

## Nature, Grace and the Eucharistic Foundation of *Fides et Ratio*

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*In 1993, Donald J. Keefe, S.J. was asked by the Vatican to offer a critical response to a document on the relation between faith and philosophy then being prepared by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and which would later form the core of Pope John Paul II's encyclical, Fides et Ratio. Chief among the points Keefe made was that any metaphysics adequate to Catholic faith would have to keep Christ at the center. This paper provides a brief study of the texts to which Keefe refers in his observation that even Aquinas found himself having to undertake a revision of his earlier view of the grace of faith as an Aristotelian accident after being alerted during his first Italian period (1259–1268) to the teaching of the Second Council of Orange.*

Late in 1993, Donald Keefe, S.J. was among a number of theologians who were asked to respond to a preliminary draft of a document that was being prepared by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the topic of faith and philosophy. Five years later this document had come to maturity as Pope John Paul II's encyclical letter, *Fides et Ratio*. Very little of the draft's actual content can be inferred from Keefe's report which was forwarded to the Congregation. It is clear, though, that like the letter, the draft took particular interest in the role philosophy can play in shaping culture, holding it from sliding into a sense of nihilism. It stressed how important it is that philosophy guide the human quest for truth beyond the material world into the realm of the transcendent. Like the letter, the draft noted that the work of Catholic theology cannot proceed without the assistance of a properly developed philosophy of being, of knowledge and of language. Perhaps the draft even anticipated the letter's hope that Christian philosophers might inspire in their secular colleagues a new appreciation for the Western intellectual tradition in its entirety, and a return to the critical work of metaphysics. Certainly Pope John Paul's high regard for the discipline of philosophy is on full display in his opening line: "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (cf. Ex. 33:18; Ps. 27:8–9; 63:2–3; Jn. 14:8; 1 Jn. 3:2)." In his densely written report extending more than forty pages, Keefe's primary concern is to sound a single note of caution: that in the effort to open a dialogue between believers and unbelievers based on a common pursuit of the intellectual life, sight not be lost of the pivotal truth theology in the twentieth century had gained, or maybe regained, namely the central place of Christ in all of created reality.

The problem, Keefe writes, is that the systematic analyses constructed by even Catholic philosophy prove unable to accommodate the centrality of Christ. Take as an example the work of Thomas Aquinas. According to the categories of Thomas' Aristotelian approach, the grace of Christ comes to the human person as an accidental property of a substance, the person, who is said to have a "positive potency" for it. Or put differently, it belongs to the nature of the person to have the possibility of possessing grace, and when the grace is provided, that possibility is

realized; just as we say that our skin has the potential for being cold, and when we apply ice to it, the potential is actualized. Yet grace is supposed to be entirely free, arising out of the beneficence of God, without any prior conditions or prior possibilities that he is merely fulfilling. And having been bestowed, in contrast to an accidental property, grace is thought to have an intrinsic, defining relation to the person. None of which is to claim that Thomas intended to place Christ anywhere else but at the heart of creation. But it does mean that this placement rested uneasily within the structure of Thomas' system; a point that is nowhere more clear than in his teaching on the gift of faith.

As early as Dominic Soto in the sixteenth century, commentators have noted that Thomas' explanation of the conversion to faith in his *Summa theologiae* differs markedly from what one finds in such earlier writings as the *Sentences* and *De veritate*.<sup>1</sup> Before, as Max Seckler summarized it, Thomas spoke of faith as consent to accept the preached gospel as true, once the value of the gospel, whose content attracts the will, has in a sense been "verified" by reason.<sup>2</sup> In the *Summa*, however, one encounters a decided shift. In response to the question whether it is meritorious to believe, Thomas answers that the act of mind involved in faith is not like that involved when a conclusion has been rationally proven, in which case the mind cannot not assent. Faith is an intellectual act made by one assenting to the divine truth, at the command of the will. That is why the act, freely chosen, and directed toward God, is said to be meritorious. But by the same token, even if the act is made at the command of the will, it is not that the person has no reasons for believing. For first, there is the fact that what one is assenting to is the teaching of God himself. Second, this teaching is confirmed by the evidence of miracles. And third, Thomas states, and more important still, there is "the interior instinct of God inviting."<sup>3</sup> This is the first time Thomas mentions the notion of a divine, interior instinct to faith; and he adds that in faith, the commanding will is "moved by God through grace."<sup>4</sup>

What accounts for the change? Apparently it is the fact that during Thomas' first stay in Italy (1259–1268), after he had composed the *Sentences*, he somehow became aware of the documents of the Second Council of Orange (529) condemning what is referred to as Semi-Pelagianism, the teaching that if grace is needed to reach perfection, nonetheless one is able to prepare oneself, and to independently choose, to receive grace.<sup>5</sup> He had essentially taken this

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Blackfriars, 60 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill; London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964–1975), vol. 31, trans. and ed. T. C. O'Brien, 166, n. f.

<sup>2</sup> See the critical review of Max Seckler's *Instinkt und Glaubenswille nach Thomas von Aquin* (Mainz, 1962) by E. Schillebeeckx, O.P., *Revelation and Theology*, vol. 2, trans. N. D. Smith (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), 34–5.

<sup>3</sup> "Dicendum quod ille qui credit habet sufficiens inductivum ad credendum: inducitur enim auctoritate divinae doctrinae miraculis confirmatae, et, quod plus est, interiori instinctu Dei invitantis." 2–2, q. 2, a. 9, ad 3. All quotations of the *Summa* are taken from the Ottawa edition (basically the Piana text of 1570), 5 vols., 1941–45.

<sup>4</sup> "Ipsum autem credere est actus intellectus assentientis veritati divinae ex imperio voluntatis a Deo motae per gratium, et sic subiacet libero arbitrio in ordine ad Deum." 2–2, q. 2, a. 9, c.

<sup>5</sup> Max Seckler observed that the word *instinctus*, which Thomas first uses in connection with faith following this period in Italy, is found both in the Church documents treating Semi-Pelagianism and in Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* 7. 14. 1248a 14 (known to Thomas by its inclusion in the anonymous compilation, *Liber de bona fortuna*) to which one now finds Thomas referring in connection with Pelagianism. See Schillebeeckx, op. cit., 36–7 and T. C. O'Brien, op. cit., 98, n. i.

very position in the *Sentences* when he wrote: "from free will alone a person can prepare himself to have sanctifying grace; for by doing what is in himself, he attains to grace from God."<sup>6</sup> Now in the *Summa* he explicitly rejects both it and the Pelagians. The Pelagians knew, Thomas writes, that neither preaching nor miracles nor argumentation of any sort is in itself sufficient to bring one to faith, since two people can hear the same argument and one will believe while the other will not. Rather some other cause must be at work. Thomas notes, "This cause, the Pelagians posited, is the free decision of the person alone, and thus they said that the beginning of faith lies with us, inasmuch as we prepare ourselves to assent to the things that belong to faith, while the perfection of faith is the work of God since he proposes to us the things we are to believe. But this is false." On the contrary, the content of faith goes beyond our nature, and so what is required is a cause, a principle, beyond our nature, and that is God. Therefore, as far as the essential part of faith, namely assent, is concerned, "it comes from God moving interiorly by grace."<sup>7</sup>

Such writers as Henri Bouillard and Marie Dominique Chenu observed additionally that beginning with this Italian period, Thomas' thought came increasingly under the influence of the later work of Augustine and he began to pay closer attention to the scriptural texts that were relevant to Augustine's discussion of grace,<sup>8</sup> in particular the Gospel of John and Paul's letter to the Romans.<sup>9</sup> Thomas was struck by the Johannine teaching that it is the Father who brings the believer to faith in the Son (John 6:44); and when, having returned to Paris from Italy, he lectured publically on John's Gospel, he took the idea of the Father drawing and he joined it to the concept of the interior instinct: "Not only has external or objective revelation the power to attract, but also an inner instinct impelling and moving to belief. . . . The Father draws many to the Son through an instinct, divine action moving man's heart within to belief."<sup>10</sup> The instinct is

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<sup>6</sup> "[A]d gratiam gratum facientem habendam ex solo libero arbitrio se homo potest praeparare; faciendo enim quod in se est, gratiam a Deo consequitur." 2 *Sent.* 28. 1. 4. sol.; in Thomas Aquinas, *Opera Omnia*, 34 vols. (Paris: Vivès, 1889), vol. 8, 381. Cited by O'Brien, op. cit., 166, n. f.

<sup>7</sup> "Pelagiani ponebant solum liberum arbitrium hominis, et propter hoc dicebant quod initium fidei est ex nobis, inquantum scilicet ex nobis est quod parati sumus ad assentiendum his quae sunt fidei; sed consummatio fidei est a Deo, per quam nobis proponuntur ea quae credere debemus. Sed hoc est falsum. Quia cum homo assentiendo his quae sunt fidei, elevetur supra naturam suam, oportet quod hoc insit ei ex supernaturali principio interius movente, quod est Deus. Et ideo fides quantum ad assentiendum, qui est principalis actus fidei, est a Deo interius movente per gratiam." 2-2, q. 6, a. 1, c. The second part of the *Summa* was composed during Thomas' second period as master of theology at the University of Paris, from 1269 to 1272. James A. Weisheipl, O.P., *Friar Thomas D'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Works* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1983), 361.

<sup>8</sup> Schillebeeckx, op. cit., 34ff. One sees this in the third book of the *Summa contra gentiles*, cc. 147, 149 (which Weisheipl, op. cit., p. 360, dates between 1261-63), where Thomas, already reversing his earlier position and condemning Pelagianism, cites Lamentations and Zechariah as well as what will become for him the central texts from the Gospel of John and Paul's Letter to the Romans.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas first commented on John (and perhaps Paul, too) while in Italy, and he continued when he returned to teach at Paris, at the very time he was writing the section on faith in his *Summa*. See Weisheipl, op. cit., 246-50, 370-73.

<sup>10</sup> "Sed quia non solum revelatio exterior, vel objectum, virtutem attrahendi habet, sed etiam interior instinctus impellens et movens ad credendum; ideo trahit multos Pater ad Filium per instinctum divinae operationis moventis interius cor hominis ad credendum." *Comm. In Ioan.* 6. 5. 3. *Opera Omnia*, vol. 20, 41, col. 2. This commentary was based on the lectures that Thomas delivered during his second regency at Paris. But one finds the same emphasis on the Father's gift of drawing the believer, with express reference to Augustine and the mercy of God, though without

the definitive act by which God draws, educing a conclusive response to the many different ways in which he proposes his truth: persuading, demonstrating, alluring, and instructing.<sup>11</sup> The illuminator of the mind, he teaches within as the preacher instructs from without. It is a kind of intelligible testifying, a direct evangelization of the intellect, when God inspires into the heart of someone what is to be believed.<sup>12</sup> And since as John teaches, whatever the Father does the Son does also (6:19), the Father's work of drawing one to faith is also the work of the Son. So in the public disputation held at Paris in Advent of 1269, Thomas argued that among the works performed by Christ, which included his teaching, was the interior call (*vocatio interior*) that attracted those who followed him.<sup>13</sup> And again, "The interior instinct by which Christ was able to manifest himself without exterior miracles pertains to the virtue of the First Truth which illuminates and teaches man interiorly."<sup>14</sup>

Keefe points out that the more frequently Thomas refers to the instinct to faith, which is clearly a gift of grace,<sup>15</sup> the more evident it is that it is something ontological, belonging to the being of a human person as one who knows and chooses. It is the effect of God acting on the inclination of the person to know the true and to pursue the good, transforming this inclination (which belongs to any created person qua person) into something other, into a readiness to know God as he reveals himself to be, and to accept his offer to enter into his life. Hence Thomas speaks of the instinct as the work not simply of God, but of the mediator, Christ. This *gratia Christi*, however, is operative, in Aristotelian terms, on the level of substance, not accident. It is distributed universally. Therefore no one is excused from the obligation to believe; for anyone, unbelief can be a sin. And this is exactly what Thomas says. As a sin, he writes in the *Summa*, unbelief is a matter of pride, a refusal to hear the faith or a despising of it; it is symptomatic of a deeper turning away from the truth by a mind which regards any submission to be something reprehensible.<sup>16</sup> Culpable unbelief in the situation of a pagan would involve resisting the faith as such; in the situation of a Jew, it involves resisting in its fullness the faith that has already been accepted in figure; in the case of a heretic, one is betraying the very thing one once held.<sup>17</sup> "Christ attracts by means of a word," Thomas said in commenting on John, "with signs visible

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mention of an interior instinct, in his first commentary on John, part of the *Catena aurea* that Thomas composed in Italy between 1263–67. See *Super Ev. Ioan.* 6. 6; *Opera Omnia*, vol. 17, 500, col. 2–501, col. 1. Unlike in the *Summa*, however, where Thomas states that grace is required if one is to assent to what lies beyond the range of our nature, in this first gloss what he points to is the need for grace to overcome a nature hardened by sin.

<sup>11</sup> "Nam aliquis homo trahit aliquem persuadendo ratione; et hoc modo Pater trahit homines ad Filium, demonstrando eum esse Filium suum; et hoc dupliciter: vel per internam revelationem: Matth. XVI, 17 . . . vel per miraculorum operationem, quam habet a Patre. . . . Item aliquis trahit alium alliciendo. . . . Et hoc modo illi qui attendunt ad Jesum propter auctoritatem paternae majestatis, trahuntur a Patre." Ibid. 41, col. 1–2.

<sup>12</sup> *Comm. In Ioan.* 5. 5. 9; *Opera Omnia*, vol. 20, 19.

<sup>13</sup> "[I]nter illa opera quae Christus in hominibus fecit, annumerari etiam debet vocatio interior, qua quosdam attraxit . . ." *Quodl.*, 2., q.4, a. 1, ad 1 (Marietti, 1956).

<sup>14</sup> "[I]nterior instinctus, quo Christus poterat se manifestare sine miraculis exterioribus, pertinet ad virtutem primae veritatis, quae interius hominem illuminat et docet." *Quodl.* 2. q. 4, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>15</sup> "Dicendum est ergo, quod ad fidem duo requiruntur: quorum unum est cordis inclinatio ad credendum, et hoc non est ex auditu, sed ex dono gratiae; aliud autem est determinatio de credibili, et istud est ex auditu." *In Ep. ad Rom.* 10. 2. (Marietti, 1929, vol. 1, 150).

<sup>16</sup> 2–2, q. 10, a. 1, c. and ad 3.

<sup>17</sup> 2–2, q. 10, a. 5, c.

and invisible, by moving and inciting the heart interiorly (Prov. 21:2). Therefore there is a work of God which is an interior instinct to do the good, and he who resists it sins."<sup>18</sup> It is not that having faith is part of human nature, Thomas explains in the *Summa*, but it *is* a matter of nature that one's mind not fight against either the interior instinct or the exterior preaching of the truth.<sup>19</sup>

If the grace shaping the instinct to faith is universal within human life, it is also universal throughout human history. The first human being, having been created in sanctifying grace,<sup>20</sup> was also created with the grace of the *instinctus*. From the beginning, Thomas states in the *Summa*, there was in man a certain beginning of the happiness for which he was intended, which was expressed in the will by the qualities of hope and charity, and in the intellect by faith. St. Paul, of course, wrote that faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17), and this, Thomas says, is true—not because there was anyone else speaking outwardly to the first man whom he might have heard, but rather because God was there "inspiring interiorly."<sup>21</sup> A little earlier Thomas had insisted that faith in Christ, meaning the incarnation of the Son, is always and everywhere necessary if one is to come to final happiness. Indeed not only did the first man believe that he would be fulfilled by means of the incarnate Son, but he understood that the meaning of his own relation as man to the first woman lay in the relation of the Son united to his Church. Furthermore, after sin, as the first man perceived that fulfillment now would also require atonement, so every right-thinking person had at least implicit faith in Christ as savior, by virtue of their hope for happiness and belief in divine providence, evidenced by the practice of religious sacrifice.<sup>22</sup> The invitation to faith, which is the beginning of life in Christ, was not only there at the start of the first man's life, it is there, Thomas suggests, as soon as one comes to the use of reason, in the first act of each person's reason—which transpires, once again, in the face of the obligation to hand oneself entirely over to God. Turn to God so far as you, though only a child, are able with as much clarity as you are able, and you receive the grace that remits the only sin that you can be indicted with in this first moment, namely original sin; turn to yourself and you sin mortally.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> "Sed est attendendum, quod Christus attraxit verbo, signis visibilibus et invisibilibus, scilicet movendo et instigando interius corda. Proverb. XXI, 2: *Cor regnum in manu Dei*. Est ergo opus Dei instinctus interior ad bene agendum: et qui ei resistunt, peccant . . ." *Comm. In Ioan.* 15. 5. 4; *Opera Omnia*, vol. 20, 270.

<sup>19</sup> "Dicendum quod habere fidem non est in natura humana, sed in natura humana est ut mens hominis non repugnet interiori instinctui et exteriori veritatis praedicationi. Unde infidelitas secundum hoc est contra naturam." 2–2, q. 10, a. 1, ad 1.

<sup>20</sup> See for example *De malo* q. 5., a. 1, c. and ad 1; 2 *Sent.* 30. 1. 1. sol.; 1a, q. 95, a. 1.

<sup>21</sup> 2–2, q. 5, a. 1. c., and also ad 3: "Dicendum quod in statu primae conditionis non erat auditus ab homine exterior loquente, sed a Deo interius inspirante; sicut et prophetae audiebant, secundum illud Psalmi 84:9: 'Audiam quid loquatur in me Dominus Deus.'"

<sup>22</sup> 2–2, q. 2, a. 7.

<sup>23</sup> 1–2, q. 89, a. 6. Admittedly, not only is there no mention in the *Prima secundae* (which, according to Weisheipl, op. cit., 361, would have been written in Paris between 1269 and 1270) of the *instinctus interior*, there is no reference in this passage to the idea of God drawing the believer to himself. Instead Zechariah 1:3 is quoted ("Convertimini ad me, et ego convertar ad vos") to make the point that as soon as one comes to the use of reason, one falls under the command to turn oneself to God, who will turn to you in response. Yet it cannot be that Thomas is sliding back into the position he had just left while teaching and writing in Italy. For in denying the Pelagian view that we prepare ourselves to receive grace, or that the consent of faith is an act of mind and will alone, Thomas did not then say that the person is simply passive in the hands of grace. Rather, as he states in the *Catena aurea*'s

This view of what might be called the *trahi a Deo*, or the divine interior address, that emerges from these scattered passages in Thomas' work describes Christ's presence to each person as an antecedent, substantial grace, preparing the individual at each stage of intellectual and volitional development for an ever-more explicit decision for Christ as the Son whom the Father sent to bestow the Holy Spirit. What Keefe adds to Thomas' analysis is the element of the relational. The primal grace of Christ is the life of Christ, freely offered, seeking to evoke a free response and the consequent entry of one's created life into the uncreated life of God. The event whereby God brought into being this community of persons, meant by their own mutuality to be both a source of created life and a means by which created life is united with God, is referred to by Keefe as our creation in Christ. The freedom of these persons derives from their having been constituted, not only outside themselves, which underlies their capacity to transcend themselves, but in the Son who is never-endingly inciting them to himself, for himself, in the life of the Spirit, for the sake of the Father. The mutuality of this order is perfected with it not only having been established in the life of the Son, but the life of the Son having been united to this order, in the life of one born of this order—namely, in the Incarnation. Certainly, the more Thomas speaks of the *instinctus* to faith, the more he implies that the Incarnation belongs to the very meaning of the Son as Mediator, and to the intention behind the creation of the human community. The order of this intended community could be created only in freedom, founded on the free decision for or against the Son. Like Thomas, Keefe follows the teaching that the primordial decision was not for the Mediator, not for Christ, but for the self and opposed to him. Hence the freedom of the order was compromised from the outset, its structure fractured; and the Incarnate life of Christ was required to be a life of atonement, while the turning toward the Father through the Son had now to be a simultaneous turning away from sin, and a deliberate identification with the Son's self-abnegation.

Yet the order of created human freedom, though riven, endured, grounded as it had been in the life of the Son, founded on a union of divine and human freedom that could not be broken, namely the freedom of the human will which *is* the will of the Son—the will of the man Jesus—and of the will indivisibly united to his, the will which is the condition of possibility for the joining of humanity to the divine life of the Son, namely the will of Mary. The history of humanity is therefore, from its outset, the history of Christ. Founded in him, it is fulfilled in him. It is he who ensures that there is a history; that even the fragmentation wrought by sin will not reduce time to an atomized succession. The definitive, free, uniting of the human with the life of God in the Incarnation is continued, freely, in the Eucharist. And even the Eucharistic presence of Christ is a demonstration of the conversion that each individual is being drawn to, the building up of the prime substantial reality, which is the integration of humanity with God in Christ.

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commentary on John, the will to believe, for example, remains in our own power ("ea quae ex nobis est voluntate ad credendum"), even if it is exercised only in response to the attraction of God. *Super Ev. Ioan.* 6. 5; *Opera Omnia*, vol. 17, 497, col. 2. Thus if the drama of conversion is to be traced back to the beginning of reflective life, it must be that from its outset, reflective life has unfolded in and through grace.

Grace urging and, as accepted, grace sanctifying is present within each person's life from the beginning of history to its destined end; for there is no person who does not belong to Christ. The ontological relation to Christ is there in the constitution of the human person. One may speak of the nature of the person as a material intellect with an unrestricted desire to know, even if the person were not created to receive the offer of access to God; just as one may speak of the nature that persists as distinctively human despite the aversion of sin. Yet Keefe is wary of talk of a natural reason that is addressed by the gospel, or of natural knowledge of God that is perfected by revelation, if by "natural" is meant "the ungraced situation of pure secularity;" for no such situation exists.<sup>24</sup> Instead, for a portrait of natural knowledge in the genuine sense, one should turn to the opening chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans (1:16–32). There St. Paul declares that God, the author of truth and goodness, has made himself known to all, in every time and in every place, simply through the world he created. And yet this very fact stands as an indictment of all; for which of us can say that he has never failed to fulfill the duty he has to submit himself to the True and the Good?

The obligation, of course, as Thomas would say, arises out of the inclination of our God-fashioned nature to the ends of truth and goodness, an inclination become, by the beckoning action of God, an *instinctus*, or to use a word of Saint Anselm's, a *quaerens*, a seeking; in the words of Keefe, a veritable "ontological hunger."<sup>25</sup> "[W]ithin the historical order of salvation," Keefe writes, "ordered by the Eucharistic immanence of the Lord of history in history," this seeking is pursued by diverse individuals in diverse settings in distinctive ways. Still, for all their diversity they share a unity, conducting their search within "a single history of salvation, in which every historical *quaerens intellectum*, whether it arise within paganism, Judaism, Islam, Protestantism, or Catholicism has its own legitimacy, its own autonomy."<sup>26</sup> This legitimacy and autonomy, however, remain authentic only insofar as each *quaerens* retains its disposition to an ever-deeper truth; which as both Thomas and Keefe have it, is also to say an ever-deeper conversion, whose object is ultimately affirmed to be the Eucharistic Christ.

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<sup>24</sup> Donald J. Keefe, S.J., "Essay on the Relation of Faith and Reason," unpublished report, 38–9.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 33.