

THOMAS AQUINAS AND JUDAISM

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Introduction

Writing on Thomas Aquinas and Judaism is a delicate matter. No Christian theologian in the twenty-first century can escape an awareness of recent and remote atrocities, also in the name of Christianity, committed against the Jews; namely, the Shoah. It lays a heavy burden on those from a Christian perspective who now want to reflect on Jews and Judaism. Since this particular awareness is quite recent, we cannot of course expect Thomas Aquinas to share in our modern sense of delicacy. But if we want to be able to determine whether he can be helpful today in dialogue between Christians and Jews, we should first of all try to understand the basic characteristics of Aquinas's theological approach to Judaism generally. In the interests of making this a manageable task, we will have to leave aside a number of Aquinas's otherwise interesting political and practical contributions on how to deal with Jews, as for instance his letter to a countess of Flanders regarding the matter of governing the Jews under her rule. We will also need to set to one side the many occasions where Aquinas mainly repeats the traditions concerning Judaism and Jews that he inherited from the Christian *adversus Iudaeos* tradition. Following Jeremy Cohen's distinction between Aquinas's political and traditional side, where he largely echoes the rather tolerant Augustinian tradition, and his theological side, where he more or less mirrors the aggressiveness of a new mission to the Jews by the mendicant friars,¹ we concentrate on the latter because that is, perhaps surprisingly, where Aquinas's insight is most helpful to us. Before turning directly here, however, it is necessary to begin with a short survey of the contemporary

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debate as to whether the mendicant friars represented a new approach to Judaism and Jews in the Christian theological tradition. Next, we will concentrate on three aspects of Aquinas's theological approach to Judaism: his characterisation of Judaism as a form of disbelief; his christocentric reading of the Old Testament; and finally his treatment of circumcision as a sacrament administered to Christ. In conclusion, we will indicate some elements in the very structure of Aquinas's theology that might help us develop a new theology of the relationship between Christians and Jews. What is particularly relevant here is Aquinas's understanding of salvation history, where God's incarnation in Christ decisively determines the relation between Old and New Testament analogous to the relation between the human and the divine nature in Christ.

1. The Mendicant Friars: A New Approach to Jews and Judaism in the Middle Ages?

In the beginning of the thirteenth century, a new type of cleric entered the ecclesiastical scene. The Franciscan and Dominican mendicant friars would have enormous impact on the life of church and society. The basic characteristic of this new type of religious is that it combines in a novel synthesis the two types of clergy already known, i.e. monks and diocesan priests. The former were bound to a certain place, their monastery, whereas the latter were bound to a certain task, i.e. the basic care of souls. The mendicants, as they are called because of their dependence on alms, were neither; neither bound to place nor to (parish) ministry, they were free to devote themselves to the mission they chose to pursue.

This freedom was exercised in a society that is often regarded, centuries later by modern interpreters, as unified and homogeneous, even totalitarian. One does not need to have a romantic soul to admit that this is still a prevalent view of the later Middle Ages. Europe in the West was Christian, and almost no other outlook was heard of let alone encouraged to seek social embodiment. However, there were notable exceptions. In the Iberian peninsula, for example, Jews lived side by side with Muslims and Christians, sometimes serving Muslim rulers and, especially after the twelfth century Christian *reconquista*, Christian rulers. In both instances Jews mostly lived in prosperity and relative freedom. Some heretical upsurges were known in a few regions, especially in what now is called southern France and northern Spain: the Cathars.

The zeal of St. Dominic, who preached to these heretics, was handed down to his followers, who became famously devoted to teaching and preaching. Some of these Dominicans would concentrate on teaching theology to students, as Thomas Aquinas did. Others would focus on preaching to those who did share the faith, or those who did not, or even those who no longer did. The last two categories were minorities, to be sure. But preaching to

such minorities suggests that to the extent that Christendom increased its strength, adverse pressures on 'otherness' increased as well.

The preaching friars needed the teaching friars in many respects. They were dependent upon them for the knowledge of languages, most importantly Hebrew and Arabic. In the course of the thirteenth century such knowledge spread rapidly. No longer confined only to the monastery of St. Victor in Paris, where Hebrew was read, and no longer restricted to the monastery of Cluny, where knowledge of Arabic was disseminated, Dominicans founded an increasing number of teaching houses (*studia*) where friars learnt the language they would need in order to preach to their various constituencies.² Some would also begin reading Hebrew and Arabic sources, introduce these sources into their theology, and use this knowledge when asked to pass judgement on e.g. the Talmud.

There is no argument among scholars about the reality of these new developments, although there is clearly considerable dispute over their meaning and significance. By and large, the newly formed orders of mendicant friars were less reliant on traditional views and given instead to new and different modes of inquiry reflecting their own distinctive outlooks and interests. No longer did they simply condemn the Talmud outright and have it burned, but they actually made concerted efforts to read these books, with a view to finding new ways to persuade Jews to cross over to Christianity. Jewish sources were thus employed to fashion arguments that could serve their missionizing efforts. This missionary strategy was new and explains the transition from forbidding and burning to reading and employing the Talmud. But does it bespeak a fundamental change in attitude towards Jews, a revolution in theology, as Cohen maintains? Or does it manifest yet another, albeit more subtle, version of received Christian intolerance, as Hood argues?³

Christian theology seems to develop in the direction that contemporary Judaism can no longer be regarded as the legitimate heir of the God-given Torah and the people who received it. For from the thirties to the seventies of the thirteenth century a view on rabbinic Judaism arises that is more and more hostile to it. Up till now Jews were tolerated in Western Christian Europe, largely for three theological reasons, two of which originate in Augustine's writings. Augustine considered the presence of Jews in his society as beneficial, and therefore they should be treated in a friendly manner. According to Augustine, the fact that Jews had to live in the *diaspora* after the temple was destroyed, was valuable and useful proof of their divine punishment for not accepting the Messiah, corroborating the truthfulness of Christian faith in Christ. Moreover, Jewish independent adherence to the Torah and the Prophets constitutes proof of the authenticity of these scriptures that Christians consider important for verifying their faith in Christ, whose coming was foretold in these very scriptures. A third theological reason for tolerating Jews was that the Apostle Paul was convinced of the eventual conversion of all Jews to Christ, when Christ comes again.

Of course, other reasons, notably of a non-theological nature, may be given as well—e.g. reasons of an economic or a sociological nature. But with the great exception of the pogroms in connection to the first crusade, at the end of the eleventh century, Jews lived their lives relatively calmly and prosperously in the Christian west, for Christian theology had been largely in accordance with such a situation. This does not of course entail that the Christian position regarding Jews was right. Jews were considered slaves by Christians, for example, who could not be in command of Christian servants; moreover, Jews mostly were not allowed to possess land. Many Jews were forced into livelihoods of shop-keeping, craftsmanship and the lending of money, despite their former influential role, for instance, in the development of the Iberian peninsula and in international trade. With the rise of pre-capitalist society and the closed shops that guilds constituted, the roles of Jews in Christian societies were more and more limited to money-lending, interest and pawn-broking. That these financial activities were forbidden for Christians (and Muslims), and most importantly the huge tariffs involved, partly accounts for the negative popular image Jews enjoyed.

The friars exacerbated the economic and political pressure felt by Jews during this time. Apparently they considered the abiding presence of Jewish communities to be a challenge for Christian society. Their growing knowledge of the rabbinical tradition, made it clear to them that the rabbinical tradition, as they discovered it in the Talmud, had developed in opposition to Christian views and interpretations. Here they encountered stories they considered to be fables—e.g., stories about how to avoid the angel of death or accounts of demons, but also sexual tales deemed inadmissible, involving Noah and Cham, or Samson. Here they also encountered anthropomorphic language about God they considered blasphemous—God roaring like a lion three times at night, or playing with Leviathan are but two examples. Most disturbing of all, they encountered liberal interpretations of commandments in the Torah, mockery of Jesus Christ, and the professed admissibility of lying to and cheating of Gentiles.

Despite their small minority status, Jews were able to arouse enormous indignation. For these ‘outsiders by choice’ (Hood) were frequently suspected of cooperating with Christian heretics in trying to have people forswear their religion. Not only did they aid and abet Christian heretics, they were considered to be heretics themselves. Their Judaism was no longer faithful to the Torah and their religious cult (e.g. Sabbath, circumcision, dietary laws) was, since the coming of the Messiah, no longer legitimate. To the contrary, that observance constituted, in the eyes of some, disloyalty to the Torah. All kinds of nasty accusations were spread about Jews crucifying Christian children, or desecrating hosts. Books were burned; Jews were subjected to forced baptism or expelled.

This development of the Christian attitude towards Jews, from Nicholas Donin in the 1230s, through the famous disputation of Barcelona between

Rabbi Nachmanides and Dominican friar Pablo Cristiani in 1263, to Friar Raymundo Martini in the 1270s, when he published the major medieval sourcebook of anti-Judaism, his *Pugio Fidei* (*Dagger of Faith*), is to a large extent a mendicant affair. So it seems likely that Thomas Aquinas is somehow involved in it; how was he?

The picture that emerges from the studies of this topic paints Aquinas as objective, sober and positive: a moderate conservative who is traditional to the extent that he explicitly recommends granting the Jews the rights that they have according to canon law.⁴ He is opposed to forced baptism, but is rather tough on usury.⁵ Aquinas does not consider himself an expert in political matters concerning Jews.⁶ He contributes in no way to the hysterical folktales that circulate at the time about crimes Jews allegedly commit. Aquinas, as the scholar he is, reads Jewish authors, in translation, and defends the Christian faith also in light of Jewish considerations, and does so in a manner that is detached, respectful and firm.⁷ Aquinas's major involvement in the Dominican mission among the Jews is his preparation of the *Summa contra Gentiles*. This work, which is more of a combination of philosophical and dogmatic theology than a work of sheer apologetics, seems to be written at the request of Aquinas's former Master General and the genius of the Dominican mission, Raymundus de Peñaforte.⁸ It is the only book Aquinas has written in which he refers to the 'Talmut', and in particular to a condemned proposition in it, which says that sometimes God sins and is cleansed from sin (I, q. 95). Two years before Aquinas arrived in Paris as a student the Talmud was burned there; Pablo Cristiani preached in Paris in 1269, when Aquinas was resident in the city; Raymundo Martini employed large parts of the *Summa contra Gentiles* in his *Pugio Fidei*; but the exact nature of Aquinas's relationship with these events and persons, both of whom are chief 'employees' in Raymundus de Peñaforte's mission, is unknown to us now. Theologically, it is quite clear that not only any anti-Jewish verbal abuse is absent from his works, but Aquinas also never explicitly harboured the theory of post-biblical Judaism as heretical.⁹ But it is true of course that for Thomas Aquinas the person and message of Jesus Christ is central to his outlook on Church and Society, and even dominates his historical philosophy.¹⁰ Christ is the pivotal point of history, which translates into visions on how Christ was present in Jewish scriptures that for Christians form the Old Testament, on the status of the (old) law and its precepts in regard of the new one, and on contemporary Jewish belief, to which we will turn now.

2. Judaism as a Form of Disbelief

From a Christian point of view, the relation between Christianity and Judaism is special. On the one hand, Judaism has to be viewed as a religion of its own with its own history that continues after the coming of Christ. In order to do justice to the otherness of Judaism, Christian theologians have to consider it

as a different religion with its own sources, its own history and its own characteristics. But, on the other hand, since the Christian church acknowledges the Hebrew scriptures as testimony of the covenant between God and His people, Judaism belongs to Christian identity as well. This double perspective implies that a Christian who wants to do justice to Judaism as a religious phenomenon should approach this religion both as different and as familiar. Generally speaking, theologians are inclined to view Judaism from the perspective of Christian identity only, and therefore they have difficulty in doing justice to Judaism in its otherness. A clear example of this has been given in the previous section: Christian theologians in the thirteenth century wanted to ban the Talmud because for them it symbolised a heretical tradition of interpretation of the Old Testament. Or they used the Talmud against the Jews in order to show that it confirmed that the Messiah had come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. In both cases, the Talmud was judged from the inner perspective of Christianity. In the same manner, Aquinas feels free to interpret the Old Testament from a christocentric point of view, as we will show in the next section; but first, we need to ask ourselves if we can find traces in Aquinas of respect for the otherness of Judaism. Once again, we have to be aware that this is a modern question, and therefore we should expect Aquinas to provide either an awkward answer to it or no answer at all.¹¹ In point of fact, the way that Aquinas shows respect for the otherness of Judaism is to consider Judaism as a form of disbelief.

One of the areas in which the difference between the worldview of a Christian in the Middle Ages and a Christian in modern, pluralistic society is very much apparent, is precisely the assessment of people of other faiths.¹² In the Middle Ages, the general idea was that most of the people were Christians, and that those who did not follow the lead of the Church did so out of stubbornness. Theologians contemplated the marginal case of the *nutritus in silva* (someone who is left in the woods, and grows up without knowledge of Christian faith) but the general thought was that practically everybody could know that they were to be saved by Christ. It goes without saying that this is a worldview radically different from our own. At that time, however, no one seemed to bother very much about other peoples and cultures: to most of the civilians, these 'others' were either indifferent or threatening. The famous axiom *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* (there is no salvation outside the Church) fit in with this mentality very well.¹³

Aquinas seems to share this mentality when he deals with disbelief as a vice contrary to the theological virtue of faith (*Summa theologiae* II-II, qq. 10–16). For him, *infidelitas* is disbelief rather than unbelief: a rejection of what should be believed rather than a lack of assent.¹⁴ Someone who does not believe willingly denies the truth of Christian faith, and thus commits a sin excluding him or her from salvation. Even those who, through no fault of their own, have heard nothing about the faith, are condemned, albeit because of other sins. Disbelievers are not different people believing different things;

they are people who simply depart from the truth.¹⁵ There is no place for real difference: the others are deviators, either because they resist the faith before it has been accepted (such is the case of the pagans), or because they resist it after having accepted it—either in the mode of a prefiguration (such is the case of the Jews), or in the mode of the truth itself (as is the case with heretics).¹⁶ In other words, Jews and pagans deviate from the ultimate end of their lives because they refuse to assent to Christ; heretics, on the other hand, do assent to Christ but not in a correct way.¹⁷ In a certain sense, the heretics are the worst, because they once knew the fullness of faith and yet resisted it.¹⁸ They are therefore not to be tolerated in the least: because they corrupt the faith, they deserve capital punishment, even as forgers are condemned to death by the civil authorities. When the Church is convinced that heretics will not change their minds, she will excommunicate them and hand them over to the civil judges in order to be put to death.¹⁹

It seems that Aquinas gives us an awkward answer indeed. He seems to be unable to do justice to the otherness of Judaism as a different religion, since the difference between the two religions is immediately identified with the theological difference between true faith and disbelief. On the one hand, the disbelief of the Jews is not as bad as heresy, since they did not accept the truth of Christian faith; on the other hand, their disbelief is not as complete as the heathens, insofar as the latter did not expect Christ at all. There is, however, a sense in which Aquinas does value the otherness of Judaism properly, viz. his insistence that Jews do not belong to the spiritual authority of the Church.²⁰ Therefore, the children of Jews must not be baptised against the will of their parents. On this issue, Aquinas suggests that he defends the usual practice of the Church against a then recent urge to baptise Jewish children.²¹ Aquinas gives two reasons why he is so unresponsive to the idea of forced baptism of Jewish children: first, this new practice is detrimental to the faith, since these children do not know what they believe when they are baptised. And therefore, they might easily be persuaded by their parents to renounce what they unwittingly embraced. But it goes against natural justice as well, since parents are responsible for their children until they reach the age of reason. Therefore, the Church would violate the parental rights of the Jews if she would allow this practice.²² Moreover, the process of faith should always be voluntary. And therefore, Jews cannot be compelled to believe as long as they stay outside the spiritual authority of the Church. Therefore, the famous word of the Gospel: *compelle intrare*, that is: “make them come in” (Luke 14: 23) does not apply to the Jews because they cannot be coerced to accept the Christian faith.²³ In the same manner, the Church should tolerate the rites of the Jews, because as figures of faith they are a certain witness to the truth.²⁴

In this context, Aquinas has also something to say about inter-religious dialogue between Christians and Jews. The Church cannot forbid the communion of the faithful with Jews, because she has no right to pass spiritual

judgement on them. But the Church forbids, under penalty of excommunication, any communication with heretics or apostates. As regards the persons who want to communicate with Jews or pagans, they may do so if they have a firm faith, so that the communication will lead to the conversion of disbelievers or unbelievers rather than to the turning away from faith by the believers. If, however, one is not that firmly grounded in faith, communication with disbelievers and unbelievers should be forbidden, because the probability of downfall from faith is to be feared in such instances.²⁵

3. The Interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures

Judging from the previous section, it is possible to say some good things about the way in which Thomas Aquinas deals with the otherness of Judaism. At least, he demonstrates an awareness of the fact that the Church does not have any spiritual authority over Jews, which means that their natural rights as Jews should be honoured and not violated. But this is only the other side of the fact that Jews are outside of the Church in its role as instrument of salvation. It is not yet a positive valuation of Judaism as such. Something of the latter is hinted at, however, when Aquinas claims that Jews are, theologically speaking, in a certain sense already inside the Church, since the Jews are an integral part of the Church's identity. If one is to learn more from Aquinas on the theological importance of Jews and Judaism, one must gain a better grasp of the way in which Judaism is 'internal' to Christian identity.

From the point of theological identity, the relations between Christians and Jews are determined by what they have in common. Again, Aquinas classifies the Jews, in a middle position between heathens and Muslims on the one hand and heretics on the other. Because Christians share no common Scripture with heathens and Muslims, they should, according to Aquinas, only use reason when disputing with them. With Jews, however, Christians have the Old Testament in common, and with heretics Christians share both the New and the Old Testament. Whereas the common ground determines the mode of conversation,²⁶ the issues that divide both religions determine its content. Historically speaking, from the Christian point of view, the person of Christ as Saviour of humankind has always been the most important issue in this conversation. It is therefore necessary to look at Aquinas's christological interpretation of the Old Testament if we really want to appreciate his theological approach to Judaism.

Many things can be said about the manner in which Thomas Aquinas deals with the Old Testament in his theology. It could be very interesting, for instance, to give an analysis of the way in which he engages the Old Law as one of the biblical parts of his *Summa theologiae*.²⁷ But in our opinion, the most important clue for understanding Thomas's theological approach to the Old Testament is his christocentrism. By this we mean that Christ is, for him, the centre of the history of salvation, and that both the New and the Old

Testament refer primarily to Christ. Of course, on this point Aquinas follows the way in which the Christian tradition from the very beginning has interpreted its Scriptures with Christ in mind. But he does this in quite a distinct manner, as we will show with reference to his commentary on the Psalms.²⁸

In the prologue to Aquinas's commentary on the Psalms, which is roughly contemporaneous to the third part of his *Summa theologiae*, he states that Christ and his members form the subject matter of this book. "Everything that pertains to faith in the incarnation is treated thus clearly in the Psalms that they seem to be a Gospel instead of a prophecy."²⁹ Aquinas corroborates this christological interpretation of the Psalms by refuting the approach of Theodore of Mopsuetia, who contends that nothing is expressly said about Christ in the prophecies, but that some words were applied to him later on. Quite the contrary, Aquinas says, the Spirit as the author of Scripture has ordered the words of the Psalms in such a way that some of these words have as their principal meaning that they are signs of things to come.³⁰ Some words refer to historical facts in the life of David, the human author of the Psalms, and may be interpreted as referring to Christ as well; but some other words refer mainly to Christ. This gives a certain inconsistency to Aquinas's interpretation of the Psalms: in some cases, the christological interpretation belongs to the literal sense of the Psalm; in other cases, it belongs to the spiritual sense.³¹ This inconsistency is caused by the fact that Aquinas takes seriously the Jewish way of interpreting Scripture by applying it to new situations, as the first followers of Jesus did in their testimonies. In fact, the way in which Aquinas interprets the Psalms christologically is guided by the quotations from the Psalms in the New Testament. Although his christological interpretation of the Psalms seems to be problematic in the eyes of a modern theologian who wants to respect the otherness of the Jewish Scriptures, the way in which Aquinas accounts for his method of interpretation shows his continuity with the first Christian (and therefore Jewish) interpretations of their (Jewish) Scriptures.³²

On the one hand, Aquinas refers to the person of Christ very frequently in his commentary on the Psalms: some five hundred times, which appears to accord with the christological emphasis in his prologue. On the other hand, he does not seize every opportunity to give a christological explanation.³³ Some of the Psalms do not afford any occasion to engage in christological interpretations, except perhaps that Aquinas interprets the words *in finem* in the title of some Psalms as a reference to Christ who is the way towards the destination of our Christian life.³⁴ In some cases, the words of the Psalms may have different meanings, so that a literal interpretation, with its reference to historical circumstances, may be followed by a spiritual (or mystical, or allegorical) interpretation in which those very same words are interpreted as referring to Christ. But in some other Psalms, the main reference is to Christ alone, while the historical reference is only figuratively invoked. With reference to Ps. 2:2: "The kings of the earth stand ready, and

the rulers conspire together against the Lord and his anointed king”, Aquinas remarks: “This is said of Christ, the anointed one, under the likeness of David”.³⁵ But he gives his source immediately: Acts 4:25 where Peter and John and other followers of Christ quote Ps. 2:2. In this manner, many Psalms may be read at the historical level, where they refer to the history of David; at the allegorical level, where they refer to Christ; and at the moral level, where they refer to the Church.³⁶ In their literal meaning, a good number of the Psalms refer to David, even as they refer to Christ in their mystical sense; but the ‘modern’ implication that the literal sense must be the true sense, is turned around by Aquinas: the mystical sense leads to the true interpretation that refers to the mystery of Christ, according to the words of St. Paul in Romans 10:18 (quoting Ps. 19:4).³⁷ Aquinas’s practice reflects the usual Christian approach of Judaism and the Old Testament: what has been said in the Old Law figuratively is now revealed in Christ in truth. This means that although the christological interpretation is an interpretation *secundum mysterium* and not a literal one, it is nonetheless the true interpretation according to the authors of the New Testament.

Introducing the next Psalm, Aquinas gives a similar idea of his christocentric approach: “Although some of the things in this Psalm literally refer to David, they belong to Christ properly and truly. According to mystery, they also belong to the Church and a just man.”³⁸ At these places, the christological interpretation is at one and the same time a possible interpretation but also the only true and proper interpretation. All of which is to say that Aquinas’s christocentrism does not erase other possible interpretations, since they are juxtaposed and often preceded by words such as “these words could be explained in the following way . . .”.³⁹ The juxtaposition of plural possible readings and one true reading creates a tension that is characteristic for the Christian approach to the Old Testament.⁴⁰

At some places, however, Aquinas seems to indicate that the christological interpretation is the only possibility, so that the *littera* of the text refers to the history of Christ. In these cases, the christological sense that modern theologians would accept as at most a figural sense, is in Aquinas’s opinion, the literal sense of the Psalm. Again, Aquinas appeals to the authority of the Apostles, viz. Peter who says that David spoke about Christ (Acts 2:25).⁴¹ On the same authority, Aquinas says that the words of Ps. 40:7, “In the beginning of the book, it has been written about me that my desire is to do thy will”, refer to Christ, since the Apostle in Hebrews 10:7 quotes these verses.⁴² Even stronger is the authority of Christ himself who applied the beginning of Psalm 22 (and therefore the whole Psalm) to his own person in Matthew 27:46. For that reason, the literal meaning of this Psalm refers to Christ. Finally, Aquinas refers to the authority of Christ in his explanation of Ps. 41:9: “Even the friend whom I trusted, who ate at my table, exults over my misfortune”, as follows: “Since Christ Himself according to John 14:18 used this word concerning Judas, we will explain this as referring to Christ.”⁴³

These instances make clear how New Testament texts are determinative for Aquinas in his interpretation of the Old Testament. Whereas most phrases in the Psalms refer to the history of David, and may sometimes be applied to Christ in a spiritual manner, some phrases from the Psalms that are quoted in the New Testament must be taken to refer to Christ truly, since Christ is the truth of God.

It has to be kept in mind, though, that these explicit christological explanations are, in a certain sense, exceptional in Aquinas's commentary. In large parts of this text, he mainly uses the Old Testament in order to interpret texts from the Old Testament: *Scriptura sui ipsius interpres*. A quick survey of Aquinas's commentary on the Psalms reveals that the number of quotations from the Old Testament, mainly from the Psalms, is twice as great as the number of quotations from the New Testament.⁴⁴

4. Circumcision as a Sacrament Administered to Christ

It is said sometimes, that in the course of its history Christianity has completely forgotten about the Jewishness of Jesus. Mockingly, scholars say that Christ was more the first Christian than a son of Jewish descent. Some even intimate that had the church valued the descent of its founder more correctly history would have taken a different turn:

Would there have been such anti-Semitism, would there have been so many pogroms, would there have been an Auschwitz, if every Christian church and every Christian home had focused its devotion (. . .) on icons of Christ not only as Pantocrator but as *Rabbi Jeshua bar-Joseph*, Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David, in the context of the history of a suffering Israel and a suffering humanity?⁴⁵

There can be no question but that Jesus should be viewed as a Rabbi, as a Jewish teacher and prophet, and that the awareness of this among Christians has been, by and large, quite bleak. Against this background it is rather remarkable to see that Aquinas is quite explicit on this subject. In his first large theological work he even calls Christ the *Frater Iudeorum*, and he does so in the context of questions regarding the reasons why Christ was circumcised.⁴⁶ The account of Christ's circumcision is given in Luke 2:21: "When the eighth day came and the child was to be circumcised, they gave him the name Jesus, the name the angel had given him before his conception." Gabriel had told Mary that her son would be named Jesus, and so it was done during his circumcision.

Aquinas is the first in Western theology to develop on such a large scale a theology of the mysteries of life and passion of Christ. Having reflected upon the incarnation and the relation between divinity and humanity in Christ, he continues by considering all major 'historical' events of his life, from conception to resurrection. The discussion centres around what he calls

'convenience': given these facts, why was it done thus? What reasons could there have been? And why was it not done otherwise? This applies to Christ's circumcision too. Did Christ need to be circumcised? In the *Summa Theologiae* one can detect Aquinas's major questions: was circumcision not prescribed to Abraham in order to remember God's promise which is, however, now fulfilled with the birth of Christ? What Christ does entails an example for Christians, but Christians are not supposed to have their children or themselves circumcised? And Aquinas's third question is most telling of all: circumcision is meant to do away with original sin, but Christ did not have any. So why was it necessary that Christ be circumcised? The last question is a sequel to the traditional confession that he who is supposed to cleanse from sin, is clean himself.

Aquinas's last point is quite telling, since it apparently assumes that the doctrine of original sin was a Jewish doctrine as well, and even more, that circumcision had been an effective means to do away with this sin. It brings to attention the general way in which Aquinas considers the relationship between the commandments given before or in the Torah, which Aquinas called the Old Law, and the new dispensation. We will turn to this shortly, but first we need to pay attention to Aquinas's answer to the questions concerning Christ's circumcision. In the *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas gives seven reasons for the convenience of this circumcision, before he answers the three questions mentioned above. Christ was circumcised (1) in order to testify to the reality of his human body in front of those who were to doubt it; (2) to approve of the circumcision of old instituted by God; (3) to prove himself to be a member of Abraham's family, the one who received the commandment of circumcision as a sign of his faith in Christ; (4) to prevent Jews from having an excuse, were he not circumcised; (5) to give us an example of the virtue of obedience it was done on the eighth day, according to the law; (6) to show that he did not reject this ordinary remedy for the cleansing of sin; and lastly (7) to free people from the burden of the law by himself carrying it.⁴⁷

It is quite clear how positive Aquinas is regarding this instance of what he calls "sacrament of the old law".⁴⁸ To him it is the most important sacrament of the old law, because it has such a great and important effect, i.e. cleansing from original sin. Christ's personal history approves of this ritual, and he employs it in carrying out his salvific mission. In answering the three questions, Aquinas understands Christ's circumcision as a prefiguration of his passion, being the final and true realisation of God's promise of which the general circumcision was also a sign. Christ thereby shows himself faithfully obedient to the law. Being buried with Christ by baptism means for Christians a kind of spiritual circumcision, by which they take leave of a life of the flesh. Old Testament circumcision removes original sin and is a sign of Christian spiritual circumcision. It is not just a sign of future removal of sin, it is not only valued as a prefiguration of the Christian dispensation, but it really removes original sin even before the passion of Christ.

In the course of his authorship Aquinas has changed his views on the sacramentality of circumcision. In the treatise on the sacraments of the *Tertia Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, which astonishingly contains a separate question on circumcision, in between baptism and exorcism (q. 70), Aquinas retracts his former vision on this, and to avoid misunderstanding he does so twice; apparently we are dealing with an important issue.⁴⁹ Having explained the efficacy of the sacraments of the new law in general, Aquinas here treats the question whether the sacraments of the old law cause any grace. In general Aquinas distinguishes between the conferring of justifying grace, which he denies to "the sacraments of the old law", and the signification of faith in Christ through which the fathers of old indeed were justified.⁵⁰ The sacraments of the old law cannot be said to cause grace by themselves, but only inasmuch as they prefigure Christ. To Aquinas the sacrament of circumcision, however, seemed at first to be the exception to the rule. Some, he notes, say that circumcision does not bestow any grace, but only lifts sin. This cannot be, for humans are only justified from sin through grace. Therefore others have said that the grace bestowed by "the sacraments of the old law" only removes the guilt. Aquinas rejects this as well. He then mentions the view that he himself used to subscribe to but which he now retracts: the grace conferred is positive in the sense that it makes one worthy for eternal life, but it cannot suppress the desire which persuades one to sin. This, Aquinas says, proves to be not true for anyone looking into the matter attentively. For a minimum of grace is capable of resisting any desire whatsoever and of meriting eternal life. And so, in the end, the exception is normalised and does not exist any more. Circumcision confers grace inasmuch as it is a sign of Abraham's faith in the future baptism of Christ. It really 'works', but not in and by itself, but through the mediation of belief in Christ's future baptism.

Through circumcision Abraham differentiated himself as a believer from the non-believers, moving out from his homeland and his family, on the promise of God that in and through his offspring, which is Christ, all nations of the earth would be blessed. This makes circumcision the sacrament of faith and gives it a profound similarity with the sacrament of baptism, which is also a sacrament of faith (*ST* III, q. 70, a. 1–2). Aquinas repeats his overview of possible views on the gracious efficacy of circumcision in his separate question on circumcision in particular. He states explicitly that the grace that circumcision grants has all the usual effects. Baptism does so by the act of baptism itself, *ex opere operato*, and circumcision because of the signification of Christ's passion (*ST* III, q. 70, a. 4).

Now, Richard Schenk has shown in a thorough and penetrating study that Aquinas developed his opinion on the basis of Bonaventure's exposition, very much like another theologian of the time, Robert Kilwardby did.⁵¹ But Aquinas and Kilwardby develop in quite opposite directions. Whereas Aquinas chooses to reduce the literal efficacy of this sacrament in order to

save the fullness of grace it confers, Kilwardby takes the alternative possibility and allows for all sacraments of the old law to have gracious effects in and by themselves. At first sight, and this is Schenk's interpretation, it seems that Kilwardby operates more in line with modern respect for the authentic singularity of Jewish religious rites.⁵² But on the other hand one cannot deny that in Aquinas's theological maturing process the centrality of the Mystery of the Incarnation grows and grows, and that in his theological project it is quite a logical tack to derive the effectiveness of sacraments of the old law from their prefiguration of Christ. One could moreover argue that Aquinas's unwillingness to distinguish between full Christian grace and partial Jewish grace might be of importance to his attitude toward Jews as well.

Aquinas's treatment of the sacrament of circumcision, and more particularly his treatment of the circumcision of Christ, shows him a theologian steeped in tradition, on top of which he makes his own final decisions. In doing so he fully acknowledges the importance of circumcision in the days from Abraham to Christ, admitting the bestowal of full grace through it. Making his way through life, Aquinas comes to appreciate also that there is no grace but through Christ alone, and this is the reason why he is so eager to correct his former views on circumcision. But when reflecting upon the circumcision of Christ, Aquinas fully acknowledges the Jewish lineage of Jesus, which forms part of the reason why Christ was circumcised in the first place. Christ was circumcised and baptised. He was baptised in order to start the new law, but he was circumcised in order to confirm and fulfill the old law.⁵³ Circumcision of course is connected to naming the one circumcised, as is baptism, and naming is of paramount importance to both the Jewish understanding of religion and Aquinas's interpretation of it. The name Jesus, God saves, constitutes the program of his life and mission, and connects him to God. Nothing is more central to him than that, and inside the centrality of that mission his circumcision is placed. To Jesus' identity belongs his Jewishness, according to Aquinas, and he says so explicitly: *Frater Iudeorum*.

5. Perspectives

There are several instances in which Aquinas directly addresses the Judaism of his age. He treats social and political issues, and issues like mandatory baptism. More interesting, however, is what we can encounter on the level of the very structure of Aquinas's theological authorship. For Aquinas, as the systematic theologian he is, works often through establishing connections between the various tracts of theology. And thus he connects, employing the word *mysterium*, the context of interpreting the Old Testament with the theology of the hypostatic union in Christ. The new covenant is founded on what Christians call the old covenant, the sacred Jewish scriptures. The Old Testament is said to prefigure the New Testament, and we have seen above the ways Aquinas, as many theologians of his day and the authors of

the New Testament themselves before him, thinks about Christ when interpreting the Old Testament. Christ himself is present in the Old Testament, sometimes as its literal meaning, sometimes as its spiritual meaning. This presence is *secundum mysterium*, according to mystery. And of course, the same word *mysterium* is used for the union of divinity and humanity in the one person of Christ, the hypostatic union. As shown elsewhere, Aquinas employs the word *mysterium* analogously, intimating a relationship between Christ's hidden presence in the Old Testament and God's hidden presence in Christ.⁵⁴ The exact nature of this relationship is not elucidated by Aquinas. It belongs, however, to the deep structure of his way of doing theology. And so we are entitled to ask whether the one might be helpful in approaching the other, whether Aquinas's account of the hypostatic union might help us develop his perspectives on the relationship between Old and New Testament, and ultimately between Judaism and Christianity.

This rather formal, structural tack might surprise some. There are, however, fundamental reasons why this need not be. For Aquinas's interpretation of the theology of the hypostatic union is to a large degree a formal one. Aquinas does not so much take the doctrine of the two natures of Christ as a description of his personhood, as he employs it as an ontological background for reflecting upon the person and work of Christ. He does not think that one should develop the theory of two natures into a 'greek' biography of Jesus of Nazareth, so to say. Instead the theory of Christ's two natures helps in interpreting what the Gospels say about him. So, a somewhat formal interpretation should not surprise.

But there is more to it, because medieval symbolism referred to the divine word as its primary analogate. Holy Scripture, as well as all books and words in general, indeed eventually nature itself, are expressions of the Logos, of the Word of God. The Word of God expresses itself in all that God creates. And even more so: Holy Scripture is the Word of God, the Torah is the Word of God. But the same is said of the person of Christ: he is the Word of God. This brings the Torah and Christ under the same consideration: both can be said to be the Word of God, yet both are not exclusively identified as such. For the Torah consists of human language, and Christ is human 'as well'. Both the Torah and Christ fit into medieval symbolism, because of their ultimate way of symbolising the divine.

So there is an analogy between the Torah and the person of Christ. To speak of analogy implies at least two things: a similarity against the background of an even larger dissimilarity, and the need for special naming, special signification. Both should be kept in mind when reading the following.

Aquinas's approach to the hypostatic union relies heavily on the teachings of the councils of Chalcedon and Constantinople II. Chalcedon (451) teaches a mostly negative view on the relationship between divinity and humanity in Christ. Both natures are, on the one hand, unmixed and unchanged and,

on the other, undivided and inseparable. Humanity is not thereby absorbed by divinity; the divine and the human are not competitive nor is the one endangering the integrity of the other. On the contrary, it is precisely because of his divinity that Christ can come so close to humanity as to have humanity exist in his person; both do not belong to the same level. On the other hand, we are not allowed to think of Christ as essentially a duality, as a composite of two different substantial natures accidentally united. No, this unity is a real one, albeit inexplicably real. In developing these views on the hypostatic union, Aquinas is engaged in a kind of theology which is fundamental in character. It constitutes a second order reflection on the concrete history of Jesus of Nazareth, and is not meant to be a biographical sketch. It attempts rather to approach the mystery that God is the author of Jesus's words and acts in a way that is even more radical than the way God is the author of all creatures. In the end the contours of an apophatic christology emerge, which accounts for the impossibility of comprehending God's hidden presence in Christ as well as its salvific efficacy for humanity.

It might be fruitful to pursue the experiment to attribute what is said about the hypostatic union to the relationship between Old and New Testament. They should not be mixed, for they have their own independent meaning and authenticity. They should not be changed, as was sometimes done in the Middle Ages, in order to have the text more evidently signify Christ. Christ's presence in the Old Testament constitutes an identity of meaning which is unheard of, and will never be completely unravelled. And thus such meanings should not be divided or separated, for that would result in a detrimental dualism, in strife and competition, in robbery and hatred.

It is not difficult to translate this approach of the relationship between Old and New Testament to the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. It respects the legitimacy of Rabbinical interpretation of the Tenakh, even as it respects the legitimacy of the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament. Both may go together, because of Christ's acknowledgement and observance of the 'old law', and also because of Christ's fulfillment of it. They may also be congruent because of Paul's interpretation of the non-withdrawal by God of his eternal promise made to the Jewish people (Rom 11:28–29). To be sure, the covenant may be called 'old', but that does not mean that it is ended. To interpret the *diaspora* of the Jewish people as punishment for the crucifixion of Christ is something Aquinas is not likely to subscribe to, even though he considers Judaism under the heading of 'disbelief'. He will not, however, consider Rabbinical Judaism as heretical, and was perhaps inspired not to do so because of this fundamental aspect of his overall theological authorship: the principle of non-competition between God and creation, as taught by fundamental christology, and translated into biblical theology.⁵⁵

More than in Aquinas's age, our own era is very sensitive to the tension that exists between Judaism and Christianity, for reasons indicated at the outset. But in a very fundamental sense Aquinas was well aware of this

tension, and all the more remarkable it is that he does not belong to those among his brothers who wanted to lift that tension. In the relationship between Christianity and Judaism there is, so to speak, no room left for either Nestorianism or for Monophysitism; i.e., for a duality which only admits of accidental union or for a unity which absorbs the typical features of one or both 'constituents'. Aquinas might teach us that it is good theology to try to uphold the tension, instead of doing away with it to the detriment of both Christianity and Judaism.

As we mentioned above, the central word in this theological approach is *mysterium*. Aquinas links the mystery of divine presence in the Old Testament to the mystery of the hypostatic union in Christ. Now, the Latin word for this originally Greek expression is the word *sacramentum*. Christian authors employ it to refer to the specific sacred signs that mediate God's grace. And so, the mystery of divine presence in the sacraments is carried into the analogy as well. In recent days the word sacrament is used not only to refer to a specific ritual—for example, the Jewish ritual of circumcision—but to Judaism as such. Walter Cardinal Kasper states that "Judaism is as a sacrament of every otherness that as such the Church must learn to discern, recognise and celebrate".⁵⁶ Kasper's utterance is striking and deserves much more study and comment than can be offered here. But the attribution to Judaism of (something like) the very reality which is most precious to the Church is remarkable indeed. Aquinas would certainly have been struck by this approach. And yet, the preceding argument has shown a possible continuity with the very essence of his thought. Moreover, one even has to acknowledge that this uncollapsible tension, this togetherness which seems to be impossible, accords with the very idea of a relation between Judaism and Christianity that cannot be figured out completely. It constitutes a genuine mystery, being both incomprehensible and yet at the same time saving and historical. The relation between Judaism and Christianity, seen with the eyes of Christian faith and reflected upon by Christian theology, is indeed beyond comprehension. It 'just' needs to be discerned, recognised and celebrated, which—we admit—implies a program for ages.

NOTES

- 1 See Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).
- 2 Cf. M. M. Mulchaney, "First the bow is bent in study . . .": *Dominican education before 1350*, (Toronto, Canada: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1998).
- 3 Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism*, (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1982). John Y. B. Hood, *Aquinas and the Jews*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995). For a moderate position on the role of the Mendicants cf. Robert Chazan, *Daggers of Faith: thirteenth-century Christian missionizing and Jewish response*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988).
- 4 Canon law provided for both a certain protection and a certain segregation and oppression of Jews. For example, forced baptism was forbidden by the Pope (Callixtus II, 1119–1124,

Sicut Iudeis, later included in the *Decretales* of Gregory IX, 1234), as in fact were all crimes against the Jews. However, the protection accorded Jews under these decretals carried an important qualification, namely, as long as Jews did not conspire against Christianity.

5 According to the major thesis of John Hood, in his *Aquinas and the Jews*. Hood finds Thomas's uncompromising stance on the illegitimacy of usury something that would be abused, a few decennia later, as a pretext by rulers who were interested in confiscating Jewish property.

6 Cf. his *Epistola ad ducissam Brabantiae*, also improperly called *De regimine Iudeorum*.

7 Cf. his *De Rationibus Fidei ad cantorem Antiochenum*.

8 For an elaborate discussion of background and motives see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Initiation à Saint Thomas d'Aquin. Sa personne et son oeuvre*, (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1993/ (2nd revised and augmented edition, 2002), pp. 153–156 and Rolf Schönberger, *Thomas von Aquin's 'Summa contra Gentiles'*, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001).

9 According to both Cohen and Hood, however, one can make a case for a conjectural interpretation of Aquinas as *implicitly* considering post-biblical Judaism as heretical: See John Hood, op. cit., p. 108; Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law, Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 364–389.

10 Cf. Henk J. M. Schoot, *Christ the 'Name' of God: Thomas Aquinas on Naming Christ*, (Louvain: Peeters, 1993) and Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfilment of Torah and Temple: Salvation According to Thomas Aquinas*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

11 For a similar approach, see Paul J. M. van Tongeren, "Thomas Aquinas on Forgiveness and Tolerance", in *Tibi Soli Peccavi: Thomas Aquinas on Guilt and Forgiveness* (Publications of the Thomas Instituut te Utrecht, n.s., vol. III), Henk J. M. Schoot (ed.), (Leuven: Peeters, 1996), pp. 59–73.

12 Otto H. Pesch, *Thomas von Aquin: Grenze und Größe mittelalterlicher Theologie*, (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1988), pp. 52–65.

13 Francis A. Sullivan, S. J., *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992).

14 See the explanatory note in *St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, volume 32: consequences of Faith (2a 2ae.8–16)*. Latin text, English translation, introduction, notes and glossary by Thomas Gilby O. P., (Cambridge: Blackfriars, 1975), pp. 38–39.

15 *Summa theologiae (STh) II-II*, q.10 a.1.

16 *STh* II-II q.10 a.5.

17 *STh* II-II q.11 a.1.

18 *STh* II-II q.10 a.6.

19 *STh* II-II q.11 a.3: *utrum haeretici sint tolerandi*. Gilby (op. cit., p. 89) makes the dry remark that one can only appreciate this article "when its historical period is kept in mind".

20 According to the principle *de his qui foris sunt*, Christians should not intervene in the practice of Jewish religion; cp. I Cor. 5: 12–13.

21 *STh* II-II q.10 a.12: "Et ideo periculosum videtur hanc assertionem de novo inducere, ut praeter consuetudinem in Ecclesia hactenus observatam, Iudeorum filii invitis parentibus baptizentur".

22 *STh* II-II q.10 a.12 arg.s.c.

23 *STh* II-II q.10 a.8 ad 2um.

24 *STh* II-II q.10 a.11.

25 *STh* II-II q.10 a.9.

26 See *Summa contra Gentiles* I, c.2. Also Pim Valkenberg, "How to Talk to Strangers: Aquinas and Interreligious Dialogue in the Middle Ages", in *Jaarboek 1997 Thomas Instituut te Utrecht*, vol. 17, pp. 9–47.

27 For the biblical character of *STh* I-II q.98–105, see Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Initiation*, p. 228.

28 Since there is, as yet, no critical edition of the commentary on the Psalms, we follow the Vivès edition: *Doct. Ang. D. Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia, vol. 18: in Psalmos Davidis Expositio*, studio St. Fretté (Paris, 1889), pp. 228–556. The references to this commentary, however, do not indicate page numbers but the number of the Psalm and the number of the *lectio* in Aquinas's commentary on this psalm.

29 "Omnia enim quae ad fidem [in the Vivès-edition: *finem*] Incarnationis pertinent, sic dilucide traduntur in hoc opere, ut fere videatur evangelium et non prophetia", prol.

30 "Prophetiae autem aliquando dicuntur de rebus quae tunc temporis erant, sed non principaliter dicuntur de eis, sed inquantum figura sunt futurorum: et ideo Spiritus sanctus ordinavit quod

quando talia dicuntur, inserantur quaedam quae excedunt conditionem illius res gestae, ut animus elevetur ad figuratum", prol. See also in Ps. 21, lect. 1.

31 Cf. Pim Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God: Place and Function of Holy Scripture in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (Leuven: Peeters 2000), p. 183.

32 See Pierre Grelot, *Le mystère du Christ dans les Psaumes*, (Paris: Desclée, 1998).

33 See Thomas F. Ryan, *Thomas Aquinas as Reader of the Psalms*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), pp. 14–16, 61–64 and 107–112.

34 See, among others, in *Psalmos* 4 lect. 1: Christ is the end of the Law; ps. 5 lect. 1; ps. 39, lect. 1; ps. 40, lect. 1, and the prologue to the *tertia pars* of the *Summa theologiae*.

35 "Mystice haec dicta sunt sub similitudine David de Christo", in Ps. 2, lect. 1; cf. Grelot, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

36 See Aquinas's commentary on the third Psalm, lect. 1 and 5. Also, ps. 7, lect. 3; ps. 10, lect. 1; ps. 26 lect. 12.

37 In Ps. 18, lect. 1: "Psalmus iste secundum veritatem exponitur de Christo, quia Apostolus de hoc auctoritatem ad mysterium Christi Rom. X inducit".

38 In Ps. 19, lect. 1.

39 See, for instance, in Ps. 17, lect. 1: "Et quia per David significatur Christus, omnia ista referri possunt ad Christum, vel secundum caput, vel secundum corpus, scilicet Ecclesiam". Also, In Ps. 34, lect. 1: "Mystice pertinet ad Christum verum David: et secundum mysticam explicationem est secundus Psalmus eorum qui prolixe loquuntur de passione Christi . . . hic ergo Psalmus, sive legatur ex persona David, sive Christi, vel cujuscumque duo facit". This juxtaposition of possible explanations is one of the characteristics of Aquinas's exegetical works as opposed to his systematic-theological works, see Pim Valkenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 187f.

40 See, for instance, in Ps. 27, lect. 1 (. . . non figurali, sed vero David, scilicet Christo . . .), and the rest of the Psalm, where the christological explanation is one of the possibilities (. . . de Christo autem potest exponi . . .).

41 In Ps. 15, lect. 1.

42 In Ps. 39, lect. 4; "Haec verba forte vellet aliquis exponere de David . . . sed quia Apostolus exponit de Christo, et nos etiam exponamus de eo".

43 In Ps. 40, lect. 6: "Et quia ipse Christus, Joan XIII istud verbum introducit de Juda, ideo nos de Christo hic exponamus".

44 Ryan, *op. cit.*, p. 173 n. 22 gives a comparison with the number of quotations from both Testaments in the *tertia pars* of the *Summa theologiae*.

45 Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985/1999), p. 20.

46 In *IV Libri Sententiarum* IV, d.1, q. 2, a.2, qua. 2.

47 The first four Aquinas derives from Epiphane, the last three from Bede. Jean-Pierre Torrell makes this point in *Le Christ en ses Mystères la vie et l'œuvre de Jésus selon saint Thomas d'Aquin*, t.1 (Paris: Desclée, 1999), p. 181.

48 Aquinas distinguishes three major components in the Old Law: moral precepts, ritual or ceremonial precepts and judicial precepts. The second category mentioned is subdivided in four parts: sacrifices, sacred things (e.g., tabernacle, vessels), sacraments and customs (e.g., dietary, clothing). Sacraments concern the institution for divine service of the people or of ministers through consecration. The most general sacrament is the rite of circumcision, through which one is admitted to the observance of the law. Other sacraments are the consecration of the priest, eating of the paschal meal, offering of ritual sacrifices and eating of bread in the temple, and (priestly and common) purification rites. All of these sacraments have rational causes, both literal and figurative; literally they derive their signification from the function they have in the divine service at that time; figuratively they have their signification inasmuch as they signify Christ. Cf. *STh* I-II, qq. 99–105, esp. q. 102,4.

49 *STh* III, q. 62,6 ad 3 and 70,4. Cf. *In Rom. IV*, l. 2. Aquinas's former views are contained in *IV Libri Sententiarum* IV, d.1, q. 2, a.4, qua. 3.

50 This is carried by the distinction between final and efficient causes. A final cause may have moving power even before it occurs, and thus faith in "something that is hoped for" is said to move the one who believes. An efficient cause cannot do this, and yet that would be needed for something which proceeds through a non-mental exterior use of something, which applies to sacraments; e.g., before passion and resurrection of Christ purification rites cannot have efficacy in themselves; this can only happen afterwards. This same ratio-

nale also applies to the sacrament of penance. Aquinas's analysis of causality here is important, since it reminds one of an important divergence in interpreting the efficacy of sacraments in general in the thirteenth century: namely, the question whether or not the sacraments realise what they signify *ex opere operato*.

51 Richard Schenk, "Covenant Initiation: Thomas Aquinas and Robert Kilwardby on the Sacrament of Circumcision", in: Carlos-Josaphat Pinto de Oliveira OP (ed.), *Ordo Sapientiae et Amoris. Image et Message de Saint Thomas d'Aquin à travers les récentes études historiques, herméneutiques et doctrinales*, Hommage au professeur Jean-Pierre Torrell OP à l'occasion de son 65^e anniversaire (Fribourg, Suisse: Editions universitaires, 1993), pp. 555–593.

52 Schenk mentions that beginning with William of Auvergne, halfway through the thirteenth century, some theologians would look for an immanent Jewish sense for the ritual regulations, instead of always construing them as prefiguring Christ in some way or other. The rule of circumcision on the eighth day, for example, does not primarily point to the day of the resurrection of Christ, but to the point in time where the infant would no longer be too fragile and would not yet be of an age when pain would be felt. To William the immanent Jewish meaning of circumcision was the second meaning he had found in Maimonides: remembrance of the covenant with this one and only God, what he calls 'spiritual chastity', *op. cit.* p. 561.

53 "Christus non solum debebat implere ea quae sunt legis veteris, sed etiam inchoare ea quae sunt novae. Et ideo non solum voluit circumcidiri, sed etiam baptizari", *STh III*, q. 39,1 ad 2.

54 Schoot, *op. cit.*, chapters 1 and 6.

55 David Burrell employs Chalcedon's formula to approach the uniqueness of Jerusalem. See "Jerusalem after Jesus", in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, Markus Bockmuehl (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 250–264, here p. 252 and p. 257.

56 Walter Cardinal Kasper, President of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, "Address on the 37th Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*", October 28, 2002.