and Venezia Biblioteca dei PP. Redentoristi 4 ff. 46va–47va" ("*Principia* and *Introitus*," 273n16).

⁴⁵ This was actually Ps 103 in the numbering of the Psalms in Thomas's day. The English translations of Thomas's *principia* are from McInerney, "The Inaugural Lectures," 13. The Latin text is from the Marietti edition of Thomas's works. All other references to English and Latin of Thomas's *principia* refer to these works, respectively.

⁴⁶ For the San Domenico Altarpiece, see <http://www.wga.hu/art/a/angelico/00/10fieso2.jpg> or John T. Spike, *Fra Angelico* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1997), 84–85 and 200–202. For the San Pietro Martire Altarpiece, see http://www.wga.hu/art/a/angelico/12/00_peter.jpg or Spike, *Fra Angelico*, 86–91, 230.

Thomas and Barnabas to the left of the Madonna with child, with Dominic and Peter Martyr on the right; the latter depicts the Madonna and child flanked by Dominic and John the Baptist on the left and Peter Martyr and Thomas the on the right. In both Thomas is holding a document with the words *Rigans montes de superioribus suis* clearly visible.

The story of Thomas's choice of Ps 104:13 as the *protheme* of his *principium in aula* is well known and famous. Given the upheaval of the mendicant controversy and the weighty responsibilities of the *magister in sacra pagina*, Thomas was distraught upon hearing that he was to incept. Shortly after learning of his new vocational assignment, he prayed fervently, beseeching God to grant him insight into the Scripture he should choose for the *protheme* of his inaugural lecture. When he fell asleep, he had a dream in which a distinguished Dominican—some have suggested that it was Dominic himself—visited him and told him to choose Ps 104:13.⁴⁷ Thomas's *principium in aula* is the only extant thirteenth-century *principium* that contains this passage as its *protheme*.

As Spatz has shown, while the fourteenth-century *Chartularium* required the *principium in aula* to be a commendation of Scripture, many thirteenth-century examples of these inaugural speeches only commend Scripture in passing. Many of the examples of the *prinipia* Spatz examines focus more on the subject matter of theology/*Sacra doctrina* and its distinction from other sciences, and many suggest the qualities necessary in good teachers and students of theology.⁴⁸ In his *aula*, Thomas focuses on both the subject matter of theology and the virtues needed for teaching and studying it. More importantly, however, Thomas sets both of these considerations in relation to the purpose of theological study, and thus the purpose of Sacred Scripture itself. We will discuss the theological import of Thomas's *aula* presently, but we must say something more about *Sermo II* first.

For a long time many scholars of Thomas's work have held that *Sermo II* was Thomas's inception speech when he became a *cursor biblicus*.⁴⁹ In 1974, Weisheipl pointed out that there was no evidence for this

⁴⁷ Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, 96. See also Torrell, *Saint Thomas*, 50–51, and Spatz, "Principia," 67–68.

⁴⁸ See Spatz, "Principia," 144–145 and 170–209.

⁴⁹ Dahan identifies *Hic est liber* as Thomas's bachelor *principium* even as late as 1999; see Dahan, *l'Exégèse chrétienne de la Bible en Occident médiévale* (Paris: Cerf, 1999), 406. For an early and substantive defense of this perspective, see Mandonnet, "Chronologie des écrits scripturaires," 489–519, and *S. Thomae Aquinatis opuscula omnia*, 4:481.

scholarly consensus.⁵⁰ It is much more likely that *Sermo II* is Thomas's resumption *principium* for a number of reasons.⁵¹ Weisheipl argues that the numbering and order of these two works in the Florence manuscript suggests that *Sermo II* was given after *Sermo I*.⁵² Because the resumption *principium* was supposed to complete the *principium in aula*, we would expect Thomas's resumption *principium* to fulfill this exigency. As Torrell argues, *Sermo II* clearly complements and extends *Sermo I*.⁵³ Spatz and Sulavik have shown that the key characteristics of thirteenth-century resumption *principia* are the commendation and division of Sacred Scripture, and *Sermo II* does precisely this.⁵⁴ It begins with fuller commendation of Scripture than Thomas gives in his *principium in aula* and concludes with a detailed consideration of the different divisions of Scripture and their functions in Scripture's overall purpose. One final clue provides support for the hypothesis that *Sermo II* is Thomas's resumption *principium*: *Sermo II* has Bar 4:1 as its *protheme*: "This is the book of the commandments of God, and the law that is forever. All that keep it shall come to life: but they that have forsaken it, to death" (*Hic liber mandatorum Dei et lex quae est in aeternum omnes qui tenenteam ad vitam qui autem dereliquer in team in mortem*).⁵⁵ While Thomas chose an original *protheme* for his *principium in aula*, *Sermo II* uses the *protheme* that John de La Rochelle used in his own resumption *principium* in 1238.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ See Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, 104. Weisheipl suggests that there is no evidence that, given their lowly status, bachelors of the Bible were required to give *principia* lectures. While Spatz has shown that the statutes of the *Chartularium* from the fourteenth century required incepting bachelors of the Bible to give inception speeches, there is still good reason to believe that *Sermo II* is Thomas's resumption *principium*. On the duties of bachelors and *cursores* of the Bible, see Spatz, "Principia," 29–34. For Spatz's argument that *Sermo II* is Thomas's resumption *principium*, see *ibid.*, 68.

⁵¹ See Torrell, *Saint Thomas*, 28.

⁵² Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, 103.

⁵³ Torrell, *Saint Thomas*, 51; see also Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, 104.

⁵⁴ "The central characteristic all these *resumption principia* share is a meticulous division of the Old and New Testaments into their component books. This forms the core of all the resumption lectures, and so apparently was required or at least expected of all incoming masters" (Spatz, "Principia," 152); see also Sulavik, "Principia and Introitus," 276.

⁵⁵ McNerny, "The Inaugural Lectures," 5.

⁵⁶ See Spatz, "Principia," 68 and 146–147. On John of La Rochelle's *principia*, see *ibid.*, 63–65. Sulavik suggests the possibility that Thomas chose Baruch 4:1 because he had read Hugh of St. Cher's *postilla* on Baruch (completed by 1236), wherein Hugh suggests this verse as an ideal introduction to the

It is almost certain that *Sermo I* is Thomas's *principium in aula* and extremely likely that *Sermo II* is his resumption *principium*. He would have delivered the first on the morning of his formal ceremonial inception as *magister in sacra pagina*, sometime in the Spring of 1256, and the second on the following *dies legibilis*, probably the very next day.⁵⁷ The very fact that we have any copies of Thomas's inaugural lectures attests to their importance and impact. As Mulchahey observes, "The primacy of place Remigio de'Girolami gives to these two inaugural lectures in his notebook, positioning them before his own introductions to the individual books of the Bible, reveals not only a respect for Thomas' organization of material but Remigio's conceptualization of his own work. These are his inaugural lectures, too."⁵⁸ The two works have an organic unity and together display Thomas's fundamental pedagogical and theological commitments at the outset of his inception as *magister in sacra pagina*. With our analysis of the historical context of Thomas's *principia* complete, we now proceed to an examination of their theological import and relevance for his understanding of the nature and purpose of Scripture and the principles of Christian scriptural hermeneutics.

Theological Content and Implications of the *Principia*

Thomas's inaugural lectures are not solely ceremonial academic exercises. As Ralph McInerny suggests, Thomas was "at the very height of his powers" when he composed and delivered the *principia*.⁵⁹ This judgment alone, if true, should compel us to give the *principia* sustained and careful attention. While Thomas does not offer a treatise on theoretical hermeneutics in the *principia*, his commendation of and division of Scripture in these brief works has profound importance for his broader

whole of Scripture; see "Hugh of St. Cher's Postill on the book of Baruch: The Work of a Medieval Compiler or Biblical Exegete?" in *Hugues de St. Cher (†1236): bibliste et théologien*, eds. Louis-Jacques Bataillon, Gilbert Dahan, and Pierre-Marie Gy (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 155–171, at 162.

⁵⁷ Spatz, "Evidence of Inception Ceremonies," 6–7; Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, 100. Levering, following Torrell, dates Thomas's resumption *principium* sometime in September 1256, but this seems highly unlikely, given the research of Spatz (see Levering "Ordering Wisdom," 80n2, and Torrell, *Saint Thomas*, 53). In his summaries of Thomas's works, Torrell does note later that Thomas would have given the resumption *principium* on the first *dies legibilis* following his *aula* ceremony (ibid., 338). The confusion can perhaps be traced to the work of Mandonnet, see note 12 above.

⁵⁸ Mulchahey, "*First the Bow is Bent*," 392.

⁵⁹ McInerny, "Introduction," in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*, 4.

hermeneutical and theological reflection for at least two major reasons. First, as Spatz argues, the *principia* “reveal an individual’s attitudes and beliefs about his field of academic specialization.”⁶⁰ Thomas’s *principia* give us an invaluable insight into what he thought his role as *magister in sacra pagina* entailed. His *principia in aula* lays out his understanding of the very nature and purpose of theology and his own role as a teacher of Sacred Scripture. Second, Thomas’s macroscopic division of Scripture in his resumption *principium* provides a heuristic context for all of his subsequent extant commentaries on individual books of Scripture and displays Thomas’s understanding of the unique role and purpose of scriptural interpretation in the life of faith.

Thomas offers a clear and concise account of the nature of theological reflection in his *principium in aula*. We recall the *prothème* of this first magisterial lecture: “You water the hills from your upper rooms, the earth is sated with the fruit of your works” (Ps 104:13). He uses this text to offer an account of the outpouring of God’s truth from the heights down onto all of those below, and the role that teachers have in this Dionysian outpouring. Thomas treats the dissemination of the truth of God with reference to four considerations: “the *height* of spiritual doctrine; the *dignity* of those who teach it; the *condition* of the listeners; and the *order* of communicating.”⁶¹ He first notes that the height of *sacra doctrina* derives from its origin in God, the subtlety of its content, and the sublimity of its end—namely the participation of humans in eternal life. The loftiness of sacred doctrine, Thomas goes on to explain, demands that its teachers possess a certain dignity befitting its subject matter. The dignity of teaching entails that the teacher renounce selfish pursuits, remain open to and receptive of divine splendor, and be ready to defend the faith against heresies. These grave responsibilities are an occasion of rejoicing for the teacher because of the eminence of his life. Thomas utilizes his discussion of the dignity of teaching to highlight the three responsibilities of the Parisian theology faculty first promulgated by Peter Cantor and later made official in university statutes.⁶² Invoking Ti 1:9, Thomas argues that teachers must be prepared to teach, dispute, and preach (*legere, disputare, et praedicare*).⁶³

He argues that the lowliness of the earth indicates the disposition required of those who hear the teaching of *sacra doctrina*. “[H]umility is

⁶⁰ Spatz, “*Principia*,” 1.

⁶¹ McNerny, “The Inaugural Lectures,” 13.

⁶² Torrell, *Saint Thomas*, 54.

⁶³ McNerny, “The Inaugural Lectures,” 15. On these three roles and their scriptural character, see Torrell, *Saint Thomas*, 54–74.

required of them with respect to the learning that comes from listening . . . Rectitude of the senses with respect to the judgment of what is heard . . . But fruitfulness in discovery, by which from a few things heard, the good listener pronounces many things."⁶⁴ Thomas concludes his treatment of the teaching responsibilities of a *magister* by explaining the process of communicating *sacra doctrina*. First, the indication of the "upper mountains" in Ps 104:13 shows that "not everything that is contained in divine wisdom can be grasped by the minds of the teachers."⁶⁵ The teacher must take stock of this fact, and restrict himself to teaching only what he knows of the divine mysteries. Second, Thomas argues that Ps 104:13 reveals the hierarchical dimensions of the overflow of wisdom from on high. God possesses wisdom intrinsically and naturally; teachers share in God's wisdom abundantly; and students, finally, participate in wisdom sufficiently. Third and last, Thomas draws a distinction between God's direct communication of wisdom and the secondary communication of wisdom achieved by teachers. He declares that "teachers do not communicate wisdom except as ministers. Hence the fruits of the mountains are not attributed to them, but to the divine works."⁶⁶ No one, Thomas suggests, is naturally sufficient for the task of the ministry of the wisdom of God. "Let us pray," he concludes after invoking Jas 1:5, "that Christ will grant it to us, Amen."⁶⁷

Thomas invokes the authority of Scripture at least 40 times in this brief work of 1,645 words to demonstrate the purpose of theological study and teaching. As he indicates, the whole work of theological teaching has as its *telos* the dissemination of and participation in the wisdom of God. For Thomas, the study and teaching of Sacred Scripture cannot have any other goal. Scripture is divine pedagogy; God leads the one who studies it by the hand (*manuductio*) into the mysteries of God's very being.⁶⁸ The study of Scripture could not be an end in itself for Thomas; it was a means to the higher goal of participation in the divine life. As we will see, Thomas's division of Sacred Scripture in his resumption *principium* offers further support for this conclusion.

Nancy Spatz raises a key question concerning the function of the division of Scripture in resumption *principium*: What purpose(s) does this division serve? She offers two useful suggestions in response. The division of the text allowed the incepting master to demonstrate his

⁶⁴ McNerny, "The Inaugural Lectures," 16.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ See Candler, *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction*, passim.

mastery of Scripture; alternatively, the division could have functioned as an introduction to the incepting master's first series of magisterial lectures on Scripture.⁶⁹ Both of these are reasonable hypotheses, but consideration on the relationship between Thomas's *aula* and resumption *principia* suggests that we should say more. As we noted above, Thomas's *aula* treats the loftiness of *sacra doctrina*, the eminence and responsibilities of its teachers, the humility required of its students, and finally the order of its dissemination. The whole of *sacra doctrina* has the spiritual goal of facilitating creaturely participation in the wisdom of God. We noted that Thomas's use of biblical passages in the *aula* shows that Sacred Scripture *itself* and the study of Sacred Scripture are ordered towards this *telos*. The division of Scripture undoubtedly served to demonstrate the facility of the incepting master and offered pedagogical guidance for his subsequent lectures; it simultaneously served a spiritual and theological purpose as well. A consideration of the theological character of the scholastic hermeneutical practice of *divisio textus* in medieval biblical commentaries will illustrate this point.

In the past two decades, John Boyle has offered a number of helpful treatments of Thomas's employment of the *divisio textus* in his biblical commentaries.⁷⁰ As Boyle explains, the *divisio textus* "is an interpretive technique whose idea is rather simple. Starting with the text as a whole, one articulates a principle theme, in the light of which one divides and subdivides the text into increasingly smaller units, often down to the individual words."⁷¹ This hermeneutic tactic originated sometime in

⁶⁹ Spatz, "*Principia*," 152. Sulavik offers a similar account: "The biblical lector had to offer a simple, coherent structure and rationale for the ordering of the books of the Bible, one that students could easily commit to memory. In addition to the didactic concerns, scriptural exegetes were concerned with defining the stylistic complexity of each sacred book" ("An Unedited *Principium*," 93).

⁷⁰ See John Boyle, "Authorial Intention and the *Divisio Textus*," in Dauphinais and Levering, *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas*, 3–8; Boyle, "The Theological Character of the Scholastic 'Division of the Text' with Particular Reference to the Commentaries of St. Thomas Aquinas," in *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, eds. Jane McAuliffe, Barry Walfish, and Joseph Goering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 276–283; and Boyle, "On the Relation of St. Thomas's Commentary on Romans to the *Summa Theologiae*," in Dauphinais and Levering, *Reading Romans with St. Thomas Aquinas*, 75–82. See also Margherita Maria Rossi, "La 'divisio textus' nei commenti scritturistici di S. Tommaso d'Aquino: un procedimento solo esegetico?" *Angelicum* 71 (1994): 537–548.

⁷¹ Boyle, "The Theological Character," 276.

the early thirteenth century, and Albert, Thomas, Hugh of St. Cher, and Bonaventure all made expert use of it.⁷² Boyle argues that the *divisio textus* has three essential characteristics:

First, the interpreter articulates a theme that provides a conceptual unity to the text and the commentary as a whole. Second, the division penetrates at least to the level of verse; it does not simply articulate large blocks of the text. And third, because the division begins with the whole and then continues through progressive subdivisions, every verse stands in an articulated relation not only with the whole but ultimately with every other part, division and verse of the text.⁷³

As Thomas's commentaries on Aristotle and his own *divisio* of the *Summa Theologiae* demonstrate, its use was not restricted to sacred Scripture.⁷⁴ The existence of countless works of late medieval exegesis that do not utilize the *divisio textus*—the *Catena Aurea* and biblical glosses, for instance—demonstrates that this hermeneutical technique was not the only means of engaging the text of Scripture.⁷⁵ It nevertheless became a significant and useful tool in the medieval hermeneutical toolbox. As Boyle argues, the *divisio* has the principle function of displaying the unity of the text under consideration.⁷⁶ Though the technique may appear arbitrary and forced to modern interpreters, the *divisio textus* allowed scholastic commentators to provide a comprehensive synthetic account of the conceptual unity of the works they interpreted. The scholastics employed the *divisio* to display the intrinsic interconnectedness of all of the parts of a work within the larger whole.⁷⁷

From a theological perspective, the *divisio textus* enabled medieval commentators to emphasize the unity and overarching purpose of individual books of Scripture. Thomas, for instance, insists that the Gospel of John has as its goal the communication of the divinity of Christ. His *divisio* of the Gospel of John bears this out.⁷⁸ Every verse builds on what has come before, and together, down to the last word,

⁷² Ibid., 277.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ See *ibid.* and Rossi, "La 'divisio textus,'" 540–541.

⁷⁸ Boyle, "The Theological Character," 281–282.

the details of John's gospel serve the goal of manifesting Christ's deity, As Boyle explains:

The division of the text provides a sustained structural analysis by which the parts of the Gospel stand in relation both to the whole and to each other. No verse stands in isolation, but rather each stands in a rich and organic set of relations to the rest of the Gospel. The division maintains the integrity of the Gospel in the midst of careful, detailed, and often word for word interpretation.⁷⁹

Thomas also employs the *divisio* technique in his commentary on Romans. For him, Paul's epistle to the Romans treats the grace of Christ as it is manifest in the mystical body of the Church in a general way.⁸⁰ His division of the text relates all of the component parts of the letter to this broader purpose.⁸¹ Thomas's notion of authorial intention is operative in both of these examples. It is important to note that he does not think of authorial intention in modern terms. As Boyle notes, for Thomas, "intention, to intend, is an act of the will insofar as the will moves to some end or goal, embracing not only the willing of that end, but also the willing of those things that are ordered to that end [*Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 12, a.1, ad 4.]. When Thomas speaks of the 'intention of the author,' it is precisely in this way."⁸² Thomas utilizes the *divisio textus* to demonstrate how the manifold component parts of the various biblical books function reciprocally in their elaboration of the intention of the divine author. Ultimately, this offers further support for the thesis that Thomas allows for plurality within the literal sense of Scripture.⁸³ All possible true and orthodox meanings are valid literal meanings of a given passage of Sacred Scripture provided that they serve the intentions of the Triune God, the divine author.⁸⁴

Boyle suggests that a scholastic *divisio textus* of the entirety of Scrip-

⁷⁹ Boyle, "Authorial Intention," 7–8.

⁸⁰ See the prologue in Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans*, trans. F. R. Larcher, eds. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón, Latin/English Editions of the Works of St. Thomas Aquinas, Biblical Commentaries 37 (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), 4–5.

⁸¹ Boyle, "On the Relation," 81–82.

⁸² Boyle, "Authorial Intention," 7.

⁸³ See Johnson, "Another Look at the Literal Sense," and Fowl, "The Importance."

⁸⁴ So Boyle, "Authorial Intention," 6.

ture is possible, but he knows of no such example.⁸⁵ He mentions Thomas's resumption *principium* in a note, but seems not to have recognized the reach of Thomas's division of Scripture in the second inaugural lecture.⁸⁶ While Thomas mentions the purpose of the Pauline epistles (including Hebrews) in his resumption *principium*, he does not offer in this sermon an account of the purposes of the different books included in the Pauline corpus. The prologue to Thomas's commentary on Romans, however, contains just such an account of the functional division of the letters of Paul. Franklin T. Harkins, following Thomas Prügl, suggests that the omission of the *divisio* of the Pauline epistles from Thomas's resumption *principium* may be evidence that Thomas intended to lecture on Paul's letters immediately following his formal inception.⁸⁷ If we insert Thomas's division of the Pauline epistles from the Romans commentary into Thomas's resumption *principium*, the resulting *divisio* serves as a heuristic of the entirety of the canon of Scripture. When these two works are combined, Thomas articulates the division and relationships between the testaments, the divisions of their component parts, and the specific themes of each individual book.⁸⁸ Thomas's division of the whole of Scripture in his resumption *principium* does not exhibit the exact "essential characteristics" that Boyle ascribes to the *divisio textus*, but it nevertheless serves as the comprehensive framework that informed Thomas's understanding of the nature and purpose of Sacred Scripture.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ "[I]t is notable that the effort to articulate the intrinsic conceptual unity of the text extended beyond individual biblical books. Saint Thomas subjects the corpus of the epistles of Saint Paul as a whole to a division of the text. . . . In theory at least, the whole of scripture could be subject to such a division. I know of no one who actually accomplished such a division; nonetheless, we have general divisions of the Old Testament and the New Testament, which suggest just such a way of thinking about the whole, in principle at least, if not in practice. In this case the unity is in no way based upon a unifying human author but solely upon the unifying divine author" (Boyle, "The Theological Character," 278).

⁸⁶ According to Boyle, Thomas (as well as John of La Rochelle) gives us only "general divisions of the Old Testament and the New Testament" ("The Theological Character," 278 and 282n7). Cf., however, the judgment of Jeremy Holmes, who explicitly states that "Thomas gave a *divisio textus* for all of Scripture" in his resumption *principium*; see his "Aquinas' *Lectura in Matthaeum*," in Weinandy, Keating, and Yocum, *Aquinas on Scripture*, at 77.

⁸⁷ See Harkins, "*Docuit excellentissimae divinitatis mysteria*," 240n22, and Prügl, "Thomas Aquinas," 414n68.

⁸⁸ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans*, 4–5.

⁸⁹ For an excellent outline of Thomas's division of the books in his resumption

A comparison between the theological dimensions of the *divisio textus* in Thomas's commentaries and the partitions Thomas ascribes to Scripture in his resumption *principium* is thus instructive for multiple reasons. The first and most obvious reason is that Thomas does not appear to abandon the various "divine intentions" he assigns to the various books of Scripture in his resumption *principium*, but instead reiterates them in subsequent biblical commentaries. As noted above, Thomas organizes the *divisio textus* of his commentary on the Gospel of John around the presupposition that John teaches the divinity of Christ. The judgment that John teaches the divinity of Christ appears first in his resumption *principium*. During his second regency in Paris, from 1268 to 1272, Thomas began his *Lectura in Matthaum* by noting that Matthew's purpose is to demonstrate the humanity of Christ in his Incarnation; this judgment appears over a decade earlier in his resumption *principium*.⁹⁰ Thomas's literal commentary on Job may be the only counter-example to Thomas's general practice. In his resumption *principium*, he argues that the purpose of Job is to identify and root out falsehood. In his commentary on Job, he argues that the sole purpose of Job is to demonstrate divine providence. On this discrepancy, it may be noteworthy that the commentary on Job is one of only two commentaries that Thomas produced after his inaugural lectures in which he does not offer a *divisio textus* (the other being the *Catena aurea*).

The second reason the comparison is instructive is the shared emphasis on the unity of individual books of Scripture evident in the *divisio textus* and Thomas's emphasis on the unity of Sacred Scripture in his resumption *principium*. Before Thomas offers his account of the divisions of Sacred Scripture in his resumption *principium*, he commends Sacred Scripture for three reasons: the authority with which it charges, the eternal truth with which it instructs, and finally the usefulness with which it entices. Scripture's authority derives first from its origin in

principium that includes his discussion (in the prologue to Romans) of the different purposes of each of the Pauline letters, see Chrysostum Baer, "Translator's Introduction," in Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. and trans. Chrysostum Baer, pref. Ralph McInerney (South Bend, IN: Augustine's Press, 2006), 3.

⁹⁰ The date of Thomas's *Lectura in Matthaum* is contested, but Holmes offers a persuasive argument for locating it during Thomas's second regency in Paris. ("Aquinas's *Lectura in Matthaum*," esp. 96–97). For Holmes's helpful comments on the relationship between Thomas's understanding of the purpose of Matthew expressed in the *Lectura* and in his resumption *principia* respectively, see *ibid.*, 77–79.

God, second from the necessity by which it is imposed, and finally from the uniformity of its sayings. Thomas's insistence on the singularity of the message of Sacred Scripture is worth quoting in full.

[Scripture] is shown to be efficacious by *the uniformity of its sayings, because all who teach the sacred doctrine teach the same thing.* 1 Cor 15:11: 'Whether then it is I or they, so we preach, and so you have believed.' And this is necessary because they all had one teacher. Mt 23:8: 'Your teacher is one.' And they had one spirit, 'Have we not walked in the same spirit?' and one love from above, 'Now the multitude of believers were of one heart and one soul' (Acts 4:32). Therefore, as a sign of the uniformity of doctrine, it says significantly, 'This is the book.'⁹¹

After touching upon the eternity of the truth of Sacred Scripture, Thomas expounds its usefulness. Scripture is exceedingly profitable because all who keep to its truth will come to experience eternal life. Sacred Scripture disposes its readers to the life of grace, enables its readers to embody the life of justice through good works, and leads its readers to the life of glory in God.

Thomas proceeds to offer a comprehensive account of the way the various parts of Sacred Scripture are directed towards *the single purpose* of leading its readers to participation in the life of grace, justice, and ultimately glory. Thomas first distinguishes and relates the Old and New Testaments. The former offers divine commandments for obedience, and the latter offers the aid necessary for such obedience (grace). Thomas argues that the different parts of the Old Testament command obedience in distinct ways: the Law commands by way of precept; the Prophets (classical, major, and minor) command by way of proclamation; and the Writings (which include the Apocrypha) command by way of fatherly instruction. Thomas then differentiates the ways the parts of the New Testament provide the grace necessary for the obedience required by the Law: the Gospels demonstrate and proclaim the origins of grace in Christ; Paul's epistles aid by expounding the power of grace; and finally the Catholic Epistles, Acts, and Revelation aid by displaying the exercise of the virtues of grace.⁹² For Thomas, Scripture is everywhere and always unified in its purpose and meaning; it perpet-

⁹¹ McNerny, "The Inaugural Lectures," 6 (emphasis mine).

⁹² See Baer, "Translator's Introduction," 1–3; Levering, "Ordering Wisdom," 81–87; and Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, 103–104.

ually directs its readers and hearers to participate in divine beatitude through admonition and through the aid of grace.

In her landmark work *The Bible in the Middle Ages*, Beryl Smalley commended Thomas for his emphasis on the importance of literal exegesis and the sole sufficiency of the literal meaning of Scripture as the foundation of authentic doctrine (see *ST* I, q. 1, aa. 9–10).⁹³ As Boyle notes, however, Smalley later tempered her enthusiasm for Thomas's attentiveness to the letter after carefully examining Thomas's Scriptural commentaries.⁹⁴ Boyle's examination of the *divisio textus* already helps to demonstrate the fundamentally theological character of Thomas's exegesis of the literal sense. Our examination of Thomas's *principium* confirms and offers further support for Boyle's thesis. Ultimately, a careful examination of Thomas's *principium in aula* and resumption *principium* demonstrates the evangelical character of even his theology of Scripture. All of Scripture is ordered towards the reader's/hearer's participation in the wisdom of God. Boyle's judgment on the theological purpose of the *divisio textus* is apropos for our investigation of Thomas's understanding of the nature of Scripture and the nature of Christian hermeneutics. "For Thomas," says Boyle, "the purpose of Scripture is to make known those truths necessary for salvation. Scripture is ordered to an end. The divine intention is to bring the rational creature into union with Himself, but as always in ways that are accommodated to the reality of that creature."⁹⁵

Thomas's fundamental hermeneutical principles all emerge from his conviction of the nature and purpose of Scripture in the salvific work of the Triune God. Our examination of Thomas's *principia* demonstrates that these fundamental presuppositions about the nature and purpose of Scripture and the principles of Christian exegesis were in place at the very beginning of his career as *magister in sacra pagina*.

Conclusion

As I have noted above, the scholarly renewal of interest in the scriptural dimensions of Thomas's work is a salutary and long-overdue development. In this essay, I have shown the relevance of Thomas's *principium in aula* and resumption *principium* for these contemporary investigations of

⁹³ See Beryl Smalley, *The Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), xv–xvi.

⁹⁴ Boyle, "Authorial Intention," 3. See also Beryl Smalley, *The Gospels in the Schools, c. 1100–c. 1280* (London: Hambledon, 1985), 265–266.

⁹⁵ Boyle, "Authorial Intention," 6.

the scriptural character of Thomas's work. The *principia* display Thomas's broader understanding of the nature and purpose of Scripture and the contours of his theological hermeneutic. The *principia* exhibit the foundational convictions Thomas held at the outset of his magisterial academic career. Setting Thomas's *principia* in their historical contexts helps to clear up some misconceptions in previous scholarship and demonstrates the foundational nature of these early works for Thomas's later Scripture commentaries. Thomas's *principium in aula* offers an account of the theological task of *sacra doctrina*, the roles of teachers and students, and the ordering of the overflow of divine wisdom. In doing so, it displays the fundamentally evangelical context of Thomas's theological and scriptural study. All of Thomas's work, even his philosophy, must be seen against the backdrop of the evangelical purpose of participating in and facilitating the participation of others in the wisdom of God. Thomas's division of the parts of Scripture in his resumption *principium* demonstrates his commitment to the unity of Scripture in both its nature and purpose. Scripture itself facilitates the reader's/hearer's participation in the wisdom and life of the Triune God.

For Thomas, the pastoral epistles demonstrate God's instructions for "the prelates of the Church, both spiritual and temporal."⁹⁶ While Thomas was not a prelate himself, his *principia* show how he took Paul's words in 2 Timothy to heart: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining ["dividing," KJV] the word of truth" (2 Tm 2:15, NRSV). Thomas's *principia* thus display his convictions about the fundamental nature and purpose of Scripture: "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tm 3:16–17, NRSV).⁹⁷ Thomas would thus certainly agree with Henri de Lubac's claim that "the Bible was not given to Christians merely to satisfy historical curiosity."⁹⁸ For Thomas, engagement with Sacred Scripture serves as divine pedagogy through which God leads into participation in the life of grace, the life of justice, and the life of glory.⁹⁹ All of Thomas's theology is scriptural, and all of his scriptural theology is oriented to

⁹⁶ Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans*, 5.

⁹⁷ Thomas employs this passage in his very first *sed contra* in the *Summa theologiae* (ST I, q. 1, a. 1, sc).

⁹⁸ Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Fourfold Sense of Scripture*, trans. Edward Macierowski (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 2:271.

⁹⁹ See Candler, *Theology, Rhetoric, Manuduction*.

this evangelical goal. His *principia* represent a privileged and substantive witness to his fundamental theological disposition.¹⁰⁰ N-V

¹⁰⁰ I owe special thanks to Mark Johnson for his extensive help and encouragement with this essay.