

Thomas Aquinas on Divine Beatitude, Freedom, and the Speech of Christ in Psalm 16:2

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THOMAS AQUINAS taught that God could have created a world different from our own or refrained from creating any world whatsoever. Thomas also held that this position was clearly taught by Scripture.¹ He even goes so far as to describe the main alternative to this view—the belief that God created from natural necessity—as “false and utterly alien to the Catholic faith.”² It seems fair to assume that he judged the theological stakes involved in the issue to be high. In *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 4, Thomas addresses a question that is integral to his account of divine freedom: whether God wills whatever he wills of necessity. After constructing a metaphysical account of voluntary action, in the concluding portion of his argument he writes: “Likewise, nor is there any necessity in [the divine will] with respect to the whole of creation, because the divine goodness is perfect in itself, and would be so even if no creature were to exist, for ‘he has no need of our goods,’ as is said in the Psalm [16:2].”³

It is not altogether obvious—at least if one starts from the working assumptions of modern exegesis—how the latter half of Psalm 16:2 (Vulgate 15:2) could be interpreted as concerned with divine freedom, let alone teach-

¹ Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* [SCG] II, ch. 23 (Leonine edition [LE], 13:325, lns. 24–27).

² Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, ST I, q. 104, a. 3 (LE, 5:468).

³ Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 4, resp.: “Nec etiam inest ei aliqua necessitas respectu totius creaturae, eo quod divina bonitas in se perfecta est etiamsi nulla creatura existeret, quia ‘bonorum nostrorum non eget’ ut in Psal. dicitur” (LE, 22/3:663.222–32.) English translations are my own unless noted otherwise.

ing anything about the modal status of the relation between the divine will and the whole of created reality.⁴ Read in a particular light, it could even appear plausible that Thomas's citation of the psalm in this context amounts to little more than a pious veneer, hastily glued over a slab of philosophical abstractions. This essay argues that such appearances are mistaken.

In what follows, I will not primarily be arguing for the veracity of Thomas's doctrine of divine freedom, nor even presenting a full account of his views. My aim is more modest. The argument presented here aims to uncover how Thomas arrived at this reading of the psalm, understand how his exegesis relates to his doctrine, and suggest that—given certain beliefs about the nature of Scripture and its interpretation—Thomas's reading is plausible. I conclude by considering obstacles to contemporary theologians following Thomas's reading and provide possible solutions for overcoming them.

My first section begins with an overview of Scholastic exegesis, followed by a brief description of Thomas's doctrine of divine freedom within its thirteenth-century context. To understand how Thomas may have arrived at his reading of Psalm 16:2, my second section provides a series of vignettes of the reception history of this passage. This section begins with Augustine's citation of the psalm at a critical juncture within book 1 of *De doctrina christiana*, followed by Peter Lombard's incorporation of Augustine's reading of the psalm in the *Sentences*. The section concludes with an examination of the *Postilla super Psalterium* of Hugh of Saint Cher. A third section provides a summary of Thomas's interpretation of the psalm throughout his corpus and a brief consideration of the other scriptural passages that Thomas juxtaposed with the psalm. This section concludes with an analysis of the place of the psalm in Thomas's doctrine of divine freedom, focusing on *Super Psalmos* 15 and *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 4. Fourth and finally, I conclude with a consideration of and response to obstacles for contemporary theologians who wish to follow Thomas's reading of the text.

Scripture & Divine Freedom in the Thirteenth Century

An Overview of Scholastic Exegesis

Thirty to forty years ago, it was not uncommon to construe the history of

⁴ Note that the Vulgate follows the Septuagint (LXX) in numbering the Psalms, whereas most modern English versions followed the Hebrew enumeration. I will be using the Hebrew enumeration in what follows.

the development of Scholasticism as one of liberation from the scriptural text. While elements of this construal remain in some quarters, the consensus that Scholasticism was an almost exclusively philosophical enterprise with little interest in the sacred page has largely been abandoned. Historical research on the institutional and material conditions of theological education in the universities and a groundswell of research on medieval reception of the Bible have given us a clearer understanding of the place of Scripture in medieval theology.⁵ Biblical Thomism is partly an outgrowth of these advances in historical scholarship. Particularly for those unfamiliar with this body of literature, a few words about the reception of the Psalter and the exegetical practices employed at the time are necessary.

The influence of early Christian biblical interpretation on medieval exegesis was pervasive.⁶ It was mediated to the schools through a variety of means: quotations and fragments of exegesis most often made their way into twelfth- and thirteenth-century discussions by way of florilegia, catenas, and sentence collections that excerpted portions of influential texts. One particularly influential source was the *Glossa ordinaria*, compiled in the middle of the twelfth century, which ensured the transmission of particular extracts from patristic and Carolingian sources that would inform later exegesis. The notes on the Psalter principally consisted in extracts from either Augustine's *Ennarationes in Psalmos* or Cassiodorus's *Expositio Psalmorum*, but also commonly some amalgamation of both.⁷ The most frequently consulted exegetical work in the twelfth-century schools—Lombard's *Magna glossatura*—would largely follow the *Glossa*

⁵ The mere fact that the first task assigned to a *magister in sacra pagina* was to give daily verse-by-verse expositions of Scripture, and that it was understood as foundational to the other two responsibilities—disputation and preaching—sits uneasily with the older historical construal. On the dangers of neglecting consideration of the institutional dimensions of medieval theological education, see James R. Ginther, "There Is a Text in This Classroom: The Bible and Theology in the Medieval University," in *Essays in Medieval Philosophy and Theology in Memory of Walter H. Principe, CSB: Fortresses and Launching Pads*, ed. James Ginther and Carl N. Still (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2005), 31–51. For an overview of the recent research on the medieval reception of the Bible, see Christopher Ocker and Kevin Madigan, "After Beryl Smalley: Thirty Years of Medieval Exegesis, 1984–2013," *Journal of the Bible and Its Reception* 2, no. 1 (2015): 87–130.

⁶ Franklin Harkins describes early Christian interpretation as "an omnipresent foundational force" in medieval theology ("Medieval Latin Reception," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Paul M. Blowers and Peter W. Martens [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019], 651–66).

⁷ Lesley Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary*, *Commentaria 3* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 48.

ordinaria in its selection of sources for the Psalms.⁸ The compilation of the gloss contributed to shifting the reception of the Psalms from the monastery to the schools, as well as the growing concern for increasingly fine-grained analysis of the text and its doctrinal import.⁹ Lombard's placement of David at the top of the hierarchy of prophets has also been identified as a significant contributing factor to the rise in commentaries on the Psalter in the thirteenth century.¹⁰

Early Christian exegesis was present not only in the reception of prior interpretations of individual texts, but also in the reading strategies employed to arrive at those interpretations. Twelfth- and thirteenth-century readers also employed juxtapositional reading, as well as what recent studies have termed "prosopological" and "partitive" exegesis, reading strategies that stretch back to the early Christian era. Juxtapositional reading is the practice of gathering together a constellation of scriptural texts and, through collation and ordering, bringing them to bear on one another as mutually interpreting.¹¹ Athanasius's Christological arguments from Proverbs 8 are a commonly cited example of this practice.¹² Prosopological exegesis is the practice of identifying the speaker or recipient of an address within a poetic text as a particular person, often prompted by either ambiguities or interpretive tensions in the original text.¹³ Partitive

⁸ Marcia L. Colish, "Psalterium Scholasticorum: Peter Lombard and the Emergence of Scholastic Psalms Exegesis," *Speculum* 67, no. 3 (1992): 531–48, at 532. As Colish points out, Lombard's gloss was not a mere repetition of the ordinary gloss—there is significant continuity between the sources, but a marked difference in the purposes to which those sources are put. See also, Smith, *Glossa Ordinaria*, 200–202.

⁹ Smith, *Glossa Ordinaria*, 1–12; Colish, "Psalterium Scholasticorum," 531–33.

¹⁰ Martin Morard, "Hugues de Saint-Cher, Commentateur Des Psaumes," in *Hugues de Saint-Cher (†1263): Bibliste et Théologien*, ed. Gilbert Dahan, Louis-Jacques Bataillon, and Pierre-Marie Gy (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2004), 102–3.

¹¹ For Thomas's employment of this practice, see Piotr Roszak, "The Place and Function of Biblical Citations in Thomas Aquinas's Exegesis," in *Reading Sacred Scripture with Thomas Aquinas: Hermeneutical Tools, Theological Questions and New Perspectives*, ed. Piotr Roszak and Jörgen Vijgen (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2015), 115–39, and Roszak, "Principes et pratiques exegetiques dans l'Expositio super lob de Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue Thomiste* 119 (2019): 5–30, at 10.

¹² Ephraim Radner, *Time and the Word: Figural Reading of the Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 210–15.

¹³ Peter's identification of Christ as the speaker of the Psalms in Acts 2:22–41 and the author of Hebrew's reading of Psalm 2:7 are examples of this interpretive strategy. On Acts 2, see Matthew Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and Spirit in New Testament and Early Christian Interpretations of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 153–55. On prosopological exegesis in

exegesis is the closely related strategy of identifying either the speech or the particular statements of the text under the aspect of either Christ's humanity or divinity.¹⁴ That these two practices were intertwined is particularly evident in Scholastic interpretation of the Psalms. Following Augustine, medieval interpreters read the speaker of the Psalms as not only Christ in his two natures, but the *Totus Christus*, Christ and his members, the Church. Once Christ is identified as speaker of the Psalms, the text itself pushes the reader to this interpretive strategy, as it explains how speech inapplicable to Christ, such as confession of sin, can be explained—it is the Church that is repenting.

Biblical interpretation at the turn of the thirteenth century also employed an increasingly sophisticated set of exegetical tools used to access the meaning of the text. One of the preferred tools of the thirteenth century was the *divisio textus*. John Boyle describes the practice as follows:

Starting with the text as a whole, one articulates a principal theme, in the light of which one divides and subdivides the text into smaller units, often down to the individual words. A scholastic division of the texts has at least three essential characteristics. First, the interpreter articulates a theme that provides a conceptual unity to the text and commentary as a whole. Second, the division penetrates at least to the level of verse; it does not simply articulate large blocks of text. And third, because the division begins with the whole and then continues through progressive subdivisions, each verse stands in an articulated relation not only with the whole but ultimately with every other part, division, and verse of the text.¹⁵

This practice provided both the exegetical parameters and a unifying prin-

the book of Hebrews, see Madison N. Pierce, *Divine Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Recontextualization of Spoken Quotations of Scripture*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

¹⁴ For an introduction to this reading practice focusing on Athanasius, see John Behr, *The Nicene Faith, Part I: True God of True God* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 208–15.

¹⁵ John F. Boyle, "The Theological Character of the Scholastic 'Division of the Text' with Particular Reference to the Commentaries of Saint Thomas Aquinas," in *With Reverence for the Word: Medieval Scriptural Exegesis in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Barry D. Walfish, and Joseph W. Goering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 276–83, at 276.

ciple for thirteenth-century Scholastic commentaries.¹⁶ As such, the interpretive judgments made in the division of the text—for the Psalter, often occurring in either the prologue or the commentary on the first Psalm—should be consulted to understand the exegetical judgments within the commentary on individual Psalms.

I have deliberately used the terms “practices” and “strategies” in order to emphasize that medieval exegesis was an act carried out under particular institutional and material conditions, and to highlight that these practices were not merely theoretical—they were not exclusively aimed at ascertaining the meaning of a scriptural text. They were partly that, of course. But they served contemplative, affective, and devotional ends as well. For example, Mary Carruthers has demonstrated at considerable length that dividing large texts into smaller more manageable units was one of the foundational techniques used to memorize Scripture.¹⁷ *Divisio* for the purpose of memorization and *divisio* as an interpretive strategy were not identical practices—the former was in use well before the thirteenth century. Nevertheless, given the foundational role of memorization within medieval academic culture, it seems likely that one of the motivations behind the development of the hermeneutical strategy was its heuristic usefulness in committing the text to memory.¹⁸

The deeply embedded role of memorization in medieval pedagogy has similar implications for understanding juxtapositional reading. Recent research on Thomas and Scripture often identifies Thomas’s commitment to the essential unity of Scripture as the material ground for this practice. And of course, this is true. Thomas did believe Scripture was a unified whole whose principal author was the Holy Spirit. Because of this, one passage of Scripture can clarify another, regardless of its location within

¹⁶ In his foreword to his translation of Aquinas’s commentary on Ephesians (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1966), Matthew Lamb notes that, whereas the twelfth-century commentaries tended to work through the text line-by-line and risked losing a sense of the whole, the *divisio* provided the means of relating the parts to the whole through the identification of the central theme of the text (26).

¹⁷ Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd ed., Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 122–39. Thomas Ryan has argued that the organization of *Super Psalmos* was constructed to aid in the memorization of Scripture (*Thomas Aquinas as Reader of the Psalms* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000], 31–38).

¹⁸ The conscious training of memory was both a scholarly necessity—one did not have time to go searching through codices for a biblical text in the middle of a disputation—and a moral obligation, as memory was understood to be foundational to the virtue of prudence (Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 81–89).

the canon. However, the medieval use of juxtapositional reading was not solely grounded in a commitment to the unity of Scripture and its divine authorship. It was also enabled and motivated by the value placed on the memorial practices employed in the study of Scripture. The memorization of vast portions of Scripture—such as the book of Psalms, which was expected to be memorized in its entirety by both clergy and educated laity—allowed individual texts to be brought forward, juxtaposed, and collated in the mind of the reader. One of the motivations behind the memorization of Scripture itself was to enable just such juxtapositional readings.¹⁹ Moreover, these memorial practices were not cold, computational acts of retrieving bits of bare propositional knowledge. When one memorized a text, it was considered essential to “tag” the passage with personal and emotional associations that would assist in the act of recollection. How the text first affected the reader: if it instilled fear or reverence, desire or pleasure, as well as the sensible impressions—the smell of the room, the expression on the teachers face, the color of the ink on the page—were all taken to be indispensable aids in committing a text to memory.²⁰

When these facets of medieval Scholastic pedagogy are taken into account, they give us a different perspective of the act of scriptural citation than paradigms that would construe Thomas’s invocation of biblical material as aimed exclusively at proving doctrine. It is also a picture more congruent with what Thomas himself says about the usefulness of Scripture in his famous comments on Isaiah 48:17—that it illumines the intelligence, makes glad the affections, inflames the heart, rectifies our labors, assists us in obtaining glory, and is useful for instructing others.²¹

Divine Freedom in the Thirteenth Century

Medieval debates about free will were in several respects similar to our own. Free will was understood as a necessary condition for moral respon-

¹⁹ “Many scholars with normal vision also made themselves into libraries, because doing so enables the kind of richly concordant and paralleling style of interpretation that we associate particularly with patristic and medieval exegesis” (Mary Carruthers, “Memory, Imagination, and the Interpretation of Scripture in the Middle Ages,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible*, ed. Michael Lieb, Emma Mason, and Jonathan Roberts [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], 214–34, at 215).

²⁰ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 69–76.

²¹ *Super Isa* 48. On this passage, see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, *The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 30–33.

sibility: notions of praise, blame, desert, merit, and demerit presupposed volitional control over our actions such that they are “up to us” in an important sense. Free will was taken to admit of degrees: it could be increased or diminished, though it was generally agreed that there was a sense in which it could not be wholly lost. The availability of alternatives was understood as necessary to some forms of free action, but not others. Questions about the compatibility of various forms of necessity with free action were vigorously debated.

There are nevertheless several structural differences in how medieval theologians approached the question. Free will was assumed to be the faculty of an immaterial soul that possesses a rational nature. To further complicate matters, the subjects that make up much of the contemporary discussions of free will were treated under the distinct but overlapping categories of *libera voluntas* and *liberum arbitrium*.²² In most cases, *liberum arbitrium* referred to that which enables a subset of acts of the will, those brought about through choice between alternatives.²³ Natural necessity was often understood to be compatible with *libera voluntas*, but not with *liberum arbitrium*—the paradigm case for the former was God freely willing the good with natural necessity. Theological considerations also played a more significant role in structuring debates about the nature of free will. At least since Anselm, definitions of *liberum arbitrium* were typically intended to be broad enough to range across intellectual natures—God, angels, and humans—and for creatures, in their various states (created, fallen, redeemed, damned, or glorified for humans; created, fallen, or confirmed in grace for angels). Different accounts drew from several authoritative definitions, giving this or that definition more weight depending on where the author landed on the debated issues. It was also assumed that *liberum arbitrium* came about through the faculties of intellect and will.

²² While translating *voluntas* as “will” captures most of its medieval usage, *liberum arbitrium* is notoriously difficult to translate. The best candidates are “free choice” and “free judgment,” but neither is wholly adequate. The former tilts the question of priority in the direction of the will, whereas the latter toward the intellect. Given that one of the central debates of the thirteenth century was whether the will or the intellect exercises some form of priority in acts brought about through *liberum arbitrium*, the majority of the secondary literature leaves the term untranslated, a practice that I will adopt here.

²³ Bonaventure was an exception to this general rule. He distinguished between *liberum arbitrium* as free and *liberum arbitrium* as deliberating, the latter enabling choice between alternatives; see Tobias Hoffmann, “Freedom without Choice: Medieval Theories of the Essence of Freedom,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Ethics*, ed. Thomas Williams, Cambridge Companions to Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 194–216, at 197.

Thomas taught that God possesses *libera voluntas* and *liberum arbitrium*.²⁴ This was the majority view within the twelfth and thirteenth centuries—Peter Lombard, Philip the Chancellor, Albert the Great, Alexander of Hales, and Bonaventure all taught that God possesses *liberum arbitrium* in some sense.²⁵ They differed in important respects on what precisely *liberum arbitrium* is—whether it is a power or habit; whether the intellect or the will exercises priority, whether *liberum arbitrium* is some third thing distinct from both intellect and will. But that it is what enables choice between alternatives, and that God possesses it—in a manner higher and more perfect than all other intellectual agents—was a point of collective agreement. More importantly, Thomas and the majority of his contemporaries held that creation itself was the product of divine choice and brought about through *liberum arbitrium*.

This view creates a number of interesting conceptual difficulties. For example, it seems to run afoul of the common intuition that since God is omnipotent and perfectly good, he always does what is best. Abelard—redeploying an argument from Augustine’s literal commentary on Genesis—reasoned that if God refrained from creating good things that were within his power, he would be guilty of jealousy and injustice.²⁶ Abelard concluded that God could not do more than what he does, better than what he does, or other than what he does. God, because he is the *summum bonum*, is incapable of increasing or diminishing in goodness. Nevertheless, God’s own ineffable goodness “stirs up” (*accensum*) God to will what he wills necessarily.²⁷ This was not the only difficulty that Thomas’s view raised, nor was it the only line of argument Abelard deployed for the necessity of creation. However, the issues that these arguments raise are central to Thomas’s doctrine of divine freedom and what he takes Psalm 16:2 to be teaching about God and his relation to the created order.

²⁴ Aquinas, *De potentia*, q. 10, a. 2, obj. 5 and ad 5; *SCG* I, ch. 88 (LE, 13:239–40).

²⁵ Peter Lombard, *Sentences* II, d. 25, cc. 1–2 (all quotations of the *Sentences* come from *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, ed. Ignatius C. Brady, 3rd rev. ed., 2 vols. [Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1971–1981]); Philip the Chancellor, *Summa de bono*, p. 1, tr. 4, q. 2, s. 2; Albert Magnus, *Summa de creaturis* II, q. 70, a. 6; Alexander of Hales, *Summa universis theologiae* II, p. 1, in. 4, tr. 2, s. 2, q. 3, ti. 3, m. 3, c. 1; Bonaventure, *In II sent.*, d. 25, p. 2, a. 1, q. 2.

²⁶ Abelard, *Theologia christiana* 5.30. Cf. Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 4.16.27: “But if he were unable to create good things, He would have no power; if He were able but did not do so, He would be filled with envy. Therefore, because He is all-powerful and good, He made everything exceedingly good” (in *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. John Hammond Taylor, Ancient Christian Writers 41 [New York: Newman Press, 1982], 122).

²⁷ Abelard, *Theologia christiana* 5.42.

Reception History of Psalm 16:2

Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana 1.31

In the third chapter of *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine introduces a distinction within his doctrine of charity between things that are to be used and things to be enjoyed. “To enjoy a thing,” he explains in the fourth chapter, “is to cleave to it in love for its own sake. To use, on the other hand, is to order it toward obtaining that which you love, provided it is a proper object of love.”²⁸ He explains this distinction through an illustration of an exile journeying to his fatherland where his true good lies. The exile can and should make use of land and sea transportation, and perhaps may encounter pleasures along the way. But suppose these pleasures delay the traveler, or cause him to lose interest in his home country? Likewise, we are exiles returning to our home, and we must make use of this world, not enjoy it. That which is to be enjoyed is the eternal and unchanging, to which all other temporal goods are ordered. As such, the Trinity alone is the proper object of enjoyment. Everything else in the cosmos is to be used, ordered toward the enjoyment of God. This distinction between use and enjoyment would exercise considerable influence on later theology and would also be the occasion of more than a few controversies.²⁹ However, for our purposes, we are only concerned with how the distinction bears on Augustine’s reading of the psalm.

Augustine’s first complication to the systematic employment of this distinction arises in treating humanity: are human beings to be used, enjoyed, or both?³⁰ As beings made in the image and likeness of God, humans are incontestably great things. Furthermore, humans are commanded to love one another. Based on these two considerations, Augustine poses a further question: should people be loved by others for their own sake or the sake of something else? If the former, they are to be enjoyed; if the latter, used. Augustine concludes that humans are to be used. Note, however, that Augustine has modified what he means by use—in the formal definitions from chapter 4, use was not construed as a

²⁸ Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 1.4.4 (all quotations of *De doctrina christiana* are translated from vol. 32 of *Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina*).

²⁹ For a helpful overview of the influence of this distinction, see Kimberly Georgedes, “Uti/Frui Distinction,” in *The Oxford Guide to the Historical Reception of Augustine*, ed. Karla Pollmann and Willemien Otten, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3:1838–42.

³⁰ Augustine, *De doct.* 1.22.20.

form of love, only as a means for obtaining that which was loved.³¹ Here, Augustine expands the range of the use/enjoyment distinction to map onto two forms of love: *diligere propter se*, love for its own sake (enjoyment), and *diligere propter aliud*, love for the sake of something else (use).³² This expansion of the definition would pave the way for the next obvious question: it is abundantly clear from Scripture that God loves us, but what exactly is the mode in which he loves us, that of enjoyment or use? Augustine reasons:

But if he enjoys us, he needs some good of ours, which no one of sound mind would say. For every good of ours is either [God] himself or from him. But can anyone find it obscure or doubt that the light is in no need of the brilliance of the things which it illuminates? Furthermore, the prophet clearly says: "I said to the Lord, you are my God, for you have no need of my goods." Therefore he does not enjoy us, but makes use of us. Because if he neither enjoys us nor makes use of us, I cannot discover in what way he can love us.³³

Our use of things and God's use of us differs in one crucial respect. All of our uses—even the "use" of our love for our neighbor—are ordered toward some utility on our part, namely, the enjoyment of God. Our "use" of others "is brought into the project of our need," as Oliver O'Donovan puts it.³⁴ God's use of us, in contrast, does not redound toward any utility on his part. He is not filling up any lack or need in the divine life whatsoever. Or, in the words of the psalmist, he has no need of our goods.

Augustine, in what would become one of the more influential portions of his corpus, passed on a reading of this psalm as an explanation of how God loves his people grounded in the doctrine of divine beatitude. God perfectly possesses, loves, and rests in himself as the ultimate end, the *summum bonum* to which no other goods can be added. God could not need our goods any more than the light could need what is illuminated. When Augustine returns to this psalm in other texts, it is to consistently reinforce that all of God's acts *ad extra* are done to benefit us, not himself.³⁵ Finally, note that the context of the citation of this psalm is not

³¹ Oliver O'Donovan, "'Usus' and 'Fruitio' in Augustine, 'De Doctrina Christiana' I," *Journal of Theological Studies* 33, no. 2 (1982): 385–86.

³² Augustine, *De doctr.* 1.22.20.

³³ Augustine, *De doctr.* 1.31.34.

³⁴ O'Donovan, "'Usus' and 'Fruitio,'" 389.

³⁵ E.g., Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 8.11.24.

a discussion of divine freedom, or the necessity of creation, or the question of whether God could have refrained from creating the world. Augustine's reception of the text is within a question arising in his doctrine of charity, and his response is through appeal to the psalmist's declaration of divine beatitude.

Peter Lombard, the Sentences

Augustine's argument from *De doctrina* would recur in no less conspicuous a text than the first distinction of book 1 of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. Chapters 1 and 2 rehearse the two central distinctions of *De doctrina*, between signs and things and between things to be used and things to be enjoyed. Lombard then adds two further definitions of use and enjoyment, both drawn from *De Trinitate* 10. "We enjoy the things that we know, in which the will finds delight for their own sake and comes to rest; but we use things by referring them to another thing that is to be enjoyed."³⁶ "To use is to take up something into the faculty of the will; but to enjoy is to use with the joy—not any longer of hope—but now of the thing itself. Therefore, everyone who enjoys, uses; for one takes up something into the faculty of the will with the goal of delight. But not everyone who uses also enjoys, if that which is taken up into the faculty of the will is desired, not for its own sake, but for the sake of another."³⁷ Lombard notes that this latter definition seems to imply that everyone in this life only uses God and does not enjoy him. He resolves the apparent conflict by distinguishing between proper, perfect, and full enjoyment, which the angels and the blessed possess, and the enjoyment of those who walk in hope, which is "not so full."

In the sixth article of chapter 3 of the same distinction, Lombard he poses the question of whether God enjoys or uses us, quoting the majority of *De doctrina* 1.31–32 in response, including Augustine's citation of Psalm 16:2. He concludes by quoting portions of Augustine's chapter 32: "Because he is good, we exist, and to the extent that we exist, we are good. Moreover, because he is also just, we are not evil with impunity; and to the extent that we are evil, so we exist less. Therefore, that use by which God uses us is referred not to his own utility, but to ours, and is referred only to his goodness."³⁸ The psalm—interpreted in this same Augustinian key—recurs in book 2, in the fourth chapter of distinction 1, where Lombard treats the question "for what is the rational creature created?" His answer

³⁶ Lombard, *Sentences* I, d. 1, c. 2.

³⁷ Lombard, *Sentences* I, d.1, c. 3.

³⁸ Lombard, *Sentences* I, dist. 1, ch. 3.

is concise and to the point: to praise God, to serve him, and to enjoy him. But he is also quick to dispel the notion that the Creator, rather than creatures, profits from this arrangement.

Lombard's selection of Augustine's use/enjoyment distinction also functioned as an organizing principle for the work as a whole. Kimberly Georgedes observes: "The significance of beginning his work on in bk. 1 on the Trinity with the *uti/frui* distinction is so obvious that modern authors tend to overlook it when dealing with the *Sentences*. The Trinity (bk 1) is the only thing one is allowed to enjoy, while everything else is to be used for the sake of obtaining one's final end. Lombard returns to enjoyment in his discussion of the beatific vision in 4.49, thus coming full circle."³⁹

Lombard's contributions to the reception history of Psalm 16:2 were twofold: first, the adoption of the *Sentences* as the standard theological textbook within university curricula ensured the wide dissemination of both the psalm and Augustine's reading. The gradual development of the literary types of *Sentences* commentaries—from marginal glosses, to the "catchword" commentaries, up to the "classical" or "true" commentaries of the middle of the thirteenth century—would also create new hermeneutical pressures on the text, at once both more speculative and creative.⁴⁰ Second, it is plausible that the inclusion of Augustine's two other definitions of use from *De Trinitate* may have prompted later reflections on Augustine's use/enjoyment distinction, as well as readings of Psalm 16:2, to attend to the nature of volition and how it relates to use and enjoyment.

Finally, it is worth noting that the contexts of the two recitations of the Augustinian reading of the psalm are not within a discussion of divine freedom. Unlike Augustine, Lombard did explicitly address these questions, ultimately constructing an account of divine freedom that affirmed God's freedom to do otherwise and his ability to refrain from creating the world.⁴¹ Lombard invoked a different collection of scriptural texts

³⁹ Georgedes, "Uti/Frui Distinction," 3:1839.

⁴⁰ John Fisher, "Hugh of St. Cher and the Development of Mediaeval Theology," *Speculum* 31, no. 1 (1956): 57–69, at 58–59. While the development of these literary types followed a progression toward greater complexity and relative independence from Lombard's text, they should not be construed as a strict evolution, with the older forms dying away after newer forms arrive; see Philipp W. Rosemann, "Conclusion: The Tradition of the *Sentences*," in *Mediaeval Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, ed. Philipp W. Rosemann, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 497.

⁴¹ E.g., in *Sentences* II, d. 25, cc. 1–2, where Lombard argues that God possesses *liberum arbitrium*, and in *Sentences* I, d. 42, where he is directly responding to Abelard's view.

when responding to those questions. Nevertheless, his contribution in this context is significant because we see an expansion of the logic of the Augustinian reading of the psalm outside of the context of the question of the use/enjoyment distinction, and with particular reference to questions surrounding volitional agency.

Hugh of Saint Cher, Postilla super Psalterium

Hugh of Saint Cher (1200–1263) entered the Dominican order in 1225; in 1230 he was appointed master in theology at the University of Paris and prior of the monastery of Saint Jacques. His *Postilla in totam bibliam*, began in 1229, was intended to supplement the *Glossa ordinaria* and bring it up to date with the concerns of the thirteenth century.⁴² While the date is uncertain, the *Postilla* was likely completed by 1244, just one year before Thomas's first arrival in Paris with Albert. It was already at that point entering into common use, being cited by Hugh's contemporary Guerric Saint Quentin prior to 1243, and then quoted extensively in Bonaventure's commentary on Ecclesiastes (1253–1257).⁴³

The prologue of Hugh's *Postilla super Psalterium* drew heavily from the *Summa super Psalterium* of Prepositinus of Cremona, including the selection of Song of Songs 3:11 as the opening reflection, "Go forth, O daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon, with the crown with which his mother crowned him on the day of his wedding, on the day of the gladness of his heart."⁴⁴ Hugh reads the "go forth" imperative as indicating the movement intrinsic to spiritual life. Whereas evil consists in moving away from God and turning toward self, turning toward the good consists in a threefold movement: first from flesh to spirit, second from nature to supernature, and third from the world to heaven.⁴⁵ This movement is then mapped onto Augustine's division of the three sets of fifty psalms, signifying the states of penance, justice, and glory, to which Hugh further corresponds three states of spiritual development: *incipientium*, *proficientium*, and *perfectorum*.⁴⁶ Hugh follows Lombard in identifying David as the author, and identifies the subject matter as the Whole Christ—head and members, Bridegroom and Bride, Christ and the Church, "with their

⁴² Smith, *Glossa Ordinaria*, 220–23.

⁴³ Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), 273.

⁴⁴ Morard, "Hugues de Saint-Cher, Commentateur Des Psaumes," 112.

⁴⁵ Hugh of St. Cher, *Postilla super Psalterium*, prol., in vol. 2 of *Opera omnia in universum Vetus et Novum Testamentum*, 8 vols. (Venetiis: Pezzana, 1703), fol. 2r.

⁴⁶ Hugh of St. Cher, *Postilla super Psalterium*, prol., fol. 2r.

respective conditions and properties.⁴⁷ The authorial intention (*intentio prophetarum*) is to set forth “how those who have been deformed in Adam were reformed in Christ.”⁴⁸

Hugh’s treatment of Psalm 16 is consistent with this *divisio*: he begins by interpreting the opening imperative, “Conserve me,” through Christ’s high priestly prayer in John 17:11—“Father, keep them whom thou hast given me.”⁴⁹ From the outset of Hugh’s commentary, the Whole Christ is praying the psalm. Turning to Psalm 16:2, he invokes 1 Corinthians 4:7—“What do you have that you did not receive?”—and then identifies three kinds of merit present in verses 1–2 of the psalm: of hope, of confession, and of humility. Hope is identified with 1b, “for I have put my trust in you”: confession with 2a, “I have said oh God you are my God”; and humility with 2b, “for you have no need of my goods.” In his comments on verse two, he notes that Christ says, “You are *my* God,” inasmuch as he is truly man, and because as he is truly man, God has no need of his goods. He continues:

And this is the most proper reason that he is God, namely, because he needs nothing, but is most perfect, according to the text of Acts 17. “He does not need anything, seeing it is he who gives to all life, and breath, and all things.” To give life, that is most perfect. For the one who bestows life gives both to be and to be moved, and not the converse. Thus, Dionysius writes “He himself is the substantial good, extending goodness to all things, even as the light of the sun, without previous choice, by its very being illuminating all things that exist.”⁵⁰

There are several interpretive issues at play here. First, note that, while the *uti/frui* distinction is not explicitly present, the logic of Augustine’s reading

⁴⁷ Hugh of St. Cher, *Postilla super Psalterium*, prol., fol. 2v.

⁴⁸ Hugh of St. Cher, *Postilla super Psalterium*, prol., fol. 2v: “Intentio Prophetarum est in Adam deformatos ostendere reformatos in Christo.”

⁴⁹ He also provides an alternative interpretation, where “Conserve me” could refer to his prayer to conserve his physical life.

⁵⁰ Hugh of St. Cher, *Postilla super Psalterium*, fol. 28v: “Et haec est propriissima ratio, quod sit Deus, scilicet, quoniam nullo indiget, sed est perfectissimus, secundum illud Act 17. Non indigens aliquo, cum ipse det vitam omnibus, et inspirationem, & omnia. Dare vitam, istud perfectissimum est. Qui enim dat vitam, dat et moveri, et esse, et non e converso. Ideo dicit Dionysius Ipse est substantiale bonum ad omnia extendens bonitatem, sicut Sol lumen non praecligens, sed per ipsum esse illuminans omnia.”

remains discernible. God is the source of all life, motion, and being—he is the substantial good—and cannot need anything external to himself. This interpretive trajectory is also deepened through its juxtaposition with Acts 17:25, Paul’s speech at the Areopagus in which he denies God could need anything from human hands and grounds his denial in his affirmation that God is the source of life, breath, and all things. Moreover, Augustine’s reading made use of the solar metaphor—the light is in no need of the brightness of those things which it has itself illuminated—reflected in the quote from Dionysius.

Second, note that what Hugh draws from Acts 17 is the asymmetric relation between Creator and creature: God bestows life, motion, and being, not the converse. Third, Hugh’s prosopological reading of the psalm opens up a reflection on Christ’s two natures, paving the way for the comments on the next verse, which turns to Christ’s two wills. The following verse reads: “To the holy ones who are in his land, he has made wonderful all my desires [*voluntates*] in them.”⁵¹ Hugh takes the shift from second to third person to indicate the two natures of Christ, and that “desires” or “willings” is plural shows that there is not one, but many wills in Christ, though they are all related to two things: his will to die for our sin and to be raised for our justification.⁵² He then identifies four ways in which the will of Christ can be understood, associating each with a passage of Scripture and then expounding on how God has “made wonderful” each of them. First, as the divine will, as taught Psalm 113:11: whatsoever he pleased, he has done. Second, the will of resurrection, in which he was obedient to death (Phil 2:8). Third, the will of sensuality, in which he did not want to die: “Father, if possible, let this cup pass” (Matt 26:39). Forth, the will of compassion, as in Luke 19:41: “Seeing the city, he wept over it.” Thomas picks up several of these elements in his exegesis of this passage, to which we now turn.

Thomas Aquinas on Psalm 16:2

Reception of Psalm 16:2 across Thomas’s Corpus

Thomas cites or alludes to Psalm 16:2 in at least nineteen different locations across his corpus.⁵³ The psalm occurs four times in the *Sentences*

⁵¹ Hugh of St. Cher, *Postilla super Psalterium*, fol. 28v.

⁵² Hugh of St. Cher, *Postilla super Psalterium*, fol. 28v.

⁵³ Ten of these occurrences contain an explicit reference to the psalm, and nine do not.

commentary, twice in *De veritate*, and twice in the *Summa theologiae*.⁵⁴ In the exegetical works Thomas refers to it twice each in the commentaries on Matthew, John, and Ephesians, once in the *catena* on Luke (though technically, here he is relaying the citation from Bede), once each in the commentaries on 1 Corinthians, Job, and 2 Timothy, and then in a full treatment within the commentary on the Psalter.⁵⁵ The variants use the verbs *egeo* or *indigeo*; the former is used in the Gallican Psalter, the latter in the Roman. Thomas uses a plural adjective and refers to God in the third person (“*he* has no need of *our* goods”) in thirteen of the citations; the other six maintain the second person discourse of the psalm with a singular adjective (“*you* have no need *my* goods”).

The citation occurs in some predictable contexts given its prior reception history. For example, Thomas cites the psalm in his commentary on Job 22:3, the same text where Gregory cites the psalm in his *Moralia*, and that was picked up and transmitted by the ordinary gloss.⁵⁶ Thomas’s assessment of Eliphaz in the text is more muted than Gregory’s—Eliphaz “did not grasp [Job’s] words according to the intention with which they were spoken.”⁵⁷ The differences between Thomas’s and Gregory’s reading of this chapter align with their different judgments about the *intentio* of the book of Job. Gregory, along with the majority of the Latin reception before Thomas, took the intention of Job to be the commendation of Job as a moral exemplar of patience in the midst of suffering. On the other hand, Thomas identified the intention of Job as showing that human affairs are governed by divine providence.⁵⁸ In this chapter, Gregory takes Eliphaz’s discourse to move from idle words to heinous lies until ultimately bursting into a flame of insults, which sets up Gregory for his allegorical reading of Job’s friends as representative of heretics, and Job as representing the

⁵⁴ Aquinas, *In I sent.*, d. 45, q. 1, a. 2, obj. 3; *In II sent.*, d. 1, q. 2, a. 1, obj. 3; d. 27, q. 1, a. 3, obj. 5; *In III sent.*, d. 32, q. 1, a. 2, obj. 2; *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 2, obj. 8; q. 23, a. 4, corp., *ST* II-II, q. 81, a. 6, obj. 2; q. 88, a. 3, obj. 1.

⁵⁵ Aquinas, *Super Matt* 21, lec. 1; 25, lec. 2; *Super Ioan* 1, lec. 4; 4, lec. 3; *Super Eph* 1, lec. 1; lec. 5; *Catena in Lucam* 17, lec. 4; *Super I Cor* 11 [*reportatio Reginaldi de Piperno* for v. 7]; *Super Iob* 22; *Super II Tim* 2, lec. 4; *Super Psalmos* 15.

⁵⁶ Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob* 16.2.2, (quotations from *PL* vol. 75); *Biblia Latina cum glossa ordinaria: facsimile reprint of the editio princeps Adolph Rusch of Strassburg 1480/81*, ed. K. Froehlich and M. T. Gibson, with introduction, vol. 2 (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1992), 415.

⁵⁷ Aquinas, *Super Iob* 22.

⁵⁸ On this development, see Gilbert Dahan, “The Commentary of Thomas Aquinas in the History of Medieval Exegesis on Job: *Intentio et Materia*,” trans. David L. Augustine, *Nova et Vetera* (English) 17, no. 4 (2019): 1053–75.

Holy Church.⁵⁹ In contrast, Thomas does not take Eliphaz to be insulting Job, but rather attributing to him a faulty doctrine of providence in which humans do not suffer punishments for sin.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Thomas's reading of the psalm runs roughly along the same lines as Gregory—the words of the psalmist parallel Eliphaz's claim that God's goodness is not increased by human justice.

Other contexts are less expected, such as the commentary on Matthew 21:3, which describe Jesus's instructions to the apostles to procure the donkey on which Jesus would ride into Jerusalem, and where Jesus tells them that if anyone asks why they are taking the donkey to respond, "the Lord has need of it." Thomas notes: "But there is a question according to the mystical exposition. Is it not said 'he has no need of our goods?' I say that he has no need, unless on account of our necessity and for his own glory. Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved (Joel 2:32). And everyone who calls upon my name, I have created him for my glory (Isa 43:7)."⁶¹ But even here, Thomas was not the first to associate the psalm with this text. Alexander of Hales, for example, noted the apparent conflict between the psalm and Matthew 21:3 in his *Sentences* commentary.⁶²

Turning to a brief overview of Thomas's juxtapositional readings, on three occasions Thomas cites Psalm 16:2 alongside Job 35:7—"And if thou do justly, what shalt thou give him, or what shall he receive of thy hand?"—which he takes to be teaching close to the same thing as the psalm in interrogative form.⁶³ In five other cases, Thomas juxtaposes the psalm with Isaiah 43:7: "And every one that calleth upon my name, I have created him for my glory. I have formed him, and made him."⁶⁴ This scriptural juxtaposition points to the doctrinal relation between divine beatitude and glory. Whereas divine beatitude is God's perfect self-possession and rest in his own goodness, divine glory is its *ad extra* correlate—the shining effulgence outward of all of the goods that God is. The juxtaposition also safeguards one from supposing that God might somehow need creation in order to be glorified. If divine glory is the outward effulgence of divine beatitude, and divine beatitude is God's perfect self-possession and rest in himself as the

⁵⁹ Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob* 16.2.2.

⁶⁰ *Super Iob* 22.

⁶¹ Aquinas, *Super Mat.* 21, lec. 1.

⁶² Alexander of Hales, *In I sent.*, d. 1, ch. 31.

⁶³ Aquinas, *Super Psalmos* 15; *Super Matt* 25, lec. 2; *Super Eph* 1, lec. 5.

⁶⁴ Aquinas, *Super Matt* 21, lec. 1; *Super Ioan* 1, lec. 4; *Super Eph* 1, lec. 1; lec. 5; *Super I Cor* 11 [*reportatio Reginaldi de Piperno* for v. 7].

summum bonum, the notion of “need” can be seen as something of a category mistake, along the lines of supposing that the sun needs that which is illuminated by its rays, to pick up the Augustinian metaphor again. Both passages Thomas juxtaposes with Ps 16:2 (Job 35:7 and Isa 43:7) can be plausibly read as textual witnesses used to support the Augustinian reading of the psalm—that all of God’s acts *ad extra* do not redound to his own utility, but rather to our good.

Thomas’s Reception of Psalm 16:2 in Super Psalms

Thomas likely began his Psalms commentary while in Naples in the fall of 1273, a work cut short by his illness in December and death the following March.⁶⁵ While this text is among the latest of Thomas’s commentaries, it is not typically singled out as a particularly fruitful source for exploring Thomas’s exegesis.⁶⁶ Compared with his other mature commentaries, the course on the Psalter tends to be more austere in both matter and form.

Thomas’s Psalms commentary is at once more concise and more technical than Hugh’s *Postilla*.⁶⁷ While he gives more attention to the literal sense and less to the allegorical than Hugh, Thomas’s *divisio* is also considerably more complex, accepting the tripartite division of the three fifties corresponding to penitence, justice, and glory, but then further dividing each group of fifty into groups of ten. Thomas also identifies the subject matter as Christ and his members, but does so within the context of an analysis of the four causes of the Psalter.⁶⁸ Turning to his commentary on Psalm 16, Thomas takes the literal sense of the psalm to be in reference to David: “But because David also carried the person of Christ who was born of his seed, therefore certain things are posited concerning David, and certain things concerning Christ.”⁶⁹ Thomas follows Hugh in glossing

⁶⁵ Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 1:258.

⁶⁶ Eleonore Stump, for example, writes: “On the whole, the commentaries are clearly the product of the same outstanding mind that composed the *Summa theologiae*. With the possible exception of the cursory commentaries on the prophets and the Psalms, all of Aquinas’s biblical commentaries repay careful study, but three are worth singling out, the commentaries on Romans, the Gospel of John, and Job” (“Biblical Commentary and Philosophy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 252–268, at 260).

⁶⁷ For a helpful comparison of Hugh and Thomas’s commentaries on the Psalms, see Aaron Canty, “Hugh of St. Cher and Thomas Aquinas: Time and the Interpretation of the Psalms,” in *Time: Sense, Space, Structure*, ed. Nancy Van Deusen and Leonard Michael Koff (Leiden, Brill: 2016), 160–76.

⁶⁸ Aquinas, *Super Psalms*, prooem.

⁶⁹ Aquinas, *Super Psalms* 15.

“Conserua me” through reference to John 17:11, adding that his hope in God was both for the eternal life of others and for himself in the glorification of his body.

In his comments on 16:2 he follows Hugh in identifying the “Dixi Domino” with the act of faith in confession and Romans 10:10. He continues:

And for so it is, “for you have no need of my goods.” And this is proper to God, because he is infinite goodness, and nothing can be added to him, because he is the substantial good, extending goodness to all things as the sun extends light, not by participation, but by its very being illuminating all things that exist. While something can be added to any other creature, even the saints, and on account of this something increases for them, and for that reason we are to some extent in need—but God alone does not need our goods. Job 33 [35:7] “If you do justly, what will you give him? Or what will he receive from your hand?” Jerome has “Because it cannot be well with us without you,” as though to say, “From this it is evident that you are my God, that you are my goodness, nor can it be well with me without you.”⁷⁰

Thomas follows Hugh again here, but with two noticeable differences. He does not cite Dionysius explicitly, and he modifies the quotation—whereas Hugh includes that the sun extends light “without previous choice [*non praeeligens*],” Thomas replaces the phrase with “not by participation [*non per participationem*].” Thomas was well aware of the wording of this text. In fact, Hugh did not cite the whole text either—whereas Hugh states that the sun gives light to all without previous choice, the text reads that the sun gives light to all neither by reasoning nor previous choice (*non ratiocinans aut praeeligens*; in Greek: *ou logizomenos ē proairoumenos*).⁷¹ Hugh had

⁷⁰ Aquinas, *Super Psalmos* 15. “Et ideo est, quia bonorum meorum non eges. Et hoc est proprium Dei: quia infinitae bonitatis est, et nihil ei addi potest, quia est substantiale bonum ad omnia extendens bonitatem sicut sol lumen, non per participationem, sed per ipsum esse illuminans omnia. Cuilibet autem alii creaturae potest addi, etiam sanctis, et propter hoc aliquid eis accrescit, et ideo aliquo modo indigent nobis: sed Deus solus non indiget bonis nostris: Job 33: porro si iuste egeris, quid donabis ei, aut quid de manu tua accipiet? Hieronymus habet, quoniam bene non est nobis sine te: quasi, ex hoc apparet quia tu es Deus meus, quia tu es bonitas, nec mihi bene est sine te.”

⁷¹ Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* 4.1.693b. (Greek from *Corpus Dionysiacum I*, ed. Beate Regina Suchla [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990], 144; Latin from Aquinas, *In de*

already modified the quote in a way that avoids implying that God does not exercise rationality in his act of creation. Thomas cites this passage elsewhere in his corpus to suggest, most often in the objections, that God acts by natural necessity rather than will. Admittedly, a plain reading of the Areopagite's illustration does seem to imply that creation is brought about by natural necessity—it is merely in virtue of the sun's existence that it sheds light on all that is capable of illumination. Thomas's solution is to interpret "non ratiocinans aut praeligens" as referring to the universality of God's communication of goodness to all created effects rather than to some.⁷² Rather than rehearsing the original wording and then offering his interpretation, in this context, Thomas skips straight to what he takes to be the proper sense of the text.⁷³ Second, we can note the metaphysical point that Thomas makes in explicating what it means to be in need—in virtue of the passive potency for addition in all created things, they can increase and, therefore, are in some sense in need. But there is no sense in which God can increase.⁷⁴ Thirdly, Thomas is aware of an alternative rendering of Psalm 16:2 that he attributes to Jerome, an item which we will return to in the conclusion.

Thomas follows Hugh in verse 3 as well. After noting the unity of will between the Father and the Son, he adds that, inasmuch as he was man, he fulfills the will of the Father. He also reads the *voluntates* as referring to the many wills of Christ:

Moreover, Christ wanted many things: and this was for our benefit [*utilitatem*]. But what did he want? To suffer, to die, and to rise again, in order that we might live. Therefore, he says: God the Father, "he has made wonderful all my desires," that is, has wonderfully fulfilled, "in them," in whom? "Them," in the saints who are in the land, that is, in the Church militant and triumphant.⁷⁵

divinis nominibus 4, lec. 1).

⁷² Aquinas, *De veritate* q. 5, a. 2, obj. 1; q. 23, a. 1, obj. 1; *De potentia* q. 3, a. 15, obj. 1; *In de divinis nominibus* 4, lec. 10; *ST I*, q. 19, a. 4, obj. 1 and ad 1.

⁷³ On the conscious alteration of texts quoted from memory, see Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 111–18.

⁷⁴ See *SCG II*, ch. 25.

⁷⁵ Aquinas, *Super Psalmos* 15. "Christus autem multa voluit: et hoc propter nostram utilitatem. Sed quid voluit? Pati, mori, resurgere, ut nos vivificaret. Dicit ergo: Deus pater, omnes voluntates meas mirificavit, idest mirifice adimplevit, in eis, in quibus? Eis, in sanctis qui sunt in terra ejus, idest in Ecclesia militante et triumphante."

Thomas picks up and ties in the emphasis from verse 2—what Christ wills, he wills not for his own good, but for our benefit. However, the theme is here beautifully refracted through a soteriological lens: the Son, who has no need of our goods, wills to suffer, die, and rise so that we might live. The Father, hearing the voice of his Son, makes wonderful these willings by fulfilling them in his saints, the Church.

To sum up, Thomas's reading of Psalm 16:2 in this context combines the Augustinian interpretive trajectory set by *De doctrina* with a Christological focus. Christ himself is speaking to the Father, confessing that "you have no need of my goods." Moreover, the prosopological reading of the psalm within its broader context brings in distinct theological resonances not always present in Thomas's quotation of the psalm elsewhere.

Thomas's Reception of Psalm 16:2 in De Veritate

In *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 5, Thomas addresses the question of whether the will wills anything necessarily. His argument in the *respondeo* runs as follows: everything that exists has a nature, and everything that has a nature is ordered toward something with necessity. Since the will exists, it has a nature, and therefore tends toward something with natural necessity. Since the proper object of the will is the good, it follows that the will is ordered toward the good with natural necessity.⁷⁶ This natural ordination to the good was understood by Thomas to enable rather than undermine free will. God, the confirmed angels, and the blessed cannot but will the good, and they are not somehow less free than those capable of willing evil. Because of these considerations (and others) Thomas held that *libera voluntas* and natural necessity were compatible.⁷⁷

However, just because the will wills something with necessity, it does

⁷⁶ Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 5, resp. (LE, 22/3/1:623–24). Note, this inclination should not be understood as somehow pre-rational. Properly speaking, the natural inclination of the will is the rationally apprehended good. See Stephen L. Brock, "Natural Inclination and the Intelligibility of the Good in Thomistic Natural Law," *Vera Lux* 6, no. 1–2 (Winter 2005): 57–78.

⁷⁷ This can be the source of some confusion, as Thomas often contrasts acts *per voluntatem* with acts *per necessitatem naturae* (e.g., *SCG* II, ch. 23; III, ch. 99; *ST* I, q. 104, a. 3), which could give the impression that the two are incompatible. However, here and elsewhere, he makes it clear that they are not (see: *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 5, ad sc 1; *De potentia*, q. 10, a. 2, ad 5). Thus, when Thomas argues against views that God creates from natural necessity, his arguments should not be taken to imply that only inanimate natural objects without knowledge or volition act from natural necessity. See Rahim Acar, *Talking about God and Talking about Creation: Avicenna's and Thomas Aquinas's Positions*, Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Science, 58 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), ch. 3.

not follow that everything that is willed is willed with necessity. In the next article, Thomas defines the sense of necessity used here to as that which is “immutably determined to one thing.”⁷⁸ He then lists three senses in which the will is undetermined: with respect to its object, its act, and its ordination to the end. The will is undetermined with respect to its object because there are multiple different means to the final end, and therefore it can will this or that object so long as it is apprehended under the aspect of the good.⁷⁹ The will is undetermined to its act because, for a given object, it always has the power of willing or not willing it.⁸⁰ The ordination to the end is undetermined because objects can be wrongly apprehended—by finite intellects existing in a fallible state of nature—as good which are not in fact good.

He picks up these categories in article 4 of question 23 and further distinguishes between the principal object of the will to which it is ordered by its nature and the secondary objects, which are ordered toward the principal object. The principal object of God’s will is the good, and thus God wills the good with the necessity of natural inclination. Given that God is goodness itself, this is another way of saying that God necessarily wills himself.⁸¹ Nevertheless, God does so freely. However, Aquinas is equally clear that God is not under any necessity concerning any other object. His rationale is grounded in his account of the relation between the means (or the secondary objects) and the end (or the principal object). If the means

⁷⁸ *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 6, resp.: “Quod ex hoc aliquid dicitur esse necessarium, quod est immutabiliter determinatum ad unum.” *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 6, resp. (LE, 22/3/1:627).

⁷⁹ Given the convertibility of being and goodness, everything that exists is good in some respect, and thus can be apprehended under the aspect of the good. See *De veritate*, q. 21, a. 2 (LE, 22/3/1:595–98).

⁸⁰ Thomas’s description of the will as undetermined with respect to its object and act corresponds to what would be later called the freedom of specification and the freedom of exercise. This passage is one of the principal reasons to be wary of claims—first made by Dom Lottin, but then picked up by Bernard Lonergan and others—that Thomas’s account of *liberum arbitrium* underwent significant change from *De veritate* (1256–1259) to *De malo* (1270–1272). For critical assessments of the development thesis, see: Kevin L. Flannery, “Voluntas Aristotelian and Thomistic,” in *Acts Amid Precepts: The Aristotelian Logical Structure of Thomas Aquinas’s Moral Theory* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 111–43; Daniel Westberg, “Did Aquinas Change His Mind about the Will?,” *The Thomist* 58, no. 1 (1994): 41–60.

⁸¹ As Lawrence Dewan points out, God’s willing of himself is not to be taken causally, but rather as “loving himself,” and “delighting in his own being and goodness.” Lawrence Dewan, “St. Thomas, Norman Kretzmann, and Divine Freedom in Creating,” *Nova et Vetera* (English) 4, no. 3 (2006), 495–514, at 504.

are perfectly proportioned to the end—such that without them the end cannot be obtained—if the end is willed necessarily, so is the means.⁸² But if there is more than one means to the desired end, then the agent is presented with alternatives—to will this means or that means depending on the judgment and choice of the agent. We now arrive at the final section of Aquinas's argument and the quotation of the psalm:

Therefore, it is evident that from the love which God has for his goodness, there is no necessity in the divine will with respect to willing this or that concerning a creature; likewise, nor is there any necessity in it with respect to the whole of creation, because the divine goodness is perfect in itself, and would be so even if no creature were to exist, for “he has no need of our goods,” as is said in the Psalm [16:2]. For the divine goodness is not the kind of end that is produced by means to an end, but rather an end in the sense that the things ordered to it are produced and perfected.⁸³

The ultimate ground for Thomas's doctrine of divine freedom vividly expressed here lies in the contingent relation between divine beatitude and the whole of creation.⁸⁴

To summarize, Thomas held that everything that has a nature is necessarily ordered to its proper object. The proper object of the will is the good, and thus all natures with a will—whether human, angelic, or divine—will the good with natural necessity. Since God is goodness itself, he wills himself with natural necessity. Further, everything that exists and that can be the object of the will is either a means to an end or an end itself.⁸⁵ Because nothing external to God—no creation, whether possible or actual—is proportionate to the divine goodness, God possesses the freedom to create this world or that world, or refrain from creating any world whatsoever.⁸⁶ On Thomas's account, saying that God creates out of natural

⁸² *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 4, resp. (LE, 22/3/1:662).

⁸³ *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 4, resp. (LE, 22/3/1:663).

⁸⁴ Commenting on Thomas's argument in this article, John Wippel states that we find here “the key to Thomas's defense of divine freedom,” namely, “the lack of proportion, the lack of any kind of equality between the goodness and perfection of any creature or any number of creatures whether actual or possible and God's infinite goodness and perfection.” John Wippel, “Thomas Aquinas on God's Freedom to Create or Not,” in *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas II* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 232–33.

⁸⁵ Aquinas, *In I sent.* d. 1, q. 4, a. 2, expos.

⁸⁶ More specifically, Thomas held that in virtue of God's self-knowledge of the

necessity implies that creation itself is an adequate object of the divine will—it is the only means for achieving the final end. But this would imply, contrary to the declaration of the psalmist, that God has need of our goods in order to achieve his final end, or, contrary to the Augustinian reading of the text, that creation itself is the final end, and that he enjoys and rests in those things which he has made rather than himself. In short, it would imply an agonistic doctrine of divine beatitude.⁸⁷

Compare Augustine's reflection on God's rest on the seventh day, occurring in the paragraph just before the text Abelard invoked in his axiological argument for a necessary creation:

It should be pointed out also that God's rest, by which He is happy in Himself, had to be revealed to us so that we might understand what the meaning of rest is as applied to us. The truth is that this term describes only that state in which God makes us sharers in the rest which He has in Himself. God's rest, therefore, when rightly understood, is His independence of any need for any good outside Himself. Hence, our unfailing rest is in Him, because we attain happiness in the good that is God, but God does not attain happiness in the good that we are. We are in our measure a good coming from God, who made all things exceedingly good, including ourselves. There is no other good thing apart from God that He did not make, and therefore He needs no good outside of Himself because He needs not the good He has made. This is His rest from all the good works He has wrought.⁸⁸

Note the similarities with *De doctrina* 1.31: God rests in himself, finds happiness in himself, enjoys himself. Further, divine beatitude—God's perfect self-possession and rest in himself—serves as the explanatory grounds for why he does not stand in need of his creation.

infinite number of different ways that creatures could participate in his goodness, there was an infinite hierarchy of increasingly better worlds that God could have created (*ST* I, q. 25, a. 6; *SCG* I, ch. 81).

⁸⁷ For a helpful articulation of the contrast between agonistic accounts of divine beatitude and Thomas's doctrine, see Tyler Wittman, "The Logic of Divine Blessedness and the Salvific Teleology of Christ," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 18, no. 2 (2016): 132–53.

⁸⁸ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram* 4.16.27 (J. H. Taylor trans., 121–22). The relation between Ps 16:2 and this text could be categorized as somewhere between allusion and paraphrase.

Summary of Thomas's Reception of Psalm 16:2

Several facets of Thomas's reading of Psalm 16:2 bear the marks of the text's prior reception history. Its occurrence in Augustine's exposition of God's mode of love for humanity as use rather than enjoyment, as well as his reading of the psalm as a confession of God's perfect beatitude in himself, are both reflected in Thomas's interpretation of the text. This is even more evident when Thomas's exposition of the use/enjoyment motif in distinction 1 of the *Sentences* commentary is taken into account. While he does not reference the psalm in his discussion of the motif, in the exposition he defines the enjoyable as that which has the *ratio* of an end, and the useful as that which has the *ratio* of the means to the end, which is clearly consonant with Thomas's argument in *De veritate*.⁸⁹ At minimum, we can say that Lombard's inclusion of Augustine's use of the psalm in *De doctrina* at the beginning of the *Sentences* ensured continuing reflection on the passage. A bit more speculatively, it seems plausible that his inclusion of the alternative rendering of the use/enjoyment motif from *De Trinitate* would prompt later reflection to bring considerations of volitional agency to bear on the distinction. Hugh's *Postilla* was also influential for Thomas's reading of the psalm in his commentary, where he follows Hugh's juxtapositions of John 17:11, Romans 10:10, and the quote from Dionysus.

Where Thomas appears more innovative, at least with respect to the prior sources surveyed here, was in expanding the logic of Augustine's reading of the psalm to its implications for the doctrine of divine freedom. Augustine's views on divine freedom resist easy classification.⁹⁰ Yet we have seen that Thomas's reading of this psalm runs along the grain of Augustine's thought, perhaps what could be called an instance of Aristotle working in service of Thomas's Augustinianism. Once his metaphysical analysis of the nature of voluntary action is in place, consideration of Augustine's teaching of God's perfect possession of himself as the ultimate end yields

⁸⁹ Aquinas, *In I sent.* d. 1, q. 4, a. 2, expos.

⁹⁰ While some texts suggest that Augustine sees creation as grounded in the divine will and resulting from free choice, others—such as those Abelard invoked—seem to construe creation as necessitated in some way by the divine goodness. Nevertheless, as Ronald J. Teske cautions, the question of whether or not God could have refrained from creating the world was not one that Augustine ever explicitly considered, and therefore considering how he might answer requires some amount of speculation (“The Motive for Creation According to Saint Augustine,” in *To Know God and the Soul: Essays on the Thought of Saint Augustine* [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008], 155–164; see also Robert-Henri Cousineau, “Creation and Freedom: An Augustinian Problem: ‘Quia Voluit’? And/or ‘Quia Bonus’?,” *Recherches Augustiniennes* 2 [1963]: 253–71).

a resolution to the tension surrounding divine freedom in Augustine's corpus.

Thomas's prosopological reading of the psalm in his commentary also underscores the distributed nature of the doctrine of divine freedom. Consider Christ's will to suffer, die, and rise again spoken of in his commentary on Psalm 16:3, where he refers to the same *collatio* of texts as he does in his commentary on Psalm 21: Psalm 39:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; and John 6:38–39. As Piotr Roszak shows in his analysis of Thomas's commentary on Psalm 21 in this symposium, Thomas argues that the efficacy of Christ's passion and death depends on his acceptance of death *willingly*, and not by natural necessity. For Aquinas, the modal status of the divine will with respect to the whole of created reality lies at the foundation not only of creation, but of soteriology as well.

Reading with Thomas Aquinas

How did Thomas arrive at his reading of this psalm? Given the reception history sketched above, it appears plausible that Thomas's reading was informed by Augustine's reflection and interpretation of the text in *De doctrina* 1.31, and mediated by Lombard's inclusion of his reading in the first distinction of the *Sentences*.⁹¹ The extent to which one judges Thomas's reading to be plausible will depend, in part, on prior judgments concerning the role of reception history within scriptural interpretation, and the validity of the exegetical practices that he employed. Space does not allow for an argument in favor of either of these factors. Nevertheless, even granting that the consideration of the reception of the text of Scripture within the Church can help guide our exegesis, and that the current revival of figural interpretation and all that it entails—prosopological and partitive exegesis, juxtapositional reading, and the like—is both good and salutary, there remain three potential obstacles to following Thomas's reading of this psalm.

First, with very few exceptions, English translations do not render Psalm 16:2b as “you have no need of my goods.” The reason lies in differences between the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Old Greek (OG) texts, with the Vulgate following the latter. In the Septuagint (LXX), the clause in verse 2 reads, “*hoti tōn agathōn mou ou chreian echeis*,” which the

⁹¹ I do not intend to make any direct, causal claim here, as if one could draw a clear, unbroken line through these historical vignettes to Aquinas's reading. Rather, if one were to plot an interpretative trajectory of the text beginning with Augustine, given the evidence above, Aquinas's reading would fall more or less within its parameters.

New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS) translates, “because you have no need of my goods.” In contrast, the MT reads “*tôbâtî bāl ‘alêkâ*,” which most English versions translate, “I have no good apart from you.” If one grants priority to the Hebrew over the Greek text, it is not clear that the broadly Augustinian reading built on the LXX/OG is sustainable.

The second difficulty is contextual: even if one judges the Vulgate’s rendering as plausible, the question remains whether the Augustinian interpretive trajectory coheres, or is even consistent, with the surrounding context of the psalm. By this, I do not intend to limit the criteria of contextual coherence to arguments concerning the original human authorial intent, but rather to play by Aquinas’s own interpretive rules laid out in *De potentia*.⁹² The first rule is to not attribute anything obviously false to the teaching of Scripture. The second is to not exclude possible interpretations that are compatible with the *circumstantia litterae*, which, as Boyle puts it, requires that an interpretation more or less fits the words and their context.⁹³

The third difficulty is figural. All of the readings surveyed above identified Christ as the referent and speaker of the psalm. While it is obvious how David can proclaim to the Lord, “You have no need of my goods,” if it is ultimately Jesus who is praying the Psalter, in what sense can the eternal Word say this to the Father?

Turning to the textual difficulty, it is not merely the case that the OG and the MT disagree. There is also considerable variation between other textual traditions.

GREEK

Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus: “Because you have no need of my goods

[*hoti tōn agathōn mou ou chreian echeis*]” (NETS).

Aquila: “My goodness is not upon you [*agathosynē mou ou mē epi se*].”

Symmachus: “My good is not without you [*agathon moi ouk estin aneu sou*].”

Vaticanus: clause is missing.

⁹² Aquinas, *De potentia*, q. 4, a. 1, resp.

⁹³ John F. Boyle, “Authorial Intention and the Divisio Textus,” in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas: Theological Exegesis and Speculative Theology*, ed. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 3–8.

LATIN

Jerome (Gallicana) / Vulgate: “Because you have no need of my goods
[quoniam bonorum meorum non eges].”

Jerome (Hebraicum): “My good is not without you [bene mihi non est
sine te].”

PESHITTA: “And my goodness is from thee.”⁹⁴

TARGUM: “truly my good is not granted except by you.”⁹⁵

Symmachus, Jerome’s Hebraicum, and the Targum supply the negative prepositions “without” or “except,” which has suggested the emendation of *bil’ādēkā*.⁹⁶ Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, and Jerome’s Gallican Psalter read as it appears in Augustine and the later tradition. Aquilla comes the closest to a literal rendering of the MT, the Peshitta lacks a negative particle, and the clause is not present in Vaticanus.

The MT itself does not admit of straightforward interpretation.⁹⁷ The two main difficulties for our purposes are (1) whether *tōbātī* is taken as active (the good done by the speaker) or passive (the good received by the speaker) and (2) the sense of the preposition ‘al, (“over”/“above”/“upon,”), whether *bāl* is read as a negative particle or an assertive. A brief consideration of Jewish reception of the text provides examples for both active and passive senses of *tōbātī*. Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (Rashi) interprets this verse as “my goodness is not incumbent upon you,” meaning God is not obliged to reward him.⁹⁸ Rabbi Joseph Kimhi reads it as active, and

⁹⁴ *The Peshitta Psalter According to the West Syrian Text*, ed. William Emery Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904).

⁹⁵ *The Targum of Psalms*, ed. Martin McNamara, Kevin Cathcart, and Michael Maher, trans. David M. Stec (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2004).

⁹⁶ Roger T. O’Callaghan, “Echoes of Canaanite Literature in the Psalms,” *Vetus Testamentum* 4, no. 1 (1954): 166. O’Callaghan argues against the emendation, suggesting that this may be a case where *bāl* is used as an assertive rather than a negative particle.

⁹⁷ Samuel Terrien notes the obscurity and likely corruption of the text (*The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003], 175); Jacob Leeven goes further, describing verses 2–4 as “baffling,” and in need of “a somewhat drastic operation” to bring it back to health (“Textual Problems in the Psalms,” *Vetus Testamentum* 21, no. 1 [1971]: 48–58, at 52).

⁹⁸ Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, *Rashi’s Commentary on Psalms*, ed. and trans. Mayer I. Gruber, Brill Reference Library of Judaism 18 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 226.

along the same lines as the Vulgate and the LXX/OG: “The good I do is not done to Thee,” meaning that it does not reach Thee (personally), for one cannot dispose for, or help, or give to Thee.”⁹⁹ Rabbi David Kimhi (RaDaK) disagrees with his father and follows Rashi and Moses ben Samuel ha-Cohen as reading *tôbātî* as active.

What can we conclude from these considerations? Minimally, we can say that the LXX/OG and the Vulgate’s reading should not be ruled as entirely incompatible with the Hebrew text. However, particularly when the diversity within the ancient textual traditions is taken into account, neither can an obvious case be made from the LXX/OG to a reconstruction of its Hebrew Vorlage that unambiguously aligns with the Vulgate’s reading. By my lights, the most that could be said is that the text of the psalm cited by Augustine and interpreted throughout the sources surveyed above is compatible with one possible, if not very plausible, rendering of a difficult Hebrew passage. Does this mean that Augustine and the later tradition’s reading of the psalm should be abandoned if one gives authoritative priority to the Hebrew text? Not necessarily.

First, the Septuagint’s reading of this psalm had significant implications for its reception, even within the New Testament canon. In Acts 2:25–28 Luke reports Peter quoting verses 8–11 from the LXX/OG: “I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence” (NRSV). Whereas the Hebrew text could be easily understood as David’s current trust and reliance on God for his present safety, the Septuagint’s use of terms—“in hope” from Greek *ep’ elpidi* versus “in security” from the Hebrew *lābeṭaḥ*; “to see corruption” from the Greek *idein diaphthoran* versus “to see the pit” from the Hebrew *lir’ôt šāḥat*—suggests a postmortem hope.¹⁰⁰ This, in turn, encouraged prosopological readings of this psalm by the early Church as the words of Christ, such as found in Peter’s sermon at Pentecost.¹⁰¹ In short, everyone who affirms Peter’s

⁹⁹ David Kimhi, *The Longer Commentary of R. David Kimhi on the First Book of Psalms (I–X, XV–XVII, XIX, XXII, XXIV)*, trans. R. G. Finch, Translation of Early Documents III: Rabbinic Texts (London: Macmillan, 1919).

¹⁰⁰ This is not to suggest that Peter could not have made his argument without recourse to the Septuagint. See the discussion in I. Howard Marshall, “Acts,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. D. A. Carson and G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 513–607, at 537–39.

¹⁰¹ For an overview of the translational issues and their influence on this psalm’s recep-

reading of the psalm is going to have to deal with some aspect of this worry.

Second, and perhaps more significantly, as noted in his commentary on the Psalms, Thomas was aware of the textual difficulties with this passage. Following his typical practice of interpreting textual variants, his response was to provide a reading of Jerome's text that was consistent with the LXX/OG and the Augustinian interpretive trajectory. Thomas, at least, did not see the alternative version as somehow undermining his reading of the psalm.

Concerning the contextual challenge, the immediate context suggests that Psalm 16:2 is something of an idol polemic. The verses immediately following read:

As for the saints in the land, they are the noble,
in whom is all my delight.
Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;
their libations of blood I will not pour out
or take their names upon my lips.

In contrast to the gods of the nations, the God of Israel does not need to be served by human hands. Aquinas's reading of the text is coherent with this sense and could be understood as a deepening or even radicalization of the idol polemic. It is not merely that the God of Israel is not in need of human servants for food, worship, and glory; he has no need of the entire created cosmos. It is not even possible for him to pass into any kind of need or lack. Particularly when Acts 17 is brought to bear on this psalm, Aquinas reading clearly does not prejudice the *circumstantia litterae*.

Finally, there is the figural challenge with respect to Christ praying the Psalter. Thomas does not explicitly note the apparent incongruity of the Son saying to the Father, "you have no need of my goods." However, Hugh does, and employs partitive exegesis to resolve the tension. As the speaker of this psalm is the Son in his two natures praying to the Father, *meus* is said with reference to Christ in his human nature, which Hugh understands to be displaying the radical humility of the Son. This reading was not entirely innovative—Cassiodorus, for example, in his commentary on the psalm writes: "The Son speaks to the Father in the role of the servant, so that we may realize clearly that in the one person of the Lord there are two natures, the one lowly matching our weakness, the other wonderful in

tion history, see Susan Gillingham, *Psalms Through the Centuries*, Wiley Blackwell Bible Commentaries Series (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018), 105–11.

accord with His power.”¹⁰² Hugh was here following patristic interpretive precedent, and it remains a viable way forward for contemporary interpreters who wish to follow Thomas’s reading of the psalm.

Conclusion

Upon closer inspection, it turns out that Thomas’s citation of the Psalm 16:2 within his argument in *De veritate* was not a thin veneer applied to some other substance of dubious origin. Thomas’s reading ran along the grain of Augustine’s exegesis of the psalm and was informed by the text’s prior reception, aware of the interpretive implications of textual variants, and consonant with the *circumstantia litterae*. A full account of the scriptural shape of Thomas’s doctrine would need to consider a much broader range of texts, but for now, a few preliminary conclusions can be drawn about the implications of this study for biblical Thomism.

First, while Thomas’s exegesis bears the marks of Augustine’s influence, it is equally as clear that he does not merely repeat Augustine’s reading. It is not a mere repristination.¹⁰³ Thomas’s metaphysical analysis of voluntary action is employed to better understand the teaching of the psalm, and in so doing, he further mines the text for its dogmatic implications for divine freedom. This, I think, is instructive for thinking through the role of reception history in the various resourcement projects being undertaken in both Catholic and Protestant theology. Augustine guided Thomas, but he also saw with and beyond him. So similarly, the challenge of biblical Thomism, as I see it, is to adopt this same posture to Aquinas. As Don Collett recently observed, there was no golden era of biblical interpretation, no age that serves as “the pinnacle and consummation of exegetical wisdom,” and as such, we are free to learn from all.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, biblical Thomism is a research program that has promising antidotes to a set of particularly modern exegetical maladies. The challenge is to continually ask how his reading of Scripture might deepen our own, even as we think

¹⁰² Cassiodorus, *Explanation of the Psalms*, ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 161–62.

¹⁰³ The same can be said of Thomas’s Augustinianism in general; “Thomas is an ‘Augustinian’ in the sense that, like all of Augustine’s greatest interpreters, he engages with and elaborates upon Augustine’s insights in a manner that challenges us to think afresh about the realities known and loved by Augustine.” (“Introduction” in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, ed. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007], xxiv).

¹⁰⁴ Don C. Collett, *Figural Reading and the Old Testament: Theology and Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2020), 27.

afresh about the realities to which Scripture points.

Second, Thomas's reading of Psalm 16:2 points to one antidote in particular that attention to Thomas's exegesis can contribute to the broader theological landscape: Thomas's dogged insistence on not separating biblical and speculative theology. In much of contemporary philosophical theology, Scripture is treated either as irrelevant when touching on philosophical questions or useful only for setting up broad philosophical parameters for a range of acceptable views. In both cases, metaphysical considerations have little—if anything—to contribute to the task of reading Scripture. Thomas's exegesis differs sharply from these approaches. As Gilles Emery puts it, “speculative theology is not superimposed on or juxtaposed with the biblical text, but is part and parcel of the biblical reading: it aims at disclosing the doctrinal meaning of the ‘letter,’ the literal sense, of the Gospel.”¹⁰⁵ By practicing just this sort of scriptural and speculative theological reflection, biblical Thomism offers what I take to be a more fruitful approach to the questions facing contemporary theology.¹⁰⁶

N.V.

¹⁰⁵ Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Aran Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 20.

¹⁰⁶ My thanks to Daniel Houck, Nathan Chambers, Peter Highley, and Phil Brown for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay, and especially to Matthew Levering, along with the organizers and participants of the 2019 graduate student conference hosted by the Center for Scriptural Exegesis, Philosophy, and Doctrine at Mundelein Seminary.