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### Franciscan and Dominican Trinitarian Theology (Thirteenth Century): Bonaventure and Aquinas

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### Abstract and Keywords

This article explores Franciscan and Dominican Trinitarian theology during the thirteenth century, focusing on the thoughts of Saint Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas. It underscores the centrality of Trinitarian theology for both theologians and highlights their areas of agreement as well as their distinctive features. It explains that Bonaventure put the good and love at the heart of his account of God and emphasized the primacy of the Father. It highlights Aquinas' understanding of divine persons in terms of subsistent relations.

Keywords: Trinitarian theology, Saint Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, God, Father, divine persons, subsistent relations

It is not unusual in the scholarship for the Trinitarian theologies of Bonaventure (d. 1274) and Aquinas (d. 1274) to be played against each other. That there are significant differences between the two theologies is beyond doubt; there are differences in approach, stress, even particular claims. But, while the differences should not be ignored, the two great thirteenth-century theologians are united in certain basic convictions, not least about the absolute centrality of Trinity for Christian faith and a Christian understanding of reality. Bonaventure is insistent on the point, and scholars have readily accepted his assertion. Hence in the first of the disputed questions *De Trinitate* (a.2 *resp.*), he proclaims Trinity to be the foundation and root of divine cult and of the entire Christian religion, and then specifies how this article of faith informs other truths of the faith, about creation, providence, salvation, and incarnation. Some claiming acquaintance with Aquinas, however, have been more doubtful about his Trinitarian commitments and the shape of his teaching. Several criticisms have been made of the Dominican theologian, sometimes with a nod to the, apparently, more compelling, integrated

teaching of his Franciscan contemporary. To cite but a few of these criticisms: this account of Trinity is too rationalistic and jargon-laden; the intimate connection between the immanent and the economic Trinity has been broken; Aquinas' talk of God over-emphasizes the essence and is relatively inattentive to the persons; the account of Trinity, sophisticated in itself, has inadequately informed the rest of the theology; the Trinitarian teaching is simply too speculative and fails to make a difference in Christian living and practice (Scheffczyk 1995). Aquinas, however, does affirm Trinity, and with (p. 183) Bonaventure affirms the centrality of Trinity; it is hard to see why he too should not be taken at his word. There are, he tells us (*ST* II-II, q.1, a.8, *resp.*), two main categories of articles of faith, the truths revealed by God that are necessary for salvation, for coming, in the next life, to the immediate presence of God and knowing and loving God directly: those about Christ, who is the way to eternal life; and those about God, who is the beginning and end of human existence. There are seven articles, in Aquinas' reckoning, that treat of God. Three have to do with God's activities, in creating, sanctifying, bringing the successful human journeyer to the end of eternal life. One has to do with the unity of the divine essence. The other three are concerned with the persons, who differ in person but are one and the same in divine substance and being. A single article, affirming the distinction and equality, might have sufficed, but for the explicit denial, by the Arians and Macedonians respectively, of the full and equal divinity of the second and third divine persons who truly are God (*ST* II-II, q.1, a.8, ad3). Thus, each of the persons receives an article; what is true about the one God who is three, active in the world, must be affirmed to attain eternal life. An even more striking affirmation of the centrality of the Trinity comes earlier in the *Summa* (*ST* I, q.32, a.1, ad3), and its bluntness is inescapable. By their natural powers, humans are unable to know the triune God, that God is a Trinity of persons. This must be revealed; and God does so reveal God. In this passage, Aquinas is clear about the significance of this self-manifestation. What difference does the revelation by God of God as triune make? It makes possible, Aquinas states, a correct understanding of both creation and salvation. By affirming that God creates by the Word, necessity is removed from creating. Creating is a voluntary activity that is intentional; God freely acts, according to a plan that is the Word. So too the involvement of the Holy Spirit in creating shows that God here acts by love, a love of God's own goodness that God wills in love to share with others. God need not share God's goodness, to be God; that God does, shows God's love for what is not God. And, Aquinas adds, that God is triune enables, and chiefly, a correct understanding of salvation, which is brought about by the incarnation of the Word, who as human is the way to God as beatifying end, and by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Here, Aquinas is invoking the divine missions, which are discussed in *ST* I, q.43 and then at greater length later in the *Summa*, as at I-II, qq.106ff. (of the grace of the Holy Spirit that is the New Law) and III, qq.1-59 (on Christ, the Word become human). For a Christian theologian, creation and salvation are not trivial or incidental matters, but

will stand at the heart of theological work. Trinity, according to Aquinas, is needed for the perceptive handling of these central themes; the subsequent inquiries in the *Summa* will have, then, a Trinitarian cast.

Aquinas and Bonaventure would seem to share a second, fundamental conviction: the affirmation of God as triune is dependent on divine revelation, and so too is theological reflection on the triune God. The two, it is true, advance the claim about the need for revelation in somewhat different terms. In Aquinas, the insistence on divine revelation meshes nicely with his basic epistemology (*ST I*, q.1, aa.1, 9, 10; qq.12–13; q.32, a.1). In this life, knowledge must originate in the senses, and one will be able to come to know what is accessible from that starting point. And so one can come to know that God exists and that God must differ from creatures, not subject to creaturely limitations and pos-  
(p. 184) sessing all perfections in a supereminent way. But what God is in Godself, and in particular that God is triune, transcends the human capacity for knowing. Thus, knowing God is dependent on God's initiative, on God revealing God to human beings, which God does through Scripture. Without that revelation, humans in this life would not know who God is and what God does for them and what God seeks of them, as they move through their affections and acts to God as their God-given end. Bonaventure takes a different tack in arguing the indispensability of divine revelation, invoking the history of salvation as marked by human need, due to sin, and God's redemptive activity (*De Trinitate* q.1, a.2 *resp.*). As made by God, the world does offer testimony to the God that is triune; the world proclaims God in the ways determined by God in God's creative activity. The triune God can be read in the 'Book' of creation. But the intellect has been clouded by sin, and human beings as under sin consequently fail to read this Book correctly; they are thus blind to the witness to the triune God provided by the creation. Thus, for humans to know the triune God, other 'Books' are required. There is the Book of Scripture, which testifies to God. The Old Testament is concerned with being and unity; but there are figures of the triune God even in the Old. The New Testament more openly proclaims the triune God; here, God reveals God, in the process making it possible to read anew the Book of creation correctly. Yet, for the grasping of the scriptural message about God, and so too the correct reading of the world, a further Book is needed, the Book of Life, which is God's inner inspiration by which people are granted faith, and so accept God's self-manifestation in Scripture. Bonaventure is less interested than Aquinas in the epistemological need for divine revelation, but would seem to have room for that: his God, after all, is transcendent mystery, and while there are lesser and better ways of putting the triune God, ultimately this God transcends the ability of reason to fully grasp, in this life. But, in Bonaventure, it is the moral need that comes to the fore: God's revelation of God, and providing of aid in the Book of Life, aims at change in the person, to facilitate the attainment of the end—God—that has been set for people by God. Coming to affirm the triune God, and seeing in reality that God, are essential to the journey to

God, which comes to its term in the next life. Correspondingly, to 'see' God through and in the world or the self requires the proper spiritual disposition, fostered in prayer and humble desire, on the part of the journeyer, a point nicely made in the Prologue to his great spiritual writing, the *Itinerarium*.

God's initiative makes possible the salvific movement to God as end. This initiative likewise for both theologians sets the stage, is the condition, for theological work, not least the discussion of the triune God. There is a tradition-based and tradition-guided enquiry. Again, there are some differences between the two in the understanding of theology. Thirteenth-century Franciscans tend to conceive of theology in primarily practical terms. Just as is Scripture, so the theology made possible by Scripture aims at moral transformation, the furtherance of the movement of the person to God as end. Aquinas for his part thinks that just as sacred doctrine—the body of truths revealed by God that are necessary for salvation—is both practical and speculative (*ST I*, q.1, a.4), so too is the theology that pertains to it. By accepting in faith the God who is both beginning and end, and thinking correctly of that God, one will be led to action that is desired by God (p. 185) and conducive to reaching the end that is God. Theology thus is practical. But it is also speculative, mirroring the knowing that God has of God and that is the root of sacred doctrine, and anticipating that knowing, now held by the blessed (*ST I*, q.1, a.2, *resp.*), that will be granted at the term of the journey, in the next life. Yet, despite such difference in characterizing the point of theology, for both Bonaventure and Aquinas, theology remains 'faith seeking understanding'. Through one's theological meditation and argument, one is seeking a firmer understanding of truths that are crucial to one's being and operation. For that seeking, there must be a faith, in objective terms; and the truths of faith are revealed by God, in Scripture. Scriptural revelation is the foundation of all theological work, and, in ways appropriate to their different writings, Scripture will provide the touchstone. In addressing the scriptural witness, neither theologian is on his own. In his reading and rendering of the scriptural witness, each is aided by those who have come before: the Church, in its conciliar determinations; the doctors or Fathers of the Church, whose skill in interpreting and exploring and defending God's revelation has been acknowledged by the believing community; other theologians, including more recent theologians, who aspire to grasp and transmit saving truth; the philosophers, whose principal occupation lies elsewhere than sacred doctrine and theology, but whose insights and analyses may be useful, when appropriated and adapted by the theologian, in proclaiming and clarifying and defending Christian truth (*ST I*, q.1, a.8, ad2; *Breviloquium*, Prologue; Part One, chs. 1–2). As it happens, Aquinas and Bonaventure tend to favour different theologians and parts of the tradition in their particular Trinitarian discussions. But, for both, doing theology is a communal affair, and their theologies are possible only by virtue of Scripture and the mediating tradition. In discussing the triune God, they each are trying to do justice to what God has revealed

about God, to what the Church has proclaimed through the centuries about the three-personed God. The ancient faith of the Church was known in the thirteenth century, and was still vibrant, and cherished. That faith, as delineated in the formative centuries of the Christian movement, and nicely restated more recently, at Lateran IV (1215), acknowledges both unity and substantial identity, and personal distinction and proper qualities (Tanner 1990: 230); one without the other will distort the reality that is the Christian God. Both Aquinas and Bonaventure strive mightily, each in his own way, to offer balanced accounts of God.

## **Bonaventure**

Bonaventure offers extended discussions of the triune God in several of his writings. Among the chief discussions are the *Commentary* on the first book of the Lombard's *Sentences*; the disputed questions on the Trinity (1255); the *Breviloquium*, Part One, chs. 2–6 (1257); and the *Itinerarium*, ch. 6 (1259). The *Commentary* on the *Sentences* follows the Lombard's order and contains (in I, dist. 2–34) a detailed presentation on Trinity, articulating Bonaventure's most typical insights. There are eight disputed questions on (p. 186) the Trinity, looking in turn at divine existence, unity, simplicity, infinity, eternity, immutability, necessity, and primacy. Each of the first seven questions falls into two articles. In a first article, he will reflect on an attribute, and in the second, make the appropriate Trinitarian comments, showing the compatibility of a given attribute with Trinity, indeed, its instantiation. The discussion is as a rule sophisticated, and more nuanced and advanced than that found in the *Commentary* on the *Sentences* or in the *Breviloquium*, playing up the thorny issues of Trinitarian discourse and for the most part assuming the basics of Trinitarian theology. The *Breviloquium* is meant to be a summary of theology for the benefit of newcomers to the discipline. It treats its topics briskly, in the process hitting on the high notes of theology. In the discussion of Trinity, Bonaventure announces three main questions which he considers in turn: how the unity of the divine substance and nature can coexist with a plurality of persons; how the unity of the divine substance and nature can coexist with a plurality of manifestations; how the unity of the divine substance and nature can coexist with a plurality of appropriations. In treating the first of these questions (Part One, chs. 2–4), Bonaventure introduces the most important Trinitarian terminology (emanations; hypostases; relations; characteristics or notions; personal properties) and, in reviewing basic rules of predication when it comes to God, is attentive to the need for precision in stating the triune God. In the *Itinerarium*, the discussion of Trinity, scattered throughout the work, is most intense in the sixth chapter. In the fifth, he has reflected on the name of God, Being,

revealed in the Old Testament. In the sixth, he turns to that, Good, revealed in the New Testament.

The Good is central to Bonaventure's discussion of the triune God. Bonaventure invokes the Good in treating God's activities *ad extra*. Echoing Pseudo-Dionysius (e.g. *De caelestia hierarchia*, ch. 4; *De divinis nominibus*, ch. 4), Bonaventure notes that it pertains to the good to diffuse itself, to share its goodness or perfection with others. Hence, in creating, in bringing into existence and sustaining what is not God, God is sharing with creatures God's goodness. God is free of any necessity to create; God would be God even if there were no universe of creatures. But, as good, indeed the ultimate goodness, it is wholly in keeping with, compatible with, God's nature to bring others into existence. Thus, God creates, in a voluntary, non-necessitated act. That God is good also shapes the treatment of salvation, and of the incarnation that facilitates the attainment of God's salvific end for human beings. God wills to share the good that is God with those who are not God. God has set God as the end of human existence. God offers, as the end of human beings, the possibility of full communion with God, of coming to know and love, directly, the good that is God. And, to make reaching that end possible, God gives of Godself, entering into the world and taking up all that pertains to human being into a union that is personal and hypostatic. Again, there is no necessity for God to save or to become incarnate; but such are reflective of God's goodness. For Bonaventure, as for other medieval theologians (including Aquinas), there is an intimate link between goodness and love. Loving is the highest form of good and is a sharing of goodness. And so creating and saving and becoming incarnate all testify to God's love for what is not God. In the way appropriate to each of these activities, God shows God's love, because God is good.

(p. 187) The account of the inner life of the Trinity too revolves around love and the good (e.g. *In I Sent.*, dist. 2, a.unicus, q.4, conclusion; *Itinerarium* 6.2). Several basic features of love are pertinent to the presentation of the triune God. Love is not self-contained; it has to do with another. To love is to give of oneself, to another. It is to share oneself with that other. Love is also mutual: it involves the love of that other in return. And true love involves more than the two; it will bring in a third, who is loved by the two. The two in their perfect love share themselves with a third, who so unites them fully. With respect to God, the relations that are constitutive of the divine persons are figured in terms of love. In the Father's loving self-giving, the Son is generated; the Son loves the Father in return; and in the perfection of their mutual love, there is a third, the Holy Spirit, with whom they share themselves, in their love.

Origin is important in this meditation on the divine persons. The Son is generated by the Father, arises from the Father. The Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, receiving from both. The Father, however, is innascible, does not arise from another; the Father is of himself. On this basis, the Father enjoys a fundamental primacy (e.g. *In I*

*Sent.*, dist. 27, pars 1, a.unicus, q.2, ad3; dist. 28, a.unicus, qq.1-4; *De Trinitate* q.8, conclusion; *Breviloquium*, Part One, ch. 3, 7). Now, from Aristotle (*Posterior Analytics* I, ch. 2) and the *Liber de causis*, we know that what is more prior is more productive of being. And so, to the 'negative' aspect of the Father (namely, the Father does not arise from another) Bonaventure adds the more positive description, that the Father possesses a fontal plenitude. It is out of this fullness that the Father generates the Son; that the Father does so is fully in keeping with the Father's underived goodness; this generating is for such a one necessary. There are different sorts of emanation, as, again, Aristotle reminds us (*Metaphysics* 6.22). This emanation can be termed in the manner of nature (*per modum naturae*), in the Father's full communication of what belongs to the Father to the Son, in generation. Another emanation is found in the spiration of the Holy Spirit. This is *per modum voluntatis*, and is a matter of liberality, more of the will (with the nature accompanying) (*Breviloquium*, Part One, ch. 3, 2; *In I Sent.*, dist. 2, a.unicus, q.4, conclusion; dist. 10, a.1, qq.1-3). In their mutual love, Father and Son bring to be the third that is the Holy Spirit, sharing themselves with this shared term of their love. The Son is the beloved of the Father, the Holy Spirit the co-beloved of the Father and the Son.

In his discussion of the emanations and relations, Bonaventure is attentive to the attributes of divinity. Perfection, eternity, unity, and simplicity might be mentioned here. God is utterly perfect, and eternally so. And thus there is no discursiveness in God, and God is not subject to time. Emanation is an eternal act, and there is no 'time' when the Son, who is generated by the Father, is not. Nor can that act be distinguished into constituent parts, falling into some sort of sequence. So too of the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son in their mutual loving; the Spirit eternally is, as are the Father and the Son. The communication in each of these emanations is total; all that belongs to God the Father in the Father's divinity is given, without loss to the Father, to the Son who is generated; all that pertains to the first two persons as divine is communicated to the Holy Spirit. The three persons are coeternal and equal (e.g. *In I Sent.*, dist. (p. 188) 19). God's perfection might also be cited to explain why there are only the two eternal emanations in God. To posit others would be superfluous, and even impious; generating the Son, the Father communicates to the Son all that the Father is, and there is no need for further, additional emanation of this sort. So too the spiration by the Father and the Son of the Holy Spirit is complete, fully constitutive of this divine person; there is no need for another spirit. God is also one and simple. In generating the Son in the self-giving love that expresses the fecundity of the Father, the Father is not bringing another being into existence. The Son eternally is; and is of the same being, and substance, as the Father. There are differences in God, marked by talk of persons, but these differences are not absolute. The Father is not the Son; but they, and the Holy Spirit, are the same God. The three persons, different from each other but always in fundamental relation, are each identical with one and the same divine essence. What is

generated, what proceeds, does not go 'outside' of God but each stands in eternal relation to its Principle. What emanates is intrinsic and immanent.

Through his careful rendering of the divine emanations in terms appropriate to God, Bonaventure is able to allege the parallel between the inner life of the triune God and God's work *ad extra*, without confusing the two. In both, love and good predominate; and God's work in the creation mirrors and is rooted in the inner dynamic of the triune God. God's communication of good to creatures echoes, in accordance with God's creative plan, the eternal generation and spiration; this is why creaturely effects can act sacramentally, pointing beyond themselves to, and so proclaiming, the triune God who is their source and end. But divine emanation is not a creative act. God brings creatures into existence and sustains and guides them by God's will. However much, by the divine intention, creatures look like God, no creature is God; there is always an ontological distance between Creator and creature. The Father is the principle of the Son, but is not the creator of the Son; the Son is not a creature, but is God, one who arises from the Father and who eternally stands in full relation to the Father, who is Father because of the Son. The emanations characteristic of divinity and creation are of fundamentally different orders.

As testified to by Scripture and the tradition, the second divine person is known by several names proper to this person: Son, Image, Word (*Breviloquium*, Part One, ch. 3, 8; *In I Sent.*, dist. 27, pars 2). Each of these names helps to manifest important features of the second person. 'Son' underscores that the Father's generating is personal, and that what is generated is of one and the same nature as the Father. 'Image' points to the extent of the communicating in this generation. The second person receives, and fully, the divine nature; the second person who is Image also receives from the Father what pertains to the Father as that divine person. While the second person is not innascible, the second divine person does receive from the Father the Father's productive power, such that the second person is principle, with the Father, of the third. The name 'Word' has a more intellective flavour. It discloses that this person expresses the Father, what the Father is and knows. And, on that basis, this person also stands as the model or exemplar of the creation, of all that is brought into existence as a mark of God's communication of God's goodness *ad extra*. All things that are made are made according to the second (p. 189) divine person, in accordance with God's plan for the wise communication of God's goodness outside of God.

The third divine person also has several names (*Breviloquium*, Part One, ch. 3, 9; *In I Sent.*, dist. 10, a.2, q.1 *resp.*; dist. 18, a.unicus, q.5, ad4). The Holy Spirit has the personal name of 'Love', for the Spirit is produced by the joint loving of the Father and the Son, sharing their love with this third. As such, the Spirit is also 'Bond', the eternal, personal



result of the loving of these others. And, since that loving reflects the liberality of God, linked to the will of God, the third person is also termed the 'Gift', the first of all gifts who as fully God is the basis, and model, for all gifts given to those who are not God. The Spirit, however, is not 'Image', as the Son is Image; for the Spirit is eternally produced by a joint activity, not by the Father alone. And so the Holy Spirit lacks the generative power that the Father eternally communicates with the Son. The Spirit is in this sense purely receptive.

Bonaventure's description of the primacy of the Father is perhaps his most innovative Trinitarian move. It also occasioned some controversy. Why is the first divine person the Father? Here, paternity, the personal characteristic of the Father, is surely relevant. The Father is the Father because of generation. But Bonaventure also observes the fontal plenitude of the Father, which pertains to the Father as first; and this seems, logically, to be prior to, apart from, generating. It is because of this primal fullness, as unoriginated, that this person can/must generate. Relation, then, would only provide a partial account for the person. The first person would be Father in a lesser sense (due to the primal fullness), and then logically in a fuller sense, because of generation (Hayes 1979: 42; Friedman 2010: 28–30). The richness of Bonaventure's talk of the primacy of the Father in terms of plenitude might be offset by this relativization of paternity.

Bonaventure drew on several different sources in constructing this imposing Trinitarian theology (Hayes 1979: 13–24; Calisi 2008: 27–34). The twelfth-century theologian Richard of St Victor, in his *De Trinitate* 3, had anticipated him in rooting the discussion of Trinitarian relations and the divine persons in an analysis of love and its modes; so too Richard shared with Bonaventure the affirmation, on this basis, of necessity, that a plurality of divine persons is necessary, and precisely three divine persons. Richard too had linked love and the good, but did not invoke the Pseudo-Dionysian 'good as self-diffusive' in explicating the triune God. That move was made subsequently, by Bonaventure's Franciscan predecessors, by Alexander of Hales in his *Gloss* on the *Sentences* and in the collaborative *Summa fratris Alexandri* (Hayes 1979: 20; 21–2). The *Summa fratris Alexandri* also anticipated Bonaventure in his use of the two kinds of emanation (*per modum naturae*; *per modum liberalitatis* and will) to distinguish Son and Spirit (Mathieu 1992: 28–34). Philosophy too has made its contribution. The insight that what is more prior is more fecund goes back to Aristotle, and more clearly to the *Liber de causis* (propositions 1, 17); so too the identification of kinds of emanation has an Aristotelian inspiration. Yet, while the significant features of this theology have important antecedents and the teaching is 'Franciscan', there is a scholarly consensus that Bonaventure marks an advance on what has been accomplished previously, in his thoroughness and methodical application of the governing insights (Mathieu 1992: 16–17; Hayes 1979: 22–3).

## Aquinas

Aquinas discusses the Trinity at length in several of his writings. He devotes considerable space in the systematic writings to an *ex professo* account of Trinity. Thus, he addresses Trinity in the first book of his *Commentary* on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, which he prepared as a student at the University of Paris, making use of the commentaries of Albert the Great and of Bonaventure and, among other things, suggesting how the acts of God *ad extra* are patterned on the inner activities of Trinity (Emery 1995); in the final book of the *Summa contra Gentiles*; and in the *Summa theologiae*, *Prima Pars*. He also treats Trinity at length in writings of other genres; these writings can nicely complement what is found in the systematic writings. Thus, for example, there is a series of questions devoted to Trinity in the disputed questions *De Potentia* (roughly contemporary with the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa*); and Aquinas offers a rich teaching in his great *Commentary* on John. In what follows, the focus is on the *Summa contra Gentiles* and *Summa theologiae* (ST).

Granted the scholarly debate about occasion and genre, the *Summa contra Gentiles* is best characterized as a work in Christian wisdom (Gauthier 1993). As suggested by the opening citation of Prov. 8:7 ('my mouth shall meditate truth, and my lips shall hate impiety'), the *Summa contra Gentiles* reviews the main truths of the Christian faith, exploring their meaning and coherence, while also distinguishing these truths from other versions of wisdom. An alternative title for the entire work helps to convey the double movement of the work, to proclaim and defend: *Liber de veritate catholicae fidei contra errores infidelium*. 'Unbelief' can take different expressions, and so those against whom Aquinas argues while teaching Christian wisdom will differ from case to case: at times philosophers, who have fallen short in this regard or that of some aspect of the faith, at others, heretics who share some but not all of the orthodox faith. Aquinas organizes the four books of the *Summa contra Gentiles* according to the distinction between the articles and the preambles of faith (*Summa contra Gentiles* I, chs. 1–9). Both are revealed by God and are tied to salvation; the articles transcend reason and must be held by faith; the preambles are open to demonstration, but are revealed since they can be attained by argument only after a long time, and only by a few, and then with error admixed in. While the articles cannot be demonstrated, they are not contrary to reason (although above it), and one can think about them, plumb their meaning, and try to obtain a greater sense of them. The first three books are devoted to the preambles; the final to the articles, covering Trinity, incarnation, sacraments, and the end things. The doctrine of God, consequently, is distributed across several books: that God exists and what God is/is not is found in book one; God's creative and providential activity are treated in the second

and third books; the Trinity, with the continuation of the discussion (p. 191) in the account of Christ, is examined in the fourth. Each successive part of the discussion of God presupposes what has come before, while contributing to the overall doctrine. It is the same God, the Christian God, who is discussed throughout.

Aquinas discusses Trinity in Bk. IV, chs. 2–26 (chs. 27–55 look at the incarnation of the second divine person and its salvific payoff). The Trinitarian chapters fall into two main parts: chs. 2–14 are on the second divine person, chs. 15–25 on the Holy Spirit (ch. 26 offers a fine summary of Christian teaching, affirming the three persons who are equal in their divinity, rehearsing more methodically the technical language of procession and relation and notion that has been employed at points in the preceding chapters). The discussion of the second person itself falls into two sections, each prosecuting particular tasks of a Trinitarian theology. Chs. 2–9 revolve around the scriptural evidence, taking into account divergent readings of Scripture, offered by certain heretics (Photinus, Sabellius, the Arians). Scripture proclaims a generation in God and insists that what is generated is truly God. The heretics have failed to read Scripture correctly: Sabellius denies distinction in God and thinks that the names of ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ simply mark different moments in the activities of an, in effect, one-personed God; the Arians grant distinction, but equate the difference between Father and Son to that in effect between the creator God and creatures. The virtue of the orthodox formulation (the one God who is distinct in persons) is brought into relief by showing how the different heresies fail in their reading of Scripture. Chs. 10–14 approach the second person in relation to the first from a different angle. Ch. 10 raises objections to the orthodox teaching: even if it fairly renders Scripture, there are profound difficulties with that teaching; the objections reported in ch. 10 would seem to be insinuating the rational appeal of the heresies previously treated (even if they are defective readings of Scripture, don’t they nonetheless make more sense than the orthodox teaching?). Aquinas will answer these objections, and in the process make the orthodox case, in ch. 14. In the intervening chapters (11–13) he sets up that final chapter, showing the plausibility of what orthodox Christians, on the basis of Scripture as read and determined by the Church, proclaim about God. How is generation in God to be taken (ch. 11)? After considering different types of generation, Aquinas identifies the most suitable parallel as found in intellectual generation, and in particular, in one’s thinking of oneself, in which one forms a ‘word’ of oneself. He then painstakingly suggests how this would play out in God, taking into account the analyses offered in the first book. All perfections are to be affirmed of God; they are to be affirmed of God in a way proper to God; all imperfections, found in creatures, are to be denied of God. There is, in short, a grammar of divinity; and in the Trinitarian discussions, Aquinas observes that grammar. The upshot is that intellectual generation in God, by which the one spoken is distinguished from the one who speaks, is portrayed as a single, eternal act, in which the Word who is spoken possesses real being

and indeed the same being as the Father. The Word is different from the Father, but does not proceed outside of God; the two stand in real relation, and the being of the two is the same. Each is identical with the divine essence, while different from each other. The relations constitutive of Father and second person, on the basis of the eternal intellectual generation, are subsistent.

(p. 192) With the tradition, Aquinas knows of different names proper to the second person. Earlier in his career, he had tended to prefer that of 'Son', which nicely conveys personhood as well as identity in nature. By the time of the *Summa contra Gentiles*, he tends to play up that of 'Word', as this chapter underscores, corresponding to the manner of generation by which the second person eternally is (Paissac 1951). He can also employ the name 'Image' with facility: since God's knowing of God is perfect, the Word who is eternally formed by the Father is a perfect representation of the Father, the Image of the Father. The Word manifests the Father and can reveal the Father to others. And the Word of the Father is thus, in a distinctive way, the Wisdom of God; Aquinas will exploit this in his account of creation, as well as in a subsequent discussion of the fittingness of this divine person becoming incarnate for the purpose of human salvation (*cf. Summa contra Gentiles* IV, chs. 12 and 42) (Wawrykow 1998).

In the subsequent presentation of the third person, Aquinas is again intent on stating orthodox teaching succinctly and in linking that formulation to the scriptural witness. The Holy Spirit is distinct in person and one in being and substance with the Father and the Word; this is what Scripture affirms. Heresy (in particular, that that denies fully divinity to the Spirit) is invoked, to make clearer orthodox teaching by contrast, and rebutted, as a faulty reading of Scripture. Aquinas devotes considerable effort to the scriptural presentation of the activities of the Spirit, to gird the case for full divinity. He also brings in the *Filioque*, which with Bonaventure he affirms, although in different terms (*Summa contra Gentiles* IV, chs. 24 and 25; Emery 1996). He alleges several reasons for saying that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both persons, is spirated by Father and the Word, including the need to distinguish between the second and third persons. Given the identity of intellect and will in God, if the Spirit proceeded from the Father alone, then there would be no reason not to term this person a Son; yet there is only one Son. Both Father and Son are involved in spiration, in the love of God's goodness that eternally gives rise to the Spirit; and there is a logical priority of the Word's generation. Love proceeds from a word; humans are able to love nothing but that which a word of the heart conceives (*Summa contra Gentiles* IV.24.12); the same holds in God. In teaching *Filioque*, Aquinas asserts a continuity with the fourth and fifth ecumenical councils, as well as with the great doctors of the faith, both east and west (*Summa contra Gentiles* IV. 24.5-6).

While presenting materially the same teaching, the *Summa theologiae* differs from the *Summa contra Gentiles* in several respects. First, Aquinas no longer uses the preambles of faith-articles of faith distinction to structure the entire work. Thus, what is distributed over several books in the *Summa contra Gentiles* is now found in the Prima Pars of the *Summa theologiae*: the unity and essence of God; the Trinity of persons; the creative activity of the triune God. Second, Scripture figures differently in the *Summa theologiae*. Aquinas is still dependent on scriptural revelation: apart from God's self-disclosure, one would not know that God is triune. But Aquinas is not intent in the *Summa theologiae* to show how dogmatic formulation is rooted in Scripture; that task of the *Summa contra Gentiles* (as in Bk. IV, chs. 2–9) is here taken as given. A third difference comes in the depth and extent of the *Summa's* analysis. The *Summa contra Gentiles* is much more (p. 193) limited in scope, keeping to what is basic in the presentation of Christian truth, including Trinity. In its discussion, the *Summa theologiae* goes into much greater detail and the process is meticulous and precise.

In treating what belongs to the Trinity of persons in God, Aquinas follows what he deems the order of doctrine, beginning with the processions (q.27) and then relations (q.28) and then person (qq.29ff.); this is to reverse the order of knowing, in which person is revealed first, but is in keeping with the pedagogical aim of the *Summa theologiae*, as announced in its brief Prologue. The discussion of person falls into two main sections, as suggested by the transitional paragraph at the head of q.29: Aquinas first considers the persons absolutely, and then in comparative terms. In terms of the first section (qq.29–38), the general consideration of the persons involves four points: the meaning of the word 'person' (q.29); the number of the persons (q.30); what is involved in the number of the persons or is opposed thereto, as diversity and similitude and the like (q.31); and what belongs to the knowledge of the persons (q.32). A series of questions is then devoted to the persons singly: to the Father (q.33); to the second person, who is Son, Word (q.34) and Image (q.35); to the third, who is called Holy Spirit (q.36), Love (q.37), and Gift (q.38). In the second main section devoted to the persons (qq.39–43), Aquinas looks at what concerns the person in relation to the essence (q.39), to the properties (q.40) and notional acts (q.41), and then as compared to one another, first with regard to equality and likeness (q.42) and then with regard to mission (q.42).

The opening questions (27 to 29), on procession, relation, and person, are foundational, setting the tone for the rest of the discussion of Trinity. One begins with these since the divine persons are distinguished from each other according to the relations of origin. Questions 27 to 29 are brisk and adept. There are two eternal processions in God: the intellectual generation of the Word, and the procession which is the spiration of the Holy Spirit. The relations (paternity, sonship, spiration, and procession) are real, and distinguish the persons. But, as is proper to God, they are identical with the divine

essence. This allows Aquinas to portray correctly 'person' as used of God. As Boethius says, 'person' is an individual substance of a rational nature. In God, relations are constitutive of the persons. While in creatures relation is an accident, in God relation is taken substantially. In God, there is no real distinction between essence and *esse* (*ST* I, q. 3, a.4); and since the relations are identical with the divine essence, their being is not accidental. In God, person denotes subsistent relation (*ST* I, q.29, a.4, *resp.*). Previous questions in the treatise on God, dealing with what is common in the Christian God, have prepared well for the discussion of divine persons.

Organization is indeed Aquinas' forte, and he has constructed a teaching on God that is comprehensive and precise, leading to fresh insight into the Christian God, in the service of Christian faith. While sharing much with Bonaventure's theology—the basic terminology of Trinitarian discourse, as this had emerged over the centuries; the linking of the immanent and the economic Trinity; the stressing of God's salvific intention as the beginning and end of reflecting on Trinity—Aquinas' account of the Christian God (p. 194) takes a distinctive shape. The pace is measured as he unfolds that teaching, moving from what the persons hold in common, to the persons themselves, including in their individuality, to the creative and salvific activities of the triune God in the world. Aquinas favours, as well, different authorities; as in the discussion of the processions in terms of rational activities, the debt to Augustine is more pronounced and obvious. Aquinas has, finally, shied away from what is likely the most distinctive feature of Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology. Without naming Bonaventure, Aquinas rejects the parsing of innascibility in terms of fecundity; for him, innascibility simply means that the Father is not from another (*ST* I, q.33, 4, ad1). And although Aquinas certainly invokes the Dionysian insight into the self-diffuseness of the good when it comes to the action of God *ad extra*—witness his argument for the plausibility of the second person becoming incarnate (*ST* III, q.1, a.1, *resp.*)—he does not use that saying to portray the inner life of the Trinity, preferring to base the distinction of the persons who are God exclusively in subsistent relations.

## **Suggested Reading**

The following are recommended: Emery (1995; 1998; 2007); Hayes (1979): 13–103; Mathieu (1992).

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