

## The Treasure of St. Thomas' Theology of the Trinity

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### Abstract

One of the treasures of Thomas' theology of the Trinity is his attention to the mission of the Spirit, to the gift of the Spirit (and not just to the gifts of the Spirit). In this slightly modified version of the 2016 Aquinas Lecture Oxford, three texts are read that show the richness of his attention to the Spirit and that show, too, that often repeated criticism that Thomas forgets the Spirit is incorrect. First, Thomas' remark that the knowledge of the divine persons is necessary for a correct understanding of creation and salvation (*STh* I q. 32, a.1 ad 3m). Second, his commentary on the opening verse of ps 50, ('the great mercy of God'). Third, two articles on the mission of the Spirit (*STh* 1, q. 43, a.3 and 5, especially the ad 2m).

### Introduction

Bernard Lonergan remarks in his *Method in Theology* that when reading texts an empty head is neither an ideal nor a real possibility.<sup>1</sup> An awareness of one's agenda and one's interests in reading texts and doing research is therefore a requirement for every scholar. And it certainly helps the communication.

There are, as we all know, varieties of Thomism. I am not sure where exactly I fit in. Of course, I am connected with the *Thomas Instituut te Utrecht* and I have contributed to the line of research developed there over the last 25 years. I can easily provide some terms or concepts that are characteristic of that research: Thomas as theologian, Thomas as a negative theologian, Thomas as a theologian who is very much aware of the *nexus mysteriorum*, Thomas as a theologian who is firmly rooted in Scripture. But I do not consider myself a Thomist in the strict sense of the word— I was not trained that way, I have not lectured exclusively on Thomas, I have done

<sup>1</sup> B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp 157-8.

research on Thomas, but, again, not exclusively so. My first thesis was on the *Ysagoge in Theologiam*, a text belonging to the school of Peter Abelard; in my second thesis only a part was about Thomas, about his use of the metaphor body of Christ; in my dissertation, again, only a small part was on Thomas' view on metaphors and their role in theology. But right from the beginning I have liked Thomas' way of doing theology: asking questions, making distinctions and probing his findings. Moreover, gradually I have come to appreciate more and more his attention to language, to what can and especially to what cannot be said about God, his cautious and respectful approach to the mystery of God. Some theologians know much too much about God, Thomas does not. Because of these features Thomas is for me a discussion-partner, even if I do not always understand him - he lived in such a different society and circumstances - or even if do not always agree with him.

So, what are my interests in exploring the treasure of Thomas' theology of the Trinity? What is my agenda when reading his texts? There are at least three major points I am aware of.

First, I am interested in the theology of the Trinity. I consider what is called the renaissance of the theology of the Trinity as one of the most important, if not the most important development in the field of systematic theology over the last half century.<sup>2</sup> I think Eberhard Jüngel, Jürgen Moltmann and Walter Kasper among others are correct in their analyses of atheism as a 'protest-atheism': a mainly philosophical theistic conception of God provoked rightly a rejection and the adequate response to this a-theism is a truly theological Trinitarian conception of God. Quite independently, James Buckley and Charles Taylor present a similar analysis of the rise of our secular society. Rahner, in his contribution to *Mysterium Salutis*, does not refer to atheism and secularity, but remarks that most Christians are monotheists. Rahner's contribution can be seen as a starting-point for that renaissance, since it sets an agenda that most theologians in their writings on the Trinity have followed: paying attention to the so called economic Trinity and giving it priority when talking and thinking about God Father Son Spirit. The theology of the Trinity has become an explanation of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To put it more technically, the mission of the Son has become the focus. But too often the other mission, the mission of the Spirit, has been forgotten or treated poorly. The complaint from Eastern Orthodox theologians that the Spirit is forgotten in Western theology does not always seem to be incorrect. The opportunity to understand the theology of the Trinity not only as an explanation of

<sup>2</sup> I have given a more elaborate analysis of what follows in: The Current Renaissance of the Theology of the Trinity. A reconstruction, in *Bijdragen* 70 (2009), pp 423-457.

the identity of Jesus the Christ - and I refer to the rediscovery of the so-called Spirit Christology - but also as an explanation of our identity as Christians, of our baptism as the basis of our dignity and responsibility is not used to the full.<sup>3</sup> In my research I have tried to contribute at least a little by exploring this possibility. Contrary to the often-repeated view that Thomas is suffering from forgetting the Spirit or that he is even to blame for that forgetting, I have discovered that to be not true, historically and systematically. Today I want to read some texts of Thomas about the mission of the Spirit.

A second point is related to the culture and society I live in, and that does not seem to be very different from the culture and society here in the United Kingdom. According to Jesus' saying in his farewell address, we should be *in* the world but not *of* the world. That tension is different from culture to culture and from period to period. I mentioned already the secularity that obviously determines our societies and that determines the way we can or should talk and think about God. But there is another characteristic, that is perhaps not so obvious, but that equally determines the way we can or should think and talk about God and that becomes especially problematic when we want to pay attention to the Spirit: the economization of our societies. By economization I do not mean that the economy is an important part of our lives, but rather that the economy, the market, has taken over government and society. A sign of this alarming development is that we are using economical terms (or more precisely market terms) to talk about areas of our lives that are not economical as such ('invest in relationships'). This context makes it difficult to talk about the Spirit, about the gift of the Spirit, about grace, since the whole concept of gratuitous giving is called into question, not just by philosophers like Derrida, but more importantly by that dominant pattern of behaviour in society and church.

A third point is related to the current jubilee-year, the year of mercy. The bull *Misericordiae vultus*, with which Pope Francis announced this extraordinary jubilee year, does, at first sight, not have a clear structure: there are only some 25 numbered paragraphs. But when one looks more carefully, one can discover that after an introduction dealing with the reason for this jubilee, a series of paragraphs follow that belong to what one could call the doctrine of God: a summary of mercy as the attribute of God in both Old and New Testament. These paragraphs are followed by paragraphs discussing the implications for the church. As one might expect, these are followed by a number of practical paragraphs indicating elements of the jubilee year. But, surprisingly enough, within this practical context a more theoretical theme, closely linked to the earlier paragraphs

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. e.g. the definition of the *christifideles* in the Codex, can. 204.

on the doctrine of God, is discussed: the relationship between justice and mercy.<sup>4</sup> It looks like an afterthought, more or less provoked by the remarks about corruption and criminal organizations, but it seems to me that these two paragraphs are far from a late addition: they touch the very centre of what the pope wants to say. One signal is that in my parish precisely these reflections about justice and mercy in the bull touch a nerve, and most of my parishioners do not belong to criminal organizations. Another more important signal for understanding these paragraphs as such is the rather strong statement about God that determines the whole argument: 'If God limited himself to only justice, he would cease to be God, and would instead be like human beings who ask merely that the law be respected.'<sup>5</sup>

In this discussion about justice and mercy the Pope does not quote Thomas. He has quoted Thomas, not as a pious ornament, but as a basis for the paragraphs about God: "It is proper to God to exercise mercy, and he manifests his omnipotence particularly in this way".<sup>6</sup> But these two paragraphs about the relationship between justice and mercy are very similar to what Thomas says about that relationship in the first part of the *Summa*. A closer look at that discussion might strengthen this element of the bull. Moreover it might also improve the bull, since, sadly enough, reference to the work of the Spirit is almost completely lacking — I hope to show that thinking about mercy can help us in thinking about the mission of the Spirit.

So, in this lecture on the treasure of Thomas' theology of the Trinity I will concentrate on the Holy Spirit and read some texts on the mission of the Spirit: I hope to show how rich that theology is and how relevant for today it can be.

I will start with a short remark Thomas makes in an answer to an *objectio* on the importance of knowledge of the divine persons (1). That will lead to Thomas' commentary on psalm 50(51) the *Miserere*. (2) Then I will pay attention to the relationship between the missions of the Son and of the Spirit (3).

## 1. The necessity of knowing the divine persons.

In *quaestio* 32 of the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* Thomas discusses knowing the divine persons. In the *ad 3m* of the first article of this *quaestio* he remarks that knowledge of the divine persons is necessary for us for two reasons: in order to understand the creation and in order to understand the salvation of the human

<sup>4</sup> *Misericordia vultus*, 20-21.

<sup>5</sup> *Misericordiae vultus*, 21.

<sup>6</sup> *Misericordiae vultus*, 6. The pope quotes from *STh* II II q. 30 a.4; he uses the same quote in *Evangelium Gaudium* 37.

race.<sup>7</sup> In both cases Thomas qualifies understanding with *recte*, correctly, underlining the necessity, and he distinguishes between the two, by saying that the second reason, the correct understanding of salvation, is *principalius*, is more important.

But the way he presents these reasons is puzzling. He explains in a somewhat expanded way that a knowledge of the divine persons is necessary for us in order to understand creation correctly, but for the other and more important reason, the correct understanding of our salvation, he just mentions that is accomplished by the incarnate Son and by the gift of the Spirit.

Of course, one can argue that Thomas by just mentioning the *two* missions makes an important statement, certainly in the light of what I have said about the renaissance of the theology of the Trinity. That Thomas explicitly mentions not only the incarnation of the Son, but also the gift of the Spirit implies that forgetting one, e.g. the gift of the Spirit, amounts to an incorrect understanding of salvation. Given this remark it seems adequate to suppose that Thomas sets here an agenda for himself and it seems too easy to accuse him of forgetting the Spirit.

One can also argue that Thomas indicates in his remark a close connection between the *theologia* and the *oikonomia*, a connection moreover that reflects the sensitivity of the recent renaissance of the theology of the Trinity. Thomas indicates that the *theologia*, the reflection on Godself, is required for the *oikonomia*. In order to understand correctly the *oikonomia*, to understand correctly what God does in our reality (both creation and salvation), we need *theologia*, we need (some) knowledge of who God is.

But these arguments remain formal and do not remove that puzzling aspect of this *ad 3m*. Before I explore a possible and rather obvious answer by looking at the way Thomas discusses the two missions later in the *Summa*, I want to look at the argument he does give with regard to creation and ask whether that argument might contain some elements relevant to solving that puzzlement.

Thomas mentions three misunderstandings with regard to creation: first that God created *ex necessitate naturae*, second that God

<sup>7</sup> *Ad tertium dicendum quod cognitio divinarum personarum fuit necessaria nobis dupliciter. Uno modo, ad recte sentiendum de creatione rerum. Per hoc enim quod dicimus Deum omnia fecisse verbo suo, excluditur error ponentium Deum produxisse res ex necessitate naturae. Per hoc autem quod ponimus in eo processionem amoris, ostenditur quod Deus non propter aliquam indigentiam creaturas produxit, neque propter aliquam aliam causam extrinsecam; sed propter amorem suae bonitatis. Unde et Moyses, postquam dixerat, in principio creavit Deus caelum et terram, subdit, dixit Deus, fiat lux, ad manifestationem divini verbi; et postea dixit, vidit Deus lucem, quod esset bona, ad ostendum approbationem divini amoris; et similiter in aliis operibus. Alio modo, et principalius, ad recte sentiendum de salute generis humani, quae perficitur per filium incarnatum, et per donum spiritus sancti. STh I, q.32 a.1 ad 3m.*

created *propter aliquam indigentiam*, third that God created *propter aliquam causam extrinsecam*. These three misunderstandings have in common that they imply some kind of involuntary reaction, in other words a view of creation as an action in response to some pressure from outside. One could say, these misunderstandings have in common that they do not take seriously enough the *ex nihilo* in the traditional definition of creation.<sup>8</sup>

For correcting the first misunderstanding - *ex necessitate naturae* - he refers to the Son or rather to the Word and for correction of the other two - *propter aliquam indigentiam*, and *propter aliquam causam intrinsecam* - he refers to the Spirit or rather to Love.

The names 'Word' and 'Love' are not accidentally chosen. Thomas quotes two sentences from Genesis 1. God speaks: 'let there be light' and God sees 'that the light is good'. So there is a Biblical foundation for the use of 'Word' and 'Love'. But it seems that more can be said. When Thomas in the next step in the *Summa* considers the three persons in particular, he returns to these names 'Word' and 'Love'. In his discussion of the name 'Word' Thomas argues that this term is used properly when it is understood as *conceptum intellectus*. The link to mind and knowledge indicates an internal process, in the sense that the word originates, proceeds from the knower who speaks.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, love is an internal process, that originates, that proceeds from the lover who loves or wills.<sup>10</sup> So, knowing and willing are primarily internal processes.

If I am correct, Thomas stresses in that first point of the *ad 3m* that God's creative work is unconditional, is not provoked or caused by anything from outside. The source or motivation of God's creative activity is an internal one. If that is not taken into account, an incorrect understanding is the result. And the way he formulates the work of creation suggests that this might also be the case for God's redemptive activity. The work of creation is the key to understanding the work of salvation. In order to explore this a little bit further I turn to Thomas' commentary on the *Miserere*, psalm 50.

## 2. *Magna misericordia*

For Thomas psalm 50 (51), the *Miserere*, is the central one of the seven penitential psalms. Of all the penitential psalms this is the one most prayed and the easiest, for in it we ask only about mercy.

<sup>8</sup> Cfr. *STh* I q. 45 a.1sc.

<sup>9</sup> *STh* I q. 34 a.1c.

<sup>10</sup> *STh* q. 37 a.1 ad 2m.

Everyone can do that and it is easier that eating ashes for bread or crying every night.<sup>11</sup>

Thomas reads the psalm word for word and reads the psalm spiritually, as a prayer that is part of the liturgy and that can and should be prayed by people of all times. It is quite revealing how easily Thomas changes from the *ego* of David to us or even to a personal 'me'. 'If David after so many victories, after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, after so much intimacy with God and prophecy, has sinned, how careful should we, fragile people and sinners, then not be?'<sup>12</sup> 'And that is why I ask full confidence: God have mercy on me.'<sup>13</sup>

This last quote is the end of a beautiful exploration of the greatness of God's mercy, mentioned in the opening sentence of this psalm: *miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam*. But before I say something more about that exploration, I want to say that Thomas reads the psalm word for word also theologically. Spirituality and theology are not separated. The psalm provokes theological reflections and theological insights illuminate the prayer. E.g. before Thomas shows the various dimensions of the greatness of God's mercy - *magna misericordia* - he points to two reasons why someone can hope for that mercy: because of who God is and because of what God does. Thomas inserts a short reflection on God's nature. Referring to Denys and Boethius he calls goodness the *proprium* of the divine nature. Mercy is nothing but goodness that wants to do away with misery. 'So, when I consider that it is proper for goodness to remove misery - that is after all precisely what goodness is - I appeal confidently to mercy.'<sup>14</sup>

Thomas does not discuss God's nature in this commentary, does not argue about goodness or mercy: he just refers to it. In the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa* he does argue. Part of the discussion about God's will is the question whether God is merciful. Thomas asks that question after he has discussed whether God is just and when he discusses mercy justice is always in the background or even explicitly part of the discussion. *Quaestio* 21 is not just about justice and mercy, but also about the relationship between justice and mercy and about a certain tension between those two attributes.

The first step in the argument about that relationship is a discussion of the opinion that mercy implies a relaxation of justice, an opinion that sounds rather familiar in our contemporary situation. In other

<sup>11</sup> Thomas refers to two other penitential psalms, 103(102), 10 and 6,7.

<sup>12</sup> ... *quia si David post tot victorias, post donum spiritus sancti, post tantam familiaritatem cum Deo et prophetiam peccavit, quantum debemus cavere nos, qui fragiles et peccatores sumus?*

<sup>13</sup> *Et ideo confidenter peto: miserere mei Deus.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ergo cum considero quod bonitatis miseriam repellere est proprium, et tamen est ipsa bonitas, confidenter ad misericordiam recurro.*

words: the argument starts with a negative step. The second step is more positive and proposes another type of relationship: mercy as the basis for justice. The first step can be found in a. 3, the second in a. 4.

The negative opinion about mercy as a soft option is one of the *objectiones* of a. 3. Since God is just and cannot deny himself, mercy does not fit God. In his main response Thomas starts with the stirring thesis that *misericordia est Deo maxime attribuenda*. Stirring, since Thomas uses here the superlative *maxime*. This is not the only time he does that when discussing the divine attributes. He does the same when he discusses *vita* and *veritas* - but it is remarkable he does it here, since he does not do it in the immediately preceding discussion about justice.

When he answers the question whether *iustitia* is in God, he makes a distinction between *iustitia commutativa* and *iustitia distributiva*. The first type refers to giving and taking and is part of trade and commerce; the second type refers to organizing and ruling and is part of government be it on the level of family or of state. The first type does not fit God, the second does, especially God as Creator. This distinction between *iustitia commutativa* and *iustitia distributiva* is an important and crucial distinction and the reasons why the second fits God and the first does not resemble the reasons Thomas uses for the necessity of the knowledge of the divine persons. If *iustitia commutativa* would be in God, then God would be part of *do ut des*, give and take, then would the economy of salvation be economy full stop. But while *iustitia distributiva* fits God, *misericordia maxime attribuenda est*. The reason why - and Thomas repeats the *maxime* - is related to goodness. He defines mercy as removing someone's misery, i.e. removing whatever defect. The removing of defects can only be done by some kind of goodness. God is the first source of goodness.

Responding to the opinion that mercy implies a relaxation of justice, Thomas argues that when God shows mercy he does not go against his justice but surpasses it. He gives two telling examples: to give more money than due and to forgive. For the second he refers to Eph 5, for the first he does not give a biblical reference but one is almost automatically reminded of the parable of the workers at the 11th hour. The biblical basis for the overall argument is James 2,13: 'mercy is exalted above judgment.'

The second step in the argument about justice and mercy is to be found in the discussion of the question whether justice and mercy are present in all God's works. Thomas gives an affirmative answer and argues moreover that the works of justice are based upon the works of mercy 'in whatever work of God mercy appears'. The reasons Thomas gives are all part of creation-theology. The ultimate argument is that goodness is the basis of existence.

Thomas points, moreover, to the abundance of creation: creatures receive more than strictly required. 'For what would be sufficient to



preserve the order of justice is less than what is in fact conferred by God's goodness, which exceeds what is merely fitting for each creature.<sup>15</sup> *Superexaltat* is the term that occurs in the quote from James, which is the foundation for the first step and *excedit* is the term Thomas uses here. One can also say that the quote and the argument of the *ad 3m* in a.3 are tested in the second step and are confirmed in the main discussion of a.4. The atmosphere surrounding mercy is one of abundance, luxury, more than required by rules or regulations, more than reasonably can be expected, in other words mercy evokes the atmosphere of grace. Creation is already related to grace, work of the Spirit.

This is the theological background of those short remarks in the commentary on ps. 50, before Thomas starts his exploration of the *magna misericordia*. He starts with pointing to the *incomprehensibilitas*, a reminder not unlike the opening *quaestiones* of the *Summa* in which Thomas shows how God is not, how God does not fit into any of the categories with which we try to understand our reality. The Creator is not a creature. The most remarkable point in the list of aspects of greatness is Thomas' explanation of the force of God's great mercy: mercy 'makes God man, places God from heaven on earth, lets the immortal die.'<sup>16</sup> Mercy as the force behind the incarnation, mercy as the *motivum incarnationis*. Thomas' cautious remark in the discussion about the *motivum incarnationis* in the *Tertia Pars* of the *Summa*, that *post* is not *propter*, that after the fall does not necessarily mean because of the fall, is an echo of this view on incarnation as a work of God's mercy. 'Because of the fall' says too much, draws God into a process of involuntary reactions.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Et propter hoc etiam ea quae alicui creaturae debentur, Deus, ex abundantia suae bonitatis, largius dispensat quam exigit proportio rei. Minus enim est quod sufficeret ad conservandum ordinem iustitiae, quam quod divina bonitas confert, quae omnem proportionem creaturae excedit. ST I, q. 21, a.4c.*

<sup>16</sup> *Et dicitur magna sua incomprehensibilitate, qua implet omnia. Ps. 32: misericordia domini plena est terra. Et in omnibus habet locum: nam justii innocentiam servaverunt propter misericordiam Dei. Augustinus: domine gratiae tuae depono mala quae non feci. Item peccatores sunt conversi ad justitiam propter Dei misericordiam. 1 Tim. 1: misericordiam consecutus sum. Item in peccato existentes misericordiam Dei experti sunt. Thren. 3: misericordiae domini multae, quod non sumus consumpti. Item dicitur magna sublimitate, quia miserationes ejus super omnia opera ejus; nam misericordia non signat in Deo passionem animi, sed bonitatem ad repellendam miseriam. Item magna duratione. Isa. 54: in misericordia sempiterna misertus sum tui. Item magna virtute, quia Deum hominem fecit, de caelo Deum ad terram deposuit, et immortalem mori fecit. Eph. 2: Deus autem qui dives est in misericordia. Item magna per effectum, quia ex omni miseria potest homo per misericordiam elevari. Ps. 85: misericordia tua magna est super me, et remisisti impietatem peccati mei, (Ps. 31). Et ideo confidenter peto: miserere mei Deus.*

<sup>17</sup> *STh III, q. 1 a.2 and a.3. See for an insightful analysis of these texts M. Corbin, La Parole devenue chair, in L'inouï de Dieu. Six études christologiques (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1981), pp 111-158.*

I shall reflect a moment on this observation about mercy as the *motivum incarnationis* and say a few things Thomas does not say or that even might go against what he says.

One of the theological issues so clouded by political manipulation, linguistic confusion and cultural misunderstanding that the proper theological insight and the spiritual importance is difficult to see, is undoubtedly the *filioque*: the addition made in the West to the Creed of the Councils.

If I understand the theological issue correctly, it is not about some systematic urge to fill gaps at all costs, but an answer to a genuine spiritual and theological problem that can already be found in Scripture and that remains a problem for each generation of Christians. How to discern the Spirit? It is a pity that in the liturgy of Pentecost not the complete story from Acts is read. The final sentence is left out, turning thereby an ambivalent story into a clear-cut one. In the liturgy the end is the wonder about God's great deeds, while in Acts the story ends with a remark about drunkenness. The story in Acts reveals the real ambivalence that is part of our historical experience and also of our experience of the Spirit.

Thomas' discussion of the *filioque* in the *Summa* is part of his discussion about the person of the Holy Spirit: a discussion about the name or title Holy Spirit.<sup>18</sup> I do not want to analyze now the long discussion in the second article, but only point to a sharp remark Thomas makes in that discussion: it is necessary to say either that the Son is from the Holy Spirit or that the Holy Spirit is from the Son; the last is the faith we confess, the first no one holds.<sup>19</sup> I understand Thomas' reference to the Creed with regard to the *filioque*, but I do not understand his remark that no one holds that the Son is from the Holy Spirit. For, do we not confess that he was conceived of the Holy Spirit?

Of course, there is a difference between procession and conception, between the language belonging to the *theologia* and the language belonging to the *oikonomia*, but as I said earlier about the current renaissance of the theology of the Trinity the importance of the *oikonomia* and even the priority of *oikonomia* over *theologia* is part of this renaissance. So, if we confess that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, that, in other words, the Spirit plays a role in the incarnation, that confession should have consequences for our thinking on the level of the *theologia*. If we understand incarnation not just as a reference to the beginning but as a reference to the whole of the *acta et passa* of Jesus, as Thomas does in that quote about power of mercy, if we take the insights of the rediscovered Spirit Christology

<sup>18</sup> *STh I* q. 36.

<sup>19</sup> *Relinquitur ergo quod necesse est dicere vel Filium esse a Spiritu Sancto, quod nullus dicit, vel Spiritum Sanctum esse a Filio, quod nos confitemur. STh I* q. 36, a.2c.

seriously, those consequences are even more required. And I think we should take those insights seriously, for it helps us to reach a truly Trinitarian view of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and it helps us to appreciate the title 'Christ'. The stories in the gospels about Jesus' baptism, the only clearly Trinitarian stories in Scripture, determine Jesus' identity as the Son of the Father *and* as the Christ, anointed by the Holy Spirit. In our thinking about Godself, *theologia*, those two relationships should have a place. So, instead of removing the *filiouque* we should perhaps add a *spirituque*.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps we should even go one step further and think about mercy as an appropriation for the Spirit. Appropriation does not imply an exclusive use but a characteristic use. Some reasons may be given for this further step. First of all, Paul lists in Gal 5,22 fruits of the Spirit. In the tradition the criteria the Lord gives in Mt 25 for his judgement are not only assembled in the works of mercy but are also augmented by one: burying the dead (Pope Innocent III did that). But they are also supplemented by the so-called spiritual works of mercy and these resemble some of the fruits of the Spirit. Moreover, in the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, the sequence of Pentecost, all the verbs used are related to forgiving sins. That fits well in with Thomas' definition of mercy.

### 3. *Cum amore notitia*

With regard to Thomas' remarks about the necessity of us knowing the divine persons, I suggested earlier that that the reason for the *amplius* might also be found in what he says about the missions. I want to explore that suggestion now and the best text for looking for an answer is *quaestio* 43 of the *Prima Pars*, the *quaestio* about the two *missiones*, the *missio* of the Son and the *missio* of the Spirit. This text is, moreover, an excellent text for my purpose since Thomas' main interest is in the invisible mission of the Spirit, as is clear from the questions Thomas discusses in the eight articles of this *quaestio*.<sup>21</sup> If one looks carefully at his arguments one discovers how strong that interest is. Article 5 on the question whether apart from the Spirit also the Son is sent invisibly is especially important,

<sup>20</sup> Cfr. also Th. Weinandy *The Father's Spirit of Sonship. Reconceiving the Trinity*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> For a more elaborate analysis see H. Rikhof, Trinity in Thomas. Reading the *Summa Theologiae* against the background of modern problems, *Jaarboek 1999 Thomas Instituut Utrecht*, Utrecht, 2000, 81-100. Cf. also A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union, Deification in Aquinas and Palamas*, (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999); G. Emery, *La théologie trinitaire de saint Thomas d'Aquin*, (Paris: Cerf, 2004), 439-464. Emery correctly remarks in his conclusions (486) that the person and work of the Holy Spirit occupy a central place in Thomas' reflections on the Trinity.

but in that article Thomas refers to article 3, which in my reading is the central article of this *quaestio*.

So, I'll start with article 3. The question Thomas discusses in this central article is whether the invisible mission consists of only the gift of sanctifying grace (*donum gratiae gratum facientis*), or only the gift of charismatic grace (*donum gratiae gratis datae*): that is to say, whether the mission only makes the person who receives it good or holy, or whether it only amounts to the fact that a human person receives gifts that can benefit others. But, in the way Thomas formulates the question, he also suggests another possible answer: the mission consists in the gift of the Spirit. So, apart from his discussion on two forms of created grace, he also mentions uncreated grace.

Thomas' rather compact argument amounts to accepting all the answers: it is because the *missio* consists of the coming and giving of the divine person that the human person both becomes holy and receives charismatic gifts that benefit others. In his argumentation Thomas analyses the concept of mission, but strangely enough, or in view of the concentration on the invisible mission of the Spirit, remarkably enough, also the concept of gift. Parallel to *mitti* (to be sent), he discusses *dari* (to be given)<sup>22</sup>. This parallel mirrors the way Scripture, especially Paul, talks about the work of the Spirit.

I will concentrate on Thomas' short analysis of *dari* and try to unpack it. But first I have to say something about an element that is crucial in the whole discussion: the new manner of God being present that is typical for the two *missiones*. Thomas contrasts this new, this special way, with the common way God the Creator is present in all that is: a contrast between all that is and rational beings, a contrast between creation and grace. The new manner of presence is not due to a change in God, but due to a change in us. By responding with our mind and heart to God, to the mission of the Son and the mission of the Spirit, we develop the capacity implied in us as rational creatures being created in the *imago Dei* into a similarity of God, into adoptive children of God. This new special manner is the answer to the question about the qualification *principalis*. While the new special manner of presence is an explanation of 'mission', Thomas specifies this further when talking about gift: 'a divine person is sent on mission insofar as He exists in a new way in something, and a divine person is given insofar as He is had by someone.'<sup>23</sup>

Thomas' first step in the analysis of 'to give' is a remark about the (general) meaning of 'to be given' or rather of 'to possess', to have

<sup>22</sup> Cfr. the opening sentence of the response: *Respondeo dicendum quod divinae personae convenit mitti, secundum quod novo modo existit in aliquo; dari autem, secundum quod habetur ab aliquo. STh I q. 43, a.3co.*

<sup>23</sup> *dari autem secundum quod habetur ab aliquo STh I q. 43, a.3co; 'the verb 'given' is that he is possessed by someone' (Blackfriars translation)*

something. We can only speak of a gift, that is, as something that was given to us and that we consequently have or possess, if we can 'freely use or enjoy' that gift.<sup>24</sup> Thomas refers here to a distinction with old roots in Roman philosophy and Augustinian theology: *uti vel frui*. Thomas does not discuss or analyse that distinction in this article, but he indicates briefly how he understands and uses it earlier in the *Summa*, in one of the questions on the Spirit: in q. 38 on *Donum* as a name for the Spirit.

Thomas starts there, as he does so often, with a general comment about our ordinary language. 'To possess something means that we can freely use or enjoy it, as we please'. The next step is to apply this to God. 'In this sense a divine person can not be possessed unless by a rational creature united to God; other creatures can be moved by a divine person, but not in such a way that they have it in their power to enjoy (*frui*) the divine person and to use (*uti*) his effects.'<sup>25</sup> The reason for this is that only the rational creature has the capacity to know and to love God.

Thomas' application of the distinction *uti vel frui* to God is subtle. Thomas does distinguish between *frui* and *uti*, Thomas does link *frui* to God and *uti* to our reality, to the effects, the working of the divine person in our reality, but Thomas does not oppose *uti* to *frui* as Augustine sometimes does in terms of time: *uti* in this life, *frui* only in the hereafter.<sup>26</sup> The importance of this application of the distinction *uti-frui* is enjoying God can start, can happen here and now.

In q. 38 he talks about enjoying the divine person, and using his effects, but in q. 43 he talks only about enjoying the divine person. This shows precisely his concentration on the Spirit itself in this article. His final sentence is completely in tune with that focus: 'and so the Spirit itself is given and sent'.

So, in a. 3, Thomas indicates the depth and intensity of the mission: it is neither only about some gifts, nor only about sanctifying grace: it is also and foremost about the coming and staying of the divine person. In addition, because he concentrates upon the Spirit, Thomas establishes the link between mission and indwelling. But there are other biblical data concerning the divine indwelling that do not seem to fit this concentration on the Spirit. In John, one finds Jesus talking about the Father and himself coming to the believer and making their home with him (John 14,23). And so Thomas

<sup>24</sup> *Similiter illud solum habere dicimur, quo libere possumus uti vel frui. Habere autem potestatem fruendi divina persona, est solum secundum gratiam gratum facientem. Sed tamen in ipso dono gratiae gratum facientis, spiritus sanctus habetur, et inhabitat hominem. Unde ipsemet spiritus sanctus datur et mittitur.* *STh* I q. 43, a.3co.

<sup>25</sup> *STh* I q.38, a.1c.

<sup>26</sup> See the discussion in Lombard *Sentences*, I *distinctio prima*; see Thomas' *divisio textus* in *In I Sent*.

in the next article questions and refines this first presentation by inquiring into the role of the Father (a. 4) and the role of the Son. (a. 5). I will concentrate, as I said earlier, on a. 5 and especially on Thomas response to one of the *objectiones*.

In a. 5, Thomas concentrates on the invisible mission of the Son. The arguments in the *objectiones* show that the problem is not just the general question 'whether an invisible mission fits the Son', but a more precise and pertinent one. Given the invisible mission of the Spirit, is yet another mission required (obj. 3)? Given that that mission makes the human person graceful (a. 3), is that not typical the work of the Spirit, as Paul indicates (obj. 2 and 3)? In his *responsio*, Thomas answers only the general question by repeating relevant elements from his conceptual clarification. But in his reactions to the *objectiones* one finds his views on the more precise questions. In the *ad Im* Thomas argues that all gifts as gifts are attributed to the Spirit, while some, because of their meaning, are attributed to the Son. To understand this statement, one has to take fully into account the distinctions Thomas makes. He makes two distinctions: between all (*omnia*) and some (*aliqua*), and between gift as a general concept (*dona inquantum dona*) and specific gifts (*dona secundum proprias rationes*). The argument is therefore not about two kinds of gifts, but about *the* genus and *a* species. The genus is linked to the mission of the Spirit, the species to the mission of the Son. So, this statement confirms the interpretation given of a. 3 as mainly concerned with the mission of the Spirit. Thomas does not retract his position taken in a. 3, but refines it. [The scope of this refinement becomes clear when one tries to think about another species of gifts parallel to the species attributed to the Son. What would the *ratio propria* for such a species be but *caritas*?]

A further confirmation of the prominent place of the mission of the Spirit can be found in Thomas' reaction to the second *objectio*. This reaction shows, moreover, his profound Trinitarian understanding of grace.

Thomas starts with the general thesis that the soul through grace becomes God-like (*conformatur Deo*). He then specifies this process via the mission of a divine person. The human person becomes assimilated to the divine person sent through some gift of grace. It would be incorrect to construe this opening as if Thomas first talks *de Deo Uno*, and then adds some more or less irrelevant remarks *de Deo Trino*. When he later in the *Summa* discusses the essence of grace, he talks about the participation to the divine good, which is Godself, a participation in God's *cognitio* and *amor*.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *STh* Ia IIae q. 110, a.1c and a. 4c. The basis for this can be found in Thomas' clearly Trinitarian understanding of *imago Dei*: *STh* I, q. 45 a.7 and q. 93 a.5.

The next step Thomas takes is to make this process of assimilation concrete. But the way Thomas does it is remarkable. He first talks about the Spirit as *Amor* and second about the Son as *Verbum*. And, more importantly, he talks rather differently about these two assimilations. With regard to the Spirit he talks straightforwardly. He just states that by the gift of *caritas* the soul is assimilated to the Spirit. But with regard to the Son, he qualifies explicitly the title *Verbum*: 'the Son is not just any word, it is the Word breathing Love'.<sup>28</sup> And Thomas explains this *Verbum spirans Amorem* further by quoting Augustine saying that he wants the meaning of 'Word' understood as 'knowledge with love' and by stressing (*non igitur*) that the mission of the Son is not about some intellectual perfection, but about 'an enlightening that bursts forth into love'.<sup>29</sup>

### Conclusion

I started with Thomas' argument that we need to know the divine persons in order to understand creation and salvation correctly. I have concentrated on our need to know the Spirit. The work of the Spirit in Scripture is connected to both creation and salvation. The work of the Spirit in the creation can, in terms of psalm 104, be called foundational: the presence of the Spirit the basis of all there is. The work of the Spirit in salvation can, in terms of Paul in Romans and Galatians, be called directional: the presence of the Spirit guides people and turns them from slaves to children. Thomas, in his argument, reflects those two aspects of the work of the Spirit and he detects not only on the level of salvation the abundance of grace, but also on the level of creation. The reflection on mercy, on the presence of mercy in whatever God does, underlines that.

Those familiar with that remark I started with might have noticed that I have not opted for the gifts (*dona*) of the Spirit, but for the gift (*donum*) of the Spirit. The Blackfriars edition, that I usually find very helpful both with regard to translation and commentary, chooses *dona* and comments that ultimately it is of small importance which reading one chooses. I hope I have given enough reasons that

<sup>28</sup> *Filius autem est verbum, non quaecumque, sed spirans amorem. STh I q. 43 a.5 ad 2m.* Cf. the scene of the first Easter day described in John: the risen Lord enters the closed room, wishes his disciples peace and then says: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you". And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them "receive the Holy Spirit" (20,21-22)

<sup>29</sup> *Unde Augustinus dicit Verbum quod insinuare intendimus cum amore notitia est. Non igitur secundum quamlibet perfectionem intellectus mittitur Filius, sed secundum talem instructionem intellectus qua prorumpat in affectum amoris. . . . STh I q. 43 a.5 ad 2m.*

we should disagree with that choice and also with that comment.<sup>30</sup> Our knowledge that we enjoy the gift of the Spirit and not only use his gifts makes all the difference. How would we otherwise be temples of the Holy Spirit, adoptive children of God, Christians?

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<sup>30</sup> cfr. also Thomas' remark about David, quoted in footnote 10.